

Exploring Matthew 1-9

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PREFACE

The book of Matthew describes the birth, the ministry, and the death of Jesus Christ. His birth was a miraculous birth—born of a virgin. A bright star appeared and guided wise men from the east who sought to worship him. Matthew explains that Jesus is the long-awaited Messiah and King. He came to this world with a mission to save his people from the penalty of their sins and from the enslaving power of sin. During his ministry, he taught his people the way of God. His “Sermon on the Mount” (Matthew 5-7) describes fundamental principles for the life of his people. His parables describe important lessons, as well as point to the beauty of his redeeming work on the cross. He teaches his people “the Great Commandment” and gives them “the Great Commission.” He came to bring the kingdom of heaven to his people.

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Lesson 1 – The Birth of Jesus Christ

Matthew, one of Jesus' disciples, wrote this book approximately in 60-70 A.D. The Jews were waiting for the Messiah—the Anointed One—who would deliver them from their oppressors. They thought the Messiah should be a political figure. On the contrary, Jesus did not come to deliver the Jews from their political oppressors, but to deliver all his people—Jews and non-Jews—from their spiritual oppressors—the power of sin and evil. Matthew presents Jesus as the long-awaited Messiah and King, who has brought the kingdom of heaven to his people.

Read Matthew 1:1-17

Matthew begins his book by giving the genealogy of Jesus Christ. “Christ” and “Messiah” are titles of Jesus. “Christ” is from the Greek word “Christos” and “Messiah” is from the Hebrew word “Mashiach.” Both mean “the Anointed One” or “the Chosen One.” Matthew identifies Jesus as the son of David and the son of Abraham. Abraham is the first Jew and the ancestor of the Jews. He is also the spiritual father of all who believe in Jesus by faith, trusting and surrendering their lives to him. David was the famous king of Israel, who loved God and was loved by him. The Messiah was prophesied to come from the line of David, who would be a king like him, but his kingdom would never end. Matthew points out that Jesus is the promised Messiah and King.

Women are not usually named in Near Eastern genealogies, but Matthew purposefully identifies five women as Jesus' ancestors: Tamar (v.3), Rahab (v.5), Ruth—a Moabite (v.5), Bathsheba—the wife of Uriah (v.6), and Mary—the mother of Jesus (v.16). These women were ordinary and would not be expected by people to be the ancestors of the Messiah. God often does unexpected things in contrast to our expectation.

How does Matthew organize the genealogy of Jesus (v.17)?

Read Matthew 1:18-25

How could Mary get pregnant before she married Joseph and had sexual relationship with him (v.18)?

What did Joseph plan to do when he found out that his fiancée was pregnant (v.19)?

What can we learn about Joseph's character (v.19)?

Who appeared to Joseph and what message did Joseph receive (v.20)?

What name should Joseph give to his baby boy (v.21)?

What was the baby prophesied to do (v.21)?

The Bible teaches that all people were born with a sinful nature. We sin against God because we are sinners. Sin is disobeying or not conforming to God's law in any way. We sin against God in our thoughts, words, and actions. The penalty for our sins against God is death—total separation from God. Sin is evil and is a powerful force. Sin enslaves and corrupts us, making us to sin against God. The purpose of Jesus' coming to this world is to free us from the enslaving power of sin and the penalty of our sins.

The coming of the Messiah was already prophesied in the Old Testament. Many prophets spoke about the Messiah, his purpose of coming, and his life and ministry.

What shall people call the Messiah's name according to the Prophet Isaiah and what does that name mean (v.22-23, Isaiah 7:14)?

How do you feel if you know for certain that God is always with you, guiding your life?

What did Joseph do after waking up from sleep (v.24-25)?

Joseph was a godly man. He obeyed God, married his pregnant fiancée, and did not have sexual relations with her until she had given birth. Mary's conception was a miracle. She was still a virgin when she gave birth to Jesus.

Read Matthew 2:1-12

Where was Jesus born (v.1)?

Who was the ruler over Judea (v.1)?

Who came from the east looking for Jesus and what did they say to King Herod about him (v.1-2)?

What was their purpose of looking for Jesus (v.2)?

These wise men saw a special star in the sky and followed it. They came to King Herod and explained that they were looking for a child who was born to be "the king of the Jews."

How did Herod react to this news (v.3)?

What did Herod do in response (v.4)?

The chief priests and the scribes were the religious leaders of the Jewish community. They found a prophecy spoken by the Prophet Micah, who prophesied that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem in Judah (Micah 5:2). One of the important things the Messiah will do is to shepherd his people (v.5-6).

What did Herod ask the wise men to do and why did he ask them secretly (v.7-8)?

How did the wise men react when they saw the star stop over the place where the child was (v.9-10)?

What did they do once they saw Jesus (v.11)?

To worship is to show adoration and reverence to a deity. The wise men knew that Jesus was divine and not a regular human being, even though he was only a child. They travelled very far from the east in order to see and worship the child. They also gave him gifts to show their adoration to him. They knew that Jesus was the promised Messiah, the Savior of the world.

What did the wise men experience when they were sleeping (v.12)?

God protected Jesus and warned the wise men not to return to Herod. They followed God's guidance and returned back to their country by another way.

We see clearly the work of God in bringing the Messiah to the world. God worked in the lives of Joseph, Mary, and the wise men to witness the birth of the Messiah, the Savior of the world. God chose ordinary people—Joseph and Mary—to be the parents of the Messiah. God did not plan for the Messiah to be born in a royal family. Jesus, as the Messiah, would take the life of an ordinary man, going through difficulty and suffering in life. He came not to conquer kings and kingdoms, but to conquer sin and to save his people from the penalty of their sins and from the enslaving power of sin. He is Immanuel—God is with us. In him, we have hope.

Lesson 2 – Jesus as a Refugee & His Baptism

Previously, we have learned about the miraculous birth of Jesus. “Christ” and “Messiah” are titles of Jesus which mean “the Anointed One” or “the Chosen One.” Jesus is the Christ or the Messiah who has come to save his people from the penalty of their sins and from the enslaving power of sin. He is also called “Immanuel,” meaning “God is with us.” In him, we have hope.

Read Matthew 2:13-18

Who appeared to Joseph and what message did Joseph receive (v.13)?

Why do you think King Herod wanted to kill Jesus?

What did Joseph do after he woke up (v.14)?

The Prophet Hosea prophesied that Israel would be called out of Egypt and be delivered from their slavery (Hosea 11:1). Matthew explains that the history of Israel points to Jesus, the Son of God, who would live as a refugee in Egypt temporarily (v.15).

How did Herod react when the wise men did not report back to him? What did he do (v.16)?

Rachel was one of the ancestors of the Jews, the mother of Joseph and Benjamin. The Prophet Jeremiah described the weeping and lamentation among the people of Israel as they were attacked by the Babylonians (Jeremiah 31:15). Matthew explains that what Prophet Jeremiah spoke of pointed to the weeping and lamentation among Israel, because of the killing of their children by Herod (v.17-18).

Read Matthew 2:19-23

After Jesus grew up for some time in Egypt, Herod died because of complication of diseases.

Who appeared to Joseph and what message did Joseph receive (v.19-20)?

Where did Joseph take his wife and Jesus to (v.21)?

What city and district did Joseph take his family to when he found out the Roman government had put Archelaus as the new ruler over Judea (v.22-23)?

Judea is in the southern part of Israel and Galilee is in the northern part. Jesus would grow up in Nazareth—a small and insignificant city in Israel. He would grow up among insignificant citizens of an insignificant place. When Jesus was thirty years old, he would begin his ministry.

Read Matthew 3:1-12

John the Baptist was a relative of Jesus through their mothers. John was also born miraculously because his mother conceived him at an old age.

What did John the Baptist do in Judea (v.1-2)?

What does *repentance* mean (v.2)?

In the Bible, to repent means more than just to feel bad about the bad thing we do. To repent means to turn away from sin with regret and sorrow, and to turn to God with the full intention to be obedient. John preached and encouraged people to repent because “the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” Jesus, the king of heaven, came to bring the kingdom of heaven—the kingdom of God—to us. Matthew quotes Prophet Isaiah (Isaiah 40:3) and explains that John is “the voice” that Isaiah had spoken about. John wanted them to make their hearts ready for Jesus, because he is the King and the Lord—the only one they should worship and follow (v.3).

What did John wear and eat (v.4)?

People came and listened to John’s preaching. Many confessed their sins and were baptized (v.5-6). There were also many Pharisees and Sadducees who came to see what John was doing. These religious leaders of the community were supposed to teach the people the way of God. Instead, they misled the people to follow the religious rules they made. They were prideful, legalistic, and self-righteous.

What did John say to them (v.7-8)?

John warned them that they would face God’s judgment upon their sins and self-righteousness if they did not repent from their sins. If they repented, their behaviors would prove it. Genuine repentance produces fruit. The internal change of heart will be manifested in external behaviors.

Abraham was the first Jew and the ancestor of the Jewish people. God made a covenant with Abraham that through him all nations would be blessed. The Jewish religious leaders took pride in this covenant and thought they would be in the kingdom of God for sure. In contrast, John rebuked them and warned them of their sins, and stated that they did not have any prestige in the kingdom of God. If they did not want to repent from their sins, they would receive God’s judgment (v.9).

How did John illustrate God’s judgment (v.10)?

Jesus came to fulfill God’s covenant promise to Abraham. Through Jesus, people from all nations are blessed. Jesus came to bear the judgment of God upon our sins as our substitute, in order that by repenting from our sins, putting our faith in him, and trusting and surrendering our lives to him, we may receive God’s forgiveness and be allowed to enter the kingdom of heaven.

What did John say about Jesus (v.11-12)?

John baptized people with water as an outward sign of their inward repentance. Church leaders in the present day continue to use water to baptize believers. John said that Jesus would baptize people with the Holy Spirit and fire. At the day of Pentecost, Jesus sent the Holy Spirit, appearing as *tongues of fire*, to dwell in his people. The metaphor of fire points to the internal cleansing of sins in us. The cleansing by water in baptism signifies the internal baptism and cleansing by fire done by the Holy Spirit in us. The metaphor of fire also points to the final judgment of Jesus at the day of his return. “The wheat” points to Jesus’ people and “the chaff” points to those who reject him, never wanting to believe in him and to trust their lives to him.

Read Matthew 3:13-17

Why did Jesus come to John (v.13)?

What did John say to Jesus (v.14)?

What was Jesus’ reply to him (v.15)?

Jesus came to John to be baptized because he wanted to be identified with his people, for whom he would die. His baptism also marked the beginning of his ministry. In the Old Testament, before a prophet began his ministry, he needed to be anointed and to get affirmation from God.

What happened when John was baptizing Jesus (v.16-17)?

Here we see that God the Father affirmed Jesus—his own Son—to begin his ministry to save his people from their sins and from the enslavement of sin. The Holy Spirit came and rest on him, spiritually baptizing and anointing him, as well as empowering him. God the Father and God the Holy Spirit affirmed their love for God the Son, showing that they would be with him in his mission to sacrifice himself for the sins and unrighteousness of his people and to make them righteous in him.

Lesson 3 – The Temptation of Jesus & the Beginning of His ministry

Previously we have learned that Jesus was baptized as he began his ministry. At his baptism, God the Father and God the Holy Spirit affirmed their love for God the Son, showing that they would be with Jesus in his mission to sacrifice himself for the sins and unrighteousness of his people and to make them righteous in him.

Read Matthew 4:1-11

Jesus was preparing himself to begin his ministry on earth. He was brought by the Spirit of God to the wilderness. He spent time alone with God, praying and fasting for forty days and nights. Then God let him be tempted by the devil. To be our Savior, Jesus needed to experience temptation and suffering as a man. He needed to become our model and hope to overcome temptation and suffering.

What was his condition after fasting (v.2)?

What did the tempter [the devil] say to Jesus (v.3)?

Why do you think the devil said, “If you are the Son of God?”

Temptation usually starts with a suggestive, enticing, and tempting thought in our minds.

What was Jesus’ response to him (v.4)?

The first temptation that Jesus received was to meet his physical hunger. Jesus replied to the devil by quoting Old Testament scripture in Deuteronomy 8:3. Bread or physical food sustains our physical lives, but God’s word is spiritual food that sustains our spiritual lives. Without God’s word, we cannot live and grow spiritually. Jesus did not discuss the tempting thought about what he could do as the Son of God but rejected it.

What was the consequence if Jesus would have done what the devil suggested?

The devil then brought Jesus to the pinnacle of the great temple in the holy city—most likely Jerusalem (v.5).

What did the devil say to Jesus there? Why (v.6)?

The devil once again said, “If you are the Son of God.” The devil knows that Jesus is the Son of God. He said this to make Jesus to do his bidding. This time the devil even used Old Testament scripture and twisted the original meaning of Psalm 91:11-12.

What was Jesus' answer to him (v.7)?

The devil wanted Jesus to fall into pride—the most major sin—in this second temptation. If people saw Jesus jump and angels came to catch him—a spectacular performance—people would accept him as God and worship him immediately. This was a great temptation for Jesus. He answered the devil by quoting Deuteronomy 6:16. God is not to be tested but trusted. We need to obey and trust God. The devil likes to make us think that we should question this truth. The devil likes to tempt us, “Why do you have to obey God? You can be yourself.” If we give in to our pride, we become self-centered in our thoughts, words, and actions.

Where did the devil bring Jesus next? Why (v.8)?

What did the devil say to Jesus there (v.9)?

What was Jesus' response to him (v.10)?

Satan, the devil, wanted Jesus to fall into greediness—another major sin—in this third temptation. The devil tried to direct Jesus' focus on the glory of the world, offering him money, power, people's attention and worship, etc. In the movie *The Lord of the Rings*, Sauron's ring is the object of evil and temptation. Once people's eyes look at the ring, they are tempted to possess it. They are also drawn to worship the ring as their idol—god, *my precious*), as if without it, life lacks meaning and fulfillment.

The devil wanted Jesus to sin and fail in his mission to save his people. The devil was saying to Jesus, “I am in power over this world, but I can give them to you if you worship me.” The Bible describes the devil as the deceiver, the tempter, and the Father of lies. Jesus answered him by quoting Deuteronomy 6:13.

What did the devil do then (v.11)?

Who came to Jesus and what did they do (v.11)?

The devil's three temptations for Jesus are three major temptations in our lives: the lust of the flesh, the pride of life, and the lust of the eye. If Jesus had given in to the devil's lie, then we would have had no hope. If Jesus had compromised his mission with the devil, then we would have no Savior. Jesus defeated the devil and overcame his temptations. Three times Jesus was tempted, and three times he used the word of God to defeat the devil. Jesus' ultimate battle with the devil is at the cross. Jesus' mission was to sacrifice himself and die as our substitute for the punishment of our sins. The devil tempted him to abandon his mission to save us, but Jesus did not abandon it. He died for us, bearing the punishment of our sins as our substitute, so that we can be saved from the penalty of our sins and the enslaving power of sin and have a new life in him.

Read Matthew 4:12-17

When Jesus heard that Herod had arrested John (Matthew 14:1-12), he withdrew into Capernaum in Galilee. Jesus fulfilled a prophecy spoken by the Prophet Isaiah. From the beginning of his ministry, Jesus intended to reach out both the Jews and the Gentiles—people from all nations (v.12-15).

What does “the people dwelling in darkness have seen a great light, and for those dwelling in the region and shadow of death, on them a light has dawned” mean (v.16)?

What did Jesus do in Capernaum (v.17)?

Jesus asked people to repent—turning away from their sins with regret and sorrow, and turning their hearts to God with the full intention to be obedient. Jesus came to bring the kingdom of heaven to us and to deliver us from darkness and the “shadow of death.” He is the great light. He is the light that has dawned. Jesus says, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life” (John 8:12).

Read Matthew 4:18-22

Whom did Jesus see by the Sea of Galilee and what did he ask of them (v.18-19)?

What does “fishers of men” mean (v.19)?

To follow Jesus is to trust and surrender our lives to him. Jesus asked Peter and Andrew to leave their occupation as fishers of fish and to follow him with a new occupation as fishers of men, bringing people to the kingdom of heaven by sharing the good news of Jesus Christ—the gospel.

How did Peter and Andrew respond to Jesus’ calling for them (v.20)?

Whom else did Jesus call to follow him and to be fishers of men (v.21)?

How did they respond to Jesus’ calling for them (v.22)?

Mark 1:20 tells us that besides his sons, Zebedee had servants who also helped his business. James and John did not just leave their father alone. They made sure his father and his business were in good care.

All Jesus’ followers are fishers of men and his light bearers and reflectors, bearing and reflecting his spiritual light in this dark world.

Lesson 4 – Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount

In the previous lesson, we learned that Jesus overcame three major temptations from the devil: the lust of the flesh, the pride of life, and the lust of the eye. If Jesus had compromised his mission with the devil, then we would have no Savior. Jesus defeated the devil and did not abandon his mission to save us from evil and darkness. He began his ministry by asking people to repent, turning away from their sins with regret and sorrow, and turning their hearts to God with the full intention to be obedient. Jesus came to bring the kingdom of heaven to us and to deliver us from darkness. He is *the great light—the light that has dawned*.

Read Matthew 4:23-25

What did Jesus do in Galilee (v.23)?

“The gospel of the kingdom” is the good news that God has a plan to save people from sin and evil. Jesus asked people to repent. Jesus would later demonstrate that through his sacrifice, people could be made right with God. Jesus healed people. His mercy ministry accompanied his preaching ministry. This is a model for Christian ministry. We try to meet the physical needs of people, as we try to meet their spiritual need for Jesus.

What happened as a result of Jesus’ ministry (v.24-25)?

Some followed Jesus for the right reason—believing in him and trusting their lives to him. Some followed him for the wrong motives—wanting fame or other benefits for themselves. While some would follow Jesus and even would suffer and die for him, some would later turn their backs on him.

Read Matthew 5:1-12

Where did Jesus go when he saw the crowds coming to him (v.1)?

Matthew 5-7 is known as “The Sermon on the Mount.” All the sayings of Jesus in these three chapters were spoken at one sermon to his disciples. Matthew 5:2-12 is known as “The Beatitudes,” in which Jesus teaches about those who are blessed by God. The Greek word for “blessed” is “makarios,” which means happy and being well spiritually—the joy of the soul—as a result of God’s presence with the person. The meaning also includes a happier future destiny given from God. There are nine statements that begin with the word “blessed.”

What is the first statement and what does it mean (v.3)?

This first statement is the foundation for the other eight statements. Jesus teaches us to be *poor in spirit*, which means realizing that there is nothing good we can offer to God. We are born sinners and

daily sin against God in our thoughts, words, and actions. We are in need of God's forgiveness and mercy. God wants us to humbly realize our spiritual poverty and to come to him. God does not like those who are proud and think that they can earn or trade-in God's blessings with their works or worldly riches. Unless we come to God with empty hearts, he will not fill our emptiness with his love. The only way we can be spiritually blessed, happy, and rich in God is by humbly coming to him as people who are *poor in spirit*—repenting and turning our hearts away from sins and pride with godly sorrow, and turning to God with the full intention to be obedient.

What is the second statement and what does it mean (v.4)?

Those who mourn are those who mourn over the sin and evil of their own in particular and over the sin of humankind against God in general. Those who are aware of this and mourn are blessed by God. They are genuinely aware of their need of God's forgiveness and their destiny without it consequently. They are also aware of the destiny of others without God's forgiveness. They are aware that people in general rebel against God. We do not give proper glory to God in our lives. Mourning for sins is an aspect of repentance. Repentance is turning away from sin accompanied by godly sorrow or mourning over the sin, and turning our hearts to God with full intention to be obedient.

What is the third statement and what does it mean (v.5)?

Spiritual meekness is an attitude of humility and submission to God. Spiritually meek people always seek God's guidance and depend on his grace. They know that they are poor in spirit. They realize and mourn over their sins. If we are spiritually meek, we "shall inherit the earth"—the kingdom of God, the new heaven and earth. It is an eternal place of rest for us, without sin and evil.

What is the fourth statement and what does it mean (v.6)?

People hunger and thirst for money, power, pleasure, praise, and other things this sinful world can offer. Jesus teaches us that we should hunger and thirst for God and his righteousness. We should daily consume our spiritual food—the word of God, the Bible. We should daily practice righteousness in our lives and desire righteousness being done. We need to have a right relationship with God and others. We can be like this only if we understand that we are poor in spirit, mourn over our sins, and humbly seeking God. When we repent and put our faith in Jesus, God will satisfy us by imputing, or crediting, the righteousness of Jesus to us. This is how we are justified and made right in our relationship with God. Having been justified, God sanctifies us, making us more and more righteous in the image of Jesus.

What is the fifth statement and what does it mean (v.7)?

This does not mean that we will only receive God's mercy if we show mercy to others. This means that having repented from our sins and received much of God's forgiveness and mercy, we can now show much mercy to others. Believers—those who have received much love, forgiveness, and mercy—are capable of showing much mercy to others out of their love for God.

What is the sixth statement and what does it mean (v.8)?

We cannot make our sinful and corrupted hearts pure, only God can do this to us. After we are justified by God on the basis of the righteousness of Jesus that is imputed to us, God begins the work of sanctification in us, purifying us from the inside out and renewing us in the image of his Son, Jesus Christ, enabling us more and more to die to sin and to live to righteousness. One day, we shall see God face to face. He will bring us to rest and live with him in the new heaven and earth.

What is the seventh statement and what does it mean (v.9)?

Spiritual peacemakers are those who attempt to bring peace between people and God. They bring the message of reconciliation—the gospel—that in Jesus, people can be saved from their sins, received God’s forgiveness, and be at peace with God. They are the sons of God—believers. We are “sons of God,” because we are sanctified in the image of the Son of God, Jesus Christ. In our union with Jesus, we are co-heirs of God’s kingdom.

What are the eighth and the ninth statements and what do they mean (v.10-11)?

To be persecuted for righteousness’ sake means to be persecuted because of being a follower of Jesus Christ. To follow Jesus is to be an enemy of the devil and of those who reject Jesus. When we try to be good Christians and obey God, we will make many enemies in this world. Many people will persecute us, either emotionally, verbally, physically, or a combination of these. When we suffer for Jesus, it shows our genuine faith in him. We should rejoice and be glad, because we are “blessed.” He will make sure that our reward is great in heaven. He will bring us to rest in his kingdom (v.12).

Lesson 5 – Shining Our Light in this Broken World

We have learned about “The Beautitudes” in previous lesson. The only way we can be spiritually blessed and happy in God is by humble repentance—turning our hearts away from sins and pride with godly sorrow, and turning to God with the full intention to be obedient. God then forgives our sins and justifies us on the basis of the righteousness of Jesus that is imputed to us. After justifying us in Jesus, God begins the work of sanctification in us, purifying us from the inside out and renewing us completely after his image, enabling us more and more to die to sin and to live to righteousness. God adopts us as his children and makes us heirs of his kingdom.

Read Matthew 5:13-16

What does Jesus say about his followers (v.13)?

What do we do with salt that is not salty (v.13)?

What should we do to preserve *our saltiness*—our good impact or influence as God’s children in this broken world?

What does Jesus say about his followers (v.14)?

What illustrations does Jesus use to teach his followers to shine *their light* (v.14-15)?

For what purpose do we shine *our light* in this broken world (v.16)?

What does shining *our light* look like in our daily lives?

Read Matthew 5:17-20

What does Jesus say about his coming to this world (v.17)?

“The Law and the Prophets” refer to the whole Old Testament which points forward to Jesus Christ. Jesus came to fulfill them and not to abolish them. He came to fulfill all the prophecies about him in the Old Testament. The whole Old Testament is about the gospel of Jesus Christ for all nations, accomplished through his suffering, death, and resurrection. Jesus came to this world and lived a life of perfect obedience to the law of God for us. When we believe in him and put our faith in him, trusting and surrendering our lives to him, his perfect obedience to the law of God—his righteousness—is imputed to us. That is how we are justified in our union with him.

What does Jesus say about the law of God (v.18)?

When Jesus said, “I say to you,” it showed he had full authority to interpret God’s word. He used this phrase several times. He wanted his hearers to have a right and clear understanding of God’s word, as well as to clear the misinterpretations and misunderstandings they had.

Followers of Jesus need to treat the law of God with reverence. Whether obeying or teaching God’s law, we need to do it with reverence. The Pharisees—the religious leaders of the Jewish community—were known to be legalistic in obeying and teaching God’s law. They focused on the external behaviors, rather than the internal—their hearts and love for God. We need to obey God’s law out of love for him, and not in order to get something in return from God or in order to be seen good by others. We cannot enter the kingdom of heaven if we try to be righteous before God like the Pharisees did. We can enter God’s kingdom only by repenting from our sins, turning our hearts to God, putting our faith in Jesus, and trusting and surrendering our lives to him (v.19-20).

Read Matthew 5:21-30

What does Jesus teach about anger (v.22)?

In the Ten Commandments, God commands us “You shall not murder” (Exodus 20:13). The Pharisees interpreted this law and taught the Jews that actual murder of another person’s life was forbidden; otherwise they would be liable to God’s judgment. However, Jesus explains the full meaning of this law that anger and murder are equally liable to God’s judgment. Anger is the root of murder. God judges both the external action and the internal motive of our hearts. We sin against God not only in our external actions, but also in our thoughts and words (v.21-22).

What does Jesus teach about worshipping God and reconciling with others (v.23-24)?

God wants us to come to him with a loving and peaceful heart. What he desires is our hearts—our love for him and obedience to his words—and not our offerings or gifts. Jesus teaches us that having peace and reconciliation with one another is important in our worship to God. (v.25-26).

What does Jesus teach about lustful sexual intention (v.28)?

In the Ten Commandments, God commands us “You shall not commit adultery” (Exodus 20:14). The Pharisees interpreted this law and taught the Jews that actual sexual relationship outside marriage was forbidden. However, Jesus explained that the thought of having an unlawful relationship is as sinful as the act of committing it.

How does Jesus elaborate the dangers of sin that dwells in our bodies (v.29-30)?

Jesus teaches us that our internal hearts are the root of our sinful acts. What our hands do comes from our hearts. Jesus speaks figuratively about “throwing away our sinful eyes” and “cutting of our sinful hands” to emphasize that what we actually need is *spiritual heart surgery*. Without God renewing our hearts, our inclination is always to sin against his law.

Jesus teaches us that hell is a real place—a place for those who rejects God. We are all sinners and deserve hell. We can only be saved by God if he performs spiritual surgery on our hearts, changing us from the inside out. We cannot perform spiritual surgery on our own hearts. We need God to help us. When God does, it is only by his grace that he saves us from sin and its enslaving power in us.

Our sins need to be punished by God. The reason Jesus came to this world is to save us. He sacrificed himself to die bearing the punishment of our sins as our substitute, in order that by believing and putting our faith in him, we can receive God’s forgiveness and be made new persons. God renews our hearts. He justifies us in Jesus and begins the work of sanctification in us, purifying us from the inside out and renewing us completely after his image, enabling us more and more to die to sin and to live to righteousness.

Lesson 6 – Imitating Our Heavenly Father

We have learned that our internal hearts are the root of our sinful acts. We need God to help us to perform spiritual surgery to our hearts, changing us from the inside out. Jesus wants his followers to be the salt and light of this world, bringing good impacts to the people around us for the kingdom of God.

Read Matthew 5:31-37

What does Jesus teach about divorce (v.31-32)?

The religious leaders of the Jewish community made divorce and remarriage easy. This is not what God has intended when he instituted marriage. In God's eyes, marriage is a life-time covenant relationship between a man and a woman. Jesus allows divorce only on the ground of sexual immorality. Husbands should love and sacrifice themselves for their wives, just as Jesus loves and sacrifices himself for his church.

What does Jesus teach about taking an oath (v.33-36)?

An oath is a solemn declaration and is binding. The Jews apparently used oaths in casual conversations. They used different phrases to make oaths. They believed an oath made by "the heaven" was considered more solemn and binding than an oath made by "the earth." Jesus explains that an oath is an oath, and is equally solemn and binding before God, no matter what phrases is being used. Jesus does not forbid the use of oaths in a court of law. He wants his followers to speak the truth and be honest in all their conversations.

What does Jesus teach about how our words should be (v.37)?

Read Matthew 5:38-48

God gave a rule for the Jewish court that a criminal should be punished according to the crime. This is to prevent anyone from exercising a greater personal vengeance to the criminal (v.38).

What does Jesus teach about retaliation or vengeance (v.39-42)?

What is the underlined life principle we can draw from Jesus' teaching?

Jesus wants his followers to be the light of this world and to be good examples for others. Jesus wants us to pursue peace and to bear necessary consequence of it. Jesus himself has given a good example in his life for us. He wants us to trust in the sovereign God for judgment and retaliation. God will make all things right at the end.

The Jewish community leaders wrongly interpreted God's law that to love "your neighbor" was to love only "your fellow Jews" and hate your enemies (v.43). Jesus corrected their misunderstanding that "your neighbor" includes your enemies.

What should we do to our enemies according to Jesus (v.44)?

Why (v.45)?

How does God give his common grace to all people (v.45)?

Tax collectors were Jewish people who worked for the Roman government to collect taxes from their own people. They often cheated people when they collected taxes. They took more money by force and would keep the extra money for themselves. They worked well only with those who shared benefits with them. Jesus wants his followers to be different than others. He wants us to love and show kindness to all people equally. He wants us to reach out to all people. Unlike the Gentiles—non-Jewish people who worshipped different gods—Jesus wants his followers to greet and welcome all people, regardless of their religious beliefs, cultural backgrounds, ethnicities, or nationalities. He wants us to pray for their souls, so that they too will come to know our God (v.46-47).

What does Jesus want us to be? Why (v.48)?

True followers of Jesus Christ have been adopted as God's children. We can call God our heavenly Father. God is loving and perfect. As his children, our duty is to imitate and reflect his character to the people around us.

If God is your heavenly Father, does it mean anything to you?

Read Matthew 6:1-4

What should we be careful of (v.1)?

Why should we not give to the needy in order to be praised by others (v.2)?

What is a hypocrite (v.2)?

Hypocrites like to do what seems to be religious duties, such as giving to the needy, in order to be seen by others. They do those things with a self-centered motive. They may receive their reward—earthly reward—such as the praise from others that they seek for or other benefits from others for themselves.

What does “do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing” mean (v.3-4)?

While people see our external actions, God sees our internal heart motive. Helping people or doing certain things in order to receive praise from others or in order to receive something back in return for our own benefits does not please our heavenly Father. God is delighted when we do these things out of love for him. When no one sees, God still sees what we do. When we practice humility, we grow in imitating our heavenly Father. He surely takes notice and will reward us with spiritual blessings.

Read Matthew 6:5-8

How did the Jewish religious hypocrites pray (v.5)?

How should we pray (v.6)?

What should we not do when we pray (v.7)?

Why (v.8)?

Gentiles—non-Jewish people who worship false gods—prayed with vain repetition of words in order to make their gods listened to them. Jesus, however, explains that our God and heavenly Father knows our needs before we ask him. He sees and knows all things. We can take comfort and have assurance that our heavenly Father will take care of us.

Lesson 7 – Praying to Our Heavenly Father & Trusting in His Love for Us

We have learned that true followers of Jesus Christ have been adopted as God’s children. We can call God our heavenly Father. God is loving and perfect. As his children, our duty is to imitate and reflect his characteristics and attributes to the people around us. We can take comfort and be assured that our heavenly Father knows our needs before we ask him. He sees and knows all things.

Read Matthew 6:9-15

“Hallowed be your name” means God’s name is holy and worthy to be praised. “Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven” means acknowledging God’s sovereign rule over all things and his will to be established on earth and in our lives as it is in heaven (v.9-10).

What do you think God’s will for your personal life is?

“Give us this day our daily bread” means recognizing God as the Provider of our daily lives and asking him for our daily provisions, which are not limited to food, but also include many other things (v.11).

What are our daily needs?

“Forgive us our debts, as we also forgive our debtors” means acknowledging our spiritual debts—sins against God—confessing them before God, and asking for forgiveness. We daily sins against God in our thoughts, words, and actions. As we are humble before God and seek his forgiveness for our sins, he will strengthen us to forgive others who wrong us as well. If we are forgiven much, we will be able to forgive others much as well. Those who are not forgiven will not be able to forgive others (v.12).

Was there a time when it was difficult for you to forgive another person?

Our sins against God are beyond count. We deserve to be punished greatly. God says that the penalty of a single sin against God, who is the Creator of the universe and has the supreme authority, is death—a total separation from God and all his goodness. Jesus came and sacrificed himself to bear the penalty of all our sins, in order that we can receive God’s forgiveness by believing and putting our faith in him, trusting and surrendering our lives to him.

Will that difficult time for you to forgive another person be easy if on the same day you receive God’s forgiveness for all your sins against him?

If we realize that we are equally sinful as other people, it will not be hard to forgive others. Jesus warns us that if we do not forgive others, our heavenly Father will not forgive us either. If we repeatedly show this behavior, it shows that we may not be true followers of Jesus—we have not experienced deep and heart-felt forgiveness of God for us. True followers of Jesus are able to forgive others (v.14-15).

“Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil” means asking God not to let us be tempted by the devil and consequently fall into sin against God. God often times grows us to spiritual maturity through temptations and struggles. Because God knows our weaknesses, we can ask him not to let us be tempted and fall into sin, instead of getting our faith stronger in him (v.13).

Read Matthew 6:16-24

What does Jesus teach about fasting (v.16-17)?

Why (v.18)?

Jesus reemphasizes that what matters to God is the motive of our hearts and not merely our external acts. God is not pleased with those who seek to be praised by others for doing religious acts. God delights with those who have a right relationship with him.

Why should we lay up treasures in heaven and not on earth (v.19-20)?

What are worldly treasures and what are heavenly treasures?

What does Jesus say about the relationship between our hearts and our treasures (v.21)?

What does “the eye is the lamp of the body” mean (v.22-23)?

We are not able to see the things of God because of our sins that blind us. God needs to heal our spiritual sight by performing surgery to our spiritual eyes. God heals us by his word and gives us the gift of faith through his word. God enlightens us by his word.

Jesus says, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life” (John 8:12). “The people dwelling in darkness have seen a great light” (Matthew 4:16). Jesus is our light, guiding us to live in this spiritually dark world.

Why can we not serve two masters—God and money (v.24)?

Read Matthew 6:25-34

What does “life is more than food, and the body more than clothing” mean (v.25)?

How does Jesus illustrate that we are more valuable than the birds in the eyes of God (v.26)?

What is one reason not to be anxious (v.27)?

How does Jesus illustrate that we should not be anxious about our clothing (v.28-30)?

God, as our heavenly Father, cares about us and takes care of us. Life in this broken and sinful world indeed can be difficult, but we can rest in God. He knows and supplies our needs. He loves us (v.32).

What should we do primarily (v.33)?

What should we not do therefore? Why (v.34)?

To “seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness” means to prioritize our right relationship with God daily and to trust in his sovereignty and wisdom to meet our daily needs. This implies that we should not worry about our lives, because being worried means not having enough faith in our heavenly Father. God promises us that he will meet the necessary supports of our lives. He wants to prioritize him in our lives, loving him more than all things in this world. This is for our own good. The closer and deeper our personal relationship with our heavenly Father is, the less worry we have in life. Experiencing the sovereignty and wisdom of God increases our faith in him. It takes away anxieties and increases joy in our hearts.

How have you seen the sovereignty and wisdom of God in your personal life, in the life of others, or in the history of the world?

Lesson 8 – Jesus is the Narrow Gate that Leads to Eternal Life

We have learned how to pray to God and to prioritize our right relationship with him daily, as well as to trust in his sovereignty and wisdom to meet our daily needs. As our heavenly Father, God loves us and promises to take care of us and to supply our needs. The most important thing he wants is for us to prioritize him in our lives, loving him more than all things in this world. This is for our own good. When we experience the sovereignty and love of God for us, it takes away anxieties and increases joy in our hearts. Consequently our love for him and our faith in him will grow.

Read Matthew 7:1-6

What should we not do (v.1)?

Why (v.2)?

God has instituted the courts of law to judge people and to maintain justice. However, there are people who have a habit of judging others harshly or slandering others without grounds. Jesus warns us of this kind of behavior. We need to judge ourselves and should not assume to have authority over others. God is the one who ultimately maintains justice and judges everyone justly.

What are we usually unable to see (v.3-4)?

Why?

A hypocrite is one who pretends to be religiously or morally virtuous, but in fact does not possess the quality. Jesus often warned the Jewish community religious leaders of their hypocrisy. They resisted the message of the gospel. With such people who keep rejecting the gospel—what is holy and valuable like pearls—we do not need to spend much time. In the same principle, we do not need to spend much time in giving good advice to those who keep mocking and scorning, because it is a waste (v.5-6).

Read Matthew 7:7-11

What illustration does Jesus use to teach us about prayer (v.7-8)?

How is God, as our heavenly Father, compared to earthly fathers (v.9-11)?

Jesus teaches us that we need to persevere in our prayers. The principle here is that we need to *seek* what we *ask* from God. We need to labor on it and keep *knocking*, pleading with God. Our God is a good heavenly Father. He loves to hear our prayers. He is a prayer-hearing God. He will “give good things to those who ask him.”

Read Matthew 7:12-14

What is *the golden rule* (v.12)?

“The Law and the Prophets” refer to the whole Old Testament, which teaches us to love God with all our hearts and to love other people just as we love ourselves.

What does Jesus say about the wide gate (v.13)?

What does Jesus say about the narrow gate (v.14)?

Jesus teaches us that the gate to heaven and to eternal life with God is narrow and the way is hard, marked by many struggles and sufferings. In contrast, the gate to destruction—hell—is wide and the way is easy, marked by worldly pleasures. Those who enter the wide gate to hell are many, but those who enter the narrow gate to heaven are few. Jesus would explain later that he is the narrow gate. He is the way to heaven and to eternal life with God. Many would not believe in Jesus and would reject him. Those who follow and believe in Jesus, their lives would be marked by many struggles and sufferings in this world. Followers of Jesus have three enemies: (1) the devil, (2) this sinful world, and (3) the flesh – our sinful nature and its sinful desires. Jesus teaches us that the eternal joy and life with God in heaven is incomparable with the temporary struggles and sufferings in the world.

How do we live our lives with eternal perspective?

Read Matthew 7:15-23

What should we beware of (v.15)?

How do we recognize false prophets and teachers (v.16, 20)?

What do *their fruits* mean?

How does Jesus illustrate a healthy tree and a diseased tree (v.17-18)?

What will happen to every tree that does not bear good fruit (v.19)?

There have been many false teachers in this world, teaching people to reject Jesus and the Bible—the word of God. Jesus gives a warning to all false teachers who attempt to corrupt and lead people away from God and his truth. God will surely judge and destroy them.

Who will enter the kingdom of heaven (v.21)?

Where do we find the will of God for us?

The will of God the Father for us is to repent—turning away from our sins and turning our hearts to him—and to believe and put our faith in Jesus his Son, trusting and surrendering our lives to him. Many people may call Jesus “Lord” or acknowledge him as *a lord* or *a master*, but not *the Lord* of their lives. To have Jesus as the Lord and Master of our lives is to trust and surrender our lives to him alone. This is the will of God the Father for us. Followers of Jesus need to have the conviction and the fruits of the lordship of Jesus in their lives.

“On that day” refers to the day of Jesus’ return to bring judgment to this world—also called the Judgment Day (v.22).

What will many people say to Jesus on that day (v.22)?

What will Jesus say to them (v.23)?

“I never knew you” means that Jesus never had a personal, close, and intimate relationship with them. The biblical meaning of “knowing someone” indicates a personal, close, and intimate relationship—a covenant relationship. False prophets and teachers do the work of the devil. They can do great works—deceptive signs and wonders—that people do not expect and are not aware of this spiritually deceptive reality. Jesus calls them “workers of lawlessness” because they are against God’s ordained law. When Jesus returns, they will be begging him to let them enter his kingdom. However, Jesus will tell them, “Depart from me.” To be departed from God is to be completely separated from him and all his goodness—to be “cut down and thrown into the fire” (v.19). Jesus will destroy them when he returns.

There are many people who want to be in God’s kingdom or to receive God’s good gifts in this present life, but do not want to have a personal and close relationship with him. They do not care about God, but only his good gifts. They reject Jesus as *the narrow gate* and *the way* to God’s kingdom. But to those who believe and put their faith in Jesus, having a personal and close relationship with him, he will welcome them to his kingdom.

Lesson 9 – Jesus is the Rock Foundation of Our Lives

We have learned that Jesus is *the narrow gate* and the way that leads to eternal life. He desires to have a personal and close relationship with us and to have his lordship in our lives. He has taught us that God is a good heavenly Father, who loves to hear our prayers and will give good things to those who ask him. Jesus wants us to love God with all our hearts, not because of the good gifts he can give us. Jesus also wants us to be careful of false teachers in this world, who teach contrary to the word of God—the Bible.

Read Matthew 7:24-29

How does Jesus describe a person who hears his words and obeys them (v.24)?

What would happen to the house built on the rock when a storm hit it? Why (v.25)?

How does Jesus describe a person who hears his words but does not obey him (v.26)?

What would happen to the house built on the sand when a storm hit it? Why (v.27)?

Jesus teaches us to recognize whether a house is built on a strong foundation or not. The house is our lives. The foundation on which we build our lives upon is the one that holds and sustains our lives. There are many foundations that people try to build their lives upon. Some try to build their source of security or happiness on money or power.

From what other sources do people try to find happiness or security?

The storm is a sudden hardship that comes to our lives. It can be a natural disaster like hurricane, flood, or earthquake that destroys our house and possessions. It can also be a sudden tragedy or crisis, such as an accident, death of a family member, or a severe illness that comes to us. Jesus teaches us that we need a strong foundation for our lives so that we will not collapse when a sudden hardship, tragedy, or crisis comes to us.

Have you ever experienced any of these?

When Jesus is teaching, he wants his audience to think about the truth of who he is—that he is the answer and the truth that they should look into seriously. Jesus points to himself that he is the foundation we should have—not one of the foundations, but the only foundation. Jesus was teaching, “If you have me as the foundation of your life, I will hold and sustain your life. Come to me and have a personal and loving relationship with me. Have me as the Lord of your life and I will give you joy, strength, and grace to go through difficulty in life. I will walk with you, guiding you.”

If we attempt to build our lives upon any other foundations, we will collapse. All other foundations have no power to hold our lives and are not permanent. However, Jesus is eternal and omnipotent. He is inviting each of us to have him as the Lord and the foundation of our lives. He is the true foundation, who can hold our lives permanently and sustain us when hardship, tragedy, or crisis comes to us. He is the true source of joy, strength, and hope for our lives.

How did the crowd react to Jesus' teaching (v.28)?

Why (v.29)?

Read Matthew 8:1-4

After teaching on the mountain, Jesus came down and "great crowds followed him" (v.1). Matthew 8-9 records the healing ministry of Jesus.

Who came to Jesus and what did he want from Jesus (v.2)?

In Jewish culture, lepers were outcast people. They had to live with other lepers outside the community. They were not allowed to participate in the community religious activities, because they were religiously unclean. People who touched a leper would also be declared religiously unclean.

This leper knew that Jesus could heal him. He knelt before Jesus and called him "Lord," acknowledging Jesus' lordship over him. He also acknowledged that Jesus had authority and power over his disease.

How did Jesus respond to his request (v.3)?

What happened to his leprosy (v.3)?

Jesus touched the leper and healed him. Jesus' gesture of touching him showed that he had authority over the religious law of the Jewish community. He did not become unclean and made the leper clean. Jesus healed him by his words, "be clean." His words have authority and are commanding and powerful. The disease was gone and the man was healed at that very moment.

What did Jesus ask him to do (v.4)?

Jesus had a mission to sacrifice himself to die on the cross and did not want people to follow him for wrong reasons. Jesus wanted him to simply report to the priest that his leprosy had been healed and to offer a sacrifice to God according to the Law of Moses.

Read Matthew 8:5-13

What did a centurion—a commander of a hundred soldiers in the Roman army—ask of Jesus (v.5-6)?

It is astonishing for the Roman centurion to address Jesus—a Jew—“Lord.” Roman soldiers colonized, oppressed, and looked down on the Jews. The centurion had learned about Jesus and what he said to Jesus would reveal his belief in Jesus.

How did Jesus respond to his request (v.7)?

In Jewish culture at that time, a Jew would not socialize with non-Jews, because they did not worshipped the same God. If a Jew socialized with non-Jews, he would become unclean according to the Jewish religious law. No Jews would socialize with non-Jews, let alone a Roman soldier. Jesus’ willingness to help and go to the centurion’s house would shock other Jews around him. Jesus often times showed that his authority was above the Jewish laws and customs. Jesus’ ministry was cross-cultural and he showed compassion to foreigners.

How did the centurion respond to Jesus and how did his words show his faith in Jesus (v.8-9)?

What did Jesus say about him (v.10)?

Jesus told the people that many non-Jewish people from east and west—from all around the world—would be with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—the patriarchs of the Jews—in the kingdom of heaven. Many people from different nations would believe and put their faith in Jesus. The Jews thought that they would be the only ones in God’s kingdom. They thought that they were the only “sons of the kingdom.” However, Jesus said that many Jews would be thrown into the outer darkness—hell—because they would not believe and put their faith in him. By saying this, Jesus told his own Jewish people that many of them would reject him and would not enter God’s kingdom, but many foreigners from all around the world would believe in him and would be in God’s kingdom. These words of Jesus would shock his audience as well (v.11-12).

What did Jesus say to the centurion and what happened to his servant (v.13)?

Jesus showed his divine authority over sickness. Many of his followers would believe and put their faith in him. However, many Jews would also reject him as the Lord and Savior of their lives. On a personal level, the centurion’s faith in Jesus would be strengthened. The centurion could be the first Christian among non-Jewish people, just as Jesus was declaring that “many will come from east and west” to the kingdom of God.

Lesson 10 – The Cost of Following Jesus

We have learned that Jesus is inviting each of us to have him as the Lord and *the foundation* of our lives. Jesus can hold and sustain our lives permanently and we will not collapse when a sudden hardship, tragedy, or crisis comes to us. Jesus also has a divine authority and power over diseases. His ministry was cross-cultural and he showed compassion to foreigners. He has declared that people from all around the world will come to him and be in his kingdom of heaven.

Read Matthew 8:14-17

What did Jesus do to Peter’s mother-in-law who had a fever (v.14-15)?

When people recover from fever, their bodies are still weak. After being healed by Jesus, Peter’s mother-in-law “rose and began to serve him”—serving Jesus and the people in the house. Her strength was immediately restored. This was a supernatural healing.

Whom did people bring to Jesus that evening (v.16)?

What did Jesus do for them (v.16)?

Just as Jesus healed people by his words, he also cast out demons by his authoritative words. Jesus showed compassion to those who were sick and oppressed. He fulfilled what Prophet Isaiah had prophesied about the promised Messiah and Savior in Isaiah 53:4. Sin has brought illnesses, diseases, pain, and death in our lives. Jesus came to bear the curse and punishment of sin as our substitute, in order that by believing and putting our faith in him, trusting and surrendering our lives to him, we may receive God’s forgiveness and be set free from the curse of sin (v.17).

Read Matthew 8:18-22

By teaching, healing, and performing other miracles, a large crowd came to see Jesus for various reasons. Because of the crowd, Jesus moved to the other side of the Sea of Galilee (v.18).

What did a scribe—an expert who transcribed and taught the Jewish laws—say to Jesus (v.19)?

What was Jesus’ reply to him (v.20)?

“The Son of Man” was Jesus’ favorite title to refer to himself. He wanted to emphasize his humanity and vulnerability and to identify himself with us. Several times he would mention that he would be killed. Here he said to the scribe that he had no place to lay his head. In his ministry, Jesus moved from one place to another and slept whenever there was a place available. Unlike foxes and birds, he was not always home to rest and sleep. Jesus challenged the scribe, “If you want to follow me, would you be able

to live like me? Would you be able to give up your comfort? Think carefully if you want to follow me (v.20).”

What did another disciple say to Jesus (v.21)?

What was Jesus’ reply to him (v.22)?

This disciple wanted to go home, wait until his father died, bury him, then follow Jesus. It could be that his father was presumed to die soon but was not dead yet. His excuse was basically that he was not ready to follow Jesus at that moment. Therefore, Jesus challenged him to leave everything behind. “Leave the dead to bury their own dead” means let the people who are still spiritually dead in sin bury their own dead. Jesus wanted him to follow him without hesitation.

If Jesus asks you to follow him now, will you be ready to say “Yes” to him?

Read Matthew 8:23-27

After a full day of teaching people, Jesus was tired and wanted to rest and spend time alone with his disciples. They got into a boat and went across the Sea of Galilee to the other side.

What happened to them on the sea and what was Jesus doing when it happened (v.24)?

What did his disciples do and ask of him (25)?

What did Jesus do and what happened to the sea (v.26)?

This was probably the first time Jesus’ disciples had ever seen someone speak to nature and nature obey. Jesus was the Son of God through whom God the Father created the world and nature. When Jesus said, “O you of little faith,” he was challenging his disciples to think about whether or not they had faith in him, and if so, to what degree? Jesus wanted them to think about whether or not they trusted him as someone who held their lives and souls.

How did the disciples react (v.27)?

During the great storm, they were terrified that they would die. Now the storm had gone and the sea was completely calm, they marveled and were shocked again. The first shock was the fear of dying. The second shock was different. They realized three things.

First, they realized that Jesus was God. Who could give a command to nature and nature obey, but God himself? They saw Jesus’ authority over nature and comprehended his identity.

Second, they realized that God was with them in the boat. Jesus, the Son of God, came down from

heaven to the world not only to live among his people, but also to be in the midst of their suffering. Third, although God was with them, they realized that he allowed a great storm—great suffering—to come into their lives. Jesus could prevent the great storm from coming and did not explain to them why he allowed it. He simply asked them to have faith in him, trusting their lives to him.

God oftentimes does not explain why he lets us face difficulties in life. Jesus asks us to simply put our faith in him, trusting him as our Savior who holds our lives in his hands. This is what faith in Jesus means.

Read Matthew 8:28-34

What happened when they reached the other side of the sea (v.28)?

What did they say to Jesus (v.29)?

The demons (evil spirits) knew the identity of Jesus. The devil and his demons were angels who rebelled against God and were banished from Heaven. They spiritually deceive people to reject God and sometimes hurt people physically too.

What did the demons ask of Jesus (v.31)?

What did Jesus say to the demons and what happened to the pigs (v.32)?

The demons begged Jesus to allow them to go into the pigs. They asked Jesus' permission to do what they wanted to do. Here we learn that Jesus has authority over demons and they obey him.

What did the herdsmen do (v.33)?

What did the people of the city ask of Jesus (v.34)?

The people might have asked Jesus to leave their region because they were afraid to lose more animals which were their financial resources. They seemed to be more concerned about their own welfare than knowing who Jesus truly was. Jesus, who is God himself who came down from heaven, is the true source of our welfare. In Jesus, we find the complete well-being of our lives. If we follow him, even though sufferings will come to us, we will find comfort, security, and peace in him. Jesus is inviting each of us, "Follow me and have faith in me."

Lesson 11 – Jesus’ Authority to Forgive Sins

We have learned that Jesus has authority over diseases and can heal people supernaturally. He has authority over nature and nature obeys him. He also has authority over demons and they obey him as well. Jesus is inviting us to follow him and to put our faith in him, trusting him as our Savior who holds our lives in his hands. If we follow him, even though sufferings will come to us, our souls will find comfort, security, and peace in him.

Read Matthew 9:1-8

Who was brought to Jesus when he returned to his own city (v.1-2)?

What did Jesus say to him (v.2)?

What did some of the scribes—experts who transcribe and teach the Jewish laws—say to themselves about Jesus (v.3)?

Blasphemy is an offense of speaking against God. At that time, blasphemy was considered a serious sin and the blasphemer could be punished by being stoned to death. The scribes said that Jesus was blaspheming because he claimed to have authority to forgive the paralytic’s sins. Only God can forgive people’s sins. Therefore, Jesus was claiming to be God himself. His claim was blasphemy if he was not God and he deserved to be killed. The scribes did not believe that Jesus was God.

What did Jesus say to them (v.4)?

Jesus knew what was in their minds and hearts. He said to them that what they were thinking about him was evil, because they falsely accused him.

What else did Jesus say to them (v.5-6)?

Jesus liked to use the title “the Son of Man” more than “the Son of God” to emphasize his humanity. Jesus told them that he had authority on earth to forgive sins. Performing a miraculous healing is easier than forgiving sins. Jesus then healed the paralytic—the easier act—to prove his authority to forgive sins as God—the more difficult act.

How did Jesus heal the paralytic and what did the paralytic do after he was healed (v.6-7)?

How did the crowd react (v.8)?

The crowd was shocked, just like the disciples were after watching Jesus calm the great storm on the sea. They glorified God—giving praise to God—for what Jesus just did. They might have thought that God gave *men* the ability to heal sickness and glorified him for that reason, rather than glorifying him for who Jesus actually was. At this point, people still thought that Jesus was just a man, a great religious teacher who could heal diseases. Jesus' act of forgiving the paralytic's sins was an unseen and unobservable act by the crowd.

Our spiritual life is much more important than our physical life. Because of the paralytic's faith in Jesus, he was healed both spiritually and physically. Jesus forgave his sins, healing him spiritually first because it was the most important matter. He was free from the punishment of his sins, because Jesus would bear it for him on the cross as his substitute. We too can be forgiven of our sins by having faith in Jesus, who died on the cross for the punishment of our sins as our substitute.

Read Matthew 9:9-13

What did Jesus ask Matthew, a tax collector, to do and what was his response to Jesus (v.9)?

Matthew would become one of the apostles—the twelve core disciples of Jesus (Matthew 10:1-4). He was also the one who wrote this Gospel of Matthew. Tax collectors were Jewish people who worked for the Roman government to collect taxes from their own people. They often cheated people when they collected taxes. They took more money by force and would keep the extra money for themselves. Tax collectors, along with other sinners (religious law breakers), were hated by the Pharisees and the scribes—the religious leaders of the community. The Pharisees and the scribes often times looked down on them with spiritual pride. They did not befriend these sinners. However, Jesus reached out to them and they came to him. Jesus ate, talked, and laughed with them. The Pharisees and the scribes often times criticized Jesus for reaching out to the sinners (v.10).

What did the Pharisee say to Jesus' disciples (v.11)?

What was Jesus' response to them (v.12-13)?

The sinners are “those who are sick” and in need of Jesus, *the Physician*. The Pharisees did not see themselves as sinners but as “those who are well” with God. They were in fact spiritually sick and needed a spiritual physician, but they were blinded by their own spiritual pride. They saw themselves as righteous people and would not show kindness to or associate with sinners. Jesus reminded them that God desires mercy and not sacrifices. He told them that he came for needy sinners, bringing healing to their souls. Jesus is *the Physician* of our souls.

Read Matthew 9:14-17

As Jesus was teaching people, disciples of John asked him why his disciples did not fast. Fasting is an abstinence or reduction from some food, drink, or both. The biblical purpose of fasting is to spend more

time with God in prayer, humbling ourselves before him, expressing our dependence on him, seeking his guidance, and worshipping him. However, Pharisees were known to be legalistic in their practice of religion. Being legalistic means acting according to religious rules for the sake of obeying those rules, or to make oneself look good before others, without any motives to please God.

What was Jesus' answer to them (v.15)?

Jesus was speaking of himself as the bridegroom and his disciples as the wedding guests. If they were at a wedding, they could not fast. People go to a wedding to celebrate and eat good food. When Jesus came to this world, his disciples celebrated their every day of life with Jesus as if it was a wedding. They had a personal, loving, and close relationship with Jesus. They had a joyful and blessed life. However, the joyful life of Jesus' disciples would be paused for a moment, because he would be taken away from them and be put on trial by the religious leaders of the community. He would be crucified and killed on the cross. However, he would rise from death to life and return to his disciples, and the days of celebration would continue again and would never end.

What is the first parable that Jesus told them (v.16)?

What is the second parable that Jesus told them (v.17)?

At that time, there was no glass bottle, and people used animal skin to store their wine. New wine would be put into new wineskin, and not old wineskin. The wineskin, after being used for some time, would get worn-off. Spiritually speaking, Jesus is implying that he is the new wine and the new garment—the unshrunk cloth.

Jesus came from heaven to teach us about a personal and loving relationship with God through him. He came to end rule-keeping-based belief systems. Practicing fasting or any other religious observances and being legalistic do not please God. In fact, observing religious rules without any motives to please God is completely sinful. Observing religious rules, such as fasting, praying, or going to church in order to make oneself look good before others or to get blessings from God is a manifestation of spiritual pride.

Rule-keeping-based belief systems teach that if we observe religious rules then we will get God's blessing for our lives, including a credit to enter his heaven. Jesus came to end all man-made rule-keeping-based belief systems—the old garment and the old wine. Many people still prefer rule-keeping-based, work-based, or self-effort-based belief systems, rather than salvation by God's grace alone through faith alone and in Jesus Christ alone. However, to those who believe and put their faith in Jesus, trusting and surrendering their lives to him, they become *the new wineskins*—the recipients of Jesus' grace; his righteousness, love, joy, peace, and all other spiritual blessings in him.

Lesson 12 – The Shepherd Who Loves His Sheep

We have learned that Jesus came from heaven to teach us about a personal and loving relationship with God through him. He came to end rule-keeping-based belief systems that teach if we observe religious rules, we will get God's blessing for our lives, including a credit to enter his heaven. On the contrary, Jesus teaches us to believe in what he accomplishes for us, and not what we can accomplish for ourselves. Jesus came so that his righteousness would be credited to us when we repent from our sins and put our faith in him. We can rest in what he has already done for us and not be burdened by rules.

Read Matthew 9:18-26

What did a ruler—a religious leader—ask of Jesus (v.18)?

How did Jesus respond to his request (v.19)?

Who touched the fringe of Jesus' garment while he was walking (v.20)?

Why (v.21)?

What did Jesus say to her (v.22)?

What do you think about her faith in Jesus?

Jesus healed her because of her faith in him. Jesus knew that she touched her, just as he knew her unseen faith in him. He healed her by his power. He made her well. It is more likely that she received both physical healing and spiritual healing. Jesus saved her from her sins and made her well, because she put her faith in him.

What did Jesus tell the musicians and the crowd once he arrived at the ruler's house and how did they respond to him (v.23-24)?

What did Jesus do to the ruler's daughter (v.25)?

The news of Jesus' raising her from the dead spread through all the district (v.26). Jesus can bring people from death to life again because he has authority over death. Death is the consequence of sin. The Bible teaches about two kinds of death: physical death and spiritual death. Every person is born spiritually dead as a sinner—separated from God. Jesus came to reconcile us with God. Jesus has also defeated death for us at his resurrection. Death has no power over those who are united with Jesus.

Read Matthew 9:27-34

Who followed Jesus and what did they ask of him (v.27)?

“Son of David” is a title for the Messiah—the promised Savior who will deliver God’s people from the power of sin and evil—who is a descendant of King David, a great king of Israel in the Old Testament era. The two blind men believed that Jesus was the Messiah. They were blind physically but they could see spiritually. On the contrary, many people can see physically but they are blind spiritually. They cannot see and understand who Jesus is.

What did Jesus ask them and what was their answer (v.28)?

What did Jesus do to their eyes and what did he say to them (v.29)?

What did Jesus warn them about after opening their eyes (v.30)?

What did they do instead (v.31)?

Jesus often times asked the people whom he healed not to tell others. He did not want people to follow him for wrong reasons and to think that he was a political Messiah, which was what many Jews thought the Messiah should be. Jesus came not to deliver the Jews from political oppressors, but to deliver his people from spiritual oppressors—the power of sin and evil—through his death and resurrection.

Who was brought to Jesus (v.32)?

What did Jesus do to the demon who possessed the man and what happened to the man then (v.33)?

How did the crowd react (v.33)?

What did the Pharisees—the religious leaders of the Jewish community—say about this miracle (v.34)?

Jesus has authority and power over the devil and his demons. The Pharisees criticized Jesus and stated that he used the prince of demons—the devil—to cast out demons. These Pharisees heard Jesus’ teaching and saw his miracles, but they were blind spiritually. They could not comprehend what they saw. They were blinded by their own spiritual pride. Later on, they would arrest Jesus and give him to the Roman authority to be crucified.

Read Matthew 9:35-38

What did Jesus do throughout Galilee (v.35)?

Jesus went to economically-well cities as well as to poor villages to teach the word of God, proclaim the gospel, and heal diseases.

How did Jesus react when he saw the crowds? Why (v.36)?

“They were harassed and helpless” spiritually speaking. They were burdened by their religious leaders with religious traditions and rules that did not liberate them, but instead made them spiritually fatigued. They were scattered and neglected “like sheep without a shepherd.” Just like them, we are also spiritually lost. We are sheep without a shepherd. Jesus has come to be our Shepherd, to take care of our souls, and to liberate us from the enslavement of sin and rule-keeping-based belief systems. We find liberation and the well-being of our souls only by having him as our Shepherd and Savior.

What did Jesus say to his disciples? What do you think it means (v.37)?

What did Jesus ask his disciples to pray about (v.38)?

We are all born under the enslavement of sin and evil. Jesus came to liberate us and to die for us as our substitute for the punishment of our sins. He is the Shepherd who sacrificed himself for the lives of his sheep. He died so that we can have a new life in him. If we believe and put our faith in him, trusting and surrendering our lives to him, our sins are forgiven and we are freed from the power of sin and evil.

After Jesus died on the cross and rose from the dead, he ascended to heaven before his disciples. Before he ascended, he sent them as laborers for his kingdom and gave them a mission: “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:19-20).

Resources

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