

Helping Our Children Present Jesus as the King Part 1

**Growing Godly Family Series
Manual 31**

By

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Updated 6/2017**

Growing Godly Families Series

This series of manuals is the result of a series of weekly e-mail topics that have been prepared and e-mailed over a period of years. They originally started out as a one page topic that gradually grew to the point where most topics are about three pages in length.

This series is especially designed for those who are already Christian leaders to give them Biblical principles for the development of godly physical and spiritual families. Because they give Biblical principles for developing godly families, they are also helpful for new Christians that want to grow and become godly families.

Mark 10:43-45 says, "Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant. And whoever of you desires to be first shall be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many." In these verses,, Christ taught that godly spiritual leaders do not have the attitudes of leaders in the world. Worldly leadership is based on power and authority and is designed to benefit the leader and place him above others. In contrast, godly spiritual leadership is designed to help every Christian reach their full potential in Christ. The following three statements give a summary of three styles of leadership. The purpose of this series is to help every family develop their full potential as godly families.

If we drive people, we will drive them until they can get out of our way.

If we lead people, we will be able to lead them as far as we have gone ourselves.

If we serve people, we will help each person develop their full God given potential and equip each person for the ministry that Christ has prepared for every Christian.

In the world, people often measure success by the amount of things that they accumulate in this world before they die. However, they are unable to take any of those things with them when they die. Mark 8:36-37 says, "For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?" Success produces rewards until we die but it produces nothing for eternity.

In contrast, God measures effectiveness by our faithfulness and obedience. Matthew 6:19-21 says, "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." Effectiveness produces eternal rewards. Mark 10:29-30 says, "So Jesus answered and said, "Assuredly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My sake and the gospel's, who shall not receive a hundredfold now in this time--houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions--and in the age to come, eternal life." 1Corinthians 10:31 says, "Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God." The Growing Godly Families Series is designed to help your family life count for eternity by bringing glory to God.

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1.

Jesus Has a Legal Right to be King of the Jews

Today, we are beginning a new series of topics that will help us to teach our physical and spiritual children about the fact that Jesus came as the promised King of the Jews. In fact Jesus Christ will also be the Eternal King of kings and Lord of lords. These topics will be taken from the book of Matthew. In this topic we will see that Jesus had the legal right to be the King of the Jews.

In Matthew 1:1-6a we read, “The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham: Abraham begot Isaac, Isaac begot Jacob, and Jacob begot Judah and his brothers. Judah begot Perez and Zerah by Tamar, Perez begot Hezron, and Hezron begot Ram. Ram begot Amminadab, Amminadab begot Nahshon, and Nahshon begot Salmon. Salmon begot Boaz by Rahab, Boaz begot Obed by Ruth, Obed begot Jesse, and Jesse begot David the king. David the king begot Solomon by her who had been the wife of Uriah.” We see that Matthew begins this book by giving the genealogy of Joseph to show that Jesus has the legal right to be the King of the Jews. Then the book of Luke gives a second genealogy in Luke 3:23-37 which is the genealogy of Mary to show that she was also a descendent of Adam, Abraham and David. Romans 5 shows us why it is so important to have both genealogies.

Romans 5:12 says, “Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned.” Here we see that it was through Adam that sin entered into the world. Then we have a wonderful promise in Romans 5:19-21 where we read, “For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man’s obedience many will be made righteous. Moreover the law entered that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more, so that as sin reigned in death, even so grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” The first Adam brought sin and death upon all people. In contrast, Jesus Christ our Lord is the last Adam who showed that it was the grace of God that caused the Father to send His only begotten Son to pay the full penalty for sin so that God could offer eternal life to all as a free gift. That is why 1 Corinthians 15:45 says, “And so it is written, “‘The first man Adam became a living being.’ The last Adam became a life-giving spirit.” Jesus is both the Son of Man and Son of God.

This genealogy also includes four women. All four of these women are mentioned in the first six verses. First, we see that all four of these women were a part of Gentile families. In Genesis 38 we see that Tamar was a Canaanite. In Joshua 2:1 we read, “Now Joshua the son of Nun sent out two men from Acacia Grove to spy secretly, saying, ‘Go, view the land, especially Jericho.’ So they went, and came to the house of a harlot named Rahab, and lodged there.” Here we see that Rahab was from the city of Jericho. Ruth 1:4 says, “Now they took wives of the women of Moab: the name of the one was Orpah, and the name of the other Ruth. And they dwelt there about ten years.” Here we see that Ruth was a Moabite. 2 Samuel 11:3 says, “So David sent and inquired about the woman. And someone said, “‘Is this not Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite?’” Here we see that Bathsheba was married to a Hittite.

Second, we see that these women pictured the grace of God to all people even in spite of things in their past that might cause many people to exclude them. Genesis 38:24 says, “And it came to pass, about three months after, that Judah was told, saying, “‘Tamar your daughter-in-law has played the harlot; furthermore she is with child by harlotry.’” So Judah said, “Bring her out and let her be burned!” Then in verse 36 Judah had to confess that he had committed incest with his daughter-in-law. Joshua 2:1 quoted above said that Rahab was a prostitute in the city of

Jericho. Ruth was a Moabite and Deuteronomy 23:3 says, “An Ammonite or Moabite shall not enter the assembly of the LORD; even to the tenth generation none of his descendants shall enter the assembly of the LORD forever.” Then David committed adultery with Bathsheba and tried to cover up his sin by ordering the death of her husband, Uriah. God showed His grace to all four women.

Taken together we can see that God wanted to make it very clear by using the genealogy of Jesus to show that no Gentile would be excluded from the salvation that Jesus provided through His payment for the sins of the whole world. 1 John 2:1-2 says, “My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world.” Christ satisfied the requirement that all sin must be paid for either by each of us because we are guilty of sin or by believing that the Father was satisfied with the payment that Jesus made for our sin and receiving Jesus as the Lord and Savior of our lives. The women in the genealogy also show that God will forgive the sin of unbelief and blot out all other sins for all who come to Christ in repentance and faith.

Matthew 1:7-11 says, “Solomon begot Rehoboam, Rehoboam begot Abijah, and Abijah begot Asa. Asa begot Jehoshaphat, Jehoshaphat begot Joram, and Joram begot Uzziah. Uzziah begot Jotham, Jotham begot Ahaz, and Ahaz begot Hezekiah. Hezekiah begot Manasseh, Manasseh begot Amon, and Amon begot Josiah. Josiah begot Jeconiah and his brothers about the time they were carried away to Babylon.” Jeconiah (Coniah) was such an evil king that his family was cut off from ever sitting on the throne of David in the future. Jeremiah 22:28-30 says, “Is this man Coniah a despised, broken idol—a vessel in which *is* no pleasure? Why are they cast out, he and his descendants, and cast into a land which they do not know? O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the LORD! Thus says the LORD: ‘Write this man down as childless, a man *who* shall not prosper in his days; for none of his descendants shall prosper, sitting on the throne of David, and ruling anymore in Judah.’” God said that none of his biological children would ever sit on the throne of Israel in the future. Joseph was a descendent of Jeconiah and so had a legal right to be king but this curse would have made that impossible.

That is one reason why it is so important that Jesus was born of a virgin. Luke 1:34-35 says, “Then Mary said to the angel, ‘How can this be, since I do not know a man?’ And the angel answered and said to her, ‘The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God.’” Here we see that Jesus was both totally God and totally human. He is the Son of God and He was born of a woman. Jesus has the legal right to sit on the throne on David because Joseph was a descendent of Jeconiah (Coniah). However, the curse on the biological descendents of Coniah did not affect Jesus because of the fact that He is the Son of God and was born to a virgin.

A much more important reason for Jesus to be born of a virgin was to fulfill the Old Testament. Isaiah 7:14 says, “Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel.” This promise given through Isaiah said that Jesus would be born of a virgin and thus fulfilled this prophecy. This verse also points out the fact that this virgin birth was to be a sign to the nation of Israel. Both Matthew and Luke mentioned the virgin birth of Jesus as a part of the books that God inspired them to write about the birth of Jesus. Matthew included the genealogy of Joseph to show that as the adopted son of Joseph Jesus had a legal right to be the king. Luke included the genealogy of Mary to show that Jesus was the son of David, the Son of Abraham and the son of Adam as well as being the Son of God to show that Jesus fulfilled all of the prophecies about the Messiah.

Matthew 1:12-17 gives the genealogy of Joseph from the time of Jeconiah down to Joseph to

show the completion of that legal line. Those verses say, “And after they were brought to Babylon, Jeconiah begot Shealtiel, and Shealtiel begot Zerubbabel. Zerubbabel begot Abiud, Abiud begot Eliakim, and Eliakim begot Azor. Azor begot Zadok, Zadok begot Achim, and Achim begot Eliud. Eliud begot Eleazar, Eleazar begot Matthan, and Matthan begot Jacob. And Jacob begot Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus who is called Christ. So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations, from David until the captivity in Babylon are fourteen generations, and from the captivity in Babylon until the Christ are fourteen generations.”

The genealogies of the Jews were available at the temple at the time that that books of Matthew and Luke were written. However, just a few years later in 70 A.D. the city of Jerusalem and the temple were completely destroyed along with the genealogies. Here we see that God had preserved these genealogies until the books of Matthew and Luke could be written to show both the legal line through Joseph and the actual line through Mary. God wants all of the Jews to know that Jesus is the Messiah.

David was the last individual to receive the promise that the Messiah would come from his family. Psalm 45:6 says, “Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; a scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Your kingdom.” The writer of Hebrews quoted this verse in Hebrews 1:8 where we read, “But to the Son He says: “Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; a scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Your kingdom.” Then Hebrews says in Hebrews 13:20-21, “Now may the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.” God wanted to make it clear to the Jews that Jesus Christ is the One who fulfilled all of the promises given in the Old Testament. In the same way we want to help our physical and spiritual children understand why the virgin birth is so important. May the Lord richly bless you as you explain this important lesson to your children.

Jesus was Born of a Virgin

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children understand the importance of the genealogies of Jesus to show that He is the One who fulfilled all of the prophecies given about the Messiah in the Old Testament. In this topic we will learn about the actual birth of Jesus.

Matthew 1:18-20 says, “Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: After His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Spirit. Then Joseph her husband, being a just *man*, and not wanting to make her a public example, was minded to put her away secretly. But while he thought about these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, ‘Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit.’” The words “betrothed” or “espoused” mean to be promised in marriage. This promise was legally as binding as a marriage and could only be ended by a divorce in the culture of that day.

As a result, we see the events that are mentioned in the following verses happened after Mary had been promised in marriage to Joseph. We also see that the events in these verses happened before Mary and Joseph came together physically as husband and wife. We see that Mary was found with child by the Holy Spirit. In Luke 1:30-33 we see that an angel came to visit Mary. Those verses say, “Then the angel said to her, ‘Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name JESUS. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end.’” Here we see that the angel told Mary that she would become pregnant and would give birth to a son that would fulfill the Old Testament promises.

Mary had the same question that all of us would have had in that situation. In Luke 1:34-35 we read, “Then Mary said to the angel, ‘How can this be, since I do not know a man?’ And the angel answered and said to her, ‘The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God.’” Mary did not understand how she could become pregnant without a sexual relationship with a man. The angel explained that the Holy Spirit would come upon her. Genesis 2:7 tells us how the first man came into existence when that verse says, “And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.” Here we see the angel said that the power of God was going to create Jesus within Mary without any sexual relationship with a man. That is why her child would be called the Son of God. It would be a miracle just like the creation of Adam.

However, just because Mary had been told about this miracle that did not mean that Joseph understood. He was probably filled with great sorrow when he first heard that Mary was pregnant. That left Joseph with two choices as he thought about it. He could accuse her publicly and the law said that she would either have to identify the father and marry him or be stoned. The second choice he could make was to give her a bill of divorce secretly so that she could marry the father and not be stoned. Joseph was a just man and wanted to do what was right and so he decided to make the second choice.

However, that night an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph and he realized that the Lord had given him a third and much better choice. Here we learn a key principle for life. If we try to

deal with the problems of life in our own strength, we will either turn the problem out and get angry or turn the problem in and get hurt. When we take the problem to the Lord and turn it over to Him, He will give us His knowledge and His love to act in a way that will serve others instead of hurting self or others. That was what happened with Joseph. The angel called him Joseph, son of David, and told him not to be afraid to take Mary as his wife because the child that was within her had been conceived by the work of the Holy Spirit.

When the angel said, Joseph, son of David, he started thinking about the Old Testament prophecies immediately because of the words of the angel. Matthew 1:21-23 says, “‘And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins.’ So all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying: ‘Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel,’ which is translated, ‘God with us.’” Here we see that the angel told Joseph what to do and then reminded him of the prophecy of Isaiah by quoting the prophecy given in Isaiah 7:14. Joseph knew his own genealogy and knew that he was a descendent of David. He would have known the genealogy of Mary as well and knew that she was also a descendent of David.

Suddenly the sorrow of Joseph was turned to great joy because the angel said that he was to have the privilege of raising the Son of God. The naming of a child was the privilege of the earthly father. This is illustrated in Luke 1:13 where Zacharias was instructed to name his son John. That verse says, “‘But the angel said to him, ‘Do not be afraid, Zacharias, for your prayer is heard; and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John.’” Then Luke 1:59-63 says, “‘So it was, on the eighth day, that they came to circumcise the child; and they would have called him by the name of his father, Zacharias. His mother answered and said, ‘No; he shall be called John.’ But they said to her, ‘There is no one among your relatives who is called by this name.’ So they made signs to his father—what he would have him called. And he asked for a writing tablet, and wrote, saying, ‘His name is John.’ So they all marveled.”

The fact that the angel told Joseph that he would be the one who would name the baby, Jesus, meant that he was to take Mary as his wife. That would have brought a certain amount of shame to Joseph because everyone else must have thought that Joseph was admitting that he was the father. Exodus 22:16 says, “‘If a man entices a virgin who is not betrothed, and lies with her, he shall surely pay the bride-price for her *to be* his wife.” Then Deuteronomy 22:23-24 says, “‘If a young woman who is a virgin is betrothed to a husband, and a man finds her in the city and lies with her, then you shall bring them both out to the gate of that city, and you shall stone them to death with stones, the young woman because she did not cry out in the city, and the man because he humbled his neighbor’s wife; so you shall put away the evil from among you.” Joseph was betrothed to Mary so this brought shame to his name but it protected Mary from either a divorce or a stoning. Joseph chose to accept that shame with joy.

Joseph understood that he would have the privilege of naming Jesus and the angel had told him in advance that Jesus would save his people from their sins. Hebrews 12:2 says, “‘Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of *our* faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.” In this verse, we see that Jesus would bear a much greater shame as He hung naked before all who passed by as He bore our sins. In fact Joseph was not the only one who was willing to experience shame for Jesus. Acts 5:41-42 says, “‘So they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name. And daily in the temple, and in every house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ.” Joseph and the apostles also rejoiced for the privilege to suffer shame for the name of Jesus. Joseph and the apostles certainly give us an example to follow when we suffer shame for Christ.

The prophecy from Isaiah explained that Jesus would also be called Immanuel which means

“God with us.” John 1:14 says, “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.” Then John 1:17-18 adds, “For the law was given through Moses, *but* grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared *Him*.” The Old Testament showed the full consequences of the Law. Christ revealed the love of God for all mankind when He came and paid those full consequences. That means that every person must now make the choice to come to God in repentance and receive that free gift by faith or make the choice to pay their own penalty throughout eternity.

Matthew 1:24-25 says, “Then Joseph, being aroused from sleep, did as the angel of the Lord commanded him and took to him his wife, and did not know her till she had brought forth her firstborn Son. And he called His name JESUS.” Joseph was a man of action when he knew the will of God. He immediately went and took Mary to him as his wife and not just his betrothed. This meant that Joseph took the shame on himself and protected Mary from that shame. In addition, even though he had taken her as his wife he protected her as a virgin. This meant that he had no sexual relations with her until after the birth of Jesus. Later Mary and Joseph did have normal sexual relations because in Matthew 13:52-53 says, “Is this not the carpenter’s son? Is not His mother called Mary? And His brothers James, Joses, Simon, and Judas? And His sisters, are they not all with us? Where then did this *Man* get all these things?” In these verses, we see that Mary and Joseph later had four sons and at least two daughters.

We want to help our physical and spiritual children understand that God wanted to make it clear that Mary and Joseph later had other children who were conceived the way that all of the rest of the children in the world have been conceived. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children to understand these important things about Jesus.

3.

Jesus was Recognized as King of the Jews

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children understand the importance of being willing to accept shame for the name of Jesus. In this topic we are going to see how God chose to announce the birth of Jesus to the Jewish religious leaders and Herod, the Roman ruler.

Sometime after Jesus was born, a group of men arrived in the city of Jerusalem looking for the new king. Matthew 2:1-4 says, “Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, saying, ‘Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East and have come to worship Him.’ When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born.” Here we see that the arrival of this group of men caused the whole city of Jerusalem to be troubled.

Mary and Joseph lived in Nazareth. However, the Old Testament had predicted that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem because it was the city of David. We see that God allowed the Roman emperor to require his entire empire to register for taxes so that Mary and Joseph would be in the right place at the right time for that birth to happen. Luke 2:1-5 says, “And it came to pass in those days that a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. This census first took place while Quirinius was governing Syria. So all went to be registered, everyone to his own city. Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, to be registered with Mary, his betrothed wife, who was with child.” This meant that Mary and Joseph had to travel about 80 miles probably by foot or donkey at a time when Mary was expecting the birth of Jesus any day.

At least 40 days and probably several months after Jesus was born in Bethlehem these men from the east arrived in the city of Jerusalem. The reason it had to be at least 40 days is due to the fact that Mary and Joseph took Jesus to the temple in Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord. Luke 2:22-24 says, “Now when the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were completed, they brought Him to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord (as it is written in the law of the Lord, “Every male who opens the womb shall be called holy to the LORD”), and to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in the law of the Lord, “A pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons.” Leviticus 12:1-3 tells us that the days of purification for a woman who had a male child were a total of 40 days.

These men from the east were men who studied the stars. In Jerusalem they kept asking people about a baby that would be a King until they were finally sent to Herod. The men told Herod that they had come to worship this baby. Immediately Herod was very troubled. The word “troubled” means to take away the calmness of mind or to fill the spirit with fear and dread. Herod was troubled because he was the ruler appointed by the Romans and he was continually afraid that someone might take away his power and control. The rest of the people of Jerusalem were filled with fear because Herod was willing to kill others whenever he was upset or thought that his power was threatened. This is illustrated in Matthew 2:16 which says, “Then Herod, when he saw that he was deceived by the wise men, was exceedingly angry; and he sent forth and put to death all the male children who were in Bethlehem and in all its districts, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had determined from the wise men.” As a result, everyone in Jerusalem was troubled by these visitors.

Herod gathered the chief priests and scribes together and demanded of them where the Christ was to be born. Matthew 2:5-6 says, “So they said to him, ‘In Bethlehem of Judea, for thus it is written by the prophet: “But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, Are not the least among the rulers of Judah; For out of you shall come a Ruler who will shepherd My people Israel.”’” Then Herod, when he had secretly called the wise men, determined from them what time the star appeared. And he sent them to Bethlehem and said, ‘Go and search carefully for the young Child, and when you have found Him, bring back word to me, that I may come and worship Him also.’”

The chief priests and scribes answered the question of Herod by quoting Micah 5:2. That verse says, “But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of you shall come forth to Me the One to be Ruler in Israel, whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting.” Here we see that the chief priests and scribes knew the verse so that they could tell Herod where the Messiah would be born. At the same time they showed their unbelief because they refused to recognize that He is from eternity because He is God. Here we have an example of the fact that people can know the facts of the Bible but not believe and receive Christ as the One who came to give them life. That rejection will result in eternal judgment for them.

In contrast, there were people in Jerusalem who had already heard that Jesus was born and were rejoicing. Prior to the arrival of these men from the east at Jerusalem, Luke 2:25-38 tells us that Jesus had been presented to the Lord at the temple when He was 40 days old. Two of the people who saw Jesus at that time were Simeon and Anna. Luke 2:38 tells us that Anna had been telling others about the birth of Jesus. That verse says, “And coming in that instant she gave thanks to the Lord, and spoke of Him to all those who looked for redemption in Jerusalem.” Redemption means to buy us back from sin, to remove us from further sale and to set us free. Anna had served at the temple for many years. She knew the people who came to the temple that were looking for the Messiah to come and pay the penalty for their sin and redeem them. As a result, she had been telling all the people that looked for the Messiah the good news that the Messiah had come.

By quoting Micah 5:2 the religious leaders also told Herod what kind of a leader Jesus would be for Israel. The religious leaders said, “For out of you shall come a Ruler who will shepherd My people Israel.” Ezekiel had warned the religious leaders of Israel in Ezekiel 34:8, “‘As I live,’ says the Lord GOD, ‘surely because My flock became a prey, and My flock became food for every beast of the field, because *there was* no shepherd, nor did My shepherds search for My flock, but the shepherds fed themselves and did not feed My flock.’” That is why Jesus came to be the True Shepherd both to the Jews and also the Gentiles. The religious leaders of Israel were only feeding themselves.

We go on to read in Matthew 2:7-12, “Then Herod, when he had secretly called the wise men, determined from them what time the star appeared. And he sent them to Bethlehem and said, ‘Go and search carefully for the young Child, and when you have found *Him*, bring back word to me, that I may come and worship Him also.’ When they heard the king, they departed; and behold, the star which they had seen in the East went before them, till it came and stood over where the young Child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceedingly great joy. And when they had come into the house, they saw the young Child with Mary His mother, and fell down and worshiped Him. And when they had opened their treasures, they presented gifts to Him: gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Then, being divinely warned in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed for their own country another way.” Herod feared anyone who might take his power and so he called the men from the east secretly during the night and told them to go to Bethlehem and find the baby. Then he said to come and tell him saying he wanted to worship Him also. However, he really planned to kill Jesus.

When the men came out of the palace that night, they saw the Star that they had earlier seen in the East. This was not a regular star. It was probably similar to the light that led Israel at night in the wilderness. Exodus 13:21 says, “And the LORD went before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead the way, and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, so as to go by day and night.” This night God caused His glory to appear like a star that was so low that it could lead the men from the east to the particular house just as the pillar of fire had stood over the tabernacle in the wilderness at night.

Mary, Joseph and Jesus were no longer in the stable of Luke 2 when the wise men arrived. Instead they were now in a house because Jesus was a young child and no longer a newborn baby since he was 40 days old when He had earlier been presented at the temple. The men from the east were filled with joy when that light led them to the very house where Mary, Joseph and Jesus were now living. These men came into the house and fell down and worshiped Jesus. They also gave Him gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. The gold gave Mary and Joseph money to travel as they had to flee to Egypt to escape before Herod could kill Jesus. The frankincense and myrrh could later be sold to supply their needs while they were in Egypt.

Bethlehem was less than five miles from Jerusalem. God gave some of the men from the east that night a dream to warn them not to return to Herod. As a result, they left to return to their own country by a different route. Here we see that God helped the wise men to understand that Herod had no intention to worship Jesus. Instead this was just an attempt of Satan to try and destroy Jesus through the evil plan of Herod. We want to help our physical and spiritual children understand the importance of letting the Lord guide them so that they will carry out the work of the Lord and not be deceived by the tricks of Satan when he works through others. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children to grow in wisdom and understanding.

Jesus was Taken to Egypt to Escape Herod

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children understand how God caused the Jewish religious leaders, Herod and the entire city of Jerusalem to learn that the Messiah had been born. In our topic today, we are going to see how Satan worked through Herod to immediately try to destroy Jesus.

God warned the wise men not to return to Herod and so they began the return to their own country by a different route. Meanwhile, Matthew 2:13-15 says, “Now when they had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, ‘Arise, take the young Child and His mother, flee to Egypt, and stay there until I bring you word; for Herod will seek the young Child to destroy Him.’ When he arose, he took the young Child and His mother by night and departed for Egypt, and was there until the death of Herod, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying, ‘Out of Egypt I called My Son.’” Here we see that the Lord again used a dream to let Joseph know what to do.

Bethlehem was less than five miles from Jerusalem. God knew that as soon as Herod realized that the wise men were not returning to tell him where Jesus was that he would immediately make an effort to try and destroy Jesus. In the dream Joseph was told to take the young Child and His mother and flee to Egypt. God told Joseph that he was to stay in Egypt until God told him to return. God said that Herod was going to try and destroy the young Child. The word translated “young Child” is used nine times in this chapter to describe Jesus. This is the word that was used for children up to the age of twelve years. It is also the word used in 1 John 2:13 to speak of Christians who are growing in their spiritual lives. That verse says, “I write to you, fathers, because you have known Him *who is* from the beginning. I write to you, young men, because you have overcome the wicked one. I write to you, little children, because you have known the Father.” In this verse, it speaks of those who have gotten to know the Father.

Herod was a very evil and fearful man so God warned Joseph that Herod would try to destroy Jesus. God told Joseph to go to Egypt because Herod had no influence in Egypt. Joseph was obedient and left immediately by night so that no one would know where Mary, Joseph and Jesus had gone. By this action no one could tell the soldiers of Herod where they might be able to find Jesus. By morning Joseph, Mary and Jesus would have been several miles away from the town of Bethlehem and no one would know where they had gone. As a result, Jesus was protected from Herod.

However, God also had another purpose for sending Jesus to Egypt. Hosea 11:1 says, “When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called My son.” The Jews understood that God had called Israel from the land of Egypt through Moses. Here we see that God had a greater purpose for that statement that could only be fulfilled by Jesus. Throughout the Old Testament God caused many things to happen that pictured Jesus. These things later were used in the New Testament to point to Jesus. An example is found in Exodus 17:5-7 where Moses struck the rock and water came from it. In 1 Corinthians 10:4 we read, “And all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ.”

Matthew 2:16-18 goes on to say, “Then Herod, when he saw that he was deceived by the wise men, was exceedingly angry; and he sent forth and put to death all the male children who were in Bethlehem and in all its districts, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had determined from the wise men. Then was fulfilled what was spoken by Jeremiah the

prophet, saying: “A voice was heard in Ramah, Lamentation, weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, refusing to be comforted, because they are no more.” We see that Herod became extremely angry when the wise men did not return to tell him where to find Jesus. Then we see the fear and evil in the heart of Herod.

In his fear Herod ordered the death of all of the male children in Bethlehem and the surrounding area from two years of age and under. The reason why he chose the age of two was due to the questions that Herod had asked the wise men. These verses show that Herod had asked the wise men several questions about the star. The wise men had made this trip based on the statement in Numbers 24:17 where we read, “I see Him, but not now; I behold Him, but not near; a Star shall come out of Jacob; a Scepter shall rise out of Israel, and batter the brow of Moab, and destroy all the sons of tumult.” This verse said that a Star would come from the descendents of Jacob. A Scepter was what a king used as he ruled. As a result, that was why the wise men came to Jerusalem seeking Jesus. Apparently Herod asked the wise men when they had first seen the star. It took the men time to get ready to travel. Then it took them additional time for the trip. As a result, to make sure that he killed this potential threat to his rule, Herod ordered the death of all of the male children that were two years of age and under.

Matthew saw that this murder of the young children fulfilled the prophecy written several hundred years earlier by Jeremiah, the prophet. Jeremiah 31:15 says, “Thus says the LORD: “A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation and bitter weeping, Rachel weeping for her children, refusing to be comforted for her children, because they are no more.” Chapter 31 in Jeremiah talks about when the Lord will bring the scattered nation of Israel back from the places where they were scattered. That part of the chapter will be fulfilled by Christ with His second coming to rule on the earth. However, this verse was fulfilled at the first coming of Jesus because He came to die and rise again. This was necessary in order for Him to restore the nation of Israel when he comes to fulfill the thousand year rule of Christ promised in Revelation 20:4-6.

Matthew 2:19-23 goes on to say, “Now when Herod was dead, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, saying, “Arise, take the young Child and His mother, and go to the land of Israel, for those who sought the young Child’s life are dead.” Then he arose, took the young Child and His mother, and came into the land of Israel. But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning over Judea instead of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. And being warned by God in a dream, he turned aside into the region of Galilee. And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, “He shall be called a Nazarene.” Here we see that an angel appeared to Joseph in another dream to let him know that Herod had died and Joseph, Mary and Jesus could return to the land of Israel.

We see that Joseph was obedient and took the family and made the return trip to the land of Israel. However, when Joseph, Mary and Jesus got close to the land of Israel one of the people that they met told them that Archelaus, the son of Herod, had replaced his father as the Roman ruler over the area of Judea. The area that Herod ruled had been divided between three of the sons of Herod so that they ruled various parts. That meant that Archelaus was ruling in Jerusalem over the entire region of Judea which included the town of Bethlehem since that town was less than five miles south of Jerusalem. That caused Joseph to be afraid to go there because Archelaus was just as evil as his father.

However, God gave Joseph one more dream to guide Joseph. In this dream God told Joseph not to return to Bethlehem. We see in the first two chapters of Matthew that God guided Joseph with four different dreams. God spoke to many different individuals in the Old Testament through dreams. That was necessary because Old Testament believers had not received the Holy Spirit. Jesus told His disciples the night before His crucifixion in John 14:26, “But the

Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.” Later that evening Jesus said in John 16:13, “However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come.” God guided Joseph with dreams because the Holy Spirit had not yet been given.

We saw that God had allowed Caesar Augustus, the Roman emperor, to order everyone to return to the home of their ancestors to register for taxes so that was why Mary and Joseph were in Bethlehem when Jesus was born. However, before that Luke 1:26-27 says, “Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin’s name was Mary.” Here we see that Mary and Joseph had actually been living in the town of Nazareth before Jesus was born. As a result, Joseph decided to return to Nazareth which was located in the region of Galilee.

The word Nazarene is not mentioned in the Old Testament. However, Isaiah 53:3 says, “He is despised and rejected by men, a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised, and we did not esteem Him.” The John 1:46 says, “And Nathanael said to him, ‘Can anything good come out of Nazareth?’ Philip said to him, ‘Come and see.’” Here we see that the people of Nazareth were despised by Jews from other places. Jesus was born in a barn and here we see that He grew up in a town where the people were despised and rejected. God chose these places so that the despised and rejected would feel accepted by Jesus. In the same way we want to help our physical and spiritual children realize that Jesus came to provide salvation for every person including those who are despised and rejected by many. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to reach out to those who have been rejected by society.

John the Baptist Prepared the People for the Coming of Jesus

In our last topic, we see that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn how the Lord worked to protect Jesus when Herod tried to destroy Him. Matthew does not tell us about any of the other events of the life of Jesus until it was time for Him to begin His public ministry. In this topic we are going to see that John the Baptist was sent to tell the Jews to prepare their hearts for the coming of the Messiah.

Matthew 3:1-3 says, “In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, and saying, ‘Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!’ For this is he who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah, saying: ‘The voice of one crying in the wilderness: ‘Prepare the way of the LORD; make His paths straight.’” Luke 1 tells us that John the Baptist was the son of Zacharias and Elizabeth, a relative of Mary. He was six months older than Jesus. When John the Baptist was about thirty years old these verses tell us that he began to preach in the wilderness of Judea. This was the area on the west side of the Jordan River close to where that river runs into the Dead Sea.

The message of John was, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!” The word “repent” means to have a change of mind for the better and causes a person to turn from sin and to turn to God. 1 Thessalonians 1:9 says, “For they themselves declare concerning us what manner of entry we had to you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God.” Here we see that this change of mind causes a person to turn from sin and idols to God. This change of mind for the better also causes a person to begin to serve the living and true God.

The kingdom of heaven (kingdom of God in all books other than Matthew) means that in the present Christ is ruling in our hearts and some day in the future Christ will rule on the earth for a thousand years. Luke 17:20-21 says, “Now when He was asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, He answered them and said, ‘The kingdom of God does not come with observation; nor will they say, ‘See here!’ or ‘See there!’ For indeed, the kingdom of God is within you.’” Then Revelation 20:4-6 says, “And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years.”

We also see that Isaiah had described the ministry of John the Baptist when he wrote in Isaiah 40:3, “The voice of one crying in the wilderness: ‘Prepare the way of the LORD; make straight in the desert a highway for our God.’” In the time of Isaiah it was common when a king was going to visit another area to send a messenger several weeks in advance so that the people of each town could prepare the road by smoothing out the bumps and filling the holes in the road. Instead of preparing the roads, John the Baptist was sent to tell the people to prepare their hearts for the coming of Jesus.

Matthew 3:4-6 goes on to say, “Now John himself was clothed in camel’s hair, with a leather belt around his waist; and his food was locusts and wild honey. Then Jerusalem, all Judea, and all the region around the Jordan went out to him and were baptized by him in the Jordan, confessing their sins.” Here we see that John wore some rather unusual clothing and ate some

rather unusual food. His clothing was made from the hair of camels. Camel's hair makes clothing that lasts a long time but also does not feel comfortable and can really make a person itch.

The leather belt around his waist was like the one worn by Elijah. 2 Kings 1:7-8 says, "Then he said to them, 'What kind of man was it who came up to meet you and told you these words?' So they answered him, 'A hairy man wearing a leather belt around his waist.' And he said, 'It is Elijah the Tishbite.'" The people of Israel were looking for Elijah to come because the last two verses in the Old Testament found in Malachi 4:5-6 say, "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD. And he will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the earth with a curse." Malachi was the last of the Old Testament prophets so there had been no Word from God to the people of Israel for 400 years so they were looking for Elijah to come.

Since John the Baptist was preaching in a desert area he ate the food that he could find in the desert. We see that his food was mostly locusts and wild honey. Locusts are large grasshoppers and the Jews were allowed to eat them as food. Israel was not allowed to eat most insects. However, Leviticus 11:22 says, "These you may eat: the locust after its kind, the destroying locust after its kind, the cricket after its kind, and the grasshopper after its kind." Wild honey was also easy to find in the desert. Judges 14:8 says, "After some time, when he returned to get her, he turned aside to see the carcass of the lion. And behold, a swarm of bees and honey were in the carcass of the lion." Wild bees will find anything they can to use as a place to swarm and make their honey. As a result, John the Baptist just had to look for a swarm of bees and he was able to find honey.

People came to hear John the Baptist from Jerusalem, Judea and the entire surrounding region. Luke 3:3 says, "And he went into all the region around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins." For many years Gentiles who became a part of Judaism had been baptized to show that they were repenting from their false religions and turning to the worship of the true and living God. However, John was preaching his message to the Jews. This meant that the Jews who were being baptized by John recognized that they were religious but had never repented of their sin. This same thing is true of many people today. Here we see that the people were confessing their sins. This meant that the baptism of John was different from the Old Testament baptism of the Jews. It was also different than the baptism of followers of Jesus after the Day of Pentecost as Acts 19:3-5 says, "And he said to them, 'Into what then were you baptized?' So they said, 'Into John's baptism.' Then Paul said, 'John indeed baptized with a baptism of repentance, saying to the people that they should believe on Him who would come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus.'" When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus." The baptism of John was a baptism of repentance.

Matthew 3:7-10 says, "But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, 'Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance, and do not think to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as *our* father.' For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones. And even now the ax is laid to the root of the trees. Therefore every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.'" John recognized that some of those coming to hear what he was preaching were Pharisees or Sadducees. Both of these groups were small. However, they had a powerful influence in Israel because the high priests were Sadducees and controlled the temple. Most of the men on the Sanhedrin were either Pharisees or Sadducees. The Pharisees added their own traditions to the Law. In contrast, the Sadducees only accepted the books of Moses and denied the resurrection and other miracles.

John was not afraid to confront these religious leaders and show that their teachings were false

and that these men were hypocrites. He called both groups “vipers” which are very poisonous snakes. John asked them who had warned them to flee from the wrath to come? Then he said that if their faith was genuine that they would show that they had genuine faith by changed actions that showed that there was true repentance in their hearts. James later wrote a similar thing in James 2:17-20 where we read, “Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. But someone will say, ‘You have faith, and I have works.’ Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe—and tremble! But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead?” Both John the Baptist and later James made it clear that true repentance will cause a person to have changed actions.

The Pharisees and Sadducees both thought that God favored them because they were descendents of Abraham and looked to him as the father of the Jews. John made it clear that God has no grandchildren. Any person is either a true child of God because he or she has come to the Father through Christ or that person will not have eternal life. John 1:12 says, “But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name.” Then John 14:6 adds, “Jesus said to him, ‘I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.’” Then John the Baptist gave two additional warnings. First, John said that God could raise up children for Abraham from the stones that were lying around them on the ground. Second, John said that the ax was already being used to cut the root of the trees. Just a little over 40 years later the city of Jerusalem was destroyed and only those who escaped before the Romans attacked the city survived. The Pharisees and Sadducees did not bear good fruit because their works were evil and so they faced eternal judgment. We want to help our physical and spiritual children understand the warning that Jesus gave to these religious leaders because there are many like them today. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to explain this warning about judgment.

Jesus was Baptized by John the Baptist

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain the warning about judgment given to the Pharisees and Sadducees by John the Baptist. In this topic we will see that John finished that warning by explaining that the One that was coming after him would either baptize people with the Holy Spirit or He would baptize them with fire (which we will see means eternal judgment).

John the Baptist explained the difference between his baptism and the baptism with which Jesus would baptize. Matthew 3:11-12 says, “I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fan *is* in His hand, and He will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor, and gather His wheat into the barn; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.” John said that his baptism was a baptism of repentance. Repentance is explained in 1 Thessalonians 1:9 where we read, “For they themselves declare concerning us what manner of entry we had to you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God.” The idols of many of the Jews were their works which many of the Jews thought would make them acceptable to God. They were baptized by John to show their repentance.

In contrast, John said that the One coming after him was much greater than he was. John said that he did not even feel worthy to carry the sandals of that One. John said that One would actually have two different baptisms. One of those baptisms would be with the Holy Spirit and the other would be with fire. The difference between these two baptisms is then explained in the next verse because one is for those who repent and place their faith in Jesus and the other baptism is for those who do not believe.

First, we see that those who are baptized with the Holy Spirit are compared to wheat. In that day the people would cut their wheat and bring it to the threshing floor. The threshing floor was usually on the top of a hill where the ground had been made hard and smooth. The wheat would be placed on the smooth threshing floor and then the cattle would walk over the wheat to break the kernels of wheat free from the straw. The straw would then be stacked to the side of the threshing floor. Then in the evening when there was a good breeze blowing the wheat would be thrown into the air so that the tiny pieces of straw called chaff could be blown away and the kernels of wheat would fall back on threshing floor and would then be gathered and taken to the barn. Jesus will gather all believers and take us to heaven.

Jesus promised this baptism with the Holy Spirit to all believers when He told the disciples the night before His crucifixion in John 14:16-17, “And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever—the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you.” The original believers were baptized with the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost. In Acts 8 the Samaritans, in Acts 10 the Gentiles and in Acts 19 the Old Testament saints received the Holy Spirit as a group. From the time these groups first received the Holy Spirit all believers receive the Holy Spirit at the moment of salvation. Romans 8:9 says, “But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His.” We are baptized with the Holy Spirit at salvation.

Second, those who do not believe are compared to chaff. The chaff was not gathered into the

barn. Instead the chaff was burned with fire. John said here in Matthew 3:12 that Jesus will “burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.” This is the eternal judgment described in Revelation 20:15 where we read, “And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.” As we pray for people who are still like chaff, we want to pray that the Holy Spirit will convict them (John 16:8-11), the Father will draw them (John 6:44) because the Son came to seek and save them (Luke 19:10).

One day while John the Baptist was in the wilderness, Jesus came to the place where he was preaching. Matthew 3:13-15 says, “Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan to be baptized by him. And John *tried to* prevent Him, saying, ‘I need to be baptized by You, and are You coming to me?’ But Jesus answered and said to him, ‘Permit *it to be so* now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.’ Then he allowed Him.” Here we see that Jesus asked John to baptize Him. John knew that Jesus was God and told Jesus that that he needed to be baptized by Jesus instead. He then asked Jesus why Jesus was coming to him. John had said that he was not even worthy to carry the sandals of Jesus. He realized that Jesus was so much greater that he was totally unworthy for Jesus to even come to the place where he was baptizing. He had said that his baptism was a baptism of repentance and Jesus certainly did not need to repent.

Then Jesus explained to John why He asked John to baptize Him. Jesus said, “Permit *it to be so* now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.” The key word in this statement is “us”. Jesus chose to identify Himself with all sinners because He came to bear our sins and die for all of us. 1 Peter 2:24 says, “Who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness—by whose stripes you were healed.” Jesus bore our sins in His own body on the cross. Romans 6:3-4 says, “Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.” At the moment of repentance and faith we became full partakers of His death and were released from the power of death. That is what now makes it possible for us to live for righteousness.

Once Jesus explained to John the reason why He asked to be baptized, John baptized Him. Mark 1:9 says, “It came to pass in those days that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized by John in the Jordan.” Here we see that Jesus was baptized in the Jordan River. Matthew 3:16-17 then goes on to say, “When He had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him. And suddenly a voice *came* from heaven, saying, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” In these verses, we see that the Father also had another purpose for the baptism of Jesus by John.

Here we see that both the Father and the Holy Spirit identified themselves with Jesus at the time of His baptism. As soon as Jesus came up out of the water we see that the heavens were opened to Him. The word translated “opened” is used 77 times in the New Testament. These include times when Jesus opened the eyes of those blind, when He opened His mouth to speak, when the wise men opened their treasures, when prison doors were opened, when people open the door to invite Jesus into their lives (Revelation 3:20) and many other times when something was opened. In Acts 7:56 Stephen spoke, “And said, ‘Look! I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!’” As a result, we see that God did something that was very obvious to Jesus, to John and to anyone else that was there when He opened the heavens.

From this opening in the heavens the Holy Spirit descended like a dove and landed on Jesus. Luke 3:22 says, “And the Holy Spirit descended in bodily form like a dove upon Him, and a

voice came from heaven which said, “You are My beloved Son; in You I am well pleased.” Here we see that the Holy Spirit had a bodily form that looked like a dove. This made it possible for John the Baptist and the others who were there to see or hear all three members of the Trinity. Jesus had just walked up out of the water. The Holy Spirit came in the form of a dove and landed on Jesus. Then the Father spoke from heaven. The Father was not seen because in Exodus 33:20 the Father said, “But He said, ‘You cannot see My face; for no man shall see Me, and live.’” Stephen did see the Father in the verse mentioned in the previous paragraph but that was just before his death. Here the Father spoke from heaven so that John and the others heard Him speak and at the same time saw Jesus with the Holy Spirit sitting on Him in the form of a dove.

Then the Father spoke from heaven and said, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” Here we see that John and the others who were there that day heard the Father publicly identify Jesus as His Son at the very beginning of His public ministry. We also see that the Father publicly responded to Jesus again in the last week before Jesus went to the cross. John 12:27-28 says, “Now My soul is troubled, and what shall I say? ‘Father, save Me from this hour’? But for this purpose I came to this hour. Father, glorify Your name.’ Then a voice came from heaven, *saying*, ‘I have both glorified *it* and will glorify *it* again.’” The Father made it clear that Jesus is His Son.

Meanwhile Luke 4:1 tells us, “Then Jesus, being filled with the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness.” Here we see that Jesus showed us how to live for righteousness. At any moment that we are yielding our human spirit to the Holy Spirit Ephesians 5:18 says, “And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit.” When we yield our human spirit to the Holy Spirit we make it possible for His power to work in us and the love of Jesus to flow through us. This is a key lesson that we want to help our physical and spiritual children to understand. In our own power we can do nothing. At all times that we yield to the Holy Spirit, His power works through us. That is what makes it possible for us to live for righteousness. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your children how to live for righteousness in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus was Tempted in the Wilderness

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children understand what it means to live for righteousness by yielding to the Holy Spirit moment by moment so that His power works in us and makes it possible for the love of Jesus to flow through us. In our topic today, we are going to see that Jesus shows us how to have victory over temptation.

We read the first thing that Jesus did after He was baptized by John the Baptist. Matthew 4:1-4 says, “Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, afterward He was hungry. Now when the tempter came to Him, he said, ‘If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread.’ But He answered and said, ‘It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.’” In our last topic, we saw that Jesus was filled with the Holy Spirit. Here we see that Jesus was tempted (tested) by Satan in the wilderness. This testing came after forty days of fasting.

The word translated “tempted” can be used in either a good or a bad sense. Jesus showed that God always uses this word in a good sense when He tests us. John 6:5-7 says, “Then Jesus lifted up His eyes, and seeing a great multitude coming toward Him, He said to Philip, ‘Where shall we buy bread, that these may eat?’ But this He said to test him, for He Himself knew what He would do. Philip answered Him, ‘Two hundred denarii worth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may have a little.’” In contrast, the goal of Satan is always to get us to do evil. James 1:13-15 says, “Let no one say when he is tempted, ‘I am tempted by God’; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone. But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.” Here we see that temptation comes from within.

There are only three ways that Satan can tempt us as we see that Satan tempted Jesus in the same three ways that he tempted Adam and Eve. 1 John 2:16 says, “For all that *is* in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world.” First, let us look at the way the serpent tempted Adam and Eve. Genesis 3:4-6 says, “Then the serpent said to the woman, ‘You will not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.’ So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate.” God had said they would die. Satan showed that he is the father of lies by saying, “You will not surely die.” This meant that Adam and Eve had to choose to believe God or to believe Satan.

Once Eve believed Satan, her own desires took over and she was enticed (means to catch by bait). The bait was his statement that “you will be like God”. First, the lust of the flesh – she saw the tree was good for food. Second, the lust of the eyes – she saw that it was pleasant to the eyes. Third, the pride of life – she heard it was a tree desirable to make one wise (like God). She took it and started to eat and gave some to Adam since the verse says he was with her and he joined her in eating the fruit. Jesus is going to show us in these verses that He had victory in the same three areas where Adam and Eve were tempted and committed sin.

Satan came with his first temptation when he said, “If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread.” Satan was trying to get Jesus to satisfy a normal human desire –

the desire for food when one is hungry. However, in this case it was an appeal to the lust of the flesh. Jesus showed us the way to have victory over temptation by the way that He responded. Jesus quoted the Word of God as He quoted the last part of Deuteronomy 8:3 which says, “So He humbled you, allowed you to hunger, and fed you with manna which you did not know nor did your fathers know, that He might make you know that man shall not live by bread alone; but man lives by every *word* that proceeds from the mouth of the LORD.” Here we see that Jesus had victory in the first area where Adam and Eve were enticed because the Word of God was His authority and He quoted it to show that the temptation of Satan did not agree with the Word of God.

This led to the second temptation of Satan. Matthew 4:5-7 says, “Then the devil took Him up into the holy city, set Him on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to Him, ‘If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down. For it is written: ‘He shall give His angels charge over you,’ and, ‘In their hands they shall bear you up, Lest you dash your foot against a stone.’” Jesus said to him, “It is written again, ‘You shall not tempt the LORD your God.’” This time we see that Satan tried to deceive Jesus by also quoting from Psalm 91:11-12. 2 Peter 3:16 says, “As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable *people* twist to their own destruction, as *they do* also the rest of the Scriptures.” Unlearned speaks of those who are ignorant of Scripture. Unstable means those who are unstable and easily deceived. As 2 Peter 2:14 talks about false teachers, it says, “Having eyes full of adultery and that cannot cease from sin, enticing unstable souls. They have a heart trained in covetous practices, and are accursed children.” Satan uses false teachers to try to entice (to catch by bait) people who are untaught or unstable and easily deceived.

Satan took Jesus to the pinnacle of the temple. The pinnacle was either the top of the temple or a porch on the southeast corner of the temple. If it was the top of the temple it was about 65 feet above the courtyard of the temple. If it was the porch on the southeast corner of temple, that corner of the temple had a 450 foot drop deep into the Kidron Valley. Either place would be a drop that would severely injure or kill most people. Satan was appealing to the pride of Jesus by saying that everyone would be amazed when He was not hurt. This time Jesus quoted from Deuteronomy 6:16 which says, “You shall not tempt the LORD your God as you tempted *Him* in Massah.” Jesus defeated Satan when Satan tried to tempt Jesus with pride.

Satan only had one more form of temptation that he had used to deceive Adam and Eve. Matthew 4:8-11 says, “Again, the devil took Him up on an exceedingly high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. And he said to Him, ‘All these things I will give You if You will fall down and worship me.’ Then Jesus said to him, ‘Away with you, Satan! For it is written, ‘You shall worship the LORD your God, and Him only you shall serve’.’ Then the devil left Him, and behold, angels came and ministered to Him.” Here we see that Satan was trying to tempt Jesus with the lust of the eyes. Satan was not going to quit until he had tried every possible temptation.

Satan took Jesus to a very high mountain. From that mountain Satan showed Jesus all of the kingdoms throughout the world and the glory of each of those kingdoms. Then Satan made an offer to Jesus. He said, “All these things I will give You if You will fall down and worship me.” Satan was actually offering Jesus the kingdoms of the world without having to go to the cross to pay the penalty for sin. In the Garden of Gethsemane the night before His crucifixion Jesus prayed in Matthew 26:39 to the Father, “He went a little farther and fell on His face, and prayed, saying, ‘O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will.’” Jesus said that if there was any other way possible for our sin to be paid for other than the cross for the Father to pay for our sin in that way.

It was not the suffering that Jesus wanted to avoid. Instead it was the separation from the Father during the hours that Jesus had our sin placed on Him. That is why Matthew 27:45-46 says, “Now from the sixth hour until the ninth hour there was darkness over all the land. And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, ‘Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?’ that is, ‘My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?’” Satan hoped that this would be a possible way to tempt Jesus by offering Him all of the kingdoms of the world without the cross. The real desire of Satan was to get Jesus to obey him. However, the cross had a greater purpose for God as it related to Satan. John 16:11 says, “Of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.” When Jesus said on the cross, “It is finished!”, that included more than just the payment for our sin. It also determined that the judgment of Satan had been completed so he is like a person on death row who is waiting for the sentence to be completed. Revelation 20:10 says, “The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet *are*. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.” All those who continue in unbelief will share with Satan in that judgment because Revelation 20:15 says, “And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.”

Jesus answered this temptation of Satan in the same way that He had answered the others. Deuteronomy 6:13-14 says, “You shall fear the LORD your God and serve Him, and shall take oaths in His name. You shall not go after other gods, the gods of the peoples who are all around you.” Here Deuteronomy says, “You shall fear the LORD your God; you shall serve Him, and to Him you shall hold fast, and take oaths in His name.” We see that Jesus defeated Satan and his third form of temptation. Satan was then forced to leave Jesus. Jesus had victory in each area where Adam and Eve had been tempted and sinned. Jesus had used only the book of Deuteronomy. He still had the rest of the Old Testament if Satan came back with other temptations. When the devil left Jesus, we read that the angels came and ministered to Him. We want to show our physical and spiritual children by our example how to have victory over each temptation that Satan may use. As we resist the devil with the Word of God and prayer, He will flee. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your children how to have victory over temptation.

Jesus Called His First Disciples

In our last topic, we saw that we want to show our physical and spiritual children how to have victory over Satan. We see that sharing Scripture and praying are the weapons that will defeat him. In this topic we are going to see that Jesus called His first disciples.

In Matthew 4:12-17 we read, “Now when Jesus heard that John had been put in prison, He departed to Galilee. And leaving Nazareth, He came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is by the sea, in the regions of Zebulun and Naphtali, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying: The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, by the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles: The people who sat in darkness have seen a great light, and upon those who sat in the region and shadow of death light has dawned.” From that time Jesus began to preach and to say, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” This statement makes it clear that the things in at least the first four chapters of John had already happened because John was still baptizing in John 4:1-3 says, “Therefore, when the Lord knew that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John (though Jesus Himself did not baptize, but His disciples), He left Judea and departed again to Galilee.”

We see that Jesus went back to His hometown of Nazareth for a period of time. Then He left Nazareth and settled in Capernaum. This was the hometown of Peter, Andrew, James, John and Matthew and so at least the first four had already known Jesus for several months. John 1:35-42 records the first time that Jesus met these men. Then John 2:12 says, “After this He went down to Capernaum, He, His mother, His brothers, and His disciples; and they did not stay there many days.” These and possibly a few others were probably the disciples who had gone with Jesus to the wedding in Cana. Here we see that Jesus had earlier also spent some time in Capernaum before He and a group of the disciples went to Jerusalem for the Passover.

We see that this move by Jesus to Capernaum was to fulfill the prophecy of Isaiah 9:1-2 which says, “Nevertheless the gloom will not be upon her who is distressed, as when at first He lightly esteemed the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, and afterward more heavily oppressed her, by the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, in Galilee of the Gentiles. The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in the land of the shadow of death, upon them a light has shined.” Here we see that Jesus fulfilled the prophecy that said that this area of Galilee was in spiritual darkness and that Jesus came to bring light to this area. Jesus also began to preach publicly and His message was the same as the message of John the Baptist. John said in Matthew 3:2 and Jesus said in Matthew 4:17, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” Jesus also taught His disciples the importance of preaching repentance. Mark 6:12 says, “So they went out and preached that people should repent.”

We read what Jesus did one day as He was walking by the Sea of Galilee. Matthew 4:18-22 says, “And Jesus, walking by the Sea of Galilee, saw two brothers, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen. Then He said to them, “Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.” They immediately left *their* nets and followed Him. Going on from there, He saw two other brothers, James *the son* of Zebedee, and John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets. He called them, and immediately they left the boat and their father, and followed Him.” Jesus had invited these men to come and get acquainted with Him nearly a year earlier when two of these men asked Jesus where He was staying. Jesus said in John 1:39, “He said to them, “Come and see.” They came and saw where He was staying, and remained with Him that day (now it was about the tenth

hour). That earlier call was a call to get acquainted. This was a call to learn how to serve.

We see how these four men responded to that call to learn how to serve. Peter and Andrew immediately left their nets and followed Him. Then we see that James and John immediately left the boat and their father and followed Him. During the previous year these men had been with Jesus to a variety of places and had seen what He taught and what He did. John 2:11 says, “This beginning of signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, and manifested His glory; and His disciples believed in Him.” When Jesus cleansed the temple John 2:17 says, “Then His disciples remembered that it was written, ‘Zeal for Your house has eaten Me up.’” John 3:22 says, “After these things Jesus and His disciples came into the land of Judea, and there He remained with them and baptized.” They later returned from Judea with Jesus and passed through Samaria where Jesus met the woman at the well near the city of Sychar.

Jesus used that opportunity to begin to expand the vision of these men. The men went into the city and came back with food. When they returned the woman was talking to Jesus. She then left and went back into the city. While she was gone the disciples asked Jesus to eat. Jesus said that He had food which they did not know about. John 4:33-35 says, “Therefore the disciples said to one another, ‘Has anyone brought Him anything to eat?’ Jesus said to them, ‘My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work. Do you not say, ‘There are still four months and then comes the harvest’? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest.’” Then John 4:38 adds, “I sent you to reap that for which you have not labored; others have labored, and you have entered into their labors.” The disciples went into the city and all they found was food. The woman went into the city and returned with many people that believed. When the people heard Jesus, John 4:41 says, “And many more believed because of His own word.” The disciples did not know how to fish for men.

We see that these four men were all fishermen. As a result Jesus said, “Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.” Here we see that they were given an invitation that fit their background. They knew how to fish for fish. Now Jesus gave them an invitation to follow Him. He promised them that He would show them how to fish for men. We see that Jesus was going to teach His disciples by His example. Here we see that Jesus knew that the best way to teach people how to share the Gospel was by example. Mark 1:35-39 tells what happened the next morning. Those verses say, “Now in the morning, having risen a long while before daylight, He went out and departed to a solitary place; and there He prayed. And Simon and those *who were* with Him searched for Him. When they found Him, they said to Him, “Everyone is looking for You.” But He said to them, ‘Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also, because for this purpose I have come forth.’ And He was preaching in their synagogues throughout all Galilee, and casting out demons.” Jesus was showing them how to fish for men.

Matthew 4:23-25 tells us more about what Jesus did. Those verses say, “And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease among the people. Then His fame went throughout all Syria; and they brought to Him all sick people who were afflicted with various diseases and torments, and those who were demon-possessed, epileptics, and paralytics; and He healed them. Great multitudes followed Him—from Galilee, and *from* Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea, and beyond the Jordan.” Here we see the things that Jesus did as He taught them how to fish for men.

First, Jesus was teaching in their synagogues. When Jerusalem was destroyed in 586 B.C., the Jews decided that if they were going to survive as a people that it would only happen if they got together and studied the Old Testament. As a result, they decided that any village that had ten Jewish men had to build a synagogue where the Jews could gather daily for prayer and teach

both the adults and the children to read the Old Testament. The synagogues also became the place where they worshiped on the Sabbath. As a result, these were the gathering places where Jews met together throughout the week wherever they lived. On the Sabbath seven to nine men and teenage boys would each read a passage from the Old Testament and then someone would usually teach. The Gospels and the book of Acts show that Jesus and His followers were often given the opportunity as visitors to teach in the synagogues. Throughout Galilee there were many towns and villages with one or more synagogues. They were just one room but they had benches around the walls and the rest of the people would stand or sit on the floor.

Second, Jesus preached the Gospel of the kingdom wherever He and the disciples went. The disciples listened as Jesus taught and preached in many synagogues and learned what to share. They learned how to explain the Gospel of the kingdom. They heard the questions that were asked and saw how Jesus answered those questions. Then Jesus would often give more explanation to the disciples when He and the disciples were alone. Mark 4:10-11 says, "But when He was alone, those around Him with the twelve asked Him about the parable. And He said to them, "To you it has been given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God; but to those who are outside, all things come in parables." In this way the disciples were being taught to fish for men.

Third, Jesus verified His message and showed that He came from God by "healing all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease among the people." Word quickly spread throughout the entire surrounding area of Syria, Judea, Galilee and other nearby regions. They started to bring all kinds of people that were sick, diseased, suffering from various torments or demon possessed to be healed by Jesus. As a result, great crowds of people began to follow Jesus. We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to understand how Jesus showed His disciples to become fishers of men so that they can show others how to share the Gospel in the same way. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your children how to equip others to share the Gospel.

Jesus Taught His Disciples on the Mountain

In our last topic, we saw that we want to show our physical and spiritual children how to become fishers of men in the same way that Jesus showed His disciples how to become fishers of men. In this topic we will see what Jesus taught one day as Jesus was teaching His disciples on a mountain because of the crowds of people that were coming.

Jesus saw the crowds coming to hear Him from many of the surrounding areas in addition to those coming from Galilee. Matthew 5:1-4 says, “And seeing the multitudes, He went up on a mountain, and when He was seated His disciples came to Him. Then He opened His mouth and taught them, saying: “Blessed *are* the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed *are* those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.” Here we see something that Jesus often did when large crowds came to hear Him. He would either go to the mountains or to the seashore because mountains and water both carry sound and that makes it possible for those at the back of a large crowd to hear. We also see that Jesus did what most Jewish teachers did as He sat down to teach even though there was a large crowd. When Jesus sat down we see that His disciples came and gathered around Him. This meant He was primarily teaching His disciples and the crowd was being given the opportunity to listen. Then Jesus began to teach. We see that Jesus began this sermon by talking about nine groups that could look forward to blessing. The word translated “blessed” means “*blessed or happy*”. This happiness is not just a feeling. In John 13:16-17 we read, “Most assuredly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master; nor is he who is sent greater than he who sent him. If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them.” Here we see that such happiness is much more than just a feeling. Jesus had just washed the feet of the disciples and said that He had given them an example to follow. We will have a desire to follow the example of Christ if we are His true followers. Here we see that action will give us a real inner sense of blessing because we are modeling godly character.

First, Jesus said, “Blessed *are* the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” The phrase “poor in spirit” means to be poor, needy or powerless to reach a goal. A person who is “poor in spirit” realizes that he or she has nothing to offer in self. Instead the total dependence of such a person is on the Lord. Jesus said in John 15:5, “I am the vine, you *are* the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.” When we realize that we can do nothing in ourselves, we realize that we must abide in Christ and yield our human spirit to the Holy Spirit so that He can work in us and through us. Then we will experience blessing and peace. We can also look forward to being in the kingdom of heaven.

Second, Jesus said, “Blessed *are* those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.” The word translated “mourn” means “*to have true sorrow for sin*”. David said in Psalm 51:17, “The sacrifices of God *are* a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart—These, O God, You will not despise.” Here we see that to mourn means to be broken in spirit and contrite in heart because of sin in a person’s life. Such an attitude toward sin will bring about restoration and blessing in the life of a Christian. 2 Corinthians 7:9-10 says, “Now I rejoice, not that you were made sorry, but that your sorrow led to repentance. For you were made sorry in a godly manner, that you might suffer loss from us in nothing. For godly sorrow produces repentance *leading* to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death.” In this case, a whole church experienced such blessing.

Matthew 5:5-8 says, “Blessed *are* the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed *are* those

who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled. Blessed *are* the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed *are* the pure in heart, for they shall see God.” Third, the word translated “meek” means “*gentleness of spirit*” and is used three times in the New Testament. Matthew 21:5 says, “Behold, your King is coming to you, lowly, and sitting on a donkey, a colt, the foal of a donkey.” Here we see that Jesus had a lowly (meek) attitude as He rode into Jerusalem on a donkey. 1 Peter 3:4 says, “Do not let your adornment be merely outward—arranging the hair, wearing gold, or putting on fine apparel—rather let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible beauty of a gentle (meek) and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God.” Here we see that a Christian who accepts opposition with a gentle spirit realizing that God is permitting whatever happens to develop godly character will experience great blessing.

Fourth, Jesus said, “Blessed *are* those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled.” The Pharisees were very self-righteous. In contrast, true righteousness means that we hunger and thirst for those things which are pleasing to God. In 2 Corinthians 5:21 we read, “For He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.” In this verse, we see that we received the righteousness of God at the time of salvation. Romans 6:19 says, “I speak in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members as slaves of uncleanness, and of lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves of righteousness for holiness.” When we yield our spirit to the Holy Spirit, we are slaves of righteousness and live a holy life that pleases God.

Fifth, Jesus said, “Blessed *are* the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.” Merciful means to show mercy to others. This word is used to describe Jesus in Hebrews 2:17 where we read, “Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.” Jesus had to become human like us but without sin so that He could pay the penalty for our sin. Propitiation means that which satisfies. When we sin, Satan accuses us to God. Jesus is our merciful High Priest who speaks for us and says, “I paid for the sin of that person and that person received Me.” The Father says, “I am satisfied with the payment.” That is why Romans 8:1a says, “There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus.” Certainly we have obtained mercy.

Sixth, Jesus said, “Blessed *are* the pure in heart, for they shall see God.” Pure in heart speaks of one who is free from sin and guilt. 1 Timothy 1:5 says, “Now the purpose of the commandment is love from a pure heart, from a good conscience, and from sincere faith.” Here we see that one with a pure heart is led by love. Paul told Timothy how to be pure in heart in 2 Timothy 2:22 where we read, “Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.” Those with a pure heart can look forward to being with God for all eternity.

Matthew 5:9-12 says, “Blessed *are* the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God. Blessed *are* those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great *is* your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”

Seventh, Jesus said, “Blessed *are* the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.” It is important to understand the difference between a peacekeeper and a peacemaker. A peacekeeper gets between two people or nations who are fighting and keeps them apart. In contrast, a peacemaker makes peace between two people or nations and brings them back together. 2 Corinthians 5:18 says, “Now all things *are* of God, who has reconciled us to

Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation.” God brought us back together with Himself by Christ’s full payment for our sins so that those who receive Christ had all our sins blotted out and the sins that we commit today are no longer put to our account. God has now given us the opportunity and privilege to be peacemakers by sharing with others how they may have their sins blotted out.

Eighth, Jesus said, “Blessed *are* those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” Those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake are people who are persecuted for doing what is pleasing to God. In Acts 5:40-41 we read, “And they agreed with him, and when they had called for the apostles and beaten *them*, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. So they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name.” The apostles were beaten for preaching the message about the death and resurrection of Jesus. Instead of complaining they rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His’ name and they could look forward to spending eternity in heaven with Him.

Ninth, Jesus said, “Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great *is* your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.” Here we see that Jesus made it very personal. Revile means to speak evil. Persecute means to make us suffer. Speaking evil falsely means people are speaking lies about us. Jesus said that all of those things may happen to us for His sake. Instead of complaining, we can rejoice and be exceedingly glad. 1 Peter 2:21 says, “For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps.” Jesus gave us His example to follow when He suffered for us in our place for our sins. In the same way we want to help our physical and spiritual children understand that they can look forward to the blessing of the Lord if they develop the attitudes that are given in these verses. They can also rejoice and be exceeding glad for the privilege of suffering for Jesus. May the Lord richly bless you as you provide your children an example of the fact that it is a privilege to suffer for Jesus.

Jesus said His Disciples are to be Salt and Light

In our last topic, we saw nine attitudes that we want to help our physical and spiritual children develop so that they can experience great blessing and joy from the Lord. In our topic today, we will see that Jesus taught His disciples that believers are to be salt and light on this earth. We will also see that Jesus taught that He came to fulfill the Law.

Jesus taught that we are to be salt and light. Matthew 5:13-16 says, “You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men. You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all *who are* in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.” Salt has many uses. Those uses show us what it means to be salt.

Three other verses tell us some of the things that salt does. Mark 9:50 says, “Salt is good, but if the salt loses its flavor, how will you season it? Have salt in yourselves, and have peace with one another.” Our lives are to give flavor to the lives of others as we meditate on the Word of God and bear the fruit of the Spirit. When our lives have the flavor of God, we will also have peace with one another. Luke 14:34 says, “Salt is good; but if the salt has lost its flavor, how shall it be seasoned?” Our lives will bring flavor to others as long as we have the flavor of God. Colossians 4:6 says, “Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one.” Here we see that we are always to speak with grace. We see that such speech will both preserve and help people to get answers from the Word of God to their questions.

Jesus went on to say that we are the light of the world. In Matthew 4:16 we read, “The people who sat in darkness have seen a great light, and upon those who sat in the region and shadow of death Light has dawned.” John 8:12 says, “Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, ‘I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life.’” John 9:5 adds, “As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.” Jesus brought Light to this world. Jesus was looking to the time when He would return to heaven and leave Christians to shine as His lights in this sinful world.

Philippians 2:14-15 explains what it means for us to be lights in the world. Those verses say, “Do all things without complaining and disputing, that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world.” The darker it is the brighter a light shines. Here we see that we are to be lights both by our words and our actions. Jesus gave two illustrations of what it means to be lights. He said that we are to be like a city on a hill that cannot be hidden. We are to be like a light that is put on a lampstand and not hidden under a basket. Jesus then said that we are to let our light shine before the people around us. Only as people see our good works will they be ready to listen to what we say. As they see that our works and our words agree they will be drawn to Jesus and will glorify our Father in heaven.

Matthew 5:17-18 says, “Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled.” Just a short time before Jesus was going to be condemned by the Jews and turned over to Pilate to be put to death, a lawyer that was also a Pharisee asked Jesus a question to test Jesus. We read that question and the answer of Jesus in Matthew 22:36-40 when the lawyer said, “Teacher, which is the great

commandment in the law?’ Jesus said to him, ‘You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.” Jesus explained why He did not come to destroy the Law or the Prophets in this answer to the lawyer. Instead Jesus came to fulfill the Law.

Jesus showed His perfect love for the Father by coming to do His will. John 6:38 says, “For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.” Then Jesus showed His perfect love for all people (neighbors) by dying for the sins of the whole world. 1 John 2:2 says, “And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world.” Jesus fulfilled the two commandments on which the entire Old Testament hangs. He is the One who could and did fulfill the Law and that meant that He was also the One who was able to pay the penalty for our sins.

He did fulfill the Law by living a perfect life that was without sin. He died on the Cross to pay the penalty for our sins. God showed that He was satisfied with the payment that Jesus made for our sins by raising Him from the dead. Colossians 2:13-14 says, “And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.” When we received Jesus we are made alive with Jesus. The fact that our sins were nailed to the cross was applied to our lives at the moment that we received Jesus’ payment for our sins by faith. That blotted out all of the sins that were written in the books mentioned in Revelation 20:12-13 that listed our sins before we became followers of Jesus.

We now stand before God as a new creation because we are in Christ. 2 Corinthians 5:17 says, “Therefore, if anyone *is* in Christ, *he is* a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.” Galatians 2:20 adds, “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.” This transformation that happened at the moment of salvation means that as Christians we are now dead to the Law. Galatians 3:24-25 says, “Therefore the law was our tutor *to bring us* to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor.” Christ did not destroy the Law. Instead He fulfilled it. As Christians we are now in Christ and no longer under the Law. It accomplished its purpose of bringing us to Christ. He is our sacrifice once for all and so we no longer have a need to offer any sacrifices.

Instead we are to present our bodies to Jesus as a living sacrifice. Romans 12:1-2 says, “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.” Our bodies have now become the temple of the Holy Spirit. 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 says, “Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s.” Here we see that we can now glorify God both with our body and with our human spirit. Jesus fulfilled the Law. He went on to promise that not even the smallest part of a letter like an apostrophe would pass from the law until all is fulfilled. We can expect everything in the Word of God to be fulfilled.

Then Matthew 5:19-20 says, “Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but

whoever does and teaches *them*, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. 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.” Here we see that those who try to earn their way to heaven by keeping the Law instead of being in Christ would have to keep the law perfectly. Galatians 3:10 says, “For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, ‘Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them.’” In contrast, Galatians 3:13-14 says, “Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, ‘Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree’), that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.”

The scribes and Pharisees said that they followed the Law. We will see that Jesus went on later in His sermon to explain specific commandments. They thought that their own righteousness would certainly get them to heaven. Jesus had explained to Nicodemus several months earlier in John 3:3-5, “Jesus answered and said to him, ‘Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.’ Nicodemus said to Him, ‘How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born?’ Jesus answered, ‘Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.’” Nicodemus lacked spiritual understanding. A person would need to keep the Law perfectly in order to fulfill it. Jesus is the only one who ever did or will keep the Law perfectly. As a result, those who depend on their own works will not be in the kingdom of heaven.

We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain why Jesus was the only One who could fulfill the Law. Then we want to help them learn to explain to others that the only way that they can be righteous is by repenting of their sin of unbelief and receiving by faith the righteousness that Jesus has provided. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to explain these things.

Jesus Explained the Importance of Reconciliation

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain to others that the only way that they can be righteous is by repenting of their sin of unbelief and receiving the righteousness of Jesus by faith. In this topic we will see that Jesus began to explain the true meaning of various commandments.

Matthew 5:21-26 says, “You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not murder, and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment.’ But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment. And whoever says to his brother, ‘Raca!’ shall be in danger of the council. But whoever says, ‘You fool!’ shall be in danger of hell fire. Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift. Agree with your adversary quickly, while you are on the way with him, lest your adversary deliver you to the judge, the judge hand you over to the officer, and you be thrown into prison. Assuredly, I say to you, you will by no means get out of there till you have paid the last penny.” Jesus here explains Exodus 20:13.

Earlier rabbis had explained their interpretation of Exodus 20:13, “You shall not murder.” Those rabbis said that a person who committed murder would be in danger of judgment. That was true but was certainly not the full meaning of that commandment. Jesus went on to explain that murder begins in the heart. This heart attitude is shown by such things as anger against a person or insults such as calling a person Raca (Empty-headed) or calling a person a fool. Such anger or insults shows that the attitudes in the heart are sinful and could even eventually lead to murder of their character by words or to physical murder where the person is killed. Jesus said these attitudes lead to eternal judgment.

Jesus then went on to explain what a person needs to do when we realize that we have such attitudes in our heart. Jesus said if a person had said or done something to a brother that had offended the brother to go to the brother before offering a sacrifice. In the Old Testament the purpose of sacrifice was to cover sin until Christ came to pay the penalty to take away sin. We see that the person was to seek reconciliation with the brother even before offering the sacrifice. 1 John 3:18-21 says, “My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth. And by this we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before Him. For if our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and knows all things. Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence toward God.” In this verse, we see that words and actions are to go together. The act of seeking reconciliation shows that there is true repentance in the heart.

Jesus warned that if a person makes no effort to settle the conflict, especially a conflict regarding a debt, that the adversary might take the person to the judge. The judge would then hear the case and may agree that the adversary is correct. In that case, the judge would deliver the person to the officer who had charge of the prison. In that day they had a debtor’s prison where the person would have to work until he had paid off the debt. This is illustrated in Matthew 18:32-34 where we read, “Then his master, after he had called him, said to him, ‘You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you begged me. Should you not also have had compassion on your fellow servant, just as I had pity on you?’ And his master was angry, and delivered him to the torturers until he should pay all that was due to him.” These verses show us that the result of unresolved conflict can be very severe.

Jesus then went on to show that adultery also begins in the heart. Matthew 5:27-30 says, “You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart. If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast *it* from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and cast *it* from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell.” Exodus 20:14 says, “You shall not commit adultery.” The Jews could quote that commandment just as they quoted each of the commandments. However, Jesus went on to explain the full meaning of this commandment.

The word translated “lust” means “*to have a strong desire for something*”. In several cases, the word is used in a good sense. Jesus used this word when He said in Luke 22:15, “Then He said to them, ‘With fervent desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer.’” Here we see that Jesus had a strong desire to eat the Passover with His disciples before His crucifixion. In other cases this word is used in an evil sense. Galatians 5:17 says, “For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish.” In this case we see that our human flesh can have strong desires that are against the Holy Spirit. This happens when we are not walking in the Spirit or being led by the Spirit.

In our verses in Matthew this word is used in an evil sense. When a man looks at a woman that is not his wife to lust for her Jesus said that man has already committed adultery in his heart. When a man is not being led by the Holy Spirit and is not walking in the Holy Spirit his heart is exposed to the desires of the flesh. Romans 13:9 says, “For the commandments, ‘You shall not commit adultery,’ ‘You shall not murder,’ ‘You shall not steal,’ ‘You shall not bear false witness,’ ‘You shall not covet,’ and if there is any other commandment, are all summed up in this saying, namely, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’” In this verse, the word is translated “covet”. Here we see that a strong desire to violate any of the commands mentioned in this verse is the result of a lack of love for our neighbor. Jesus said that a strong sexual desire for a woman that is not his wife means that the man has already committed adultery in his heart. The same would be true for a woman to have such a desire for a man that is not her husband. In either case sin has happened in the heart.

Jesus went on to say that it would be better to lose an eye than to have a heart consumed by lust that would keep a person from repentance. The same would be true for a hand. It would be better to have the hand cut off than to have a heart consumed by lust so that it would keep a person from repentance. A heart attitude that keeps a person from coming to Jesus in repentance and faith has serious consequences for eternity. Again Jeremiah 17:9 says, “The heart *is* deceitful above all *things*, and desperately wicked; who can know it?” Galatians 5:13 reminds us as Christians, “For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not *use* liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.” True liberty will cause us to love and serve and not to lust for evil.

Matthew 5:31-32 says, “Furthermore it has been said, ‘Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.’ But I say to you that whoever divorces his wife for any reason except sexual immorality causes her to commit adultery; and whoever marries a woman who is divorced commits adultery.” The Jewish leaders had twisted the meaning of Deuteronomy 24:1-4 which says, “When a man takes a wife and marries her, and it happens that she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some uncleanness in her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce, puts *it* in her hand, and sends her out of his house, when she has departed from his house, and goes and becomes another man’s *wife*, if the latter husband detests her and writes her

a certificate of divorce, puts *it* in her hand, and sends her out of his house, or if the latter husband dies who took her as his wife, *then* her former husband who divorced her must not take her back to be his wife after she has been defiled; for that *is* an abomination before the LORD, and you shall not bring sin on the land which the LORD your God is giving you *as* an inheritance.”

In these verses we see that the verses are talking about defilement. The Old Testament penalty for adultery was stoning so it is not talking about a woman that committed adultery. Instead this was due to some other kind of uncleanness. In Matthew 19:3 we read, “The Pharisees also came to Him, testing Him, and saying to Him, ‘Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for *just* any reason?’” Jesus showed the misunderstanding of the Jewish leaders by His answer to their question. Matthew 19:7-8 says, “They said to Him, ‘Why then did Moses command to give a certificate of divorce, and to put her away?’ He said to them, ‘Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, permitted you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so.’” Jesus made it clear that Moses never commanded divorce but only permitted it because of the hardness of their hearts.

Jesus made it clear that immorality was the only Biblical reason that divorce was even allowed. He said that even then divorce was only permitted because of hardness of heart. Matthew 19:5-6 quotes from Genesis 2:24 to show the plan of God for marriage. Those verses say, “And said, ‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh’? So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate.” The world today has many hardhearted people who do not recognize the ideal that God has for marriage. That even includes some Christians. From the words of Jesus in Matthew 5:31-32 and 19:1-9 we see that divorce is only permitted for immorality but even that has never been the plan of God. The plan of God is for forgiveness. Ephesians 4:32 says, “And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.” God forgave all of our sins because of Christ. We want to help our physical and spiritual children help others learn to forgive one another because of Christ just as the Father forgives because of Christ. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to help others forgive one another.

Jesus Taught about Making Promises

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain to others the reason that we are to forgive. We also saw that Jesus explained the full meaning of some of the commandments. In our topic today, we are going to see that Jesus continued to explain the full meaning of some additional commandments.

In our last topic, we saw that sin begins in the heart and that the actions of a person are the result of what is in his or her heart. We begin this topic by seeing what Jesus said about taking vows or making oaths. Matthew 5:33-37 says, “Again you have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform your oaths to the Lord.’ But I say to you, do not swear at all: neither by heaven, for it is God’s throne; nor by the earth, for it is His footstool; nor by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. Nor shall you swear by your head, because you cannot make one hair white or black. But let your ‘Yes’ be ‘Yes,’ and your ‘No,’ ‘No.’ For whatever is more than these is from the evil one.” The Jews had made oaths something that was done regularly as a part of their casual talk and then were not keeping those casual promises.

As a result, we see that Jesus explained that a person was not to make casual promises that they did not intend to keep. There were several statements in the books written by Moses about vows and oaths. In Numbers 30:2 we read, “If a man makes a vow to the LORD, or swears an oath to bind himself by some agreement, he shall not break his word; he shall do according to all that proceeds out of his mouth.” In this verse and the rest of the chapter it talks about making vows to the Lord. If a man made a vow to the Lord we see that he was to keep that vow. If an unmarried woman made a vow to God and her father heard her make the vow, the father could disallow the vow if he did it that day. The same was true if a husband heard his wife make a vow and disallowed it that day. Otherwise all vows to the Lord were to be obeyed.

Then Deuteronomy 23:21-23 says, “When you make a vow to the LORD your God, you shall not delay to pay it; for the LORD your God will surely require it of you, and it would be sin to you. But if you abstain from vowing, it shall not be sin to you. That which has gone from your lips you shall keep and perform, for you voluntarily vowed to the LORD your God what you have promised with your mouth.” In these verses, we see that no one had to make vows to the Lord. However, if a person did make a vow to the Lord, that person was to keep that vow. Moses wrote that any oath or vow that a person made to the Lord must be kept or it would be a sin to that person. When Jesus was commanded to take an oath, Matthew 26:63-64 says, “But Jesus kept silent. And the high priest answered and said to Him, ‘I put You under oath by the living God: Tell us if You are the Christ, the Son of God!’ Jesus said to him, ‘*It is as you said.* Nevertheless, I say to you, hereafter you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven.’” Here we see that Jesus spoke under oath.

However, the Jews were doing something that was probably related to their interpretation of Leviticus 19:12 which reads, “And you shall not swear by My name falsely, nor shall you profane the name of your God: *I am* the LORD.” This verse made it clear that they would profane the name of God if they made a vow or an oath using His name and did not keep that vow. As a result, we see that they substituted several other words instead of using the name of God. They felt it was all right to make a casual oath and not keep it if they swore by heaven, by earth, by the city of Jerusalem or even by ones’ own head as long as they avoided using the name of God.

In these verses, we see that Jesus is telling the people that they are not to make casual vows by other things because all things have been created by God. To make an oath in the name of heaven was to swear by the throne of God. To make an oath in the name of the earth was to swear by the footstool of God. To swear by the city of Jerusalem was to swear by the city of the great King. In a passage that talks about Christ, Paul wrote in 1 Timothy 6:15, “which He will manifest in His own time, *He who is* the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords.” Jesus is the King of kings who will one day rule in Jerusalem for a thousand years. That would make an oath using Jerusalem an oath involving Jesus. Jesus told the people not even to swear by their own head because they could not change the color of one hair from black to white.

As a result, Jesus said that true obedience to the law would mean that they did not make any casual oaths at all. The Jews had a fear of God whether or not they had a true faith. As a result, they thought that if they swore by something other than the name of God that then they were free to break their oath because they did not need to fear God. Jesus made it clear that to use something that God created to make an oath and then break the oath was just a way to cover the sinful desires of the heart. As a result, Jesus told the people that they should avoid the casual oaths. Instead, Jesus said to say yes and mean it from the heart or to say no and mean it from the heart. Jesus said that to say anything more than that was to speak words that came from the evil one. In John 8:44 Jesus said, “You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it.” A casual oath that was broken just followed the example of Satan.

Jesus then told the people how to respond to those who did evil to them. Matthew 5:33-37 says, “You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.’ But I tell you not to resist an evil person. But whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also. If anyone wants to sue you and take away your tunic, let him have *your* cloak also. And whoever compels you to go one mile, go with him two. Give to him who asks you, and from him who wants to borrow from you do not turn away.” We see that the religious leaders actually taught the people to take personal revenge when someone did something to them. Jesus again explained the true meaning of the law.

The statement, “An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth,” is written three times in the law. Those verses are Exodus 21:24, Leviticus 24:20 and Deuteronomy 19:21. In Deuteronomy 19:18-21 we read, “And the judges shall make careful inquiry, and indeed, if the witness is a false witness, who has testified falsely against his brother, then you shall do to him as he thought to have done to his brother; so you shall put away the evil from among you. And those who remain shall hear and fear, and hereafter they shall not again commit such evil among you. Your eye shall not pity: life shall be for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot.” In this case we see that a person might bring a charge against a person before the judges.

The first responsibility of the judges was to make a careful investigation to see if the charge was true. If the investigation showed that the charge was true the judges would make a judicial decision and give a punishment that would fit the crime. However, if the judges found out that the person had made a false charge, then the judges were to order the one who gave false testimony to receive the punishment that he had hoped to see carried out against the other person. The purpose of God was to make sure that there was an official investigation. Then God said that the punishment should fit the crime against the person who actually committed the crime. That is very different than taking personal revenge. Here we see that the judges were to make a decision based on evidence.

Jesus went on to teach that instead of taking personal revenge that they were not to resist the

evil person. Anything that needed a judgment needed to be turned over to the judges so that they could make a judgment based on evidence. Jesus said that if we love others that we will give up our personal rights. Instead of taking personal revenge, Jesus said that we should respond to others with love. If a person slaps you on the side of the face, Jesus said to just turn the other cheek. Romans 12:21 says, "Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."

The second illustration Jesus used was someone who wants to sue you to take your personal clothing. Jesus said that instead of fighting for your clothing to instead even let them have your coat. Later Paul would write in 1 Corinthians 6:6-7, "But brother goes to law against brother, and that before unbelievers! Now therefore, it is already an utter failure for you that you go to law against one another. Why do you not rather accept wrong? Why do you not rather let yourselves be cheated?" In this case we see that it better to be cheated than to even take the case to court.

The third illustration Jesus gave was, "And whoever compels you to go one mile, go with him two." The Roman soldiers could force a person to carry a load for a mile. Matthew 27:32 says, "Now as they came out, they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name. Him they compelled to bear His cross." Here we see that the Roman soldiers forced Simon of Cyrene to carry the cross of Jesus to the place where Jesus was crucified. Jesus said that in such situations they were to offer to carry the load a second mile instead of trying to take personal revenge.

Then Jesus said, "Give to him who asks you, and from him who wants to borrow from you do not turn away." Here we see that we are to be willing to share what we have with others who are in need. The apostles encouraged Paul in Galatians 2:10, "*They desired* only that we should remember the poor, the very thing which I also was eager to do." We also want to teach our physical and spiritual children to love their neighbor as they love themselves instead of taking revenge. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to follow the example of Jesus.

Jesus Taught about Loving Our Enemies

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to follow the example of Jesus and learn to love their neighbor as they love themselves. In this topic we are going to see that Jesus then went on to explain how we are to show love to those who treat us as enemies.

We have seen that Jesus explained the meaning of several of the commands in the Old Testament. We will see that He explained some additional commands in this topic. Matthew 5:43-44 says, “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you.” Jesus quoted part of a verse and then explained how the Jewish religious leaders added to that phrase and gave it a totally different meaning. The verse is Leviticus 19:18 which actually says, “You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the children of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I *am* the LORD.” We see that this verse is actually a warning against taking vengeance.

Instead the religious leaders added to that verse a statement which showed the sinfulness of their own hearts by dropping “as yourself” and adding “and hate your enemy”. Later in Revelation 22:18-19 John wrote, “For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and *from* the things which are written in this book.” The religious leaders had both added to the Word of God and taken away from the Word of God. These verses in Revelation show that such acts will bring eternal judgment.

Then Jesus went on to explain what it actually means to “love your neighbor as yourself”. That kind of love will cause us to do four things. First, Jesus said that to love your neighbor means to love your enemies. Jesus certainly modeled that love by His own life. Judas showed himself to be an enemy of Jesus when he betrayed Jesus with a kiss. Matthew 26:50 tells us the words that Jesus spoke to Judas immediately after that kiss. That verse says, “But Jesus said to him, ‘Friend, why have you come?’ Then they came and laid hands on Jesus and took Him. Jesus knew exactly why Judas had kissed Him because Jesus said in John 6:70-71, “Jesus answered them, ‘Did I not choose you, the twelve, and one of you is a devil?’ He spoke of Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon, for it was he who would betray Him, being one of the twelve.” Jesus had treated Judas with the same love and respect that He treated the other disciples so that none of them even suspected that Judas would be the one who would betray Jesus.

Second, Jesus said to “bless those who curse you.” Jesus modeled that same love for those who mocked and crucified Him. Luke 23:34 says, “Then Jesus said, “‘Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do.’ And they divided His garments and cast lots.” Just a few hours later Jesus died for their sins just as He died for our sins. In 1 John 2:2 we read, “And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world.” Jesus satisfied the Father by dying for the sins of the whole world so that He could offer eternal life to all who would come to Him.

Third, Jesus said to “do good to those who hate you.” The verses quoted in the previous paragraph show that Jesus certainly did good to those who hated Him so much that they put Him to death even though they knew that He was innocent. Fourth, Jesus said to “pray for

those who spitefully use you and persecute you.” John 11:49-50 says, “And one of them, Caiaphas, being high priest that year, said to them, “You know nothing at all, nor do you consider that it is expedient for us that one man should die for the people, and not that the whole nation should perish.” Later Caiaphas said in Matthew 26:65-66, “Then the high priest tore his clothes, saying, ‘He has spoken blasphemy! What further need do we have of witnesses? Look, now you have heard His blasphemy! What do you think?’ They answered and said, ‘He is deserving of death.’” As we saw in the earlier paragraph Jesus also prayed for the very men who condemned Him to death.

Jesus went on to tell us why we should respond in these same ways. Matthew 5:45-46 says, “That you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same?” Here we see that in addition to providing an example by His own actions, Jesus pointed out the fact that the Father has that same care and concern for the just and unjust. God continues to cause His sun to rise on those who are evil just as He provides the sun for those who do what is right. He sends His rain on the unjust at the same time that He sends His rain on the just. Since we become the children of God at the moment of salvation, we are to act like His children. That means showing His love by patience and kindness even with the most evil of sinners. God has shown His patience and kindness to each of them.

Then Jesus gave two illustrations using tax collectors to show that even those who are very sinful can still love others. Many of the Jews had a particular hatred for those who were tax collectors. In that day the tax collectors were Jews who collected taxes for the hated Roman government. In Matthew 9:10-11 we see that the Pharisees could not understand why Jesus would show kindness to the tax collectors. Those verses say, “Now it happened, as Jesus sat at the table in the house, *that* behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and sat down with Him and His disciples. And when the Pharisees saw *it*, they said to His disciples, ‘Why does your Teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?’” The Pharisees were loyal to other Pharisees but they had no concern for the tax collectors. However, we see that the tax collectors had just as much love for other tax collectors as the Pharisees had for other Pharisees.

In contrast, Jesus showed that He had a great love for all people. He ate with tax collectors and He ate with Pharisees. Jesus said that those who are sons of the Father will have the same love for all people whether they are good or evil. Galatians 6:10 says, “Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith.” Here we see that we are to follow the example of Jesus and do good to all. Jesus made it clear that this is the way that we are to treat even those who oppose us and treat us as an enemy. This is how we fulfill the instructions given in Romans 12:21 where we read, “Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.” God uses our actions that please Him to bring others to Himself.

Jesus went on to give a second illustration in Matthew 5:47-48 where we read, “And if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more *than others*? Do not even the tax collectors do so? Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.” The word translated “brethren” can include family, people who have a common ancestor or people of the same country. Among Christians it can speak of a fellow believer in Christ because we are both in the body of Christ. It is common for people to greet others that have one or more of these similar backgrounds. People of almost every culture greet people of a similar background regardless of whether they are good or evil. Jesus again pointed out the fact that even tax collectors greet other tax collectors. However, as followers of Jesus we want to show that same concern for all.

That is why Jesus said, “Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.” The word translated “perfect” means “*that which is brought to an end, is finished, is complete or is fully mature*”. Several verses illustrate this meaning for a Christian. Ephesians 4:11-13 says, “And He Himself gave some *to be* apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.” In these verses, we see that the goal that Christ has for every Christian is that we will grow to spiritual maturity so that our lives become more and more like Christ.

Paul explained in Colossians 1:28-29, “Him we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus. To this *end* I also labor, striving according to His working which works in me mightily.” Here we see that it was the goal of Paul to help every Christian come to maturity in Christ. He said that He worked hard to help others because the Lord was continuing to work in His life to help him continue to grow and become more like Christ. Later in that book we see that Epaphras had this same goal. Colossians 4:12 says, “Epaphras, who is one of you, a bondservant of Christ, greets you, always laboring fervently for you in prayers, that you may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God.” Here we see that Epaphras spent much time in prayer praying that the Christians in Colosse would stand perfect and complete in all the will of God.

John pointed out that as we mature in our spiritual lives that the perfect love of Christ causes us to learn to be led by love instead of driven by fear. 1 John 4:18-19 says, “There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love. We love Him because He first loved us.” As we learn to be led by the love of Christ we see that love grows to maturity in our own lives. We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to grow and mature so that the love of Christ is brought to maturity in their lives. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your children how to let the love of Christ grow to maturity in their lives.

Jesus Explained the Actions of Religion

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn grow and mature spiritually so that they are led by the love of Christ instead of driven by their own fears. Christ wants them to enjoy a personal relationship with Him and not develop the actions of those who have a religion but no personal relationship with Christ. That will be the focus of this topic.

Jesus went on to point out the fact that people who have religion do their religious acts to be seen by men. In contrast, Jesus said that those who have true faith will do what they do to be seen by God. Matthew 6:1-4 says, “Take heed that you do not do your charitable deeds before men, to be seen by them. Otherwise you have no reward from your Father in heaven. Therefore, when you do a charitable deed, do not sound a trumpet before you as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory from men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. But when you do a charitable deed, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, that your charitable deed may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will Himself reward you openly.”

In Matthew 5:19 Jesus had warned about breaking the Law. Then He went on in Matthew 5:21-48 to explain the true meaning of some of the laws. In Matthew 5:20 Jesus said, “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.” As we come to the first part of chapter 6 we see that in these verses that Jesus explained what the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees was like to help the disciples understand why that righteousness came from a selfish sinful heart. First Jesus talked about the charitable deeds practiced by the scribes and Pharisees.

The word translated “charitable deeds or alms” speaks of “*the gifts that people gave to the poor and needy*”. We see that Jesus did not deal with the action of giving. Throughout the Bible we see that we are to share with the poor and needy. Israel was told in Deuteronomy 15:11 says, “For the poor will never cease from the land; therefore I command you, saying, ‘You shall open your hand wide to your brother, to your poor and your needy, in your land.’” Then Deuteronomy 24:14 adds, “You shall not oppress a hired servant who is poor and needy, whether one of your brethren or one of the aliens who is in your land within your gates.” The Jews were to share with the poor whether they were other Jews or aliens. The apostles told Paul and Barnabas in Galatians 2:10, “They desired only that we should remember the poor, the very thing which I also was eager to do.” Here we see that remembering the poor was very important in the church.

Instead of talking about giving, Jesus is talking about the motive for giving. Jesus said that there were many who did their charitable giving to be seen by men. Jesus said that those who blow their trumpets or make announcements about their giving in the streets or the synagogues are hypocrites. Such individuals are seeking the glory of men. Jesus said that individuals who give with wrong motives are hypocrites and have their reward. The praise that they receive from other people is their reward. However, they will not have any eternal reward because their giving is based on a wrong motive.

Jesus then went on to tell how we should give as we carry out charitable actions. Jesus said that we should not let our left hand know what our right hand is doing. Jesus gave an illustration about sharing with the poor in Luke 14:12-14 when He said, “Then He also said to him who invited Him, ‘When you give a dinner or a supper, do not ask your friends, your brothers, your

relatives, nor rich neighbors, lest they also invite you back, and you be repaid. But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind. And you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you; for you shall be repaid at the resurrection of the just.” The poor and needy cannot repay and usually such actions will not even be noticed by others. However, God looks at the motives of the heart and He will reward those who minister to the poor and needy with the love of Christ. This reward will be in heaven and will be given by God for all there to see.

Then Jesus went on to talk about the way that those who were scribes and Pharisees prayed. In the dramas of that day one actor would play several different parts by wearing a different mask for each person that he played. Such actors became known as hypocrites because they were not acting the way that they normally acted. As a result, the word “hypocrite” is used in the New Testament to speak of those who deceive themselves and try to deceive others. Jesus used that word to describe the prayers of the scribes and Pharisees. In these verses, we see that the scribes and Pharisees often did certain things as they prayed. They loved to pray standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets. However, they did not pray there to talk to God. Instead we read that they would pray in these places so that they could be seen by men. Here we see that Jesus was again dealing with the motive in their hearts. Jesus said that they had already received their reward because they had been seen by other people and that was their desire.

Jesus then told His disciples what they should do when they prayed. Jesus told the disciples to go into their room and shut the door. Then they were to pray to the Father. In this way they would truly be talking to the Father instead of trying to impress the people around them. Jesus often went to pray and talk to the Father where He would be alone. Mark 1:35 says, “Now in the morning, having risen a long while before daylight, He went out and departed to a solitary place; and there He prayed.” Matthew 14:23 says, “And when He had sent the multitudes away, He went up on the mountain by Himself to pray. Now when evening came, He was alone there.” Then Luke 22:39-41 says, “Coming out, He went to the Mount of Olives, as He was accustomed, and His disciples also followed Him. When He came to the place, He said to them, ‘Pray that you may not enter into temptation.’ And He was withdrawn from them about a stone’s throw, and He knelt down and prayed.” In each case we see that Jesus left even the disciples as He went to pray alone to the Father.

Jesus wanted the disciples to understand the importance of spending time alone with the Father in prayer. Here we see that Jesus taught the importance of time alone with the Father. In the other passages we see that He taught this same lesson to His disciples by His own example. Jesus also gave the promise that if we spend time alone in prayer to the Father that the time will come when the Father will reward us openly. The Holy Spirit led John to record the prayer that Jesus prayed as He was talking the Father alone in the Garden in John 17:1-26 so that we would have an example of His prayer.

Jesus went on to point out the fact that the heathen also pray. Matthew 6:7-8 says, “And when you pray, do not use vain repetitions as the heathen *do*. For they think that they will be heard for their many words. Therefore do not be like them. For your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him.” Here we see that the heathen had a very different way of praying than the scribes and Pharisees. The word translated “heathen” was the word that the Jews used to speak of “*a person that had a different language or customs*” and came to refer especially to those who did not know and worship the true God. This is a reminder of the fact that even people who have no knowledge of God may pray even though they do not know to whom they are praying.

Sometimes such people pray to their idols or false gods. 1 Kings 18:26 says, “So they took the

bull which was given them, and they prepared *it*, and called on the name of Baal from morning even till noon, saying, ‘O Baal, hear us!’ But *there was* no voice; no one answered. Then they leaped about the altar which they had made.” Here we see an example of vain repetitions as they repeated the same phrase over and over. We also see the results in 1 Kings 18:29, “And when midday was past, they prophesied until the *time* of the offering of the *evening* sacrifice. But *there was* no voice; no one answered, no one paid attention.” They prayed all day and received no answer.

At other times people pray to the god that they do not know. Acts 17:22-23 says, “Then Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus and said, “Men of Athens, I perceive that in all things you are very religious; for as I was passing through and considering the objects of your worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Therefore, the One whom you worship without knowing, Him I proclaim to you.” The problem that such people have is the fact that they are praying to a god that they do not know. The only ones who will hear such prayers are the other people that are standing there and listening. Such prayers change nothing.

Then Jesus explained why our prayers to the Father are very different. God knows the things that we need even before we pray. He chooses to answer our prayers for our needs to help us grow in our faith. 1 John 5:14-15 says, “Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him.” As a result, we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to pray according to the will of God. This means that we should help our children learn from the Bible the things that God says are His will. We help them learn that God speaks to them through His Word. They learn that they speak to God as they pray. They come to realize that God knows the things that we need and God answers according to His will. As we help our children to understand these things, they learn that prayer is talking to God and not just saying prayers. This also equips our children to help others learn to pray and communicate with God. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to communicate with God.

Jesus Taught about Prayer and Fasting

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to talk with God by learning the will of God from the Word of God and then praying to God for the things that are His will. We saw that God knows the things that we need and answers according to His will. In our topic today, we are going to see that Jesus gave an example of things for which we should pray.

Matthew 6:9-13 says, “In this manner, therefore, pray: Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as *it is* in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.” At a later time in Luke 11:1 we read, “Now it came to pass, as He was praying in a certain place, when He ceased, that one of His disciples said to Him, “Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples.” In both passages we see that Jesus taught the same basic areas for which we pray.

Jesus showed that true prayer is based on a personal relationship to God. Jesus had just been talking about the empty prayers of the religious and the heathen. In contrast, in this prayer we are reminded of the fact that we have a very personal relationship with God. He is our Father. Romans 8:14-15 says, “For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, ‘Abba, Father.’” We are children of God. We received His Spirit at the moment that we were adopted into His family. As a result, we have a very personal relationship with Him.

Jesus went on to give six areas for which we should pray. The first three recognize who God is and His will and work for the world. The second three deal with our personal needs. First, as we pray, we are to recognize that God is holy. The word translated “hallowed” means “*to sanctify, to set apart or be holy*” and is used 29 times in the New Testament. Jesus used this word three times in His prayer to the Father the night before He was crucified. John 17:17-19 says, “Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth. As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also may be sanctified by the truth. Jesus said that He could sanctify us because He is Holy. He was totally committed to doing the will of the Father. Jesus prayed that His followers would be sanctified by His Word because the Word of God is truth.

Second, we are to pray for the kingdom of God to come. At the present time the kingdom of God is in our hearts. Jesus told the Pharisees in Luke 17:20-21, “Now when He was asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, He answered them and said, “The kingdom of God does not come with observation; nor will they say, ‘See here!’ or ‘See there!’ For indeed, the kingdom of God is within you.” In the present we are to pray that we will know and do the will of God. In the future the kingdom of God will be fully established when Jesus reigns as King of kings and Lord of lords. Third, we are to pray that the will of God will be done. That will happen as we submit ourselves to God. James 4:7 says, “Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.” As we submit to God, we are able to carry out His will and work in the world.

The last three things for which we should pray are our own personal needs. First, we are to pray for our daily bread. Our heavenly Father knows what we need and He responds to meet

our daily needs. However, we should also remember that there is a difference between wants and needs. 1 Timothy 6:6-8 says, “Now godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into *this* world, *and it is* certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content.” The Lord knows what we need each day and He will supply those needs. Hebrews 13:5 says, “Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, ‘I will never leave you nor forsake you.’”

Second, we are to ask God to forgive us our debts. The word translated “debts” means “*that which is legally due*”. That word is also used in Romans 4:4 where we read, “Now to him who works, the wages are not counted as grace but as debt.” If someone agrees to pay you a certain amount if you do a particular job for them, you expect them to pay their debt when the work is finished. Romans 6:23 says, “For the wages of sin *is* death, but the gift of God *is* eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” The Father freely forgave that debt at the moment that we repented and came to Christ in faith. That is why we can experience forgiveness because as we pray we are reminded that Jesus fully paid that legal debt.

Third, we are to pray and ask God not to lead us into temptation. James 1:13-15 says, “Let no one say when he is tempted, ‘I am tempted by God’; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone. But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.” The word translated “deliver” means “*to rescue or deliver*”. God does not tempt us but the Evil One (Satan) certainly does. We are to pray that the Lord will give us His strength to withstand that temptation.

Jesus went on to explain more about forgiveness when He said in Matthew 6:14-15, “For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. ¹⁵ But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.” If we know that we are Christians, we know that our sins have been forgiven. Jesus told the disciples in John 13:10 says, “Jesus said to him, ‘He who is bathed needs only to wash *his* feet, but is completely clean; and you are clean, but not all of you.’” At the moment we repented of our sin of unbelief, our sins were forgiven, removed as far as the east is from the west, buried in the depths of the sea, blotted out and God promised to remember them no more (no longer hold them against us). In 1 John 1:9 we are told, “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” As Christ washed the feet of the disciples He pointed out that it was like the cleansing. Confession of sins and forgiving others makes it possible for us to live with a clear conscience instead of continuing to have guilt about past sins. That is the cleansing that we need day by day in order to enjoy our freedom in Christ.

Jesus then went on to talk about fasting. Matthew 6:16-18 says, “Moreover, when you fast, do not be like the hypocrites, with a sad countenance. For they disfigure their faces that they may appear to men to be fasting. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. ¹⁷ But you, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, ¹⁸ so that you do not appear to men to be fasting, but to your Father who *is* in the secret *place*; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly.” In these verses, we see another of the religious acts that the Pharisees and others did to be seen by men. In both the Old and New Testament we see that people fasted due to sorrow for sins, to spend time in prayer as they were seeking the will of the Lord and for other reasons. However, those who were hypocrites fasted for a different reason. When the hypocrites were fasting they would try to appear to be sad and even disfigure their faces.

Those who were hypocrites fasted for the same reason that they publicly gave gifts to the needy and prayed long prayers on the street corners. They fasted to be seen by the other people. Jesus gave a parable to those who trusted in themselves that they were righteous in Luke 18:9-14.

Luke 18:11-12 says, “The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, ‘God, I thank You that I am not like other men—extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess.’” In these two verses we see that this Pharisee did all three of the things mentioned in Matthew 6:1-18. He stood up and prayed in the temple courtyard where the people could see and hear him. He included in his prayer the fact that he fasted twice a week. He included in his prayer the fact that he gave tithes to help the needy. However Jesus said that he prayed with himself instead of praying to God. Jesus also said that he could not make himself just. His only reward was the praise of men because God did not listen to his prayer.

Jesus went on to tell us what we should do when we are fasting. Jesus told His disciples that they should anoint their head and wash their faces just as they always did. In this way no one except God would even know that they were fasting. Jesus made it clear that whether a person was giving, praying or fasting that these things were to be done in such a way that the Father could see and reward but they were not to be done in a way that would cause other people to praise them. That is true for us and our children just as it was true for the disciples.

Jesus also gave a great promise if we give, pray and fast in secret. He said that the Father will see what we do and will reward us openly. In 1 Corinthians 3:11 we are told that Christ is our foundation on which we build. Then it tells us in the following verses that our works are either like gold, silver and precious stone or our works are like wood, hay and straw. These works will be tested by fire. 2 Peter 3:10 says, “But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up.” Those works which are just for this earth will be destroyed. 1 Corinthians 3:14 says, “If anyone’s work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward.” Those works which have eternal value will be rewarded. We want to help our physical and spiritual children understand how they can have eternal rewards. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to seek eternal rewards.

Jesus Taught how to have Treasure in Heaven

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to do those works that will have eternal value. We saw that we want to help them understand how they can have eternal rewards. In this topic we will see that Jesus explains this more fully as He taught the disciples how to have treasure in heaven.

Matthew 6:19-21 says, “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” The treasures of this earth do not last. When the richest man in the world dies, he will leave behind everything he has. He will take nothing with him. In these verses, we see that there are also other ways that the riches of this world are destroyed. Jesus listed three specific ways that riches were often destroyed in that day.

First, riches can be destroyed by the moth. The word translated “moth” is used three times in the New Testament. Two are in these verses and the third is in a similar passage in Luke 12:33-34 where we read, “Sell what you have and give alms; provide yourselves money bags which do not grow old, a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches nor moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” The clothes moth is able to eat holes in clothes. As a result, those who used their treasure to buy expensive clothes could find that these moths had destroyed their expensive clothes and they no longer had any value.

Second, riches can be destroyed by rust. The word translated “rust” speaks of “*the act of eating*” and pointed out the fact that various metals could be eaten away by corrosion. The two times that this word is translated “rust” are both in these verses. The word translated “corrupt” means “*to put out of view or to cause to vanish away*”. By the use of this word, Jesus made it clear that the metals that people use to try and keep their riches can quickly vanish and disappear. Third, riches can be stolen by those who break in and steal. Jesus pointed out in John 10:10 that Satan has certain goals and those who follow him may have the same goals. That verse says, “The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have *it* more abundantly.” As a result, the riches of this world can disappear in a variety of ways.

Jesus said instead that the place to store lasting treasures is in heaven because none of these things can touch treasure that is stored in heaven. God gives a promise about treasures stored in heaven in 1 Corinthians 3:12-14 where we read, “Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each one’s work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one’s work, of what sort it is. If anyone’s work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward.” When we build on the foundation of Christ by doing those things that have eternal value, we are sending our treasures ahead where nothing on earth can destroy them and where God will also reward them.

However, Jesus focused on the heart by His next statement when He said in verse 21, “For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” Our heart is our inner man and it determines how we see everything in the world. Jesus said here that those who are storing up their treasure in heaven do so because their heart is focused on spiritual things. Paul illustrated this so well when he said in Philippians 3:10, “That I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death.” Then he

added in Philippians 3:13-14, “Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.”

In contrast, those who are storing up their treasure on earth have their hearts focused on the things of this world. Jesus told the rich young ruler in Mark 10:21-22, “Then Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, ‘One thing you lack: Go your way, sell whatever you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, take up the cross, and follow Me.’ But he was sad at this word, and went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.” This young man chose to store up his treasure on earth. His heart was focused on earthly things and he had nothing when death came.

Jesus went on to say in Matthew 6:22-23, “The lamp of the body is the eye. If therefore your eye is good, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great *is* that darkness!” Here we see that the actions of a person show what is in the heart. Those who have their treasure on this earth will see things in one way while those who have their treasure in heaven will see things very differently. This is illustrated so well in Genesis 6. Genesis 6:5 says, “Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.” Here we see that most of the people had their whole body full of darkness because the thoughts of their hearts were only evil continually. The actions of the people are described in Genesis 6:11 where we read, “The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence.” The actions produced by that darkness were corruption and violence.

In contrast, Genesis 6:8 says, “But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD.” Noah had eyes that were good because his heart was filled with light. Genesis 6:22 tells us how his actions were different than the rest of the people when that verse says, “Thus Noah did; according to all that God commanded him, so he did.” Here we see that Noah had his treasure in heaven and so he chose to be obedient to God. Hebrews 11:7 shows us that the results of his actions were very different. That verse says, “By faith Noah, being divinely warned of things not yet seen, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his household, by which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith.” Noah saved his household and inherited the righteousness that is the result of faith because he stored his treasures in heaven.

Matthew 6:24 goes on to say, “No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.” The word translated “mammon” means “*earthly riches and especially money*”. The word is used four times in the New Testament and the other three are all in Luke 16. Luke 16:9 says, “And I say to you, make friends for yourselves by unrighteous mammon, that when you fail, they may receive you into an everlasting home.” Luke 16:11 says, “Therefore if you have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches?” Then Luke 16:13 says the same thing that Matthew 6:24 says.

Jesus taught the verses mentioned in Luke 16 to His disciples at a time when the Pharisees were listening. We see the response of the Pharisees in Luke 16:14 where we read, “Now the Pharisees, who were lovers of money, also heard all these things, and they derided Him.” The Pharisees taught that riches were proof of God’s blessing and that those who were rich were the favorites of God. Here we see that in their hearts that they were lovers of money. 1 Timothy 6:9-10 warns, “But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and

pierced themselves through with many sorrows.” In these verses, we see that a love of money is a root of all kinds of evil.

In contrast, 1 Timothy 6:17-19 says, “Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy. Let them do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share, storing up for themselves a good foundation for the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.” In these verses, we see that if a person has riches that God has given him those riches so that he can use them to serve others and store up treasure in heaven. If the Lord is our Master we will use the money that He has given to us to serve Him by doing good works that will glorify God.

God says that it is impossible for a person to serve both God and money. 2 Corinthians 5:7 says, “For we walk by faith, not by sight.” Then James 1:6-10 says, “But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; *he is* a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways. Let the lowly brother glory in his exaltation, but the rich in his humiliation, because as a flower of the field he will pass away.” In order to walk by faith we must make the Lord the Master of our lives whether we are rich or poor. Many times it is easier for the poor to learn to walk by faith because James 2:5 says, “Listen, my beloved brethren: Has God not chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him?” However, the key is that we make the Lord our Master and use whatever money He has given us wisely so that we can store up treasure in heaven.

We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to make the Lord their Master so that their lives will bring glory to Him also. This will result in the fact that they will use their lives to serve the Lord and not to serve self. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your children by your example how to bring glory to God.

Jesus Gave Seven Reasons not to Worry

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to store their treasure in heaven as they make the Lord the Master of their lives. Jesus went on to teach the disciples that when they made the Lord the Master of their lives that they would have seven reasons why they did not need to worry. Those seven reasons will be the focus of this topic.

In Matthew 6:25-27 we read, “Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature?” Here we see that that Jesus began these verses by listing several things about which we do not need to worry as we seek to store up heavenly treasures. We do not need to worry about our life, what we will eat, what we will drink or what we will wear. First, we see that God gave us the greater (our life) so He will give us those things that are less. Since God gave us life that He will certainly give us the food and the clothing that we need to carry out the plan that He has for our lives. As a result, we can trust the Lord to supply our basic needs.

Second, we see that God provides for the birds that are smaller so He will certainly provide for our needs since He has given our lives much greater value. The birds do not plant crops. They do not harvest crops and store them in barns. Luke 12:24 says, “Consider the ravens, for they neither sow nor reap, which have neither storehouse nor barn; and God feeds them. Of how much more value are you than the birds?” In this verse, we are reminded that the ravens do not have either a storehouse or a barn. Just like the other birds, they have to depend on God to supply their food. Then Matthew 10:29-31 says, “Are not two sparrows sold for a copper coin? And not one of them falls to the ground apart from your Father’s will. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Do not fear therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows.” In these verses, we see that our heavenly Father knows when every single sparrow dies. At the same time He also knows how many hairs we have on our head and knows exactly how many hairs we lose each day. God tells us that our lives have much more value than many sparrows.

Third, we see that it is a waste of time to worry. We cannot add one cubit to our height by worrying. A cubit is the distance from the tip of your finger to your elbow and is usually about 18 inches. We cannot grow taller by worrying. In the same way we cannot live longer by worrying. In fact Hebrews 9:27-28 says, “And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment, so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation.” God knows the exact moment when we will die and that will not change. As a result, instead of worrying about that time we should focus on the fact that Christ is coming back to take us to heaven. Then we will realize that it is a waste of time to worry and we can enjoy every moment of the life that the Lord has given us.

We go on to read in Matthew 6:28-30, “So why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; and yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, *will He* not much more *clothe* you, O you of little faith?” Fourth, in these verses, we are reminded that the care that God has for us is even greater than the care that we show to ourselves. This time Jesus used clothing to illustrate the care that God has for us.

Jesus told the disciples to take a look at the lilies around them. The lilies cannot work to make them beautiful. They cannot spin to make cloth to cover them. Then Jesus reminded the disciples that even Solomon could not make himself look as beautiful as the lilies in the field. In 2 Chronicles 9 the queen of Sheba came to visit Solomon. She heard his wisdom and saw his clothing. She also saw the clothing of his servants. Then she said in 2 Chronicles 9:3-6 says, "And when the queen of Sheba had seen the wisdom of Solomon, the house that he had built, the food on his table, the seating of his servants, the service of his waiters and their apparel, his cupbearers and their apparel, and his entryway by which he went up to the house of the LORD, there was no more spirit in her. Then she said to the king: 'It was a true report which I heard in my own land about your words and your wisdom. However I did not believe their words until I came and saw with my own eyes; and indeed the half of the greatness of your wisdom was not told me. You exceed the fame of which I heard.'" Jesus said that the lilies are even more beautiful than the clothing of Solomon.

Then Jesus said that since God can make the fields look beautiful with their grass and the lilies than grow in the fields even though those things only last for a short time that certainly God will provide us with the clothing that we need. Jesus went on to point to the disciples the reason why they worried by saying, "O you of little faith." What was true of the disciples is also true for each one of us. The reason why we worry is due to the fact that we have little faith. We try to determine how to meet our needs though our own efforts instead of depending on the Lord for all things. We try to solve our problems by depending on ourselves instead of yielding to the Lord. In John 15:5 Jesus said, "I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing." In contrast, Philippians 4:13 says, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." Then Philippians 4:19 adds, "And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus." God knows our needs and so He promises to supply our needs.

Matthew 6:31-34 goes on to give us the final three reasons why we do not need to worry. Those verses say, "Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day *is* its own trouble." Fifth, we see that we do not need to worry because the Father knows what we need. Three common questions of those who do not know the Lord are: What shall we eat? What shall we drink? or What shall we wear? They ask these questions because they do not know the Lord.

In contrast, the disciples were reminded that their heavenly Father knows that they need all of these things. The same is true for us in our lives. Our heavenly Father knows what we need. One of the things that we often need to learn is the difference between our needs and our wants. Our needs are the basic necessities for our lives. 1 Timothy 6:6-8 says, "Now godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into *this* world, *and it is* certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content." Then Paul wrote in Philippians 4:11-12, "Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content: I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need." We see that Paul did not automatically have this contentment from the moment that he became a follower of Christ. He had to learn to be content and that is something we also have to learn.

Sixth, Jesus told the disciples that they would not need to worry if they chose to seek the kingdom of God and His righteousness. That meant that they turned the control of their lives over to the Lord instead of depending on self. The kingdom of God is the salvation that we

have through Christ. 2 Corinthians 5:21 then explains, “For He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.” God the father made Christ to be sin for us during the time that He hung on the cross in the darkness from the sixth to the ninth hour. That was done so that we would be able to receive the righteousness of God at the moment that we repented of our sin of unbelief. When we come to God by faith in Jesus, He promised in these verses that the Father would meet the needs that we have in our lives.

Seventh, we see that Jesus told the disciples that they did not need to worry about the future but to live and trust the Lord each day. Many people worry about the things that might happen in the future. James 4:13-14 says, “Come now, you who say, ‘Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, spend a year there, buy and sell, and make a profit’; whereas you do not know what will happen tomorrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away.” Here we are reminded that we have no idea what may happen tomorrow or next year. We need to live with the knowledge that Jesus may come and take us to heaven tonight.

Jesus told the disciples that tomorrow will worry about its own things since we do not know what will happen tomorrow or next year. The Father is in control of the things that will happen then because He knew what will happen tomorrow before He ever created the world and will use it for our good. In Romans 8:28-29 we are told, “And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to *His* purpose. For whom He foreknew, He also predestined *to be* conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.” We want to show our physical and spiritual children by our example that we do not need to worry. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children turn their worries over to Christ.

Jesus Taught about Judging Others

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children understand the seven reasons that Jesus gave so that we do not need to worry. Instead, we can turn our worries over to Him. Jesus went on to teach that we are not to judge. That will be the focus of this topic.

In Matthew 7:1-2 we read, “Judge not, that you be not judged. For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you.” The word translated “judge” means “to judge others with a self righteous attitude that condemns others”. Jesus gave a parable about a Pharisee and a tax collector to illustrate this attitude. Luke 18:10-12 says, “Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, ‘God, I thank You that I am not like other men—extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess.’” This Pharisee had the attitude that he was much better than any of the groups of people that he mentioned. He judged and personally condemned them by his words. This is the kind of judgment Jesus is condemning in these verses. It is not talking about a court of law.

First, we see that we should not have a self righteous attitude and judge others because otherwise God and others will hear us and judge our self righteous attitudes. God told Samuel in 1 Samuel 16:7, “But the LORD said to Samuel, ‘Do not look at his appearance or at his physical stature, because I have refused him. For *the LORD does not see* as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.’” It is impossible for us to know the heart of any person. Only God can know the heart of others. That is why it is important to leave all judgment to the Lord because He knows the hearts and will make a righteous judgment which we cannot do.

Second, we do not see and recognize our own attitudes when we judge others. Often when one person judges another person he will pick out the positive things in his own life and compare them to the failures and negative things in the life of the person that he is judging. Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 10:12, “For we dare not class ourselves or compare ourselves with those who commend themselves. But they, measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise.” Here we see that we are not wise when we compare ourselves with others.

Third, we see that when we judge others and measure others that the same measure we use will be used to measure our life. The word translated “measure” means “*the rule or standard of judgment*”. Mark 4:24 says, “Then He said to them, ‘Take heed what you hear. With the same measure you use, it will be measured to you; and to you who hear, more will be given.’” Then Luke 6:38 tells us how to measure others instead of judging them. That verse says, “Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you.” We want to avoid the attitude of the Pharisees by avoiding personal judgments.

Jesus went on to illustrate this principle in Matthew 7:3-5 where we read, “And why do you look at the speck in your brother’s eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, ‘Let me remove the speck from your eye’; and look, a plank *is* in your own eye? Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye.” The word translated “speck” means “*a piece of straw, a twig or a dry stalk*”. The word translated “plank” means “*a beam or large*

piece of wood".

By saying this, Jesus was showing what a lot of people do when they judge others. Some Christians may be quick to condemn someone else for something that the person thinks is a sin which the Bible does not call sin. An illustration of this is found in Romans 14:1-3 where we read, "Receive one who is weak in the faith, but not to disputes over doubtful things. For one believes he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats only vegetables. Let not him who eats despise him who does not eat, and let not him who does not eat judge him who eats; for God has received him." In the time of the New Testament some people did not want to eat meat because it might have been offered as a sacrifice to an idol and so those individuals only ate vegetables. Other people liked meat and so they did not worry about whether that meat might have been offered to idols. A person might condemn a person for eating meat and so that person would be judging another Christian. This would be an example of a Christian with a large piece of wood (a judgmental attitude) in his own eye condemning another Christian for eating meat. Jesus said that a person doing such a thing was actually a hypocrite.

Jesus then went on to explain what such a person should do. Jesus said that the very first thing that the person should do remove the beam (the judgmental attitude in this illustration). Then the person would be able to help the other person instead of judge the other person. Galatians 6:1-2 says, "Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who *are* spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted. Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ." These verses show how the person will respond once the beam is removed from his own eye instead of judging the other person.

First, the goal will be to restore rather than condemn. God is the true Judge and He will judge according to righteousness instead of with a judgmental attitude. Second, this restoration will be done with an attitude of gentleness. This is very important because it prevents an attitude that will cause a person to commit additional sins in addition to the judgmental attitude. Third, this will help the weaker Christian because someone has chosen to help him carry his load by encouraging and strengthening the person. This fulfills the law of Christ because it demonstrates that love is patient and that love is kind. The law of Christ is given in John 13:34-35 where we read, "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."

Jesus went on to say in Matthew 7:6, "Do not give what is holy to the dogs; nor cast your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you in pieces." Two key words in this verse are dogs and swine. The word translated "dog" was often used to speak of "*a person that had an impure mind*". The word is used five times in the New Testament. Philippians 3:2 says, "Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the mutilation!" In this case Paul was referring to Jews who were trying to force Gentiles to be circumcised. Then Revelation 22:14-15 says, "Blessed are those who do His commandments, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city. But outside are dogs and sorcerers and sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and whoever loves and practices a lie." In these verses, we see that those who are called dogs will not enter into eternal life or have access to the tree of life.

The word translated "swine" is used 14 times in the New Testament. In all of the other verses the word is talking about pigs. As a result, in this verse, the words dogs and pigs are talking about those who are against Jesus and hate the truth. This meant that Jesus was warning us not to debate with those who hate the things that are holy (pleasing to God). Jesus warned in Matthew 23:15-17, "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel land and sea to win one proselyte, and when he is won, you make him twice as much a son of hell as

yourselves. Woe to you, blind guides, who say, ‘Whoever swears by the temple, it is nothing; but whoever swears by the gold of the temple, he is obliged *to perform it.*’ Fools and blind! For which is greater, the gold or the temple that sanctifies the gold?” In these verses, we see that Jesus condemned the scribes and Pharisees who were doing everything that they could do to lead people away from the truth in stead of trying to bring them to the truth.

The word translated “pearls” means either “*a pearl or a word of great value*”. Those who are totally opposed to God do not want to hear His Word because the Word of God makes them angry. The word translated “trample” means “*to trample, to treat with rudeness or to insult*”. Hebrews 10:28-29 says, “Anyone who has rejected Moses’ law dies without mercy on *the testimony of two or three witnesses*. Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace?” This verse reminds us that those who hate God and His word will do everything possible to mock Christ and His Word.

However, many will also make personal attacks on those who are sharing the Word of God with them. Jesus said that after such people have mocked God and His Word that they will also turn and tear you to pieces. Jesus later told the disciples in John 15:18-19, “If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before *it hated* you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.” Then Psalm 14:1 says, “The fool has said in his heart, ‘*There is no God.*’ They are corrupt, They have done abominable works, There is none who does good.” Jesus wanted to make it clear to His disciples that it is useless to debate with those who hate God. We want to help our physical and spiritual children understand why this is true so that they will not take it personally when there are those who attack them for sharing the Word of God in love. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children to understand such attacks.

Jesus Explained the Wide and Narrow Ways

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to understand why we are not to judge others but instead leave all judgment to the Lord. We saw that we also want to help them understand why some in the world attack Christians. In this topic we will see that Jesus encouraged His followers to pray and then explained the wide and the narrow ways.

Jesus taught His disciples about asking and receiving. Matthew 7:7-11 says, “Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. Or what man is there among you who, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!” We see that Jesus wanted His followers to know that they could feel free to ask God to meet their needs.

We see that God enjoys meeting our needs. Jesus had said earlier in Matthew 6:8, “Therefore do not be like them. For your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him.” Here we see that He wants us to tell Him about our needs even though He knows what those needs are. Jesus used three words to show the importance of bringing our needs to God in prayer: ask, seek and knock. First, we are to ask. The word translated “ask” means “*to beg, desire or ask*”. 1 John 5:14-15 uses this word three times when those verses say, “Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him.” We see that we can know that God will answer our request if it is His will.

Second, we see that we are to seek. The word translated “seek” means “*to seek in order to find something*”. This is the word that is used in Luke 15:8 where we read, “Or what woman, having ten silver coins, if she loses one coin, does not light a lamp, sweep the house, and search carefully until she finds it?” In this verse, the word is translated “search” and the woman searched until she found the missing coin. In the same way Jesus said that the Father wants us to keep praying until He answers our prayers.

Third, we are to knock. The word translated “knock” means “*to knock at the door*”. This word is used in Acts 12 when Peter was knocking at the door after the angel led him out of the prison. Revelation 3:20 says, “Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me.” In this verse, we see that the church in Laodicea had gone so far from Jesus that He is outside the door and He knocks on the door and asks any individuals who want to have fellowship with Him to open the door. In contrast, to the church at Laodicea, Christ promises that as we pray and knock that the Father will certainly open the door for us.

All three of these illustrations show us that the Father is eager to answer our prayers. We see that if we will ask that we will receive. If we seek, we will find. If we knock the door will be opened. Philippians 4:6 says, “Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God.” In this verse, we see that we are free to pray to the Father about everything that happens in our lives. The Father wants us to come to Him in prayer with our requests. He also tells us that we are to make our requests to Him with thanksgiving. This is a step of faith because we thank God in advance that

He is going to answer according to His will. Such an attitude brings great joy to the Father.

Jesus went on to illustrate how human fathers usually respond when their children come to them with their requests. Jesus said that an earthly father will not give his son a stone when the child is hungry and asks for bread. If the child asks for a piece of fish to eat, a father will not give his son a poisonous snake that will hurt or kill the child. Jesus said that even though people are sinful and evil that they will still feed their children when the children have a need for food. Even a very evil and sinful father is still concerned about the physical needs of his children. Then Jesus went on to explain that our heavenly Father will certainly give good things to His children when we ask Him. The Father enjoys our fellowship when we come to Him with requests regarding our needs.

Jesus went on to said in Matthew 7:12, “Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.” Here we see that Jesus gave a summary of how to obey all of the commandments in the Old Testament. Jesus said that we are to treat other people the way that we want to be treated. He said that if we will treat people the way that we want to be treated that we will fulfill the commandments in the Old Testament. The Jewish rabbis had given a similar summary of the Old Testament but they always made it a negative rule instead of a positive action. One rabbi wrote, “What is hateful to yourself do not to someone else.” This says avoid doing something hateful to others that you would not want to be done to you. In contrast, Jesus said in a positive way so that we would make it our goal to treat others the way that we want to be treated. Jesus made it possible for us to do that by giving us the Holy Spirit so that He can give us the power to do what is right. Galatians 5:13 says, “For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.” Here we see that true liberty gives us the freedom and power to follow the example of Christ and to serve one another in love.

Jesus then went on to point out to His disciples and to the others who were gathered there listening to Him that every person faces a very important choice in life. Matthew 7:13-14 says, “Enter by the narrow gate; for wide *is* the gate and broad *is* the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow *is* the gate and difficult *is* the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.” Here we see that Jesus said that there are two gates. One leads to a wide way and the other gate leads to a narrow way. This choice that each person makes is very important because it will determine where each person spends eternity. Jesus then gave an invitation to all to enter the narrow way as He warned that many will choose the wide way.

Jesus explained why He encouraged each one to enter the narrow gate. Jesus said that He knew that most people would choose to enter the wide gate that had a wide road. The wide gate is a very easy because people go through the wide gate by depending on their own works to get them to heaven. These two ways were first illustrated in Genesis 4:3-5 where we read, “And in the process of time it came to pass that Cain brought an offering of the fruit of the ground to the LORD. Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat. And the LORD respected Abel and his offering, but He did not respect Cain and his offering. And Cain was very angry, and his countenance fell.” Cain chose to bring a sacrifice to God based on his own works. As a result, he brought a sacrifice of fruit from his garden. He had the attitude that God would be pleased with his works.

In contrast, Abel brought the firstborn of his flock as a blood sacrifice as a covering for his sin. Abel realized that his own efforts could never pay for his sin. Instead he needed to offer a blood sacrifice so that the blood could cover his sin. God had shown that need for a blood sacrifice as a covering for sin when he killed animals to provide coverings for Adam and Eve. Genesis 3:21 says, “Also for Adam and his wife the LORD God made tunics of skin, and

clothed them.” Even that sacrifice was not enough to take away sin because Hebrews 10:4 says, “For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins.” However, that sacrifice did show faith and covered sin until the time that Christ came to take away sin. Hebrews 9:11-12 tells us that Christ paid the full penalty for sin by presenting His own blood to the Father as the payment for sin. That verse says, “But Christ came *as* High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation. Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption.”

Most of the Jews in the time of Jesus were like Cain and thought that their own works would be good enough to get them to heaven. That is why Jesus warned that the wide gate and the broad way actually lead to destruction. The word translated “destruction” means “*complete ruin or the destruction which consists of the eternal misery of the lake of fire*”. Revelation 20:15 says, “And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.” Jesus also warned that many were making the choice to enter that wide gate. People still think their own works are good enough to get them to heaven.

In contrast, Jesus said that the narrow gate is a difficult way but it is the way that leads to eternal life. The word translated “narrow” means “*a way with suffering and tribulation*”. Jesus later said in 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.” The way is narrow because Jesus had to experience suffering and death for us in order to make the narrow way possible. In addition, in 1 Thessalonians 3:4 Paul wrote, “For, in fact, we told you before when we were with you that we would suffer tribulation, just as it happened, and you know.” In this verse, the word is translated “suffer tribulation”. As we follow Jesus, we can also expect suffering because the world does not want to come to God through Christ. People want to come to God by their own works. We want to prepare our physical and spiritual children for suffering because Jesus said that all who follow Him will suffer persecution but they will also receive eternal life. May the Lord richly bless you as you prepare your children to be ready to suffer persecution for Christ.

Jesus Taught about False Teachers

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children be prepared for the fact that they will suffer persecution as they follow Jesus. People are sinful and want to depend on their own works. As a result, they will persecute those who come to Jesus by faith. In this topic we are going to see that Jesus warned His disciples that there would be false prophets who would try to deceive them.

Jesus had just finished warning people that all people face a choice about the two ways. Jesus then went on to warn about false prophets or teachers who would try to deceive. Matthew 7:15-17 says, "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thorn bushes or figs from thistles? Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit." The word translated "beware" means "*pay attention*". Jesus wanted His disciples to listen closely while He warned them about false prophets. Jesus warned what false teachers will do to try to deceive others.

Jesus said that such individuals will come in sheep's clothing. Here we see that such false teachers will try to make themselves appear like they are true shepherds. Ezekiel had earlier warned about the false shepherds of Israel. Ezekiel 34:2-4 says, "Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel, prophesy and say to them, 'Thus says the Lord GOD to the shepherds: "Woe to the shepherds of Israel who feed themselves! Should not the shepherds feed the flocks?"³ You eat the fat and clothe yourselves with the wool; you slaughter the fatlings, *but* you do not feed the flock."⁴ The weak you have not strengthened, nor have you healed those who were sick, nor bound up the broken, nor brought back what was driven away, nor sought what was lost; but with force and cruelty you have ruled them." We see that Ezekiel warned that the false shepherds of Israel were using the sheep for their own benefit instead of caring for the sheep.

Jesus said that although false prophets try to look like shepherds they are actually ravenous wolves. The word "ravenous" means a robber or an extortioner. In the New Testament "wolves" was used to describe people who were cruel, greedy and destructive. John 10:12 says, "But a hireling, *he who is* not the shepherd, one who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees; and the wolf catches the sheep and scatters them." In Acts 20:29 Paul told the elders of the church at Ephesus, "For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock." In both passages the goal of these false teachers is to destroy.

Jesus said that the way to recognize false teachers is by their fruit. Jesus said that it is impossible to get good fruit from thorn bushes or thistles. By this statement Jesus made it clear that it is impossible for false teachers to bear good fruit. The same is true for fruit trees. A good fruit tree will bear good fruit. A rotten fruit tree will bear bad fruit. The fruit of a bad tree may have a beautiful skin on the outside. However, when you cut the fruit open you will find that the fruit is rotten on the inside. 2 Corinthians 11:13-15 points out the fact that the goal of such teachers is always to deceive. Those verses say, "For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ. And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works."

Matthew 7:18-20 goes on to say, "A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor *can* a bad tree bear

good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Therefore by their fruits you will know them.” In these verses we see that a good tree cannot bear bad fruit just as a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. John 15:2 says, “Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every *branch* that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit.” In Matthew Jesus is talking about false teachers. In John Jesus is the vine and is talking about fruitful Christians. A false teacher bears bad fruit while a person that is not a Christian bears no fruit. The branch that bears no fruit is cut off the vine and burned so those who are not Christians will experience eternal judgment even if they are not false teachers.

Later Jesus was speaking to the Pharisees in Matthew 12 and in verses 33-35 said, “Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or else make the tree bad and its fruit bad; for a tree is known by its fruit. Brood of vipers! How can you, being evil, speak good things? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good things, and an evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth evil things.” Jesus told the Pharisees that the things that they spoke came from their hearts. Because their hearts were evil they could not speak good things. That is why false teachers will focus on this world and the things of this world rather than the things which are eternal. Many people do not recognize such false teachers because those teachers are focusing on worldly success and even humanitarian acts. Those who bear bad fruit will also experience eternal judgment. That is why Jesus said that we can know false teachers by their fruits because their followers will be focused on earthly gain.

The second thing that we see is that a good tree will always bear good fruit. However, there may be various levels of fruit bearing. John 15:1-7 talks about fruit, more fruit and much fruit. In John 15:2 we see that the Father prunes every branch that bears fruit so that it will bear more fruit. The word translated “pruned” in John 15:2 means “*to be cleansed from impurity or guilt*”. The only other place this word is used is in Hebrews 10:2 where we read, “For then would they not have ceased to be offered? For the worshipers, once purified, would have had no more consciousness of sins.” Those who offered animal sacrifices never had their guilt fully taken away.

In contrast, our sins have been blotted out by the blood of Christ. 1 John 1:9 points out the fact that we can experience cleansing from guilt as well as forgiveness for sin. That freedom makes it possible for our lives to bear more fruit. John 15:5 says, “I am the vine, you *are* the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.” As we learn to abide in Christ moment by moment our lives will begin to bear much fruit.

Jesus went on to say that false teachers will do many things in the name of Jesus in their efforts to deceive others. Matthew 7:21-23 says, “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!’” Here we see that Jesus explained why false teachers will be able to deceive many people and lead them away from the truth of the Word of God.

False teachers focus on works and not what it means to do the will of God. The Pharisees had a very strong focus on works. Matthew 23:15 says, “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel land and sea to win one proselyte, and when he is won, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves.” We see that the Pharisees worked very hard to get one more person to become a part of the Pharisees. However, each follower that they won they helped to become even more judgmental and evil than themselves. In contrast, true believers will focus on doing the will of God. Christ set the example when He said in John

6:38, “For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.”

Jesus went on to talk about some of the other works that false teachers will emphasize. Many will claim to have prophesied in the name of Christ. Just a few weeks before he condemned Jesus to death, the high priest prophesied in John 11:50-51, “Nor do you consider that it is expedient for us that one man should die for the people, and not that the whole nation should perish.’ Now this he did not say on his own authority; but being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the nation.” He prophesied as the high priest in the name of God while at the same time he also condemned Jesus to death just a few weeks later.

We also see that false teachers claimed to cast out demons in the name of Jesus. Acts 19:13 says, “Then some of the itinerant Jewish exorcists took it upon themselves to call the name of the Lord Jesus over those who had evil spirits, saying, “We exorcise you by the Jesus whom Paul preaches.” Jesus said that many false teachers would also do wonders in God’s name. This was illustrated in 2 Corinthians 11:13-15 which was quoted above. Even the antichrist will do false wonders. 2 Thessalonians 2:9-10 says, “The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved.” Here we see that the antichrist will do these works through the working of Satan.

False teachers may even deceive themselves but they will be judged along with Satan and all unbelievers because they have never repented of their sin of unbelief and trusted in Jesus. This is why 1 Corinthians 10:21 warns, “You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; you cannot partake of the Lord’s table and of the table of demons.” We want to help our physical and spiritual children understand that false teachers can be recognized by their fruit. We want to help them understand that an emphasis on worldly rewards instead of eternal rewards is the first sign of a false teacher. May the Lord richly bless you as you equip your children to recognize the fruit of false teachers.

Jesus Taught the Word of God with Authority

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to understand what Jesus meant when He said that you will know false teachers by their fruit. We saw that the focus of such teachers is on the things of this world instead of the things that are eternal. In this topic we are going to see that Jesus taught with authority.

As Jesus came to the end of this sermon, He taught His disciples and the crowd that was listening about the two builders and the two foundations. Matthew 7:24-25 says, “Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock.” We see that Jesus concluded His sermon by pointing out that people would make one of two responses to His sermon. Everyone there that day heard what Jesus taught. Some would take action and would put what Jesus taught into practice in their daily lives. Others would hear what Jesus taught and would make no changes in their lives.

These verses speak about those who would hear and put into action the things that Jesus taught. Jesus compared this response to a wise man who built his house on a rock. The word translated “wise” speaks of “*one who hears and takes action to make changes*”. This word is used several times in the first nine verses of Matthew 25. Matthew 25:1-4 says, “Then the kingdom of heaven shall be likened to ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. Now five of them were wise, and five were foolish. Those who were foolish took their lamps and took no oil with them, but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps.” In these verses, we see that both groups took lamps. However, the foolish group took no oil for their lamps.

The fact that Jesus said the wise man built his house on a rock shows that those who hear and obey what Jesus teaches are building on a solid foundation. Jesus told Peter in Matthew 16:18, “And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.” The word “Peter” means a stone or a small rock. The word translated “rock” means “*a very large rock*”. This is the word that is used both in Matthew 7 and also in 1 Corinthians 10:4 where we read, “And all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ.” Together these verses show us that the wise person is the person who builds his or her life on the foundation of Christ, the Rock.

Those who hear and do what Jesus taught are those who are building on Christ as their foundation. In life there will be rain and storms that come. That means that we will face various trials in our lives. When Christ is the One that is our foundation, we do not need to worry that these trials will destroy our foundation because Christ is a solid foundation. In 1 Corinthians 10:13 we are told, “No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.” Then Romans 14:4 adds, “Who are you to judge another’s servant? To his own master he stands or falls. Indeed, he will be made to stand, for God is able to make him stand.” The Lord will never leave or forsake us.

In contrast, Jesus warned in Matthew 7:26-27, “But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand: and the rain

descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall.” Jesus was talking to His disciples plus a large group of other people who had come searching for Him. Everyone there that day heard what Jesus had taught. However, some would make one decision and many others would make a very different decision. Many of those there that day heard exactly what Jesus had told His disciples. Instead of doing the things that Jesus taught, they would hear them and do nothing. Jesus said that those who made that choice would be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand.

The word translated “sand” can refer to either “*sand or sandy ground*” and sometimes the word was used to speak of “*a group of people so large that it could not be counted*”. That is illustrated in Hebrews 11:12 where we read, “Therefore from one man, and him as good as dead, were born *as many* as the stars of the sky in multitude—innumerable as the sand which is by the seashore.” In this verse, we see that sand is used to show that the number of descendants of Abraham could not be counted. However, in Matthew this word is used to talk about building a house on either sandy ground or just sand. It is very easy to build such a house because no time has to be spent preparing a large rock to be the foundation of the house.

In the same way, those who build on the sand are making no preparation for their eternal future. They are just living to enjoy the temporary pleasures of this world. In the time of Isaiah, God had called on the nation of Judah to repent and turn back to Him. Instead, most of the people of that day chose to live for the temporary pleasures of sin. Isaiah 22:13 said that they did not weep in repentance for their sin. That verse says, “But instead, joy and gladness, slaying oxen and killing sheep, eating meat and drinking wine: ‘Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die!’” Here we see that the people chose to live for the moment in the time of Isaiah. Jesus knew that most of the people were doing the same in His day. That is why Jesus warned that those who heard His Word and did nothing were foolish and were building on the sand. The same is true today.

Jesus warned what would happen to all who choose to live for the moment at any time. Jesus said that the rain will come, the floods will come, the winds will blow and the fall of that house will be great. Jesus had been teaching the true meaning of the law. Most of the people were depending on their own works to keep that law. Jesus had just explained the true meaning of the law. That teaching showed that good works could never save any person from judgment. Ephesians 2:9 says, “Not of works, lest anyone should boast. Then Titus 3:5 adds, “Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit.” The people had to choose to come to Jesus in repentance and faith because He is the narrow gate or they would continue on their way to eternal destruction which is illustrated by the total destruction of the house built on the sand.

When Jesus finished speaking, Matthew 7:28-29 says, “And so it was, when Jesus had ended these sayings, that the people were astonished at His teaching, for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.” The word translated “authority” is a key word in these last two verses and means “*one having power, strength or authority*”. Later in Matthew 9:6-7 Jesus said, “‘But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins’—then He said to the paralytic, ‘Arise, take up your bed, and go to your house.’ And he arose and departed to his house.” In this verse, the word is translated power. In Matthew 21:23-24 the chief priests and elders questioned Jesus. Those verses say, “Now when He came into the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people confronted Him as He was teaching, and said, ‘By what authority are You doing these things? And who gave You this authority?’ But Jesus answered and said to them, ‘I also will ask you one thing, which if you tell Me, I likewise will tell you by what authority I do these things.’” Because of their unbelief, the chief priests refused to answer the question of Jesus and so He did not answer their question.

However, Jesus later made it clear to the disciples the source of His authority. Matthew 28:18-20 concludes the book of Matthew by the following statement of Jesus to His disciples, “And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, ‘All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, *even* to the end of the age.’ Amen.” This commission to all Christians to make disciples is given by Jesus who is the One who has all authority. Jesus said in the previous verses here in Matthew 7 that if we build our foundation on Him that we will hear and do what He says.

In contrast to the teaching of Jesus, the scribes would quote other scribes as the source of their authority. Satan tried to offer Jesus authority over the world when he tempted Jesus in the wilderness. Luke 4:6 says, “And the devil said to Him, ‘All this authority I will give You, and their glory; for *this* has been delivered to me, and I give it to whomever I wish.’” Jesus showed the source of His authority to both the people and Satan later in that chapter. Luke 4:32 says, “And they were astonished at His teaching, for His word was with authority. Then Luke 4:36 adds, “Then they were all amazed and spoke among themselves, saying, ‘What a word this is! For with authority and power He commands the unclean spirits, and they come out.’” Jesus showed both by His words and by His authority over demons that He had a source of authority much greater than Satan.

The people were filled with amazement as they heard and saw that He taught with authority. The word translated “were astonished” means “*to be struck with astonishment or to be amazed*”. The people had never heard teaching like this because they were used to hearing the scribes quote the opinions of other scribes. We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to accurately teach and explain the Word of God by quoting from the Word of God in context instead of quoting from the opinions of others. The Word of God is living and powerful because of the source of its authority. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children to use the Word of God to explain the Word of God.

Jesus Healed a Leper and a Servant

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to teach the Word of God with authority by teaching them to accurately explain the Word of God by using other passages of the Word instead of the opinions of men. We also saw that Jesus has all authority. In this topic we will see how Jesus showed His authority over disease and sickness.

Matthew 8:1-4 says, “When He had come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed Him. And behold, a leper came and worshiped Him, saying, ‘Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean.’ Then Jesus put out *His* hand and touched him, saying, ‘I am willing; be cleansed.’ Immediately his leprosy was cleansed. And Jesus said to him, ‘See that you tell no one; but go your way, show yourself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded, as a testimony to them.’” In these verses, we see that Jesus showed His authority over an incurable disease. A person with leprosy was forced to live out in the wilderness and cry “Unclean” when anyone came close so that the person would not catch the disease.

Here we see that one such leper came running to Jesus as He came down from the mountain. He began by worshiping Jesus. Then he said, “Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean.” We see some important lessons about the faith of this man. First, he recognized Jesus as Lord. Second, He asked Jesus to work in his life if Jesus was willing. Third, he recognized that Jesus could make him clean and cleanse him from his leprosy. There were only two people mentioned in the Old Testament who had been cured from leprosy. One was Marian, the sister of Moses, more than 1400 hundred years earlier. The other, was Naaman who was a Syrian in the time of the prophet Elisha who the Lord had healed more than 800 years earlier. However, this man realized that Jesus had the power and authority to heal him.

Jesus immediately put out His hand and touched the man. Most people were very careful to avoid touching a leper because they were afraid they would catch the disease. In contrast, Jesus touched the man and healed the man instead of catching the disease. Then Jesus gave the man some instructions. Jesus told the man to go and show himself to the priest and offer the sacrifice which Moses had commanded in the law. That command is given in Leviticus 14:1-32. Jesus said that this was to be done as a testimony to the priests. Since the last leper to be cured in the Old Testament had been a Syrian and that had happened more than 800 years earlier this was a powerful way for the priests to be forced to recognize that Jesus had the authority of God. Instead of obeying Jesus and going to show himself to the priest, Mark 1:45 says, “However, he went out and began to proclaim it freely, and to spread the matter, so that Jesus could no longer openly enter the city, but was outside in deserted places; and they came to Him from every direction.” The priests did not recognize the power of Jesus but the people did and came from every direction to see Jesus perform more miracles. In fact it became necessary for Jesus to spend part of His time in the deserted places because the crowds became so great.

Matthew 8:5-9 says, “Now when Jesus had entered Capernaum, a centurion came to Him, pleading with Him, saying, ‘Lord, my servant is lying at home paralyzed, dreadfully tormented.’ And Jesus said to him, ‘I will come and heal him.’ The centurion answered and said, ‘Lord, I am not worthy that You should come under my roof. But only speak a word, and my servant will be healed. For I also am a man under authority, having soldiers under me. And I say to this *one*, ‘Go,’ and he goes; and to another, ‘Come,’ and he comes; and to my servant, ‘Do this,’ and he does *it*.’” Here we see that the priests did not recognize the authority of Jesus but a Roman centurion certainly did recognize that Jesus had authority from God that gave Him power to heal.

A Roman centurion had a servant that was paralyzed and the servant was experiencing great suffering. Some of the Jews told Jesus about the centurion and the need of his servant. In Luke 7:3-5 these Jewish leaders said to Jesus, “So when he heard about Jesus, he sent elders of the Jews to Him, pleading with Him to come and heal his servant. And when they came to Jesus, they begged Him earnestly, saying that the one for whom He should do this was deserving, ‘for he loves our nation, and has built us a synagogue.’” When they got close to his house the centurion came to Jesus and told Jesus that he had a servant that had become paralyzed. He was in great suffering because of whatever had paralyzed him. The centurion pleaded with Jesus to do something to help the servant. Jesus just replied, “I will come and heal him.” The centurion said that he was not worthy for Jesus to come to his house. This centurion knew that most Jews would not even enter the house of a Gentile so he did not feel worthy to have Jesus come into his house.

Keep in mind that a centurion was an officer in the Roman army with one hundred men under his command as we study what Jesus did and said. The centurion then said, “But only speak a word, and my servant will be healed.” This statement showed that the Roman centurion had heard enough about Jesus to recognize that Jesus had to be from God. He realized that Jesus did not even need to see the servant in order to heal him. Then the centurion made a statement that showed that he understood why Jesus could heal his servant just by speaking the word.

Luke 7:8 says, “For I also am a man placed under authority, having soldiers under me. And I say to one, ‘Go,’ and he goes; and to another, ‘Come,’ and he comes; and to my servant, ‘Do this,’ and he does *it*.” The word translated “placed” means “*to set in place, to appoint or to be given authority*”. This centurion recognized that he had been given authority by the Roman government to be over the one hundred soldiers under his command. In the same way, he realized that Jesus had been given authority by God over all sickness and disease. He realized that Jesus could just speak the word and his servant would be healed even though Jesus did not see the servant. The word that the centurion used for authority is the same word that Jesus used in Matthew 28:18 before He gave what is known as the great Commission. That verse says, “And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.” This Roman soldier understood the principle of authority.

Matthew 8:10-13 says, “When Jesus heard *it*, He marveled, and said to those who followed, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel! And I say to you that many will come from east and west, and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. But the sons of the kingdom will be cast out into outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’ Then Jesus said to the centurion, ‘Go your way; and as you have believed, *so* let it be done for you.’ And his servant was healed that same hour.” The word translated “marveled” means “*to wonder at or to be had in admiration*”. It is the same word used in Acts 4:13 where we read, “Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus.” The religious leaders were amazed at the boldness of Peter and John. Jesus showed this same wonder and amazement about this Roman centurion. The reason for such amazement was due to the fact that none of the Jews in Israel had shown such wonder.

Jesus used that opportunity to help His disciples notice and understand that there were Gentiles at that time that had true faith in God and that many more in the future would show that same faith. Here we see that Jesus took each opportunity to help His disciples understand that God had a great concern for the Gentiles. This same concern caused Jesus to say in John 4:35, “Do you not say, ‘There are still four months and then comes the harvest’? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest!” The disciples heard these statements by Jesus but did not fully understand until we read in Acts 11:17-18, “If therefore God gave them the same gift as *He gave* us when we believed on the Lord Jesus

Christ, who was I that I could withstand God?’ When they heard these things they became silent; and they glorified God, saying, ‘Then God has also granted to the Gentiles repentance to life.’”

In contrast, Jesus warned that judgment would come on many of the Jews because of their unbelief. The Jews had received the Old Testament and the promises. However, most of them in the time of Jesus did not believe in Him. Jesus gave the Jews whose hearts were controlled by unbelief a warning that day. Jesus said that many sons of the kingdom would be cast into outer darkness. The phrase “outer darkness” is mentioned three times in Matthew and each time it speaks of the eternal judgment of the unbelievers. Matthew 22:13 says, “Then the king said to the servants, ‘Bind him hand and foot, take him away, and cast *him* into outer darkness; there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’” Then Matthew 25:30 adds, “And cast the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” In all of these verses we see that Jesus was warning of the eternal judgment of unbelievers.

After Jesus honored the faith of the Roman centurion, He told the centurion that it would be done just as he had believed. The centurion went home and found that his servant had been healed because of his faith. We want to help our physical and spiritual children understand that this Roman centurion demonstrated what authority means and help them recognize that Christ is the One who is to have that kind of authority over our own lives. As Jesus said in Matthew 28:18, “And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.” We want to help our children understand that we are servants of Christ who have been commissioned by Him. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children understand these things.

Jesus Taught what it Means to be a Disciple

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children understand that Jesus is the One who has all authority in heaven and earth. That authority gave Him the ability to cast out demons and heal the sick. It is also the authority that He showed when He commissioned us to make disciples. In our topic today, we are going to see what it means to be a disciple.

Jesus had come down from the mountain, had healed a leper and had healed the servant of a Roman centurion as He came into the city of Capernaum. He then went to the home of Peter. Matthew 8:14-15 says, "Now when Jesus had come into Peter's house, He saw his wife's mother lying sick with a fever. So He touched her hand, and the fever left her. And she arose and served them." Luke gives us a few details about this miracle that are not mentioned in Matthew. Luke 4:38-39 says, "Now He arose from the synagogue and entered Simon's house. But Simon's wife's mother was sick with a high fever, and they made request of Him concerning her. So He stood over her and rebuked the fever, and it left her. And immediately she arose and served them." Luke was a doctor and so he mentioned the fact that the mother-in-law of Peter had a high fever. We also see that the family of Peter made a request to Jesus for the mother-in-law.

Jesus responded to the request to heal the mother-in-law of Peter. Jesus stood over her and rebuked the fever. Then Mark 1:31 says, "So He came and took her by the hand and lifted her up, and immediately the fever left her. And she served them." Here we see that Jesus then took her hand and lifted her up. When Jesus touched her we see that immediately the fever left her. Normally when people have a high fever they are weak for a day or two following the fever. Instead the mother-in-law was made completely well and regained her full strength.

Then she arose and immediately began to serve Jesus and His disciples. Jesus had first met Peter about a year earlier so He had probably been to this home several times during that year. As a result, the mother-in-law knew Jesus and His disciples and was eager for the privilege to serve them. Galatians 5:13 says, "For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another." Although that verse was not yet written, she saw her opportunity to serve Jesus and immediately began to serve Him and the disciples.

Many people had seen Jesus heal the leper. Others had heard how Jesus just spoken the word and the servant of the centurion was healed. As a result, we see that many people came to the house of Peter. Matthew 8:16-17 says, "When evening had come, they brought to Him many who were demon-possessed. And He cast out the spirits with a word, and healed all who were sick, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying: 'He Himself took our infirmities and bore our sicknesses.'" Then Mark 1:33 adds, "And the whole city was gathered together at the door." Here we see that many people of the city came and gathered around the house of Peter because they knew that Jesus was there.

These verses say that the people brought many that were demon-possessed. The word translated "demon-possessed" is used 13 times in the Gospels. The first use is in Matthew 4:24 where we read, "Then His fame went throughout all Syria; and they brought to Him all sick people who were afflicted with various diseases and torments, and those who were demon-possessed, epileptics, and paralytics; and He healed them." From just these two verses we see that Jesus set many people free from demons. Then in Luke 7:21 we read, "And that very hour

He cured many of infirmities, afflictions, and evil spirits; and to many blind He gave sight.” In this verse, at a later time Luke used the term “evil spirits” to refer to demons. Jesus always showed His power over demons.

It is important for new Christians to learn that Jesus has all power over demons because some new Christians have been involved in demonic activity before they became Christians. That is why John warned in 1 John 4:1, “Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world.” Then John said in 1 John 4:4, “You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.” New Christians need to understand that they have the Holy Spirit in their lives and that His power is much greater than the power of Satan or the demons.

We also see that Jesus healed all of the sick that were brought to Him. We see the reason that Jesus cast out all of the demons and healed all of the sick that evening. This was done to fulfill the prophecy that Isaiah had given. Isaiah 53:4-5 says, “Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed.” The word translated “fulfilled” means “*to fill or to complete*”. It is used four times in the first two chapters of Matthew to show how the various things that were prophesied in the Old Testament were fulfilled by things that happened around the birth of Jesus. Then in Matthew 5:17-18 we read, “Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled.” Jesus fulfilled the Law perfectly because He was without sin in order to bring us to God. That is why Galatians 3:24-25 says, “Therefore the law was our tutor *to bring us* to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor.” We come to God through Christ.

Jesus went on to say in Matthew 8:18-22, “And when Jesus saw great multitudes about Him, He gave a command to depart to the other side. Then a certain scribe came and said to Him, ‘Teacher, I will follow You wherever You go.’ And Jesus said to him, ‘Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head.’ Then another of His disciples said to Him, ‘Lord, let me first go and bury my father.’ But Jesus said to him, ‘Follow Me, and let the dead bury their own dead.’” In these verses we see that Jesus told a scribe to consider the cost before saying that he would follow Jesus.

Jesus saw the crowds and gave a command to His disciples to go to the other side of the Sea of Galilee. Before He and the disciples left to cross the Sea of Galilee, two men came and said that they wanted to follow Jesus. As they were preparing to leave a scribe came and spoke to Jesus. The scribe told Jesus that he would follow Jesus wherever Jesus went. He came and said, “Teacher, I will follow You wherever You go.” Jesus knew his heart so Jesus answered Him based on that knowledge. Jesus just said, “Foxes have holes and birds of the air *have* nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay *His* head.” This answer reminded the man that the animals have their places where they stay and the birds have their nests. The animals and birds have the basic necessities.

In contrast, Jesus made it clear by this answer that He did not even have a place to sleep that night. That meant that if the scribe went with Jesus that he would have to learn to live by faith. 2 Corinthians 5:7 says, “For we walk by faith, not by sight.” Suddenly this scribe faced a choice. He was a scribe and so there were always things to be copied and that was how he earned his living. As a result, this scribe had to choose whether he was willing to trust the Lord or whether he wanted the security of knowing where he would get his next meal and where he

would sleep that night. When he saw that following Jesus meant that he would have to live by faith, he changed his mind about following Jesus.

One of the others who had said that he wanted to follow Jesus and be his disciple apparently heard what Jesus said. He then said to Jesus, "Lord, let me first go and bury my father." This did not mean that his father had just died. Instead it meant that he would wait to follow Jesus until after his father died because then he would have his inheritance. Jesus also knew his heart. Sometime later Jesus said to His disciples in Matthew 16:24-26, "Then Jesus said to His disciples, 'If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?'" Jesus knew that this man had his focus on the things of this world instead of the things that are eternal. 2 Corinthians 4:17-18 says, "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal." Jesus wants disciples who have eternal values.

As a result, Jesus told this man, "Follow Me, and let the dead bury their own dead." By this statement Jesus was saying to let those who are spiritually dead bury those who are physically dead. Luke 9:60 is this same event but adds one additional thought. That verse says, "Jesus said to him, 'Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and preach the kingdom of God.'" Anyone can take care of the daily things of life. However, Jesus wanted disciples who looked at the things that are eternal and not just the things of this world. This is a key lesson that we want to help our physical and spiritual children understand. The Lord will greatly use their lives if they will focus on the things that are eternal rather than the things of this world. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your children by your example the importance of the things that are eternal.

Jesus Showed His Power over Nature and Demons

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children understand what it means to be a disciple. We saw that Jesus wants disciples who learn to walk by faith and not by sight. In this topic we are going to see that Jesus showed His power over both the forces of nature and over demons.

Jesus and His disciples had left the crowds and were sailing across the Sea of Galilee. Matthew 8:23-27 says, “Now when He got into a boat, His disciples followed Him. And suddenly a great tempest arose on the sea, so that the boat was covered with the waves. But He was asleep. Then His disciples came to *Him* and awoke Him, saying, ‘Lord, save us! We are perishing!’ But He said to them, ‘Why are you fearful, O you of little faith?’ Then He arose and rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm. So the men marveled, saying, ‘Who can this be, that even the winds and the sea obey Him?’”

Jesus and the disciples were crossing the Sea of Galilee by boat. Suddenly a great storm arose on the sea. The Sea of Galilee is in a very unique location. It is nearly 700 feet below sea level. It is south of Mount Hermon which is about 9200 feet high. There are several narrow canyons that lead into the valley where the Sea of Galilee is located. In addition, very strong winds can blow through those canyons from May to October. As a result, those winds can cause sudden storms and very large waves on the Sea of Galilee. However, this storm was much worse than a normal storm because several of the disciples of Jesus had been fishermen who were used to such storms. We see that the storm was so severe that waves were going over the top of the boat. Meanwhile, the storm was not affecting Jesus. Mark 4:38 says, “But He was in the stern, asleep on a pillow. And they awoke Him and said to Him, ‘Teacher, do You not care that we are perishing?’” Here we see that Jesus was in the back of the boat sound asleep.

However, the disciples were very fearful and woke up Jesus. They said to Him, “Lord, save us! We are perishing!” Here we see that those former fishermen and the others in the boat thought that they were going to die. Then Jesus explained to the disciples why both they and we experience fear in our lives. Jesus just said, “Why are you fearful, O you of little faith?” When we are driven by events or people, our lives will be controlled by fear. Why we are led by the love of Christ because of our faith in Him we will experience peace even in the middle of a great storm.

Jesus then stood up in the boat. Mark 4:39-40 says, “Then He arose and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, ‘Peace, be still!’ And the wind ceased and there was a great calm. But He said to them, ‘Why are you so fearful? How is it that you have no faith?’” Here we see that Jesus just spoke to the sea. Immediately the wind was gone. The waves were gone. The sea had become so calm that it looked like there had never been even a breeze blowing on the water. Suddenly the disciples were amazed. They had seen the power of Jesus over sickness and disease. They had seen His power over demons. Now they had seen His power over the forces of nature. We see that Jesus used this event to help the faith of the disciples grow as they realized the greatness of His power.

Matthew 8:28-32 goes on to say, “When He had come to the other side, to the country of the Gergesenes, there met Him two demon-possessed *men*, coming out of the tombs, exceedingly fierce, so that no one could pass that way. And suddenly they cried out, saying, ‘What have we to do with You, Jesus, You Son of God? Have You come here to torment us before the time?’ Now a good way off from them there was a herd of many swine feeding. So the demons begged Him, saying, ‘If You cast us out, permit us to go away into the herd of swine.’ And He

said to them, ‘Go.’ So when they had come out, they went into the herd of swine. And suddenly the whole herd of swine ran violently down the steep place into the sea, and perished in the water.” The area of Gergesa was across the Sea of Galilee from the city of Tiberius.

We see that when Jesus and the disciples reached the other side of the Sea of Galilee that they were met by two demon-possessed men. Mark 5:2-5 adds some additional things about these men, “And when He had come out of the boat, immediately there met Him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit, who had his dwelling among the tombs; and no one could bind him, not even with chains, because he had often been bound with shackles and chains. And the chains had been pulled apart by him, and the shackles broken in pieces; neither could anyone tame him. And always, night and day, he was in the mountains and in the tombs, crying out and cutting himself with stones. We see the effect that these demons had on these men. They were living in the tombs of the dead. They were exceedingly fierce. They would not let anyone pass close to them. They could not be bound with chains. They had often broken shackles and chains. They could not be tamed. They spent day and night in the mountains crying out. They cut themselves on the stones. These verses give us a picture of the destructive effects that demons can have in the life of a person.

The demons wanted nothing to do with Jesus because they realized that Jesus had the power to send them to immediate judgment. That was why they started crying out when they saw Jesus. We see that in their crying they were forced to recognize that Jesus is the Son of God. That is the reason why James 2:19 tells us, “You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe—and tremble!” There were good reasons why the demons trembled. Some demons have already been sent to eternal judgment. Jude 6 says, “And the angels who did not keep their proper domain, but left their own abode, He has reserved in everlasting chains under darkness for the judgment of the great day.” The demons knew that they will one day experience eternal judgment but they did not want that judgment to begin immediately.

As a result, the demons asked for permission to go out of the men and into a nearby herd of swine (pigs). Jesus allowed them to go into the pigs instead of going immediately to eternal judgment. We see that having the demons enter into them caused the pigs to act like they were insane. They immediately began to run quickly. They were close to a place where the Sea of Galilee had a steep bank down to the Sea. They ran down that steep place into the water and were drowned in the Sea of Galilee. This is a reminder that the goal of Satan and his demons is always the same. John 10:10 says, “The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.” The demons had tried to destroy the men and now they destroyed the pigs instead. Mark 5:13 says there were about 2000 pigs.

We see the reaction of the men who were taking care of the pigs. Matthew 8:33-34 says, “Then those who kept *them* fled; and they went away into the city and told everything, including what *had happened* to the demon-possessed *men*. And behold, the whole city came out to meet Jesus. And when they saw Him, they begged *Him* to depart from their region.” The men herding the pigs were so filled with fear that they immediately ran into the city. They told the people what had happened to the pigs. Then they told the people what had happened to the demon-possessed men. Mark 5:15 says, “Then they came to Jesus, and saw the one *who had been* demon-possessed and had the legion, sitting and clothed and in his right mind. And they were afraid.”

The people could see a dramatic change in the men who had been demon-possessed. They saw that the men were now sitting and talking with Jesus. They saw that the men were now wearing clothing. Most of all they saw that these men were now in their right mind. Here we see the transformation that Jesus is able to make in the lives of those who are demon-possessed. Jesus

is the One who has all authority. He is the One who is able to cast out the demons of those who are possessed. He is able to set them free from their bondage to Satan. John 8:36 says, “Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed.” Jesus is also able to restore people to their right mind.

The whole city heard about what had happened and they all came out to see the way that Jesus had changed and transformed the lives of these two men. However, they were not happy to see the lives of these men transformed. Pigs were considered an unclean animal by the Jews. Leviticus 11:7 says, “And the swine, though it divides the hoof, having cloven hooves, yet does not chew the cud, *is* unclean to you.” As a result, the Jews did not eat the meat of pigs. However, there was a Roman military base in that area. The Jews would not eat the pigs because they were unclean but they would raise them and sell them to the Romans as a way to make money. Their pigs had been destroyed and they had lost the profits that they would have made by selling those pigs to the Romans. That was probably why they wanted Jesus to leave the area. Their profits from the sale of the pigs were more important to them than the lives of the men who had been transformed.

Those people were an example of many people today. However, Mark 8:36-37 warns, “For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?” Today, many people are more concerned about their money or their other things than they are about the needs of people. In contrast, it should be our desire to see the lives of people transformed. Romans 12:2 says, “And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what *is* that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.” First, we want to see the Lord transform our lives. Then, we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn how Christ can transform their lives so that together we can share that same good news with others. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children develop a real desire to see the lives of people transformed by Christ.

Jesus Healed a Paralyzed Man

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn the importance of focusing on the fact that Jesus wants to transform lives. Jesus will use our faithful sharing of the Word of God to change people and transform their lives. In this topic we will see that Jesus healed a man that was paralyzed.

In Matthew 9:1-2 we read, “So He got into a boat, crossed over, and came to His own city. Then behold, they brought to Him a paralytic lying on a bed. When Jesus saw their faith, He said to the paralytic, “Son, be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven you.” The people of the area of Gergasa had asked Jesus to leave their area because their pigs were more important to them than people. As a result, Jesus and the disciples got into the boat and went across the Sea of Galilee to the city that Jesus was using as His home city. From Matthew 4:13 we see that city was Capernaum. That verse says, “And leaving Nazareth, He came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is by the sea, in the regions of Zebulun and Naphtali.”

Luke also wrote what Jesus did after Jesus made Capernaum His home city. Luke 5:16-17 says, “So He Himself often withdrew into the wilderness and prayed. Now it happened on a certain day, as He was teaching, that there were Pharisees and teachers of the law sitting by, who had come out of every town of Galilee, Judea, and Jerusalem. And the power of the Lord was present to heal them.” Here we see that Pharisees and scribes had come from many places because they heard what Jesus was doing. The people came to hear what Jesus taught and see what He did. In contrast, the scribes and the Pharisees came to look for an excuse to condemn Jesus because their hearts were evil. Jesus had left the crowds to go to the area of Gergasa by boat. The crowds had then gone to Capernaum because they thought that Jesus would return there which happened very soon because the people of Gergasa asked Jesus to leave their area.

After Jesus arrived in Capernaum we see that a paralyzed man was brought to Jesus. Mark 2:3-4 says, “Then they came to Him, bringing a paralytic who was carried by four *men*.⁴ And when they could not come near Him because of the crowd, they uncovered the roof where He was. So when they had broken through, they let down the bed on which the paralytic was lying.” From these verses we see that four friends had a great concern to see their friend healed and their faith caused them to refuse to let anything stop them from getting their friend to Jesus.

Jesus saw and honored the faith of the four friends by what He said to the paralyzed man. Jesus spoke to the paralyzed man and said, “Son, be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven you.” The fact that Jesus began by telling the man that his sins were forgiven may be an indication that this particular man was paralyzed because of his own sin. At other times Jesus made it very clear that physical problems were not the result of sin. In John 9:1-3 we read, “Now as Jesus passed by, He saw a man who was blind from birth. And His disciples asked Him, saying, ‘Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?’ Jesus answered, ‘Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but that the works of God should be revealed in him.’” This passage makes it clear that the purpose of some physical problems is to bring glory of God.

The message of forgiveness certainly brought joy to the heart of the man that was paralyzed. However, it produced a very different reaction among the scribes that were there that day. Matthew 9:3-5 says, “And at once some of the scribes said within themselves, ‘This Man blasphemes!’ But Jesus, knowing their thoughts, said, ‘Why do you think evil in your hearts? For which is easier, to say, ‘*Your* sins are forgiven you,’ or to say, ‘Arise and walk?’” The scribes were eager to find some excuse to condemn Jesus and we see the result of that eagerness

in these verses. The scribes immediately thought within their hearts “This Man blasphemes!” In their hearts the scribes immediately accused Jesus of blasphemy. Later in Jerusalem other Jews put this same inner attitude into words. John 10:33 says, “The Jews answered Him, saying, ‘For a good work we do not stone You, but for blasphemy, and because You, being a Man, make Yourself God.’”

Here we see that Jesus knew that these men were accusing him of blasphemy in their hearts. As a result, Jesus asked a question that actually gave them proof that He is God and has the power to forgive sins. Jesus just asked the question, “Why do you think evil in your hearts?” The fact that Jesus could know what was in their hearts showed that He is God. If Jesus were a man He would not have known what was in their hearts. In 1 Corinthians 2:11 we read, “For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God.” However, Jesus did know what was in their hearts because He is God.

In fact Jesus revealed the evil character of their hearts. Jeremiah 17:9 says, “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?” Then Genesis 6:5 says, “Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man *was* great in the earth, and *that* every intent of the thoughts of his heart *was* only evil continually.” Many of the scribes, Pharisees and Sadducees showed that their hearts were like the hearts of the people in the time of Noah because they refused to believe that Jesus is God in spite of all of the signs which Jesus did. This is an example of the fact that whatever is in the heart will determine how a person views everything that they see or hear as they go through life.

Jesus went on to explain that He could heal this man by saying two different things. He could say, “*Your* sins are forgiven you,” and the man would be healed. He could also say, “Arise and walk,” and the man would be healed. Either way, the fact that a man who was paralyzed would be totally healed was evidence of the fact that Jesus is God. We see that Jesus was making it necessary for people to examine their own hearts and make a choice. Each person has to choose within his or her heart either to believe that Jesus is God or to deny that Jesus is God. All people today still have to make that same choice. John 1:12 gives a wonderful promise to all who truly believe and receive Jesus as Lord. That verse says, “But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name.” The scribes there that day chose to deny that Jesus is God and so they did not receive eternal life.

We go on to see what Jesus did after He talked about the hearts of the scribes and Pharisees. Matthew 9:6-8 says, “‘But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins’—then He said to the paralytic, ‘Arise, take up your bed, and go to your house.’ And he arose and departed to his house. Now when the multitudes saw *it*, they marveled and glorified God, who had given such power to men.” Jesus said that He would show that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins. Then Jesus said to the man, “Arise, take up your bed, and go to your house.” The man immediately took up his bed and went home. However, that miracle did not change the hearts of the scribes because they had made the choice that they were not going to believe that Jesus is God.

In contrast, we see that there was a different response by the multitudes. We see that the multitudes marveled and glorified God. The word translated “marveled” means “*to wonder at or to be amazed*”. This is the word that was used to describe the disciples in the previous chapter when Jesus calmed the storm. Matthew 8:27 says, “So the men marveled, saying, ‘Who can this be, that even the winds and the sea obey Him?’” However, even when people marvel and are amazed it does not mean that they always believe and receive. Mark 12:17 says, “And Jesus answered and said to them, ‘Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the

things that are God's.' And they marveled at Him." This verse shows us that people can be amazed and still refuse to believe that Jesus is the Christ.

However, part of the multitude did show evidence that could indicate belief that this man had his sins forgiven and was healed. We see that there were many in the multitude that glorified God and recognized that God was the source of that power that healed the man. Those who were true disciples were growing in their understanding of who Jesus was and is. John 20:30-31 says, "And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name." Jesus knew that many in the multitude did not have true belief but He wanted those who were becoming His disciples to recognize that Jesus had both the power to heal and also the power to forgive sins.

This is also the reason why we share the Word of God with others and not just our own opinions about Jesus. Hebrews 4:12 says, "For the word of God *is* living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." Our thoughts and opinions about Jesus may cause people to be amazed. However, the Word of God will do much more. The Word of God will discern the thoughts and the intents of their hearts. Romans 10:10 tells what happens when the Word of God reveals the intents of the heart. That verse says, "For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." Our opinions may convince the mind but only the Word of God can change the heart. That is why we want to help our physical and spiritual children understand the importance of sharing the Word of God rather than their own opinions when they are talking to others. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to share the Word of God with others.

Jesus Called Matthew to be His Disciple

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children understand the importance of sharing the Word of God and not just their own opinions with others. In this topic we will see that after Jesus called Matthew to follow Him that Jesus quoted the Old Testament as He explained that His purpose was to call sinners to repentance. That will be the focus of this topic.

Jesus had left the place where He healed the paralyzed man. Matthew 9:9-11 says, “As Jesus passed on from there, He saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax office. And He said to him, ‘Follow Me.’ So he arose and followed Him. Now it happened, as Jesus sat at the table in the house, *that* behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and sat down with Him and His disciples. And when the Pharisees saw *it*, they said to His disciples, ‘Why does your Teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?’” Here we see that Jesus invited Matthew to follow Him and become one of his disciples.

Tax collectors were hated by most of the Jews. First, tax collectors were Jews who worked for the hated Roman government. Jesus later talked about two sons to the chief priests and rulers of the people. In Matthew 21:31 we read, “‘Which of the two did the will of *his* father?’ They said to Him, ‘The first.’ Jesus said to them, ‘Assuredly, I say to you that tax collectors and harlots enter the kingdom of God before you.’” Jesus told the chief priests that the tax collectors and the harlots would enter the kingdom of God before they did. The chief priests were so angry after hearing the parables in that chapter that they wanted to kill Jesus. Second, tax collectors were often thieves who took extra money for themselves. In Luke 19:8 Zacchaeus said, “Then Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, ‘Look, Lord, I give half of my goods to the poor; and if I have taken anything from anyone by false accusation, I restore fourfold.’” Zacchaeus said that he would pay back four times as much to all those from whom he had stolen by charging extra taxes.

Matthew knew that he was accepted by Jesus. He was a hated tax collector at the time Jesus invited him to become a disciple. Matthew also wanted all of his friends to meet Jesus. Luke 5:28-29 says, “So he left all, rose up, and followed Him. Then Levi gave Him a great feast in his own house. And there were a great number of tax collectors and others who sat down with them.” As a result, Matthew invited all of his tax collector and sinner friends to a great feast so that they could all meet Jesus and know that Jesus accepted them as well. The Pharisees were upset to see Jesus eating with tax collectors and sinners. That was why they wanted to know why He ate with tax collectors.

The Pharisees thought that they were better than both the tax collectors and others that they called sinners. That is why Jesus later gave the parable in Luke 18:10-14 where we read, “Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, ‘God, I thank You that I am not like other men— extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess.’ And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise *his* eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me a sinner!’ I tell you, this man went down to his house justified *rather* than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.” The scribes and Pharisees exalted themselves and condemned others.

In Matthew 9:12-13 we read, “When Jesus heard *that*, He said to them, ‘Those who are well

have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. But go and learn what *this* means: ‘I desire mercy and not sacrifice.’ For I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance.” Jesus said that it is the sick people that need a doctor and not those who are well. In that day people did not go to see a doctor when they were healthy. Instead they only went to a doctor when they were very sick. Their purpose for going to a doctor was so that he could help them get healed from their sickness or disease. They knew that they needed help and that is why they went to a doctor. In the same way the tax collectors and sinners knew that they needed their sins forgiven.

Jesus then used a phrase that was common in that day, “Go and learn what this means.” That phrase was actually a rebuke. It was a phrase to remind the people that the thing that was going to be said next was something that they should have known for many years already. Then we see that Jesus quoted from the book of Hosea to explain why He did what He did. Hosea 6:6 says, “For I desire mercy and not sacrifice, and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings.” The Pharisees claimed to follow God but they did not obey Him. They offered sacrifices but they failed to show mercy. God had warned Saul, the first king of Israel that obedience was more important than sacrifice. In 1 Samuel 15:22-23 we read, “So Samuel said: ‘Has the LORD *as great* delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, *and* to heed than the fat of rams. For rebellion *is as* the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness *is as* iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, He also has rejected you from *being* king.’” The Pharisees knew what God had said to Saul but they failed to obey and show mercy to others. They did not realize that their own rebellion was like the sin of witchcraft and their stubbornness like idolatry.

Then Jesus said, “For I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance.” Matthew knew that He was a sinner and needed to come to God in repentance. All of his tax collector and sinner friends knew the same thing. Instead of going to them and telling them about the love of God, the Pharisees just condemned them. As a result, the tax collectors and sinners thought that they were so sinful that God would never accept them and so they were afraid to come to God. Hosea offered a message of hope just a few verses earlier when He said in Hosea 6:1, “Come, and let us return to the LORD; for He has torn, but He will heal us; He has stricken, but He will bind us up.” The Pharisees knew what God said but they did not share this message that God would forgive because they did not know God themselves. Instead they just condemned others and thought that God was pleased with them because of their works. Today, many religious people are just like the Pharisees. Instead of showing mercy to sinners and telling them how to receive forgiveness, they just condemn them. That was why Matthew invited them all over for a feast so that they could meet Jesus and hear how to have forgiveness of sins. He knew that Jesus had forgiven him and he wanted his friends to know that same forgiveness.

Jesus also answered the question of some others that day. Matthew 9:14-15 says, “Then the disciples of John came to Him, saying, ‘Why do we and the Pharisees fast often, but Your disciples do not fast?’ And Jesus said to them, ‘Can the friends of the bridegroom mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? But the days will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast.’” Here we see that some of those who had become disciples of John the Baptist came to Jesus with a question. These men often fasted and they knew that the Pharisees often fasted. However, they had noticed that the disciples of Jesus did not fast. In fact we have just seen that Jesus and His disciples had enjoyed a great feast at the home of Matthew.

Jesus introduced a very important relationship as He answered the question of the disciples of John the Baptist. Jesus asked the question, “Can the friends of the bridegroom mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them?” In this verse, we see that Jesus compared Himself to the

bridegroom. In John 3:28-30 John the Baptist had told some of his disciples, “You yourselves bear me witness, that I said, ‘I am not the Christ,’ but, ‘I have been sent before Him.’ He who has the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom’s voice. Therefore this joy of mine is fulfilled. He must increase, but I *must* decrease.” In his statement recorded in the book of John, John the Baptist told his disciples that the bridegroom is the Christ. Here in Matthew we see that Jesus made it clear to those disciples that He is the Christ that John introduced.

Then in Ephesians 5:25-27 we read, “Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.” Then Ephesians 5:31-32 says, “‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.’ This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church.” In this passage we see that the church is the bride of Christ and that is why Jesus is called the bridegroom.

We also see that Jesus said that His disciples would fast after He was taken back to heaven. Acts 13:2-3 says, “As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, ‘Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.’” Then, having fasted and prayed, and laid hands on them, they sent *them* away.” Then Acts 14:23 says, “So when they had appointed elders in every church, and prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed.” In these two passages we see that the early church fasted and prayed as they sought the guidance of the Lord for the churches.

We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to show the same concern and acceptance of others that Jesus showed for tax collectors and sinners. That attitude is a key in helping our children learn to become effective witnesses for Christ especially to those who are often rejected by society. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to reach out to all people with the love and acceptance that Christ showed.

Jesus Showed His Power over Disease and Death

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to reach out and show acceptance to those who are often rejected by society just as Jesus reached out in acceptance to the tax collectors and sinners. In this topic we will see that Jesus showed His power over both disease and death.

Jesus had enjoyed a feast at the home of Matthew. Then Jesus gave two parables to explain the new life that He came to offer. Matthew 9:16-17 says, “No one puts a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old garment; for the patch pulls away from the garment, and the tear is made worse. Nor do they put new wine into old wineskins, or else the wineskins break, the wine is spilled, and the wineskins are ruined. But they put new wine into new wineskins, and both are preserved.” The first parable was about trying to use a new piece of unshrunk material to patch up an old piece of clothing.

Unshrunk material will always shrink the first time that it is washed. As a result, Jesus explained that no one would take a new piece of material and try to patch an old piece of clothing because the patch would pull away from the old clothing and would make the tear even worse than it had been. The Pharisees and disciples of John the Baptist had just spoken to Jesus in the previous verses. The Pharisees were trying to add their traditions to the law as they tried to get into the kingdom of God through their own efforts. John the Baptist said that He came to introduce the Christ that was promised in the Old Testament. As a result, both had been under the covenant which was known as the Law.

In the Old Testament the Jews offered various sacrifices and observed various ceremonies. Hebrews 10:1 says, “For the law, having a shadow of the good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with these same sacrifices, which they offer continually year by year, make those who approach perfect.” The Law could never make anyone perfect. That is why it was only a shadow of the real thing. If you go into a dark room and hold a bright light behind your hand you will see a shadow of your hand on the wall. However, the shadow is not the real hand. Jesus said that He did not come to patch up the shadow. Jesus did not come to patch up the Old Covenant because the Old Covenant could never make anyone perfect. Instead He came to bring a New Covenant that would offer true life. He was not going to fulfill the Law not patch it up .

The second parable was about wineskins. Old wineskins become stiff over time. If the juice of fresh squeezed grapes was put in these old wineskins the wineskins would break as the juice turned to wine. That would cause the wine to be spilled and it would also ruin the wineskins (they could still be used for things like carrying water). Instead new wine would be put in new wineskins so that both the wineskins and the wine would be preserved. Hebrews 10:11-12 says, “And every priest stands ministering daily and offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God.” The Old Testament sacrifices could never take away sin. Christ by His death paid for sin once for all. That is why the New Covenant is like new wine in new wineskins.

While Jesus was teaching, Matthew 9:18-22 says, “While He spoke these things to them, behold, a ruler came and worshiped Him, saying, ‘My daughter has just died, but come and lay Your hand on her and she will live.’ So Jesus arose and followed him, and so *did* His disciples. And suddenly, a woman who had a flow of blood for twelve years came from behind and

touched the hem of His garment. For she said to herself, 'If only I may touch His garment, I shall be made well.' But Jesus turned around, and when He saw her He said, 'Be of good cheer, daughter; your faith has made you well.' And the woman was made well from that hour." In these verses, we see that a ruler of the synagogue showed his faith by coming to Jesus and asking Him to come and lay His hand on the daughter of the ruler who had just died. He believed that the touch of Jesus could raise his daughter from the dead and heal her. Jesus immediately stopped teaching and He and His disciples followed the ruler of the synagogue toward his home.

However, they were interrupted on the way to the home of the ruler. A woman also had faith that Jesus could heal her. She had a flow of blood that had lasted for twelve years. This had a great impact both on her physical health and also on her spiritual development. The continual loss of blood for twelve years would cause her to be physically weak. In addition, it also had an impact on her spiritual development. Leviticus 15:25-27 says, "If a woman has a discharge of blood for many days, other than at the time of her customary impurity, or if it runs beyond her usual time of impurity, all the days of her unclean discharge shall be as the days of her customary impurity. She shall be unclean. Every bed on which she lies all the days of her discharge shall be to her as the bed of her impurity; and whatever she sits on shall be unclean, as the uncleanness of her impurity. Whoever touches those things shall be unclean; he shall wash his clothes and bathe in water, and be unclean until evening." This meant that she could not go into either the local synagogue or the temple in Jerusalem.

This woman had faith that Jesus could heal her but she did not feel that she could ask Him to touch her since that would make Jesus unclean. Luke 8:43-44 says, "Now a woman, having a flow of blood for twelve years, who had spent all her livelihood on physicians and could not be healed by any, came from behind and touched the border of His garment. And immediately her flow of blood stopped." She showed her faith by touching the edge of the robe of Jesus and was immediately healed. However, Jesus wanted to recognize her faith and so Luke 8:46-47 says, "But Jesus said, 'Somebody touched Me, for I perceived power going out from Me.'"⁷ Now when the woman saw that she was not hidden, she came trembling; and falling down before Him, she declared to Him in the presence of all the people the reason she had touched Him and how she was healed immediately. And He said to her, 'Daughter, be of good cheer; your faith has made you well. Go in peace.'" These verses show us the way that Jesus chose to honor her faith so that everyone saw an example of faith. The woman also received spiritual life so that she was able to go in peace.

Once this woman was healed Jesus started walking again with the ruler toward his house to lay His hand on her daughter so that she could be restored back to life. Matthew 9:23-26 says, "When Jesus came into the ruler's house, and saw the flute players and the noisy crowd wailing, He said to them, 'Make room, for the girl is not dead, but sleeping.' And they ridiculed Him. But when the crowd was put outside, He went in and took her by the hand, and the girl arose. And the report of this went out into all that land." When they reached the house of the ruler we see that a crowd of people was already there mourning the death of the daughter of the ruler.

In that day it was common for flute players and mourners to immediately come to the home of a person that had died to play the flutes and cry loudly. These people were paid for mourning for the person that had died and so these people were not there because of concern for the girl and her family. Instead they were there to make some extra money. Jesus spoke to this crowd of mourners who were wailing loudly and said, "Make room, for the girl is not dead, but sleeping." Suddenly the loud wailing turned to loud mocking. Luke 8:53 says, "And they ridiculed Him, knowing that she was dead." The word translated "ridiculed" means "*to laugh or to scorn*". By their actions, these paid mourners showed that they had no concern for the girl

or her family. They also showed unbelief.

This unbelief led Jesus to have all of these people put outside so that they did not have the opportunity to see Jesus raise the girl from the dead. Mark 5:40 says, “And they ridiculed Him. But when He had put them all outside, He took the father and the mother of the child, and those *who were* with Him, and entered where the child was lying.” The only people that Jesus allowed to be in the house while He raised the girl from the dead were her parents along with Peter, James and John. Mark 5:41-42 says, “Then He took the child by the hand, and said to her, ‘Talitha, cumi,’ which is translated, ‘Little girl, I say to you, arise.’ Immediately the girl arose and walked, for she was twelve years of age. And they were overcome with great amazement.” We see that the word “Talitha” means little girl or lamb. The word “cumi” is a command and means arise.

Mark tells us that the girl got up and started walking. This showed that the girl had been fully restored to health because she was even able to walk immediately. Luke 8:55 describes exactly what happened when that verse says, “Then her spirit returned, and she arose immediately. And He commanded that she be given something to eat.” Here we see that Luke said that her spirit returned. Ecclesiastes 12:7 says, “Then the dust will return to the earth as it was, and the spirit will return to God who gave it.” We see that God is the One who gives life to the human spirit.

We also see how the news about this girl being raised back to physical life quickly spread throughout the region. We read, “And the report of this went out into all that land.” The unbelieving mourners did not have the opportunity to see how Jesus raise the girl from the dead. However, they had known that she was dead and that now she was alive. The word of this particular miracle quickly spread throughout the region of Galilee and beyond because this happened immediately after Jesus was at the feast at the home of Matthew and there were Pharisees there who complained. We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn how to explain that God is the source of both physical and spiritual life so that they can explain from the Word of God to others how to receive forgiveness of sins and spiritual life. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to explain these things to others.

Jesus Showed His Compassion for People

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn how to explain to others from the Word of God that God is the source of both physical and spiritual life. In this topic we will see how Jesus showed compassion both for the needs of individuals and also for the multitudes as a whole.

Jesus left the house where He had raised the daughter of the ruler from the dead. Matthew 9:27-31 says, “When Jesus departed from there, two blind men followed Him, crying out and saying, ‘Son of David, have mercy on us!’ And when He had come into the house, the blind men came to Him. And Jesus said to them, ‘Do you believe that I am able to do this?’ They said to Him, ‘Yes, Lord.’ Then He touched their eyes, saying, ‘According to your faith let it be to you.’ And their eyes were opened. And Jesus sternly warned them, saying, ‘See *that* no one knows *it*.’ But when they had departed, they spread the news about Him in all that country.” Here we see that these two blind men had heard about Jesus and wanted to receive their sight.

The men began to follow Jesus and cried out to Him, “‘Son of David, have mercy on us!’” The title “Son of David” showed that these men recognized that Jesus was the Christ. This title is used several times for Jesus in Matthew. Matthew 12:23 says, “And all the multitudes were amazed and said, ‘Could this be the Son of David?’” The two men also asked Jesus to show mercy to them. They realized that their blindness could only be healed by God and so they asked for help for their need for sight. Jesus did not respond immediately. Instead He continued to the house where He was going. The two men followed Jesus right into the house. Here we see that they were desperate because they knew that Jesus could heal them and give them sight.

Jesus just asked the two of them one question. He said, “Do you believe that I am able to do this?” Jesus knew that these two men had faith. As a result, He wanted to give them an opportunity to demonstrate their faith by this question. They answered Jesus, “Yes, Lord.” The fact that they added the word Lord to their yes showed that they recognized that they were placing their faith in Jesus. This showed that they had spiritual sight because they placed their faith in Jesus. Jesus then touched their eyes and spoke as He touched them and said, “According to your faith let it be to you.” At that moment they received physical sight in addition to the spiritual sight that had been shown by their statement of faith.

Jesus told them not to tell anyone that He had opened their eyes. However, they had good news because they had been given both physical and spiritual sight. They probably felt like Jeremiah did in the second part of Jeremiah 20:9. That verse says, “Then I said, ‘I will not make mention of Him, nor speak anymore in His name.’ But His word was in my heart like a burning fire shut up in my bones; I was weary of holding it back, and I could not.” Jeremiah had said he was not going to talk any more about God because of persecution. In contrast, these men had good news because Jesus had given them sight but He had told them not to say anything. However, Jeremiah and these two men had one thing in common. They could not keep quiet. The two men told others what Jesus had done for them and the news about Jesus spread throughout that whole surrounding area.

When Jesus left the house where He had given sight to the two men, some other people brought a man to Jesus that was demon-possessed. Matthew 9:32-34 says, “As they went out, behold, they brought to Him a man, mute and demon-possessed. And when the demon was cast out, the mute spoke. And the multitudes marveled, saying, ‘It was never seen like this in Israel!’” But

the Pharisees said, ‘He casts out demons by the ruler of the demons.’” We see that this man was mute and unable to talk because of the demon. Jesus knew why this man was unable to talk. As a result, Jesus cast out the demon and immediately the man was able to talk.

There was a large crowd that had seen and heard what had happened. We see that the people were amazed. The people expressed their amazement by saying, “It was never seen like this in Israel!” The crowds realized that the things that Jesus was doing had never before happened in the land. We read how the crowds responded to another time when Jesus cast out demons. Mark 1:27-28 says, “Then they were all amazed, so that they questioned among themselves, saying, ‘What is this? What new doctrine *is* this? For with authority He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey Him.’” And immediately His fame spread throughout all the region around Galilee.” We see that the crowd was amazed as they saw the results when Jesus cast out the demon.

That was exactly what the Pharisees had feared. That is why the Pharisees said, “He casts out demons by the ruler of the demons.” The Pharisees later said this again. Jesus said at that time in Matthew 12:26-28, “If Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then will his kingdom stand? And if I cast out demons by Beelzebub, by whom do your sons cast *them* out? Therefore they shall be your judges. But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, surely the kingdom of God has come upon you.” This time Jesus showed why their statement could not be true. If Jesus cast out demons by the power of Satan, He would be defeating Himself. In contrast, if Jesus was casting out demons by the Spirit of God, they needed to admit that the kingdom of God had come to them. The Pharisees did not want to admit that Jesus had come from God and so that was why they accused Jesus of casting out demons by the power of Satan.

Then Matthew 9:35-38 goes on to say, “Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people. But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd. Then He said to His disciples, ‘The harvest truly *is* plentiful, but the laborers *are* few. Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.’” We see that Jesus then left that area and began traveling to the various cities and villages throughout the region of Galilee. We see that Jesus focused on three things as He traveled throughout Galilee. He was teaching in the synagogues. He was preaching the gospel of the kingdom. He was healing every sickness and disease.

However, Jesus did more than just teach, preach and heal. We read that He was moved with compassion as He saw the multitudes. The word translated “moved with compassion” means to be moved from one’s bowels (inner being) and meant to be filled with love and pity. This word is used twelve times in Matthew, Mark and Luke. Luke 10:33-34 says, “But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was. And when he saw him, he had compassion. So he went to *him* and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine; and he set him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him.” In these verses, we see that the word was used to describe the Good Samaritan. Then Luke 15:20 says, “And he arose and came to his father. But when he was still a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him.” In this passage we see that the father of the prodigal son showed compassion when his son returned home. Most of the rest of the uses of this word talk about the compassion of Jesus for the people.

Jesus was moved with compassion for the people because they fainted and were scattered abroad. The word translated “fainted” means to grow weak or to become faint hearted. The word translated “were scattered abroad” means to be thrown down or thrown to the ground. Jesus saw the people as sheep scattered abroad like sheep having no shepherd. Matthew 27:5

says, “Then he threw down the pieces of silver in the temple and departed, and went and hanged himself.” This verse talks about Judas casting down the pieces of silver because of the guilt that he felt for betraying innocent blood. When sheep do not have a shepherd they just wander and become easy food for the coyotes and the wolves because they have no protection. In John 10 Satan is described as a wolf. Just before that description Satan is also described as a thief in John 10:10 where we read, “The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.”

Then Jesus said to the disciples, “The harvest truly *is* plentiful, but the laborers *are* few. Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.” In this statement Jesus gave the response that He wanted each of the disciples to make as they looked at the great spiritual need of the people around them. Jesus wanted them to develop the same compassion that He had for the people. That is the same thing that Jesus wants for each of us. A related word is used in 1 John 3:17-18 where we read, “But whoever has this world’s goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him? My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth.” Here the Word makes it clear that we are to have that same love in our heart for others that Jesus had for the multitudes.

Jesus told the disciples and us what to do if we have that kind of love for people. Jesus said that we are pray the Lord of the harvest that He will send forth laborers into His harvest. Here we see that the harvest is His harvest. We are to pray that the Lord will send forth laborers into His harvest. We want to help our physical and spiritual children develop the kind of love for others that will also cause them to pray that the Lord will send forth laborers into His harvest. We see in the following verses that the very ones asked to pray were then sent into that harvest field. We want to show our children by our example the importance of praying for laborers. May the Lord richly bless you as you lead your children by your example as you pray for laborers.