

Helping Our Children Present Jesus as the King Part III

**Growing Godly Family Series
Manual 33**

By

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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." I Corinthians 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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Jesus Warned of the Traditions of Men

In our last topic we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn how to explain to others that their unbelief will be forgiven and they will receive eternal life when they come to Jesus in repentance and faith. In this topic we see that Jesus told the scribes and Pharisees that they were hypocrites because they obeyed the traditions of men but did not obey the commandments of God.

The scribes and Pharisees were always looking for an opportunity to accuse either Jesus or the disciples of breaking their traditions. Matthew 15:1-2 says, “Then the scribes and Pharisees who were from Jerusalem came to Jesus, saying, ‘Why do Your disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands when they eat bread.’” Here we see that a group of scribes and Pharisees had traveled from Jerusalem for the purpose of accusing Jesus and His disciples of breaking their traditions. These were traditions that the scribes and Pharisees had formed after some of the Jews had returned from Babylon. They were not even written down at the time of Jesus and were not written down until nearly 200 years after the time of Jesus. However, the Pharisees and scribes treated these as if they were as important as the Old Testament.

The Pharisees and scribes accused Jesus of failing to follow the tradition of the elders in the way that they washed their hands. Mark 7:3-4 says, “For the Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they wash *their* hands in a special way, holding the tradition of the elders. *When they come* from the marketplace, they do not eat unless they wash. And there are many other things which they have received and hold, *like* the washing of cups, pitchers, copper vessels, and couches.” It was not a case that the disciples had not washed their hands. The Pharisees taught that the people were to wash their hands a special way. The Pharisees would have someone pour water over their hands with their fingers pointing up until the water began to drip from their wrists. Then they would turn their hands over and have the person pour water over their hands with the fingers pointing down. Finally they would make one hand a fist to wipe the water from the one hand and then repeat the process with the other hand. These traditions had become more important than obeying the Old Testament to the Pharisees and scribes.

Jesus answered the question of the scribes and Pharisees with a question. Matthew 15:3-6 says, “He answered and said to them, ‘Why do you also transgress the commandment of God because of your tradition? For God commanded, saying, ‘Honor your father and your mother’; and, ‘He who curses father or mother, let him be put to death.’ But you say, ‘Whoever says to his father or mother, ‘Whatever profit you might have received from me *is* a gift to God’—then he need not honor his father or mother.’ Thus you have made the commandment of God of no effect by your tradition.’ Suddenly the Pharisees were confronted with their sin.

Jesus quoted the fourth of the Ten Commandments which is given in Exodus 20:12 where we read, “Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the LORD your God is giving you.” Here we see that this commandment explains how we are to

treat our parents with the promise that such actions will bring blessing. Jesus went on to show that the Pharisees did not honor their parents. In contrast to that promise of blessing, Jesus quoted Leviticus 20:9 to show the judgment of those who chose to dishonor their parents, “For everyone who curses his father or his mother shall surely be put to death. He has cursed his father or his mother. His blood *shall be* upon him.” This verse made it clear that God warned of judgment for anyone that would curse their parents by their words or their actions.

Then Jesus went on to point out that the traditions of the elders were being used by the scribes and Pharisees to avoid honoring their parents and were actually a form of evil that gave a curse. The verses in Mark 7:11-13 tell what Jesus said when those verses say, “But you say, ‘If a man says to his father or mother, “Whatever profit you might have received from me *is* Corban”—’ (that is, a gift *to God*), then you no longer let him do anything for his father or his mother, making the word of God of no effect through your tradition which you have handed down. And many such things you do.” Scribes or Pharisees who became angry with their parents would just say Corban. Then if their parents came later needing financial or some other form of help the scribe or Pharisee would quote this tradition. This was their way of telling their parents that they had dedicated everything to God for His service so it would be a sin for them to use anything that they had to help their parents. In this way they did not honor their parents by helping them in times of need.

Jesus then went on to explain what the scribes and Pharisees had done by their tradition. Jesus said that they made the commandment of God of no effect. The word translated “no effect” means to make something void or to make a command so that it has no authority. Jesus said that such actions showed that the scribes and Pharisees were hypocrites. The word “hypocrite” was the word used to describe an actor who wore different masks in a play and pretended to be different people. The scribes and Pharisees were pretending to give what they had to God to cover the fact that they were actually cursing their parents by their actions and words.

Here we see the danger when people try to develop traditions that reject the responsibility that God has given. Colossians 2:8-10 warns, “Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ. For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power.” The word translated “cheat” means to carry away spoil and spoke about a person that committed robbery. Christians can be robbed by human philosophies that are in disagreement with the Word of God. Here we see that such philosophies are really a way that Satan uses to lead people away from the truth. In addition, the traditions of man can blind people to the truth so that they do not come to the truth. II Timothy 3:5-7 warns that there will be people, “Having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away! For of this sort are those who creep into households and make captives of gullible women loaded down with sins, led away by various lusts, always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.” Here we see that Satan tries to use false teachers to keep people from ever coming to the truth.

Jesus then went on to quote the prophet Isaiah to show what Isaiah had prophesied about these actions in Matthew 15:7-9 where we read, “Hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy about you, saying: ‘These people draw near to Me with their mouth, and honor Me with their lips, but their

heart is far from Me. And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.’” Jesus quoted these words from Isaiah 29:13. Jesus here explained to the scribes and Pharisees that Isaiah had been talking about them and others like them when he wrote these words. The scribes and Pharisees all claimed to follow God. However, they made their own traditions more important than the Word of God. In Matthew 23:15 Jesus said, “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.” Here we see how hard the scribes and Pharisees worked to get the people to follow their traditions and become one with the Pharisees. We see that they traveled from place to place to convince even one person to become a Pharisee.

In this quote from Isaiah Jesus described the heart attitudes of the scribes and Pharisees as well as many of the other people. The scribes and Pharisees claimed to serve God. Jesus had given a description of some of the things that they did in the Sermon on the Mount. Matthew 6:1 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.” Matthew 6:5 adds, “And when you pray, you shall not be like the hypocrites. For they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward.” Matthew 6:16 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.” In these verses we see that these things were all done to be seen by man because these hypocrites wanted to appear to serve God.

However, Isaiah and Jesus said that their hearts were far from God. Their false worship was empty and worthless. Mark 7:3-5 says, “For the Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they wash *their* hands in a special way, holding the tradition of the elders. *When they come* from the marketplace, they do not eat unless they wash. And there are many other things which they have received and hold, *like* the washing of cups, pitchers, copper vessels, and couches. Then the Pharisees and scribes asked Him, ‘Why do Your disciples not walk according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with unwashed hands?’” Most of the Jews had replaced the Word of God with their traditions. Paul wrote in Galatians 1:14, “And I advanced in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries in my own nation, being more exceedingly zealous for the traditions of my fathers.” Paul advanced in Judaism by his emphasis on those traditions but his heart was far from God as he persecuted the early Christians.

We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to focus on their personal relationship with God in their hearts and not on the outward traditions that many people have added to the Word of God just as the Pharisees had done. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your children what it means to be obedient to the Word of God.

Jesus Taught about the Heart of Man

In our last topic we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to be obedient to the Word of God and not to be deceived by the traditions that others have added to the Word of God. In our topic today we are going to see that Jesus went on to explain much more about the condition of the hearts of many people.

The Pharisees and scribes were very focused on their traditions. However, their hearts were far from God. In Matthew 15:10-11 Jesus said, “When He had called the multitude to *Himself*, He said to them, ‘Hear and understand: Not what goes into the mouth defiles a man; but what comes out of the mouth, this defiles a man.’” Jesus wanted the multitudes to understand one of the changes that He would bring about through the establishment of a New Covenant. The Old Covenant given to Israel when they were in the wilderness contained both the Ten Commandments and also ceremonial laws about things like foods that were unclean. The purpose of these ceremonial laws was to keep the Jews a separate people from which Jesus could come. Now that Jesus had come He was going to shed His blood as the blood of a New Covenant.

The ceremonial law was given to the Jews and the Christians still followed those ceremonial laws after the death and resurrection of Jesus so that their message about the death and resurrection of Jesus would not be hindered because they no longer kept the ceremonial law. Paul said in I Corinthians 9:19-20, “For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win the more; and to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might win Jews; to those who are under the law, as under the law, that I might win those who are under the law.” Paul understood the freedom that he had in Christ but he also said in I Corinthians 10:23-24, “All things are lawful for me, but not all things are helpful; all things are lawful for me, but not all things edify. Let no one seek his own, but each one the other’s *well-being*.”

Acts 21:20-21 says, “And when they heard *it*, they glorified the Lord. And they said to him, “You see, brother, how many myriads of Jews there are who have believed, and they are all zealous for the law; but they have been informed about you that you teach all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, saying that they ought not to circumcise *their* children nor to walk according to the customs.” Here we see that all of the Jewish Christians were zealous for the ceremonial law and continued to practice the things contained in the ceremonial law. They even asked Paul to take a Jewish vow in the following verses. At the same time they did not try to impose the ceremonial law on the Gentiles. Acts 21:25 goes on to say, “But concerning the Gentiles who believe, we have written *and* decided that they should observe no such thing, except that they should keep themselves from *things* offered to idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from sexual immorality.” These four things all come from the first nine chapters of Genesis and are universal principles for all people. Sexual immorality is a violation of Genesis 2:24; idolatry was first demonstrated by Cain in Genesis 4:3; and the principle regarding blood and things strangled is given in Genesis 9:4 where we read, “But you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood.”

Jesus said that what comes out of the mouth is what defiles a man. This is due to the fact that what a person speaks shows what is in his heart. Matthew 15:12-14 says, “Then His disciples came and said to Him, ‘Do You know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this saying?’ But He answered and said, ‘Every plant which My heavenly Father has not planted will be uprooted. Let them alone. They are blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind leads the blind, both will fall into a ditch.’” The Pharisees were very offended by what Jesus said for at least two reasons. First, the Pharisees knew that Jesus was rejecting their traditions. Second, they had not repented of their sin of unbelief and so they lacked spiritual life. They were practicing the same idolatry that Cain had practiced by depending on their own works to try and gain salvation.

Jesus went on to explain two key lessons to His disciples. First, Jesus said, “Every plant which My heavenly Father has not planted will be uprooted.” Jesus gave a parable in Mark 4:26-29 that says, “And He said, “The kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed on the ground, and should sleep by night and rise by day, and the seed should sprout and grow, he himself does not know how. For the earth yields crops by itself: first the blade, then the head, after that the full grain in the head. But when the grain ripens, immediately he puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come.” In an earlier parable in that chapter Jesus had given the parable of the sower and the various kinds of soils (hearts) where the seed lands. Then Mark 4:14 says, “The sower sows the word.” Most of the Pharisees were like the seed that landed on the wayside. Mark 4:15 says, “And these are the ones by the wayside where the word is sown. When they hear, Satan comes immediately and takes away the word that was sown in their hearts.” The Pharisees heard the Word of God and Satan immediately replaced it with their traditions.

Second, Jesus told His disciples to let the Pharisees alone. Then Jesus described what the Pharisees and their teachings were like when He said, “They are blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind leads the blind, both will fall into a ditch.” The Pharisees lacked spiritual life and so they did not have spiritual understanding. Jesus had said earlier in Matthew 13:13, “Therefore I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand.” In I Corinthians 2:14 we read, “But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know *them*, because they are spiritually discerned.” That is why Jesus called the Pharisees blind leaders.

However, most of the Jews at that time were also spiritually blind. Luke 2:38 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.” Anna knew those who were looking for Christ to come and pay the penalty for sin so that mankind could be redeemed. That meant that the number looking for redemption was only a small percentage of the people. Jesus said that when blind leaders lead the blind that both groups will fall into the ditch. By this statement Jesus reminded us that spiritually blind leaders will lead their spiritual blind followers to eternal judgment.

We see that Jesus was then asked a question. Matthew 15:15-20 says, “Then Peter answered and said to Him, ‘Explain this parable to us.’ So Jesus said, ‘Are you also still without understanding? Do you not yet understand that whatever enters the mouth goes into the stomach and is eliminated? But those things which proceed out of the mouth come from the

heart, and they defile a man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. These are *the things* which defile a man, but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile a man.” Peter had heard what Jesus had said but he did not understand what Jesus meant so he asked Jesus to explain the parable to the disciples.

The people recognized the Pharisees as religious leaders because of the emphasis that the Pharisees placed on the importance of following religious traditions. However, they lacked spiritual life because they were depending on their own works instead of repenting of their sin of unbelief and coming to God in faith. Jesus wanted to make certain that Peter and the other disciples clearly understood the difference between religious traditions and true repentance and faith. We see that Peter did come to a very clear understanding and showed that understanding as he preached in the book of Acts. In Acts 3:19 Peter said, “Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord.” Matthew showed his understanding by quoting Jesus in Matthew 4:17 where we read, “From that time Jesus began to preach and to say, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” Paul shared the same message in Acts 17:30 where we read, “Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent.” Jesus went on to point out that anything eaten went into the stomach and was eliminated.

Jesus went on to say that the words that come out of the mouth of a person describe what is going on in the heart of a person. Then Jesus gave a list of sins that begin in the heart. This has been true of those who do not believe ever since Adam and Eve sinned. 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.” Peter described what false teachers will be like in the last times by saying in II Peter 2:14, “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.” Jesus said that these are the things which defile a person because these things come from the heart.

In contrast, Jesus said that hands that have not been washed cannot defile a person. In this way Jesus made it clear that the traditions of the Pharisees were false because they taught as traditions things that did not agree with the Word of God. Paul who was a Pharisee as a young man later wrote in Galatians 1:14, “And I advanced in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries in my own nation, being more exceedingly zealous for the traditions of my fathers.” Paul advanced in Judaism as he persecuted the followers of Christ. However, when he turned to Christ his former friends tried to kill him. Acts 9:29 says, “And he spoke boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus and disputed against the Hellenists, but they attempted to kill him.” We want to help our physical and spiritual children understand that they need to be prepared for opposition and persecution as they live faithfully for Christ. May the Lord richly bless you as you prepare your children to be faithful to Christ even when they face persecution.

Jesus Went to the Area of Tyre and Sidon

In our last topic we saw that we want to prepare our physical and spiritual children for the fact that they may suffer persecution as they faithfully serve Christ. However, the Lord will give them strength so that they can rejoice even in persecution. In our topic today we are going to see that Jesus took the disciples to the area of Tyre and Sidon.

Jesus spent most of His ministry time in the areas of Galilee and Judea. However, we see that Jesus left Galilee and went to the area of Tyre and Sidon which was a Gentile area. Matthew 15:21-23 says, “Then Jesus went out from there and departed to the region of Tyre and Sidon. And behold, a woman of Canaan came from that region and cried out to Him, saying, ‘Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David! My daughter is severely demon-possessed.’ But He answered her not a word. And His disciples came and urged Him, saying, ‘Send her away, for she cries out after us.’” Here we see that Jesus wanted to teach the disciples the need to reach out to the Gentiles so Jesus kept quiet so that the disciples could show their attitudes toward the Gentiles. Jesus also wanted to show that Gentiles could have great faith.

Tyre and Sidon are known by many people as the cities from which the Phoenicians sailed as they traded throughout the Mediterranean Sea. One of the women that Jesus and the disciples met as they went to this area was a woman of Canaan. This meant that she was a descendent of Canaan, the son of Ham. Noah had given a curse to the descendents of Canaan. Genesis 9:25-26 says, “Then he said: ‘Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants he shall be to his brethren.’ And he said: ‘Blessed be the LORD, the God of Shem, and may Canaan be his servant.’” In contrast, the Jews were descendents of Shem who had been given a blessing by Noah. However, Jesus wanted the disciples to understand that He had a great compassion and concern for people of all nations.

We read that the woman cried out to Jesus and asked Him to show mercy to her by healing her daughter who was severely demon-possessed. Jesus was usually quick to respond to those who asked for mercy but this time He chose to be silent so that the disciples would reveal their attitudes. Finally the disciples spoke to Jesus since He remained silent. However, they did not ask Jesus to show compassion to the woman. Instead they told Jesus to send the woman away because she kept crying out for Jesus to show mercy and heal her daughter. Here we see that the disciples had not yet learned to show compassion to the Gentiles. Jesus had to provide an example to them so that they could learn to reach out to people of all nations.

Jesus then spoke to the woman. Matthew 15:24-28 says, “But He answered and said, ‘I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.’ Then she came and worshiped Him, saying, ‘Lord, help me!’ But He answered and said, ‘It is not good to take the children’s bread and throw *it* to the little dogs.’ And she said, ‘Yes, Lord, yet even the little dogs eat the crumbs which fall from their masters’ table.’ Then Jesus answered and said to her, ‘O woman, great *is* your faith! Let it be to you as you desire.’ And her daughter was healed from that very hour.” Here we see that Jesus chose to show the faith of the woman to the disciples in a rather unusual way.

Jesus just said to the woman, "I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." Ezekiel said in Ezekiel 34:2, "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?"' Then Ezekiel 34:11-12 says, "For thus says the Lord GOD: 'Indeed I Myself will search for My sheep and seek them out. As a shepherd seeks out his flock on the day he is among his scattered sheep, so will I seek out My sheep and deliver them from all the places where they were scattered on a cloudy and dark day.'" Jesus was obedient to the Father and was reaching out to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

However, Paul said in Romans 1:16, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek." Jesus did go to the Jews first but He also came to this earth to pay the penalty for the sins of all people and provide salvation to all who would turn to Him in repentance and faith. This was the lesson that Jesus wanted to illustrate to the disciples that day. At that point the woman came to Jesus and worshiped Him. She just said, "Lord, help me." Then Jesus made one more statement to the woman so that He could show the greatness of her faith to the disciples. He just said, "It is not good to take the children's bread and throw *it* to the little dogs." Jesus' only recorded use of the word translated "little dogs" was with this woman as recorded here and in Mark 7:27-28. It spoke of the little dogs that were family pets and during the meals would sit on the floor near the table where the family ate.

The family would then feed the small pieces of bread that the children did not finish to these small dogs. The fact that Jesus used this word made it much easier to show her great faith as she answered, "Yes, Lord, yet even the little dogs eat the crumbs which fall from their masters' table." First, we see that it gave her the opportunity to again personally address Jesus as Lord. However, it also gave her the opportunity to use the same word for little dogs and state that they received the crumbs from the table of their master. In this way she was saying that she recognized Jesus as her Master. This was the opportunity for Jesus to point out the greatness of her faith to the disciples.

Here we see that Jesus honored her great faith by saying, "O woman, great *is* your faith! Let it be to you as you desire." By this statement Jesus showed the disciples that Gentiles could have great faith. We also see that Jesus added other words to the woman. Mark 7:28-30 says, "And she answered and said to Him, 'Yes, Lord, yet even the little dogs under the table eat from the children's crumbs.' Then He said to her, 'For this saying go your way; the demon has gone out of your daughter.' And when she had come to her house, she found the demon gone out, and her daughter lying on the bed." In addition to honoring the great faith of the woman, Jesus also granted the request of the woman. Jesus cast the demon out of her daughter just by speaking the word. The woman also showed her faith by going home because it showed that she had faith that her daughter was set free from the demon. She found her daughter was freed just exactly as Jesus had promised to her.

Once Jesus had shown the disciples that Gentiles could have great faith, He and the disciples returned to the area east of the Sea of Galilee. Matthew 15:29-31 says, "Jesus departed from

there, skirted the Sea of Galilee, and went up on the mountain and sat down there. Then great multitudes came to Him, having with them *the* lame, blind, mute, maimed, and many others; and they laid them down at Jesus' feet, and He healed them. So the multitude marveled when they saw *the* mute speaking, *the* maimed made whole, *the* lame walking, and *the* blind seeing; and they glorified the God of Israel." We see the way that Jesus traveled from the region of Tyre and Sidon as He returned toward Galilee. Mark 7:31 says, "Again, departing from the region of Tyre and Sidon, He came through the midst of the region of Decapolis to the Sea of Galilee." The word "Decapolis" means ten cities. These cities were mostly on the east side of the Jordan River and were primarily Greek cities that had been established during the time of the Greek Empire.

As Jesus traveled through this area we see that He went up the mountain. Mt. Hermon is located east and a little north of the city of Tyre so this is probably the mountain to which this refers. We see that large crowds came to see Jesus and brought many people with physical needs with them because they wanted Jesus to heal them. These included many physical needs which doctors were not able to help. Since most of the people living in this area were Gentiles, this probably included many Gentiles as well as Jews. Jesus healed all that were brought to Him.

The people were amazed when they saw Jesus heal these people because they knew that no doctor could help many of the people that were brought to Jesus. People who had not been able to talk (mute) were suddenly able to talk. The word translated "maimed" means crooked and spoke of those who had arms, legs or other parts of the body that were disabled because of injuries or birth defects. Jesus healed all of those who come to him with this type of physical disability or injury so that they were completely healed. Some of those that had been brought to Jesus were lame and unable to walk. Jesus healed them as well so that they were healed and could now walk normally. There were also people that were blind and Jesus gave them physical sight. Earlier in Matthew 8:16-17 we read, "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." In that passage we see that Jesus healed those who were demon possessed. In this passage we see that Jesus healed all those who came with physical disabilities.

The multitudes were filled with amazement as they saw Jesus heal all of these physical disabilities. They were forced to realize that Jesus came from God because these were disabilities which could not be healed by any human person. This caused the people to give glory to God. We also want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain that Jesus did the things that were impossible for any human being so that they can help others come to understand that Jesus is God. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to explain that Jesus is truly God.

Jesus Fed the Four Thousand

In our last topic we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain that Jesus did the miracles of healing that He did to fulfill Old Testament prophecy and also to show that He is truly God. In this topic we will see that Jesus fed the large crowd of people that had come to see and hear Him.

Jesus had healed many people with disabilities that could not be healed by doctors. Here we see that the people had remained with Jesus on that mountain so that they could hear Him teach. They were so interested in the things that Jesus taught that they did not even think about their hunger. In Matthew 15:32 we read, “Now Jesus called His disciples to *Himself* and said, ‘I have compassion on the multitude, because they have now continued with Me three days and have nothing to eat. And I do not want to send them away hungry, lest they faint on the way.’” Mark added one detail when he wrote in Mark 8:2-3, “I have compassion on the multitude, because they have now continued with Me three days and have nothing to eat. And if I send them away hungry to their own houses, they will faint on the way; for some of them have come from afar.” Here we see that Jesus knew that some of the people had traveled a great distance in order to hear Him.

We see that Jesus recognized the need of the people even before they realized their own need. The people had been there for three days. They had not had anything to eat during that time. Jesus said that He had compassion on the multitude. The word translated “compassion” means to be moved with love and pity from the inner man. This word is used twelve times in the New Testament and ten of those times we see that Jesus is moved with compassion for people. The other two times that this word is used in the New Testament was when Jesus spoke about someone showing compassion. One use of the word is in the passage about the Good Samaritan. Luke 10:33 says, “But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was. And when he saw him, he had compassion.” The other use is in the passage about the prodigal son in Luke 15:20 where we read, “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.”

The other ten uses of the word all speak directly of the compassion that Jesus felt as He saw people in physical or spiritual need. Jesus knew that these people had been with him for three days. He knew that during that time they had nothing to eat. He also knew that some of them had walked a long way to hear Him and some might have a difficult time making it home if He sent them away hungry. As a result, Jesus explained this need of the people to His disciples and explained to them that He had compassion for the people. In Matthew 15:33-34 we read, “Then His disciples said to Him, ‘Where could we get enough bread in the wilderness to fill such a great multitude?’ Jesus said to them, ‘How many loaves do you have?’ And they said, ‘Seven, and a few little fish.’” We see that the disciples heard what Jesus said but they could only see it as a problem.

The disciples explained the problem as they saw it to Jesus. They said that there was no place where they could buy enough food to feed the people because they were in a wilderness area. This meant that there were no nearby towns where they could go to buy food. They had just seen Jesus heal many disabilities in the previous three days but they could not make the connection between the power of Jesus to heal and the power of Jesus to provide food for the hunger of the people. In Matthew 14 we saw that Jesus had fed a crowd of five thousand men plus the women and the children. Matthew 14:20-21 says, "So they all ate and were filled, and they took up twelve baskets full of the fragments that remained. Now those who had eaten were about five thousand men, besides women and children." However, the disciples seem to have forgotten what Jesus had done and so all they could think of was the fact that there were no nearby towns where they could buy food for this very large crowd of people.

Instead of reminding the disciples of what He had done on the earlier occasion, Jesus just asked the disciples the question, "How many loaves do you have?" Here we see that Jesus wanted the disciples to find out what they had available. This is an important principle for all Christians to learn. The Lord has provided what we have and He is able to meet needs through what He has provided us. Instead of focusing on the problem, we need to ask the Lord how to use what He has given us to meet whatever situation the Lord allows in our lives. Philippians 4:19 says, "And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus." When we put the Lord first in our lives and service we can trust Him to supply what is needed to carry out the work that He has called us to do.

The disciples said that they had seven loaves and a few small fish. The loaves of bread that the Jews made in that time were several inches long if they were oblong and about as thick as a thumb. Part of the time they were round but about the same size. At the feeding of the five thousand John 6:9 says, "There is a lad here who has five barley loaves and two small fish, but what are they among so many?" The disciples made it clear on that day that the amount of food would not normally do much to feed a large crowd. The same thing was true here because they only had a little more food that day than they had at the feeding of the five thousand. God led the disciples both times to give the amount of food available to show how great a miracle Jesus performed in both events.

Once the disciples told Jesus what was available we see what happened next. Matthew 15:35-39 says, "So He commanded the multitude to sit down on the ground. And He took the seven loaves and the fish and gave thanks, broke *them* and gave *them* to His disciples; and the disciples *gave* to the multitude. So they all ate and were filled, and they took up seven large baskets full of the fragments that were left. Now those who ate were four thousand men, besides women and children. And He sent away the multitude, got into the boat, and came to the region of Magdala." Here we see that Jesus commanded the crowd there that day to be seated on the ground. When Jesus fed the five thousand, Luke 9:14 says, "For there were about five thousand men. Then He said to His disciples, 'Make them sit down in groups of fifty.'" That time Jesus organized the people so that it would be easier for the disciples to distribute the food. He probably did the same thing this time as He commanded the people to sit down.

Once the people were seated we see that Jesus took the loaves and the fish and gave thanks to the Father for the food. Here we see that Jesus showed by example a very important lesson that

we want to help our children show as they help new Christians begin to grow. Ephesians 5:21 says, "Giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." Many new Christians have never prayed and thanked God for their food. This is one of the ways that we can help our children learn to show new Christians by example an attitude of thankfulness to the Father for what He provides for us day by day.

Then Jesus broke the loaves and the fish and gave them to the disciples to distribute to the people that were seated on the mountainside. Jesus had performed the miracle which it was impossible for anyone else to do. However, He gave the disciples the responsibility to distribute the food once He had performed the miracle. In this way Jesus showed that we help people learn to serve the Lord by giving them small responsibilities where they can begin to serve the Lord. Ephesians 4:16 says, "From whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love." In this verse we see that Christ wants each Christian to learn to serve Him. Jesus used many different things to teach the disciples how to serve Him.

Next Jesus showed the disciples that He had provided more than enough food to feed all of the people. Jesus did this by having the disciples gather up the food that remained after everyone had eaten all that they wanted. We read, "They took up seven large baskets full of the fragments that were left." The word translated "baskets" is used in Acts 9:25 where we read, "Then the disciples took him by night and let *him* down through the wall in a large basket." Here we see that the basket was large enough to hold Saul while he was let down from the wall of the city of Damascus. This meant that that the seven baskets of food were very large baskets since the basket was large enough to hold Saul as he was lowered from the wall of the city.

We also read that there were four thousand men plus women and children there that day. This meant that a very large crowd had eaten and been filled with the food that Jesus had multiplied. This is a reminder of the fact that Christ knows what we need and will provide what is needed as we are obedient to Him. Jesus then sent away the multitude to their homes. The people had been there for three days and Jesus knew that they needed to return to their homes but also recognized that they would not leave unless He sent them away. When Jesus fed the five thousand the people came back the next day because they wanted to be fed again. Jesus did not want the people to stay in that area for a similar reason. Instead He wanted to meet their need this time so that they could return home. Then Jesus and the disciples went to the Sea of Galilee and got into the boat. They traveled by boat to the region of Magdala. The town of Magdala was about five miles south of the town of Capernaum on the west side of the Sea of Galilee.

We want to help our physical and spiritual children understand the compassion that Jesus showed to the people by feeding them in an area where there was no place to get food. By our example we can show our children how to have compassion to others. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your children how to show compassion.

Jesus Explained the Leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees

In our last topic we saw that we want to show our physical and spiritual children how to show compassion to others by our example. Jesus had illustrated that compassion by feeding the people when they did not have a place to get food. In this topic we will see that Jesus warned His disciples about the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

The Pharisees and Sadducees normally opposed the teachings of one another. However, both groups feared Jesus and so we will see that part of the time they began to come together in an effort to trap Jesus. Matthew 16:1-4 says, “Then the Pharisees and Sadducees came, and testing Him asked that He would show them a sign from heaven. He answered and said to them, ‘When it is evening you say, *‘It will be fair weather, for the sky is red’*; and in the morning, *‘It will be foul weather today, for the sky is red and threatening.’* Hypocrites! You know how to discern the face of the sky, but you cannot *discern* the signs of the times. A wicked and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and no sign shall be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah.’ And He left them and departed.” In these verses we see that these two groups came together to test Jesus.

Several months earlier the scribes and Pharisees had asked Jesus for a sign from heaven. In Matthew 12:38 they said, “Then some of the scribes and Pharisees answered, saying, ‘Teacher, we want to see a sign from You.’” Instead of giving them a sign from heaven at that time, Jesus reminded them of the Word of God. Here we see an example by Jesus of the importance of answering questions from the Word of God instead of our own opinions. Jesus then gave them the sign of Jonah. Matthew 12:40 says, “For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.” He also reminded them of the queen of the South who came to hear the wisdom of Solomon.

This time Jesus reminded them that God gave them signs in the sky so that they could predict what the weather would be like the next day. When the sky was red in the evening they said that the weather would be good the next day. When the sky was red in the morning they said that they were going to have foul weather because the sky was threatening. Jesus then said, “Hypocrites!” Then Jesus explained why they were hypocrites. They could determine what the weather would be like just by looking at the sky. However, Jesus said that they were unable to discern the signs of the times.

Soon after Jesus began His public ministry He had gone to the Passover in Jerusalem. While He was there He had cleansed the temple. At that time John 2:18-19 says, “So the Jews answered and said to Him, ‘What sign do You show to us, since You do these things?’ Jesus answered and said to them, ‘Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.’” Here we see that from the beginning Jesus consistently said that the only sign that the Jewish religious leaders would see was His death and resurrection but they did not understand and would not understand until He rose from the death. That is why Jesus said both in Matthew 12:39 and

here in these verses that the only sign that would be given to them was the sign of the prophet Jonah. We see that Jesus consistently said that the only sign they would receive was His death and resurrection.

Jesus also said that, “A wicked and adulterous generation seeks after a sign.” Jesus called the Pharisees and Sadducees a wicked or evil generation because He knew their hearts. Jeremiah 17:9 says, “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?” He called them an adulterous generation because they did not worship God. As a result, they were committing spiritual adultery because they were serving their own traditions and were in rebellion against God. Then Jesus left the Pharisees and Sadducees and crossed the Sea of Galilee.

We read what happened when they got to the other side. Matthew 16:5-7 says, “Now when His disciples had come to the other side, they had forgotten to take bread. Then Jesus said to them, ‘Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees.’ And they reasoned among themselves, saying, ‘*It is* because we have taken no bread.’” The disciples had forgotten to take any bread when they got into the boat. As a result, they misunderstood what Jesus said to them when they got to the other side of the Sea of Galilee. Jesus often used the things that people had said to help His disciples develop godly understanding. However, they would often question Jesus soon after something was said. This time Jesus waited until their reached the other side of the sea before he began to talk to them about what the religious leaders had said.

Once they were on the other side Jesus said, “Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees.” The word translated “take heed” means to set your mind to know. The word translated “beware” means to pay attention to or to devote thought to. Used together these words told the disciples that Jesus was saying something very important that they should hear and understand. Then he went on to say that the thing they should pay such close attention to was the leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees. Instead of understanding, the disciples began to discuss among themselves and say that Jesus must be talking about the fact that they had forgotten to bring any bread since He mentioned the word leaven.

Here we see what often happens when people have their mind focused on something that they have just realized in their lives when we start to talk to them. Jesus shows us that we need to be very aware that people may be thinking about things that are totally unrelated to the principles that we want to share with them from the Word of God. Matthew 16:8-12 says, “But Jesus, being aware of *it*, said to them, “O you of little faith, why do you reason among yourselves because you have brought no bread? Do you not yet understand, or remember the five loaves of the five thousand and how many baskets you took up? Nor the seven loaves of the four thousand and how many large baskets you took up? How is it you do not understand that I did not speak to you concerning bread?—*but* to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees.” Then they understood that He did not tell *them* to beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and Sadducees.” We are not like Jesus where we can know what other people are thinking but we can ask questions and see how they answer.

Jesus was also able to help the disciples see the need to strengthen their faith. Jesus said to the

disciples, “O you of little faith.” Matthew and Luke record five different times that Jesus used this phrase. The first was in the Sermon on the Mount when Jesus was talking to His disciples as a large crowd was listening. However, the other four of these times were when He was talking just to the disciples. One of the most important things that every Christian needs to learn is to walk by faith. Hebrews 11:8-10 says, “By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. By faith he dwelt in the land of promise as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise; for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God.” Abraham had his focus on the eternal and not on the things that happened to him day by day.

Christ wanted to help the disciples learn to walk by faith. He also wants us to have that same focus because II Corinthians 5:6-8 says, “So *we are* always confident, knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord. For we walk by faith, not by sight. We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord.” Christ wants every Christian to develop an eternal focus instead of giving their whole attention to the problems that come in their lives day by day. Then Jesus went on to remind the disciples of the feeding of the five thousand and the four thousand and asked them how many baskets of leftovers they gathered up after each event. He made it clear that He could provide for their daily needs.

Jesus then explained that he used the word leaven to talk about the doctrine of the Pharisees and the Sadducees. Leaven spreads throughout a whole lump of bread dough. In the same way the false teachings of these two groups has spread among many of the Jews even though most of the people did not become a Pharisee or a Sadducee. The Pharisees added their traditions and rules to the Word of God which caused them to focus on outward actions instead of the condition of their heart. Revelation 22:18 says, “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.” The doctrine of the Pharisees had added their traditions and rules to the Word of God.

In contrast, the Sadducees denied miracles, they denied the resurrection and they denied many other things because they did not believe that the whole Word of God is true. That is why Revelation 22:19 warns, “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 doctrine of the Sadducees denied many parts of the Word of God. Today we have many groups who either add their traditions to the Word of God or they deny the truth of every word in the Bible. Both forms of leaven (false doctrine) keep people from coming to true faith in Christ.

We want to help our physical and spiritual children understand the danger of any teaching that adds traditions or rules to the Word of God or denies part of the Word of God. At the same time we also want to show them by our example what it means to walk by faith and not by sight. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to avoid false teachings and learn to grow as they walk by faith.

Jesus Made His first Mention of the Church

In our last topic we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to walk by faith and avoid the false teachings of those who add to the Word of God or take away from the Word of God. In this topic we will see that Jesus made His first mention to the disciples about the fact that He would build His church.

Jesus wanted to teach the disciples some very important lessons and so He took them to the area of Caesarea Philippi. This city was located in an area where most of the people were Gentiles about 25 miles north of the area of Galilee. It was also near Mount Hermon which will be important in the next chapter of Matthew. Jesus wanted to spend time just teaching His disciples without interruptions from people coming that wanted to be healed or for some other reason. Times like this were important as Jesus prepared the disciples for the time when He would return to heaven and He wanted them to be equipped for the ministry that they would have at that time.

Matthew 16:13-14 says, “When Jesus came into the region of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, saying, ‘Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?’ So they said, ‘Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.’” In these verses we see that after Jesus and the disciples had walked to the area of Caesarea Philippi that Jesus asked the disciples a question. It was a very simple question but Jesus was going to use this first question to prepare the disciples for the second question that He had for them. Jesus just asked, “Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?” Jesus knew what others were saying about Him but Jesus wanted the disciples to learn to clearly explain who Jesus really is.

The disciples answered that people had many different opinions about who Jesus was. Some people thought that Jesus was John the Baptist and that he had come back to life. In Matthew 14:1-2 we read, “At that time Herod the tetrarch heard the report about Jesus and said to his servants, ‘This is John the Baptist; he is risen from the dead, and therefore these powers are at work in him.’” Here we see that Herod was one of those who thought that Jesus might be John the Baptist. We see later in chapter 14 that Herod murdered John the Baptist. As a result, his conscience bothered him. Whenever he heard about Jesus he wondered if John had risen from the dead. Here we see one of the consequences of a guilty conscience.

Other people said that Jesus was Elijah. Four hundred years earlier Malachi had written in the last two verses of the Old Testament, Malachi 4:5-6, “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.” Those who said that Jesus might be Elijah were looking for him to come before “the great and dreadful day of the Lord” and so those people were expecting the Christ to come and become their eternal king. Other people thought that Jesus was Jeremiah or one of the other Old Testament prophets who had been restored to life.

After listening to their answers Jesus asked and was answered by Peter in Matthew 16:15-18, “He said to them, ‘But who do you say that I am?’ Simon Peter answered and said, ‘You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.’ Jesus answered and said to him, ‘Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed *this* to you, but My Father who is in heaven. 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.’” This question, “But who do you say that I am?” was the question that the disciples must answer clearly if they were going to be effective disciples for Jesus once He returned to heaven. In fact that is also the key question that all Christians today must also answer clearly if we are going to be effective witnesses for Christ.

Peter spoke for disciples as he answered, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” In just these few words Peter gave a clear answer to the question of Jesus. The title “Christ” means the Anointed One and that means the Messiah or the Son of God. Jesus then pointed out a very important lesson to Peter and the other disciples. Jesus made it clear that Peter did not learn who Jesus was from the opinions of others. Instead Jesus said that it was the Father that had revealed this truth to the disciples. I Corinthians 2:9-10 says, “But as it is written: ‘Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him.’ But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God.” Verse 9 is taken from Isaiah 64:4.

The Father had revealed to Peter and the other disciples that Jesus is the Christ through the Holy Spirit. This meant that the Holy Spirit had worked in the heart of Peter and that he had spiritual life even though the Holy Spirit did not come to indwell the disciples until the Day of Pentecost. I Corinthians 2:14 says, “But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know *them*, because they are spiritually discerned.” In the Old Testament we see that it was also the Holy Spirit that worked in the hearts to give spiritual life. Proverbs 2:10-11 says, “When wisdom enters your heart, and knowledge is pleasant to your soul, discretion will preserve you; Understanding will keep you.” Then I Samuel 16:7 says, “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.’”

Then Jesus made His first statement about the church as verse 18 says, “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 translated “Peter” is petros and means a small stone. In contrast, the word translated “rock” is Petra which means a great massive stone. That is the word that is used twice in I 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.” Christ is the great massive Rock upon which the church is built. Because the church is built on that foundation even the gates of Hades cannot have victory against the church. In fact John 16:11 says, “Of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.” When Jesus said on the cross, “It is finished” the judgment of Satan was completed and he is now on death row waiting for that sentence to be carried out. As Jesus was concluding the Sermon on the Mount He said in Matthew 7:24-25, “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.” This same word for rock is used twice in those verses.

Jesus went on to say in Matthew 16:19-20, “‘And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.’ Then He commanded His disciples that they should tell no one that He was Jesus the Christ.” The keeper of the keys has the power to open and to shut. In the New Testament keys are used to speak of power and authority of various kinds. In Matthew 28:18 Jesus said, “And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.” Here we see that Christ is the One who has all authority. However, Jesus delegated to the disciples and through them to all Christians the authority and privilege to share the Gospel with those who are not Christians. The night of His resurrection Jesus told the disciples in John 20:22-23, “And when He had said this, He breathed on *them*, and said to them, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the *sins* of any, they are retained.’” Those who are drawn to Christ by the Father (John 6:44) have the door of eternal life opened to them. Those who reject that message of eternal life continue in their sins and will one day experience eternal judgment.

Jesus then gave a commandment to the disciples. He told them at that time that they were not to tell anyone that He was Jesus the Christ. This commandment was only for the period from that day through the time of the death and resurrection of Jesus and until the day they received the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost. Luke 24:46-49 says, “Then He said to them, ‘Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And you are witnesses of these things. Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high.’” Jesus knew that if the disciples said that He was the Christ at that time that the religious leaders would immediately try to kill Him. Jesus was going to be crucified at the time that the Father had appointed and not when the religious leaders determined to kill Him. As a result, Jesus told the disciples to say nothing about the fact that Jesus is the Christ until the time appointed by the Father.

However, that appointed time came on the Day of Pentecost and that commandment was no longer necessary. As a result, we are now all to be witnesses of the fact that Jesus is the Christ. However, we are to be witnesses of the fact that Jesus is the Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit and not in our own strength. If we depend on our own strength we will accomplish nothing. That is why we want to show our physical and spiritual children what it means to be witnesses of the fact that Jesus is the Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your children how to witness in the power of the Holy Spirit so that you are able to witness with boldness.

Jesus Began to Tell His Disciples about His Coming Death

In our last topic we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain what Jesus said in His first mention of the church to His disciples. We also saw that we will only be effective as we share about Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit and not in our own strength. In our topic today we are going to see that Jesus began to teach His disciples about His coming death.

We saw in our last topic that Jesus had taken the disciples with Him to the region of Caesarea Philippi. This was a mostly Gentile area so Jesus was able to spend time with just the disciples teaching them. After Jesus explained to the disciples that He would build the church, Jesus then began to teach His disciples about His coming death and resurrection. Matthew 16:21 says, “From that time Jesus began to show to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day.” The statement “from that time” tells us that Jesus was beginning a new period in His ministry. From this point on we will see that Jesus spent more and more of His time teaching just the disciples and preparing them for His coming death and resurrection.

The word translated “must” means it is necessary or it is right and proper. Here we see that Jesus was making it clear to His disciples that it was necessary for Him to go to Jerusalem to carry out the work that the Father had sent Him to do. Jesus and the disciples had already made several trips together to Jerusalem. However, we see that Jesus is now beginning to talk about the trip when He would go to the cross. The Old Testament had given many prophecies about the death and resurrection of the Christ. Isaiah 53:8 says, “He was taken from prison and from judgment, and who will declare His generation? For He was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgressions of My people He was stricken.” In this verse we see that Isaiah had predicted the death of Christ for the sins of the people.

We see that Jesus said that He would suffer many things from the elders, chief priests and scribes. Jesus explained here that it would be the religious leaders who would put Him to death. The elders were the 70 men that were known as the Sanhedrin. The chief priests were the men who were responsible to lead the people of Israel in the worship of God. The scribes were the men who made copies of the various books of the Old Testament. Together these men were recognized by the Jews as the religious leaders. Matthew 26:57 says, “And those who had laid hold of Jesus led Him away to Caiaphas the high priest, where the scribes and the elders were assembled.” In this verse we see that it was these religious leaders that had gathered to condemn Jesus to death. That night the high priest put Jesus under oath and said, “Tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God. Matthew 26 64-66 says, “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.*’ 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.’” Here we see that the religious leaders formally condemned Jesus to death.

Jesus also told the disciples that death would not be the end. Instead Jesus said that He would be killed and be raised the third day. Peter was not happy to hear Jesus say that He would be put to death. Matthew 16:22-23 says, "Then Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, 'Far be it from You, Lord; this shall not happen to You!' But He turned and said to Peter, 'Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men.'" These verses show the reaction of Peter. Peter said that such a thing would never happen to Jesus. Here we see how easy it is to see things from our viewpoint instead of the plan of God. The Old Testament had given the plan of God when it said that Jesus would be put to death to pay the penalty for our sins to bring us back to God. Isaiah 53:6 says, "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way; and the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so He opened not His mouth." God had made His plan clear.

In contrast, the viewpoint of Peter was that this would never happen to Jesus. As a result of the failure of Peter to understand the plan of God, Peter instead gave his own opinion. His opinion was directly contrary to the Word of God. This caused Jesus to give the strongest recorded rebuke that Jesus gave to any of the disciples. Jesus said, "Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men." In the Garden of Eden Satan spoke to Eve through the snake. Here we see that Jesus said that Satan was speaking through Peter. Satan is always against the plan of God because his goal is to exalt himself. Isaiah 14:12-14 says, "How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How you are cut down to the ground, you who weakened the nations! For you have said in your heart: 'I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation on the farthest sides of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High.'" Jesus wanted Peter to understand the plan of God.

Jesus also said that Satan speaking through Peter was an offence to Him. The word that is translated "offence" means a stumbling stone, a trap or a snare. This word is used in Romans 11:9 where we read, "And David says: 'Let their table become a snare and a trap, a stumbling block and a recompense to them.'" In this verse the word is translated "stumbling block". Peter himself later used this word in I Peter 2:7-8 where we read, "Therefore, to you who believe, He is precious; but to those who are disobedient, 'The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone,' and 'a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense.' They stumble, being disobedient to the word, to which they also were appointed." In these verses the word is translated a rock "of offence". When we give our own opinions instead of sharing the Word of God, we can open a door for Satan to speak through us also. Satan desires to get all Christians thinking about the things of men instead of being mindful of the things of God.

Matthew 16:24-28 goes on to say, "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? For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His

angels, and then He will reward each according to his works. Assuredly, I say to you, there are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom.” In these verses we see that Jesus went on to explain to the disciples what it means to follow Him instead of following the world.

Jesus said that we are to do three things if we desire to follow Him. First, we are to deny self. To deny self means to forget self and our own interests. Second, we are to take up his cross. Jesus said in Luke 14:25-27, “Now great multitudes went with Him. And He turned and said to them, ‘If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple. And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple.’” To take up his cross means that we are to have a greater love for Christ than for our relatives or even our own physical life. Third, we are to follow Christ. II Peter 1:1 says, “Simon Peter, a bondservant and apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who have obtained like precious faith with us by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ.” In this verse we see that Peter viewed himself as a bondservant of Jesus Christ and his purpose in life had become to serve Jesus as His bondservant.

Peter understood that salvation and forgiveness of sins was a free gift. However, as He grew in Christ he grew to understand that as a follower of Christ his goals in life would either focus on the things of this world or they would focus on the things that have eternal value. The same thing was true for all of the twelve except for Judas Iscariot. In II Peter 3:10 Peter explained what he had come to understand as he followed Jesus. That verse 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.” We are to be obedient to the command to make disciples. Matthew 28:20 says, “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.” As we help new Christians grow in their understanding of the love of Christ for them, they will respond to that love by loving Christ more than the things of this world. That is especially important since the things of this world will all be burned up and everything that is gathered in this world will be destroyed.

As a result, the process of helping a new Christian grow and become a disciple of Christ will change and transform his or her value system. Instead of the temporary things of this world a growing Christian begins to have a greater and greater desire for the eternal rewards that Christ has promised to all who seek the things that have eternal value instead of value just for this world. The disciples had their hearts and minds transformed as they followed Jesus and they became willing to die for Him because the temporary things of this world became of no value to them. In the same way we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain to others why they have chosen to seek the things which are eternal instead of the things that will only last for this world. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your children why this is becoming true in your life.

Jesus was Transfigured before Three of His Disciples

In our last topic we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn by our example what it means to be a disciple of Jesus so that they can practice those things in their own lives and help others begin to live for the things that are eternal as well. In this topic we are going to see that Jesus was changed and transformed before three of His disciples just six days later.

The last verse of Matthew 16 is actually connected to the first part of chapter 17. Matthew 16:28-17:4 says, “Assuredly, I say to you, there are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom.” Now after six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John his brother, led them up on a high mountain by themselves; and He was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light. And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with Him. Then Peter answered and said to Jesus, “Lord, it is good for us to be here; if You wish, let us make here three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.” In these verses we see that Jesus promised that some of the disciples would see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom before they died.

Just six days later Jesus took Peter, James and John and the four of them went up on a high mountain. There is a high mountain just north of Caesarea Philippi and it is known today as Mount Hermon. It is more than 9,200 feet in height and is covered with snow much of the year. The springs near the foot of this mountain and the melting snow from this and the surrounding mountains are the source of the Jordan River. This is probably the mountain where Jesus and the three disciples went. Jesus chose this place to show His glory to the three disciples. The word translated “transfigured” means to be changed into another form. Matthew, Mark and Luke all mention the transfiguration. The only Gospel that does not mention it is John.

John was there that day and could have given a more detailed description than any of the three other Gospels. However, John had the privilege to see an even greater change in the appearance of Jesus. That appearance is described in Revelation 1:12-16 where we read, “Then I turned to see the voice that spoke with me. And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands, and in the midst of the seven lampstands *One* like the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the feet and girded about the chest with a golden band. His head and hair *were* white like wool, as white as snow, and His eyes like a flame of fire; His feet *were* like fine brass, as if refined in a furnace, and His voice as the sound of many waters; He had in His right hand seven stars, out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword, and His countenance *was* like the sun shining in its strength.”

Even in this appearance the face of Jesus shown like the sun and His clothing became as white as the light. We see that two men then appeared and talked with Jesus. Luke 9:30-31 says, “And behold, two men talked with Him, who were Moses and Elijah, who appeared in glory and spoke of His decease which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem.” Here we see that

Moses and Elijah talked with Jesus about His coming death which would soon happen in Jerusalem. Moses wrote the books of the Law and Elijah was one of the prophets. Then meant Moses wrote about the first promise of Jesus in Genesis 3:15 where we read, “And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel.” God promised that Jesus would crush the head of Satan even though Satan would bruise the heel of Jesus. For three days Satan thought that he had won. Then when the resurrection came Satan knew that He had lost and is now awaiting his eternal judgment.

Peter and the other two disciples were amazed when they saw Jesus talking with Moses and Elijah. The word translated “tabernacle” was most commonly used in the New Testament to speak of the tabernacle in the wilderness. In the book of Revelation it was used to speak of the dwelling place of God in heaven. It is even used once to speak of the eternal dwelling place of all unbelievers. In the Old Testament at the time of the Feast of the Tabernacles the Jews would make temporary shelters usually with the green branches of trees or bushes to remind them of their time in the wilderness. However, Matthew, Mark and Luke all use this word at the time of the transfiguration. Peter may have used this word to speak of building three temporary shelters of branches so that Moses and Elijah could spend a longer time with Jesus. However, Mark and Luke both said that Peter said this because he did not know what to say.

Luke 17:5-8 says, “While he was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them; and suddenly a voice came out of the cloud, saying, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!” And when the disciples heard *it*, they fell on their faces and were greatly afraid. But Jesus came and touched them and said, “Arise, and do not be afraid.” When they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no one but Jesus only.” Here we see that the Father interrupted Peter by covering them with a bright cloud. Then God spoke out of the cloud and said, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!” The Father did several things by this statement. First, He made it clear to the three disciples that this was His beloved Son. Second, He made it clear that He was well pleased with His Son. Third, He told them to hear what Jesus was saying. The word translated “hear” means to pay attention or to understand what is being said. Since Jesus, Moses and Elijah were talking about the coming death and resurrection of Jesus, the Father wanted the disciples to clearly understand that Jesus was going to die and be raised again on the third day. This was the message they were to share.

The disciples were so fearful when they heard the voice of the Father that they fell on their faces in great fear. Then Jesus came and touched them and told them to get up and not to be afraid. Then they looked up and saw that Jesus was now the only One standing there. Matthew 17:9-13 goes on to say, “Now as they came down from the mountain, Jesus commanded them, saying, ‘Tell the vision to no one until the Son of Man is risen from the dead.’ And His disciples asked Him, saying, ‘Why then do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?’ Jesus answered and said to them, ‘Indeed, Elijah is coming first and will restore all things. But I say to you that Elijah has come already, and they did not know him but did to him whatever they wished. Likewise the Son of Man is also about to suffer at their hands.’ Then the disciples understood that He spoke to them of John the Baptist.” Here we see what Jesus and the disciples talked about as they came down from the mountain to where the other disciples were.

Jesus, Moses and Elijah had been talking about the coming death of Jesus. As the four went down the mountain together Jesus told the three disciples not to tell anyone about the vision until after the Son of Man rose from the dead. However, they did not understand that statement either because Mark 9:10 says, "So they kept this word to themselves, questioning what the rising from the dead meant." The three must have talked together later that afternoon or evening because Luke 9:37 says, "Now it happened on the next day, when they had come down from the mountain, that a great multitude met Him." Here we see that it was the next day before they reached the bottom of the mountain so the disciples had time to discuss their questions with one another later in the day or during the evening.

Jesus had told them six days earlier that He would suffer many things, be killed and be raised on the third day. Here we see that the three did not understand clearly what Jesus had said earlier. As a result, we see that they could not have explained what Jesus meant at that time even if they would have desired to explain the statement of Jesus to the other disciples. When people do not understand something it is very easy for them to not talk because they are afraid people might ask them questions that they cannot answer. The three disciples needed two things to be able to speak boldly about the death and resurrection of Jesus. First, they needed to have a clear understanding. Second, they needed to be able to have the power of the Holy Spirit in order to speak boldly about the death and resurrection of Jesus. They received clear understanding in Luke 24:44-48 after Jesus rose from the dead. They received boldness to speak with the coming of the Holy Spirit. Both things must be true in order for a person to be a bold witness.

As they were coming down the mountain the disciples asked Jesus the question of why the scribes said that Elijah must come first. The scribes made that statement because of Malachi 4:5 which says, "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD." Jesus explained that the one bringing the message that the Christ was coming had come. Instead of listening to that one, the religious leaders and the Roman government had treated that one with contempt and did to him whatever they wished. Suddenly the disciples understood that John the Baptist had come before Jesus, the Christ, to prepare the way for the coming of Jesus. Jesus said that these same men were about to make the Son of Man suffer at their hands. This was another statement of Jesus about His coming death.

However, there is also a second part to the prophecy in Malachi. Malachi said that Elijah would come before the great and dreadful day of the Lord. Elijah will be one of the two witnesses that will be killed when he comes before the Great Tribulation. This is explained in Revelation 11 and fulfills the second part of the prophecy of Malachi. John brought the message of the coming of Jesus and was rejected. Elijah will experience that same rejection in the tribulation. We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain that John brought the message that Elijah will bring during the tribulation which is part of the Day of the Lord. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to understand and explain these things.

61.

Jesus Rebuked a Demon in a Boy

In our last topic we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain what Jesus taught about the ministry of John the Baptist and how that ministry compares to the future ministry of Elijah during the tribulation. In this topic we will see that Jesus set a boy free that was possessed by a demon.

Jesus and the three disciples, Peter, James and John, came down from the mountain where Jesus had been transfigured. A large group of people were gathered around the other disciples when they returned. Matthew 17:14-16 says, “And when they had come to the multitude, a man came to Him, kneeling down to Him and saying, “Lord, have mercy on my son, for he is an epileptic and suffers severely; for he often falls into the fire and often into the water. So I brought him to Your disciples, but they could not cure him.” Here we see that one of the men in the crowd saw Jesus coming and went and knelt down in front of Jesus and made a request. He asked Jesus to show mercy.

This man had a son that was suffering greatly. Mark 9:17-18 describes his condition in more detail as those verses say, “Then one of the crowd answered and said, ‘Teacher, I brought You my son, who has a mute spirit. And wherever it seizes him, it throws him down; he foams at the mouth, gnashes his teeth, and becomes rigid. So I spoke to Your disciples, that they should cast it out, but they could not.’” In these verses we see that this boy was suffering because of a demon. This demon caused several things to happen in the life of the boy. He could not talk. The demon would throw him to the ground. The demon would cause him to foam at the mouth. The demon would cause him to gnash his teeth (grind his teeth together). The demon would cause him to become rigid. Here in Matthew 17 see that the demon also often caused him to fall into the fire and into the water. We see that the goal of this demon was to destroy the life of the child.

That is why the man asked Jesus to show mercy to his son. The man feared that one day that demon would succeed and kill the child. The man wanted Jesus to have mercy and show compassion to his son because of all the things that were happening in the life of the boy because of the demon. Before Jesus had come down from the mountain, the man said that he had brought the boy to the other disciples and they could not cure him. That was why he now said, “Lord, have mercy on my son.” He recognized Jesus as Lord because he felt that Jesus was the only one who could help his son. The fact that the man recognized Jesus as Lord showed his faith and we read what Jesus said and did because of that faith in contrast to the lack of faith of others. Matthew 17:17-18 says, “Then Jesus answered and said, ‘O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I bear with you? Bring him here to Me.’ And Jesus rebuked the demon, and it came out of him; and the child was cured from that very hour.”

Jesus began by using two words to describe that generation. We will see by the question that the disciples asked Jesus in verse 19 that they were also described by those words. First, Jesus

said that generation was a faithless generation. The word translated “faithless” means unbelieving or without trust in God. Jesus had given the twelve and later the seventy the power to cast out demons when He sent them out to preach the Gospel in various towns and cities. Luke 10:17 says, “Then the seventy returned with joy, saying, ‘Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name.’” On their ministry trips they saw the Lord cast out demons because they had trusted in Him at that time. In this case they may have tried to cast out the demons in their own strength instead of depending on the strength of the Lord to cast out the demons.

Second, Jesus said that generation was a perverse generation. The word translated “perverse” means to turn aside from the purposes and plans of God. This is a reminder that even the disciples were to pray according to the will of God. I 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.” These verses show that when we pray we are to pray according to the will of God. The fact that Jesus later healed this boy shows that it was the will of God for him to be healed. I Corinthians 10:31 says, “Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.” When we depend on our own strength we will not bring glory to God. We will see later that the disciples asked why they could not cast out the demon. In the answer of Jesus we see that he tells them how to bring glory to God.

Jesus then asked the question, “How long shall I be with you?” The disciples did not understand that Jesus was preparing them for future ministry when He would no longer be physically present with them. They needed to learn to serve the Lord in the strength that the Lord provides and not in their own strength. Jesus later said as He ate the Passover with the disciples 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.” In the same way, we will accomplish nothing when we depend on our own strength.

Then Jesus told the man to bring the boy to Him. Luke 9:42 says, “And as he was still coming, the demon threw him down and convulsed *him*. Then Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit, healed the child, and gave him back to his father.” In this verse we see that the demon made one final effort to try and destroy the boy as the father was bringing him to Jesus. The demon threw the boy down and caused him to go into convulsions as a part of that final effort to destroy him. 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 goal of Satan is always to steal, to kill and to destroy. This verse shows that demons have this same goal.

In contrast, the goal of Jesus is to give spiritual life. Jesus just rebuked the demon and the demon was forced to come out of the boy. We see that the boy was cured from that very hour. The word translated “cured” means to be restored to health. That day the boy left Jesus a normal healthy boy. However, the disciples had some questions. Matthew 17:19-21 says, “Then the disciples came to Jesus privately and said, ‘Why could we not cast it out?’ So Jesus said to them, ‘Because of your unbelief; for assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith as a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you. However, this kind does not go out except by prayer and

fasting.” The disciples had cast out demons when Jesus sent them out on the ministry trip. As a result, they wanted to know why they could not cast out the demon this time. Jesus explained the faith that brings glory to God.

Jesus explained that they could not cast out the demon because of their unbelief. The disciples had cast out demons through the power of God when they were sent out two by two because they said that the demons were subject in Jesus name. Here the disciples said “Why could we not cast it out?” This is the indication that they depended on their own strength to cast out the demon instead of praying and asking the Lord to cast out the demon. Joshua had done the same thing after the great victory at Jericho. Joshua 7:3-4 says, “And they returned to Joshua and said to him, ‘Do not let all the people go up, but let about two or three thousand men go up and attack Ai. Do not weary all the people there, for *the people of Ai are few.*’ So about three thousand men went up there from the people, but they fled before the men of Ai.” Joshua had depended on the counsel of the spies instead of asking God what to do.

Jesus told the disciples that this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting. The word translated “kind” is used to speak of a family, a nation or a group of the same nature. In Acts 17:28-29 we read, “For in Him we live and move and have our being, as also some of your own poets have said, ‘For we are also His offspring.’ Therefore, since we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, something shaped by art and man’s devising.” Here the word is twice translated offspring. Angels are spirits created by God and divide into two groups, the good and the fallen. Since they are creations of God, He is the only One who has power to cast them out so that is why Jesus said this kind only comes out by prayer and fasting.

Jesus also taught the difference between great faith and faith in a Great God. A mustard seed is the smallest seed in the land of Israel. As a result, the need of the disciples was not a great faith in their own strength. Instead they needed only enough faith to pray and ask God to work in the life of one who was demon possessed. God is a Great God and He has all power over all demons. I John 4:4 says, “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.” A little child who is loved by his earthly father has faith in his earthly father. In the same way as the children of God, He wants us to have faith in Him.

We demonstrate that faith in Him by coming to Him in prayer and thanksgiving for our requests. 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.” Our prayer and supplications to God demonstrate our dependence on God instead of our own strength. Our thanksgiving to God shows our faith in God because we ask Him to do what He knows is best. Romans 8:27 says, “Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit *is*, because He makes intercession for the saints according to *the will of God.*” We want to show our physical and spiritual children our dependence on the Lord to do His will in all things by the example that we provide for them by our own prayers and thanksgiving to the Lord. May the Lord richly bless you as you show these things to your children by your example.

Jesus Again Told His Disciples about His Coming Resurrection

We saw in our last topic that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn by our example to bring their requests to God with thanksgiving because that thanksgiving shows faith in a Great God and a submission to His will about the way that He answers our requests. In this topic we are going to see that Jesus again told His disciples about His coming resurrection.

After Jesus was transfigured on the mountain and Peter, James and John saw the glory of Jesus, we see that Jesus stayed in the area of Galilee for a period of time. In Matthew 17:22-23 we read, “Now while they were staying in Galilee, Jesus said to them, “The Son of Man is about to be betrayed into the hands of men, and they will kill Him, and the third day He will be raised up.” And they were exceedingly sorrowful.” Jesus was preparing the disciples for His coming death and resurrection but we will see that they did not really understand until Christ explained it to them after His resurrection. Many times the same thing happens to people as we explain the Scriptures to others. Each time they hear they gain a little more understanding but they do not fully understand until the Holy Spirit gives them a clear understanding.

First, Jesus said that the Son of Man was about to be betrayed into the hands of men. The word translated “betrayed” means to deliver something, to permit or to betray someone into the hands of another. Jesus told the disciples several times that He would be betrayed. He even told them that He would be betrayed by one of the disciples. However, the disciples did not understand. Jesus spoke about the betrayer in John 13:26-30 where we read, “Jesus answered, ‘It is he to whom I shall give a piece of bread when I have dipped *it*.’ And having dipped the bread, He gave *it* to Judas Iscariot, *the son* of Simon. Now after the piece of bread, Satan entered him. Then Jesus said to him, ‘What you do, do quickly.’ But no one at the table knew for what reason He said this to him. For some thought, because Judas had the money box, that Jesus had said to him, ‘Buy *those things* we need for the feast,’ or that he should give something to the poor. Having received the piece of bread, he then went out immediately. And it was night.” The other disciples did not understand until they saw Judas betray Jesus later that night.

The next day they saw Jesus killed on the cross but they did not understand the promise that Jesus had given that He would be raised up the third day. The women came and told the disciples the morning of the resurrection. Luke 23 9-11 says, “Then they returned from the tomb and told all these things to the eleven and to all the rest. It was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary *the mother* of James, and the other *women* with them, who told these things to the apostles. And their words seemed to them like idle tales, and they did not believe them.” Here we see that the disciples did not believe the words of the women. Luke 24:36-39 adds, “Now as they said these things, Jesus Himself stood in the midst of them, and said to them, ‘Peace to you.’ But they were terrified and frightened, and supposed they had seen a spirit. And He said to them, ‘Why are you troubled? And why do doubts arise in your hearts? Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself. Handle Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see I have.’” The disciples had to see Jesus before they believed. That was why the disciples were filled with sorrow as they heard Jesus talk about His coming death and resurrection.

Jesus and the disciples traveled to the city of Capernaum. Matthew 17:24-26 says, “When they had come to Capernaum, those who received the *temple* tax came to Peter and said, ‘Does your Teacher not pay the *temple* tax?’ He said, ‘Yes.’ And when he had come into the house, Jesus anticipated him, saying, ‘What do you think, Simon? From whom do the kings of the earth take customs or taxes, from their sons or from strangers?’ Peter said to Him, ‘From strangers.’ Jesus said to him, ‘Then the sons are free.’” Here we see that while they were in Capernaum that Peter spoke for Jesus before He talked to Jesus about the question that he was asked.

When Israel was in the wilderness the people were told that all males 20 years and older were to pay a tax as an atonement for themselves. Exodus 30:13-15 says, “This is what everyone among those who are numbered shall give: half a shekel according to the shekel of the sanctuary (a shekel is twenty gerahs). The half-shekel shall be an offering to the LORD. Everyone included among those who are numbered, from twenty years old and above, shall give an offering to the LORD. The rich shall not give more and the poor shall not give less than half a shekel, when you give an offering to the LORD, to make atonement for yourselves.” Later the people of Israel made this an annual payment to care for the temple. II Chronicles 24:9-10 says, “And they made a proclamation throughout Judah and Jerusalem to bring to the LORD the collection *that* Moses the servant of God *had imposed* on Israel in the wilderness. Then all the leaders and all the people rejoiced, brought their contributions, and put *them* into the chest until all had given.” By the time of Jesus that was called the temple tax and men were sent out to collect this tax. This tax was equal to two days wages.

It was the men who were collecting the temple tax that asked Peter if Jesus was going to pay the temple tax. When Peter came to the house, Jesus asked Peter two questions before Peter could even say a word. Those questions were, “What do you think, Simon? From whom do the kings of the earth take customs or taxes, from their sons or from strangers?” Here we see that Jesus wanted to make Peter think so that Peter could grow in His understanding of Jesus. In that day the kings did not require their own sons to pay taxes since the taxes were paid to the king. Instead the taxes were paid by the rest of the people. That is why Jesus asked Peter if kings gathered their taxes from their own sons or from the strangers (the rest of the people). Peter immediately answered that they collected taxes from those who were strangers. Jesus then said, “Then the sons are free.”

Peter was suddenly reminded that Jesus is the Son of God. Jesus explained the purpose of the temple in Jerusalem in Mark 11:17-18 after He had driven out those who were buying and selling in the temple. Those verses say, “Then He taught, saying to them, “Is it not written, ‘My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations’? But you have made it a ‘den of thieves.’” And the scribes and chief priests heard it and sought how they might destroy Him; for they feared Him, because all the people were astonished at His teaching.” These verses teach that the temple was to be a house of prayer for all nations. The words spoken in this verse come from two different passages.

Isaiah 56:6-7 says, “Also the sons of the foreigner who join themselves to the LORD, to serve Him, and to love the name of the LORD, to be His servants— Everyone who keeps from defiling the Sabbath, and holds fast My covenant— Even them I will bring to My holy

mountain, and make them joyful in My house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and their sacrifices *will be* accepted on My altar; For My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations.” God wanted the Gentiles to be able to worship Him at the temple so He led Isaiah to write these things so that the Gentiles would know that they were also accepted by God. Then Jeremiah wrote in Jeremiah 7:11, ““Has this house, which is called by My name, become a den of thieves in your eyes? Behold, I, even I, have seen *it*,’ says the LORD.” Both men said that the temple was called by the name of the Lord. As a result, when Jesus said, “Then the sons are free,” this statement was a clear reminder to Peter that Jesus is the Son of God and did not need to pay the temple tax.

After this gentle rebuke to Peter, Jesus then said to him in Matthew 17:27, “Nevertheless, lest we offend them, go to the sea, cast in a hook, and take the fish that comes up first. And when you have opened its mouth, you will find a piece of money; take that and give it to them for Me and you.” Here we see that Jesus also told Peter what to do. Jesus told Peter to go to the Sea of Galilee with a hook and line to fish. Because Peter had been a fisherman before he followed Jesus, he normally fished with a net. Jesus made it clear that He was not sending Peter back to his occupation of fishing. A hook and line was what any person might use to catch a fish for a meal.

Peter was told what to do with the first fish that he caught. Jesus told Peter to open the mouth of that first fish and he would find a coin in its mouth. That coin would be a shekel which was worth four days wages. The temple tax was a half-shekel so the coin would be worth twice as much as the temple tax for Jesus. Jesus then told Peter to take that coin and give it to the men who were collecting the temple tax. Peter said that the coin would pay the tax for both Peter and Jesus.

We also see why Jesus told Peter to pay the tax for both of them. Jesus said to do it so that they would not offend those who were collecting the temple tax. The word translated “lest we offend” means to cause a person to stumble, to entice to sin or to cause a person to be displeased. Jesus knew the hearts of the people that were collecting the temple tax. As a result, he knew whether they would later believe and place their faith in Jesus. Jesus wanted to make sure that He did nothing that would offend any person and make it harder for that person to come to faith in Christ. Romans 15:2-3 says, “Let each of us please *his* neighbor for *his* good, leading to edification. For even Christ did not please Himself; but as it is written, ‘The reproaches of those who reproached You fell on Me.’” In these verses we see that Jesus gave us an example of the fact that we are to avoid anything that would be a stumbling block for others and hinder them from coming to Jesus. This is also an important principle that we want to teach our physical and spiritual children by our example. We want to show by our example that we make it our goal never to be a hindrance by our actions that would hinder others from coming to Jesus. May the Lord richly bless you as you provide an example for your children.

Jesus Explained the Importance of Caring for Children

In our last topic we saw that we want to help our children learn by our example how to avoid hindering others from coming to Jesus in repentance and faith. That is a key lesson to help them learn to be effective as they share the message of the death and resurrection of Christ with others. In this topic we will see that Jesus showed the disciples by His example the importance of taking time to reach out to physical and spiritual children.

The world looks for greatness and success. We see that was also true of the disciples when they first followed Jesus. In Matthew 18:1-5 we see that the disciples came to Jesus with a question, “At that time the disciples came to Jesus, saying, ‘Who then is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?’ Then Jesus called a little child to Him, set him in the midst of them, and said, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore whoever humbles himself as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Whoever receives one little child like this in My name receives Me.’” Instead of just answering their question, Jesus gave a living illustration of His answer.

Jesus called a little child to Him and sat the child in the middle of the disciples. Then Jesus began to speak to the disciples. The word translated “converted” means to turn around, to turn from one’s course of conduct or to change one’s mind. Most uses of this word refer to Jesus turning, God turning or some other person turning. However, in Acts 7:39 we read about the people of Israel when they were in the wilderness and that verse says, “Whom our fathers would not obey, but rejected. And in their hearts they turned back to Egypt.” In this case Israel rejected the Word of God and in their hearts and they wanted to return to Egypt. In this verse in Matthew we see that Jesus says that people must turn in heart and become like little children to even be in the kingdom of heaven. Those who are filled with pride and depend on their own efforts will not even be a part of the kingdom of heaven.

Then Jesus used the little child that He had called to Him to explain a key lesson about greatness in the kingdom of heaven. Jesus said that a person has to humble himself like a little child to be the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Christ is our example of One who humbled Himself. Philippians 2:8 says, “And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to *the point of* death, even the death of the cross.” Jesus is the One who is King of kings and Lord of lords. James 4:10 tells us, “Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up.” Then I Peter 5:6 tells us, “Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time.” We are to humble ourselves and not seek to be the greatest. Jesus said that those who have such humility will also receive a little child like the one that He had set in the middle of the disciples.

Then Jesus went on to warn the disciples about causing a child to sin. Matthew 18:6-9 says, “Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to sin, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were drowned in the depth of the sea. Woe to

the world because of offenses! For offenses must come, but woe to that man by whom the offense comes! If your hand or foot causes you to sin, cut it off and cast *it* from you. It is better for you to enter into life lame or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet, to be cast into the everlasting fire. And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast *it* from you. It is better for you to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes, to be cast into hell fire.” This speaks about a Christian causing someone to stumble and includes a physical child and also a spiritual child. A spiritual child is a new Christian or a Christian that is still spiritually immature.

A millstone was a large stone that was turned by a donkey to crush the grain and grind it so that it could be used for bread and other forms of food. If a person had such a millstone hung about his neck and he was thrown into the sea, that person would quickly sink to the bottom of the sea and drown. Jesus was making it very clear to the disciples that they were not to cause a child or a weak Christian to sin by the things that the disciples said or did. I Corinthians 8:1 says, “Now concerning things offered to idols: We know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge puffs up, but love edifies.” Then Romans 14:19-20 says, “Therefore let us pursue the things *which make* for peace and the things by which one may edify another. Do not destroy the work of God for the sake of food. All things indeed *are* pure, but *it is* evil for the man who eats with offense.” Here we see that Paul gave warning about the danger of boasting about our knowledge which could easily cause a weak Christian to stumble. In contrast, love will lead us to help others and build them up in their spiritual lives.

Jesus said that there will be offences in the world. Those who are not Christians like to boast about their knowledge and speak against those who are new or weak Christians. They also try to cause those who are weak Christians to sin in other ways. We are to leave their judgment to the Lord. Romans 12:19 says, “Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but *rather* give place to wrath; for it is written, ‘Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,’ says the Lord.” Those in the world must either accept Christ’s payment for their judgment or they will experience that judgment. Revelation 20:15 says, “And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.” That judgment will be eternal. Our prayer for all who are not followers of Jesus should be that the Holy Spirit will convict them and the Father will draw them to Christ so they can receive forgiveness.

Jesus knew that Judas was showing the outward actions of a follower of Jesus but his heart was filled with sin. Perhaps there were others there that day in the larger group of disciples who were also pretending to be followers of Jesus. As a result, Jesus gave a warning to all who were not true followers. Jesus said it would be better to lose a hand or a foot rather than to experience that judgment which faces all who do not repent of their sin of unbelief and receive Christ by faith. The same thing would be true for their eye. It would be better to be blind and live on earth with only one eye than to never come to Christ and experience the eternal judgment of everlasting fire.

Then Jesus went on to apply this principle and warn the disciples not to despise a little one by giving a parable. Matthew 18:10-14 says, “Take heed that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I say to you that in heaven their angels always see the face of My Father who is in heaven. For the Son of Man has come to save that which was lost. “What do you think? If a

man has a hundred sheep, and one of them goes astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine and go to the mountains to seek the one that is straying? And if he should find it, assuredly, I say to you, he rejoices more over that *sheep* than over the ninety-nine that did not go astray. Even so it is not the will of your Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish.”

The word translated “despise” means to reject, make fun of or to treat unkindly. Jesus said that the disciples were not to treat a little child or a weak or new Christian in this way. In addition to the concern of the Father, we see that the angels are also concerned when a child or a weak Christian is treated in this way. Jesus did not come to make fun of such individuals. Instead Luke 19:10 says, “For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.” That same thought is repeated here in verse eleven. Then Jesus gave a parable to His disciples.

Jesus began that parable with the question, “What do you think?” Here we see that the purpose this time when Jesus gave this parable was to make His disciples really think. It is the desire of Jesus that we will also really think about this parable and let it be a guide for the actions that we take in our lives. The parable is about a man with one hundred sheep that had one of them go astray. The word translated “goes astray” means to cause to stray, to lead from the right way, to lead from the truth or to lead into error and is usually translated deceive. This word is used twice in II Timothy 3:13 where we read, “But evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived.” Here we see that it talks about false teachers who deceive others and at the same time also deceive themselves. It is easy for weak Christians to be deceived by false teachers.

Jesus told his disciples that a true shepherd would rejoice more over finding that straying sheep than he will over the ninety-nine that did not go astray. Peter always remembered what Jesus said that day. He wrote in I Peter 2:25, “For you were like sheep going astray, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.” In the earlier part of the chapter Peter had warned that we will suffer for Christ. I 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.” Christ had gone to the Sea of Galilee to find Peter when Peter had denied Jesus three times and then gone back to fishing in John 21. There Jesus had asked Peter three times if Peter loved Him. Each time Jesus had told Peter to feed and shepherd his lambs and his sheep. In the same way Jesus has gone after each of us when we have strayed away from Him. Jesus said it is not the will of the Father that a weak Christian should be destroyed or caused to perish. Instead we are to follow the example of Jesus and seek the weak and straying Christian and bring them back into the fellowship of the other believers.

The Lord calls us to show our physical and spiritual children how to go and seek for those weak and struggling Christians who have gone astray and bring them back to the fellowship of the church. In that way we will also be following the instructions that Jesus gave to the disciples that day. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your children how to seek weak Christians that have gone astray.

Jesus Taught about the Importance of Forgiving

In our last topic we saw that we want to show our physical and spiritual children how to help weak and struggling Christians that have gone astray and bring them back into the fellowship of the church. In this topic we will see that Jesus taught about the importance of seeking to bring about reconciliation between Christians in conflict.

Christians do have conflicts because we still sin as long as we are here on this earth. We saw in the previous topic that a sheep can go astray. After giving that parable Jesus went on to say in Matthew 18:15-17, “Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother. But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that ‘by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.’ And if he refuses to hear them, tell *it* to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector.” The word translated “moreover” is used nearly 2900 times in the New Testament and is usually translated but or and. As a result of the use of this word, this verse points out the fact that some who sin against others do so because they have gone astray and these verses give us the process to seek restoration of the person.

The first step in the process to restore a brother that has gone astray is to go and talk to the person alone. The word translated “his fault” is used in seventeen verses in the New Testament and this is the only verse where the word is translated this way. The word is normally translated reprove, rebuke or convict. In John 16:8 we see that this is one of the ministries of the Holy Spirit to one who is not yet a Christian. That verses says,” And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment.” In this verse the word is translated convict. In John 8:9 Jesus used this word as He talked to the men condemning the woman caught in the act of adultery. That verse says, “Then those who heard *it*, being convicted by *their* conscience, went out one by one, beginning with the oldest *even* to the last. And Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst.” Here we see that their consciences convicted these men.

James used the word to give a rebuke to many in the church when he said in James 2:8-9, “If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself,’ you do well; but if you show partiality, you commit sin, and are convicted by the law as transgressors.” Here we see that the law itself convicts those who show partiality and favor the rich over the poor. Deuteronomy 1:17 told the judges of Israel, “You shall not show partiality in judgment; you shall hear the small as well as the great; you shall not be afraid in any man’s presence, for the judgment *is* God’s. The case that is too hard for you, bring to me, and I will hear it.” This verse indicates that the rich were taking advantage of the poor in the early church. In such a case the rich person would be sinning against the poor person. Ideally the sin can be corrected by just the rebuke of the individual.

However, if the person will not listen to you verse 18 says, “But if he will not hear, take with

you one or two more, that ‘by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.’” Here we see that if the person who has gone astray refuses to hear you, this verse says that you are to take one or two others with you to talk to the person. Deuteronomy 19:15 says, “One witness shall not rise against a man concerning any iniquity or any sin that he commits; by the mouth of two or three witnesses the matter shall be established.” If the person refuses to hear the two or three witnesses, then those witnesses are to tell the entire church of the refusal of the person to repent. Finally if the person refuses to listen to the entire church that person is to be removed from fellowship with the church until the person repents. I Corinthians 11:31-32 says, “For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world.”

Matthew 18:18-20 says, “Assuredly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. ‘Again I say to you that if two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them.’” In this case the church would be binding a person on earth. I Corinthians 5:4-5 explains, “In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when you are gathered together, along with my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.” Here we see that a Christian who goes astray and refuses to repent is actually turned over to the Lord to bring the person to repentance. The previous paragraph and these verses say that the Lord will chasten (discipline) the person and if necessary even allow physical death so that He can take the person to heaven if necessary in order to restore that person to fellowship with Himself.

This is a reminder of the fact that absolutely nothing can separate a true believer, even one who goes astray, from the love of Christ. Romans 8:35-39 says, “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? *Shall* tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written: ‘For Your sake we are killed all day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.’ Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” In these verses we see that no created person or thing can separate a true believer from the love of Christ.

The purpose of this discipline is always to restore the person to the fellowship of the church. Galatians 6:1 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.” Here we see that a Christian may be committing any trespass or sin but the goal is always restoration. This restoration and love is illustrated in II Corinthians 2:6-8 where we read, “This punishment which was inflicted by the majority is sufficient for such a man, so that, on the contrary, you ought rather to forgive and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one be swallowed up with too much sorrow. Therefore I urge you to reaffirm your love to him.” Here we see that as soon as there is repentance that we are to loose the one who has been bound for discipline by the Lord. Here we see that even a leadership team of only two or three elders can gather together in the name of Christ and know that the Lord is present with them as they loose the one who has been

bound for discipline. This allows even the leadership team of a very small church to publicly reaffirm their love for the person disciplined and to publicly restore the person.

Jesus had just given the parable about the sheep that had gone astray and the rejoicing that followed when the sheep was found. Then in the verses above Jesus said that those who repent are to be loosed and restored by the leadership of even the smallest church. This caused Peter to ask a new question. Matthew 18:21-22 says, "Then Peter came to Him and said, 'Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?' Jesus said to him, 'I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven.'" Peter thought that he was really being generous when he asked if he should forgive a brother up to seven times.

Peter thought that he was being generous to offer to forgive a brother seven times. The Jewish rabbis had developed a tradition that a person should only be forgiven three times. They based that tradition on the book of Amos. Amos 1:3, 1:6, 1:9, 1:11, 1:13 and 2:1 all say the same thing about various enemies as only the name used is different in the following statement from each of these verses, "Thus says the LORD: 'For three transgressions of _____, and for four, I will not turn away its punishment.'" In the various verses the blank includes the name of Damascus, Gaza, Tyre, Edom, Ammon and Moab. The rabbis said that if God would punish these people for the fourth transgression that they should only forgive a person three times. Of course there is a major problem with that interpretation because in Amos 2:4 and 2:6 the same statement is used with the names of Judah and Israel instead of an enemy. By their unforgiving spirit the rabbis were actually condemning themselves.

Here we see that Jesus showed that the tradition of the rabbis did not show the heart of God. Instead it showed the rabbis own unwillingness to forgive. That helps us to understand why Peter thought that he was being very generous to offer to forgive seven times. Jesus said to Peter in verse 22, "I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven." By this statement Jesus made it clear that as Christians we are to continue to forgive. The reason that we should continue to forgive is the fact that God in Christ has forgiven us all of our sins. Ephesians 4:32 says, "And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you." In Christ, God forgave us all of our sins. Now Christ lives in our hearts and He tells us to be kind to one another. I Corinthians 13:4a says, "Love suffers long and is kind." As a result, the definition of love is that it is patient and kind. Christ has also given us the Holy Spirit as our Helper so that as we yield to Him that we are given the strength of God to show this patience and kindness by forgiving others.

This is a key lesson that we want to show our physical and spiritual children by our example. We show our love as we forgive others. By providing our children with our example, we help them to realize that the Holy Spirit can give them the strength to forgive others regardless of what others might do to them. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your children by your example the importance of forgiving others.

Jesus Illustrated how some have an Unforgiving Attitude

In our last topic we saw that we want to show our physical and spiritual children the importance of forgiving by our example. Jesus went on to give an illustration of why it is so important for us to forgive others. In this topic we will see what Jesus taught the disciples about forgiveness through this illustration.

Jesus told the disciples about a master that showed compassion to his servant. Matthew 18:23-27 says, "Therefore the kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. And when he had begun to settle accounts, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents. But as he was not able to pay, his master commanded that he be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and that payment be made. The servant therefore fell down before him, saying, 'Master, have patience with me, and I will pay you all.' Then the master of that servant was moved with compassion, released him, and forgave him the debt." A talent was a weight that was used to weight precious metal like gold and silver. A talent is estimated to have varied in size from 55 to 80 pounds. Today the value of gold is given per ounce with 16 ounces making a pound. In New Testament times the number ten thousand was often used to speak of a number so large that it could not be counted.

In this illustration that Jesus gave a king decided to settle accounts with his servants. Since this was a king the servants of the king probably refers to the governors who collected taxes for the king in the various parts of the kingdom of that king. However, this servant apparently spent the money he had collected for taxes and so he did not have the money to give to the king. This debt owed to the king was so large that it was impossible for the servant to pay the king. As a result, the king commanded that the servant, his wife and his children plus everything that the servant owned be sold to pay at least a small part of the debt. The servant immediately realized that he was in very serious trouble and fell down in front of the king to beg for time to pay the debt.

The debt was so large that it would have been impossible for the servant to even pay interest on the debt during the time that he tried to gather money to repay the debt. However, the servant still said, "Master, have patience with me, and I will pay you all." Then we see that the master was moved with compassion and instead forgave the entire debt. That is exactly what God did with our sins because we could never pay the penalty for our sins. 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." Here we see our condition before God forgave our sins.

We were dead in our trespasses and sins so that we had no spiritual life. Then we see that God forgave all of our trespasses. We see that God gave us spiritual life. Then we see that God wiped out the handwriting of the requirements against us. God told Israel in Isaiah 44:22, "I have blotted out, like a thick cloud, your transgressions, and like a cloud, your sins. Return to

Me, for I have redeemed you.” Peter said as he preached in the temple in Acts 3:19, “Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord.” Comparing this verse with Colossians 2:14 quoted above we see that our sins are blotted out (the ink that was used to write our sins was removed). This means we have no sins even listed in the books which will be used to judge those who do not believe.

When we are unwilling to forgive others we are like this servant that had just been forgiven. Matthew 18:28-31 says, “But that servant went out and found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii; and he laid hands on him and took *him* by the throat, saying, ‘Pay me what you owe!’ So his fellow servant fell down at his feet and begged him, saying, ‘Have patience with me, and I will pay you all.’ And he would not, but went and threw him into prison till he should pay the debt. So when his fellow servants saw what had been done, they were very grieved, and came and told their master all that had been done.” A denarius was one day’s wages. As a result, one hundred denarii were the wages a person was paid in three to four months. That was a very small debt compared to the huge debt that the first servant had been forgiven.

The first servant showed no love as he went to this servant who owed him one hundred denarii. He laid his hands on the second servant and grabbed him by the throat. Then he demanded that the second servant pay him immediately the one hundred denarii that he owed. The second servant said the same thing that the first servant had said to the king, “Have patience with me, and I will pay you all.” Since the debt of the second servant was between three and four months wages he would have been able to pay it if the first servant would have given him time. However, the first servant was hard hearted and showed no compassion to the second servant. Instead the first servant threw the second servant in prison until he could pay the debt.

We see that the other servants were very grieved when they saw what the first servant had done. Here we see that we should show love when another Christian shows a rebellious spirit. This is what Paul did in II Corinthians 2:4 where he wrote, “For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote to you, with many tears, not that you should be grieved, but that you might know the love which I have so abundantly for you.” Paul used this same word when he wrote later in II Corinthians 7:8-10, “For even if I made you sorry with my letter, I do not regret it; though I did regret it. For I perceive that the same epistle made you sorry, though only for a while. 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.” Paul was grieved and wrote so that the Corinthian Christians would come to repentance. This was the desire of the other servants for the first servant. That was why they told the master what the first servant had done.

We see the response of the king when the servants told him what the first servant had done. Matthew 18:32-35 says, “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. ‘So My heavenly

Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses.” God is holy and cannot look at sin with approval even in the life of a follower of Christ.

The king reminded the servant that he had forgiven the debt which it would have been impossible for the servant to pay. Instead of showing the same love and compassion that servant had gone and mistreated another servant who owed him a small debt. The king told the servant that the servant should have shown the same compassion to the other servant that the king had shown to him. The king called his servant a wicked servant and the king could not allow that sin to be ignored. We see that the king was angry at the sin of his servant and delivered him to the torturers. The word translated “torturer” is the word used of a soldier or other individual who would torture a prisoner to get him to tell the truth. In I Corinthians 11:30-32 we read, “For this reason many *are* weak and sick among you, and many sleep. For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world.” These verses show us one reason why we as Christians are to remember the death of the Lord with a communion service.

One reason we have communion to remind us of the infinite cost that Jesus paid as He shed His blood and gave His life to pay the penalty for our sins. That is why we are to examine ourselves before we take communion. We are to examine our lives to see if we are showing the same love and compassion to others and if not to confess that sin to the Lord and ask Christ to give us His strength to forgive those who have sinned against us. Ephesians 4:32 says, “And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.” We see from the verses in the previous paragraph that many in the church at Corinth were experiencing the discipline of the Lord because they took communion in an unworthy manner because they had unconfessed sin in their hearts. Such sin is often an unwillingness to forgive another person from the heart.

That is why Jesus concluded this illustration by saying, “So My heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses.” A Christian with unwillingness to forgive another person from the heart will experience the discipline of the Lord here on earth and will not be judged eternally. I Corinthians 5:5 says, “Deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.” God will allow emotional upset and physical sickness to change an unforgiving heart of a Christian. God may even take the physical life of that person because the Father will do whatever is necessary to conform our lives to the image of Christ. As we see in this verse the goal that God has is to save the spirit of a sinning Christian in the day of the Lord Jesus.

We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to understand that God will discipline them in love if they have an unforgiving heart toward another person. God disciplines his children because He loves them. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children to understand the purpose for godly discipline of His children.

Jesus Taught About the Plan of God for Marriage

In our last topic we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to understand that God will discipline them in love if they have an unforgiving heart toward another person. The Pharisees certainly demonstrated their unbelief as well as the hardness in their hearts by the question that they asked Jesus in the next chapter.

Jesus taught His disciples about forgiveness. Then Jesus and the disciples moved to another area. Matthew 19:1-6 says, “Now it came to pass, when Jesus had finished these sayings, *that* He departed from Galilee and came to the region of Judea beyond the Jordan. And great multitudes followed Him, and He healed them there. 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?’ And He answered and said to them, ‘Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning ‘made them male and female,’ 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.’” Here we see that Jesus moved to the area east of the Jordan River but in the region of Judea. There great crowds came to Jesus and brought many to Him to be healed.

Since this area was close to Jerusalem the Pharisees came again to test Jesus with questions. Their question was to try and trap Jesus but it was also a question that was being debated by the Pharisees because two different rabbis had very different opinions. As a result, the Pharisees asked Jesus, “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for *just* any reason?” One rabbi by the name of Shammai taught that the only reason a man could divorce his wife was if she was guilty of sexual immorality. A different rabbi by the name of Hillel permitted a man to divorce his wife for any reason. This question was being debated by the Pharisees because some followed the teaching of Shammai and some followed the teaching of Hillel. The Pharisees thought that whatever answer Jesus gave that the other group could say that Jesus was wrong so it was a trap to test Him.

Jesus first quoted a statement from the book of Malachi and then from the book of Genesis. Malachi 2:14-15 says, “Yet you say, “For what reason?” Because the LORD has been witness between you and the wife of your youth, with whom you have dealt treacherously; yet she is your companion and your wife by covenant. But did He not make them one, having a remnant of the Spirit? And why one? He seeks godly offspring. Therefore take heed to your spirit, and let none deal treacherously with the wife of his youth.” Malachi had said that they were dealing treacherously with the wife of their youth. Then Jesus quoted Genesis 2:24 which says, “Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.” This verse established God’s standard for all marriages because Adam and Eve had no parents to leave. Then Jesus explained the last phrase of that verse by saying in verse 6, “So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate.” Here we see that the desire of God did not include divorce because He is the One that has joined a couple together.

This led the Pharisees to ask a second question in Matthew 18:7-9, “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. And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery.’” Here the Pharisees showed that they had totally twisted the Word of God to satisfy their own sinful desires. Moses actually wrote that a woman could not return to her first husband if a second husband also divorced her. Moses never commanded divorce.

The instructions of Moses are given in Deuteronomy 24:1-4 where we read, “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.” These verses make it clear that Moses never commanded divorce. The only command is “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.” Then Jesus explained why Moses allowed but never commanded divorce.

Jesus said, “Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, permitted you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so.” Here we see that Jesus had just exposed the sin of the Pharisees when He spoke of the hardness of their hearts. The word translated “hardness of heart is only used three times in the New Testament. In Mark 10:5 it is the same event that is recorded here. Then Mark 16:14 says, “Later He appeared to the eleven as they sat at the table; and He rebuked their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they did not believe those who had seen Him after He had risen.” In this case Jesus rebuked His disciples for their unbelief and hardness of hear for not believing the witnesses of His resurrection.

The Jewish religious showed this same unbelief and hardness of heart when the soldiers reported the resurrection of Jesus. Matthew 28:11-14 says, “Now while they were going, behold, some of the guard came into the city and reported to the chief priests all the things that had happened. When they had assembled with the elders and consulted together, they gave a large sum of money to the soldiers, saying, ‘Tell them, ‘His disciples came at night and stole Him away while we slept.’ And if this comes to the governor’s ears, we will appease him and make you secure.’” The disciples repented of their hardness of heart when they saw Jesus. In contrast, the religious leaders never repented of their unbelief.

Jesus gave one reason why divorce was allowed (but not required). That was for sexual immorality. That allowance was actually an act of mercy because the penalty of the law for adultery for sexual immorality is given in Deuteronomy 22:22 where we read, “If a man is found lying with a woman married to a husband, then both of them shall die—the man that lay

with the woman, and the woman; so you shall put away the evil from Israel.” Joseph was going to show this mercy to Mary when Matthew 1:19 says, “Then Joseph her husband, being a just *man*, and not wanting to make her a public example, was minded to put her away secretly.” Christ gave the same allowance here that He had earlier given in Matthew 5:32 where we read, “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 disciples then asked Jesus if it would be better then not to get married. Matthew 19:10-12 says, “His disciples said to Him, ‘If such is the case of the man with *his* wife, it is better not to marry.’ But He said to them, ‘All cannot accept this saying, but only *those* to whom it has been given: For there are eunuchs who were born thus from *their* mother’s womb, and there are eunuchs who were made eunuchs by men, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven’s sake. He who is able to accept *it*, let him accept *it*.’” We see that most of the disciples were married. I Corinthians 9:5 says, “Do we have no right to take along a believing wife, as *do* also the other apostles, the brothers of the Lord, and Cephas?” However, we see three reasons given in these verses why a man might be a eunuch.

First, we see that a person might be a eunuch because he had been born without male sexual organs. Second, we see that some were made eunuchs by men. This meant that their sexual organs had been removed. This was done in many kingdoms if a king had a harem of women. The keeper of the harem would have his sexual organs removed so that he could not have sexual relationships with the wives or concubines of the king. This was also done in some cases to other high government officials, for example the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8. Third, we see that there are those who make themselves eunuchs for the sake of the work of the Lord. I Corinthians 7:32-33 says, “But I want you to be without care. He who is unmarried cares for the things of the Lord—how he may please the Lord. But he who is married cares about the things of the world—how he may please *his* wife.”

Paul knew that he was going to experience much suffering for the sake of the Lord. Ananias has been told in Acts 9:15-16, “But the Lord said to him, “Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel. For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name’s sake.” Paul chose not to marry so that he could carry out the work that the Lord had for him including the beatings, imprisonments, shipwrecks and other things. He wanted to be without care so that he could focus on the things of the Lord. He knew it would be very difficult to lead a wife as he experienced this suffering for the Lord. We want to help our physical and spiritual children understand that the Lord may lead them to a type of ministry that might make it very difficult for them to have a wife and family. We also want to help them understand and apply the will of God for a godly marriage. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children understand what Jesus taught about marriage.

Jesus Talked to a Rich Young Ruler

In our last topic we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children understand what Jesus taught about His plan for a godly marriage. In this topic we will see how Jesus answered a young man that wanted to know how to inherit eternal life.

We see that as Jesus was talking some parents brought their little children to see Jesus. Matthew 19:13-15 says, “Then little children were brought to Him that He might put *His* hands on them and pray, but the disciples rebuked them. But Jesus said, “Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of heaven.” And He laid *His* hands on them and departed from there.” The word translated “little children” may be a recently born child or one who is somewhat older. This is the word that is used for Jesus both in Matthew 2 and Luke 2. It can also be used to speak of spiritual children as it is in John 21:5 where Jesus spoke to the disciples as they were fishing and in I John 2:13 in the passage when it is speaking about various levels of spiritual maturity. However, in this same event Luke 18:15 we read, “Then they also brought infants to Him that He might touch them; but when the disciples saw *it*, they rebuked them.” In this verse we see that these children were infants recently born.

We see that the parents wanted Jesus to put his hands on these infants and pray for them. Instead of welcoming the parents with their infants, the disciples rebuked them. The disciples knew that Jesus was talking to the Pharisees (see also Mark 10:1-12 and Luke 18:9-14). Jesus chose to use this opportunity to show that children are important to Him. He wanted everyone there that day to understand how He felt about children including both the disciples and the Pharisees. Jesus told the disciples to let the little children come to Him. The word translated “forbid” means to hinder, to prevent or refuse. Jesus made it clear that He does not want anyone to hinder or try to prevent a child from coming to Him. Jesus then said that infants and young children are a part of the kingdom of heaven. By this statement Jesus showed that He shows grace and mercy to young children that have not yet reached the understanding to be able to reject Jesus. This verse and the comparable verses in Mark and Luke provide a great message of comfort for parents who have a child die at a young age because these verses show that the Christ includes such children in His kingdom.

Jesus then used this opportunity to teach a very important lesson to everyone that was there that day. Mark 10:15-16 gives more details as those verses say, “Assuredly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it.’ And He took them up in His arms, laid *His* hands on them, and blessed them.” Jesus makes it clear in these verses that every person that comes to Him must come to Him with the childlike faith of a young child. A young child does not depend on his or her own efforts to try and please a parent. Such children just come to their parents when their parents invite them to come. In the same way every person must come to Jesus by just accepting His invitation to come and not by depending on any self effort. We also see here in Mark that Jesus took these young children up in His arms and held them. Then He laid His hands on them and blessed them. Jesus took this time to give a blessing to each of the children that were brought to Him that day.

We also see that a young man came to Jesus. Matthew 19:16-19 says, “Now behold, one came and said to Him, “Good Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?” So He said to him, “Why do you call Me good? No one *is* good but One, *that is*, God. But if you want to enter into life, keep the commandments.” He said to Him, “Which ones?” Jesus said, “‘You shall not murder,’ ‘You shall not commit adultery,’ ‘You shall not steal,’ ‘You shall not bear false witness,’ ‘Honor your father and your mother,’ and, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’” Mark gives us some additional details about the way that this young man came to Jesus. Mark 10:17 says, “Now as He was going out on the road, one came running, knelt before Him, and asked Him, “Good Teacher, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?” In this verse we see the young man came running to Jesus. We also see that He knelt down in front of Jesus.

The question of this young man shows that He had a total lack of understanding about how to have eternal life. He wanted to know what good thing he could do that would make it possible for him to inherit eternal life. In this verse we see a very common thing that many people think. This young man thought that he could do some good thing to earn eternal life. Jesus then asked the young man why he called Jesus good. Then Jesus added that the only One that is good is God. Romans 3:10-12 says, “As it is written: “There is none righteous, no, not one; there is none who understands; there is none who seeks after God. They have all turned aside; they have together become unprofitable; there is none who does good, no, not one.” This is a quotation from both Psalm 14:1-3 and Psalm 53:1-3. This young man had a complete lack of understanding about the fact that he was spiritually dead and did not have spiritual life to do any good thing.

Jesus had to show this young man that he had deceived himself about his ability to do good. Jesus told him that if he wanted to enter into life to keep the commandments which meant to keep them perfectly. The young man immediately asked which commandments he should keep. The Pharisees said that they had found 613 commandments in the Old Testament. He also knew that God had given Moses the Ten Commandments. Jesus had to first show this young man that it was impossible to keep the law perfectly before He could show the young man how to receive eternal life as a free gift. As a result, Jesus began by reminding the young man about the part of the Ten Commandments that deal with man’s relationship to man which was the second part of the Ten Commandments.

Paul later gave a similar summary of the Law based on what Jesus had said when Paul wrote in Romans 13:8-9, “Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law. 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.’” Here we see that Paul pointed out the fact that any other law in the relationship with people can be summarized by loving your neighbor as yourself. Jesus showed the young man that he had not kept the whole Law by helping the young man to understand the idol that he worshipped instead of loving God with his whole heart.

Matthew 19:20-22 says, “The young man said to Him, ‘All these things I have kept from my

youth. What do I still lack?’ Jesus said to him, ‘If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me.’ But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.” Here we see why Jesus used the summary of the law given in Leviticus 19:15 and 19:18 where we read, “You shall do no injustice in judgment. You shall not be partial to the poor, nor honor the person of the mighty. In righteousness you shall judge your neighbor...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.” In verse 15 God said that a person was not to be partial to the poor or to honor the person of the mighty. In verse 18 God summarized the second part of the law by the statement, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” We see that the young man thought that he had kept these commandments from his youth.

Based on the context of, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself,” in Leviticus 19:15-17 Jesus then told the young man what to do if he really wanted to obey that command and its context. In this way Jesus showed this young man that his riches were his idol. He needed to repent, turn from his idol and turn to Jesus. I 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.” Jesus said in Matthew 6:24, “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 treasure or riches. Jesus just showed this young man that he had not obeyed those particular commandments from his youth up. He was not willing to love his neighbor as he loved himself. That is why Jesus invited the young man to turn from his idol and to come and follow Jesus instead. Jesus would have forgiven the sins of this young man if he would have repented and followed Jesus.

At that moment the young man was faced with a choice that would reveal the condition of his heart. Jeremiah 17:9 says, “The heart *is* deceitful above all *things*, and desperately wicked; who can know it?” This young man had just had the condition of his heart revealed to him. He could no longer deceive himself. We read that this young man went away with great sorrow and sadness. II 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 the case of this young man, he did not experience godly sorrow. Instead he experienced the sorrow of this world which leads to death. He had great riches and those riches were more important to him than eternal life.

We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn how to explain to each person with whom they share the Gospel that no person can earn salvation. In contrast, each person who will come to Jesus in repentance and faith will receive the gift of eternal life. That is the message of hope that we can offer to all. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your children how to share this message with others.

Jesus Taught About Riches and Rewards

In our last topic we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn how to explain to others that a person cannot earn salvation but must come to Jesus in repentance and faith in order to receive salvation. In this topic we will see that Jesus went on to use that event to teach His disciples about riches and rewards.

As the rich young man left Jesus, Jesus began to talk to His disciples. Matthew 19:23-24 says, “Then Jesus said to His disciples, ‘Assuredly, I say to you that it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. And again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.’” Here we see that Jesus explained to His disciples that it is with great difficulty that a rich person enters into the kingdom of heaven. In that day the people felt that riches was a sign of God’s approval of those who were rich and that they were the people that were most likely to get to heaven. Jesus quickly proved that such an idea was false because no one can earn his or her way to heaven. The rich often think that they can depend on their riches to get them to heaven instead of coming to Jesus by faith.

Jesus then went on to give an illustration to show that it is totally impossible for a person to pay his way to get into heaven. Jesus said that it would be easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God. Most people find it hard to get even a tiny thread to go through the eye of a needle and of course a camel is a very large animal. Paul warned in I Timothy about the danger of riches. I Timothy 6:9-10 says, “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.” Here we see that the love of money is what causes money to become an idol.

In contrast, the Lord may bless some Christians with riches so that they can use those riches to serve others. 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.” Liberty does not mean that we are free to serve our sinful desires. Instead liberty means that we are free to serve one another in love. A Christian that has been given riches by the Lord has been given the opportunity to serve others with that money or his possessions to serve the Lord and to serve others. This was illustrated by the early church in Acts 4:34-37 where we read, “Nor was there anyone among them who lacked; for all who were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of the things that were sold, and laid *them* at the apostles’ feet; and they distributed to each as anyone had need. And Joses, who was also named Barnabas by the apostles (which is translated Son of Encouragement), a Levite of the country of Cyprus, having land, sold *it*, and brought the money and laid *it* at the apostles’ feet.” These Christians were not required to share but they chose to share because of their thankfulness to the Lord.

Jesus used a question by the disciples to help prepare them for the future when the church

began. Matthew 19:25-27 says, “When His disciples heard *it*, they were greatly astonished, saying, ‘Who then can be saved?’ But Jesus looked at *them* and said to them, ‘With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.’ Then Peter answered and said to Him, ‘See, we have left all and followed You. Therefore what shall we have?’” The question of the disciples showed that they had the same understanding which many of the Jews of that day had. The people thought that riches were a sign of the approval of God and that those who were rich were the ones that God would certainly take to heaven. Many people today have that same false idea.

The disciples had to clearly understand that salvation is totally the work of God. Ephesians 2:8-9 says, “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; *it is* the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.” These verses make it clear that God gives us the faith to believe as a gift. Then Romans 10:17 adds, “So then faith *comes* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” This verse shows us that people receive this gift of faith as they hear, read and study the Word of God. It is impossible for people to be saved through their own efforts. Instead God must give them faith as they hear or read the Word of God. That is why all things are possible with God. He can give that faith to any person that He chooses.

Peter then went on to say, “See, we have left all and followed You. Therefore what shall we have?” By this statement Peter said that he and the other disciples had done exactly what Jesus had just told the young man to do. Matthew 4:18-20 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.” Jesus had given each of the disciples an invitation to follow Him. Here we see that Peter and Andrew had immediately left their fishing and had followed Jesus. The same was true for other disciples. Matthew 4:21-22 says, “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.” Then Matthew 9:9 adds, “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.” As a result, Peter wanted to know what reward the disciples would have.

Matthew 19:28-30 says, “So Jesus said to them, ‘Assuredly I say to you, that in the regeneration, when the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory, you who have followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My name’s sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and inherit eternal life. But many *who are* first will be last, and the last first.’” Here we see that Jesus promised the disciples both present and future rewards.

The word translated “regeneration” means a renewal or a restoration of life after death. This word is also used in Titus 3:5 where we read, “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.” In Titus the word is used to speak of our immediate change and restoration that happens at the moment of salvation. We see that this is the work of the Holy

Spirit at that moment which restores us to the spiritual life that Adam and Eve lost at the moment that they sinned. Genesis 2:16-17 says, “And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, ‘Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.’”

Spiritual death is separation of man from God. Physical death is the separation of the body from the soul and the human spirit. Adam and Eve experienced spiritual death at the moment that they sinned and Adam experienced physical death 930 years later according to Genesis 5:5. Jesus said that when He sits on the throne in His glory that the complete restoration to spiritual and eternal life will be complete. That condition was present in Genesis chapters 1 and 2 and we see that the same condition will be present in Revelation 21 and 22. During the period from Genesis 3 to the end of Revelation 20 we will live under the effects of sin. As a result, we see that the twelve can look forward to eternal rewards when Jesus sits on the throne of His glory.

However, Jesus also went on to promise the disciples that there would be spiritual blessings in their lives here on this earth. Matthew 19:29 says, “And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My name’s sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and inherit eternal life.” This promise was not just to the original disciples. We see that this promise of spiritual blessings is for everyone who leaves houses, family or lands for the sake of Jesus here on this earth. We see that in this earthly life we will receive spiritual blessings worth one hundred times as much for the things that we have left for the sake of Christ. One thing that happens as we serve the Lord on this earth is the fact that we gain a spiritual family. In I John 1:7 we read, “But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.” Here on this earth we are able to enjoy the fellowship of other believers as we serve the Lord. We will also enjoy rewards for our works on this earth as I Corinthians 3:14 says, “If anyone’s work which he has built on *it* endures, he will receive a reward.”

In addition, all believers can look forward to inheriting eternal life. Romans 8:16-17 says, “The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with *Him*, that we may also be glorified together.” This reward of eternal life is for every true believer. Those who become Christians just a short time before they die will have eternal life just like those who have been Christians for many years. In this way the reward of eternal life is the same for all believers.

We want to help our physical and spiritual children understand both the blessing of fellowship with other Christians during this life and also the eternal blessings that all of will receive at the moment that we enter into eternal life. We will certainly enjoy the rewards of salvation throughout eternity. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children grow in the understanding of the rewards that we receive as followers of Christ.

Jesus Gave a Parable about Laborers

In our last topic we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children understand the blessings and rewards that we will receive as followers of Christ. In this topic we will see that regardless of how long we have been a Christian that we will receive the full reward of eternal life that is promised to all who follow Christ.

Matthew 20:1-7 says, “For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard. Now when he had agreed with the laborers for a denarius a day, he sent them into his vineyard. And he went out about the third hour and saw others standing idle in the marketplace, and said to them, ‘You also go into the vineyard, and whatever is right I will give you.’ So they went. Again he went out about the sixth and the ninth hour, and did likewise. And about the eleventh hour he went out and found others standing idle, and said to them, ‘Why have you been standing here idle all day?’ They said to him, ‘Because no one hired us.’ He said to them, ‘You also go into the vineyard, and whatever is right you will receive.’” We see that Jesus compared the kingdom of heaven to a landowner who hired workers for his harvest.

In that day the normal wage for a full day of work, 6 in the morning until 6 in the evening, was a denarius. During the time of harvest people who were looking for work would go to the marketplace and wait for someone to hire them. As a result, landowners who had fields or vineyards to harvest would go to the marketplace to look for workers. Here we see that Jesus used that way of hiring workers to show what the kingdom of heaven will be like. The Lord calls all who become Christians to become workers in His harvest. Ephesians 4:16 says, “From whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.”

He has also given each of us at least one gift for the work which He has called us to do. I Peter 4:10-11 says, “As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. If anyone speaks, *let him speak* as the oracles of God. If anyone ministers, *let him do it* as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.” If the Lord has given us a speaking gift, we are to speak the Word of God. If the Lord has given us a serving gift, we are to serve in the strength that the Lord supplies. In this parable God is the One who calls all of us to serve Him in His harvest field.

We see that some of the people were called the first thing in the morning at 6 a.m. and were promised a full day’s wages if they would work in the landowners field. Throughout the day the landowner went looking for additional laborers. The landowner went out at 9 a.m. and found more workers and promised that he would give those workers whatever is right. The same things happened at noon, at 3 p.m. and at 5 p.m. The landowner asked those who were standing idle at 5 p.m. why they were not working. They told him that no one had hired them. He also told them that they would receive whatever was right.

Matthew 20:8-10 says, “So when evening had come, the owner of the vineyard said to his steward, ‘Call the laborers and give them *their* wages, beginning with the last to the first.’ And when those came who *were hired* about the eleventh hour, they each received a denarius. But when the first came, they supposed that they would receive more; and they likewise received each a denarius.” A steward was the man who was the manager of the fields or vineyards of a person. It was his responsibility to manage the landowner’s finances and pay the workers at the end of the day. In this parable we see that the landowner told the steward to pay first those who had been hired last. However, the landowner did something that was very unusual and chose to be generous even to those who had only worked for a short time. He told the steward to pay those who had been hired later in the day a full day’s wage even though they did not deserve a full day’s pay.

As a result, those who had been hired at 5 p.m. were given a denarius which was the amount normally paid for working for an entire day. As we concluded the previous topic we saw that Matthew 19:29-30 said, “And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My name’s sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and inherit eternal life. But many *who are* first will be last, and the last first.” Here we see that in this parable that Jesus said that the last will be paid first. Every person who comes to Christ in repentance and faith will receive eternal life. This is true regardless of how long or short the period was between the time that person became a Christian and died. Some people become a Christian at an early age and serve the Lord for many years. Others like the thief on the cross turn to Christ only minutes or hours before they die. However, all will receive eternal life.

In this parable Jesus said that those who had worked throughout the day thought that they would receive more since those who had only worked for one hour received a full day’s wages. However, the steward also gave each of them a denarius. In the kingdom of heaven we will all receive eternal life even though none of us deserve that life. Ephesians 2:4-6 says, “But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.” We are reminded in these verses that God is going to give all who come to Christ in repentance and faith the gift of eternal life even though none of us deserved that free gift. In the parable some who had worked all day supposed that they would receive more instead of being thankful that the landowner had given them work and a full day’s wage to all who came to him.

Matthew 20:11-16 says, “And when they had received *it*, they complained against the landowner, saying, ‘These last *men* have worked *only* one hour, and you made them equal to us who have borne the burden and the heat of the day.’ But he answered one of them and said, ‘Friend, I am doing you no wrong. Did you not agree with me for a denarius? Take *what is* yours and go your way. I wish to give to this last man *the same* as to you. Is it not lawful for me to do what I wish with my own things? Or is your eye evil because I am good?’ So the last will be first, and the first last. For many are called, but few chosen.” Here we see that some complained against the landowner. We will see why they complained before we conclude this topic.

We see that the landowner heard the complaint and spoke to one particular person. This person is probably the one who had started the complaining. Jesus told that person, “Friend, I am doing you no wrong. Did you not agree with me for a denarius? Take *what is yours* and go your way.” The word translated friend is a key to understand in these verses. It is only used four times in the New Testament and all are in the book of Matthew. It is used of children in Matthew 11:16 where it is translated companions. It is used of Judas in Matthew 26:50 when Judas had just given Jesus the kiss of betrayal. 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 still loved and treated Judas as a friend even though Judas had just given Him the kiss of betrayal.

In this parable we see that Jesus shows why this particular person had complained. Jesus told this particular man, “Is it not lawful for me to do what I wish with my own things? Or is your eye evil because I am good?” In the parable the landowner had shown great kindness to all especially the one he rewarded who had only worked a short time. This kindness was shown because this man had received the offer of the landowner to work in his field at the last hour and had responded. In contrast, the one to whom the landowner spoke showed the condition of his heart by complaining about the generosity of the landowner. The landowner was free to show generosity to any person that he chose including those who respond to his offer at the last moment. The landowner also asked the complainer, “Or is your eye evil because I am good?”

In Matthew 22:1-14 we see a parable about a king who invited all to the marriage feast of his son. Verses 11-14 say, “But when the king came in to see the guests, he saw a man there who did not have on a wedding garment. So he said to him, ‘Friend, how did you come in here without a wedding garment?’ And he was speechless. 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. For many are called, but few *are* chosen.’” The use of “friend” is the fourth use of this word in the New Testament and the word that Jesus used as He spoke to Judas just after he had given the kiss of betrayal. We also see that the parables in Matthew 20:1-16 and Matthew 22:1-14 both end with the same words, “For many are called, but few chosen.” The word translated “chosen” means to be chosen by God and means to be chosen or elect. It is used in I Peter 2:9 where we read, “But you *are* a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.” We can rejoice that God has chosen all those who respond to His call to the wedding feast of His Son.

We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain these parables so that they can help others to understand that God is a loving God who has chosen all who will respond to His call to salvation. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to explain these things to others.

Jesus Heard the Request of James and John

In our last topic we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain the parable about the marriage feast. We saw that God is a loving God who will reward all those who serve Him. In our topic today we will see that James and John came to Jesus with a request.

Matthew 20:17-19 says, “Now Jesus, going up to Jerusalem, took the twelve disciples aside on the road and said to them, ‘Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and to the scribes; and they will condemn Him to death, and deliver Him to the Gentiles to mock and to scourge and to crucify. And the third day He will rise again.’” Here we see that Jesus and the disciples were going toward Jerusalem along with many other people. They were on their way to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover. However, Jesus took the disciples aside and explained that something else was also going to happen while they were in Jerusalem. We will see that Jesus was actually on His way to the crucifixion.

Jesus said that several things were going to happen when they arrived at Jerusalem. First, Jesus said that the Son of Man would be betrayed to the chief priests and the scribes. Just a few weeks earlier the high priest had said in John 11:49-50, “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.’” Here we see that the high priest had told the others that it was necessary for Jesus to die for the people. God allowed the high priest to give this prophecy to predict that Jesus would die for all people. The purpose of the high priest for making this statement was very different. His purpose was to say that they had to destroy Jesus in order to maintain their power over the people.

Second, Jesus said it would be the chief priests and scribes that would condemn Him to death. This statement was fulfilled in Matthew 26:65-66 where we read, “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.’” Here we see that it was the religious leaders that condemned Jesus to death and then early in the morning took Jesus to Pilate and asked him to put Jesus to death. Third, Jesus said that the religious leaders would deliver Him to the Gentiles who would mock, scourge and crucify Him. John 19:1-3 says, “So then Pilate took Jesus and scourged *Him*. And the soldiers twisted a crown of thorns and put *it* on His head, and they put on Him a purple robe. Then they said, ‘Hail, King of the Jews!’ And they struck Him with their hands.” John 19:16 adds, “Then he delivered Him to them to be crucified. Then they took Jesus and led Him away.”

Fourth, Jesus told the disciples that He would rise again the third day. Here we see that Jesus clearly explained to His disciples again that He would die and rise the third day. Jesus did appear to the disciples the day that He arose from the dead. They showed that they did not

really hear and believe what Jesus had told them when He said that He would rise the third day. Luke 24:37-39 says, “But they were terrified and frightened, and supposed they had seen a spirit. And He said to them, ‘Why are you troubled? And why do doubts arise in your hearts? Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself. Handle Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see I have.’” We see here in Matthew that the disciples did not really listen and understand.

That is shown by the request that the mother of James and John made as they continued on their way toward Jerusalem. Matthew 20:20-21 says, “Then the mother of Zebedee’s sons came to Him with her sons, kneeling down and asking something from Him. And He said to her, ‘What do you wish?’ She said to Him, ‘Grant that these two sons of mine may sit, one on Your right hand and the other on the left, in Your kingdom.’” In these verses we see that James, John and their mother all thought that Jesus was going to remove the Romans and set Himself up as the King of Israel. James and John had their mother make a request to Jesus based on that thinking.

We see that the mother of James and John came and kneeled down in front of Jesus. She said that she had a request to make of Him. Jesus then asked the mother what she wanted. Her request clearly showed that the three of them expected Jesus to set up an earthly kingdom when they arrived at Jerusalem. Later Jesus clearly explained to Pilate that He was a king but that His kingdom was not of this world. John 18:36-37 says, “Jesus answered, ‘My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now My kingdom is not from here.’ Pilate therefore said to Him, ‘Are You a king then?’ Jesus answered, ‘You say *rightly* that I am a king. For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice.’” Jesus made it clear that His kingdom at that time was not an earthly kingdom but instead was a spiritual kingdom. The earthly kingdom will come when Christ returns to rule for one thousand years according to Revelation 20:1-9.

The request of the mother of James and John was for her two sons to sit on the right and the left hand of Jesus when He set up His kingdom. The seats on the right and left hands of a king were the positions of power. Here we see that James, John and their mother were thinking in terms of a worldly kingdom and not a spiritual kingdom. They wanted positions of authority and power. We see the answer of Jesus in Matthew 20:21-24 where we read, “But Jesus answered and said, ‘You do not know what you ask. Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?’ They said to Him, ‘We are able.’ So He said to them, ‘You will indeed drink My cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with; but to sit on My right hand and on My left is not Mine to give, but *it is for those* for whom it is prepared by My Father.’ And when the ten heard *it*, they were greatly displeased with the two brothers.” Jesus made it clear that the three totally lacked spiritual understanding.

Jesus told the three that they did not know what they were asking. Then Jesus asked James and John a question, “Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?” The cup that Jesus was about to drink was the wrath of God against sin. God said Israel had experienced a cup of wrath in Isaiah 51:17 where we read, “Awake, awake! Stand up, O Jerusalem, you who have drunk at the hand of the LORD the cup

of His fury; you have drunk the dregs of the cup of trembling, and drained it out.” Then just two chapters later In Isaiah 53:10-11 we read that God would be satisfied with the payment of Christ for the wrath of God against the sins of all mankind. Those verses say, “Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise Him; He has put *Him* to grief. When You make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see *His* seed, He shall prolong *His* days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in His hand. He shall see the labor of His soul, *and* be satisfied. By His knowledge My righteous Servant shall justify many, for He shall bear their iniquities.” Jesus experienced that wrath of God against sin as He hung on the cross and the earth was covered with darkness.

Jesus said that there was a baptism which He would experience. In Luke 12:50 we read, “But I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how distressed I am till it is accomplished!” That baptism was the baptism of suffering. There are eight different kinds of baptism given in the New Testament. A Greek doctor named Nicanor in a recipe of how to make pickles about two hundred years before Jesus used two different words that help us understand the act of baptizing and the results of baptism. To make a vegetable into a pickle he wrote that you first dip (bapto) the vegetable into a pot of boiling water. Then you place (baptizo) the vegetable in a vinegar solution for a period of time. When the vegetable is taken out of the vinegar solution the vegetable has been permanently changed. It is the second word that is used here and in Romans 6:3-4 where we read, “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.” Our baptism into the death of Christ produced a permanent change in our lives which makes it possible to live a new life.

Jesus was going to experience a baptism of suffering in our place and for our sin that would produce a permanent change in our lives because all of our sins would be blotted out and as a result there is nothing on the record against us. James and John would experience the cup of suffering as they served Christ. They would receive a permanent change when their sins were blotted out by the payment of Christ for their sins. However, Jesus said that He was not the One who would determine who would sit on His right and left hand. He said that privilege would be for those for whom those places have been prepared by the Father.

We learn one other lesson from these verses. We see that the other ten disciples were very unhappy when they heard about the request of James and John. The reason that they were very upset was due to the fact that the ten also wanted to sit in those positions of power and authority. As a result, we will see in the next topic that Jesus used this opportunity to teach all twelve disciples about the nature of spiritual leadership. We want to help our physical and spiritual children understand the nature of that spiritual leadership. In order to help them learn we want to show them by our example that we are not to seek positions of power and authority. We will see that godly spiritual leaders are those who learn to serve others. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your children by your example that it is a privilege to serve the Lord by serving others.

Jesus Explained about True Leadership

In our last topic we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to understand that we are not to seek positions of power and authority over others. Instead we come to an understanding of the fact that true godly leadership is learning to serve Christ and through His strength to serve others. That will be the focus of this topic.

Jesus went on to explain a key lesson to His disciples about godly spiritual leadership. Matthew 20:25-28 says, “But Jesus called them to *Himself* and said, ‘You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave— just as 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 we see that Jesus explained that there is a great difference between godly leadership and worldly leadership.

Jesus said that there are two key characteristics of worldly leadership. First, worldly leaders want to lord it over others. The word translated “lord it over” means to bring under one’s power. Peter used this same word when he wrote to the leaders of the church in I Peter 5:2-3, “Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock.” Here we see that Peter wrote that true shepherds of God shepherd and lead the flock by example instead of using power and authority to drive the flock of God. In these verses in Matthew Jesus made it clear that driving others is a characteristic of worldly leadership.

Second, worldly leaders exercise authority over others. The word translated “exercise authority over” means to exercise absolute authority and control over others. Diotrephes is an example of one who tried to exercise this kind of leadership in the church. III John 1:9-10 says, “I wrote to the church, but Diotrephes, who loves to have the preeminence among them, does not receive us. Therefore, if I come, I will call to mind his deeds which he does, prating against us with malicious words. And not content with that, he himself does not receive the brethren, and forbids those who wish to, putting *them* out of the church.” Jesus made it clear that godly leaders do not do these two things.

Instead Jesus said that they are to be two characteristics of godly leadership that are very different from the world. First, anyone who desires to become great as a spiritual leader is to be a servant. The word translated “great” means to be great in size or number or to be respected. The word translated “servant” means one who carries out the commands of another or the servant of a king. Here we see that as godly spiritual leaders we are to see ourselves as servants of the King of kings and we are to carry out His commands.

Second, anyone who desires to become first as a spiritual leader is to be as a slave. The word

translated “first” means to be first in influence. Then Jesus explained how godly leaders gain that influence. The word translated “slave” means one who is devoted to another to the disregard of his own interests. Here it speaks about one who gives himself up to do the will of Christ by extending and advancing the cause of Christ among men. Romans 6:16-17 says, “Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one’s slaves whom you obey, whether of sin *leading* to death, or of obedience *leading* to righteousness? But God be thanked that *though* you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered.” Before we became Christians we were the slave of sin and were following sin even though sin was destroying us. Ephesians 6:6 says, “Not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but as bondservants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart.” Together these verses show us that we are to be slaves of Christ doing the will of God from the heart. That is true spiritual leadership.

Christ is our example of such spiritual leadership. He did not come to be served. Instead Christ came to serve and to give His life a ransom for many. 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.” We see that true spiritual leadership is giving our lives to serve one another as the bondslaves of Jesus Christ. That is the exact opposite of worldly leadership.

Jesus soon had the opportunity to show that style of leadership as He, the disciples and many other people began walking out of the city of Jericho on the way to Jerusalem for the Passover. Matthew 20:29-31 says, “Now as they went out of Jericho, a great multitude followed Him. And behold, two blind men sitting by the road, when they heard that Jesus was passing by, cried out, saying, “Have mercy on us, O Lord, Son of David!” Then the multitude warned them that they should be quiet; but they cried out all the more, saying, “Have mercy on us, O Lord, Son of David!” Here were men that needed mercy shown to them. The crowd did not show mercy. They told the men to keep quiet. Here we see the worldly attitude. The world does not have a lot of concern for others.

The only way that these two men could survive was by sitting beside the road and begging those who passed by to give them something so that they could survive. Some people would have a little compassion and give them some food or a small coin to help them buy some food. These men had heard other people talk about Jesus as they passed by the place where these two men were sitting along the road. They had probably heard about some of the miracles that Jesus had done. As a result, they wanted to get the attention of Jesus as He was passing by them. That was why they began to cry out, “Have mercy on us, O Lord, Son of David!” They were not going to stop calling when the crowd told them to be quiet because they knew that Jesus was their only hope for help. Instead that attitude just caused them to cry even louder.

We see how Jesus responded to their cries. Matthew 20:32-34 says, “So Jesus stood still and called them, and said, ‘What do you want Me to do for you?’ They said to Him, ‘Lord, that our eyes may be opened.’ So Jesus had compassion and touched their eyes. And immediately their eyes received sight, and they followed Him.” Jesus always had time to minister to people who were in need. As a result, Jesus just stood still and called to the two men. Jesus just asked them one simple question. He said, “What do you want Me to do for you?” Since Jesus is God, He knew what they wanted before Jesus even stopped. However, it was important for Jesus to give these men an opportunity to share what they believed about Jesus.

The two men spoke to Jesus and said, “Lord, that our eyes may be opened.” Their very first word is the key to understanding their answer. The word translated “Lord” means the one who has control of a person. It was used to speak of kings and emperors. However, the most common use in the New Testament is to speak of the fact that Jesus is God, the Messiah. Jesus would tell the disciples just a few days later at the Last Supper in John 13:13-15, “You call Me Teacher and Lord, and you say well, for *so* I am. If I then, *your* Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you.” These two men recognized Jesus as Lord as they made their request.

Here we see that Jesus gave the two men the opportunity to publicly confess before all of the people that were walking along the road that Jesus is the Lord. This was the reason that Jesus asked these men what they wanted Him to do. He wanted to give them the opportunity to publicly recognize Him as the Lord. They would have another time just a few hours later when they could join many other people who said the same thing as Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey because we read that these men followed Jesus. Jericho was the place near the Jordan River where the road started to climb to the city of Jerusalem. We will see in the next chapter that when Jesus and the crowd reached the small town of Bethphage very close to the city of Jerusalem that Jesus sent two of His disciples into that town to get the colt on which Jesus would ride into that city a few hours later. As a result, these two men were a part of that crowd.

We also see why Jesus opened the eyes of these two men. We read that Jesus had compassion and touched their eyes. The word translated “had compassion” means to be moved from one’s inner man to show love and pity to those in need. This word is used twelve times in the New Testament all of which are in Matthew, Mark or Luke. In most of the uses it is Jesus that is moved with compassion for the people. Matthew 9:36 says, “But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd.” Several times the word is used to show the compassion of Jesus when the people had no food.

Jesus showed His compassion by touching the eyes of the two men and healing them. As soon as Jesus touched them, the men immediately received their sight. They followed Him and as mentioned earlier had the privilege of being a part of the crowd that escorted Jesus into Jerusalem as He presented Himself to the people as the King. That action fulfilled the prophecy of Zechariah 9:9 which says, “Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your King is coming to you; He *is* just and having salvation, Lowly and riding on a donkey, A colt, the foal of a donkey.” Here we see that Jesus greatly rewarded their faith by giving them that great privilege. In the same way we want to help our physical and spiritual children understand that Jesus will also reward their faith as they recognize Him as Lord. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your children how to recognize Jesus as Lord.

Jesus Offered Himself as the King

In our last topic we saw that we want to show our physical and spiritual children what it means to recognize Jesus as Lord. We saw that two blind men showed their faith in Christ by recognizing Him as Lord. In our topic today we will see that many other people also had the opportunity to show their faith a few hours later.

Jesus had given sight to two blind men as He went out of Jericho. Then He and the great multitude that were following Him began the long climb to the city of Jerusalem. Jericho is more than 1000 feet below sea level and Jerusalem is more than 3000 feet above sea level. That meant that Jesus and the people had to climb more than 4000 feet as they walked from Jerusalem to Jericho. Matthew 21:1-3 says, “Now when they drew near Jerusalem, and came to Bethphage, at the Mount of Olives, then Jesus sent two disciples, saying to them, ‘Go into the village opposite you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her. Loose *them* and bring *them* to Me. And if anyone says anything to you, you shall say, ‘The Lord has need of them,’ and immediately he will send them.’” Here we see that Jesus gave instructions to two of His disciples.

Bethphage was near the town of Bethany where Lazarus and his sisters lived. Bethany is about two miles from Jerusalem. The Mount of Olives is a hill or a small mountain that was located just east of the city of Jerusalem and this town was on the southeast edge of the hill. It was called the Mount of Olives because there were groves of olive trees on this hill just across the Kidron Valley from the temple on the east edge of Jerusalem. As Jesus and the large crowd approached this town Jesus told two of His disciples to go into the village. Jesus said that as soon as they entered the village that they would find a donkey tied and a young colt standing with the donkey. Mark 11:2 says, “And He said to them, ‘Go into the village opposite you; and as soon as you have entered it you will find a colt tied, on which no one has sat. Loose it and bring it.’” Mark tells us that it was the colt that Jesus actually wanted but Matthew says that they were to bring the donkey along with the colt.

Jesus knew that they would be questioned by the man standing nearby when they started to untie the animals. As a result, Jesus told the disciples exactly what to say when they were questioned. The disciples were just to say, “The Lord has need of them.” Jesus and the others had just walked up to Jerusalem from Jericho so Jesus had not made advance arrangements to use this colt. In fact this is an example of the fact that Jesus knew all things because He knew where the animals would be located even though Jesus had not been in the area since He had raised Lazarus from the dead at least several weeks earlier. He also knew that the disciples would be questioned. Jesus even told the disciples what the man would do when they said that the Lord needed the animals. Jesus said that then the man would immediately send the animals with them to Jesus.

We go on to read why Jesus told the disciples to do this. Matthew 22:4-7 says, “All this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying: “Tell the daughter of

Zion, ‘Behold, your King is coming to you, Lowly, and sitting on a donkey, A colt, the foal of a donkey.’” So the disciples went and did as Jesus commanded them. They brought the donkey and the colt, laid their clothes on them, and set Him on them.” In these verses we see that Jesus was fulfilling another of the many promises that had been made about Him in the Old Testament. This prophecy had been written more than 400 years earlier by Zechariah. In Zechariah 9:9 we read, “Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your King is coming to you; He *is* just and having salvation, lowly and riding on a donkey, a colt, the foal of a donkey.”

In this verse we see that Zechariah had predicted that Jesus would come with great humility to offer Himself as the King. A donkey was the work animal of the poor. The word translated “meek or lowly” is only used three times in the New Testament. It means to have a gentleness of spirit by which we accept the way that God is working in us and through us with a gentle and quiet spirit. One of the places where this word is used is Matthew 5:5 where we read, “Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.” The other place is in I Peter 3:4 where the word is used to describe a wife whose husband is not a Christian but the wife wants her husband to see Christ in her. That verse says, “Rather *let it be* the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible *beauty* of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God.” Here the word is translated gentle and we see that such an attitude is very precious in the sight of God.

The disciples went to get the animals and everything happened just as Jesus had said that it would. In Luke 19:33-34 we read, “But as they were loosing the colt, the owners of it said to them, ‘Why are you loosing the colt?’ And they said, ‘The Lord has need of him.’” Then the owners let them take the colt. A colt is usually wild when someone first tries to ride the colt. However, we see here that even this colt was going to submit to Jesus and let Jesus ride on it so that Jesus could demonstrate that attitude of humility as He rode into Jerusalem. A conquering king usually came riding into a city on a powerful white horse to show he was the conqueror. In contrast, Jesus came riding on the colt of a donkey which showed His humble attitude.

The disciples brought the colt to Jesus and placed their clothes on the back of the colt. They the disciples placed Jesus on the colt. We see how the large crowd following Jesus responded when they saw what the disciples had done. Matthew 21:8-11 says, “And a very great multitude spread their clothes on the road; others cut down branches from the trees and spread *them* on the road. Then the multitudes who went before and those who followed cried out, saying: ‘Hosanna to the Son of David! ‘Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!’ Hosanna in the highest!’” And when He had come into Jerusalem, all the city was moved, saying, ‘Who is this?’ So the multitudes said, ‘This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth of Galilee.’” Here we see that this large multitude most of whom would have been from Galilee quickly recognized that Jesus was offering Himself as the King of Israel.

We see that the people immediately did two things. Many of the people spread their clothes along the road. Others cut down branches from the trees and spread them on the road. The reason that they spread their clothes was to show that they recognized Jesus as the King of Israel. This had been the way that the people had recognized a new king many years earlier in Israel. II Kings 9:12b-13 says, “...So he said, ‘Thus and thus he spoke to me, saying, ‘Thus

says the LORD: "I have anointed you king over Israel." Then each man hastened to take his garment and put it under him on the top of the steps; and they blew trumpets, saying, 'Jehu is king!'" Here we see that the people had spread their clothes under Jehu when he was presented as the new king of Israel.

However, the people did more than just spread their clothes and the branches of trees along the road. Then some went in front of Jesus and others followed Him. This great crowd shouted as they moved slowly toward the gate where they would enter the city of Jerusalem. The words that they spoke were, "Hosanna to the Son of David! 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!' Hosanna in the highest!" These phrases came from Psalm 118:25-26 where we read, "Save now, I pray, O LORD; O LORD, I pray, send now prosperity. Blessed *is* he who comes in the name of the LORD! We have blessed you from the house of the LORD." The word translated "Hosanna" is taken from the Hebrew word which means "Save now!" The large group of people also called Jesus the Son of David. By this statement they were recognizing Jesus as the One who fulfilled the prophecy that a descendent of David would come as the Messiah.

The Jews who knew the Old Testament had a good reason to shout these words and recognize Jesus as the Messiah. In Nehemiah 2:1 we read, "And it came to pass in the month of Nisan, in the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes, *when wine was* before him, that I took the wine and gave it to the king. Now I had never been sad in his presence before." In the following verses Nehemiah asked for permission allowing him to return and rebuild the wall of Jerusalem. The king wrote a decree granting that request. Nehemiah 2:8b says, "And the king granted *them* to me according to the good hand of my God upon me." Daniel gave a prophecy in Daniel 9:25 that says, "Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the command to restore and build Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince, there shall be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublesome times." Seven weeks plus 62 weeks of years makes 483 years. Then Daniel 9:26a says, "And after the sixty-two weeks Messiah shall be cut off, but not for Himself." At the end of the 62 we read that the Messiah would be cut off.

According to the Jewish calendar and the way that the Jews counted years, that very day was exactly 483 years after King Artaxerxes signed the decree allowing Nehemiah to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the wall of Jerusalem. Many of the Jews were looking for the coming of the Messiah especially among those who were coming to Jerusalem for this feast. This is why it caused such a great reaction when Jesus rode into the city on the colt of a donkey. We see that the entire city was moved. Many people asked the question, "Who is this?" The large crowd surrounding Jesus said, "This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth of Galilee." This was a clear statement by Jesus that He was the promised Messiah. We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to clearly explain why Jesus truly was the Messiah that fulfilled this prophecy made by Daniel. The people of Jerusalem were now forced to make a choice. They either had to accept Jesus as the Messiah or reject Him. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to clearly explain that Jesus is the Messiah who must either be accepted or rejected.

Jesus Cleansed the Temple

In our last topic we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to clearly explain that Jesus offered Himself as the promised Messiah and that all people must make the choice to either accept or reject Him. In this topic we will see how the chief priests and scribes responded to this offer.

Matthew 21:12-16a says, “Then Jesus went into the temple of God and drove out all those who bought and sold in the temple, and overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves. And He said to them, ‘It is written, ‘My house shall be called a house of prayer,’ but you have made it a ‘den of thieves.’” Then *the* blind and *the* lame came to Him in the temple, and He healed them. But when the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that He did, and the children crying out in the temple and saying, ‘Hosanna to the Son of David!’ they were indignant and said to Him, ‘Do You hear what these are saying?’” Here we see that the first thing that Jesus did after He arrived in the city of Jerusalem was cleanse the temple. Jesus had cleansed the temple at the beginning of His ministry (see John 2:14-17) and now He cleansed the temple a second time as He neared the completion of His ministry on earth.

The Jews were using the large temple courtyard known as the Court of the Gentiles as a place to make money by selling doves and sheep for sacrifices. There were also Jews who worked as moneychangers by exchanging Roman coins and money from various other countries into the money being used to sell these birds and sheep to Jews who came from other areas of the world to Jerusalem for the Passover. The Jews did not feel that Roman coins and other money was acceptable to purchase animals that would be used as sacrifices in the temple. Both the money changers and those who sold sacrifices to the people were apparently charging excessive amounts because Jesus said that they had made the temple a den of thieves.

We see that Jesus explained the real purpose of the temple in Jerusalem. Isaiah 56:6-7 says, “Also the sons of the foreigner who join themselves to the LORD, to serve Him, and to love the name of the LORD, to be His servants—Everyone who keeps from defiling the Sabbath, and holds fast My covenant—Even them I will bring to My holy mountain, and make them joyful in My house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and their sacrifices *will be* accepted on My altar; for My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations.” Here we see that the temple was to be a house of prayer for the people of all nations. This included those who were foreigners as well as those who were Jews. Jeremiah 7:11 says, “‘Has this house, which is called by My name, become a den of thieves in your eyes? Behold, I, even I, have seen *it*,’ says the LORD.” Jesus said that those who were exchanging money and those who were buying and selling had made the temple a den of thieves instead of recognizing that the temple was to be a house of prayer for all nations.

After cleansing the temple, we see that the blind and the lame came to Jesus in the temple and He healed them. This caused the chief priests and scribes to become angry as they heard the

children speaking with loud voices saying “Hosanna to the Son of David” and saw Jesus healing the blind and the lame. The chief priests and scribes were very familiar with Isaiah 9:7 which says, “Of the increase of *His* government and peace *there will be* no end, upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, to order it and establish it with judgment and justice from that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this.” All of the Jews were looking for the Messiah that would be the Son of David who would rule forever. This was why the chief priests and scribes were angry because they knew the children were using the title for the Messiah and they had already been planning to kill Jesus for a period of time because they viewed Him as a threat to their power and control over the people. That was why they said to Jesus, “Do You hear what these are saying?”, because they knew the Jesus was being called God.

Instead of telling the children to be quiet, we see that Jesus spoke to the chief priests and scribes. Matthew 21:16b-19 says, “And Jesus said to them, “Yes. Have you never read, ‘Out of the mouth of babes and nursing infants You have perfected praise’?” Then He left them and went out of the city to Bethany, and He lodged there. Now in the morning, as He returned to the city, He was hungry. And seeing a fig tree by the road, He came to it and found nothing on it but leaves, and said to it, “Let no fruit grow on you ever again.” Immediately the fig tree withered away.” Here we see that Jesus accepted the words of the children by quoting from Psalm 8:2 which says, “Out of the mouth of babes and nursing infants You have ordained strength, because of Your enemies, that You may silence the enemy and the avenger.” Psalm 8 is a Psalm about the glory of God and also speaks about the fact that the Father would make the Messiah for a short time a little lower than the angels before crowning Him with glory and honor.

Hebrews 2:9 tells us why Jesus was made a little lower than the angels for a short time. That verse says, “But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone.” Jesus was made a little lower for a short time so that He could experience death for everyone. Jesus then left the temple and went out to Bethany to spend the night. By these actions and words Jesus made it clear that He was not going to silence the children. Instead He was accepting their words that He was the Son of David who came in the name of the Lord. In the next chapter we will see that Jesus will question the Pharisees about whether the Messiah is the Son of David. They were not able to answer and none of the religious leaders asked Jesus any more questions.

We see what happened the next morning as Jesus was returning to Jerusalem. Jesus saw a fig tree by the side of the road. However, when Jesus and the disciples came to the tree, they found nothing but leaves on the tree. Jesus chose to use that tree to teach the disciples a very important lesson. Jesus cursed the tree and said that nothing would grow on that tree in the future. As a result, we see that the fig tree withered away. In Hosea 9:10 the Lord used the fig tree to picture the rebellion of Israel as the nation turned away from Him. That verse says, “I found Israel like grapes in the wilderness; I saw your fathers as the firstfruits on the fig tree in its first season. *But* they went to Baal Peor, and separated themselves *to that* shame; they became an abomination like the thing they loved.” Here we see that God compared Israel to the first figs from a fig tree in its first season of bearing fruit. However, instead of following the

Lord, Israel turned from the Lord and began to worship Baal. As a result, Christ may have cursed the fig tree to show that judgment would come on all the rebellious of Israel.

However, we also see that the Lord used that fig tree to teach the disciples another important lesson. Matthew 21:20-22 says, “And when the disciples saw *it*, they marveled, saying, ‘How did the fig tree wither away so soon?’ So Jesus answered and said to them, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith and do not doubt, you will not only do what was done to the fig tree, but also if you say to this mountain, ‘Be removed and be cast into the sea,’ it will be done. And whatever things you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive.’” The fig tree had quickly dried up. As the disciples looked at the tree after it had withered away and dried up, they were amazed to see how quickly the tree had become unable to even produce leaves any more.

Here we see that Jesus used what had happened to the fig tree and the nearby Mount of Olives to teach the disciples a lesson about faith. Several months earlier Jesus had taught the disciples and the father of a demon possessed boy about faith. Jesus had been transfigured on a mountain and Peter, James and John had seen Christ in all of His glory. Then they returned to the other disciples who had not been able to cast the demon out of the boy. Jesus told the father in Mark 9:33-34, “Jesus said to him, ‘If you can believe, all things *are* possible to him who believes.’ Immediately the father of the child cried out and said with tears, ‘Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!’” The disciples had seen that day that it was possible for Jesus to do anything that is according to His will.

In these verses we see that Jesus taught the disciples that all things would be possible for them if the things for which they prayed were according to the will of God. That same thing is true for us today. These verses showed that faith without doubt is all that is required if we are praying according to the will of God. John may have remembered that day as he later wrote in I John 5:14-15, “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.” The disciples later certainly recognized that God would answer their prayers as they prayed according to the will of God.

Jesus gave two illustrations to the disciples that day. The first illustration they had recognized as they saw the fig tree that had withered away. Then Jesus went on to give a second illustration. At that moment on the way from Bethany to Jerusalem, Jesus and the disciples were going around the Mount of Olives. Jesus pointed out that if it was the will of the Father that they could ask Him to remove that mountain and their prayer would be answered. Zechariah 14:4 tells us that mountain will one day split and move. That verse says, “And in that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which faces Jerusalem on the east. And the Mount of Olives shall be split in two, from east to west, *making* a very large valley; half of the mountain shall move toward the north and half of it toward the south.” In the same way we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn that they can expect the Lord to answer their prayers as they pray according to the will of God. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to pray in faith.

Jesus Gave a Parable about Two Sons

In our last topic we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to pray according to the will of God. We saw that as they pray according to His will that He will hear and answer their prayers. In this topic we will see that Jesus spoke a parable about two sons.

Jesus had cleansed the temple of those who bought and sold in it the previous day. The chief priests and elders of the people were very angry because they were gaining riches by stealing from the people through their buying and selling. As a result, they wanted to stop Jesus from teaching in the temple. Matthew 21:23-25 says, “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: The baptism of John—where was it from? From heaven or from men?’” The word translated “confronted” means to come near or to approach. As soon as the chief priests saw that Jesus was teaching the people, they came to Him to stop Him from teaching.

The religious leaders asked Jesus who gave Him the authority to teach in the temple. In John 3:2 we see that Nicodemus came to Jesus early in His public ministry and said, “This man came to Jesus by night and said to Him, ‘Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him.’” Here we see that Nicodemus recognized that Jesus had authority and this authority was recognized by the fact that Jesus was able to do the miracles that He did. The authority of Jesus had also been recognized when Jesus gave the Sermon on the Mount. Matthew 7:29 says, “For He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.” The religious leaders knew that Jesus had a source of authority.

Jesus could have answered in the words of Matthew 28:18 which says, “And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, ‘All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.’” However, Jesus chose to answer the question of the religious leaders with a question and told them that He would answer their question if they would answer His question. Throughout the Gospels we see that Jesus often answered questions in this way. Jesus said that if they would give Him the answer to His question that He would answer their question. Then Jesus asked them, “The baptism of John—where was it from? From heaven or from men?” Jesus asked a question that forced the religious leaders to have to really think about the ministry of John the Baptist. However, as they thought about the question of Jesus, we see that the religious leaders suddenly had a new problem.

Matthew 21:26-27 says, “‘And they reasoned among themselves, saying, ‘If we say, ‘From heaven,’ He will say to us, ‘Why then did you not believe him?’ But if we say, ‘From men,’ we fear the multitude, for all count John as a prophet.’” So they answered Jesus and said, ‘We do not know.’ And He said to them, ‘Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things.’” The word translated “reasoned” means to carefully discuss or to bring different reasons

together. This was why the religious leaders suddenly had a new problem. As they talked together they realized that they could not answer the question of Jesus. There were two reasons why they could not answer that question.

First, there was their personal unbelief. They refused to believe John and they refused to believe Jesus. Jesus had explained the reason for their unbelief earlier in His ministry. John 8:43-45 says, “Why do you not understand My speech? Because you are not able to listen to My word. 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. But because I tell the truth, you do not believe Me.” The religious leaders could not accept the message that Jesus shared with them because their hearts were filled with unbelief.

Second, we see that the religious leaders were controlled by fear. They were afraid of the people because many of the people had recognized John as a great prophet. In the same way many of the people had heard Jesus and had seen the miracles that He had done. They had recognized Jesus as a great teacher. Here we see an example of the fact that if a person is not led by the love of Jesus that the person will be driven by his or her own fear. In I John 4:18 we read, “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.” As a result of the fact that the religious leaders were controlled by fear, they told Jesus that they could not answer His question because they did not know. In their discussion they had given their actual answer when they said that if they answered that John was from heaven, they knew that Jesus would ask them why they did not believe John.

Since they would not answer His question, Jesus went on to give them a parable and then ask them another question. Matthew 21:28-32 says, “But what do you think? A man had two sons, and he came to the first and said, ‘Son, go, work today in my vineyard.’ He answered and said, ‘I will not,’ but afterward he regretted it and went. Then he came to the second and said likewise. And he answered and said, ‘I *go*, sir,’ but he did not go. 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. For John came to you in the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him; but tax collectors and harlots believed him; and when you saw *it*, you did not afterward relent and believe him.’” We see that Jesus gave a parable about two sons.

The father asked the first son to go and work in his vineyard. When the father asked the son, we see that the son refused at first. The word translated “regretted in verse 29 and relent in verse 32” means to repent or to change one’s mind for the better. We see that as the son thought about the request of his father that he changed his mind and then went to work in the vineyard. The father made the same request to the second son. This son immediately answered his father that he would go and work in the vineyard. However, he did not go to the vineyard and work. Then Jesus asked the religious leaders the question, “Which of the two did the will of his father?” The answer was very clear and so the religious leaders answered, “The first.” Christ agreed that their answer was right and then He went on to explain the lesson that He wanted to teach the religious leaders.

Jesus then said that the, “Tax collectors and harlots enter the kingdom of God before you.” Tax collectors were hated by both the Jews and the people of other nations because they were known for cheating the people by charging more than they were supposed to charge because of their greed. In addition, they often treated the people with harshness. The word translated, “harlots” was used to speak of women who sold their bodies for sexual use or one who committed unlawful sexual intercourse for gain or for lust. As a result, it is another word for a prostitute. The religious leaders treated such women with great contempt. John 8:3-6 says, “Then the scribes and Pharisees brought to Him a woman caught in adultery. And when they had set her in the midst, they said to Him, ‘Teacher, this woman was caught in adultery, in the very act. Now Moses, in the law, commanded us that such should be stoned. But what do You say?’ This they said, testing Him, that they might have *something* of which to accuse Him. But Jesus stooped down and wrote on the ground with *His* finger, as though He did not hear.” This was clearly an attempt to trap Jesus because it takes two to commit adultery. The fact that they said they caught her in the very act meant that both people had been caught in the act.

In these verses we see that Jesus told the religious leaders that tax collectors and prostitutes would enter the kingdom of God before the chief priests and elders of the people. Then Jesus explained why that statement was true. Jesus answered the earlier question that the religious leaders had refused to answer. He said that John the Baptist had come in the way of righteousness. This statement made it clear that John had been sent by God to prepare the way for the Christ. Many tax collectors and prostitutes heard the preaching of John and believed his message and turned from their sin of unbelief. In contrast the religious leaders did not repent. Even to this very day when Jesus was speaking to them they had still not repented because they had just said that they did not know where John got his authority.

The way of righteousness is explained for us in Romans 3:21-24 where we read, “But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference; for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.” The first thing that we see in these verses is that it is the righteousness of God. Second, we see that no person can obtain that righteousness by the law because of the fact that all have sinned. Third, we see that all who believe are “Justified freely by His grace.” That means that the righteousness of God is given by God as a free gift and is placed on all who believe in Christ through faith.

The word “redemption” means to buy back from sin, to set free and to remove from further sale. Those are the three things that Jesus did when He died in our place and for our sin on the cross. The Father showed that He was satisfied with that payment by raising Jesus from the dead. That is the message that we want to help both our physical and spiritual children learn to explain clearly to others. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your children how to share this message.

Jesus Gave a Parable about a Landowner

In our last topic we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to share the message with others how they can have the righteousness of God placed on them. We also saw that many tax collectors and prostitutes had received that gift by faith while the religious leaders had rejected that gift. In our topic today we will see that Jesus gave a parable about a landowner.

Jesus knew that in a few days that the religious leaders would condemn Him to death and demand that Pilate crucify Him. As a result, Jesus chose to speak to the religious leaders in parables. Jesus went on to give a parable that predicted His coming death. Matthew 21:33-39 says, "Hear another parable: There was a certain landowner who planted a vineyard and set a hedge around it, dug a winepress in it and built a tower. And he leased it to vinedressers and went into a far country. Now when vintage-time drew near, he sent his servants to the vinedressers, that they might receive its fruit. And the vinedressers took his servants, beat one, killed one, and stoned another. Again he sent other servants, more than the first, and they did likewise to them. Then last of all he sent his son to them, saying, 'They will respect my son.' But when the vinedressers saw the son, they said among themselves, 'This is the heir. Come, let us kill him and seize his inheritance.' So they took him and cast *him* out of the vineyard and killed *him*." In this parable we will see that God, the Father, is pictured as the landowner and Jesus as His Son.

Isaiah had written in the book of Isaiah that Israel was the vineyard of God in Isaiah 5:1-7. Verse seven says, "For the vineyard of the LORD of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah are His pleasant plant. He looked for justice, but behold, oppression; for righteousness, but behold, a cry for help." Jesus knew that the religious leaders were very familiar with this message in the book of Isaiah. As a result, Jesus began this parable by explaining again the process by which a person prepared a vineyard. Jesus said that the first thing the owner did was plant the vineyard. This was always the first thing because it takes a vineyard a period of years before it is ready to bear fruit. Once the vineyard was planted, the owner built a hedge (fence) around the vineyard. Then the owner built a winepress to squeeze the juice out of the grapes when they ripened. Finally the own built a tower in the vineyard. This was a high tower that allowed a watchman to watch in every direction as he protected the harvest when it would ripen.

Once the owner had everything in the vineyard ready he leased it to vinedressers. These were the people who would care for the vineyard and give a certain percentage to the owner of the vineyard. Then the owner went to a place a great distance away. In this parable we will see that the vinedressers were the Jewish religious leaders. After a period of years to allow the vineyard to develop and begin to bear fruit, the owner began to send various servants to receive the share of the fruit that belonged to the owner. In this parable the servants represented the Old Testament prophets. However, instead of listening to the servants, the vinedressers rejected the servants. Some of the servants were beaten. Others were killed. Some were even stoned to

death. Regardless of how many servants were sent, they were all mistreated by the vinedressers.

Finally, the owner decided to send his son. He said, "They will respect my son." Jesus went on to explain in the parable what the religious leaders were already planning to do to Him in the next few days. Matthew 21:38 says, "But when the vinedressers saw the son, they said among themselves, 'This is the heir. Come, let us kill him and seize his inheritance.'" Just a few weeks earlier the high priest had said in John 11:49-50, "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.'" Then John 11:53 adds, "Then, from that day on, they plotted to put Him to death." Jesus showed by this parable that He knew exactly what the religious leaders were planning to do to Him.

Jesus concluded the parable by telling what the religious leaders were going to do when He said, "They said among themselves, 'This is the heir. Come, let us kill him and seize his inheritance.' So they took him and cast *him* out of the vineyard and killed *him*." John 19:19-20 says, "Now Pilate wrote a title and put *it* on the cross. And the writing was: JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS. Then many of the Jews read this title, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city; and it was written in Hebrew, Greek, *and* Latin." Here we see that the death was near the city which meant that it was outside the city wall of Jerusalem. This fulfilled to the exact detail everything that Jesus spoke in this parable.

Then Jesus asked the religious leaders a question. Matthew 21:40-42 says, "'Therefore, when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those vinedressers?' They said to Him, 'He will destroy those wicked men miserably, and lease *his* vineyard to other vinedressers who will render to him the fruits in their seasons.' Jesus said to them, 'Have you never read in the Scriptures: 'The stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief cornerstone. This was the LORD's doing, And it is marvelous in our eyes'?" Jesus asked the religious leaders what the owner of the vineyard would do when he came. The religious leaders answered, "He will destroy those wicked men miserably." Here we see that the religious leaders described themselves and then pronounced their own judgment as they answered the question of Jesus. They called the vinedressers wicked men. They also said that the owner would destroy those wicked men miserably. That judgment came on the city of Jerusalem just 40 years later.

Christ then quoted Psalm 118:22-23 which says, "The stone *which* the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone. This was the LORD's doing; It *is* marvelous in our eyes." When Solomon was building the temple the materials were prepared at a different location and then brought to the temple site. Here we see that the builder rejected the stone that was to become the cornerstone of the temple. The Lord caused this to happen as a picture of the fact that the religious leaders would reject the One who came to give eternal life. By quoting this verse Jesus was telling the religious leaders that they were rejecting the One who would die for sin and make salvation possible for all who would believe in Him. The chief priests and the other religious leaders were pictured by this statement as the ones who had rejected the chief cornerstone.

Jesus went on to explain that the religious leaders had condemned themselves. In Matthew

21:43-46 we read, “Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it. And whoever falls on this stone will be broken; but on whomever it falls, it will grind him to powder.” Now when the chief priests and Pharisees heard His parables, they perceived that He was speaking of them. But when they sought to lay hands on Him, they feared the multitudes, because they took Him for a prophet.” Jesus said that the kingdom of God would be taken from the Jews.

Romans 11:25 says, “For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.” In this verse we see that God said that most of Israel would be blind and the people set aside as God’s witnesses until God had completed His work of reaching the Gentiles. We see that on the Day of Pentecost just 50 days later that God began the church which became the group that God is presently using to reach the world for Christ. The church is composed of both Jews and Gentiles and has taken the message of the death and resurrection of Jesus worldwide over the years. However, in the future God will restore Israel to the place of blessing.

Jesus is the One who is the stone. Matthew 16:18 says, “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 name Peter means a little rock. The word translated “rock” means a great massive rock. Jesus is the One who is this great massive rock on which the church is built. Isaiah 8:14 says, “He will be as a sanctuary, but a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense to both the houses of Israel, as a trap and a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem.” Jesus was a stone of stumbling to both Israel and Judah. He is also a stone of stumbling to many Gentiles. Some ignore Jesus and they will be broken. Others actively oppose Jesus and they will be crushed.

Jesus had made it very clear by His words that He was the promised Messiah. As Jesus spoke these parables to the chief priests and Pharisees they realized that Jesus was talking about them and the judgment that would come to them. Instead of repenting of their sin of unbelief, these religious leaders wanted to lay their hands on Jesus and destroy Him. They refused to accept the fact that Jesus was the Messiah and wanted to kill Jesus because they saw Jesus as a threat to their power.

The common people recognized Jesus as a great prophet because they had heard Jesus speak and had seen the miracles that Jesus had done. However, Luke 22:2-6 says, “And the chief priests and the scribes sought how they might kill Him, for they feared the people. Then Satan entered Judas, surnamed Iscariot, who was numbered among the twelve. So he went his way and conferred with the chief priests and captains, how he might betray Him to them. And they were glad, and agreed to give him money. So he promised and sought opportunity to betray Him to them in the absence of the multitude.” We want to help our physical and spiritual children understand why the religious leaders wanted to kill and destroy Jesus. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children to understand how their unbelief and fear controlled these religious leaders.

Jesus Gave a Parable about the Marriage Supper

In our last topic we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children understand why the Jewish religious leaders wanted to destroy Jesus. We saw that they were fearful of losing their control and power over the common people. In our topic today we are going to see that Jesus gave another parable about a marriage feast.

Matthew 22:1-6 says, “And Jesus answered and spoke to them again by parables and said: ‘The kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who arranged a marriage for his son, and sent out his servants to call those who were invited to the wedding; and they were not willing to come. Again, he sent out other servants, saying, ‘Tell those who are invited, ‘See, I have prepared my dinner; my oxen and fatted cattle *are* killed, and all things *are* ready. Come to the wedding.’” But they made light of it and went their ways, one to his own farm, another to his business. And the rest seized his servants, treated *them* spitefully, and killed *them*.” In this parable we see that Jesus compared the kingdom of heaven to a wedding feast given by a king for his son.

Throughout the Old Testament God had invited the descendents of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob to come to Him. Some of these descendents did believe and placed their faith in the promises of God. However, many of the descendents did not believe. In the first part of this parable we see that Jesus talked about those who did not believe. We see that they were invited to the wedding but they were not willing to come. Moses wrote about their early rejection when he wrote in Deuteronomy 32:21, “They have provoked Me to jealousy by *what* is not God; they have moved Me to anger by their foolish idols. But I will provoke them to jealousy by *those who are* not a nation; I will move them to anger by a foolish nation.” Many years later Isaiah spoke about this same rebellious attitude. Isaiah 65:2-3 says, “I have stretched out My hands all day long to a rebellious people, who walk in a way *that is* not good, according to their own thoughts; a people who provoke Me to anger continually to My face; who sacrifice in gardens, and burn incense on altars of brick.” Most of Israel rejected the offer of life from God.

Throughout the Old Testament God continued to send other leaders and prophets to speak to Israel and later the divided nations of Israel and Judah. During the book of Judges we see that the people repeatedly turned to idols. Judges 3:5-7 says, “Thus the children of Israel dwelt among the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. And they took their daughters to be their wives, and gave their daughters to their sons; and they served their gods. So the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD. They forgot the LORD their God, and served the Baals and Asherahs.” The surrounding nations would then bring the people into bondage. Finally the people would cry out to God. Then God raised up judges to deliver the people when they finally cried out to God. The people would serve God for a short time and then turn back to idols. This cycle was repeated over and over throughout the book of Judges.

The people were not any different during the period of the kings and finally God allowed the people to be taken to foreign lands. Even in those foreign lands the people did not turn to God

in repentance and faith. Instead rebellion continued throughout the period of the rest of the Old Testament. They continued to reject the invitation of God to come to Him. In this parable we see that they made light of the invitation of God. Most of the people went their own ways. Isaiah 53:6 says, “All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way; and the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.” In this promise about the coming of Christ, we see that the Jews were compared to sheep that had gone astray. We see that they continued to reject the prophets that God sent. Instead the people mistreated or killed most of the prophets that God sent.

We go on to read about the response of the king in the parable. Matthew 22:7-10 says, “But when the king heard *about it*, he was furious. And he sent out his armies, destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city. Then he said to his servants, ‘The wedding is ready, but those who were invited were not worthy. Therefore go into the highways, and as many as you find, invite to the wedding.’ So those servants went out into the highways and gathered together all whom they found, both bad and good. And the wedding *hall* was filled with guests.” In these verses we see that Jesus began to talk about what was going to happen in the near future as the religious leaders and most of the Jews continued in their rejection of God, the Father, and His Son.

In addition to rejecting those who spoke for God in the Old Testament, the religious leaders and most of the Jews were going to do the same to Jesus and His disciples. Jesus was put to death just a few days later as the Jewish religious leaders made it clear that they did not accept Jesus as their king and demanded that Pilate put Him to death. In John 19:15 we read, “But they cried out, ‘Away with *Him*, away with *Him*! Crucify Him!’ Pilate said to them, ‘Shall I crucify your King?’ The chief priests answered, ‘We have no king but Caesar!’” Christ here predicted what the results of that rejection meant for the Jews. Just 40 years later God allowed the Romans to completely destroy the city of Jerusalem and many of the Jews. The Romans completely destroyed the city and burned it including the temple in which Jesus was giving this parable.

In this way the Jews were set aside for a time because most of the Jews rejected the offer of Christ to be a part of those who would be guests at the marriage of the Son of the King. Then the king said to his servants, “The wedding is ready, but those who were invited were not worthy. Therefore go into the highways, and as many as you find, invite to the wedding.” Here we see that God wants the kingdom of heaven to be filled with people who will respond to His invitation to the wedding of His Son. God had said through Simeon in Luke 2:29-32, “Lord, now You are letting Your servant depart in peace, according to Your word; for my eyes have seen Your salvation which You have prepared before the face of all peoples, a light to *bring* revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of Your people Israel.” In these verses we see that God was going to send His servants to bring light to the Gentiles and invite them to the marriage feast.

After His resurrection, we see that Jesus told His disciples that they were to make disciples of all nations. Matthew 28:18-20 says, “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.” In this parable Jesus said that they were to share this invitation to the wedding with both the bad and the good of all nations. As His servants we are to continue to carry out this commission until the end of the age. We see that the desire of God is that the wedding of His Son will be filled with guests from all nations including both the bad and the good.

Jesus concluded this parable by giving a prophetic warning to any who would try to get into this wedding by their own works. Matthew 22:11-14 says, “But when the king came in to see the guests, he saw a man there who did not have on a wedding garment. So he said to him, ‘Friend, how did you come in here without a wedding garment?’ And he was speechless. 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. For many are called, but few *are* chosen.’” In these verses we see that Jesus talked about one who would try to get into the wedding without a wedding garment.

In this parable we see that the king will supply wedding garments for all who will accept the invitation to the wedding. In Isaiah 61:10 we read, “I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for He has clothed me with the garments of salvation, He has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.” Here we see that the wedding garment is called the “robe of righteousness”. That robe of righteousness is explained for us in II Corinthians 5:21 where 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.” Christ places the robe of righteousness on us at the moment of salvation. That is why Ephesians 2:8-9 says, “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; *it is* the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.” This man tried to get into the wedding based on his own works instead of accepting the faith to believe in the righteousness of Christ as a free gift.

We see that those who try to enter the kingdom of heaven based on their own righteousness will be judged. This judgment will be in outer darkness as the king said to his servants, “Bind him hand and foot, take him away, and cast *him* into outer darkness; there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. For many are called, but few *are* chosen.” Matthew 8:11-12 says, “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.” In these verses we see that many Gentiles will be in the kingdom of heaven. At the same time the Jews who rejected the free salvation provided by Christ will be left out of the kingdom. Instead all who do not believe will experience eternal judgment in the lake of fire and brimstone as well as in outer darkness.

We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain the parable of the Marriage Supper. This will help them learn to answer many questions that people ask about what is going to happen in the future. May the Lord richly bless you as you equip your children to answer questions from the Word of God.

Jesus Answered the Herodians

In our last topic we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain the parable of the Marriage Supper so that they are equipped to answer questions about the future from the Word of God. In this topic we will see that the Pharisees and Herodians tried to deceive Jesus in their efforts to trap Him by what He said to them.

Matthew 22:15-17 says. “Then the Pharisees went and plotted how they might entangle Him in *His* talk. And they sent to Him their disciples with the Herodians, saying, “Teacher, we know that You are true, and teach the way of God in truth; nor do You care about anyone, for You do not regard the person of men. Tell us, therefore, what do You think? Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?” We see that the purpose of this question was not to learn from Jesus. Instead the purpose of this question was to entangle Jesus in His talk. This word “entangled” means “to snare or trap birds”. The Pharisees and Herodians worked together as they came with their question so that they could try and trap Jesus by the words that He spoke.

The Herodians supported the family of Herod as they saw this as a way to gain political power. In fact many of the Herodians were also Sadducees. In contrast, the Pharisees were a religious party and hated the Romans and their control. However, we see that the two groups were now working together in their efforts to destroy Jesus. This had been their attitude since early in the public ministry of Jesus. Mark 3:6 says, “Then the Pharisees went out and immediately plotted with the Herodians against Him, how they might destroy Him.” In order to try and trick Jesus, these men made four true statements about Jesus before asking their question. First they said, “Teacher, we know that You are true.” The word true means to “Speak the truth or to be truthful.” These men said that Jesus spoke the truth but then they refused to believe Him.

Second, these men said Teacher you, “Teach the way of God in truth.” That was a true statement because Jesus 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.’” These men then showed that they did not accept Jesus as the One who taught the way of God in truth so this was just a part of their plot to try and destroy Jesus. John 18:37-38 says, “Pilate therefore said to Him, ‘Are You a king then?’ Jesus answered, ‘You say *rightly* that I am a king. For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice.’ Pilate said to Him, ‘What is truth?’ And when he had said this, he went out again to the Jews, and said to them, “I find no fault in Him at all.” Even Pilate had to admit that Jesus was truth and without fault because He taught the way of God in truth.

Third, these men recognized that “nor do you care about anyone.” By this phrase these men meant that Jesus did not favor one person over another but treated all people with respect. Jesus showed the same respect and love for Judas that He showed to the other disciples. At the very moment when Judas had just given Jesus the kiss of betrayal, Jesus said in Matthew 26:50, “But Jesus said to him, ‘Friend, why have you come?’ Then they came and laid hands on Jesus and took Him.” Even at this moment Jesus showed love and respect. Fourth, these men said that

Jesus did not “regard the person of men.” This phrase means to show favor to one person over another. James 2:8-9 says, “If you really fulfill *the* royal law according to the Scripture, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself,’ you do well; but if you show partiality, you commit sin, and are convicted by the law as transgressors.” Jesus loved every person with a perfect love and that is why He died for the sins of every person even though He knew that many would choose to reject the offer of forgiveness from sins through His blood.

After these men said that they knew that Jesus demonstrated each of these four things by His godly character, they then asked the question that they hoped they would be able to use to trap Jesus and condemn Him. Their question is given in verse 17 where we read that they said, “Tell us, therefore, what do You think? Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?” These men thought that they had the perfect trap to catch Jesus in His words. If Jesus said it was wrong to pay taxes to Caesar then the Herodians would have told Pilate that Jesus was trying to start a tax revolt against the Romans. If Jesus said it was right to pay taxes to Caesar, the Pharisees would have condemned Jesus for being unfaithful to Judaism. With either answer, these men expected to condemn Jesus by His words.

We see the answer of Jesus in Matthew 22:18-21 where we read, “But Jesus perceived their wickedness, and said, ‘Why do you test Me, *you* hypocrites? Show Me the tax money.’ So they brought Him a denarius. And He said to them, ‘Whose image and inscription *is* this?’.” Here we see that Jesus showed that He is God because He knew the thoughts of their hearts. Jeremiah 17:9 says, “The heart *is* deceitful above all *things*, and desperately wicked; who can know it?” Jesus knew that these men had asked this question because of their desire to test Him and trap Him in His words. As a result, Jesus used the word that described their character to describe them when He asked the question, “Why do you test Me, *you* hypocrites?” The word translated “hypocrites” means an actor or stage player that wore different masks to show that the words in a play or drama were the words of different people. These men had just made four statements about Jesus that they personally refused to accept. As a result, Jesus said that they were like actors who tried to cover their real character by their words.

Then Jesus told the men to show Him the tax money. The men then brought Jesus a denarius. The “denarius” was a silver Roman coin worth one day’s wages. These coins were made by the authority of the Roman emperor, Tiberius. One side of the coin showed the face of Tiberius, the Roman emperor. The other side of the coin had a picture of an engraving of Tiberius sitting on his throne with the robes of a priest. The two sides of the coin taken together showed that Tiberius thought of himself as both the Roman emperor and also as the god of the Roman Empire. For the Jews this coin was a clear violation of the Ten Commandments. Both Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5 give us the Ten Commandments. Deuteronomy 5:8 says, “You shall not make for yourself a carved image—any likeness *of anything* that *is* in heaven above, or that *is* in the earth beneath, or that *is* in the water under the earth.” The engraving of Tiberius sitting with the robes of a priest was viewed by the Jews as a direct violation of the Second Commandment. In addition, this was a Roman coin for a Roman tax and so the Jews viewed this coin for taxes as a way that the Roman emperor was saying that he owned them.

The reason these men quickly brought a denarius to Jesus was because they thought that their question was going to be the perfect trap to catch Jesus. The Herodians supported the Roman

government and the Pharisees strongly supported the Ten Commandments even though they continually broke those commandments. Jesus took the coin and then asked the question, “Whose image and inscription *is* this?” Matthew 22:21-22 says, “They said to Him, ‘Caesar’s.’ And He said to them, ‘Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.’ When they had heard *these words*, they marveled, and left Him and went their way.” Here we see that Jesus pointed out that human government is needed and is allowed by God. Romans 13:1-2 says, “Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves.” God allows even the very evil governments to last for a time but He will judge the evil rulers in His time.

At the same time Jesus made it clear to the Herodians and Pharisees that they were to give to God the things that belong to God. Money is made in the image of earthly rulers. In contrast, man is made in the image of God. Genesis 1:26-27 says, “Then God said, ‘Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.’ So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.”

Later that same day a Pharisee again questioned Jesus and asked Him what is the great commandment in the law. Jesus answered that question by saying in Matthew 22:37-40, “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.” Earthly rulers may have their image on the coins but God wants His image on our hearts (the inner person). That is why Romans 10:9-10 says, “That if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.” God created us in His image and He stamps His image on our hearts.

The Herodians and Pharisees were amazed at the answer of Jesus and left Him. They had just been caught in their own trap because they were made in the image of God but they did not believe in God from their hearts. As a result, they suddenly had to confront their own unbelief in their hearts. They were not giving to God what belonged to God. Jesus had exposed the fact that they were hypocrites because they claimed to follow God but they did not believe in Him from their hearts. We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to lead people to focus on the condition of their hearts and their need to come to God by repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to explain these things.

Jesus Answered the Sadducees

In our last topic we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to focus on the condition of their hearts and their need to come to God by repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. In this topic we see that the Sadducees came to try and trap Jesus by what He said.

Jesus had answered the question of the Herodians and Pharisees earlier that day. In Matthew 22:23-28 we see that the Sadducees had a question regarding the resurrection that they thought Jesus could not answer. Those verses say, “The same day the Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to Him and asked Him, saying: ‘Teacher, Moses said that if a man dies, having no children, his brother shall marry his wife and raise up offspring for his brother. Now there were with us seven brothers. The first died after he had married, and having no offspring, left his wife to his brother. Likewise the second also, and the third, even to the seventh. Last of all the woman died also. Therefore, in the resurrection, whose wife of the seven will she be? For they all had her.’” Here we see an example of the fact that some who do not have a true faith think that they can prove the impossibility of a resurrection by a question.

God had given a command in the Old Testament which made it possible for every family line in Israel to be maintained. This law also provided a way in which widows could receive continuing care if the husband died at a young age. Deuteronomy 25:5-6 says, “If brothers dwell together, and one of them dies and has no son, the widow of the dead man shall not be *married* to a stranger outside *the family*; her husband’s brother shall go in to her, take her as his wife, and perform the duty of a husband’s brother to her. And it shall be *that* the firstborn son which she bears will succeed to the name of his dead brother, that his name may not be blotted out of Israel.” Here we see that the brother of a man who died was to marry the widow and the first-born son would be considered the child of the dead brother. In Israel the first-born son was given a double inheritance so that he would have the money needed to care for his mother in her old age if she was a widow.

The Sadducees came with their question based on this law. The Sadducees taught that there is no resurrection so we see that the purpose of this question was to prove that a resurrection would cause an impossible problem because of this law. The Sadducees asked what would happen if the oldest of seven brothers died and had no children. Then each of the six remaining brothers married the woman and each of them also died after they had married the woman. Finally after the death of the seventh brother the woman also died. Then they asked their question which was, “In the resurrection, whose wife of the seven will she be? For they all had her.” Here we see that the Sadducees were trying to trap Jesus with their question because they asked this question even though they did not believe that there would be a resurrection. I Corinthians 2:14 says, “But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know *them*, because they are spiritually discerned.” The Sadducees could not understand the Word of God because they were without spiritual life.

We see that Jesus answered the question of the Sadducees by explaining why they were mistaken. Matthew 22:29-30 says, “Jesus answered and said to them, “You are mistaken, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God. For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels of God in heaven.” Jesus said that the first problem that the Sadducees had was the fact that they did not know the Scriptures. The word translated “know” means to pay attention to something or to know so that there is understanding. The Jews had read the Old Testament Scriptures and especially the books written by Moses for many generations. Acts 15:21 says, “For Moses has had throughout many generations those who preach him in every city, being read in the synagogues every Sabbath.”

However, Isaiah had warned that most of the Jews would hear but would not understand. God told Isaiah in Isaiah 6:9-10, “And He said, ‘Go, and tell this people: ‘keep on hearing, but do not understand; keep on seeing, but do not perceive.’ ‘ Make the heart of this people dull, and their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and return and be healed.”” God said that most of Israel would not hear until their cities were destroyed. Jesus quoted from these verses after His disciples asked Him why He spoke to the people in parables. Jesus said in Matthew 13:11-14, “He answered and said to them, ‘Because it has been given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given. For whoever has, to him more will be given, and he will have abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him. Therefore I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. And in them the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled, which says.’” Then Jesus quoted the verses above from Isaiah.

Paul quoted the same verses when he talked to the Jews in Rome. Acts 28:24-25 says, “And some were persuaded by the things which were spoken, and some disbelieved. So when they did not agree among themselves, they departed after Paul had said one word: ‘The Holy Spirit spoke rightly through Isaiah the prophet to our fathers.’” Then Paul quoted these same words from Isaiah. After quoting these verses Paul added in Acts 28:28-29, ““Therefore let it be known to you that the salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles, and they will hear it! And when he had said these words, the Jews departed and had a great dispute among themselves.” The Sadducees certainly did not understand the Scriptures even though they heard them read every Sabbath.

Jesus said the second thing they did not know was the power of God. Job did know the power of God to raise the dead. He said in Job 19:25-27, “For I know *that* my Redeemer lives, and He shall stand at last on the earth; and after my skin is destroyed, this *I know*, that in my flesh I shall see God, whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another. *How* my heart yearns within me!” Job understood the power of God. He knew that God would raise him back to life so that he could see God in his flesh. Then Jesus told the Sadducees that there will be no marriage in heaven. Instead we will be like the angels. The Sadducees did not believe the Word of God. They did not believe in the resurrection. They did not believe in angels. As a result, when Jesus mentioned that we will be like angels He pointed out another thing that they did not believe.

Jesus went on to give the Sadducees an example of what Moses taught about the resurrection.

Matthew 22:31-33 says, “But concerning the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was spoken to you by God, saying, ‘I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob’? ‘God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.’ And when the multitudes heard *this*, they were astonished at His teaching.” The reason why Jesus chose to share what Moses taught about the resurrection was due to the fact that the Sadducees only recognized the authority of the writings of Moses and did not give that same recognition to the other Old Testament writers. As a result, Jesus chose to quote the part of the Old Testament that they believed to show that Moses also believed in the resurrection.

God spoke to Moses at the burning bush in Exodus 3:5-6 when God called to Moses out of the burning bush. Those verses say, “Then He said, ‘Do not draw near this place. Take your sandals off your feet, for the place where you stand is holy ground.’ Moreover He said, ‘I am the God of your father—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.’ And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look upon God.” A key thing to notice about this statement is that God said “I am” the God of your father - the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob.” God did not say, “I was”. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob had all died physically several hundred years earlier. However, the fact that God used the “I am” made it clear that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were still living at that very moment although their physical bodies had died and been buried. In the New Testament in II Corinthians 5:8 we read, “We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord.” Due to the resurrection of Jesus, we see that the souls and spirits of all believers go immediately to be with the Lord.

Jesus used this statement in Exodus to make it clear to the Sadducees that Moses taught that God is the God of the living. Instead of believing the Sadducees only hardened their hearts. This hardening of their hearts was shown by what they did just a few days later. Matthew 28:11-15 says, “Now while they were going, behold, some of the guard came into the city and reported to the chief priests all the things that had happened. When they had assembled with the elders and consulted together, they gave a large sum of money to the soldiers, saying, “Tell them, ‘His disciples came at night and stole Him *away* while we slept.’ And if this comes to the governor’s ears, we will appease him and make you secure.” So they took the money and did as they were instructed; and this saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day.” Here we see that the religious leaders including the chief priests who were Sadducees paid a large sum of money in their efforts to deny the resurrection. In contrast, the multitudes were astonished by the teaching of Jesus.

We want to help our physical and spiritual children understand that there are also many people today like the Sadducees who will deny all of the evidence for the resurrection of Jesus in their efforts to hide the unbelief and evil that fills their hearts. We want to help our children learn to explain the results of such unbelief. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to explain to others the need for repentance and faith.

Jesus Answered the Pharisees

In our last topic we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain to those who deny the resurrection that their denial is a result of the unbelief and evil that fills their hearts because they are following the teachings of the Sadducees. In this topic we will see that the Pharisees made one final attempt to trap Jesus in His words.

The Sadducees and Pharisees were normally in conflict with one another. However, we saw in an earlier topic that they came together to try and trap Jesus. In our topic today we are going to see that the Pharisees tried to do what the Sadducees had been unable to do. Matthew 22:34-36 says, “But when the Pharisees heard that He had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together. Then one of them, a lawyer, asked Him a question, testing Him, and saying, ‘Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?’” The rivalry between these two groups probably caused the Pharisees to see this as one more opportunity to show the Sadducees that they could trap Jesus when the Sadducees had failed to trap Him. That rivalry was later illustrated in Acts when both groups wanted to destroy Paul. Acts 23:7-9 says, “And when he had said this, a dissension arose between the Pharisees and the Sadducees; and the assembly was divided. For Sadducees say that there is no resurrection—and no angel or spirit; but the Pharisees confess both. Then there arose a loud outcry. And the scribes of the Pharisees’ party arose and protested, saying, ‘We find no evil in this man; but if a spirit or an angel has spoken to him, let us not fight against God.’” Here, the Pharisees wanted to prove they could trap Jesus.

One of the Pharisees was also a lawyer and a scribe. As a result, he was the one that was chosen to ask Jesus their question in an effort to use his skills as a lawyer to trap Jesus. His question did not sound like a trap as he just asked, “Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?” We see that Jesus answered this question by quoting from the Old Testament. Matthew 22:37-40 says, “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.” The first part of this answer came from Deuteronomy 6:4-5. Those verses say, “You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength.” Some of the Greek translations added the word mind. Mark 12:30 says, “Hear, O Israel: the Lord is our God, the Lord is One. And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.’ This is the first commandment.” We see that Mark included this addition from the Greek translation to show the completeness of love.

Matthew originally wrote His book especially to show that Jesus had the legal right to be the King of the Jews. This is shown by the genealogy that is given in the first chapter and the many references to the kingdom throughout the book of Matthew. The Jews repeated what is called the Shema every morning and every evening. This originally was Deuteronomy 6:4. Later the Shema was expanded to include Deuteronomy 6:4-9, 11:13-21 and Numbers 15:37-41. We saw in the previous paragraph that Deuteronomy 6:4 says, “Hear, O Israel: the Lord is our God, the

Lord is One.” In Genesis 1:26 we read, “Then God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.” In this verse we see that God speaks of Himself as plural – Us, Our and Our. We refer to God as the triune God - Father, Son and Holy Spirit. He created us in His Image by making us one person with spirit, soul and body.

The lawyer had asked Jesus for the great commandment in the law. In these verses we see that Jesus did not stop after the first and great commandment but went on to say that the second is like it. Then Jesus quoted part of Leviticus 19:18 which 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.” Jesus quoted the part, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself” as the second that is like the first and great commandment. Jesus had taught this same basic principle in the Sermon on the Mount when He 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.” Jesus said that these two commands summarized the entire Old Testament. Just a few days later Jesus gave the disciples a New Commandment which would summarize the whole New Testament. In John 13:34-35 Jesus said, “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.”

In I John 4:19 we read, “We love Him because He first loved us.” We see just how much God loved us in the verse that probably is best known in the New Testament. John 3:16 says, “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.” These three commandments given in the paragraph above summarize how we are to respond to God’s love for us. We are to love God with our whole heart, soul and mind. We are to love our neighbor as we love ourselves. We are to love one another as Christ has loved us. Our neighbor would be every person that is not a Christian. One way we show this love is by sharing the good news of the Gospel with them. One another would be any person that is a Christian.

Mark tells us what the scribe said when Jesus finished His answer. Mark 12:32-34 says, “So the scribe said to Him, ‘Well *said*, Teacher. You have spoken the truth, for there is one God, and there is no other but He. And to love Him with all the heart, with all the understanding, with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love one’s neighbor as oneself, is more than all the whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.’ Now when Jesus saw that he answered wisely, He said to him, ‘You are not far from the kingdom of God.’ But after that no one dared question Him.” Here we see that this man gave a very thoughtful answer which shows that Jesus really made him think. We do not know if those thoughts were used by God to later bring this man to true repentance and faith.

Jesus then used this opportunity to ask the Pharisees a question. Matthew 22:41-46 says, “While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them, saying, ‘What do you think about the Christ? Whose Son is He?’ They said to Him, ‘The Son of David.’ He said to them, ‘How then does David in the Spirit call Him ‘Lord,’ saying: ‘The LORD said to my Lord, “Sit at My right hand, Till I make Your enemies Your footstool”’? If David then calls Him ‘*Lord*,’

how is He his Son?’ And no one was able to answer Him a word, nor from that day on did anyone dare question Him anymore.” In this question we see why Mark said that no one dared to question Jesus any more. No one could give an answer to this question. Let us see why that was true.

Many of the Jews were looking for the Messiah to come. The most common title that they had for the Messiah was “The Son of David”. That was how these men answered the first question of Jesus. However, the thought of the people was that this would be a descendent of David who would reestablish the earthly kingdom over which David had ruled. They did not understand that the kingdom of God was going to be an eternal kingdom because they had not realized that the “Son of David” was going to be conceived by the Holy Spirit so that Jesus would be the God/Man. The angel told Mary in Luke 1:35, “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.*’”

Jesus quoted Psalm 110:1 which says, “The LORD said to my Lord, ‘Sit at My right hand, till I make Your enemies Your footstool.’” Then Jesus asked the Pharisees and others gathered there, “If David then calls Him ‘Lord,’ how is He his Son?” Jesus also explained why David made this statement. Mark 12:36-37 says, “For David himself said by the Holy Spirit: ‘The LORD said to my Lord, ‘Sit at My right hand, till I make Your enemies Your footstool.’ Therefore David himself calls Him ‘*Lord*’; how is He *then* his Son?’” And the common people heard Him gladly.” First Jesus said that David made this statement by the Holy Spirit. This meant that He was inspired by the Holy Spirit to call his future descendent “Lord”. In this way Jesus made it clear that David recognized that his descendent would be God. This meant that His descendent was both God and man. That was one thing that the religious leaders refused to recognize.

We also see that the common people heard Jesus gladly. This gave the religious leaders a second reason not to ask Jesus any more questions. They were driven by their own fear. They were afraid that if they asked any more questions that would give Jesus another opportunity for Him to influence the common people. They were afraid they would lose their control over the people. Just a few weeks earlier the chief priests and scribes had said in John 11:48, “If we let Him alone like this, everyone will believe in Him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and nation.” They were afraid that everyone would believe Jesus and that would cause them to lose their control.

The Herodians, the Sadducees and the Pharisees had been silenced because of their own fear. As a result, they did not dare ask Jesus any more questions. This fear was the result of their refusal to repent of their sin of unbelief and come to Jesus in faith. Many people have that same attitude today. In contrast, we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to come to Jesus with boldness by helping them continue to grow in their understanding of the fact that Christ has given them true spiritual liberty. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children grow in their understanding of these things.