The Gospel According to
MATTHEW

Abraham to Christ—1997 BC → 5 BC

1 [1] A genealogy[1] of Jesus Christ, son of David, son of Abraham:
[2]Abraham begot Isaac, then Isaac begot Jacob, then Jacob begot Judah and his brothers; [3]then Judah begot Perez and Zerah by Tamar, then Perez begot Hezron, then Hezron begot Ram; [4]then Ram begot Amminadab, then Amminadab begot Nahshon, then Nahshon begot Salmon; [5]then Salmon begot Boaz by Rahab, then Boaz begot Obed by Ruth, then Obed begot Jesse, [6]then Jesse begot David the king, then King David begot Solomon by her *who was* of Uriah.[2]

[7]Then Solomon begot Rehoboam, then Rehoboam begot Abijah, then Abijah begot Asa; [8]then Asa begot Jehoshaphat, then Jehoshaphat begot Joram, then Joram begot Uzziah; [9]then Uzziah begot Jotham, then Jotham begot Ahaz, then Ahaz begot Hezekiah; [10]then Hezekiah begot Manasseh, then Manasseh begot Amon, then Amon begot Josiah; [11]then Josiah begot Jeconiah and his brothers about the time of the Babylonian captivity.

[12]After the Babylonian captivity Jeconiah begot Shealtiel, then Shealtiel begot Zerubbabel; [13]then Zerubbabel begot Abiud, then Abiud begot Eliakim, then Eliakim begot Azor; [14]then Azor begot Zadok, then Zadok begot Achim, then Achim begot Eliud; [15]then Eliud begot Eleazar, then Eleazar begot Matthan, then Matthan begot Jacob; [16]then Jacob begot Joseph the husband of Mary, by whom[3] was begotten Jesus, who is called Christ.[4]

[17]So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations, and from David until the Babylonian captivity are fourteen generations, and from the Babylonian captivity until the Christ are fourteen generations.[5]

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[1] There is no definite article in the Greek Text, as there should not be, since there is more than one genealogy; see Luke 3:23-38. For a discussion, please see 'Mary's genealogy' in the Appendix (in the 4th edition). The Appendix became the book, *An Analysis of Controverted Topics*, and is also in my website.

[2] Sins may be forgiven, but your curriculum remains—3,000 years later we still read about David's sin (Bathsheba is not named, she was Uriah's wife, not `widow`, even though Solomon was conceived after the murder of Uriah—David did not marry a widow, he stole someone else`s wife). The only women included in the genealogy (Tamar, Rahab, Ruth [Deuteronomy 23:3], Bathsheba) represent some violation—perhaps to emphasize the grace of God.

[3] This pronoun is feminine in the Greek Text, and can only refer to Mary. The Holy Spirit begot Jesus by Mary.

[4] Here the formula changes, because Jesus could not be the son of Joseph—see Jeremiah 22:24,30; 36:23,29-30.

[5] This is really Joseph's genealogy. As adoptive father he conferred the legal right to the throne of David on Jesus (which may be why David receives such emphasis, as being

Conception of Jesus—5 BC

18Now the birth of Jesus Christ was like this: After His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, before they joined together, she was found to be pregnant by the Holy Spirit.[1] **19**Then Joseph her husband,[2] being a just man and not wanting to humiliate her publicly, decided to repudiate her secretly. **20**But while he pondered these things, wow, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream saying: "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to receive Mary as your wife, because that which has been begotten in her is of the Holy Spirit.[3] **21**And she will give birth to a Son and you shall call His name Jesus, because He will save His people[4] from their sins." **22**Now all this happened so that what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet should be fulfilled, namely: **23**"Behold, the virgin will become pregnant and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Emmanuel",[5] which being translated is, 'God with us'.[6] **24**Then Joseph, being aroused from sleep, did as that angel of the Lord commanded him and received his wife,[7] **25**but did not know her

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king). Since the throne of David has to do with the covenant people, this genealogy only goes back to Abraham. In contrast, Mary's genealogy (Luke 3:23-38) goes back to Adam and God—Jesus was literally son of both Adam and God. It has been observed that from David to the captivity there were seventeen kings, but Ahaziah reigned only one year, Amon only two and Abijah only three, so they would not count as generations—Matthew is correct in saying there were fourteen 'generations'. For further discussion of perceived difficulties in this genealogy, please see: `Some related anomalies in Matthew's genealogy of the Christ`, available from my website.

1 Luke 1:26-38 gives detail on how this happened. Luke 1:39-56 tells us that Mary then left immediately to visit Elizabeth, where she stayed three months before returning home. So she was three months pregnant when Joseph got the news.

2 The betrothal was legally binding, so the man was then called 'husband', even before the physical union.

3 Strictly speaking, both here and in verse 18, 'Holy Spirit' occurs without the definite article, which I suppose means that the phrase is being used as a proper name.

4 To whom does "His people" refer? To actually receive the salvation one must believe into Jesus, so the reference would appear to be to those who have identified with Him as their Savior.

5 The quote is from Isaiah 7:14. Matthew uses the Greek '*parthenos*', which unambiguously means 'virgin', to translate the Hebrew *'alma'*, which is ambiguous—it refers to a young woman who may be a virgin, but not necessarily. Isaiah did not use '*bethulah*', which refers unambiguously to a virgin, because, I suppose, the context demands an immediate fulfillment, which was supplied by Isaiah's wife, as the next chapter makes clear. It follows that translations of Isaiah 7:14 that render 'young woman' are not doing violence to the Hebrew Text.

6 'God with us' is stronger than 'God is with us'; Jesus was literally God living among us.

7 Apparently there was some urgency involved; it sounds like he did it that same night (Mary was at least three months pregnant)—at night there would not be any onlookers. What God asked of Joseph was very difficult. No one would believe the explanation about the Holy Spirit. Joseph would have to raise the child as his own, as he did. But Jesus probably did not look the least bit like Joseph. Remember what the Pharisees threw in Jesus' face in John 8:41: "We were not born of fornication".

until[1] she had given birth to her son, the firstborn.[2] And he called His name JESUS.

Jesus is born—5 BC

The 'wise men'

2 [1]Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men [*magi*] from the East came into Jerusalem, [2]saying: "Where is he who has been born King of the Jews? For we saw his star in the East and have come to worship him." [3]When Herod the king heard it he became agitated, and all Jerusalem with him. [4]And gathering all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born.[3] [5]So they said to him: "In Bethlehem of Judea, for thus it stands written by the prophet: [6]'And you, Bethlehem, land of Judah, are not at all the least among the rulers of Judah, for out of you will come a Ruler who will shepherd my people Israel.'"[4] [7]Then Herod, calling the wise men secretly, determined from them the time when the star appeared. [8]And directing them to Bethlehem he said, "When you get there, search carefully for the young child; and should you find him, bring back word to me, so that I also may go and worship him."[5]

The Star!

[9]So having heard the king they departed, and there was the star that they had seen in the East! It went before them until it arrived and stopped above where the young Child was. [10]Now when they saw the star they rejoiced with exceedingly great joy![6] [11]And going into the house[7] they saw the young Child

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[1] The use of this conjunction implies that they had normal relations after Jesus' birth, and in fact they had at least six children together. In the Bible the verb 'to know' is used to refer to sexual intercourse. Matthew is said to have 'published' his Gospel in 38 or 39 AD. By then Mary would be past the age when she could have children, even if she was still alive. So for Matthew to write 'firstborn' means there were others later; if Mary had had only one child Matthew would have written 'only born'.

[2] Only 0.5% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, omit "her" and "the firstborn" (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.). That is eight manuscripts against 1,454 that have been collated, but there are probably over 300 others yet to be collated that will swell the number against the eight. Why do so-called 'evangelical' scholars insist on damaging the Text based on such ridiculously inferior and inadequate 'evidence'?

[3] The magi said, "King of the Jews"; Herod said, "Messiah". Evidently he knew something about O.T. prophecy. Notice that Herod believed them; they were probably impressive. That they had undertaken an extensive and expensive journey meant that they were convinced.

[4] See Micah 5:2.

[5] Presumably Herod was a good actor, so if they hadn't been warned in a dream, they would probably have reported back.

[6] It reappeared after two years. They had undertaken an expensive and dangerous journey in the dark, as it were. Now God confirms that they are on the right track. They are beside themselves with joy! It guided them to the very house.

[7] Joseph probably used the stable (Luke 2:7) for only one night; the next day he would look for more adequate quarters. That Jesus was born at night is clear from Luke

with Mary His mother,[1] and falling down they worshipped Him; and opening their treasures they presented gifts to Him: gold, frankincense and myrrh.[2] **12**Then, having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed for their *own* country by a different road.

The flight to Egypt

13Now when they had departed, again, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream saying: "Get up, take the young Child and His mother, flee to Egypt and stay there until I tell you; because Herod is about to seek the young Child to destroy Him!" **14**So he got up and took the young Child and His mother by night[3] and departed for Egypt. **15**And he was there until the death of Herod, so that what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet should be fulfilled, namely: "Out of Egypt I called my Son."[4]

The massacre

16Then Herod, when he saw that he had been deceived by the wise men, became very angry, and he sent out and massacred all the boys who were in Bethlehem and in all its districts, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had determined from the wise men.[5] **17**Then what was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet was fulfilled, namely: **18**"A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation, weeping and great mourning; Rachel weeping for her children and not wanting to be comforted, because they are no more."[6]

2:8-12. The angels appeared at night (verse 8) and said "this day" (verse 11)—the shepherds were Jews, and the Jewish day began at 6:00 p.m. Since the shepherds broadcasted the message delivered by the angel, any people in the town who loved God would want to help Joseph. The Text says 'young child', not 'baby'—the visit to Jerusalem (Luke 2:22-38) is now well behind them.

1 They may have arrived at night. All the events recorded in verses 1-8 presumably happened the same day. It is only some ten miles from Jerusalem to Bethlehem, but it may have been already dark when they started out. The Text says that they saw Jesus and Mary; Joseph is not mentioned. Perhaps he was sleeping in another room. If the magi took off immediately, as I suppose, then the angel roused Joseph as soon as they were out the door.

2 Because the gifts were three, some have assumed that the magi were three, but nowhere does the Text specify the number. Now, as then, those who are wise still seek Him. The gifts were providential to meet their financial needs in Egypt and beyond, quite apart from any symbolism.

3 That same night, immediately. A suspicious man like Herod doubtless sent a spy to keep an eye on the magi. When they took off in the opposite direction Herod would have been informed within a few hours. If Joseph had waited until morning it would probably have been too late.

4 The time spent in Egypt was probably only a few months. Jesus was born in 5 BC, and Herod died in 4 BC. The quote is from Hosea 11:1, which in that context refers to Israel, but Jesus was/is literally God's Son—OT prophecies often have a dual reference /application.

5 Obviously it had been his intention to kill Jesus.

6 Ramah was a district of Bethlehem. The quote is from Jeremiah 31:15. The birth of the Savior resulted in the massacre of many infants; being the fulfillment of prophecy

The return to Natsareth

19Now Herod having died, there, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt 20saying: "Get up, take the young Child and His mother and go into the land of Israel, for those[1] seeking the life of the young Child have died." 21So he got up and took the young Child and His mother and went into the land of Israel. 22But hearing that Archelaus was reigning over Judea instead of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. And being warned in a dream he proceeded into the region of Galilee. 23And upon arriving he settled in a city called Natsareth [Branch-town],[2] so that what was spoken through the prophets should be fulfilled, that He would be called a Natsorean [Branch-man].[3]

Ministry of John the baptizer—26 AD

3 1Now in those days John the Baptizer began preaching in the wilderness of Judea 2and saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of the heavens has come near!" 3For this is he who was referred to by the prophet

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means it was part of the Plan. God's ways seem strange to us at times, but He is under no obligation to explain His actions. (However, based on Jeremiah 31:16 I wonder if God did not compensate the parents somehow; "your work shall be rewarded".)

[1] The Text is plainly plural here, so who else besides Herod had died? That massacre would not be a nice thing to have on the record, and it may be that Herod had ordered the execution of others who were involved.

[2] We know from Luke that Natsareth was Joseph's home—his house and business were waiting for him (although he had been gone for quite a while). The name of the town in Hebrew is based on the consonants נצר (*resh, tsadde, nun*), but since Hebrew is read from right to left, for us the order is reversed = n, ts, r. This word root means 'branch'. Greek has the equivalent for 'ps' and 'ks', but not for 'ts', so the transliteration used a ζ (*zeta*) 'dz', which is the voiced counterpart of 'ts'. But when the Greek was transliterated into English it came out as 'z'! But Hebrew has a 'z', ז (*zayin*), so in transliterating back into Hebrew people assumed the consonants נזר, replacing the correct *tsadde* with *zayin*. This technical information is necessary as background for the next footnote.

[3] Neither 'Nazareth' nor 'Nazarene', spelled with a *zayin*, is to be found in the Old Testament, but there is a prophetic reference to Messiah as the Branch, *netser*—Isaiah 11:1—and several to the related word, *tsemach*—Isaiah 4:2, Jeremiah 23:5, 33:15; Zechariah 3:8, 6:12. So Matthew is quite right—the prophets (plural, being at least three) referred to Christ as the Branch. Since Jesus was a man, He would be the 'Branch-man', from 'Branch-town'. Which brings us to the word 'natsorean'. The familiar 'Nazarene' (*Ναζαρηνος*) [Natsarene] occurs in Mark 1:24, 14:67, 16:6 and Luke 4:34, but here in Matthew 2:23 and in fourteen other places, including Acts 22:8 where the glorified Jesus calls Himself that, the word is 'Natsorean' (*Ναζωραιος*), which is quite different. (Actually, in Acts 22:8 Jesus introduced Himself to Saul as 'the Natsorean', which Saul would understand as a reference to the Messiah.) To my surprise, Pilate put "the Natsorean" in the accusation above the cross—John 19:19. He had doubtless researched Jesus thoroughly, and was making a statement: Jesus was the Messiah. I have been given to understand that the Nazareth of Jesus' day had been founded some 100 years before by a Branch family who called it Branch town; they were very much aware of the prophecies about the Branch and fully expected the Messiah to be born from among them—they called themselves Branch-people (Natsoreans). Of course everyone else thought it was a big joke and tended to look down on them. "Can anything good…?"

Isaiah, saying: "A voice crying out, 'Prepare in the wilderness the way of the LORD, make His paths straight.'"[1]

[4]Now John actually used clothes *made* from camel's hair and a leather belt around his waist; while his food was locusts and wild honey.[2] [5]Then Jerusalem, all Judea and all the region of the Jordan went out to him, [6]and were being baptized by him in the Jordan, confessing their sins.

A bunch of snakes

[7]But seeing many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them: "Brood of vipers! Who tipped you off to flee from the coming wrath?[3] [8]Therefore produce fruit worthy of repentance, [9]and don't *even* think to say within yourselves, 'We have Abraham as father,'[4] for I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones. [10]Indeed, already the ax is being laid to the root of the trees.[5] So every tree not producing good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.[6]

[11]"I baptize you with water unto repentance, but the One coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry.[7] He will baptize you with Holy Spirit.[8] [12]His winnowing shovel is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor and gather His wheat into the barn; but He will burn up the chaff with

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[1] The reference is to Isaiah 40:3. Hebrew poetry, and prose, makes heavy use of parallel or synonymous statements. From the context in Isaiah, it seems clear that "in the wilderness" goes with the verb 'prepare', not 'call out'. But why a straight road in the wilderness? Any road facilitates the movement of people and goods, but a straight road through accidented terrain is a major asset. (Actually, Isaiah 40:3-4 describes the construction of a modern super highway.) John was the voice, but it was the people who had to make the road. So how about us? Are we supposed to be making such a road, and if so, how? At the very least we should be proclaiming biblical values to the world by every available means.

[2] Honey is an excellent food.

[3] John did not think highly of Pharisees and Sadducees! He refers to the final Accounting, also in verse 10.

[4] They had notions of spiritual privilege based on birth, but as someone has said, God has no grandchildren. Later on, Jesus will make clear that they did in fact reject John's message—they were not baptized.

[5] The Messiah was already present, and He would condemn the Pharisees and Sadducees.

[6] We are judged by what we do.

[7] Mark 1:7 has "untie His straps". John doubtless repeated this many times, to different audiences, and varied the expression; there is no discrepancy.

[8] There is no article with 'Holy Spirit', so I take the phrase as a proper name. The 'and fire' we are used to is read by only 20% of the Greek manuscripts. The 80% includes the best line of transmission. However, Luke 3:16 has the 'and fire'. Note that it is Jesus who baptizes with the Holy Spirit. In John 1:30 God Himself declares that Jesus will baptize with Holy Spirit. For more on this subject, please see 'Baptisms in the Bible', available from my website: www.prunch.org.

unquenchable fire."[1]

Baptism of Jesus

13Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan to be baptized by him. **14**But John tried to dissuade Him saying, "I have need to be baptized by You, and You are coming to me?"[2] **15**But in answer Jesus said to him, "Permit it now, because thus it is appropriate to us to fulfill all righteousness."[3] Then he permitted Him. **16**And having been baptized Jesus came up directly from the water, when wow, the heavens were opened to Him, and he saw the Spirit of God coming down like a dove and alighting upon Him.[4] **17**And wow, a Voice from the heavens saying, "This is my Son, the beloved, in whom I am *always* well pleased!"[5]

Jesus tested by Satan

4 **1**Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tested by the devil. **2**And having fasted forty days and forty nights, afterward He was hungry.[6] **3**And coming to Him the tempter said, "Since you are the Son of God, command that these stones become loaves of bread."[7] **4**But in answer He said, "It is written: 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but by every word coming out of God's mouth.'"[8] **5**Then the devil takes Him into the holy city[9]

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1 Can you have wheat without chaff? Isn't the chaff part of the wheat plant? What might the implications of this analogy be for the Church? What percentage of the plant is edible wheat? Wherever Christianity is the state or majority religion, or part of the prevailing culture, a large majority of the 'Christians' will be chaff. Where Christians are persecuted a high percentage will be wheat. Since Judaism was part of the prevailing culture, presumably most of John's hearers were chaff. The 'unquenchable' fire is presumably a reference to the Lake.

2 John knew that Jesus was the Messiah.

3 Our Lord's statement here seems difficult to us. Since Mark 1:4 and Luke 3:3 state that it was "a baptism of repentance for forgiveness of sins" but Jesus had no sins to repent of, in what sense was He "fulfilling all righteousness"? Perhaps as Messiah and Great High Priest He needed to identify Himself with those of His people who were truly repentant.

4 The episode is presented from John's perspective, while in Mark 1:11 and Luke 3:22 it is presented from Jesus' perspective. Just as at Pentecost the Holy Spirit translated into the ears of the foreigners, I take it that here Jesus heard one thing and John another.

5 The Trinity is clearly manifested: voice = Father, Jesus = Son, dove = Holy Spirit. This was an important confirmation for Jesus.

6 This episode was ordained by the Holy Spirit. Jesus had to confront Satan when He was physically the weakest He would ever be (40 days without food!). When Satan failed to defeat this weakened Jesus he was probably filled with despair—he now knew that he could never defeat Him. (But he would still try to kill Him.)

7 Satan was not so foolish as to question Jesus' identity, "if"; he was more subtle, "since". Luke 4:3 has "this stone", instead of "these stones". I gather that Satan said both; he started with 'these stones' and then picked out a specific one.

8 See Deuteronomy 8:3.

9 'The holy city' was evidently Jerusalem. One is tempted to ask, what was 'holy' about it? Well, the Temple was there, and the sacrifice of God's Lamb would consecrate it forever.

and sets Him upon the pinnacle of the temple,[1] **6**and says to Him, "Since you are the Son of God, throw yourself down; for it is written: 'He will give orders to His angels about you, and they will lift you up on their hands, lest you strike your foot against a stone.'"[2]

7Jesus said to him, "It is <u>also</u> written: 'You shall not test the LORD your God!'"[3] **8**Again the devil takes Him to a <u>very</u> high mountain and shows Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory.[4] **9**And he says to Him, "All these things I will give to you, if You will fall down and worship me." **10**Then Jesus says to him: "Get behind me, Satan![5] Because it is written: 'You shall worship the LORD your God, and Him only shall you serve.'"[6] **11**Then the devil leaves Him, and <u>then</u>, angels came and began ministering to Him.[7]

Jesus chooses Capernaum as His base of operations—27 AD

12Now hearing that John had been put in prison, Jesus departed into Galilee.[8] **13**And leaving Natsareth behind,[9] He went and took up residence in Capernaum by the sea, in the regions of Zebulun and Naphtali; **14**so that what was spoken through Isaiah the prophet should be fulfilled, namely: **15**"Land of Zebulun and land of Naphtali, way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations! **16**The people sitting in darkness saw a great light, and upon those sitting in the place and shadow of death light has dawned."[10]

Jesus calls four fishermen

17From then on Jesus began to preach and to say, "Repent, for the kingdom of the heavens has come near."[11] **18**And walking by the Sea of

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[1] This is literal; Satan has the power to transport things. Matthew has the correct sequence, whereas Luke inverts the order of tests 2 and 3 (Matthew uses adverbs of sequence, but Luke does not).

[2] See Psalm 91:11-12. Satan knows the Bible, and how to twist it.

[3] See Deuteronomy 6:16. The point is to not put God to the test, to not deliberately do something irresponsible with the intention of obliging God to work a miracle to save you.

[4] This also is literal and obviously supernatural (since the world is a sphere, even from a satellite one can only see half of it). We have here a masterstroke of Satan—Jehovah the Son took on human form in order to recover what the first Adam had lost, and Satan offers it to Him on a silver platter, with just one 'small' condition …

[5] 12% of the Greek manuscripts omit "behind me" (as in many modern versions); in Luke 4:8 only 3% omit it. The vast majority, including the best line of transmission, is certainly correct.

[6] See Deuteronomy 6:13. Note that Jesus did not deny his right to make the offer.

[7] The impression one gets is that the angels were not allowed to help Jesus during His direct confrontation with Satan.

[8] The early Judean ministry, as recorded in John 1, 2 and 3, ends here.

[9] See Luke 4:16-30, where the local inhabitants tried to kill Him. Presumably Jesus moved His belongings out of Natsareth at that time.

[10] See Isaiah 9:1-2.

[11] Right! The King was walking among them. "Kingdom of the heavens" and "kingdom of God" are synonyms, as can be seen by comparing parallel passages in Mark and Luke. Jesus continues with John's message, since the herald is now out of action.

Galilee He saw two brothers, Simon (the one called Peter) and Andrew his brother, casting a circular net into the sea (for they were fishermen). 19And He says to them, "Follow me and I will make you fishers of men." 20So leaving the nets immediately they followed Him.[1] 21And going on from there He saw two other brothers, James (the one of Zebedee) and John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets. And He called them. 22So leaving the boat and their father immediately, they followed Him.[2]

A tour of Galilee

23Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the Gospel of the Kingdom, and healing every disease and every illness among the people. 24So His fame went throughout all Syria; and they brought to Him all who were sick—suffering with various diseases and torments, and being demonized,[3] also epileptics and paralytics—and He healed them. 25So large crowds followed Him—from Galilee and Decapolis and Jerusalem and Judea and beyond the Jordan.[4]

The Sermon on the Mount

5 1Now seeing the crowds He went up on the mountain, and upon His sitting down His disciples[5] approached Him.

The Beatitudes[6]

2And opening His mouth[7] He started teaching them, saying:
3"Blessed are the poor in spirit,[8] for theirs is the kingdom of

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1 They had employees who could take care of the equipment.

2 All four of these men had spent time with Jesus already, so this was not 'out of the blue'.

3 For some readers the term 'demonized' may be new. For an explanation, please see my article 'Demonization'.

4 Luke 5:1 says that this same crowd was hungry to hear the Word of God, and they did indeed hear the Sermon on the Mount, but Jesus used healing and deliverance to attract the crowd.

5 The 'twelve' had not yet been chosen, so this was a larger group of followers.

6 The 'beatitudes', there are eight of them, have a general application, being a type of invitation; Jesus invites people to embrace the values of the Kingdom, stating the benefits they will receive if they do. The 'beatitudes' should be interpreted from Jesus' point of view, not ours or anyone else's. Remember also that no benefit of the shed blood of God's Lamb is automatic—they are all potential. God's promises must be claimed, but first there are prior conditions that must be met. God's part is guaranteed, but ours is not; the level of benefit varies from person to person. Remember the parable of the sower, or the soils: the seed that fell on the good ground produced at different levels—100%, 60%, 30%.

7 This appears to be a Hebrew idiom indicating a formal or serious pronouncement.

8 To be 'poor in spirit' means to have a humble spirit. It does not refer to money, but to attitude. Someone may not like the term 'poor', but that is what the Text says. It will be well to remember that the Sovereign Creator was not born in an English-speaking country, but in Israel, speaking Hebrew. For a detailed discussion, please see 'Poor in spirit—Matthew 5:3', available from my website.

the heavens.[1]

4Blessed are those who mourn,[2] for they will be comforted.

5Blessed are the meek,[3] for they will inherit the earth.

6Blessed are those hungering and thirsting for righteousness,[4] for they will be filled.

7Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.[5]

8Blessed are the pure in heart,[6] for they will see God.

9Blessed are the peacemakers,[7] for they will be called sons of God.

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[1] If the Kingdom is theirs, then they are part of the Kingdom. Nobody gets into that Kingdom without a humble spirit, but not everyone with a humble spirit enters the Kingdom; not necessarily.

[2] The 'mourning' here is not crying because you hurt; nor is it weeping because you lost a loved one. It is mourning because of evil and sin, and their consequences. For a detailed discussion, please see 'Lament, not weep—Matthew 5:4', available from my website.

[3] 'Meek' is not 'weak', it is power under control. It was said of Moses that he was the meekest man in his time, precisely because he was also the most powerful. Jesus said of Himself that He was 'meek', and He was also powerful. But in what practical way can the 'meek' 'inherit the earth', beginning with where they live? For a detailed discussion, please see 'Meek is not weak', available from my website.

[4] For a detailed discussion, please see 'Hunger and thirst for righteousness', available from my website.

[5] It seems clear that the purpose of this 'beatitude' is to promote mercy. We need to understand the difference between grace and mercy. To receive grace is to receive a benefit that is not deserved (a deserved benefit is a salary). To receive mercy is to be spared deserved punishment (for something bad that was done). Part of the importance of this 'beatitude' derives from the circumstance that the opposite is also true: someone who is not merciful will also not receive mercy. For a detailed discussion, please see 'Merciful receives mercy', available from my website.

In James 2:12-13 we read: "Speak and act as being those who are about to be judged by a law of liberty (the judgment will be without mercy to the one not showing mercy). *That law* exalts mercy over judgment." This accords with the description that Jehovah gave of Himself to Moses, on that rarest of occasions: "Jehovah, God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth; keeping mercy unto the thousandth generation, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin; and that will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and the children's children unto the third and the fourth generation" (Exodus 34:6-7). He keeps mercy to the 1000th generation, He punishes to the 4th; the proportion is 250:1. That is why it is important that we show mercy.

[6] A pure substance, like honey, is without mixture, is 100% honey. A pure person is without dirt. A pure heart has both of those qualities. In 2 Chronicles 16:9 Jehovah is looking for people "whose heart is loyal to Him"; people with a pure heart, without a mixture of other gods. For a detailed discussion, please see 'Pure in heart', available from my website.

[7] "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of god." We may begin with two questions: 1) they make peace between whom? and 2) they will be 'called" by whom? For the other seven 'beatitudes', the result is overtly stated, but here Jesus did not say, 'they will be sons of God', but rather, 'they will be called sons of God'. But I should begin with the first question: 'make peace between whom?'—it will have to be an activity that God can bless.

10Blessed are those who have been persecuted on account of
righteousness,[1] for theirs is the kingdom of the heavens.[2]

To begin, it is not peace with God, because "there is one God, and one Mediator between God and men—a man!—Christ Jesus" (1 Timothy 2:5). "He Himself is our peace" (Ephesians 2:14), precisely because He is the "Prince of Peace" (Isaiah 9:6). So then, make peace between whom? It cannot be to make peace with evil or with those who have sold themselves to evil. God Himself hates "all workers of iniquity" (Psalm 5:4-6); and He commands us to hate evil (Psalm 97:10). Further, "There is no peace, says my God, for the wicked" (Isaiah 57:21). And we have the Lord's own example: He never tried to conciliate the Sadducees and Pharisees; He denounced them in violent terms.

Well then, peace between whom? I would say that it is peace between persons, when there is discord between brothers in the church, or between families, or even between regions and peoples. Since wars always cause suffering to 'innocents', attempts to avoid war should be encouraged. Well, that is to say, with the exception of ideologies that are committed to destroying the good—such ideologies should be exterminated. If you are dying with cancer, do you want a doctor who is dedicated to making peace with the cancer?

"They will be called sons of God"—by whom? Is it by making peace that a person can save his soul? How does one become a child of God, in fact? Is it by works? There are certainly people in the world who want to promote peace, but who have never been regenerated by the Holy Spirit—are they sons of God? Would making peace be a passport to Heaven? Sovereign Jesus said: "**I** am the Way, the Truth, and the Life; no one goes to the Father except through me!" (John 14:6). Making peace is not the way; Jesus is the way. Therefore, I take it that it would not be God who calls them 'sons of God'. It would be the people who received the benefit of the peacemaking. Being both grateful and relieved, they could easily say, "You are a son of God". They will be blessed by people, and by God Himself, but not with eternal effect.

[1] This eighth 'beatitude' carries the same promise as the first: "theirs is the kingdom of the heavens". If the kingdom is theirs, they are part of it. For someone to accept suffering for a given cause (even more, as the suffering increases), he must be convinced of the correctness and the importance of that cause, and be firmly committed to it. The Text says, "those who have been persecuted", which means that they already remained firm under persecution—they did not waver, did not give up.

Actually, it is precisely because they did not back down that they could enter the Kingdom. Remember Revelation 21:8—"But as for the cowardly and unbelieving . . . and all who are false, their portion is in the Lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death". Sovereign Jesus was very clear in Matthew 10:33—"Whoever should deny me before the people, I will deny him before my Father who is in the heavens". If Jesus denies you, you are dead!

There are various texts that speak of God's faithfulness and of the certainty of our inheritance in Christ. I will just mention two of them. 2 Timothy 1:7—"God did not give us a spirit of cowardice, but of power and of love and of self-control". Any spirit of fear is not from God and should be rejected. 1 Corinthians 10:13—"No testing has overtaken you except what is common to man, and God is competent, who will not allow you to be tested beyond what you can stand, but with the testing will also provide the way out, that you may be able to endure it". So take courage!

[2] These 'beatitudes' are in the third person and so presumably of general application. From verse 11 on Jesus uses the second person and so the specific application is presumably to His disciples. The first and last of these 'beatitudes' say, "theirs is the kingdom of the heavens". In Matthew 18:3 the Lord will say we have to become like little children to enter the Kingdom—that is being 'poor in spirit'. To face persecution, you must be committed.

For disciples

11"Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and speak all kinds of evil against you, lying,[1] because of Me. **12**Rejoice and exult, because your reward in the heavens is great, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.[2] **13**You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt becomes insipid, with what will it be salted? It is then good for nothing except to be thrown out and trampled down by the people.[3] **14**You are the light of the world.[4] A city located upon a hill cannot be hidden. **15**Nor do they light a lamp and place it under the hamper, but on the lampstand, and it shines on everything in the house. **16**So also let your light shine before the people, so that they may see your good works and may glorify your Father, who is in the heavens.[5]

Jesus interprets the Law

17"Do not suppose that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. **18**For assuredly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, <u>not one</u> iota nor one tittle shall pass away from the Law until everything happens.[6] **19**Therefore, whoever annuls one of the least of these commandments and teaches that to the people[7] will be called least in the kingdom of the heavens; but whoever does and teaches *them*, <u>he</u> will be called great in the kingdom of the heavens.[8]

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1 The eclectic Greek text currently in vogue places 'lying' within single brackets, [ ], thereby formally questioning the word's authenticity. The editors did this following a single Greek manuscript, Codex D (one of the worst), plus part of the old Latin. Their initiative makes nonsense out of what the Lord said. How can you be blessed if people tell the truth about bad things you have done?

2 The prophets were only persecuted when they spoke, and the people didn't like it! But we also have an obligation to speak.

3 'Christians' who have caved in to the world's values and life style are like insipid salt—good for nothing except to be thrown out. (Insipid salt was thrown on the road, where it helped to keep down the dust.) The implications of this have become increasingly serious in today's world.

4 Both salt and light are aggressive. A pinch of salt in a pan of rice seasons all of it. Darkness is simply the absence of light. If you turn on the light in a dark room, the darkness is gone. Lamentably, most Christians today are passive, not aggressive. It is the servants of Satan who are aggressive.

5 Nowadays if you stand up for Biblical values you will probably be persecuted, not praised; but the darker the night, the farther a light can be seen.

6 The Lord here makes an impressively strong statement about the preservation through time of the precise form of the Sacred Text. Since our only access to the meaning is through the form, any alteration in the form will alter the meaning. One of the most effective ways of annulling a commandment is to corrupt the Text—something Satan understands quite well. [See 1 Chronicles 16:15, John 12:48 and Revelation 22:18-19.]

7 Obviously the Lord was not contradicting what He had just said. A teacher or preacher can only 'annul' a commandment for his hearers, by telling them that it no longer applies, that they don't have to keep it. That damages the hearers (if they 'buy' it), but does not change the commandment.

8 Presumably God Himself does that 'calling'. The King makes clear that there will be levels, or ranks in Heaven.

20For I say to you that unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees you will absolutely not enter the kingdom of the heavens![1]

About respecting others, especially 'brothers'

21"You have heard that it was said to the ancients, 'You shall not murder, so whoever murders will be liable to the judgment.'[2] 22But I say to you that whoever gets angry with his brother without cause will be liable to the judgment.[3] And whoever says to his brother, 'Numbskull!' will be liable to the council.[4] But whoever says, 'You absolute idiot!' will be liable to hell fire.[5] 23Therefore, if you bring your gift to the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you,[6] 24leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled with your

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[1] Did you get that? If you are like the scribes and Pharisees, what are your chances? In 23:33 Jesus consigns them to Hell! They were hypocrites, so verse 19 here presumably refers to a sincere person who is mistaken. I suppose that 'least' refers to relative importance. We, today, are no longer under the Law, but there are some things that we must believe in order to be saved. To 'annul' any of them is to be lost.

[2] The scribes had diluted the Text—the Law demands the death penalty (Exodus 21:12). Our Bibles generally have an inadequate translation of the sixth commandment. The Hebrew verb means 'to murder', not 'to kill'. 'To kill' is too generic, since God Himself commands to kill, in given situations.

[3] God hates injustice and will judge it. Less than 2% of the Greek manuscripts, of inferior quality, omit "without cause" (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.). NIV, NASB and LB favor us with a footnote informing us that "some manuscripts" add 'without cause'—by "some" they mean 98% of them!! More serious, the shorter text has the effect of forbidding anger, which would contradict other Scriptures (Ephesians 4:26, Psalm 4:4) and the Lord's own example (Mark 3:5).

[4] The Greek text has a transliteration of the Aramaic term, *raka*. The idea seems to be that this was an offensive epithet that could lead to a court case, for defamation of character (or whatever).

[5] This presumably involves an offense against God, denigrating His image, disparaging His work. **However**, note that the Lord is talking about saying this to a <u>brother</u>. He Himself applied this term to the scribes and Pharisees in chapter 23. Verses 22-24 deal with how we treat 'brothers'. Consider James 4:11-12: "Brothers, do not speak evil of one another. Because the one speaking against a brother and judging his brother speaks against a law and judges a law. So if you judge a law you are not a law-doer but a judge. The Lawgiver and Judge is One, the One who is able to save and to destroy. So who are <u>you</u> (sg) to be judging someone who is different?" I was surprised to find the Greek *ετεροϛ* here, which usually refers to a different kind. I personally do not enjoy dealing with 'brothers' who are too different; I would rather question whether they are really 'brothers' at all! But James tells me not to do that. Each person is different (background, experiences, personality, training) and we must recognize that God can and will deal differently with different people. He uses one 'law' with me, another 'law' with you, and so on. A law is a set of rules or demands, so when I judge a brother I am questioning the way ('law') that God is working on him. As He is both Lawgiver and Judge, I will have to answer to Him for how I judged my 'brothers'. (For 'different one' the eclectic text currently in vogue has 'neighbor', following some 12% of the Greek manuscripts [as in NIV, TEV, LB, NASB, etc.].)

[6] Verse 23 is linked to 22; insult or injury is involved—an overt action, an unpleasant scene that will presumably be alive in your memory.

brother and then, returning, offer your gift.[1] 25Be agreeable to your adversary quickly, while you are on the way with him, lest the adversary hand you over to the judge, and the judge hand you over to the officer, and you be thrown into prison. 26Assuredly I say to you, you will by no means get out of there until you have paid the last penny.[2]

About sexual sin

27"You have heard that it was said,[3] 'You shall not commit adultery.' 28But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.[4] 29So if your right eye is causing you to fall, tear it out and throw it away; because it is better for you that one of your members perish than that your whole body be thrown into hell.[5] 30And if your right hand is causing you to fall, cut it off and throw it away; because it is better for you that one of your members perish than that your whole body be thrown into hell. 31It was said, 'Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.' 32But I say to you that whoever divorces his wife, except for a case of fornication,[6] causes her to commit adultery,[7] and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.

About swearing

33"Again you have heard that it was said to the ancients: 'You shall not swear falsely, but you shall perform your oaths to the Lord.'[8] 34But I say to you not to swear at all: neither by heaven, because it is God's throne; 35nor by the earth, because it is a stool for His feet; nor by Jerusalem, because it is the city of the great King.[9] 36Nor shall you swear by

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[1] Verses 23-24 refer to moral debt, through abusive language.

[2] Verses 25-26 refer to financial debt, through property damage, a loan, etc. There is no doubt about the fact of the debt, and the time limit has expired; and you are on the way to court—at that point the only way out is to humble yourself and throw yourself on the mercy of the creditor.

[3] Perhaps 10% of the Greek manuscripts add 'to those of old' (as in AV and NKJV).

[4] If he had the courage and the opportunity, he would do it.

[5] This is literal, but mostly theoretical, since by the time people realize they are in trouble it is usually too late; they are already trapped. Perhaps this is why Hebrews 3:13 tells us to "exhort one another daily… lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin". Sometimes others see that we are in trouble before we do. Please read Ezekiel 18:21-24 with care.

[6] Presumably a reference to pre-marital sex, where a groom discovers that his bride is no longer a virgin (like the situation that Joseph faced in 1:18-19)—see Matthew 19:3-12. 'Fornication' and 'adultery' have distinct semantic areas; the first does not include the second (see Matthew 15:19, Mark 7:21, 1 Corinthians 6:9 and Galatians 5:19).

[7] In that culture such a woman would look for another man as a matter of physical survival.

[8] See Leviticus 19:12.

[9] Who is "the great King"? Has there been a king of any kind in Jerusalem since 70 AD? In Jesus' day the Herods were vassal kings under Rome; the governor had the real authority. So when is there going to be a great king in the literal city of Jerusalem? Jesus was referring to Himself, when He will reign during His Messianic Kingdom, which is certainly going to happen.

your head, because you cannot make one hair white or black.[1] **37**But let your word be 'yes yes', 'no no';[2] for whatever is more than these is from the malignant one.[3] [!!]

About retaliation

38"You have heard that it was said: 'An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.'[4] **39**But I say to you not to resist the evildoer; but whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also.[5]

40"And if someone wants to sue you and take your tunic, let him have the cloak as well.[6] **41**And whoever compels you to go one mile, go with him two.[7] **42**Give to him who asks you, and do not turn away from him who wants to borrow from you.[8]

How to treat enemies

43"You have heard that it was said: 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.'[9] **44**But I say to you: love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who mistreat you and persecute you,[10] **45**that you may prove to be sons of your

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[1] It should be obvious that the Lord was not talking about dyeing one's hair, but actually changing the hair roots.

[2] Presumably this precludes any and all exaggeration, putting a 'spin' on things, etc.

[3] Do we really believe this? If not, we had better go back to the drawing board. Remember what the Lord said in Matthew 12:36-37.

[4] The reference is to Exodus 21:24, but verse 22 makes clear that it is "as the judges determine"—we are not to take the law into our own hands.

[5] Do not use physical violence to respond to physical violence—but we can use our spiritual authority (see Luke 10:19 and Ephesians 3:20-21). Animals must resort to force, but Adam was given dominion over the animals, which presumably was not exercised with physical force—we should not lower ourselves to the animal level; but Satan tries to trick us into doing so, by taking us by surprise. Even when you know how to protect yourself, an attack can be too sudden. We need to keep alert and foresee any possible attack. We can take authority over the other person's thoughts, and forbid an attack (2 Corinthians 10:5).

[6] Do not use legal action to respond to legal action—but we can use our spiritual authority. If they are resorting to legal action, they presumably do not want to talk it over, they are trying to impose something on us; so turning the other cheek could shame them. Why not try to take their thoughts captive to the obedience of Christ (2 Corinthians 10:5)?

[7] A Roman imposition on subjugated peoples—any Roman soldier could compel a local non-Roman citizen to carry his pack one mile. A cheerful response to this humiliating situation could at least deprive the soldier of sadistic satisfaction, and maybe even shame him into carrying his own pack.

[8] Presumably this does not refer to professional beggars (2 Thessalonians 3:10), but to someone overtaken by adversity who needs temporary help, someone you know who is part of the community. There may come a time when we ourselves need help.

[9] Leviticus 19:18 says to "love your neighbor", but not "hate your enemy". The scribes had added an unwarranted inference.

[10] Less than 1% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, offer a truncated form of this verse (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.). It is necessary to distinguish between things done against us personally, and things done against the Kingdom of God. See Deuteronomy 7:9-10 and Psalm 5:5-6. And then there is Romans

Father in the heavens; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and He sends rain on the just and the unjust. **46**For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? **47**And if you greet only your friends,[1] what are you doing extra? Do not even the tax collectors do so?[2] **48**Therefore, you be perfect just as your Father in the heavens is perfect.[3]

Jesus warns against religious ostentation

6 **1**"Be careful not to do your charitable giving[4] before the people so as to be seen by them. Otherwise you have no reward from your Father who is in the heavens.[5] **2**Therefore, whenever you do charitable giving do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they may be praised by the people. Assuredly I say to you, they *already* have their reward. **3**But when you do charitable giving do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing,[6] **4**so that your charitable giving may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will Himself repay you openly.[7] **5**And whenever you pray do not be like the hypocrites; for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners, so that they may be seen by the people. Assuredly I say to you that they *already* have their reward. **6**But you, whenever you pray, go into your room, and having shut the door pray to your Father who is in secret; and your Father who

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12:21, "Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome the evil with the good". The best way to solve the problem of enemies is to convert them!

1 Perhaps 4% of the Greek manuscripts have 'brothers', as in many versions.

2 The reference to "reward" and "extra" suggests that the procedures previously enjoined are demonstrations of practical righteousness—we are to be examples, rise above the level of the surrounding society. Tax collectors were Jews, part of the community, but despised as traitors.

3 "Perfect"—the Father is our point of reference; we are to be like He is. A standard is a standard; it is not invalidated just because we may feel that it is unattainable. Comparing this passage with texts like Deuteronomy 7:10, "He repays those who hate Him to their face", and Psalm 5:5-6, "You hate all workers of iniquity", I take it that we must distinguish between personal enemies (those who oppose us for personal reasons) and enemies of God and His truth. To be like the Father we also must hate workers of iniquity (because of the consequences to others).

4 Instead of "charitable giving", the eclectic text currently in vogue has 'righteousness', based on about 1% of the Greek manuscripts (of objectively inferior quality), to be followed by most modern versions. Unfortunately, this makes Jesus contradict Himself, since He had just said, in 5:16, "Let your light shine before the people, so that they may see your good works".

5 Note that the reward has more to do with the person's motive than the charitable act itself.

6 Since hands do not think (so far as I know), I suppose that not even the recipient should know where the gift came from, although there may be times when the recipient needs to know.

7 This is amazing; the Father **Himself** will repay = a good investment! ("Himself" is omitted by 24% of the Greek manuscripts; "openly" is omitted by 6%.)

sees in secret will repay you openly.[1]

How to pray

7"But when you pray do not babble like the heathen; for they think that they will be heard for their many words. **8**So do not be like them, because your Father knows what you need before you ask Him.[2] **9**Therefore, <u>you</u> pray like this:

'Our Father who is in the heavens, let Your name be reverenced;[3]
10let Your kingdom come, let Your will be done, on the earth just as in heaven.[4] **11**Give us today our daily bread;[5] **12**and forgive us our debts, as we also forgive our debtors. **13**And do not bring us into testing, but rescue us from the evil one;[6] because <u>Yours</u> is the kingdom and the power and the glory into the ages. Amen.'[7]

14For if you forgive people their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. **15**But if you do not forgive people their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.[8]

How to fast

16"Also, whenever you fast do not become gloomy like the hypocrites, because they disfigure their faces so that people will notice that they are fasting. Assuredly I say to you that they *already* have their reward. **17**But when <u>you</u> fast anoint your head and wash your face, **18**so that you do not appear to the people to be fasting, but to your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will repay you.[9]

The right attitude toward material supply

19"Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on the earth, where moth and rust ruin and where thieves break in and steal; **20**but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust ruins and where thieves neither break in nor steal;[10] **21**because where your treasure is there your heart will be also.[11]

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[1] About 2% of the Greek manuscripts, of inferior quality, omit "openly".

[2] We do need to ask, but we should do it simply, and without undue repetition (God is not deaf). Further, we should ask with confidence.

[3] Your Bible probably has 'hallowed', but how many people today know what that means? One of its meanings is 'to sanctify', but how can you sanctify something that is 100% holy? God's name is to be reverenced.

[4] Be careful! If you pray this you are committing yourself to that Kingdom, and to accepting that will.

[5] See Luke 12:16-21 for a negative example.

[6] The Father can rescue us from the evil one because He is far greater.

[7] About 1% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, omit the last clause (as in NIV, [NASB], LB, TEV, etc.).

[8] Forgiveness is a <u>very</u> serious matter!

[9] Some 10% of the Greek manuscripts add 'openly' (as in AV and NKJV).

[10] Please read James 5:1-3 with care. The usable capital that God places in our hand should be invested so as to produce, not just stored away doing nothing.

[11] That is the crucial question: where is your heart? It should be obvious that the best place to have your savings account is in the Bank of Heaven. So how does one make deposits up there? You do it by investing in the Kingdom down here.

About world-view

22"The lamp of the body is the eye. So if your eye is sound, your whole body will be full of light.[1] 23But if your eye is evil, your whole body will be full of darkness.[2] So if the light that is in you is darkness, how great is that darkness!

"You cannot serve God and money"

24"No one is able to serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.[3] 25Therefore, I say to you not to worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? 26Look at the birds of the air, that they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth more than they are? 27And which of you can add one cubit to his stature by worrying? 28And why do you worry about clothes? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither labor nor spin, 29and yet I say to you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was arrayed like one of these. 30Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which exists today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will He not much more clothe you, you little-faiths? 31Therefore do not worry saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' 32For the pagans seek all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need each of these things. 33Rather, seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.[4] 34Therefore do not worry about tomorrow,[5] for tomorrow will worry

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[1] Of course we have two eyes, but the Text has "eye" in the singular. I take it that the reference is to the way we interpret what we see (which is our real 'eye')—two people, one pure and one vile, observing the same scene will give very different interpretations to it. Unfortunately, some versions render "eyes" (plural), thereby condemning the reader to never understand what the Lord was teaching here.

[2] "Evil" here has the idea of malignant—aggressively evil. Someone with a malignant mind will give an evil interpretation to <u>everything</u> he sees, and in consequence his being will be filled with unrelenting darkness. Compare Titus 1:15; to someone who is defiled **nothing** is pure.

[3] The Text has "mamon" (5% of the Greek manuscripts have 'mammon', as in the AV), which presumably includes more than just money; anyone who has materialistic values is serving mamon. But I fear that comparatively few speakers of English today know the word, so I put 'money' [but see Luke 16:13]. The Lord is emphatic: we <u>cannot</u> serve God and money! But really now, how many of us actually believe that?

[4] "These things" refers to food, drink and clothes—the basics. Jesus does not promise luxury. Just how seeking first the Kingdom works out in practice will differ from person to person. It should be obvious that we are not being told to sit around doing nothing. See 2 Thessalonians 3:19 and 1 Timothy 6:6-10.

[5] God only gives us grace for today's challenges. If He gave us tomorrow's grace today, there would be none for tomorrow. Some planning is necessary, but we are not to worry.

about its own affairs. Each day has enough trouble of its own.[1]

The right attitude toward others

7 [1]"Do not judge, so that you be not judged.[2] [2]Because with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you.[3] [3]So why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye but do not consider the plank in your own eye? [4]Or how will you say to your brother, 'Let me remove the speck from your eye,' when hey, there is a plank in yours? [5]Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye.[4]

Analyze your audience

[6]"[A]Do not give what is holy to the dogs, [B]nor cast your pearls before the pigs; [B]lest they trample them with their feet, and [A]turning around they tear you to pieces.[5]

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[1] The implication would appear to be that each day will present us with some challenges.

[2] The verb 'to judge' here has confused many people, because they do not know how to interpret it. We may begin with what it does not mean. It does not mean 'to evaluate' things, because 1 Corinthians 2:15 affirms that the spiritual person has the obligation to evaluate everything. It does not refer to the attitude that those responsible for the wellbeing of a congregation must sometimes assume, disciplining, or even excluding, someone who is damaging the community. 1 Corinthians 5:1-5 offers a specific example. In Matthew 18:15-17, sovereign Jesus Himself taught that there can be times when someone should be excommunicated. It should also be obvious that it does not refer to the office of a judge, whose function is precisely to judge.

Verses 3-5 that follow make clear that it involves two people. Since none of us knows all the relevant factors in any given case (only God knows everything), we are not competent to pass judgment on the other person, 'to judge' in that sense. Only God is competent to do that kind of judging. It is necessary to note that the two people involved are "brothers". To conduct war against Satan, his subordinates and their works is a totally different subject.

[3] The use of the future tense probably points toward God. If we call for judgment, not mercy, on others, by so much we are calling for judgment, not mercy, on ourselves.

[4] Can you have a 'plank' in your eye without knowing it? (The tiniest bit of grit is an unbearable irritant.) Actually, to have a plank in your eye is the same as being blind. When a person does not want to admit or correct his own failures, it is standard defensive procedure to call attention to the failures of others. Jesus Himself calls such a person a 'hypocrite'.

[5] This verse may be a chiasmus, AB,BA. But just who are 'the dogs' and 'the pigs'? A pig will sniff the pearl and perhaps think it a stone—it not being edible the pig will ignore it and it will get trampled into the mud. So a 'pig' is someone who is incapable of recognizing or appreciating the 'pearl'—the reaction will be one of total indifference. So do not waste your time. In contrast a 'dog' reacts in an aggressively hostile manner against what is 'holy'. So a 'dog' is presumably someone who is committed to evil and will therefore attack what is holy. In general our media today are controlled by 'dogs'. So do not innocently offer what is holy to a 'dog'—you will get chewed up! We need to try to convert the 'dogs', but you need to understand what you are about. Anyone who has sold out to Satan will almost certainly have a resident demon, and we have the authority to bind such.

Be persistent, yet considerate

7"Keep asking, and it will be given to you; keep seeking, and you will find; keep knocking, and it will be opened to you. 8For each one asking, receives;[1] and the one seeking, finds; and to the one knocking it will be opened. 9Or which man is among you who, if his son asks for bread will give him a stone? 10Or if he asks for a fish will give him a snake? 11If you then, being evil, know to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in the heavens give good things to those who ask Him![2] 12So then, whatever you want people to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.[3]

Eternal destiny

13"Go in through the narrow gate; because wide is the gate and broad is the way which leads away into perdition, and those who are going in through it are many. 14How narrow is the gate and confined[4] the way which leads away into life, and those who are finding it are few![5]

A tree is known by its fruit

15"Beware of false prophets who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves.[6] 16You will know them by their fruits. Do people gather grapes from thorn bushes, or figs from thistles? 17Just so, every good tree produces good fruits, but the rotten tree produces evil fruits.[7] 18A good tree cannot produce evil fruits, nor can a rotten tree produce good fruits. 19So every tree not producing good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.[8] 20Therefore, you will know them by their fruits.[9]

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1 But do not forget Psalm 106:15! You need to be careful what you ask for.

2 I take it that we are authorized to ask!

3 This is the so-called 'golden rule'—if everyone did this the world would be a better place.

4 The verb here is a perfect passive participle; God has made the way narrow, or confined on purpose.

5 Observe that the Lord Jesus Christ affirms that "few" find the way of life. He Himself makes clear that to travel the way of life requires commitment to the Owner of that 'way'. Perhaps 1% of the Greek manuscripts have the weaker "Because narrow…", as in KJV and NKJV.

6 Probably demonized; demonic prophecies are always destructive.

7 The Lord uses 'rotten' and 'evil' (or 'malignant') because He is really talking about people, not trees.

8 The Lord is very clear about the eternal destiny of people who do not produce good fruit. Remember Ephesians 2:8-10—we are not saved by good works, but we are indeed saved for good works; if we do not produce, we are not saved.

9 Remember 2 Corinthians 11:14-15: "Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light. So it is no great thing if his servants also masquerade as ministers of righteousness." Since Satan's servants like to present themselves as 'good Christians', in a religious context, how can we identify them? It is "by their fruits". It is necessary to evaluate with care the results that they produce.

We have to <u>do</u> the Father's will

21"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord', will go into the kingdom of the heavens, but he who does the will of my Father who is in the heavens.[1] 22Many will say to me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and cast out demons in Your name, and perform many mighty works in Your name?' 23And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me you practitioners of lawlessness!'[2]

All face adversity—foundation determines outcome

24"Therefore whoever hears these words of mine and does them, I will compare him to a prudent man who built his house on the bedrock; 25and the rain fell, and the rivers rose, and the winds blew and attacked that house; and it did not fall, because it was founded on the bedrock. 26But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be compared to a foolish man who built his house on the sand; 27and the rain fell, and the rivers rose, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall!"[3]

Editorial comment

28And so it was, when Jesus had ended these words, that the crowds were astonished at His teaching, 29for He was teaching them as one having authority, and not like the scribes.[4]

The Messiah demonstrates His power

Jesus heals a leper

8 1So when He came down from the mountain large crowds followed Him. 2And then, a leper came and worshipped[5] Him saying, "Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean." 3So reaching out His hand Jesus touched[6] him, saying, "I am willing; be cleansed!"[7] And immediately his leprosy was cleansed. 4And Jesus says to him: "See that you tell no one; but go, show yourself to the priest and offer the gift that Moses commanded, as a **proof** to them."[8]

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1 If we do not **<u>do</u>** the will of the Father, we will not enter the Kingdom.

2 Evidently they did indeed cast out demons and perform mighty works—so if it was not by God's power, by whose power was it? Could it be that Satan works with those who think they are serving the Lord but are really 'lawless', to confirm them in their error? When we do not do things God's way we are being 'lawless'. Forget not 2 Samuel 6:3-7!

3 Here again, we have to <u>do</u> the words. Note that both houses had to face the same circumstances, but the verbs are different. Everyone faces adversity in this life—your foundation determines the outcome. Why do the adverse circumstances 'attack' one house, but only 'beat on' the other? The verb 'attack' implies an intelligence ordering the circumstances. Satan uses a variety of things and ways to attack God's servants.

4 The scribes would not dare to say, "**<u>I</u>** tell you"; they would quote a variety of scholars and leave the question up in the air.

5 The verb here means to be prostrate.

6 To <u>touch</u> a leper was unheard of, because of the contamination; this was a powerful demonstration of authority.

7 Beautiful!

8 A proof that the Messiah had arrived—who else could cure leprosy? See Leviticus 14:2-32.

Jesus heals at a distance[1]

5As He entered Capernaum a centurion came to Him, pleading with Him **6**and saying, "Lord, my servant is lying at home paralyzed, being terribly tormented." **7**And Jesus says to him, "I will go and heal him." **8**But in answer the centurion said: "Lord, I am not worthy that you should come under my roof; but only speak a word and my servant will be healed. **9**For I also am a man under authority, having soldiers under me. And I say to this one, 'Go,' and he goes; and to another, 'Come,' and he comes; and to my slave, 'Do this,' and he does." **10**Upon hearing *him* Jesus marveled, and said to those who were following: "Assuredly I say to you, not even in Israel have I found such great faith! **11**And I say to you that many will come from east and west and sit down with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of the heavens;[2] **12**but the sons of the kingdom will be thrown out into the darkness farthest away. <u>There</u>, there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."[3] **13**Then Jesus said to the centurion, "Go; and let it be done for you just as you believed." And his servant was healed in that very hour.[4]

Peter's mother-in-law[5]

14Now when Jesus had come into Peter's house, He saw his mother-in-law laid up and burning with fever. **15**So He touched her hand and the fever left her; and she got up and began to serve Him.[6] **16**And when evening came they brought to Him many who were demonized. And He cast out the spirits with a word, and healed all who were sick,[7] **17**so that what was spoken through Isaiah the prophet should be fulfilled, namely: "He Himself took our infirmities and bore our diseases."[8]

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1 It has often been assumed that this account is parallel to that in Luke 7:1-10, but I believe they were different occasions. For a detailed discussion, please see: 'Did the centurion leave his house?', in my website: www.prunch.org

2 Notice that Jesus affirmed that those three men are in Heaven.

3 "Sons of the kingdom"—those who knew the truth and rejected it will have the severest judgment, "farthest away". (Dante's view of hell is perhaps not entirely mistaken.) In the NT 'darkness' is frequently used to refer to Satan's kingdom; here their final destination is evidently included. God does not have grandchildren, just sons and daughters. To be brought up in a Christian context is a privilege and an advantage, but if the person does not believe into Jesus, he will be judged for not doing so.

4 Jesus healed a serious case at a distance.

5 It has often been assumed that Matthew's account here is parallel to those in Mark 1:29-31 and Luke 4:38-39, but close attention to the contexts has convinced me that Matthew's account took place some time after that in Mark and Luke. In that event, Jesus healed the woman twice, which means that just because God heals you one time, it does not mean that you will never get sick again. For a detailed explanation, please see "Peter's mother-in-law".

6 Jesus healed the consequences as well—normally a high fever leaves you weak.

7 Jesus did not touch the demonized, nor did He argue with them; He expelled the demons with a word.

8 See Isaiah 53:4. If the main fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy took place on the cross, this would be an application.

18Seeing large crowds around Him Jesus gave an order to depart for
the opposite shore. 19Then a certain scribe approaching said to Him,
"Teacher, I will follow you wherever you may go." 20So Jesus says to him,
"The foxes have dens and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of
the Man does not have where He may lay His head."[1] 21Then a different
one of the disciples said to Him, "Lord, permit me first to go and bury
my father." 22But Jesus said to him, "Follow me, and leave the dead to
bury their own dead."[2]

Jesus controls wind and wave

23Now when He got into the boat, His disciples followed Him. 24And
then—a great tempest[3] arose on the sea, so that the boat was covered by
the waves. But He was sleeping. 25So the disciples came and awakened
Him saying, "Lord, save us! We are perishing!" 26And He says to them,
"Why are you cowardly, you little-faiths?" Then rising He rebuked the
winds and the sea, and there was a great calm.[4] 27So the men marveled,
saying, "What sort of being is this, that even the winds and the sea obey
Him?"[5]

Jesus controls any number of demons

28Upon His coming to the other side, to the region of the Gerge-
senes,[6] two demonized men[7] met Him, coming out from the tombs, **very**
dangerous, so that no one could pass that way. 29And then—they cried
out saying: "What do you have to do with us, Jesus, Son of God? Have

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[1] That is what the Text says, "the Son of the Man", which appears to be a phrase coined by the Lord Jesus to refer to Himself; the phrase doesn't make very good sense in English, at first glance, but if "the man" refers to pristine Adam and "the son" to an only pristine descendent, it makes great sense. It seems to indicate a perfect human prototype, like Adam was before the fall—the human side of the God-man.

[2] When it comes to discipleship, Jesus is very demanding—ordinary physical comfort and normal human relationships must be held in abeyance. Since a physically dead person can't do anything, it is the spiritually dead who are to do the burying. To wait for a father to die before doing God's will could mean never doing it.

[3] The word rendered 'tempest' usually means 'earthquake'; one could render, "there was a big earthquake in the sea"—which would produce sudden, unexpected waves. Maybe that is what happened (that lake is right on a major fault line).

[4] The implication is that they should have solved the problem. Again, Jesus undoes the consequences, as well as the cause.

[5] Well, what were the options? Jesus obviously had supernatural power.

[6] Some 98% of the Greek manuscripts read 'Gergesenes', rather than 'Gadarenes'. Gadara was the Roman capital of the province of Perara, located some six miles from the Sea of Galilee. For the swineherds to run six miles to the city to report the incident and then walk back with the people would take quite a while. It seems more likely that there was a village named 'Gergesa' nearby, whose people came and asked Jesus to leave. For a more detailed discussion, please see: The 'Legion' and the pigs; where was it?, in my website: www.prunch.org.

[7] As a tax collector, numerical precision was important to Matthew. Where other Gospels may select an individual as sufficient for the narrative, Matthew specifies that there were actually two (also blind men and donkeys, although the blind men is probably a separate case).

you come here to torment us before the time?"[1] 30Now a good way off from them there was a herd of many pigs feeding. 31So the demons kept imploring Him saying, "Since you are going to cast us out, permit us to go into the herd of pigs." 32So He said to them, "Go!" And coming out they went off into the herd of pigs. And then—the whole herd of pigs rushed down the steep bank into the sea and died in the water![2] 33So the swineherds ran away, and going into the town they told everything, including about the demonized men. 34And then, the whole town went out to meet with Jesus; and upon seeing Him they begged Him to depart from their borders.[3]

Jesus forgives sins

9 1So getting into the boat He crossed over and came into His own city. 2And then, they came to Him carrying a paralytic lying on a pallet.[4] And seeing their faith Jesus said to the paralytic, "Courage, son; your sins are forgiven you!" 3But then, some of the scribes said within themselves, "This man blasphemes!" 4So Jesus, knowing their thoughts,[5] said: "Why do you think evil in your hearts? 5So which is easier, to say 'Your sins are forgiven', or to say 'Get up and walk'?[6] 6But so that you may know that the Son of the Man has authority on the earth to forgive sins"—then He says to the paralytic, "On your feet, pick up your pallet and go to your house!" 7So he got up and went off to his house. 8And seeing it the crowds marveled and glorified God, the one giving such authority to the people.[7]

Matthew called

9And going on from there Jesus saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax office, and He says to him, "Follow me." So getting up he followed Him. 10Now it happened, as He was reclining *at the table* in the

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[1] The demons knew who Jesus really was, and also about their own destiny. The parallel accounts in Mark 5 and Luke 8 give added detail—their name was 'Legion', and there were about 2,000 pigs. In Luke 8:31 they kept imploring Him not to send them to <u>the</u> Abyss—they were really worried; they knew something we do not.

[2] I really doubt that the demons did it—why would they want to destroy their new 'house'? Perhaps the pigs preferred death to demons (animals often show more common sense than people do). It is also possible that Jesus commanded the action.

[3] Apparently Jesus never went back there; they did not want Him and that was that (I doubt that the inhabitants were Jews). The dead pigs represented a big economic loss; the pigs were more important to them than the two men—what Jesus represented threatened their way of life.

[4] The parallel accounts in Mark 2:3-12 and Luke 5:18-26 furnish many more details.

[5] Jesus could read people's minds.

[6] Obviously it is easier to <u>say</u> "your sins are forgiven" because no one can see if it happened or not; but "get up and walk"—if he doesn't, you look silly!

[7] This way of putting it intrigues me. The people were getting the benefit from just one person who was using God's authority. How many people do you know who use God's authority on a regular basis? What would happen if a few appeared on the scene?

house,[1] that many tax collectors and sinners had also come and were reclining *at the table* with Jesus and His disciples! 11Upon seeing this the Pharisees said to His disciples, "Why does your teacher eat and drink[2] with the tax collectors and sinners?" 12But Jesus heard it, so He said to them: "Those who are strong do not need a physician, but those who are sick. 13But go and learn what this means, 'I desire mercy and not sacrifice.'[3] For I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."[4]

Fasting

14Then the disciples of John come to Him saying, "Why is it that we and the Pharisees fast *about* many things, but your disciples do not fast?" 15So Jesus said to them: "Can the friends of the bridegroom mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? But the days will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them,[5] and then they will fast.

Old wineskins

16"And no one puts a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment; for the patch pulls away from the garment and the tear becomes worse. 17Nor do they put new wine into old wineskins; otherwise the wineskins burst and the wine spills out, and the wineskins will be ruined.[6] But they put new wine into new wineskins, and both are preserved."[7]

Jesus raises the dead

18While He was saying these things to them, there he was; a certain ruler came and worshipped Him, saying, "My daughter has just died, but come and lay your hand on her and she will live." 19So Jesus got up and followed him, with His disciples. 20And then—a woman who had been hemorrhaging for twelve years came from behind and touched the hem of His garment. 21For she kept saying to herself, "If only I may touch His garment I will be healed."[8] 22But Jesus, turning around and seeing

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1 Matthew's; see Luke 5:27-29. Matthew prepared a special meal and invited all his colleagues. He would have to turn his responsibilities as tax collector over to them.

2 I follow the best line of transmission that has 'and drink', although 70% of the Greek manuscripts omit the words.

3 See Hosea 6:6.

4 Perhaps 4% of the Greek manuscripts omit "to repentance" (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

5 He was referring to Himself.

6 They will be ruined for future use; since a wineskin would be of more value than the wine it could contain, it was a loss to be avoided.

7 What are the implications here for established ecclesiastical structures? How many churches have been split by 'new wine'? But, so, how should we go about trying to renew a dead church? Or should we just pull out and 'leave the dead to bury their dead'?

8 It is clear from Mark 5:27-30 that the woman was healed before Jesus turned around. (Matthew's account is quite limited; compare Mark 5:25-34 and Luke 8:43-48; and for a detailed analysis please see 'A desperate woman', in my website: www.prunch.org.) At other times contact with the shadow or a handkerchief brought healing. There is a principle at work here that we no longer understand, but satanists use all the time.

her, said, "Take courage, daughter; your faith has made you well." And the woman was healed from that *very* hour.

23When Jesus came into the ruler's house and saw the flutists and the crowd making a commotion, **24**He says to them, "Go away, for the girl is not dead, but sleeping." So they began to ridicule Him.[1] **25**But when the crowd had been put outside, He went in and grasped her hand, and the girl got up. **26**And the report of this went out into all that land.

Jesus restores sight and speech

27As Jesus went on from there two blind men followed Him, crying out and saying, "Have mercy on us, Son of David!" **28**And arriving in the house, the blind men approached Him; so He says to them, "Do you believe that I am able to do this?" They say to Him, "Yes, Lord." **29**Then He touched their eyes saying, "According to your faith let it be to you." **30**And their eyes were opened. And Jesus sternly warned them saying, "See to it that no one knows!" **31**But going out they spread the news about Him in all that country.

32As they were going out, well, they brought to Him a mute man, demonized. **33**And when the demon was cast out, the mute spoke. And the crowds marveled saying, "Never was it seen like this in Israel!"[2] **34**But the Pharisees said, "He casts out demons by the ruler of the demons."[3]

The harvest needs workers

35Then Jesus went around to all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and preaching the Gospel of the kingdom, and healing every disease and every illness among the people. **36**Seeing the crowds He was moved with compassion for them, because they were harassed and prostrated, like sheep without a shepherd.[4] **37**Then He says to His disciples: "The harvest truly is plentiful, but the workers are few. **38**Therefore pray to the Lord of the harvest that He may send out workers into His harvest."[5]

Jesus commissions and orients the twelve disciples—28 AD

10 **1**So summoning His twelve disciples He gave them authority over unclean spirits so as to cast them out, and to heal every disease and every illness. **2**Now the names of the twelve apostles are these: first

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[1] They knew that the girl was dead. Please see Mark 5:35-43 and Luke8:49-56 for more detail.

[2] I take it that the events recorded in verses 10-33 happened one right after the other, probably within two or three hours—the Lord had very little time to Himself; someone was clamoring for attention constantly. To be alone with the Father He had to slip away at night.

[3] At this point the Pharisees committed the unpardonable sin; see Mark 3:29-30.

[4] Who or what did the harassing? Sheep without a shepherd have no protection. As animals go, a sheep is basically without protection (as was the dodo bird).

[5] Not everyone is supposed to go, and not everyone can give, but we can all pray—or can we? To pray that prayer honestly, we have to be prepared to be one of the workers He will send!

Simon (the one called Peter) and Andrew his brother, James (the son of Zebedee) and John his brother, 3Philip and Bartholomew, Thomas and Matthew (the tax collector),[1] James (the son of Alphaeus) and Lebbaeus (who was surnamed[2] Thaddeus), 4Simon (the Canaanite) and Judas Iscariot (who also betrayed Him).

Orientation with immediate effect

5These twelve Jesus sent out,[3] and commanded them saying: "Do not go off into the road of the Gentiles, and do not enter a city of the Samaritans. 6But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.[4] 7And as you go, preach, saying, 'The kingdom of the heavens has come near.' 8Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons.[5] You have received free of charge, give free of charge.[6] 9Do not provide gold nor silver nor copper in your money belts, 10nor a knapsack for the road, nor two tunics, nor sandals, nor staffs;[7] because the worker is worthy of his food.

11"In whatever city or village you may enter, inquire who in it is worthy, and stay there until you go out. 12Upon entering the house, greet it; 13and should the house be worthy, let your peace come upon it; but should it not be worthy, let your peace return to you. 14And whoever will not receive you nor hear your words, as you go out from that house or city shake off the dust from your feet.[8] 15Assuredly I say to you, it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the Day of judgment than for that city!

Orientation with prophetic effect

16"Now then, I am sending you out like sheep in the midst of wolves.

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[1] Matthew insists on recording the fact that he was a tax collector—perhaps to underscore God's grace in choosing someone from a despised occupation.

[2] Less than half of one percent of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, omit "Lebbaeus who was surnamed" (to be followed by NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

[3] The Lord gives the example; He sends out the twelve (9:38).

[4] See Matthew 15:24; the emphasis of the Lord's earthly ministry was upon "the house of Israel".

[5] Some 94% of the Greek manuscripts do <u>not</u> have "raise the dead". KJV, NKJV, NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc. (most versions in English) follow the 6%, because it is found in both the TR and the eclectic text.

[6] What would happen if the Church started following this instruction?

[7] They were to travel 'light'—a spare staff would just be extra weight (they went everywhere on foot); with no knapsack a spare tunic and pair of sandals would just get in the way. However, this was a temporary instruction for a specific occasion (it probably only lasted for a number of weeks). Later, in the upper room, He revoked this instruction (Luke 22:35-36). Perhaps 5% of the Greek manuscripts have 'neither a staff' (singular), that sets up a contradiction with Mark 6:8, to be duly followed by NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.

[8] This is an instruction, an order. Paul did it at least once—Acts 13:51 (as have I). Jesus Himself declares this judgment upon Capernaum (Matthew 11:23-24), thereby setting the example.

Therefore be prudent like snakes and innocent like doves.[1] 17But beware
of the people, for they will hand you over to councils and flog you in their
synagogues. 18And you will be brought before governors and even kings
for my sake, as a testimony to them and to the nations. 19But whenever
they hand you over, do not worry about how or what you will speak, for
it will be given to you in that hour what you should speak;[2] 20for it is not
you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father who speaks through you.[3]

Like master, like slave

21"Furthermore, brother will hand over brother to death, and a
father a child, and children will rise up against parents and put them to
death. 22And you will be hated by all for my name's sake;[4] but the one
enduring to the end, he will be delivered.[5] 23But whenever they perse-
cute you in this city, flee to another.[6] For assuredly I say to you, you will
certainly not go through all the cities of Israel before the Son of the Man
comes.[7]

24A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a slave above his owner.
25It is enough for a disciple that he become like his teacher, and a slave
like his owner.[8] Since they have stigmatized[9] the master of the house as
Beelzebul,[10] how much more those of his household! 26So do not fear
them; because there is nothing concealed that will not be revealed, and
secret that will not be known.

"Do not be afraid"

27"What I tell you in the dark, say in the light; and what you hear
in the ear, proclaim on the housetops.[11] 28And do not be afraid of those

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[1] A literal sheep has no protection against a literal wolf, but we have protection—see Luke 10:19. 'Prudent' means prudent, but what does 'innocent' mean? I suppose that it means without malice.

[2] As one of my seminary professors once said, this instruction is for martyrs, not preachers. But would it not be nice if more preachers got their messages from the Holy Spirit?

[3] God still speaks in and to the world today, using our mouths.

[4] This is already happening in North America and elsewhere. Anyone who stands up for Biblical values—speaks out against homosexualism, for instance—is ridiculed, and more physical forms of persecution have already started. In Canada you go to jail.

[5] The verb here can also be translated 'saved'.

[6] This sounds like the life of a refugee.

[7] Beginning with verse 18, but especially in verses 21-23, Jesus is probably referring to the end times, more than to their immediate future. If "all the cities of Israel" is to be taken literally, that part would only apply to people in Israel.

[8] This should be our goal: be like Jesus, do like Jesus.

[9] I here follow the best line of transmission, with 30% of the Greek manuscripts. 'To stigmatize' is the appropriate verb here, rather than 'to call'.

[10] All Greek manuscripts have 'Beelzebul', rather than the familiar 'Beelzebub', that is a carry-over from the Latin.

[11] This one bothers me; to do this is like painting a target on your back. But He goes on to say that it is better to fear God more than man, and that nothing can happen to you apart from the Father's will. But how many of us really trust God that much? How many of us can say with Job, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him" (Job 13:15)?

who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear the One who is able to destroy both soul and body in Hell.[1] **29**Are not two sparrows sold for a copper coin? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father's *will.* **30**Why even the hairs of your head are all numbered![2] **31**Therefore do not be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.

Jesus demands total commitment

32"Now then, everyone who will confess me before the people, I will also confess him before my Father who is in the heavens. **33**But whoever should deny me before the people, I will also deny him before my Father who is in the heavens.[3]

34"Do not suppose that I came to bring peace on the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. **35**For I came to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law;[4] **36**and a man's enemies will be those of his *own* household.

37"The one who is more devoted to father or mother than to me is not worthy of me, and the one who is more devoted to son or daughter than to me is not worthy of me; **38**and he who does not take up his cross and follow after me is not worthy of me.[5] **39**The one 'finding' his life will lose it, and the one 'losing' his life for my sake will find it.[6]

40"The one receiving you receives me, and the one receiving me receives the One who sent me. **41**The one receiving a prophet in the name of a prophet will receive a prophet's reward,[7] and the one receiving a righteous man in the name of a righteous man will receive a righteous man's reward. **42**And whoever should give so much as a cup of cold *water* to one of these little ones, in the name of a disciple, assuredly I say to you, he will certainly not lose his reward."[8]

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[1] The Greek Text has 'Gehenna', a euphemism for the Lake of Fire. The Lord used this euphemism repeatedly.

[2] What Sovereign Jesus is saying here is that whatever happens to me had to pass through the filter of the Father's will (also His love—Romans 8:39). This should be a great comfort, especially when I am hurting.

[3] If Jesus denies us in front of the Father, what are our chances? Maybe this is why the Text says that a coward does not enter the Kingdom (Revelation 21:8).

[4] This happens especially when the Gospel is introduced for the first time to an ethnic group. The first believers are often persecuted.

[5] Notice that it is Jesus who sets the parameters, not we. Rather than people 'accepting' Jesus, the question is whether He will accept us.

[6] I take it that the reference is to the potential that your life represents, potential in the interests of God's Kingdom. To the extent that your life revolves around God's will and Kingdom you will both find and save it—of course from the world's perspective you will be throwing it away. See 1 Corinthians 3:13-15.

[7] I assume that the point here is identification: you are identifying with the prophet whose name you invoke; and if that prophet is in prison, you are taking a risk.

[8] Presumably the rewards mentioned here are received in this life, since the good deeds mentioned could be performed by an unbeliever. I suggest that God blesses anyone who

The Pharisees reject Jesus as Messiah

11 [1]And so it was, when Jesus finished directing His twelve disciples, that He moved on from there to teach and preach in their towns.[1]

John needs reassuring

[2]But John, hearing in prison *about* the works of the Messiah, sent two of his disciples [3]to say to Him, "Are you the Coming One, or do we look for another?"[2] [4]By way of answer Jesus said to them: "Go and report to John the things that you hear and see: [5]blind regain sight and lame walk, lepers are cleansed and deaf hear, dead are raised and the poor are evangelized. [6]And, blessed be whoever is not offended at Me!"[3]

Jesus commends John the Baptizer

[7]So as they departed Jesus began to say to the crowds concerning John: "What did you go out into the wilderness to see, a reed shaken by the wind? [8]But what did you go out to see, a man clothed in soft garments? Actually, those who wear soft material are in kings' houses. [9]But *really*, what did you go out to see, a prophet? Yes, I tell you, and far more than a prophet. [10]For this is he of whom it is written: 'Behold, I send my messenger before your face, who will prepare your way ahead of you.'[4] [11]Assuredly I say to you, among those born of women there has not arisen a greater than John the Baptizer; but he who is least in the kingdom of the heavens is greater than he.[5] [12]But from the days of John the Baptizer until now the kingdom of the heavens is being aggressive and aggressive people are seizing upon it.[6] [13]For all the prophets and the

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takes sides with what is right, good, decent, honorable, just—but if that person does not belong to Christ the blessing is limited to this life.

[1] "Their towns" probably refers to the towns to which the disciples had been sent, deliberately, and to which Jesus Himself would go.

[2] John was in prison, which was contrary to his expectations; like all the others he expected Jesus to set up the Kingdom right then. In answer the Lord says, in effect, that the Kingdom is not based on our expectations.

[3] Verse 6 was directed specifically at John. When Jesus went to John to be baptized, John knew perfectly well that he was looking at the Messiah, but now, because of his circumstances, he is in doubt. In effect, Jesus is saying, "Whatever you do, do not rebel!" And He is still saying so to us: when your circumstances are painful and unexplained, do not rebel!

[4] See Malachi 3:1. There have been many prophets, but only one Herald of Christ's first coming.

[5] Evidently, as forerunner of the Kingdom John was not part of it—the Kingdom was rejected at that time; both forerunner and King were killed—those who participate in the actual future Kingdom will be more privileged. "Born of women" excludes Adam. Men like Noah, Abraham, Moses, Daniel would be of equal standing, just not "greater". But those who live during the Messianic Kingdom (Millennium) will be more privileged than all except Adam, because the earth will return to conditions similar to Eden.

[6] Note that Jesus is referring to a period of about two years. With the King physically present and giving a living demonstration of the Kingdom, the Kingdom was being more aggressive in this world than it had been since the time of Moses. In the present tense of a Greek verb a single form serves for both the middle and passive voices—the verb *βιαζεται* has usually been translated as passive in our versions, 'suffers violence',

Law prophesied until John, 14and if you are willing to receive it, he is Elijah who is to come.[1] 15He who has ears to hear, let him hear!

16"But to what shall I compare this generation? It is like children sitting in a marketplace and calling to their friends 17and saying, 'We played the flute for you and you did not dance; we mourned for you and you did not lament.' 18For John came neither eating nor drinking and they say, 'He has a demon'; 19the Son of the Man came eating and drinking and they say, 'Just look, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!' Indeed, wisdom is vindicated by her children."[2]

Jesus denounces three cities

20Then Jesus began to reproach the cities in which most of His mighty works had been done, because they did not repent. 21"Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! Because if the mighty works that were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. 22So I say to you, it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the Day of judgment than for you! 23And you, Capernaum, 'the one having been exalted to heaven', you will be brought down to Hades![3] Because if the mighty works that were done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day.[4] 24So I say to you that it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the Day of judgment than for you."[5]

"I praise You, Father"

25At that time Jesus reacted and said: "'I praise You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and intelligent and have revealed them to 'babes'. 26Yes, Father, because thus it was good to You.'[6]

27"All things have been delivered to me by my Father, and no one really knows the Son except the Father; nor does anyone really know the Father except the Son, and the one to whom the Son may will to reveal *Him*.[7] 28Come to me all you who are laboring and are loaded down,

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but I think it makes much better sense to translate it as middle, as I have done. Given the hostility of the religious leaders, it would take someone with plenty of backbone to openly side with Jesus.

1 Jesus declares that the real Elijah is still going to come. John fulfilled the role for Messiah's first advent that Elijah will fill for the second. Please see 'John is not Elijah'.

2 Instead of "her children", just 0.5% of the Greek manuscripts, of inferior quality (objectively so), have "her works" (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

3 'Hades' is not Hell. Please see the article with that title. In Luke 16 the Lord explained that Hades has two sides, separated by a terrible abyss. Capernaum will presumably find itself on the bad side.

4 I suppose that "until this day" was an idiomatic expression meaning that it would not have been destroyed.

5 Evidently, at least in part, there are degrees of judgment, based on the amount of 'light' received. To be worse off than Sodom—help! (See Matthew 10:14-15.)

6 I take it that this was said out loud, so those around could hear.

7 This means that it is possible to really know the Father.

and I will give you rest. 29Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, because I am meek and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls; 30for my yoke is easy and my burden is light."[1]

Jesus is Lord of the Sabbath

12 1At that time Jesus went through the grain fields on the Sabbath.[2] But His disciples became hungry and began to pluck heads of grain and to eat. 2And upon seeing it the Pharisees[3] said to Him, "Hey, your disciples are doing what is not lawful to do on a Sabbath!" 3But He said to them: "Have you not read what David did when he became hungry, he and those who were with him, 4how he entered the house of God and ate the loaves of presentation, which was not lawful for him to eat, nor for those with him, but only for the priests? 5Or have you not read in the Law that on the Sabbaths the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath and are guiltless? 6Yet I say to you that a greater than the temple is here. 7If you had but known what this means, 'I desire mercy and not sacrifice,'[4] you would not have condemned the innocent. 8Furthermore, the Son of the Man is Lord of the Sabbath!"[5]

Jesus heals on the Sabbath

9Now moving on from there He went into their synagogue. 10And there was a man with a withered hand![6] And they asked Him saying, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?"—so that they might accuse Him. 11So He said to them: "What man will there be among you who has one sheep, and should this *one* fall into a ditch on the Sabbath, will he not lay hold of it and lift it out? 12Of how much more value, then, is a man than a sheep! Therefore it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath." 13Then He says to the man, "Stretch out your hand!" And he stretched it out, and it was restored whole like the other. 14But going out the Pharisees plotted against Him, how they might destroy Him.[7]

A tactical withdrawal

15So being aware, Jesus withdrew from there. And large crowds followed Him, and He healed them all.[8] 16Yet He warned them not to

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1 To be without a yoke is not an option in this world. It is either Jesus' yoke or Satan's—if you refuse Jesus' yoke you remain under Satan's yoke, which is always heavy. Being born with an inclination to sin, we are soon under Satan's yoke—Jesus offers us a way out.

2 The Text actually has 'the Sabbaths'; the parallel passage in Luke 6:1 has 'a second-first Sabbath'. This was evidently a special day, but we have lost the relevant cultural information.

3 Most probably the Pharisees had 'observers' tagging along everywhere Jesus went.

4 The quote is from Hosea 6:6. See the footnote at Matthew 5:7.

5 Who but the Messiah, or God Himself, could be Lord of the Sabbath? Jesus was hitting the Pharisees where they lived (they used the Sabbath as an instrument of domination). He had also just said that He was greater than the temple.

6 That was a trap; the Pharisees introduced that man on purpose.

7 They could not answer Him, but did not want to submit to Him either; He threatened all that they held dear.

8 He did not go looking for sick people to cure, but He healed all who came to Him.

make Him known, 17so that what was spoken through Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled, namely: 18"Behold my Servant whom I chose, my Beloved in whom my soul is well pleased! I will put my Spirit upon Him,[1] and He will declare justice to the nations. 19He will not quarrel nor cry out, nor will anyone hear His voice in the streets. 20A bruised reed He will not break, and a smoldering wick He will not quench, until He sends justice forth to victory.[2] 21And in His name Gentiles will trust."

The Pharisees blaspheme the Holy Spirit

22Then a demonized man was brought to Him, blind and mute, and He healed him, so that the [A]blind and [B]mute [B]spoke and [A]saw.[3] 23And all the crowds were amazed and said, "Might this not be the Christ,[4] the Son of David?" 24But upon hearing it the Pharisees said, "This *fellow* does not cast out demons except by Beelzebul, ruler of the demons." 25But knowing their thoughts Jesus said to them: "Every kingdom divided against itself becomes desolate, and every city or house divided against itself will not stand. 26So if Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then will his kingdom stand? 27And if I cast out demons by Beelzebul, by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore they will be your judges.[5] 28But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, then surely the kingdom of God has come upon you. 29Or how can anyone go into the house of the strong *man* and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man? Then he can plunder the house.[6]

The unforgivable sin

30"He who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me scatters.[7] 31Therefore I say to you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven people, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven people. 32And whoever speaks a word against the Son of the

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[1] Here we have one of the few allusions to the Trinity in the OT.

[2] The quote in verses 18-21 (see Isaiah 42:1-4) is tied to verse 16. Since after His resurrection the Lord commanded them to go to the whole world and preach the Gospel to every person, I take it that the "until He sends justice forth to victory" was fulfilled at His death and resurrection. So the description in verses 19-20 is limited to His earthly ministry and is not an example for us to follow now—see Matthew 10:27, etc. Verse 21 here goes with the great Commission.

[3] A chiasmus—AB,BA

[4] I follow the best line of transmission [20%] in reading 'the Christ', although it is alone against the rest.

[5] Jesus seems to be affirming that their sons did indeed cast out demons; the implication is that they were doing so by Satan's power. Further, if they did not protest when their sons did it, why did they protest when He did it?

[6] The use of the definite article with "strong man" (its first occurrence) means that the entity has already been introduced in the previous context—the reference is to Satan. Here is biblical basis for binding him.

[7] There is no 'neutrality'; you are either for or against. There are only two teams, two sides, two spiritual kingdoms in this world. Either God or Satan, light or darkness, truth or falsehood. Whose side are you on? Really. Notice that what we do also serves one side or the other.

Man, it will be forgiven him;[1] but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven him, neither in the present age nor in the next.[2]

Jesus denounces the Pharisees

33"Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or make the tree rotten and its fruit rotten; for the tree is known by the fruit.[3] **34**Brood of vipers![4] How can you, being malignant, speak good things?[5] For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. **35**The good man out of the good reservoir brings forth good things, and the malignant man out of the malignant reservoir brings forth malignant things. **36**Furthermore, I say to you that for every useless word whatever that people may speak, they will give account of it in the Day of judgment. **37**For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned."[6]

The sign of the prophet Jonah

38Then some of the scribes and Pharisees reacted saying, "Teacher, we want to see a sign from you."[7] **39**But in answer He said to them: "A malignant and adulterous generation seeks a sign, and no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. **40**For just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the stomach of the sea monster, so will the Son of the Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.[8] **41**Ninevite men will arise with this generation at the judgment and will condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and really, a greater than that of Jonah is here.[9] **42**The queen of the South[10] will be raised with this generation at the judgment and she will

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[1] Statements like this need to be interpreted against the background of all other Scriptures that bear on the subject. Forgiveness depends on confession (1 John 1:9). "It will be forgiven" should be understood as 'it can be forgiven'. Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit cannot be forgiven.

[2] Mark 3:30 makes clear that "the blasphemy against the Spirit" is to ascribe His working to Satan.

[3] Jesus expressed Himself in this way because He was referring to people, using the figure of trees.

[4] At no time did the Lord make any effort to conciliate the Pharisees. They are 'serpents' because their father is a serpent (Revelation 12:10).

[5] Jesus appears to be saying that a malignant person is incapable of speaking good. See Matthew 6:22-23 and Titus 1:15.

[6] "Every useless word whatever"—do we really believe that? This may be why certain orders of monks took an oath of silence (but how can you be 'justified' by your words if you never say anything?).

[7] Jesus had already performed hundreds of signs, and doubtless they had seen some of them. Their request was not honest.

[8] "In the heart of the earth"—here we seem to have instruction from the Lord on the location of Hades—it is inside the earth, somehow. Compare 1 Samuel 28:13 where Samuel (literally), returning from Hades/Sheol, comes up from inside the earth.

[9] The comparison is to Jonah's preaching; Jesus' preaching was far more powerful. Similarly, His wisdom was greater than Solomon's.

[10] See 1 Kings 10:1.

condemn it, because she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and really, a greater than that of Solomon is here.[1]

An empty 'house' is bad

43"Now when an unclean spirit [demon] goes out from a man, it goes
through arid places looking for rest, but finds none. 44Then it says, 'I will
return to my house from where I came.' And coming it finds it unoccu-
pied, swept and put in order. 45Then it goes and takes along with itself
seven different spirits, more malignant than itself, and going in it dwells
there; and the last *state* of that man becomes worse than the first. Just
so it will be for this malignant generation also."[2]

New relationships

46But then, while He was still speaking to the crowds, His mother
and brothers stood outside, seeking to speak with Him. 47So someone
said to Him, "Look, your mother and your brothers are standing outside,
seeking to speak with you." 48But in answer He said to the one who told
Him, "Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?" 49And stretching
out His hand toward His disciples He said: "Here are my mother and my
brothers! 50For whoever does the will of my Father in the heavens, he is
my brother and sister and mother."[3]

Parables of the Kingdom

13 1On the same day Jesus went out of the house and sat by the sea.
2And large crowds were gathered together to Him, so He got into a
boat to sit down; and the whole crowd stood on the shore.

Parable of the soils

3Then He started to speak many things to them in parables saying:
"Listen, the sower went out to sow. 4And as he sowed, some *seeds* fell
alongside the road, and the birds came and devoured them. 5Others fell
on stony places, where they did not have much earth; so they sprouted
quickly because they had no depth of earth. 6But when the sun came up,
they were scorched, and because they had no root they withered away.
7And others fell among the thorns, and the thorns grew up and
smothered them. 8But others fell on the good ground and yielded a crop:
some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. 9He who has ears to hear,
let him hear!"

The reason for parables

10And the disciples approached and said to Him, "Why do you speak

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[1] Jonah, and the sea monster, are just as historical as Solomon, the queen of Sheba, Nineveh—we have it on the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ.

[2] Jesus does not say why the demon left, but obviously a vacuum is dangerous. Jesus seems to be implying that the Pharisees are already demonized, but will become worse! Actually, in verse 34 He said they were malignant, poisonous snakes; to be malignant is to be aggressively evil, the term is regularly used of Satan. In fact, later on Jesus says they are sons of Satan.

[3] Notice again that the key is doing the Father's will. Notice also that He specified 'sister'.

to them in parables?"[1] 11So in answer He said to them: "To you it has been given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of the heavens, but to them it has not been given. 12For whoever has, to him more will be given and he will have abundance;[2] but whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him.[3] 13Therefore I speak to them in parables, that seeing they not see and hearing they not hear nor understand.[4] 14Indeed, in them the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled, which says: 'By hearing you (ye) will hear and not understand, and seeing you will see and not perceive. 15Because the [A]hearts of this people have grown dull, and their [B]ears hard of hearing, and their [C]eyes they have closed; lest they should see with their [C]eyes and hear with their [B]ears and understand with their [A]hearts, and turn around; and I would heal them.'[5] 16But blessed are your eyes because they see, and your ears because they hear; 17for assuredly I say to you that many prophets and righteous ones desired to see what you see and did not see it, and to hear what you hear and did not hear it.

Parable of the soils explained

18"Therefore hear the parable of the sower: 19When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand, the malignant one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart[6]—this is the seed sown alongside the road.[7] 20But the seed sown on stony places—this is he who hears the word and directly receives it with joy, 21but he has no root in himself and is short-lived; for when trial or persecution comes because of the word, directly he is offended.[8] 22But the seed sown among the thorns—this is he who hears the word, but the care of this age and the deceitfulness of riches choke out the word, and it becomes fruitless.[9] 23Now the seed sown on the good ground—this is he who hears the word

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1 From Mark 4:10 it appears that this occurred later, probably after verse 33. Mark has two parables that Matthew does not—Mark 4:21-29.

2 But he will have to give an accounting for it all.

3 Spiritual growth is like going up an incline on a bicycle without brakes; if you stop pedaling you go backwards. We must keep learning and growing; if we stop, we start losing.

4 This is in response to their choice, as verses 14-15 make clear. But Jesus only started using parables after the Pharisees blasphemed the Holy Spirit—they formally rejected Jesus as Messiah. Notice that the declared purpose of the parables is that the people not understand. It follows that doctrine should never be based on a parable, unless Jesus interprets it—the interpretation may be used, but not the parable itself.

5 See Isaiah 6:6-10. A triple chiasmus—ABC,CBA. The Text is clear to the effect that if they turn around, He will heal.

6 See 2 Corinthians 4:4.

7 In sowing, the seed is scattered on top of the soil, not planted, and is therefore vulnerable—maybe that is why the great commission is to disciple. Observe that Jesus is teaching that the devil can invade a person's mind.

8 This is typical of the 'prosperity gospel'.

9 Both the seed on stony places and among thorns sprouted—there was life.

and understands, who indeed bears fruit and produces: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty."[1]

Wheat and tares

24He put another parable to them, saying: "The kingdom of the heavens is like a man who sowed good seed in his field; **25**but while the people were sleeping his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat and went away. **26**But when the stalk sprouted and produced fruit, then the tares also appeared.[2] **27**So the servants of the owner came and said to him, 'Sir, was it not good seed that you sowed in your field? How then does it have tares?' **28**He said to them, 'An enemy did it.' The servants said to him, 'So do you want us to go and gather them up?' **29**But he said: 'No, lest gathering up the tares you also uproot the wheat with them. **30**Let both grow together until the harvest, and at the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers, "First gather up the tares and bind them into bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn."'"

Mustard seed

31He put another parable to them, saying: "The kingdom of the heavens is like a mustard seed which a man took and sowed in his field; **32**which indeed is smaller than all the seeds,[3] but when it is grown it is greater than all the vegetables and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and rest[4] in its branches."

Yeast

33He spoke another parable to them: "The kingdom of the heavens is like yeast, which a woman took and hid in three measures[5] of meal until it was all leavened."

34All these things Jesus spoke to the crowds in parables, and without a parable He did not speak to them, **35**so that what was spoken through the prophet should be fulfilled, namely: "I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter things kept secret from the foundation of the world."[6]

"Wheat and tares" explained

36Then Jesus dismissed the crowds and went into the house. And

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[1] Not all saved persons serve the Lord at the same level of intensity; some are more committed, others less.

[2] It is only when the 'fruit' appears that you can tell the difference. "By their fruits you shall know them."

[3] That is, seeds normally planted in gardens.

[4] The verb I have rendered 'to rest' is a compound form. The noun root refers to a temporary shelter, like a tent or a hut. The verbal form means to make use of such a shelter. Here the preposition *kata* is prefixed to the verb, emphasizing, as I suppose, the temporariness. In Mark 4:32 the Text says that the birds can use the shade, not the branches. But shade moves with the sun, and with the wind—how can you build a nest in something that keeps moving around (the Text actually says 'under its shade')? See 'The least of the seeds?', in my website: www.prunch.org.

[5] That was probably about a bushel.

[6] The quote is from Psalm 72:2—Matthew calls Asaph a prophet.

His disciples approached Him saying, "Explain to us the parable of the tares of the field." **37**So He answered and said to them: "He who sows the good seed is the Son of the Man. **38**The field is the world; as for the good seed, these are the sons of the kingdom, while the tares are the sons of the malignant one. **39**The enemy who sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are angels. **40**Therefore just as the tares are gathered and burned with fire, so it will be at the end of this age.[1] **41**The Son of the Man will send out His angels,[2] and they will collect out of His kingdom everything that causes to stumble, and those who perpetrate lawlessness;[3] **42**and they will throw them into the furnace of fire.[4] There, there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. **43**Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!

Treasure and pearl

44"Again, the kingdom of the heavens is like a treasure hidden in a field,[5] which a man found and re-hid, and in his joy he goes and sells everything he has and buys that field.

45"Again, the kingdom of the heavens is like a man, a merchant, seeking beautiful pearls, **46**who upon finding one very valuable pearl went and sold everything he had and bought it.[6]

A seine

47"Again, the kingdom of the heavens is like a seine that was cast into the sea and gathered of every kind, **48**which, when it was full, they pulled upon the shore; and sitting down they collected the good into vessels, but threw out the bad. **49**So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come forth and will separate the malignant out from among the righteous, **50**and they will throw them into the furnace of fire. There, there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

51Jesus says to them, "Did you understand all these things?" They say to Him, "Yes, Lord."[7] **52**So He said to them, "Therefore every scribe who has been discipled into the kingdom of the heavens is like a man, a householder, who brings out of his reservoir things new and old."[8]

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1 We are still in "this age", since the end has not happened yet.

2 The angels are going to be busy.

3 I take it that the "kingdom" here is physical (not merely 'spiritual') and includes the whole planet, because it contains "offensive" things and "lawless" people.

4 This is one of the descriptions of Hell.

5 Although 70% of the Greek manuscripts have 'the' field, the best line of transmission has 'a' field, which is correct.

6 Both of these parables are to the same point, and in Philippians 3:7-9 Paul illustrates that point.

7 Perhaps 2% of the Greek manuscripts, of inferior quality, omit 'Lord', to be followed by NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.

8 A 'scribe' was instructed in the Law and the prevailing interpretations of it (the 'old'), but if he had also been discipled into the Kingdom, his thinking would be re-oriented about many things (the 'new').

A visit to Natsareth[1]

53Now it happened, when Jesus had finished these parables, that
He departed from there. 54And coming into His hometown He began to
teach them in their synagogue, so that they were astonished and said:
"Where did this man get this wisdom, and the mighty works? 55Is this
not the carpenter's son? Is not his mother called Mary, and his brothers
James and Joses and Simon and Jude?[2] 56And his sisters, are they not
all with us? Where then did this man get all these things?" 57So they
were offended at him. But Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without
honor except in his hometown and in his own house." 58And He did not
do many mighty works there because of their unbelief.

The death of John the Baptizer

14 1At that time Herod the tetrarch heard the report about Jesus 2and
said to his servants, "This is John the Baptizer; he has been raised
from the dead, and therefore the powers are at work in him." 3For Herod
had laid hold of John and bound him, and put him in prison because of
Herodias, his brother Philip's wife. 4For John would say to him, "It is not
lawful for you to have her."[3] 5And although he wanted to kill him, he
feared the crowd,[4] because they counted him as a prophet. 6But while
Herod's birthday was being celebrated, the daughter of Herodias danced
before them and she pleased Herod. 7So he promised with an oath to give
her whatever she might ask.[5] 8So she, having been prompted by her
mother,[6] she says, "Give me here on a platter the head of John the Bap-
tizer!" 9And the king was sorry; nevertheless, because of the oaths and
those who were reclining *at the table* with him, he commanded it to be
given. 10So he sent and had John beheaded in prison. 11And his head was
brought on a platter and given to the girl, and she brought it to her
mother.[7] 12Then his disciples came forward and took the body and buried
it,[8] and they went and told Jesus.

Food for 15,000

13Upon hearing it, Jesus departed from there by boat to a deserted

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1 This is the second visit; Luke 4:28-30 relates what happened during the first visit.

2 Here we have the names of Jesus' four half-brothers, and the plural 'sisters' means there were at least two of them (the use of 'all' probably indicates more than two). Joseph and Mary had a normal family.

3 The impression one gets is that John took Herod to task several times—a coward he was not.

4 Comparing Matthew and Mark, there appears to be some discrepancy between the two accounts. For a detailed analysis, please see 'Herod and John', in my website: www.prunch.org.

5 He had doubtless already 'celebrated' more than was good for him and was no longer thinking clearly.

6 Herodias knew how to nurse a grudge.

7 What would seeing that head do to your appetite?

8 The body was buried without the head—one wonders what became of it.

place privately.[1] But when the crowds heard it, they followed Him on foot from the towns. **14**So when Jesus disembarked, He saw a large crowd, and He had compassion on them and healed their sick.[2]

15Now with evening coming on His disciples approached Him saying: "The place is uninhabited and the hour is already late. Dismiss the crowds, that they may go into the villages and buy themselves food." **16**But Jesus said to them: "They do not need to go away. <u>You</u> give them to eat."[3] **17**But they say to Him, "We have nothing here except five loaves and two fish." **18**So He said, "Bring them here to me." **19**Then He commanded the crowds to recline on the grass. And taking the five loaves and two fish and looking up to heaven, He blessed; and breaking the loaves He gave to the disciples, and the disciples to the crowds. **20**So they all ate and were filled; and they took up the fragments that remained, twelve baskets full. **21**Now those who ate were about five thousand men, besides women and children.[4]

Peter walks on water

22Immediately Jesus made His disciples get into the boat and go ahead of Him to the other side, while He dismissed the crowds. **23**And having dismissed the crowds He went up on the mountain by Himself to pray. So when night came, He was alone there.[5] **24**But the boat was already in the middle of the sea,[6] being harassed by the waves, for the wind was contrary. **25**So in the fourth watch of the night[7] Jesus went to

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1 From Mark we learn that Jesus and the disciples were under heavy pressure from the crowds—no time even to eat. So when He hears of John's death, and under such ignominious circumstances, Jesus wants to get away so He can grieve and assimilate the news.

2 In Mark it is even clearer that the people ran along the shore and got to the destination first, before the boat (please see the note at Mark 6:34). Naturally the faster runners were there first, but others kept arriving so that in the end there were thousands of people. In the town there was not space for everybody to get to Jesus, but out in the open—so when the news got around people came from all over.

3 Really now, with what? Although Jesus had to take the initiative, the disciples did participate in the miracle. For more detail, please see 'You feed them!'.

4 Since any large crowd is likely to have more women and children than men, there were probably at least 15,000 people there. "They were filled"—how much food does it take to 'fill' 15,000 hungry people? Notice the care not to waste anything—the fragments were collected.

5 Finally, Jesus manages to be alone, to think and pray.

6 Perhaps 2% of the Greek manuscripts, of inferior quality, read "many furlongs away from the land" (as in NIV, NASB, LB,TEV, etc.).

7 The fourth watch, using Roman time, was from 3 to 6 a.m.—the disciples had had a rough night! They had been on the water at least nine hours and probably rowing most of that time (they were in a fishing boat, not a little row boat). But they were still four miles from shore. Presumably Jesus did not walk all that distance but simply 'flew' to near the boat. John 6:21 informs us that He transported the boat 'immediately' to Bethsaida (four miles away). Presumably He could have done all of that hours earlier and spared them that toil. Jesus deliberately sent them into a difficult and trying

them, walking on the sea. 26And when the disciples saw Him walking on the sea, they became agitated saying, "It's a ghost!" And they cried out for fear. 27But immediately Jesus spoke to them saying: "Courage! It is I; don't be afraid!" 28So reacting Peter said, "Lord, since it's you, command me to come to you on the water." 29So He said to him, "Come!" And stepping down from the boat Peter walked on the water to go to Jesus. 30But seeing the strong wind he became afraid, and beginning to sink[1] he cried out saying, "Lord, save me!" 31And immediately Jesus reached out His hand and caught him and says to him: "You little-faith! Why did you doubt?" 32And when they got into the boat the wind ceased.[2] 33Then those who were in the boat came and worshipped Him saying, "Truly you are the Son of God!"[3]

At Genesaret

34When they had crossed over they came to the land of Genesaret.[4] 35And when the men of that place recognized Him, they sent *messengers* into all that surrounding region and they brought to Him all who were sick. 36And they would beg Him that if only they might at least touch the hem of His garment; and as many as touched were completely healed.

Jesus antagonizes the Pharisees—29 AD

15 1Then the scribes and Pharisees from Jerusalem approached Jesus saying: 2"Why do your disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands whenever they eat bread." 3So in answer He said to them: "Why do you even transgress the commandment of God through your tradition? 4For God commanded saying,[5] 'Honor your father and your mother,' and 'He who curses father or mother, let him be put to death.' 5But you say: 'Whoever says to his father or mother, "Whatever you might be profited by me is a gift *to God*"—6then he must not honor his father or mother.'[6] Thus you have nullified the commandment of God through your tradition. 7Hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy about you saying: 8"These people draw near to

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situation. We need to understand that He may do the same with us. For a detailed discussion please see 'Bethsaida, or Tiberias?' in my website: www.prunch.org.

1 Peter knew how to swim (John 21:7), but he was walking on top of the water (a totally new experience) and then he was wading; and the storm was scary.

2 Why did the wind cease? Was it a supernatural wind? If so, who caused it?

3 They took a lot of convincing, but are we not the same way?

4 The best line of transmission, along with some 30% of the Greek manuscripts (also the Targum), spells the name of the place with one 'n'; 70% of the Greek manuscripts spell it with two (as does the LXX).

5 Instead of "commanded saying", perhaps 1.5% of the Greek manuscripts, of inferior quality, have 'said' (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

6 Perhaps 0.5% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, omit "or mother" (as in NIV, LB, TEV, etc.). NASB informs us that "many" manuscripts omit "or his mother"—by 'many' they mean four, against some 1700! That is a dishonest use of language.

Me with their mouth and honor Me with their lips,[1] but their heart is far away from Me. 9But in vain do they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.'"[2]

That which defiles

10Then summoning the crowd He said to them: "Hear and understand. 11Not what goes into the mouth defiles the man, but what comes out of the mouth—this defiles the man." 12Then His disciples came and said to Him, "Do you know that upon hearing this saying the Pharisees were offended?" 13But in answer He said: "Every plant that my heavenly Father did not plant will be uprooted. 14Leave them alone.[3] They are blind guides of the blind; and if the blind guides the blind, both will fall into a ditch."

15Then Peter answered and said to Him, "Explain this parable to us." 16So Jesus said: "Are you also still without understanding? 17Do you not yet understand that whatever enters the mouth goes into the stomach and is expelled into the sewer? 18But the things coming out of the mouth *actually* come from the heart; those are the things that defile the man. 19Because out of the heart proceed malignant thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications,[4] thefts, false witness, blasphemies. 20These are the things that defile the man, but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile the man."

A crumb for a little dog

21Going out from there Jesus withdrew into the region of Tyre and Sidon. 22And then, a Canaanite woman coming from those parts cried out to Him saying: "Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David! My daughter is severely demonized." 23But He answered her not a word.[5] So His disciples came and urged Him saying, "Send her away, because she is crying out after us." 24But in answer He said, "I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel."[6] 25So she came and worshipped

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[1] Perhaps 2% of the Greek manuscripts omit "draw near to me with their mouth and" (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

[2] See Isaiah 29:13. Are there no such 'doctrines' in our churches? Sovereign Jesus declares that such worship is **in vain**—if it does you no good, you are wasting your time (and it may be doing you harm).

[3] Jesus made no effort to conciliate or to convert the Pharisees. For all that, some did convert. (Remember the 'dogs' in Matthew 7:6.)

[4] This is one of a number of places where 'adultery' and 'fornication' both occur in a list of sins—it is clear that they are distinct in meaning, and so 'fornication' does not include 'adultery'; and so to render 'fornication' as 'sexual sin/immorality' is misleading.

[5] "Son of David"—as a Canaanite she appealed to the Jewish Messiah, upon whom she had no claim. But how did she know that? I suspect there is more to this story than meets the eye. For further discussion, please see 'A 'crumb' for a 'puppy" on my website: prunch.org.

[6] Although His ultimate mission included the whole world (see the Great Commission in Matthew 28:19-20), His earthly ministry was directed to the "house of Israel".

Him saying, "Lord, help me!"[1] **26**But in answer He said, "It is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the little dogs." **27**So she said, "Yes, Lord, yet even the little dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table."[2] **28**Then Jesus answered and said to her: "O woman, great is your faith! Let it be to you as you desire." And her daughter was healed from that *very* hour.

Food for 4,000 men

29Moving on from there, Jesus went alongside the Sea of Galilee,[3] and going up on the mountain He sat down there. **30**And large crowds approached Him, having with them lame, blind, mute, maimed and many others, and they placed them at Jesus' feet, and He healed them. **31**So the crowds marveled—seeing mutes speaking, maimed made whole, lame walking, and blind seeing—and they kept glorifying the God of Israel.

32Then Jesus summoned His disciples and said: "I have compassion on the crowd, because they have already remained with me three days,[4] and have nothing to eat; and I do not want to send them away hungry, lest they faint on the way." **33**So His disciples say to Him, "Where could we get, in an uninhabited place, enough bread so as to satisfy such a great crowd?" **34**Jesus says to them, "How many loaves do you have?" And they said, "Seven, and a few small fish." **35**So He commanded the crowds to recline on the ground. **36**And taking the seven loaves and the fish, He gave thanks, broke and gave to His disciples, and the disciples to the crowd. **37**So they all ate and were filled; and they took up seven hampers full of the fragments that remained.[5] **38**Now those who ate were four thousand men, besides women and children.[6] **39**And having dismissed the crowds He got into the boat[7] and went to the region of Magdala.[8]

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[1] Here she drops the appeal to the Messiah—evidently the Lord spoke loudly enough for her to hear.

[2] We may feel that Jesus was harsh with her, but in this way He put into bold relief her faith and humility—and she got her crumb!

[3] This was on the Eastern side of the Sea, so the public was different from that on the other side.

[4] Three days is a long time! Where did they sleep, what did they eat, etc.? Obviously a great deal more happened than is recorded here.

[5] Where did the "hampers" come from? Probably from fishing boats that stopped by.

[6] Again, the crowd was much larger than just the 4,000 men; probably at least 10,000 people.

[7] The Text has <u>the</u> boat. Presumably Jesus had sent someone to get Peter's boat. Since He was in that place for several days, there was plenty of time.

[8] Magdala was Mary Magdalene's hometown; perhaps this was when Jesus delivered her from the demons (Mark 16:9). Less than 0.5% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, read "Magadan" instead of Magdala (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.). The parallel passage in Mark 8:10 has 'the region of Dalmanutha'—I assume that Magdala was in that region.

The sign of the prophet Jonah

16 [1]The Pharisees and Sadducees came, and testing Him they asked Him to show them a sign from heaven.[1] [2]But in answer He said to them: "When it is evening you say, 'Fair weather, for the sky is red'; [3]and in the morning, 'Today will be stormy, for the sky is red and overcast.' Hypocrites![2] You know how to discern the face of the sky, but cannot *discern* the signs of the times. [4]A malignant and adulterous generation seeks a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah."[3] And leaving them behind He went away.[4]

"Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees"

[5]Upon arriving at the other side His disciples had forgotten to take bread. [6]Then Jesus said to them, "Watch and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees."[5] [7]So they reasoned among themselves saying, "It's because we didn't bring any bread." [8]But Jesus, being aware, said to them: "You little-faiths! Why are you reasoning among yourselves because you didn't bring any bread? [9]Do you not yet perceive nor remember the five loaves of the five thousand and how many baskets you took up? [10]Nor the seven loaves of the four thousand and how many hampers you took up?[6] [11]How come you don't perceive that it wasn't about bread that I told you to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees?" [12]Then they understood that He did not say to beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

Jesus openly declares His death and ministers on that basis

[13]When Jesus came into the region of Caesarea Philippi He questioned His disciples saying, "Who do people say that I, the Son of the Man, am?"[7] [14]So they said, "Some say John the Baptizer, others Elijah, and still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." [15]He says to them, "But you, who do you say that I am?" [16]So in answer Simon Peter said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God!" [17]And in answer Jesus said to him: "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but my Father who is in the heavens. [18]And I further say to you that you are a stone,[8] but on this bedrock I will build

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[1] Pharisees and Sadducees were theological enemies, but they join forces against Jesus.

[2] 3% of the Greek manuscripts omit "Hypocrites" (as in some modern versions).

[3] Remember Matthew 12:39-40.

[4] He left by boat—He did not want to waste time with them. Jesus calls them "malignant"—they are aggressively evil.

[5] See Luke 12:1.

[6] What is the connection? If He could feed thousands, He could feed them! He was not going to let them starve.

[7] Instead of "I, the Son of the Man, am", perhaps 0.5% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, have 'the Son of the Man is' (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.). The change is significant.

[8] There is a play on words here, *petros* VS *petra*—the bedrock was obviously not Peter. The bedrock presumably has to do with the fact that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of the Living God. To translate 'Peter' instead of "a stone" is an aberration.

my church, and the gates of Hades will not withstand her.[1] **19**And I will give you (sg) the keys of the kingdom of the heavens, and whatever you bind on earth will have been bound in the heavens, and whatever you loose on earth will have been loosed in the heavens."[2]

20Then He ordered His disciples not to tell anyone that He was the Messiah.[3] **21**From then on Jesus began to show to His disciples that He had to go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised on the third day. **22**So taking Him aside Peter began to rebuke Him saying: "Mercy to you, Lord! This shall not happen to you!" **23**But turning He said to Peter: "Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me, because you are not mindful of God's values, but of men's values."[4]

How to save your life

24Then Jesus said to His disciples: "If anyone desires to come after me, let him really deny himself, and take up his cross,[5] and follow me. **25**For whoever desires to save his life will waste it, but whoever 'wastes' his life on my account will find it.[6] **26**For what is a man profited if he gains the whole world but forfeits his life? Or what can a man give to get his life back again?[7] **27**For the Son of the Man will certainly come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will recompense each

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1 'Gates' do not attack, but are the last line of defense—it is the Church that is attacking Hades. Hades is not hell. Hell is the Lake of fire, the second death; Hades is the halfway 'house' where departed spirits await the judgment. For more discussion, please see 'Hades is not Hell', in my website: www.prunch.org.

2 Please see the note at Matthew 18:18. The 'keys' are distinct from the binding and loosing.

3 As is clear from Luke 9:20-22, verses 21-23 here form part of the same conversation. At this point Jesus changes the game plan—He declares that He is going to die and orders the disciples to stop presenting Him as the Messiah. Some 65% of the Greek manuscripts have 'Jesus, the Messiah' (as in AV and NKJV); I follow the best line of transmission.

4 Satan put those words in Peter's mouth, but he agreed with them. Note that within 3-5 minutes Peter spoke twice, under inspiration; the first time inspired by God (verses 16-17) and the second by Satan (verses 22-23). It is God the Son who tells us what really happened. Since Sovereign Jesus said it was Satan, it was Satan, and if he could do it to Peter, he can do it to us. The almost total ignorance on the subject of biblical spiritual warfare that prevails in North America is having serious consequences.

5 It sounds like being without a cross is not an option, for those who follow Jesus.

6 What is in view here is the potential your life represents.

7 Many versions have 'give in exchange for his soul', but how does that work? If I say to you, "I will give you my horse in exchange for your car", I have a horse and you have a car. If I say to you, "I will give you ??? in exchange for my soul", you have my soul. In that event, I have already lost my soul, and I want to know if there is any way I can get it back. But in the context it is the life that is in play, not the soul. Does not verse 27 make that clear? It is talking about the final judgment, or accounting, and it will be about what we did during our lifetime. So it is the life that is lived that is in view, not the soul. Someone who spent his life serving Mammon, threw his life away, forever. Please see 'Fire loves straw'.

according to his performance.[1] **28**Assuredly I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the Son of the Man coming in His kingdom."[2]

Jesus meets with Moses and Elijah

17 **1**Now after six days Jesus takes Peter, James and his brother John and leads them up on a high mountain, in private. **2**And He was transfigured before them and his face shone like the sun, while His clothes became as white as the light. **3**And wow, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, conversing with Him.[3] **4**Then Peter reacted and said to Jesus: "Lord, it is good for us to be here; if you wish, let us[4] make three booths: one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah."[5] **5**While he was still speaking, wow, a brilliant cloud overshadowed them, and then, a **Voice**[6] came out of the cloud saying: "This is my beloved Son in whom I am *always* well pleased. Hear Him!"[7] **6**As the disciples heard it they fell on their faces and were greatly afraid. **7**Then Jesus came and touched them and said, "Get up, don't be afraid." **8**So lifting up their eyes they saw no one but Jesus only.

Elijah and 'Elijah'

9As they were coming down from the mountain, Jesus commanded them saying, "Tell no one the vision until the Son of the Man is risen from the dead." **10**So His disciples questioned Him saying, "Why then do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?"[8] **11**In answer Jesus said to them: "Elijah is indeed coming first,[9] and he will restore all things. **12**But I say to you that 'Elijah' has come already, and they did not recognize him, but did to him whatever they wished. Thus also the Son of the Man is about to suffer at their hands." **13**Then the disciples understood that

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1 We will be judged on the basis of what we did with our potential.

2 Presumably this was fulfilled at the transfiguration—a manifestation, in miniature, of the Kingdom (Jesus the King, Moses and Elijah representing glorified saints [who will participate in the administration] and the three disciples representing the normal inhabitants of the earth at that time).

3 Luke 9:33 indicates that Peter spoke up as Moses and Elijah were leaving. Evidently Peter wanted to prolong the experience, or there would be no need for booths.

4 Instead of "let us", perhaps 0.5% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, have "I will" (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

5 So how did Peter know who they were? Photography had not yet been invented. Luke 9:37 makes clear that they spent the night on the mountain. Evidently what has been recorded here (and in Mark and Luke) gives but a thumbnail sketch of all that took place.

6 Peter never forgot that **Voice** (2 Peter 1:17)! He even coined the phrase, Magnificent Glory, to describe the source. Evidently what happened on that mountain was totally overwhelming.

7 In effect, the Father was telling Peter to shut up!

8 See Malachi 4:5-6.

9 Perhaps 3% of the Greek manuscripts omit "first" (as in most modern versions).

He spoke to them of John the Baptizer.[1]

A tough kind of demon

14As they came to the crowd a man approached Him and kneeling to Him said: **15**"Lord, have mercy on my son, because he is moonstruck and suffers badly! For he often falls into the fire and often into the water. **16**So I brought him to your disciples, but they could not cure him." **17**Then in answer Jesus said: "O faithless and perverse generation,[2] how long must I be with you? How long must I put up with you?[3] Bring him here to me." **18**And Jesus rebuked the demon and it came out of him, and the boy was healed from that *very* hour.

19Then the disciples came to Jesus privately and said, "Why were we not able to cast it out?" **20**So Jesus said to them: "Because of your unbelief; for assuredly I say to you, if you have faith like a mustard seed *has*, you (ye) will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you.[4] **21**However, this class does not go out except by prayer and fasting."[5]

22While they were staying[6] in Galilee Jesus said to them, "The Son of the Man is about to be betrayed into the hands of men, **23**and they will kill Him, and on the third day He will be raised." And they were

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[1] At this point John is already dead, but in verse 11 the Lord declares that Elijah is still going to come—John performed the function for Christ's first advent that Elijah (literally) will perform for the second advent. For further discussion, please see 'John is not Elijah', in my website: www.prunch.org.

[2] Why "perverse"? To reject the truth and the evidence is to be perverse. This word was presumably directed to the disciples, who should have known better by now. So how about us—are we living on the basis of the truth and the evidence? Really?

[3] Luke 9:31 tells us that Moses and Elijah communicated to Jesus the 'game plan' for the ending of His earthly ministry (in about six months). So He knew that there was not much time left, and He expressed frustration because the disciples were such slow learners.

[4] What kind of 'faith' might a mustard seed have? Albeit so small, it reacts without question to the climactic circumstances, and grows to remarkable proportions. If we reacted similarly, without question, to the Holy Spirit's promptings, our spiritual 'climactic circumstances', we should indeed move mountains, literally. Or to put it another way, a seed has the faith to die, like the Lord said in John 12:24: "unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone". In 1 Corinthians 15:31 Paul said that he died daily. How so? Obviously he did not die physically; he died to himself, his own ideas and ambitions, so as to embrace God's will. Dying to self is a prerequisite for moving mountains. The seed does not create or control the 'climactic circumstances', and neither do we.

[5] Less than 1% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, omit this whole verse (as in NIV, [NASB], LB, [TEV], etc.). I take it that this was true up until the Lord's victory on the cross and the resurrection. Now we are in Christ at the Father's right hand, far above <u>all</u> principality and power, etc., which includes Satan and all classes below him in rank—Ephesians 1:19-21, 2:6. (There is nothing wrong with Christ's victory and authority, but our spiritual condition does not always permit us to make full use of that victory.)

[6] Instead of "staying", perhaps 1% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, have 'gathering together' (as in NIV, NASB, TEV, etc.).

seriously grieved.

Money from a fish

24When they entered Capernaum those who collected the temple tax approached Peter and said, "Does your Teacher not pay the temple tax?" **25**He says, "Yes." So when they entered the house Jesus anticipated him saying: "Simon, what do you think? From whom do the kings of the earth take customs or poll tax, from their sons or from strangers?" **26**Peter says to Him, "From the strangers." Jesus said to him: "Well then, the sons are free. **27**But, lest we offend them, go to the sea, cast in a hook, and take the fish that comes up first. And opening its mouth you will find a 'stater' [a coin]; take that and give it to them for me and you."[1]

How to be 'big' in the Kingdom

18 **1**At that time the disciples approached Jesus saying, "Who then is greater in the kingdom of the heavens?" **2**So Jesus called a little child to Him, set him in the midst of them, **3**and said: "Assuredly I say to you, unless you change and become like little children, you will <u>not</u> enter the kingdom of the heavens.[2] **4**Therefore whoever will humble himself like this little child, <u>he</u> is the greater in the kingdom of the heavens.

About offenses

5"Whoever receives one little child like this in my name, receives me; **6**but whoever should cause one of these little ones who believe into me[3] to fall, it would be better for him if a large millstone were hung on his neck and he were drowned in the depth of the sea![4] **7**Woe to the world because of offenses! Now offenses will come by force,[5] but woe to that person by whom the offense comes!

8"If your hand or your foot is causing you to fall, cut them off and throw them away! It is better for you to enter into the Life lame or maimed than to be thrown into the everlasting fire, having two hands

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[1] The *stater* was the exact amount for two people. Presumably somebody had lost the coin in the water, but for the fish to deliver it to Peter was a miracle.

[2] This is a serious statement. Several times the Text says that God resists the proud. To acknowledge that we are sinners in need of forgiveness requires humility.

[3] 'Into' not 'in'. The Lord Jesus always said "believe <u>into</u> [Greek εις] Me", never "believe <u>in</u> [Greek εν] Me". (In John 3:15 a very few Greek manuscripts of inferior quality have "in", against 99.5% that have "into".) People believe in Santa Claus, the Easter bunny, the goodness of man, or whatever, but it does not change their lives. Similarly there are many who say they believe in Jesus, but it makes no difference in their lives either. You have to believe **into** Him—commitment and identification are involved—it is a move from being outside to being inside, which involves a change in worldview.

[4] It is preferable to suffer an ignominious physical death than to destroy the faith of a child who believes into Jesus. What is worse than an ignominious physical death? Spiritual death—in verses 8-9 Jesus refers overtly to hell fire. If you send a child to hell, you go too! What about all the teachers who have dedicated themselves to destroying the faith of their students?

[5] The usual rendering here is, 'Now it is necessary that offenses come', but why should it be 'necessary'? The Greek word here refers to necessity or force, as in being forced to do something. Satan forces his servants to do things, including offenses.

or two feet. 9And if your eye is causing you to fall, tear it out and throw it away! It is better for you to enter into the Life one eyed than to be thrown into the fiery Hell, having two eyes.[1]

God loves children

10"See to it that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I say to you that in heaven their angels always see the face of my Father, who is in the heavens.[2] 11For the Son of the Man came to save the lost.[3] 12What do you think? If some man has a hundred sheep and one of them goes astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine in the mountains[4] to go and search for the stray? 13And if he happens to find it, assuredly I say to you, he rejoices more over it than over the ninety-nine that did not go astray. 14Likewise it is not a desire, in the view of your Father in heaven, that one of these little ones should be wasted.[5]

Handling a recalcitrant brother

15"Now if your brother sins against you, go, confront him between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have won your brother. 16But should he not hear, take along with you one or two more, so that every word may be established by the mouth of two or three witnesses. 17And should he refuse to hear them, tell it to the congregation. But should he refuse to hear even the congregation, let him be to you just like the heathen and the tax collector.[6]

Agreeing in prayer

18"Assuredly I say to you, whatever (pl.) you (pl.) may bind on earth will have been bound in heaven, and whatever you may loose on earth will have been loosed in heaven.[7] 19Assuredly again, I say to you that if

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1 I believe this is literal, but largely hypothetical—by the time someone realizes what is happening, it is usually too late. Maybe that is why we are supposed to exhort one another daily (Hebrews 3:13).

2 "These little ones" refers to the literal children who were in the room. In verse 2 Jesus called one over, so it was obviously in the room, but the playmates would naturally stop to see what was going to happen, so there were several in the room. This verse suggests the existence of guardian angels.

3 Just 1.5% of the Greek manuscripts, of inferior quality, omit verse 11 (as in NIV, [NASB], LB, [TEV], etc.). This is an important statement, and it should not be questioned on the basis of such inferior evidence.

4 "In the mountains"—note that the 99 were not left in a safe fold somewhere; they were left unprotected. The shepherd takes a calculated risk.

5 The Lord's statement here is round about, not direct—I tried to reflect that 'round-aboutness'.

6 In other words, such a person is to be excommunicated, ostracized.

7 The tense of the Greek verb phrase here is a periphrastic future perfect, passive voice (so also in 16:18). Thus, "will have been bound/loosed" not "will be bound/loosed". We are not telling God what to do; we are to apply down here that which He has already done in heaven. What had been just for Peter is now given to all the disciples. For more discussion, please see: Do we command God?, in my website: www.prunch.org. Matthew 18:18. If I try to 'bind' something and nothing happens, then it had not been bound in heaven. I tried to do something that God did not agree with.

two of you should agree on earth about any subject whatever that they may ask, it will be done for them by my Father who is in heaven.[1] **20**Because where there are two or three gathered together into my name, there I am in their midst!"[2]

About forgiveness

21Then Peter approached Him and said, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him; up to seven times?" **22**Jesus says to him: "Not, I tell you, up to seven, but up to seventy-seven times![3]

23"Therefore the kingdom of the heavens is like a certain king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. **24**And as he began to settle up, one debtor of ten thousand talents was brought to him. **25**But since he had nothing with which to repay, his lord commanded that he be sold, with his wife and children and everything he had, so as to be repaid. **26**So then the servant fell down and did obeisance to him saying, 'Lord, be patient with me and I will repay you all.' **27**So the lord of that servant, having compassion, released him and forgave him the loan.

28"But when that servant went out he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii; and grabbing him he started choking him saying, 'Pay me back what you owe!' **29**So his fellow servant fell down at his feet and kept begging him saying, 'Be patient with me and I will pay you back.'[4] **30**But he would not; instead he went and threw him into prison until he should pay back what was owed. **31**But when his fellow servants saw what had happened they were really grieved, and they went and reported to their lord everything that had happened. **32**Then summoning him the lord says to him: 'Malignant servant! I forgave you all that debt because you begged me. **33**Were you also not obligated[5] to have mercy on your fellow servant, just as I had mercy on you?' **34**So in anger the lord handed him over to the torturers until he should repay all that was owed to him.

35"My heavenly Father will handle you just like that, if each of you does not forgive his brother his trespasses, from the heart."[6]

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[1] If you are like I am, you have probably tried this, and it didn`t work! Why not? I suppose because verses 19 and 20 must be taken together. The 'because' that begins verse 20 gives the clue—if Jesus is part of the group that is asking, then His will limits the asking.

[2] The Greek text has "into my name", not "in"—commitment is involved.

[3] Why 77 and not 490? Well, actually the Greek phrase is ambiguous—it could be either. In either case Jesus is saying that forgiveness should not be limited by number.

[4] The picture is that he kept begging all the way to the prison.

[5] Notice the verb 'obligated'; verse 35 makes clear that this is the way God looks at it—His having forgiven me obligates me to forgive others. Observe that the king reversed his pardon—what might the implications of that be? "My heavenly Father will handle you just like that!"

[6] This is a very strong statement! Perhaps 1% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, omit "his trespasses" (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.). Note the

Jesus ministers in Perea—29/30 AD

19 [1]Now it happened, when Jesus had finished these words, that He departed from Galilee and went to the borders of Judea beyond the Jordan. [2]And large crowds followed Him and there He healed them.

Jesus denies divorce

[3]The Pharisees also came to Him to test Him, saying to Him, "Is it permissible for a man to divorce his wife for *just* any cause?" [4]So in answer He said to them: "Have you never read that the Creator at the beginning made them a male and a female? [5]And He said, 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall be turned into one flesh.'[1] [6]So then, they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore, what[2] God joined together let not man separate!" [7]They say to Him, "Why then did Moses command to give a certificate of divorce and to dismiss her?"[3] [8]He says to them: "Because of your hard-heartedness Moses permitted you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it has not been so. [9]And **I** say to you that whoever divorces his wife, except for fornication, and marries another commits adultery; and whoever marries a divorcee commits adultery."[4] [10]His disciples say to Him, "If that's the situation of a man with his wife, it is better not to marry!"[5] [11]So He said to them: "Not all *can* assimilate this word, but those to whom it has been given.[6] [12]For there are eunuchs who were born that way, from their mother's womb; and there are eunuchs who were castrated by men; and there are eunuchs who castrated themselves for the sake of the kingdom of the heavens. He who is able to assimilate it, let him assimilate."[7]

'fellow servant' and 'his brother'—presumably declared enemies of Sovereign Jesus are not in view.

[1] "Two"—not three, four, five, etc. "The two" refers to one man and one woman—not two men, a man and an animal, a woman and a demon, or whatever. The 'one flesh' is not just poetic language; it refers to a chemical reality.

[2] Jesus did not say 'whom', referring to the people, but "what" (neuter gender), referring to the fact of "one flesh".

[3] They distorted the Text: Moses did not command divorce. The Lord corrects their distortion.

[4] "Fornication" is distinct from "adultery" and does not include it. Here, it is presumably a reference to pre-marital sex, where a groom discovers that his bride is no longer a virgin (like the situation that Joseph faced in Matthew 1:18-19). Perhaps 0.5% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, omit the last clause of verse 9 (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

[5] Why the strong reaction from the disciples? Obviously Jesus did not give the expected answer, namely that infidelity justifies divorce.

[6] The demonstrative pronoun 'this' is probably cataphoric, referring forward to the content of verse 12.

[7] What in the world do 'eunuchs' have to do with divorce and remarriage? Well, do eunuchs have sexual relations? A eunuch castrated by others was a victim of the actions of others. We also may be victimized by others, and be obliged to take the consequences, including living like a eunuch. For more discussion, please see 'Divorce and re-marriage', in my website: www.prunch.org.

Jesus blesses children

13Then little children were brought to Him, that He might lay hands on them and pray; but the disciples rebuked them. **14**So Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me and do not forbid them, for of such[1] is the kingdom of the heavens." **15**And after laying hands on them He moved on from there.

It is difficult for a rich person to enter the Kingdom

16And then, a certain one came and said to Him, "Good teacher, what good thing must I do so that I may have eternal life?" **17**But He said to him: "Why do you call me good? No one is good except One, God.[2] But if you want to enter into the Life, keep the commandments."[3] **18**He says to Him, "Which ones?"[4] So Jesus said: "'You shall not murder,' 'You shall not commit adultery,' 'You shall not steal,' 'You shall not give false witness,' **19**'Honor your father and your mother,' and 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'" **20**The young man says to Him: "I have kept all these things since my youth.[5] What do I still lack?" **21**Jesus said to him, "If you want to be perfect, go sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come follow me." **22**So upon hearing that word the young man went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.[6]

23Then Jesus said to His disciples: "Assuredly I say to you that *only* with difficulty will a rich person enter into the kingdom of the heavens. **24**And again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter into the kingdom of God."[7] **25**Upon hearing it His disciples were really flabbergasted saying, "Who

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[1] Jesus was not saying that only children go to heaven; we need to believe the way a child believes.

[2] Jesus is not denying that He is good. He is challenging the man's opinion about Himself. The man was not recognizing Jesus to be God—if he had, Jesus would not have objected. Perhaps 1% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, omit "Good" before "teacher" in verse 16 and have Jesus saying, "Why do you ask me about what is good? There is One who is good" here in verse 17 (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.). The minority reading makes Matthew contradict Mark 10:18 and Luke 18:9; it probably originated in Egypt, that was dominated by Gnosticism.

[3] The man said, "good thing", singular, as if only one thing would be needed, but Jesus answered, "commandments", plural.

[4] Did he think that some were not necessary?

[5] "Since my youth" is omitted by 1% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

[6] Jesus emphasized the commandment about loving one's neighbor because that was precisely the one that the young man was not keeping. He went away sorrowful because Jesus made him see that he was not keeping it, and worse yet, was not prepared to keep it.

[7] This seemingly difficult statement has given rise to several attempts to avoid the literal meaning. However, since in verse 26 Jesus says it is "impossible" we may stay with the literal meaning. Jesus had already said that one cannot serve God and money, so someone who "trusts in riches" (Mark 10:24, as in 99.5% of the Greek manuscripts) simply cannot be saved (unless he abandons that trust).

then can be saved?" 26So looking at them Jesus said, "With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."

It pays to serve Jesus

27Then Peter answered and said to Him: "See, we have left all and followed you. So what will we have?" 28So Jesus said to them: "Assuredly I say to you that in the Regeneration,[1] when the Son of the 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.[2] 29And, everyone who left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife[3] or children or fields for my name's sake will receive a hundredfold, and will inherit life eternal. 30But many 'first' will be last, and 'last' first.[4]

The desperate landowner

20 1"For the kingdom of the heavens is like a certain landowner who went out early in the morning to hire workers for his vineyard. 2And agreeing with the workers for a denarius a day he sent them into his vineyard. 3And going out about the third hour [9 a.m.] he saw others standing idle in the marketplace. 4And he said to them, 'You also go into the vineyard and I will give you whatever is right.' So off they went. 5He went out again about the sixth hour, and the ninth, and did the same. 6Now about the eleventh hour he went out and found others standing idle, and he says to them, 'Why have you stood here idle all day?'[5] 7They say to him, 'Because no one hired us.' He says to them, 'You also go into the vineyard, and you will receive whatever is right.'[6] 8So when evening had come the owner of the vineyard says to his foreman, 'Call the

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[1] I take it that Jesus is referring to His millennial reign, the Messianic Kingdom, when the earth will be 'regenerated', being restored to conditions reminiscent of Eden. For instance, if He does not regenerate the magnetic field that surrounds it pretty soon, life on this planet will become less and less viable.

[2] I wonder who will occupy the Iscariot's throne. I see no reason to doubt that the Lord is being literal here. Actually, "the twelve tribes of Israel" has to be literal, not figurative. The twelve tribes still exist, and God knows where they are.

[3] Perhaps 1.5% of the Greek manuscripts, of inferior quality, omit "or wife" (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.)—the idea of having 100 wives was no doubt objectionable. Actually, the 'hundredfold' should presumably not be taken in a strictly literal sense. I take it that the Lord is saying that we will be abundantly recompensed, if not down here, certainly in heaven. In my own experience, in the absence of my real mother, whenever I needed one God provided one. If you only have one brother, that is all you can leave, obviously, so the plural nouns are also contingent on the facts in the case. 'Eternal' life is a quality of life, and it begins down here.

[4] The parable that occupies the next 15 verses illustrates this.

[5] How did he know they had been there all day? He had seen them, and had himself refused to hire them until the end. As his desperation level increased, he became less and less choosy about the quality of the workers [I take it that for some reason the grapes had to be collected that day; any that were left until later would be lost]. As the Church is in its eleventh hour, or later, it seems to me that we see God doing just like the landowner—He is using some rather 'unusual' workers.

[6] Perhaps 1% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, omit the last clause (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

workers and pay them their wage, beginning at the last to the first.'[1]
9The eleventh hour ones came and each received a denarius. **10**So when
the first ones came, they supposed that they would receive more; yet
each of them also received a denarius. **11**When they received it they
began grumbling against the landowner **12**saying, 'These last worked
only one hour, and you made them equal to us who bore the burden and
the heat of the day!' **13**But in answer he said to one of them: 'Friend, I
am not wronging you. Did you not agree with me for a denarius? **14**Take
what is yours and go. I wish to give to this last one just as to you. **15**Or
is it not permissible for me to do what I want with what is mine? Is your
eye evil because I am good?' **16**Just so the last will be first, and the first
last. For many are called, but few are chosen."[2]

Jesus alerts the disciples, again

17As Jesus was on His way to Jerusalem He took the twelve disci-
ples aside on the road and said to them privately: **18**"Listen! We are going
up to Jerusalem and the Son of the Man will be betrayed to the chief
priests and scribes; and they will condemn Him to death, **19**and they will
hand Him over to the Gentiles to mock, to scourge and to crucify. And
on the third day He will rise!"

Selfish ambition rebuked

20Then the mother of Zebedee's sons approached Him, with her
sons, and kneeling down she asked something from Him. **21**So He said to
her, "What do you wish?" She says to Him, "State that these my two sons
may sit one on Your right and one on Your left in Your kingdom." **22**But
in answer Jesus said: "You (pl.) do not know what you are asking.[3] Are
you able to drink the cup which I am about to drink, or to be baptized
with the baptism that I am being baptized with?"[4] They say to Him, "We
are able." **23**And He says to them: "You will indeed drink my cup, and
you will be baptized with the baptism that I am being baptized with, but
to sit on my right and on my left is not mine to give; rather it is for those
for whom it has been prepared by my Father."[5]

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[1] Presumably the usual procedure would be to pay the first ones first, so they could head for home; by inverting the order the owner provoked the confrontation. What about our own notions of 'fairness'? People who believe into Jesus at the end of a misspent life get to go to Heaven, just like those who have served God all their lives. Of course there is the matter of rewards, but they scarcely compare with the fact of spending eternity in Heaven, rather than Hell.

[2] Just 1.5% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, omit the last sentence (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

[3] Jesus sees that the sons had put their mother up to it and answers them, not her.

[4] Perhaps 1% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, omit "or be baptized with the baptism that I am being baptized with" and also the corresponding clause in verse 23 (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.). Their confident "We are able" makes we wonder if it was prophetic. James was the first one of the Eleven to die, executed by Herod, while John was the last one, after a very long life, with its share of suffering.

[5] We may well be surprised at the Father's choices.

[24]Now when the ten heard it they were indignant at the two brothers.[1] [25]But summoning them Jesus said: "You know that the rulers of the nations lord it over them, and the great exercise authority over them; [26]but it must not be so among you. Rather, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, [27]and whoever wants to be first among you must be your slave; [28]just like the Son of the Man—He did not come to be served but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many."

Two blind men

[29]Now as they went on from Jericho a large crowd followed Him. [30]And then, two blind men sitting alongside the road and hearing, "Jesus is passing by!"[2] cried out saying, "Have mercy on us, Lord, Son of David!" [31]So the crowd threatened them to be quiet, but they cried out all the more saying, "Have mercy on us, Lord, Son of David!!" [32]Jesus stopped, called them and said, "What do you want me to do for you?"[3] [33]They say to Him, "Lord, that our eyes may be opened!" [34]So Jesus had compassion and touched their eyes, and immediately their eyes received sight, and they followed Him.

The last week

The triumphal entry—Sunday, 03/31/30AD

21 [1]Now when they drew near to Jerusalem and came to Bethsphage, opposite the Mount of Olives, then Jesus sent two disciples, [2]saying to them: "Go into the village opposite you and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her. Loose *her* and bring *them* to me. [3]And if anyone says anything to you, *just* say, 'The Lord needs them,' and immediately he will send them." [4]Now all this happened so that what was spoken through the prophet should be fulfilled, namely: [5]"Say to the daughter of Zion, 'Look, your King is coming to you, humble and mounted on a donkey, in fact, a young donkey, foal of a beast of burden.'"[4]

[6]So going and doing just as Jesus had commanded them, [7]the disciples brought the *female* donkey and the young donkey. And they placed their clothes on them and He sat down on them [the clothes].[5] [8]And the

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[1] Why were they indignant, unless they had similar ideas?

[2] Comparing this account with the parallels in Mark and Luke, there appear to be several discrepancies. For a detailed discussion, please see: 'Entering or leaving Jericho?'

[3] The question may seem unnecessary, but Jesus obliged them to state plainly what they wanted.

[4] The quote is from Zechariah 9:9. Unfortunately the KJV (corrected by the NKJV) mistranslates both the Hebrew and the Greek, making it appear that Jesus rode both animals, which was not the case; He rode only the colt. For a more complete discussion, please see: 'How many animals?', in my website: www.prunch.org.

[5] It must have been a curious sight—no one had ever seen anything like it. Mark 11:2 and Luke 19:30 make clear that no one had ever ridden the colt. It was so young it was still staying close to 'mother', so if she was tied, he was too. Jesus was going to expose

very large crowd spread their clothes on the road, while others were cutting branches from the trees and spreading them on the road. **9**Then the crowds who went in front and those who followed kept crying out, saying: "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD![1] Hosanna in the highest *heaven*!"

10So when He came into Jerusalem the whole city was stirred up, saying, "Who is this?"[2] **11**And the crowds kept saying, "This is Jesus, the prophet from Natsareth of Galilee."

The second cleansing of the temple[3]

12Jesus went into the temple of God and drove out all who were selling and buying in the temple, and He overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold the doves. **13**And He says to them, "It is written, 'My house will be called a house of prayer,' but you have made it 'a cave of bandits'."[4] **14**And the lame and the blind came to Him in the temple, and He healed them.

15But seeing the wonders that He did, and the children calling out in the temple and saying, "Hosanna to the Son of David!" the chief priests and the scribes became indignant **16**and said to Him, "Do you hear what these are saying?" So Jesus says to them: "Yes. Have you never read that 'Out of the mouth of babies and nursing infants You have prepared praise *for Yourself*'?"[5] **17**Leaving them behind He went out of the city to Bethany and lodged there.

"If you have faith"—Monday, 04/01/30 AD

18Now in the early morning, as He returned to the city, He was hungry. **19**And seeing a lone fig tree by the road, He went up to it and found nothing on it, just leaves.[6] And He says to it, "May you never again produce fruit!" And forthwith the fig tree started to wither.[7] **20**And seeing it

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the colt to a frightening experience—be ridden for the first time, by a stranger, someone perhaps heavier than the colt, and in the middle of a noisy crowd! So He has them bring the mother along as moral support. The disciples put clothes on both animals (the clothes would be very strange to the young donkey, but seeing his mother take it patiently would help his peace of mind), but Jesus rode only the colt—maybe He had to lift His feet so they didn't drag! It was probably comical, a strange way for a King to present Himself.

1 See Psalm 118:26.

2 Really and truly: can't you just see the hubbub! The crowd with Jesus was not from Jerusalem (John 12:12), so the locals were taken by surprise.

3 Mark and Luke have the correct sequence of events for that Sunday, Monday and Tuesday—Matthew rearranges the material for stylistic reasons (presumably). For the correct sequence of events, read Matthew 21:1-11, 18-19, 12-17, 20-22, 23-46. Chapters 22-26 are in sequence.

4 See Isaiah 56:7 (Jeremiah 7:11).

5 See Psalm 8:2.

6 As Mark points out (Mark 11:13), it was not fig season, but a tree with leaves might have some dried figs. Since dried figs are very good eating, any visible figs would have been eaten long since (the tree was near the road).

7 The Text has 'the sap was cut off'; the result would not be visible immediately.

the disciples marveled saying, "How quickly the fig tree became withered!"[1] 21So in answer Jesus said to them: "Assuredly I say to you, if you (pl.) have faith and do not doubt, you will not only do what was done to the fig tree, but even if you should say to this mountain, 'Be taken up and be thrown into the sea,' it will happen. 22And anything whatever you may ask in the believing prayer,[2] you will receive."

About John's baptism—Tuesday, 04/02/30 AD

23So He came into the temple, and as He was teaching, the chief priests and the elders of the people approached Him saying, "By whose authority are you doing these *things*?" and "Who gave you this authority?" 24But in answer Jesus said to them: "I also will ask you one question, which if you tell me, I also will tell you by whose authority I do these *things*: 25The baptism of John—where was it from; from heaven or from men?" So they reasoned among themselves saying: "If we say, 'From heaven,' he will say to us, 'Why then did you not believe him?' 26But if we say, 'From men,' we fear the crowd, for all consider John as a prophet." 27So in answer to Jesus they said, "We do not know." So He said to them: "Neither do I tell you by what authority I do these *things*.

Two parables against the Pharisees

28"But what do you think? A certain man had two sons, and going to the first he said, 'Son, go work today in my vineyard.' 29But in answer he said, 'I don't want to' (but later he changed his mind and went). 30And going to the other he said likewise. And in answer he said, 'I *go*, Sir'; yet he did not go. 31Which of the two did the will of the father?" They say to Him, "The first". Jesus says to them: "Assuredly I say to you that the tax collectors and the prostitutes will go into the kingdom of God before you do.[3] 32For John came to you in the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him; but the tax collectors and the prostitutes believed him, yet when you saw it you did not afterward repent, so as to believe him.

33"Hear another parable: There was a certain landowner who planted a vineyard and set a hedge around it, dug a winepress in it and built a tower. And he leased it to farmers and went on a journey. 34When vintage-time drew near he sent his servants to the farmers to receive his fruits. 35But the farmers took his servants—one they beat, one they killed, one they stoned. 36Again he sent other servants, more than the first, and they did to them likewise.[4] 37So finally he sent his son to them saying, 'They will respect my son.' 38But when the farmers saw the son,

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[1] According to Mark this was 24 hours later. For a fuller discussion, please see 'The cursed fig tree', in my website: www.prunch.org.

[2] That is, without any doubt.

[3] The Lord's words were definitely not designed to make them happy! In effect, He goes on to show that their refusal to answer His question was duplicitous. They knew good and well that John's baptism was from heaven.

[4] This sort of thing would probably not happen in real life, but this parable was directed at them, including the history of Israel.

they said among themselves: 'This is the heir. Come, let us kill him and take possession of his inheritance.' 39And taking him they threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. 40Therefore, when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those farmers?" 41They say to Him: "He will miserably destroy those miserable men! And he will lease the vineyard to other farmers who will render to him the fruits in their seasons."

42Jesus says to them: "Did you never read in the Scriptures: 'A stone which the builders rejected, this one became the cornerstone. This was the LORD's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes'?[1] 43Therefore I say to you that the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a nation producing the fruits of it.[2] 44Also, whoever falls upon this stone will be broken to pieces; but upon whomever it falls, it will grind him to powder."[3]

45As the chief priests and Pharisees heard His parables they knew that He was speaking about them.[4] 46And although they wanted to seize Him, they were afraid of the crowds, because they considered Him as a prophet.

Parable of the wedding feast

22 1Jesus reacted and spoke to them again in parables saying: 2"The kingdom of the heavens is like a certain king who prepared a wedding feast for his son. 3And he sent out his servants to call those who had been invited to the wedding feast, but they did not want to come. 4Again he sent out other servants saying: 'Say to those who have been invited: "See, I have prepared my dinner; my oxen and fatted cattle are butchered, and everything is ready. Come to the wedding feast!"' 5Now the indifferent ones *just* took off—one to his own field, another to his business. 6But the rest, seizing his servants mistreated and killed them!

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[1] See Psalm 118:22-23.

[2] That is what the Text says, 'a nation', which makes me wonder which 'nation' that might be. Since at any given time a nation is made up of the people alive at the moment, an Israel in the distant future would be a different 'nation'. However, in 1 Peter 2:9 the Church is called "a holy nation", so perhaps the reference is to the Church.

[3] Two Greek manuscripts (of inferior quality: D and 33—Codex D is possibly the worst copy in existence), against some 1700, omit verse 44. In consequence the so-called 'critical' text, UBS[4]/N-A[27] (which reproduces the text of UBS[3]/N-A[26]), places the verse within brackets, thereby affirming that in their opinion the verse is not genuine. NIV informs us that "Some manuscripts do not have verse 44." By "some" they mean two against 1700—is that not a dishonest use of the English language? To join Jesus means you have to be broken (so you can be re-made), but to reject Him leads to destruction. Jehovah the Son does not take kindly the rejection of His sacrifice.

[4] They understood, so they were warned; but they did not pay attention to the warning. They went to hell with their eyes open. They would rather go to hell than acknowledge Jesus as Messiah. Today it is the same way—many would rather go to hell than acknowledge Jesus as Creator and Savior.

7So when that king heard *about it* he was furious; and sending his troops
he destroyed those murderers and burned up their city.[1]

8"Then he says to his servants: 'The wedding is ready, but those who
were invited were not worthy. 9So go on the roads leading out *of town*,
and as many as you may find invite to the wedding feast.' 10And going
out on the roads those servants gathered together everyone they found,
both evil and good; and the wedding *hall* was filled with guests. 11But
when the king came in to look at the guests, he saw there a man who
had not been clothed with a wedding garment.[2] 12So he says to him,
'Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding garment?' And he
was speechless. 13Then the king said to the servants, 'Tie him up hand
and foot, take him away and throw him out into the darkness farthest
away.'[3] There, there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. 14For many
are called, but few chosen."

Jesus bests the Herodians

15Then the Pharisees went and plotted how they might trap Him in
some word. 16So they send their disciples to Him, with the Herodians,[4]
saying: "Teacher, we know that you are truthful and teach the way of
God in truth; and you are not impressed by anyone, for you do not look
at people's faces.[5] 17So tell us, what do you think: is it lawful to pay tax
to Caesar, or not?" 18But perceiving their malignancy Jesus said: "Hypo-
crites! Why do you test me? 19Show me the tax coin." So they brought
Him a denarius. 20And He says to them, "Whose image and inscription
is this?" 21They say to Him, "Caesar's." Then He says to them, "Render
therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things
that are God's!" 22And hearing it they marveled, and leaving Him they
went away.

Jesus bests the Sadducees

23The same day the Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection,
came to Him and asked Him 24saying: "Teacher, Moses said that if some-
one dies having no children his brother must marry the widow and raise
up offspring for his brother. 25Now there were seven brothers among us.

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[1] There is a contrast between the indifferent (verse 5) and the malignant (verse 6)—the indifferent missed out on the feast, but the malignant were destroyed. In the kingdom of the heavens there is only one wedding feast for the King's Son, so far as I know, called "the marriage supper of the Lamb" in Revelation 19:9. So who might the 'indifferent' be?

[2] Obviously people grabbed off the street would not have appropriate attire—the wedding garment must have been issued to each one as he went in.

[3] Someone tried to 'crash the party' and had even taken a place at a table, but it did not work. I suppose there may be those who think they can crash "the marriage supper of the Lamb", but if you are not dressed in the righteousness of the Bridegroom you will not make it.

[4] The Pharisees and the Herodians were political enemies, but in their desperation they joined forces against Jesus.

[5] They really tried to butter Him up.

The first married and died, and having no offspring he left his widow to his brother. 26So also the second, and the third, up to the seventh. 27Last of all, the woman died too. 28Therefore in the resurrection whose wife, of the seven, will she be? For they all had her."[1] 29So in answer Jesus said to them: "You are deceived,[2] not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God![3] 30For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage,[4] but are like angels of God in heaven.[5] 31But concerning the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was spoken to you by God saying, 32'I <u>am</u> the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'?[6] 33Now as the crowds heard *Him* they were astonished at His teaching.

Jesus bests the Pharisees

34Now when the Pharisees heard that He had silenced the Sadducees, they got together. 35And one of them, a lawyer, testing Him, questioned and said, 36"Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?" 37So Jesus said to him:[7] "'You must love the LORD your God with your whole heart, and with your whole soul, and with your whole mind.'[8] 38This is the first and great commandment. 39And the second is like it, 'You must love your neighbor as yourself.'[9] 40On these two commandments hang the whole Law, and the Prophets."[10]

David's Son and Lord

41While the Pharisees were assembled, Jesus asked them 42saying, "What do you think about the Christ; whose Son is He?" They say to Him, "David's." 43He says to them: "How then does David in *the* Spirit call Him 'Lord' saying, 44'The LORD said to my Lord, "Sit at my right

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[1] To dream up hypothetical situations is typical of those who really do not want to acknowledge or obey the truth. No doubt they thought they were being clever.

[2] I started out putting 'self-deceived', but the verb is passive Indicative and not inherently reflexive—it could be Satan deceiving them.

[3] Alas! Is this not true of large segments of so-called evangelical Christianity? The Lord puts His finger on the Sadducees' real problem—they were spiritually bankrupt.

[4] Since there will be no death in Heaven, there also will be no need to procreate, producing people to replace those who die.

[5] Jesus does not say that angels do not have sex/gender. Evidently no baby angels (good or fallen) are born, but if angels are of only one gender they cannot reproduce in kind. Whenever an angel takes on human form in the Bible, it is always the form of a man. Perhaps 1% of the Greek manuscripts, of inferior quality, omit "of God" (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

[6] See Exodus 3:6,15,16—Jesus attributes this text to God! Mark 12:27 adds, "He is not the God of dead people, but the God of living ones'.

[7] Evidently Jesus answered without hesitation; that one was easy!

[8] See Deuteronomy 6:5, 10:12.

[9] See Leviticus 19:18. Jesus gave him more than he asked for.

[10] The first one covers our relationship to God; the second one covers our relationship to other people.

until I place your enemies as a footstool for your feet"?[1] 45Really now, if David calls Him 'Lord', how can He be his son?" 46And no one was able to answer Him a word, nor from that day on did anyone dare to question Him anymore.

Jesus excoriates the scribes and Pharisees

23 1Then Jesus spoke to the crowds and to His disciples 2saying: "The scribes and the Pharisees are seated upon Moses' chair; 3so whatever they may tell you to observe, you should observe and do;[2] but do not do according to their deeds, for they say and do not do. 4For they package loads *that are* heavy and hard to bear, and lay them on the shoulders of the people; but they *themselves* do not want to move them with one of their fingers.

5"Rather, they do all their works in order to be seen by people. They make their phylacteries broad and the tassels on their garments large;[3] 6they love the place of honor at dinners and the first seats in the synagogues, 7and the greetings in the market places, namely to be called 'Rabbi, Rabbi' by the people.

We have only one Teacher and one Father

8"But you (pl.), do not be called 'Rabbi'; because your Teacher is <u>one</u>, the Christ,[4] and you are all brothers. 9And do not call anyone on earth your 'father'; because your Father is <u>one</u>, He who is in the heavens.[5] 10Neither be called leaders/guides; because your Leader is <u>one</u>, the Christ.[6] 11On the contrary, the greatest among you must be your servant. 12And whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted.

A series of 'Woes'

13"Woe to you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! Because you devour the houses of the widows,[7] while making long prayers as a

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[1] See Psalm 110:1—note that Jesus affirms that David was inspired. Jesus affirmed that "my Lord" is a reference to the Christ.

[2] Here the Lord gives importance to the function, whether or not the men in that function are worthy.

[3] They were big on ostentation.

[4] Perhaps 4% of the Greek manuscripts omit "the Christ" (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

[5] Since the second person here is plural, the Lord is evidently referring to calling someone your spiritual father; He is not saying not to acknowledge your physical father. "Your (pl.) Father is <u>one</u>"—obviously they did not all have the same physical father.

[6] This may be why we have no record in Scripture of a Christian calling someone his disciple; even in 1 Corinthians 3:4 Paul evidently avoids using the term. I take it that our Lord is forbidding any effort by one Christian to control the spiritual life of another. He had already told the Samaritan woman that the Father must be worshipped "in spirit and truth" (John 4:23-24). Therefore, that worship may not be forced or imposed, or controlled by someone else.

[7] How did that work? I suppose that if the widow was in debt, they would just foreclose and put her out on the street.

pretense. Therefore you will receive a greater condemnation.[1] 14Woe to you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!! Because you bar *the entrance to* the kingdom of the heavens in the face of the people; for you neither go in *yourselves* nor do you allow those who are trying to enter to go in.[2] 15Woe to you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!!! Because you travel all over, land and sea, to make one convert, and when he joins up you make him twice as much a son of Hell[3] as yourselves.

16"Woe to you blind guides, who say, 'Whoever swears by the temple, it is nothing; but whoever swears by the gold of the temple is obligated.' 17Stupid and blind! For which is greater, the gold or the temple that sanctifies the gold? 18And, 'Whoever swears by the altar, it is nothing; but whoever swears by the gift that is on it is obligated.' 19Stupid and blind!! For which is greater, the gift or the altar that sanctifies the gift?[4] 20Therefore he who swears by the altar swears by it and by all the things on it. 21And he who swears by the temple swears by it and by Him who used to dwell in it.[5] 22And he who swears by heaven swears by the throne of God and by Him who sits on it.[6]

23"Woe to you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! Because you pay a tithe of mint and dill and cummin, but have neglected the weightier items of the law: justice and mercy and faith. <u>These</u> it was obligatory to do, while not neglecting those. 24Blind guides, who strain out a gnat but gulp down a camel!

25"Woe to you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!! Because you cleanse the outside of the cup and the dish, but inside they are full of plunder and injustice.[7] 26Blind Pharisee! First cleanse the inside of the cup and the dish, so that their outside may also be clean.

27"Woe to you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!!! Because you resemble white-washed tombs, which indeed appear beautiful outwardly but inside are full of dead bones and of all uncleanness. 28Just

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[1] They are already condemned, but are making it worse. Perhaps 2% of the Greek manuscripts, of inferior quality, omit this verse (as in NIV, [NASB], LB, [TEV], etc.). A very small minority, perhaps another 1%, reverse the order of verses 13 and 14 (as in KJV and NKJV).

[2] Those guys were really perverse! If you don't want to go in yourself, that is your problem; but to try to keep others from going in is satanic, really and truly satanic.

[3] Where do you suppose a 'son of hell' is going to spend eternity?

[4] Wow, they really were stupid and blind! which raises the obvious question: How did they get that way? According to Ephesians 2:2, 'sons of the disobedience' suffer direct satanic influence.

[5] Some 10% of the Greek manuscripts have "dwell" in the present tense (as in most versions), rather than the past. I take it that Jesus was telling them that God had left their temple (see verse 38). Thus verse 22 is in contrast with verse 21, with reference to God's presence. I believe Josephus wrote that the Ark of the Covenant was not in Herod's temple.

[6] See Matthew 5:3-37 and James 5:12.

[7] Instead of "injustice", perhaps 5% of the Greek manuscripts have 'self-indulgence' (as in most versions).

so, you also outwardly appear *to be* righteous to the people, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.

29"Woe to you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!!!! Because you restore the tombs of the prophets and adorn the monuments of the righteous;[1] **30**yet you say, 'If we had lived in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets.' **31**Therefore you testify against yourselves that you are sons of those who murdered the prophets. **32**So fill up the measure of your fathers' *guilt*!

Snakes!

33"Snakes! Brood of vipers! How can you escape from the condemnation of Hell?[2] **34**So take note: I will send you prophets and wise men and Biblical scholars;[3] some of them you will kill, even crucify; some of them you will flog in your synagogues and persecute from city to city—**35**so that upon you may come all the righteous blood shed on the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel up to the blood of Zechariah son of Berechiah,[4] whom you murdered between the temple and the altar.[5] **36**Assuredly I say to you that all these things will come upon this generation.[6]

Jesus laments over Jerusalem

37"Jerusalem, Jerusalem, she who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children, just like a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you did not want to. **38**Look, your house is left to you abandoned! **39**For I say to you, you will <u>not</u> see me again until you say, 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD'!"[7]

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[1] Presumably the tombs and monuments could still be identified, although having suffered the ravages of time. So on what basis would they choose which ones to restore? They said that they would not have participated in the murder of a given prophet, so why would they want to restore his tomb? By restoring his tomb, you are calling the public's attention to it and reminding them that he had been murdered. Why would you want to spend time and money doing that, unless you agreed with the murder? How could they share in the guilt if they did not agree with what their fathers had done?

[2] Would you say that Jesus is trying real hard not to hurt their poor little feelings? So are we supposed to avoid hurting people's feelings? When and why?

[3] Jesus makes this statement knowing that He will die within a few days. Obviously He also knows that He will rise from the dead and return to the Father's right hand—it is from that position that He will do the sending.

[4] The only 'Zechariah son of Berechiah' recorded in the O. T. was the author of the book of prophecy that bears his name. The temple was rebuilt during his time, so it would be possible for him to have been killed there, but his death is not recorded. The Lord may have known something we do not, or He may have been referring to someone else.

[5] A terrible statement! But Jesus is addressing persons who will condemn the Messiah to death with total premeditated malice. From Abel to Zechariah was 3,500 years, or the time of the whole Old Testament. That was a lot of shed blood!

[6] Presumably Jesus was saying that "all these things" would happen before AD 70.

[7] See Psalm 118:26. Apparently He did not return to the temple anymore; He had declared judgment upon it: "your house is left to you abandoned".

The Olivet Discourse

24 [1]So as Jesus was going out, departing from the temple, His disciples came up to show Him the buildings of the temple. [2]But Jesus said to them: "Do you not see all these things? Assuredly I say to you, absolutely not a single stone here will be left upon another, that will not be thrown down."[1]

"A beginning of birth pains"

[3]Now as He was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately saying: "Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign of Your coming and of the completion of the age?"[2] [4]So in answer Jesus said to them: "Watch out, so that no one deceives you. [5]Because many will come in my name saying, 'I am the Christ,' and they will deceive many. [6]You will be concerned when you hear[3] of wars and rumors of wars; see to it that you not get worked up; for all of it has to happen, but the end is not yet. [7]For nation will be raised up against nation and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be famines and pestilences and earthquakes in various places; [8]but all these things are *only* a beginning of birth pains.[4]

The increase of lawlessness

[9]"Then they will hand you over to oppression and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for my name's sake.[5] [10]And then many will be offended, and they will betray one another and will hate one another. [11]And many false prophets will be raised up and they will deceive many.[6] [12]And because of the increase of the lawlessness[7] the love of the majority will grow cold. [13]So the one who perseveres to the end, he will be saved.[8] [14]And this good news of the kingdom will be proclaimed in the whole inhabited earth as a witness to all the ethnic nations, and then

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1 This was literally fulfilled in 70 AD. The Jews used the temple buildings as their last bastion of defense. They themselves set fire to some buildings and the Roman soldiers finished the job. Apparently the gold on the dome melted and ran down the cracks between the stones. So the looters literally tore stone from stone to make sure they got all the gold.

2 There are two questions: "When these things?" and "What the sign?" The answer to the first is given in Luke 21:20-24. The answer to the second begins here in verse 5.

3 I follow the best line of transmission, with 25% of the Greek manuscripts, in reading "You will be concerned when you hear", instead of 'you will be about to hear' (more or less followed by most versions).

4 The Text has 'birth pains', so what is the 'baby'? I suppose that the 'baby' is the Messianic Kingdom.

5 This is happening today; the world is becoming increasingly anti-Christian.

6 The verb is in the passive voice, 'will be raised up': the obvious question is, by whom? Here we have a clear hint of supernatural activity behind the scenes.

7 Is not lawlessness increasing in the world today? And is not coldness increasing in the churches?

8 The Greek text is emphatic here—it is the one who perseveres who will be saved.

the end will come.[1]

The Great Tribulation

15"So then, when you (ye) see the 'abomination of desolation', spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place"[2] (let the reader understand), 16"then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. 17Anyone on the housetop should not go down to take things out of his house, 18and anyone in the field should not go back to get his cloak.[3] 19But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing a baby in those days! 20And pray that your flight may not happen in winter or on a Sabbath.[4] 21Because then there will be a great tribulation, such as has never been since the beginning of the world until now, and never again will be.[5] 22And unless those days were cut short no flesh would be saved;[6] but for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short.[7] 23Then if anyone says to you, 'Look, the Messiah is here!' or 'there!' do not believe him. 24Because false christs and false prophets will be raised up,[8] and they will give great signs and wonders so as to deceive, if possible, even the elect. 25See, I have told you beforehand. 26So if they should say to you, 'Look, He is in the wilderness!' do not go out; 'Look, in the secret rooms!' do not believe it. 27Because just as the lightning comes from east and shines to west, so also will be the coming of the Son of the Man; 28for

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1 The 'end' of what? There are at least four possible relevant ends here—of the world, of the Millennium, of the Great Tribulation, of the Church Age. Just as this day, this week, this month, this year, etc. all have ends, but those ends are rarely coincidental, so the four ends above are not coincidental. So which 'end' is it? The immediately following context points to the Great Tribulation. In that event, any unreached ethnic nations in our day cannot impede the Rapture, since the angel in Revelation 14:6 will finish the job (blessed angel!).

2 "Standing"—presumably a person, therefore. See Daniel 11:31 and 12:11.

3 Wait a minute! If you are on the housetop or in the field, how can you "see" the 'abomination' so you know it's time to run? Well, how about wrist TVs, hand held computers, cell phones with internet access, etc.? So how did Jesus know about these gadgets 2,000 years ago? If you are still around when that happens, and if you do not want the 'mark', you had better disappear in a hurry.

4 Well now, any such praying needs to be done before the fact to do any good. Do you know anyone who is praying like this?

5 There has always been tribulation and distress in the world, and continues to be, but nothing to compare with the Great Tribulation, which has not yet happened.

6 Adding up the percentages of destruction in Revelation, it appears that only one sixth of those who are alive at the beginning of the Great Tribulation will still be alive at its end. If six billion go in, only one billion will come out. So much for the overpopulation problem!

7 Just who are the "elect" here (and in verse 31), if the Rapture has already taken place? I believe there will be many millions of conversions immediately after the Rapture—unsaved church members who are left behind. And if the Rapture is partial (Matthew 25:1-13), all the lukewarm Christians will all of a sudden get serious.

8 Here is the passive voice again, 'will be raised up'. In this context it seems clear that they are Satan's servants.

wherever the carcass may be there will be a gathering of vultures.[1]

The King's return to earth

29"Immediately after the tribulation of those days, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from the heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken.[2] **30**And then the sign of the Son of the Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn[3]—they will see the Son of the Man coming on the clouds of the heaven with power and great glory.[4] **31**And He will send out His angels with a great sound of a trumpet and they will collect His elect from the four winds, from one extreme of the heavens to the other.[5]

Learn from the fig tree

32"Now learn this parable from the fig tree: when its branch has already become tender and it puts forth leaves, you know that the summer is near. **33**So you also, whenever you see all these things, know that it is near, at the doors! **34**Assuredly I say to you, this generation will <u>not</u> pass away until all these things happen.[6] **35**The heaven and the earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.[7]

The Rapture

36"But no one knows concerning that day and hour,[8] not even the angels of the heavens,[9] except my Father alone.[10] **37**But just as were the days of Noah, so also will be the coming of the Son of the Man. **38**For just

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[1] The point of verses 26-28 seems to be that the Lord's return will be very obvious, like the lightning or the circle of buzzards above a carcass—so if someone says He has returned secretly, don't believe it (see verse 30). The word "then" in verse 23 makes clear that what is being described here is the Lord's return to the earth after the Great Tribulation, to set up the Messianic Millennial Kingdom.

[2] Possibly citing Isaiah 13:10. 'Stars' often refer to angels, in the Scriptures, and "the powers of the heavens" most probably refers to high ranking fallen angels. It is at this time that Satan will be confined in the Abyss (Revelation 20:1-3). (Just one literal star hitting the earth would reduce it to dust, so the reference cannot be to them.)

[3] Literally, 'beat the breast'—in Semitic cultures this action expresses strong emotion, involving some combination of grief, fear and despair. This will be the attitude of everyone who is wearing the 'mark'.

[4] Compare Acts 1:11, Zechariah 14:4,8, John 7:3 and Ezekiel 47:1-12.

[5] Since the collecting will happen on this earth, the reference to 'winds' and 'heavens' is presumably figurative, indicating that the 'collecting' will be complete.

[6] "This generation" could refer to the Jewish race (render 'this race'), but I think it more probable that it refers to the generation that "sees all these things". To be more precise, I think that those who were alive on the planet in 1967 (when the city of Jerusalem returned to the political control of the nation Israel) are the generation in question.

[7] The Lord Jesus declares the eternal authority of His own word.

[8] It is typical of Hebrew prose (Jesus is a Jew) to re-tell a sequence of events from different perspectives. He is still answering "What is the sign?" but here He starts over and comments upon something that will happen before the 'abomination' (see the footnote with verse 44).

[9] 5.8% of the Greek manuscripts add 'nor the son' here (as in some versions).

[10] While walking this earth as Jesus, the Son was not omniscient.

as they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, in the days before the flood until the day that Noah entered the ark, 39and were not aware until the flood came and took all away, so also will be the coming of the Son of the Man. 40Then two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other will be left. 41Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken and the other will be left. 42So be watchful, because you (pl) do not know in what hour[1] your Lord is coming. 43But know this, that if the master of the house had known in what watch the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake and not allowed his house to be broken into. 44Therefore you also be ready, because the Son of the Man is coming at an hour that you do not suppose.[2]

45"Who then is the faithful and prudent slave whom his lord placed over his corps of servants to give them food on schedule? 46Blessed be that slave whom his master, when he comes, will find doing so. 47Assuredly I say to you that he will place him over all his possessions. 48But if that bad slave should say in his heart, 'My lord is delaying his return,' 49and should begin to beat his fellow slaves, and to eat and drink with the drunkards, 50the lord of that slave will come on a day when he is not looking for *him* and at an hour when he is not aware, 51and will cut him in two and appoint his portion with the hypocrites.[3] <u>There</u>, there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.[4]

Parable of the ten virgins

25 1"Then[5] the kingdom of the heavens will be like ten virgins who, taking their lamps, went out to meet the bridegroom. 2Now five of them were prudent and five foolish. 3Those who were foolish, taking their lamps, did not take [extra] oil with them, 4but the prudent ones

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[1] Instead of "hour", perhaps 5% of the Greek manuscripts have 'day' (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

[2] I take it that for there to be the element of surprise the Rapture of the Church must occur before the "abomination of desolation". When the Antichrist takes his place in the Holy of Holies and declares himself to be god there will be precisely 1,260 days until the return of Christ to the earth (see Revelation 12:6 and 13:5—42 months of 30 days each = 1260 days). "An hour that you do not suppose" presumably requires a pre-'abomination' rapture—if the rapture is pre-wrath but post-abomination, only a fool will be taken by surprise, unless the Rapture happens immediately after the 'abomination' (2 Thessalonians 2:3-4). For a fuller discussion of this question, please see: Before or after?, in my website: www.prunch.org.

[3] Notice that the Lord consigns hypocrites to hell. That servant pretended to be faithful while the owner was around, but as soon as he turned his back …

[4] This is a <u>servant</u> who had gained his master's confidence, but then betrayed it—he winds up in hell. He was director of food services, and if he had been faithful there he would have been promoted to general director (verse 47), but …

[5] "Then"—this temporal adverb links the parable to the prior context, which is dealing with the Rapture (I think). Since the foolish ones are virgins, not prostitutes, and since they also had some oil (does the oil represent the Holy Spirit?), this parable may point to a partial rapture; only those who are ready are taken.

took oil in their vessels along with their lamps.[1] 5Now while the bridegroom delayed they all dozed and slept, 6but at midnight there was a shout: 'Attention! The bridegroom is coming; go out to meet him.' 7Then all those virgins got up and trimmed their lamps. 8And the foolish ones said to the prudent, 'Give us some of your oil, because our lamps are going out.' 9But the prudent ones answered saying, 'No, in case there not be enough for you and us; instead, go to those who sell and buy for yourselves.' 10But while they went to buy, the bridegroom arrived, and the ones who were ready went in with him to the marriage feast—and the door was shut! 11Later the other virgins arrived too saying, 'Lord, lord, open for us!' 12But in answer he said, 'Assuredly I say to you, I do not know you.'[2] 13Therefore, keep alert, because you do not know the day nor the hour in which the Son of the Man is coming.[3]

Parable of the talents

14"Because *the kingdom is also* like a man about to go on a *long* journey, who called his own slaves and entrusted his possessions to them. 15To one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one, to each according to his own ability; and immediately he went on the journey. 16So the one who received the five talents went and traded with them, and made another five talents. 17So also the *one who received* the two gained another two as well. 18But he who received the one went off and dug in the ground and hid his lord's silver.

19"Then, after a long time, the lord of those servants comes and settles accounts with them. 20So the one who had received the five talents approached and brought five more talents saying, 'Lord, you entrusted five talents to me; see, I gained five more talents besides them!' 21His lord said to him: 'Super, you good and faithful slave! You were faithful over a few things, I will put you in charge of many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.' 22So the one who had received the two talents also approached and said, 'Lord, you entrusted two talents to me; see, I gained two more talents besides them!' 23His lord said to him: 'Super, you good and faithful slave! You were faithful over a few things, I will put you in charge of many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.'[4]

24"Then he who had received the one talent also approached and said: 'Lord, I knew that you are a hard man, reaping where you did not

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[1] From verse 8 it is clear that they all had oil in the lamp, but even with the wick down low their lamps were lit (they wouldn't wait in total darkness) and were burning oil (4-5 hours). So the delay of the bridegroom meant that the oil in the lamps was used up—the wise ones had extra oil.

[2] See Luke 21:36—"be counted worthy".

[3] About 11% of the Greek manuscripts omit "in which the Son of the Man is coming" (as in NIV, NASB, [LB], TEV, etc.).

[4] The two-talent man was just as faithful as the first one—he also doubled the principal—so he gets the same commendation. We are judged on the basis of what we do with our potential.

sow and gathering where you did not scatter. **25**And being afraid I went off and hid your talent in the ground; here, take what is yours.'[1] **26**So in answer his lord said to him: 'You wicked and lazy slave! You knew that I reap where I did not sow and gather where I did not scatter.[2] **27**Therefore you were obligated to deposit my money with the bankers, and at my coming I would have received what is mine with interest. **28**Therefore, take the talent away from him and give it to the one having the ten talents. **29**For to everyone who has, *more* will be given, and he will have abundance; but the one who does not have, even what he thinks that he has[3] will be taken away from him.[4] **30**And throw out the useless slave,[5] into the darkness farthest out!' <u>There</u>, there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Judgment in preparation for the Millennium

31"When the Son of the Man comes in His glory,[6] and all the holy angels with Him,[7] then He will sit on His throne of glory. **32**And all the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another,[8] just as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. **33**And the sheep He will place on His right, but the goats on His left.[9] **34**Then the King will say to those on His right: 'Come, you blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom that was prepared for you at the foundation of the world.[10] **35**For I was hungry and you gave me food; I was thirsty and you gave me drink; I was a stranger and you took me in; **36**I was naked and you clothed me; I was sick and you visited me; I was in prison and you came to me.' **37**Then the righteous will answer Him saying: 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? **38**When did we see you a stranger and take you in, or naked and clothe you? **39**Or when did we see you sick or in prison and come to you?' **40**And

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[1] Evidently the third man did not identify with his lord's interests. He served out of fear or necessity, but his heart wasn't in it. He has a negative opinion of his lord and is unrepentant: "here, take what is yours". He winds up in hell. Are there not many 'Christians' today who have a low opinion of God? Who feel that He is hard, unfair, unjust—and who 'serve' out of fear or a sense of obligation? If you believe <u>into</u> Jesus you identify with Him.

[2] Observe that the owner did not deny the description. The first two slaves identified with the owner's interests anyway.

[3] I follow the best line of transmission, with 30% of the Greek manuscripts, in reading "he thinks that he has", rather than 'he has' (as in most versions).

[4] Use it or lose it!

[5] To be "useless" is not a valid option. We are here for a purpose, to serve, to be useful.

[6] The Lord Jesus uses "the coming of the Son of the Man" to refer to both the Rapture and the Second Advent.

[7] Perhaps 4% of the Greek manuscripts omit "holy" (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.). From Revelation 5:11 it appears that the holy angels are well over 100 million.

[8] It is clear that the King is dealing with individuals here; nations are made up of people, and each person will be evaluated individually.

[9] See 1 Kings 22:19-22 (2 Chronicles 18:18-21).

[10] Wow!

in answer the King will say to them, 'Assuredly I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.'[1]

41"Then He will also say to those on His left: 'Go away from me, you accursed ones, into the eternal fire that was prepared for the devil and his angels.[2] 42For I was hungry and you did not give me food; I was thirsty and you did not give me drink; 43I was a stranger and you did not take me in; I was naked and you did not clothe me; I was sick and in prison and you did not visit me.' 44Then they also will answer saying, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison and did not minister to you?' 45Then He will answer them saying, 'Assuredly I say to you, inasmuch as you did not do it to one of the least of these,[3] neither did you do it to me.'[4] 46And they will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."

26 1Now it happened, when Jesus had finished these words, that He said to His disciples, 2"You know that after two days the Passover takes place, and the Son of the Man will be handed over to be crucified."[5]

The Sanhedrin conspires—04/03/30

3Then the chief priests, the scribes and the elders of the people

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1 The King demands practical demonstrations of righteousness. As James says, a 'faith' that does not produce will not save anyone. "These my brothers" refers to those on the King's right.

2 The Lake of fire was prepared for Lucifer (now Satan) and those angels that joined his rebellion (about a third of the angelic beings—Revelation 12:4). Human beings who side with Satan (there are various ways of doing that) will also share his destiny. The basic meaning of the word translated 'angel' is 'messenger'; many human beings are Satan's messengers.

3 "These" presumably refers to those on His right, the righteous. The wicked will be judged for how they treated the righteous (among other things).

4 These people are basically selfish and self-centered, and self-centeredness is the essence of sin. That is why Lucifer rebelled against God, etc.

5 Jesus knew just how He was going to die. I take it that our Lord's statement here settles the question of the exact day of the crucifixion. It was late Tuesday afternoon, probably about 6:00 p.m.—adding two days takes us to 6:00 p.m. on Thursday, but the proceedings in the upper room began after 6:00 p.m. on that Thursday, which to the Jews was already Friday. Therefore Jesus died on a Friday [not Thursday]. Our Lord's own statements have given rise to some confusion: referring to the time period between His death and resurrection He said—"on the third day", "after three days" and "three days and three nights". So some have argued that Jesus died on a Thursday, or even a Wednesday. Well, Wednesday won't work because that would make 3 days and 4 nights; but Thursday gives 3 nights and 2 full days, plus a part of a third day; while Friday gives 2 nights and 1 full day, plus a part of a second day. We take it that "3 days and 3 nights" was an idiomatic expression that could refer to three 24-hour days represented by some part of each, but in sequence—in this case: Friday, Saturday and Sunday. (See also Luke 23:54-24:1—Jesus was buried on Friday afternoon; then the women rested during the Sabbath [singular = just one day]; then early the first day of the week they went to the tomb.) See 'How long was Jesus' body in the tomb?', in my website: www.prunch.org.

assembled at the palace of the high priest, the one called Caiaphas,[1] **4**and they plotted to seize Jesus by trickery and kill Him. **5**But they said, "Not during the feast, in order not to have an uproar among the people."

Someone anoints Jesus' head

6Now when Jesus was in Bethany at the house of Simon the leper, **7**a woman approached Him,[2] having an alabaster *flask* of very expensive perfume, and she began to pour it on His head as He reclined *at the table*. **8**But upon seeing it His disciples were indignant saying: "Why this waste? **9**For this perfume could have been sold for a good deal and given to the poor." **10**But being aware Jesus said to them: "Why are you bothering the woman? She has done something beautiful to me. **11**You will always have the poor with you, but you will not always have me.[3] **12**In putting this perfume on my body she did it with a view to my burial. **13**Assuredly I say to you, wherever this gospel may be proclaimed in the whole world, what this woman did will also be told in her memory."[4]

Judas offers to betray Jesus

14Then one of the twelve, the one called Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests **15**and said, "What are you willing to give me so that I deliver Him to you?"[5] So they counted out to him thirty silver *coins*. **16**From then on he kept looking for an opportunity to betray Him.

The last night—begins Thursday evening, 04/04/30, and ends the next morning

17Now on the first *day* of Unleavened Bread the disciples came to Jesus saying to Him, "Where do you want us to prepare for You to eat the Passover?" **18**So He said: "Go into the city to 'you know who' and say to him, 'The Teacher says, "My time is near, I will do the Passover with my disciples at your *place*."'" **19**And the disciples did as Jesus directed them and prepared the Passover.[6]

The traitor identified

20When it was evening He was reclining *at the table* with the twelve. **21**And as they were eating, He said, "Assuredly I say to you that one of

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[1] The real high priest was Annas, but in an effort to diminish the political power of the high priest the Romans obliged the Jews to name a different one every year, and that year it was Caiaphas.

[2] This incident must not be confused with the one in John 12:1-11. In John, Mary anoints His feet on Saturday (03/30/30), while in Matthew and Mark an unidentified woman anoints His head on Wednesday (04/03/30). The houses are also different. In the earlier incident only Judas ventured to criticize the hostess, but here a number of them chime in—He had already been anointed once, so why do it again?

[3] Jesus is referring here to His physical presence (see Matthew 28:20).

[4] So it has been, to this day.

[5] Apparently the 'wasted' perfume was the last straw for Judas. (If he also finally got the message that Jesus was about to be killed instead of setting up the Kingdom, he may have rebelled.)

[6] Clearly the use of the upper room had been arranged beforehand.

you will betray me." 22This really upset them and they each[1] began to say to Him, "It isn't me, is it, Lord?" 23In answer He said: "It is the one who dipped his hand in the bowl with me, he will betray me. 24The Son of the Man is really going just as it is written about Him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of the Man is betrayed! It would have been better for that man not to have been born."[2] 25Then Judas, who was betraying Him, answered and said, "It isn't me, is it, Rabbi?" He says to him, "You said it!"[3]

Jesus institutes the Lord's Supper

26Now as they were eating,[4] after taking the bread and blessing it, Jesus broke it, gave it to the disciples and said, "Take, eat; this is my body." 27And taking the cup and giving thanks He gave it to them saying: "Drink of it, all of you; 28for this is my blood, that of the new covenant,[5] that which is being shed on behalf of many for forgiveness of sins. 29Furthermore, I tell you that I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom."[6] 30And after hymn-singing they went out to the Mount of Olives.

Jesus predicts Peter's denials[7]

31Then Jesus says to them: "All of you will be caused to stumble because of me this night, for it is written: 'I will strike the Shepherd and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.'[8] 32But after I am raised I will go before you to Galilee." 33Peter answered and said to Him, "Even if everyone *else* is caused to stumble because of you, **I** will never be caused to

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1 Perhaps 3% of the Greek manuscripts, of inferior quality, have "one after another" (as in NIV, LB, TEV, etc.), as if it were an orderly proceeding, each one politely waiting for his turn. Not really—they were shocked; what Jesus had just said couldn't be true! As a gut reaction each one started saying, "It cannot be me, can it?", all at once. Apparently none of them suspected Judas.

2 In John 17:12 the Lord calls him "the son of perdition" and declares him to be "lost". But see the footnote at Luke 6:16.

3 Judas phrases his question just like the others, only saying 'Rabbi' instead of 'Lord'. The Lord's answer confirms that it is Judas. Mark and Luke also record this incident, but the one recorded in John 13:21-30 happened later.

4 In John 13:1 we read, "before the feast of the Passover", and in 13:2, "supper being ended" [less than 1% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, have 'during supper'—as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.]. They ate an ordinary meal before the Passover ritual. In John 13:4-11 Jesus washes their feet because they could not proceed with the ritual while ceremonially unclean. In Matthew 26:21 they were eating the ordinary meal. Here in verse 26 they are now into the ritual (my deduction)—the foot washing happened between verse 25 and verse 26.

5 Here, and in Mark 14:24, perhaps 1% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, omit 'new' (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.). The original reading, as also in Luke 22:20 and 1 Corinthians 11:25, is new covenant.

6 "With you"—presumably at the Marriage Supper of the Lamb? The vinegar in John 19:29 would not qualify as "this fruit".

7 For a detailed discussion of Peter's denials, please see: How many times did Jesus say that Peter would deny Him?, in my website: www.prunch.org.

8 See Zachariah 13:7.

stumble." 34Jesus said to him, "Assuredly I say to you that this night, before *any* rooster crows, you will deny me <u>three</u> times."[1] 35Peter says to Him, "Even if I have to die with you, I will <u>not</u> deny you!" And all the *other* disciples said the same.

Gethsemane—Jesus almost dies!

36Then Jesus comes with them to a place called Gethsemane, and He says to the disciples, "Sit here while I go over there and pray." 37And taking Peter and the two sons of Zebedee along He began to be troubled and distressed. 38Then Jesus says to them: "My soul is in anguish, to the point of death.[2] Stay here and watch with me." 39And going a little farther He fell on His face and prayed saying, "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass me by; nevertheless not as I wish, but as you do."[3] 40Then He comes to the disciples and finds them sleeping, and He says to Peter: "So, you (pl.) were not able to watch with me one hour! 41Watch and pray, so that you do not enter into temptation. The spirit on its part is willing, but the flesh is weak." 42And going away a second time He prayed saying, "My Father, if this cup cannot pass from me unless I drink it, let your will be done."[4] 43And coming He finds them sleeping <u>again</u>, because their eyes had been weighed down.[5] 44So leaving them again, He went away and prayed a third time, saying the same thing. 45Then He comes to His disciples and says to them: "Sleep some more and take your rest![6] Actually, the hour is here and the Son of the Man is

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[1] The emphasis here is on the silence of all roosters until Peter denies at least three times. This is actually the <u>third</u> prediction—the first is in John 13:36-38 and the second is in Luke 22:31-34.

[2] I take it that Jesus faced the full implications of the cross at this point—that He would be made sin, be separated from the Father—and the anguish of soul was so terrible that He almost died. Luke 22:44 records that Jesus sweat blood, "great drops" of it—a rare condition that is usually fatal. Verse 43 records that an angel from heaven strengthened Him. I believe Hebrews 5:7 refers to this moment; Jesus cried out to be delivered from a premature death in the Garden, He had to get to the cross, and the Father sent an angel to strengthen Him. [Perhaps 1% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, omit Luke 22:43-44.]

[3] How did Matthew know what Jesus prayed? It is not clear whether the "stone's throw" (Luke 22:41) refers to the nine, or the three, but even if the three were within earshot how much would they hear asleep? Did Jesus tell them after His resurrection? Or did the Holy Spirit simply reveal it? And how did they know about the blood if they were asleep?

[4] Notice that the second prayer is less 'desperate'—Jesus is getting the victory over His anguish. I believe the real battle was won in Gethsemane—the cross was just the mopping-up.

[5] The Greek verb phrase here is a periphrastic pluperfect, passive voice = 'had been'. The clear implication is that there was supernatural involvement. Just as Jesus had to face the devil alone in the desert, without angelic help (Matthew 4:11), so here He faced His trial alone, without human help.

[6] I take it that Jesus is reproving them with a bit of gentle sarcasm, since He goes on to say, "Get up"—although there could have been an interval between verses 45 and 46.

being betrayed into sinners' hands. 46Get up, let's go; behold my betrayer!"[1]

Jesus is betrayed[2]

47And while He was still speaking, there was Judas, one of the twelve, and with him a large crowd with swords and clubs,[3] *sent* from the chief priests and elders of the people. 48(Now His betrayer had given them a sign saying, "Whomever I kiss, it is He; take Him!") 49And he went right up to Jesus and said, "Greetings, Rabbi!" and kissed Him. 50So Jesus said to him, "Friend, what brings you here?"[4] Then approaching they laid hands on Jesus and took Him. 51And then, one of those with Jesus stretched out his hand and drew his sword, and striking the servant of the high priest he cut off his ear![5] 52But Jesus says to him: "Put your sword back into its place, for all who take the sword will die by the sword. 53Do you actually suppose that I cannot call upon my Father right now and He will place beside me more than twelve legions of angels?[6] 54But how then would the Scriptures be fulfilled that it has to happen this way?" 55At that time Jesus said to the crowd: "Have you come out with swords and clubs, as against a bandit, to arrest me? I used to sit daily with you in the temple, teaching, and you did not seize me. 56But all this has happened so that the Scriptures of the prophets should be fulfilled." Then all the disciples forsook Him and ran away.

57So those who had seized Jesus led Him away to Caiaphas the high priest, where the scribes and the elders were assembled. 58Now Peter was following Him at a distance, up to the high priest's courtyard. And going inside he sat down with the attendants, to see the end.

Jesus tried by the Council

59The chief priests and the elders, in fact the whole Council, kept looking for false witnesses against Jesus so that they could put Him to death, 60but did not find any. Even though many false witnesses came forward, they did not find any. But at last two false witnesses came forward 61and said, "This *fellow* said, 'I am able to destroy the temple of

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[1] I here follow the best line of transmission, with only 20% of the Greek manuscripts.

[2] For a harmonization of the accounts of the betrayal and arrest, please see the article with this title, in my website: www.prunch.org.

[3] Jesus had repeatedly demonstrated unusual power, and they were probably expecting some resistance—hence the crowd.

[4] Jesus knew perfectly well why Judas was there, so why did He call him "friend"? Perhaps to show that He held no personal animosity against him. Here read John 18:4-9. Jesus is clearly in control. They finally laid hands on Him only because He allowed it—it had to be; it was the Father's will.

[5] From John 18:10 we know that it was Peter, and that the servant was Malchus. The Text has 'the servant', so the high priest had probably put him in charge of the operation. Obviously Peter was not used to wielding a sword.

[6] That would be a minimum of 36,000—probably enough to handle the situation, don't you think?

God and to rebuild it in three days.'"[1] 62And standing up the high priest said to Him: "Do you answer nothing?[2] What is it that these men are testifying against you?" 63But Jesus kept silent. So reacting the high priest said to Him, "I put you under oath by the Living God so that you tell us if you are the Messiah, the Son of God!"[3] 64Jesus says to him: "You said it. Furthermore, I tell you, hereafter you will see the Son of the Man sitting at the Power's right, and coming on the clouds of heaven."[4] 65Then the high priest tore his clothes saying: "He has blasphemed! Why do we still need witnesses? See, now you have heard His blasphemy! 66What do you think?" So in answer they said, "He deserves death!" 67Then they spat in His face and punched Him, while others slapped Him 68saying, "Messiah, prophesy to us! Who is the one who hit you?"[5]

Peter denies Jesus

69Now Peter sat outside in the courtyard. And a certain servant girl approached him saying, "You too were with Jesus the Galilean." 70But he denied before them all saying, "I don't know what you are saying." 71And having gone out to the gateway, another girl saw him and says to those who were there, "This *fellow* also was with Jesus the Natsorean." 72And he denied again, with an oath, "I do not know the man!" 73But a little later the bystanders came up and said to Peter, "Really, you too are one of them, because your very accent gives you away!" 74Then he began to curse and to swear, "I do not know the man!!" And immediately a rooster crowed. 75And Peter remembered[6] the word that Jesus had said to him, "Before *any* rooster crows, you will deny me three times." And going out he cried bitterly.

Crucifixion Day—Friday, 04/05/30

27 1When early morning came, all the chief priests and elders plotted against Jesus to kill Him. 2And having bound Him they went and

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[1] Of course, Jesus had said nothing of the kind, but even if He had, it would just be stupid, not criminal.

[2] A freer rendering would be, "Aren't you going to answer?"—the priest was frustrated, getting desperate. He had to get results.

[3] What the priest did was cowardly and illegal. He had to come up with two witnesses on his own. Of course, under oath to the Living God Jesus had to answer, and of course He would tell the truth. And if He told the truth, it wasn't blasphemy. During His ministry He had given more than enough evidence in support of His claim. They simply refused to acknowledge it. From the way Caiaphas framed the oath, I think he knew in his heart that Jesus was indeed the Messiah (just as Satan knows it) but had determined to rebel against Him.

[4] Jesus made it easy for him, gave him more than he asked. According to the Plan, He had to be condemned. But being in Hades (they were lost), how could they see Jesus at the Father's right? I don't know.

[5] Just like Satan entered Judas (John 13:27), the gang here was probably under satanic influence (which would help to explain their perversity)—according to Luke 22:64, they blindfolded Him first, before hitting Him!

[6] Yes, but only after Jesus looked at him (Luke 22:61) and broke the satanic spell (Luke 22:31).

handed Him over to Pontius[1] Pilate, the governor.

The end of Judas—parenthetical

3(Then Judas, His betrayer, seeing that He had been condemned, felt regret and returned the thirty silver *coins* to the chief priests and elders **4**saying, "I sinned, by betraying innocent blood." But they said: "What do we care? It's your problem!" **5**So throwing the silver down in the sanctuary he left, and went and hanged himself![2] **6**Then the chief priests took the coins and said, "It isn't lawful to put them into the treasury, being blood money."[3] **7**So after consultation they bought the potter's field with them, as a burial ground for strangers. **8**Therefore that field has been called 'field of blood' to this day. **9**Then was fulfilled what was spoken through Jeremiah the prophet,[4] namely: "And they took the thirty silver *coins*, the value of the one who was priced, whom some of the children of Israel priced, **10**and they gave them for the potter's field, just as the LORD directed me.")

Jesus before Pilate

11So Jesus stood before the governor. And the governor asked Him saying, "Are you the king of the Jews?" Jesus said to him, "As you say." **12**But although the chief priests and elders kept accusing Him, He answered nothing. **13**Then Pilate says to Him, "Don't you hear all that they are saying against you?" **14**But He did not answer him, not even one word, so that the governor was really amazed.

"We want Barabbas!"

15Now at the feast the governor was accustomed to release one prisoner to the crowd, whomever they wanted. **16**Just then they had a notorious prisoner called Barabbas. **17**So while they were assembled Pilate said to them, "Whom do you want me to release to you, Barabbas or Jesus who is called Messiah?" **18**For he knew that they had handed Him over through envy.

19Now as he was sitting on the judgment seat, his wife sent to him saying, "Have nothing to do with that righteous man, because I suffered a great deal in a dream today because of Him."

20But the chief priests and elders had persuaded the crowds that

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[1] Perhaps 0.5% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, omit "Pontius" (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

[2] For a discussion of the seeming discrepancy with Acts 1:18-19, please see: 'How did Judas die?'

[3] Having gulped down a camel they now strain out a gnat. When you put on legalistic blinders you lose moral perspective.

[4] The quote resembles Zechariah 11:12-13 (not a perfect fit) but really has no counterpart in the canonical Jeremiah. However, Daniel (9:2) refers to "the books" (plural) in connection with Jeremiah the prophet. Just as Jude (verse 14) had access to a prophecy by Enoch, of which no copy survives, Matthew may have had access to other writings of Jeremiah (Daniel 9:2), of which no copy survives. For further discussion of this, please see: 'Jeremiah? Matthew 27:9-10', in my website: www.prunch.org.

they should ask for Barabbas, but destroy Jesus. 21So the governor spoke up and said to them, "Which of the two do you want me to release to you?" And they said, "Barabbas!" 22Pilate says to them, "What then shall I do with Jesus who is called Messiah?" They all say to him, "Let Him be crucified!" 23So the governor said, "But, what evil did He do?" But they kept yelling all the more saying, "Let Him be crucified!!" 24When Pilate saw that nothing was being gained but rather a riot was starting, he took water and washed his hands in front of the crowd saying: "I am innocent of the blood of this righteous man.[1] It's your problem!" 25So in answer all the people said, "His blood be upon us and upon our children!"[2] 26Then he released Barabbas to them, but Jesus, after flogging Him,[3] he delivered to be crucified.

Soldiers make fun of Jesus

27Then the governor's soldiers took Jesus into the Praetorium and gathered the whole garrison around Him. 28They stripped Him and put a scarlet cloak on Him. 29They plaited a crown out of thorns and put it on His head, and a reed in His right hand; and kneeling before Him they would mock Him saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!"[4] 30Spitting on Him they took the reed and hit Him repeatedly on the head.[5] 31After they had mocked Him they took the cloak off Him and put His own clothes back on; and they led Him away to be crucified.

The crucifixion

32Now as they went out they found a man of Cyrene, named Simon; they compelled <u>him</u> to carry His cross. 33Upon arriving at a place called Golgotha, which means 'place of a skull', 34they gave Him sour wine mixed with gall to drink;[6] but having tasted it He would not drink. 35Having crucified Him they distributed His clothes among themselves,

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[1] Perhaps 0.5% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, omit "righteous" (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.). Notice that Pilate declares Jesus to be righteous.

[2] Terrible, terrible, terrible! This may well be the worst curse that any parents ever placed upon their descendants. Just terrible!!

[3] Apparently flogging was considered to be a necessary part of the ritual/procedure—you had to flog first, and then crucify!

[4] They were really having fun! The soldiers were not Jews and presumably did not know anything about Jesus. They probably held a low opinion of Jews in general, and some 'peasant' who thought he was a king, well …

[5] Here they get nasty. The thorns were probably poisonous and the blows drove the points into His scalp down to the bone. His face began to swell from the poison; the blood oozing from the wounds was mixed with the spit. We assume from Isaiah 50:6 that the soldiers also yanked out parts of His beard, which would have torn away the skin as well. The total effect must have been horrible, leaving Jesus unrecognizable—Isaiah 52:14 was literally fulfilled.

[6] This was a small humanitarian gesture—gall is a crude anesthetic, and would deaden the pain. But Jesus refused it, so He remained fully alert on the cross and felt it all. For a discussion of the seeming discrepancy with Mark, please see: 'Gall', or 'myrrh'?

having cast lots.[1] **36**And sitting down there they guarded Him.[2] **37**And they put the charge against Him above His head in writing:

THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS.[3]

38At the same time they crucified two bandits with Him, one on His right and one on His left. **39**And the passers-by kept blaspheming Him, wagging their heads **40**and saying: "You who destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save yourself!" "If you are 'Son of God', come down from the cross!" **41**Likewise the chief priests also, mocking with the scribes and elders and Pharisees, said: **42**"He saved others; himself he cannot save!" "If he is 'King of Israel' let him come down from the cross now and we will believe him!"[4] **43**"He trusted in God; let Him rescue him now, if He wants him; for he said, 'I am God's Son.'" **44**Even the bandits who were crucified with Him were reviling Him in the same way.[5]

Jesus takes the 'wages' for our sin

45Now from the sixth hour until the ninth hour a darkness came over all the land. **46**And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice saying, "*Eli, Eli, lima sabachtani*?" which means, "My God, my God, why have You abandoned me?"[6] **47**So upon hearing it some of the bystanders said, "This *man* is calling Elijah." **48**Right then one of them ran and took a sponge, filled it with sour wine, put it on a reed and started to give Him a drink; **49**but the rest said: "Don't! Let's see if Elijah comes to save Him."[7]

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[1] If they divided up His clothes it means they were no longer on Him—one last bit of humiliation. Perhaps 95% of the Greek manuscripts do not have the rest of verse 35 as found in the KJV and NKJV, although it would make a nice addition.

[2] The Lord was alive on the cross for some six hours, and the soldiers had to stay there to make sure no one tried to interfere with 'justice'. So naturally they sat down.

[3] The board must have been of fair size, because the full Accusation, in three languages (John 19:20), was: "This is Jesus the Natsorean, the king of the Jews".

[4] This was a lie; they already knew that Jesus was the Messiah but had deliberately rejected Him. However, if Jesus had descended from the cross (as presumably He had the power to do) we would be without hope. The people were being satanically nasty, but Jesus was totally committed to the Father's will and thus the redemptive program was not aborted.

[5] Evidently they both started out by reviling Him, but later one of them repented—they were on the cross about three hours before the supernatural darkness, so there was time to think.

[6] I take it that the Father turned His back on the Son during those three hours—to be separated from the Father is spiritual death. For Jesus to pay for my sin and yours He had to take our wages: "The wages of sin is death"—both physical and spiritual.

[7] Comparing this verse with Mark 15:36 we have an apparent discrepancy: Matthew records that others told the man to stop, while Mark records that the man told them to stop! So which is it? What I imagine is this: as both accounts state, a certain man [could it possibly have been John Mark himself?] decides to offer Jesus a drink of wine vinegar; several others, supposing that Jesus had just called on Elijah, tell him to stop; to which he retorts, "You (pl) stop!" and repeats their statement with sarcasm [anyone who really understood the language would have known that Jesus wasn't calling Elijah at all]. However, it does appear that the man stopped his action before Jesus could

*The shout of **victory***

50Then Jesus called out again with a great shout and dismissed His spirit.[1] **51**And then, the veil of the temple was ripped in two from top to bottom![2] And the earth was shaken, and the rocks were split, **52**and the graves were opened. (And many bodies, of the saints who had fallen asleep, were raised; **53**and coming forth out of the graves after His resurrection, they entered the holy city and were made visible to many.[3]) **54**Now when the centurion and those with him guarding Jesus saw the earthquake and all that happened they were scared stiff and said, "This *Man* really was the Son of God!"[4]

55Many women who followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering to Him, were also there looking on from a distance;[5] **56**among whom were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Joses, and the mother of the sons of Zebedee.

The burial

57Now at evening there appeared a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who himself had also become a disciple of Jesus.[6] **58**This man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Then Pilate ordered

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drink, since a bit later Jesus says, "I'm thirsty" (John 19:28). For more, please see 'Who said what?', in my website: www.prunch.org.

[1] Oh praise God! Jesus dismissed His spirit (see also John 19:30)—it was not the cross that killed Him (for details see the note at 27:54 below). As He said in John 10:18, "no one takes it from me, but I lay it down of myself". I take it that John 19:30 gives the content of the shout—*Τετελεσται!* = "Paid in full!" It was a shout of victory. For a fuller discussion, please see 'Did the cross kill Jesus?', in my website: www.prunch.org.

[2] God Himself ripped the veil (or ordered it done). Access to God's presence is no longer limited to one man once a year. See Hebrews 10:19-22.

[3] Wow! How would you like a departed saint to knock at your door?! It would be tremendous confirmatory evidence for Christ's resurrection. The Text does not say what happened to these resurrected saints, but to be sent back into the ground would be a real drag. It is more likely that they went with the risen Christ to heaven.

[4] "All that happened" is better explained in Mark 15:39—the loud shout followed immediately by death convinced the centurion. He had seen many crucifixions and was doubtless hardened to it. He knew that a person on a cross dies from asphyxiation. The weight of the body pushes the diaphragm against the lungs and you cannot breathe. Nailing the feet was a sadistic procedure that prolonged the agony—rather than die they would push against the nail to get a breath. Finally, when too weak to do that they would die for lack of air. (That is why they broke the legs of the two thieves; they then died within a few minutes.) Obviously, if you are dying without air you cannot shout! The centurion knew that the cross had not killed Jesus. But what mere human can just tell his spirit to leave? 2 + 2 = 4. Jesus had to be the Son of God.

[5] "Ministering to Him"—here we may have a clue as to how Jesus was maintained financially during His ministry, since He presumably did not have time for carpentry.

[6] He "appeared"—he had been waiting in the wings. Just as with the owner of the donkey, and the owner of the upper room, who were doubtless advised in advance that their services would be needed, Joseph was prepared. He didn't just "happen" to have a tomb he didn't know what to do with, complete with a large stone just right for sealing. According to Isaiah 53:9 He was to have a rich man's grave, not whatever the common criminals got (the Father did not allow the Son's body to suffer that humiliation).

that the body be given. 59So taking the body Joseph wrapped it in a clean linen cloth 60and placed it in his *own* new tomb that he had cut out of the rock. Then he rolled a large stone against the door of the tomb and left. 61And Mary Magdalene was there, and the other Mary, sitting opposite the grave.[1]

The tomb is guarded

62The next day, which is after the Preparation, the chief priests and the Pharisees went together to Pilate 63saying: "Sir, we remember that that deceiver, while still alive, said, 'After three days I am going to rise.' 64Therefore command that the grave be made secure until the third day, lest His disciples come by night and steal Him and say to the people, 'He was raised from the dead,' and the last deception will be worse than the first." 65So Pilate said to them, "You have a guard; go make it as secure as you can!"[2] 66So they went and secured the grave with the guard, having sealed the stone.[3]

Resurrection Day—Sunday, 04/07/30

28 1Now after the Sabbath, at the dawning of the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene, and the other Mary, came to see the tomb. 2Now then, a big earthquake had occurred, because an angel of the Lord, descending out of heaven, had come and rolled back the stone from the door,[4] and sat on it![5] 3And his appearance was like lightning and his clothing as white as snow. 4So the guards were shaken for fear of him, and became like dead men.

The angel does his duty

5Now the angel spoke up and said to the women:[6] "Do not be afraid! I know that you are looking for the Jesus who was crucified. 6He is not

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1 All four Gospels refer to the burial, furnishing complimentary details. For a harmonization of those accounts, please see the article with this title on my website: prunch.org.

2 Was Pilate happy? No, he was not! And maybe, just maybe, he was not as stupid as some might like to think. From Mark 15:44-45 we know that he debriefed the centurion, who had to explain why Jesus died sooner than expected! "Make it as sure as you can." Right. For a detailed analysis concerning Pilate, please see: 'Poor Pilate—wrong place, wrong time' on my website: prunch.org.

3 Ironically those great champions of the Sabbath had to violate the Sabbath to secure the tomb. They thought they were being shrewd, but only played into God's hand. Their effort only made the evidence for the resurrection all the stronger. Consider: who removed the stone? (It was sealed with the seal of Rome.)

4 Perhaps 0.5% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, omit "from the door" (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

5 The stone was not removed to let Jesus out, but to let the witnesses in.

6 Comparing this account with Mark 16:5-7 we conclude that the women did not see the angel outside on the stone—he only appeared to them inside the tomb. And if a shining angel had been on the stone Magdalene would not have assumed that the body had been stolen (John 20:2). If I had been one of those guards, I think I would have converted on the spot—surely some of them believed and later they gave their eyewitness account to the Christian community. It has been common for people to

here, because He is risen, just like He said! Come, see the place where the Lord was lying.[1] 7Now go quickly and tell His disciples that He is risen from the dead; and get this, He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him. There, I have told you!"[2] 8So they went out quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to report to His disciples.

Jesus' second appearance

9But as they were going to report to His disciples,[3] wow, Jesus met them saying, "Rejoice!" So approaching, they held His feet and worshipped Him. 10Then Jesus says to them: "Do not be afraid! Go report to my brothers[4] that they must go to Galilee, and there they will see me."[5]

Guards are bribed

11Now while they were going, get this, some of the guard went into the city and reported to the chief priests all that had happened.[6] 12When they had met with the elders and consulted together, they gave plenty of money to the soldiers 13saying: "Say that his disciples came at night and stole him while you were sleeping. 14And should this get to the governor, we will persuade him and make you safe." 15So taking the money they did as they were instructed. Their tale is widely spread among the Jews until this day.

The Great Commission

16The eleven disciples went into Galilee to the mountain that Jesus had indicated to them.[7] 17When they saw Him they worshipped Him; but some doubted.[8] 18And approaching, Jesus asserted to them saying: "All

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think that the four Gospels contradict each other, with reference to the events surrounding the Resurrection. For a detailed analysis, please see 'Harmonizing the accounts of the Resurrection' on my website: prunch.org.

1 Perhaps 0.5% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, omit "the Lord" (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

2 It almost sounds like he was glad to get it off his chest. I wonder why.

3 Some 12% of the Greek manuscripts omit this first clause (as in NIV, NASB, [LB], TEV, etc.). Mark 16:9 makes clear that the first appearance was to Magdalene.

4 The angel said "disciples", but Jesus said "brothers". It may be that He was referring precisely to His half-brothers James, Jude, etc. They would not have been in the upper room with the Eleven, and so did not see Him at that time.

5 The four Gospels give complementary details about Christ's appearances after His resurrection. For a harmonization, please see the article with this title on my website: prunch.org.

6 "Some"—so where were the rest? Those who were converted, as I suppose, would not want to be part of the cover-up.

7 Curiously, Matthew does not mention the appearances on the first two Sundays, in the upper room, in Jerusalem.

8 It seems improbable that all of them would doubt (after all, they had seen Him at least twice already), so most translations render "some". Although verse 16 refers specifically to the eleven, there may have been others (like His half-brothers, verse 10) along who had not seen Him yet.

authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. **19**As you go,[1] make disciples in all ethnic nations: baptizing them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit;[2] **20**teaching them to obey everything that I commanded <u>you</u>;[3] and take note, I am with you every day, until the end of the age!"[4]

Amen.[5]

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[1] The familiar 'therefore' is found in perhaps 5% of the Greek manuscripts, but it is a logical inference.

[2] Our Lord defines the Trinity here. According to Greek grammar the use of 'and' plus the definite article with items in a series makes clear that the items are distinct entities. So "the Father" is different from "the Son" is different from "the Holy Spirit". So we have three persons. But He also said, "into <u>the</u> name", singular, not 'names'. So we have only one name. God is one 'name' or essence subsisting in three persons.

This baptism is to be administered **into the name of the Trinity, which represents a new revelation about the nature of God.** It also represents a new 'religion', being different from what was known up to that time. In the OT there are veiled references, and looking back we can associate them with the Trinity, but here we have the first clear statement of it. But what does it mean to be baptized into the name of the Trinity?

A person's name represents that person. To do something 'in the name of the king' means that the king gave the order; whoever said it represents the king (or claims that he does). So what does it mean to be baptized into the Trinity? Well, if you are within the Trinity, you are protected by them, since to reach you an attack must pass through them. That is tremendous! So then, the true meaning of this baptism should be this: it is a public declaration, taking a formal stand, whereby the candidate is formally renouncing Satan, and the world he controls, and is placing himself under the protection of the Triune God. It is to change sides, to change kingdoms. (Kind reader, do you know of any local church, anywhere, that teaches this meaning for this baptism? Alas!) For a fuller discussion, please see 'Baptisms in the Bible', in my website: www.prunch.org.

[3] The 'you' here refers to the eleven (see verse 16), so they were to pass down all the commands that Jesus had given them. To be a disciple of Jesus you should do everything that Jesus had commanded the eleven to do—this includes healing and casting out demons, as well as preaching the Gospel.

[4] Since the age has not ended, Jesus is still with us. Praise God!

[5] Around 50% of the Greek manuscripts, including the best line of transmission, have a colophon that says, "published eight years after the Ascension of Christ". For 50% of the manuscripts to have this probably means that the tradition is ancient. If this information is correct, Matthew's Gospel was turned over to the public ('published') in 38 AD.