**Matthew 19:7-15**

**“The Sanctity Of Marriage”**

**I.) Intro**

**II.) Vs. 7-9 Moses & Marriage**

**III.) Vs. 10-12 Singleness & The Kingdom**

**IV.) Vs. 13-15 Children & Marriage**

**I) Intro**

In preparing for this study I was thinking of how people would respond to it. When ever you talk about marriage & divorce you are bound to offend people. I was talking to a fellow pastor the other day & he was telling me that his church was doing a 6 week study on sex, the first time they did this series was several years ago & they saw a 40% increase in their attendance. What a contrast these two topics are. People have no problem talking or hearing a series of messages on the joy of sex, but teach on the commitment of marriage & people will get angry. I do not know of a family who has not had someone go through a divorce or a bad marriage, so it is important to get what Jesus has to say on this subject.

 First by way of introduction, let me establish a few things:

1.) The context of this passage makes it clear that, what Jesus lays down here are Gods ideal for marriage & a condition for the separation of marriage.

2.) Second, that these statements are intended for those who have a relationship with the Lord. Be that personally or as a nation (Israel) who were Gods chosen people.

In other words we can not impose these as rules upon those out side of a covenant relationship with the Lord. Neither can we condemn those who did not live by these ideals prior to knowing the Lord.

3.) Though, these ideals are for believers to live by, if we redeemed sinners do what we sinners so often do, (sin), there is grace & forgiveness available in Christ. In other words, if a believer sins & divorces their spouse for wrong reasons it is not the unpardonable sin. There is only one sin that God will not forgive & that is to die apart from giving your heart to Him. That does not mean that there may not be consequences to our actions & it will reveal a problem in the heart of the person, but there is always forgiveness available upon repentance.

4.) In light of this passage on marriage & divorce, the person you marry is the second most important decision you will ever make, so you ought to put more into it then just the way a person looks or how they make you feel.

 I am convinced that the frustration over this subject lies at communication. If we would just always consider our spouse better then ourselves & treat them the way in which we ourselves would like to be treated then divorce among believers would be unheard of. A little girl & a little boy were playing together when the little girl asked the boy if they wanted to play house. The boy said, “*Sure, what do I have to do*?” “*Share what you feel & communicate your thoughts*.” she replied. The little guy scratched his head & said, “*I have no idea what that means*.” “*Perfect*!”, smirked the girl, “*You can be the husband*!”

**II.) Vs. 7-9 Moses & Marriage**

Vs. 7a “***Then they said to Him***..” This is a phrase that tells us that what they had to say next relates to what Jesus already had to say in answer to their original question on divorce.

***What did Jesus say?***

 A.) **He said that the reason for divorce was not the important question, but rather the reason for marriage was**! They wanted to draw Jesus into the debate of what was the appropriate reason for divorce. The two opinions of the day were liberal & strict.

 1.) One said that what was meant by the passage in Deut. 24:1-4 was that if the husband found any thing he did not like about his wife he could get rid of her.

 2.) The other position was that the only way the husband could divorce his wife was in the case of sexual sin.

Folks, if you are single here this morning do your self a favor & seek God on whether or not you are to be married & whom it is you are to marry. Divorce will never be possible if two believers spend as much time & concern over the issue of who God has for them as they do what clothes they are to ware. Some people are not a good look on us nor we on them & it would be better to find this out before marriage.

Vs. 7b The force of their question was; *“If that is Gods heart towards marriage then why did Moses give permission for divorce*?” Their view was strict on divorce but liberal of the reasons for it. They viewed divorce as something that they had to do.

 A careful reading of Deut. 24 makes it clear that the only commandment that Moses made in this passage dealt with the divorced wife not returning to her first husband if she was divorced by her second husband. Moses did not command divorce he permitted it. In fact this law was seen as a deterrent for divorce for three reasons.

 1.) First it would cause the first husband to think twice be for he divorced his wife since he could not get her back again.

 3.) Third, when the husband divorced his wife he would have to pay her a sum of money prescribed in the marriage contract. Plus the husband had to assume liability for any goods his wife brought into the marriage.

Vs. 8 Here Jesus tells us why divorce was ever allowed, **hardness** of the fallen human heart. Someone once said that, “*People are married for better or worse, but today they are not married for long*!” How tragically true that is today!

 So what is Jesus saying here? He is saying that the laws concerning divorce were added because of sin in mans inability to carry out Gods original purpose, “one man, one woman, for life.” The only thing that could & did separate a marriage was death, in which case the surviving person could remarry. This brings us to Jesus next statements in verse 9.

 Now I again say that, if you are here this morning & you have gotten a divorce, God can & does forgive if you repent. It is certain that if God allows divorce He certainly allows remarriage.

The context here is Gods ideal, for believers in marriage & divorce is only allowed for sexual immorality. Now before you all get mad at me, these are the words of Jesus not Dale. If you are married & having a hard time with it, divorce is not an option, if it is a bad marriage it need not be & getting out of it may bring some temporary relief but it will not fix the problem it will only create new ones. It is clear by the way Jesus disciple’s respond that they understood what Jesus was saying.

**III.) Vs. 10-12 Singleness & The Kingdom**

Vs. 10 Do you see what they are saying? “*If there is no way of getting out of a bad marriage, then you are better off staying single*!” Clearly they understood Jesus as saying that there was no out of a bad marriage, that is the context of their statement.

Vs. 11 Now notice that Jesus does not argue against their statement. He wants us to realize the seriousness of the nature of marriage. If you make divorce for any reason an option then you destroy the structure of the family & that of the nation.

 A study just came out this week by Rutgers University. It is dealing with living together & the rates of divorce. Now listen to this, couples that live together before they get married are 48% more likely to divorce then couples who do not live together before marriage. **Thus living together is not a good way to prepare for marriage, but it is a good way to prepare for divorce**.

Not every one is called to be single, neither is everyone called to be married. Now if you are married then you are called to be married. If you are single now enjoy it & use it for His kingdom because you have been given more opportunity to serve others.

 A.) “*For there are* ***eunuchs*** *who were born thus from their mother's womb*,..” Now the word “eunuch’s” appears 7 times in the N.T. here & the rest are in Acts dealing with the Ethiopian eunuch. The word means literally “**bed keeper**,” one who has charge of beds and bedchambers. The original Heb. word clearly implied the incapacity that castration involves. It is used here figuratively & refers to the power of maintaining an attitude of indifference toward sexual desires and temptations. Some people are born with reasons why they should not marry be that physical or emotional. I think that this number is rather small, but none the less there are some who for reasons from birth are not called to be married.

 B.) *“..and there are eunuchs who were made eunuchs by men,..”*  There was a pagan practice that Kings used to castrate men to watch over their harem. That is what the word “bed keeper” referred to. It was not practiced by the Jews upon either man or animals; and the law (Deuteronomy 23:1; cf. Leviticus 22:24) dealt severely with this kind of treatment of any Israelite. It was a custom of the East to treat captives this way, not only those of tender age, but, also those who were adults. This is something that is not practiced today, but some who have responsibilities in society, have no time for spouses are made single by “man”.

 D.) *“..He who is able to accept it, let him accept it*.” So Jesus says here that if God has called you to be single then use it to serve God, go for it. But if not then demonstrate your calling through your marriage. A lot of pastors have marriage problems & a lot of people who feel called into ministry struggle in their relationship with their wives. Hey, if you can not rule your own household well, how are you going to rule the household of God?

**IV.) Vs. 13-15 Children & Marriage**

Vs. 13 Interesting that right after Jesus’ teaching of marriage & divorce that children would be brought to Him! A good marriage is the greatest asset to our society. Did you know that 70% of all juvenile criminals come from single parent homes? Innocent children are often the victims of divorce.

 Now Luke tells us that after His teaching on divorce they kept on bringing children to Jesus. The words (they & them) in Luke 18:15 are in the masculine meaning that it was the fathers that brought their children to Jesus to be blessed by Him.

 One wonders what was running through the disciple’s heads as they tried to stop this scene. Did they think that such an activity was beneath our Lord?

 Now do not miss His action here:

 1.) First, He rebuked the disciple’s for forbidding the practice.

 2.) Then He again proclaimed that the Kingdom was for such as these little ones.

 3.) Lastly He raped His arms around them. I love this!

Maybe your here this morning & your hurting. Maybe it is your marriage, your hurting & hurting the one that you are called to be one with & it’s been going on so long. Hey, your His child He wants to rap His arms around you this morning & love on you. He wants to bless your marriage will you let Him work in this area of your life? Or are you forbidding that part of your life from His healing hands. It’s up to you!

**“How To Go To Heaven”**

**I.) Intro**

**II.) Vs. 16-17 Defining “Good”**

**III.) Vs. 18-22 What Or Who Posses You?**

**IV.) Vs. 23-26 Who Can Be Saved**

**I) Intro**

 A man appeared at the gate of heaven where he was meet by an angel. The man said, “I’d like to come in!” “It will take 1,000 points to get in sir”, replied the angel. “Tell me about your life & I will tell you how many points you have.” The man smiled because he had lived a good life with many good works. “Well I was born into a Christian home & went to church every Sunday.” “Excellent”, said the angel “That will get you three points.” “Three points?” “That’s all I get for giving up my time to go to church every Sunday?” “Yep!”, replied the angel. “OK then I was missions director for four years overseeing 10 missions that we supported.” “Did, you ever go your self?” ask the angel. “Well, no I could not get the time off from work.” “But I tithed faithfully & sang in the choir.” “That’s very good, I will give you five points for each.” “10 points all I get for this is 10 points?” The man gasped in disappointment. “At this rate,” he said, “I’ll never make it in except by the grace of God.” “Exactly,” the angel said. “Come on in!”

 It is important this morning that we fully comprehend “goodness”. What matters most is not our “goodness” but rather our complete dependence upon His “goodness”.

**II.) Vs. 16-17 Defining “Good”**

Vs. 16a Now it is important before we look Jesus’ answer to this mans question that we get a look at who it was that asked it in the first place. The other gospels tell us a few important facts about him. This guy was the first yuppie.

 1.) Matt. 19:20 tells us that he was young.

 2.) Mark 10: 22 tells us that he was rich.

 3.) Luke 18: 18 tells us that he was a ruler, (most likely of a synagogue)

Mark also adds that he ran up to meet Jesus with his question & that after the young mans reply that Jesus looked upon him with love. What these two comments show us is that the young ruler was conscience of not measuring up to the point that it troubled him & second that he was sincere upon his efforts to go to heaven.

Let just sum up all that I have just said about our gut here: On all outward appearances this guy was surly a candidate for heaven. Religious, energetic, successful, will like in the community, went to church, read the Bible. I mean this guy was had it together. As far as “goodness” was concerned he was the man, yet he was aware that there was something missing that Jesus had that he needed to go to heaven, that’s the story here.

 So what does that have to do with us? Well, most people think that they ought to deserve to go to heaven based upon their own good works. Now most of them will be able to tell you that there are people better then they are, but that they are still good enough. I want to share with you that this guy may have been the best that there was in this category. As far as what the world looks at in being good enough his was the man. So if he turned down on his good works then so would you be!

Vs. 16b Now look at his question*: “Good Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life*?” By this statement we see that he equated good works with eternal life & that what ever else he had done prior to this was not enough. Man is that interesting, most people feel that their good works are enough, not this guy. With all the advantages this guy had he knew that there was still something lacking that only Jesus could supply.

 Folks, what this guy asks Jesus is the most important question any one can ever ask. This week, as I was in my office a young gal came into see me. I asked her how I could help her. Her response was one that I don’t hear that often, she said, “I don’t want to go to hell!” Here was a lady who knew that she was apart from God. I’m pleased to say that she is not going to hell any more as she gave her life to Jesus that very day.

 The problem in this young mans question was not in his evaluation of his need, but rather that he thought that he could do something to earn his way to heaven. He still thought that he could do something to go to heaven, some good work. The young lady in my office was to the point where she knew she could do nothing to go to heaven she had a deep conviction of sin that deserved hell. All she wanted was to know if the sentence passed was pardonable.

Vs. 17a The understanding of Jesus’ question back lies in the word “why”. “What is the basis of your evaluation?” The Bible tells us that there is only One that is righteous, only one that is “good” & that is God. Jesus is not denying His own goodness, He is rather drawing this guy in to an understanding of Gods standard of goodness. Perhaps he had seen Jesus & knew that Jesus was better then he was & hoped to gain some insight on works. Jesus answer is that “goodness” is not measured horizontally, but vertically. You do see whether or not you measure up by comparing yourself to another person, you see whether or not you measure up by comparing yourself to God. Heaven is the place where God dwells, therefore He is the standard of goodness.

 Look at how ironic this scene is. This guy comes up to God & asks Him what good work he can do to go to heaven. It’s like some stranger coming up to you & asking, “How much you want for your family.”

Vs. 17b Now why does Jesus bring up the commandments? Is Jesus saying that you can do something like keeping the law which the Bible says is “holy & good”, & go to heaven?

Rom 3: 20 tells us that, *“..by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin*.” Gal. 3: 24 further tells us that *“..the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith*.” Clearly that is not what Jesus is getting at. What Jesus does here is to introduce the law to show the young man not **HOW** to be saved, but rather that he **NEEDED** to be saved. This guy was looking to works to save him, so Jesus takes him to the very works to show him that he could not make it that way. “If you are going to live by works then you must be perfect in your keeping of them.”

**III.) Vs. 18-22 What Or Who Posses You?**

Vs. 18a It is obvious that this guy was expecting Jesus to give some new work to do not the same old things. There is a bit of puzzlement in this young rulers question, “Which ones.” It like saying, “Am I missing something?

Vs. 18b-19 Jesus quotes the second part of the ten commandments. Now you will remember that the first four commandments deal with mans relationship to God the second six deal with mans relationship with man. This guy was doing good works, he was doing good to his fellow man, his life was spent in doing good to others. Nothing wrong with this, it is a good thing to others centered, but it is wrong to think that this is the basis of salvation. So Jesus gives him this, to show him based upon his own need seen in his coming to Jesus that those things don’t save a person.

Vs. 20 Now of coarse as Jesus interprets the intent of the law in the sermon on the mount this man had not kept the law, but I’m sure that he kept them in the way that made him righteous in mans eyes. Paul would say in Phil. 3:6 that prior to knowing Jesus that concerning the righteousness which is in the law he was blameless. Not in the true sense of what Jesus meant, but as far as other see where good. I mean if you ask me if break the traffic laws I can say to you that I’ve only had one ticket my whole life. Now that sounds pretty good, but the truth of the matter is that I’ve only got caught a few times & two of the three times I’ve been pulled over I beat in court. Am I keeping the traffic laws? What If breaking one law one time meant death? And it was not man who judged it but God. The moment you got in you car & started to drive down the road & went one mile per hour over the speed limit, Zap! How about you? what do you do when you see a police car? You slow down & pray he was not watching you! Were you breaking the law? You betcha.

 So this young man answers, “I’m still not their, I mean Lord something is missing.”

Vs. 21 If you want to be complete, surrender all you have & follow me. Put God first in every area of your life. The first law was “*You shall have no other gods before Me*.” The way a person gets to heaven is not found in their relationships with mankind, but rather it is found in their relationship to God. Jesus is not saying that a person is saved by selling all they have & giving it away. Jesus was answering the young mans question as to what he lacked. What he lacked was that he did not love God more then everything else. His money was just the sign of that. Possession’s were his god. He could not “go & sell” & because of that he could not “come & follow”. Hey, folks what good does it do to die the richest man in the cemetery? There are only two possibilities in life we will either be possessed by our possessions or possessed by the Lord. This guy went away bummed out because he was unwilling to surrender his life. How about you what posses you?

**IV.) Vs. 23-26 Who Can Be Saved**

Vs. 23 The Jewish people like many people today believed that riches were a sign or evidence of God’s blessing. Riches, that possess us can hinder our decisions to be obedient to follow God. Now remember that it is here that Jesus looked at him in love. It is hard for rich person to inter into heaven because they are self-reliant. It is only when we come in our poverty of spirit that we will receive Jesus. As long as we come thinking. as this guy, that we can do something to go to heaven then we are showing that we are still possessed by our possession’s.

Vs. 24 Much has been made Jesus statement here. There are several possibilities:

 A.) There was a small gate within the large gate of Jerusalem called the “needles eye.” It was only largest enough that a camel on it’s needs could get through but not loaded down with goods to sell. This was used at night to keep people from selling goods at night. So some see that Jesus is saying that it is very difficult or impossible for a rich man to be saved unless they unload themselves of the worlds goods & humble themselves & go through the gate of Jesus.

 B.) Then there are those that point out that in the Talmud, which was written during the Babylonian captivity, there was a figure of speech signifying the impossible that went, “It is easier for an elephant to go through the eye of a needle.” And seeing that they did not have any elephants in Israel Jesus just used the same phrase & used the largest animal that they knew of.

 C.) The last possibility is that Jesus is speaking of a literal needle & camel. It appears by the comments of verse 26 that Jesus is referring to something impossible for man to accomplish. A father was reading this verse to his 9 year old son & was trying to show that apart from God no one would be in heaven. Well the boy could not get the idea of a camel going through the a sewing needles eye. Finally the boy spoke up, “Dad” “What son”, the father replied. “It’s not impossible for a camel to go through the eye of a needle.” “Sure it is son.” No dad just the other day I saw you cram a whole bunch of stuff into the blender & turned it into liquid, you could do the same with a camel!”

Vs. 25-26 So who can be saved? Those put in a blender? No! With man it is impossible there is no good works we can do to be saved. All we can do is trust Jesus’ work on the cross for our sins. I don’t care who you are this morning the only way your going to go to heaven is by trusting in Jesus so don’t leave here today without doing just that.

**Matthew 19:27 - 20:16**

**“The First Will Be Last & The Last Will Be First”**

**I.) Intro**

**II.) Vs. 27-29 Sacrificial Rewards**

**III.) Vs. 30-7 Workers In The Masters Vineyard**

**IV.) Vs. 8-16 How Do You Want To Get Rewarded?**

**I) Intro**

In the rich young ruler Jesus dealt with how to go to heaven question. We are saved not by works, as the rich young ruler thought, we are saved by surrendering our lives to Jesus, (vs. 26). How tragic it is to see people in the world trying to be good enough to go to heaven. Evaluating their goodness based upon comparing themselves to others. If you are trying to be good enough the real standard is that you have to be as good as Jesus, or perfect.

 In this section we have Jesus’ response to Peter’s question as to future rewards. All of us at times want to know what we shall receive for our sacrifice of love. You may not care about rewards now, but you will one day.

 Legend has it that a wealthy woman, reached heaven & was shown a very plain mansion. She objected to it being hers. "Well," she was told, "that is the house prepared for you." "Well whose is that fine mansion across the way?" she asked. "It belongs to your gardener." "How is it that he has one so much better than mine?" “The houses here are prepared from the materials that are sent up. We do not choose them, you do that by your earthly faithfulness." Now this is just a legend, but it does speak to the text at hand.

**II.) Vs. 27-29 Sacrificial Rewards**

Vs. 27 It is obvious that Jesus’ words to the rich young ruler had an effect on the disciple’s. They had questioned how a person could be saved if a “good man” with “good works” could not. Jesus answered that with man, that is on his own effort it is impossible, but with trusting in Gods goodness it is possible.

 Now I kind of think Peter was weighing the whole seen with the rich young ruler & saw his unwillingness to surrender & sacrifice as the reason for his failure. So old Peter just did the math; “If not giving all you have to the Lord keeps you from the kingdom, then giving up everything must get you something.” Peter thought, “Hey, we are not making sacrifices were making investments, so how much are we going to get.”

 I think we all get into this way of thinking at times. We go through difficulties based upon our faith & have less to show for it worldly. So we comfort ourselves with the thought that one day man we are going to have it all. Now I would of thought that Jesus would of rebuked Peter right on the spot, but He doesn’t.

Vs. 28-29 I just love it when Jesus says, **”Assuredly**”. It’s the word “amen”, so be it, it speaks of something being certain. That’s what Jesus says in answer to Peters question of rewards, “absolutely”. There is no rebuke for asking the questing instead Jesus goes on & say how they will be rewarded for their trust in Him rather then their trusting in good works or riches.

 A.) **Heavenly**: *“..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*.” Now this has to do with the disciple’s, they will have a special place in judgment over the nation of Israel. Perhaps they will have a special place during the 1000 year reign of Jesus upon the earth as well. They would share in the authority of the kingdom. I believe that we too shall share in this. Simply put, we will have rewards in heaven. 1 Cor 3: 8 says, “*Now he who plants and he who waters are one, and each one will receive his own reward according to his own labor*.” Rev. 22:12 Jesus says, *“..behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work*.”

 B.) **Earthly**: Vs. 29 Here it is universal, “everyone” who has left houses, family, business for Jesus will inherit 100 fold. The 100 fold is not literal because you are not going to get 100 wives. What Jesus is saying is that what ever it has cost you in this life will be returned a hundred times over to you in what you gain through knowing Jesus. Paul said as much to the Philippians in 3:7-8 “*But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ*.” On a practical basis when you go through a loss; say your house floods, man did the Lord bless us through the body of Christ. We received back much more then we lost. So, when you came to Christ your friends all left you. Now you have more friends then you ever had before.

 C.) **Forever**: Everlasting life. All of the worlds rewards are temporary. I went to get a movie the other day & they were having a contest. So I got my game token scratched it off & one another movie, then I read my restrictions; “good for only 1 movie rental from only a certain section, only on Sunday through Thursday with in the next 7 days.” Man after reading all of it I wondered if I lost or won. So here the Lord says more then rewards heavenly & earthly, you’ve won the grand prize “everlasting life”.

 My son likes to play video games, but the bumber about these games is that if you lose you have to start all over again. Now he has found out that if you know the master code you get all power & life you want. So we went on the inter-net got the code. So he is at home blowing up these aliens with all the weapons & they can’t touch him because he has “everlasting life”. He gets to win the game defeat the enemy, with all the gadgets, as much as he wants. Folks, we have the secret code man it’s Jesus. We win the game because He has already defeated the enemy for us. We are never going to die! As my son was playing he was having a blast because he knew he could not lose his reward. Hey, do you not know that you are going to be with Jesus for ever & you are not going to lose your reward. It is impossible to out give the Lord!

**III.) Vs. 30-7 Workers In The Masters Vineyard**

Vs. 30 Now you will notice that this verse & verse 16 are the same. They form a parentheses around the parable of the laborers. So why does Jesus say this phrase to the disciple’s? I think it is a warning to see gage our future rewards based upon our sacrifice. If you do then your reward is nothing more then a wage for what you have given up. There is a danger in working for salvation, but clearly here Jesus warns against works for sanctification. It’s not about how much you gave up, or how much you have done for the Lord. That is what He says; “*But many who are first will be last, and the last first*.” The reward is on the basis of grace not merit. The motive of the heart & being faithful to what He has called us to is what God rewards not how much for how long.

 With that said, may I warn as well not to take this passage as reason for being lazy. “Hey if it does not matter how much I do for the Lord, or how long I do it why not do as little as I can?” That is why Jesus teaches this parable to give us clarification on what He was talking about.

Vs. 1-7 Lets Identify the key parts of the story:

 1.) You have a landowner: This represents the Lord, He owns the vineyard. It seems that it was harvest time & when the grapes get ripe you got to pick them before in rains. So He goes out & hires migrant workers.

 2.) Next you have day laborers: They would work from sunrise to sunset & were given food plus a days wage.

 3.) Now notice verse 2 carefully it says that the Land owner agreed with the laborers for the wage. This was done normally because the land owner would rip off the workers so they would set a wage a head of time. Now remember that the land owner here is the Lord. Simply put they enter into a contract together. “A denarius” was a silver coin used by the Romans.

 4.) Now look at the other workers who were called at 3 hour intervals starting a 9: am, then noon, then 3: pm & lastly the final group was called to work at 5: pm, one hour before they shut down for the day.

 A.) Notice at 5: pm landowner asks, “Why, have you been standing here idle all day.” The answer back, “No one hired us!” So what this tells us that each of those hired after the original group, were not just standing around goofing off wasting time. They wanted work, but weren’t called. You can not work for the kingdom unless your called, But once your called you better be ready to work! This helps clarify what I said before, these workers were not idle because they were slothful, they were idle because they had not been called. Each of us has been called, so we can not use that as an excuse.

 B.) Now notice their wage, “what ever is right I will give you..” These later workers went to work in the same vineyard on the goodness of the landowner.

**IV.) Vs. 8-16 How Do You Want To Get Rewarded?**

Vs.8-10 Now it comes time to settle up. So they bring them together starting with the ones hired at 5 pm & they get a days wage & right on down the line. I bet that those hired at 3 pm said, “Hey, they got a days wage for one hour, we ought to get 4 days worth.” And right on down the line. So when the next group got the same days wage, they were thinking well it’s not quite what I thought, but he said he would pay what ever is right & after all we got a days wage for 4 hours work.

Vs. 11-15 Now when the first guys that had been out there in the heat of the day working got the same amount they were mad & complained. “They got the same pay we did & only worked 1 hour.” I kind of think that all those except those who worked only one hour were there grumbling.

 So what is the point of the story?

 1.) It is better to trust in the Lords goodness then to try to earn his favor.

 2.) It is always a sign of pride to “suppose” that we should get something based upon our deserving it. Peter said, “What shall we have..” “Peter, more then you deserve!”

 3.) Don’t measure yourself by others work. God rewards based upon being faithful to what He has called us to do! You may not have been called to circle the world preaching the gospel, but that does not mean that He is not going to reward you greatly!

 Heaven is going to be real interesting when the rewards are passed out. There is going to be some big surprises. How do you feel when other s are blessed more then you? Do you rejoice? Quit your complaining & start enjoying His goodness towards us for none of it do we deserve!

**Matthew 20:17-34**

**“The Master Slave”**

**I.) Intro**

**II.) Vs. 17-19 The Mind Of Christ**

**III.) Vs. 20-28 The Mind Of The Disciple’s**

**IV.) Vs. 29-34 The Mind Of The Multitude**

**I) Intro**

Last week Jesus spoke to us about rewards. Rewards in our life usually accompany accomplishments. Yet Jesus taught in the parable that being faithful to what He has called you to do is the basis of heavenly rewards. I was talking on the phone the other day to a Christian musician who was telling me how the Christian music business has become just like the world, all that matters is how popular you are not where your heart is towards service. It seems to me that the church has gone the same way, all that matters to most is how big a church is or how popular the speaker is. How tragic this is, when we evaluate success & greatness upon the worlds standards not Jesus’.

 A mother was fixing pancakes for her two boys, when the two began to fight over who would get the first pancake. The mother thought it a good time for a spiritual lesson. “Boy’s, if Jesus was one of you, He would say, “Let my brother have the first pancake. I can wait!” There was a pause in the commotion until the oldest boy turned to the younger brother, “Hey Ryan, why don’t you be Jesus!” All to often this is the attitude of those in the church. D. L. Moody said, “The measure of a man is not how many servants he has, but how many men he serves.”

**II.) Vs. 17-19 The Mind Of Christ**

Vs. 17 This is the third time Jesus is sharing with His disciple’s about His death. He started just stating it as a fact, & Peter took Him aside & rebuked Him. Then again Jesus shared with them & this time He revealed that one of them was to betray Him & they were bummed out. Now this time here he reveals that the not only will He be delivered over to the ruler but that He was going to be mocked, scourged & crucified.

 Now think about this for a minute! Jesus had clear knowledge of what lay before Him. So what? You ask!

 A.) Well there are those who say that Jesus was just this guy that got caught up in some political intrigue & that His death was just a accident, kind of being in the wrong place at the wrong time. Can’t be! Jesus knew what was about to happen & He was very specific as He spoke of it. Now not many Jews would get crucified that was a Roman form of execution not Jewish. This can only further prove that He is God, for only God can no what is going to happen before it happens.

 B.) Then there is the fact that He takes aside His disciple’s to tell them again what is about to happen in around a week. He has been with these guys three years & He is preparing them. Notice that unlike a lot of predictions He is not general. He is very specific; more then that notice Jesus does not say “perhaps or maybe”. No what He is telling them is certain. Jesus wants His disciple’s to know that this is not speculation or opinion.

 C.) Notice the details closely:

 1.) Going up to Jerusalem: That is the place where Abraham’s sacrifice for Isaac took place some believe at the very spot.

 2.) Betrayal to the chief priest & scribes: Again the fact that Jesus would be betrayed be His own & condemned to death by His own people. The apostle John would later writ in John 1: 11 “Even in his own land and among his own people, he was not accepted.”

 A.) Did you ever think of the fact that Jesus was scourged? It was an extremely painful experience. The prisoner would be tied to a post & whipped with a leather whip that was embedded with bits of glass & metal. Many died from the whipping alone. Do you know the purpose of the whipping? It was so that the prisoner would confess their crimes against Rome; a kind of third degree. If the person confessed then the strokes would get lighter & lighter, but if they were silent then the strokes would heavier & heavier until confession was made. Now Jesus was whipped & of coarse he had nothing to confess. The prophet Isaiah say s that He was like a sheep before it’s sheers & did not open His mouth. The Bible further tells us that by His stripes we are healed. Folks, those lashes were meant for us, He took upon Himself our crimes. This is why it is important that we confess our sins. Jesus has been whipped for them all we need to do is confess them before Him.

 B.) One last thing. Did you ever notice that Jesus never mentions His own death apart from speaking of the resurrection? He never one time saw His death anything more then ultimate victory! Now I know a lot of sad sack Christians who walk around all puckered up in life & if you ask them how they are doing they say; “Well I’m just baring my cross man. Just walking through one trial after another. Just dying man that is what I’m doing, praise God!” That’s not the way Jesus spoke of His life. Oh sure there is sacrifice & suffering, but man there is resurrection! Sometimes I listen to myself & I hear how I portray Christianity. It’s no wonder people say forget it. Folks, their is a resurrection don’t forget to mention that every time you are talking about your particular trial!

**III.) Vs. 20-28 The Mind Of The Disciple’s**

Vs. 20 Now before we look at negative aspects of this passage I want to point out something positive. Jesus had just spoke on the fact of His death, something that they had been more then just in denial over, yet here this Jewish mom at the urging of her two sons requests for seats of honor in Jesus’ future kingdom. So what? What this shows is that they still believed that Jesus was coming into His kingdom. Oh, they did not know how it was going to work out, but they had not abandoned their hope. Folks, you don’t celebrate your teams championship when your in last place with one game remaining. Yet these guys are doing just that. I love it! Man if we all just could be a bit more optimistic in our Christian faith. Folks Gods not on our side we are on His!

 With that said, I also find something very convicting about this passage. The Mother of James & John at the urging of her two boys comes to ask a favor from Jesus, but you know what? Look at what she does first, she kneels down. The word used here means to prostrate ones self like a dog licking her masters hand. It is the word used for worship. Well what’s wrong with that? Nothing accept that she is coming to worship in order to get something. She is not worshipping Him for Who He is. How many times have we become real spiritual & committed because we want something from the Lord***? Folks worship is not about getting it is about giving***!

Vs. 21 Now again I am amazed by Jesus, I mean doesn’t He see through this? As soon as this old lady knelt down I would of said; “Forget it, don’t even bother asking!” May I just encourage you to be strait with the Lord. You don’t have to trick Him into your scam. How about just coming to Him & saying; “Lord I know this may not be what you want but its what I want! Yet Lord not my will your will!”

 A young man just got his driving permit when he came to his father about getting a car. The dad took him aside & talked about responsibility. So the dad said; “I’ll tell you what pull up your grades, read your Bible more & get your hair cut. A few months passed & the boy again came to his father to discuss getting a car. The dad said; “Son I’m real proud of you, your grades are improved & I’ve seen you studying your Bible, but you have not yet cut your hair. “I know dad”, replied the son, “but I’ve been thinking allot about all of this hair stuff & the bible speaks of the fact that Samson had long hair & Moses had long hair why even Jesus has long hair. “Yes”, the father said, “And they walked every where they went!”

Vs. 22-24 I love the fact that Jesus does not rebuke these guys. Instead He tells them that they do not know what they are asking for. They are looking at position as a place where other serve you. That is why He says, “Can you suffer as I am about to as your servant?” Jesus is not saying that there aren’t positions but that those positions await those who are servants here & now. May I just say that God does not prepare the office for a man, He prepares the man for the office! They wanted position & power, but they did not understand that greatness & rewards in His kingdom come from service.

 My son may come up to the coach of the Sacramento Kings & say, “I want to start tomorrow’s game.” But the coach is not going to put him in. Only through years of sacrifice & hard work could he ever be ready to play on that level. Nothing wrong with the desire to be great, but you must realize that just like on the physical realm so too on the spiritual realm. Growing in the grace & knowledge of Jesus is work. With that said I think to few Christians even try. I heard of a woman the other day who had spent $75,000 trying to win the sweepstakes & had won nothing at all.

 Now when the ten heard it they were mad. They were mad because these are guys had beat them to it. Some time we get mad at folks because they are doing the same things we are only they just beat us to it, so we ought to check our hearts & ask ourselves why were upset!

Vs. 25 - 28 Here Jesus tells us the keys to success in His Kingdom so pay attention. This is how to get ahead in the race for greatness.

 A.) Vs. 25 It’s not like the world. Position & power in the world means that you are the one that gets waited on & served. Jesus says, “Not so!” So what does that tell us? Well it ought to tell us that if there is a person who is in authority in the Church they ought not to be being waited on. Man does that change our perspectives.

 B.) Vs. 26 Here Jesus uses the word that means a waiter. If you want to be great then be a waiter. Serve & pick up after people. Make sure that their needs are meet. Clear off their tables for them. Man is this a lost art. Ever go to a restaurant & have great service? I mean it is hard. Some one who goes out of their way to make you feel at home even when you are not. That’s what it takes to be great seek service. Service is just an action.

 D.) Vs. 27 Now Jesus uses the word slave. That is permanent! If you want to be first then always all the time serve people, not just when you have to, not just when it’s convenient, but always. You see a servant is just an action, but a slave well he is that all the time.

Vs. 28 Here Jesus uses His own reason for coming as an illustration of Servanthood. Jesus the creator of everything says that He came to wait tables, and as a slave He died as a ransom for many. There it is folks how to be great & first for His kingdom. Any takers?

**IV.) Vs. 29-34 The Mind Of The Multitude**

Vs. 29 -34 This last story serves as a great illustration of what it looks like to be a servant. These two blind guys crying out like a woman at child birth. Jesus is heading to His death being pushed & shoved by the multitude who want these beggars to just shut up. Yet He stops & asks them what they want. Look at verse 34. “Jesus had compassion”. Are you to busy to be bothers by the blindness of others?

**Matthew 21:1-17**

**“Behold, Our King Comes”**

**I.) Intro**

**II.) Vs. 1-5 The Kings Preparation**

**III.) Vs. 6-11 The King Rides & The City Is Shaken**

**IV.) Vs. 12-13 The Cleansing Of The Temple**

**V.) Vs. 14-17 The Restoration Of The Temple**

**I) Intro**

We now come to the last part of this book & the last week of Jesus’ life. The events recorded here are pointed & purposeful. What Jesus does in this scene before He had not done before in His entrance into Jerusalem. Not only does He not shy away from glory, He entices it.

 Now what we have just read is traditionally know as “Palm Sunday” which this year falls just three weeks from today on the 28th. It is also called the “Triumphal Entry” a name in which might better be reserved for Rev. 19: 11-14, where Jesus comes at His second coming.

 What is recorded for us is a series of responses to Jesus’ claim to be the Messiah. People responses can be very difficult to gage. A four-year-old girl was at the pediatrician's office for a check-up. As the doctor looked into her ears with an otoscope, he asked*, "Do you think I'll find Big Bird in here*?" The little girl stayed silent. Next, the doctor took a tongue depressor and looked down her throat. He asked, "*Do you think I'll find the Cookie Monster down there*?" Again, the little girl was silent. Finally the doctor put a stethoscope to her chest. As he listened to her heart beat, he asked, "*Do you think I'll hear Barney in here?"* "**Oh, no**!" the little girl replied. "**Jesus is in my heart. Barney's on my underpants**."

**II.) Vs. 1-5 The Kings Preparation**

Vs. 1-3 Jerusalem was bulging with people, some 2 million there to celebrate “Passover”. 1500 years earlier God used His servant Moses to deliver the Israelites from the slavery of the Egyptians. Nine plagues were released by the hand of God & each time pharaoh hardened his heart. The 10th plague was announced, “the death of the firstborn” from every house. The only way of escape was to slaughter a lamb & mark the top & bottom of the door of each house.

 Now 1500 years later Jesus comes not quietly as He always had done. No, this time He stages a event! Matthew as well, as the other gospel writers, are very specific as to the details of Jesus’ entry into the city & the events which follow.

 A.) Matt. tells us that as they came near to Jerusalem that they did so come on a route that led them by a village called “Bethphage” or house of figs, where Jesus sent two of His disciple’s to get the donkey & it’s colt. What is interesting is that the location of Bethphage is the route a person would take if they would enter the temple through the main gate. You would enter the city through the water gate & then the temple through the main gate. Previously as Jesus went into the temple it is believed that He always went in through the “sheep gate” at the opposite end of the temple. Not this time.

 B.) Then there is, if you read the other accounts of this, a belief that Jesus actually entered the city three strait days, each time staying with the disciple’s outside the city in a village called Bethany with the twelve.

 1.) Here the triumphal entry He rides in & Mark 11:11 tells us that “*Jesus went into Jerusalem and into the temple. So when He had looked around at all things, as the hour was already late, He went out to Bethany with the twelve*.” That would of been on Saturday which was the Sabbath & there were no money changer’s in the temple. Interesting as He goes into the temple the first time it is the Sabbath & the only ones at the temple would of been the Priests. So Jesus shows that He is the Great High Priest.

 2.) Then the next day He again goes into the temple on Sunday which was the first day of the week, Matt. 21:12-13. That is the day He cleanses the temple & restores it. It is that day that we see Him enter the temple as the King with authority.

 3.) Lastly, on Monday Luke 19:41 records for us the fact that He again goes into the city & wept over it & again cleanses the temple. This time He appears as a prophet.

Now I can not be sure of those details, but they are interesting none the less! All of this brings about a question why? Why all the attention to detail?

Vs. 4-5 Here we have the answer. “All this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet,..” The donkey & it’s colt all part of the demonstration. Was this a miracle? Well we don’t know for sure, but I rather think not. I believe that Jesus has set the stage for this earlier.

 Now the quote is out of the Zech. 9: & it occurs in the portion of Zechariah which the prophet which spoke upon the land of Hadrach, (Syria) & in the middle of this prophecy he speaks of Jesus first coming & of a king who would be rejected. Now Matthew leaves out some words in his quotation of this as the fulfillment. He leaves out the words “Rejoice greatly” “He is just having salvation”. Why? Well it is the difference again between Jesus’ first coming & His second coming. His coming into the city was for judgment of sin that is not to rejoice over. Second, His coming into Jerusalem was an act of mercy & grace not justice & salvation. He had that for this city but they would not receive it that is why He weeps!

**III.) Vs. 6-11 The King Rides & The City Is Shaken**

Vs. 6-9 Here we see the disciples in obedience. Now some see a contradiction here as Matthew records the use of two donkeys & the other gospel’s record only one. The answer is simple there were two donkeys, but Jesus rides the colt & the colts mother came along. Matthew is showing the fulfillment of the prophecy.

 Speaking of the fulfillment of prophecy Sir Robert Anderson in his book “The Coming Prince” points out something very interesting concerning the date of Jesus triumphal entry. Dan. 9: 25 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.* Now the decree to restore the temple which Daniel refers to here was given on March 14th, 445 BC. In Daniel’s day they used a 360 day calendar, so if you take the specifics of his prophecy:

 A.) “*seven weeks”*  The word week here is “sevens” & refers to years. That would come out to 49 years.

B.) “*sixty-two weeks”* Again the word week is seven & if you do the math it would add up to 434 years.

 C.) Adding these together you come up with 483 years or 173,880 days “*Until Messiah the Prince”* comes. Folks that puts this event at April 6th, 32 AD. & you know what that is the exact day that Jesus rode that colt into Jerusalem, 483 years later.

 Now this must of been quite a scene as “great multitudes” spread out their garments upon the ground & took down branches & laid them upon the ground 7 they began to shout “Save now, Save now!” Now when the Roman’s would win a great battle they would come in riding a great horse with shouts following after them. A donkey was a animal of peace not war, that is what Jesus came riding, but remember that he will one day come on a great white horse with His saints behind Him. The praise that proceeds from the crowd is out of Psalm 118: 24 a Psalm that Jesus will attribute to Himself.

 It is hard to realize that this would the same crowd in a week that would shout “Crucify Him”. Yet when you really stop & think about it a lot of folks do the same thing. They make an intellectual commitment to Jesus in a time of need. A sort of spiritual “good luck charm.” They were their crosses, go to church trying to do everything they can to get what they wanted to. But when Jesus the good luck charm does not produce what they expected they become disappointed & say; “I tried Christianity & it did not work!” May I just say that Christianity is not something that you “try”! Jesus & the cross is not some “good luck” charm He is your savior who died upon that cross.

 Now can you imagine how you would feel if your loved one died to save the life of another. Then you develop a friendship with them. Time goes by & they come up to you & say; “Hey, I’m not going to hang around you any more as a matter of fact I don’t like you!” “Well what have I done”, you ask? “Your relatives death on my behalf did not make me rich, or popular.” “I mean, nothing that I wanted to have happen to me has happen as a result of them dying for me!” That is the way many people react towards Christ.

Vs. 10- 11 Now the city was “moved”; that’s the word where we get our word “seismic” from. The city was shaken emotionally & mentally by what was going on with Jesus. They wanted to know “who is this”? I kind of think that it was the gentiles who wanted to know this.

**IV.) Vs. 12-13 The Cleansing Of The Temple**

Vs. 12 As I’ve said I think this is the next day & He comes back into the temple & finds all of the commotion going on. This is the second time He has done this the first was at the start of His ministry. These folks were crooked. You had to pay your offering in temple shekels & not in Roman currency. So the money changer’s were there in the court of the gentiles to “help” you out, but in so doing they were making a huge prophet & giving kick-backs to the priests. Same thing with the dove tables. You could get doves outside & bring them in, but the priest would always find some blemish on them. So only the doves that had the temple seal upon them were accepted & of coarse they were expensive.

 Now look at Jesus here one man knocking over the tables & nobody stops Him. Jesus was no whimp. Oh He was gentle, but He is holy as well. What does all this show us about what Jesus wants out of our temples being that we are temples of the Holy Spirit?

 A.) Well He wants a clean temple. One without compromise. May I say it is a good thing when Jesus comes into your life Christians & knocks over some tables. Maybe its been some time since He has come in & knock some tables over, but may I suggest that you remove those things that are corrupting your faith. Those things that are keeping other from knowing Jesus. You have a choice friends you can either remove those tables or have Jesus knock them over. Notice that He can not make your temple into what it ought to be, before He cleanses it!

 B.) He wants it to be a place of communion with Him, “Prayer”. A place of consistent fellowship. That is Gods design for us a place of Prayer. Folks, if their is corruption in the house then fellowship is not happening!

**V.) Vs. 14-17 The Restoration Of The Temple**

Vs. 14-17

 C.) Vs. 14 He wants the temple to be a place of healing. Jesus wants to be able to use you to heal those who can not see. To touch those who can not walk. Folks that is what the church ought to be doing.

 D.) Vs. 14 Further more He wants it to be a place of power. A place where the impossible is accomplished.

 E.) Vs. 15-16 He wants it to be a place of praise. Now notice who it was that praised. It was the children, is that not great? The religious they are having a cow, but the children are praising.

Vs. 17 As we conclude this morning may I ask you to search your heart this morning & see what kind of temple are you? Would He leave there & lodge somewhere else?

**Matthew 21:18-27**

**“Fig’s And Fakes”**

**I.) Intro**

**II.) Vs. 18-19 Leaves Without Figs**

**III.) Vs. 20-22 Fruitful Faith**

**IV.) Vs. 23-27 Authority, Who Has It?**

**I) Intro**

As we come into the second day of Jesus’ final week we have a curious story concerning this fig tree; then we move onto the questioning of His authority by chief priests & the elders. In both of these stories we shall deal with **authenticity & authority**. A wise person once said; “*You must act as you believe, for you will eventually believe as you act*.” One of the worst things to hear as a Christian is the “H” word. You know, when someone calls you a “hypocrite”. The story is told of Jesse James who killed a fellow in a bank robbery and shortly thereafter was baptized in the Kearney Baptist Church. Then he killed another man & joined the church choir and taught hymn-singing.

 Not that long ago the Hollywood branch of the American Cancer Society decided to hold a benefit night along with a professional tennis tournament. What they learned latter was that a major tobacco company was also sponsoring the tennis tournament. They had already committed to selling 500 tickets to an event that was named after a well-known brand of cigarettes. The publicity that was sent out had the “American Cancer Society” name along side a young woman with a tennis racket in one hand and a cigarette in the other. How about you, are you authentic in your faith?

**II.) Vs. 18-19 Leaves Without Figs**

Vs. 18 Now you will notice that this event takes place in the morning as He was returning to Jerusalem. Again we realize that these events take place over a period of a few days.

 Something else I want you to see here. Now we know that He stayed in Bethany which was a few miles out side the city. So what, you ask? Well, Bethany had a famous family living there. A family made famous by Jesus, Lazarus & his sisters Mary & Martha lived there. The whole raising of Lazarus had really tweaked the chief priests who took counsel to kill him for many were believing on Jesus based upon that incident, (John 12:10-11). Well it seems that Jesus went to their house for dinner, but did not stay the night with them. How do we know that? Well, two reasons:

 A.) Jesus would not of risked the life of His friends on account of Him. In fact we see him staying at the garden of Gethsemane on the night He is arrested.

 B.) Knowing the heart that Mary & Martha had to serve it is hard to believe that they would let Jesus go from their house in the morning with out something to eat, but here we see that He was hungry.

 So what do you think Jesus was doing at night? It is just an opinion, but I believe He was up all night praying. Praying for the spiritual condition of the city which He wept over. What do you think Jesus is doing now? I mean what is He doing now in regards to You? Well the Bible tells us in Heb. 7:25 “*Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them*.” Then there is the story of Peter’s failure in Luke 22:31-32 a week from this time where Jesus says; “*Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren*.” Folks I love this. I mean the picture of Jesus knowing every little detail of my life, praying for my strength. It is good for us to pray for each other, but you have the Lord praying for you, even knowing that we are going to blow it, but praying for our return to Him. You never have the excuse to say; “*I can’t come back to the Lord I’ve blown it to bad this time*.” Hey, He knows & has been praying for you.

Vs. 19 Now we come to this cursed fig tree. I must admit that this story puzzled me a bit. I mean, so what the fig tree has no figs why curse a dumb tree? I’ve come up with some new insight into this whole incident.

 A.) First, this story has **Prophetical implications**. Jeremiah, (the weeping prophet) was speaking of Judah’s judgment in chapter 8. In verse 5-6 God says that Jerusalem is always backsliding & refusing to return & repent. Then in verses 8-11 he goes on to say how they are proud of their heritage & proclaim “peace peace”, while rejecting the word of God. Then in verse 12-13 the prophet declares, “In the time of their punishment they shall be cast down. I will surely consume them," says the LORD. "No grapes shall be on the vine, **Nor figs on the fig tree**, And the leaf shall fade; And the things I have given them shall pass away from them.” Hosea also describes Israel as a fig tree in 9:10, so does Jesus in Luke 13:6-9. Simply put this story is a practical parable to Israel, that God has been patient as Jesus story in Luke 13 tells us, but time is up. 40 years later the Roman general Titus would come into this city & kill over 1 mill Jews & Israel would cease being a nation for over 1900 years. Israel failed to bring forth fruit to God they were not a light unto the gentiles. So Jesus came to this fig tree, with it’s leaves, but fruit & said, “let know fruit grow on you ever again.” After the nation rejected Jesus it withered & died from the roots up.

 B.) The second thing I get out of this story is **practical**, that is God desires fruit in our lives. He creates with a purpose in mind. We all to often are concerned with what other see when we ought to be concerned with what God sees! With that said may I point out a few things about this fruitless fig tree?

 1.) First the problem with the tree was not that it had no fruit, it was that it had appeared as though it should have fruit & didn’t. This tree was a hypocrite, it was pretending to be fruitful by it’s out ward appearance, but had no fruit. This tree was not fulfilling it’s true function, it was just putting forth leaves, but not fruit. I’ve done some study on the kind of fig trees native to this region & found some interesting things.

 A.) Fig season was in late June early July, but this type of fig tree put forth a first fruit crop this time of year. What’s more interesting is that figs come on the tree before the leaves do. So when Jesus came up to this tree & saw the leaves, naturally He thought it would of had the first fruit of figs on it. May I say folks that, what ever you do as a believer be real! Don’t try to look like you are something you are not. Hey, if you don’t have fruit yet be honest, get prayer. With that said, why did this fig tree have no fruit? “Now Pastor, how can we know that?” Hey, I said I’ve been looking into this fig tree thing!

 B.) Look carefully at the text. How many fig tress does Jesus go to? “A fig tree”! It does not say that Jesus went up to “some” fig trees but just one. So what? When we first moved here to Merced we lived at a house that a one fig tree & it was the only one around & it produced figs all the time. With this said, this type of fig tree can not produce fruit alone. It seem that this type of fig tree has a small male variety that has to grow right next to it for cross pollination. Simply put, with out the other type of fig tree around it can not produce fruit. Hey, folks you can not produce fruit in your life with out being with other Christians. It’s true we need each other, we are “fruitless” without the body of believers. You may think it’s OK to be a fig tree out there all by yourself & other may see your leaves & say, “looks good” but the truth is there is no fruit.

 C.) One other thing, interesting about this type of fig tree. They don’t have blossoms. There is no flower that comes on these trees ahead of time. Yet, they have to be cross pollenized. Well, it seems that God has placed this little fruit wasp that takes the pollen from the male tree & goes inside the fruit it’s self to pollinate it. Without that little pest not fruit. Folks, it’s the trials & tribulations in our lives that produce lasting “fruit” in our lives.

So with that said; “Be transparent, be with other believers, & allow the Lord to work in the circumstances of your live. ” For it is the lack of these things that leads to fruitlessness.

**III.) Vs. 20-22 Fruitful Faith**

Vs. 20 It is interesting to me that the disciple’s were more interested in know, “How” then they were in knowing “Why”. May I just say to you some times, the better question to ask ourselves is the “why”. We are all into programs & such, folks there is no sort cut to Christian maturity & growth it all runs through the cross. How great it is to ask ourselves, “Why am I not growing in Christ?” Instead of, “How can I do this quickly?” Yet the Lord answers both questions.

 2.) They wanted to know how this miracle was accomplished so quickly & Jesus uses it as an opportunity to further speak on the issue of fruitfulness.

 A.) Vs. 21 **First, fruit will be produced through “faith**”. In fact fruit can be produced no other way except by trusting in God. Now according to Mark’s account the Mountain that Jesus probably pointed to was the mount of Olives. It is the Mount of Olives that Zech. 14:4 says; “..in that day His (Jesus’) 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.” All of that will take place at His second coming. So in other words if you trust the Lord you will not only see fruitless tress removed you shall soon see my coming again.

 B.) Vs. 22 **Second, fruit will be produced through prayer**. Now you will notice that this statement is made to Jesus’ disciple’s. And what makes a disciple? It is a person who has surrendered their wills to the will of the Lord. So the purpose of prayer is not for our own desires or to enrich ourselves. We should not be praying to get out will done, but rather His will done. The person who is surrendered to God 7 is asking for Gods will not their own is going to be fruitful!

**IV.) Vs. 23-27 Authority, Who Has It?**

Vs. 23 As we have been speaking of true fruit, now we move to ,the fakes. Now Jesus had just the day before over turned the tables & He comes back into the temple this time He is teaching the people. So the chief priests & elders want to know what authority to had to do what He had been doing. These people were the religious leaders of the nation & it was their duty to judge the people. So they are right in asking the questions. Notice they ask two questions & neither one of them deny the miraculous things Jesus did all they can do is question His right to do them:

 A.) “*By what authority are You doing these things*?” Is your authority political, social, spiritual? That is what they are asking what is the purpose behind what you are doing? Now I think that was a big question but not the one that bothered them the most.

 B.) “*And who gave You this authority*”?” Jesus presence was without permission from them, so where did He get such permission? And if they had not given Him permission then what He was doing was illegal.

Vs. 24-25 Now notice Jesus’ response back. Now He does not decline to tell them what they ask He just wants to determine if they are willing to receive the answers. It would be pointless to tell them the source of His authority if they were not ready to believe it. So He says, “You want to know whether or not I have the right to come into the temple to do & teach. Am I a teacher called by the authority of God or am I a man craving popular opinion & the acclaim of the people?” That is what He says back to them.

 Vs. 25 The Baptist of John, where was it from, heaven or men? John’s ministry was to prepare the way for Jesus. All that John did pointed to Jesus. John was not the light, but he testified of the “True Light” Jesus. Now the people believed that John’s authority came from God. In a since Jesus is asking these guys about John’s fig tree, “Leaves or fruit”, boys, “Leaves or fruit?”

 So from trapping Jesus they find themselves trapped. They were suppose to be leaders under the authority of God, but they were men who were swayed by popular opinion. If they said from God Jesus would say that John testified of Him & that they allowed Herod to put to death John. If they said man then the people would come after them.

 These guys were fruitless figs. Oh they had a lot of leaves, but no fruit. How about You? What kind of tree are you, a fake or one with fruit?

**Matthew 21:28-46**

**I.) Intro**

**II.) Vs. 28-32 Who Will Work Today?**

**I) Intro**

To clearly understand these parables we need to go back & see what brought them on. As Jesus came into the temple, for the third time, He was teaching & the chief priests & elders came up to Him about His previous activities of cleansing the temple. Their questions dealt with authority. They were the only ones that had the right to grant authority in the temple & Jesus had not gotten authority from them. These guys were the judges of Israel, so they questioned Jesus right to do & say the things that He did. So Jesus told them that He would answer their questions if they answered His concerning John the Baptist. Since they were concerned with authority surly they should have made some conclusions concerning John’s ministry. Now these guys were caught in a horns of dilemma, so they refused to answer one way or another, but Jesus is not going to let them off so easy. That is why He shares these parables with them, to get them to look at themselves. It is hard to way the motives of others. These guys were impugning the motives of Jesus now Jesus will get them to Judge their own motives for authority.

 A pastor was walking down a street on a cold day when he spotted a young boy on the front porch of a home. The doorbell was set high in the door way, and the little guy was too short to ring it despite his attempts of jumping. Feeling sorry for the little guy, the pastor stepped up onto the porch and rang the bell for him & then asked, "And now what, young man?" "Now," exclaimed the boy, "we run like crazy!"

**II.) Vs. 28-32 Who Will Work Today?**

Vs. 28 “*But what do you think*?” Now these guys just a minuet ago refused to think when they were asked a direct question, but Jesus is going to get them to think by putting their deeds on trial using an illustration.

 A.) Vs. 29 First, there are the non-religious (tax collectors, & harlots) who refuse to go & work in the vineyard but latter regret it. Now this word **regret** is only used 5 times in the N.T. & it means to be filled with sorrow. Now this guy was not only filled with sorrow this sorrow led to a change in attitude & action as he went into the vineyard.

 B.) Vs. 30 Second, we have those who when asked just said, “I sir” in the Greek “go” is not there. It suggests that the second son wanted to put himself in contrast with the other son who said he would not go. It was as if the second boy was saying; “You can depend upon me sir!” This boy wanted to appear religious, but did not want to be obedient any more then the first boy did. Jesus is going to give us the interpretation of this parable in verse 31b-32, but before He does He wants the religious folks to give Him their opinion concerning the story.

 Notice that in the story both are addressed as sons. We may not be able to tell the difference between the two, but their actions will reveal which one is the true son. Also you can see that their is no mistaking what God requires each of those sons to do, “work in the vineyard.” Neither can anyone mistake when it is that they are to start, “today”. Lastly you will see who’s vineyard it is, (Gods).

Vs. 31 So Jesus asks, “Which one **did** the will of God?” Now notice what’s important here, “the will of the Father!” It’s not whether or not you say you are a Christian that is important any body can do that. Gods not impressed with lip service or emotional responses. Today a lot is folks want to talk about how many came forward at an alter call & they say “***Well, 4000 got saved today***!” **No! 4000 said they would go to the vineyard you got to wait & see how many show up to work**!

 Now, how did the first son differ from that of the second? Well clearly they repented they sorrowed, but more then that they were out in the vineyard to work. Their sorrow over their rebellion had legs didn’t it? Folks being a Christian is more then intellectual agreement with some creeds or doctrines it’s a change of life.

 I’m afraid today in our rush to be relevant to a new generation that we have redefined success in terms of numbers. The Bible speaks of two prophets with some similarities, Jonah & Jeremiah. Both were sent into cities to preach, both were reluctant to do so. Both cried out to the Lord to be delivered from distress. Yet with that said they had very different results. Jonah, preached a single sentence, “In forty days, the city will be destroyed.” And 600,000 got saved! Jeremiah preached to the same city for 40 years & not a single person got saved. If these two were alive today which on would all the books be written about? Which one would, get interviewed & quoted. Which one would be doing church growth seminars? It is easy Jonah! Yet with that said, which one of these two prophets did the folks of Jesus’ time think He was most like? Well, Matt. 16:14 tells us it was Jeremiah. Not a single person thought of Jonah! And why you ask? Because of Jeremiah’s heart was like that of Jesus’. God’s not interested in some outward show, He is into your heart!

 Even after the religious leaders saw the change of life in the tax collectors & harlots they still did not repent themselves. It is a sad state when professing believers are resistant to change & growth. If anything we believers ought to be the most open to change! When the houses on our block flooded last year the response of those who flooded varied. One of my neighbors, just took the money he got back from the insurance & bought some new toys. He had his carpet cleaned & that was it. To this day I’m told that their house looks all right, but it still has a smell about it. Now when ours flooded Mike Salvadori came over cut a few hole in our walls & said, “Everything from the floor up to 4 feet has got to go.” You see when a person accepts Jesus God doesn’t just redecorates He strips it bare & makes it new for it’s the only way it won’t keep smelling bad!

**III.) Vs. 33-41 Who’s Vineyard Is This?**

Vs. 33-36 Now Jesus reveals the heart of those religious folks & why they would not change. Again He uses a familiar word picture, a vineyard. The story of this vineyard mentioned here is found in Isaiah 5:1-7, “*Now let me sing to my Well-beloved A song of my Beloved regarding His vineyard: My Well-beloved has a vineyard On a very fruitful hill. He dug it up and cleared out its stones, And planted it with the choicest vine. He built a tower in its midst, And also made a winepress in it; So He expected it to bring forth good grapes, But it brought forth wild grapes*.” Jesus is calling these guys back to Isaiah’s prophecy which reminded Israel of Gods goodness towards them & only asked that they bring forth fruit to Gods glory. This parable shows that God had a plan for this vineyard, in fact He had even placed a tower of protection upon it. He placed official leaders, (vinedressers), in it so that it would produce fruit for Him. Simply put God put everything necessary for fruit production, I mean these guys lacked nothing. Yet, when He sent servants (prophets) at vintage time to check & see on the fruit production, all the official leaders did was beat chase off or kill the servants. Now if I was the Lord I would just send my army in there & kill each of these guys. Instead the Lord sends His son to instruct them.

Vs. 37-39 God sends His own Son! So the failure of the vineyard was a direct relationship to those that He had put over the vineyard, it was their fault that He was not able to get fruit from it. So they kill the son saying, “We will seize His inheritance!” So what s the point of the story? It’s found right there in these words. These guys had forgotten who’s vineyard it was. They had forgotten that they were just put there to ensure that the vineyard would be fruitful. They had begun to believe that the vineyard existed for them, it was all about their vineyard rather then their masters.

**IV.) Vs. 42-46 Rejecting The Stone**

Vs. 42 Now Jesus quotes to them right out of Ps. 118: it was the same section of scripture that the people were singing as He came into Jerusalem.

 There is an interesting story told in connection with this passage. When the temple was being built stones were quarried miles away & transported to the Temple Mount. Now these stones were huge some 40 feet wide & 20 feet high yet they were so perfectly cut that you could not pass a knife blade between them, in fact they did not even use mortar to put them together. The most important part of the building was the “chief cornerstone” for from it all the other stones fit together. Well when that stone arrived no one could figure out where it belonged so they through it off a cliff. It was not until the foundation was all done that they realized that they did not have the “corner stone” it was then that they realized that they had rejected it. A kind of life imitating scripture!

 The word “rejected” is found some 9 times in the N.T. & it means to be unfit after trial. In the case of Jesus those that rejected Him were the ones unfit after trial.

Vs. 43-44 Now notice that rejecting Jesus has two consequences.

 So you see Jesus made them pass judgment & told them, “Your choice fellows!” “What’s it going to be, brokeness or dust!”

Vs. 45-46 Here we are told a few days before the crucifixion their choice, they want to lay their hands on Him. All the world will have one of two relationships with Jesus; you will either call Him “Savior” or you will call Him “Judge”. Now I want to be on record this morning that I deserve to be judged by Him, but because He took my punishment & I have accepted this truth then He is my Savior. What’s it going to be for you?

**Matthew 22:1-14**

**“Your Invited”**

**I.) Intro**

**IV.) Vs. 8-14 Dressed For The Party**

**I) Intro**

In this parable Jesus answers a question of the heart. Verse 46 says that upon hearing the two parables they understood their failure & “*sought to lay hands on Him*,...” That is to say they wanted to kill Him. Why? Because Jesus had dealt with authority & responsibility in the Kingdom of God & they saw themselves on the wrong side of the story. In this parable Jesus again speaks of the kingdom of heaven but instead of responsibility He deals with the privilege associated with it.

 When you really think about it life is boiled down to making the right choices. Now some folks would argue that you have to be given the opportunities before you can make the right choice, but what is certain as far as heaven is concerned everyone is given the opportunity. Under the heading “The Top 12 Truths That Children Have Learned” comes these 5 wise choices:

2.) When your mom is mad at your dad, don’t let mom brush your hair.

3.) You can’t trust dogs to watch your food.

4.) Don’t sneeze when someone is cutting your hair.

5.) Don’t wear polka-dot underwear under white shorts.

**II.) Vs. 1-3 Not Willing To Come**

Vs. 1 Now the Leaders were still upset at Jesus’ words concerning their responsibility to Gods vineyard when Jesus wants to show them that the Kingdom of heaven is not just about responsibility it is about privilege. Jesus is going to show us that going to Heaven is a choice, but more then that it is made not upon our sacrifice but rather His.

 Now the first thing that you will notice in the comparing of these parables is that we have switched story lines. In the first two parables Jesus used the word picture of workers in a vineyard. He did so to illustrate responsibility & authority for that had been their question in verse 23. Now this parable deals with a invitation to a celebration. Why the change? Well I think that these religious folks were missing the point of the kingdom. They thought of the kingdom in terms of theirs & what they did, hence they were threatened by our Lords graciousness. They emphasized the outward above the inward. So now Jesus tells us this story of a three fold invitation to a wedding feast.

 Now you need to understand that unlike our culture the Jewish culture centered around celebrations. I mean these folks knew how to party. In fact the wedding celebration lasted 1 week & it was full of singing, eating & dancing. Sounds like a party to me!

 May I just take a moment to say that I think you folks are a lot like the Jewish culture for truly you all like to get together to eat, fellowship. I pray that we never lose the joy of just wanting to be together. Last week one of the couples that visited came up to me & said; “Man what a great group of people that go to Calvary Chapel, we have not stopped talking to people since we walked in the doors.” I always want to maintain a celebration type attitude here & I thank-you for keeping me in that place!

Vs. 2 Now here are the principal people of the story: A King is having a wedding for His son & servants are sent ahead of time to invite certain folks to the celebration.

 Clearly this is a picture of the nation of Israel & their rejection of Jesus. Israel was the first to be invited to the banquet. What is interesting to me is why anyone would turn down this invitation. I mean if I invite you to come on over to my house & put you to work then you probably won’t come back the next time I come calling on you, but that’s not the case here. So what’s the practical point?

 1.) First of all if your not a believer this morning you need to stop thinking about what you will have to give up if you become a Christian & start realizing what you are already giving up because you are not! You are being invited to a party & everything you need is provided.

 2.) Second, if you are a believer, may I ask you how you see your relationship with Jesus? I mean what is the “Kingdom of Heaven” to you? Is it a stuffed shirt list of does & don’ts? Jesus says that the Kingdom of heaven is like; “*A forty hour work week in a job that you can’t stand*!” **No!,** but that’s how a lot of us act. He says it’s like a wedding celebration. Now careful folks the wedding is supposed to be just the beginning & marriage makes it better! So many people would say; “It’s not the church I don’t like its the people.” I came across this the other day; It’s called the “Senility Prayer” God grant me the senility to forget the people I never liked anyway, the good fortune to run into the ones I do, & the eyesight to tell the difference.

 A.) So what is the “kingdom of heaven”? Well, Rom. 14:17 tells us “*For the Kingdom of God is not a matter of what we eat or drink, but of living a life of goodness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit*.” It’s like a wedding feast, a life filled with gladness, song, joy & celebration. Does that characterize your life in Jesus? It ought too! And you know what it is not conditional upon circumstances or situations.

Vs. 3 Now notice the wording here, “*and sent out his servants to call those who were invited to the wedding; and they were not willing to come*.” The words, “*to call those who were invited”*  Is literally “to call the called”, there was a second call to those who were already invited to the celebration. A kind of RSVP No look at the response, they were not willing to come. “Come on in we are celebrating, having a party at no cost to you, just come.” That is what Jesus did to the lost sheep of Israel, His was a call to the called, but they would not come. A few days latter Jesus would stand outside the city & say, “*O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings,* ***but you were not willing***!” So the first reaction to the invitation is **indifference.**

 How about you are you ignoring Gods invitation to celebrate with Him? Don’t you know that as Rom. 2:4 says, “Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance?”

**III.) Vs. 4-7 Angry About Being Invited**

Vs. 4-5 Here then is the second invitation. The first thing you notice is that the time of the celebration is at hand. The sacrifice has been prepared the meal is ready. The King had done every thing to prepare for the Joy, peace & gladness. This represents the time after the crucifixion. A time when God empowered the disciple’s & they went back out & told Israel to come on in to the feast. You will notice that the response is individual now. So here we are looking not at Israel’s rejection, but that of individuals rejection. Now notice the responses to the invitation:

 A.) Vs. 5 “They made light of it..” That is that they **neglected or unconcerned** with it. In the first call they were indifferent, here they neglectful. It is not that they would not agree with the truth it is that they just put it off or make light of it. Do you see the progression of unbelief?

 B.) Vs. 5 “..went their ways..” Here we see that the response was that they saw the things of the world greater then the privilege of celebrating with God. It was their ways! “Hey, I want to do my own thing man, my own way!” Prov 14:12 says, “There is a way that seems right to a man, But its end is the way of death.”

 1.) Vs. 5 “went to his farm..” Here it was the world system.

 2.) Vs. 5 “to his business..” Here we see that it was the worlds goods.

Those are the things that cause neglect folks, being to caught up into the world system or the worlds goods to realize what your losing out on!

 C.) Vs. 6 “And the rest seized his servants, treated them spitefully, and killed them.” Here then is the third response to the invitation, hostility towards the person offering it. The words means to insult or to treat in an arrogant, spiteful manner. Think of this why would you make fun of someone who has sacrificed their life that you may have peace, joy & righteousness? But you know that is the progression.

Vs. 7 Now look at what the Lord does with those that so respond. He judges them! Folks either you will enjoy the benefits of the party of the Lord or you will be judged. And you know what some 40 years latter this very thing happen to Israel as the Roman General Titus came into the city.

**IV.) Vs. 8-14 Dressed For The Party**

Vs. 8-10 Here then is the response to the rejection of Israel, God send His servant out to those who are not worthy. Folks that is you & I. And where does He find us? Highways & the invitation is to all both bad & good. That is to say by the worlds standards, by Gods standards there are none that are righteous. All were admitted to the banquet, no discrimination the invitation is to all. Before the invitation was just to the Jew the only way you could get the invitation was by becoming a Jew.

Vs. 11-14 Here we have a guy who came but He was not dressed rightly. There are interesting words here to describe why he was not dressed right. In verse 11 the word “not” having a wedding garment on describes the simple observation that the guy was not warring a wedding garment, but in verse 12 when the King questions him on it a different word is used. The word “without” means that the guy did not ware one at his own discretion. It is not that he did not have one it is rather that he did not want to ware one. So when the king questions the guy he is speechless. You see their was a white robe that a King would provide for all the invited guests. They did not have to provide it for themselves it was given to them all they had to, do is show up with it on. Folks you can not come to the party dressed in any thing other then the righteousness of Christ. You better not reject Gods righteousness, for if you do you are going to get kicked out of the party!

 Hosea 2: 19-20 says, “*I will betroth you to Me forever; Yes, I will betroth you to Me In righteousness and justice, In lovingkindness and mercy; I will betroth you to Me in faithfulness, And you shall know the LORD*.” Hey folks the Lord has chosen us all are called but only those warring the robe of Jesus are going to be their. Isa. 61:10 says, “*I am overwhelmed with joy in the LORD my God! For he has dressed me with the clothing of salvation and draped me in a robe of righteousness. I am like a bridegroom in his wedding suit or a bride with her jewels.”*

 So how about you? Do you realize you have an vitiation to the greatest party the world has ever seen. It is a great time won’t you please come, but make sure you are warring His righteousness!

**Matthew 22:15-33**

**“Death & Taxes”**

**I.) Intro**

**II.) Vs. 15-22 Show Me The Money**

**III.) Vs. 23-33 God Of The Living**

**I) Intro**

After Jesus’ words in parables about the need for a relationship with God not just religion the religious folks come back at Jesus with a few questions of their own. These questions were intended to entrap Jesus. Interesting the timing of this section with the time of year. Most of us just sent off our taxes, & will have to wait to work through June to pay for next years. It seems that there are few subjects that will get people more upset then these two that we will look at this morning. I saw a report on the news that close to 6% of the I.R.S. fails to file their taxes on time.

 It reminds me of a story I heard awhile back. It seems that there was a young man who wanted a $100 really bad for something that he wanted to buy. He asked his parents & they suggested that he pray about it. So for two weeks the little guy prayed, but nothing happened. Finally he decided to write God a letter again asking for the $100. When the postal authorities got the letter addressed to God USA, they forwarded it to the President of America. The President was so impressed & amused by the letter that he instructed his secretary to send a check for $5, thinking that to this little guy $5 was a lot of money. Well when the boy got the check from the President he was thrilled & set down to write a thank-you note at his parents request. “Dear God, Thank you very much for sending the money to me. However God, I noticed that for some reason you had to send the money through the President & like my Dad always says that jerk deducted $95 in taxes!”

**II.) Vs. 15-22 Show Me The Money**

Vs. 15-17 This question was one with political implications & as everyone knows politics makes for strange bed-fellows. It seems that Jesus parables on judgment did have an effect the religious folks, but it was not in causing them to repent instead it angered them.

 It is interesting to look at their series of load questions from a prophetic perspective. In Ex. 12: 3-6 we are told how the priests of Israel were to examine the Passover lamb before it was to be sacrificed. In a few days from this time as Jesus was in the temple He would be sacrificed as the Lamb of God. So here they are, the priests, examining the Passover Lamb, “Jesus”, to see if He had any blemishes & then we are told three times in this chapter that they “**marveled at His words**”, “**astonished at His teaching**” & were “**not able to answer Him a word nor ask Him any more questions**”. Sounds as if they found that Jesus was with out spot or blemish!

Vs. 16 The Pharisees & Herodians were enemies. The Pharisees opposed the Roman tax because they did not like submitting to any foreign power, especially to a Caesar who was revered as a god. The Herodians, on the other hand, were a political party centered around Herod, they were in favor of the taxes because it was Rome that kept Herod in power not to mention that they received income from them. The Herods were not popular with the people, yet religiously they were still Jewish.

 Herod the Great had died in 4 B.C. & the Romans divided his kingdom into three parts giving a part to each of three of his sons. One son, Herod Antipas, had been given the area that included Galilee. Judea, with it’s capital Jerusalem was given to Archelaus. Archelau’s rule only lasted 9 years because he was so oppressive that revolts started happening, so Caesar removed & installed Judea as a Roman province governed by someone he would appoint, (Pontius Pilate). From that time on the people of Judea had to pay their taxes to the Roman emperor, Caesar. Israel had long ago been conquered & forced to pay tribute to foreign powers, but their was a new thought in the land that paying any tribute to a Gentile ruler was an act of treason because God alone was King of Israel. You see Israel had required 1/10 offering to maintain the temple which came from the produce of the land. The Roman tax came from the produce of the land as well.

 So as you can see this question was a no win type of question. It also shows us the great lengthens to which Jesus’ enemies were willing to compromise to get rid of Him. Folks it seems today you can be into anything no matter how weird, but man if you dare to become a Christian the whole world will be against you.

 A.) Now you will see that the self-righteous Pharisees sent their disciples to Jesus for they themselves would not be seen with the Herodians. The religiously political with the politically religious.

 B.) Next you see how they start their entrapment, with flattery. Folks watch out when those who don’t like you start to praise you. A person with strong convictions always has more to fear from flattery then opposition. Challenge, blame & oppose a man with convictions & he will stand upon those convictions to death. Ah, but praise that man, tell him he is all that & he will let down his guard. What this shows me is that I must not stand upon my convictions, but rather I must stand upon the Rock of faith, for it is the only thing that does not care for any of mans opinions!

Vs. 17 So here they think that they have Jesus. If He said, “Yes, pay taxes to Caesar.” That would cause all of Israel to hate Him. Yet if He said, “No don’t pay taxes to Caesar.” That would cause Rome to arrest Him for tax evasion & political rebellion. Can you just see these men there grinning ear to ear? What fascinates me is not only the answer He gives, but the speed in which He delivers it. When Jesus in 21:25-27 had question them concerning John the Baptist they took a time out huddled together & still could not come up with the right answer. Here Jesus gives them an answer straight away!

Vs. 18-22 Now look at Jesus. He knows that their flattery is bogus. That got me to thinking, how many times do I try to con God into something? “Lord great & awesome Holy Lord. You always do right by me, so how about giving me the winning numbers to the lottery? You know I will give it all to You!” Why do you test me, Hypocrites? Folks we can’t trick God into something & personally it we ought to be very glad about that. I mean what would the world be like if our children could trick us into to what ever they wanted? Scary!

 A.) Vs. 19 So Jesus just asks to see the money. Now the fact that they had a Roman coin with the face of Caesar on it tells you something.

 1.) That Israel, whether or not they liked it, were subject to Roman sovereignty. And sense God was over everyone & everything then God was allowing even this for a reason.

 2.) Second the fact that they had the coin showed they were indeed enjoying the benefits of Roman occupation.

 B.) Vs. 20-22 So here we have Jesus two fold response:

 1.) Vs. 20-*21a “Since you have the coin & are using it, then give it back to Caesar for what he requires*.” The word “**render**” means to give back something to it’s original owner. Folk’s we as Christians ought to be the best citizens that our country has, it’s the very least that should be said of us. Look at what Rom. 13:1-2 says, “*Obey the government, for God is the one who put it there. All governments have been placed in power by God. So those who refuse to obey the laws of the land are refusing to obey God, and punishment will follow*.” Further more 1 Tim. 2: 2-3 says that we should *“..plead for God's mercy upon them, and give thanks...to Pray this way for kings and all others who are in authority, so that we can live in peace and quietness, in godliness and dignity... for it is good and pleases God our Savior*,” Hey, we accept all the advantages of the authorities placed over us should we then refuse to pay for it’s maintenance? Folks we have a moral obligation. Paying the Roman taxes was not a gift it was a payment of a debt that Israel was using.

 2.) Vs. 21b Here then Jesus gives the second part of His answer, “Give back to God (the original owner) the things that are His.”

 A.) In this part of the answer we are given the secret of how to do the first part. When you are giving back to the government, you are also giving back to the Lord who put the a*ll governments in power.* Yet don’t forget that you represent another Kingdom. If we would always give God all that belongs to Him, we would never need to be concerned about what we give to Caesar. 1 Cor. 4:7b says “*What do you have that God hasn't given you? And if all you have is from God, why boast as though you have accomplished something on your own*?” Folks, all that we have has come from the Lord. It is when our attitude changes to the fact that what we has comes from our own effort that we get into a tissey over giving! The reality is that our relationship with the Lord ought to effect our relationship towards the country & it’s citizens towards Him in away that no laws can, for we operate under the laws of grace.

**III.) Vs. 23-33 God Of The Living**

Vs. 23-28 The Sadducees were the intellectual materialists of the day. They only accepted the first 5 books of the O.T. (Torah). Notice that their question starts off with what “Moses” said, for they did not at all believe is a spirit world especially the resurrection. So they would get together & debate the Pharisees on the resurrection arguing from the Torah asking that they prove the resurrection for only those first 5 books; the Pharisees were not to successful at doing so & there was a great rift between the two groups.

 So here they give this hypothetical illustration based upon a “levirate marriage”. You ask, what’s a “levirate marriage” well it’s one that you leave-er-right where you found it! OK I’m sorry! It’s means husbands brother. The purpose of this custom was to preserve a mans name by giving him an inheritance. Now today this would not be necessary, but back then land & property was tied too having a male heir & to not have an heir meant that your land possessions would not get passed on to the serving family.

 The point of their question is to discredit the resurrection by pointing how difficult it would be for this woman to have a husband. Perhaps today we would use a organ transplant. “*If a person dies & his heart goes to another person, his cornea goes to someone else & his kidneys to yet another in the resurrection who gets the organs*?”

 Now if I was Jesus I would have been a bit flippant with these guys & said any woman who has gone through 6 of my brothers in heaven any one of them can have her for she was not to good of luck with me! But that is not what Jesus says.

Vs. 29-33 Here he tells them that they are in error because they have two problems:

 A.) **Don’t know the scriptures**: Folks that is the number one problem we have today in the church, people are ignorant of the Word of God. 1 Tim 2:15 says to, “Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.”

 B.) **Don’t know the power of God**: Simply put they tried to put God into their world. J.W’s do this. They can’t figure out the trinity to they say it can’t be. Hey, we don’t to show the word trinity in the Bible all we need to do is show how there is One God who exists in three persons. I can’t fully understand it, but I can show you in the word the proof of this.

 1.) Vs. 30 Here Jesus deals with the marriage part of it & says that there won’t be marriage in heaven. First He tells them that their hypothetical illustration is flawed because that can never happen in heaven. Lets be careful here & take a look at what & why.

 a.) First notice that He says we will be LIKE angels, not that we WlLL be angels. A lot of weird stuff has come through the miss understanding of this verse. So forget all the Hollywood movies where people become angels. Simply put we would be in no need of sex.

 b.) Why no marriage? Well because the primary reason for marriage in this life was to bring forth a family in the safety & security of love between a husband & wife. In the resurrection we will never die, neither will we have children so no marriage. Gods purpose in marriage is to bring together two lives in love, so that children may be produced in a loving secure relationship built around the Lordship of Jesus.

 c.) In heaven we will have new glorious bodies, this earthly tent will be dissolved, so don’t worry about all of your organs & such, he is going to give you a knew heavenly body not built with hands but eternal.

 2.) Vs. 31-32 Here Jesus deals with the resurrection. Notice that He does so from two ways.

 a.) First, He takes them to what God says. They quoted an obscure law form Moses as proof against the resurrection & He brings them to the Word of God.

 b.) Next He quotes to them out of the Torah. Notice how Jesus does this. He brings them to the context. God never said to Moses that He WAS the God of Abraham, Isaac, & Jacob. You say, “Yes He did.” Look again you won’t find the word “WAS” He says, “I am” the God. You get it? If they had died & that was all then it would have been WAS. My Grandfather passed away on Wednesday, he **was** my Grandfather, but that relationship will only be a memory because death has put it to an end. Now that I pray is only for a brief time because we shall be together for eternity.

 May I just say what a great comfort this truth is! Paul said in Rom. 8:38-39 “*I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from His love. Death can't, and life can't. The angels can't, and the demons can't. Our fears for today, our worries about tomorrow, and even the powers of hell can't keep God's love away. Whether we are high above the sky or in the deepest ocean, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord*.” May we be astonished at this teaching today & everyday!

**Matthew 22:34-46**

**“Law & Order”**

**I.) Intro**

**II.) Vs. 34-40 The Principal In Law Is To Love**

**III.) Vs. 41-46 What Do You Think Of Jesus?**

**I) Intro**

Jesus had answered two difficult questions: The first of which dealt with the relationship between religion & government & Jesus said that our lives don’t belong to us they belong to God therefore serve the Lord & by so doing you will serve the government. Next, He dealt with the question concerning this physical life & the next life, to which He responded that God is not the God of the dead but the living. When people die they don’t all go to heaven. You say, what do you mean? Well, heaven is not the place for the dead it is a place for the living where their will be no more death. Jesus said that He came to give life & that more abundantly. Heaven & God are not for the dead but the living! This week He will deal with another tough question with what ought to be governing our lives. Then Jesus will come back with the greatest question ever asked.

 I get a lot of folks asking me some very important questions, most of which are very serious, man am I ever thankful to the Holy Spirit who brings His word into remembrance. I came across these true stories of questions asked some professional:

 First their was this woman who called a travel agent to ask about a special offer on a Hawaii vacation. After hearing the price the woman asked if it would be any cheaper to fly to California & then take a train to Hawaii. Then at a court proceeding a lawyer asked a doctor; “How many autopsies have you performed on dead people?” The doctor replied, “All of my autopsies have been performed on dead people.” “Do you recall the time of the autopsy?” “Yes, it was around 8:30 pm.” “And was Mr. Dennington dead at the time?” “No, he was sitting on the table wondering why I was cutting his chest open!” It sounds like these folks could of been religious!

**II.) Vs. 34-40 The Principal In Law Is To Love**

Vs. 34-36 The Pharisees probably enjoyed Jesus mailing the Saducees for these two were at odds against each other over the supernatural specifically the resurrection. It appears that they had been watching & listening to Jesus’ answers, then huddled together to see what they could come up with. A kind of stump the Rabbi time.

 Vs. 35 Yet with that said we are told in Mark’s account that this guy was sincere. Now a lawyer didn’t mean the same as it does today. The idea was not that of a litigator, but rather an expert in the Mosaic law. It was their job to make distinctions between one requirement & another. They had been debating this amongst themselves for 100’s of years. In fact they had documented some 613 commandments in the law 248 were positive, (things that you should do) & 365 were negative, (things that you should not do). Since no one person could hope to know, let alone obey, all of these commandments it was the job of the Scribes or lawyers to divide these commandments into groups. There were the heavy or important commandments & the light or unimportant ones. So a person could major on the heavy ones & not worry about the light ones.

 Now of coarse this approach goes against the word; James says,(Deut. 27:26) (2:10-11) “*And the person who keeps all of the laws except one is as guilty as the person who has broken all of God's laws. For the same God who said, "Do not commit adultery," also said, "Do not murder." So if you murder someone, you have broken the entire law, even if you do not commit adultery*.”

 Vs. 36 The question in light of the language is really, “*Jesus which one of the 613 commandments of the Law comes* ***first*** *with you*?” This guy was trying to see how Jesus would divide the law as to what was most important. Perhaps the others were hoping that in so doing Jesus would neglect an area of the law by promoting another. There was a popular school of opinion that taught that the 3rd commandment was the greatest & that all the others were minor ones. The 3rd commandment is “*Do not misuse the name of the LORD your God. The LORD will not let you go unpunished if you misuse his name*.” So as long as you were OK in that one then you were fine.

 Now a lot of folks today are trying to maintain some outward form of religion & they are all worried about conforming the outward man. So they say things like, “I don’t drink or cuss therefore I’m not a sinner.” Well let’s see what Jesus considers to be the most important law.

Vs. 37-40 Here Jesus quotes from the Shema (Sha-ma) from Deut. 6:4-5. This was kind of the Jewish statement of faith. They would recite it every day. The word Shema means “to hear”, because the confession starts out, “Hear, O Israel..” & goes on to say “*The LORD is our God, the LORD alone. And you must love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your strength*.” Now the Shema was so important to the Jew’s that they would write it out & put them in small little box’s by their front doors. They would also put this passage of scripture in a small leather pouch & attach it to their foreheads so that they would always keep it before their minds.

 It is interesting that Jesus does not go to the Commandments & which one is the most important as far as our obedience. **Instead He goes to the confession of faith & shares what the principal motivation ought to be in the Law, LOVE**! Do you all see that? The lawyer asked Jesus which one of the 613 laws comes first & Jesus says, **“Loving the Lord your God, with every fiber of your being**!” Look carefully at this now for Jesus is not talking about the kind of love that is infatuation, He is not saying that you ought to have tingly feelings about Him. No, He is saying that the motivation behind obedience is that of devotion. Where there is this kind of love there will always be obedience & service. I saw, a young man on T.V. that was in the H.S. in Littleton. When the shots rang told his sister to lay on the ground & he put his body over the top of her to shield the bullets from her & her friend. Now that is the kind of love that we are talking about here. True love involves every part of us not just our emotions. So the principal of the Law is to Love & the first one you are to love is the Lord. Agustine said, “If you love God like this then you can do as you please.” Folks, we must have a loving relationship with God first.

 Vs. 39-40 Here then Jesus tells them that the expression of their love of God will be seen in how they treat their fellow man. That is what John tells us in 1 John 4:20 *“If someone says, "I love God," but hates another Christian, that person is a liar; for if we don't love people we can see, how can we love God, whom we have not seen*?” Again Paul tells us in Rom. 13:8-10 “*Pay all your debts, except the debt of love for others. You can never finish paying that! If you love your neighbor, you will fulfill all the requirements of God's law. For the commandments against adultery and murder and stealing and coveting--and any other commandment--are all summed up in this one commandment: "Love your neighbor as yourself." Love does no wrong to anyone, so love satisfies all of God's requirements*.” Folks if we have a right relationship to God then we will have no problems with obeying any of His commandments.

 Finally Jesus says that it is upon these two that everything else hangs upon. If You first love the Lord the way you ought to then you will love man kind the way you should. Man is this ever simple, we make Christianity so difficult. Folks it’s first about maintaining a loving relationship with the Lord & as we do so that love is going to just spill out every where upon everyone & we are going to treat them as we would want to be treated.

**III.) Vs. 41-46 What Do You Think Of Jesus?**

Vs. 41-42a Now Jesus is going to ask them a question. Notice this is different then what Jesus had asked His followers back in chapter 16. There He asked, “*Who do you say I am*?” He is not asking them what they think of Him, rather He is asking them, *“What’s your opinion about the Messiah, who’s son is He*?” Now we see here that He is still talking to the same group of people who were not interested in Him so Jesus ask them an indirect question to get them to a personal decision.

 Vs. 42b These men were trained experts in the law they knew the answer. “He is the son of David.” They could of given the proper scriptural references if Jesus had asked for them. Now that is the answer that Jesus wanted them to give, He knew that this is what they would say & it is true.

 Vs. 43-45 Jesus asks them another question out of Psalm 110:1. Now I want you to notice several things that Jesus affirms here:

 A.) First, Jesus says that David wrote this psalm. So people claim that he didn’t but clearly Jesus says that he did.

 B.) Second, Jesus affirms that scripture is inspired by the Holy Spirit. 2 Tim. 3:16 tells us that, “*All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It straightens us out and teaches us to do what is right*.”

 C.) Lastly, Jesus tells us that it was written about the Messiah. So what?

Well you will notice here is in Psalm 110:1, which read in the Hebrew “*The LORD said to my Lord*,..”, the words for LORD is all in caps that’s because it stands for the constants YHVH or the word Jehovah. While in the second use of the word Lord only the L is in caps, that’s because there the word Lord is Adonai. Every scholar interpreted this as speaking about the Messiah because only the He could set at the right hand of God. Yet if the Messiah was David’s son then how could He be David’s Lord? Now the OT promised that God would exalt a descendant of David & give him an everlasting rule. Yet in Jewish thought a descendent was always considered inferior to his ancestor. Yet here David inspired by the Holy Spirit reverses the order & calls his own descendent Lord. David is saying that his heir will be greater then himself. Is that not what Jesus said? Jesus always said that He was the Son of God. So Jesus was not only fully man, (Son of David) but He was also fully God, (Son of God). Folks, Jesus is only our Savior if He is both.

 Now here is the interesting thing. When this passage is translated into Greek from the Hebrew the word for Lord is the same; it is the word “Kurios” which is always used translate the word Jehovah not Adonai. So here the translation would read Jehovah said to Jehovah. The point of the conversation here would not be between God & David’s heir (Jesus the Son of David), but rather between God the Father & God the Son!

 Vs. 46 Lastly we see that they were not able to answer the question. These men prided themselves on their deep understanding of the Word & they were stumped. They were so blinded by their own pride that they “would” not see the truth & He was standing right before them. Many people say today if I could just see Jesus then I would believe. Really? How about it “What do you think of Jesus?” Is He just a man or is He both God & man? Careful how you answer that question because it has eternal consequences.

**Matthew 23:1-12**

**“What’s This God Thing All About?”**

**I.) Intro**

**II.) Vs. 1-7 Mans Religion**

**III.) Vs. 8-12 Gods Relationship**

**I) Intro**

As we approach chapter 23 we need to realize that Jesus was still in the temple where He had silenced the religious opposition. They had heard Him speak in stories that instead of convicting them angered them. So they in turn came to entrap Him in some man made controversy which failed on every front. Finally Jesus silenced them with a question as to what they thought about the Messiah.

 Now in this chapter Jesus still in the temple, around the multitudes, disciple’s & the Pharisees, & here utters His last public message. Now one would think that this being His last public message Jesus would of spelled out some powerful argument to try to convince folks to trust in Him. Instead what we have is perhaps His most scathing words ever uttered. This chapter is easily divided into three sections: First, you have in verses 1-12 Jesus words to the multitudes & His disciples. Then in verses 13-36 you have a series of 8 woes pronounced upon the religious leaders. Lastly, in verses 37-39 are Jesus’ words of remorse over Israel’s failure.

 Gone from the words of Jesus are pleadings & all that is left is warnings of impending doom. One Sunday in a church service, a small boy was sitting next to his parents. The boy would not sit still & the more the parents tried to get him to settle down the more he acted up. The parents whispered warnings, looked at him sternly & still the boy continued. Finally the father knew what he had to do so he grabbed the boy by the hand & began to walk with him to the back of the church to the outside where the boy was going to be delivered from being a pain in the butt. Now the young boy knew by the way his father had a hold of him that he was in big trouble so he did what every young boy does, refused to walk. At this his father quickly picked him up & slung him over his shoulder. By now all eyes were on the father & his son as the boy looked back over his father to all that were staring at him. There was a slight pause & the boy realized that he had only one chance to save his fate. At the top of his lungs he uttered these words to all that watched, “Please pray for me, pray for me quickly!” Folks, this is all that is left for Israel & they won’t even respond to this.

**II.) Vs. 1-7 Mans Religion**

Vs. 1-2 Now it is important to see who it was that Jesus is saying these words too. The first seven verses are primarily for the interest of the multitudes who counted the Pharisees as the religious leaders of the nation. As Jesus said these words about the Scribes & Pharisees the multitudes were no doubt a bit shocked, as these were the most righteous & religious folks in Israel. It would be like attacking some of the most visible Christian authors, radio & T.V. people of today.

 Now the Pharisees & scribes were about 6,000 in number, made up of middle class businessmen who were sincere in their desire to be holy. Their name comes form the word “to separate” & it signified their desire to “separate” from any thing that would render them unclean, which included gentiles, Jews who did not practice the law & any one else who did not support the traditions that governed their lives. May I just say that not all of them were hypocrites, Nicodemus was a Pharisee & so was Joseph of Arimathea who was the one that retrieved Jesus body & placed Him in his own tomb. Yet with that said a great majority were only interested in promoting themselves & their own business.

 Folks it never ceases to amaze me, within Christian circles, when we tend to elevate men & their ministries to “super star” status based upon the worlds concepts. Just when we tend to think that we are not like the Pharisees we go & get impressed by those same qualities that tended to elevate them. What am I saying? Well, folks lets not be impressed by the instrument that God uses, but rather the master who plays so beautifully through them! I mean can you imagine going to some concert with best pianist in the world & after the concert going over to the piano that he played the master piece upon & beginning to touch the keys & say “Man, your are the greatest piano I’ve ever heard.” People, with white coats would pick you up & put you a way. Now lets look at several things that impress so many people about religion.

 1.) Vs. 2 ***“...they sit Moses’ seat***.”: The proper rendering of this verse would read, “they seat ***themselves*** in Moses’ seat.” Lets look carefully at what Jesus is saying here.

 A.) First, “**they seat themselves**..” Jesus is not saying that in so doing that they were in a place that they should not be, because the very next verse He tells them that what ever the Pharisees tell them to “observe & do”, in so much that they correctly interpret the word of God. Jesus recognized that they had authority. Yet with that said they had appointed themselves to that position. So what does that tells us about religion? Well it tells us that many times we are impressed with a persons office & that though that office may be of the Lord it may be that the person who occupies it has placed themselves there instead allowing the Lord too. Watch out for a religious leaders who walk around talking about their titles & position.

 B.) Now lets move to where they placed themselves, “***Moses’ seat***”: The word for “seat” here is an interesting one it is the word “Cathedra” which is the where we get the idea in colleges where a certain professor “chairs” the department. In other words these guys had placed themselves in the position of “final authority” in the law. So what does that tells us? Well it tells us that we are prone to be impressed with how a person caries himself. In other words if so & so says something in a absolute way as an expert we tend to give them more credit. Again, if a religious leader sets himself up as the final authority on the Bible then you know that they are religious!

 Do you get the picture? Religion & religious people tend to be impressed by outward things like their position & how much of an authority they have. Is that what should impress us? No it’s the inward condition of the heart.

 2.) Vs. 3 Here we have another thing about mans religion, there were two sets of books, ones they kept for everybody else & ones they kept for themselves. These guys were concerned with rules that governed every aspect of life including what spices you kept in the cupboard, but inwardly they did not keep the laws that they required others to. Simply put there was a **lack of integrity**. Hey, folks don’t just examine what a person says examine what a person does with what they say! So in mans religion there will inevitably a lack of integrity. In the April 29th Denver Post there was an article stating that Liberal Christians & others were offended by the memorial service for the slain at Columbine High. One pastor was upset because no person of color spoke his statesmen was that, “It was pretty vanilla.” Now think of the lack of integrity here what would happen if some Caucasian Pastor said that the service was “pretty chocolate?” Folks, if something is wrong with some then it is wrong for all!

 3.) Vs. 4 Here we see yet another aspect of religion, a **lack of sympathy & compassion**. The picture is that of a donkey so pilled upon with a load that you can’t see the donkey. What this shows that these guys had a false idea about leadership, they were into pilling on things for others to do rather then helping people unload. Simply put they were harder on others then they were on themselves. Jesus came to lighten peoples burdens, religion seeks to make the load heavier. “You’ve got to give a certain amount, or do certain things in order to be right with God.” All to often what people see in religious leaders is dictators not servants. Jesus never asked us to do anything that He did not do Himself. So? Well, if the pastor or leaders ask others to do what they are not willing to do then your into religion not relationship. I’ve seen this kind of attitude from people, where the pastor or leadership sets up on some hill over looking what the rest is doing.

 4.) Vs. 5 Here we see that all these folks do is summed up in the words, **“.all their works they do to be seen by men**.” Here we again see what motivated them, the praise of men instead of the approval from God. Another mark of religion is the **lack of humility** & more then that the coveting to be seen by man. Now this lack of humility & the courting of the praise of men can be seen in several areas:

 A.) Vs. 5b **It was seen in what they wore**. Those little leather bags that they tucked scripture in were larger then everyone else. Perhaps today we might see it in having a big old Bible with every study help, or a special translation. Anyway they would ware these big leather bags so that people would recognize them as being super spiritual.

Now numbers 15 tells us that the borders of all the men’s garments were suppose to have these fringes with blue thread in them, but these guys took it to an extreme by enlarging them. Hey, I see these guys today warring priestly garb with the collar & all or preaching with some robe on & I wonder what is the purpose? It is not **what** I ware that ought to be what identifies me it is **Who** I ware, Jesus!

 B.) Vs. 6 **It was seen in where they sat**. They were into **positions of honor**. They thought that the mark of greatness was where they were placed in public functions. Religion is always seeking to define success & spirituality based upon how many people are serving so that we can claim honor at the number. Jesus determines greatness by how we serve & Who we honor.

 C.) Vs. 7-10 **They were into tittles**. I’m sorry if I offend any one here but I can’t get into that reverend thing, but many are! I’m pastor so & so. Gods not impressed with titles & the only one I long to here is from Him when He will one day say, “Well done good & faithful servant.” Do you see the difference between religion of man & true Christianity?

**III.) Vs. 8-12 Gods Relationship**

Now we move on to what Jesus had to say to His disciple’s concerning how they were to be.

Vs. 8 Notice that Jesus says, “But you..” He is speaking just to His disciple’s now. And in so doing I believe that He sets forth the true purpose of Christianity & what His servants ought to be doing.

 Now it is interesting because it is the same as what He will say in John 14:6 where He says that “***I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me***.” Now it won’t be in the same order but it is the purpose.

 1.) Vs. 8 ***The truth:*** Gods design is to lead people to truth & clearly Jesus is “the” truth. So here Jesus tells them not to call themselves “Rabbi”. Why? Because the Rabbi’ job was one of authority in truth. Man kind is in a quest for truth & God understands that man is looking for truth with authority, something that they can bank on. But why were they not to call themselves authorities on truth? Because there is only one final authority on truth Jesus in the Word of God. Now notice the order. Rms. 10:17 tells us that faith come by hearing & hearing by the word of God. So that a person can’t come to Christ apart from the Word of God & Jesus is the Word. Folks, there is only one teacher & everyone else is dependent upon Him.

 2.) Vs. 9 ***The life:*** Gods plan is to bring people to life. So here Jesus tells them not to be called father. Why? Well the father was seen as the life giver & there is only one who gives us spiritual life God the Father. You can ask me, “Dale how many people have you saved?” And I will tell you no one, I can’t save anyone there is only One that imparts spiritual life. So the second purpose of Christianity is Life. Jesus said that He had come to give life & that more abundantly.

 3.) Vs. 10 ***The way:*** Here then is the last purpose of Christianity the practice of truth into every day life. Now the word teacher is better rendered guide. Perhaps today we say Guru. That is someone who guides us into the practice of truth in every situation. I am not your guide I only want to keep pointing people to Jesus.

Vs.11-12 Lastly Jesus tells His men how to accomplish this.

 A.) Be a servant. A true person that is accomplishing Gods plan is serving other not being served.

 B.) Be humble. Again a person that is so doing this doesn’t want the glory but instead wants to reflect the glory to God.

**Matthew 23:13-39**

**“What The Church Should Not Be”**

**I.) Intro**

**II.) Vs. 13-22 Keeping People From God**

**III.) Vs. 23-28 Fake & Phony**

**IV.) Vs. 29-36 Against The Truth**

**V.) Vs. 37-39 Our Broken Hearted Savior**

**I) Intro**

Last week Jesus spoke to the multitudes, then instructed His disciple’s in how they were reach the world. In this section of the passage Jesus turns His words upon the religious community & pronounces 8 woes of condemnation upon their failure. I often think of the responsibility God gives us to reach this world & what a poor example I am. Failure is a part of the reality we believers face, yet it is only when we allow Jesus to shine through our failure that the world is reached. The trouble with what often passes for Christianity is that it is not honest it is instead religiosity or churchianity. I am not saying that this is the only reason why the world rejects Jesus’ offer of love, but it is certainly a reason. These 8 woes against the religious leaders parallel the 8 attitudes of what Christianity should be. All to often people see us Christians as goody to shoes folks trying to bribe God into what we want Him to do. Reminds me of a story of a little boy who wanted a bike for Christmas. His mother told him that they did not have money for a bike but that if he prayed & told Jesus that he was going to be a good boy that perhaps Jesus would give him a bike. So the little guy sat down to write a letter to Jesus promising to be a good boy. Each time he got to the part where he would promise to be a good boy he realized that he could not be good long enough. You see he started out by saying he would be good for a year then he realized how long a year was & started over. Then he said a month but he realized he could not be good for a whole month. Finally, he was down to only a day & he thought that this was probably not enough to get him the bike. So he gave up & went into the living room bummed out & as he was sitting there he saw the nativity scene above the fire place. Quickly he got an idea, grabbed the statue of Mary & went back into his room to write the letter. This time his letter read, “Dear Jesus, If you ever want to see your mother again...” Hey folks, lest take this section to heart & evaluate what kind of Christianity we are showing the world.

**II.) Vs. 13-22 Keeping People From God**

Here we have the first 4 woes against the Pharisees. Now, the word “**woe**” is an interesting one fore it carries with it not anger but sorrow as well. When you read these woes you need to hear not only the Holiness of God but the Love of God as well. You will also see that 7 times they are called “**hypocrites**”. Now the original word came from the Greek word that describe an actor, a person who acts a part warring a mask to cover their true feelings. That is what was breaking Jesus’ heart as well as causing their judgment, they were acting the part, but it was all a facade.

 1.) Vs. 13 In Matt. 5:3 Jesus had *said “Blessed are the poor in spirit, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven*.” Here we have the contrast between the **broken hearted** which enter the kingdom of heaven & the **proud hearted** which not only keep themselves out but other as well. Jesus speaks of their twofold sin:

 a.) They did not go in themselves

 b.) They did not allow others to go in.

It was the Parisees responsibility to teach the people the word of God, instead they were teaching man made traditions over the word of God & were proud hearted about what they taught. They liked the idea of teaching others but they themselves were not teachable. These guys would carry around their necks a key which symbolized knowledge that they were responsible to pass on to the people instead they kept people out the truth. Today we have to many church spending all their time & energy on trying to **entertain the goats instead of feeding Gods sheep**! In so doing they are acting just like the Pharisees & shutting up the kingdom of heaven. A lot of pastors have opted out of teaching the Bible & they say that it just is not relevant any more. I am more convinced every day that this is the most relevant book that there has ever been & if you read it regularly it will not make you **proud hearted** it will leave you **broken hearted**!

 2.) Vs. 14 In Matt. 5:4 Jesus said*, “Blessed are those who mourn, For they shall be comforted*.” Because they were proud they did not mourn over their own condition, which made them callous to the needs of others. When a man died they would go to the house & offer prayers which were to be paid for by there length. They weren’t a comfort they just used the situation to rip of the widows. Hey, allot of what the people think today of the church is that it only interested in money. That is not what Jesus is into He has come to give His life away! The church ought never be in the money business. Never should we be trying to manipulate peoples emotions so that they will give. Yet you see it!

 3.) Vs. 15 In Matt 5:15 Jesus said, “*Blessed are the meek, For they shall inherit the earth*.” Instead of impacting the world for Christ by their inward heart these guys were more interested in get people to follow them. The word “proselyte” means a stranger who has left his own people to live among another. There were two kinds of proselytes in those days:

 a.) Those that admired Judaism because of its moral aspects & they were called “God fearers”

 b.) Then there were those who became Jewish converts & circumcised themselves & upheld all the traditions with such a zeal that was even greater then the Pharisees. That is the group spoken of here.

 Worse yet these guys when someone would follow them were usually ten times as bad. Folks, there is an attraction to religion & religious people. It always seems this way, get a smoker to quit smoking & they are usually the most zealous anti-smokers. So what does that show us? Well we are not to try to convert someone to our denomination or church, but rather we are to lead them to Jesus! Today the church has gone to certain lengths that if you are not of their opinion then you have to get re-baptized. Some churches wont let you take part in communion if you are not a member. Folks, you are not members of Calvary Chapel, your members of His body, & you are fellowshiping here with us.

 4.) Vs. 16-22 In Matt. 5:6 Jesus said, “*Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, For they shall be filled*.” Instead of Hungering & thirsting for righteousness they after the things of the world. They did not want more of God they wanted more of the world. So they had all these oaths to show they were sincere, but when you think about it if someone says to you I swear then they probably aren’t telling the truth because if they are then why do they have to swear that they are? Words & oaths seem to many something different so you had to be up on all of what it meant. So Jesus says that any time you swear it is binding as far as God is concerned. When we were all kids we get into some discussion that was based upon our honesty & in order to lie we would cross our fingers & when it was found out that we lied we would claim that we did not because we had crossed our fingers. Some folks never learn to tell the truth & then they end up running for president or something!

 Now think of the word picture here. Can you imagine following a person down the “Grand Canyon” who was blind? These men were not seeking Gods righteousness they were after a religious system that let them get into what ever they wanted. In all of these woes we see that what these religious leaders were doing was keeping people from God, yet when you put that next to what Jesus said in the beatitudes you can see it was the opposite. Folks the way we live should draw people to Jesus, not to our church, or ourselves. We ought to be examples of people who recognize that we are sinners & are resting in His grace.

**III.) Vs. 23-28 Fake & Phony**

Here we are given three more woes, but these deal more with their own approach to God instead of how that approach effected the world.

 5.) Vs. 23-24 Again Jesus said in Matt. 5: 7 *“Blessed are the merciful, For they shall obtain mercy*.” They were obsessed with trivial things while ignoring the important things. It reminds me of this guy I knew who was obsessed with driving the speed limit & he was always telling me that it was important to obey the traffic rules as a witness to the world of our obedience to Christ, yet at the same time he treated his wife terrible, Now I’m not saying that we can break the traffic laws, but clearly loving our wives as Christ loves the church is a bit more important as a witness.

 Now in Deut. they were told to tithe all that yields seeds. The mint & dill were not crops that a person would grow in large quantities, instead they were herb’s that they would grow in a little kitchen garden for cooking. Now there was nothing wrong about tithing a few leaves to the Lord, but not to the exclusion justice, mercy & faith. Today a lot of Christians are all caught up in what they ware to church & go with a bad attitude.

 So here in verse 24 Jesus gives them a funny illustration out of Lev. It seems that the smallest unclean animal was a gnat & the largest was the camel. These guys would take all their drinks & pour them through a gauze so that any gnat would be strained out yet while doing so let a camel go through. The picture is that of a group of people who had lost proportion. At times that is what the world sees about the church, that it has lost proportion, we are into politics & things but their is no compassion upon a hurting & lost world. We are up in arms against immorality, as we should be, yet we do nothing to reach those folks.

 6.) Vs. 25-26 In Matt. 5: 8 we read, *“Blessed are the pure in heart, For they shall see God*.” These guys were into looking pure to be seen by men instead of a pure heart to be seen by God. You see they had all these rules for cleanliness & it appeared that they were really concerned about holiness, but all they really wanted to do is to appear that way. You see what religion does? It masks where the real heart is! The cup might be ceremonially clean yet the person holding it may be full of pride! Today there has been church splits over the color of carpet in the sanctuary. Hey folks, what God wants from us is a pure heart, lets not major in minors.

 7.) Vs. 27-28 Matt 5: 9 says, “*Blessed are the peacemakers, For they shall be called sons of God*.” They were careful not to touch dead things as it would make them unable to enter into the temple, yet they caused all kinds of strife As we have seen they were not peace makers they were murders.

 Here is a picture that they were all familiar with. One of the places where they put tombs was along the road side & there was a problem because Num. 19:16 says that if they touched a grave then they were unclean. At Passover time the road way was crowed with people & for a person to become unclean at Passover would mean that they would remain unclean for a year, so it became the practice to whitewash all the tombs, so that no one would accidentally come into contact with one of them. So Jesus is make a comment about their hearts. You see religious people look real impressive but there is no life in them. I see these young men riding around on their bicycles all dressed up in suits, but their religion is dead. Folks, again it is what we are to God that is important not what we appear to be to others.

**IV.) Vs. 29-36 Against The Truth**

 8.) Vs. 29-36 Lastly we read in Matt. 5:10 “*Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven*.” Instead of being persecuted they were persecuting the righteous. There have always been counterfeits in the world & that was the case with these guys. It appeared as though they had great respect for the prophets of old as they would often beautify their tombs, but in reality they were plotting to kill Jesus whom all the prophets spoke of.

 Now in verse 35 Jesus uses a reference of their forefathers killing Able & Zacharia. And what most don’t realize is that Able was the first recorded death in the Bible & Zacharia was the last recorded death in the Hebrew Bible. You see the Jewish Bible ends with 2 Chron. So Jesus is saying that they killed all of them from beginning to end.

 Now you see why the world hates Churchianity. They are a bit confused because they think that true Christianity is just a mere religion & they say well look at all the killing in Gods name. May I just say that Jesus is against it as well. He is not into all this phony stuff He wants everyone to experience His love for them. How do we know that is His heart? Lets look at the last section.

**V.) Vs. 37-39 Our Broken Hearted Savior**

This passage shows four things about Jesus:

 1.) **It shows His patience**. They had killed the prophets yet He stills desires to save them. Vs. 37 It is obvious that Jesus wanted His people to experience His love & not His wrath. Luke records His tears over the city. He had preached to the nation but they would not hear His voice. The metaphor Jesus uses is very beautiful. When a hen sees danger of prey coming, she will make a noise to assemble her chicks that she may cover them from danger with her wings.

 2.) **It shows His love**: Notice that He stands outside the city His only weapon His love. The Bible tells us that He is not willing that any should parish. It will never be His sending anyone to hell.

 3.) **It shows sinful heart of man**: They were not willing! Folks, every human heart only has only a door knob on the inside all Jesus can do is stand at the door & knock it is up to you to answer. The stubborn pride of the human heart that won’t go to the door when He is knocking.

 4.) **It shows the consequences of rejecting Jesus**: In 40 short years they would be ran out of the country. Every heart that rejects God is heading for a disaster, folks it is just a matter of time.

 As we come to end this section ought to speak to each of us.

 A.) As believers it ought to tells not to pretend to be Christians, but rather to starting getting serious about our relationship.

 B.) As non-believers it ought to tell you of Gods love & your responsibility.

**Matthew 24:1-14**

**“When Will These Things Be?”**

**I.) Intro**

**II.) Vs. 1-3 Signs In The Temple**

**III.) Vs. 4-5 Deceptive Claims**

**IV.) Vs. 6-8 External Conflicts**

**V.) Vs. 9-14 World Wide Witness**

**I) Intro**

As we last left off Jesus finished His final public speech before the cross & He did so with a heart that was breaking over Israel’s failure to come to Him. Remember what He said in verse 37-39? Look at these verses for a moment & you will understand the context of chapter’s 24-25. Vs. 38-39 He says “*See! Your house is left to you desolate; for I say to you, you shall see Me no more till you say, 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!*'” As Jesus said those words they were in the temple & it was Passover which means that it was full of people. So Jesus is saying that the center of Jewish life, both religious as well as social, was going to be a **deserted wilderness**, that’s what the word “desolate” here means. And He tells them that it is because of their rejection of Him that this was going to happen. Then He says that they won’t see Him any more until they say “*Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!*'” Well we know that He is saying that to the nation not to the disciples because His disciple’s saw Him again after the resurrection. All of Israel was looking for the visible kingdom of God & they wanted to know when the Messiah would come & rule over the gentile kingdoms. Yet all Jesus ever spoke of was the secret kingdom of God in men’s hearts. Hey, folks the secret kingdom is that “born again” relationship we believers have in Christ & it will have an end but this too will be invisible, “the rapture”. Yet, there is a visible kingdom of Christ’s reign upon the earth & it will have a visible initiation, the 2nd coming of Jesus.

 So these words, first of the disciple’s then Jesus words followed by the three full question & Jesus answer, speaks to the nation of Israel & the 2nd coming of Jesus & not the rapture of the church. That’s the context, but it has personal application for us as well. As we approach the year 2000 we can see more & more signs of millennial madness & people want to know if Jesus is coming back soon? Well I personally think He is long over due, yet I know He will be right on time. So the signs listed here are concerned with the 2nd coming not the snatching away (rapture) of the church described in 1 Thess 4:17. Well then how close are we? Well it reminds me of this story I heard about a C.H.P. officer who observed a car load of old ladies driving down Highway 33 going exactly 33 miles per-hour. Seeing they were endangering themselves & other by going so slow he pulled them over. The lady calmly said, “Officer, I don’t understand I know I was not speeding for I was going exactly what the speed limit sign was posted “33 miles per-hour.” Trying to keep from laughing, the officer replied, “Mam, that was not the speed limit sign you saw it was the Highway number sign.” The lady a bit embarrassed, thanked the officer & yet he noticed that all the other ladies were still quite shaken up. So he asked the driver if they were going to be all right. “Oh, they will be OK in a few minutes you see we just goy off of Highway 140.” You see it all depends on what signs your looking at as to how close we are & as I see it mine reads 140.

**II.) Vs. 1-3 Signs In The Temple**

Vs. 1 These guys were still thinking of Jesus’ words in verse 38. How could this ancient wonder of the world become a deserted wilderness. So as they walked through the temple towards the Eastern Gate the disciple’s came near Him & began to speak of the beauty of the temple buildings.

 Now Herods temple took 40 years to build & it was a marvel. Old Herod even though he was not Jewish (he was an Edomite \* descendent of Esau) was a builder & this temple far exceeded the beauty of Solomon’s temple. It’s construction was out of white marble with green specks hewn out of the Kidron Valley below. These stones were 40 feet by 20 feet weighing 100 tons & perfectly fitted together so that not even a knife blade could pass between them. A top the temple was pure gold. The ancient historian Josephus said to look at the temple in the sun light was to blinded by it’s glow.

 May I just take a moment for an application point here? You see Israel had gotten all caught up in the beauty of their temple that they had forgotten who it was they were to worship & they had been worshipping the building & it’s splendor instead of the splendor & glory of God. So much so that when the Glory of God showed up in the person of Jesus Christ they did not see Him. How about it folks? What are you worshipping? I mean here we are Calvary Chapel ready to plow up some land & build a sanctuary, but lets not ever forget that it’s just a building you all are the temple! And we have come into this house to worship Him not the walls, chairs or color of the carpet.

Vs. 2 Man can you Imagine how shocking these words were to the disciple’s? Now a lot of people want to know how do you know the Bible is true & that Jesus is who He claimed to be. Well it’s simple, Peter said in 2 Peter 1 speaking of the reliability of the Bible that they were eyewitnesses of His majesty, (1:16). Yet he goes on to say that the prophetic word is more sure, (1:19). You see as Jesus said these remarkable words which were the last words He ever spoke in the temple prior to His arrest, it was totally inconceivable to think that this would ever happen. Yet in less then 40 years it happened. You see Caesar gave orders to demolish the city, but Titus the Roman General told the soldiers not to harm the temple, but one of the soldiers got plastered & in a rage through a burning torch inside the temple setting it on fire. The blaze got so hot that it actually melted the gold on top which trickled down between the massive marble stones. Well the only way the soldiers could get to the gold was by literally making sure not one stone was left upon another.

 Now think a minute of the lesson this tells us. A building no matter how beautiful it is can be destroyed, but the splendor of the Lord who knew of it’s destruction can never be dismantled for the treasure within it’s walls! Folks, lets commit to this shall we? We at Calvary Chapel want to maintain an attitude that says that Jesus & not a building is what we worship Amen?

Vs. 3 Now as they left the Eastern Gate they would cross over the Kidron Valley by way of a stone bridge which came to an end upon the Mount of Olives to the side of this was the Garden of Gethsemane. So as Jesus sat down on the hill which over looked the temple His disciple’s come to Him wanting to know more concerning the deserted temple that He had just spoke of. And they ask Him a question that though they did not intend it too was really three questions:

 A.) **When will these things be**? : That is they wanted to know when the temple was going to be destroyed. Now Matthew does not give us the reply to this but Luke 21:20-24 does & there He says, *“When you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then you know the desolation is near*.” And as I’ve just told you that happened 40 years latter.

 B.) **What will be the sign of Your coming**? : They wanted to know what would be the sign of His return, when He would execute these judgments upon them & establish His reign. And He will answer that question in verses 27-34 of this chapter.

 C.) **And of the end of the age**? : Lastly they asked Him when He was going to fulfill Israel’s hopes. How do you get that? well these words are used 6 times in the N.T. & five of them are here in Matt. And Matthew uses them in each case to refer to a transition from a present state to the consummation of Gods plan for His people Israel. So In this question they were asking as to when they might expect to see Israel’s messianic expectations of Jesus fulfilled. And this expectation were that He would put all the kingdoms of the earth under His feet. “When is Israel going to be the capitol of the world & you it’s King Jesus. That is what they were asking here!

 Now it’s interesting here that Jesus answers the last part of their question first & that is what we are going to look at in verses 4-14. I wonder if the reason why He answered the last part of their question first is because it most pertained to where the heart of the people were. I mean they were all caught up in religion & buildings; when all of that is temporal. Jesus tells them that there is an eternal kingdom one in which the spiritual secret kingdom will be physically manifested. So lets not get all caught up on the temporal physical realm when there is yet to be an eternal physical realm!

**III.) Vs. 4-5 Deceptive Claims**

Vs. 4-5 Here we are told the first sign of the second coming, **religious deception**.

 A.) Vs. 4 First is just a general warning. Now Jesus tells them to watch out because it will be a time when religion will be at a all time high. There will come false teachers who will seek to gather people after themselves rather then after Jesus. Now we are given a clue as to what some of their deception will be in verse 23-24. Simply put they will try & deceive Israel concerning Christ’s second coming.

 B.) Vs. 5 Second the deception would come in people pretending to be Him. Did you know that prior to Jesus’ coming to the earth there is not one recorded person ever claiming to be the Messiah. Yet after His coming look how many we have just in the last few years! Now verse 24 tells how they will accomplish this deception, “great signs & wonders”. Simply put they will look first to outward sign rather then truth of the word of God. And we are told the effect of this in the tribulation period that the whole world will follow the anti-christ because it will appear that he had a fatal wound & yet lives (Rev. 13:11-15).

**IV.) Vs. 6-8 External Conflicts**

Vs. 6-8 Now He tells them another sign will be external conflicts, But be careful here for He says that these are just the beginning of the birth pains. The Bible tells us in Rev. 16:16 that there will be a great war called Armageddon where the whole world will be gathered together to make war against Jesus & His saints, that will, be the war that will precede his 2nd coming. Jesus is just saying that there will be continue evidences of mans inhumanity to man & He notes them here for us.

 A.) Vs. 6 First, “**Wars & rumors of wars**”. Folks the world is not getting better it is getting worse. In a book called the “War Atlas” it reports that since the II World War, which was to be the war that would end all wars, there has not been one single day of peace on this planet. Yet Jesus says that it was to be so. Why is that so startling? Well because with all our civilization on this planet we are on the verge of annihilation. If that does not point to the sin nature of man nothing does.

 B.) Vs. 7a Second, “Nation against Nation, Kingdom against Kingdom.” In other words the world will be a **continue place of dissension**.

 C.) Vs. 7b Lastly, “famines, pestilence’s, & earthquakes.” The world it’s self will be groaning. That is what Paul says in Rom. 8:22 “For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now.” So next time you fell Mono Lake give off a little shake remember that it’s God little labor pain! Yet as verse 8 tells us it’s not the time it’s just pointing to it.

**V.) Vs. 9-14 World Wide Witness**

Vs. 9-14 Here Jesus gives the last sign before the second coming that of Israel’s witness to the world. You say it does not look like much of a witness as it sounds like they are going to be hated, but it is.

 A.) Vs. 9 The First witness is that of Martyrs. Folks, there is no other nation or people that have been more hated then the Jews. Titus alone killed over 1 million. In the 6th century 60 thousand were killed. In 1492 Spain forced 800 thousand into the sea to drown. In 1881 Russia killed 1/3 of the 5 million living their. And of coarse 6 million were killed by Hitler, & that’s just to name a few of the massacres. And why are they so hated? Because they are Gods chosen people, that’s the only reason.

 B.) Vs. 10 The second witness will be that of truth which will cause division. Can you imagine 144 thousand Jewish evangelists on the earth testifying to the truth that Jesus (Iesous) is the Messiah.

 C.) Vs. 11 They will be a witness in that because of the truth many false teachers & prophets shall come forward. Hey, you know the truth is having an impact when a bunch of phonies arrive on the scene.

 D.) Vs. 12 Lawlessness will abound truth always brings about rebellion.

 E.) Vs. 13-14 Lastly Jesus says that if they endure to the end they will see His coming. Now the gospel will be preach to all the world, first by the 144 thousand Jewish evangelist & also by angels above who will proclaim the truth.

 So there it is folks the 2nd coming! Yet may I remind you all that we are not looking toward these events instead we are look at Jesus the author & finisher of our faith. May I just say that prophetically nothing needs to take place before the church is snatch up in the air to meet Jesus. So if you think you have time you may not!

**Matthew 24:15-31**

**“When You See This”**

**I.) Intro**

**II.) Vs. 15-22 Watch & Run**

**III.) Vs. 23-28 Suddenly The End**

**IV.) Vs. 29-31 The Obvious Return**

**I) Intro**

Last week I went into the context of the passage before us. It is obvious to me that Jesus was speaking to His disciples about the *beginnings of sorrows* (Vs. 8) which started at the destruction of the temple & has gone on until this very day. Today we have wars & rumors of wars, nation against nation, famines, pestilence & earthquakes. All of these things are just birth pains. Now we are in the time of the gentiles, the age of the Church & Gods grace though faith in His Son Jesus, but according to 1 Cor. 15:51-55 this will have an end. (N.L.T.) “*But let me tell you a wonderful secret God has revealed to us. Not all of us will die, but we will all be transformed. It will happen in a moment, in the blinking of an eye, when the last trumpet is blown. For when the trumpet sounds, the Christians who have died will be raised with transformed bodies. And then we who are living will be transformed so that we will never die. For our perishable earthly bodies must be transformed into heavenly bodies that will never die. When this happens--when our perishable earthly bodies have been transformed into heavenly bodies that will never die--then at last the Scriptures will come true: "Death is swallowed up in victory*.” Further more Paul tells us in 1 Thess. 4:16-17 “*For the Lord himself will come down from heaven with a commanding shout, with the call of the archangel, and with the trumpet call of God. First, all the Christians who have died will rise from their graves. Then, together with them, we who are still alive and remain on the earth will be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air and remain with him forever*.” So I believe that this age will change at the rapture or ***snatching away*** of the Church to which Jesus does not address here. Instead, he is dealing with the disciple’s question concerning Israel & the verses we are going to look at today start at the mid point of the tribulation & go on through to the moments before the 2nd coming.

 Now as we go through this section may I again remind you that Jesus is speaking to His disciple’s about when Jesus was going to rule over Israel & set all her enemies at her feet. Simply put these verse deal with the second coming, but with that said they have an encouragement to us as well. Seems lately every where you go today folks are talking about the end of the world, computer crashing & the like. And many people are wondering what part these will play in the 2nd coming of Jesus. Well, for me this is simple, I’m not looking towards some event to happen to get me fired up for Titus 2:11-13 says that, *“..the grace of God has been revealed, bringing salvation to all people. And we are instructed to turn from godless living and sinful pleasures. We should live in this evil world with self-control, right conduct, and devotion to God, while we look forward to that wonderful event when the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, will be revealed*.” Folks, the (Grace of God has been revealed in Jesus) therefor we need to live with a heart that says that soon He is coming for me. I was reading through some actual signs in front of church’s. One said, *“Free trip to heaven, details inside*.” Another said, “*Searching for a new look? Have your Faith lifted here*!” Then there was this one, “*Do not wait for the hearse to take you to church*.” My favorite was this one, “*This is a ch\_\_ch. What is missing” ------------(UR)*” It is my prayer that those who don’t have a relationship with Jesus will consider the signs of the 2nd coming & get saved prior to it so they can miss it all together! And those of us who do know Him will do what Titus exhorts us to do, “*turn from godless living and sinful pleasures....live in this evil world with self-control, right conduct, and devotion to God, while we look forward to that wonderful event when the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ”*

**II.) Vs. 15-22 Watch & Run**

Vs. 15 You will remember that the disciple’s asked Jesus a three-fold question in verse 3.

A.) **When will these things be**? : That is they wanted to know when the temple was going to be destroyed. Now Matthew does not give us the reply to this but Luke 21:20-24 does & there He says, *“When you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then you know the desolation is near*.” And as I’ve just told you that happened 40 years latter.

 B.) **What will be the sign of Your coming**? : They wanted to know what would be the sign of His return, when He would execute these judgments upon them & establish His reign. And He will answer that question in verses 27-34 of this chapter.

 C.) **And of the end of the age**? : Lastly they asked Him when He was going to fulfill Israel’s hopes. And we looked at that last week.

 Now the “**Therefore**” in this verse points back to what He had been saying about “the sign of the end of the age” So what’s the sign of the end of the age? Verse 15 the “abomination of desolation spoken by the prophet Daniel”. Everything, prior to this event Jesus said was “birth pains or the beginning of sorrows”. Turn with me to Dan. 9: 24-27 as we look at this event.

 1.) Vs. 24 Notice the words *“..for* ***your*** *people and* ***your*** *holy city*.” Who is this prophecy for? It’s speaking to the Nation of Israel. To apply this to the church or anyone else is to take it out of context. The church does not have a “Holy city”, but Israel does & it is Jerusalem!

 2.) Vs. 25-26 Next you will note this prophecy involves **70 weeks** & in Hebrew the word week means a week of years or 7 years. So 70 - 7’s would equal 490 years. And this is broken down for us by Daniel.

 A.) “Seven sets of seven..” During the first 49 years the city of Jerusalem would be rebuilt & worship reestablished. Now as Daniel wrote this he was still in Babylon & the walls were torn down yet they would be rebuilt. In fact we know that the time when the commandment to restore & rebuild Jerusalem went forth Artaxerxes was 445 BC & it took 49 years to rebuild the city.

 B..) “..plus sixty-two sets of seven will pass from the time the command is given to rebuild Jerusalem until the Anointed One comes.” After that Daniel goes on to tell us that another 434 years would pass until “the Anointed One comes”. And we know that according to 2 Chron. 36:22-23 & Ezra 1 that exactly to the day 483 years or 173,880 days passed until Jesus came riding upon that colt into Jerusalem.

 C.) Vs. 26 “*After this period of sixty-two sets of seven, the Anointed One will be killed, appearing to have accomplished nothing, and a ruler will arise whose armies will destroy the city and the Temple. The end will come with a flood, and war and its miseries are decreed from that time to the very end*.” So here Daniel says that Jesus will “appear to have accomplished nothing” & a ruler will arise whose armies will destroy the city & the temple, then there will be a great dispersion & miseries to the very end. Now as I mentioned last week 40 years from the time Jesus said these words the temple with the city was destroyed.

 Now if you add up the 62 sets of 7’s with that of the 7 sets of 7’s you end up with 69 sets of 7’s which of coarse takes us through the destruction of Israel, but wait a minute now Daniel’s said that there would be 70 sets of seven, where the missing 7 years?

 D.) Vs. 27 “*He will make a treaty with the people for a period of one set of seven, but after half this time, he will put an end to the sacrifices and offerings. Then as a climax to all his terrible deeds, he will set up a sacrilegious object that causes desecration, until the end that has been decreed is poured out on this defiler*." If you have followed me up to this point you can see that Daniel is speaking of the Great tribulation period & he says that the Anti-christ will make a “treaty” with Israel for 7 years but at 31/2 years he will break it by setting up sacrilegious object & demanding people to worship it. Now as you can read the temple will be built by this time in fact sacrifices will have been made upon the alter, which has not happened in Israel since the destruction of the temple in 70 AD. Now let me give you a few more verse that will shed light on this abomination:

 1.) 2 Thess. 2:3-4 Here Paul was dealing with the false teaching that Jesus had already came back & he says, “*Don't be fooled by what they say. For that day will not come until there is a great rebellion against God and the man of lawlessness is revealed--the one who brings destruction. He will exalt himself and defy every god there is and tear down every object of adoration and worship. He will position himself in the temple of God, claiming that he himself is God*.”

 2.) Rev. 13 Tells us that Antichrist will cause a living statue of himself to be put into the temple & the false prophet will cause the whole world to worship it. It is this that here in Matt 24:15 Jesus calls the “Abomination of desolation”.

 Notice that Matthew says, “who ever reads, let him understand.” So clearly it will be important for those living in the tribulation period to, understand this section.

 Well if some is reading this for the first time during the tribulation period & then they turn on CNN just in time to see this happen what should they do?

Vs. 16 If your in Judea, get out of their quickly! Now we read in Zechariah 13:8-9 that following the abomination of desolation the Jews will flee from Judah but “Two-thirds of the people in the land will be cut off and die, & a third will be left in the land. Yet He will bring that group through the fire and make them pure, just as gold and silver are refined and purified by fire. They will call on my name, and I will answer them. I will say, 'These are my people,' and they will say, 'The LORD is our God.”

 Now many Bible scholars believe that the mountains that they will be fleeing to is none other then the rock city of Petra in Jordan. It was founded by Jacob’s twin brother Esau in a volcanic crater 1 mile in length. To get to this crater you have to pass through a canyon that is only 12 feet wide at places with a rock face of 200 feet. The whole city can house over a million people & can be secured by 15 soldiers. One believer is so convinced that this is the city where the Jews will flee too that he has provided 1000 of copies of the N.T. in Hebrew with this passage underlined & put them in earthen jars throughout Petra so that when they get their the Bibles will be waiting for them.

Vs. 17 Now this is very Jewish as the house tops in Jerusalem were flat roofed & you can walk across the city from roof top to roof top with out going down stairs. But the point is that this will all happen very quickly so they had better not waist time.

Vs. 18 So if then worker in the field has left his coat at the end of a row just leave the thing & get out. It is hard for us to imagine the swiftness of the massacre, but Jesus is warning them to get out quickly.

Vs. 19 Jesus clearly loves that generation & is expressing His heart towards their destruction.

Vs. 20 Again you will notice how Jewish this all is. We don’t worship on Saturday but Israel does. And if you go to Israel then you would find out that on the Sabbath everything stops, transportation comes to a halt.

Vs.21-22 With that Jesus tells us why they will need to get out of Judea. A great tribulation greater then any the world has ever seen will start & by the time it ends 2/3 of the worlds population will be gone.

 Now there are some who try & say that the tribulation has already taken place & right now we are in the 1000 year reign of Jesus will if that is the case some one forgot to tell the devil. Folks, make no mistake about it this time will be obvious to all.

 By the way the word “elect” reveres to Israel not the church by the context!

**III.) Vs. 23-28 Suddenly The End**

Vs. 23-26 Jesus tells them that it will be a time of great deception. Look carefully at what He is saying here: Jesus is saying that His second coming will not be a secret one in fact if someone is saying that Jesus comes back the 2nd time secretly it marks them as a false prophet no matter how many signs & wonders they do. In 1917 Jehovah Witness said that Jesus came back into a secret chamber where He now rules the world. In the 1800 Joseph Smith said that He revealed Himself to him & gave him some magic glasses. Folks, Jesus is saying that His second coming is not a secret or invisible one.

Vs. 27-28 Never have seen silent lightning or lighting that you can’t see! Simply put His coming will be visible to all! And further more verse 28 tells us that it will be a time of Judgment! His coming will coincide with the right time to judge the world.

**IV.) Vs. 29-31 The Obvious Return**

Vs. 29 Immediately on the heals of the great tribulation He will return. Again notice that it is visible.

 A.) The sun darkened, No light!

 B.) Powers of the heavens shaken.

I think we will all be able to notice that. If you look for a moment at Rev 19:11 you will see how this will all unfold.

Vs. 30 we are not sure what that sign will be but all of that time will know it’s Jesus.

Vs. 31 It is interesting here that Jesus says that angels will be sent out to gather Gods elect which would be all believers Israel & gentiles that got saved during the tribulation period, because at the rapture angels are not used for the Lord comes in person to gather us all up!

 So what does all this 2nd coming stuff speak to us now? Well again I believe it is an exhortation for us believers to live for Jesus because we don’t know the day or hour of His coming to take us with Him!

**Matthew 24:32-51**

**“At The Very Doors”**

**I.) Intro**

**II.) Vs. 32-35 Figuring The Fig Tree**

**III.) Vs. 36-39 The Days of Noah**

**IV.) Vs. 40-44 Watch For The Hour**

**V.) Vs. 45-51 Study The Two Servants**

**I) Intro**

It seems to me that nothing will get folks more riled then when Christians start talking about Jesus coming back for His Church. Especially when we talk & act as if we really believe it to be true. You see I think that what is wrong with me & why I struggle with sin at times is because I’ve lost the since of the soon return of Jesus. When the church loses the imminent return of Jesus apathy sets in. As you read through the N.T. you can see that those guys believed that the rapture of the church was going to happen in their life time. And what was the result of this belief? Holiness & the gospel was spread through out the whole world in one generation.

 With that said I also think that all to often we Christians get all caught up in the speculation of the events of the last days & fail in appropriating the truth of His return in our lives. The author of Hebrews puts it this way; 10:22-25 “*let us go right into the presence of God, with true hearts fully trusting him. For our evil consciences have been sprinkled with Christ's blood to make us clean, and our bodies have been washed with pure water. Without wavering, let us hold tightly to the hope we say we have, for God can be trusted to keep his promise. Think of ways to encourage one another to outbursts of love and good deeds. And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage and warn each other, especially now that the day of his coming back again is drawing near*.”

**II.) Vs. 32-35 Figuring The Fig Tree**

May I review a bit? Jesus was answering the disciple’s threefold question (vs. 3), & as He does He focuses on the end of the age. He tells them that prior to that time there will be (vs. 5-7) “*false teachers, wars & rumors of wars, nation against nation, famines, pestilence & earthquakes, but the end is not yet as these are just the beginning of sorrows*.” They had asked what would be the sign of the end of the age. His answer was what we covered last week, (vs. 15) “the abomination of desolation” which we saw will take place at the 3 1/2 year mark of the tribulation when the anti-christ with the help of the false prophet will enter the rebuilt Jewish temple in Jerusalem set up an image of himself & demand that all people worship him. When that happens, Jesus goes on to say, get out of Judah & flee to the mountains.

Vs. 32 Here then Jesus speaks concerning the timing of these events. And there is a lesson form the fig tree.

 As a side note I love the fact that Jesus teaches using natural things to illustrate spiritual truths. Life is one big class room & if we pay attention we will see the Lord reaffirm the truths of the Word of God by what’s going on around us. So what about this fig tree? Well first off the fig tree is used as a picture of Israel. So the Lord is using this illustration for the nation to pay attention too.

Vs. 33 Just like the budding of the trees indicates the beginning of summer so to when the anti-christ sets up his image in the temple you will know that . Now as I went through this section I looked at some commentaries as well & some of these guys that wrote their interpretation of this section did so several hundred years ago. And the thought of Israel ever budding again was inconceivable. So because of it they are a bit messed up as they have the fact of the 1000 year reign of Christ all ready happening & so on.

 Now we know that in AD. 70 the Romans marched into Jerusalem & destroyed it & for hundreds 2,000 years the name of the land was changed from Israel {governed by God} to Palestine {land of the Philistines}. Yet during that 2,000 year period God did a neat thing in the Jewish people, they maintained their cultural identity, language, ethnicity & religion. No other nation in the history of the world has been able to do that without a home land. Every other nation that has been swallowed up by another nation has lost it’s identity within two generations. But there’s more! In Deut. 28:64-66 we read, “*For the LORD will scatter you among all the nations from one end of the earth to the other. There you will worship foreign gods that neither you nor your ancestors have known, gods made of wood and stone! There among those nations you will find no place of security and rest. And the LORD will cause your heart to tremble, your eyesight to fail, and your soul to despair. Your lives will hang in doubt. You will live night and day in fear, with no reason to believe that you will see the morning light*.” And that is what happened in 70 AD, (by the way it happened on Aug. 10 70 AD. which happened to be the exact same day & month on which it had been burnt by thee King of Babylon). Yet God said something else in Jerem. 23:8 “*As surely as the LORD lives, who brought the people of Israel back to their own land from the land of the north and from all the countries to which he had exiled them.' Then they will live in their own land*.” Hey folks on May 14th 1948 the fig tree again budded. That old fig tree put forth it’s leaves!

Vs. 33-34 So Jesus has said that the timing of this will be the anti-christ coming into the temple & as Jesus said this the temple had not been destroyed & the nation scattered. Neither had Israel been without her home land. Yet with that said look at the certainty He says of the prediction.

 A.) “This generation will not pass away till all these things are fulfilled.” So what generation is He speaking of ? Well lets use the process of elimination

 1.) It can not bee the generation of the disciple’s because none of them lived that long.

 2.) I don’t believe that it is speaking of the generation that comes back into the land 1948. Because a generation is usually thought of as 40 years, which would of put this all happening 1988. By the way many people put the rapture of the church in 1988. There was even some guy who wrote a best selling book “88 Reasons why the rapture will happen in 1988”. Then when we did not get raptured he wrote another book “89 reasons why the rapture will happen in 1989”. Well I can give you 1 reason why not to buy those books!

 3.) It is my opinion that the simplest interpretation is the best here. The generation that sees these signs will not pass away until all these things come to pass. Now some will point out to you that the word “generation” can mean race as well, thus Jesus is saying that Jewish race will be preserved. At any rate Jesus is saying that these things will happen & that there will be those around to witness it.

 So what’s the point Pastor? Well I’m not looking for these signs, I’m doing what Paul said to the Church at Philipi (Phil. 3:20-21) *“..eagerly waiting for him to return as our Savior. He will take these weak mortal bodies of ours and change them into glorious bodies like his own, using the same mighty power that he will use to conquer everything, everywhere*.” Hey, beloved if these are signs of the second coming & the rapture happens before the tribulation period then we know that are time is closer then we think!

 Vs. 34 Look carefully at this verse in light of what so many people say concerning the return of Jesus. You know what they say; “Man people have been saying that Jesus is coming back for thousands of years & I still don’t see Him.” Peter said that they were saying the same thing in his day (1 Peter 3:4 ) “*Jesus promised to come back, did he? Then where is he? Why, as far back as anyone can remember, everything has remained exactly the same since the world was first created*.”

 So what does Jesus say? “As fixed as heaven & earth are they have an end but His word will never change it will stand through out eternity. Now in Rev. 21: 1 we read “*Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the old heaven and the old earth had disappeared*.”

**III.) Vs. 36-39 The Days of Noah**

Vs. 36 Now wait a minute here how can Jesus tell them so many signs, then say it with absolute certainty & then turn around & say that the day or hour know one knows not even the angel, but only the Father?

 Well, Jesus is referring to the sign of His coming & He is saying that it will happen with certainty but to those that remain it will be unexpected. I believe that verse 37-39 explain how this can be true. The time of His coming will be when the world will be eating & drinking, marrying each other. Life will go on as usual & wickedness will increase to the point that folks will be self deceived.

 Again I find it interesting that it says that not even the angels in heaven know the day or hour. Yet we have folks telling us that some angel told them the day an hour. Folks, Morni does not know. Well, how do you know that? Because Jesus says so.

Vs. 37-38 Now here Jesus puts the emphasis on why they will not know the day or hour. It will be like in the days of Noah. Now I’m sure you are all some what familiar with the story of Noah, but did you know that Noah *“..warned the world of God's righteous judgment*.” (2 Peter 2:5) So for 120 Noah warned of Gods coming wrath every board he put on that ark everything he did was a witness. Yet we read in Luke 17:27 that “*In those days before the flood, the people enjoyed banquets and parties and weddings right up to the time Noah entered his boat and the flood came to destroy them all*.” And they had more then Noah speaking to them in Jude 1: 14-15 we are told that Noah’s Grandfather Enoch was a prophet & said “*Look, the Lord is coming with thousands of his holy ones. He will bring the people of the world to judgment. He will convict the ungodly of all the evil things they have done in rebellion and of all the insults that godless sinners have spoken against him*.” As a matter of fact Enoch had a son when he was 65 years old & named him Methuselah which means “his death shall bring”. Now Methuselah lived 969 years & died the week before the flood. You talk about knowing the day & the hour these folks did yet they were all to party up to see it. “Hey, have you seen “his death shall bring around?” “Nope, I heard he had gotten sick a while back.”

 So they did not know the day that judgment would strike not because it was not told them but rather because they were so caught up living for the moment. Hey, folks it is a dangerous thing to get caught up in the pursuits of this life.

Vs. 39a Now lets look at this in context! Jesus has been talking about the people that lived in Noah’s day & that they were all caught up in living for the moment. Then here He says that they, “***did not know until the flood came & took them all away***,...” So who was it that did not know & was taken away? Well, it would seem that you can have only two choices:

 1.) Righteous Noah & his family. But that can’t be because he was the one who had been telling them all for 120 years.

 2.) The people of Noah’s time who were into living for the moment. Now follow me closely for a moment. Jesus says that flood took them away.

 Folks they were not in the boat were they? No, they were taken away by the waters of the flood right? So being taken away here in the context was not a good thing it was a sign of judgment & being left was the good thing for it meant that God preserved them miraculously in the ark.

Vs. 39b Now Jesus says that “.***.so also will the coming of the Son of Man be***.” So here Jesus is linking the 2nd coming with the time of Noah. OK you say I’ve got it. Now the time of Noah was the first judgment of God upon the earth in fact God said in Gen. 6:5-7 “That the thoughts of mans heart was only evil continually & He was grieved in His heart that He had created Him & would destroy man from the face of the earth.” And God did so by sending the flood. In 2 Peter 3:6,10 Peter tells that that first world was destroyed by the flood, but the second *“..will pass away with a terrible noise, and everything in them will disappear in fire, and the earth and everything on it will be exposed to judgment*.”

**IV.) Vs. 40-44 Watch For The Hour**

Vs. 40-41 I hope you are all up with me because as we look at this section here I think I’m going to change some of your common thinking. Jesus says that at the coming of the Son of Man “*two men will be in the field & one will be taken & the other left. Two women will be grinding at the mill: one will be taken & the other left*.”

 Now I’ve always heard this interpreted saying that Jesus is speaking of the rapture of the church here. Yet remember the context? Being taken away here in the context was not a good thing it was a sign of judgment & being left was the good thing for it meant that God preserved them miraculously in the ark. Jesus is linking the 2nd coming with it’s judgment with the first judgment by flood. And here He says that the one taken would be like the time of Noah. So what am I saying? Well I think that the context of this passage is clear Jesus is not talking about the rapture of the church He is speaking of the sudden judgment of those on the earth during the tribulation period & of how some will make it through.

 Further more the word “taken” here is used some 49 times in Matthew & it means to be taken away in judgment. It is the same word used when they took Jesus away to scourge Him in Matt. 27:27. So Jesus is saying that some people will perish in the judgment while others will remain.

 Vs. 42-44 So based upon that He tells them to “**watch therefore**”. What was the problem in the time of Noah? Hey they were not paying attention. This then is a warning to those who may find themselves alive during the tribulation period. Paul says this in 2 Thess 2:11-12 *“..God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness*.”

 So they are to be expecting the time watching for the signs, not allowing the house to be broken into.

**V.) Vs. 45-51 Study The Two Servants**

Vs. 45-47 Here Jesus gives a story of the first of two servants. This one is called wise. Why? Well, because he was diligent while the Lord was gone. He gave them “food in due season.” The diligence was in rightly dividing the word of truth. Man is that ever going to be important during the tribulation period.

Vs. 48-51 The evil servant took Jesus delay as an opportunity to be wicked.

 Now as I close what is the lesson of this? Well look at the examples & what Jesus says in each:

 Vs. 33 The Fig tree: “**Know that He is near**.”

 Vs. 42 Days of Noah: “**Watch therefore**.”

 Vs. 44 Master & Thief: “**You also be ready**”

For we are not on the earth at this time for 1 Thess. 5:9-10 “*For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him*.” Hey. lets live as if Jesus is coming to night Amen!

**Matthew 25:1-13**

**“Behold, The Bridegroom is Coming, Are You Ready?”**

**I.) Intro**

**II.) Vs. 1-2, 5,7 Wise & Foolish Virgins**

**III.) Vs. 3-4, 6, 8-9 What Made Five Wise & Five Foolish**

**IV.) Vs. 10-13 No Oil, No Relationship**

**I) Intro**

Here again we need to remember the context of this passage; it is Jesus’ words in response to the disciple’s question to when the second coming was going to happen. Now I want you to notice just for a moment that this section is divided into three sections each illustrated by it’s own parable, The parable of the ten virgins, the parable of the talents & the parable sheep & the goats. Now in each of these parables Jesus is pictured:

 1.) Vs. 1-13 Jesus is the Bridegroom

 2.) Vs. 14-30 Jesus is the Master

 3.) Vs. 31-46 Jesus is the King who judges

Now did you notice something else about these stories? In each case the One that represents Jesus, (Bridegroom, Master, King), is absent for awhile & then returns! So in each of these stories we have a picture of Jesus at the time of the 2nd coming, He was absent for awhile then returns. Something else I picked up on here in each case the story deals with folks who are either faithful or they are not faithful. Interesting that what these stories are to illustrate is faithfulness at the Lord’s return.

 Hey folks, we live in a world of 15 second sound bites. Where perception is everything & content does not matter. As long as it looks good, we are impressed. I’m afraid that today in the Church we have settled for the same thing. As long as we sound spiritual & religious, that’s when people will come into our buildings. Hey folks lets not forget that Christianity at it’s simplest point is about DEVOTION to a Person not a principal. It is devotion seen in a loving surrender of ourselves, to the One we owe our lives too.

 A young businessman had just moved into his own office starting up his new firm. He had ordered the best in office furniture, accenting it with some antiques. So he was sitting there in his $800.00 leather office chair. When all of the sudden a man entered the plush waiting room. Wanting to appear the young hot shot businessman he thought he was, he quickly grabbed the phone, spun in his chair so his back was facing him & pretended that he was making some huge multi-million dollar deal. “*What do you mean you can’t ship three thousand units by Friday*?” “*At 10 grand a pop you had better find away, or you won’t be doing any business my way again*!” “*Yeh, that’s what I thought you would say, Make it 4000 thousand by Thursday, & I’ll send you & the Miss’s to the Islands on me, you can stay at my chateau*.” “ *Great! Hey, got to go, got some one else here*.” As he hung up the phone he swung around in his $800.00 chair looked the guy in the eye & said, “*May I help you*?” To which the man replied, “*Yeah, I’ve come to hook up your phone lines*!”

 Folks, I’m afraid that it might be that way at the rapture, a lot of people have been pretending to be Christians, but it’s not real, there’s no relationship. Now you’ve fooled a lot of people, but you aren’t going to fool Jesus. That’s the application of this story here today.

**II.) Vs. 1-2, 5,7 Wise & Foolish Virgins**

Vs. 1 First take a look at that little word “**Then**”. What that little word tells you is that there was no chapter break here, this was part of Jesus’ words on the mount of Olives about the consumation of the Jewish age. It is also a word that marks time. Literally it is “**at that time**” So all of you Bible scholars will now raise up in one accord & ask the question, “At what time?” Well, Jesus had been teaching using the illustration of the two servants, (vs. 45-51). There He ended it by saying that the unfaithful servant will be (vs. 51), “..appoint***ed* *his*** portion with the hypocrites. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” This little word “then” is the key to the interpretation of this parable. When will the kingdom of heaven by likened to this? “THEN”! Not today folks, not the time of the church, but rather at the second coming.

 **Note**: Jump ahead with me & you will see that this is the case in each of the stories in this chapter: In verse 14 you see the word “**For** the kingdom of heaven is like” When you see the word “for” you ask what is it there for. Then in verse 31 “**When**, you see the Son of Man..”

 So if in this section the context deals with the 2nd coming & we are not here why bother studying it? Well, because Rom. 15:4 says, “*For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope*.” In other words there is a benefit in our looking at these words as well. Remember the “rapture” of the church happens before the tribulation so if these things are true at Jesus’ 2nd coming how much more true are they for us? So often this parable is used as a evangelic message to unbelievers & it still can be but first we need to realize that the context warrants it to be placed at the 2nd coming not the rapture.

Vs. 1-2,5,7 Allow me please to lump this altogether if you will so that we can get a clear picture & as I do we will make our observations:

 A.) It is helpful to understand the Jewish wedding ceremony & the importance it had in that day. The Jewish marriage was in three stages:

 1.) **Engagement**: A formal agreement made by the two fathers.

 2.) **Betrothal**: A legal contract where promises were made, lasting a year.

 3.) **Marriage**: The ceremony usually lasting a week at the end of which the relationship was consummated.

It is the last stage that this story illustrates. By the way everyone hearing this story was familiar with it, the problem is that we for the most part are not.

 During the one year of betrothal the couple would only see each other at supervised times. And during this time the Bridegroom would be building the house in which they would live in. In fact the wedding ceremony would take place at the new house. So some time in the early afternoon the bridegroom would set out to get his bride, usually with his friends. If you read John 3:29 John the Baptist makes reference to this same thing when he says, “*He who has the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom's voice. Therefore this joy of mine is fulfilled*.” So John called himself one of the “*friends of the bridegroom*”. They would arrive together at the brides house & while there, the bride would receive a blessing from her family as well as gifts placed upon her such as jewelry & perfume. This would last some time & by the time they left it was dark. So as they made their way through the darkened streets people would join the joyous processional all the way to the new house as they weaved in & out of the streets, kind of gathering momentum as they went in song & dancing. Now most of the folks would join this group along the way, but they had to be ready, for you were not allowed in if you were late.

 Note: Weddings were a big thing folks, it was a huge party & a great source of entertainment & fun. So people really liked going to them. You can tell this by the way John the Baptist describes it in the verses above by saying that he “*rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom's voice. Therefore this joy of mine is fulfilled”* In fact Jer. 7:34 predicts that because of the sins of Israel “*the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride,* **will not be heard***. For the land shall be desolate*.”

 So did you notice something here? Did you see that the bridegroom had already gotten his bride? In this story, Jesus has already gotten His bride & he is on his way back to the wedding at His house, folks, & He is picking up the rest of the people along the way! Folks we are the bride of Christ! By the time that this story takes place we are with our Groom Jesus heading home, Amen!

 Now lets look at the virgins. You will notice that they had four things in common:

 1.) Vs. 1 **They all took their lamps**: They all appeared outwardly *prepared*. They all looked like they were ready to join the party. Folk’s most people are some what interested in religious things & especially end time things; why there is even a push to do good today.

 2.) Vs. 1 **All went out to meet the Bridegroom**: They all *professed* to be ready & waiting. Folks, they all wanted to go to the party! It was not indifference that excluded some.

 3.) Vs. 5 **All slept & slumbered**: They all nodded off & rested. As they all waited & it was night they grew weary. Hey, it happens! It would happen not that many days latter when Jesus would go to the garden & pray & they all fell asleep. Folks, the Sprit is willing, but the flesh is week. You can show the difference between these two groups based upon some never failing, because they all do.

 4.) Vs. 7 **All arose trimmed their lamps**: Neither can you say that, “Well, we all fail but only those of the Lord repent & change their ways.” Nope, they all arose & trimmed their wicks.

 According to a national survey by “Sunday School Adult Quarterly, 10% of the church members can not be found, 20% never attend, 25% never pray, 35% never read their Bible, 40% never give to the church, 60% never give to missions, 70% never assume responsibility to help at church, 85% never invite anyone to church, 95% never share their faith, yet on the same questionnaire 100% expect to go to heaven.

**III.) Vs. 3-4, 6, 8-9 What Made Five Wise & Five Foolish**

Vs.3-4 Right here in Jesus story we are told what made some foolish & some wise. You will notice that it was nothing outward at all. It was inward. So what did the foolish not do?

 A.) Vs. 3 They took their lamps but took no oil with them: Folks that is what religion is all about trying to outwardly appear religious without having to have a relationship. Do you see that? They took the lamps, but not the oil. The lamp was to shed light, it’s just a receptacle, it’s the burning of the oil that produces the light. Man, does that speak to me, to much of what the church does is get all caught up in the structure.

 B.) Vs. 4 But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps: Now the lamps were made up of a round receptacle for the oil & wick & this was placed in a hollow cup, which was in turn fastened on a wooded pole.

 So the problem of the foolish was “no oil in their vessel”. Hey, folks you can look through out scripture & you will find out that “oil” is a symbol of the Holy Spirit. In Heb 1:9 we are told “Therefore God, your God, has anointed you, pouring out the oil of joy on you more than on anyone else.” Again notice that the “Oil” or Holy Spirit had to be “IN” the vessel.

 May I just take this time here to say what Jesus said to Nicodemus in John chapter 3: “*I assure you, unless you are* ***born again****, you can never see the Kingdom of God*.” So what is Jesus saying? He is saying that entrance into Gods kingdom can not be gained through education, or religion, but only by being spiritually transformed! Turn back a moment to John 1:12-13 “***But to all who believed him and accepted him, he gave the right to become children of God. They are reborn! This is not a physical birth resulting from human passion or plan--this rebirth comes from God***.” So according to John how are you “reborn, becoming the children of God”?

 A.) vs. 12 Believe Him

 B.) vs. 12 Accept Him

 C.) vs. 13 By God

How are you not “reborn”?

 A.) Not by blood: Not by birth right!

 B.) Not by the will of the flesh: Not by religious practice!

 C.) Not by the will of man: Not by self effort!

Do you get the picture now as to why 5 were foolish? They had not been born again!

Vs. 6 Notice that there was no difference until the coming of the Bridegroom. Hey, you had better make sure that if you are in the tribulation period & your trying to make tell the second coming that you are not just faking it. And may I just say that same thing today.

Vs. 8-9 Now I can not give you some of my oil, you can not come on some one else’s coat tails folks. I can not save you only Jesus can do that so go to Him.

 Now this flies right into the face of those that say that they have time, man no one knows their day or hour, so why not be born again now? Why wait?

**IV.) Vs. 10-13 No Oil, No Relationship**

Vs. 10 Look at the finality of all this. While the 5 were away trying to get oil the Bridegroom came & those that were ready went “In” with Him & the door was shut. I am convinced that in eternity none will want to be in Hell. Every single person will want to be in heaven, but the door will be shut it will be to late. The Bible says in Heb. 9:27 “*And just as it is destined that each person dies only once and after that comes judgment*,” All a person needs to do to go to Hell is nothing! Just wait & procrastinate tell your self that you have plenty of time to party & when you get older then you will get “born again”.

Vs. 11 Look here they come up to the door & say “Lord, Lord, open to us!” Hey He could say I was open to you all the time while you were living & you did want me. Making some profession of faith does not save you unless it is back by faith & surrender!

Vs. 12 Wow! Look at what the Lord says here. There are two words commonly used for “know” & the word used here means full knowledge or intimate knowledge. So Jesus is saying that He has no intimate knowledge. Vine’s renders it this way; “Assuredly, I say to you, you do not stand in a relationship with me.”

Vs. 13 So what’s the point? “Watch” Hey be occupied with Him, not religion or churchianity.

 Folks, even though this is geared towards that find themselves in the tribulation awaiting the 2nd coming, we too ought to heed what Peter says in 2 Peter 1:10-11 “*So, dear friends, work hard to prove that you really are among those God has called and chosen. Doing this, you will never stumble or fall away. And God will open wide the gates of heaven for you to enter into the eternal Kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ*.” Hey, lets just ask the Lord to fill our lamps with the oil of His Holy Spirit!

**Matthew 25:14-30**

**“Faithfully Yours”**

**I.) Intro**

**II.) Vs. 14-18 Using What Has Been Given To Us**

**III.) Vs. 19-28 Giving Account**

**IV.) Vs. 29-30 Rewards & Retribution**

**I) Intro**

Now as I said last week Jesus gives His disciple’s & us a picture of Himself & what His followers will look like just prior to His 2nd coming. He likens Himself to:

 1.) A Bridegroom who after he has gotten his bride & is on the way to the wedding, picks up the rest of the party, only to find that some have not been prepared inwardly. As I said this deals with profession of faith & an actual relationship with Jesus.

 2.) A Master, who leaves his servants in charge of his possessions according to their ability & rewards them based upon what they have done when he returns.

 3.) A King who judges, every person dividing them into sheep & goats again it is based upon their activity to reach others.

 I believe that in each case the context of the story indicates that Jesus is speaking of the time after the church has been raptured or taken away & just prior to His 2nd coming. Yet with that said, it is important that we find personal application for today as well. It appears that the virgins in the first story are the same as the servants in the 2nd story. In the first story Jesus deals with being prepared personally & He warns in verse 13 “*Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming*.” It seems that some have a misunderstanding of what it means to “watch”. For some this describes in activity. The story is told a fishing boat that was returning home after many days at sea. As they neared the shore, the sailors gazed eagerly toward the dock where a group of their loved ones had gathered. The skipper looked through his binoculars and identified some of them: "I see Bill's Mary, and there is Tom's Margaret and David's Anne." One man became concerned because his wife was not there. As soon as he left the boat he hurried up the hill to his cottage. As he opened the door, she ran to meet him saying, "I have been waiting for you!" He replied with a gentle rebuke, "Yes, but the other men's wives were watching for them!" Do you get it? their watching was full of activity! If the virgins had been faithful to watch for the wedding party they would have worked to make sure they had enough oil for the lamps!

**II.) Vs. 14-18 Using What Has Been Given To Us**

Vs. 14-15 Now the word “for” points us right back to the verse above which spoke of watchfulness. So Jesus is going to illustrate for us what watchfulness looks like.

 I like this, every know in then when I buy some sort item that needs to be assembled I actually read the instructions. Now guys I don’t know about you but I like the instructions that have pictures along the way that show me what the heck the thing I’m trying to put together is suppose to look like, it helps me know if I’m understanding the instructions! That’s what Jesus does here, in verse 13 He exhorts them on being prepared personally for his coming & the emphasis was on internal preparations. Now He comes back & says that, this watchfulness has to do with outward conduct as well.

 Now this story has to do with something that does not happen in our day. In those days when a wealthy man left he would be gone for a long time, for travel was time consuming. So when he would leave he would want his business to continue. He would place his servants in charge of his assets & they were to see that they were prospering just as he would if they were there.

 With that said lets take a look at the story in detail & ask several questions:

 1.) Who’s servants were they? **His!** The word used for servant here is *doulos* & it means a “bound-servant” Now a bound-servant was different then a slave. In Israel you may find your self as a servant to pay off some debts you owed, but at the end of 7 years you were released & were free. Except if at the end of those 7 years you choose to remain in service to your master. If you did then you would go to the door post of the masters house & he would pierce your ear. This meant that you were the absolute property of your master, all of your life was now willingly surrendered to him. The normal reasons why a person would do this was that while they were a slave they had married another slave & had children & while they may be freed after 7 years their wife & children were not they remained the property of the master.

 So what does that have to do with us? Well, you & I are bound-servants of Jesus Christ willingly, for no other reason then His love for us. That is what we profess. We claim to have no other purpose in life then to glorify Him. (story of African slave in Georgia). We have been set free from the bondage of sin, so we now serve the Lord Jesus all the days of our lives.

 2.) Who’s good were they*?* **His!** It is important that you get the picture, “His servants....His goods” **The goods were left to the servant for the purpose of enriching the absent master**! It was the responsibility of the servants to use the goods in a way that brought wealth to the master. Do you see that? The Goods just like the servants did not belong to the servants but to the master. “OK! OK!”, you say I get it. The work of the believers both now & at the 2nd coming is to be further Gods kingdom, not our own! Jesus has given us everything & it was purchased at a great cost & given freely to us to use as we see fit, but the goal of using it is to bring Him glory!

 Note: May I just make an observation at this point? I think that this is one on the main reasons the church is so in effective today. We are to busy trying to make a mark for ourselves, our church etc. I came across this the other day about worship & it struck me. “Many people think that our worship is somehow supposed to be for our benefit, edification, enjoyment, instead of the Lord’s” Folk’s, I think that is true not in the area of worship, but in most of the things connected to what we call church. It’s not about us, it’s about Him!

 3.) What were the Goods? **Talents**! Now when we think of this word “talents” we think in terms of abilities. “*Man, so & so is very talented*!” The word does not describe the quality of a gift, but rather the quantity of the gift; it was not about natural abilities. And as we can see that the master gave some more then others. The five, were the masters & so were the two, as well as the one, they were not the servants at all! Literally the talents were sums of the masters money, approximately 20 years of wages.

 So in perspective here it was not about the giftedness of His servants, but rather the riches of His grace & what ever He has given us we are to use for His glory not ours. Anything that we can use to glorify the Lord is a “talent”. **Your time** is a talent, for you can use that to glorify the Lord. Some of you are retired & God has given you time, then it is not your time but His! Then their is **your giftedness**, some of you have specialized gifts, the ability to crunch numbers, or play music, cook, paint, etc. Then this giftedness is not yours it’s the Lords, so use it for His glory! Some, of **you have been given treasure** from the Lord. I mean God has blessed you with finances, that’s your talent. Well it’s not yours it’s His. Simply put, God has given all of us something’s to use for His glory.

 Perhaps you might be thinking, “Well, I have nothing!” Even if you were disabled to the point that you could not speak, walk, or provide for yourself in any way, you would still have a talent. You could be a intercessor prayer warrior!

 4.) Vs. 15 How did He distribute the talents? **Each according to their ability**! Now the talents were the Lords, but they were given in accordance to ones ability to distribute them. All this means is that God will never call a person to do something that He has not gifted them to do. Well, how do you know if He has gifted you to sing, well can you sing? All this refers too is responsibility, the grater the amount of gift the greater the responsibility to use it all!

 Note: I’ve been pastoring here for almost 11 years & I’ve finally concluded that I’m a “one talent” guy. Now unfortunately I’ve spent most of those 10 plus years bummed out that I did not get more talents instead of using the one I have for His glory. Don’t make my mistake folk’s. It is the Lord that gifts you according to your ability, but He rewards all the same & it’s not based upon **quantity** it is based upon “faithfulness” as we shall see.

Vs. 16-17 Do you see that the two faithful servants were equally successful? They each doubled what was originally in trusted to them. Now that is great, each of these guys received the same from the master, (vs. 21,23) There was no difference! Do you see this? It’s not the amount that determines success it was faithfulness. Don’t you see if the man with one talent would of done like the first two he would have received the same reward! Simply put for me, it is not how much He gave me, it’s what I’ve done with what He gave me that will be the determining factor of rewards!

Vs. 18 Now notice what this unfaithful servant does. He puts the talent into the earth! Hey, that’s what a lot of folks do they invest the talent God has given them in the world where it produces nothing for the Lords glory.

**III.) Vs. 19-28 Giving Account**

Vs. 19 Again you will notice the time delay. It seems that when we lose the perspective that the Lord can come at any moment that people get slothful. The reality is that all every person is going to have to give an account, believers as well. There is a judgment for believer that is not about punishment but rather about rewards.

Vs. 20-23 Now as I’ve already noted the rewards came for both of the faithful servants. Each servant produced 100 fold, so they were both equally successful.

 Now, look at what the Lord has to say to these servants, “*Well done, my good and faithful servant. You have been faithful in handling this small amount, so now I will give you many more responsibilities. Let's celebrate together*!” The rewards were identical because the increase was identical, both 100 fold.

 1.) They started as servants but they end up as rulers.

 2.) They had worked & toiled but now they were entering to the joy of the Lord.

 When I think of all the talents I’ve buried worrying about the five someone else has had that I did not. All God rewards upon is faithfulness to what He has given you.

 Vs. 24-28 Now we have the unfaithful servant. We can see that his problem can from not knowing the true character of his master, (vs. 24) Notice his estimation of his master. The sovereignty of the master does not excuse the laziness of the servant, it condemns it all the more! This guy was into profession without practice which is mere religion!

**IV.) Vs. 29-30 Rewards & Retribution**

Vs. 29-30 In context this deals with those in the last days professing to be believers without showing by their life style. Yet, it has an application for us as well, you al have things that the Lord has given you so use them do not bury them in the earth.

 Folks, there is the sin of commission where we actively do something, but you know there is the sin of omission as well where we don not do what we ought. The servant shows himself not to be a servant at all, by what we do with what God has given us. You determine your watchfulness & readiness by what you do not what you say.

 It is my prayer that, the Lord find me & the one talent He has given me invested producing a 100 fold for His glory.

**Matthew 25:31-46**

**“Sheep, Goats & Brethren”**

**I.) Intro**

**II.) Vs. 31-32a The Nations Gathered**

**III.) Vs. 32b-36 He Will Separate The Sheep From The Goats**

**IV.) Vs. 37-46 Inasmuch As You Have Done**

**I) Intro**

We come now to the last of the stories that Jesus told concerning His second coming. In all of these stories Jesus is speaking of contrasts between what a person professes to be & what they really are. In each of these the actions of those foolish, lazy, or the goats showed INDIFFERENCE.

1.) Parable of 10 Virgins: Dealt with faithfulness in being born again, verses the indifference of just looking religious outwardly.

2.) Parable of the talents: Dealt with faithfulness to use what the Lord has given you for His glory, verses indifference as seen in burying what He has given you.

3.) Parable of the sheep & goats: Deals with Faithfulness towards reaching the needs of others, verses indifference towards others.

 Folks, there is one thing we can not afford to be concerning the second coming regardless of your opinions of how it will all unfold, you can not afford to be indifferent! When the church has lost the hope of the emanate return of Jesus it has become indifferent. May, I just say that this must go beyond just verbal excitement, it must spur us to action!

 A survivor of a Nazi death camp wrote these words very bitterly: "Here's to a world that did not care. To those who had eyes but would not see. To those who had ears but would not hear. To those who had voices but would not speak." May that not be said about us!

**II.) Vs. 31-32a The Nations Gathered**

Vs. 31. I find it interesting the use of the tern “Son of man” is used here. This is Jesus’ title for himself & one that depicts His humanity, (Son of God speaks of His deity). So what’s the point? Well, Jesus wants us to know that the same person born in the manger, that was rejected by the world will be the same one who judges the world. Think of this for a moment if you will:

 A.) For the Christian (Born Again) the One who sits on the throne to judge will be your savior, Shepherd, Brother, & Friend. When you see Him how are you going to feel? I know that I am going to sigh a great relief, for the one that judges me is the one that laved me so much that He died for me.

 B.) For the non-Christian their judge will be the same one who died for them but they rejected choosing rather to trust in their own goodness. It was His invitation to receive His love for them that they were to busy to accept so they died & are in His presence. How are they going to feel when they see Him?

 Now I just love the way Jesus puts this, “*When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory*.” Folks, notice that it does not say, “If the Son of Man comes..” It is only an issue of timing, it is when! And again it is not a matter of where He will be, for He will sit on the throne of His glory! Now if I was saying this about myself it would be the highest of arrogance, but this is Jesus saying it about Himself!

Vs. 32 So Jesus is describing the Judgment after His 2nd coming. Now Joel speaks of this in his prophecy:

 A.) Joel 3:1-2, 14 “For behold, in those days and at that time, When I bring back the captives of Judah and Jerusalem, I will also gather all nations, And bring them down to the Valley of Jehoshaphat; And I will enter into judgment with them there On account of My people, My heritage Israel, Whom they have scattered among the nations; They have also divided up My land.” “Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision! For the day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision.”

 B.) Zech. 14:4 “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.

 C.) Dan. 12:11-12 “And from the time that the daily sacrifice is taken away, and the abomination of desolation is set up, there shall be one thousand two hundred and ninety days. Blessed is he who waits, and comes to the one thousand three hundred and thirty-five days.” Now the difference in these two numbers is 40 days.

 This is what Jesus is describing here that when Jesus comes back He will come back upon the Mount of Olives & it will split into causing a very large valley to form & in that valley He will gather the nations & they will be judged some 40 days based upon how they treated the Jews & perhaps other believers during the tribulation period. Now it is interesting several years ago Hilton Hotels wanted to build a huge hotel on the Mount of Olives so they did some seismological studies on the Mount of Olives & they found a previous undetected major fault line, so they can’t build on it.

 So Jesus is looking forward to the consumation of the age & to what will happen. And what will happen will be the judging of the “nations”. Now the word “nation” here literally means “gentile nation” which would be anything other then Jewish. But with that said it will not be just the nation that will be judged but the individual’s with in those nations, for the word “them” speaks to individuals.

 Now I want you to get the picture here. There will be this valley & the gentile nations will be gathered together right after the 2nd coming & Jesus will separate into two groups one called sheep the other called goats based upon what they did or do not do towards His brethren. So in essence we have depicted three groups of folks here, (Sheep, Goats & Brethren). And all of this will take place before the 1000 year reign of Jesus upon the earth.

 If Jesus is separating these into sheep & goats it reveals to us that some will make it through the great tribulation. Now a careful reading of Revelation 9:1-21 will tell you that based upon the worlds population of 6 billion 2/3 of the population of the world will be wiped out during the great tribulation period & these will appear here before Jesus. Kind of like a war tribunal being convened.

**III.) Vs. 32b-36 He Will Separate The Sheep From The Goats**

Vs. 32b-33 So who are the Sheep?

 A.) Vs. 35-36, 37. They will be comprised of individuals that will have ministered to the “brethren” feeding, giving water, visiting in jail clothing etc. They will be surprised at their being called sheep, because their motive was pure. Their service was unto the Lord, so their reward is from the Lord!

 Now notice what the Lord gives them as a reward for their faithfulness. “inherit the kingdom..” So is this some works type salvation? No! for it says that they “inherit” the kingdom, which tells you that you have to have a relationship with the person you have inherited the kingdom from! So these sheep were saved by faith just as we are. Folks nobody at any time has been saved by works. Yet with that said these works here were an evidence that they were saved.

 So what’s the application for us? Well, if we are His sheep we will care about the same things He does, you won’t see indifference towards the needs of others. All to often what the world sees in the church is a bunch of folks indifferent towards the world that is hurting. Our deeds are evidence of our trust in Jesus. The question is not what we said, but what we did: not what we professed, but what we practice. Folks our works will not justify us. but the truth of our faith will be tested by our lives. Character in this life will prove to be an everlasting possession in the world to come. With the same heart that a person dies they will rise with!

 Who are the brethren?

 B.) Well, Jesus is no doubt speaking of the Jews that are alive during this time who have fled Judea to hide from the sever persecutions of the anti-christ. Since these Jew’s will not receive the mark of the beast & will therefor be unable to buy or sell, they will be dependent upon the charity of others. Perhaps they might be believers as well because Jesus said who ever did the will of His Father were His brethren.

 At any rate they will visit them in prison, hide those who need protection, reach out to those who are hurting. It reminds me of Corrie Tinboom & her family who refused to persecute the Jews, & took care of them feeding them hiding them etc. Folks that is how we are to live today, reach out to a dying world! Man, if we could only treat the hurting as if they were Jesus! Wow! Would you treat Jesus any different then you would a J.W.’s. that came to your door? How about that guy that bugs you at work? This challenges me to treat each & every person as if I was ministering to Jesus. Now that does not mean that you wink at sin, it just means that you lovingly deal with it. Folks being a Christian is a messy job & if you are doing it right you are going to get your business all over you!

**IV.) Vs. 37-46 Inasmuch As You Have Done**

Vs. 37-40 Now the faithful are amazed by the response of the Lord. I mean not only had He remembered them, but He had applied their action to Himself! Folks everyone of else will have to give an account of ourselves. Now as believers in Jesus ours will not be for salvation but rather for rewards.

Vs. 41-46 Now look at this carefully because you have an answer to a question a lot of non-Christians want to know: “Will God send a person to hell?” The answer is No!

Vs. 41 tells us that Hell was not created for man but for the devil & his angels so the only way you can go there is by following him. Simply put God did not prepare hell for people. Who are the goats?

 C.) Well the goats are those who were indifferent. Now there is no middle ground here either you are a sheep are a goat. Have you ever seen sheep? They follow direction of the shepherd just as Rev. 14:4 describes the 144,000 Jewish evangelists as those who follow the lamb where ever He goes. Goats on the other hand are impossible to lead, they would rather butt heads & eat trash then follow any one.

 Now the end results are both eternal & the state won’t change. As Christians today we must be ready willing & able to use what God had entrusted us to reach a world that does not know Him. God loves the people of the world so much so that He took the punishment of sins of the world upon Himself. God does not condemn any one to hell. Instead people would rather go to hell then trust the One died for them. God will do His best to stop each person from going to hell, but it is up to each person to respond to His grace & love!

**Matthew 26:1-16**

**“Worship, Or A Wasted Life”**

**I.) Intro**

**II.) Vs. 1-5 Man Plotted, Jesus In Control**

**III.) Vs. 6-13 The Fragrance Of Worship**

**IV.) Vs. 14-16 The Price Of A Wasted Life**

**I) Intro**

This is the longest chapter in the book of Matthew & it records many different events, but central to it’s theme is the events which lead up to Jesus death on the cross. Nearly a 1/3 of every gospel is devoted to the last week of Jesus’ life on the earth, but what we fail to realize is that this was not some incident that was the result of circumstances gone out of control. No, according Matt. 16: 21 Jesus said that this was going to happen 6 months previously. Not only that, including verse 2 He tells His disciple’s 6 times that this event will take place. Simply put the only One not surprised by the events of this week was Jesus!

 Now Matthew places this section right on the heals of the words Jesus had spoken too His disciple’s concerning His second coming in power & glory, where He will judge the world. It seems that right after saying this He looked at the disciple’s & said, “*As you know, the Passover celebration begins in two days, and I, the Son of Man, will be betrayed and crucified*.” So our Lord reminds His disciple’s, & us, that there is no crown with out a cross! There is no second coming without a first coming! As you read this account it will become obvious to you that Mathew does not record this chronologically. Instead Mathew is showing you the reason for the events taken place as they did. One of the most startling things in this chapter is how the action of two individuals is miss understood by the disciple’s, yet how clearly Jesus knows the hearts of those that profess to love Him.

 A couple had just finished shopping at their local mall when they went to the parking lot only to find their brand new car was stolen. They went back into the mall told security who in turn called the police. When the police arrived they took them around the parking lot thinking that perhaps they had simply miss placed the car. As they drove around near where they had parked the car they found their car in a different spot. On the windshield of the car was a note that said; “*I’m so sorry for having taken your car, but my wife was having our baby & our car would not start so I hot wired yours to rush her to the hospital. Please forgive the inconvenience*.” Attached to the note was two tickets to a long ago sold out concert in town. Their faith was restored in the action of this guy so they decided not to pursue any legal options & a few weeks later decided to take the tickets & go to the concert. When they returned they came home only to find that their house had been ransacked & all of their valuables were gone. As they went through each room of the house they came into the front bathroom only to find a note attached to the mirror which read, “*Hey, I have to put my kid through college somehow, don’t I*?” Clearly we humans have a hard time looking into what really lies at the heart of others!

**II.) Vs. 1-5 Man Plotted, Jesus In Control**

Vs. 1 As I’ve already said Jesus words follows right on the heals of the Olivet discourse which is where He outlined the events of the 2nd coming, specifically sharing the need to be more then just mere professors of the truth they must be possessor of the truth. Everything in our Christian life has to do with faithfulness. Or in other words our response to the truth of Who Jesus is. Jesus wants His disciple’s to know what is to take place that they may have the appropriate response, (faith) to what will soon take place.

 How about it? How do you respond to change in your hopes & dreams? I can only say that I don’t do all that well! I like things to go according to my plans & expectations. Yet I am being reminded over & over again of Who is really in charge & it’s not me, neither is the situation or circumstance that I find myself in; rather it is the Lord!

Vs. 2 What is interesting here is that Jesus gives us some interesting facts concerning His crucifixion. Now we know that Jesus came into Jerusalem on Sunday, (that is why we call it Palm Sunday), for that is what we are told back in chapter 21. Then in the 18th verse of chapter 21 we are told that He comes back into the city, that would make this Monday mourning, right. From there on it is all the same day, as the Pharisees send folks to try to catch Jesus in traps of words. We are even told in the 23 rd verse of chapter 22 that it was the same day. In chapter 23 we are told that “Then Jesus spoke to the multitudes..” in other words still Monday. Then in chapter 24 as it became late in the day on Monday He departs the temple heading out to the mount of Olives for what we have just concluded the “Olivet discourse”. So what you ask? Well, here Jesus tells His disciple’s that after two days it will be the “Passover” & he will be delivered up & crucified. So what day was the Passover? Wednesday! So Jesus was crucified on the Passover, which would give three days & three nights in the heart of the earth, then the Resurrection on Sunday morning. You see if you have a Friday Crucifixion you have to do some juggling to get those three days & nights in.

Vs. 3 Here we see unity in the leadership of the nation. It never ceases to amaze me that all different kinds of folks will come together in opposition to Christ. We are told that Caiphase was the High Priest at that time. Now usually the High Priest was passed on from father to son through the levitical line, but when the Romans came in they began to appoint the High Priest themselves to avoid some zealot getting in. So the High priest in these days was nothing more then a political puppet of Rome. Caiphas was the son of Annas who had removed himself from office, choosing his son to serve in his stead. The whole family was quite wealthy & had paid Rome big money for the spot. They had made their money in the temple concession business. It was for this reason that they wanted to kill Jesus, He had over turned the concession tables upsetting business!

Vs. 4-5 Here we are told their plan was one of deception & the end result was to be Jesus’ death, but notice that they did not want this to take place during the Passover as this would upset the people & damage good business.

 Do you see this here? Both Jesus & the leaders in Israel agree that Jesus was going to die, but they differed greatly as to the timing of it. So? Well, think of this for a moment you have the most powerful people in the nation all agreed to the death of Jesus & that this death WOULD NOT take place during the Passover. Then you have this peasant prophet who said that He was going to die for the sins of the nation, He was going to the “Passover lamb” & as such would have to be put to death at “Passover”. So which one of them would you normally think could carry out their plan? Folks, don’t miss this because it has great application in our lives today. Jesus may seem helpless or week to stop the circumstances, but in reality He was in perfect control! The same is true today in your lives, He may seem helpless or week to you, but He is in perfect control! There you have the ball is in motion, but what caused the ball to get there in the first place? That’s what we are told in the next section.

**III.) Vs. 6-13 The Fragrance Of Worship**

Vs. 6 Notice the words “And when”. These words tell you that this was not in chronological order. In fact this story takes place according to John’s gospel 12: 1, “Six days before the Passover ceremonies began,” so this is about 4 days earlier. Now we know that Jesus was staying at Lazarus’ house each night & when He first came to town John tells us that they through a party for Him (John 12:2). Yet it was at Simon the leper’s house. Now Simon may have been a leper but he wasn’t any longer.

Vs. 7 At any rate Matthew tells us that a woman came to Him having an alabaster jar of very expensive fragrant oil. Again John helps us out & tells us that this was no other then Mary the sister of Lazarus & Martha.

 You know it is interesting every time we see Mary she is at the feet of Jesus!

 A.) Luke 10: 39 We read that “.*.Mary, sat at the Lord's feet, listening to what he taught*.” That is the first time we are introduced to her in the Bible & where is she? At His feet listening to what He taught! May I just say that if you want to grow in your Christian life then you must be a person who will be willing to sit at His feet to learn from Him!

 B.) John 11: 32 We are told that, *“..Mary came where Jesus was, and saw Him, she fell down at His feet, saying to Him, "Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died*.” Again, we see Mary coming to Jesus this time she comes & lays her troubled heart at His feet. Mary knew the only place to leave your heart aches was at the feet of Jesus. How did she know that? Well she had sat at his feet to learn of Him!

 C.) John 12:3 Then in the story before us we read that, *“..Mary took a pound of very costly oil of spikenard, anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped His feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the oil*.” Here she comes to Jesus to worship Him. Hey, Folks do you see the progression here? If you are going to be a true worshiper you need to be taught of Him, you need to see Him as the only one to leave your heart aches at. Your worship of Him is because He alone is able.

Vs. 8-9 Now notice the reaction of the disciple’s, “***What purpose is this waste***.” Folks the religious will always miss understand true worship! Now John tells us that it was Judas who started this statement & it seem that all the disciple’s agreed, (John 12:4-5)

 Further more John tells us that Judas motive was that of greed, “*not that he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief, and had the money box; and he used to take what was put in it*.” Now I want you to notice a few things about Mary’s act of worship:

 1.) **It represented all that was valuable to her**: We are told that this perfumed oil was worth “three hundred denarii”. That would be about a years salary. Now most likely this was a dowry paid to her by either a husband or a suitor. It was her ticket to marriage. Yet she saw herself as married to Jesus. These Alabaster jars of perfume were so expensive that they were often bought as investments. Folks, our worship of Jesus ought to cost us something, not materially but spiritually. David said that as he purchased the land Ornan, the Jebusite, which the temple was to be built on. Ornan wanted to give it to David, but David said; “*No, but I will surely buy it for the full price, for I will not take what is yours for the LORD, nor offer burnt offerings with that which costs me nothing*.”

 2.) **It ought to be given up liberally**: We are told by Matthew that she broke the alabaster jar & pored it on His head as well as His feet. She did not worship sparingly she emptied her self out man! Worship every moment of every day, folks don’t just worship Jesus on Sunday. Come & empty yourself out daily, moment by moment! From His head to His towes. You know what that speaks to me that we need to worship not just for the big things, but for the little things as well!

 3.) **It needs to be a total surrender**: In 1 Cor. 11:15 Paul tells us that a woman’s hair is her glory. So what does Mary do with her glory? She use it to wipe the feet of Jesus. We to ought to surrender our glory to the Lord & worship with our precious gift of praise.

Vs. 10-13 Now what is amazing about this passage of scripture to me is that it appears that the only one of Jesus disciple’s that fully listened to what He had been saying about His death was Mary. She had been at He feet & heard what He said about His own death & knew that He was going to die. Now I’m sure that she did not fully grasp it all, but clearly more then the rest. Folks, if you want to grasp the truths of God sit at His feet. surrendered to Him, dependent upon Him, worshipping Him.

 It is clear that by this passage that the greatest thing we can do for Jesus is worship. Now we can worship clearly by caring for other but it is only if what we do is as unto the Lord! Folks. nothing given to the Lord is ever wasted! Do you know that? John tells us that her at of love & devotion was something that brought a fragrance to the whole house. So to as you worship Him, it will always bring a fragrance to the world. So don’t be afraid to give your very best to Jesus, because though your best is to Him clearly it blessed other as well!

 One last point, & I will move on. Did you know that the only one that prepared Jesus for burial was Mary & did you know that she was not among those who returned the following to anoint Him after His death. Why? Well I think she had been listening. Man If we just would listen with our hearts not just with our minds! I think Mary listened with her heart!

 Why, is this a memorial to Mary? Because it teaches us about setting at His feet & worshipping Him!

**IV.) Vs. 14-16 The Price Of A Wasted Life**

Vs. 14-15 I’m going to lump these verse together for a moment. It was Judas who said that Mary’s gift of devotion was a waste. Yet Jesus call Judas the “son of perdition” in John 17:12. You know what perdition means? You’ve got it “WASTE”. Jesus call Judas the son of waste! Judas had been with Jesus 3 years saw the miracles, heard the teaching & had even been used by God, yet his life was nothing but wasted opportunities. Folks the waste in not the fragrance of worship but rather the lack of it in a life that had every opportunity to do so.

 And so Judas goes out & sells out the Lord. For how much? For the price one would pay for a slave that had been gored to death by a bull, $25.00.

 Hey what are you welling to sell your worship for? Maybe you have never met the Lord & your willing to sell your ticket to heaven for a can of Budwiser, or that good looking gal or guy. Are they worth it?

**Matthew 26:17-30**

**“Giving Thanks”**

**I.) Intro**

**II.) Vs. 17-19 Preparation For Passover**

**III.) Vs. 20-25 Is It I?**

**IV.) Vs. 26-30 Something New**

**I) Intro**

The Last few weeks we have spoke of worship & what true worship is all about, this week we are given the greatest reason to worship Jesus as He institutes what we commonly call communion. Now some of you will call this the “**Eucharist**” which is Greek for the “Giving of Thanks”. Folks, that is what the Lords Supper is all about. It is amazing to me how many church’s have almost come to blows or split because of arguments over communion. I suppose it is like so many other traditions, that we in our flesh get a hold of we soon begin to worship the ordinance & forget what it was suppose to generate in our hearts.

 I was at the ministerial meeting two weeks ago & sitting across from me was the fellow form the local Episcopal Church. We are friends, though we would not agree on all things. Now I come from the first church of being a heathen so I don’t have a traditional back ground. And Father Ron was talking about the uniform that he wares. Now one of the guys at our table asked him if it had some meaning; to which he replied that he thought that it had at one time but nobody new it any longer. Then he proceeded to tell us the difference between the collars that the Roman Catholics ware compared with what they ware. Again we asked him if there was a purpose to it & he again said he did not know of one. Now just the other day I heard a joke about a minister that wore a color. It seems that a little fellow saw a priest warring his outfit & asked the priest why he was dressed so different. “*Well said the priest it’s just like a baseball player who wares a uniform*.” So the young guy said, “*Well what’s that thing around your neck for? Did you hurt your self & half to put a Band-Aid on*?” The priest could see that the little guy was curious so he took it off to show the boy that it was not a Band-Aid. On the inside was some raised lettering indicating the company that manufactured it. So the priest asked do you know what that says*? “Sure do!”* Said the little guy*. “It says that it is guaranteed to keep flees & ticks away for 30 whole days*!” I’m afraid that we non-traditional Christians often fail to understand the things that we call traditions as well.

**II.) Vs. 17-19 Preparation For Passover**

Vs. 17 What we are told here is what leads up to what we call “communion”.

 A.) First, notice that what we call the “Lords Super” was instituted on the same day as another feast day, “Passover”. Folk’s we are told in Hebrews 10:1-3 *“For the law, having a shadow of the good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with these same sacrifices, which they offer continually year by year, make those who approach perfect. For then would they not have ceased to be offered?”* Jesus was with this act is telling us all that substance which the shadow told of has arrived.

 Now I don’t know if you have ever attended a Passover Haggadah Seder, but what you have is an organized dinner where you are hearing the telling of the Passover while you eat. Everything in the Passover points to Yeshua as Messiah (Jesus). This had become Israel’s largest most elaborate feast. I can just imagine the excitement of the disciple’s who had just been told about His 2nd coming. Little did they realize that this very night their hopes & dreams were going to be shattered.

 B. Second, Notice that the preparations came on the first day of the “feast of the Unleavened Bread. As part of the preparations on the first day the Jews would put out all the leaven from their houses. Now leaven of coarse is yeast which causes through spoilage bread doe to rise. Now when Moses had told the Israelites to do this it was because it takes time for this to take place. But more then this leaven in scripture symbolizes sin.

 It is interesting to me that before the lamb was to be slain, the house has to be rid of leaven. Hey folks, the sacrifice of Christ will do us no good if we first don’t realize that our house needs to be rid of sin! What they would do is make this a game with the children. For the most part all the leaven would be out of the house except a small amount that the parents would leave, it was then the job of the children to find the leaven to put it out of the house. I was reading the other day in Psalm 34: 18 “*The LORD is near to those who have a broken heart, And saves such as have a contrite spirit*.” How about it folks, have you searched your house for sin? Are you broken hearted & contrite? For it is those that He is near & saves!

 C.) Vs. 18 Now Mark & Luke both tell us that Jesus told them to look for a “*Man carrying a pitcher of water*.” So? Hey, men did not carry water pitcher’s that was women’s work. So a man doing this would of stood out. Now this un-named servant must of been a follower of Jesus as, Jesus tells His disciple’s to say, “The teacher say’s..” What this says is that no matter what was the common custom of the day this un-named servant was doing whatever it took to prepare for the Lords coming. I like that. **I think that is what we all ought to be like willing to do whatever it takes to prepare for the Lord’s coming**. In fact our deacon’s are given a paper that speaks about counting the cost in leadership, which says that we ought to be ready, willing & available, which is a heart attitude seen in a willingness to do whatever it takes in order to further the Lord’s work.

 D.) With a little bit of Bible detective work I think we can figure out who this servant was & what house this took place at.

 1.) Acts 1:13 says that they, “..they went up into the upper room where they were staying:” Further more Luke 22:12 describes this same room as a “*large, furnished upper room:..”* So by this we find out that the Passover “upper room & the Pentecost upper room” is one in the same.

 2.) Acts 12:12 tells us that this place was the “.*.house of Mary, the mother of John whose surname was Mark, where many were gathered together praying*.” So the man was either John Mark or his father.

 But lets go back a moment to realize something about the fact that the “upper room” was both used for the Lord’s supper as well as the empowerment of the Holy Spirit. May I suggest to you that you will always find empowerment of the Hold Spirit for the work of ministry when you go away & wait on Him, seeing His brokeness for us & our riches through His brokeness!

Vs. 19 We are told in Luke 22:8 that the two disciple’s that went & did all this was Peter & John. This preparation was no small matter & had to be followed exactly. Again may I just say that we learn some things about servant-hood here. Obedience to every thing the Lord tells you to do. I love to be around folks who have a “stick-to-it-ness” nature instead of a “get-a-round-to-it” nature. That is what makes this body so precious, you stick to it!

**III.) Vs. 20-25 Is It I?**

Vs. 20-22 Preparation had been finished, the food had been laid out on the table. Of coarse the Passover lamb had been slain.

 A.) I suppose you are all familiar with Leonardo’s famous painting titled. “The last supper” the problem with the painting is that it is from an Italian perspective. The Jew’s in Jesus time sat on the floor in a U-shaped table with the host “Jesus” at the center. Further more in John’s gospel (13:23) we are told that John was seated on the right of Jesus, therefore if Jesus & Judas were sharing the same bowl then Judas was on Jesus left, which we know was the place of honor.

 Folk’s think of this a moment! Jesus knew who it was that would betray Him, but in all of this He was giving Judas opportunity to repent. God is not willing any should parish, not even Judas. I am amazed at the Lords mercy & grace aren’t you? I mean why would He give me so many opportunities to repent, but don’t make the mistake that Judas did & see those opportunities as reason continue in sin.

 B.) I want you see that each one of those men recognized that they had the potential to betray Jesus. The way that sentence is constructed, “It is not I, is it?” indicates that they did not think it was them, but none the less they understood the possibility of it.

 Now you may say right now that you would never, be able to betray one who died for you, but the simple truth is each of us betray Him every time we choose sin. So every time you take part in communion you are saying that you are failure & that you are resting upon His grace!

Vs. 23-25 As Jesus said these words He was indicating that He would be betrayed by someone who claimed to be in communion with Him. You see the Jews viewed eating together very different then we do, they saw it as becoming one with another person. As people partook of something that gave it’s life that was might sustain our lives then we were both being sustained together.

 The dish that they were eating in the bowl was Kharoset, which was a paste made up of dates, figs, & nuts. Simple put it looked like mud which was to remind the Israelites of their slavery to Egypt. Think of this a moment as Judas dipped the un-leaven bread in the Kharoset, it should of told Him to put away the sin to which he was enslaved to & he was eating it with the one who was going to die so that he could be forgiven. Folks, I wonder if at the great judgment of man kind if we will be able to see how close people came to getting saved only to continue to reject His loving offers. If they can, how awful that will be to realize all the opportunities they wasted, hanging on to sin!

 Now, Jesus gives us both perspectives in verse 24.

 A.) First, He gives us heavens perspective*, “The Son of Man indeed goes just as it is written of Him*,..” Hey this was no surprised from Jesus perspective.

 B.) Secondly, He gives mans perspective, “.*.but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been good for that man if he had not been*” born." **Better to have never been born then not to be born again**! **Better to have no being, than not have your being in Christ**! People who hate change & end up in hell will find a place where it never changes.

Vs. 25 Look at this, Judas is the only one who does not address Jesus as Lord, only teacher. Judas knew that it was he that would betray, for he had already made arrangements to do so. Notice that none of the others thought it was Judas, he was not wearing black outwardly only inwardly!

 Next look at Jesus’ words “you have said it.” Those words were not condemnation, but searching, “That’s what you say Judas, but is it true?” Now John tells us that it was then that Satan entered him, (13:27). It was the moment that having been given every opportunity to repent, Judas decided for the final time to continue to be outwardly something that he was not inwardly. Hey folks, what ever you are be real! If your a mess be a “real mess”. That is where the Lord begins to deal with us when we are real with Him!

**IV.) Vs. 26-30 Something New**

Vs. 26 According to John 13:30 that Judas, “*Having received the piece of bread, he then went out immediately. And it was night*.” In other words Judas left before Jesus institute the Lord’s Supper.

 A.) Again we are told that as they were eating, so this took place during the time of the Passover, right between the third & forth cups of wine. Say what? As I said this is like a big drama which you are not only eating but listening to the production with things you say. Through out the ceremony they would be four times when they would all share a glass of wine together.

 1.) First they would say, “*I will bring you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians*..”

 2.) Second, they would say, “*I will free you from being slaves*..”

 3.) Third, they would say, “*I will free you with an outstretched arm*..”

 4.) Lastly, they would say, “*I will take you as my own people, & I will be your God..”*

 They had just drank together & all said “*I will free you with an outstretched arm*..”

Do you see the significance of this? The Lord’s supper was placed right in between those two statements. Man, when I think of the reality of what Jesus was doing here it overwhelms me. “I’m freeing you from sin, with My death upon the cross.” “That will be the sole basis of your relationship with me, celebrate it, realize that it is because of this that I will take you as my own & be your God.” “This is my promise to you, my covenant to you!”

 It is here that He took up the un-leavened bread, broke it, blessed it & said “this is my body.” Now the word Eucharist is taken from right here where it says “blessed it”. Think of it who is giving thanks here? It is Jesus, Jesus is giving God the Father thanks for the opportunity to purchase us back to God. Next time you are bummed out, think of this, “Jesus is saying thank-you for the opportunity to suffer the worst kind of death for something that you did, all that you might be restored to fellowship with the father.” Man does he ever love us!

 “Take, eat..”: You can not be saved until you have taken Jesus into your life & allowed Him to sustain you! That’s what it is all about!

Vs. 27-28 Now this cup would have been the one in which they would say, “*I will take you as my own people, & I will be your God..”* And it becomes the new agreement between God & man. The word “shed” or “poured out” points back to Lev. 8:15 where we are told that only in the sin offering is the blood poured out upon the alter. So this blood represents a covenant by which you will be My people & I will be your God. It is by My sacrifice for your sins. Or if you will it is His sacrifice & our sins, do you agree?

Vs. 29 Covenants were entered into by eating & drinking together & so when we partake of it we are agreeing to the terms, which is that we are only saved by faith in Jesus finished work on the cross, further more we are sustained by it! The Lord’s supper is all about His sacrifice & our rejoicing in it, thanking Him for it!

 Folks, if a person takes part in communion with out being saved it does them only harm. This is a celebration for the living not the dead!

Vs. 30 now we know that the Hymn sung was Psalm 136 Over & over in this 26 verse psalm is repeated the words “For His mercy (loving kindness) endures forever”.

 It is now time for us to celebrate the Lord’s Super together, so lets spend some time in thanks giving.

**Matthew 26:31-56**

**“Alone In The Garden Of Grief ”**

**I.) Intro**

**II.) Vs. 31-35 Scattered Sheep**

**III.) Vs. 36-46 Far From Home**

**IV.) Vs. 47-56 The Price Of Our Freedom**

**I) Intro**

We now move from the upper room to the Garden called Gethsemane. When we first started this chapter I told you that it can be divided into four parts each dealing with a different location:

 A.) Vs. 1-16 Bethany: Of coarse that is where Jesus & His disciple’s stayed each night & where Mary anointed His feet.

 B.) Vs. 17-30 The “upper room”: This is where the Passover took place as well in the midst of it the “Lords Supper”

 C.) Vs. 31-56 This is where we are today in the garden of Gethsemane. Now the word Gethsemane means “oil press”. And you will see that Jesus will be pressed out by what is about to take place.

 D.) Vs. 57-75 All take place at the Caiaphase’s, the high priest’s, court yard, & of coarse deal with Jesus’ trial.

I saw a discovery channel special on the rock, “Alcatrez”. They were interviewing those prisoners who had done some time there & everyone said that by far the worst place in the whole prison was isolation. They would throw the trouble makers into a 7 by 7 foot sell away from the rest of the population. It was pitch black & there was no human contact for weeks. Some men would go insane being left alone with their own thoughts.

 As I read this section & ponder the meaning of what our Lord went through I’m struck at how alone He was. What He must of felt & gone through at this time is beyond human understanding. As you will remember Jesus had just shown them in the Lords supper what was now going to take place, time had come for scripture to be fulfilled.

**II.) Vs. 31-35 Scattered Sheep**

Vs. 31-32 They has just sung the song declaring Gods enduring loving kindness & made the walk in the full moon of Passover across the Brook of Kidron no doubt red with the blood of a 1000 lambs for sacrifice. As They came to the Mount of Olives Jesus makes this statement.

 “*All of you will be made to stumble because of Me this night*,..” The word “*stumble”* is an interesting one as it is where we get our English word “**scandalized**”. “I’m going to be the object over which you all will be offended.” Have you ever been embarrassed over being called a Christian? Now I’m not talking about the times when you have blown your testimony of Him & some unbeliever says, “Aren’t you a Christian”. No, I’m talking about the times when people who are cool look at who you are in Christ & say, “Oh don’t swear around him, he’s a CHRISTIAN!” Perhaps, it’s more subtle & we just live a little more like the world when were out in the world. So what’s your point?

 Well I like the fact here that Jesus is telling them ahead of time that He knows that they are going to stumble because of Him. Jesus is saying by this statement, “I know your frame guy’s & I know that you are going to act different then where you think your heart is.” Then Jesus tells them why quoting from Zech. 13:7. So what does that verse tell us? Well I’ve thought about it & I think the Lord is revealing something that is true about the fallen human nature. We all like to be identified with winners, but the moment that our winner appears to be a loser we run out on them. As long as the Shepherd was keeping the flock man kick tail on all the wolves, lions, bears, we are all jumping up & down wearing our team jerseys saying, “I’m a member of the SHEPHERDS baby, & we are undefeated!”

 Months back as Jesus was sending the 70 disciples out they came back & said, Luke 10:17 “*Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name*.” But Jesus said, “.*.do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven*.” Bare with me here a moment, Jesus knows that we have a tendency to do this we get all caught up in the individual moments that we lose sight of the mission.

Vs. 32 That’s when Jesus tells them that though it would appear that He would have been defeated it was all apart of His plan. What was about to happen in a few hours was not the final out of the game it was instead the sign of the ultimate victory.

 I pray that this encourages you this morning, perhaps you are experiencing some circumstance right now in your life & you feel like a failure, but as a believer in Christ folks the game is not over! He is going on ahead of us, after He has already won the game!

Vs. 33-35 With that great pep-talk of Jesus about human failure & His faithfulness, Peter & I am afraid us as well at times, missed what He is telling them. Jesus was saying that, “ultimate victory was won” & that the victory was not based upon mans faithfulness but rather on Gods. But Peter was still stuck on those word’s “***all of you***”. Peter, is making that mistake that we all do about our selves, the over estimation of our own ability. “Hey, I know myself man & I will never be made to fall away from you.” Peter was a passionate strong man & there lie his weakness. So Peter is telling the Lord, “Hey, Lord, I used to be Shifting Sand (Simon) but you re-named the Rock.” “So the all of you must mean, all of them!” Peter had started believing his own press reports. Folks, there is only One that is invincible only One that never fails & it’s not me nor any man it is Jesus. To many people put their trust in themselves or others only to see their hopes dashed. I pray that we always be a Church that places people in dependence upon Jesus not Calvary Chapel!

Vs. 34 Now Peter thought that he was better then all the others the truth was that he was worse then all the others. Paul warns us in 1 Cor. 10:12 “*Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall*.”

Vs. 35 Instead of heading the warning Peter says that he was ready to die for the Lord. Hey folks we are all ready to die for a winner, but what do we do when we feel as if our Shepherd has become a Lamb? Ever notice after some Pro team wins the title how many folks start warring their apparel? I mean all you ever saw was Chicago Bull’s stuff now you don’t see any body warring it. Again, in Christ you will always have a winner, but His winning has nothing to do with your character or ability, it has everything to do with His!

**III.) Vs. 36-46 Far From Home**

Vs. 36-37 As I said earlier Gethsemane means olive press in the original language & it is here that the wait of mans sin begins to press in upon Him. What initially strikes me is the loneliness of this moment. What I mean is that of human loneliness, because what we have here recorded is three prayers of Jesus to the Father & the wording indicates complete fellowship.

 Now 11 of the closest friends that Jesus had were with Him & He separates three of them to be even closer still. Now by the way it is these same three, (Peter James & John) who were with Him on the Mount of Transfiguration & they also were taken with Him into Jairus’s house when his daughter was raised. This then was the inner circle. Yet some times I wonder what made it the inner circle? Was it that these men were the cream of the crop? Some how I think it the opposite. I think these guys were the weakest of the bunch needing the most proof of who He was.

 At any rate He wants them near to Him as He faces His greatest trial. You will remember at the beginning of His ministry as Satan tempted Him for those 40 days & nights. Well, I think that Luke gives a great deal of incite into this moment in the garden. In Luke 4: 13 we read that “*Now when the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from Him until an opportune time*.” Here then was that “*opportune time”*  .

 Now it is interesting to look at the wording here. The words of verse 37 describe Jesus as being “deeply distressed” & these words means literally “**far from home**”. It describes the feeling one gets of desolate loneliness. Perhaps today we would say that Jesus was home sick! The feeling of complete isolation.

Vs. 38 Now we are told here that He tells the three of this & here He uses the words, “exceedingly sorrowful.” Now here these words mean “**grieved all around**” . So this feeling of loneliness which was so overwhelming as to bring to the point of death is the context of His prayers. So what was it that caused such despair?

Vs. 39-45 Look carefully at His prayers of Jesus here. “O My Father..” There is no doubt as to His abiding relationship with the Father. So what do we make the shrinking away from the cup? Well I believe that what Jesus is speaking of is not of the agony of the cross so much as what was placed upon Him (our sin) & what that sin would mean as far as unbroken fellowship with the Father. 2 Cor 5:21 says, “*For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him*.” Here is where I can not comprehend this agony, you see I am a sinner, I have times where I don’t experience the fellowship of God, but not so with Jesus. Our sin would separate Jesus unbroken fellowship with the Father.

 Every year on the day of atonement the priest made atonement for Israel’s sin by placing his hands upon the goat & confessing all the sins of the nation upon it’s head. The goat was called the Aza-zel. It means “**the complete sending away**” for after the priest would do so they would lead it out into the wilderness into a land not inhabited. This is where we get our word “scapegoat”. For years they did this & set the scapegoat free, but one year having done so the goat returned into the city. So they changed the custom to taking the goat some 6 1/2 miles away to a hill with a cliff & pushing the goat down the hill so that it would die in the fall. Folks do you see the picture in what is happening in this garden? The sins of the whole world are being placed upon Jesus, “*He who knew no sin became sin for us..”* And soon he would be led 6 1/2 miles away to a hill called Golgatha where He would die.

 You will notice that in the first prayer Jesus asks “*If it is possible*”. That is if there is any other way in which mans sin can be atoned for apart from the cross. If a certain amount of good works or deeds; if some other religion can do the job. Yet in the 2nd & third prayer, (the third prayer being the same as the second) Jesus says that this cup can not pass. You know what folks? There is no other way for our sins to be forgiven except by Jesus dying! And each time Jesus submitted His life to that of the Father. Back in Luke’s account of the temptation of Jesus Satan tried to get Jesus to worship him & if He did all the world would be His, but Jesus knew that there was only one way the world could be purchased back & the was through the cross.

 Now lets look at the inability of these three to stay awake. If there salvation was dependent upon them staying awake then they would be condemned. Isn’t it great that Jesus does not save us based upon our deserving it! I mean if the Lord look at me & said Dale is just not worth it, I mean the guy is so fickle. Why he can not even stay awake when I want him too. I’m not going to suffer eternal separation from My Father for this flake!” He could of done that but He did not. Why because our salvation is based upon His goodness not ours!!

Vs. 46 Jesus is the one who is staying watch over us! Peter had promised to be faithful but instead he was faithless. They all needed to be praying for themselves & instead Jesus prays for them. **There you have my Christian experience summed up, my complete failure His complete faithfulness**! It is only when I realize the truth that apart from Him I can do nothing that & enter into His faithfulness!

**IV.) Vs. 47-56 The Price Of Our Freedom**

Vs. 47-50 Now John tells us that there were some 600 men in the company of Judas & they had come prepared. One wonders how silly this scene must of looked like. 600 armed men there to arrest the meekest man that ever lived & 11 sleepy disciple’s. Perhaps they thought that they would have to search for Jesus & fight with Him to take Him, but it is Jesus who goes right up to the mob.

 It was common for a disciple to kiss his teacher, but clearly Judas wanted to identify Him. Perhaps Judas kissed Jesus repeatedly to pre-occupy Him in case Jesus would do some miracle to try to slip away.

Vs. 50 Look at what Jesus calls Judas here, “Friend, why have you come”. Amazing grace as Jesus gives Judas one more chance to be forgiven.

Vs. 51-53 Now we know who it was that chopped of the servants ear, it was Peter. We are told that the servants name was Mal-cus which means king it is here that we have the last person healed by Jesus. What do we learn from this section? Well I think we learn that Jesus does not need to be defended by the work of the flesh. Further more any work of the flesh no matter how noble always leaves a person wounded. Notice what it was that was cut off by Peter’s act, Mal-cus’s ear. We are told that faith comes by hearing. How many times have well meaning Christians whacked off some non-believers ear? Next time you are out there talking to a person about Jesus & they just aren’t listening ask them if they know me, because it might of been my fleshly attempt at defending Jesus. Hey folks, lets love on the world, lets imitate Him.

 Now a Roman legion was about 6,000 men. So 12 legions is about 72,000 angels & we are told in 2 Kings 19:35 that it only took 1 angel to wipe out 185,000 Assyrians. So the truth is that the Lord does not need our help in protecting Him, what He does want us to do is to follow Him.

Vs. 54-56 Notice that Jesus that all of this was the fulfillment of the Word of God. May I just close with this guys. We all will sooner or later show our flesh & flee, but please remember that He is faithful & is going ahead of us. So once you get over the truth of your failure why not go ahead He is waiting for you!!

**Matthew 26:57-75**

**“Christ In The Court Of Humanity”**

**I.) Intro**

**II.) Vs. 57, 59-68 Religion On Trial**

**III.) Vs. 58, 69-75 Will The Witness Please Stand Up**

**I) Intro**

Now last week we looked at two things; the failure of Peter & the rest of the disciple’s & Jesus’ arrest. This week we continue on in both of those themes. Behind both of theses events is our Lord who continues His march to Victory at the cross. I love the fact that nothing can thwart Gods plan, everything will work out to His glory even if I do not as of now see how.

 Yet with that said, I am equally amazed by how in the midst of the single most important event in human history he takes time for the hurting, failing individual. Simply put there is no event to great for Jesus, but neither is there to event to small for Him. That must mean that He is ***“..able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think***,” (Eph. 3:20).

 Here we start the Jewish trial of Jesus. I say that because Jesus was tried three times:

 A.) **Jewish**, before Annas, Caiaphas & the council

 B.) **Roman**, before Pilate.

 C.) **Herodian**, before Herod.

Further more there were three separate examinations of Jesus in His Jewish trial. First He appear before Annas, the real high priest who was deposed by the Roman’s. Then In the same evening He appeared before Caiaphas Annas’s son in law. Lastly this passage here before us which was the formal trial, before Caiaphas & the full council. Amazingly, it is not Jesus that is on trial, instead it is fallen humanity which hides behind religion that is found guilty. And in the case of Peter it is the fallen flesh seen in pride that is found guilty as well.

**II.) Vs. 57, 59-68 Religion On Trial**

Vs. 57 John tells us that the troops first led Jesus to Annas (John 18:13) so this must of been very early in the mourning. Next we are told again by John (John 18:19-23) that Caiaphas, came & examined Jesus asking Him about His disciple’s & His doctrine. So what records here is as the sun is about to rise. So? Well what this tells us is that based upon Jewish law this was a completely illegal trial, for several reasons:

1. All criminals must be tried in the daylight.
2. No criminal case could be tried during Passover time.
3. Only a “Not guilty verdict” could be issued on the same day of the trial, guilty verdicts had to wait one day.
4. Only decisions made at the official court were valid, this was at the home of the high priest.

May I point out two things here? First this again is a picture of Jesus as the “scapegoat” as He is fully examined & the sins of Israel is placed upon Him by the high priest. Second, these were the highest religious leaders in the land, they could trace their ancestors back to Aaron the first high priest. Their position was sacred, yet these men were nothing more then murders! Folks, men are fallible. Religion no matter how spiritual it might appear to be can be nothing more then a bunch of lies. The Bible tells us to “*Test all things; hold fast what is good.”* (1 Thess 5:21). Isa. 8:20 says, “*To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because there is no light in them*.” Folks, don’t follow a man or religion follow the Lord through His word! So many people follow the “watchtower” the “prophet” or the T.V. preacher with out checking the Bible.

Vs. 59-60 Now you will remember that Annas’ family was kind of a racketeer’s & he & his five son’s ran the temple business. Normally the high priest served for life, but when the Romans took over they made the position an appointed one. Annas served as high priest for 9 years & each of his five son’s served as well. Lastly, his son in law Caiaphas served, but Annas was still the power behind the seat. They were all Sadducees which meant that they did not believe in the resurrection, or anything accept the first five books of Moses. They had already determined that Jesus was guilty & they were just looking for people who could substantiate their conclusion. The 9th commandment states that you shall not bear false witness against your neighbor, but they did not care. They could find no honest witnesses, they had to come up with a charge if they were going to put Him to death & none came forward that would substantiate each other.

Vs. 60b-63a Finally after a night of searching two guys come forward. Now these guys twist what Jesus said to make it sound something different. Lets looks at what Jesus said & what they said He said:

 A.) John 2:19 “*Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up*.”

 B.) Matt. 26:61 “*I am able to destroy the temple of God & to build it in three days*.”

Jesus never said “***I am able***” to destroy the temple! He said “***destroy this temple***”. To speak against the temple was a serious matter, a charge that was punishable by death. Jesus is not the destroyer, that is not His work, He was of coarse speaking of the fact that they were going to destroy Him by taking His life & that He was going to raise Himself from the dead!

 Now notice Jesus’ reaction to their statement, silence! Isaiah the prophet said some 700 years earlier that the reaction of the Messiah would be, “*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*.”

 I wonder how many times in my life the best answer would have been silence? But No! I’ve goy to go & try to explain what I meant. There is no need to answer people who are not looking for the truth they are rather looking for reasons to continue to believe lies. A while back there was this guy where my wife works asking all these questions about the Bible & Jesus. At first it seemed that he really was interested in searching for the truth, but when my wife started answering his question he would just come up with some more question. Finally my wife just stopped answering his questions, this only made him more persistent. It got to the point that this guy was getting rude, so I told her that she just need to ask him a question & either he would stop asking her questions or he would ask them for the right reasons. So she went to work the next day & he began to go right after her with the questions, so she looked him in the eye & said, “Robert, are you looking for reasons to believe are for reasons not to believe?” He just looked at her & couldn’t say a word, his heart was cut to the quick. How unfortunate that he never asked questions for the right reason.

 That is exactly what happened here, Jesus said nothing.

Vs. 63b-68 Now you will notice that Caiaphas uses the legal system to put Jesus under obligation to speak. Look carefully at the question of Caiaphas because it reveals insight into what the nation had observed about Jesus’ life & ministry.

 “***Tell us if You are the Christ, the Son of the living God***.” The hope of the nation was the Messiah & they understood that He should be the Son of God, anointed for the purpose of accomplishing Gods will upon the earth. But most importantly they affirm that what Jesus of Nazareth, had been doing & saying pointed to the fact that He was making this claim. Simply put you do not put a person on trial for pretending to be something if they had not acted as if they were indeed that person. You can’t put me on trial for pretending to be a doctor, if I have not been observed warring a white smock, writing prescriptions, & trying to examine people!

 Say what you will about these religious leaders, but they had observed Jesus to the point that they understood what He claimed to be. So they ask Jesus, “*Let’s make it official under oath to God, are you what you claim to be, the Messiah?” “Give us an open confession in court*!”

Vs. 64 Look here at Jesus twofold answer:

 A.) “***It is as you said***.” Jesus’ answer to the question is as simple as it is profound. “You have observed me correctly!” Jesus is exactly what the high priest said, the Son of God! Folks there is such overwhelming evidence in the truth of who Jesus is. People really search will find out, but then they will be faced with a choice of what to do with the truth!

 B.) “***Nevertheless, I say to you, hereafter you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, & coming on the clouds of heaven***.”: The high priest under oath asks Jesus the question concerning His Messiahship. Yet the high priest had already came to the conclusion that he was not. In other words the high priest already had his bias, his presupposition & prejudice. That is what is behind the force of the words, “***Nevertheless***”. “In spite of your prejudice & pride you will still see.” What is wonderful is that Jesus in saying this statement quotes two old testament passages:

 1.) Ps 110:1 “*The LORD said to my Lord, "****Sit at My right hand****, Till I make Your enemies Your footstool.”*

 2.) Dan. 7:13-14 “*I was watching in the night visions, And behold, One like the Son of Man,* ***Coming with the clouds of heaven****! He came to the Ancient of Days, And they brought Him near before Him. Then to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, That all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, Which shall not pass away, And His kingdom the one Which shall not be destroyed*.”

 Why, those verses? Well Jesus is saying that He is going to raise, ascend & return in glory no matter what Caiaphase & the rest decided to do. In fact what we do with the truth will not change the truth, but it will change where we will spend eternity.

 Folks, I want you to think about the day that the book of life is opened. Now some who will appear there will be like old Caiaphas & he is going to be brought before Jesus whom he condemned, but who is it that really is condemned? You know what’s tragic? Is that it did not have to be that way it was Caiaphas’s choice to reject the truth not Jesus’!

Vs. 65-66 Without considering the evidence sentence is passed. Now Leviticus tells us that the high priest violated the law here by tearing his garments in anger or sorrow. And when he did so he ripped out the old system of levitical priest for a new one was going to be established & this one is established on Jesus being the Great High Priest, who does not offer animals for the sins of man, He offers himself!

Vs. 67-68 Notice the punishment that they dished out upon Jesus.

 A.) First they spit on him. This is a sign of total disdain & contempt. A nasty thing to do. It was not just saliva, it was mucus!

 B.) Then they beat Him. We are told by Mark 14:65 that they first blindfolded Him. Now if you blindfold someone then hit them they lose that natural reflex reaction of rolling with the punch. So the blows were having full impact upon His face.

 C.) Other hit him with the palm of their hands while others used rods.

 D.) Isa. 50:6 tells us that pulled out the hair of His beard as well. Now wonder Isa 52:14 says, “*So His visage was marred more than any man, And His form more than the sons of men*;” Further more Isa. 53:3 says that, “*And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him;* ” By the time the beating was over, you could hardly recognize Him as a human being let alone Jesus. Yet, through out it all He did not upon His mouth.

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Vs. 58, 69-75 Here we are going to get a glimpse of why we Christians fail in our walk with the Lord. Ultimately, it is because of what we saw last week our pride in our own self effort.

which will inevitably lead up to what we see here:

 A.) **Following the Lord at a distance**. Folks, any attempt to follow the Lord in our own strength will always put us at a distance with Him! Jesus at the time of His arrest had wanted the disciple’s to “go their way”. But not Peter & John; no they were going to see it through even if it meant they had to do it by themselves!

 B.) Mark tells us that, Peter **had gone into the enemies courtyard to warm himself by their fire**. Here is another mistake we make, we get to close to the fires of the world. We, no matter how well meaning, end up back into places we have no business being! No you will notice that Peters first two interrogators were servant girls.

 C.) Next you see by Peter’s response that he does not want to be associated with Jesus. At first he is willing to lie about it, then he is willing to take an oath to deny it. Finally he begins to curse & swear it his lie. Folks, the more you try to stand in your own strength the more you will look like the world! Why all of this cowardice? Well when Peter’s relationship with Jesus was seen as depending upon himself then it had no security.

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 I find it interesting that it was his speech that gave him away. To many people get the talk down before they do the walk. Peter was not walking & his talk when put to the test failed as well.

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**“What Shall I Do With Jesus”**

**I.) Intro**

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**I) Intro**

Chapter 26 closed as Jesus was being led out of Caiaphas’s house. We now move to what is the central part of the Bible, the crucifixion. Paul wrote in 1 Cor. 15:3-4 “*For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures*,..” Amazingly though very little of the actual event is given any description, in fact Matthew in verse 35 puts extremely plainly when he says, “Then they crucified Him,..” No explanation of how gruesome of an event this was. Instead what Matthew records is how people reacted to these events. We have already seen the disciple’s response. they all fled. Then we spent time looking at Peter’s failure. We saw how religion dealt with Jesus. In this section we will see the final outcome of Judas, as well we shall look at Pontius Pilate’s response to Jesus. We will even take a glance at this figure named Barabbas.

 I remember the first time as a Christian that I read these verses & how amazed & overwhelmed I felt at the price Jesus paid for me. I believe that I have continued to grow in my amazement to these events. However I fear that if I’m not careful these event shall be come no big deal. Maturity ought to bring a greater since of worship in us, don’t you think?

**II.) Vs. 1-10 Two Bound Men**

Vs. 1-2 The three trials at the hands of the Jewish authorities had been going on all night. The Sanhedrin had convicted Jesus of Blasphemy, but the problem was that the Roman Government did not recognize this as a capital offense. So they had to come up with some charges that they could apply to Jesus that would get Him sentenced to death by the Roman’s. Now according to Luke’s account (23:2) they came up with three:

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 3.) **That He claimed to be a King in opposition to Caesar**.

There was no proof of any of these things, but they were all capital offenses. It appears based upon Luke’s account, as well as John’s (18:28-38) that the one that Pilate was most interested in was the one that dealt with Him being King. To which finally Jesus has to explain that His kingdom is not like the kingdoms of the world it is a kingdom in men’s hearts.

 It would of been around 5: am as they led Jesus away bound to Pontius Pilate. But why do that at all? Why not just put Him to death? Well capital punishment had been outlawed accept when the Roman Government did it. The Jew’s would never think of crucifixion as a form of punishment. What they did was to stone a person. Yet here it is clear that Jesus was crucified. You see the Bible was clear on the way in which Jesus would die.

 A.) Deut. 21:23 say’s, “cursed is everyone that hangs on a tree.”

 B.) Ps 22: 14-18.

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 Folks, may I just say that there is a big difference between **true biblical repentance which is a change of thinking, emotions & will which changes a persons actions** & being sorry you got caught & that what you wanted to happen why you sinned to begin with did not turn out the way in which you wanted it to.

 Judas was remorseful which led to despair & as we shall see to suicide. If Judas really wanted to repent he would not of gone up to the religious leaders, he would of instead gone over to Jesus. And had of done so he would of found forgiveness. A lot of folks are sorry about the consequences of their actions, but are not sorry for the actions themselves!

 Another thing that interests me is knowing how self centered Judas was, & the way I am as well, his statement concerning Jesus as, “innocent”. Hey, when those that betray you & those that hate you call you innocent, it can only mean that there was no inconsistency, nor hypocrisy. Any sin Jesus would of done, any wrong attitude that He would of manifested any time He boasted, stretched the truth or lost His temper would of caused Judas not to say He was “innocent”. Judas might of said, “*Hey I’ve been with Jesus 3 1/2 years & He is not all that.” “I remember the time He did this, or said that*.” Folks think of this a moment if Jesus was really not sinless & the religious community wanted to find something to confict Jesus with why not just ask Judas? I will tell you why; because Judas knew that there was nothing phony about Jesus!!

 Now I don’t know about you, but I’m sad to say that if you hang around me sooner or later you will see that there is some inconsistencies about what I say on Sunday mourning & how I live my life. Not so with Jesus!

 So Judas, was trapped with what he had done. Funny isn’t it that Jesus is bound going to be put to death, but really it is Judas that was bound in his own sin enable to loosen sins grip on his life, where as Jesus was going to die & death could not even hold Him. Now which one of these two men was the one that was bound?

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 Now I need to mention this because someone will point out that there is a seeming contradiction between this account here in Matthew & the one told to us by Luke in the book of Acts. Luke says that, “*Now this man purchased a field with the wages of iniquity; and falling headlong, he burst open in the middle and all his entrails gushed out*.”

Yet here we are told that Judas went out & hanged himself , then the chief priests took the silver & realized that it was unlawful for them to use the money for the temple treasure bought the potters field. Now Acts does not say that Judas committed suicide in the field that the priests bought, for that would have defiled the land. So what you have piecing these two verses together is that the priests bought a field with the money that Judas had throne down. Further more it appears that when Judas went to hang himself that his body remained undetected for some time & eventually brook free & fell to the ground bursting his body open.

 One more thing the field that was purchased was called the potters field, but why? Well it seems that the potters in those days had a field that they would discard their broken, cracked or chipped pots into. Over time this field would be so overcome with broken vessels that the field would be useless for any agriculture. Is that not a great picture though for us? I mean that the blood money of Jesus Christ would go to buy a place where broken vessel & dead bodies were. Folks that is what you & I were; Clay pots that can not hold that which they were intended to do so. Further more we were dead in our sin & He has purchased us by His blood!!!

Vs.9-10 One last thing here in this quote which Matthew tells us is a fulfillment of prophecy. Matthew tells us that it was spoken by Jeremiah. And if you look through Jeremiah you will not find this verse. What you will find is that Jeremiah speaks about a potter & something that he purchases from him, but it is Zechariah that this is quoted from. So did Matthew make a mistake? No, because it is believed that Zechariah takes some of what he shares from Jeremiah’s prophecy, a common practice. It is also worth noting that at this time the O.T. was not in a book form with chapters & verses. Instead they were in scrolls, with shorter books rolled up with the longer ones. That was the case with Zechariah it was actually in the scroll of Jeremiah so they would simply say, “In the scroll of Jeremiah, which includes Zechariah..”

**III.) Vs. 11-26 The Trial Of Pilate**

Vs.11-14 Now as I look at this section it really is the trial of Pilate & not Jesus. As I said above the only thing that interested Pilate was the accusation of Jesus saying He was King.

 Pontius Pilate was an interesting fellow. Based upon his name it is believed that he had a one time been a slave & some how won his freedom. We further know that he did not much care for the Jews. He had offended the Jews several times to the point of riots. Once it had gotten so bad that he killed some Galileans while they made their sacrifices at the temple. All of this had gotten back to Rome & Pilate had to watch what he was doing with regards to the Jews.

 Jesus answers Pilate just as He had Caiaphas. “You’ve made the right assessment of who I am.” Yet with that said Jesus does not again defend himself as the chief priests & elders make accusations against Him. All of this amazes Pilate. Truly Pilate had never witnessed a defendant quite like Jesus.

Vs. 15-26 Now I want to bring some things to light in this passage, yet in so doing I realize that I may not touch one every point in this.

 A.) Vs. 15 There was this custom at feast time & with Pilate already being at hot water with the Jews & at the same time not liking the religious leaders he is thinking that he has away out of the problem of Jesus. Further more we are told that his wife a convert to Judaism had suffered in a dream concerning Jesus. So Pilate was thinking.

 B.) Vs. 16 Then there is this fellow named Barabbas who we are told by Mark (15:17) was a murderer & a guy who had been held for starting a riot. Now Bar-Abbas is a interesting name. It would kind of like be a last name. You will recognize the first part of it “Bar” from what Peter was called “Bar-Jonah”; Bar means “son of”. Now abba you will remember is the Hebrew word for father, today we would say “Daddy”. So Barabbas means “son of the father”, but what was his first name? Well I think we can discover this by the way Pilate asks the question to the crowds in verse 17, “*Whom do you want me to release to you? Barabbas, or Jesus who is called Christ*?” Why would Pilate use Barabbas last name & then distinguish Jesus as the one who is called the Christ? Well according to some ancient manuscripts of Matthew it is because both men shared a common first name JESUS!

 Now as you go down & read Pilate’s question to the crowds as to which person he should release it brings up some interesting realities. A few blocks away in some cell lay this guy Barabbas & as far as he knew this was his last day to breath. His only hope lie in this pardoning deal that Pilate did. Yet he was on death row for murder & trying to over throw the government that was going to put him to death. Now he no doubt could not hear what Pilate was asking the crowd, but I bet he could here their response to Pilate’s questions. And what might he of hear over & over? Well lets see:”

 A.) Vs. 21 **Barabbas**

 B.) Vs. 22-23 **Let him be crucified**

And the more Pilate asked why the more they shouted. I am thinking that old Barabbas must of lost all hope in that cell.

 So that verse 26 must carry more weight then we have thought before as Barabbas we have been the first person to recognize that Jesus the true Son of the Father died for him.

As I close now may I just leave you with the tragedy of Pilate, a man who did not want to do something to Jesus but followed popular opinion. Folks following the crowd will lead you to hell! No matter how much Pilate tried to divorce himself from his action he could not. Washing his hands did not change the facts. Saying that Jesus was a just man only made his cowardice even more unbearable.

 Folks. Pilate knew what was right, but did nothing about it because he was wanting to please people. I know of a lot of people who today do the same thing with Jesus. They know what they need to do is receive Him as their savior, but because they are afraid of what other will think they do nothing.

 May I just say that be careful what you do with Jesus for you will either by standing on His blood or His blood will be on you!

**Matthew 27:27-50**

**“The Way To Calvary”**

**I.) Intro**

**II.) Vs. 27-33 The Road To Redemption**

**III.) Vs. 34-44 On The Cross**

**IV.) Vs. 45-50 His Final Moments**

**I) Intro**

As most of you are aware my family & I have just returned from our vacation. Something has dawned on me & it started as we left Merced to S.F. **Everybody is on a journey, the only questions are where you are going & who is taking you there?** I mean, the moment we start out in life we are trying to get to some place & most of the time we are doing so in our own strength according to what we think is best. My little niece is starting to walk & she is on her way to go where she thinks is best for her.

 As my family & I sat on the tarmac in S. F. we heard what no traveler wants to hear from the captain of the plane; “*This is your captain & we are going to have to return to the terminal as we have had a* ***SMALL*** *malfunction, I’m sorry for your inconvenience*.” Now, I was bummed that we were not able to take off, but I was far more grateful that our captain discovered this SMALL malfunction before we took off. You see our captains sole duty was to take us to paradise, I mean he was not going for his benefit he was going for ours! What a bummer if when we got on to the plane instead of the trained captain flying the plane the stewardess went around the plane with a hat full of numbers so that we all could draw to see who it was that was going to fly the plane! Yet that is how most people govern their lives.

 One day two elderly women were out on the town driving the old 64 Buick when they came to an intersection. The stoplight was red but they just plowed right on through. The woman in the passengers seat thought to herself, “*Did we just run a red light*?” Not being sure she did not say anything. A few moments latter came another red light & again they drove right on through. The passenger was getting a little bit more nervous but she still was not 100% sure that the light was red. So she determined that she would watch real careful at the next signal. Sure enough as they came to the next intersection, the light was definitely red & they went right on through. This time the passenger spoke up quite frantically, “***Mildred****! Did you know that we have just ran through three red lights in a row! You could of killed us both*!” At which point Mildred turned to her friend very surprised & said, “*Oh, am I driving? I thought you were*!”

 And the point? Well let me ask you a twofold question where are you going & who is driving? This morning we shall see that Jesus is in control & His sole purpose was to get us to paradise!

**II.) Vs. 27-33 The Road To Redemption**

Vs. 27-28 They had just released Barabbas (Son of the father) & the cruelty that was to be dished out to him was laid upon Jesus.

 Hey did you ever stop to realize that? I mean all of this horrible scene was what was to be yours for the sins that you have committed. Can you imagine for a moment Barabbas standing off to the side some where watching all of this thinking this should of been happening to me.

 In the 60’s, the intellect’s of the time pronounced what they thought was a great truth, “God is dead!” & since that time they have been mocking & torturing Him. Man is never content to just deny God they have to glory in their denial! Every year since then the media has become more brazen in their mocking of God, to where we have now come to a point that we are not in a post Christian society instead we find ourselves in a neo-pagan society. I was flipping through the 1999-2000 planer that Merced High gave all the students. It is what they wish to pass on to generation X. Most of it quite moral, but when it got to spirituality it should a student with her legs crossed Indian stile chanting a mantra! Can’t show the Bible, but any other weird religion & it’s OK.

 The official charge against Jesus was that He claimed to be King of the Jews, (verse 37). Now it is interesting to me as much as Pilate said that he wanted nothing to do with this he sure does nothing to prevent the cruelty.

 It says here that the whole “garrison” gathered around Jesus to mock & torture Him, but just how many people is that? Well, the word “garrison” is rendered “cohort” in other translations & it represents a Roman military unit with capacity of 1000 men; ten cohorts formed a legion. So roughly a 1000 men formed around Jesus with the sole purpose of being cruel!

 Then it says that they stripped Him & the word means to **unclothe** Him. Now the average Jewish male wore 5 articles of clothing, a headband around his forehead, sandals for their feet, an inner cloak sort of like a night shirt, a belt, & an outer tunic which was like a robe. So I want you to picture this a moment; a 1000 men surround you & strip you naked, talk about humiliating! Afterward they put a “soldier’s cloak” on Him & this is all that He wore until He left & went to Calvary. There stood the Prince of peace naked accept for and old reddish purple Roman military coat surround by 1000 men making fun of you. Yet Jesus says not a word, He stood their & took the shame that is ours. He wore our nakedness, covered only by our feeble attempt to be strong. As I look at this scene now I realize two things about Jesus:

 A.) How completely submissive He was in every way to the plan of our redemption!

 B.) How incredible strong in every sense of the word He was.

Today people make fun of Jesus all the time & He says nothing. There are no angry looks, no snarled lips of hatred, only the look of love & the desire to see those that are so hateful experience His love. One day folks every knee will come before this same Jesus!

Vs. 29-31 Next it says that they wove a crown of thorns & pushed it into His brow.

 If you go back to the fall of man in the garden you will discover something very interesting about what these soldiers do. Back in Gen. chapter 3:17-19 God says to Adam, “*Cursed is the ground for your sake; In toil you shall eat of it All the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you, And you shall eat the herb of the field. In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread Till you return to the ground*,..” So the thorns came as a result of Gods curse against man’s sin, as well as the sweat. How interesting that the curse is now being placed upon the head of Jesus. Gal 3:13 says that Jesus, “...*became a curse for us (for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree*). They were pressing back into the very brow the very curse that followed because of sin.

 Folks, how little the world understands of this act of our Jesus for their sins. Would one mock & despise the person who saved their life? They spit on Him, beat Him & mocked Him, all the while He was dying to save their lives!

Vs. 31 says that they put His clothes back on Him as they led Him through the streets to Golgotha or in Latin Calvary. Again, I want to remind you that this is a historical fact it is not fantasy, this all happened.

Vs. 32-33 The march to the actual crucifixion was used by Rome as a warning to potential troublemakers that this would be their fate if they challenged Rome. It was led by a centurion on horseback, who shouted out the crime of the condemned. It was required that the prisoner carry his own crossbeam & that he ware around his neck a placard that announced his crime.

 Now Jesus had been up all night whipped & beaten, so He was unable to complete the gauntlet of carrying the crossbeam. So they enlist this man from Northern Africa & forced him to carry the crossbeam. Simon had no doubt come to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover. Most of those who lived so far away did not come every year to Jerusalem to celebrate instead they came only once their whole life. So their is Simon he has saved up for years to go to this feast & when he arrives he perhaps sees Jesus riding in on a donkey & people claiming He is the Messiah. Then a week later, he like thousands of others line the street to watch this same man carry a cross on His way to Calvary. Suddenly Jesus falls right in front of him & he feels the point of a Roman spear in his back & he has to carry that crossbeam up to Golgotha. What happened to Simon? Well we are told in Mark 15:21 that he was the “..the father of Alexander and Rufus,” This is an indication that these two boys of Simon were well known in the Christian community. Further more in the book of Roman’s 16:13 Paul writing to the church in Rome salutes them saying, “Greet Rufus, chosen in the Lord, and his mother and mine.” So? Well I believe that Simon became a strong believer & his family walked with God. Simon had come to Jerusalem to sacrifice his Passover lamb, & in stead he meet the Lamb of God who was sacrificed for him.

**III.) Vs. 34-44 On The Cross**

Vs. 34 In the original language “gall” & “myrrh” are the same word & describes a gummy substance that had many different uses. Here we see it mixed with “sour wine” which would be vinegar it was used as a narcotic to deaden pain. It was customary to offer this narcotic drink, which was extremely bitter, to those who were to be crucified, for this would help ease the pain of being crucified. Yet Jesus refuses it. What Jesus was about to do He did so with all of His faculties. Interestingly even this is a fulfillment of scripture as we read in Ps. 69:*21 “They also gave me gall for my food, And for my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink*.”

 Now a lot of people use drugs, alcohol & other stimulants to deaden the pains of their lives, but Jesus took your pain every bit of it so that you turn to Him & not some artificial way of escaping! As soon as Jesus realizes what it was that they were offering Him He wanted nothing to do with it. Folks, don’t turn to some thing to deaden your pain for a short while turn to Jesus for He took all your pain with Him on the Cross & it was nailed there!

Vs. 35 Matthew very simple states the crucifixion. The word crucifixion is where we get our English word “excruciating” from. And that is because it describes the type of painful death that occurred to those who were crucified. Now none of the gospel describe the act it’s self in any detail. The Gospel writer record the crucifixion as historical fact & the Epistle’s explain the meaning of the event. Simply put History states Jesus died but the Epistles explain that He did so for our sins, (1 Cor. 15:3).

 Again scripture is fulfilled as the soldiers divided his clothes among them. Yet when it came to the outer tunic or robe they gambled to see who would win it for John tells us it was with out seem.

 Think of this a moment Jesus is there virtually naked upon the cross paying for the sins of the world & here are the soldiers playing games at the foot of the cross. So? Well I think a lot of people are playing games with the cross today! You know people can handle Jesus fine, many people like what He has to say, but there is always one thing they don’t like about Jesus, THE CROSS. What the world wants is a Crossless Christ. Because if they accept the cross then they are forced to accept the reason for it & that is that we are sinners!!!

Vs. 36-37 Notice that they guarded Him, after all there had been many strange reports spoken about this man.

 Then they put this sign over Him in written in three languages Hebrew, Greek & Latin. This was the full reason He was put to death, “This is Jesus of Nazareth the King of the Jews.” This was the only thing that Pilate did not waver on & in so doing he did not realize that he had ordered the first gospel tract. It announced to all including the revolutionaries on either side of Him that He was being put to death because He was the Savior & King. And that very day one of the thieves would believe that message & be saved.

Vs. 38-40 The word robbers here would better be called revolutionaries, for the word means robbery with violence. Most likely they were part of Barabbas gang who were trying to cause insurrection against Rome by killing & stealing.

 Look at how they mocked Jesus, “save yourself, if you are the Son of God come down from the cross.” Could He have? You bet! But if He would of saved Himself could not of saved you & I! The reason I so believe in Jesus today is because He did not come down from the cross in stead He rose from the dead! Phil. 2: 8-11 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. Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and* *that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father*.”

Vs. 42-44 Here we have what indictment the religious leaders made on Jesus:

 A.) Vs. 42 He saved others

 B.) Vs. 43 He trusted in God

Yet with those observation they came to the wrong conclusions. They determined if He was King then He should save Himself first, but Jesus always thinks of others first that is why He is the King of Kings. Then they said, “If He is the Son of God then god should deliver Him.” But His trust of the Father is seen in the fact that He was delivered to death for our sins!

**IV.) Vs. 45-50 His Final Moments**

Vs 45 Through out this whole time God the Father is silent. At His Son’s baptism He spoke “This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased.” Then at the Mount of transfiguration God the Father again spoke & said, “This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased, hear Him.”

 Yet now there is silence accept for this darkness that fell upon the land. Jesus was put on the cross around 9: am & at about noon darkness covered the land & it lasted for three hours. It is interesting because you can search history in different cultures & find that they all speak of a time when the sky went dark. The Roman historian Tertullian speaks of this darkness at the time of Jesus’ death & you can read about it in the Roman archives. What makes this even more interesting is that we know that it was a full moon because it was Passover season which always was held during a full moon & we know that we can not have an eclipse during a full moon because the moon is on the opposite of the sun.

Vs. 46-49 Psalm 22 is often called the 5th gospel by some because it is quoted some 5 times in the gospels. But why did Jesus utter these words? Well I think that we can find the reason by understanding what was happening there at the cross.

 A.) In Hab. 1:13 we read “**You are of purer eyes than to behold evil, And cannot look on wickedness**.” At that time our evil & wickedness was placed upon Jesus & God the Father was not beholding His only Son.

 B.) Further more we read in 2 Cor. 5:21 “For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us,..”

Therefore the Father had no choice then to turn His back to His Son & Jesus felt the isolation of that agony which I believe was far worse then any physical pain. And with the darkest of our sin being placed on the One that is the Light of the World the only thing that could happen is that the world was dark.

Vs. 50 As I close with this verse please understand the words of Jesus in John 10 :17-18 “***Therefore My Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again. No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again***.” Jesus did have His life taken, He gave it away! Do you understand that Jesus gave His life away for you & to you. 1 Cor. 8: 6 tells us, “.*.there is one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we for Him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, through whom are all things, and through whom we live*.” It is He that now lives through you if you trust Him!

**Matthew 27:51-66**

**“Signs of Life”**

**I.) Intro**

**II.) Vs. 51-53 Open, Come On In**

**III.) Vs. 54-61 Changed Lives**

**IV.) Vs. 62-66 The Proof of Skeptics**

**I) Intro**

The responses to situations are facinating to observe. People can go through similar circumstances & react totally differently! What we have in this section is the reaction to the death of Jesus. First in the spiritual realm we see Gods response, then is the physical realm we see natures response. We also see the response of the living & the dead, of believers & non-believers. Yet behind the obvious reactions is the fact that all gave evidence to the finished work of Jesus!

 Speaking of strange reactions to stressful circumstances comes the recent true story of two armed robbers in Detroit. It seems that the pair went into a record shop waving guns. The first one shouted, “*Nobody move or I’ll shoot you*!” The problem was that the second robber did not think that this applied to him as well & proceeded to go get the cash from the register his partner pulled the trigger hit him in the shoulder. What is your reaction to Jesus death upon the cross for your sins?

**II.) Vs. 51-53 Open, Come On In**

Vs. 51a Before we look at the spiritual implication of the veil being torn in two from top to bottom, lets look at the veil it’s self & what it’s purpose was.

 Now the veil was what separated the Holy Place which was made up of tables of show bread & the alter of incense from the Holy of Holies which is where the Ark of the Covenant was at. The veil was massive, 60 feet tall, 30 feet wide, & 10 inches thick. It was made of 72 braids, each braid had 24 cords. It was so heavy that it took 300 priests to put it up or move it. Originally behind the veil is where the visible presence of the Lord was seen in the Shkinah glory which was between the wings of the cherubim over the mercy seat on the Arch of the Covenant. But that had long since passed away & all that was there now was complete darkness. No light was ever there in fact no one ever entered the Holy of Holies accept the high priest & him only once a year, on the Day of Atonement. On that day the high priest would go through the veil into the small room called the Holy of Holies & he would sprinkle blood about the mercy seat & intercede on behalf of the nation & it’s sin. Simply put the veil of the temple excluded men from God, mankind was outside & not permitted to enter.

 Now the high priest had to be properly cleansed, if not he would die. On the hem of his robe were silver bells & pomegranates, which signified the gifts & the fruit of the Spirit. On the Day of Atonement as long as the priests could here those bells ringing behind the veil, they knew everything was cool. But if the bells weren’t ringing then they were in trouble. Years later they realized that if a person died in their that none of them would want to go in & get him so they would tie a rope around his ankle, so they could pull him out without risking their own lives. Why all the fear? Well Heb. 10:31 reminds us *that “It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God*.” Why, is that important? Well for the high priest it was a sobering, powerful, glorious moment to enter into the presence of God. Folks, do you realize that as you have the privilege of being in His presence?

 So what was this all about? Well, according to Lev. 17:11 “..it is the blood that makes atonement for the soul.” Folks, God takes sin seriously. He does not wink at it & say “Boy’s will be boy’s.” Heb. 9:22 says, “..without shedding of blood there is no remission.” And if there is no remission of our sin then there can be no fellowship between God & us. So man kind was outside the presence of the Lord having no real access to Him accept through the high priest once a year. Further more we know through the book of Hebrews that even that sacrifice was a symbol. You see those high priests offered the blood of animals every year for the sins of the people, but Jesus the Great High Priest had just offered Himself as the sacrifice! And what He did He did once for all! (Heb. 7:27)

 You see according to Heb. 10:3-4 in those very sacrifices each year was a reminder of the fact that sin remained because it was not possible that the blood of bulls & goats could take away sin.

 So what does this mean to me? Well when the veil was torn it was torn from top to bottom, in other words it was God who created the access to Himself by the sacrifice of His own Son. You & I do nothing to gain access other then receive His Son. Now can you imagine those priests there in the Holy place setting out the showbread & all of the sudden they hear this loud ripping & they look up to see the 10 inch thick veil being ripped in two exposing the Holy of Holies & for the first time in 1,000 of years light shone upon the mercy seat.

 Folks the way to God the Father is now open! The priests that were standing there were not allowed to look in were suddenly looking into the light of the Glory of God. Jesus on the cross once for all took all of my rebellion, sin, foolishness & with the offering of Himself for my sin opened the door for me to come into the presence of God! And that not just once a year, just at a certain place, & only certain people. NO**!! You can come anytime, any place, any person!!!** Do you understand? Heb 4:16 says, “***Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need***.” And when do you need to obtain mercy & find grace or help in time of need? Well I don’t know about you, but for me it is 24 & 7!! What a bummer to have a need & you try to reach me & I’m not available. Folks you don’t have to wait until the church is open, you don’t have to wait, for a specific time, not do you have to wait for a specific person. You don’t have to have me pray for you I have no closer access then you do, I will pray with you, but you can approach His throne of Grace because the veil has be torn in two.

 May just say that sometimes we fall into a trap thinking that if I just try harder, read more, pray longer, give more money then God will hear me! God does not do things based upon our devotion He does them based upon His devotion to us! So then why bother reading my Bible, or praying? Well, it’s not the act that changes but it is the motivation in the act that changes! What did he say? **I don’t read my bible, go to church, worship or pray to impress God, or to find favor. No, I do those things because I am impressed with God & because I have found favor!! Amen**?

 So the access to God is open, you don’t have to go through me or a priest. You don’t have to say “Hail Mary’s” or any of that.

Vs. 51b-53 Now here is recorded three things which further show the reaction to the death of Jesus.

 A.) Vs. 51b **The earth quaked, & the rocks split**: On a natural realm earthquakes were not uncommon events. Yet the timing of this in light of the words of Jesus a week earlier make it a sign. What do you mean? Well, in Rom. 8:22 we read that *“..the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now*.” That is that all of creation was put under the curse at the fall of mankind. Further more as the crowds worshipped Jesus as He entered Jerusalem the religious leaders rebuked Jesus commanding Him to tell them to stop to which He replied in Luke 19:40 “*I tell you that if these should keep silent, the stones would immediately cry out*." So? Hey, folks this was the first rock concert & may I just say that it was worship!! The rocks were quaking & splitting out a worship song that was declaring that the curse had been lifted!

 B.) Vs. 52 Second we are told that because the of the earthquake the stones that covered over the tombs were opened. Now the word “raised” here would better be rendered “appeared”. So I believe that what happened here at first was that the bodies of the some of the believers were made visible! So what does that mean? Why this sign? Well if you go to 1 Cor. 15:55-58 you read, “*O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory? The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ*.” I believe that God was showing that death could not hold the saints in the grave.

 C.) Vs. 53 Lastly it says that these same believers came out of the graves after Jesus resurrection & they went into Jerusalem & appeared to many. The word appear means to “to exhibit (in person) or disclose (by words), declare (plainly), to inform.” Now Paul tells us in Eph 4:8-9 that when Jesus “..ascended on high, He led captivity captive, And gave gifts to men. (Now this, "He ascended"; what does it mean but that He also first descended into the lower parts of the earth?” Peter tells us in 1 Peter 3:19 that Jesus “*preached to the spirits in prison*,” So it is my opinion that it is these O.T. saints that Jesus went to share the liberty that they had looked forward too, thus they were out there sharing that only through Jesus could you be made perfect! Now I must admit that there is not much given on this whole seen, but it is interesting to think that King David would come up to you & start talking to you proclaiming the victory won you in Jesus alone! And remember all of this took place on the first Resurrection Sunday!

**III.) Vs. 54-61 Changed Lives**

Vs. 54 Centurions were in command of 100 men. They were tough guys, chosen to be in command of 100 men because they were the meanest, bravest fighters around. I guess they were kind of like Marine Corps Gunnery sergeants. This Centurion job was to guard the body of Jesus as He hung on the cross. So He no doubt was making fun of Him as well. Yet when they all saw the sky darken for three hours & then the earthquake. It shook up everyone including this tough guy! They had all heard Jesus say in Luke 23:34 “*Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do*.” Then they heard Him say in John 19:30 “*It is finished*!” And with that He bowed His head, He gave up His spirit. There was only one conclusion, “This was the Son of God”. Now there was only one problem with this Centurions statement. Jesus IS the Son of God. Now I’m not sure what happened to these men, but it would not surprise me to see them worshipping the One that they mocked & crucified! Why you ask? Well, you see I’m a lot like that Centurion & soldiers for I use to mock Him & if I was their I would of crucified Him & now I worship Him! Is not Gods grace amazing?

Vs. 55-56 Here is another group of folks who are forever changed by hanging around Jesus. The Women! Mary Magdalene was the gal who had seven demons cast out of her. Then you have two mothers who had two sons each that were a part of the disciple’s, Mary the mother of James (called the less) Joses. Then there was Saome the mother of the sons of thunder James & John. You will remember her as the one who went up to Jesus & asked Him if her two boys could be given the right to have special thrones one on the left & one on the right hand of Jesus. I wonder as she was there looking up at the Lord there on the cross if she understood Jesus words about not knowing what she asked! May I just say that we ought to desire to be there next to Jesus. Our special throne is the cross of dying to self!

Vs. 57-61 Now John tells us that it was not only Joseph of Arimathea, but also Nicodemus who came right away to get the body of Jesus after His death. These two had both become followers of Jesus yet they were not hanging around the 12. But before you are to hard on these men for being secret disciple’s, may I remind you that the others are no where to be found. It is these two men that step forward at a time when all other shrank away. May I just say that it is to celebrate with a winner. I mean that it takes no character or maturity to associate with someone when they are top, but these men are willing to identify with Jesus when it looks as if He has been defeated! Folks, that takes great character & maturity!

 What did they risk coming out in the open like this? They could of lost their lives, their reputation, & at very least as soon as they touched the body of Jesus they were ceremonially unclean & could not take part in the “Passover feast” . Yet it did not matter to them for they had met the real “Passover” Lamb who had just taken away their sin 7 they Loved Him more then their position & even their lives! How about you?

**IV.) Vs. 62-66 The Proof of Skeptics**

Vs. 62-66 I am amazed at this section of scripture because what it shows is that the enemies believed more in what Jesus said then did His own disciple’s. They are afraid that some how Jesus body will be missing & they remembered that He said that He was gong to raise from the dead, but the disciple’s they are no where to be found because now matter how many times Jesus talked to them about His resurrection they did not get it! So they seal the tomb up & if that seal is broken it is death! Now old Pilate He kind of says go ahead make it as secure as you can. And they set the guard. A year after this event Pilate asks to leave Judah & heads to Germany where he commits suicide. The fact is that he never did get over his cowardice of sending this innocent man to death. And he never did understand that this person that he condemned to death died to set him free. Old Pilate could have had free access to the King of Kings, but he chose otherwise!

 Folks this chapter ends on Friday but you know what they say? Sunday is a coming!

**Matthew 28:1-10**

**“Rejoice, He is Not Here”**

**I.) Intro**

**II.) Vs. 1-4 Roll Away The Stone**

**III.) Vs. 5-8 Come See**

**IV.) Vs. 9-10 Go Tell**

**I) Intro**

In the last chapter we finished off with a guarded tomb. In the 61st verse we were told that near that guarded tomb sat at least two women. The tomb had been guarded because at least practically the religious leaders believed Jesus words that after three days He would arise. Yet the women are there not because they believed His words, for if they would have believed Jesus’ words they would not have come to the tomb at all. No, they were there because they did not believe His words yet they were absolutely devoted to Him.

 Maybe you can guess where I’m going with this. I have been at times in my life doctrinally correct, but devotionly off. But rarely have I been devotionaly right & doctrinally off. At the start of our study this morning allow me to make an early application point:

It is better to be devotionaly right & doctrinally a bit off then to be doctrinally right & devotionaly off. Why? Well when you deal with doctrine you are dealing with your intellect & you all know how easy it is to change your mind on something. Yet when you are dealing with your devotion you are dealing with your heart & that’s a far greater issue for the Lord to change. It is my prayer for myself & you that we will allow the Lord to cause us to be more like these gals & less like these religious leaders. Hey, I don’t have all the answer. but I’m devoted to the One that does!

**II.) Vs. 1-4 Roll Away The Stone**

Vs. 1 In this verse we are told the day, approximate hour & those that first discovered the empty tomb. It was early Sunday morning as these women made there way leaving as it was still dark & arriving at the tomb at dawn. These heart broken women left the walls of Jerusalem toward where they had watched Joseph & Nicodemus lay His body a day earlier.

 I can imagine the heavy heart of these ladies. Hope lost, but love not severed. All of us at sometime will experience this feeling. Someone whom we love so deeply is gone & a part of us is missing. There is a word that we use to describe this feeling, “**LOSS**”. Someone that added to our lives will not be able to do so any longer & so we say that we have suffered a loss! And in those early days of grieving we can not imagine ever getting over that “Loss”.

 Back in England’s history there was a time when the nation experienced this sense of loss. Napoleon had been on an island in exile where he had rebuilt his army to over 75,000 men. They were fierce fighters perhaps the best in the world at that time. The commander of the British force was the Duke of Wellington. He was ordered to stop Napoleons advancement with only 67,000 men & there they met at Waterloo. Napoleon was heavily favored to win & if victorious all of Europe would of been invaded & lost their freedom. A ship was sent out into the British Channel it was their job to signal the outcome of the battle as all of England waited to here the news along the shores of Dover. Finally the signal came from the ship as the thick fog came across the water. The message simply read, “***Wellington Defeated***..” The heart of England broke as the nation began to weep. The news spread rapidly & despair hit the nation as they realized that their freedom had been lost. After much time had lapsed the ship fired a canon shot towards the tower at Dover to get the attention of those who had read the original message. This time, the fog had cleared just a little & they could make out the message which read***, “Wellington Defeated Napoleon***!” Suddenly with the addition of the last word the hearts of the nation broke forth in rejoicing!

 How about it? Do you have a fog in your life things not to clear. Perhaps you feel as if all is Loss? You feel defeated, without hope. You’ve come here to church like these ladies to come & see a tomb. Hey, folks you can be a follower of Jesus, devoted to Him & still go through time like this. But I have a word for you today***; “He is not here, for He has risen, as He said***!”

Vs.2-3 These ladies did not come expecting to find what they did, so it was not their faith that gave them this honor. What brought them to the tomb? It was their devotion! Folks the greatest part of our Christian life is to be found in our love for Him. 1 John 4:19 says, “*We love Him because He first loved us*.” It is when we realize His great love for us that we are devoted to Him.

 So why was the 4 ton stone rolled back up the hill? Was it to let Jesus out? Of coarse not! Jesus not need an angels help to get out of the tomb. Make tells us that these ladies had been wondering how they were going to get in as they said, “*Who will roll away the stone from the door of the tomb for us*?” So why was this done? Well it was not to let Jesus out but rather to let us in! I find that interesting, religion is about man trying to get in to where God is & we can never do enough the stone is to heavy, but in Christianity God is the One who rolls the stone away so you can come in & see!

 In 1885 General Gorden discovered what many think is this very tomb & the first thing he did was gather soil from the ground. He took it back with him to noted chemists with only one question: “Is there any trace of decomposition?” And in every case there was no sign of decay! Why? Because Jesus rose form the dead!

Vs. 4 This angel, we are told in Mark, looked like a young man. Now I’m picturing a 13 year old boy here & these buff battle worn Roman soldiers there passed out with fear at the sight of him. Was it because he had some sort of powerful weapon pointing at them that caused this reaction? I don’t think so. Judging by what we are told here that continence was like lightening & his clothing was white as snow it would seem to indicate purity & holiness. If that is the case then there is a great principal to glean here. Power is not in physical stature but rather it is measured in terms of inward character. The powerful man is not the one that has rippling muscles, rather it is the person who is humble & holy. Folks if you want to freeze the opposition at work be humble & holy!

**III.) Vs. 5-8 Come See**

Vs. 5-6 Notice the first words from this angel, “Do not be afraid..” Why because they were just that. I mean what would your reaction be, you come up to the tomb of your lord & when you get there you see the 4 ton stone rolled away a bunch of passed out soldiers that had guarded the tomb & this young man sitting on the stone. Something is absolutely wrong with this scene.

 If we are honest a lot of things scare us. We don’t like anything that is uncertain! Anything that gets us out of our comfort zones causes to react in fear. I read this the other day, “I intend to live forever, so far it’s going well.” The reality is death is 100% 10 out of 10 people will die. A father had the horrible task of telling his young daughter that her mother was going to die as she had untreatable cancer. The little girl asked Daddy when is she going to die. “Well said the Dad when the leaves on the tree start to fall to ground she will be gone. As that time approached the Dad looked out the window of the house to see his little girl by the tree with scotch tape in her hand sticking the leaves back on the tree. We all deal with fear but I want to show you this morning the great “fear buster”

Vs. 6 “*He is not here, for He has risen, as He had said*.” No matter what you are going through today this phrase changes everything. Everything that may seem hopeless & lost, was on that day changed. What do you mean? Well Jesus conquered death & if He can defeat the one thing that has 100% success rate then He can handle your job, marriage, finances, illness or what ever. Folks, nothing can beat Jesus. The resurrection is the great answer to what ever fear or doubt you may have. All you need to do is trust Him. If Jesus lives in you then the Rom 8:37-39 tells us that, *“..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*.”

“Well how do I know what you are telling me is true?” Hey, come & see the place where the Lord lay! So what did they find? They saw the graves clothes lying on the stone shelf empty like a flattened cocoon. There was no sign of struggle, with the grave clothes for He had passed right through them.

Now you may say that you can’t go to that tomb. But let me tell you what you can do. You can check it out in the Bible. For we are told of many different appearances of Jesus:

Peter saw Him the same day, the two disciples on the road talked to Him. Then He appeared to the disciples in a closed room with out Thomas. Then later He again appeared to them with Thomas. Then seven of the disciples were met by Him by the lake. Over 500 folks in Galilee saw Him. James saw Him in two different locations. Many saw Him at His Ascension. Steven saw Him when he was being stoned, Paul who had hated Him meet Him near Damascus, then again years later Paul saw Him again in a temple. Lastly the apostle John saw Him while he was on the island of Patmos.

 Need more proof? How about all the changed lives over thousands of years?

Vs. 7-8 Notice that going & telling follows “coming & seeing”. If you want to grow in your ability to share Jesus first you need to “come & see”! Folks, we all need daily a clear vision of Jesus work upon the cross & His resurrection from the dead. It as we make that the center stone of our lives that we will become effective in our telling to others.

 I just love the fact that Jesus choose two women to be his first witness. Did you know that a women’s report was not acceptable in a court of law in those days. So why did the Lord choose these ladies? Well I think that it is to show us that He chooses the foolish things of the world to confound the wise. To remind us that devotion is greater then our intellect. That humility & brokeness is a better tool then self effort. **And may I just say that the effectiveness of the truth of the gospel does not rest upon the strength of the messenger, but rather upon the truth that we are charged to share**!

**IV.) Vs. 9-10 Go Tell**

Vs. 9-10 I just love what the first word out of Jesus’ mouth is to these two gals is, “Rejoice”. Did you know that the word here is the same word that we translate in the word “grace”. And what was there response they grabbed a hold of Him & worshipped Him. Folks, if you understand His work for you then you know that it is by grace that you have been saved & all you can ever do in your life is worship Him!

 Lastly as Jesus sends them to tell the rest of the loser, mean disciples. Notice what He calls them for it is the first time He calls them this, “My brethren.” Hey, are you a failure like me? Do you some times think that Jesus is a shamed of you? Well, read this verse in light of the fact that these disciples had totally blown it & Jesus is sending these ladies to tell them that they are “His family”. Is that not great? So no matter how many mistakes you have, He still calls you family! And you know what else He wants to meet up with you. But there is obedience involved, you got to go to where He is. And where is that? Well it’s in His word & fellowship of prayer & the body!

 Here it is then folks you have got no excuses to stay in death, defeat, & despair you can rejoice so lets go & meet Him that we may worship at His feet!

**Matthew 28:11-20**

**“Between Two Worlds”**

**I.) Intro**

**III.) Vs. 16-20 Jesus’ Call To Reach The World**

**I) Intro**

For three days this week Tom Porter & I had the opportunity to glean insights in how to best communicate the gospel from some of the most gifted expositor teachers alive today. Now as I was taking in every drop of the Word offered to us I realized more then ever the assume privilege granted to me & you to share the truth of Gods word to the world. Yet with that said, another fear settled in upon my heart & that is how woefully unqualified I am to do so.

 All to often we are like the scientist & his colleagues who, with all of their advancements, decided that they no longer needed God. So they got together & decided to tell Him so. “God, we the scientists of the world have come to the conclusion that we no longer need You.” “All those creating miracles that have been attributed to You, we can now do ourselves.” “In fact we can even recreate ourselves through cloning!” “So you can just go some where else because the mystery is all gone!” Now God heard the scientist & listened very patiently. Finally God spoke & said, “Well, lets see, why don’t we do a sort of contest, to see if you really don’t need me.” “We will both make a man just like I did originally, OK?” “Great!” Said the scientist. “So the scientist got a cell from his body & started to put it in a jar. Then God spoke up, “Wait a minute, you are breaking the rules here I said you had to make a man JUST LIKE I DID ORIGINALLY, & I did not use a cell nor a glass dish.” “OK!”, said the scientist I’ll do it just like you did, so he bent down to pick up some dirt, when again God stopped him, “NO, No, no!” “You get your own dirt!”

 Folks, the power is not in the person it is in Christ & it will only change lives through the working of His Spirit through His word.

Vs. As I said last week these big old burly guys had passed out at the sight of this young looking angel, & they had a real big problem. They had been sent to secure the tomb & now the tomb was open & empty, with the only explanation that some bright young man moved the 4 ton stone away while these tough guys fainted at his sight!

 Now notice that these Romans did not go to Pilate or their superior officers at first with this story. No, they went to the Jewish religious community. Why?

 Well, they understood both the desperate situation they were in as well as the fact that the religious leaders would want to cover this whole thing up. In an old book called “*Justian’s digest of laws*” the author lists some 18 offenses by which a Roman soldier was liable to be executed. Deserting ones post, leaving the night watch, & taking flight when it would influence others to do the same; were all of which they might of been put to death for.

Vs. 12-13 1 Cor. 1:18 says, “*For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God*.” Have you ever noticed that the lame explanations that non-believers use to excuse away the truth often takes more faith to believe then does the facts? What we have here is the worlds attempt to give rational reasons for an empty tomb. Now what we are not told is what other possible explanations they might of come up with & then ruled out. It says here that “they took counsel” now I’m certain that they investigated all the possible explanations such as:

 A.) “Jesus did not really die, He just passed out.” Nah, that would not work to many saw Him die on the cross, the spear was shoved into His side.” “No one will buy that.”

 C.) “The tomb is not empty, you only think there is not a body.” I mean is reality really reality or are we all part of someone else’s dream? How do you know?

 Folks what you have here is the very best reasoning in the world at that time. I mean these guys put their heads together & this was the very best explanation they could come up with. And verse 15 tells us that at the time of Matthew’s writing of this gospel it was the most accepted alternative to the Truth! May I just punch some wholes in this theory this morning?

 1.) If the guards were all asleep how did they know it was the disciples that stole the body?

 3.) Assuming that all of the above were possible, what was the reason? Well so people would be duped into believing that Jesus rose from the dead proving that He was God the son. OK, but what did they get out of it? Did this incredible act gain them something? Did it make them powerful, rich, popular? No, everyone of them died a martyrs death for what accordingly they would know was a lie! Some of them had watched their children murdered & wives raped & every last one of them did so never flinching at all on what they would of known was a lie!

 Folks to believe, this report takes far more faith then I have. It simple does not add up. In fact it is ludicrous!

 Now some of the early church fathers wrote that Pilate had written an account to the Roman Government as he was required after any execution. And they elude to it’s existence in the early church. A 1,000 years passed with out that letter showing up until one day an American came upon it in the Vatican library. It is called the Actipalate & it was first translated into German then into English. Now I must tell you that this letter from Pilate to Caesar speaking of the events of the crucifixion & resurrection has not been 100% authenticated, but it is very interesting none the less. Here is a small sample of what Pilate reportedly writes to Caesar:

 “I sent him to the captain of the royal guard Malcus to take Him, the Jewish soldiers, and placed as many around the sepulcher as were needed, and then if anything should happen, they would blame themselves, and not the Romans. And when the great excitement arose about the sepulcher being found empty, I felt deeper solicitude then ever. I sent for Malcus who told me, he had placed his Lieutenant Benishim with 100 soldiers around the sepulcher. He told me Ishim and the soldiers were very much alarmed at what had occurred there that morning. I sent for this man Ishim who related to me as near as I can remember the following circumstances.

 He said that about the beginning of the fourth watch they saw His soft and beautiful light over the sepulcher. He had first thought that the woman had come to embalm the body of Jesus, as was their custom. They could not see how they gotten through the guards. And while this reflection were passing through his mind, behold the whole place lighted up, and there seemed to be crowds of the dead clothed. All seemed to be shouting and filled with ecstasy while all around and above was the most beautiful music they had ever heard. And the whole air seemed to be filled with voices praising God.

 Well there you have it! Folks any way you slice it you have to come up with an answer for an empty tomb! The Biblical evidence is overwhelming. Now with that said, the world stands today still just like the religious leaders of that time making up reasons to deny the facts. Now If was Jesus I would just say to the disciples, “Just forget it, don’t even bother talking to those folks. And I’m afraid that all to often that is just what the church has done. But lets see what Jesus tells His disciples.

Vs. 16 Now this was not their first meeting with Jesus, the disciples had met with Him several times before, but we read here that this was the “appointed meeting”.

 Folks I like this, for it tells me that most of us need a little more then help to get to the mountain, you know what I mean? These guys had to be encourage several times about Jesus resurrection. At one time we are told in Luke’s gospel that He sat down with them & just went through the scriptures. Jesus had told the Pharisees “*You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me*.” And so Jesus showed the disciples just the truth of that statement. Maybe you’ve been a Christian for a while & you are still not at a place where you are ready to here Jesus say to you to Go! May I encourage today that some times it takes a while for us to make the trip to the mountain. Further more we will never be ready to go to men until we are first ready to go to God & we won’t do that until we are convinced of who He is! I’m blessed by the patience of Jesus towards us, how about you?

Vs. 17 Folks when you finally begin to grasp who Jesus really is all that you can do is worship Him. If I may paint the picture here for you the 11 disciples they are worshipping Jesus & probably other as well, but there were over 500 we are told in Cor. around this mountain & some of them were still not sure of who Jesus was.

Vs. 18-20 Here is where we have recorded what is called the “Great Commission”. Before we get into the specifics of what Jesus said may I state the obvious:

 “**The world is not called to come to the Church, the Church is called to go to the World**.” Today in the Church growth movement the pet phrase is to be “seeker sensitive”. But as I look at this passage we are to be seekers, just as God is the seeker in the parables about the lost lamb & the lost coin! The Church is not for unbelievers it is for believers & what we are to do is simply to out “LIVE” the culture that we are placed into. I fear today that what the Church has done to reach the world is to become like the world & in so doing they have denied the very power that will reach the world.

 Folks, there is a real since that the most exciting time that we ought to have at Church is when you walk out that door! Now, be careful here for not talking about, “Thank-God that’s over!” I’m saying all right I get to go out live the world!

Did you notice that Jesus uses the word or a derivative of the word “All” Four times?

 1.) Vs. 18 “*All authority has been given to Me on heaven & on earth*”: **This is the secret of our service.** Folks have you ever been afraid to talk to someone about Jesus? Well guess what you don’t have to be. Why? Because Jesus is in charge of heaven & earth. The word “authority” means the right to use power. So where ever we go we can go in confidence! Hey did you notice the importance of the word “ALL” here? Jesus did not say I have most of the authority, or I have all authority in this area but not very much over here. Now based upon the fact that Jesus has “all authority” he gives you what you are to do.

 B.) “**Make disciples**”: The word here had a Greek slant. Socrates had built an education system based upon Plato’s ideology. It was these apprentices that so identified with the teacher that impacted the whole of society. Folks the goal of conversion is discipleship. Jesus did not say go & make converts. No, He said make pupils, people who will attach themselves to Me & Me to them. So that by listening & doing they will influence everyone with Me!

 2.) “*all nations*”: Now literally this “make all nations learns.” The commission is not to a select group but to every nation. Where ever we go we are to make learns of Christ!

 A.) “**Baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son & Holy Spirit**”: When a person is baptized they are having a change of address sort of. The word comes from what a person did when they would dye a garment a certain color. If the cloth was white & it was dyed purple then there would be a visible change in it’s characteristics. So what would the visible change be in the disciple? Well it tells us that we are to be baptized in the trinity. Our visible characteristics should be that of the Godhead. So right here we see that Jesus is speaking for more then just a superficial change.

 3.) “*Teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded*”: Here we see the method employed to cause that change, obedience to the Word of God. Learns need to be instructed on how they are to out live the world. Notice the word “observe”; information without practice is worthless! People we need to know how to do it! This is why we here at Calvary Chapel go systematically through the text.

 4.) “*I Am with you always, even to the end of the age*”: What a great fact this is! Jesus is with us every where we go. So Go!!!

 As we close now may I encourage to reach the world you are to be the “seeker” so go out under His power everywhere with His Word.