

The Genealogy of the Lord Jesus Matthew 1:1-17

Background

Doctrinal Points

1. The genealogy of Christ proves that Jesus was the promised Messiah.
2. The genealogy of Christ proves that God is a gracious God.

Practical Application

1. Don't dismiss the designs in Scripture.

Questions

1. How can the genealogy of Christ to Abraham be broken down?
2. What do we know about Matthew, the author of this Gospel?
3. How is a genealogy different from a chronology?
4. How can the differences between this genealogy and the genealogy in Luke 3 be explained?
5. What was Matthew's purpose in writing this gospel?
6. What is the meaning of "Messiah"?

Answers

1. 14 generation from Abraham to David 14 generations from David to the captivity of Babylon 14 generations from the captivity to Christ.
2. Matthew, also called Levi, was a disciple of Christ. Before he was called to be a disciple, he was a Publican, a Jewish tax collector.
3. A genealogy does not include every link in the chronology; it skips certain ones to give others emphasis.
4. Luke gives the lineage of Christ through Mary, showing He was a physical descendant of David. Matthew gives the lineage of Christ through Joseph, giving Him a legal right to the throne of David.
5. To show conclusively that Jesus is the Messiah and King, who was promised in the Old Testament scriptures.
6. Messiah means "Anointed One." "Christ" is the Greek word for Messiah.

Discuss / Consider

1. In the time of Christ, tax collectors were looked on as traitors and thieves, because they collected taxes from their fellow Jews for the Roman government. Even though Matthew was not a popular or well-liked individual, the Lord chose him to be a disciple. He was chosen not only to be a disciple, but also to write a gospel. God sometimes calls the most unlikely people to serve Him. Can you give an example of this? How should this affect your attitude toward fellow believers that you may not like?

2. Discuss what you know about Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, and Bathsheba. Women are rarely included in Jewish genealogies, especially if they are Gentiles or known sinners. Here we see the grace of God, in His sovereign choice to include these women in the genealogy of the Messiah. The coming of Christ was intended to bring salvation to sinners. This salvation is available to anyone. Have you considered how gracious God was to include you in His plan of salvation?

Challenge

1. Thank God today that Jesus is the Messiah He promised to send.

The Angel's Announcement to Joseph
Matthew 1:18-25

Background

Doctrinal Points

- 1. Joseph was righteous in his obedience to the Lord.**

- 2. Joseph was righteous in his treatment of Mary.**

Practical Application

- 1. Trust God when you're slandered.**

Questions

1. What is the purpose of the Gospel of Matthew?
2. How does this passage show that Jesus Christ is both God and Man?
3. What does the name of Jesus mean?
4. Did Mary remain a virgin after the birth of Christ?
5. Why didn't the angel rebuke Joseph for planning to send Mary away?
6. Should you fight back in your own defense, when people speak lies about you?

Answers

1. To prove that Jesus is the Messiah and the royal Son of David, Who was promised in the scriptures.
2. He is God because He was conceived supernaturally of the Holy Spirit. He is man because He was born naturally of Mary.
3. Jesus means “The Lord is salvation” or “The Lord is Savior.”
4. No. See Matthew 1:25 and Matthew 13:55-56.
5. Because God does not require us to believe the incredible without divine revelation.
6. No, trust God when you’re slandered. He will give you strength to graciously stand strong.

Discuss / Consider

1. Joseph’s life was characterized by consistently doing what was right before God. Discuss how difficult it must have been for him to trust and obey God in this situation. Are you willing to fully obey God, even in difficult areas?

2. When Mary returned pregnant after a 3-month visit to her cousin Elisabeth’s house, Joseph must have assumed she had an affair. Under Jewish law, Mary could have been publicly exposed and put to death for adultery. This would have saved Joseph’s reputation, and have been perfectly legal! Yet because of his love for Mary, he decided to send her away privately. As Christians, our love for people should cause us to treat them even more kindly than may be required.

Challenge

1. Could it be said of you, “He was a just man” or “She was a righteous woman”?

The Wise Men who Came from the East to Worship the True King
Matthew 2:1-12

Background

Doctrinal Points

1. Some people know the Scriptures, but they don't know the King.
2. Some people hear the Scriptures, and they reject the King.
3. Some people believe the Scriptures and they receive the King.

Practical Application

1. Return home a different way.

Questions

1. Did the wise men come to the stable to worship baby Jesus, as we often see in nativity scenes?
2. Is the Christmas carol "We Three Kings" an accurate account of this passage?
3. Does there have to be a natural explanation for the Star of Bethlehem?
4. Who were the scribes mentioned in Matthew 2:4?
5. Did the wise men remain in Bethlehem with the King?

Answers

1. No, the wise men came to the house of Joseph and Mary in Bethlehem, as many as two years after Jesus was born.
2. No, the Bible does not say there were three wise men, although they did bring three gifts. Nor does the Bible say these wise men were kings.
3. No. Although God might have used a natural astral event to lead the wise men, He could also have used a miracle star.
4. The Scribes were the professional students of the day. They copied the scriptures, taught the scriptures, and were the official interpreters for the people. Although they knew the scriptures, they did not know the King.
5. No, they went back to their homes, jobs, and friends. But they were changed men for life.

Discuss / Consider

1. In this lesson we saw three reactions to the announcement that the King was born according to the Scriptures. Review the three doctrinal points Discuss the three reactions in the scripture passage. Also, discuss how people react these same ways today.

2. The wise men from the East were not part of God's chosen people, Israel. They were probably Gentiles from Babylon or Persia. Yet they believed God's revelation in the Hebrew Scriptures. They followed the light God gave them, and they were brought to the Savior. "Those who seek will find," Matthew 7:7. Discuss how you personally were brought to the Savior.

Challenge

1. The wise men returned home as different men after they met the King. Have you been changed by an encounter with the King, the Lord Jesus? You too can return home a different way.

**Joseph, Mary and Jesus went to Egypt until the Death of Herod
Matthew 2:13-23**

Background

Doctrinal Points

1. Prophecy was fulfilled when Jesus returned from Egypt.
2. Prophecy was fulfilled when Herod killed the children.
3. Prophecy was fulfilled when Joseph moved to Nazareth.

Practical Application

1. Don't expect God's guidance to make your life easier.

Questions

1. Review the four dreams God used to guide Joseph.
2. How does Matthew show the preeminence of Jesus over His mother, Mary?
3. What is Hosea 1:1 referring to in its original context?
4. What is Jeremiah 31:15 speaking about in its original context?
5. Where in the Old Testament prophetic books can we find the prophecy, "He shall be called a Nazarene"?

Answers

- 1) Matthew 1:20-24 - Joseph was guided to take Mary as his wife, because she was going to have a Son conceived of the Holy Spirit.
2) Matthew 2:13 - Joseph was guided to take his family to Egypt to escape from Herod.
3) Matthew 2:19-20 - Joseph was guided to return to Israel because Herod was dead.
4) Matthew 2:22 - Joseph was guided to reside in Galilee, not Judea, because Herod's son, Archelaus, was reigning over Judea.
2. Five times in this chapter Jesus is mentioned before His mother (2:11, 13, 14, 20, 21). Also, the wise men worshiped Jesus alone, not Jesus and Mary (2:17).
3. Hosea was referring to the Exodus of the Jews from Egypt.
4. The Israelites wept and mourned because their children died when the Babylonians conquered Jerusalem during the time of Jeremiah.
5. We do not find the exact quote in any Old Testament book. But the idea that Jesus would be despised is a common prophetic theme. See Isaiah 5:3, Psalm 22:6, and John 1:46.

Discuss / Consider

1. God guided Joseph specifically through dreams. But this guidance did not make Joseph's life easier. Do you think it was easy for Joseph to trust God and take pregnant Mary as his wife? Do you think it was easy for Joseph to move baby Jesus and His mother to Egypt in the middle of the night? As Christians, God has promised to guide us. See Proverbs 3:5-6. Although following God's guidance will make your life more enjoyable, fulfilling, and rewarding, it will not necessarily be easier. Have you seen this to be true in your own life? Following God's guidance is worth it!
2. In this lesson we saw the fulfillment of three Old Testament prophecies. In their original context, these prophecies did not seem to refer to the Messiah. Yet by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Matthew saw the fuller meaning of scripture. We need to allow for the fuller meaning of scripture. Yet this does not mean we should look for "hidden meanings" in Old Testament texts. Let your interpretations be guided by the rest of scripture.

Challenge

1. Are you willing to obey the Lord, as Joseph was, even if His guidance does not make your life easier?

The Ministry of John the Baptist, and our Lord's Baptism
Matthew 3:1-17

Background

Doctrinal Points

- 1. The baptism of John was a baptism unto repentance**

- 2. The baptism of Jesus would be with the Holy Spirit and fire.**

Practical Application

- 1. You too can have a ministry in a wilderness.**

Questions

1. What happened between the events of Matthew chapter 2 and Matthew chapter 3?

2. When did God say of Jesus "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased"?

3. Did John the Baptist live alone as a hermit in the wilderness?

4. Was the baptism of John the same as Christian baptism?

5. Why did the Lord Jesus, who had never sinned, take part in John's baptism of repentance?

Answers

1. There is a gap of 27 to 29 years between these chapters. The only record we have of these years is when Jesus astonished the teachers at the temple when He was 12 years old. Chapter 3 picks up with the beginning of our Lord's public ministry.
2. God said this before Jesus began His public ministry. God saw nothing but perfection in Jesus' childhood and young adulthood.
3. No, there were a number of wilderness communities of Orthodox Jews, known as the Essenes. John was probably associated with one of these communities.
4. No, Christian baptism was not instituted until after our Lord's death and resurrection. John's baptism called for the Jews to repent and prepare for the coming of the Messiah.
5. Jesus says in Matthew 3:15 that it was right for Him to be baptized. He was setting the example and identifying with those who separated themselves from unbelieving Judaism and were preparing themselves for the kingdom of God.

Discuss / Consider

1. John the Baptist was the forerunner of the Messiah. He came prophesying that the kingdom of God, predicted in the Old Testament, was at hand. Discuss how the earthly kingdom was postponed, because the King was rejected. Discuss the kingdom of heaven that is proceeding on this earth, while the King is in heaven. The people rejected the offer of the Messianic kingdom, because they would not repent, but one day the Jewish people will repent and Christ will come again to establish His earthly kingdom.

2. The baptism of Jesus would be with the Holy Spirit and fire. Because the King was rejected and His earthly kingdom postponed until His second coming, the baptism with the Holy Spirit and fire will occur in two stages separated by a length of time. The baptism with the Holy Spirit was at Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit came upon the Church with power and blessing. The baptism with fire will be when the Lord returns in judgment. Do you live your life knowing that you will be judged when the Lord returns?

Challenge

1. It does not seem possible that thousands of people would go into the Judean wilderness to be ministered to by John the Baptist. Yet God blessed John the Baptist's ministry, because he was faithful in what God called him to do. Do not be discouraged; you too can have a ministry in a wilderness.

The Testing of Lord Jesus in the Judean Wilderness
Matthew 4:1-11

Background

Doctrinal Points

1. The temptations of Christ do not imply that Jesus could sin.

2. The temptations of Christ illustrate how we are tempted.

Practical Application

1. How many verses can you quote from Deuteronomy?

Questions

1. Did the devil lead the Lord into the wilderness?

2. Why did God allow the devil to test Jesus?

3. Matthew 4:2 says that the Lord was hungry. Was this wrong?

4. If Jesus could not sin, does this make the temptations meaningless?

5. How did Jesus respond to Satan's temptations?

Answers

1. No, the Holy Spirit led Him into the wilderness. God was in control of the situation.
2. To prove that He would not sin. This proved that Jesus was the Son of God.
3. No, it was not a sin for Him to desire food. This shows that the Lord was truly Man.
4. No, the Lord felt the pressure of His temptations even more than we do, because He was more sensitive to sin - yet He did not yield.
5. He quoted scripture. Each of these scriptures was from the book of Deuteronomy.

Discuss / Consider

1. Jesus did not sin - at the temptations, or at any other time. See 1 Peter 2:22, 2 Corinthians 5:21, and I John 3:5. Some people are hesitant to speak of the Lord being tempted, because they think temptation is a sin. Refer to James 1:14-15. Temptation is not a sin; we sin when we yield to that temptation. Our Lord faced real temptations, but He did not yield in any way. Hebrews 4:14-16 shows how we should be encouraged by this truth. Praise the Lord that we have a great High Priest who can sympathize with our weaknesses.

2. Discuss how the three temptations of Christ fall into the same categories encountered in the Garden of Eden, and listed in I John 2:16. Satan knows that we are susceptible to temptation in these areas: the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. He is very experienced at appealing to these sinful desires. Discuss ways to combat these temptations when they occur (Hint: Look at our Lord's example).

Challenge

1. Satan will often twist scripture to lead us astray. You can defeat this tactic if you are familiar with scripture yourself. Hide God's Word in your heart, so you can withstand temptation.

The Beginning of the Galilean Ministry, and the Call of Four Disciples
Matthew 4:12-25

Background

Doctrinal Points

1. The Lord preached the Gospel of the Kingdom in the early days of His ministry.

2. The Lord called His first disciples in the early days of His ministry.

Practical Application

1. Don't forget your background.

Questions

1. How much time elapsed between verses 11 and 12 of Matthew 14?

2. Did Jesus leave Judea because He was afraid of Herod Antipas, who had beheaded John the Baptist?

3. What was the "Gospel of the Kingdom"?

4. Was the "Gospel of the Kingdom" preached to everyone?

5. Must you leave your secular job to be a disciple of the Lord?

Answers

1. Almost a year elapsed between the Temptation of Christ and the beginning of His Galilean Ministry. John records his ministry in Jerusalem and Judea during that time.
2. No, Galilee was also under Herod Antipas' jurisdiction. His move to Galilee foreshadowed the time when His Gospel would be open to the Gentiles, not only the Jews.
3. It was essentially the same gospel that John the Baptist preached: "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." (Matthew 3:2, 4:17) This was the good news that the Messiah had arrived, and His kingdom predicted in Old Testament prophecies was at hand.
4. This gospel was only preached to the Jews, not to Gentiles or Samaritans. See Matthew 10:5-7.
5. No, the Lord does not call all of His followers out of secular service, although this was the case with the first disciples.

Discuss / Consider

1. The Lord preached the Gospel of the Kingdom in the early days of His ministry. But the Jews rejected the offer of the kingdom. As a result, the Lord began to teach in parables about the form the kingdom would take at this present time, until Christ returns again to finally establish His kingdom. In the meantime, the gospel of the Great Commission is going out. Now the Lord has set up His Church, which includes Jews and Gentiles together. Praise the Lord for the revelation of His Church, because He has graciously included us in His plan of salvation.

2. Discuss some principles of fishing. Go where the fish are; use the right bait; know when to draw in the net; etc. The disciples could use their background in their new ministry as fishers of men. Discuss how God can use your background to prepare you for ministry.

Challenge

1. You don't have to leave your secular employment to be a disciple of the Lord. Allow Him to use you where you are. The skills you have learned in your employment could be useful for ministry.

The Beatitudes
Matthew 5:1-16

Background

Doctrinal Points

1. The Sermon on the Mount does not present the way of salvation.

2. The Sermon on the Mount does present the way of righteous living.

Practical Application

1. Let's not lose our salt or hide our light.

Questions

1. Why did Jesus sit down to teach?

2. Who were Jesus' original audience for the Sermon on the Mount?

3. What was the purpose of the Sermon on the Mount?

4. In light of the historical context, does the Sermon on the Mount have any use for us today?

5. How was salt used in the time of Jesus? What then does it mean that we should be the "salt of the earth"?

Answers

1. This was the traditional position of rabbis during the time of Jesus. They would stand up to read the scripture, sit down to teach.
2. His audience included not only His closest disciples, but also a multitude or crowd (see Matthew 7:28).
3. Looking at the historical context, we see that this Sermon was given in the interim period - the period between the time when the kingdom was offered to Israel, and the time when the kingdom was rejected. It described the moral qualities that should characterize anyone who had participated in John's baptism unto repentance and was preparing for the kingdom of the Messiah.
4. Yes. When Israel rejected the Messiah and His kingdom, the interim was over. Now we look for appropriate application. Although not all of the Sermon on the Mount can be applied to believers, there is plenty of application for us today.
5. Salt was used as a preservative, to prevent the spread of decay and corruption in foods. Similarly, believers are to act as a preservative in society, to limit the spread of moral decay and corruption.

Discuss / Consider

1. The Sermon on the Mount does not present the way of salvation. Discuss why this statement is true. As you read further into the Sermon, can you see why it will be important to understand this up-front?

2. Re-read the Beatitudes. If Christ is our king, these moral qualities of the kingdom should characterize our life today. These qualities are not our natural instinct; discuss how you can make them a part of your life. Remember, if we follow the way of righteous living, we are not only blessed now, we will be rewarded later.

Challenge

1. "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven." Matthew 5:16 Let your light shine not just with good talk, but with good works for the Lord.

Jewish Leaders' Misinterpretation of Commandments of the Law
Matthew 5:17-30

Background

Doctrinal Points

1. Hate is the seed of murder.

2. Lust is the seed of adultery.

Practical Application

1. Don't have a litigious spirit.

Questions

1. What is the "Law and the Prophets"?

2. How did the Lord come to "fulfill" the Law and the Prophets?

3. To what level did God inspire Scripture?

4. How did the Pharisees distort the command "You shall not murder"?

5. How did the Pharisees distort the command "You shall not commit adultery"?

6. What did the Lord mean by "If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you."?

Answers

1. This refers to the entire Old Testament scripture.
2. Through the Lord Jesus, every single prediction in the Old Testament would be fulfilled. The Lord Himself would obey the Law perfectly. He was the fulfillment of the Messianic prophecies. What has not been fulfilled yet will be fulfilled in the future.
3. God superintended the writers and writings of scripture not just to the level of the writer's thoughts and concepts, but right down to the very words and letters.
4. The Pharisees had watered down the meaning of God's law. They said it was okay to be angry with people you didn't like, call them derogatory names, even damn them, as long as you did not kill them. You could hate all you wanted. This missed the point of God's law.
5. The self-righteous Scribes and Pharisees said you could look and lust all you wanted, as long as you did not commit the act of adultery. But the Lord is saying both are sinful. The Pharisees were wrong to condemn the act, but not the attitude of lust.
6. The Lord was not suggesting self-mutilation. Drastic action should be taken to address the problem of lust. See Job 31:1.

Discuss / Consider

1. "For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven." Matthew 5:20. The Pharisees seemed to be very righteous. In fact, they strived to obey extra rules that they added to the Law (although they did not obey the Law itself). But their righteousness was not from the heart. They actually twisted God's true intent of the Law by their unbiblical traditions and practices. The righteousness the Lord requires is not just external, but internal as well, based on true faith and conversion. God's law extends beyond the external act, to the internal attitude behind the act. Consider the motivation of your heart.

2. Don't have a litigious spirit. What a relevant lesson in today's lawsuit crazy society! Even Christians are caught up in frivolous lawsuits. Look at I Corinthians 6. It is wrong for believers to fight one another in court. This attitude is a terrible testimony to unbelievers. Settle your disputes with believers outside of court.

Challenge

When you have wronged or been wronged by a fellow believer, do everything you can to be reconciled to him. Take the first step.

Our Lord's View on Divorce and on the Taking of Oaths **Matthew 5:31-37**

Background

Doctrinal Points

1. Divorce is not condoned by God.

2. Oaths are not condoned by God.

Practical Application

1. Wait for reconciliation.

Questions

1. Was the Lord Jesus removing or changing the Law in the Sermon on the Mount?
2. Look back at Matthew 5:29-30. Explain why the Lord is using figurative language when He gives the command to pluck out your right eye, or cut off your right hand.
3. How were the Jews misusing God's Law on divorce in Deuteronomy 24:1-4?
4. Was God condoning divorce in Deuteronomy?
5. The Mosaic Law prohibited swearing falsely by the name of God. How did the Pharisees get around this law?
6. How do God's dealings with His people Israel give us insight into His attitude toward divorce?

Answers

1. No, He was correcting Judaism's wrong interpretation of the Law.
2. The Lord is commanding people to deal seriously with the problem of lust. He is not commanding them to literally disfigure themselves, because:
 - a. Disfigurement does not solve the problem of lust.
 - b. Disfigurement does not affect your destiny to heaven or hell.
 - c. The rest of scripture speaks against mutilation of the body.
3. They were using the Law as an excuse to get a divorce for any reason that suited their purposes.
4. No, the Law was given to regulate and put limits on the divorce that was already going on in Israel.
5. The Pharisees swore by other things instead of God's name. They swore in the name of heaven, by Jerusalem, and by their own heads. This was a distortion of the intent of God's law.
6. God's relationship with Israel is compared to a marriage. Israel committed spiritual adultery with foreign gods, yet God did not completely sever His relationship with them. He patiently waited for reconciliation. He wants us to seek reconciliation instead of divorce as well.

Discuss / Consider

1. Divorce is rampant in our culture today, even among Christians. Yet in Malachi 2:16, God said that He hates divorce. God has not changed His mind, or lowered His standards since then. There is only one biblical ground for divorce - not emotional stress, not incompatibility, not financial problems, not lack of romance. Divorce is allowed only in the case of sexual immorality. Discuss this possibly unpopular teaching on divorce. Do you have the "Divorce is not an option" mindset in your marriage? Remember, divorce is not commanded even in the case of sexual immorality. Reconciliation is far better, because divorce is never condoned.
2. The Pharisees in Jesus' day twisted and distorted God's Law to say as long as you did not take an oath, you did not need to be as truthful in normal conversation. Are you known for integrity in your speech? Can your word be trusted, because you are a trustworthy person? Citizens of the kingdom should not have to take an oath to make their statements more truthful. Our "Yes" should mean "Yes", and our "No", "No."

Challenge

1. If you, or someone you know, are going through marital difficulties, challenge them with our practical application from Matthew 5. Reconciliation is not easy, but it can happen. Be willing to wait for reconciliation.

Other Misinterpretations of the Law Corrected by the Lord
Matthew 5:38-48

Background

Doctrinal Points

1. The command to “Turn the other cheek,” does not mean to forget justice.

2. The command to “Love your enemies,” does not mean to forsake justice.

Practical Application

1. Let’s aim for perfection.

Questions

1. How is Matthew 5:43 typical of how the Jews handled the Law in Jesus’ day?
2. Why was the Lex talionis given?
3. Give an example of the proper application of “An eye for an eye.”
4. How had the Pharisees of Jesus’ day distorted the law “An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth”?
5. Why is it not enough to love our friends?
6. How is God an example for us as we seek to love our enemies?

Answers

1. The first part, “You shall love your neighbor,” is scripture, from Leviticus 19:18. But the second part, “and hate your enemy,” is not scripture. Many Jews ignored the original intent of God’s Law. They misinterpreted God’s Law by distorting it, or adding or subtracting from it, so the Law would suit their own purposes.
2. This so-called “Law of Retaliation” was not given as a justification for revenge or personal vendettas; it was given as a limit for punishment under civil justice. See Deuteronomy 19:21.
3. If you punch your boss at work, he cannot take you to court and have you beheaded. “The punishment must fit the crime.”
4. The Jews had turned this Law into an excuse for personal revenge. Jesus said, Don’t take revenge - turn the other cheek.
5. Because even non-Christians love people who love them. It is more commendable to love those who do not deserve it. See Matthew 5:46.
6. God gives grace to all people, by causing the sun to shine and the rain to fall on all. See Matthew 5:45.

Discuss / Consider

1. God’s moral laws are good for all time, not just for Israel under the Mosaic Law during Old Testament times. The ceremonial and civil parts of the Mosaic Law do not apply to believers today. But God’s moral law continues. Did you know that nine of the Ten Commandments are repeated in the New Testament, because they are moral laws? The only one not repeated is the ceremonial law to “Remember the Sabbath.” Do you have a high view of Old Testament scripture? Realize that God’s moral laws in the Old Testament still apply today.

2. How far do we take the Lord’s commands to “Turn the other cheek” and “Love your enemies”? Discuss why these principles should not be practiced by the government. Remember that these principles are given in the context of personal enemies.

Challenge

1. Don’t settle for mediocrity in your Christian life. Look at the example of our Heavenly Father, and aim for perfection.

The Right View on Giving and on Prayer
Matthew 6:1-15

Background

Doctrinal Points

1. Believers should not flaunt their giving.

2. Believers should not flaunt their praying.

Practical Application

1. Remember, forgiveness and fellowship go together.

Questions

1. What is the subject matter of the Sermon on the Mount?
2. What does it mean to “not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing”?
3. Can the principle, “Believers should not flaunt their giving,” be applied outside the realm of money?
4. The “Lord’s Prayer” is often repeated in churches. Is there any biblical basis for this practice?
5. What was the purpose of the “Lord’s Prayer”?
6. Does Matthew 6:5 mean we should never pray in public?

Answers

1. The Lord addresses areas of the Mosaic Law that the Jews had misinterpreted and misapplied. In chapter 5 He addresses the wrong teachings of the Law; in chapter 6 He addresses the wrong practices of the Law.
2. This is a descriptive figure of speech to say our giving should be in secret. We should not be giving in order to gain praise from men.
3. Yes, believers should not flaunt their giving whether they are giving time, talent, or treasure.
4. No, Lord Jesus taught His disciples this prayer before the Church was established. We do not see a pattern of the churches reciting this prayer in Acts, nor are believers commanded in the Epistles to recite it. Ironically, many churches turn the Lord's Prayer into "vain repetitions," which the Lord discourages in Matthew 6:7.
5. The Lord gave this prayer to His disciples as a pattern for the way they should pray.
6. No, elsewhere in scripture, believers are encouraged to pray in public. This verse is teaching that our motivation for prayer should not be praise from others. (See I Timothy 2:8)

Discuss / Consider

1. Review the Lord's Prayer in Matthew 6. When we remember that this prayer was given to the disciples as a model, we can draw principles for prayer from it. Here are a few principles we could draw. What are some others?
 - Prayer begins with the worship of God.
 - We acknowledge that God's will is best.
 - We long for His kingdom to be set up on earth.
 - We depend on the Lord to meet our basic needs.
 - We desire that our fellowship with the Lord be maintained by confessing our sins.
 - We seek to be preserved from areas of temptation where we are vulnerable.
2. Discuss why we need forgiveness for our sins, even after we are saved. Refer to I John 1:9. We need our sins to be forgiven so that fellowship with the Lord will be maintained. Does your relationship with the Lord seem distant? Maybe you need to forgive a brother or sister. Our fellowship with the Lord is broken when we will not forgive our brothers. Discuss why an unforgiving attitude hurts our relationship with God.

Challenge

1. "Believers should not flaunt their giving," is not a problem for some believers, because they do not give at all! Are you giving regularly to the Lord's work from what He has given you? It is important not only to give, but to give for the right reasons.

The Lord Discusses Fasting and the Proper Attitude Toward Money
Matthew 6:16-24

Background

Doctrinal Points

- 1. Believers should not publicize their spiritual fasting.**

- 2. Believers should not hoard their material treasure.**

Practical Application

- 1. Don't try to serve God and money.**

Questions

1. What is "spiritual fasting"?

2. What was the only fast commanded in the Old Testament?

3. "The lamp of the body is the eye. If therefore your eye is good, your whole body will be full of light..." What does this verse have to do with money?

4. What is "mammon"?

5. What will happen if you try to serve God and money?

Answers

1. Fasting for spiritual reasons, not weight loss!
2. The Jews were only commanded to fast on the Day of Atonement. Any additional fasting was optional. Fasting may be appropriate for a special time of prayer or spiritual concern. But the Pharisees loved to fast for show.
3. This is an illustration about our motives. How well do our priorities line up with the two commands in Matthew 5:19-20?
4. Mammon is the Aramaic word for riches. We get our English word “money” from this word.
5. The best you can hope for is that you will only despise the things of the Lord, and not hate them. Your loyalty will be divided, and money will always move up on your priority list, as the things of the Lord move down.

Discuss / Consider

1. Many Christians say they love the Sermon on the Mount, when really they only like the Beatitudes. When it comes to the difficult sections on money and wealth, some people might prefer they weren't there! Review some of your favorite highlights from our study of the Sermon on the Mount. Have you allowed these truths to affect your life? If Christians will use the whole Sermon on the Mount as a general guideline for living life and setting priorities, it will make a radical change in their lifestyle and value system.

2. Suppose you were to lose all your material possessions tonight. How would it affect you? Your response depends on how well you obey the command to “lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven.” Now discuss what one item you would take with you if your house caught on fire. Do your priorities line up with God's?

Challenge

1. Money is a prime focus in our culture. As Christians, we cannot have money as our #1 priority - that position belongs to God. Remember, don't try to serve God and money.

Our Caring Heavenly Father Knows our Needs and our Future
Matthew 6:25-34

Background

Doctrinal Points

- 1. Believers should not worry about their basic needs.**

- 2. Believers should not worry about the future.**

Practical Application

- 1. How little is your faith?**

Questions

1. Is the Lord's teaching, "Do not worry," a suggestion?
2. What are the two reasons Jesus gives not to worry?
3. Recall the two illustrations from nature Jesus gives to show we do not need to worry about our basic needs.
4. Does God's promise to provide, mean we can sit around and do nothing?
5. Think of another place in scripture where believers are commanded not to worry.

Answers

1. No, it is a command.
2. 1) It doesn't help to worry
2) There's no need to worry
3. 1) Birds of the air
2) Lilies of the field
4. No, this is not an excuse for laziness. Refer to 2 Thessalonians 3:10, "If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat." Also, this promise is only given to those who "seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness" (Matthew 6:33).
5. Philippians 4:6-7, "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."

Discuss / Consider

1. Discuss how God provides for His creation, which is here today, gone tomorrow. How much more, will He take care of His people? Do you realize how precious you are to God? You are so precious that He sent His only Son to die for you! Thank God for providing for your ultimate need when He sent Jesus as your Savior. Thank Him for providing for your daily needs as well.

2. We all know fellow believers who could be labeled "worrywarts." Did you realize this shows a lack of faith on their part? When we worry we are taking our concerns into our own hands, and not trusting God. Discuss why we worry, and why we should not. Trust God; don't worry.

Challenge

1. God promises to provide for us. This does not mean everything we want, but everything we need. When we "seek first the kingdom of God," the things we want will line up with the things we need!

Believers are not to Judge Motives or be Fault-finders
Matthew 7:1-6

Background

Doctrinal Points

- 1. Believers should not judge the motives or conscience of others.**
- 2. Believers should not concentrate on the faults of other believers.**
- 3. Believers should not cast their pearls before swine.**

Practical Application

- 1. Use your sense of humor to serve the Lord.**

Questions

1. Micah 6:8 says, "He has shown you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you, but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?" How is this similar to the Sermon on the Mount?
2. Who were the original recipients of the Sermon on the Mount?
3. Why are believers not to judge another person's motives or conscience?
4. What is hyperbole?
5. Who do the dogs and swine in Matthew 7:6 represent?

Answers

1. Like Micah 6:8, the Sermon on the Mount does not tell how to be saved. Instead, both of these passages show the way of righteous living.
2. The Jews who were preparing for the kingdom of heaven.
3. We cannot know another person's motives, so it would be wrong of us to judge them. We should not be judgmental in the area of conscience, because among faithful Christians there are differences of opinion on matters that are not in of themselves right or wrong.
4. Hyperbole is a figure of speech with purposeful exaggeration to get the point across.
5. Dogs and swine were unclean under the Mosaic Law. They represent wicked unbelievers, who are not open to the things of God and would even like to undermine the Christian faith.

Discuss / Consider

1. "Tolerance" could be a theme word of our society today. Accordingly, the verse "Judge not, that you be not judged" has been commonly quoted, and greatly misunderstood. Discuss why it does not mean we should never judge or be discerning. Christians are sometimes responsible to judge the behavior of others, as we see elsewhere in the New Testament. Jesus' teaching here means that believers should not judge the motives or conscience of others. How has the move toward "tolerance" affected the Church?

2. Imagine a cartoon of a man with a telephone pole sticking out of his eye, telling someone else they have a piece of sawdust in their eye! As ridiculous as this sounds, it is easy for believers to see the little faults of other believers, while we overlook our own faults. Discuss how this hypocritical attitude will affect a body of believers. Remember, this does not mean we should never challenge another believer about their behavior. Just make sure your testimony is right so you can truly help others.

Challenge

1. Christians are often stereotyped as being sour and overly-serious. Use your sense of humor as you serve the Lord, to help dispel this wrong impression.

“Ask, Seek, and Knock” and “The Golden Rule”
Matthew 7:7-12

Background

Doctrinal Points

- 1. God expects believers to ask, and seek, and knock.**

- 2. God expects believers to obey the Golden Rule.**

Practical Application

- 1. Let’s practice the Law and the Prophets.**

Questions

1. The Sermon on the Mount was given to Jews preparing for the kingdom. Is it beneficial for believers today?

2. If an unbeliever asked you what one chapter of the Bible they should read, should you point them to the Sermon on the Mount?

3. A believer may claim he is “asking, seeking, and knocking” and God is not answering his request. Give three reasons his requests may not be answered.

4. How did Jesus put a positive spin on the Golden Rule?

5. What are the Law and the Prophets?

Answers

1. Yes, the moral standards presented in the Sermon on the Mount still apply today. As part of the Word of God, it is profitable for believers. Refer to 2 Timothy 3:16-17.
2. No, the Sermon on the Mount does not present the way of salvation (instead they should read John 3). The Sermon on the Mount teaches believers the way of righteous living.
3. 1) His request may be a selfish request - James 4:3.
2) His request may be outside the will of God - 1 John 5:14-15.
3) God knows what is best for us; He will not give us things that would harm us.
4. The Golden Rule is recorded in Jewish rabbinical literature, but always as a negative command: "Don't do to others, what you don't want them to do to you." Jesus changed this to a positive command, showing we should take the extra step to be kind to others.
5. The Old Testament scriptures. When we practice the Golden Rule, we fulfill the righteous requirement of the Law.

Discuss / Consider

1. Are you overwhelmed when you think of God's commands in the Sermon on the Mount? Remember, the moral standards for the way of righteous living are impossible to keep in our own strength. Do you know people who try to live righteously in their own strength? They cannot succeed! Praise the Lord today that you have been given the Holy Spirit, who enables you to follow God's will. Every Christian is indwelt by the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 1:13).

2. You can know God's will for your life! Ninety percent of God's will is found in His Word. Discuss some standards God reveals in the Bible. These things are God's will for all believers. The more specific aspects of God's will for your life can be found by walking with the Lord, using your God-given common sense, and seeking godly counsel.

Challenge

1. The Golden Rule does not say, "Do nice things for others if they do nice things for you." Do you practice the Golden Rule toward others, or do you only want them to practice it toward you?

Two Gates and Ways, Two Trees and Fruits, Two Builders and Foundations
Matthew 7:13-29

Background

Doctrinal Points

1. There are two different gates and ways.

2. There are two different trees and fruits

3. There are two different builders and foundations.

Practical Application

1. Don't be deceived by signs and wonders.

Questions

1. What common teaching method did Jesus use in this last section of the Sermon on the Mount?

2. How did Jesus' teaching differ from the other teachers of His day?

3. Are the two gates and ways a picture of the road to salvation?

4. What are the two gates and ways a picture of?

5. Will there be false prophets in Christ's millennial kingdom?

6. Are the false teachers of Matthew 7:23 unbelievers or backslidden believers?

Answers

1. Jesus used the “two ways” method of teaching, where a teacher would compare and contrast two items.
2. Jesus taught by His own authority (see Matthew 7:28). He did not have to quote famous rabbis, because He spoke with the authority of God.
3. No, this is more an issue of discipleship. The Sermon on the Mount does not present the way of salvation, but the way of righteousness. Using the hermeneutical principle, “Look for one interpretation, with many applications,” however, we can apply this illustration to salvation.
4. Jesus is teaching that the majority of believers are not committed disciples. They do not enter the gate of discipleship. Most believers waste their lives on things that will not count for eternity.
5. No, all false prophets will be judged at the Lord’s return. There will however be false prophets in the tribulation period preceding the millennial kingdom.
6. These false teachers are unbelievers, even though they perform miracles in the name of Christ. The Lord says to these false teachers, “I never knew you.” God would never say this to a believer.

Discuss / Consider

1. Have you entered the gate of discipleship? Discuss the distinction between being a believer and being a disciple. Many believers never take the step toward discipleship. Remember, you only have one life to live, and one life to give. The life of the committed disciple is not easy, but it is more rewarding. The life of a disciple has eternal value.

2. Review the story of the wise man and the foolish man. Sing the song, if you know it. This story, like the two gates, is an issue of discipleship. After you are saved you need to ask, what are you going to build your life upon? Many believers do not build their Christian lives on the Lord and His Word. Are you building your life on the value system of this world? What would this look like? Many believers have houses on the sand. Before a storm comes, a house on the sand and a house on the rock may look the same. But the foundation will be proven when the storms of life come. Discuss how building your life on the Lord and His Word will help you weather the storms of life.

Challenge

1. Occasionally a group will arise that reports many impressive healings and miracles. As Christians, we need to be discerning of these signs and wonders. Remember, Satan has miraculous powers as well.

The Healing of the Leper and the Healing of the Centurion's Servant
Matthew 8:1-13

Background

Doctrinal Points

1. The Lord Jesus can cleanse from leprosy.

2. The Lord Jesus can heal with a word.

Practical Application

1. Do we have great faith?

Questions

1. Each of the four gospels presents Christ from a different perspective. What are they?

2. How does Matthew show that Jesus is the promised Messiah?

3. What is leprosy a picture of in the Bible?

4. Explain Matthew 8:11-12.

5. What is a "centurion"?

6. How did the centurion show great faith?

Answers

1. Matthew presents Christ as King, Mark presents Christ as the perfect Servant, Luke presents Christ as the Son of Man, and John presents Christ as the Son of God.
2. Matthew shows that Jesus performed healing miracles, as was prophesied of the Messiah in the Old Testament.
3. Leprosy is a picture of sin. Just as leprosy is a loathsome, infectious, and incurable disease, so sin is a disease that leads to death.
4. Many Gentiles will become believers, and enter the kingdom of God by faith. Meanwhile, many of the “sons of the kingdom,” Jewish people, will end up in hell because of their disbelief.
5. A centurion is a Roman military officer in charge of 100 men.
6. The centurion understood authority. He knew Jesus’ command would be obeyed, because he believed He was sovereign.

Discuss / Consider

1. Jesus could have healed this leprous man just by speaking the words. Instead, He reached out and touched him. How long do you think it had been since this man had felt compassionate human touch? The Lord is aware of your needs. Not only will He provide for you, He will do so graciously and compassionately. Share a time when God has provided for you, giving you exactly what you needed.

2. Would the Lord marvel at your faith? The Roman centurion, who was a Gentile, displayed more faith than the Jewish people the Lord ministered to. Discuss how sovereign and powerful our Lord is. Reflect on this truth throughout this week, so your faith can grow into a great faith.

Challenge

1. If it is the Lord’s will to heal, He can do so today. Not every believer who is sick will be healed. But if it is His will to heal you, He can heal with a word.

**His Miracles Affirm Jesus Christ as Messiah; Teaching on Discipleship
Matthew 8:14-22**

Background

Doctrinal Points

- 1. Disease will be eliminated when all effects of sin are removed.**

- 2. Discipleship demands a change in priorities.**

Practical Application

- 1. If we're saved, we should serve.**

Questions

1. The Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5-7 showed the moral and spiritual qualities of the kingdom. What do the miracles in Matthew 8-9 show?
2. How is the arrangement of the miracles in Matthew 8 significant?
3. Is Isaiah 53:4, "He Himself took our infirmities and bore our sicknesses," a present promise of healing disease?
4. What did Jesus mean by, "Let the dead bury their own dead"?

Answers

1. Jesus 'miracles show the power of the King.
2. Together they seem to give us a picture of God's program for the kingdom of heaven.
 - The healing of the leper pictures Christ's first advent, when He came to heal the nation of Israel from their sin, if they would ask Him.
 - The healing of the centurion's servant portrays the present state of the kingdom of heaven. The Lord finds greater faith among the Gentiles than among the Israelites. The Lord was not physically present, yet He was able to heal.
 - In the future the Lord will return to the house of Israel, as pictured by His healing of Peter's mother-in-law.
 - The Lord cast out many demons, picturing His work during the millennial kingdom, when Satan will be bound.
3. No, Jesus did not die on the cross for our sicknesses. This prophecy was fulfilled in Jesus' healing ministry.
4. Let those who are spiritually dead bury the physically dead- you have higher priorities.

Discuss / Consider

1. Discuss the connection between sin and sickness. Sickness entered the world when Adam and Eve sinned. In the Eternal State, there will be no more death or sickness. Jesus died on the cross so that all the problems associated with sin (included sickness) can ultimately be removed. Disease will be eliminated when all effects of sin are removed. (Remember, when a believer is sick it does not mean that they specifically are lacking faith.)

2. In Matthew 8 a would-be disciple wanted to wait until his father had died, the family affairs were taken care of, and his inheritance was collected before he followed the Lord. Jesus told him, Now is the time; if you want to be a disciple, you need to change your priorities now. Discipleship demands a change in priorities. How do your priorities line up with God's? Challenge one another to place the Lord first, and let the other priorities follow.

Challenge

1. Peter's mother-in-law served the Lord immediately after she was healed. When we are saved, we are healed from our sin. If you are saved, the Lord wants you to be serving! As a Christian, you are never too young to serve.

The Lord's Power over Nature and His Power over Demons
Matthew 8:23-34

Background

Doctrinal Points

1. The Lord Jesus has power over nature.

2. The Lord Jesus has power over demons.

Practical Application

1. How big is your faith?

Questions

1. Give one or more arguments against the claim that the miracles of Jesus never took place.

2. How was Jesus' deity and humanity shown in this incident on the Sea of Galilee?

3. Review some Old Testament miracles that showed God's power over nature.

4. How do you explain why Matthew's account of this miracle speaks of two-demon possessed men, while Mark and Luke record only one?

5. What should the second miracle in this account show us about God's perspective on "animal rights"?

Answers

1. Even the unbelieving critics of Jesus' day did not deny His miracles.
2. We see His humanity because He was tired, and fell asleep in the boat. He showed His deity by calming the storm.
3. Parting of the Red Sea, sun standing still, rains withheld, etc.
4. This is not a contradiction in the Bible! There were two demon possessed men, but Mark and Luke chose to focus on the more outspoken one.
5. People are more important to the Lord than animals.

Discuss / Consider

1. Recall the illustration involving Abraham Lincoln. Do you think we could convince people to believe he was a miracle worker with divine status? This is what critics claim has been done with Christ. People try to explain away his miracles, by arguing against the validity of the historical record. What about you? Do you accept Jesus as the Son of God, or do you try to explain Him away as just a "good man"?

2. Saving faith is more than just believing the facts about Jesus. In this passage, the demons refer to Jesus as the Son of God. Compare this to James 2:19. Yet the demons are not saved! Saving faith is trust in Christ as your personal Savior. Have you believed the facts about Christ, but never trusted Him personally? Don't be orthodox like the demons; believe in Christ today.

Challenge

1. Although the Lord Jesus was with the disciples, they feared for their lives during the storm. They had no reason to fear, and Jesus chastised them for their lack of faith. If you are a believer in Christ, He has promised that He will always be with you (see Hebrews 13:5). You do not have to be afraid during the storms of life. Remember that the Lord is with you in the storm, and He can calm your troubled heart if you will call on Him.

A Paralyzed Man is Healed, and Matthew is Called to be a Disciple
Matthew 9:1-17

Background

Doctrinal Points

1. **Jesus confronted both sin and sickness.**

2. **Jesus changed both people and programs.**

Practical Application

1. **Jesus changed both people and programs**

Questions

1. What was the purpose of Jesus' miracles?

2. Did only the paralytic believe, or did his friends believe as well?

3. Why did the Pharisees accuse the Lord of blasphemy?

4. What was the point of Jesus' question in Matthew 9:5?

5. Matthew was a publican, or tax collector. Why were tax collectors disliked?

6. What was the point of Christ's parable about new and old cloth and new and old wineskins?

Answers

1. Jesus' miracles showed that He was the Son of God and the promised Messiah.
2. The paralytic and his friends showed faith by coming to Jesus. Matthew 9:2 says Jesus saw their faith.
3. Jesus forgave the man's sins, and only God can forgive sins. The Pharisees realized Jesus was claiming deity by doing this; thus they accused Him of blasphemy.
4. If you are God, you have the authority and ability to fulfill both statements. If you are not God, neither statement means anything.
5. Tax collectors, like Matthew, were disliked by their fellow Jews because they collected taxes for Rome. They would often cheat the people by overtaxing them and keeping the profit for themselves.
6. The Lord's coming signaled a change in programs. The dispensation of Law was ending and the dispensation of Grace was beginning. The two could not be mixed.

Discuss / Consider

1. 1. The miracles of Jesus give us a glimpse into the future. Discuss how they are a foretaste of what it will be like when the Lord returns to establish His millennial kingdom.

2. In Matthew 9:13, Jesus declared, "For I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance." The Lord meant He could not help people who thought they were righteous and did not need help. Only those who knew they were sinners and realized their need for a Savior would respond to His call. The same is true today. Before he can be saved, a person must realize his need for a Savior. Have you realized your need for a Savior?

Challenge

1. Remember how creative the paralytic's friends were in the way they brought him to Christ. You can also be creative in the way you introduce your unsaved friends to Christ. Try to do so this week.

Two More Miracles of Our Lord
Matthew 9:18-26

Background

Doctrinal Points

1. The touch of faith brings salvation.

2. The touch of God brings new life.

Practical Application

1. Expect interruptions when you're serving the Lord.

Questions

1. The fact that these two miracles are recorded together is significant. What is the teaching of these miracles?
2. What was the woman trying to touch on the hem of the Lord's garment?
3. Did Jesus' tassels contain a mystical power?
4. Why did Jesus say the girl was only sleeping, when everyone else thought she was dead?

Answers

1. The miracles together depict God's program for blessing both Israel and the Church. The synagogue official's daughter pictures Israel, which is spiritually dead. The Lord is on His way to heal the nation. Meanwhile people are coming to Christ for healing from sin today. People who come to Christ during the present time are part of the Church.
2. As a Jewish man, our Lord probably had blue tassels on the hem of His garment.
3. No, the significance was not in the actual tassels, but in her faith. She reached out in faith, believing she would be healed by touching the Lord.
4. He was showing that He intended to raise her to life again. Death for a believer is only a temporary state, like sleep.

Discuss / Consider

1. Discuss, "The touch of faith brings salvation." The woman reached out in faith to touch the only One who could make her well. It is the focus of faith that matters. Saving faith is not focused in a church or creed, but in the person of Jesus Christ. Refer to Ephesians 2:8-9. If we reach out in faith to the Lord, He will forgive us, because He died on the cross for our sins.

2. Discuss, "The touch of God brings new life." One day the Lord will touch the nation of Israel and bring her to life again. He has not abandoned His plan for His chosen people. Look at Romans 11. God has a future plan for the nation of Israel. Thank the Lord now that He does not revoke His promises. Meanwhile, in this parenthesis in time, God has extended His plan of salvation to include Gentiles who are coming to Him today. Praise the Lord that He has extended His promise to include you.

Challenge

1. Follow the model of our Lord the next time you are interrupted in your Christian service. Look at the interruption as a possible new window for service.

**The Healing of Two Blind Men, and the Healing of a Demon-possessed Man
Matthew 9:27-38**

Background

Doctrinal Points

- 1. The Lord can remove darkness and bring light.**

- 2. The Lord can remove demons and bring healing.**

Practical Application

- 1. Pray for workers.**

Questions

1. Name the divisions of the three-fold ministry of the Lord.
2. What was the content of our Lord's teaching and preaching ministry?
3. What was the gospel of the kingdom?
4. Why did the two blind men call out, "Son of David, have mercy on us!"?
5. Why did the Lord Jesus command the blind men not to tell anyone when they were healed?

Answers

1. Teaching, preaching, and healing.
2. The gospel of the kingdom.
3. When Christ came to earth, He made a genuine offer of the Davidic kingdom to the nation of Israel. This was the kingdom prophesied in the Old Testament. Sadly, the Jews rejected the King and His offer of a kingdom. Thus the promises and prophecies of the earthly kingdom were not fulfilled at that time. But they will be fulfilled in the future, when Israel finally accepts her Messiah (see Romans 11). Meanwhile, the gospel of the grace of God goes out to anyone and everyone who accepts the Lord Jesus as their Savior.
4. They recognized that Jesus was the Messiah; “Son of David” is a Messianic title.
5. The Lord did not want people to follow Him only because of His healing powers. He wanted followers who had true faith in Him as the Messiah.

Discuss / Consider

1. All of Christ’s miracles were intended to teach spiritual truth. His healing of the two blind men shows that the Lord can remove darkness and bring light. Discuss 1 Peter 2:9 and 2 Corinthians 4:3-6. When we become Christians we are brought out of spiritual darkness into the marvelous light of God’s grace and truth. When did God shine His light upon you?

2. Not all of Jesus’ hearers had the hardened response of the Pharisees. Multitudes were open to Christ. He described them as sheep without a shepherd, and a plentiful harvest. The harvest is still plentiful today. Are we praying for workers? We don’t have to pray for the harvest - it is already plentiful! But workers are few. Pray for workers, and discuss how you yourselves can be those workers.

Challenge

1. Do you know a believer who is sick? It is good for fellow believers to gather to pray for the Lord’s healing. The Lord is able to heal every sickness and disease.

**The Disciples Were Told to Proclaim the Kingdom of Heaven is at Hand
Matthew 10:1-23**

Background

Doctrinal Points

- 1. The gospel of the kingdom was preached before the resurrection of Christ.**

- 2. The gospel of the kingdom will be preached after the Rapture of the Church.**

Practical Application

- 1. Prepare your Bible studies and sermons.**

Questions

1. What is the theme of Matthew's gospel?

2. Why does Jesus refer to His followers as "disciples" in Matthew 10:1, and "apostles" in Matthew 10:2?

3. To whom were the apostles supposed to preach their message?

4. Why were the apostles not to preach to the Gentiles?

5. What gospel was preached by John the Baptist and Jesus?

6. What was the gospel of the kingdom?

7. What is the time frame of Matthew 10:22-23?

Answers

1. The King and His Kingdom.
2. A “disciple” is one who is taught. An “apostle” is one who is sent forth with a message. The disciples were taught by the Lord, and now they are sent forth with the message of the kingdom.
3. They were to preach only to the Jews, not to the Gentiles or the Samaritans.
4. At this time the gospel of the kingdom was being proclaimed. This was only for the Jews. Today the gospel of the great commission is available to all who will believe.
5. The gospel of the kingdom.
6. The offer of the Messianic kingdom promised and prophesied in the Old Testament.
7. This is referring to the future time right before the second coming of Christ.

Discuss / Consider

1. Jesus sent His apostles out to preach the gospel of the kingdom to the nation of Israel. Discuss the gospel of the kingdom. This concept is not understood by most believers today. Thus they have a lot of confusion when they read the teaching of Christ. Understand the difference between the gospel of the kingdom and the gospel of grace.

2. Here is another difficult concept many believers do not understand. Discuss it now: Because the King and His kingdom were rejected by Israel, the Church composed of believers from all nations was brought into being. After the Rapture of the Church, the gospel of the kingdom will once again be proclaimed. Many Jews will believe when this gospel is preached during the Tribulation period, following the Rapture. They will believe in the Messiah they once rejected. Some believers will be martyred during this time, but some will “endure to the end” and enter the earthly kingdom of our Lord.

Challenge

1. If you are called upon to testify about the Lord, without having time to prepare, He will give you the words to say. But when you do have time to prepare for a Bible study or sermon, take the time!

The Lord Exhorts and Encourages His Disciples
Matthew 10:24-33

Background

Doctrinal Points

- 1. Disciples of the Lord Jesus will be persecuted for their faith.**

- 2. Disciples of the Lord Jesus will be encouraged in their faith.**

Practical Application

- 1. Is He Lord by my lips and my life?**

Questions

1. What was the purpose of the sign miracles performed by Jesus and His apostles?
2. Are Christians today able to perform sign miracles?
3. Are all believers persecuted for their faith?
4. Why are disciples of the Lord Jesus persecuted for their faith?
5. Who was Beelzebub?
6. Who is the "him" who is able to destroy both body and soul in hell?

Answers

1. The sign miracles confirmed that Jesus was the Messiah and His teaching was truly the Word of God.
2. No. God can perform miracles today and Christians could be called on to cast out a demon, but it is not the norm for Christians to perform miracles today.
3. No, many Christians hide their faith and do not live it out, so they are never persecuted. But those who are living out their faith as disciples of the Lord Jesus can expect persecution (see 2 Timothy 3:12).
4. Because our master, the Lord Jesus, was persecuted for His faith. See Matthew 10:24-25.
5. Beelzebub was a demonic deity of the pagan Ekronites. The Jews used this name as a synonym for Satan.
6. God. Remember that God is the One in authority over our eternal destiny, not Satan.

Discuss / Consider

1. Look at John 14:6, "Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.'" Our world hates the teachings of Christ. The more you stand for His truth, the more you will be persecuted. Are you standing up for the truth enough to be persecuted? Discuss different types of persecution - remember it is not only physical. Take a stand for the Lord this week.

2. "Do not fear." The Lord repeated this three times to His disciples. This message is as important for us to hear as it was for them. Discuss how people today live their lives constantly in fear. Unfortunately, this is true for many believers as well. But we do not have to fear! Review the reasons from this passage that believers should be encouraged, and not fear.

Challenge

1. God knows when a sparrow falls from a tree. He knows how many hairs are on your head. Find peace in the truth that He knows and controls every event in your life.

**The Lord Gives More Teaching and Encouragement to His Disciples
Matthew 10:34-42**

Background

Doctrinal Points

1. The demands of discipleship are hard.

2. The rewards of discipleship are sure.

Practical Application

1. Even you can give a cup of cold water.

Questions

1. How do you explain Matthew 10:34, “I did not come to bring peace but a sword.”?
2. What did the Lord mean by, “take up your cross and follow after Me”?
3. Do you have to be a martyr to “lose your life for the sake of Christ”?
4. How can you find your life by losing it?

Answers

1. The Lord did come to bring peace, in many ways. Here He is teaching not everyone accepts the peace He offers, therefore there is division and separation, symbolized by the sword.
2. He does not mean to carry your own problems, such as poor health or a disappointment. The cross was a means of execution. To take your cross means to lose your life for the sake of Christ.
3. No, most Christians are not called upon to be martyrs for their faith. But all Christians can “lose their life” by being such devoted followers of Christ that there is no room in your life for self-gratification. This shows your willingness to die for Christ.
4. As you give up living your life for yourself and your own interests, and instead serve the Lord and His interests, you will find real joy and satisfaction in life.

Discuss / Consider

1. Review the ways our Prince of Peace brings peace on earth. Christ brings peace between Jew and Gentile in the Church - Ephesians 2:13-17. Christ is the only means of peace from the guilt and penalty of sin. Because of His death on the cross we can have peace with God and the peace of God. Only through the Lord Jesus can we have peace in our relationships with one another. Only through Christ will true and lasting peace come to the earth, when He returns as the Prince of Peace. Praise God today for His Son, your peace.

2. There can be division within families when some believe in Christ. Perhaps you are divided from your family because of your faith. This is a very difficult situation. You can pray for the Lord's strength as you seek to testify to your family about your faith. But remember, allegiance to the Lord should take precedence over family ties.

Challenge

1. The rewards for discipleship are not just for this lifetime. You will be rewarded eternally for following after Christ. Think of this motivation for serving Christ this week. Where are you giving a cup of cold water?

The Lord Commends John the Baptist
Matthew 11:1-19

Background

Doctrinal Points

- 1. John the Baptist was the greatest Old Testament prophet.**

- 2. John the Baptist was the subject of Old Testament prophecy.**

Practical Application

- 1. When you are discouraged and have doubts, turn to the word.**

Questions

1. Where was John the Baptist at this time?
2. Why did John send his disciples to question Jesus?
3. Did Jesus scold John for having questions?
4. How was John the Baptist more than a prophet?
5. If John was so great, how could someone least in the kingdom of heaven be greater than he?

Answers

1. He had been imprisoned by King Herod.
2. John had announced the Lord as the Messiah. He expected Him to set up His earthly kingdom at this time, yet this had not happened.
3. No; He told John's disciples to testify to John about what they had seen. See Matthew 11:5. These were works that had been foretold of the Messiah.
4. He was a prophet and the forerunner of the Messiah, as prophesied in Old Testament scriptures. His mission made him the greatest Old Testament prophet.
5. They are not greater in character or mission, but greater in privilege. John announced the kingdom as being "at hand," but believers today have the greater privilege of being citizens of the kingdom. Believers today also have the privilege of being part of the Church and being indwelt by the Holy Spirit, privileges John did not have.

Discuss / Consider

1. Jesus did not scold John for having questions. Instead, He told him what he needed to hear to calm his fears. Do not be afraid to go to the Lord with your questions.

2. John the Baptist was the subject of Old Testament prophecy. Yet it is not easy to understand how all these prophecies fit together! Review the prophecies and their fulfillment. Malachi 3:1 predicted the coming of John the Baptist as the forerunner of the Lord. Malachi 4:5 is a prophecy predicting the coming of Elijah, before the day of the Lord. Was this prophecy fulfilled in John the Baptist who came in the spirit of Elijah? Yes and No. No, because John clearly said in John 1:21 that he was not Elijah. Yes, because of what the Lord said in Matthew 17:10-13. How is this apparent conflict resolved? The key lies in today's passage. Matthew 11:14 says "if you are willing to receive it..." The "if" here was dependent on the Jews' reception of the Messiah and His kingdom. If the Jews had accepted His offer, John the Baptist would have fulfilled the Elijah prophecy of Malachi 4. Since they rejected the king and His kingdom, Elijah is still coming. He will precede the second coming of Christ.

Challenge

1. We are all discouraged at times. When John the Baptist was discouraged the Lord turned him to the word. The scriptures cleared up John's doubts; the same can be true of us. As we turn to the Lord in time of discouragement and doubt, He will often point us to His word for assurance, comfort, and challenge. Turn to the Lord, then turn to His word.

Judgment is Pronounced on the Unbelieving Towns of Galilee
Matthew 11:20-30

Background

Doctrinal Points

1. Judgment was pronounced upon the unbelieving cities of Galilee.

2. Rest is promised to those who are weary and worrisome.

Practical Application

1. Praise the Lord in the midst of rejection and sorrow.

Questions

1. What is the theme and structure of the Gospel of Matthew thus far?

2. Why did the religious leaders of Israel reject the King?

3. Where were Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum located?

4. Are these cities standing today?

5. Why was judgment pronounced on these Galilean cities?

6. What two rests does the Lord promise in this passage?

Answers

1. Matthew is the gospel of the King and His Kingdom. Chapters 1-9 give the credentials of the King. In chapters 10-12 the King and His Kingdom are rejected.
2. They hated Him for denouncing their sin and hypocrisy. They stirred up the people to reject Him, because they wanted a political kingdom of their own making.
3. These were cities in the province of Galilee. Bethsaida and Capernaum were on the shores of the Sea of Galilee.
4. No, the ruins of these cities can be toured today. Another Galilean city from that time still stands, however. The ruins of these three cities are evidence of the judgment the Lord pronounced on them.
5. Because they rejected the King and His Kingdom, despite the miracles performed there as overwhelming evidence of Jesus' messiahship.
6. He promises the rest of salvation and the rest of soul.

Discuss / Consider

1. Today's passage indicates there will be degrees of punishment in Hell (Matthew 11:22). The greater the light and privilege rejected, the greater the penalty. Discuss the implications for our land, where Bibles and the good news of Jesus Christ are readily available.

2. Are you continually anxious and worried about your circumstances? Are you jealous of others, with your soul in turmoil and unrest? The Lord can give you rest of soul if you submit to the yoke of Christ. Are you willing to submit to God's sovereign ways in your life or do you chafe at this yoke and question God's ways? Discuss why some people would rather carry their own burdens than submit to the yoke of Christ. Remember, His yoke is easy and His burden is light.

Challenge

1. Even when Jesus was being rejected as Messiah, He could praise His Father. He knew all things were under God's sovereign control. Read Romans 8:28. Praise God that although all things might not be good at the moment, He will work all things for your good, if you love Him.

The Lord Jesus is Lord of the Sabbath
Matthew 12:1-13

Background

Doctrinal Points

- 1. Legalism always results in the loss of common sense.**

- 2. Legalism always results in the lack of compassion.**

Practical Application

- 1. Remember, people are more important than our pets.**

Questions

1. Who were the Pharisees?
2. On what day of the week did the Lord perform many of His miracles? Why did He choose this day?
3. Name three divisions of the Old Testament laws.
4. Which of these laws apply today?
5. What type of law was the Sabbath law?
6. Do the Ten Commandments apply to Christians today?

Answers

1. They were legalistic Jews who saw their own list of rules as more important than the Word of God.
2. He performed many of His miracles on the Sabbath, to show the Pharisees their wrong interpretation of the Sabbath laws.
3. There were moral, civil, and ceremonial laws.
4. God's moral laws are for all mankind; they never change. His civil and ceremonial laws were for the nation of Israel, and ended with the coming of Christ.
5. The law regarding the Sabbath was a civil and ceremonial law, not a moral law.
6. Nine of the Ten Commandments are moral laws. They are repeated in the New Testament and apply today. The Sabbath law was a ceremonial law and was not repeated in the New Testament; thus it is not binding for Christians today.

Discuss / Consider

1. Discuss why many Christians today fall into the trap of legalism. They let their adherence to rules take priority over their relationship with the Lord. Remember that legalism goes beyond the intent of God's commands. Our Lord said, "I desire mercy and not sacrifice."

2. Review the division of the Old Testament laws into moral, civil, and ceremonial laws. Give examples of each. Understanding these divisions will help your understanding of the Old Testament. You can see why some Old Testament laws apply today while others do not. There is much controversy about the Ten Commandments today. Since nine of these ten are moral laws, they are God's commands for all people in all ages.

Challenge

1. Our Lord is a God of compassion. In the Gospels we see again and again His tenderness and compassion toward those in need. Do you emulate this characteristic of our Lord? Be sure that you are not letting legalism override your compassion. Find a way to show compassion to someone this week.

The Pharisees Attribute the Lord's Miracles to the Power of Satan Matthew 12:14-37

Background

Doctrinal Points

- 1. The Lord fulfilled the Gracious Servant prophecy of Isaiah**
- 2. The Pharisees committed the unpardonable sin against the Holy Spirit.**

Practical Application

- 1. Remember, God has a tape recorder.**

Questions

1. Why did Jesus warn His followers in Matthew 12:16 not to make Him known?
2. What was the teaching of the Gracious Servant prophecy of Isaiah 42, quoted in today's passage?
3. How is the Trinity seen in this prophecy from Isaiah?
4. Review the arguments the Lord gave to refute the Pharisees' accusation of His power was from demons.
5. What is the "unpardonable sin"?

Answers

1. Because He did not come to be a popular revolutionary hero who would overthrow Rome. This is what the multitudes wanted Him to be, but He had a greater plan.
2. This prophecy foretold that the Messiah would not be an outspoken, political revolutionary (v. 19); rather He would deal gently and graciously with individuals.
3. In Matthew 12:18, the Father is speaking to His Servant, the Son, promising to send His Spirit.
4. 1) If the Lord's power was demonic, Satan would be defeating himself. 2) The Pharisees did not attribute the power of other Jewish exorcists to Satan. 3) He was announcing the kingdom of God, therefore binding the power of Satan. 4) The Pharisees admitted casting out demons was good, and good fruit must come from a good tree.
5. Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. In that day, the Pharisees blasphemed the Holy Spirit by attributes the Lord's works to Satan. Today, an unbeliever can blaspheme the Spirit by resisting His work in their life.

Discuss / Consider

1. Aren't you glad the Lord Jesus came to deal gently and graciously with individuals? Those who are brokenhearted, oppressed, trampled on, or dispossessed can find encouragement and strength in Him and in His justice. Have you ever felt like a smoldering wick, about to burn out? The Lord knows how to gently fan your small spark of faith back into flame. Discuss a time when the Lord has been gracious and gentle to you.

2. Review the teaching on the "unpardonable sin," which is often misunderstood. Can the "unpardonable sin" be committed today? Yes and no. No, because the Lord is no longer on this earth doing miracles to attest to His deity. Yes, in the sense that an unbeliever can resist the work of the Holy Spirit today. The Spirit's work in an unbeliever is to convict them of sin and convince them that Christ is the only way of salvation. If unbelievers continue to resist this work of the Holy Spirit, they will die in that sin - this sin is unpardonable, there is no second chance.

Challenge

1. "But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment." Matthew 12:36 Although, this verse was spoken to the unbelieving Pharisees, it certainly has application for the believer today. All Christians will stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ, where our lives will be reviewed, and we will be rewarded for what we have done with our lives. This will include what we have spoken with our lips. Will your words be worthy of reward?

The Lord Announces His Coming Death and Resurrection
Matthew 12:38-50

Background

Doctrinal Points

1. The Lord pronounced His death and resurrection.

2. The Lord predicted future idolatry in Israel.

3. The Lord proclaimed new family relationships.

Practical Application

1. Watch for spiritual vacuums.

Questions

1. How did the Scribes and Pharisees show their unbelief?
2. What is the significance of the men of Nineveh and the queen of Sheba condemning the nation of Israel?
3. What was the greater thing than Jonah or Solomon?
4. When did the Lord begin to speak of His death and resurrection?
5. How do you explain the apparent conflict regarding “three days and three nights”?
6. Explain the Lord’s parable in Matthew 12:43-45.

Answers

1. They asked the Lord to show them a sign, although for years they witnessed the miracles He had been performing.
2. The Ninevites and the queen of Sheba were all Gentiles who believed the word of God. They will stand in judgment of the nation of Israel for not believing God's word to her.
3. The King and His offer of the kingdom.
4. After He and His offer of the kingdom were rejected.
5. The phrase "three days and three nights" was a Hebrew idiom used to include any part of a day or night. This would include part of Good Friday, all of Saturday, and part of Easter Sunday. This fits with the Lord's prediction that He would rise the "third day".
6. The man is the nation of Israel. The unclean spirit represents idolatry. When Israel was taken to captivity in Babylon, she was purged of her problem with idolatry. Since that time there has been no idolatry in Judaism. But because the nation rejected her Messiah, in the future the nation will return to idolatry more than ever before. Israel will worship the Antichrist during the future Tribulation Period.

Discuss / Consider

1. In Matthew 12:49, the Lord indicated that becoming a part of the family of God is more important than blood relationships. If you are a believer in the Lord Jesus, He has called you His brother or sister! Think of the intimacy and value this implies. You are precious to God the Father, because you are His child.

2. God has created people with a spiritual vacuum in their hearts that can only be filled by the Lord Jesus. Discuss the substitutes people turn to instead of seeking the Lord to fulfill them. People who are not in a vital relationship with the Lord Jesus are unfulfilled and unsatisfied. This makes them vulnerable to the enemy. Think of your co-workers and friends. How can you guide them to the only One who will satisfy?

Challenge

1. The Scribes and Pharisees showed their unbelief by asking for a sign, when Jesus had already been performing miracles among them. The Lord has surely worked in your life. Do you recognize the work He has done and thank Him for it, or are you showing unbelief by always looking for something bigger and better?

The Parable of the Sower and its Interpretation **Matthew 13:1-23**

Background

Doctrinal Points

1. There are different responses to the word of God from the human heart.

2. There are different results from the word of God in the believer's heart.

Practical Application

1. Believing is seeing.

Questions

1. What turning point occurred in Matthew 12?

2. Are the predictions of the Lord's earthly kingdom being fulfilled in the Church today?

3. What form does the kingdom have right now?

4. What does the seed represent in this parable? What about the four types of soil?

Answers

1. Before Matthew 12, Jesus came to the Jews with a genuine offer of the kingdom. In Matthew 12, the Pharisees attributed Jesus' miracles to the power of Satan. After this, the offer of the kingdom was withdrawn and the predicted earthly kingdom was postponed until the King's second coming.
2. No. The kingdom has been postponed, and all the prophecies will be literally fulfilled in the future, when the King returns. The kingdom promises are not being fulfilled through the Church in some spiritual way.
3. The kingdom is presently in "mystery" form. It is a mystery in the sense that it was not revealed in the Old Testament. The present form of the kingdom was only revealed after the King and His kingdom were rejected by the Jews. All of the parables of Matthew 13 are about this present form of the kingdom.
4. The seed represents the word of God. The four different soils represent four different conditions of the human heart and their responses to the word:
 - The hard ground represents the hard-hearted person in whom there is no response to the word of God.
 - The rocky ground represents the heart that responds to the word with joy. But this person is shallow; the word of God never takes root in them. When trouble or persecution arises this type of hearer fades away. Their absence is an indication that they never had true faith.
 - The thorny ground represents the human heart that is so taken up with the ways of this world that the word of God never has a chance to take root in their soul. The word is choked away by other interests before there is true faith.
 - The good soil represents the person whose heart is prepared by the Holy Spirit to receive the word in true faith. The word of God takes root and brings forth fruit in that person's life.

Discuss / Consider

1. Recall when the word of God was sown in your heart. How did you respond? Realize that in some people the seed must be sown many times before it takes root. Refer to I Corinthians 3:6-7. When we share the good news of salvation with someone we are "planting a seed". Later another believer may come along and water it. Ultimately it is God who causes the seed to grow. Think of the people who planted the seeds of salvation in your life. Be encouraged as you continue to sow seeds in others.
2. Why do some Christians produce less spiritual fruit than other Christians? The same thorns that crowd out and choke the seed in the unbeliever's life also hinder and limit the fruit in the believers' life. Is your faith being choked out by the cares and desires of this world, the love of possessions, and the love of money? Ask God to weed these thorns out of your life so you can bear spiritual fruit for Him.

Challenge

1. Praise the Lord that He has given you "spiritual eyes" with which to see His truth. If you have believed on the Lord Jesus as your Savior, the Holy Spirit lives within you and helps you understand spiritual truths.

The Wheat and the Tares, the Mustard Seed, and the Leaven
Matthew 13:24-43

Background

Doctrinal Points

1. The wheat and the tares may appear the same now.

2. The wheat and the tares will be separated later.

Practical Application

1. Don't misuse the parable of the wheat and the tares for church discipline.

Questions

1. What is the purpose of the seven parables in Matthew 13?
2. Why is the kingdom in its present form?
3. Is the kingdom of heaven the same as the Church?
4. Who do the birds of the air represent in the parable of the mustard seed?
5. When will the wheat and the tares be separated?
6. Does the parable of the wheat and the tares excuse church leaders from exercising church discipline?

Answers

1. They are given to reveal the form of the kingdom at the present time, between the two advents of Christ.
2. Since the Jews rejected the King and His offer of the kingdom, during this present time Israel has been set aside while the Gospel goes out to the Gentile world.
3. No, the sphere of the kingdom is larger than true believers in the Church. The sphere of the kingdom includes false professors as well. The present form of the kingdom could be labeled “Christendom,” which includes the true and the false.
4. The birds represent the agents of Satan, just as they did in the parable of the sower. The cults of the Jehovah’s Witnesses and Mormons nest in the branches of Christendom. Although these cults deny the deity of Christ, they sneak into the category of Christianity
5. At the harvest time, when the Lord returns at the end of the age.
6. No, this parable is teaching about the kingdom of heaven, not giving instructions to the Church. Elsewhere in the New Testament church leaders are commanded to carry out discipline in their church.

Discuss / Consider

1. Discuss the difference between the true Church and “Christendom.” The present form of the kingdom of heaven contains both true and false believers. Remember that the wheat and the tares grow together now, and may even look the same, but when the Lord returns their faith will be revealed. Not everyone involved in Christian activities or Christian ministries is a believer (see Matthew 7:21-23). We must use our discernment when choosing which teachers to study and follow. Apply this to yourself. Are you disguising yourself as wheat, when in reality you are a tare? Believe on the Lord as your Savior, so that you will belong to Him.

2. Remember the different destinies of the wheat and the tares. The tares will be removed and taken away for judgment. Their destiny is hell, where there will be eternal weeping and gnashing of teeth. The wheat, the true believer, will be rewarded and will shine forth in the glorious kingdom of the Lord. What is your destiny going to be?

Challenge

1. Jesus taught the multitude in parables, but He was always willing to explain their meaning to the disciples if they would ask. You can ask Him now for help understanding His Word. Remember, “He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.” Hebrews 11:6.

The Parable of the Treasure, the Pearl, and the Good and Bad Fish
Matthew 13:44-50

Background

Doctrinal Points

1. There is a difference between the treasure and the pearl.

2. There is a difference between the Rapture and the Return.

Practical Application

1. Don't limit the luster of the pearl.

Questions

1. Who was the original audience of the parables in Matthew 13?

2. What is the "kingdom of heaven" referred to in these parables?

3. Who is the man who finds the treasure and the merchant who finds the pearl?

4. What do the treasure and the pearl represent in these parables?

5. The good fish (true believers) are separated from the bad fish (false professors) at "the end of the age."
When is this "end of the age"?

Answers

1. The first four parables were given to the multitude (see vv. 1-3). The three remaining parables were taught to the disciples (v. 36).
2. These parables speak of the kingdom in its present form. The kingdom is not synonymous with the Church; it includes the Church. The kingdom of heaven is the realm of Christendom, including both true and false believers.
3. These both represent the Lord Himself. He gave all He had to purchase the treasure and the pearl.
4. The treasure represents saved Israel; the pearl represents the true Church.
5. The end of the age is when the Lord returns to establish His kingdom on earth, following the seven-year tribulation. This is not the same time as the Rapture, which could occur at any time.

Discuss / Consider

1. Discuss why we do not interpret the man who found the treasure and the merchant who found the pearl as sinners finding Christ. This would imply that you can “sell all you have” and purchase salvation, which is not the case! Discuss why salvation is a free gift that cannot be bought. Refer to such verses as Ephesians 2:8-9 and Titus 3:5.

2. Discuss the differences between the Rapture and the Return. The Rapture is imminent, meaning it could occur at any time. The Lord’s Return must follow the seven-year tribulation on earth. At the Rapture, believers are taken away to heaven while unbelievers are left on earth. At the Return, unrighteous people will be taken away for judgment, while the righteous are left to enter into the millennial kingdom.

Challenge

1. The Church, represented in this parable by a pearl, is beautiful because of the layers with which it is made up. Together believers add to the beauty and luster of the Church. Are you living in sin and taking away from the beauty of this pearl? Clean up your life so you can reflect the beauty God intends for you!

The Unbelief of the People, Despite the Lord's Wisdom and Miracles
Matthew 13:51-58

Background

Doctrinal Points

1. A scribe brings out the new and the old from his treasure.

2. A prophet is not without honor except at home.

Practical Application

1. Is Jesus more than a carpenter to you?

Questions

1. Why did Jesus speak to the multitudes in parables?

2. What new truth was being revealed for the first time in the parables of the kingdom?

3. Who is the scribe of Matthew 13:52?

4. Where did Jesus travel to in Matthew 13:54?

5. The people of Nazareth could not see Jesus as more than the son of Joseph, the carpenter.
How do people today have a similar response?

Answers

1. So that unwilling and unrepentant hearers would not understand. The disciples and other willing listeners would hear and understand. (Matthew 13:13,16)
2. The truth about the present form of the kingdom, when the gospel would go out to the Gentiles, was being taught for the first time.
3. He is not one of the unbelieving Jewish leaders; he is a scribe who has become a disciple of the kingdom.
4. He went to His hometown of Nazareth, in the region of Galilee.
5. People today acknowledge that Jesus was a historical figure, who had moral teachings and even performed miracles. But they are not willing to admit more than this. They will not accept the truth that Jesus is the Son of God.

Discuss / Consider

1. When Jesus asked His disciples if they understood the teaching of His parables they responded, "Yes, Lord." Surely they did not completely understand the new truths of the kingdom. Yet the disciples knew more than they did before. They also knew more than the Scribes and Pharisees who were so proud of their knowledge. What about you? Are you progressing in your knowledge of the things of the Lord? You will not understand everything all at once. Are you thankful for the things the Lord has enabled you to understand?

2. Read Matthew 17:52. Like a householder we should bring out of the treasure of scripture things both old and new. The Old Testament is full of treasure for the believer today. Yet often in our churches and preaching we focus only on the New Testament.

3. Discuss some valuable truths we learn from the Old Testament scriptures. Be a good scribe and commit yourself to exploring the treasure of both the Old and New Testaments.

Challenge

1. Don't take for granted the gifted fellow believers in your assembly. Appreciate the ministry they do and thank them for it this week!

The Martyrdom of John the Baptist
Matthew 14:1-12

Background

Doctrinal Points

- 1. Speaking out against sin is a responsibility of the believer.**

- 2. Speaking out against sin is costly for the believer.**

Practical Application

- 1. Go to the Lord when you're bereaved.**

Questions

1. Who was Herod the tetrarch?
2. When Jesus stood on trial before Herod, why would He not speak to him? (see Luke 23:9)
3. Who was Herodias?
4. Why did John the Baptist speak out against Herod?
5. What did speaking out against sin cost John the Baptist?
6. What did John the Baptist's disciples do after he was beheaded?

Answers

1. The Herod of Matthew 14 was Herod Antipas. He was a son of Herod the Great who put to death the babies in Bethlehem following Jesus' birth. He was called Herod the tetrarch because he ruled over one-fourth of Palestine.
2. Herod silenced the voice of God when he beheaded John. Jesus did not give him another chance to hear God's voice.
3. Herodias was the daughter of another son of Herod the Great. Philip, another of Herod the Great's sons married his niece, and then his brother, Herod Antipas, seduced her away from him.
4. Because of his incestuous relationship with his niece, Herodias. John had great boldness to speak out against such a powerful man.
5. He was imprisoned for speaking out against Herod, and ultimately it cost him his life.
6. They buried his body, then went to the Lord Jesus.

Discuss / Consider

1. Believers are to speak out against sin. Discuss the example of John the Baptist. In Matthew 5:13, Jesus tells His disciples they are "the salt of the earth." As salt is a preservative in food and prevents decay, so believers are to prevent the spread of moral decay around them. Are you a grain of salt in your workplace or neighborhood? Are you willing to speak out against the sexual sins around you? This is not a popular or politically-correct position, but it is right. When John the Baptist was in prison the Lord commended him for his outspoken stand and ministry. Will you be commended by the Lord for standing up for truth and speaking out against sin?

2. Speaking out against sin in our culture probably will not cost you your life, but it may cost you something. Discuss situations where your faith has cost you. Commendation from the Lord is worth the cost!

Challenge

1. Are you saddened by the death of a loved one? Do not allow bitterness to grow inside you. Go to the Lord when you are bereaved. He will comfort, strengthen, and encourage you.

The Miracle of the Feeding of the Five Thousand
Matthew 14:13-21

Background

Doctrinal Points

- 1. Disciples have a responsibility to feed the multitudes for the Lord.**

- 2. Disciples have a responsibility to dedicate their abilities to the Lord.**

Practical Application

- 1. Let God guide you with scripture.**

Questions

1. What two miracles of Christ are recorded in all four gospels?
2. How do skeptics try to explain away this miracle?
3. What spiritual lesson was the Lord teaching through this miracle?
4. How can we give people spiritual food?
5. How did the disciples use their abilities in this situation?

Answers

1. The Feeding of the Five Thousand and the Resurrection.
2. They say everyone shared their lunches with one another because of a little boy's example.
3. If you dedicate what little you have to the Lord He can multiply it for the blessing of many. More specifically, if you dedicate what little spiritual food you have to the Lord He can multiply it to feed the spiritual hunger of many.
4. By teaching them the Word of God.
5. They organized the people to sit down in groups of fifty; they distributed the food; then they collected the leftovers.

Discuss / Consider

1. This parable teaches the spiritual lesson, "Disciples have a responsibility to feed the multitudes for the Lord." The spiritual food is Christ Himself. Refer to a parallel account of this miracle in John 6, which is followed by the Lord's Bread of Life discourse. He is the true Bread; He is the food that meets and satisfies spiritual hunger. Do you know people who are hungering? The Lord is the only one who can satisfy that spiritual hunger. Share the food that you have with others! Discuss the excuses people use for not sharing what they have. Remember, the Lord can multiply even your smallest efforts.

2. The disciples used their abilities for the Lord in this passage. Their abilities varied from organizing and distributing to clean-up ability! We all have been given abilities by the Lord. Discuss the large and small abilities the Lord has given you. How can you use your abilities to serve Him? Are you?

Challenge

1. When our Lord saw the multitudes that had followed Him around the sea He was not irritated or impatient with them. The Bible says He had compassion on them. Aren't you glad we have a compassionate Lord, who looks upon our weaknesses with kindness? Thank Him for this today.

The Miracle of Our Lord Walking on the Sea of Galilee
Matthew 14:22-36

Background

Doctrinal Points

- 1. The Lord intercedes for us at the right hand of God.**

- 2. The Lord calls us to walk by faith in the storms of life.**

Practical Application

- 1. Just say the three words, “Lord save me!”**

Questions

1. What is the theme of the Gospel of Matthew?
2. How do liberal theologians try to explain away this miracle?
3. How is the Lord’s intercession for us seen in this passage?
4. What is the spiritual picture taught by Peter walking on water?
5. When did Peter begin to sink?

Answers

1. The King and His kingdom.
2. They say the Lord was walking on a sandbar, and only appeared to be walking on water. This event was exaggerated by early Christians until it became a miracle.
3. In Matthew 14:23, Jesus went by Himself to pray. This is a spiritual picture of our Lord's present ministry. We are like the disciples on the stormy sea, while the Lord is on the mountain (in heaven) praying for us.
4. The Lord not only comes to us during the storms of life; He wants us to go to Him, and walk by faith.
5. When he looked at the wind and the waves.

Discuss / Consider

1. Read Romans 8:34 and Hebrews 7:25. The biblical truth that the Lord intercedes for us is modeled in this account from the Lord's life. The Lord is aware of our struggles. He can come to us in the midst of our storms, with His comforting presence to bring peace and calm to our troubled waters. Recall a time when the Lord has comforted you in the midst of a storm of life. Praise Him that He intercedes for us with the Father.

2. Are you facing any storms in your life right now? These storms might include sickness, financial struggles, a broken relationship, or death of a loved one. No matter how tempestuous our storm may seem, the Lord calls us to walk by faith in the storms of life. Discuss how you can keep your eyes on the Lord, not on the storm. Remember that Peter began to sink only when he took his eyes off the Lord and began to look at the waves around him. Refer to Hebrews 12:1-2.

Challenge

1. Is the Lord calling you to take a step of faith out of the boat into some new area of ministry? If you stay in the safety of the boat you may miss out on seeing the Lord's miraculous hand at work. Take that step of faith and keep your eyes on the Lord - He will help you walk!

The Lord Condemned the Pharisees for Their Moral Defilement **Matthew 15:1-20**

Background

Doctrinal Points

- 1. The Lord condemned the Pharisees for their evil practice of Corban.**

- 2. The Lord condemned the Pharisees for the evil that proceeded out of their hearts.**

Practical Application

- 1. Sometimes we should offend certain people.**

Questions

1. Did the Law require the Jews to go through ritualistic washings before they ate a meal?
2. What is the difference between the Jewish Torah and Talmud?
3. What is Corban?
4. In Matthew 15:11, is the Lord proposing we should eat without washing our hands?
5. Give examples of things which proceed out of the mouth, come from the heart, and defile a man

Answers

1. No, over the years the Jews had added to the Law until their requirements of elaborate ritualistic washing before meals became part of the “tradition of the elders.”
2. The Torah is the Law, scripture given by God. The Talmud is not part of the Bible; it is the Jewish ceremonial laws that were added by tradition.
3. Corban means “given to God.” The Pharisees would declare all their material possessions “Corban” (see Mark 7:11-12). In of itself, Corban was not wrong, but the self-righteous Pharisees used this as an excuse not to care for their aging parents.
4. No, He has turned the discussion from ritual defilement to moral defilement. See Matthew 15:17-18.
5. evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies, gossip, slander, lying...

Discuss / Consider

1. The Scribes and Pharisees were using the biblical concept of Corban as an excuse to avoid their God-given responsibility to “Honor your Father and Mother,” and care for them as they age. As Christians it is possible for us to act as if we are obeying God’s law, when in reality we are using this as an excuse to disobey Him. Discuss some examples of this.

2. It is a common pitfall for Christians to appear as if they are obeying the Lord, when they have a thought life that is morally corrupt. This lack of integrity will develop modern-day Pharisees. They will be selfish, proud, self-righteous, unforgiving, fault-finding, and hypocritical - when actually they are blind. Check yourself to see if you are walking with integrity. Does your life appear righteous to others, while inwardly your thought life is corrupt? Discuss ways to guard against living inconsistently.

Challenge

1. The Pharisees were offended by what Jesus said in Matthew 15. We make an effort not to offend people when we are sharing the Gospel with them. But sometimes we should offend certain people. Consider people who teach false doctrine or promote moral defilement; we should not avoid confronting these people lest we offend them! Sometimes we should offend certain people.

The Healing of a Demon-Possessed Girl, and Feeding the Four Thousand Matthew 15:21-39

Background

Doctrinal Points

- 1. The Lord rewards the persistent and humble faith of His followers.**

- 2. The Lord meets the spiritual and physical needs of His followers.**

Practical Application

- 1. Let's not be hard-hearted disciples.**

Questions

1. What is significant about the location of these miracles?

2. Give a brief overview of the Gospel of Matthew thus far.

3. What was the disciples' response to the Gentile woman's plea for help?

4. Why did the Lord refer to this woman as a dog in Matthew 15:26?

5. How did the Lord reward this woman's persistent and humble faith?

6. Is this story of the feeding of the four thousand an inconsistency in the Bible? Different from feeding 5,000?

Answers

1. These miracles occurred during the only recorded time during our Lord's public ministry that He was outside of Jewish territory.
2.
 - The gospel of the kingdom was preached and presented to Israel.
 - The kingdom of heaven was at hand, because Israel's Messiah had arrived.
 - Israel rejected her King and His offer of the Kingdom.
 - The gospel of God's grace would go out to the Gentile world.
3. The disciples were annoyed by this woman. They were uncompassionate and hard-hearted.
4. The Jews referred to Gentiles as dogs. The Lord wanted this woman to recognize He was the Jewish Messiah, and she had to take a humble position.
5. He commended her faith and healed her daughter.
6. No, these are two separate events. The Lord's feeding of the five thousand was recorded in Matthew 14. The feeding of the four thousand occurred later and is recorded here. Both of these events are also recorded in the Gospel of Mark.

Discuss / Consider

1. Have you taken a humble place before our Lord? To be saved we must humble ourselves before the Lord, recognizing that we deserve nothing from Him, yet accepting His gracious gift of salvation. Recall when you were saved; what did it take to humble you? Now, once you are a believer, God wants you to continue to follow Him humbly. Do you have a need in your life? Humbly go before the Lord and ask Him to fulfill this need. The Lord rewards the persistent and humble faith of His followers.
2. The Lord knows how to meet both your spiritual and physical needs. He does not always choose to heal His followers physically. But if He does not heal your physical needs, He will give you the spiritual strength to handle them. Can you give an example of this from your life? Refer to II Corinthians 12:8-9.

Challenge

1. Do you have compassion for people who are crying out for help and mercy? It is easy to have the response of the disciples, to be annoyed by people in need and respond with a hard-heart. Pray that the Lord will give you His view of these people, so you can look upon them with love and compassion.

The Pharisees and Sadducees Ask the Lord For a "Sign"
Matthew 16:1-12

Background

Doctrinal Points

- 1. People of great faith do not need signs.**

- 2. People of little faith do not have spiritual discernment.**

Practical Application

- 1. How many more chances will you get?**

Questions

1. Who were the Pharisees and Sadducees?
2. Did these two groups normally get along?
3. What were the Pharisees and Sadducees seeking when they asked the Lord for a sign from heaven?
4. What was "the sign of the prophet Jonah" (Matthew 16:4)?
5. What "signs of the times" was our Lord referring to in Matthew 16:3?
6. Why did the Lord chastise His disciples for having little faith (Matthew 16:8)?

Answers

1. The Pharisees were the conservative legalistic Jews of Jesus' day. The Sadducees were the theological liberals of the day.
2. No, but they found common ground in opposing the Lord.
3. They were either looking for a supernatural miracle in the sky, or, since they did not believe His previous miracles were of God, they now wanted a true sign of proof from heaven.
4. This referred to the Lord's death, burial, and resurrection. See Matthew 12:38-40.
5. The signs of the time included the miracles the Lord was performing before them, as prophesied in the Old Testament Scripture. The signs also included the ministry of John the Baptist, the prophesied forerunner of the Messiah.
6. Because they had no discernment about the Lord's message.

Discuss / Consider

1. The Pharisees should have recognized the signs of the times and realized the Messiah had come. But they were blind to these signs. There are biblical signs of the times today showing the coming of the Lord is near. Discuss the signs of the times. Even unbelievers should recognize these signs, yet they often explain them away.

2. The disciples had saving faith, but they were rebuked for having little faith as believers. All believers have saving faith, but many Christians don't show much faith in their walk of faith. It is crucial for you to grow and mature in your faith by spending time in God's Word. How have you seen this to be true?

Challenge

1. Are you waiting for a sign before you believe? God has already given you signs –His Son rose from the dead! You don't know how many more chances you will get. Believe today!

Peter's Confession of Faith; the Lord Announces that He Will Build His Church
Matthew 16:13-18

Background

Doctrinal Points

1. The Church was not built on Peter.

2. The Church began at Pentecost.

Practical Application

1. Don't fear the gates of Hades.

Questions

1. Who did people think that Jesus was?
2. What did people's opinions of the Lord tell about His character?
3. What is the rock on which the Church is built?
4. Was Peter's name the same as the "rock" in verse 18?
5. What is significant about Christ's statement, "I will build My church"?
6. Why did God wait until this time to reveal His plan for the Church?
7. Why is the Church called a "mystery" in the New Testament?

Answers

1. Some thought He was John the Baptist, some Elijah, others thought Jeremiah or one of the other prophets.
2. Saying that Jesus was any of these men spoke highly of His character. All of these men were respected among the Jews. But we know these suggestions fell sadly short of His true identity.
3. The rock is Christ, and the truth about Him.
4. No, Peter's name in Greek was Petros, meaning a stone. The Greek word for rock is petra, a large stone or cliff (see Matthew 7:24-25 and 1 Corinthians 10:4). As a stone, Peter is part of the Church, which is built upon Christ, the bedrock.
5. This is the first mention of the Church in the Bible. It is not even predicted in Old Testament prophecies.
6. The Church was not revealed until the nation of Israel rejected the Messiah and His offer of the kingdom.
7. In the Bible, a mystery is a truth concealed in the Old Testament and revealed in the New Testament (see Ephesians 3:9-10).

Discuss / Consider

1. In Jesus' day many people thought highly of Him, comparing Him to several respected prophets. But their estimation of Him was sadly short of His true identity, as Israel's Messiah. The same is true today. Many people are willing to admit that Jesus was a good man and a great prophet, but they are not willing to accept His claims to be the Son of God. They are not willing to trust Him as their only hope of salvation. What is your opinion of Jesus? Are you recognizing Him as the Savior He is, or are you thinking of Him only as a good man?

2. Discuss the logical argument that if Jesus was not more than a good man, He was not even a good man. Refer to His claims to deity in John 8:58 and 10:30.

Challenge

1. As part of the Church we are called "living stones." See 1 Peter 2:5. Thank the Lord that you are being built upon the foundation, Christ. We can stand secure because we are built on a firm foundation!

Peter is Rebuked for being a Stumbling Block
Matthew 16:19-28

Background

Doctrinal Points

1. The Lord revealed His death and resurrection to the disciples.

2. The Lord offered the way of the cross to His disciples.

Practical Application

1. Watch out for worldly advice.

Questions

1. When Christ gave Peter the “keys of the kingdom of heaven” was He giving him the power to save people?
2. Review the concept of the kingdom of heaven in Matthew.
3. Keys are used to open something. How did Peter use his keys to open the kingdom of heaven?
4. Why did the Lord command His disciples to tell no one that He was the Christ (Matthew 16:20)?
5. How does the Lord’s message begin to shift in this chapter?
6. Explain Matthew 16:28.

Answers

1. No, only God has the power to forgive sins. He has not delegated this authority to any human priesthood.
2. The kingdom of heaven was the literal, political, earthly kingdom offered to the Jews by their Messiah. John the Baptist and the Lord proclaimed this kingdom to be at hand. But when the Jews rejected the King and His offer of the kingdom they were set aside. Now God's plan of salvation was extended to include the Gentiles as the gospel of grace went out to all people.
3. After the Jews rejected the kingdom, Peter had the privilege of announcing the open door on the day of Pentecost, when the Church began. He again had the privilege of opening the kingdom of heaven to the Gentiles in Acts 10 when he brought the gospel to Cornelius, a Gentile.
4. Because He desired followers with true faith, not a popular vote to be made king.
5. Previously He had been proclaiming the kingdom of heaven. Now that the kingdom had been rejected, He began speaking of His coming suffering, death, and resurrection.
6. This verse belongs with chapter 17. At the Mount of Transfiguration, the disciples were given a glimpse of the Lord's coming kingdom.

Discuss / Consider

1. In hindsight the disciples seem so foolish! Here the Lord tells them explicitly about His coming death and resurrection, yet when He died, they still did not understand. Put yourself in their situation; would you have understood the Lord's prediction? The Lord is teaching us things today, yet often we are just as blind as the disciples.

2. The way of the cross means death. Death to self. Refer to Galatians 2:20, "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me." Discuss the wonderful irony of the way of the cross. If you die to living for yourself and begin living for Christ, you find how to truly live. In the way of the cross there is true joy, abundant life, and eternal reward. On the other hand, living your life according to the way of the world will not only leave you unsatisfied now, you will lose your opportunity to use your life for the Lord.

Challenge

1. Peter's thinking was the way of the world, not the way of the cross. This way of thinking was offensive to the Lord. What about your mindset? Is your thinking in line with Christ's priorities, or is it being dictated by the world? Remember Matthew 16:26, "For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul?"

The Transfiguration **Matthew 17:1-13**

Background

Doctrinal Points

- 1. The Transfiguration was a preview of the coming kingdom.**

- 2. Elijah will restore all things before the coming kingdom.**

Practical Application

- 1. Let your zeal be guarded and guided by good theology.**

Questions

1. How was the prediction of Matthew 16:28 fulfilled here?
2. What was the cloud that overshadowed them?
3. What is the next event on God's calendar of end-time events?
4. Why did the Lord command His disciples not to tell anyone about what they had seen?
5. Why was Peter wrong in wanting to make three tabernacles for Elijah, Moses, and Christ?

Answers

1. In today's passage Jesus took His inner circle of disciples up on a mountain where they saw a preview of the coming kingdom in our Lord's resurrection glory when He was transfigured before them.
2. This was the glory cloud, known in the Old Testament as the "Shekinah glory". It was evidence of God's presence.
3. The Rapture of the Church. See I Corinthians 15 and I Thessalonians 4.
4. The Lord did not want the Jewish people to make Him a political King; He wanted true followers who would accept Him as Savior.
5. He was lowering Christ to the level of a mere man, making Him equal with two other good men.

Discuss / Consider

1. Review the calendar of end-time events. The Rapture will be immediately followed by the seven-year Tribulation described in Revelation 4-19. Then the Lord will return with His saints (us!) to establish His one-thousand year reign on this earth (see Revelation 20). We will reign with Christ in this glorious kingdom. Review how the Transfiguration is a preview of this coming kingdom.

2. Read Malachi 4:5-6. The fulfillment of this prophecy is a difficult matter. Discuss how it relates to Matthew 17:10-13. The Elijah prophecy is a dependent-fulfillment type of prophecy. If the people of Israel had received the Lord Jesus as their Messiah, then John the Baptist would have fulfilled the Elijah prophecy of Malachi 4. John the Baptist had come in the spirit and power of Elijah (Luke 1:16-17). Refer also to Matthew 11:13-14, noticing the "if" clause. But Israel rejected her King and His offer of the kingdom. Therefore the fulfillment of the Elijah prophecy is postponed and will be fulfilled before the Second Coming of Christ. (Many theologians think this prophecy will be fulfilled in the two witness of Revelation 11.)

Challenge

1. Recall a time when you acted out of religious zeal and realized later that your actions were not based on good theology. Be encouraged - studying God's Word with Bible studies such as this will establish your theology. Good theology mixed with appropriate zeal will bear fruit pleasing to God.

The Lord Heals a Demon-Possessed Boy
Matthew 17:14-21

Background

Doctrinal Points

1. There are peaks and valleys in the Christian experience.

2. There are cases of demon possession in the Christian experience.

Practical Application

1. Bring children to the Lord.

Questions

1. Whom is the Lord speaking to in Matthew 17:17?
2. What mountains can believers move if they have faith as a mustard seed?
3. What does the promise in Matthew 17:20 mean?
4. What valley followed Peter, James, and John's mountaintop experience?
5. How does prayer and fasting relate to casting out demons?

Answers

1. To the man, the disciples, and rest of the crowd. They were a cross-section of a generation that should have had more faith, but they doubted and questioned God's ability.
2. Any mountain that represents a problem or difficulty in the life of faith of the believer.
3. If you have even a little faith in the Lord's ability you can see large problems and difficulties in your Christian life removed in the will of the Lord.
4. They came down from the Mount of Transfiguration, where they had seen a preview of the Lord's kingdom, down to a mundane problem with a demon-possessed boy. They were even scolded for their lack of faith.
5. Prayer shows our reliance on God as we call to Him for help. Fasting involves keeping self in check. Both are needed when confronting demon possession.

Discuss / Consider

1. Recall a mountaintop experience in your walk with the Lord. Now recall a valley in your spiritual life. Both are part of the Christian experience. Your faith can be strengthened on the mountaintop or in the valley.

2. "Bring children to the Lord." If you are a parent, how are you raising your children to know the Lord? If you do not have children of your own, you can still be involved in bringing children to the Lord. Discuss the children's ministry opportunities available in your local church. How do people benefit from coming to the Lord at a young age?

Challenge

1. Are you facing any mountains right now in your life of faith as a believer? Pray in faith and the Lord will show you how to deal with the mountain problem. Note that He will not necessarily remove the problem, but He will show you how to handle it. His grace and guidance will sustain you, and your faith can even be strengthened.

The Lord Again Announces His Coming Death and Resurrection
Matthew 17:22-27

Background

Doctrinal Points

- 1. It is right for a believer to pay taxes.**

- 2. It is wrong for a believer to cause offense.**

Practical Application

- 1. Remember, He owns the fish in a thousand seas.**

Questions

1. Why were the disciples grieved when the Lord again predicted His death and resurrection?
2. Why might this account of the Lord paying the temple tax be recorded only in Matthew's gospel?
3. What is the temple tax discussed here?
4. According to the Lord's argument, why should He and the disciples have been exempt from the tax?
5. Why did the Lord go on to pay the tax for Himself and Peter?

Answers

1. Because they were still expecting Him to set up His earthly kingdom at that time. They did not understand the importance and necessity of the Lord's death.
2. Matthew was a tax collector before the Lord called him to be a disciple. He would have had thorough knowledge of the Jewish and Roman taxes.
3. It was the annual tax required to support the temple, the House of the Lord. This tax was established in Exodus 30:13-16.
4. Because the tax was for the House of the Lord and He was the Lord. His disciples were sons of the kingdom, and should also have been exempt.
5. So that He would not offend.

Discuss / Consider

1. It is right for a believer to pay taxes. Refer to Luke 20:22-25. The Roman government was no better than our government today, yet the Lord approved of paying both civil and temple taxes. Discuss how Romans 13:1 relates to this issue.

2. It is wrong for a believer to cause offense. Refer to I Corinthians 10:32. To cause offense is to do what is improper or unfitting and thus cause unnecessary resentment, friction, or discomfort. Something offensive is not necessarily immoral or illegal, but it has adverse effects on others. Consider your testimony as a believer and discuss when you should be cautious of causing offense.

Challenge

1. Look how the Lord's omniscience and omnipotence is shown in Matthew 17:27. Be comforted knowing He can also use His omniscience and omnipotence to help you.

Stumbling a Little One in the Faith is a Serious Sin
Matthew 18:1-14

Background

Doctrinal Points

1. Stumbling little ones is a serious sin.

2. Despising little ones is a serious sin.

Practical Application

1. Try working with children.

Questions

1. What do we learn about the context of this story from the parallel passages in Mark 9 and Luke 9?
2. How did the Lord answer their question?
3. What is the key to greatness in God's kingdom?
4. Who are the little ones in this passage?
5. What does it mean to stumble a little one?
6. What did the Lord mean in Matthew 18:8-9?

Answers

1. The disciples were arguing about who was the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.
2. He showed them that they were asking the wrong question. They should have asked how they could humbly serve Him. Then He taught them using a little child as an illustration.
3. Humility
4. The little ones include both children and believers who are young in their faith.
5. To trip them up in their spiritual walk and growth
6. If you realize you are stumbling a little one, you must take desperate measures to stop.

Discuss / Consider

1. Discuss how the world measures greatness. The Lord measures greatness by humility and service. Read Mark 9:35. Discuss how to align your standard for greatness with God's. How great are you in the Lord's kingdom?

2. We should not despise fellow believers. Each believer, no matter how young in the faith, is important to God. Even when one of them goes astray, the Lord graciously goes after him, and rejoices at his return. Do you have a tendency to judge young believers? How can you change your attitude toward them to be more in line with God's?

Challenge

1. Is there an active children's ministry at your local church? If so, get involved. If not, pray about starting one! Working with young believers is extremely important and rewarding!

The Procedure to Follow if a Fellow Believer Sins Against You
Matthew 18:15-20

Background

Doctrinal Points

1. The Lord gives Christians the authority to confront believers who sin.

2. The Lord gives the church the authority to discipline believers who sin.

Practical Application

1. Go to church, not to court.

Questions

1. What is significant about Matthew 18:17?

2. What is the difference between the universal Church and the local church?

3. Is the universal Church or the local church in view in Matthew 16:18? In Matthew 18:17?

4. What is the proper procedure to follow when a fellow believer sins against you?

5. What does it mean to view someone as “a heathen and a tax collector” (Matthew 18:17)?

6. What is the highest form of discipline in the church?

7. What issue is involved in Matthew 18:18-20?

Answers

1. It is the second mention of the Church in the Bible. The first mention was in Matthew 16:18.
2. The universal Church is composed of all believers in the Lord Jesus. A local church is any group of Christians who meet together in the name of Christ for worship, teaching, prayer, accountability, and discipline.
3. The universal Church is in view in Matthew 16:18. Matthew 18:17 applies to local churches.
4.
 - a. Go to the believer who has wronged you and talk to him in private.
 - b. Take one or two other believers with you and talk to him.
 - c. Take the matter to the leadership of the local church.
5. This means to put them out of the fellowship of the church. Heathens and tax collectors were outside the fellowship of the church.
6. Excommunication, putting a believer out of fellowship
7. Church discipline

Discuss / Consider

1. If a fellow believer has sinned against you, you should take the initiative to go to them. Discuss the potential problems this would avoid.

2. The goal of church discipline is always restoration. Refer to I Corinthians 5. Excommunication can have the good effect of moving a sinning believer to repentance. We should never rejoice when church discipline is carried out. Church discipline is not punitive, it is restorative.

Challenge

1. Are you involved in a conflict with a fellow believer? Apply the principles in Matthew 18 and I Corinthians 6. Go to your church where wise fellow believers can help mediate between you. If your conflict is resolved in this matter you will have gained a brother and spared your testimony before unbelievers.

A Parable on Forgiving One Another
Matthew 18:21-35

Background

Doctrinal Points

- 1. A forgiving spirit is surely expected by our heavenly Father.**

- 2. An unforgiving spirit is severely judged by our heavenly Father.**

Practical Application

- 1. Make sure of your salvation.**

Questions

1. How many times did the Jewish Rabbis say you should forgive someone who sinned against you?
2. How does this passage about forgiveness fit into the context of Matthew 18?
3. Who do the king and servant represent in this parable?
4. What did the servant do after he had been forgiven by the king?
5. What is the point of this parable?

Answers

1. Three times. Peter thought he was being very generous by suggesting seven times.
2. In the previous section, the procedure to follow when a fellow believer sins against you was outlined. A crucial part of the process is forgiveness on your part. We need to be willing to forgive throughout the process.
3. The king or master in this parable represents God. The servant represents us sinners who are in debt to God because of our sin.
4. He went to his fellow servant who owed him a comparably tiny amount of money and demanded to be repaid. He would not show mercy to this servant, but had him thrown into prison.
5. If we have truly responded to the grace of God and received His forgiveness, we should have a forgiving spirit.

Discuss / Consider

1. God is willing to forgive our great debt, because the Lord Jesus paid that debt on our behalf. Consider how impossible it would have been for us to pay that debt on our own. Thank the Lord for His forgiveness today.

2. Discuss the interpretation of the unforgiving servant who was delivered to the torturers.

Challenge

1. Do you have a brother or sister in the Lord that you need to forgive? An unforgiving heart will allow bitterness and resentment to take root in you. Consider how much our Lord has forgiven you, and be willing to forgive your brother.

Our Lord's Comments on Divorce and Celibacy
Matthew 19:1-12

Background

Doctrinal Points

1. The institution of marriage was the basis for the Lord's position on divorce.
2. The advance of the kingdom was the basis for the Lord's position on celibacy.

Practical Application

1. Don't think God approves everything He allows.

Questions

1. Was divorce common in Israel during Jesus' day?
2. Why did the Pharisees ask the Lord this question about divorce?
3. What was God's plan for marriage from the beginning?
4. What is the only biblical ground for divorce?
5. Why did the disciples make their comment in Matthew 19:10?
6. Explain Jesus' teaching on celibacy.

Answers

1. Yes, divorce was a part of the culture, just as it is today.
2. In that day there were two schools of thought regarding divorce. The Pharisees thought if they could get Jesus to express His position on divorce He would anger at least half of His followers.
3. God's plan could be expressed, "One wife, for life."
4. Sexual immorality
5. Apparently they had been influenced by the more liberal view of divorce. They thought it would be better to remain unmarried than to hold to the "one wife, for life" plan.
6. Our Lord taught that there was a place for celibacy. It is not the norm and it is not for everyone, but you can be celibate to the glory of God. Refer to I Corinthians 7.

Discuss / Consider

1. The institution of marriage was the basis for the Lord's position on divorce. Discuss the institution of marriage. Marriage is not respected or honored in our culture today, but it was designed by God as a blessing for His creatures. Discuss what you personally can do to raise respect for marriage from those around you. Ideas include what you teach your children about marriage and how you discuss your marriage with your co-workers. God holds marriage in high esteem, do you?

2. Review the different interpretations of the "exception clause." Remember that reconciliation is always the best option. Although under the Law God allowed divorce, He did not approve of it. God hates divorce (Malachi 2:16). Divorce shatters the picture that God intends to convey of the relationship between Christ and the Church.

Challenge

1. Marriage is a picture of the relationship between Christ and the Church. Aren't you thankful that God does not "divorce" us, even when we are unfaithful? Recall God's faithfulness to you, and praise Him for it.

**Our Lord Blesses Children and the Account of the Rich Young Ruler
Matthew 19:13-30**

Background

Doctrinal Points

1. The Lord tests the person who desires to be a true disciple

2. The Lord rewards the person who proves to be a true disciple.

Practical Application

1. Bring your children to the Lord.

Questions

1. When should children be baptized?

2. Why do we refer to Matthew 19:16-30 as the account of the rich young ruler?

3. Was Jesus denying His deity in Matthew 19:17?

4. Was Jesus teaching you can be saved by following the Ten Commandments?

5. How was the Lord testing this man a third time in Matthew 19:21?

6. When is the time referred to in Matthew 19:28?

Answers

1. When they have believed on the Lord Jesus as their Savior.
2. Because of the parallel passages in Mark 10:17-22 and Luke 18:18-23.
3. No; He was testing the man. Was he willing to admit that Jesus was more than a good man?
4. He was again testing the man, to see if he was willing to admit he was a sinner.
5. If the man had been willing to sell all he had it would have shown his heart and revealed his priorities.
6. This refers to the future Millennial Kingdom, when the Lord will establish His literal kingdom here on earth.

Discuss / Consider

1. If the Lord asked you to sell all you have in order to follow Him, would you be willing? This exercise will expose your heart and show your priorities! If you cannot answer yes to this command, discuss ways to re-align your priorities so that you could answer yes.

2. Any disciple that gives up the blessings and benefits of this life to serve the Lord more effectively will be rewarded both in this life and in the world to come. Discuss this statement. Do you have experience or know someone who has sacrificed the blessings of this life, such as marriage or a nice home, in order to serve the Lord? How have they been blessed because of their commitment?

Challenge

1. Do you have a biblical view of children? Children should be encouraged to come to the Lord. Pray for the salvation and growth of the children in your life.

The Parable of the Landowner and the Hired Laborers
Matthew 20:1-16

Background

Doctrinal Points

- 1. Reward in the kingdom is not based on time of service.**

- 2. Reward in the kingdom is based on willingness to serve.**

Practical Application

- 1. Are you envious because of the Lord's generosity?**

Questions

1. What is the topic of this section of Matthew 20?

2. When will faithful believers receive their rewards?

3. What is the "kingdom of heaven" referred to in Matthew 20:1?

4. Were any of the laborers paid less than was fair?

5. Were the laborers who were hired later in the day lazy?

Answers

1. Rewards.
2. In heaven and in the earthly millennial kingdom
3. It is the current form of the kingdom, the mystery form between the two advents of Christ.
4. No, but out of his generosity the owner paid some of the laborers more than they deserved.
5. No, they were willing to work as soon as they were given opportunity.

Discuss / Consider

1. This parable teaches the basis now for reward in the future. Discuss this idea of eternal rewards. Distinguish between rewards which can be earned, and your salvation, which is a free gift. Are you living today in light of these future rewards? Are you willing to labor for the Lord? Remember that faithful service can take many forms. Refer to I Corinthians 15:58.

2. Are you envious of other believers because of the Lord's generosity? It is easy to become jealous of others' blessings when we begin comparing ourselves. Discuss ways to safeguard against this envious attitude. What attitude should you have toward fellow believers whom the Lord has blessed?

Challenge

1. Be willing to work when the opportunity arises. Look for ministry opportunities and take advantage of them!

Greatness in the Kingdom of God is not Determined by the World's Standards
Matthew 20:17-28

Background

Doctrinal Points

1. Rank in the future kingdom is not determined by present request.
2. Rank in the future kingdom is determined by present service.

Practical Application

1. Mothers, make the right requests for your children.

Questions

1. Did the Lord Jesus know what would have happened if He went to Jerusalem?
2. What was the basis for the request of James and John's mother?
3. What "cup" was the Lord referring to in Matthew 20:22?
4. How did James and John die?
5. Will there be rank in the future millennial kingdom on earth?
6. What does God use to determine rank in the future kingdom?
7. Who is the perfect model of a servant?

Answers

1. Yes, He knew that He would be betrayed and killed (Matthew 20:18-19), yet He was not dissuaded. He “set His face” toward Jerusalem.
2. The parable in the previous section about reward in the kingdom
3. This cup was His coming suffering and death.
4. James was martyred for the cause of Christ (Acts 12). John was persecuted and exiled to the island of Patmos.
5. Yes. Jesus said this rank is determined by His Father.
6. Our service now. Matthew 20:26-27.
7. The Lord Jesus. Matthew 20:28.

Discuss / Consider

1. Discuss the standards the world uses to measure greatness. What standard does God use? Our service of others.

2. Matthew 20:28 says the Lord “gave His life a ransom for many.” I Timothy 2:6 says, “He gave Himself a ransom for all.” Discuss why these verses are not a contradiction. In I Timothy 2:6, He gave Himself a ransom “on behalf of” all. In Matthew He gave His life “in place of many.” These are both accurate statements of Christ’s work on the cross. Christ’s atonement was unlimited in scope and provision, but it is limited in effect to those who believe. He died on behalf of all, but He died in place of those who believe. Have you believed and made His death effective for you?

Challenge

1. What are you requesting on behalf of your children? Make sure that your prayers are in line with God’s priorities. Pray that they become godly men and women who love the Lord and serve Him with their lives.

The Two Blind Men Healed by Our Lord as He Left Jericho
Matthew 20:29-34

Background

Doctrinal Points

1. The Lord will never ignore the cry of faith.

2. The Lord has come to cancel the effects of sin.

Practical Application

1. Now that you can see, what direction are you traveling?

Questions

1. When in our Lord's ministry did this event take place?

2. What differences appear when you compare this passage to the parallel passages in Mark 10 and Luke 18?

3. How many blind men were healed?

4. Where did this miracle take place?

5. Why is it significant that the blind men called Jesus the "Son of David"?

6. What was the purpose of our Lord's miracles?

Answers

1. About a week before His crucifixion
2. The number of blind men healed and where the miracle took place.
3. There were two blind men, but Mark and Luke focus on the one, Bartimaeus, probably because he was more outspoken.
4. Matthew and Mark say it was as Jesus and His followers were leaving Jericho. Luke, on the other hand, says it was while they were entering Jericho (Luke 18:35). This apparent contradiction can be harmonized when you realize there were two Jerichos at that time. Old Testament Jericho was in ruins. Further along the road to Jerusalem was New Testament Jericho, built by Herod the Great. Most likely the miracle took place where the outskirts of these two Jerichos merged.
5. Son of David was a Messianic title. They recognized that Jesus was the promised Messiah, who was promised to come from the line of David.
6. Christ's miracles proved that He is God and demonstrated what it will be like in the future, when the effects of sin will be removed from this earth.

Discuss / Consider

1. This miracle is a picture of salvation. Recall your salvation story. Before you were saved you were spiritually blind and in spiritual darkness. When you exercised faith and believed on Jesus as Savior and Lord you were brought out of darkness into His marvelous light (I Peter 2:9). Share this incredible story with others!

2. All around us we see disease, death, demonic, and natural disasters - the effects of sin in this world. Discuss how these effects have affected your life. Praise the Lord that all of the effects of sin will be removed in the new heavens and new earth where righteousness dwells (II Peter 3:13)!

Challenge

1. If you are a believer in Christ, your spiritual blindness has been healed. Now, when you are searching for direction in your life, you know which way to turn. This world will always lead you astray, but you know to follow the Lord.

The Triumphal Entry of Christ into Jerusalem **Matthew 21:1-11**

Background

Doctrinal Points

- 1. The Lord's triumphal entry was a fulfillment of prophecy.**

- 2. The Lord's triumphal entry was a foreshadowing of the Parousia.**

Practical Application

- 1. Are you willing to ride on a donkey?**

Questions

1. Why is the Sunday before Easter celebrated as Palm Sunday?
2. Why is this event known as the Triumphal Entry?
3. Why did the multitude chant an excerpt from the Messianic Psalm 118?
4. What does Hosanna mean?
5. How is the Lord's omniscience seen in this passage?
6. What is the Parousia?

Answers

1. When Jesus entered Jerusalem a week before His resurrection, He was welcomed by the multitudes waving palm branches.
2. In that day, palm branches were thrown on the road when a conquering hero rode into the city in triumph.
3. The people did not all believe the Lord Jesus was the Messiah. Rather, they were hoping He would save them from Roman oppression.
4. Hosanna means “save now,” or “save, we pray.”
5. He directed two of His disciples to the exact place where a donkey would be tied and He knew the owner would allow Him to use it.
6. Parousia is a Greek word meaning “coming.” This is one of the words used in the New Testament of our Lord’s Second Coming.

Discuss / Consider

1. Discuss the ironies of our Lord’s Triumphal Entry. He did not enter Jerusalem to conquer Rome, but to conquer sin, and death, and Satan. This victory came by means of His death on the cross. Aren’t you glad our Lord’s ways are different from the ways of the world?

2. The Triumphal Entry foreshadows our Lord’s Second Coming. When He comes, His presence will bring both blessing and judgment. Blessing for the believers; judgment for unbelievers. Both of these aspects are seen in the rest of the chapter, with the cleansing of the temple and the healing of many sick people. When He comes, will you be among the blessed or the judged?

Challenge

1. Our Lord did not ride into Jerusalem on a conquering war horse, but on a humble donkey. Are you willing to take the humble place? Follow our Lord’s example of humility.

The Cleansing of the Temple and the Cursing of the Fig Tree
Matthew 21:12-22

Background

Doctrinal Points

1. The cleansing of the temple prefigures the Lord's return in glory.

2. The cursing of the fig tree pictures the Lord's removal of Israel.

Practical Application

1. Let your mountains be turned into molehills.

Questions

1. When did the events in this passage take place?

2. Is this passage a contradiction to the account of the cleansing of the temple in John 2?

3. Fill in the Blanks: The Lord will return with _____ and _____.

4. Did the money changers deserve to be thrown out of the temple?

5. How are fig trees and mountains related in this passage?

Answers

1. The cleansing of the temple and the cursing of the fig tree took place on the Monday following Palm Sunday. This was the last week of our Lord's ministry.
2. No, Jesus cleansed the temple once at the beginning of His ministry (John 2) and here at the end. There are differences between these two accounts.
3. Judgment; blessing
4. Yes, they had turned the Lord's house into a "den of thieves" by charging the Jewish worshipper exorbitant prices for their animal sacrifices and money exchange.
5. Israel (the fig tree) was a mountain barrier to the Lord's ministry. But by faith this barrier was removed so the Lord's ministry could continue.

Discuss / Consider

1. Read the prophecy in Malachi 3. This prophecy was partially fulfilled at our Lord's first coming when John the Baptist came preparing the way of the Lord and when the Lord cleansed the temple. The remainder of the prophecy regarding the Lord's judgment has not yet taken place. These judgments will take place when the Lord returns at His second coming. Discuss why it is important to distinguish between the Lord's first and second coming when interpreting Old Testament prophecy.

2. Throughout the Bible the fig tree is symbolic of the nation of Israel. Israel did not receive her Messiah and bear spiritual fruit. Therefore Israel was removed from its place of privilege. Many Christians believe this was the end of God's plan for the nation of Israel. Discuss and cite passages for why we know God does have a future plan for His chosen people, Israel.

Challenge

1. If you are facing a mountain-like barrier in your work for the Lord you can pray in faith for Him to remove it. In time you will see that this mountain of a problem is actually a more manageable molehill.

The Parable of the Two Sons
Matthew 21:23-32

Background

Doctrinal Points

- 1. Dealing with skeptics is essential to standing firm.**

- 2. Doing God's will is evidence of saving faith.**

Practical Application

- 1. Always look for the third alternative.**

Questions

1. Why were the chief priests and elders questioning the Lord's authority?
2. How did they hope to trap Him with this question?
3. How does 1 Peter 3:15 relate to our dealing with skeptics?
4. Which of the two brothers did the will of his father?
5. How did the Jewish leaders condemn themselves with their response to our Lord's parable?

Answers

1. Because the day before He had cleansed the temple and healed many people in the temple courts. These activities caused great commotion in Jerusalem, and the Jewish leaders did not like the popularity He was receiving.
2. If Jesus claimed His own authority, He would be equating Himself with God, and they would accuse Him of blasphemy. If He claimed God's authority, they could argue that they also had been given authority by God. If He claimed authority from men, the religious leaders could discredit it because He had no formal religious training.
3. We are commanded to always be ready to defend our faith to those who ask.
4. The brother who at first disobeyed, but later obeyed did the will of his father, rather than the brother who said he would obey, but did not.
5. They correctly answered the questions, showing they understood the principle, but had not lived it out in their lives. The tax collectors and harlots of that time at first rejected God's way, but in the end they repented, did God's will, and were saved. The self-righteous leaders in Israel gave lip service to God's law, but they did not believe the message of John the Baptist and they did not repent and do God's will.

Discuss / Consider

1. Review how the Lord dealt with skeptics in His time. He did not run away from them or zap them with fire from heaven. He stood firm and refuted them. How can we do the same in our dealing with skeptics?

2. God does not want your lip service, claiming devotion to Him, while you fail to do His will in your life. Refer to James 2:17. Doing God's will is evidence of saving faith. How is your life matching up with your words?

Challenge

1. The Lord often chose a third alternative when answering questions about His teaching. Many times He would ask a question in return, or simply not get involved in the argument. Many times we will have this option when answering questions about our faith.

The Parable of the Landowner and the Wicked Tenants
Matthew 21:33-46

Background

Doctrinal Points

1. The Son of God was rejected by Israel at His first coming.

2. The Son of God will be received by Israel at His second coming.

Practical Application

1. Is God's cornerstone the cornerstone of your life?

Questions

1. What is a parable?

2. What truth is illustrated in this parable?

3. Who do the landowner, his son, the vinedressers, and the servants represent in this parable? What does the vineyard represent?

4. When did the Lord Jesus give this parable?

5. Did the chief priests and Pharisees understand that the Lord was condemning them with His parable?

6. Did the leaders of Israel reject their Messiah ignorantly?

Answers

1. Our Lord's parables were stories from everyday life given to illustrate a moral or spiritual truth.
2. Israel's Messiah, the Son of God, was rejected by the nation of Israel. Therefore the nation would be judged and set aside until they would bear spiritual fruit. Meanwhile the Church would be established and built up with Christ as the cornerstone.
3. The landowner represents God, and his son the Son of God, Jesus Christ. The vineyard represents Israel, which God "planted" in the land of Canaan. The vinedressers represent the leaders of the people. The servants are the Old Testament prophets that God sent to Israel.
4. In the last week of His life, before He was put to death by the hands of those who should have received Him as the Son of God.
5. Yes. In fact, it angered them so that they wanted even more to kill Him.
6. No, refer to Matthew 21:38. They knew Jesus was the Messiah, and they knowingly rejected Him.

Discuss / Consider

1. Look at all God did to care for the nation of Israel, as pictured in Matthew 21:33. He sought to protect it and carefully watch over it. The Lord put leaders in the land, such as priests and scribes, who had a responsibility to teach the people and help them bear spiritual fruit to prepare their hearts for the coming Messiah. Sadly, these leaders failed to help the people. In fact, they rejected the Messiah when He came from heaven. This parable is full of vivid imagery about our Lord's work with Israel. Which part of this parable impacted you the most?

2. The rejected Son of God has been glorified already by becoming the chief cornerstone of His Church. But there is more to come. Bible prophecy indicates that in the future the nation of Israel will be spiritually awakened and will bear spiritual fruit. The nation that once rejected her Messiah will be given a new heart and will welcome her Lord's return. Praise the Lord for His unfailing faithfulness to the nation of Israel. How has your perspective of Israel been affected by the study of these promises?

Challenge

1. Have you ever believed on the Son of God as your Savior from sin? Do not let today end without ensuring that He is the cornerstone of your life.

The Parable of the Wedding Feast and the Invited Guests
Matthew 22:1-14

Background

Doctrinal Points

1. The kingdom was rejected by most Jewish people.

2. The kingdom has been received by many Gentile people.

Practical Application

1. Have you received the robe of righteousness?

Questions

1. Who was the original audience of this parable?

2. What was the point of the three parables Jesus told here?

3. What is the kingdom of heaven?

4. What do the different aspects of this parable represent? The wedding, the guests, etc.

5. When the invited guests rejected their invitation a second time, the king sent his servant to “go into the highways” and invite anyone who would come. When do we see this fulfilled in the biblical account?

6. What is going on with the man without a wedding garment at the end of the parable?

Answers

1. The chief priests and elders who were trying to trick Jesus in His last week of ministry (Matthew 21:23).
2. To condemn the Jewish leaders for their rejection of the Messiah
3. In Matthew, the kingdom of heaven is the form of the kingdom now, between the two advents of Christ.
4. The wedding and marriage feast represent the kingdom prepared by God for his Son, Jesus Christ. The invited guests were the Jewish people. Gentiles are represented by guests from the highways.
5. After the Jews rejected the preaching of the apostles, Paul and Barnabas turned their attention to the Gentiles in Acts 13:44-49.
6. This man would have rejected the garment that the king tried to provide for him. Thus he represents a professing believer, who seems to accept God's invitation, but has never put on the robe of Christ's righteousness.

Discuss / Consider

1. The Roman destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD was a fulfillment of Matthew 22:7. Discuss how the Roman armies were "God's armies." God used the armies as His instruments to deal with the nation of Israel for rejecting their king. Can you think of other biblical examples where God used ungodly nations to fulfill His purposes? Could and does God still work this way today?

2. Discuss the robe of righteousness as pictured in this parable. You must have it to be part of the kingdom. You cannot buy it, and you cannot make it. You must receive it from the Lord Himself. He bought it for you with His own life, when He died on the cross for your sins. Refer to 2 Corinthians 5:21 and Isaiah 61:10. What does it mean to have Christ's righteousness?

Challenge

1. Have you responded to God's call, the invitation to His feast? Don't delay in making this critical decision.

The Lord Answers Questions that were Designed to Discredit Him
Matthew 22:15-33

Background

Doctrinal Points

- 1. While on earth, believers should pay their taxes.**

- 2. When in heaven, believers will not be married.**

Practical Application

- 1. Let's believe in the verbal inspiration of Scripture as Jesus did.**

Questions

1. Who were the Herodians?

2. Why is it ironic that the Pharisees and Herodians were in cooperation?

3. How did the Pharisees and Herodians hope to trap the Lord with their question about taxes?

4. Who were the Sadducees?

5. Does the Bible teach that we become angels when we die?

Answers

1. The Herodians were a political party in Israel that favored the rule of Herod, because they wanted peace with Rome.
2. The Pharisees were adamantly opposed to Roman rule, and were normally enemies of the Herodians. Here they are united in their opposition to Christ.
3. If Jesus said they should not pay taxes, the Pharisees would turn Him over to the Roman authorities. If He said yes, they hoped the common people who hated Roman oppression would turn against Him.
4. The Sadducees were the theological liberals of Jesus' day. They did not believe in miracles, the resurrection of the body, or life after death.
5. No, Matthew 22:30 says that we will be like angels in that we will not be married in heaven.

Discuss / Consider

1. In Jesus' time, coins were made with the image of Caesar. Man has always been made in the image of God. "Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." Discuss this beautiful parallel, and the implications it should have in our lives.

2. Discuss the doctrine of the inspiration of Scripture. Refer to 2 Timothy 3:16 and 2 Peter 1:21. Jesus believed that God inspired Scripture right down to controlling the very words used. We should have this high view of Scripture as well.

Challenge

1. In this passage we have examples of Jesus' opponents coming up with some wild arguments in an attempt to discredit Christ. This still happens today as people are willing to go to the extreme to avoid the truth about Jesus. Are you willing to accept the truth about who Jesus is?

The Lord is Asked about the Greatest Commandment
Matthew 22:34-46

Background

Doctrinal Points

1. The Pharisees questioned the Lord about the Law.

2. The Lord questioned the Pharisees about His deity.

Practical Application

1. Lead your friends to the big question.

Questions

1. How did the theology of the Pharisees and Sadducees differ?

2. What do the theological liberals of today believe?

3. How did the Lord summarize the whole of the Mosaic Law?

4. Can anyone show this kind of love?

5. What is the subject of Psalm 110?

6. Why did the Lord's question in Matthew 22:45 silence the Pharisees?

Answers

1. The Pharisees were orthodox in their view of miracles and the resurrection. The Sadducees did not believe in any of these supernatural events; they were theologically liberal.
2. They are constantly questioning the truth of Scripture and they believe that miracles do not happen.
3. With love - for God and for your fellow man.
4. No, not by their own strength apart from new life in Christ. This realization should have driven the Pharisees to admit they were helpless to keep God's Law. They needed the new life Christ could provide.
5. This psalm of David is a Messianic psalm. It speaks of the Messiah as coming king, priest, and victorious warrior.
6. The Pharisees acknowledged that the Messiah would be a physical descendant of David (Matthew 22:42). They could not answer why David would refer to his descendant as "my Lord," because they were not willing to admit that the Messiah would be God as well as man.

Discuss / Consider

1. When questioned by the Pharisees, the Lord summarized the whole of the Mosaic Law by quoting Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18. These commandments teach vertical love for God and horizontal love for your fellow man. If anyone could show this kind of love, all the other moral laws would be kept. Yet no one can love like this apart from new life in Christ. Have you acknowledged that you cannot please God in your own strength? Discuss how your ability to love changed when you were empowered by Christ.

2. Read Psalm 110. Recall the numerous times this Messianic psalm is quoted in the New Testament. This psalm of David is a beautiful statement of the Lord Jesus' deity and humanity. As God He was David's Lord, as man He was David's son. Here is the big question, "Is Jesus God?" Each person must answer this question for themselves. How have you answered it?

Challenge

1. Jesus summed up the greatest commandment with love - for God and for your fellow man. In John 13:35 Jesus said, "By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another." How is your love level this week?

The Lord's Denunciation of the Scribes and Pharisees for their Hypocrisy
Matthew 23:1-12

Background

Doctrinal Points

1. Don't confuse religious orthodoxy with eternal salvation.
2. Don't confuse religious clericalism with spiritual authority.
3. Don't confuse religious fame with genuine greatness.

Practical Application

1. Are you a great Christian?

Questions

1. Who were the multitudes Jesus was speaking to in this passage?
2. What does it mean that "The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat." (Matthew 23:2)?
3. What are phylacteries? Did the Lord condemn the practice of wearing phylacteries?
4. What is clericalism?
5. What is the measure of greatness in God's eyes?

Answers

1. Jesus was speaking in the temple courts to the Passover crowd which had gathered from all over Israel and the Roman Empire.
2. They had proudly set themselves up as the official teachers and interpreters of the Mosaic Law.
3. Phylacteries are small boxes containing portions of Hebrew scripture that Jewish men bind to their foreheads. Jesus did not condemn the practice of wearing phylacteries, but He did condemn the Pharisees for making their phylacteries conspicuously large to draw attention to their piety.
4. Clericalism is the principle of maintaining the power of a religious hierarchy. It puts mere human beings on religious pedestals and considers them to be in a higher spiritual class.
5. Serving others in the name of Christ.

Discuss / Consider

1. The Scribes and Pharisees tried to impress others with their piety and religious actions. But their outward show did not match their inward reality. Discuss why it is easy to fall into the trap of living your Christian life to be noticed by others. How can you safeguard against this?

2. Discuss the world's measure of greatness. Does this match up with the Lord's standard? Discuss how Christendom is even affected by the world's standard of greatness. Genuine greatness involves serving others in the name of the Lord. Don't confuse religious fame with genuine greatness

Challenge

1. We have all heard someone say, "Do as I say, not as I do." This is an incredibly unbiblical idea. As Christians we are to live with integrity as our actions match up with our words. How are you doing in this area? Can you say with the Apostle Paul, "Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ." (1 Corinthians 11:1)?

The Lord Pronounced Woes Against the Self Righteous
Matthew 23:13-39

Background

Doctrinal Points

1. The Lord is required to pronounce woe on sinful people.

2. The Lord is reluctant to pronounce woe on sinful people.

Practical Application

1. Don't get the idea that there is a second chance after death.

Questions

1. Did the Pharisees end their persecutions after they succeeded in having the Lord Jesus put to death?

2. What was the fate of these self-righteous Pharisees?

3. List the woes the Lord pronounced on the Scribes and Pharisees.

4. Did the Lord enjoy pronouncing these woes on Israel? Why did He pronounce them?

5. Explain Matthew 23:39.

Answers

1. No, they persecuted the early Jewish Christian leaders, including Stephen.
2. They are condemned in hell (Matthew 23:33).
3.
 - They purposefully hinder others from entering the kingdom (v. 13).
 - The Lord sees behind the mask of religious involvement (v. 14).
 - Their misguided zeal would not save them from hell (v. 16).
 - There are no double standards or levels of truth with God (vv. 16-22).
 - There are bigger issues than the legalistic details (vv. 23-24).
 - They were concerned about external cleanliness, but not internal character (vv. 25-26).
 - The Lord hates the sin of hypocrisy (vv. 27-28).
 - Their hearts of unbelief were no different than their forefathers' (vv. 29-30).
4. The Lord was reluctant to pronounce woe on sinful people. He desired to care for and protect them. But because Israel was unwilling to receive her Messiah, and rejected and crucified Him, the Lord had to pronounce woe on them.
5. There will be a change of heart for a remnant of Jewish people in the future. These believing Jews will look on their Messiah, whom they pierced, and say, "Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!"

Discuss / Consider

1. The Lord is required to pronounce woe on sinful people. Because of God's holiness, He cannot ignore sin. Think of a time when you sinned and wished God would ignore it. Think of a time when someone sinned against you and you were glad God does not ignore sin. We should always be thankful that God does not ignore His holiness, and although He pronounces woe on sin, He always pronounces forgiveness because of the Lord Jesus' sacrifice.

2. Review the woes the Lord pronounced on the Scribes and Pharisees. How do many people today fall into these same pitfalls? How can you, as a believer, protect yourself from deserving these woes?

Challenge

1. The Lord does not enjoy pronouncing woe upon people. He desires for sinners to come to Him and receive salvation. He is always ready to forgive. Our Lord's example should affect your dealings with sinners in everyday life. Be ready and willing to graciously forgive.

**The First Section of our Lord's "Olivet Discourse"
Matthew 24:1-14**

Background

Doctrinal Points

- 1. There will be a beginning to the Tribulation.**

- 2. There will be an end to the Tribulation.**

Practical Application

- 1. Don't be misled by false teachers.**

Questions

1. When did the Lord's prediction in Matthew 24:2 come true?

2. Is the Wailing Wall an exception to our Lord's prediction that "not one stone here shall be left upon another"?

3. Is Matthew 24:9 a prediction for the Church?

4. What events signal the beginning of the future Tribulation Period?

5. What is "the end" referred to in Matthew 24:14?

Answers

1. The Romans conquered Jerusalem in 70 A.D. and destroyed the beautiful Jewish Temple and surrounding buildings.
2. No, the western Wailing Wall was not a part of the original Temple compound. It is a wall around the platform on which the Temple was built.
3. No, this woe will occur for believers during the future Tribulation Period.
4. The Rapture of the Church (1 Corinthians 15, 1 Thessalonians 4) and the signing of a seven-year covenant between Israel and a coalition of western nations under the leadership of a strong political leader (Daniel 9).
5. This is the end of this present age, which culminates with the Tribulation Period. After this Tribulation the Lord will return to this earth to establish His Millennial Kingdom.

Discuss / Consider

1. Discuss the difference between tribulation for believers and the Tribulation Period. Believers today surely go through times of trial and tribulation. But a future Tribulation Period is coming that will be unlike anything before it. Will today's believers suffer in that future Tribulation Period?

2. Many people will be deceived by false teachers during the Tribulation Period. Even today, many believers fall for clever false doctrine. Discuss ways to safeguard against such deception. The best way is to know the Word of God thoroughly for yourself.

Challenge

1. The doctrine of the future Tribulation Period is unknown to many believers. With diligence and study you can understand this important biblical doctrine. Follow the example of the disciples and seek to understand, "When will these things be? And what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?" (Matthew 24:3)

The Great Tribulation and the Return of the Lord **Matthew 24:15-31**

Background

Doctrinal Points

- 1. The abomination of desolation marks the beginning of the Great Tribulation.**

- 2. The sign of the Son of Man marks the end of the Great Tribulation.**

Practical Application

- 1. Don't be taken in by signs and wonders.**

Questions

1. What is the subject matter of Matthew 24:4-28?
2. How is this Tribulation Period divided?
3. What two events mark the beginning of the Great Tribulation?
4. What is the abomination of desolation?
5. How is the coming of the Son of Man like lightning (Matthew 24:27)?
6. Why will the tribes of the earth mourn when the Lord returns (Matthew 24:30)?

Answers

1. The future Tribulation Period which immediately precedes our Lord's return
2. In Daniel and Revelation, the seven-year Tribulation is divided into two 3.5-year periods. The second 3.5 years are referred to as the "Great Tribulation."
3. The breaking of the covenant between Israel and the western nations and the abomination of desolation
4. In the abomination of desolation, the world-renowned leader will set up an idol of himself in the Jewish temple, causing Jewish sacrifices to cease.
5. His coming will be open and apparently known. He will not come in secret.
6. The unbelieving nations will mourn because He is coming in judgment. The unbelieving Jews will mourn because they finally realize that the Messiah they rejected is the returning Lord of Glory.

Discuss / Consider

1. Think over the news in past years when many men have claimed to be Christ or the Messiah. The number of false claims will rise during the Great Tribulation. Matthew tells us several criteria that can be used to identify the false christs. These criteria will be crucial during the Great Tribulation, and we can use them discerningly today.

Challenge

1. Too often when people see signs and wonders they say, "It must be from God!" Matthew warns us that false prophets will perform signs and wonders, but they are not of God. Use your discernment when you hear about the latest miracle worker.

The Parable of the Fig Tree Indicates the Time of His Return
Matthew 24:32-39

Background

Doctrinal Points

- 1. The condition of Israel is a sign of the return of the Lord.**

- 2. The condition of society is a sign of the return of the Lord.**

Practical Application

- 1. Read and study what will never pass away.**

Questions

1. Review the various interpretations for “this generation” in Matthew 28:34.
2. How is it possible that our Lord Jesus, God the Son, did not know the hour of His return?
3. What does the fig tree represent in this parable?
4. What was society like at the time of Noah?

Answers

1. The generation that begins to see these end time events will live to see the Lord's return. Or, since the Greek word for "generation" could also be translated "race," the Jewish people as a race will continue unto the end times. Third, the rejection of the Messiah by that unbelieving generation will continue to the end times, when a national revival will take place. This third interpretation, that the Jews will exist as an unbelieving generation until the end times, seems most likely.
2. When God the Son became man, he willingly opted not to use certain divine attributes, such as His omniscience, at certain times.
3. The fig tree represents Israel. Israel is often represented by a fig tree in the Bible.
4. There was much wickedness at that time, as there is today. The people were likewise going about their everyday lives, unaware of impending judgment.

Discuss / Consider

1. Discuss the current events involving Israel and the Middle East. Studying the history of the State of Israel can be exciting as you anticipate the fulfillment of the Lord's promises. The condition of Israel is a sign of the return of the Lord. Keep your eye on Israel. When you see signs of life you will know end time events are not too far ahead. The days of spiritual fruit are in the future, but the leaves are blooming now.

2. In the time of Noah, the people were living their lives unaware and unconcerned. They were not aware of the imminent judgment that was to come. The flood came suddenly and took them away. In the same way, the coming of the Lord in judgment will be sudden. People will be unprepared and unconcerned, until they are taken away in judgment. Are you living your life unaware of the future? Discuss ways to live your life in light of eternity.

Challenge

1. Think back over how you have spent your time this week. Have you spent the majority of time on things that will pass away? I Peter 1:24-25 says, "The grass withers, and its flower falls away, but the word of the Lord endures forever." Bible study will not happen by accident. Commit to spend time this week in the enduring word of God.

Be Ready and Watchful for the Lord's Return!
Matthew 24:40-51

Background

Doctrinal Points

1. The Lord will return like a thief in the night.

2. The Lord will reward His true servants who are faithful.

Practical Application

1. Let your lifestyle be a litmus test.

Questions

1. Define the Rapture and the Return of the Lord.
2. What are the key passages for the Rapture?
3. Which of these events does the Olivet Discourse address?
4. What group is exhorted to be alert in Matthew 24:42-44?
5. How can the Olivet Discourse be divided?
6. What is the interpretation of the parable in Matthew 24:45-51?

Answers

1. The Rapture is the coming of the Lord for His bride, the Church. The Return of the Lord is when the Lord returns in judgment to establish His earthly kingdom.
2. I Corinthians 15:51-58 and I Thessalonians 4:16-18
3. The Return of the Lord
4. The godly remnant of believers during the Tribulation Period
5. • The Jewish Aspect Matthew 24:1-44
• The Christian Aspect Matthew 24:45-25:30
• The Gentile Aspect Matthew 25:31-46
6. The evil servant is the professing Christian in Christendom, whose ultimate destiny is hell. The faithful servant, a Christian, will be rewarded.

Discuss / Consider

1. It is important to distinguish between the Rapture and the Return of the Lord. A lot of confusion will be avoided if we do this. Discuss the differences between these two events. Are there similarities?

2. Your lifestyle can be an indication of the sincerity of your belief. Are your actions matching the beliefs and values you profess? Asking these sorts of questions can be a helpful self-check. The danger comes when we begin evaluating other people's lifestyles. Avoid a judgmental spirit. Evaluate your lifestyle.

Challenge

1. Just as the Tribulation saints should be ready and alert for the Return of the Lord to earth, so we should be watching and waiting for the imminent coming of our Lord for His Church. If the Lord returned this very moment, how would He evaluate your service?

The Parable of the Ten Virgins - a Parable of the Kingdom of Heaven
Matthew 25:1-13

Background

Doctrinal Points

- 1. The Return of the Lord was forgotten by the foolish and the wise.**

- 2. The Return of the Lord will separate the foolish from the wise.**

Practical Application

- 1. No person can give you salvation.**

Questions

1. What is the purpose of our Lord's parables?

2. What is the time period of the parable of ten virgins? How does this affect our interpretation of the virgins?

3. Did the wise virgins remain alert during the bridegroom's delay?

4. What does the oil represent in this parable? What is the wedding feast?

5. Why can't the foolish virgins be interpreted as unfaithful believers?

Answers

1. The parables reveal truth about the kingdom of heaven that was concealed in the Old Testament. See Matthew 13:10-11. The present form of the kingdom, between the two advents of Christ, was not known in the Old Testament.
2. The events in your diagram should be in this order: The Rapture first, next the Tribulation, then the Millennium and finally the Return of Christ.
3. Commentators differ on this issue. Some say it covers the Tribulation Period, thus the wise virgins are the Tribulation saints. More likely, like the other kingdom parables, it covers the whole period of time between the two advents of Christ. In this view the wise virgins are true Christians and the foolish virgins are professing Christians.
4. No, like the foolish virgins, they fell asleep waiting for the bridegroom's return.
5. The oil represents the Holy Spirit. Without the Holy Spirit we can have no light of testimony. The wedding feast represents the blessing of Christ's kingdom here on earth.
6. In Matthew 25:12, the Lord says to the foolish virgins, "I do not know you." He would never say this to a believer, no matter how unfaithful they have been.

Discuss / Consider

1. There has surely seemed to be a long delay between the Lord's first and second comings. Like the virgins, believers and unbelievers in the past had "fallen asleep" during the delay. Discuss Church history when the expectation of the Lord's return was forgotten. In recent centuries the doctrine of the Return of the Lord has made a revival. The virgins have woken up. Unbelievers, the foolish virgins, have realized they are not part of the evangelical camp. How are you, as a wise virgin, showing your alertness and readiness for the Lord's return?
2. As true believers in the Church, we are wise virgins. All true believers will be included in the millennial kingdom. Discuss what you know of believers' roles in the kingdom.

Challenge

1. In this parable, the wise virgins could not give the foolish virgins more oil. Likewise, no person can give salvation to another. Each person must believe on Christ for himself to receive salvation from God. Are you depending on someone else for salvation? Is someone else depending on you for salvation?

The Parable of the Talents
Matthew 25:14-30

Background

Doctrinal Points

1. Faithful servants will be rewarded in the kingdom of Christ.

2. Professing servants will not enter the kingdom of Christ.

Practical Application

1. If you don't use it, you will lose it.

Questions

1. Why did Jesus give the Olivet Discourse?
2. What is the kingdom of heaven as described in these parables?
3. What are talents? What do they represent?
4. What were the servants' rewards based upon?
5. What rewards will faithful believers receive? When will we receive these rewards?
6. Who does the one-talent servant represent?

Answers

1. To answer the disciples' questions about the future
2. It is the present form of the kingdom, Christendom.
3. A talent was a considerable amount of money. They represent responsibilities in the kingdom.
4. The servants were rewarded for their faithfulness, not their amount of success. The servant who earned two talents was rewarded the same as the servant who earned five talents, because they were both faithful with what they were given.
5. Faithful believers will receive the joy of the Lord and the privilege to rule over many things. We will reign with the Lord during the earthly millennial kingdom. Our reward in the kingdom is determined by our faithful service now.
6. He represents the professing Christian. Even professing believers take on responsibility in the kingdom, but their unfaithful performance is evidence of their false profession. Note also his heretical view of the master.

Discuss / Consider

1. In the parable, the servants were given amounts of money, "each according to his own ability." In the same way, believers are given responsibilities today according to our own ability. Discuss the responsibilities the Lord has given you. If you are a mother, God has given you the responsibility to raise your children well. If you are a husband, you are responsible to love your wife sacrificially. Be encouraged to know the Lord will not give you more than you can handle by His strength.

2. Discuss the divine principle in Matthew 25:29. If you are faithful to carry out the responsibilities the Lord gives you, you will be rewarded with more responsibilities and opportunities to serve the Lord. The responsibilities of unfaithful servants will be given to faithful servants. Are you fulfilling your God-given responsibilities?

Challenge

1. In this parable, the servants are rewarded for their faithfulness not their amount of success. Will you be found faithful with the responsibilities the Lord has given you? Strive to hear from your Lord, "Well done, good and faithful servant."

The Future Judgment of the Nations
Matthew 25:31-46

Background

Doctrinal Points

- 1. The Judgment of the Sheep and the Goats is a judgment of the nations**
- 2. The Judgment of the Sheep and the Goats is a judgment based on works.**
- 3. The Judgment of the Sheep and the Goats is a judgment resulting in eternal destinies.**

Practical Application

- 1. Remember, God's rule of thumb is grace.**

Questions

1. Review the structure of the Olivet Discourse.
2. Will the sheep and the goats be divided individually or nationally?
3. When will this judgment take place?
4. What is the reward in this judgment?
5. Why are the sheep and goats judged for their works?
6. What is the destiny of the unbelieving goats? The believing sheep?

Answers

1. • The Jewish Aspect Matthew 24:1-44
• The Christian Aspect Matthew 24:45-25:30
• The Gentile Aspect Matthew 25:31-46
2. Individuals within the Gentile nations will be judged to determine whether they are sheep or goats.
3. At the end of the coming Tribulation Period, when the Lord sets up His throne for His glorious kingdom on earth (Matthew 25:31)
4. Entrance into the Lord's Millennial Kingdom.
5. Their works of kindness show the presence or absence of faith. It will take much faith in the Lord Jesus for a Gentile to show kindness to Jewish believers during the Tribulation.
6. The destiny of the goats is hell. The sheep will enter into the Millennial Kingdom and then go onto the Eternal State.

Discuss / Consider

1. The Lord takes note of our works of kindness and compassion that are evidence of our faith. We will be rewarded for these at the judgment seat of Christ. Praise the Lord for His graciousness. Could someone say of you that your rule of thumb is grace?

2. Gentiles at the end of the Tribulation Period will be judged according to their works of kindness to the Jewish believers during the Tribulation. There will be much anti-Semitism during the Tribulation, as there has often been throughout history. Yet here we see another fulfillment of the Lord's covenant with the Jewish people to "bless those who bless you, and curse him who curses you" Genesis 12:3. The Lord has always been faithful to His chosen people, the Jews. How have you seen that same characteristic of faithfulness manifested to your life?

Challenge

1. No one will escape the Lord's judgment. Every person who has ever lived will stand before the Lord to give account of his life. How will you stand up under judgment?

The Plot to Get Rid of Jesus, and the Anointing of Jesus by Mary
Matthew 26:1-16

Background

Doctrinal Points

1. Worship is never a waste.

2. Worship has eternal value.

Practical Application

1. What is your value of the Lord?

Questions

1. Is it a contradiction that John records the anointing of Jesus as six days before the Passover, and here Matthew records it after Matthew 26:2?

2. What was Matthew emphasizing by recording Mary's anointing in Bethany here?

3. Why did the chief priests and elders plan to wait until after the Passover feast to betray Jesus?

4. Were the disciples truly concerned about the welfare of the poor in Matthew 26:8-9?

5. Who was Simon the leper?

Answers

1. No, the gospel writers would often put events out of chronological order if they were emphasizing a theological point. Since Matthew did not say when this anointing occurred, there is no contradiction problem.
2. He was contrasting the love and compassion of Mary of Bethany with the betrayal of Judas and the hard hearts of the chief priests and elders.
3. So there would be less chance of a riot (Matthew 26:5)
4. No, the parallel account in John 12:4-6 tells us that Judas made this objection because he wanted to take the money for himself.
5. He was probably a man whom the Lord had healed from leprosy. He might have been the father of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus.

Discuss / Consider

1. Think back on your use of time in the past month. Does it indicate that you believe that your time spent in various ministries is more important than your time spent in worship? Both ministry and worship are important to the Lord. But worship must be emphasized. Discuss: True service is an extension of worship from the heart. Worship is never a waste.

2. When the Lord Jesus did not match Judas' expectation of a conquering ruler, he agreed to betray Him for thirty pieces of silver. He betrayed the Lord for the price of a slave. Do you hold onto your own expectations for what the Lord should be and do? Make sure that your expectations match what the Lord has promised. Discuss some of the promises He has made to His children. Discuss the danger of holding onto your own expectations.

Challenge

1. The Lord foretold that Mary's act of worship would be remembered forever. This has come true as her story has spread with the Word of God throughout the world over history. Malachi 3:16 promises that all true acts of worship will be remembered by the Lord. How will you make worship a priority in your schedule this week? Worship is never a waste.

The Celebration of the Passover, and the Institution of the Lord's Supper Matthew 26:17-30

Background

Doctrinal Points

- 1. The Last Supper commemorated the Exodus from Egypt.**

- 2. The Lord's Supper commemorates the death of Christ.**

Practical Application

- 1. Let's sing hymns as a way of life.**

Questions

1. How are Passover and the Feast of the Unleavened Bread related?

2. The Jewish day always begins at sunset. Trace the events of the Lord's last day.

3. What does leaven represent in the Bible?

4. How do the Passover and the Feast of the Unleavened Bread look forward to the work of Christ?

5. Is the bread literally the Lord's body, and the wine literally His blood?

6. What was the Lord's point in Matthew 26:29?

Answers

1. Passover is one day, and the Feast of the Unleavened Bread occurs the following week. The whole week is often referred to as "Passover Week."
2. In the evening (Thursday), the Lord ate the Passover meal with His disciples. He was arrested later that night and tried before Pilate early on Friday. He was crucified on Friday afternoon, before the Passover day ended at sunset.
3. Leaven is symbolic of corruption and evil.
4. Christ, the Lamb of God, has been sacrificed as our Passover lamb. We should therefore clean out the leaven of malice and wickedness in our lives and live with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. See I Corinthians 5:6-8.
5. No, the Lord was saying this while present in His physical body. He was speaking figuratively, giving these symbols as a reminder for us.
6. He will come again to establish His earthly kingdom. When He comes there will be much cause for celebration.

Discuss / Consider

1. Review the institution of the Passover and the Feast of the Unleavened Bread in Exodus 12. Both of these events were to remind the Israelites how God had delivered them from bondage in Egypt. Without these regular reminders, the Israelites would have forgotten God's work for them. As believers we often forget God's past faithfulness, especially when our lives are going well. Discuss reminders to look back on God's faithfulness. Perhaps the best is the Lord's idea of taking bread and wine to remember His death for us.

2. The Lord Jesus sang with His disciples when He was about to be betrayed. Paul and Silas sang in prison (Acts 16:25). The early Christians sang when they came together for many occasions. Refer to Colossians 3:16. Songs can be a great comfort, exhortation, or reminder. Discuss the role singing has had in your life.

Challenge

1. Have you had the blood of the true Passover lamb applied to your life? God told the Israelites in Exodus 12:13, "When I see the blood, I will pass over you." In the same way, if we have believed on the Lord Jesus and His work on our behalf, God will see His blood as payment for our sin. Don't delay; accept Christ's sacrifice for you.

The Betrayal and Arrest of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane
Matthew 26:31-56

Background

Doctrinal Points

1. God rebukes the spiritual sleep of believers.

2. God uses the sinful acts of unbelievers.

Practical Application

1. Are we willing to pray, “Not my will, but Thine be done”?

Questions

1. Trace the Lord’s path immediately following the Last Supper.
2. How was Matthew 26:32 an exhortation to the disciples?
3. What “cup” did the Lord pray would pass from Him?
4. Was there any other way than the Lord’s death for the problem of sin to be dealt with?
5. The disciples were rebuked for sleeping when they should have been praying. How can we avoid this problem?

Answers

1. The Lord would have led His disciples from the house where they celebrated the Passover meal, down through the Kidron Valley, and up to the Garden of Gethsemane, on the slope of the Mount of Olives.
2. The Lord predicted His resurrection and promised that, although the disciples would betray Him, they would be restored to Him when He arose.
3. The “cup” was the cup of suffering that the Lord would endure as the sin-bearer for mankind. This cup would include the wrath of God against sin, the shame of the cross, and the temporary separation from the Father.
4. No, His death was the only way.
5. Choose private prayer times when your mind and body will be alert. Get enough sleep before public prayer meetings. “The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.” Matthew 26:41

Discuss / Consider

1. The Lord predicted Peter’s denial; He knew what he would do and what he would not do. The same is true for us today. The Lord knows everything about us - all our strengths and all our weakness. He knows us better than we know ourselves. Recall a time when you knew exactly what you wanted, but God had a better plan in store. His will is good, acceptable, and perfect (Romans 12:2). This is yet another reason for us to pray, “Not my will, but Thine be done.”

2. Discuss “God uses the sinful acts of unbelievers.” Refer to Acts 2:23 and Acts 4:27-28. Is this still true today?

Challenge

1. Are you guilty of spiritual sleep? Too many Christians are spiritually asleep, not involved in regular prayer time or in-depth Bible study. This study on Matthew is a great place for you to start. Remain spiritually alert.

Our Lord's Trial Before Caiaphas, and Peter's Denial of the Lord
Matthew 26:57-75

Background

Doctrinal Points

1. Caiaphas will answer for his shameful treatment of the Lord.

2. Peter was repentant for his shameful denial of the Lord.

Practical Application

1. We can be silent when we're wronged.

Questions

1. How many trials did our Lord Jesus face?
2. How can these trials be subdivided?
3. How was the Jewish High Priest supposed to function?
4. How did Caiaphas break the judicial law during Jesus' trial?
5. Did Peter fulfill the Lord's prophesy of Matthew 26:34?
6. How did Peter die?

Answers

1. Two, a religious trial and a civil trial
2. Religious:
 - Before Annas the High Priest
 - Before Caiaphas the High Priest
 - Before the Sanhedrin, the ruling body of the JewsCivil:
 - Before Pilate
 - Before Herod
 - Before Pilate once again
3. The High Priest was to be a mediator between God and the people. He was to represent the people before God.
4. He did not allow time after Jesus' arrest for a defense to be prepared. He only sought witnesses who would testify against the Lord. The Sanhedrin was not to meet at night or during any Jewish feast days. There was supposed to be at least a full day before a death sentence was passed.
5. Yes, he denied three times that he knew the Lord and followed Him.
6. Peter died as a martyr for the Lord. Historical records indicate he was crucified upside down.

Discuss / Consider

1. The High Priest was to minister as a mediator between the people and God. Caiaphas failed in this position, but we have a Mediator who will not fail. Read 1 Timothy 2:5. Hebrews refers to Jesus as the Mediator of the New Covenant. Discuss our Lord's role as Mediator. Why do we need a mediator?

2. Read Isaiah 53:7. Isaiah prophesied that the Lord would remain silent before His accusers. The Lord would have been justified in defending Himself, but He remained silent until He was questioned under oath. The Lord could remain silent because He had entrusted Himself and His circumstances into His Father's hands. How could we take this same attitude? Can we trust that our lives are in our Father's hands, even when we are wrongly accused?

Challenge

1. Have you every wept bitterly because of your sin? Sin is a devastating thing, and it is worth mourning over. When you come to this point, the Lord can begin to work in your life. Take your sin seriously. It cost the death of the Son of God.

Our Lord's Trial Before the Sanhedrin, the Ruling Body of the Jews
Matthew 27:1-10

Background

Doctrinal Points

- 1. The remorse of Judas did not result in the salvation of his soul.**

- 2. The remorse of Judas did result in the fulfillment of prophecy.**

Practical Application

- 1. Don't make decisions that you will regret forever.**

Questions

1. What is significant about it being morning in Matthew 27:1?
2. Why did the Sanhedrin hand Jesus over to Pilate, the Roman authority?
3. How do you harmonize the death of Judas in Matthew 27:5 with Acts 1:18-19?
4. What prophecy was fulfilled when Judas' money was used to buy a potter's field?
5. Why does Matthew attribute this prophecy to Jeremiah?

Answers

1. The Sanhedrin were not allowed to make official rulings at night, so they waited until morning to officially declare their death sentence on Christ.
2. The Sanhedrin were not allowed to carry out the death penalty, only the Roman government could do this.
3. Judas likely hung himself over a rocky ledge, so that when the rope broke his body fell upon the sharp rocks below.
4. Zechariah 11:12-13
5. In Matthew's day, the scroll of the prophets began with Jeremiah. Quotations from any of the books of the prophets were identified by the first book in the group, Jeremiah.

Discuss / Consider

1. Salvation requires more than remorse and sorrow for sin. Salvation requires repentance and a willingness to turn to Christ as personal Savior. Judas felt remorse, but he never turned to Christ for salvation. Why is remorse not enough? Why do some people get stuck at this step?

2. Judas forever will regret the decision he made to betray the Lord. Have you made decisions with long-term negative consequences? This should sober us when we make future decisions. The Lord will always guide us to make the right decision if we turn to Him. Discuss some principles for godly decision-making.

Challenge

1. Do not stop with being remorseful for your sin. Repent and turn to God for forgiveness. Read I John 1:9. He will always forgive.

The Lord's Trial Before Pilate, the Roman Governor of Judea and Samaria
Matthew 27:11-26

Background

Doctrinal Points

1. The Roman governor had Jesus crucified for political purposes.

2. The Jews had Jesus crucified for religious purposes.

Practical Application

1. What will you do with Jesus?

Questions

1. Review the trials of the Lord to this point.

2. Why did the Sanhedrin turn the Lord Jesus over to Pilate?

3. On what account did the Sanhedrin condemn the Lord? What was He charged with before Pilate?

4. Did Pilate believe Jesus was guilty? Why did he condemn Him?

5. Why were the Jewish leaders envious of the Lord Jesus (Matthew 27:18)?

6. What does the name "Barabbas" mean?

Answers

1. The Lord has faced His religious trial in three phases: before Annas, before Caiaphas, and before the Sanhedrin. Now He was handed over to Pilate for the first phase of His civil trial.
2. Because the Sanhedrin, under Roman authority could not carry out the death penalty. Pilate was the one with the authority to put Jesus to death.
3. The Lord Jesus proclaimed Himself to be the Messiah. The Sanhedrin saw this was a claim to deity, thus they condemned Him of blasphemy. Blasphemy was not cause for death in a Roman trial, however. So the Jewish leaders developed three political charges against the Lord Jesus. First, He was a political revolutionary and opposed the Roman government. Second, He was against paying taxes to Rome. Third, He claimed to be a King, and was thus a threat to Rome.
4. Pilate knew the Lord was not guilty (Matthew 27:24). Yet he sentenced Him to death to appease the Jews so they would not riot and ruin his political career.
5. Because the Lord was so popular with the Jewish people. Yet the fickle crowds which adored Him one day, were persuaded to call out, "Crucify Him," the next.
6. "Barabbas" is an Aramaic name meaning "son of the father." The Jews rejected the true Son of the Father, for Barabbas.

Discuss / Consider

1. Discuss the political situation at the time of our Lord's trial and crucifixion. There were many conflicting groups with conflicting agendas. God used these political factions to carry out His purposes and ultimately bring Himself glory. Read Acts 2:22-24, 3:12-14, and 4:26-28.

2. Discuss the opposition that arises today when Christians state that the Jews killed the Lord Jesus. Yet this is what the biblical record says. Read their self-incriminating prophecy in Matthew 27:25, "His blood be on us and on our children." The Jews have been oppressed and persecuted down through the ages, partly because they rejected their Messiah. Yet Christians should never use the Jews' involvement in the Lord's death as an excuse for anti-Semitism and hatred of the Jewish people. Instead, do you pray for the Jewish people you know to recognize their Messiah? We all have sinned, and we all need to know the beautiful truth of the Lord Jesus Christ's salvation and forgiveness.

Challenge

1. What will you do with Jesus? The Jewish multitude rallied to have Him crucified. Many people today have a similar response. By rejecting Jesus and His truth they are saying they would rather have Jesus crucified, and out of their life, than accept His claims. What about you? If you have accepted the Lord Jesus as your Savior, what are you doing with Him now?

Answers

1. It was where Pilate stayed when He was in Jerusalem. Our Lord's trial before Pilate was here.
2. Calvary is the Latin word for "skull." Golgothameans "skull" in Aramaic. See Matthew 27:33.
3. The Roman soldiers; passersby; the two thieves; the chief priest, scribes, and elders; and John and the women
4. Cyrene was a city in northern Africa with a Jewish community. Simon was probably in Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover.

Discuss / Consider

1. The Messiah's death was prophesied in Old Testament Scripture. These prophecies were fulfilled in the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus Christ. Recall some of the fulfilled prophecies. Begin with those in Psalm 22, a great Messianic Psalm.

2. Review the groups that witnessed our Lord's crucifixion. How did each of these groups react? Their reactions revealed the condition of their heart. People respond in similar ways to the things of God today. Have you had experience with hard-hearted people, scornful unbelievers, or unbelieving skeptics? What is your response to the Lord's crucifixion?

Challenge

1. When the Roman soldiers compelled Simon of Cyrene to carry the Lord's cross, he probably thought he was in the wrong place at the wrong time. But actually, Simon was in the right place at the right time to help the Lord. That day changed the whole course of Simon's life, and the life of his sons, Alexander and Rufus (Mark 15:21). What does the Lord have in store for you today? Are you willing to find out?

Our Lord's Death and Burial
Matthew 27:45-66

Background

Doctrinal Points

- 1. Supernatural events were associated with the crucifixion of Christ.**

- 2. Significant evidence was associated with the burial of Christ.**

Practical Application

- 1. Use your money and position for the Lord.**

Questions

1. How do you harmonize the apparent conflict about the timing of our Lord's crucifixion in the four gospels?
2. Another apparent conflict in the gospels involves the inscription hung above the Lord's head on the cross. How do we resolve this issue?
3. What was significant about the veil of the temple being torn in two?
4. Were the saints who came out of their graves (Matthew 27:52) resurrected or raised from the dead?
5. Who was Joseph of Arimathea?

Answers

1. Matthew, Mark, and Luke say darkness fell on the earth at the sixth hour. They were using the Jewish standard of time. Their sixth hour was around noon. John records the Lord standing before Pilate at the sixth hour, because he was using the Roman standard of time, which puts the sixth hour around 6 AM.
2. The actual inscription probably read “This is Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews.” Each of the gospel writers selected to record a portion of this inscription. Luke adds that this inscription was in Greek, Latin, and Hebrew, which might explain some variations as well.
3. The veil was torn from top to bottom, showing that this was a supernatural event. This act has major spiritual implications as well. God was opening the way for all believers to enter the holy presence of God. See Hebrews 10:19-20.
4. Commentators differ on this point. Some say they were resurrected, and these saints are not in glory in their resurrected bodies. Others say they were simply brought back from the dead like Lazarus, but they would die again. Most likely these saints, whose bodies had turned to dust, were truly resurrected and became part of the “first fruits” of the resurrection to come.
5. He was a member of the Sanhedrin, the ruling council of the Jews. He and Nicodemus had become secret followers of the Lord Jesus.

Discuss / Consider

1. Because of our sins, God the Father had to judge the Son. The Lord Jesus had to experience the wrath of God in order to pay for the penalty of our sins. It is too easy to study the death of the Lord without allowing it to touch our hearts. Take a moment to reflect on the horror of our Lord’s crucifixion and the wonderful implications it has for you.
2. Review the details of our Lord’s burial. Remember that the tomb was sealed with a Roman seal to show if anyone had tampered with it. The tomb was also guarded by a Roman guard unit and possibly a Jewish guard unit as well. There is no question that the tomb was very secure. Discuss how these details refute a number of skeptical theories used to explain away the body of Christ. The theories include the “Stolen Body Theory” and the “Wrong Tomb Theory.”

Challenge

1. Joseph of Arimathea used his money and position for the Lord. We all have, in varying degrees, been given money and position that we can use for the Lord. Do you have a special niche that would enable you to do something for the Lord that others could not? God has placed you where you are for a reason. Be available to be used by the Lord.

The Resurrection of Christ
Matthew 28:1-10

Background

Doctrinal Points

1. The resurrection of Christ was on the first day of the week.

2. The resurrection of Christ was a bodily resurrection.

Practical Application

1. Trust God to remove the stones.

Questions

1. How do the four different gospel accounts confirm the authenticity of Scripture?

2. Why were the women coming to the tomb?

3. What day of the week is the Sabbath? What day is the first day of the week?

4. How is the fact that Christians meet to worship on Sunday evidence for the resurrection of Christ?

Answers

1. Since the four accounts differ in the details (but do not contradict), it shows there was not collusion or conspiracy between the gospel writers. Each wrote from his own perspective.
2. They were coming to anoint the Lord's body with oils and spices for permanent burial.
3. The Sabbath is Saturday. The first day of the week is Sunday.
4. Sunday has always been the Christian day of worship. The early Christians were mostly Jewish who had always worshipped on the Sabbath (Saturday). Something significant must have happened to compel them to change their day of worship to Sunday.

Discuss / Consider

1. Discuss the significance of the bodily resurrection of the Lord. What evidence do we have that the resurrection was bodily? Why does it matter whether the Lord's resurrection was bodily or spiritual? Refer to Philippians 3:20-21.

2. Read Matthew 16:21, 17:22-23, and 20:18-19. The Lord had prophesied to His disciples concerning His resurrection many times. Yet they were hiding at this time, afraid. They did not remember what the Lord had said. Looking back, it is hard for us to imagine how the disciples could have been so forgetful. Yet don't you forget the promises God has made to you? What are some things God has promised us? How can we be more mindful of these promises so we will not be afraid?

Challenge

1. The women were not dissuaded when they thought of the stone blocking the tomb. They had faith that somehow God would send help to remove the stone. God did send an angel to remove the stone! The stone was a barrier to their ministry to the Lord, but the Lord removed the barrier. Are there stones blocking your ministry for the Lord? Perhaps a financial, legal, or physical barrier to ministry? God can remove these barriers for you. Trust God to remove the stones.

The Great Commission of Our Lord to Evangelize the World
Matthew 28:11-20

Background

Doctrinal Points

1. The resurrection of Christ has resulted in committed skepticism.

2. The resurrection of Christ has resulted in committed evangelism.

Practical Application

1. Did you realize the Trinity is taught in the Great Commission?

Questions

1. Where did the Lord instruct His disciples He would meet them?

2. What did the Jewish leaders do when they heard about the resurrection of Christ?

3. Why did the Jewish leaders assure the Roman soldiers that they would appease the governor if necessary?

4. How do we know the Jewish leaders & the Roman's did not truly believe the disciples had stolen Jesus' body?

5. What has changed since Matt.10:5-7, when Jesus told His disciples only to preach to the lost Jewish people?

6. Where is the doctrine of the Trinity taught in the Bible?

Answers

1. On a mountain in Galilee. See Matthew 26:32 and Matthew 28:7, 10, and 16.
2. They conspired with the Roman soldiers to hide the truth.
3. Because the Roman soldiers could be put to death for falling asleep on their watch.
4. If they truly believed this, they would have found the disciples and forced them to return Jesus' body.
5. The King and His offer of the kingdom were rejected by the Jewish people. Israel has been set aside, temporarily, from God's favor. In the meantime, the gospel of God's grace is going out into all the world.
6. The word "Trinity" is not found in the Bible, but the doctrine of the Trinity is certainly taught. Matthew 28:19 is one of several verses where the three Persons of the Godhead are mentioned together. There is one "name" for the three of them.

Discuss / Consider

1. There were many committed skeptics opposed to the resurrection of Jesus Christ, then and today. Some are not willing to change their opinion, no matter what evidence you may present. But if someone was willing to hear the evidence for the resurrection, what would you tell them?

2. Discuss how the basis of the Christian faith differs from other faiths. The basis of the Christian faith is not just the teaching of the founder, Jesus Christ. It is the events of His life, culminating in His death and resurrection. The Christian faith is built on the sacrificial and substitutional death for the sins of the world. It is built on His bodily resurrection to prove that the debt for our sins has been paid, and God is completely satisfied. This is news worth sharing!

Challenge

1. The Great Commission is a command, not a "Great Suggestion." What are you doing to take part in the work of spreading the message of Christ to the world? How are you involved in making disciples?