

The Gospel According to

MATTHEW



BIBLE STUDY COURSE BY
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The Gospel of Matthew

Introducing God's King to the World

The story of Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God, who his Heavenly Father sent to earth to preach the Good News of the Gospel and to serve as a substitutional atonement for our sins thus reconciling wicked humans to a holy God. God gave him a human nature so that he could be the perfect sacrifice for our sins. Despite human weakness he never sinned.

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Author's Preface



Since my conversion in December 1988 at the age of 47 years, old, I have studied and taught the Bible. What an exciting experience this has been as God led me through book after book in his revelation of himself. I have taught the Gospels many times but seem to always return to my favorite, the Gospel called According to John.

After these years, I have concluded that the Gospel According to John was written by Lazarus, whom Jesus raised from the dead. Lazarus was a retired priest who had a home in Bethany on the Mount of Olives next to the City of Jerusalem. After Pentecost, Lazarus and his two sisters took Mary, the mother of Jesus back to Galilee where Lazarus wrote this Gospel in the mid-30's AD.

Peter in the meantime had begun the Jerusalem church. But in 45 AD, King Herod Agrippa I killed James Zebedee. Then he put Peter in prison. But an angel freed Peter who went directly to the home of Mary whose son was John Mark. Peter left Jerusalem to go to Rome taking with him John Mark, who wrote the Gospel of Mark in Rome for the Christians living there based on the preaching of Peter.

Then Peter returned to Jerusalem as James, the half-brother of Jesus, was still administering the Jerusalem church. The church needed a catechism, a book of learning for their new Christians so Peter organized a study group who wrote the Gospel According to Matthew for new Christians in Jerusalem around 50 AD. Using Mark's Gospel as a start, they filled in many details Mark had left out.

During this time in Antioch, 300 miles north of Jerusalem, Paul and Barnabas, John Mark's cousin, were ministering to Jews and Gentiles. In 62 AD, Paul was put in prison in Caesarea Maritima, the city where the Roman Governor had his palace. For two years, while Paul was in prison, this gave his companion, Dr. Luke, time to take Mark's Gospel as a start, then interviewing people who had known Jesus he added many details Mark had left out. Dr. Luke

began to write his Gospel and then his second volume, called the Acts of the Apostles focusing first on Peter and then on Paul.

This is the way I conclude the Gospels developed. The Jerusalem study group was mainly interested in assisting Jews to believe in Jesus, so they developed this Gospel using many Jewish traditions. Because they studied mainly the first five books of the Torah, Moses' Teachings, they saw Jesus as a new Moses teaching giving five great sermons. Using the testimony of those who remembered Jesus' activities, they preceded each sermon with stories of Jesus' three-year earthly ministry.

They also wanted to give more of the teaching of Jesus on what he desired of his disciples to understand and do. His Great Commission given at the end of the Gospel was the key. The Gospels of Matthew and John were written to bring Jews into the church. The Gospels of Mark and Luke were written for Gentiles so Jewish customs were explained. James himself wrote a letter before he was killed in 62 AD.

With this as a background, we want to look at what the Jerusalem study group emphasized in the Gospel of Matthew. They wanted to present the entire story of Jesus showing how he fulfilled the prophecies of the Hebrew prophets beginning with Moses.

Jesus was the prophet to come in **Deuteronomy 18:15,17** that Moses talked about. Jesus was the Anointed One whom God promised King David his descendant would always rule on the throne of Israel. **2 Samuel 7:16**. Jesus was the future ruler of Israel that would be born in Bethlehem. **Micah 5:2**. Jesus was the Savior the prophet Isaiah said would come to Zion. **Isaiah 59:20**. Jesus was that descendant of Abraham whom God promised to the patriarch Abraham that his descendants would bless all the families of the earth. **Genesis 12:3**

Jesus was Immanuel, the one prophesied in **Isaiah 7:14**. God made the virgin Mary of Nazareth pregnant with Jesus by the Holy Spirit whom she would name Immanuel meaning God Is With Us.

But most of all, Jesus called himself the Son of Man. Even the High Priest, Joseph Caiaphas knew what Jesus meant by this title. **Matthew 26:64:54**. Jesus was referring to the great prophet Daniel who told of the Ancient of Days giving the Son of Man a Kingdom that would never be destroyed. **Daniel 7:13-14**. Jesus was the King of the Jews. Even the Roman Governor Pilate proclaimed him this. **Matthew 27:37**

The Jerusalem church had prepared a Gospel that was an exciting story for Jews who knew their Torah. Jesus fulfilled so many prophecies, especially those of Isaiah. It is no wonder that the church placed this Gospel as the first of the four Gospels in the canon of the New

Testament. It was the perfect book of transition from the Old Testament to the New Testament after 400 years of silence when God never spoke to his Chosen People.

How appropriate then, that the writer Matthew began the Gospel with a genealogy of Jesus' father Joseph that went back to Abraham, the first patriarch of the Chosen People. And he used a very Jewish way to do this.

Notes on this Bible Translation and My Editorial Insertions

The translation used in this study is the *GOD'S WORD* translation. © 1995 by God's Word to the Nations Mission Society (GWT). The GWT translation is an attempt to make the English text of the Bible developed in the 1500's more readable to modern Americans. It is not a paraphrase, but it has retranslated the oldest manuscripts into modern American English at about newspaper level using "closest natural equivalence". The Bible is meant by God to be understood. Therefore, using modern language is essential.

I have used this translation in my teaching since 1996 and have found it very accurate. I love the King James Version and so when there are variances in the GWT, I may insert within the Bible text the original transliterated Hebrew or Greek word in **10-point bold-face type** followed by an English word to help better understand the meaning of the passage. English words added to aid in understanding are also in 10-point type but are not in bold. Lastly, if the original Hebrew or Greek word appears in the Bible 10 times or less, I may also indicate how often it appears (e.g., 10x or 2x, etc.). Here's an example from John 11:33 and the raising of Lazarus involving three Greek words:

³³When Jesus saw her crying and the Jews who were crying with her were deeply moved *embrimaomai*-groaned 5x *pneuma*-spirit and troubled *tarasso*-agitated.

This has shown me that the GWT translation is remarkable for finding the right meanings to phrases that are often difficult to translate.

Notes on Font Usage

All text is in the Big Caslon font. Scripture text is in regular **14-point**. If I have inserted parallel Scripture quotations, they are also in regular **14-point**, but are slightly further indented (.08) than the main Scripture text and are enclosed by brackets []. All Scripture citations are in **12-point bold face**. All my comments and questions to think about are all in regular 12-point.

Introduction

In 6 BC, God's Chosen People were suffering. The Holy Land was occupied by pagan Gentile armies of Rome. The Holy People had been ruled since 37 BC by Rome's client King, Herod the Great, an Idumean from the former country of Edom that was throughout history one of Israel's most hated enemies. **Psalm 137:7**. Herod was cruel, collecting Roman taxes effectively and mainly concerned with building programs. He had a personal bodyguard of 2,000 soldiers and crushed any rebellions ruthlessly. He was a Gentile, an Arab, thus violating God's command that Israel's King should be a one of their own people. **Deuteronomy 17:15**

Israel was a small country, about 60 miles wide and 120 miles long. The northern part was called the Galilee consisting of a rural population of Jews and Gentiles who attempted to avoid each other. Most were farmers whose land was owned by Gentiles. They were either tenant farmers or day laborers with subsistence living having few possessions still heavily taxed. Over 80% of their income was spent on food.

There was a concentration of a mixed race of Gentiles and Jews called Samaritans whom the Jews also avoided in the middle part of the Land. In fact, when Jews traveled south from Galilee to Jerusalem, they crossed east across the Jordan River running from north to south in Perea to avoid the Samaritans. The Samaritans worshiped on Mount Gerizim in Samaria instead of in Jerusalem where the great Temple was located.

The southern region of Israel was called Judea with the largest city in Israel built on God's Holy Mountain of Jerusalem founded by King David around 1000 BC. David's son Solomon built a huge Temple for God where God called every Jew to worship three times a year, at Passover, Pentecost, and at Tabernacles or Booths. In an attempt to engender himself to the Jews, King Herod the Great enlarged the Temple in a building program that had been going on during the time of Jesus for the past 46 years.

Most of the people in Jerusalem either worked at the Temple or supplied the many pilgrims who came to Jerusalem for the three festivals especially the Feast of Passover and Unleavened Bread - a time when Jews remembered God delivering them from slavery in Egypt around 1,300 BC.

Herod the Great died in 4 BC when Jesus was two years old. His kingdom in Rome was then divided among his three sons with Galilee and Perea given to Herod's son Herod Antipas, a northern part to Philip, and Judea and Idumean to Herod Archelaus. Archelaus was later removed so in 6 AD the Province of Judea was ruled by a Roman Governor with a palace at Caesarea Maritima on the Mediterranean Sea.

The Romans were mainly concerned with keeping a flow of taxes and grain flowing to Rome. So the internal affairs of Judea were managed by a Sanhedrin, a 70 member group of chief priests, scribes, and tribal lay leaders headed by a High Priest located in Jerusalem.

There were 20,000 priests attached to the Temple most of whom served only twice a year for a week each. All of them served at the three annual festivals. Most of the priests lived either in Jerusalem or in Jericho, the City of Palm Trees, located 20 miles north of the city. The population of Jerusalem was normally 50,000, but swelled during the festivals to 250,000.

The people in Jerusalem disliked the Galileans considering them country folk with a distinctive accent. Like the Galileans, most of the Jewish people in Jerusalem were poor although there were Jewish elites who compromised with Romans and lived Hellenistic lifestyles.

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PART I:

The Pre-Ministry of Jesus of Nazareth

PERICOPES 1-6

Here Matthew presents what happened to Jesus before he began his ministry at 30 years old. He begins with the genealogy of the King. In Jewish culture you can tell how important a person is by relating his ancestry. Most males were only titled by their father. Joseph, Jesus' guardian, was titled Joseph bar Jacob. A King could have ten or twelve ancestors.

Matthew relates the birth of Jesus referring to Mary only as Joseph's wife and being a virgin when Jesus is born. Joseph was obedient to the angel. Jesus is born in Bethlehem in a house and two years later Gentiles arrive to worship him. King Herod the Great is frightened and sends soldiers to kill all the male children in Bethlehem two years old and younger. But an angel warns Joseph and the family escapes to Egypt in BC. Later they return to Nazareth.

Matthew discusses John the Baptist announcing Jesus as the Mighty One who will baptize with the Holy Spirit and fire. When Jesus arrives, John baptizes Jesus, the Heavens are opened, the Holy Spirit descends as a dove, and God speaks identifying Jesus as his Beloved Son. Then the Holy Spirit leads Jesus into the desert to be tempted by Satan.

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Pericope I

The Genealogy of Jesus of Nazareth

Matthew 1:1-17

The Family Line of Jesus Christ

1:1 This is the list of ancestors of Jesus Christ, descendant of David and Abraham.

From Abraham to King David

²**Abraham** was the father of Isaac, **Isaac** the father of Jacob, **Jacob** the father of Judah and his brothers. ³**Judah** and **Tamar** were the father and mother of Perez and Zerah. **Perez** was the father of Hezron, **Hezron** the father of Ram, ⁴**Ram** the father of Amminadab, **Amminadab** the father of Nahshon, **Nahshon** the father of Salmon. ⁵**Salmon** and **Rahab** were the father and mother of Boaz. **Boaz** and **Ruth** were the father and mother of Obed. **Obed** was the father of Jesse. ⁶**Jesse** the father of King David.

From King David to the Babylonian Exile

David and **Uriah's wife** Bathsheba were the father and mother of Solomon. ⁷**Solomon** was the father of Rehoboam, **Rehoboam** the father of Abijah, **Abijah** the father of Asa, ⁸**Asa** the father of Jehoshaphat, **Jehoshaphat** the father of Joram, **Joram** the father of Uzziah, ⁹**Uzziah** the father of Jotham, **Jotham** the father of Ahaz, **Ahaz** the father of Hezekiah, ¹⁰**Hezekiah** the father of Manasseh, **Manasseh** the father of Amon, **Amon** the father of Josiah. ¹¹**Josiah** was the father of **Jechoniah** and his brothers. They lived at the time when the people were exiled to Babylon.

From the Babylonian Exile to the Birth of Jesus of Nazareth

¹²After the exile to Babylon, **Jechoniah** became the father of Shealtiel. **Shealtiel** was the father of Zerubbabel, ¹³**Zerubbabel** the father of Abiud, **Abiud** the father of Eliakim, **Eliakim** the father of Azor, ¹⁴**Azor** the father of Zadok, **Zadok** the father of Achim, **Achim** the father of Eliud, ¹⁵**Eliud** the

father of Eleazar, **Eleazar** the father of Matthan, **Matthan** the father of Jacob. ¹⁶**Jacob** was the father of **Joseph**, who was the husband of Mary. Mary was the mother of Jesus, who is called Christ.

¹⁷So there were 14 generations from Abraham to David, 14 generations from David until the exile to Babylon, 14 generations from the exile until the Messiah.

WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED SO FAR?

This is a stylized ancestry of Jesus. Matthew has not included many that were actually in the genealogy of Joseph. In the Hebrew gematria, David is **DVD**. D=4; V=6; D=4. So there are three 14's. Matthew begins with Abraham, the first ancestor of the Chosen People. God made a Covenant with Abraham that his descendants would bless all the families of the earth. **Genesis 12:3**

Matthew then takes this ancestry up to King David, the man to whom God made a Covenant that his descendants would rule Judah forever. **2 Samuel 7:16**. David was Israel's ideal King, who reigned 40 years and wrote 73 of the Psalms. He was also *a man after God's own heart*. **1 Samuel 13:14**. Then he takes the covenant to the Babylonian Exile to show that even in exile, the Davidic ancestry would be continued.

From the return of the Exile in 535 BC, Matthew shows the genealogy down to Joseph Mary's husband. Even though Matthew did not impregnate Mary – the Holy Spirit did – Joseph did name Jesus. In doing so, Joseph adopted Jesus as his own son. In the Gospel According to Luke. Luke shows that Mary's genealogy was also through King David. **Luke 3:23-28**

In this third section, there was a Covenant too. By his death on the cross, Jesus inaugurated the New Covenant prophesied by Jeremiah. **Jeremiah 31:31-34**

Matthew also includes four women in the genealogy, something quite unusual. Tamar was a Jewish woman who had sex with her father-in-law Judah. Rahab was a Gentile Canaanite prostitute in the city of Jericho who hid Israelite spies. Ruth was a Gentile from Moab. Uriah's wife Bathsheba may have been Jewish, but her husband was a Gentile Hittite as she may also have been. So Matthew shows that the Messiah's ancestry may not have been ethnically cleanly Jewish.

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

1. Matthew begins by using a title for Jesus of Jesus Christ. In Greek Christ is *christos* or anointed one. Read **1 Samuel 16:1-13**. Why is the Messiah called the Anointed One? The word Messiah appears in **Daniel 9:25,26** and in **John 1:41;4:25**.
2. In the original text Bathsheba is only mentioned as Uriah's wife. Her name Bathsheba doesn't appear. Why is this? HINT: Read **2 Samuel 11:1-12:25**
3. Why does Matthew say: *Jechoniah and his brothers*? After Josiah, his son Jehoahaz ruled, then his son Jehoiakim, then his grandson Jechoniah aka: Jehoiakin, then Josiah's son Zedekiah who was taken into captivity. Jechoniah didn't have brothers that we know of. Read **2 Kings 23:30-24:20**; **2 Chronicles 36:1-22**. Wasn't Zedekiah the last King of Judah before the Babylonian Exile?
4. Why does Matthew include the four *women* in this genealogy? Women were not included in genealogies until the Middle Ages.
5. Jesus is called Son of David 10x in **Matthew 1:1,20; 9:27; 12:23; 15:22; 20:30,31; 21:9,15; 22:42**. He is only called Son of David 3x in **Mark 10:47, 48; 12:35**. He is only called Son of David 3x in **Luke 3:31; 18:38,39**. Why is Matthew so interested in this title for Jesus?
6. From the time of Abraham to the time of David was approximately 1,000 years –from 2,000 BC to 1040 BC. From David 1040 to the exile 586 was 454 years. From the exile 586 BC to the birth of Jesus in 6 BC was 580 years. How many people did Matthew leave out? Why?

Pericope 2

Jesus is Born in Bethlehem of Judea

Matthew 1:18-25

The Virgin Birth of Jesus

1:18 The birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way: His mother Mary had been promised to Joseph in marriage. But before they were married, Mary realized that she was pregnant by the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹Her husband Joseph was an honorable man and did not want to disgrace her publicly. So he decided to break the marriage agreement with her secretly.

²⁰Joseph had this in mind when an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream. The angel said to him: Joseph, descendant of David, don't be afraid to take Mary as your wife. She is pregnant by the Holy Spirit. ²¹She will give birth to a son, and you will name him Jesus meaning He Saves because he will save his people from their sins.

²²All this happened so that what the Lord had spoken through the prophet came true: ²³The virgin will become pregnant and give birth to a son. They will name him Immanuel which means: God is with us. **Isaiah 7:14**

²⁴When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him to do. He took Mary to be his wife. ²⁵He did not have marital relations with her before she gave birth to a son. Joseph named the child Jesus.

By naming the child, Joseph adopted him as his own son.

WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED SO FAR?

God can create by simply speaking. **Genesis 1:3** So there was no problem for God when the Holy Spirit overshadowed Mary. **Luke 1:35**. God can do the impossible. **Luke 1:37** Angels appear 20x in Matthew, more than any other book in the New Testament except Revelation 75x.

The angels help us understand that God's messengers are fulfilling God's plans. The angel calling Joseph Son of David helps connect this pericope to the genealogy that preceded it. The angel tells Joseph to name the baby Jesus, Jehoshua, for he will save *sozo* people from their sins. This word *sozo* appears in Matthew 16x.

The angel tells Joseph Mary is pregnant by the Holy Spirit. The third person of the Holy Trinity will be mentioned 6x in Matthew exceeded only by the Book of Acts 41x. Joseph, a descendant of King David adopts Jesus as his own, as he is pious man, a model Jew. God has chosen him as the guardian of his Son.

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

1. Why doesn't Joseph question the angel as Mary did?
2. What did Joseph imagine would be the future of his son, particularly with the angel mentioning *he will save his people from their sins*? What Scriptures would he have thought of? HINT: Isaiah uses the word Savior 8x.
3. Jesus is never called *Savior* in Matthew. Yet he is called *Savior* in Luke 2:47; 2:11; and in John 4:42. Is there an event in Matthew where Jesus could be called Savior?
4. In Luke, Zechariah rejoices in song about his Son, John the Baptist. Luke 1:67-79 Why doesn't Joseph sing a similar song?
5. Both Matthew and Luke give only one sentence to the birth of Jesus.

Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea when Herod was King. Matthew 2:1

She gave birth to her firstborn son. She wrapped him in strips of cloth and laid him in a manger because there wasn't any room for them in the inn. Luke 2:7

Why aren't we given more details?

6. What details about Joseph would we have liked to know?
7. Why isn't the location where Joseph and Mary are when the angel speaks to them mentioned? Luke tells us it was Nazareth in Galilee. Luke 1:26

EXTRA CREDIT

The son from the virgin birth in Isaiah is named **Immanuel** meaning *God Is With Us*. Matthew will close his Gospel with Jesus saying:

Remember that *I am always with you* until the end of time. **Matthew 28:20**

Matthew uses this name and its meaning as bookends to begin and end his Gospel. Does Jesus say this anywhere else in the Bible? HINT: Read **John 12:26**. How does Jesus act as Immanuel?

Pericope 3

Three Maji from Persia Come to Worship Jesus

Matthew 2:1-12

2:1 Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea when Herod the Great 37-4 BC was King. After Jesus' birth wise men from the east arrived in Jerusalem. 2 They asked: Where is the one who was born to be the King of the Jews? We saw his star rising and have come to worship him.

3 When King Herod and all Jerusalem heard about this, they became disturbed. 4 He called together all the chief priests and the experts in the Scriptures and tried to find out from them where the Messiah *christos* was supposed to be born.

5 They told him: In Bethlehem in Judea. The prophet wrote about this:

6 Bethlehem in the land of Judah, you are by no means least among the leaders of Judah. A leader will come from you. He will shepherd my people Israel.

[You, Bethlehem Ephrathah, are too small to be included among Judah's cities. Yet, from you Israel's future ruler will come for me. His origins go back to the distant past, to days long ago.

That is why the Lord will abandon Israel until the mother has a child. Then the rest of the Lord's people will return to the people of Israel. The child will become the shepherd of his flock.

He will lead the with the strength of the Lord, with the majestic name of the Lord his God. They will live in safety because his greatness will reach the ends of the earth. This man will be their peace. **Micah 5:2**]

7 Then Herod secretly called the wise men and found out from them exactly when the star had appeared. 8 As he sent them to Bethlehem, he said: Go and search carefully for the child. When you have found him, report to me so that I may go and worship him too.

⁹After they had heard the King, they started out. The star they had seen rising led them until it stopped over the place where the child was. ¹⁰They were overwhelmed with joy to see the star.

¹¹When they entered the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary. So they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasure chests and offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

¹²God warned them in a dream not to go back to Herod. So they left for their country by another road.

WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED SO FAR?

Matthew really does not relate the story of Jesus birth except for the one sentence. The wise men from the east come to Jerusalem one to two years after Jesus is born. At this time Joseph and Mary are in a house and Herod orders his soldiers to kill male infants under 2 years old. The wise men see a child rather than an infant.

The wise men from the east are Gentiles probably from Persia or Babylon. Copies of Jewish Scriptures would have remained in Babylon after the Jewish Captivity 505-535 BC. Scripture passages tell of Kings coming to worship the Messiah: **Psalm 68:29,31; 72:10-11; Isaiah 49:7; 60:3**

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

1. The Gentiles in Matthew's Gospel call Jesus King of the Jews in **Matthew 2:2; 27:11,29, 37**. The chief priests and scribes call him Israel's King. **Matthew 27:42**. The Sanhedrin's accusation against Jesus to Pilate was that he called himself The King of the Jews? Did Jesus ever call himself this? How is this a crime against Rome?
2. We wonder about the star. How could it shine directly on the house where Jesus was? Is it possible this was the same pillar of fire and cloud that God led the Israelites through the wilderness and appeared over the Wilderness Tabernacle? **Exodus 40:34-38**
3. Read **Numbers 24:17**. Is this the Scripture that caused the Magi to come to Jerusalem?
4. The Gentile Magi tell King Herod they have come to worship *proskyneo* the new King. Why would Gentiles come to worship a Jewish King? The word *proskyneo* appears 13x in Matthew. Who worships Jesus and when?
5. Bethlehem is only 7 miles southwest of Jerusalem. Why didn't Herod's officials or the chief priests and Pharisees check this out for themselves?

6,. Gentiles come to worship Jesus but Jews don't. Does this tell us Jews were not ready to accept the Messiah promised in Isaiah's prophecies when he came? List Isaiah's prophecies of the Messiah.

7. Read **Ezekiel 34:1-31** especially verse 23. God says he will place David over his flock. Wouldn't this prophecy have stimulated the priests to search for the new David?

Pericope 4

The Holy Family Escapes to Egypt and Returns to Nazareth

Matthew 2:13-23

An Angel Warns Joseph to Leave Bethlehem Quickly

2:13 After the Magi had left, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream. The angel said to him: Get up, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you because Herod intends to search for the child and kill him.

¹⁴ Joseph got up, took the child and his mother, and left for Egypt that night.

¹⁵ He stayed there until Herod the Great died ⁴ BC.

What the Lord had spoken through the prophet came true: I have called my son out of Egypt. **Hosea 11:1**

¹⁶ When Herod saw that the wise men had tricked him, he became furious. He sent soldiers to kill all the boys two years old and younger in or near Bethlehem. This matched the exact time he had learned from the wise men.

¹⁷ Then the words spoken through the prophet Jeremiah came true:

¹⁸ A sound was heard in Ramah, the sound of crying in bitter grief. Rachel was crying for her children. She refused to be comforted because they were dead. **Jeremiah 31:15**

From Egypt to Nazareth

¹⁹ After Herod was dead, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt. ²⁰ The angel said to him: Get up, take the child and his mother, and go to Israel. Those who tried to kill the child are dead.

²¹ Joseph got up, took the child and his mother, and went to Israel. ²² But when he heard that Herod Archelaus had succeeded his father Herod as King of Judea ⁴ BC-⁶ AD, Joseph was afraid to go there. Warned in a dream, he left

for Galilee ²³ and made his home in a city called Nazareth. So what the prophets had said came true: He will be called a Nazarene.

WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED SO FAR?

Egypt was a natural place for Joseph to flee with his family. The nearest Egyptian town was 150 miles south so walking 20 miles a day would be 7-8 days. Since Matthew sees Jesus as a second Moses, he recalls Moses fleeing from Egypt to Midian where he met Jethro, a descendant of Abraham through Keturah. **Exodus 2:15**

Matthew's citing of Hosea's prophecy is a stretch, but his quote from **Jeremiah** of Rachel crying is a little closer. Rachel was Jacob's favorite wife so she could be considered the mother of all of Jacob's children, the twelve tribe of Israel. Rachel also died giving birth to Benjamin near Bethlehem so there is a tie there. Jeremiah saw Rachel, the mother of Israel crying for all the children who were killed by the Babylonians when they destroyed Jerusalem in 586 BC. Herod's killing of all the boy babies in Bethlehem under 2 years old was in keeping with Herod's paranoia.

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

1. Joseph is apparently really trusting angels and God's provision for his family. Leaving Israel and going to Egypt is quite a risk, especially with a young infant. Yet Joseph didn't hesitate. Herod's reputation for cruelty was well-known. How long would it have taken the Holy Family to travel there?
2. How would Joseph have thought about the three gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh? The gold could have provided for their living in Egypt. How would the frankincense and myrrh have been used?
3. It seems that Matthew did not think Joseph and Mary were originally from Nazareth. Why was that? Yet Matthew cites a prophecy Jesus would be a Nazarene. Can you find a Scripture that supports this?
4. Joseph has three dreams? What a good Biblical number. List them.

Pericope 5

John the Baptist Announces Jesus to Israel

Matthew 3:1-17

John Prepares the Way

3:1 Later, John the Baptizer appeared in the desert of Judea. His message was: ²Turn to God and change the way you think and act *metaneo*-repent, because the Kingdom of Heaven is near. ³Isaiah the prophet spoke about this man when he said:

A voice cries out in the desert: Prepare the way for the Lord. Make his paths straight. **Isaiah 40:3**

[A voice cries out in the desert: Make a straight highway in the wilderness for our God. Every valley will be raised. Every mountain and hill will be lowered. Steep places will be made level. Rough places will be made smooth. Then the Lord's glory will be revealed, and all people will see it together. The Lord has spoken. **Isaiah 40:3-5**]

When a King traveled, groups of men called sappers would proceed him to make certain the roads were made passible as the King rode in a carriage and carried tents and other equipment. In modern times, these sappers are called combat engineers.

⁴John wore clothes made from camel's hair and had a leather belt around his waist. His diet consisted of locusts and wild honey.

⁵Jerusalem, all Judea, and the whole Jordan Valley went to him. ⁶As they confessed their sins, he baptized them in the Jordan River.

⁷But when he saw many Pharisees and Sadducees coming to be baptized, he said to them: You poisonous snakes. Who showed you how to flee from God's coming anger *orge*-wrath? ⁸Do those things that prove you have turned to God and have changed the way you think and act *metaneo*.

⁹Don't think you can say: Abraham is our ancestor. I can guarantee that God can raise up descendants for Abraham from these stones. ¹⁰The ax is

now ready to cut the roots of the trees. Any tree that doesn't produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into a fire.

John called out the religious leaders because they were not acting in pious ways. Instead, they were taking advantage of their position and living in luxurious ways keeping apart from the common people. They were anything but shepherds.

John Speaks of the Coming Messiah

¹¹I baptize you with water so that you will change the way you think and act *metaneo*. But the one who comes after me is more powerful than I. I am not worthy to remove his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.

¹²His winnowing shovel is in his hand, and he will clean up his threshing floor. He will gather his wheat into a barn, but he will burn the husks in a fire that can never be put out.

John believed the Messiah would bring in the Day of the Lord as prophesied by many of the Hebrew prophets. Fire is a symbol of God's judgment. See **Matthew 13:30**.

John Baptizes Jesus

¹³Then Jesus appeared. He came from Galilee to the Jordan River to be baptized by John. ¹⁴But John tried to stop him and said: I need to be baptized by you. Why are you coming to me?

¹⁵Jesus answered him: This is the way it has to be now. This is the proper way to do everything that God requires of us. Then John gave in to him.

John the Baptist was Jesus' cousin. He recognized something special in him and wanted Jesus to baptize him. But Jesus said: This is the way God wants it to be.

The Holy Spirit Appears as a Dove

¹⁶After Jesus was baptized, he immediately came up from the water. Suddenly, the Heavens were opened, and he saw the Spirit of God coming down as a dove to him.

God Speaks Identifying Jesus as the Son of God

¹⁷Then a voice from Heaven said: This is my Son, whom I love—my Son with whom I am pleased.”

WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED SO FAR?

John, Jesus' older cousin by six months preaches that repentance is necessary for the people of God. They are not living in holy ways consistent with the Torah, the rules that God gave to Moses 1,300 years before. As the Servant of YHWH is now coming to his people, they must get ready to meet him.

In those days, when a King came to a town, people came out of the town to meet him. John is saying to people: Get ready. The day when God is going to do something wonderful is coming. The King will judge you blessing the righteous and cursing the wicked. Repent for the Kingdom of Heaven is near. Clean up your life and show your commitment to do this and be baptized.

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

1. What does it mean to repent?
2. Read **Ezekiel 34:1-31**. What does God say that God's shepherds should do? What does God say he will do if the shepherds do not change?
3. What does John mean when he warns the Pharisees and Sadducees of *the wrath to come*? What Scriptures could John have quoted of God's wrath? Why were these religious leaders liable to experience the wrath of God?
4. Why did people come to John to be baptized by him?
5. Read about the Day of the Lord appearing in **Isaiah 2:12; 13:6,9; Jeremiah 46:10; Ezekiel 13:5; 30:3; Joel 1:15; 2:1,11,31; 3:14; Amos 5:18,20; Obadiah 1:15; Zephaniah 1:7,14; Zechariah 14:1; Malachi 4:5**. What will God do on this Great Day?
6. How should the people of Israel get ready to meet their King, the one John calls The Mighty One?
7. Why doesn't the High Priest arrest John? To have sins forgiven, one had to sacrifice an animal at the Jerusalem Temple. **Numbers 15:22-31**. John was saying people could have their sins forgiven by his baptism of immersion in the waters of the Jordan River. He was making the Temple redundant.

EXTRA CREDIT

Read **Luke 1:16-17;68-75; Malachi 4:5-6**. How is John fulfilling prophecies about him issued before he was born?

EXTRA, EXTRA CREDIT

What is the purpose of the Holy Spirit appearing as a dove?

Pericope 6

Satan, the Devil, Tests Jesus, the Son of God

Matthew 4:1-11

The Temptation of Jesus

¹ Then the Holy Spirit led Jesus into the desert to be tempted by the Devil.
² Jesus did not eat anything for 40 days and 40 nights. At the end of that time, he was hungry.

³ The Tempter came to him and said: If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become loaves of bread. ⁴ Jesus answered: Scripture says: A person cannot live on bread alone but on every word that God speaks. Deuteronomy 8:3

⁵ Then the Devil took him into the Holy City Jerusalem and had him stand on the highest part of the Temple. ⁶ He said to Jesus: If you are the Son of God, jump. Scripture says: He will put his angels in charge of you. They will carry you in their hands so that you never hit your foot against a rock. Psalm 91:11-12. ⁷ Jesus said to him: Again, Scripture says: Never tempt the Lord your God. Deuteronomy 6:16

⁸ Once more the Devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms in the world and their glory. ⁹ The Devil said to him: I will give you all this if you will bow down and worship me. ¹⁰ Jesus said to him: Go away, Satan. Scripture says: Worship the Lord your God and serve only him. Deuteronomy 6:13

¹¹ Then the Devil left him, and angels came to take care of him.

WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED SO FAR?

After his baptism, the Holy Spirit leads Jesus into the desert. After fasting for 40 days and nights like Moses did before meeting God on Mount Sinai Exodus 34:28; Deuteronomy 9:9, Jesus encountered Satan. This fasting meant that Jesus was weakest in his physical state.

Like his temptation of Eve in the Garden of Eden **Genesis 3:1**, Satan asked: Did God really say? Jesus then quoted three Scriptures to demonstrate God is telling humans how to defeat Satan – all of them from Deuteronomy, Jesus' favorite book.

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

1. Who is Satan? Read **Job 1:6-8** where Satan appears before God. He is known as the Accuser. Why does Satan do this?
2. Read **1 John 2:16**. How does this verse describe the three temptations Jesus experienced at the hand of Satan.
3. Read **Isaiah 14:12-20**. What is the primary characteristic of Satan that motivates him?
4. Read **Ezekiel 28:11-19**. How does this describe Satan's fall from Heaven?
5. Read **Revelation 12:7-12**. How does this describe the cosmic struggle between God and Satan?
6. At Jesus' baptism, God declared that Jesus' is his beloved Son. Then Satan attacks Jesus. Was this because Satan did not know where Jesus was on earth?
7. Why did God want Jesus to be tested in his human form before entering into his earthly ministry?

EXTRA CREDIT

The Devil tests Jesus by asking if Jesus is really the Son of God three times. If so, says Satan, use your divine power instead of only acting like a human. Humans are weak. How does Jesus demonstrate that humans, despite their weaknesses, can defeat Satan's temptations?

PART 2

Jesus Begins His Galilean Ministry

PERICOPES 7-15

Jesus, like John the Baptist will preach the necessity of *repentance*. They will both say the same thing: *Repent for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.* **Matthew 3:2; 4:17**

Jesus will also preach on the Kingdom of Heaven. This phrase will appear in this Gospel 31x in **Matthew 3:2; 4:17; 5:3, 10, 19, 20, 7:21; 8:11; 10:7; 11:11, 12; 13:11, 24, 31, 33, 34, 45, 47, 52; 16:19; 18:1, 3, 4, 23; 19:14, 23; 20:1; 22:2; 23:13; 25:1, 14.** Matthew will also use the expression Kingdom of God 4x in **Matthew 6:33; 12:28; 19:24; 21:31.**

What is the Kingdom of Heaven? It is both now and future. When a person believes in Jesus, chooses to live a holy life as God wants, they are in living in the Kingdom of Heaven choosing to avoid the temptations of this world. When they physically die, they will immediately go to Paradise where from then on, they will be free from the temptations of Satan and live eternally with God and Jesus and the Holy Spirit. This is also known as Eternal Life appearing in **Matthew 19:16, 29; 25:46.**

This is the major subject of Jesus' preaching. In his Sermon on the Mount (See PERICOPES 8-9), Jesus will teach people how to live in the Kingdom of Heaven *right now* on earth.

Pericope 7

Jesus Calls His First Disciples and Begins to Preach the Gospel

Matthew 4:12-25

Jesus Fulfills the Prophecy of Isaiah

^{4:12} When Jesus heard that John the Baptist had been put in prison, he went back to Galilee. ¹³ He left Nazareth and made his home in Capernaum on the shores of the Sea of Galilee. This was in the region of Zebulun and Naphtali.

¹⁴ So what the prophet Isaiah had said came true:

¹⁵ Land of Zebulun and land of Naphtali, on the way to the sea, across the Jordan River, Galilee, where foreigners live. ¹⁶ The people who lived in darkness have seen a bright light. A light has risen for those who live in a land overshadowed by death. **Isaiah 9:1-2**

¹⁷ From then on, Jesus began to tell people: Turn to God and change the way you think and act *metaneo*, because the Kingdom of Heaven is near.

Notice that Jesus says the same thing John the Baptist has said. **Matthew 3:1**

Jesus Calls His First Four Disciples

¹⁸ As he was walking along the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon called Peter and Andrew. They were throwing a net into the sea because they were fishermen. ¹⁹ Jesus said to them: Come, follow me. I will teach you how to catch people instead of fish. ²⁰ They immediately left their nets and followed him.

²¹ As Jesus went on, he saw two other brothers, James and John, the sons of Zebedee. They were in a boat with their father Zebedee preparing their nets to go fishing. He called them, ²² and they immediately left the boat and their father and followed Jesus.

Jesus Preaches the Good News Throughout Galilee

²³Jesus went all over Galilee. He taught in the synagogues and spread the Good News of the Kingdom. He also cured every disease and sickness among the people.

People Came to Follow Jesus from All Throughout the Roman Province of Syria-Judea

²⁴The news about Jesus spread throughout Syria. People brought him everyone who was sick, those who suffered from any kind of disease or pain. They also brought epileptics, those who were paralyzed, and people possessed by demons. He cured them all.

²⁵Large crowds followed him. They came from Galilee, the Ten Cities, Jerusalem, Judea, and from east across the Jordan River.

WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED SO FAR?

In 925 BC, when King Solomon died and his son Rehoboam took over, David's Kingdom was divided in two. Ten of the twelve tribes formed the Kingdom of Israel in the north with their capital in Samaria, and two of the tribes in the south remained with their capital in Jerusalem. In 732 BC, God sent the Assyrians from far in the north to invade this Northern Kingdom that consisted of Galilee and Samaria. They deported many of the people from God's Holy Land to their Gentile Empire of Assyria, and brought in people from other parts of the Assyria Empire to live in Galilee and Samaria.

The remaining Jews in Galilee were in deep sorrow over the loss of their relatives who were deported. Isaiah who lived to see this happen prophesied that one day a Messiah would arise and be a bright light who would relieve the sorrow caused by the Assyrian deportations. Matthew sees Jesus as fulfilling that prophecy as thousands of people came to hear and follow him as he preached.

Matthew portrays Jesus as very charismatic as two sets of brothers who are working as fishermen on the Sea of Galilee drop everything and follow Jesus when he calls them. In According to John, we learn that Andrew was a disciple of John the Baptist. Andrew heard John say: *Look. This is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.* When two of John's disciples heard John say this, they followed Jesus. **John 1:35-37**. Then Andrew found his brother Simon Peter and told him: We have found the Messiah. Andrew brought Simon to Jesus. **John 1:41-42**

With these four disciples, Jesus went all over Galilee teaching in the synagogues and healing sicknesses, exorcising demons curing all of them. Crowds came to follow him not only from Galilee, but from the Ten Gentile cities on the east side of the Jordan River, and south in the city of Jerusalem and the province of Judea.

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

1. The Jewish writings say that Jesus had five disciples named Matthai, Naqqai, Netzer, Buni, and Todah. Talmud Sanhedrin 43A. ([Wikipedia](#)). Matthew will agree, but their names are different. Why doesn't Matthew mention that some of Jesus' disciples were first disciples of John the Baptist?
2. Galilee was not the center of religion in Israel. It was rather in Jerusalem where the Temple was. Why did Jesus first preach in Galilee rather than in Jerusalem?
3. Matthew says that *great crowds quickly followed Jesus*. How did Jesus attract people to himself so quickly? What were these people looking for from Jesus? Matthew will use words translated "crowds" 26x, Luke 12x, and Mark 1x.

Pericope 8

The First Sermon: The Sermon on the Mount: Part One

Matthew 5:1-6:15

5:1 When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up a mountain and sat down. His disciples came to him: ²and he began to teach them:

The Nine Beatitudes

³ Blessed are those who recognize they are spiritually helpless. The Kingdom of Heaven belongs to them.

⁴ Blessed are those who mourn. They will be comforted.

⁵ Blessed are those who are gentle. They will inherit the earth.

⁶ Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for God's approval. They will be satisfied.

⁷ Blessed are those who show mercy. They will be treated mercifully.

⁸ Blessed are those whose thoughts are pure. They will see God.

⁹ Blessed are those who make peace. They will be called God's children.

¹⁰ Blessed are those who are persecuted for doing what God approves of. The Kingdom of Heaven belongs to them.

¹¹ Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you, lie, and say all kinds of evil things about you because of me.

¹² Rejoice and be glad because you have a great reward in Heaven. The prophets who lived before you were persecuted in these ways.

These are the characteristics disciples of Jesus will have. They will be counter-cultural to the Jewish society of that day. The humble who are crushed in the world will be honored in the Kingdom of God. Those who are persecuted for their God-approved way of living in this world will be rewarded now and, in the world to come, the Kingdom of Heaven. Jesus going to now preach on what a God-approved life in this earthly world is like.

God's People Make a Difference in the World

¹³You are salt for the earth. But if salt loses its taste, how will it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled on by people.

¹⁴You are light for the world. A city cannot be hidden when it is located on a hill. ¹⁵No one lights a lamp and puts it under a basket. Instead, everyone who lights a lamp puts it on a lamp stand. Then its light shines on everyone in the house. ¹⁶In the same way let your light shine in front of people. Then they will see the good that you do and praise your Father in Heaven.

This is the first time in the Gospel Jesus mentions his Father in Heaven. Matthew will use the word *Father* 60x, John will use the word 127x, Luke 44x, and Mark 19x. Matthew will use the phrase *Father which is in Heaven* 16x and *Heavenly Father* 7x. Jesus wants his disciples to refer to God as their Father in Heaven. Jews normally do not refer to God as Father.

Jesus Fulfills the Old Testament Scriptures

¹⁷Don't ever think that I came to set aside Moses' Teachings or the Prophets. I didn't come to set them aside but to make them come true. ¹⁸I can guarantee this truth: Until the earth and the Heavens disappear, neither a period nor a comma will disappear from the Scriptures before everything has come true.

¹⁹So whoever sets aside any command that seems unimportant and teaches others to do the same will be unimportant in the Kingdom of Heaven. But whoever does and teaches what the commands say will be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven. ²⁰I can guarantee that unless you live a life that has God's approval and do it more faithfully than the experts in Moses' Teachings and Pharisees, you will never enter the Kingdom of Heaven.

Jesus Intensifies the Sin of Anger

²¹You have heard that it was said to your ancestors: Never murder. Exodus 20:13; Deuteronomy 5:17. Whoever murders will answer for it in court. ²²But I can guarantee that whoever is angry with another believer will answer for it

in court. Whoever calls another believer an insulting name will answer for it in the highest court. Whoever calls another believer a fool will answer for it in hellfire.

²³ So if you are offering your gift at the altar and remember there that another believer has something against you, ²⁴ leave your gift at the altar. First go away and make peace with that person. Then come back and offer your gift.

²⁵ Make peace quickly with your opponent while you are on the way to court with him. Otherwise, he will hand you over to the judge. Then the judge will hand you over to an officer, who will throw you into prison. ²⁶ I can guarantee this truth: You will never get out until you pay every penny of your fine.

Jesus Intensifies the Sin of Adultery

²⁷ You have heard that it was said: Never commit adultery. **Exodus 20:14; Deuteronomy 5:18.** ²⁸ But I can guarantee that whoever looks with lust at a woman has already committed adultery in his heart.

²⁹ So if your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose a part of your body than to have all of it thrown into Hell *geenna*. ³⁰ And if your right hand leads you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose a part of your body than to have all of it go into Hell.

Jesus Intensifies the Restrictions on Divorce

³¹ It has also been said: Whoever divorces his wife must give her a written notice. **Deuteronomy 24:1.** ³² But I can guarantee that any man who divorces his wife for any reason other than unfaithfulness makes her look as though she has committed adultery. Whoever marries a woman divorced in this way makes himself look as though he has committed adultery.

Jesus Forbids Making Oaths

³³You have heard that it was said to your ancestors: Never break your oath, but give to the Lord what you swore in an oath to give him. **Numbers 30:2.**
³⁴But I tell you don't swear an oath at all. Don't swear an oath by Heaven, which is God's throne, ³⁵or by the earth, that is his footstool, or by Jerusalem, which is the city of the Great King. ³⁶Don't swear an oath by your head. After all, you cannot make one hair black or white. ³⁷Simply say yes or no. Anything more than that comes from the Evil One Satan.

Jesus Says to Humble Yourself Before Your Enemies

³⁸You have heard that it was said: An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. **Exodus 21:24; Leviticus 24; Deuteronomy 19:21.** ³⁹But I tell you not to oppose an evil person. If someone slaps you on your right cheek, turn your other cheek to him as well. ⁴⁰If someone wants to sue you in order to take your shirt, let him have your coat too. ⁴¹If someone forces you to go one mile, go two miles with him. ⁴²Give to everyone who asks you for something. Don't turn anyone away who wants to borrow something from you.

Jesus Says to Love Your Enemies – His Most Difficult Saying

⁴³You have heard that it was said: Love your neighbor, **Leviticus 19:18** and hate your enemy. ⁴⁴But I tell you this: Love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you.

⁴⁵In this way you show that you are children of your Father in Heaven. He makes his sun rise on people whether they are good or evil. He lets rain fall on them whether they are just or unjust. ⁴⁶If you love those who love you, do you deserve a reward? Even the tax collectors do that.

⁴⁷Are you doing anything remarkable if you welcome only your friends? Everyone does that. ⁴⁸That is why you must be perfect as your Father in Heaven is perfect.

Jesus Says: Don't Do Good Works to Be Praised by People

6:1 Be careful not to do your good works in public in order to attract attention. If you do, your Father in Heaven will not reward you. ²So when you give to the poor, don't announce it with trumpet fanfare. This is what hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets in order to be praised by people. I can guarantee this truth: That will be their only reward.

³When you give to the poor, don't let your left hand know what your right hand is doing. ⁴Give your contributions privately. Your Father sees what you do in private. He will reward you.

Jesus Teaches about Prayer

⁵When you pray, don't be like hypocrites. They like to stand in synagogues and on street corners to pray so that everyone can see them. I can guarantee this truth: That will be their only reward. ⁶When you pray, go to your room and close the door. Pray privately to your Father who is with you. Your Father sees what you do in private. He will reward you.

⁷When you pray, don't ramble like heathens who think they'll be heard if they talk a lot. ⁸Don't be like them. Your Father knows what you need before you ask him.

Jesus Gives His Disciples a Model Prayer

⁹This is how you should pray:

Our Father in Heaven,
let your name be kept holy.

¹⁰Let your Kingdom come.

Let your will be done on earth
as it is done in Heaven.

¹¹Give us our daily bread today.

¹²Forgive us as we forgive others.

¹³ Don't allow us to be tempted.

Instead, rescue us from the Evil One Satan.

¹⁴ If you forgive the failures of others, your Heavenly Father will also forgive you. ¹⁵ But if you don't forgive others, your Father will not forgive your failures.

WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED SO FAR?

Jesus begins his first sermon by stating how those who have turned to God and live lives that God approves of will be like. It is *not* a how to do list. Instead, Jesus is setting ways for disciples to look at their lives and see what rewards God is giving them now, such as peace in their hearts, and will give them later. It is very similar to the spiritual fruits Paul talks about in **Galatians 5:22**

The Kingdom of Heaven on earth is an upside-down Kingdom where the people who are humble will be great. Later, Jesus will say the *First will Last and the Last will be First*. **Matthew 19:30; 20:16**. These people live their lives as God wants them to live. They show how God's goodness can improve both their lives and the lives of those who live around them.

Jesus says that he is only saying what the rules God gave Moses in the Torah said. But he is stressing the inward motivation that must direct people to follow these rules. It is not enough to follow the rules in an attempt to earn God's favor. Instead, people must be motivated by love for God and love for people. In this way, they will integrate God's Teachings into their lives. Mercy, compassion, justice are the true motivating forces.

Then Jesus looks at the motivations that should underlie rules for suppressing anger, sexual sin, oaths, and love of enemies. One writer call them Jesus' extensions of the Law. Jesus warns not to do good just to receive the approval of other people. Do good because you love God, and you love the people God has created.

Jesus ends this first portion of his sermon with what we call The Lord's Prayer. It is a model prayer where Jesus' disciples refer to God as their Father in Heaven. They keep his name holy and do what he wishes them to do on earth. They ask for God to supply their needs for living in his Creation. They ask God to forgive their offenses as they likewise forgive others for their sins against them. They God's protection against the Evil One.

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

1. Who was Jesus speaking to when he spoke the nine Beatitudes? Why did he say them?

2. Why did Jesus say the people who displayed these attributes were blessed by God?
3. Does Jesus follow all the Teachings of Moses? Why does he seem sometimes to contradict them?
4. Why when people physically obey the rule in the Torah are they really not doing what God wants?
5. Most of us fail to always do what Jesus says God expects in his Sermon on the Mount. Why then does Jesus teach this is what we are supposed to do?
6. How can Jesus say we should let our light shine but not do good works in public?
7. Why is the Lord's Prayer such a wonderful summation of what we should do, and also ask God to do for us?

EXTRA CREDIT

Why does Jesus place so much importance on his disciples forgiving everyone for everything?

Pericope 9

The Sermon on the Mount: Part Two

Matthew 6:16-7:24

Jesus Teaches How to Fast

6:16 When you fast, stop looking sad like hypocrites. They put on sad faces to make it obvious that they're fasting. I can guarantee this truth: That will be their only reward. ¹⁷When you fast, wash your face and comb your hair. ¹⁸Then your fasting won't be obvious. Instead, it will be obvious to your Father who is with you in private. Your Father sees what you do in private. He will reward you.

Jesus Teaches What Are True Riches

¹⁹ Stop storing up treasures for yourselves on earth, where moths and rust destroy and thieves break in and steal. ²⁰ Instead, store up treasures for yourselves in Heaven, where moths and rust don't destroy and thieves don't break in and steal. ²¹ Your heart will be where your treasure is.

Jesus Says: Where You Place Your Attention Is Where Your Actions Will Come From

²² The eye is the lamp of the body. So if your eye is unclouded, your whole body will be full of light. ²³ But if your eye is evil, your whole body will be full of darkness. If the light in you is darkness, how dark it will be.

Jesus Says You Can Only Have One Master

²⁴ No one can serve two masters. He will hate the first master and love the second, or he will be devoted to the first and despise the second. You cannot serve God and wealth.

Jesus Teaches to Have Faith and Trust God

²⁵ So I tell you to stop worrying about what you will eat, drink, or wear. Isn't life more than food and the body more than clothes?

²⁶Look at the birds. They don't plant, harvest, or gather the harvest into barns. Yet, your Heavenly Father feeds them. Aren't you worth more than they?

²⁷Can any of you add a single hour to your life by worrying?

²⁸And why worry about clothes? Notice how the flowers grow in the field. They never work or spin yarn for clothes. ²⁹But I say that not even Solomon in all his majesty **1 Kings 3:13** was dressed like one of these flowers. ³⁰That's the way God clothes the grass in the field. Today it's alive, and tomorrow it's thrown into an incinerator. So how much more will he clothe you people who have so little faith?

³¹Don't ever worry and say: 'What are we going to eat?' or: 'What are we going to drink?' Or: 'What are we going to wear?' ³²Everyone is concerned about these things, and your Heavenly Father certainly knows you need all of them. ³³But first, be concerned about his Kingdom and what has his approval. Then all these things will be provided for you.

³⁴So don't ever worry about tomorrow. After all, tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

Jesus Teaches His Disciples Not to Judge Others

7:1 Stop judging so that you will not be judged. ²Otherwise, you will be judged by the same standard you use to judge others. The standards you use for others will be applied to you. ³So why do you see the piece of sawdust in another believer's eye and not notice the wooden beam in your own eye? ⁴How can you say to another believer: Let me take the piece of sawdust out of your eye, when you have a beam in your own eye? ⁵You hypocrite. First remove the beam from your own eye. Then you will see clearly to remove the piece of sawdust from another believer's eye.

Jesus Warns: Don't Throw Pearls to Pigs

⁶Don't give what is holy to dogs or throw your pearls to pigs. Otherwise, they will trample them and then tear you to pieces.

Jesus Teaches the Power of Prayer

⁷Ask, and you will receive. Search, and you will find. Knock, and the door will be opened for you. ⁸Everyone who asks will receive. The one who searches will find, and for the one who knocks, the door will be opened.

⁹If your child asks you for bread, would any of you give him a stone? ¹⁰Or if your child asks for a fish, would you give him a snake? ¹¹Even though you're evil, you know how to give good gifts to your children. So how much more will your Father in Heaven give good things to those who ask him?

Jesus Repeats the Well Known Golden Rule

¹²Always do for other people everything you want them to do for you. That is the meaning of Moses' Teachings and the Prophets.

Jesus Teaches about the Narrow Gate

¹³Enter through the narrow gate because the gate and road that lead to destruction are wide. Many enter through the wide gate. ¹⁴But the narrow gate and the road that lead to eternal life are full of trouble. Only a few people find the narrow gate.

Jesus Warns about False Prophets

¹⁵Beware of false prophets. They come to you disguised as sheep, but in their hearts they are vicious wolves. ¹⁶You will know them by what they produce.

People don't pick grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles, do they? ¹⁷In the same way every good tree produces good fruit, but a rotten tree produces bad fruit. ¹⁸A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, and a rotten tree cannot produce good fruit. ¹⁹Any tree that fails to produce good fruit is cut down and thrown into a fire. ²⁰So you will know them by what they produce.

Jesus Warns about Inauthentic Faith and Truth

²¹ Not everyone who says to me: Lord, Lord, will enter the Kingdom of Heaven, but only the person who does what my Father in Heaven wants.

²² Many will say to me on that day: Lord, Lord, didn't we prophesy in your name? Didn't we force out demons and do many miracles by the power and authority of your name? ²³ Then I will tell them publicly: I've never known you. Get away from me, you evil people.

Jesus Summarizes the Value of His Teaching: Build on the Rock

²⁴ Therefore, everyone who hears what I say and obeys it will be like a wise person who built a house on rock. ²⁵ Rain poured, and floods came. Winds blew and beat against that house. But it did not collapse, because its foundation was on rock.

²⁶ Everyone who hears what I say but doesn't obey it will be like a foolish person who built a house on sand. ²⁷ Rain poured, and floods came. Winds blew and struck that house. It collapsed, and the result was a total disaster.

²⁸ When Jesus finished this speech, the crowds were amazed at his teachings.

²⁹ Unlike their experts in Moses' Teachings, he taught them with authority.

WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED SO FAR?

In the second half of his Sermon on the Mount, Jesus begins by warning his disciples not to do things to draw attention to themselves. Those who are proud will be humbled and those who are humbled will be honored. He will say this many times.

Then Jesus talks about not only loving God but having faith in God and trusting that God loves you and will protect you. Don't worry about basic necessities in life. God will provide them for you. This is what we pray for in the Lord's Prayer: Give us this day our bread for today.

Do not judge other people. If you do, you will be judged by the same standard by which you judge others. For a second time, Jesus turns to talk about prayer. *Ask and you will receive. Seek and you will find.* **Matthew 7:7.** Those who seek God will find him. He is echoing Isaiah:

Seek the Lord while he may be found. Call on him while he is near. Let wicked people abandon their ways. Let evil people abandon their thoughts. Let them return to the Lord and he will show compassion on them. Let them return to our God for he will freely forgive them. **Isaiah 55:6-7**

But Jesus also warns us that we must do what God wants. We must live our lives by going through the narrow gate. We can't do whatever we want. There are things God does not want us to do. To live in the Kingdom of God, there are ways God intends us to follow. We must walk on his paths and listen to his voice. **Isaiah 2:3**

Jesus continues his warning saying there are false prophets. You can recognize them by what they do as well as what they say. Many will profess to be disciples. If they don't do what they say, they are identifying themselves as false prophets.

Then Jesus summarizes the importance of his teaching by saying the person who listens to his voice will live as God planned for him to live in the Creation he created. To listen to God's voice, is to do what God says. God knows the best way for humans to live in his Creation.

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

1. What are the treasures God offers a disciple in Heaven?
2. Jesus warns that if you focus your attention on evil things, you will soon be doing evil. Read **Romans 8:5-6**. Paul tells us to focus on spiritual things. What are these?
3. Why shouldn't we throw pearls to pigs?
4. Where does God promise his disciples to answer their prayer? HINT: Read **John 14:12-13; 15:7, 16; 16:23-24**
5. Why is it that only a few people will find the narrow gate? Are only a few people going to be saved?
6. How can many people who exorcise demons and heal people in Jesus' name not enter the Kingdom of Heaven?
7. Explain how the people in Israel recognize that the way Jesus speaks is different from the way that many of their religious leaders, especially the scribes, speak?

Pericope 10

Jesus Heals a Leper, Heals a Gentile's Servant, Calms a Storm on the Sea of Galilee, and Exorcises a Demon

Matthew 8:1-34

Jesus Cures a Man with a Skin Disease

¹When Jesus came down from the mountain, large crowds followed him.

²A man with a serious skin disease came and bowed down in front of him. The man said to Jesus: Sir, if you're willing, you can make me clean. ³Jesus reached out, touched him, and said: I'm willing. So be clean. Immediately, his skin disease went away, and he was clean.

⁴Jesus said to him: Don't tell anyone about this. Instead, show yourself to the priest. Then offer the sacrifice Moses commanded as proof to people that you are clean. **Leviticus 14:1-20**

Jesus Heals a Gentile's Servant at a Distance

⁵When Jesus went to Capernaum, a Roman army officer came to beg him for help. ⁶The officer said: Sir, my servant is lying at home paralyzed and in terrible pain. ⁷Jesus said to him: I'll come to heal him.

⁸The officer responded: Sir, I don't deserve to have you come into my house. But just give a command and my servant will be healed. ⁹As you know, I'm in a chain of command and have soldiers at my command. I tell one of them: Go, and he goes. To another I say: Come, and he comes. I tell my servant: Do this, and he does it.

¹⁰Jesus was amazed when he heard this. He said to those who were following him: I can guarantee this truth: I haven't found faith as great as this in anyone in Israel.

Jesus Warns Jews Who Do Not Believe in Jesus

¹¹I can guarantee that many will come from all over the world. They will eat with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the Kingdom of Heaven. ¹²The citizens of that Kingdom will be thrown *ekballo* outside into the *exoteros*—outer darkness *skotos*. People will cry *klauthmos* and be in extreme pain *brygmos*—gnashing *odous*—teeth there.

¹³Jesus told the officer: Go! What you believed will be done for you. At that moment the servant was healed.

Jesus Cures Peter's Mother-in-Law and Many Others

¹⁴When Jesus went to Peter's house, he saw Peter's mother-in-law in bed with a fever. ¹⁵Jesus touched her hand, and the fever went away. So she got up and prepared a meal for him.

¹⁶In the evening the people brought him many who were possessed by demons. He forced the evil spirits out of people with a command and cured everyone who was sick.

¹⁷So what the prophet Isaiah had said came true: He took away our weaknesses and removed our diseases. **Isaiah 53:4**

¹⁸Now, when Jesus saw a crowd around him, he ordered his disciples to cross to the other side of the Sea of Galilee.

Jesus Teaches What It Takes to Be His Disciple

¹⁹An expert in Moses' Teachings came to him and said: Teacher, I'll follow you wherever you go. ²⁰Jesus told him: Foxes have holes, and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to sleep.

²¹Another disciple said to him: Sir, first let me go to bury my father. ²²But Jesus told him: Follow me, and let the dead bury their own dead.

Jesus Calms a Storm on the Sea of Galilee

²³Jesus' disciples went with him as he left in a boat. ²⁴Suddenly, a severe storm came across the sea. The waves were covering the boat. Yet, Jesus was sleeping. ²⁵So they woke him up, saying: Lord. Save us. We're going to die.

²⁶Jesus said to them: Why do you cowards *deilos*-fearful ^{3x} have so little faith *oligopistos* ^{5x}? Then he got up, gave an order to the wind and the sea, and the sea became very calm. ²⁷The men were amazed and asked: What kind of man is this? Even the wind and the sea obey him.

Jesus Cures Two Demon-Possessed Men

²⁸When he arrived in the territory of the Gadarenes on the other side of the Sea of Galilee in Gentile territory two men met him. They were possessed by demons and had come out of the tombs. No one could travel along that road because the men were so dangerous.

²⁹They shouted: Why are you bothering us now, Son of God? Did you come here to torture us before it is time?

³⁰A large herd of pigs was feeding in the distance. ³¹The demons begged Jesus: If you're going to force us out of the man, send us into that herd of pigs.

³²Jesus said to them: Go. The demons came out and went into the pigs. Suddenly, the whole herd rushed down the cliff into the sea and died in the water. ³³Those who took care of the pigs ran into the city. There they reported everything, especially about the men possessed by demons.

³⁴Everyone from the city went to meet Jesus. When they saw him, they begged him to leave their territory.

The Gentile townspeople beg the Jewish magician to go back to Israel across the sea. Many Gentiles hearing this story feel sorry for the pigs. But for Jews, who the Torah forbids to eat pork **Deuteronomy 14:8**, this story is hilarious.

WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED SO FAR?

After Jesus preached his sermon, large crowds continued to follow him. Jesus healed a leper. Although the Torah provided that a priest could certify a leper was healed and could rejoin society, most rabbis believed leprosy was incurable. But Jesus healed the leper and told him to go to a priest to certify he could rejoin society and offer a thanksgiving sacrifice to God.

Jesus encountered a Roman Centurion in Capernaum. The officer asked Jesus to heal him. Jesus offered to go to his home. But the officer said: I believe you can heal him from here by just uttering a word. Jesus was amazed. He commented that this Gentile had more faith than many in Israel.

Then Jesus said that many Jews who are God's Chosen People, will be thrown out of the Kingdom of Heaven into Outer Darkness apart from God because of their unwillingness to believe in Jesus. He told the officer: Your servant is healed.

Because of the crowds, Jesus and his disciples get into a boat and sail east across the Sea of Galilee to Gentile territory. In the midst of the sea, a storm suddenly arises. This is a usual happening on this lake when the cold air from the mountains meets the warm air rising up from the sea. Jesus has gone to sleep in the boat when the storm arises. Water is pouring into the boat and even Peter, a seasoned fisherman on this lake, is terrified.

They wake Jesus asking him to save them. Jesus commands the wind and the waves: Hush. Then the sea became very calm. The disciples are amazed. But what then did they expect?

When they arrive in Gentile territory, two demon-possessed men meet Jesus. They ask Jesus: Why are you bothering us, you Son of God? Then they suggest that Jesus, instead of sending them into the Bottomless Pit, send them into the nearby pigs feeding nearby. Jesus says: Go! The demons enter the pigs and the pigs run down a cliff into the sea and are drowned.

The pig herders run into the city to tell the owners of the loss of their pigs. Then all the townspeople come out to see what happened. Immediately, they beg this Jewish magician to leave. Nothing is mentioned about the formerly demon-possessed men who are now at peace.

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

1. When the cured leper goes to see a priest, what does the priest then think Jesus' identity is? Do these priests when they go to serve in the Temple spread the story of this healing among those in the Temple? What is the reaction of the religious leaders when they hear this?

2. Why does Jesus say that unbelieving Jews, citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven, will be cast out? How did they get into the Kingdom of Heaven in the first place?
3. Jesus refers to Hell as *Outer Darkness*. **Matthew 8:12; 22:13; 25:30**. He says *people will cry and be in anguish there*. He will say this in **Matthew 8:12; 13:42,50; 22:13; 24:51; 25:30**. Jesus will use *geenna* translated Hell 7x, more than any other Gospel writer in **Matthew 5:22, 29, 30; 10:28; 18:9; 25:15; 23:33**. Why does Jesus talk so much about judgment?
4. Both Matthew and John were written to Jews, while Mark and Luke were written to Gentiles. Matthew mentions *judgment crisis* 10x while John mentions it 11x. Mark mentions judgment 1x and Luke only 3x. Why should Jews be warned about judgment more than Gentiles?
5. Read **Mark 5:1-20**. Why does Matthew severely shorten Mark's version of this story from 20 verses to 8 verses?. Why doesn't he even the two men exorcised of demons?

Pericope II

Jesus Teaches God Has Done Something New in Him

Matthew 9:1-10:4

Jesus Declares God Has Given Him the Power to Forgive Sins

^{9:1} Jesus got into a boat, crossed the sea to the west, and came to his own city.

² Some people brought him a paralyzed man on a stretcher. When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the man: Cheer up, friend. Your sins are forgiven.

³ Then some of the experts in Moses' Teachings thought: He's dishonoring God. ⁴ Jesus knew what they were thinking. He asked them: Why are you thinking evil things? ⁵ Is it easier to say: Your sins are forgiven, or to say: Get up and walk? ⁶ I want you to know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins. Then he said to the paralyzed man: Get up, pick up your stretcher, and go home.

This is the second time Jesus has called himself the Son of Man. He will use this title 30x in this Gospel.

⁷ So the man got up and went home. ⁸ When the crowd saw this, they were filled with awe and praised God for giving such authority to humans.

Jesus Chooses Matthew to Be a Disciple

⁹ When Jesus was leaving that place, he saw a man sitting in a tax office. The man's name was Matthew. Jesus said to him: Follow me. So Matthew got up and followed him.

¹⁰ Later Jesus was having dinner at Matthew's house. Many tax collectors and sinners came to eat with Jesus and his disciples. ¹¹ The Pharisees saw this and asked his disciples: Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?

¹² When Jesus heard that, he said: Healthy people don't need a doctor, those who are sick do. ¹³ Learn what this means: I want mercy, not sacrifices.

Hosea 6:6. I've come to call sinners, not people who think they have God's approval.

[I want your loyalty, not your sacrifices. I want you to know me, not to give me burnt offerings. **Hosea 6:6**]

Jesus here expresses a key element in his teaching. No one is beyond redemption. God loves all the human creatures he has created. But this is the attitude of the Jewish Sanhedrin, the High Court of Israel:

[Has any ruler or Pharisee believed in him? This crowd is cursed because it doesn't know Moses Teachings. **John 7:51**]

Jesus Is Questioned about Fasting

¹⁴Then John's disciples came to Jesus. They said: Why do we and the Pharisees fast often but your disciples never do?

¹⁵Jesus replied: Can wedding guests be sad while the groom is still with them? The time will come when the groom will be taken away from them. Then they will fast.

God says that the nation of Israel is his wife. Isaiah and Hosea said:

[Your husband is your Maker. His name is the Lord of Armies. Your Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel. He is called the God of the Whole Earth. **Isaiah 54:5**]

[Israel, I will make you my wife forever. I will be honest and faithful to you. I will show you my love and compassion. I will be true to you, my wife. Then you will know the Lord. **Hosea 2:19-20**]

In the same way, Jesus is the bridegroom of those who believe in him.

Jesus Teaches that in Him God Is Doing Something New

¹⁶No one patches an old coat with a new piece of cloth that will shrink. When the patch shrinks, it will rip away from the coat, and the tear will become worse. ¹⁷Nor do people pour new wine into old wineskins. If they

do, the skins burst, the wine runs out, and the skins are ruined. Rather, people pour new wine into fresh skins, and both are saved.

[I am going to do something new. It is already happening. Don't you recognize it? I will clear a way in the desert. I will make rivers on dry land. **Isaiah 43:19**]

Jesus Heals Woman with Chronic Bleeding and a Synagogue Leader's Daughter

¹⁸A synagogue leader came to Jesus while he was talking to John's disciples. He bowed down in front of Jesus and said: My daughter just died. Come, lay your hand on her, and she will live. ¹⁹Jesus and his disciples got up and followed the man.

²⁰Then a woman came up behind Jesus and touched the edge of his clothes. She had been suffering from chronic bleeding for twelve years. ²¹She thought: If I only touch his clothes, I'll get well.

²²When Jesus turned and saw her he said: Cheer up, daughter! Your faith has made you well. At that very moment the woman became well.

²³Jesus came to the synagogue leader's house. He saw flute players and a noisy crowd. ²⁴He said to them: Leave! The girl is not dead. She's sleeping. But they laughed at him.

²⁵When the crowd had been put outside, Jesus went in, took her hand, and the girl came back to life. ²⁶The news about this spread throughout that region.

Jesus Heals Two Blind Men

²⁷When Jesus left that place, two blind men followed him. They shouted: Have mercy on us, Son of David. ²⁸Jesus went into a house and the blind men followed him. He said to them: Do you believe that I can do this? Yes, Lord, they answered.

²⁹He touched their eyes and said: What you have believed will be done for you. ³⁰Then they could see. He warned them, "Don't let anyone know

about this. ³²But they went out and spread the news about him throughout that region.

Jesus Forces a Demon out of a Man Who Couldn't Talk

³²As they were leaving, some people brought a man to Jesus. The man was unable to talk because he was possessed by a demon. ³³But as soon as the demon was forced out, the man began to speak.

The crowds were amazed and said: We have never seen anything like this in Israel. ³⁴But the Pharisees said: He forces demons out of people with the help of the ruler of demons.

Jesus' Compassion for People

³⁵Jesus went to all the towns and villages. He taught in the synagogues and spread the Good News of the Kingdom. He also cured every disease and sickness.

³⁶When he saw the crowds, he felt sorry for them. They were troubled and helpless like sheep without a shepherd.

[Moses said to the Lord: Lord, you are the God who gives the breath of life to everyone. Please appoint someone over the community who will lead them in and out of battle so that the Lord's community will not be like sheep without a shepherd. So the Lord said to Moses: Take Joshua, son of Nun, a man who has the Spirit and place your hand on him. Numbers 27:15-18]

³⁷Then he said to his disciples: The harvest is large, but the workers are few. ³⁸So ask the Lord who gives this harvest to send workers to harvest his crops.

Jesus Appoints Twelve Apostles

10:1 Jesus called his Twelve disciples and gave them authority to force evil spirits out of people and to cure every disease and sickness.

²These are the names of the Twelve apostles: first and foremost, Simon, who is called Peter, and his brother Andrew; James and his brother John, the sons of Zebedee; ³Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James, son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; ⁴Simon the Zealot and Judas Iscariot, who later betrayed Jesus.

WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED SO FAR?

Jesus confronts the scribes and Pharisees by declaring he can forgive sins. Jesus is doing the same thing as John the Baptist. He is bypassing the Temple. But he is doing something even more outrageous. He is calling himself the Son of Man, alluding to this Scripture:

In my visions during the night, I saw among the clouds in Heaven someone like the Son of Man. He came to the Ancient One, who has lived for endless years, and was presented to him. He was given power, honor, and a Kingdom. People from every province, nation, and language were to serve him. His power is an eternal power that will not be taken away. His Kingdom will never be destroyed. **Daniel 7:13-14**]

Jesus will call himself the Son of Man 30x in Matthew, 13x in Mark, 25x in Luke, and 11x in John. Jesus is clearly calling himself divine.

Jesus now chooses Matthew, a tax collector in Capernaum, as his fifth disciple. Matthew is disliked by Jews because he is working for the Romans, probably collecting customs duties as Capernaum was on the trade route between Egypt and Damascus. Later at Matthew's house, Jesus is having table fellowship with Matthew's friends. The Pharisees are outraged at this. But Jesus is outraged at the Pharisees who call themselves: The Separated Ones, as they follow the Torah precisely.

Later Jesus tells the Pharisees: While you follow part of the Torah precisely, you forget the most important parts: *Loving God and loving your neighbor*.

Matthew now tells stories of Jesus' compassion for people and his power of healing. He heals a woman with a blood disease that makes her unclean, unable to associate in society. Then he raises a synagogue leader's little daughter from death to life. He heals two blind men and then a man who can't talk.

Matthew summarizes Jesus' compassion for people. He will use the word *splagchnizomai* 5x in Matthew 9:36; 14:14; 15:32; 18:27; 20:34. Mark will use this same word 4x and Luke 3x. He also uses the same expression Moses used for his compassion for God's people:

Moses said to the Lord: Lord, you are the God who gives the breath of life to everyone. Please appoint someone over the community who will lead them in and out of battle so that the Lord's community will not be like *sheep without a shepherd*. Numbers 27:15-17

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

1. Why does Jesus heal the paralyzed man let down from the roof? He hasn't evidenced any faith.
2. Why does Jesus tell the man his sins are forgiven aggravating the scribes? Was this necessary?
3. Why did Jesus choose a tax collector to be one of his first five disciples?
4. When the Pharisees can't disprove Jesus' many healings, why do they now accuse him of being in league with Beelzebul, the Prince of Demons? Isn't this simply ridiculous. Why would Satan cast out his own demons? He put them into people in the first place. What is their logic?
5. Matthew sees it is important to stress Jesus' compassion 5x. Why?
6. Jesus claims he is the Bridegroom. Who is his Bride? HINT: Read **Revelation 19:7-9**.
7. When Jesus uses the title, the Son of Man, who does he expect will recognize what he is claiming when he uses this title? Why don't people who recognize this title ask him directly why he is using this title for himself?

EXTRA CREDIT

Why did Jesus choose Judas Iscariot, who would later hand him over to his enemies, as one of his Twelve Apostles?

Pericope 12

The Second Sermon: Jesus Trains His Disciples

Matthew 10:5-42

Jesus Sends Out the Twelve Disciples to Minister to Israel

10:5 Jesus sent these Twelve out with the following instructions: Don't go among people who are not Jewish or into any Samaritan city. ⁶Instead, go to the lost sheep of the nation of Israel.

⁷As you go, spread this message: The Kingdom of Heaven is near. ⁸Cure the sick, bring the dead back to life, cleanse those with skin diseases, and force demons out of people. Give these things without charging since you received them without paying.

⁹Don't take any gold, silver, or even copper coins in your pockets. ¹⁰Don't take a traveling bag for the trip, a change of clothes, sandals, or a walking stick. After all, the worker deserves to have his needs met.

¹¹When you go into a city or village, look for people who will listen to you there. Stay with them until you leave that place. ¹²When you go into a house, greet the family. ¹³If it is a family that listens to you, allow your greeting to stand. But if it is not receptive, take back your greeting.

¹⁴If anyone doesn't welcome you or listen to what you say, leave that house or city, and shake its dust off your feet. ¹⁵I can guarantee this truth: Judgment Day will be better for Sodom and Gomorrah than for that city.

¹⁶I'm sending you out like sheep among wolves. So be as cunning as snakes but as innocent as doves.

Don't Be Astonished That You Will Persecuted

¹⁷Watch out for people who will hand you over to the Jewish courts and whip you in their synagogues. ¹⁸Because of me you will even be brought in front of governors and Kings to testify to them and to everyone in the world.

When You Testify about Me, The Holy Spirit Will Give You Words

¹⁹When they hand you over to the authorities don't worry about what to say or how to say it. When the time comes, you will be given what to say.

²⁰Indeed, you're not the ones who will be speaking. The Spirit of your Father will be speaking through you.

My Disciple Who Has Patient Endurance and Keeps the Faith Will Be Saved

²¹Brother will hand over brother to death and, a father will hand over his child. Children will rebel against their parents and kill them. ²²Everyone will hate you because you are committed to me. But the person who patiently endures *hypomeno* to the end *telos* will be saved *sozo*.

²³So when they persecute you in one city, flee to another. I can guarantee this truth: Before you have gone through every city in Israel, the Son of Man will come.

Because They Persecute Me, They Will Persecute You

²⁴A student is not better than his teacher. Nor is a slave better than his owner. ²⁵It is enough for a student to become like his teacher and a slave like his owner. If they have called the owner of the house Beelzebul, they will certainly call the family members the same name ²⁶So don't be afraid of them.

Jesus Says: My Teaching Will Never Be Secret, Nor Should Your Teachings

Nothing has been covered that will not be exposed. Whatever is secret will be made known. ²⁷Tell in the daylight what I say to you in the dark. Shout from the housetops what you hear whispered.

Don't Be Afraid of Humans. Fear God

²⁸Don't be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Instead, fear the one who can destroy both body and soul in Hell.

Your Heavenly Father Loves You and Will Protect You

²⁹Aren't two sparrows sold for a penny? Not one of them will fall to the ground without your Father's permission. ³⁰Every hair on your head has been counted. ³¹Don't be afraid. You are worth more than many sparrows.

Keep Your Faith in Me No Matter How You Are Persecuted

³²So I will acknowledge in front of my **Father in Heaven** that person who acknowledges me in front of others. ³³But I will tell my **Father in Heaven** that I don't know the person who tells others that he doesn't know me.

Jesus Admits That His Teaching Will Result in Conflict

³⁴Don't think that I came to bring peace to earth. I didn't come to bring peace but conflict. ³⁵I came to turn a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. ³⁶A person's enemies will be the members of his own family.

Family Ties Cannot Come Ahead of Your Discipleship of Me

³⁷The person who loves his father or mother more than me does not deserve to be my disciple. The person who loves a son or daughter more than me does not deserve to be my disciple.

My Disciples Cannot Be Unwilling to Die for Me

³⁸Whoever doesn't take up his cross and follow me doesn't deserve to be my disciple. ³⁹The person who tries to preserve his life will lose it, but the person who loses his life for me will preserve it.

Jesus says this in all four Gospels: **Mark 8:35; Luke 9:24; John 12:25**

Jesus Says His Disciples Represent Him

⁴⁰The person who welcomes you welcomes me, and the person who welcomes me welcomes the One Who Sent Me. ⁴¹The person who welcomes a prophet as such will receive a prophet's reward. The person who welcomes a godly person as such will receive a godly person's reward. ⁴²I

can guarantee this truth: Whoever gives any of my humble followers a cup of cold water because that person is my disciple will certainly never lose his reward.

WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED SO FAR?

Jesus now increases the number of his chosen disciples from five to twelve. In this sermon, Jesus gives these Twelve instructions before he sends them out to minister to people in Galilee. They are to preach, heal, and exorcise demons.

Jesus stresses that they must be totally non-violent. They are not to argue with anyone. If they are opposed, they are simply to leave. They are to exhibit the humility of Jesus, and depend on friendly hospitality by not taking any possessions.

They are not to seek the richest person in a place. They are to stay with the first person who welcomes them, and not seek to find more comfortable surroundings. If they don't welcome them, simply leave.

Jesus now tells them they will have special help when they testify for him. The Holy Spirit will give them the words of testimony to use. Expect to be persecuted, even by members of your own family.

Do not teach secretly. Just as everyone is able to hear the words of the Torah, even little children, everyone must be able to hear your words. Tell them all my words, even those I told you in private. Remember that God is protecting you. He knows you intimately.

Also, remember that your loyalty must be first to God. Family obligations come second. Never give up your faith. As my disciple, you must take up your cross and complete the mission God has given you. If you attempt to preserve your physical life by giving up your faith, you will have spiritual death.

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

1. Why does Jesus tell his chosen Twelve to only go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel and not to minister to Gentiles as Jesus has done already?
2. Why does Jesus want his disciples to depend completely on hospitality?
3. Does Jesus give the Holy Spirit to his disciples at this time so they can testify for him? Don't they have to wait until the Feast of Pentecost. **Acts 2**

4. Jesus says: *Before you have gone through every city in Israel, the Son of Man will come.* **Matthew 10:23**. What does Jesus mean? One commentator says: There is a wonderful variety of interpreters' senses of this text, founded upon the various comings of Christ mentioned in holy scripture.

5. Why does Jesus remind these Twelve that family obligations must not come above loyalty to their mission?

6. Jesus says: *The one who patiently endures *hypomeno* to the end will be saved.* **Matthew 10:22; 24:13**. What does this mean?

7. Jesus says that he expects most of his disciples will die preaching the Gospel:

The person who tries to preserve his life will lose it but the person who loses his life for me will preserve it. **Matthew 10:39**

Those who want to save their lives will lose them. But those who lose their lives for me will save them. **Matthew 16:25**

Those who love their lives will destroy them and those who hate their lives in this world will guard them for Everlasting Life. **John 12:25**.

Those who want to save their lives will lose them. But those who lose their lives for me and for the Good News will save them. **Mark 8:35**

Those who want to save their lives will lose them. But those who lose their lives for me will save them. **Luke 9:24**

In the Revelation of Jesus Christ, Jesus says to the church in Smyrna:

Be faithful until death and I will give you the crown of life. **Revelation 2:10**

Why will preaching the Gospel result in such violence?

Pericope 13

Jesus Speaks of John the Baptist Comparing Their Ministries

Matthew 11:1-12:21

11:1 After Jesus finished giving his Twelve disciples these instructions, he moved on from there to teach his message in their cities.

John Sends Two Disciples to Ask Jesus If He Is the Coming One

²When John was in prison, he heard about the things Christ had done. So he sent his disciples ³to ask Jesus: Are you the one who is coming or should we look for someone else?

⁴Jesus answered John's disciples: Go back, and tell John what you hear and see: ⁵Blind people see again, lame people are walking, those with skin diseases are made clean, deaf people hear again, dead people are brought back to life, and poor people hear the Good News.

[Then the eyes of the blind will be opened and the ear of the deaf will be unplugged. Then those who are lame will leap like deer and those who cannot speak will shout for joy. **Isaiah 35:5-6**]

⁶Whoever doesn't lose his faith in me is indeed blessed.

Jesus Speaks about John the Baptist

⁷As they were leaving, Jesus spoke to the crowds about John. What did you go into the desert to see? Tall grass swaying in the wind? ⁸Really, what did you go to see? A man dressed in fine clothes? Those who wear fine clothes are in royal palaces.

⁹Really, what did you go to see? A prophet? Let me tell you that he is far more than a prophet. ¹⁰John is the one about whom Scripture says:

I'm sending my messenger ahead of you to prepare the way in front of you.

[I'm going to send my messenger *mal'ak-angel* and he will clear the way ahead of me. Then the Lord you are looking for will suddenly come to his Temple. The messenger *mal'ak* of the covenant *berit* will come. He is the one you want, says the Lord of Armies. **Malachi 3:1**]

¹¹I can guarantee this truth: Of all the people ever born, no one is greater than John the Baptizer. Yet, the least important person in the Kingdom of Heaven is greater than John.

John was the forerunner of Jesus. But Jesus' disciples are being given greater information about God and his Kingdom than John has been given. They will see the substitutional atonement of Jesus on the cross.

¹²From the time of John the Baptizer until now, the Kingdom of Heaven has been forcefully advancing, and forceful people have been seizing it

Jesus says the great crowds are eagerly rushing forward to hear the preaching of John the Baptist and Jesus.

¹³All the Prophets and Moses' Teachings prophesied up to the time of John.

¹⁴If you are willing to accept their message, John is the Elijah who was to come.

[I'm Going to send you the prophet Elijah before that very terrifying Day of the Lord comes. **Malachi 4:5**]

¹⁵Let the person who has ears listen.

The People of Today Are Like Spoiled Little Children

¹⁶"How can I describe the people who are living now? They are like children who sit in the marketplaces and shout to other children:

¹⁷We played music for you, but you didn't dance. We sang a funeral song but you didn't show any sadness.

¹⁸John came neither eating nor drinking, and people say: There's a demon in him. ¹⁹The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and people say: Look

at him. He's a glutton and a drunk, a friend of tax collectors and sinners. Yet, wisdom is proved right by its actions.

Jesus Warns Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum

²⁰Then Jesus denounced the cities where he had worked most of his miracles because they had not changed the way they thought and acted *metaneo*-repented.

²¹How horrible it will be for you, Chorazin. How horrible it will be for you, Bethsaida. If the miracles worked in you had been worked in Tyre and Sidon Gentile cities, they would have changed the way they thought and acted long ago in sackcloth and ashes. ²²I can guarantee that judgment day will be better for Tyre and Sidon than for you.

Jesus Pronounces Judgment on Capernaum Where He Ministered the Most in Galilee

²³And you, Capernaum, will you be lifted to Heaven? No, you will go down to Hell. If the miracles that had been worked in you had been worked in Sodom, it would still be there today. ²⁴I can guarantee that Judgment *krisis* day will be better for Sodom than for you.

God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah because of their wickedness. **Genesis 19:24-25**

Jesus Praises the Father and Invites Disciples to Come to Him to Learn about God

²⁵At that time Jesus said: I praise you, Father, Lord of Heaven and earth, for hiding these things from wise and intelligent people and revealing them to little children. ²⁶Yes, Father, this is what pleased you.

²⁷“My Father has turned everything over to me. Only the Father knows the Son. And no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son is willing to reveal him.

Jesus Invites Everyone to Come to Faith in Him

²⁸Come to me, all who are tired from carrying heavy loads, and I will give you rest. ²⁹Place my yoke over your shoulders, and learn from me, because I am gentle and humble. Then you will find rest for yourselves ³⁰because my yoke is easy and my burden is light.

[This is what the Almighty Lord, the Holy One of Israel says: You can be saved by returning to me. You can have rest. You can be strong by being quiet and by trusting me. But you don't want that. **Isaiah 30:15**]

Jesus Has Authority over the Day of Rest—a Holy Day

12:1 Then on a Day of Rest—a Holy Day *sabaton*, Jesus walked through the grainfields. His disciples were hungry and began to pick the heads of grain to eat.

²When the Pharisees saw this, they said to him: Look! Your disciples are doing something that is not right to do on the Day of Rest—a Holy Day.

³Jesus asked them: Haven't you read what David did when he and his men were hungry? ⁴Haven't you read how he went into the House of God and ate the Bread of the Presence? **1 Samuel 21:6**. He and his men had no right to eat those loaves. Only the priests have that right.

⁵Or haven't you read in Moses' Teachings that on the Day of Rest—a Holy Day, the priests in the Temple do things they shouldn't on the Day of Rest yet remain innocent? **Leviticus 12:3**

⁶I can guarantee that something greater than the Temple is here. ⁷If you had known what: *I want mercy, not sacrifices* means, you would not have condemned innocent people.

[I want your loyalty, not your sacrifices. I want you to know me, not to give me burnt offerings. **Hosea 6:6**]

⁸The Son of Man has authority over the Day of Rest—a Holy Day.

Jesus Heals on the Day of Rest—a Holy Day

⁹Jesus moved on from there and went into a synagogue. ¹⁰A man with a paralyzed hand was there. The people asked Jesus whether it was right to heal on a day of rest—a holy day, so that they could accuse him of doing something wrong.

¹¹Jesus said to them: Suppose one of you has a sheep. If it falls into a pit on a Day of Rest—a Holy Day, wouldn't you take hold of it and lift it out? ¹²Certainly, a human is more valuable than a sheep. So it is right to do good on the Day of Rest—a Holy Day

¹³Then he said to the man: Hold out your hand. The man held it out, and it became normal again, as healthy as the other.

¹⁴The Pharisees left and plotted to kill Jesus. ¹⁵He knew about this, so he left that place.

Jesus Is the Servant of YHWH

Many people followed him, and he cured all of them. ¹⁶He also ordered them not to tell people who he was. ¹⁷So what the prophet Isaiah had said came true:

¹⁸Here is my servant whom I have chosen, whom I love, and in whom I delight. I will put my Spirit on him, and he will announce justice to the nations. ¹⁹He will not quarrel or shout, and no one will hear his voice in the streets. ²⁰He will not break off a damaged cattail. He will not even put out a smoking wick until he has made justice victorious. ²¹The nations will have hope because of him. **Isaiah 42:1-4**

WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED SO FAR?

John, in the prison of King Herod Antipas, sends two disciples to Jesus to ask if he is the Mighty One he had predicted coming to Israel. John is concerned because he prophesied that this Mighty One would be baptized with the Holy Spirit and with fire. **Matthew 3:11**. John had seen and heard Jesus' words, but he hadn't seen Jesus exercise judgment. John didn't realize

that Jesus did not come this time to judge. But he would come a second time and he would then judge.

Jesus told John that he had prophesied correctly. Hadn't John heard that the things Isaiah the prophet had predicted had come true? Have faith, Jesus implied. The other things you prophesied will soon come to pass.

Jesus went on to preach about John the Baptist, his cousin. *Of all the people ever born, no one is greater than John the Baptist. Yet the least important in the Kingdom of Heaven is greater than John.* **Matthew 11:11.** John was the last prophet of the old dispensation, the Old Testament. He would not experience the substitutional atonement of Jesus. That is to come.

Like John, many of the people of Israel did not realize who Jesus was. They were simply viewing both physically. John was an ascetic, while Jesus was celebrating that the Kingdom of Heaven was near. So they criticized both men. Yet in time, they would see that each was executing God's plans for their lives.

Now Jesus denounces the people in the cities where he ministered for not repenting. They will be judged by God for their actions. And Jesus praises God for revealing his Son to peasant people and not to the learned. He also issues an invitation to come to him to rest in God. Having trust and faith in God brings peace – a *peace that passes all understanding.* **Philippians 4:7**

Again, the pesky Pharisees attempt to criticize Jesus for allowing his disciples to pick grain on the Sabbath. Jesus shows them that human need is valued by God more than ceremonial rules. Jesus proclaims the Son of Man has authority to interpret the Sabbath rules. Jesus goes on to heal a man with a withered hand on the Sabbath. So the Pharisees plotted to kill Jesus. They seem not to be concerned about violating the Sixth Commandment.

This pericope ends with Matthew quoting Isaiah's prophecy of the Servant of YHWH. Jesus is God's beloved servant who has been given the Holy Spirit. He is non-violent and will preach and perform God's justice. The nations will have hope because of him. **Isaiah 42:1-4**

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

1. What was John the Baptist's mission for God? Did he accomplish his mission?
2. Read **Malachi 4:5-6**. How was John like the prophet Elijah?
3. How has the Kingdom of Heaven been forcefully advancing? How have forceful people been seizing it?

4. Crowds have been following Jesus all over Galilee. Yet Jesus denounces Capernaum, his headquarters town. Didn't he experience success there?
5. In **John 14:6**, Jesus says no one goes to the Father except through me. Is Jesus saying the same thing when he says: *No one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son is willing to reveal him?* **Matthew 11:27**
6. Why does Jesus intentionally heal on the Sabbath Day? What point is he making?
7. Why does Jesus healing on the Sabbath so inflame the Pharisees?

Pericope 14

Jesus Is Attacked by the Pharisees

Matthew 12:22-50

The Pharisees Accuse Jesus of Working with Satan

^{12:22} Then some people brought Jesus a man possessed by a demon. The demon made the man blind and unable to talk. Jesus cured him so that he could talk and see. ²³ The crowds were all amazed and said: Can this man be the Son of David?

²⁴ When the Pharisees heard this they said: This man can force demons out of people only with the help of Beelzebul, the ruler of demons.

Beelzebul is a name for Satan derived from the Philistine god worshiped at Ekron.

²⁵ Since Jesus knew what they were thinking, he said to them: Every kingdom divided against itself is ruined. And every city or household divided against itself will not last. ²⁶ If Satan forces Satan out, he is divided against himself. How, then, can his kingdom last?

²⁷ If I force demons out of people with the help of Beelzebul, who helps your followers force them out? That's why they will be your judges. ²⁸ But if I force demons out with the help of God's Spirit, then God's Kingdom has come to you.

²⁹ How can anyone go into a strong man's house and steal his property? First he must tie up the strong man. Then he can go through his house and steal his property.

Jesus Describes the Unforgivable Sin

³⁰ Whoever isn't with me is against me. Whoever doesn't gather with me scatters. ³¹ So I can guarantee that people will be forgiven for any sin or cursing. However, cursing the **Spirit** will not be forgiven. ³² Whoever

speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven. But whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven in this world or the next.

Attributing the power of God to the Devil means that person can never be forgiven because they do not believe in the power of God. Only God can forgive sins.

A Tree Is Known by Its Fruit

³³ Make a tree good, and then its fruit will be good. Or make a tree rotten, and then its fruit will be rotten. A person can recognize a tree by its fruit.

³⁴ You poisonous snakes. How can you evil people say anything good? Your mouth says what comes from inside you. ³⁵ Good people do the good things that are in them. But evil people do the evil things that are in them.

³⁶ “I can guarantee that on Judgment Day people will have to give an account of every careless word they say. ³⁷ By your words you will be declared innocent, or by your words you will be declared guilty.

Jesus Will Give the Scribes and Pharisees Only the Sign of Jonah

³⁸ Then some experts in Moses’ Teachings and Pharisees said, “Teacher, we want you to show us a miraculous sign.

³⁹ He responded: The people of an evil and unfaithful era look for a miraculous sign. But the only sign they will get is the sign of the prophet Jonah. ⁴⁰ Just as Jonah was in the belly of a huge fish for three days and three nights, so the Son of Man will be in the heart of the earth for three days and three nights. **Jonah 1:17**

⁴¹ The men of Nineveh will stand up with you at the time of judgment and will condemn you, because they turned to God and changed the way they thought and acted when Jonah spoke his message. **Jonah 3:3**. But look, someone greater than Jonah is here.

⁴² The queen from the south will stand up at the time of judgment with you. She will condemn you, because she came from the ends of the earth to hear Solomon’s wisdom. But look, someone greater than Solomon is here. **1 Kings 10:1-13**

Evil Must Be Replaced by Faith or Evil Will Return

⁴³When an evil spirit comes out of a person, it goes through dry places looking for a place to rest. But it doesn't find any. ⁴⁴Then it says: I'll go back to the home I left. When it arrives, it finds the house unoccupied, swept clean, and in order.

⁴⁵Then it goes and brings along seven other spirits more evil than itself. They enter and take up permanent residence there. In the end the condition of that person is worse than it was before. That is what will happen to the evil people of this day.

Jesus Describes His True Family

⁴⁶While Jesus was still talking to the crowds, his mother and brothers were standing outside. They wanted to talk to him. ⁴⁷Someone told him: Your mother and your brothers are standing outside. They want to talk to you.

⁴⁸He replied to the man speaking to him: Who is my mother, and who are my brothers? ⁴⁹Pointing with his hand at his disciples, he said: Look, here are my mother and my brothers. ⁵⁰Whoever does what my Father in Heaven wants is my brother and sister and mother.

WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED SO FAR?

The Pharisees continue to hound Jesus. While people marvel at the power of God working in Jesus, allowing him to cure a man of both his blindness and inability to talk, they accuse him of working with the Devil. It doesn't help that the people are calling Jesus the long-awaited Davidic Messiah when they call him the Son of David.

Jesus attempts to show the Pharisees the error of their thinking. Why would Satan cast out his own demon residing in a man? He sent the demon to the man in the first place. Whoever isn't with me is against me. I can tell you that anyone attributing the power of God to the Devil is committing an unforgiveable sin.

Your evil comes out of your mouth from your evil heart. When Judgment Day comes, your evil words will judge you.

Then the Pharisees and scribes attack Jesus demanding he give them a sign that he is the Messiah. Jesus says the only sign he will give them is the Sign of Jonah, the prophet who was swallowed by a great fish. Jonah was in the whale's belly for three days and three nights. So the Son of Man will be in the heart of the earth for three days and three nights.

When Jonah recovered and went to Nineveh to preach God's judgment, the men of Nineveh repented, and God saved them. These men will condemn you Pharisees because you will not repent of your sin of accusing me. Even the Queen of Sheba will condemn you.

When an evil spirit is exorcised from a person, it looks for another place to rest. But when it doesn't find any, it returns to the person from whom it was exorcised. If there is no faith there, it brings seven more evil spirits, and the person is in worse condition than before.

While Jesus was speaking, his mother and brothers stood outside waiting to speak to him. Jesus was told but he said: Who are my mother and brothers. Looking around at his disciples, he said: This is my true family. They do what my Heavenly Father wants.

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

1. People call Jesus the Son of David. They are referring to the covenant God made with King David, Read **2 Samuel 7:8-16**. What is God promising to King David?
2. Read **Isaiah 9:6-7**. How does this continue the prophecy of the Davidic Messiah? How will people recognize the Messiah when he comes? HINT: Read **Matthew 12:18-20**; **Isaiah 42: 1-4**.
3. Read **Jeremiah 23:5-6**. What is the righteous Branch? HINT: Read **Jeremiah 33:15, 17**.
4. Ezekiel prophesied to God's people while they were in exile in Babylon. Read **Ezekiel 34:22-24**. What is God promising to his people? Now read **Ezekiel 37:24-28**. What further promise is God making? What is God's Holy Place?
5. How do people commit the unforgivable sin?
6. Who will judge people on the Day of Judgment. How do you know? HINT: Read **John 5:22-29**.
7. Read **Matthew 12:46-50**. What does Jesus criticize his family for?

Pericope 15

The Third Sermon: Jesus Favorite Teaching Method: Parables

Matthew 13:1-52

¹That same day Jesus left the house and sat down by the Sea of Galilee.

²The crowd that gathered around him was so large that he got into a boat. He sat in the boat while the entire crowd stood on the shore.

³Then he used stories *parabole* as illustrations to tell them many things.

Jesus used parables, short stories, each containing a spiritual truth to teach the crowds. The word *parabole* appears 17x in Matthew, 13x in Mark, and 18x in Luke.

The Parable of the Sower

He said: Listen. A farmer went to plant seed. ⁴Some seeds were planted along the road. Birds came and devoured them. ⁵Other seeds were planted on rocky ground, where there was little soil. The plants sprouted quickly because the soil wasn't deep. ⁶But when the sun came up, they were scorched. They withered because their roots weren't deep enough.

⁷Other seeds were planted among thornbushes. The thornbushes grew up and choked them. ⁸But other seeds were planted on good ground and produced grain. They produced one hundred, sixty, or thirty times as much as was planted. ⁹Let the person who has ears listen.

Jesus Explains to His Disciples Why He Teaches in Parables

¹⁰The disciples asked him: Why do you use stories as illustrations when you speak to people? ¹¹Jesus answered: Knowledge about the mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven has been given to you. But it has not been given to the crowd.

¹²Those who understand these mysteries will be given more knowledge and they will excel in understanding them. However, some people don't

understand these mysteries. Even what they understand will be taken away from them.

¹³This is why I speak to them this way. They see, but they're blind. They hear, but they don't listen. They don't even try to understand. ¹⁴So they make Isaiah's prophecy come true:

You will hear clearly but never understand. You will see clearly but never comprehend. ¹⁵These people have become close-minded and hard of hearing. They have shut their eyes so that their eyes never see. Their ears never hear. Their minds never understand. And they never return to me for healing. **Isaiah 6:9-10**

¹⁶Blessed are your eyes because they see and your ears because they hear. ¹⁷I can guarantee this truth: Many prophets and many of God's people longed to see what you see but didn't see it, to hear what you hear but didn't hear it.

Jesus Tells His Disciples the Meaning of the Parable of the Sower

¹⁸Listen to what the story about the farmer means. ¹⁹Someone hears the word about the Kingdom but doesn't understand it. The Evil One comes at once and snatches away what was planted in him. This is what the seed planted along the road illustrates.

²⁰The seed planted on rocky ground is the person who hears the word and accepts it at once with joy. ²¹Since he doesn't have any root, he lasts only a little while. When suffering or persecution comes along because of the word, he immediately falls from faith.

²²The seed planted among thornbushes is another person who hears the word. But the worries of life and the deceitful pleasures of riches choke the word so that it can't produce anything.

²³But the seed planted on good ground is the person who hears and understands the word. This type produces crops. They produce one hundred, sixty, or thirty times as much as was planted.

This is the most important of Jesus' parables. It teaches that the job of a disciple is to preach the Word accurately. The job of the person hearing the Word is to receive it. Disciples are not to worry about how many people come to faith in Jesus. That is the job of the Holy Spirit. Their job is to preach the Word accurately.

The Parable about Weeds in the Wheat

²⁴Jesus used another illustration. He said: The Kingdom of Heaven is like a man who planted good seed in his field. ²⁵But while people were asleep, his enemy planted weeds in the wheat field and went away. ²⁶When the wheat came up and formed kernels, weeds appeared.

²⁷The owner's workers came to him and asked: Sir, didn't you plant good seed in your field? Where did the weeds come from? ²⁸He told them: An enemy did this. His workers asked him: Do you want us to pull out the weeds?

²⁹He replied: No. If you pull out the weeds, you may pull out the wheat with them. ³⁰Let both grow together until the harvest. When the grain is cut, I will tell the workers to gather the weeds first and tie them in bundles to be burned. But I'll have them bring the wheat into my barn.

The parable is about the church. Many people join the congregation but are not really converted. Jesus teaches to allow them to remain in the congregation as some of them eventually will come to faith. At the end of time, Jesus will judge all people. At that time, those without faith will be separated. Jesus calls their destiny *Outer Darkness*. **Matthew 8:12; 22:13; 25:30**

A Parable of a Mustard Seed and Yeast Demonstrating the Growth of the Kingdom of Heaven

³¹Jesus used another illustration. He said: The Kingdom of Heaven is like a mustard seed that someone planted in a field. ³²It's one of the smallest seeds. However, when it has grown, it is taller than the garden plants. It becomes a tree that is large enough for birds to nest in its branches.

³³He used another illustration. The Kingdom of Heaven is like yeast that a woman mixed into a large amount of flour until the yeast worked its way through all the dough.

³⁴Jesus used illustrations to tell the crowds all these things. He did not tell them anything without illustrating it with a story. ³⁵So what the prophet had said came true:

I will open my mouth to illustrate points. I will tell what has been hidden since the world was made. **Psalm 78:2**

The Meaning of the Parable of the Weeds in the Wheat

³⁶When Jesus had sent the people away, he went into the house. His disciples came to him and said: Explain what the illustration of the weeds in the field means.

³⁷He answered: The one who plants the good seeds is the Son of Man. ³⁸The field is the world. The good seeds are those who belong to the Kingdom. The weeds are those who belong to the Evil One. ³⁹The enemy who planted them is the Devil. The harvest is the end of the world. The workers are angels.

⁴⁰Just as weeds are gathered and burned, so it will be at the end of time. ⁴¹The Son of Man will send his angels. They will gather everything in his Kingdom that causes people to sin and everyone who does evil. ⁴²The angels will throw them into a blazing furnace. People will cry and be in extreme pain there.

⁴³Then the people who have God's approval will shine like the sun in their Father's Kingdom. **Daniel 12:3.** Let the person who has ears listen!

Parables about a Treasure, a Fine Pearl, and a Net

⁴⁴The Kingdom of Heaven is like a treasure buried in a field. When a man discovered it, he buried it again. He was so delighted with it that he went away, sold everything he had, and bought that field.

⁴⁵Also, the Kingdom of Heaven is like a merchant who was searching for fine pearls. ⁴⁶When he found a valuable pearl, he went away, sold everything he had, and bought it.

⁴⁷Also, the Kingdom of Heaven is like a net that was thrown into the sea. It gathered all kinds of fish. ⁴⁸When it was full, they pulled it to the shore. Then they sat down, gathered the good fish into containers, and threw the bad ones away. ⁴⁹The same thing will happen at the end of time. The angels will go out and separate the evil people from people who have God's approval. ⁵⁰Then the angels will throw the evil people into a blazing furnace. They will cry and be in extreme pain there.

⁵¹[Jesus asked his disciples:] Have you understood all of this? Yes, they answered.

⁵²So Jesus said to them: That is why every student of the Scriptures who has become a disciple of the Kingdom of Heaven is like a home owner. He brings new and old things out of his treasure chest.

⁵³When Jesus had finished these illustrations, he left that place.

WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED SO FAR?

Many people dislike parables. They may have to work hard to understand them. But they usually always remember the parable. Until they understand it, it seems to gnaw at them. Remember that in Jesus' day, people didn't hear many words. Today, we are bombarded with words from every direction, usually attempting to sell us something. But it was not that way in Jesus' day.

Because most people did not write and did not read, they learned things orally. Consequently, they usually listened carefully to what was said. Jesus' parables were usually short. They were easily remembered.

Jesus said the Parable of the Sower was the most important of all his parables. In it, he was reinforcing what Moses said in Deuteronomy. We must listen to God's voice.

Love the Lord your God. Listen to his voice and hold fast to him.

Deuteronomy 30:20

Jesus' disciples must emulate God in speaking his Word clearly and carefully. In this way, their hearers will be blessed hearing God speak to them. But Jesus' disciples must also realize that their job is to communicate God's Word. The listeners have the responsibility to allow God's Word to flow into their hearts. They must listen attentively and focus their minds on it. That way they will at least remember the parable even if they don't understand it at first.

Notice how many times we remember one or two verses in the Bible. The Hebrew language is quite concise. When reading the Bible, it seems there is a great deal of repetition. The same things are said over and over. This is the Hebrew way of learning.

Like the Beloved Disciple, Matthew has chosen to focus on Jesus' teaching. He sees Jesus as a new Moses who wrote five books. Matthew gives us five speeches of Jesus. Yet these speeches are fairly short. Moses gave three long speeches in Deuteronomy, Jesus favorite book, most of which are very repetitious. Matthew shows us Jesus, also quoting Isaiah frequently.

700 years before Jesus, God told his prophet Isaiah: You are going to speak to a people who will not listen to you. But I still want you to speak my truth to them. Some of this truth will sink in and be remembered. People will write your words down and later generations will then also hear my truth. Isaiah's words were so powerful that he is the most quoted Hebrew prophet in the New Testament. In 1947, a scroll of the Book of Isaiah was found that was 1,000 years earlier than any other complete scroll of the Bible we have found. God wanted these words preserved.

The Parable of the Weeds is also an important parable. We have a tendency to judge people critically in our churches. But Jesus says: Give the Holy Spirit time to work. Be generous and don't judge. Be kind and helpful. Remember that Jesus associated with all kinds of people, including tax collectors and sinners. Don't be a Pharisee.

Jesus' shorter parables are about how the Kingdom of Heaven will grow rapidly. It took only 300 years for Christianity to become the religion of the whole Roman Empire.

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

1. Why is it important that people remember Jesus' parables? Describe your favorite parable of Jesus, its meaning, and how it has impacted your life.
2. Why is the Parable of Receptive Dirt Jesus' most important parable?
3. Why aren't Jesus' parables usually preached from church pulpits?
4. Why did Jesus have to explain his parables to his disciples?
5. Why did many of Jesus' parables focus on the growth of the Kingdom of Heaven?

PART 3

Journey to Jerusalem

PERICOPES 16-20

Jesus Galilean ministry is now ended. He has been rejected by people in his hometown of Nazareth and also by the Pharisees, the most learned religious people in Galilee. He has finished the first of the three phases of his ministry. He has preached the Good News of the Gospel to thousands of people who have come to Galilee to hear him. They have come from Jerusalem, Judea, Idumea, and outside of Israel from the ten Greek cities – the Decapolis – in the Gentile land east of the Jordan River, and the Gentile land north of Israel in Tyre and Sidon. He has healed and exorcised demons from thousands of people.

Now Jesus is going to concentrate for the next six months on training his disciples. They must realize that despite the glowing prophecies of the Messiah by the Hebrew prophets – a Messiah coming to rule and reign over the entire world from Jerusalem, God has sent him to be the Suffering Servant of YHWH, as Isaiah prophesied in **Isaiah 52:13-53:12**.

Jesus will tell his disciples this in three short passion prophecies. They must understand what Jesus is telling if they are to preach the Good News or Gospel of the Kingdom of Heaven after Jesus returns to Heaven. John the Baptist preached the King was coming. Now Jesus preaches the King has come and he will have to die for the sins of people to reconcile wicked humans to a holy God.

To end his ministry in Galilee, Jesus will perform a great miracle feeding 5,000 Jews with five loaves and two fish, ministering to a Canaanite woman, and then feeding 4,000 Gentiles. Then he will begin teaching his disciples about his identity and his mission for God.

Pericope 16

Jesus is Rejected by Galileans So He Begins Teaching His Disciples

Matthew 13:54-15:20

Jesus Is Rejected by the People of His Hometown of Nazareth

⁵⁴ Jesus went to his hometown and taught the people in the synagogue in a way that amazed them. People were asking: Where did this man get this wisdom and the power to do these miracles? ⁵⁵ Isn't this the carpenter's son? Isn't his mother's name Mary? Aren't his brothers' names James, Joseph, Simon, and Judas? ⁵⁶ And aren't all his sisters here with us? Where, then, did this man get all this? ⁵⁷ So they took offense at him.

But Jesus said to them: The only place a prophet isn't honored is in his hometown and in his own house. ⁵⁸ He didn't work many miracles there because of their lack of faith.

Matthew drastically abbreviates this story as told in **Luke 4:14-30**. In Luke's account Jesus' reads Isaiah's prophecy in **Isaiah 61:1-2** stopping in the middle of verse 2. Then he sits down and declares: *Today this Scripture was fulfilled in your hearing*. Jesus is announcing he is the Messiah. That is not all. Then Jesus recalls how God sent the prophet Elijah to a Gentile woman to heal her son. Then he tells how God sent the prophet Elisha to heal a Gentile general. The people were furious and tried to throw Jesus off a cliff.

Luke is writing for Gentiles and therefore accentuates the healing of Gentiles aspect of Jesus' ministry. Matthew simply alludes to Jesus claiming to be the Messiah but never has Jesus say this directly.

King Herod Antipas Recalls Killing John the Baptist

14:1 At that time Herod, ruler of Galilee, heard the news about Jesus. ² He said to his officials: This is John the Baptizer. He has come back to life. That's why he has the power to perform these miracles.

³ Herod had previously arrested John, tied him up, and put him in prison. Herod did this for Herodias, the wife of his brother Philip. ⁴ John had been telling Herod: It's not right for you to be married to her. ⁵ So Herod wanted

to kill John. However, he was afraid of the people because they thought John was a prophet.

⁶When Herod celebrated his birthday, Herodias' daughter danced for his guests. Herod was so delighted with her that⁷he swore he would give her anything she wanted. ⁸Urged by her mother, she said: Give me the head of John the Baptizer on a platter.

⁹The King regretted his promise. But because of his oath and his guests, he ordered that her wish be granted. ¹⁰He had John's head cut off in prison. ¹¹So the head was brought on a platter and given to the girl, who took it to her mother. ¹²John's disciples came for the body and buried it. Then they went to tell Jesus.

Jesus Feeds More Than Five Thousand

¹³When Jesus heard about John, he left in a boat and went to a place where he could be alone. The crowds heard about this and followed him on foot from the cities. ¹⁴When Jesus got out of the boat, he saw a large crowd. He felt sorry for them *splagchnizomai* and cured their sick people.

¹⁵In the evening the disciples came to him. They said: No one lives around here and it's already late. Send the crowds to the villages to buy food for themselves. ¹⁶Jesus said to them: They don't need to go away. You give them something to eat. ¹⁷They told him: All we have here are five loaves of bread and two fish. ¹⁸Jesus said: Bring them to me."

¹⁹Then he ordered the people to sit down on the grass. After he took the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to Heaven and blessed the food. He broke the loaves apart, gave them to the disciples, and they gave them to the people. ²⁰All of them ate as much as they wanted. When they picked up the leftover pieces, they filled twelve baskets.

²¹About five thousand men had eaten. This number does not include the women and children who had eaten.

²² Jesus quickly *eutheos* made *anagkazo*-compelled ^{9x} his disciples get into a boat and cross to the other side ahead of him while he sent the people away.
²³ After sending the people away, he went up a mountain to pray by himself. When evening came, he was there alone.

This event is told in all four Gospels. But only the Gospel of John reveals why Jesus *compelled* his disciples to *quickly* get into a boat while he dismissed the crowd by himself. The Beloved Disciple tells us that the people wanted to take Jesus by force and make him King. **John 6:15** Jesus was afraid his disciples might get caught up in the crowd's enthusiasm.

Jesus Walks on the Sea of Galilee

²⁴ The boat, now hundreds of yards from shore, was being thrown around by the waves because it was going against the wind.

²⁵ Between three and six o'clock in the morning, he came to them. He was walking on the sea. ²⁶ When the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were terrified. They said: It's a ghost, and began to scream because they were afraid.

²⁷ Immediately, Jesus said: Calm down. It's *emi* me. *ego-I* Don't be afraid.

²⁸ Peter answered: Lord, if it is you, order me to come to you on the water.

²⁹ Jesus said: Come.

So Peter got out of the boat and walked on the water toward Jesus. ³⁰ But when he noticed how strong the wind was, he became afraid and started to sink. He shouted: Lord, save me,

³¹ Immediately, Jesus reached out, caught hold of him and said: You have so little faith *oligopistos*. Why did you doubt?

This is the third time Jesus uses the word *oligopistos*. The *little faith* of not only the disciples but the people of Galilee will drive Jesus to abandon his Galilean ministry and concentrate on training his disciples while walking through Perea toward Jerusalem. In the Gospel of the Beloved Disciple, Jesus and his disciples after crossing the lake go to Capernaum where Jesus preaches his Bread of Life sermon. Most of his Galilean disciples now abandon him after this so Jesus goes to Jerusalem to confront the Jewish religious leaders. **John 6:22-71**

³²When they got into the boat, the wind stopped blowing. ³³The men in the boat bowed down in front of Jesus and said: You are truly the **Son of God**.

This is the first time Jesus' disciples have called Jesus the **Son of God**. Only Satan and demons have called him this before.

³⁴They crossed the sea and landed at Gennesaret. ³⁵The men there recognized Jesus and sent messengers all around the countryside. The people brought him everyone who was sick. ³⁶They begged him to let them touch just the edge of his clothes. Everyone who touched his clothes was made well.

Pharisees and Scribes from Jerusalem Challenge Jesus

15:1 Then some Pharisees and experts in Moses' Teachings came from Jerusalem to Jesus. They asked: ²Why do your disciples break the traditions of our ancestors? They do not wash their hands before they eat.

These men ask Jesus why he does not follow their Oral Law that commands washing hands ceremonially before eating.

³He answered them: Why do you break the commandment of God because of your traditions? ⁴For example God said: Honor your father and your mother **Exodus 20:12; Deuteronomy 5:16** and whoever curses father or mother must be put to death. **Exodus 21:17**

⁵But you say that whoever tells his father or mother: I have given to God whatever support you might have received from me ⁶does not have to honor his father. Because of your traditions you have destroyed the authority of God's Word. ⁷You hypocrites. Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you:

⁸These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. ⁹Their worship of me is pointless, because their teachings are rules made by humans. **Isaiah 29:13**

¹⁰Then he called the crowd and said to them: Listen and try to understand.
¹¹What goes into a person's mouth doesn't make him unclean. It's what comes out of the mouth that makes a person unclean.

The Disciples Ask Jesus to Explain Why He Doesn't Follow the Oral Law of the Pharisees

¹²Then the disciples came and said to him: Do you realize that when the Pharisees heard your statement they were offended? ¹³He answered: Any plant that my Heavenly Father did not plant will be uprooted. ¹⁴Leave them alone. They are blind leaders. When one blind person leads another, both will fall into the same pit.

¹⁵Peter said to him, "Explain this illustration to us.

¹⁶Jesus said: Don't you understand yet? ¹⁷Don't you know that whatever goes into the mouth goes into the stomach and then into a toilet? ¹⁸But whatever goes out of the mouth comes from within, and that's what makes a person unclean. ¹⁹Evil thoughts, murder, adultery, other sexual sins, stealing, lying, and cursing come from within. ²⁰These are the things that make a person unclean. But eating without washing one's hands doesn't make a person unclean.

WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED SO FAR?

How disappointed Jesus must have been when the people of his hometown rejected him. He had healed thousands of people and even exorcised demons. People came from all over Israel and even outside Israel to see and hear him. But his hometown people couldn't appreciate how God was working in him. He was just a hometown boy grown up.

Then a very sad event overwhelms Jesus. He hears that King Herod Antipas has killed his cousin John the Baptist. He leaves with his disciples in boat where he can be alone to grieve. But when he arrives at a deserted place he meets a large crowd of over 5,000 men with their families. He has great compassion, puts away his grief, and spends the day teaching them. Then at night, he feeds them miraculously with five loaves and two fish.

Then Jesus quickly makes his disciples get into a boat to go back to Capernaum while he alone dismisses the crowd. Then he goes up a mountain to pray. None of the Gospels give us this

complete story. Only the Gospel According to John tells us that *the men attempted to take Jesus by force and make him King*. **John 6:15**.

Jesus stays up in the mountain praying by himself until 3 in the morning. Then he comes to his disciples walking on the sea. The disciples do not recognize him and think he is a ghost. But Jesus identifies himself. Then Peter asks Jesus if he also can walk on the water. Jesus says: Come. Peter begins but soon loses his faith and begins to sink. So he calls out: Lord, save me. Jesus helps Peter into the boat and the storm ceases. The disciples now call Jesus: The Son of God.

When they reach Gennesaret, men recognize Jesus and send messengers to tell everyone Jesus is here. People brought him their sick and he healed them. The Pharisees come and hound Jesus again questioning why he doesn't follow their Oral Law. Jesus says the many rules they have cause people to not follow Moses' Teachings in the Torah. Matthew abbreviates Mark's account of Jesus' saying all foods are clean. **Mark 7:19**

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

1. Why do Mark and Matthew severely abbreviate Luke's story of Jesus' return to Nazareth and do not tell why the people of Nazareth rejected him?
2. Why do all three synoptic Gospels fail to tell the full story of Jesus' feeding the five thousand? Why does only Matthew say that women and children were there? Why does only the Beloved Disciple tell the full story?
3. Why did Peter want to walk on the Sea of Galilee like Jesus?
4. Why do Jesus' disciples call him the Son of God? What has Jesus done to make them say this?
5. Why does only Mark say that Jesus declared all foods clean and dietary laws of Moses out of date? In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus' said the laws of the Torah were still in effect.

Pericope 17

Jesus Leaves Galilee to Teach Gentiles

Matthew 15:21-16:12

The Faith of a Gentile Canaanite Woman

15:21 Jesus left that place and went to the region of Tyre and Sidon to the north of Israel. **22** A Canaanite woman from that territory came to him and began to shout: Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David. My daughter is tormented by a demon.

23 But he did not answer her at all. Then his disciples came to him and urged him: Send her away. She keeps shouting behind us. **24** Jesus responded: I was sent only to the lost sheep of the nation of Israel.

25 She came to him, bowed down and said: Lord, help me. **26** Jesus replied: It's not right to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs. **27** She said: You're right, Lord. But even the dogs eat scraps that fall from their masters' tables.

28 Then Jesus answered her: Woman, you have strong faith. What you wanted will be done for you. At that moment her daughter was cured.

Jesus Continues to Minister to Gentiles

29 Jesus moved on from there and went along the Sea of Galilee. Then he went up a mountain and sat there. **30** A large crowd came to him, bringing with them the lame, blind, disabled, those unable to talk, and many others. They laid them at his feet, and he cured them. **31** The crowd was amazed to see mute people talking, the disabled cured, the lame walking, and the blind seeing. So they praised the God of Israel.

Jesus Feeds More Than Four Thousand Gentiles

³² Jesus called his disciples and said: I feel sorry for the people. They have been with me three days now and have nothing to eat. I don't want to send them away hungry, or they may become exhausted on their way home.

³³ His disciples asked him: Where could we get enough bread to feed such a crowd in this place where no one lives? ³⁴ Jesus asked them: How many loaves of bread do you have? They answered: Seven and a few small fish.

³⁵ He ordered the crowd to sit down on the ground. ³⁶ He took the seven loaves and the fish and gave thanks to God. Then he broke the bread and gave it to the disciples. They gave the bread and fish to the people. ³⁷ All of them ate as much as they wanted. The disciples picked up the leftover pieces and filled seven large baskets.

³⁸ Four thousand men had eaten. This number does not include the women and children who had eaten. ³⁹ After he sent the people on their way, Jesus stepped into the boat and came to the territory of Magadan Magdala on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee.

The Pharisees Ask for a Sign from Heaven

16:1 The Pharisees and Sadducees came to test Jesus. So they asked him to show them a miraculous sign from Heaven.

Previously Jesus had told them the only sign he would give them is the Sign of Jonah. **Matthew 12:38-41**

² He responded to them: In the evening you say that the weather will be fine because the sky is red. ³ And in the morning you say that there will be a storm today because the sky is red and overcast. You can forecast the weather by judging the appearance of the sky, but you cannot interpret the signs of the times.

⁴ Evil and unfaithful people look for a miraculous sign. But the only sign they will be given is that of Jonah. Then he left them standing there and went away.

Jesus Criticizes His Disciples Because They Cannot Interpret Spiritual Things

⁵The disciples had forgotten to take any bread along when they went to the other side of the Sea of Galilee to Gentile territory. ⁶Jesus said to them: Be careful. Watch out for the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

⁷The disciples had been discussing among themselves that they had not taken any bread along. ⁸Jesus knew about their conversation and asked: Why are you discussing among yourselves that you don't have any bread? You have so little faith *oligopistis*.

This is the fourth and last time Jesus uses the word *oligopistis* in this Gospel.

⁹Don't you understand yet? Don't you remember the five loaves for the five thousand and how many baskets you filled? ¹⁰Don't you remember the seven loaves for the four thousand and how many large baskets you filled? ¹¹Why don't you understand that I wasn't talking to you about bread? Watch out for the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees!"

¹²Then they understood that he didn't say to watch out for the yeast in bread, but to watch out for the teachings of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED SO FAR?

Harried by the Pharisees, Jesus leaves Israel going north into Tyre. A Gentile woman whose daughter is inhabited by a demon asks for help. Jesus first tells her God's mission for him is for only the lost sheep of house of Israel. But the woman is persistent and says: Give me a crumb. Her great faith causes Jesus to exercise the demon with a word.

Then Jesus and his disciples went east along the Sea of Galilee. Jesus went up a mountain and taught the many Gentiles who came to him. Then he feed 4,000 of them with seven loaves and a few small fish. Then he and his disciples boarded a boat and sailed back to the west shore in Galilee.

The Pharisees again meet him and ask for a sign. But again he says the only sign they will receive in the sign of Jonah. Then he and his disciples again boarded a boat. On the way, Jesus told his disciples to beware of the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees. However the disciples thought he was talking about bread. Jesus upbraided them saying he was talking about the hypocrisy of these leaders. Didn't they remember what great miracles Jesus had just performed

in the two feedings. Then he told them clearly Watch out for the teachings of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT?

1. Why did Jesus say for a second time that he was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel? Where has he said this before?
2. Why did Jesus want his disciples to remember the number of baskets of leftovers remained in the feeding of the 5,000 and the 4,000? **Matthew 16:9-10**

Pericope 18

Jesus Teaches He Will Be the Suffering Messiah

Matthew 16:13-17:23

Peter Declares His Belief about Jesus

¹³When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi north of the nation of Israel, he asked his disciples: Who do people say the Son of Man is? ¹⁴They answered: Some say you are John the Baptizer, others Elijah, still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.

¹⁵He asked them: But who do **you** say I am? ¹⁶Simon Peter answered: You are the Messiah, the Son of the Living God.

This title for Jesus will be used only twice in this Gospel. Here it is uttered by Peter and later by the High Priest. **Matthew 26:63**

¹⁷Jesus replied: Simon, son of Jonah, you are blessed. No human revealed this to you, but my Father in Heaven revealed it to you. ¹⁸You are Peter *petros* and I can guarantee that on this rock *petra* I will build my church *ekklesia*. The gates of Hell *hades* will not overpower it. ¹⁹I will give you the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven. Whatever you imprison, God will imprison. And whatever you set free, God will set free.

The word *ekklesia* appears only here and twice in **Matthew 18:17**. It doesn't appear in any of the other three Gospels but appears in Acts and other books of the NT.

The word *hades* only appears here and in **Matthew 11:23**. This refers to Pluto, the Hellenistic god of the lower regions. *Hades* appears 2x in Luke, 2x in Acts, 1x in 1 Corinthians and 4x in Revelation. Jesus' usual word translated **Hell** is *geenna* that appears 7x in this Gospel referring to the valley of Ben Hinnom, the garbage dump of the City of Jerusalem. This word appears also in Mark 3x, Luke 1x, and in James 1x.

Jesus gives Peter the authority to forgive sins or not to forgive them. In the Gospel of John, Jesus gives this authority to all the Eleven Apostles. **John 20:23**

²⁰Then he strictly ordered the disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Messiah *christos*.

Jesus Foretells That He Will Die and Come Back to Life

²¹ From that time on Jesus began to inform his disciples that he had to go to Jerusalem. There he would have to suffer *pascho* a lot because of the leaders, the chief priests, and the experts in Moses' Teachings. He would be killed *apokteino* but on the third day he would be brought back to life *egeiro* raised again.

Peter Rebukes Jesus and Jesus Rebukes Peter

²² Peter took him aside and objected to this. He said: Heaven forbid, Lord. This must never happen to you. ²³ But Jesus turned and said to Peter: Get out of my way, Satan *satanas*. You are tempting me to sin. You aren't thinking the way God thinks but the way humans think.

This is the fourth and last time Matthew uses the word *satanas*. He also calls Satan *the evil one poneros* in Matthew 5:37; 6:13; 13:19, 38.

What It Means to Follow Jesus

²⁴ Then Jesus said to his disciples: Those who want to come with me must say no to the things they want, pick up their crosses, and follow me. ²⁵ Those who want to save their lives will lose them. But those who lose their lives for me will find them. ²⁶ What good will it do for people to win the whole world and lose their lives? Or what will a person give in exchange for life?

When Jesus tells his disciples they must *pick up their crosses*, the disciples knew very well what that meant, Romans were constantly crucifying Jews. The Jewish Zealots, particularly in Galilee, hid in caves and killed Roman soldiers whenever they could. Galileans saw Jews hanging on crosses constantly.

²⁷ The Son of Man will come with his angels in his Father's glory. Then he will pay back each person based on what that person has done

Jesus is talking about the Last Day when he will judge all people. John 5:22-30. In Revelation 20:11-15, John the prophet calls this *the Great White Throne Judgment*.

²⁸ I can guarantee this truth: Some people who are standing here will not die until they see the Son of Man coming in his Kingdom.

Jesus is Transfigured Appearing in All His Glory

¹After six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John, the brother of James, and led them up a high mountain where they could be alone.

²Jesus' appearance changed in front of them. His face became as bright as the sun and his clothes as white as light. ³Suddenly, Moses and Elijah appeared to them and were talking with Jesus.

⁴Peter said to Jesus: Lord, it's good that we're here. If you want, I'll put up three tents here — one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.

⁵He was still speaking when a bright cloud overshadowed them.

God Speaks for Only a Second Time in This Gospel

Then a voice came out of the cloud and said: This is my Son, whom I love and with whom I am pleased. Listen to him.

⁶The disciples were terrified when they heard this and fell face down on the ground. ⁷But Jesus touched them and said: Get up and don't be afraid. ⁸As they raised their heads, they saw no one but Jesus.

⁹On their way down the mountain, Jesus ordered them: Don't tell anyone what you have seen. Wait until the Son of Man has been brought back to life.

The Disciples Ask Jesus about Elijah

¹⁰So the disciples asked him: Why do the experts in Moses' Teachings say that Elijah must come first?

[I'm going to send you the prophet Elijah before that very terrifying Day of the Lord comes. **Malachi 4:5**]

¹¹Jesus answered: Elijah is coming and will put everything in order again.

¹²Actually, I can guarantee that Elijah has already come. Yet, people treated him as they pleased because they didn't recognize him. In the same way they're going to make the Son of Man suffer.

¹³Then the disciples understood that he was talking about John the Baptizer.

Jesus Cures a Demon-Possessed Boy His Disciples Couldn't Exorcise

¹⁴When they came to a crowd, a man came up to Jesus, knelt in front of him¹⁵and said: Sir, have mercy on my son. He suffers from seizures. Often he falls into fire or water. ¹⁶I brought him to your disciples, but they couldn't cure him.

¹⁷Jesus replied: You unbelieving and corrupt generation. How long must I be with you? How long must I put up with you? Bring him here to me.

¹⁸Jesus ordered the demon to come out of the boy. At that moment the boy was cured.

¹⁹Then the disciples came to Jesus privately and asked: Why couldn't we force the demon out of the boy? ²⁰He told them: "Because you have so little faith.

I can guarantee this truth: If your faith is the size of a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain: Move from here to there, and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you.

The KJV version adds verse 21: *However, this kind of demon is exorcised only by prayer and fasting.*

Jesus Foretells That He Will Die and Come Back to Life

²²While they were traveling together in Galilee, Jesus told them: The Son of Man will be betrayed and handed over *paradidomi* to people. ²³They will kill him *apokteino*, but on the third day he will be brought back to life *egeiro*. Then the disciples became very sad *sphodra*—exceedingly *lypeo*—sorrowful.

This is the second of three Passion Predictions Jesus will make on the journey to Jerusalem. Jesus will make three predictions of his suffering in all three Gospels.

WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED SO FAR?

This is a real turning point in the Gospel. Peter confesses Jesus as the Messiah. This event happens in all four Gospels: John 6:69; Mark 8:29; Luke 9:20. But Peter and the disciples have a different idea of the Messiah based on the prophecies of the Hebrew prophets. They envisioned a descendant of King David who would rule the world from Jerusalem through his Chosen People with all the Gentiles of the world coming to Jerusalem to worship him. They added to these prophecies that he would drive the Romans out of the Holy Land.

Jesus tells Simon Peter that he is blessed because the Heavenly Father revealed this to him. Jesus goes on further to say that his disciples will form a congregation after he dies and rises again that Jesus calls the church *ekklesia*, a word that appears only this of the four Gospels. It appears primarily in the writings of Paul, in Acts, and in Jesus' letters to the seven churches in Revelation.

Jesus then astonishes the Twelve by saying he must go to Jerusalem where he will suffer a lot. The elders, chief priests, and scribes would persecute him. He would be killed but on the third day God would raise him back to life. Peter is aghast and speaks for all the Twelve when he says: *Lord, this must never happen to you.* Jesus rebukes Peter saying I must follow God's plan for my life. Don't try to deter me from doing what God wants.

Jesus wants Peter to stop immediately attempting to deter him by saying: You are speaking of Satan's plan for me, not God's plan for my life.

Jesus then goes on to tell the Twelve disciples God's plan for them. If you wish to follow me, says Jesus, you must do what God wants, take up your cross, and follow me. I will die and you also must be willing to give up your lives to accomplish God's plan for your lives. One day, I will return to earth with my holy angels in my Father's glory. I will then judge all people in the world.

Then Jesus makes an amazing prophesy: Some people standing here will not die until they see the Son of Man coming in his Kingdom.

Six days later, Jesus took Peter, James, and John up a mountain, perhaps Mount Hermon, the tallest peak in Israel. There Jesus appeared in all his glory as he was transfigured into bright shining light like an angel. Moses and Elijah were talking with him about his departure from Jerusalem. The disciples were frightened at this.

Yet Peter wanted this glorious event to last forever and suggested he erect three shelters. He was interrupted when suddenly a cloud overshadowed them and God spoke for the second

time in this Gospel. *This is my Son whom I love Hear him.* But all too soon they had to return to the remaining disciples at the foot of the mountain.

When they arrived, a man pleaded with Jesus to heal his son. *I brought him to your disciples but they couldn't help him.* Jesus was frustrated as he said: *You unbelieving and corrupt generation. How long must I put up with you? Bring the boy to me.* Jesus ordered the demon out of the boy. Then the disciples asked Jesus: Why couldn't we exorcise the demon? Because you have so little faith, said Jesus.

Then Jesus gave his second Passion Prediction. The Son of Man will be betrayed and handed over to people. They will kill him but God will bring him back to life on the third day. The Twelve were quite sorrowful at the thought of this.

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

1. When Peter identifies Jesus as *the Messiah, the Son of the Living God*, Jesus blesses him. Why does Jesus bless Peter for saying this?
2. Why is Matthew the only one of the Gospel writers to use the word **ekklesia**?
3. Jesus will now tell his disciples he will be a Suffering Messiah. Why doesn't Jesus point them to Isaiah's *Fourth Servant of YHWH Song* in **Isaiah 52:13-53:12** to show them that this was God's plan for his life as the Hebrew prophet Isaiah had predicted?
4. Did the disciples understand what *rising from the dead* meant?
5. Why did Jesus only take Peter, James, and John to see his Transformation?
6. What was the purpose of Jesus' Transformation? Was it for Jesus or for the disciples? What did God want them to learn?
7. Why does Matthew follow the glory of Jesus with a story of the remaining disciples not being able to exorcise a demon?

EXTRA CREDIT

When Jesus made his second Passion Prediction, the disciples were very sorrowful. Where was their attention fixed? Did this prevent them from seeing the future event?

Pericope 19

The Fourth Sermon: What Jesus Requires of His Disciples

Matthew 17:24-19:15

Jesus Obeys the Secular Authorities by Paying the Temple Tax

17:24 When they came to Capernaum, the collectors of the Temple tax came to Peter. They asked him: Doesn't your teacher pay the Temple tax?
25 Certainly, he answered.

Peter went into the house. Before he could speak, Jesus asked him: What do you think, Simon? From whom do the Kings of the world collect fees or taxes? Is it from their family members or from other people? 26 From other people, Peter answered. Jesus said to him: Then the family members are exempt.

27 However, so that we don't create a scandal, go to the Sea and throw in a hook. Take the first fish that you catch. Open its mouth, and you will find a coin. Give that coin to them for you and me.

Greatness in the Kingdom

18:1 At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked: Who is greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven?

2 He called a little child and had him stand among them. 3 Then he said to them: I can guarantee this truth: Unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the Kingdom of Heaven. 4 Whoever becomes like this little child is the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven. 5 Whoever welcomes a child like this in my name welcomes me.

Jesus Warns His Disciples Not to Cause Others to Lose Faith

6 These little ones believe in me. It would be best for the person who causes one of them to lose faith to be drowned in the sea with a large stone hung around his neck.

⁷ How horrible it will be for the world because it causes people to lose their faith. Situations that cause people to lose their faith will arise. How horrible it will be for the person who causes someone to lose his faith.

⁸ If your hand or your foot causes you to lose your faith, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life disabled or injured than to have two hands or two feet and be thrown into everlasting fire ⁹If your eye causes you to lose your faith, tear it out and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into hellfire.

¹⁰ Be careful not to despise these little ones. I can guarantee that their angels in Heaven always see the face of my Father who is in Heaven.

The Parable of the Lost Sheep

¹² What do you think? Suppose a man has 100 sheep and one of them strays. Won't he leave the 99 sheep in the hills to look for the one that has strayed? ¹³I can guarantee this truth: If he finds it, he is happier about it than about the 99 that have not strayed. ¹⁴In the same way, your Father in Heaven does not want one of these little ones to be lost.

How to Treat Believers When They Do Wrong

¹⁵ If a believer does something wrong, go, confront him when the two of you are alone. If he listens to you, you have won back that believer. ¹⁶ But if he does not listen, take one or two others with you so that every accusation may be verified by two or three witnesses ¹⁷ If he ignores these witnesses, tell it to the community of believers *ekklesia*. If he also ignores the community *ekklesia*, deal with him as you would a heathen or a tax collector

¹⁸ I can guarantee this truth: Whatever you imprison, God will imprison. Whatever you set free, God will set free.

Jesus repeats what he previously told Peter in **Matthew 16:19**

¹⁹I can guarantee again that if two of you agree on anything here on earth, my Father in Heaven will accept it. ²⁰Where two or three have come together in my name, I am there among them.

Jesus Teaches His Disciples Must Forgive Everyone for Everything

²¹Then Peter came to Jesus and asked him: Lord, how often do I have to forgive *aphiemi* a believer who wrongs me? Seven times? ²²Jesus answered him: I tell you, not just seven times, but seventy times seven.

Jesus tells his disciples they must forgive everyone for everything. This is the genuine hallmark of a disciple of Jesus. The word *aphiemi* appears 47x in Matthew, 37x in Mark, 33x in Luke, and 15x in John. It appears only 1 or 2x in seven other books of the NT.

The Parable of the Unforgiving Servant

²³That is why the Kingdom of Heaven is like a King who wanted to settle accounts with his servants ²⁴When he began to do this, a servant who owed him millions of dollars was brought to him ²⁵Because he could not pay off the debt, the master ordered him, his wife, his children, and all that he had to be sold to pay off the account ²⁶Then the servant fell at his master's feet and said: Be patient with me and I will repay everything.

²⁷“The master felt sorry for his servant, freed him, and canceled his debt. ²⁸But when that servant went away, he found a servant who owed him hundreds of dollars. He grabbed the servant he found and began to choke him. Pay what you owe, he said.

²⁹Then that other servant fell at his feet and begged him: Be patient with me and I will repay you. ³⁰But he refused. Instead, he turned away and had that servant put into prison until he would repay what he owed. ³¹The other servants who worked with him saw what had happened and felt very sad. They told their master the whole story.

³²Then his master sent for him and said to him: You evil servant. I canceled your entire debt because you begged me. ³³Shouldn't you have treated the other servant as mercifully as I treated you? ³⁴His master was so angry that

he handed him over to the torturers until he would repay everything that he owed.

³⁵That is what my Father in Heaven will do to you if each of you does not sincerely *apo*-from *hymon*-your *kardia*-heart forgive *aphiemi* other believers.

Pharisees Test Jesus about Divorce

19:1 When Jesus finished speaking, he left Galilee and traveled along the other side of the Jordan River to the territory of Judea. ²Large crowds followed him, and he healed them there.

³Some Pharisees came to test him. They asked: Can a man divorce his wife for any reason?

[This is what you must do if a husband writes out a certificate of Divorce, gives it to his wife, and makes her leave his house. He divorced her because he found out something indecent about her and she no longer pleased him. **Deuteronomy 24:1**]

⁴Jesus answered: Haven't you read that the Creator made them male and female in the beginning ⁵and that he said: That's why a man will leave his father and mother and will remain united with his wife, and the two will be one? **Genesis 2:24**. ⁶So they are no longer two but one. Therefore, don't let anyone separate what God has joined together.

⁷The Pharisees asked him: Why, then, did Moses order a man to give his wife a written notice to divorce her? ⁸Jesus answered them: Moses allowed you to divorce your wives because you're heartless *sklerokardia*-hardness 3x *hymon*-your *sklerokardia*-hearts. It was never this way in the beginning. ⁹I can guarantee that whoever divorces his wife for any reason other than her unfaithfulness is committing adultery if he marries another woman.

¹⁰The disciples said to him: If that is the only reason a man can use to divorce his wife, it's better not to get married. ¹¹He answered them: Not everyone can do what you suggest. Only those who have that gift can.

¹²For example, some men are celibate because they were born that way. Others are celibate because they were castrated. Still others have decided to be celibate because of the Kingdom of Heaven. If anyone can do what you've suggested, then he should do it.

Jesus Blesses Children

¹³Then some people brought little children to Jesus to have him bless them and pray for them. But the disciples told the people not to do that. ¹⁴Jesus said: Don't stop children from coming to me. Children like these are part of God's Kingdom. ¹⁵After Jesus blessed them, he went away from there.

WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED SO FAR?

Jesus continues to teach his disciples. They must obey secular authorities. God does not want chaos. Before the nation of Israel left Mount Sinai, God told Moses to appoint the heads of each tribe as officers. They were in charge of groups of 1,000, 100, 50, or 10 people. **Deuteronomy 1:9-18**. Jesus told Peter to pay the Temple tax.

Now the disciples, after Jesus has given them his second Passion Prediction, ask him: *Who is greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven?* Jesus took little children and said: *Unless you repent and become like little children, you will never enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Whoever becomes like this little child is the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven.* Jesus will have to repeat this again in **Matthew 23:11**

Jesus now gives his disciples a stern warning. *Don't ever cause one of these little ones to lose faith.* In fact, he pronounces a woe in advance on anyone who does this. Jesus also reminds his disciples that these little ones have angels in Heaven to protect them.

Jesus wants his disciples to clearly understand that their Heavenly Father is concerned for all his sheep. If one strays, he will leave the flock of 99 and go and seek the lost one.

Jesus then says that if one does wrong, confront him alone. If he does not listen, take one or two with you to comply with the instructions in **Deuteronomy 19:15**. If he still does not listen, tell it to the congregation *ekklesia*. If he still does not listen, treat him as a heathen or a tax collector. **Matthew 19:17**

I do not understand this last sentence and it appears most commentators avoid attempting to explain it. However, Paul seems to agree with this statement. *Judge those who are inside. Remove that wicked man from among you.* **1 Corinthians 5:12-13**

Jesus says Christians are to forgive everyone for everything whether they repent or not. Jesus then tells a parable about a servant who refused to forgive. His master handed him over to the torturers *basanistes*^{IX}.

The Pharisees continue to hound Jesus this time asking him about divorce. Jesus says God never intended divorce, but he authorized it in Deuteronomy 24 because humans have such hard hearts. But he authorized it only if the wife committed adultery. His disciples said: Then its better not to get married. Jesus said: If one can remain single, then they should do it.

This pericope concludes with Jesus blessing little children. In Jewish society, children had no rights. At 12 years old, boys were accepted into the community by a special coming-of-age ceremony in their local synagogue – something not mentioned in the Bible called a Bar Mitzvah. They became a Son of the Covenant.

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

1. Jesus says to obey secular leaders. What if these leaders do something really bad? What is a disciple to do then?
2. Why are Jesus' disciples so worried about their places in the Kingdom of Heaven? Luke presents the most outrageous example. At the Last Supper, Jesus said:

The hand of the one who will betray me is with me on the table. The Son of Man is going to die the way it has been planned for him. But how horrible it will be for that person who betrays him. Then they began to discuss with each other who could do such a thing. Then a quarrel broke out among the disciples. They argued about who should be considered the greatest. **Luke 22:21-24**

How is this even possible?

3. Jesus warns his disciples not to cause little ones to lose faith. If they do, they will be severely punished. I personally have taken this very seriously. James, the first Bishop of the Jerusalem church said:

Brothers and sisters, not many of you should become teachers. You know that we who teach will be judged more severely. **James 3:1**

4. In analyzing Jesus story of the shepherd who leaves the 99 in the flock to go after the one who is lost, we are gratified that the shepherd will do this. But who is guarding the 99? What may happen to them without a shepherd?

5. How do you evaluate this verse? Could Jesus have said this?

If he will neglect to hear them: tell it unto the church. But if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto you as a heathen man and a publican.

Matthew 18:17 KJV

6. How seriously does Jesus take forgiveness? Is there any time we should not forgive?

7. Why does God allow divorce? Why did the Pharisees question Jesus about this?

Pericope 20

Jesus and His Disciples Are Almost to Jerusalem

Matthew 19:16-20:34

A Young Man Asks Jesus How He Can Gain Eternal Life

¹⁶ Then a man came to Jesus and said: Teacher, what good deed should I do to gain Eternal Life?

¹⁷ Jesus said to him: Why do you ask me about what is good? There is only one who is good. If you want to enter into eternal life, obey the commandments Torah.

¹⁸ Which commandments? the man asked.

Jesus said: Never murder. Never commit adultery. Never steal. Never give false testimony. ¹⁹ Honor your father and mother. Love your neighbor as you love yourself. Exodus 20:20:13,14,15,16,12; Deuteronomy 5:17, 18, 19, 20, 16; Leviticus 19:18

²⁰ The young man replied: I have obeyed all these commandments. What else do I need to do?

²¹ Jesus said to him: If you want to be perfect, sell what you own. Give the money to the poor and you will have treasure in Heaven. Then follow me.

²² When the young man heard this, he went away sad because he owned a lot of property.

Jesus Teaches How Great Is the Lure of Wealth

²³ Jesus said to his disciples: I can guarantee this truth: It will be hard for a rich person to enter the Kingdom of Heaven. ²⁴ I can guarantee again that it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter God's Kingdom.

²⁵ He amazed his disciples more than ever when they heard this. Then who can be saved? they asked. ²⁶ Jesus looked at them and said: It is impossible for people to save themselves, but everything is possible for God. **Genesis 18:13; Numbers 11:23; Isaiah 50:2; Jeremiah 32:27; Zechariah 8:6; Luke 1:37**

²⁷ Then Peter replied to him: Look, we've given up everything to follow you. What will we get out of it *esomai*-have *ara*-therefore?

²⁸ Jesus said to them: I can guarantee this truth: When the Son of Man sits on his glorious throne in the world to come, you, my followers, will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel

²⁹ Everyone who gave up homes, brothers or sisters, father, mother, children, or fields because of my name will receive a hundred times more and will inherit Eternal Life.

³⁰ However, many who are first will be last, and many who are last will be first.

A Parable about Vineyard Workers

20:1 The Kingdom of Heaven is like a landowner who went out at daybreak to hire workers for his vineyard. ² After agreeing to pay the workers the usual day's wages, he sent them to work in his vineyard. ³ About 9 a.m. he saw others standing in the marketplace without work. ⁴ He said to them: Work in my vineyard, and I'll give you whatever is right. So they went.

⁵ He went out again about noon and 3 p.m. and did the same thing. ⁶ About 5 p.m. he went out and found some others standing around. He said to them: Why are you standing here all day long without work? ⁷ No one has hired us, they answered him. He said to them: Work in my vineyard.

⁸ When evening came, the owner of the vineyard told the supervisor: Call the workers and give them their wages. Start with the last, and end with the first. ⁹ Those who started working about 5 p.m. came, and each received a day's wages.

¹⁰When those who had been hired first came, they expected to receive more. But each of them received a day's wages. ¹¹Although they took it, they began to protest to the owner. ¹²They said: 'These last workers have worked only one hour. Yet, you've treated us all the same, even though we worked hard all day under a blazing sun.

¹³The owner said to one of them: 'Friend, I'm not treating you unfairly. Didn't you agree with me on a day's wages?' ¹⁴Take your money and go. I want to give this last worker as much as I gave you. ¹⁵Can't I do what I want with my own money? Or do you resent my generosity towards others? ¹⁶In this way the last will be first and the first will be last.

For the Third Time Jesus Foretells That He Will Die and Come Back to Life

¹⁷When Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem, he took the Twelve apostles aside and said to them privately: ¹⁸We're going to Jerusalem. There the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and the experts in Moses' Teachings. They will condemn him to death ¹⁹and hand him over to foreigners. They will make fun of him, whip him, and crucify him. But on the third day he will be brought back to life.

A Mother of the Sons of Thunder Makes a Request

²⁰Then the mother of Zebedee's sons came to Jesus with her two sons. She bowed down in front of him to ask him for a favor. ²¹What do you want? he asked her. She said to him: Promise that one of my sons will sit at your right and the other at your left in your Kingdom.

²²Jesus replied: You don't realize what you're asking. Can you drink the cup that I'm going to drink? We can, they told him. ²³Jesus said to them: You will drink my cup. But I don't have the authority to grant you a seat at my right or left. My Father has already prepared these positions for certain people.

²⁴When the other ten apostles heard about this, they were irritated with the two brothers

Jesus Teaches about Leadership Discipleship

²⁵Jesus called the apostles and said: You know that the rulers of nations have absolute power over people and their officials have absolute authority over people. ²⁶But that's not the way it's going to be among you.

Whoever wants to become great among you will be your servant. ²⁷Whoever wants to be most important among you will be your slave. ²⁸It's the same way with the Son of Man. He didn't come so that others could serve him. He came to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many people.

Jesus Gives Two Blind Men Their Sight

²⁹As they were leaving Jericho, a large crowd followed Jesus. ³⁰Two blind men were sitting by the road. When they heard that Jesus was passing by, they shouted: Lord, Son of David, have mercy on us!"

³¹The crowd told them to be quiet. But they shouted even louder: Lord, Son of David, have mercy on us!"

³²Jesus stopped and called them. What do you want me to do for you? he asked. ³³They told him: Lord, we want you to give us our eyesight back.

³⁴Jesus felt sorry for them so he touched their eyes. Their sight was restored at once and they followed him.

WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED SO FAR?

Jesus and the disciples are almost to Jerusalem. They have been traveling through Perea alongside the eastern bank of the Jordan River for nearly six months. This timing comes only from the Gospel of John where a Passover Festival is mentioned three times at **John 2:13; 6:4,** and **11:44**. The synoptic Gospels only mention one Passover, that occurring in the last week of Jesus life.

The story of rich, young ruler is told in all three synoptic Gospels. This man comes up to Jesus asking him how to gain Eternal Life. Jesus says to obey the Ten Commandments. Which ones? he asks. Jesus cities Commandments 5-8 and adds Leviticus 19:18. The man says: I have obeyed these. What else do I need to do. Jesus answered: If you want to be perfect, sell your possessions, give the money to the poor and come an follow me. When the young man heard this, he went away sorrowful because he had many possessions.

Jesus said: Having great possessions is a strong deterrent from becoming my disciple. *It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle.* Jesus disciples were astonished. They asked Jesus: *Who then can be saved?* Jesus said: *God can save these people.*

Peter asked: *We have given up everything to follow you. What will be our reward?* Jesus said: In the world to come, you will sit on twelve thrones judging the tribes of Israel. Whoever has given up possessions, families, or fields will have one hundred times more and Eternal Life besides. However, may who are first will be last and the last will be first. To explain Jesus told a Parable of Vineyard Workers. No matter how long they worked, each received a day's wage. All disciples are treated alike.

Now Jesus makes a third and final Passion Prediction. He adds the detail the foreigners will mock him, scourge him and crucify him. But then on the third day he will come back to life. This is first time the word *crucify* is used in this Gospel.

Yet after this the mother of James and John makes a request of Jesus. Promise me that my two sons will sit at your right and left in the Kingdom of Heaven. Jesus replied: You don't realize what your asking. My Father has already selected people to occupy those places. The other Ten heard this discussion and were indignant.

Jesus then taught all Twelve about leadership discipleship. Whoever wants to be great among you must be your servant. Whoever wants to be important among you must be your slave. It is the same with me. I didn't come to have you serve me but to come to serve and give my life as a ransom for many.

Jesus and his disciples then passed through Jericho, the City of Palm Trees where many of the priests serving in the Jerusalem Temple lived. As they left the city, two blind men, hearing Jesus was passing through, called out loudly, Lord, Son of David, have mercy on us. Jesus said: What do you want? They said: Lord, we want to see. Jesus touched their eyes and they could see. So they followed him on the way.

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

1. Was it only his possessions that kept the rich, young ruler from following Jesus?
2. Most of the Jews in Galilee had few possessions and were quite poor. Why then did Peter ask what they would receive?
3. Matthew mentions the Twelve 8x, Mark 10x, Luke 8x, but John only 3x. What is the importance of the Twelve Apostles? Why did Jesus choose Twelve?

4. Why did each of the vineyard workers receive the same amount no matter how long their worked? What is the spiritual principle to be learned?
5. Why did Jesus wait until his third Passion Prediction to tell his disciples he would be crucified?
6. While the mother of Zebedee's sons makes the request, James and John answer Jesus' question. Why don't James and John ask Jesus directly if they can sit at his right and left hand? Why were the other Ten irritated at James and John making this request?
7. Why do the two blind men call Jesus Son of David just before Jesus enters Jerusalem? Does the fact that Jesus heals two blind men have anything to say about the blindness of the Twelve?

EXTRA CREDIT

Who do Jesus' disciples now think Jesus is when they enter Jerusalem? How can you tell?

PART 4

Jesus Ministers in Jerusalem

Pericopes 21-25

Having ministered in Galilee, in Judea, and in the Gentile areas north and east of there, and having spent time in Perea teaching his disciples, Jesus now enters the City of Jerusalem, where the Temple is. Here he will confront the religious leaders of the nation, the Jewish High Court, the Sanhedrin, a seventy-member group comprised of the chief priests, the Sadducees, the Pharisees, and the lay elders of the people.

These people have heard of Jesus, they know exactly what is going on in this very small country, only 50 miles wide and 120 miles long. They have already sent their spies to Galilee to confirm all the stories they've heard. What concerns them most is that Jesus is an agitator of the common people as several others were as he appears to want to change the existing order that is quite comfortable for these elites under Roman rule.

Jesus knows he is entering a hostile area. While this is the center of Jewish religion with the Temple and its thousands of priests, its highly ornate ceremonies, and its money coming in from all over the world with Jews from the diaspora attending the three annual festivals of Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles plus the High Holy Days, it is not the most pious place. The genuine personal religion of Jews are the Sabbath services conducted in the local synagogues in the city of which the Talmud Ket 105a says there were 394. **Wikipedia.**

The Roman officials in the City of Jerusalem were wary of religious zealots. Galilee was known for its rebels called the Zealots of whom many were sicarii or dagger men. These men carried short swords in the robes and stabbed Roman soldiers wherever they could find them. The Romans had captured a notorious Zealot named Barabbas who was presently in a Roman jail.

The time was the annual Passover Festival and the Roman Governor with his personal troops had come in from his palace in Caesarea Maritima to keep order with the increased crowds that flooded the city. The population would something grow five times in size from 50,000 to 250,000 people.

The Passover Festival was a time when Jews remembered that God had delivered their ancestors from 400 years of slavery in Egypt. Around 1,300 BC, God had sent Moses, an 80-year-old Hebrew, born and raised in Egypt in palace of Pharaoh who had fled to the desert of Midian when he was 40 years old because he had murdered an Egyptian. For the past 40 years he had been herding sheep living with a priest who was descendant of Abraham's wife Keturah.

He returned to Egypt at God's call to demand that Pharaoh allow the Hebrews to leave Egypt and return to God's Mountain and fulfill God's promise to Abraham's descendants. Pharaoh refused so God brought nine horrific plagues on Egypt. Then God announced through Moses to Pharaoh that he will send a death angel. The first born of every Egyptian would be killed. Still Pharaoh refused.

God then told the Hebrews to select a lamb and keep it until the 14th day of the month. Then they were to kill it. They were to take the branch of a hyssop plant, dip it in the blood that is in a bowl and put some of the blood on the top and side of the doorframes of their house. God's Death Angel will then know not to kill the firstborn males in that house. The angel did this. Moses went to Pharaoh and Pharaoh said: Go.

The Hebrews left and camped on the edge of the Red Sea. But Pharaoh changed his mind and chased them. God then divided the Sea and the Hebrews walked through the sea as if on dry land. The Egyptians in the chariots followed them. God caused the sea to return and drowned the Egyptians. Each year the Jews celebrated this.

So at this time of the year, the Jews longed for a promised Messiah to come and deliver them from the occupying Romans. There was a tension in the air and even a hint of expectancy as Jews celebrated a Passover Seder, a ceremonial meal that told this story. Exodus Chapter 12 describes this.

The pericopes in this part describe what occurred prior to the actual Passover Day.

Pericope 21

King Jesus Comes to God's Holy Mountain

Matthew 21:1-45

Jesus Enters Jerusalem as the Davidic Messiah

21:1 When they came near Jerusalem and had reached Bethphage on the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples ahead of him. ²He said to them: Go into the village ahead of you. You will find a donkey tied there and a colt with it. Untie them, and bring them to me. ³If anyone says anything to you, tell him that the Lord needs them. That person will send them at once.

Jesus' good friend Lazarus lived in Bethany on the Mount of Olives. Jesus had arranged for a donkey and a colt tied to a post in front of his home. The code word was: The Lord needs them.

⁴This happened so that what the prophet had said came true:

⁵Tell the people of Zion: 'Your King is coming to you. He's gentle, riding on a donkey, on a colt, a young pack animal.

[Rejoice with all your heart, people of Zion. Shout in triumph, people of Jerusalem. Look. Your King is coming to you: He is righteous and victorious. He is humble and rides on a donkey, a colt, a young pack animal.

He will make sure there are no chariots in Ephraim or war horses in Jerusalem. There will be no battle bows. He will announce peace to the nations. He will rule from sea to sea and from the Euphrates River to the ends of the earth. I will set your captives free from the waterless pit because of the blood that sealed my Covenant with you. **Zechariah 9:9-11**]

⁶The disciples did as Jesus had directed them. ⁷They brought the donkey and the colt and put their coats on them for Jesus to sit on. ⁸Most of the people spread their coats on the road. Others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road.

⁹The crowd that went ahead of him and that followed him was shouting,

Hosanna to the Son of David!

Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord. **Psalm 118:26**

Hosanna in the highest Heaven.

¹⁰When Jesus came into Jerusalem, the whole city was in an uproar. People were asking: Who is this? ¹¹The crowd answered: This is the prophet Jesus from Nazareth in Galilee.

Did Jesus ride the donkey entirely into the city or did this celebration take place entirely on the Mount of Olives? None of the Gospel writers tell us.

Jesus Cleanses the Temple

¹²Jesus went into the Temple courtyard and threw out everyone who was buying and selling there. He overturned the moneychangers' tables and the chairs of those who sold pigeons ¹³He told them: Scripture says: My house will be called a House of Prayer but you're turning it into a gathering place for thieves.

[I will remember the foreigners who have joined the Lord to worship him, to love the Lord's name, and to be his servants. All of them will keep the Day of Rest – a Holy Day, from becoming unholy and will faithfully observe the conditions of my Covenant.

Then I will bring them to My Holy Mountain and make them happy in My House of Prayer. Their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be acceptable on my altar, because my House will be called a House of Prayer for All Nations. **Isaiah 56:6-7**]

[The House that is called by my names has become a gathering place for thieves. I have seen what you are doing, says the Lord. **Jeremiah 7:11**]

¹⁴Blind and lame people came to him in the Temple courtyard, and he healed them.

¹⁵When the chief priests and the experts in Moses' Teachings saw the amazing miracles he performed and the children shouting in the temple courtyard: Hosanna to the Son of David, they were irritated.

¹⁶They said to him: Do you hear what these children are saying? Jesus replied: Yes, I do. Have you never read: From the mouths of little children and infants, you have created praise? **Psalm 8:2**

¹⁷He left them and went out of the city to Bethany and spent the night there.

Jesus Curses the Fig Tree

¹⁸In the morning, as Jesus returned to the city, he became hungry. ¹⁹When he saw a fig tree by the road, he went up to the tree and found nothing on it but leaves. He said to the tree: May fruit never grow on you again. At once the fig tree dried up.

²⁰The disciples were surprised to see this. They asked: How did the fig tree dry up so quickly? ²¹Jesus answered them: I can guarantee this truth: If you have faith and do not doubt, you will be able to do what I did to the fig tree. You could also say to this mountain: Be uprooted and thrown into the sea, and it will happen. ²²Have faith that you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer.

Jesus' Authority Challenged

²³Then Jesus went into the Temple courtyard and began to teach. The chief priests and the leaders of the people came to him. They asked: What gives you the right to do these things? Who told you that you could do this?

²⁴Jesus answered them: I, too, have a question for you. If you answer it for me, I'll tell you why I have the right to do these things. ²⁵Did John's right to baptize come from Heaven or from humans?

They discussed this among themselves. They said: If we say: from Heaven, he will ask us: Then why didn't you believe him? ²⁶But if we say: from

humans, we're afraid of what the crowd might do. All those people think of John as a prophet. ²⁷ So they answered Jesus: We don't know.

Jesus told them: Then I won't tell you why I have the right to do these things.

Jesus' Parable about Two Sons

²⁸ What do you think about this? A man had two sons. He went to the first and said: Son, go to work in the vineyard today. ²⁹ His son replied: I don't want to. But later he changed his mind and went. ³⁰ The father went to the other son and told him the same thing. He replied: I will, sir, but he didn't go.

³¹ Which of the two sons did what the father wanted? The first, they answered. Jesus said to them: I can guarantee this truth: Tax collectors and prostitutes are going into God's Kingdom ahead of you.

³² John came to you and showed you the way that God wants you to live, but you didn't believe him. The tax collectors and prostitutes believed him. But even after you had seen that, you didn't change your minds and believe him.

A Parable about a Vineyard

³³ Listen to another illustration. A landowner planted a vineyard. He put a wall around it, made a winepress, and built a watchtower. Then he leased it to vineyard workers and went on a trip. ³⁴ When the grapes were getting ripe, he sent his servants to the workers to collect his share of the produce.

³⁵ The workers took his servants and beat one, killed another, and stoned a third to death. ³⁶ So the landowner sent more servants. But the workers treated them the same way. ³⁷ Finally, he sent his son to them. He thought: They will respect my son.

³⁸ When the workers saw his son, they said to one another: This is the heir. Let's kill him and get his inheritance. ³⁹ So they grabbed him, threw him out of the vineyard, and killed him.

⁴⁰ Now, when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those workers? ⁴¹ They answered: He will destroy those evil people. Then he will lease the vineyard to other workers who will give him his share of the produce when it is ready.

⁴² Jesus asked them: Have you never read in the Scriptures:

The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone. The Lord is responsible for this, and it is amazing for us to see? **Psalm 118:22-23**

⁴³ That is why I can guarantee that God's Kingdom will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce what God wants. ⁴⁴ Anyone who falls on this stone will be broken. If the stone falls on anyone, it will crush that person

[Remember that the Lord of Armies is holy. He is the one you should fear and the one you should be terrified of. He will be a place of safety for you. But he will be a rock that makes people trip and a stumbling block for both kingdoms of Israel. He will be a trap and a snare for those who live in Jerusalem. Many will stumble. They will fall and be broken. They will be trapped and caught. **Isaiah 8:13-15**]

⁴⁵ When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard his illustrations, they knew that he was talking about them. ⁴⁶ They wanted to arrest him but were afraid of the crowds, who thought he was a prophet.

WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED SO FAR?

Jesus and his disciples walk the 15 miles up from Jericho to Jerusalem. It is a long hard climb that takes six hours. They come to Bethany, where Jesus' friend Lazarus, probably a retired priest lives with his two unmarried sisters. Lazarus has tied a donkey and its colt to a post in the front of the house.

Jesus sent two disciples to get the donkey and he rides on it. Then Jesus, his disciples and a crowd that went before him and a crowd that followed him spread their coats on the road and waves branches shouting: *Hosanna* meaning Lord save us. *Blessed is he that comes in the*

name of the Lord. All of this is taking place on the Mount of Olives where pilgrims to the Passover Festival camped because the city of Jerusalem was so crowded.

When Jesus came into the city, Matthew says *the city was in an uproar seio*^{5x}. This word means to be thrown into a tremor, to quake for fear. People asked: Who is this meaning what is happening? The answer was: This is Jesus of Nazareth, a prophet from Galilee. **Matthew 21:11.**

Jesus immediately went into the Jerusalem Temple. Angered at the vast number of commercial transactions taking place in the Temple courtyards, the only place where Gentiles were allowed to enter and pray, Jesus began to disturb their business. He overturned the tables of the moneychangers and the chairs of those who sold pigeons.

Quoting the Scriptures of Isaiah and Jeremiah, he shouted: *My Father's House should be a House of Prayer, not a marketplace.* Then he healed both blind and lame people in the Temple. The chief priests and scribes upbraided Jesus for making such a disturbance. But Jesus quoted more Scripture to them and left for Bethany to spend the night there.

In the morning the next day, as Jesus and his disciples returned to the city, he saw a fig tree. But there were only leaves on the tree rather than fruit. So Jesus cursed the fig tree. At once the fig tree dried up. Mark says it dried up the next day. **Mark 11:20.** Jesus then taught his disciples: If you have faith, you will be able to do what I did to the tree. You could also say to this mountain: Be thrown into the sea and it would happen.

Jesus was symbolically pointing the Temple. It was not producing fruit for God but was a money-making venture for the city of Jerusalem. Jesus was cursing it saying the Temple mountain should be thrown into the nearby Dead Sea for not producing fruit for God.

Then Jesus went into the Temple courtyards to teach. The chief priests and elders came to him and asked for his authority. He was only a Galilean prophet. Jesus said: Answer my question and I'll answer your question. Did John the Baptist's authority come from Heaven? They refused to answer. So Jesus refused to answer also.

Then Jesus told his Parable of the Vineyard. A man planted a vineyard and leased it to tenants. At the right time, he sent servants to collect his share of the fruit. But the tenants killed those servants. Then the owner sent his son to collect the fruit owed him. But the tenants also killed his son. Jesus asked: What will the owner of the vineyard do?

Those listening said: He will kill those evil tenants and lease the vineyard to someone else. The religious leaders standing there knew exactly what he meant. Then Jesus quoted more Scripture to demonstrate that God would take the Temple away from the chief priests and

scribes. These men wanted to arrest him but were afraid of the crowd who thought Jesus was a genuine prophet.

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

1. What stimulated the crowd that was with Jesus to throw down their coats, wave palm branches, and shout Hosanna as he made his way riding on a donkey through the pilgrim crowds camped out on the Mount of Olives? They should have been exhausted after climbing up the fifteen miles from Jericho.
2. Why wasn't Jesus immediately arrested either by the Temple police or the Romans who were in the Antonia Fortress overlooking the Temple when he caused a disturbance in the Temple? They certainly had time to do so as afterwards Jesus was healing people in the Temple.
3. When Jesus refused to cite his authority, he compared himself to John the Baptist. In what ways was Jesus like his cousin John, and in what ways was he different?
4. Jesus openly defied the chief priests and scribes in front of the crowds of pilgrims and the people of Jerusalem. He said that tax collectors and prostitutes would enter the Kingdom of Heaven ahead of them. **Matthew 21:31**. Why didn't they call their Temple police and arrest him? Were they that helpless? Why didn't they ask the Romans to help?
5. Jesus' Parable of the Vineyard immediately told the chief priests that Jesus knew exactly what they intended to do. In fact, Jesus seemed to be daring them to arrest him. He would teach in the Temple courtyards each morning for the next four days. Why didn't they act? Where did Jesus get his power?
6. The stories of Daniel the prophet were very popular. When Jesus quoted Isaiah's prophet of a stone crushing a person **Isaiah 8:44-45**, most probably remembered Daniel's explanation of King Nebuchadnezzar's dream where a stone not made by human hands crushed a large statue made of gold, silver, bronze, iron and clay. **Daniel 2:44-45**. They wondered if Jesus could be the Davidic Messiah who would drive the Romans out of God's Holy Land.
7. The Roman Governor's inaction seems very surprising. Passover was a time when insurrection seemed very probable. Why didn't they do anything?

Pericope 22

Jesus Teaches in the Temple Courtyards

Matthew 22:11-46

A Parable about a Wedding Reception

22:1 Again Jesus used stories as illustrations when he spoke to them. He said: ²The Kingdom of Heaven is like a King who planned a wedding for his son. ³He sent his servants to those who had been invited to the wedding but they refused to come. ⁴He sent other servants to tell the people who had been invited: I've prepared dinner. My bulls and fattened calves have been butchered. Everything is ready. Come to the wedding.

⁵But they paid no attention and went away. Some went to work in their own fields, and others went to their businesses. ⁶The rest grabbed the King's servants, mistreated them, and then killed them. ⁷The King became angry. He sent his soldiers, killed those murderers and burned their city.

⁸Then the King said to his servants: The wedding is ready but those who were invited don't deserve the honor. ⁹Go where the roads leave the city. Invite everyone you find to the wedding. ¹⁰The servants went into the streets and brought in all the good people and all the evil people they found. And the wedding hall was filled with guests.

¹¹When the King came to see the guests, he saw a person who was not dressed in the wedding clothes provided for the guests. ¹²He said to him: Friend, how did you get in here without proper wedding clothes?

The man had nothing to say. ¹³Then the King told his servants: Tie his hands and feet, and throw him outside into the darkness. People will cry and be in extreme pain there. ¹⁴Therefore, many are invited, but few of those are chosen to stay.

The Pharisees Attempt to Trap Jesus

¹⁵Then the Pharisees went away and planned to trap Jesus into saying the wrong thing. ¹⁶They sent their disciples to him along with Herod's followers. They said to him: Teacher, we know that you tell the truth and that you teach the truth about the way of God. You don't favor individuals because of who they are. ¹⁷So tell us what you think. Is it right to pay taxes to the Roman Emperor or not?

¹⁸Jesus recognized their evil plan so he asked: Why do you test me, you hypocrites? ¹⁹Show me a coin used to pay taxes. They brought him a coin. ²⁰He said to them: Whose face and name is this? ²¹They replied: The Emperor's. Then he said to them: Very well, give the Emperor what belongs to the Emperor and give God what belongs to God.

²²They were surprised to hear this. Then they left him alone and went away.

The Sadducees Attempt to Trap Jesus

²³On that day some Sadducees, who say that people will never come back to life, came to Jesus. They asked him: ²⁴Teacher, Moses said: If a man dies childless, his brother should marry his widow and have children for his brother. **Deuteronomy 25:5-10**

²⁵There were seven brothers among us. The first married and died. Since he had no children, he left his widow to his brother. ²⁶The second brother also died, as well as the third, and the rest of the seven brothers. ²⁷At last the woman died. ²⁸Now, when the dead come back to life, whose wife will she be? All seven brothers had been married to her.

²⁹Jesus answered: You're mistaken because you don't know the Scriptures or God's power. ³⁰When people come back to life, they don't marry. Rather, they are like the angels in Heaven ³¹Haven't you read what God told you about the dead coming back to life? He said: ³²I am the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. **Exodus 3:14-15**. He's not the God of the dead but of the living. ³³He amazed the crowds who heard his teaching.

A Scribe Asks Jesus What Is the Greatest Commandment

³⁴When the Pharisees heard that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together. ³⁵One of them, an expert in Moses' Teachings, tested Jesus by asking: ³⁶Teacher, which commandment is the greatest in Moses' Teachings?

³⁷Jesus answered him: Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. **Deuteronomy 6:5.** ³⁸This is the greatest and most important commandment. ³⁹The second is like it: Love your neighbor as you love yourself. **Leviticus 19:8.** ⁴⁰All of Moses' Teachings and the Prophets depend on these two commandments.

Jesus Asks a Question They Refuse to Answer

⁴¹While the Pharisees were still gathered, Jesus asked them: ⁴²What do you think about the Messiah? Whose son is he? They answered him: David's. ⁴³He said to them: Then how can David, guided by the Holy Spirit, call him Lord? David says:

⁴⁴The Lord *YHWH* said to my David's Lord: *'Adon.* Take the honored position—the one next to me on the Heavenly throne until I put your enemies under your control. **Psalm 110:1.** ⁴⁵If David calls him Lord, how can he be his son?

⁴⁶No one could answer him, and from that time on no one dared to ask him another question.

WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED SO FAR?

Matthew now gives examples of Jesus' daily teaching in the Temple courtyards. He taught each morning for four days. Luke says:

Jesus taught in the Temple courtyard every day. The chief priests and experts in Moses' Teachings and the leaders of the people looked for a way to kill him. But they could not find a way to do it because all the people were eager to hear him. **Luke 19:47-48**

During the day Jesus would teach in the Temple courtyard. But at night he would go to the Mount of Olives as it was called and spend the night there. All the people would get up early *orthrizo*^{IX} to hear him speak *ekkremanai*^{IX} in the Temple courtyard. **Luke 21:37-38**

Jesus tells a Parable of a Wedding Banquet. A King plans a wedding banquet for his son. He sends out servants to invite people to the banquet. But they refused to come. He sends out more servants, but the invitations are refused. The King became angry, so he invited the common people and provided wedding garments for them.

When they were seated at the banquet, the King noticed one man without a wedding garment. When questioned, the man had no excuse. So the King had him thrown out into the darkness. Jesus concluded: Therefore, many are invited but few are chosen.

Jesus is saying that God sent his Son to the Jews with the message of salvation, but many refused to come. Thus, they brought judgment on themselves. So God opened the Kingdom to Gentiles also. Those who refuse to accept God call and attempt to enter his Kingdom *by their own efforts* will fail and be thrown into Outer Darkness.

The Pharisees then conspired with the Herodians to trap Jesus. They asked: Is it right to pay taxes to Rome? Jesus replied: Give to the Emperor what belongs to the Emperor and to God what is God's.

The Sadducees, who do not believe in the afterlife, asked Jesus about Levitical marriage. The Torah says if a man dies without a son his brother must marry his widow. In this situation, a man dies and then seven brothers in turn marry her but die. When the dead come back to life, whose wife will she be as seven brothers married her.

Jesus said. You don't know the Scriptures or God's power. In the afterlife humans don't marry as the angels in Heaven don't marry. But you don't accept that the dead come back to life. Yet God told Moses: *I AM the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.* **Exodus 3:14.** God is not the God of the dead but of the living. Luke adds: *In God's sight all are living.* **Luke 20:38**

The Pharisees now send a scribe to Jesus. He asks: Which of the commandments in the Torah is the greatest? Jesus said: *Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.* **Deuteronomy 6:5.** This is the greatest commandment. The second is like it: *Love your neighbor as yourself.* **Leviticus 19:18**

Now Jesus asks a question of the Pharisees: Whose son is the Messiah? David's son, they replied. Jesus asks: Then how can David in his Psalm call him Lord? *The LORD YHWH said to my lord 'Adonai: Take the honored position -the one next to me and the Father on the*

Heavenly throne until I put your enemies under your control. Psalm 110:1. If David calls him Lord, how can he be his son? How could one of David's descendants be his Lord?

The Pharisees could not answer. After that, no one asked him another question.

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

1. The Parable of the Wedding Banquet is really story of self-sufficiency. Why do people attempt to do things on their own rather than seek God's help? People can't earn God's favor. They can only receive his salvation as a gift. Why is this so hard for people to understand?
2. Where has Jesus earlier said that disciples must obey the secular authorities in paying taxes? Where does Paul say disciples of Jesus must obey secular authorities?
3. In order to answer the Sadducees question about the afterlife, Jesus must provide information that is not in the Bible – that angels do not marry. How does this point to Jesus' identity?
4. When Jesus indicated that the Shema that began the passages of Scripture **Deuteronomy 6:4-5** Jews repeated every day twice a day was the greatest commandment, why didn't the scribe comment Jesus for saying this?
5. Why couldn't the Pharisees answer Jesus' question about Psalm 110:1?

Pericope 23

Jesus Severely Criticizes the Pharisees and Scribes

Matthew 23:1-39

Jesus Says: Listen to Them But Don't Follow What They Do

23:1 Then Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples: ²The experts in Moses' Teachings and the Pharisees teach with Moses' authority. ³So be careful to do everything they tell you.

But don't follow their example because they don't practice *poieo*-do what they preach *lego*-say. ⁴They make loads that are hard to carry and lay them on the shoulders of the people. However, they are not willing to lift a finger to move them.

⁵They do everything to attract people's attention. They make their headbands large and the tassels on their shawls long. ⁶They love the place of honor at dinners and the front seats in synagogues. ⁷They love to be greeted in the marketplaces and to have people call them Rabbi.

⁸But don't make others call you Rabbi because you have only one teacher and you are all followers. ⁹Don't call anyone on earth your father, because you have only one Father and he is in Heaven. ¹⁰Don't make others call you a leader because you have only one leader, the Messiah *christos*.

¹¹The person who is greatest among you will be your servant. ¹²Whoever honors himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be honored.

[The eyes of arrogant people will be humbled. High and mighty people will be brought down. On that day the Lord alone will be honored. **Isaiah 2:11**]

Seven Woes: The Hypocrisy of the Jewish Leaders

¹³How horrible it will be for you *ouai* experts in Moses' Teachings and Pharisees. You hypocrites. You lock people out of the Kingdom of Heaven. You don't enter it yourselves and you don't permit others to enter when they try.

¹⁵How horrible it will be for you, experts in Moses' Teachings and Pharisees. You hypocrites. You cross land and sea to recruit a single follower. When you do, you make that person twice as fit for Hell *geenna* as you are.

¹⁶How horrible it will be for you, you blind guides. You say: To swear an oath by the Temple doesn't mean a thing. But to swear an oath by the gold in the Temple means a person must keep his oath. ¹⁷You blind fools. What is more important, the gold or the Temple that made the gold holy? ¹⁸Again you say: To swear an oath by the altar doesn't mean a thing. But to swear an oath by the gift on the altar means a person must keep his oath.

⁹You blind men. What is more important, the gift or the altar that makes the gift holy? ²⁰To swear an oath by the altar is to swear by it and by everything on it. ²¹To swear an oath by the Temple is to swear by it and by the one who lives there. ²²And to swear an oath by Heaven is to swear by God's throne and the one who sits on it.

²³How horrible it will be for you, experts in Moses' Teachings and Pharisees. You hypocrites. You give God one-tenth of your mint, dill, and cumin. But you have neglected justice, mercy, and faithfulness. These are the most important things in Moses' Teachings. You should have done these things without neglecting the others. ²⁴You blind guides. You strain gnats out of your wine, but you swallow camels.

²⁵How horrible it will be for you, experts in Moses' Teachings and Pharisees. You hypocrites. You clean the outside of cups and dishes. But inside they are full of greed and uncontrolled desires. ²⁶You blind Pharisees.

First clean the inside of the cups and dishes so that the outside may also be clean.

²⁷How horrible it will be for you, experts in Moses' Teachings and Pharisees. You hypocrites. You are like whitewashed graves that look beautiful on the outside but inside are full of dead people's bones and every kind of impurity. ²⁸So on the outside you look as though you have God's approval, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.

²⁹How horrible it will be for you, experts in Moses' Teachings and Pharisees. You hypocrites. You build tombs for the prophets and decorate the monuments of those who had God's approval. ³⁰Then you say: If we had lived at the time of our ancestors, we would not have helped to murder the prophets. ³¹So you testify against yourselves that you are the descendants of those who murdered the prophets. ³²Go ahead, finish what your ancestors started.

³³You snakes. You poisonous snakes. How can you escape being condemned to Hell *geenna* ? ³⁴I'm sending you prophets, wise men, and teachers of the Scriptures. You will kill and crucify some of them. Others you will whip in your synagogues and persecute from city to city. ³⁵As a result, you will be held accountable for all the innocent blood of those murdered on earth. This includes the murder of Abel **Genesis 4:8**, who had God's approval, to that of Zechariah, son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar. **2 Chronicles 24:20-21**. ³⁶I can guarantee this truth: The people living now will be held accountable for all these things.

³⁷Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you kill the prophets and stone to death those sent to you. How often I wanted to gather your children together the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings. But you were not willing. ³⁸Your house Temple will be abandoned, deserted.

³⁹I can guarantee that you will not see me again until you say, Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord. **Psalm 118:26**

WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED SO FAR?

Matthew will refer to the Pharisees *pharisaios* 30x, Mark 12x, Luke 26x, John 20x, Acts 9x. Matthew will refer to the scribes *grammateus* 24x, Mark 22x, Luke 15x, and John ix. Members of both of these organizations followed Jesus around Galilee and Jerusalem questioning and criticizing him.

The Gospels indicate that they irritated Jesus so much that he often got into a boat with his disciples and sailed east across the Sea of Galilee to get away from both them and the crowds that followed him.

The historian Josephus says there were four parties of the Jews: The Pharisees, a lay group of leaders who held strictly to the Torah of which there were 5,000, the Sadducees, conservative Jewish elites who were priests who tended toward Hellenistic beliefs, the Essenes, a conservative group that lived in a celibate monastic style on the shores of the Dead Sea at Qumran, and the Zealots, who were determined to push the Roman occupiers out of the Holy Land by force.

The Pharisees thought that if they kept the Torah rules strictly, the Messiah would come to God's Holy Land, drive the Romans out, and set up his Kingdom in Jerusalem for the Jews as Isaiah predicted in **Isaiah 60:1-22**. Gentiles would come to honor the King and his Chosen People.

Jesus criticized the Pharisees for minutely keeping the rules of the Torah while neglecting God's commands to be merciful, loving and kind to all of God's people no matter their class in Jewish society. Pharisees called themselves separated ones and called the people of the land *'am eres* cursed because they did not know the Law. **John 7:49**

Jesus tells the people the Pharisees do study the Torah and therefore you should listen to them. But don't follow their example because their actions conflict with the Torah. The main principles in the Torah are to love God and love your neighbor. **Matthew 22:37-40**. The Pharisees only love certain people and avoid others. They also are very proud and concerned that people admire and honor them.

Moreover, they make additional rules outside the Torah to place a fence around the Torah so that people don't violate the rules of the Torah. These rules are so complex -they had 39 rules for what one could do and could not do on the Sabbath called the Oral Law -that most people couldn't even remember all of them. The Pharisees were all about ritual outward observance rather than focusing on inward motivation of loving God and neighbor.

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

1. Jesus first accuses the Pharisees and scribes of not doing what they say. So they are hypocrites. Matthew will use this word *hypokrites* 15x, Luke 4x, and Mark 1x. Define a hypocrite? What is Jesus' greatest complaint about them?
2. What does God say about the proud? HINT: Read **Isaiah 2:11-12**
3. Why does Jesus end his diatribe against the scribes and Pharisees by saying the Temple will be destroyed?

Your house will be abandoned, destroyed. **Matthew 23:38**

4. Jesus says for these to go ahead and continue to murder the prophets as your ancestors did. **Matthew 23:32**. Is Jesus saying: Go ahead and murder me?
5. Of the four parties of Jews mentioned by Josephus, which party would Jesus have chosen to belong to? Why? What are the good things the people of this party do?

Pericope 24

Jesus Gives His Olivet Discourse on Last Things: Part One

Matthew 24:1-31

Jesus Teaches His Disciples the Temple Will Be Destroyed

24:1 As Jesus left the Temple courtyard and was walking away, his disciples came to him. They proudly pointed out to him the Temple buildings.
²Jesus said to them: You see all these buildings, don't you? I can guarantee this truth: Not one of these stones will be left on top of another. Each one will be torn down.

³As Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives, his disciples came to him privately and said: Tell us, when will this happen? What will be the sign *semeion* that you are coming *parousia* again and when will the world come to an end *synteleia* 6x?

The coming *parousia* of Jesus will be mentioned in **Matthew 24:3, 27, 37, 39**. The word *synteleia* translated *end* appears in **Matthew 13:39, 40, 49** when Jesus talked about the Parable of the Weeds and the Net.

Phase I: The Anti-Christ Will Come

⁴Jesus answered them: Be careful not to let anyone deceive you. ⁵Many will come using my name. They will say: I am the Messiah, and they will deceive many people.

Phases 2, 3, 4: Wars, Famines, and Earthquakes

⁶You will hear of wars and rumors of wars. Don't be alarmed. These things must happen, but they don't mean that the end *telos* has come. ⁷Nation will fight against nation and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. ⁸All of these are only the beginning pains of the end *odin*-sorrows 4x.

Phase 5: Persecution of Christians

⁹Then they will hand you over to those who will torture and kill you. All nations will hate you because you are committed to me. ¹⁰Then many will lose faith. They will betray and hate each other. ¹¹Many false prophets will appear and deceive many people.

¹²Because there will be more and more lawlessness, most people's love will grow cold. ¹³But the person who endures *hypomeno* to the end *telos* will be saved.

There is a parallel verse to this last verse in **Matthew 10:22**

¹⁴ This Good News *euangelion* about the Kingdom will be spread throughout the world as a testimony to all nations. Then the end *telos* will come.

The word *euangelion* translated *Good News* or *Gospel* appears 4x in Matthew, 8x in Mark, 2x in Acts, but 6ix in Paul.

¹⁵ The prophet Daniel said that the disgusting thing *bdelygma*-abomination 6x that will cause destruction *erenisus*-desolation 3x will stand in the holy place. **Daniel 11:31; 12:11**

When you see this – let the reader take note – ¹⁶those of you in Judea should flee to the mountains. ¹⁷Those who are on the roof should not come down to get anything out of their houses. ¹⁸Those who are in the field should not turn back to get their coats.

¹⁹How horrible it will be for the women who are pregnant or who are nursing babies in those days. ²⁰Pray that it will not be winter or a Day of Rest—a Holy Day, when you flee. ²¹There will be a lot of misery at that time, a kind of misery that has not happened from the beginning of the world until now and will certainly never happen again. ²²If God does not reduce the number of those days, no one will be saved. But those days will be reduced because of those whom God has chosen.

False Messiahs Will Appear to Deceive Christians

²³At that time don't believe anyone who tells you: Here is the Messiah, or there he is. ²⁴False messiahs and false prophets will appear. They will work spectacular, miraculous signs and do wonderful things to deceive, if possible, even those whom God has chosen.

²⁵Listen. I've told you this before it happens. ²⁶So if someone tells you: He's in the desert, don't go out looking for him. Don't believe anyone who says: He's in a secret place.

When the Son of Man Appears, You Will Recognize Him Immediately

²⁷The Son of Man will come again *parousia* just as lightning flashes from east to west. ²⁸Vultures will gather wherever there is a dead body.

Phase 6: A Cosmic Disturbance

²⁹Immediately after the misery of those days, the sun will turn dark, the moon will not give light, the stars will fall from the sky, and the powers of the universe will be shaken.

Phase 7: The Son of Man Comes on the Clouds of Heaven

³⁰Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky. All the people on earth will cry in agony when they see the Son of Man coming *erchomai* on the clouds in the sky *ouranos*—heaven with power and great glory.

³¹He will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call *salpigx*, and from every direction under the sky, they will gather *episynago* ^{7x} those whom God has chosen.

How To Tell When Jesus Is Coming

³²Learn from the story of the fig tree. When its branch becomes tender and it sprouts leaves, you know that summer is near. ³³In the same way, when you see all these things, you know that he is near, at the door.

³⁴I can guarantee this truth: This generation will not disappear until all these things take place. ³⁵The earth and the Heavens will disappear, but my Words will never disappear.

No One Knows When the Son of Man Will Return

³⁶No one knows when that day or hour will come. Even the angels in Heaven and the Son don't know. Only the Father knows.

³⁷When the Son of Man comes again *parousia*, it will be exactly like the days of Noah. ³⁸In the days before the flood, people were eating, drinking, and getting married until the day that Noah went into the ship. ³⁹They were not aware of what was happening until the flood came and swept all of them away. That is how it will be when the Son of Man comes again *parousia*.

The Rapture When Believers Are Taken to Paradise

⁴⁰ At that time two men will be working in the field. One will be taken, and the other one will be left. ⁴¹Two women will be working at a mill. One will be taken, and the other one will be left.

Paul discusses this in **1 Thessalonians 4:15-17**.

⁴²Therefore, be alert *gregoreo*, because you don't know on what day your Lord will return *erchomai*. ⁴³You realize that if a homeowner had known at what time of the night a thief was coming, he would have stayed awake. He would not have let the thief break into his house. ⁴⁴Therefore, you, too, must be ready *hetoimos* because the Son of Man will return *erchomai* when you least expect him.

Jesus' Parable of the Faithful and Wise Servant

⁴⁵Who, then, is the faithful and wise servant? The master will put that person in charge of giving the other servants their food at the right time. ⁴⁶That servant will be blessed if his master finds him doing this job when he comes. ⁴⁷I can guarantee this truth: He will put that servant in charge of all his property.

⁴⁸ On the other hand, that servant, if he is wicked, may think that it will be a long time before his master comes. ⁴⁹ The servant may begin to beat the other servants and eat and drink with the drunks. ⁵⁰ His master will return unexpectedly. ⁵¹ Then his master will severely punish him and assign him a place with the hypocrites. People will cry and be in extreme pain there.

WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED SO FAR?

In the Bible, when prophets prophesy of future events in End Times, there can be a *near fulfillment* and a *far fulfillment*. Jesus will talk about several events in this pericope.

First Fulfillment: 165 BC

Jesus talks about the Abomination of Desolation identified by the prophet Daniel who prophesied from 605-536 BC. This first occurred when the Syrian King Antiochus IV Epiphanes in 165 AD sacrificed a pig on the altar of the Jerusalem Temple. Then he killed thousands of Jews. This was the near prediction.

Second Fulfillment: 70 AD

This fulfillment will be in 40 years after Jesus' resurrection in 70 AD when the Romans destroy the Jerusalem Temple. At that time, many Jews will be killed, and many will be sent into slavery. It will be a terrible time.

Jesus says the signal for Jews to leave Jerusalem will be when an Abomination of Desolation is set up the Jerusalem Temple. Jews should flee to the mountains immediately for all the Jews in Jerusalem will either be killed by the Romans and sent into slavery.

Historically, we do not know of the Abomination of Desolation happening at this time. It may be the golden eagles grasping a thunderbolt, a standard of each cohort in a Roman legion. The armies placed them at the Eastern Gate of the Jerusalem Temple and worshiped them. Josephus tells us this. But this happened after the Temple was destroyed.

The early church father Eusebius [263-339 AD] cites a tradition that before the destruction of Jerusalem by the Roman armies, the Messianic Jews were warned to flee to Pella in the region of the Decapolis east across the Jordan River.

But the people of the church in Jerusalem had been commanded by a revelation, vouchsafed to approved men there before the war, to leave the city and to dwell in a certain town of Perea called Pella. And when those that believed in Christ had come there from Jerusalem, then, as if the royal city of the Jews and the whole land

of Judea were entirely destitute of holy men, the judgment of God at length overtook those who had committed such outrages against Christ and his apostles, and totally destroyed that generation of impious men. **Ecclesiastical History 3:5-3, 290's AD.**

Third Prediction: The Rapture Date Unknown

The next chronological prediction is the *rapture* when Jesus says *his angels will gather those who are chosen*. **Matthew 24:31**. Paul will talk about this in **1 Thessalonians 4:13-18**.

John the prophet will describe this in **Revelation 14:14-16**. Jesus will take all his believers to Paradise with him before the wrath of God is poured out on the earth in the seven Bowl Judgments. **Revelation 15:1-18, 24**

The rapture will be sudden without any warning.

Fourth Prediction

Jesus speaks of a future Abomination of Desolation in Daniel 's prophecy:

But after the sixty-two sets of seven time periods, the Anointed One [Jesus] will be cut off and have nothing. The city and the Holy Place will be destroyed with the prince who is to come. His end will come with a flood until the end of the destructive war that has been determined. He will confirm his covenant with many for one set of seven time periods. In the middle of the seven-time periods, he will stop the sacrifices and food offerings. This will happen along with the disgusting things that cause destruction until those time periods come to an end. It has been determined that this will happen to those who destroy the city. **Daniel 9:26-27**

Daniel has prophesied the coming of Jesus, the *Anointed One*, and his death in Jerusalem in 33 AD. After that, there will be a *Prince* who is to come. This appears to be the *Anti-Christ* whom Paul calls *the Man of Sin* or *Son of Perdition*. **2 Thessalonians 2:3**. John the prophet calls him *the Beast from the Sea*. **Revelation 13:1-2**. He will make a Covenant with Israel for one week and then break it when he places the Abomination of Desolation in the Temple.

Then there will be a war and God will destroy him. In Revelation, this is called the Battle of Armageddon. **Revelation 19:11-21**

What Jesus Stresses in This Pericope

While many details of the different events here are vague, one thing is very clear. Jesus wants his disciples to have *patient endurance* and keep their faith in him despite persecution or the length of time before the significant event occurs.

Everyone will hate you because you are committed to me. But the person who patiently endures *hypomeneo* to the end will be saved. **Matthew 10:22; Mark 13:13**

But the person who endures *hypomeneo* to the end will be saved. **Matthew 24:13**

The seeds that are planted on good ground are people who also hear the word. But they keep in their good and honest hearts and produce what is good despite what life may bring [bring forth fruit with patience *hypomone*. KJV]. **Luke 8:15**

By your endurance *hypomone* you will save your life. **Luke 21:19**

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

1. Define what Jesus means by patient endurance.
2. John the prophet says Jesus says: *Be faithful until death and I will give you the crown of life.* **Revelation 2:10**. This is the theme of his entire book. John uses the word *hypomone* 7x in his book. What does he mean?
3. Jesus warns against following false prophets. This has been a problem for God's people since the time Moses. Describe how we are to detect false prophets. HINT: Read **Deuteronomy 13:1-18; 18:22**
4. When Jesus warns his disciples to be alert *gregoreo*, what does he mean?
5. How will we recognize Jesus when he comes? HINT: Read **Revelation 24:27**.
6. Jesus wants us to be *faithful and wise servants*. **Matthew 23:45**. What does he mean?
7. Jesus says: When you see all these things, you will know that he is at the door? **Matthew 24:33**. What things are we supposed to see?

Pericope 25

Jesus' Olivet Discourse about End Times: Part Two

Matthew 25:1-46

A Parable about Ten Bridesmaids

¹When the end comes, the Kingdom of Heaven will be like ten bridesmaids. They took their oil lamps and went to meet the groom. ²Five of them were foolish, and five were wise. ³The foolish bridesmaids took their lamps, but they didn't take any extra oil. ⁴The wise bridesmaids, however, took along extra oil for their lamps. ⁵Since the groom was late, all the bridesmaids became drowsy and fell asleep.

⁶At midnight someone shouted: 'The groom is here. Come to meet him.' ⁷Then all the bridesmaids woke up and got their lamps ready. ⁸The foolish ones said to the wise ones: 'Give us some of your oil. Our lamps are going out.' ⁹But the wise bridesmaids replied: 'We can't do that. There won't be enough for both of us. Go. Find someone to sell you some oil.'

¹⁰While they were buying oil, the groom arrived. The bridesmaids who were ready went with him into the wedding hall and the door was shut.

¹¹Later the other bridesmaids arrived and said: 'Sir, sir, open the door for us.' ¹²But he answered them: 'I don't even know who you are.'

¹³So stay awake *gregoreo* because you don't know the day or the hour.

The Parable of the Talents

¹⁴The Kingdom of Heaven is like a man going on a trip. He called his servants and entrusted some money to them. ¹⁵He gave one man ten thousand dollars, another four thousand dollars, and another two thousand dollars. Each was given money based on his ability. Then the man went on his trip.

¹⁶The one who received ten thousand dollars invested the money at once and doubled his money. ¹⁷The one who had four thousand dollars did the

same and also doubled his money. ¹⁸But the one who received two thousand dollars went off, dug a hole in the ground, and hid his master's money.

¹⁹After a long time the master of those servants returned and settled accounts with them. ²⁰The one who received ten thousand dollars brought the additional ten thousand. He said: Sir, you gave me ten thousand dollars. I've doubled the amount. ²¹His master replied: Good job! You're a good and faithful servant. You proved that you could be trusted with a small amount. I will put you in charge of a large amount. Come and share your master's happiness.

²²The one who received four thousand dollars came and said: Sir, you gave me four thousand dollars. I've doubled the amount. ²³His master replied: Good job! You're a good and faithful servant. You proved that you could be trusted with a small amount. I will put you in charge of a large amount. Come and share your master's happiness.

²⁴Then the one who received two thousand dollars came and said: Sir, I knew that you are a hard person to please. You harvest where you haven't planted and gather where you haven't scattered any seeds. ²⁵I was afraid. So I hid your two thousand dollars in the ground. Here's your money. ²⁶His master responded: You evil and lazy servant. If you knew that I harvest where I haven't planted and gather where I haven't scattered, ²⁷then you should have invested my money with the bankers. When I returned, I would have received my money back with interest.

²⁸Take the two thousand dollars away from him. Give it to the one who has the ten thousand. ²⁹To all who have, more will be given, and they will have more than enough. But everything will be taken away from those who don't have much. ³⁰Throw this useless servant outside into the *exoteros*-outer ^{3x} darkness *skotos*. People will cry and be in extreme pain there.

This is the last of ^{3x} Jesus will use the expression outer darkness or Hell. He has used it **Matthew 8:12; 22:13; 25:30**. This phrase appears only in Matthew.

Jesus Will Judge the World

³¹When the Son of Man comes in his glory and all his angels are with him, he will sit on his glorious throne. ³²The people of every nation will be gathered in front of him. He will separate them as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. ³³He will put the sheep on his right but the goats on his left.

³⁴Then the King will say to those on his right: Come, my Father has blessed you. Inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the creation of the world. ³⁵I was hungry, and you gave me something to eat. I was thirsty, and you gave me something to drink. I was a stranger, and you took me into your home. ³⁶I needed clothes, and you gave me something to wear. I was sick, and you took care of me. I was in prison, and you visited me.

³⁷Then the people who have God's approval will reply to him: Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you or see you thirsty and give you something to drink? ³⁸When did we see you as a stranger and take you into our homes or see you in need of clothes and give you something to wear? ³⁹When did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?

⁴⁰The King will answer them: I can guarantee this truth: Whatever you did for one of my brothers or sisters, no matter how unimportant they seemed you did for me.

⁴¹Then the King will say to those on his left: Get away from me. God has cursed you. Go into everlasting fire that was prepared for the Devil and his angels. ⁴²I was hungry, and you gave me nothing to eat. I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink. ⁴³I was a stranger, and you didn't take me into your homes. I needed clothes and you didn't give me anything to wear. I was sick and in prison, and you didn't take care.

⁴⁴They too will ask: Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or as a stranger or in need of clothes or sick or in prison and didn't help you? ⁴⁵He will answer them: I can guarantee this truth: Whatever you failed to do for

one of my brothers or sisters, no matter how unimportant they seemed, you failed to do for me.

⁴⁶These people will go away into eternal punishment but those with God's approval will go into Eternal Life.

WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED SO FAR?

This pericope has three parables.

The Parable of the Ten Virgins

Here we are to envision a Jewish wedding. The ten virgins are at the house of the Bride to wait the arrival of the Bridegroom. When he comes, he will take the Bride to the new house he has built for her. The Bride and her Bridesmaids await his return. Unfortunately, the five foolish Bridesmaids do not have enough oil for their lamps. So before Bridegroom comes, they must leave and get more oil. The Bridegroom comes, the Bride and her five Bridesmaids go with him. The foolish Bridesmaids go to the Groom's house, but he will not let them in. They were not ready.

The story is straight forward in that to go to Heaven, one must be born again as Jesus tells Nicodemus. **John 3:3,5**. The five foolish virgins are those in the church who are not born again. Jesus says only those who do the will of my Father are in my family. **Matthew 7:21**

The Parable of the Talents

A wealthy man goes away and gives each of his servants money to invest for him while he is away according to their ability. When he returns, he asks them how they have done. The first servant has doubled his money as has the second servant. But the third servant merely buried the money in a hole. The man rewards the first and second servant. He takes his money away from the third servant and gives it to the first servant.

The money in the parable represents the gifts of the Holy Spirit that God gives the believer. These gifts are not to be hoarded but used to build the Kingdom of Heaven. Those who hoard these gifts and refuse to help others eventually lose their gifts.

The Parable of the Sheep and the Goats

This parable envisions the Last Judgment. Jesus is the judge, and he divides people into sheep and goats. How is this division made? It is made on the basis of those who are born again, love Jesus with faith and love other people. These are the sheep who are at Jesus' right hand.

Those who are not born again are the goats. They do not love other people and do not help them.

The parable raises the question: Do good works cause salvation? The answer is no. Salvation is a gift from God. Paul tells us:

God saved us through faith as an act of kindness. You had nothing to do with it. Being saved is gift from God. It's not the result of anything you've done so no one can brag about it. God has made us what we are. He has created us in Christ Jesus to live lives filled with good works that he has prepared for us to do. **Ephesians 2: 5-10**

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

1. Why don't the five Bridesmaids with oil share their oil with the five whose oil has run out? It doesn't seem very Christian.
2. Why does the groom refuse to allow the five foolish bridesmaids into the wedding banquet?
3. Some say that the Parable of the Sheep and the Goats is about how nations treat God's people. Why isn't this the meaning of this parable?
4. Jesus says:

The person who welcomes you welcomes me, and the person who welcomes me welcomes the One Who Sent Me. The person who welcomes a prophet as such will receive a prophet's reward. The person who welcomes a godly person as such will receive a godly person's reward. I can guarantee this truth: Whoever gives any of my humble followers a cup of cold water because that person is my disciple will certainly never lose his reward. **Matthew 10:40-42**

Why will a person who is not born again but who is kind to a believer not be allowed to enter the Kingdom of Heaven?

PART 5

THE PASSION OF JESUS

Pericopes 26-30

We now come to the last week of Jesus' life. Jesus has spent 3 ½ years in public ministry in Galilee and in Perea. He has been in Jerusalem for a time attempting to convince the Jewish religious leaders of his identity and the message God has for the Jewish people – his Chosen People.

He preaches in the Temple courtyards each day. While the people in Jerusalem, both the local townspeople and the pilgrims from all over Israel and the diaspora come to hear him, the jealous religious leaders mock and attempt to trick him into saying something wrong. Surprisingly, the Roman Governor does nothing despite the large crowds gathering to listen to him.

But now, Jesus sees the end coming swiftly. The day of Passover is quickly approaching, and Jesus knows as John the Baptist said: *Look. This is the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world.* **John 1:29**

In the town of Bethany on the Mount of Olives where Lazarus, Mary, and Martha live, Jesus and the disciples attend a dinner. Mary anoints Jesus' head with very expensive perfume. While the disciples murmur, Jesus rebukes them praising Mary for anointing him for his burial. He said: She will be remembered for doing this wherever the Gospel is preached throughout the world.

Judas, meanwhile, goes to the chief priests and offers to hand over Jesus. We now come to the day of Preparation for the Passover. Knowing that he will be crucified the next morning, Lazarus arranges for an Upper Room in the city. That evening, Jesus and his disciples celebrate a Passover Seder in advance.

Jesus immediately tells his disciples that one of them at the table will betray him. Matthew immediately moves to Jesus initiating what has come to be known as the Eucharist or Thanksgiving. Jesus took unleavened bread and said: Take this and eat it. This is my body. Jesus then took a cup of wine and said: This is my blood, the blood of New Covenant that is poured out for many people so sins can be forgiven. Then they all went out to Mount of Olives to the Garden of Gethsemane where they had met many times before.

Jesus told his disciples: All of you will abandon me tonight. Peter protested but Jesus told him: Three times this night you will deny me. In the garden, Jesus took Peter, James, and John deeper into the garden and said: Wait here while I pray. Jesus prayed in anguish to his Father.

The arresting party came too soon with Judas leading. They arrested Jesus and took him to the house of Joseph Caiaphas, the High Priest. Jesus was mocked and witnesses called but they gave

false testimony. Finally, Caiaphas himself, forced Jesus to incriminate himself by asking: Are you the Messiah, the Son of God? Jesus replied: You have said so. But from now on you will see the Son of Man on the right hand of God coming with the clouds of Heaven. The High Priest immediately knew what Jesus was saying so he asked the Sanhedrin: What is your verdict. They declared him worthy of death.

Meanwhile, Peter in the courtyard below denied knowing Jesus three times.

Very early in the morning, members of the Sanhedrin took Jesus tied up to Pontius Pilate, the Roman Governor, who alone had the power to kill people. The charge was that Jesus said he was the King of Jews without the approval of the Roman Senate.

Pilate attempted to free Jesus but the hand-picked crowd there shouted: Crucify him, Crucify him! At 6 am, Pilate ordered Jesus crucified. At 9 am he was nailed to the cross. Above his head, Pilate ordered a titulus: This is Jesus, the King of the Jews. Beginning at noon until 3 pm there was a darkness over the land as Jesus was made sin for the world. At 3 pm, Jesus cried: My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Then Jesus cried out once again, and gave up his ghost.

Now Matthew reports the curtain in the Temple separating the Holies of Holies from the Holy Place was torn in two from top to bottom. There was a great earthquake, tombs were opened and holy people appeared to people in the City. A Roman Centurion directing the crucifixion was terrified and said: Certainly this man was the Son of God. Then Joseph of Arimathea, a member of the Sanhedrin obtained permission from Pilate to place Jesus' body in his own tomb nearby. At dusk all was silent. The Sabbath and Passover had begun.

Pericope 26

Jesus Is Host at a Last Supper for His Disciples

Matthew 26:1-35

The Plot to Kill Jesus

^{26:1} When Jesus finished saying all these things, he told his disciples: ²You know that the Passover will take place in two days. At that time the Son of Man will be handed over to be crucified.

³Then the chief priests and the leaders of the people gathered in the palace of the chief priest Caiaphas. ⁴They made plans to arrest Jesus in an underhanded way and to kill him. ⁵But they said: We shouldn't arrest him during the festival or else there may be a riot among the people.

Mary of Bethany Prepares Jesus' Body for the Tomb

⁶Jesus was in Bethany in the home of Simon, a man who had suffered from a skin disease. ⁷While Jesus was sitting there, a woman went to him with a bottle of very expensive perfume and poured it on his head.

⁸The disciples were irritated when they saw this. They asked: Why did she waste it like this? ⁹It could have been sold for a high price, and the money could have been given to the poor

¹⁰Since Jesus knew what was going on he said to them: Why are you bothering this woman? She has done a beautiful thing for me. ¹¹You will always have the poor with you, but you will not always have me with you.

¹²She poured this perfume on my body before it is placed in a tomb. ¹³I can guarantee this truth: Wherever this Good News is spoken in the world, what she has done will also be told in memory of her.

Judas Plans to Betray Jesus

¹⁴Then one of the Twelve apostles, the one named Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests. ¹⁵He asked: What will you pay me if I hand him over to

you? They offered him 30 silver coins. ¹⁶ From then on, he looked for a chance to betray Jesus.

Preparations for the Passover

¹⁷ On the first day of the Festival of Unleavened Bread, the disciples went to Jesus. They asked: Where do you want us to prepare the Passover meal for you? ¹⁸ He said: "Go to a certain man in the city and tell him that the Teacher says: My time is near. I will celebrate the Passover with my disciples at your house. ¹⁹ The disciples did as Jesus had directed them and prepared the Passover.

²⁰ When evening came, Jesus was at the table with the Twelve apostles.

Jesus Knows Who Will Betray Him

²¹ While they were eating, he said: I can guarantee this truth: One of you is going to betray me. ²² Feeling deeply hurt, they asked him one by one: You don't mean me, do you, Lord?

²³ Jesus answered: Someone who has dipped his hand into the bowl with me will betray me. ²⁴ The Son of Man is going to die as the Scriptures say he will.

[He was arrested, taken away, and judged. Who would have thought that he would be removed from this world? He was killed because of my people's rebellion. *Isaiah 53:8*]

But how horrible it will be for that person who betrays the Son of Man . It would have been better for that person if he had never been born. ²⁵ Then Judas who betrayed him asked: You don't mean me, do you, Rabbi? Yes, I do, Jesus replied.

Jesus Gives His Disciples Symbols to Remember Him

²⁶ While they were eating, Jesus took bread and blessed it. He broke the bread, gave it to his disciples, and said: Take this, and eat it. This is my body. ²⁷ Then he took a cup and spoke a prayer of thanksgiving. He gave it

to them and said: Drink from it all of you. ²⁸This is my blood, the blood of the [New] Covenant. It is poured out for many people so that sins are forgiven.

[This is the [New] Covenant that I will make to Israel after those days, declares the Lord. I will put my teachings inside them, and I will write those teachings on their hearts. I will be their God and they will be my people. No longer will each person teach their neighbors or his relatives by saying: Know the Lord. All of them from the least important to the most important will know me, declares the Lord, because I will forgive their wickedness and I will no longer hold their sins against them. **Jeremiah 31:33-34**]

²⁹I can guarantee that I won't drink this wine again until that day when I drink new wine with you in my Father's Kingdom.

³⁰After they sang a hymn, they went to the Mount of Olives.

Jesus Predicts Peter's Denial

³¹Then Jesus said to them: All of you will abandon me tonight. Scripture says:

I will strike the shepherd and the sheep in the flock will be scattered.
Zechariah 13:7

³²But after I am brought back to life, I will go to Galilee ahead of you.

³³Peter said to him: Even if everyone else abandons you, I never will. ³⁴Jesus replied to Peter: I can guarantee this truth: Before a rooster crows tonight, you will say three times that you don't know me. ³⁵Peter told him: Even if I have to die with you, I'll never say that I don't know you. All the other disciples said the same thing.

WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED SO FAR?

The Sanhedrin now meets and decides to arrest and kill Jesus. But we don't want to arrest him during the festival but before it.

In Bethany on the Mount of Olives, Jesus attends a dinner where Lazarus' sister Martha serves the meal. Lazarus' other sister Mary takes a large bottle of expensive perfume and pours it on Jesus' head. Although the disciples complain of the waste, Jesus compliments Mary. She has shown her great love for him.

Judas goes to the chief priests and offers to hand Jesus over to them. They give him 30 shekels of silver.

Matthew and John differ in their dates of when Jesus and his disciples celebrated the Passover Meal. Matthew has the Last Supper on the first day of the Festival of Unleavened Bread. **Matthew 26:17**. John has it on Preparation Day, the day before the Passover. **John 19:14**. Remember Jewish days begin at dusk. On this day Jesus and Twelve go to the Upper Room in the City that Lazarus has secured for them.

Matthew says Jesus began by saying: One of you at this table will betray me. Each one then asks Jesus: Do you mean me? Jesus only says: Someone dipping their bread in the sauce will hand me over. The Son of Man is going to die as the Scriptures said he would. Then Judas asked Jesus: Is it I? Jesus said: Yes.

Then Jesus took bread, blessed it, broke it, and gave it to them saying: Eat this. This is my body. Then Jesus took a cup of wine, blessed it, and then gave it to them saying: This is my blood of the [New] Covenant. It is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. Only **Luke 22:20** mentions Jesus says it is the New Covenant.

Then they all went to the Mount of Olives. Matthew doesn't mention Judas leaving the room to go to the chief priests at the Temple.

Jesus told his disciples: All of you will abandon me tonight as Scripture says. Peter said: No. I will not deny you. Jesus replied: Tonight, before the rooster crows, you will deny me three times. But Peter denied it again as did the other disciples.

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

1. What was Mary of Bethany's purpose in anointing Jesus' head with expensive perfume?
2. Jerusalem was very crowded during Passover with many pilgrims camping out on the Mount of Olives. How did Lazarus secure an Upper Room just for the one night?
3. What was the purpose of the disciples locating the Upper Room by seeking a man carrying a pitcher of water rather than Jesus tell them where the room was?
4. Why is it important Jesus mentions the New Covenant of **Jeremiah 31:31-34**?

5. Why doesn't John mention the Eucharist being given at the Last Supper?
6. Did Jesus give Judas the Eucharist?

Pericope 27

Jesus Prays and Is Arrested by the Sanhedrin

Matthew 26:36-56

Jesus Prays in the Garden of Gethsemane

³⁶Then Jesus went with the disciples to a place called Gethsemane. He said to them: Stay here while I go over there and pray. ³⁷He took Peter and Zebedee's two sons with him. He was beginning to feel deep anguish. ³⁸Then he said to them: My anguish is so great *perilypos*^{5x} that I feel as if I'm dying. Wait here, and stay awake with me.

³⁹After walking a little farther, he quickly bowed with his face to the ground and prayed: Father, if it's possible, let this cup of suffering be taken away from me. But let your will be done rather than mine.

⁴⁰When he went back to the disciples, he found them asleep. He said to Peter: Couldn't you stay awake with me for one hour? ⁴¹Stay awake, and pray that you won't be tempted. You want to do what's right, but you're weak.

⁴²Then he went away a second time and prayed: Father, if this cup cannot be taken away unless I drink it, let your will be done. ⁴³He found them asleep again because they couldn't keep their eyes open.

⁴⁴After leaving them again, he went away and prayed the same prayer a third time. ⁴⁵Then he came back to the disciples and said to them. You might as well sleep now. The time is near for the Son of Man to be handed over to sinners. ⁴⁶Get up. Let's go. The one who is betraying me is near.

Jesus Is Arrested by the Sanhedrin

⁴⁷Just then, while Jesus was still speaking, Judas, one of the Twelve apostles, arrived. A large crowd carrying swords and clubs was with him. They were from the chief priests and leaders of the people. ⁴⁸Now, the

traitor had given them a signal. He said: The one I kiss is the man you want. Arrest him.

⁴⁹ Then Judas quickly stepped up to Jesus and said: Hello, Rabbi and kissed him. ⁵⁰ Jesus said to him: Friend, why are you here? Then some men came forward, took hold of Jesus, and arrested him.

⁵¹ Suddenly, one of the men with Jesus pulled out his sword and cut off the ear of the chief priest's servant. ⁵² Then Jesus said to him: Put your sword away. All who use a sword will be killed by a sword. ⁵³ Don't you think that I could call on my Father to send more than twelve legions of angels to help me now? ⁵⁴ How then are the Scriptures to be fulfilled that say this must happen? **Isaiah 53:8**

⁵⁵ At that time Jesus said to the crowd: Have you come out with swords and clubs to arrest me as if I were a criminal? I used to sit teaching in the Temple courtyard every day. But you didn't arrest me then. ⁵⁶ All of this has happened so that what the prophets have written would come true.

Then all the disciples abandoned him and ran away.

WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED SO FAR?

In the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus said: Stay here while I pray. Between Matthew telling Peter to *stay awake one hour* and Mark saying *Jesus went away three times*, most conclude that they were in the garden for three hours. From 9 pm to midnight when Jesus was arrested.

Jesus struggled with God in his prayer asking if there was some other way than to be made sin for the world while he was crucified. But in any event, Jesus would do the Father's will. It was a mighty struggle as Jesus may have learned that in his human nature, he would feel separated from God for three hours.

At probably midnight Judas arrived with the arresting party. John tells us a cohort of 600 Roman soldiers were included although led by the High Priest's servant Malchus. **John 18:3,10**. Judas identified Jesus by kissing him in greeting. Then one of the disciples cuts off the ear of Malchus. Luke reports Jesus healed the ear. **Luke 22:51**. Then they take Jesus to Caiaphas' house. Judas has told them to tie Jesus up. **Mark 14:44**

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

1. Jesus prayed for three hours while the disciples slept. Why did they sleep?
2. Jesus told the disciples to stay awake so they wouldn't be tempted. What would they be tempted to do?
3. Jesus prayed to God for three hours. What did he pray for?
4. Who led the arresting party: Judas, Malchus, or the Roman Centurion?
5. Why does only John say there were Roman soldiers in the arresting army? **John 18:3**
6. Only John shows Jesus in complete control of the arrest. When Jesus replies to the question: Who are you looking for? The arresting party falls backward to the ground. Why do they fall backwards when Jesus says: I AM. **John 18:6**
7. Why does Mark say Judas was concerned that Jesus is tied up? **Mark 14:44**

Pericope 28

The Sanhedrin Conducts a Trial But No True Witnesses Could Be Found

Matthew 26:57-27:10

The Trial in Front of the Jewish Council

⁵⁷Those who had arrested Jesus took him to Caiaphas, the High Priest, where the experts in Moses' Teachings and the leaders had gathered together. ⁵⁸Peter followed at a distance until he came to the High Priest's courtyard. He went inside and sat with the guards to see how this would turn out.

⁵⁹The chief priests and the whole Council Sanhedrin were searching for false testimony to use against Jesus in order to execute him. ⁶⁰But they did not find any, although many came forward with false testimony. At last two men came forward. ⁶¹They stated: This man said: I can tear down God's Temple and rebuild it in three days.

[Jesus replied: Tear down this Temple and I'll rebuild it in three days.
John 2:19]

⁶²The High Priest stood up and said to Jesus: Don't you have any answer to what these men testify against you? ⁶³But Jesus was silent. Then the High Priest said to him: Swear an oath in front of the living God and tell us, are you the Messiah, the Son of God?

⁶⁴Jesus answered him: Yes, I am. But I alone can guarantee that from now on you will see the Son of Man in the honored position—the one next to God the Father on the Heavenly throne. He will be coming on the clouds of Heaven.

⁶⁵Then the High Priest tore his robes in horror and said: He has dishonored God. Why do we need any more witnesses? You've just heard

him dishonor God. ⁶⁶What's your verdict? They answered: He deserves the death penalty.

The Sanhedrin Members Abuse Jesus

⁶⁷Then they spit in his face, hit him with their fists, and some of them slapped him. ⁶⁸They said: You Messiah, if you're a prophet, tell us who hit you.

Peter Denies Jesus

⁶⁹Peter was sitting in the courtyard. A female servant came to him and said: You, too, were with Jesus the Galilean. ⁷⁰But Peter denied it in front of them all by saying: I don't know what you're talking about.

⁷¹He went to the entrance [and], another female servant saw him. She told those who were there: This man was with Jesus from Nazareth. ⁷²Again Peter denied it and swore with an oath: I don't know the man.

⁷³After a little while the men standing there approached Peter and said: It's obvious you're also one of them. Your Galilean accent gives you away. ⁷⁴Then Peter began to curse and swear with an oath: I don't know the man.

Just then a rooster crowed. ⁷⁵Peter remembered what Jesus had said: Before a rooster crows, you will say three times that you don't know me. **Matthew 26:34.** Then Peter went outside and cried bitterly.

The Death of Judas

27:3 Then Judas, who had betrayed Jesus, regretted what had happened when he saw that Jesus was condemned. He brought the 30 silver coins back to the chief priests and leaders. ⁴He said: I've sinned by betraying an innocent man. They replied: What do we care? That's your problem. ⁵So he threw the money into the Temple, went away, and hanged himself.

⁶The chief priests took the money and said: It's not right to put it into the Temple treasury because it's blood money. ⁷So they decided to use it to buy a potter's field for the burial of strangers. ⁸That's why that field has been

called the Field of Blood ever since. ⁹Then what the prophet Jeremiah had said came true: They took the 30 silver coins, the price the people of Israel had placed on him ¹⁰and used the coins to buy a potter's field, as the Lord had directed me.

[The Lord told me: Give it to the potter. So I took the 30 pieces of silver. Such a magnificent price was set by them. I gave the pieces of silver to the potter at the House of the Lord. **Zechariah 11:13**]

WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED SO FAR?

The Sanhedrin violated their own rules by holding a trial at night. However, it wasn't much of a trial. In a Jewish court, it took the testimony of two or three reliable witnesses to prove guilt. The accused didn't speak. In this case, that probably took place around 1-2 am, only witnesses with conflicting testimony testified. Frustrated, Joseph Caiaphas asked Jesus: Are you the Messiah, the Son of God? Jesus replied: You say so. And from now on, you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of God coming with the clouds of Heaven.

The High Priest knew at once Jesus was referring to **Daniel 7:13-14** where the Son of God was being presented to his Father. He tore his robes and asked: What do you decide? They said: He should be put to death.

Then comes one of the saddest parts of this time. Members of the Sanhedrin strike him and spit on him. Jesus is probably still tied up and unable to defend himself. So is fulfilled the prophecy in Isaiah's third Song of the Servant of **YHWH**:

I will not turn my face away from those who humiliate me and spit on me.
Isaiah 50:6

While this going on Peter is in the courtyard below denying that he even knows Jesus. After denying him three times, Peter goes off and weeps bitterly. Then Judas returns the money to the chief priests and hangs himself.

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

1. With no charge to level against Jesus except that he claimed to be God, the Sanhedrin met and accomplished nothing. Finally, the High Priest ordered Jesus to identify himself as the Messiah? How did Jesus do this?
2. What is the final charge against Jesus the Sanhedrin gives Pilate?

3. If Peter doesn't know Jesus, why is he in the High Priest's courtyard for several hours?
4. How do the female servants know that Peter was with Jesus? When did they see him with him?
5. Why does Judas hang himself?

Pericope 29

Jesus is Judged by the Roman Governor Pontius Pilate

Matthew 27:1-30

The Sanhedrin Takes Jesus to the Roman Emperor

^{27:1} Early in the morning all the chief priests and the leaders of the people decided to execute Jesus. ²They tied him up, led him away, and handed him over to Pilate, the Governor.

Pilate Questions Jesus

^{27:11} Jesus stood in front of the Governor Pilate. The Governor asked him: Are you the King of the Jews? Yes, I am, Jesus answered.

¹²While the chief priests and leaders were accusing him, he said nothing. ¹³Then Pilate asked him: Don't you hear how many charges they're bringing against you? ¹⁴But Jesus said absolutely nothing to him in reply, so the Governor was very surprised.

The Crowd Rejects Jesus

¹⁵At every Passover festival the Governor would free one prisoner whom the crowd wanted. ¹⁶At that time there was a well-known prisoner by the name of Barabbas. ¹⁷So when the people gathered, Pilate asked them: Which man do you want me to free for you? Do you want me to free Barabbas or Jesus, who is called the Anointed One? ¹⁸Pilate knew that they had handed Jesus over to him because they were jealous.

¹⁹While Pilate was judging the case, his wife sent him a message. It said: Leave that innocent man alone. I've been very upset today because of a dream I had about him.

²⁰But the chief priests and leaders persuaded the crowd to ask for the release of Barabbas and the execution of Jesus. ²¹The Governor asked them: Which of the two do you want me to free for you? They said: Barabbas.

²² Pilate asked them: Then what should I do with Jesus, who is called the Anointed One? He should be crucified they all said. ²³ Pilate asked: Why? What has he done wrong? But they began to shout loudly: He should be crucified.

²⁴ Pilate saw that he was not getting anywhere. Instead, a riot was breaking out. So Pilate took some water and washed his hands in front of the crowd. He said: I won't be guilty of killing this man. Do what you want. ²⁵ All the people answered: The responsibility for killing him will rest on us and our children.

²⁶ Then Pilate freed Barabbas for the people. But he had Jesus whipped *phragello* 2x and handed over to be crucified.

The Soldiers Make Fun of Jesus

²⁷ Then the Governor's soldiers took Jesus into the palace and gathered the whole troop around him. ²⁸ They took off his clothes and put a bright red cape on him. ²⁹ They twisted some thorns into a crown, placed it on his head, and put a stick in his right hand. They knelt in front of him and made fun of him by saying: Long live the King of the Jews. ³⁰ After they had spit on him, they took the stick and kept hitting him on the head with it.

WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED SO FAR?

The Sanhedrin took Jesus to the Roman Governor very early in the morning. Romans wanted to get their work done before the hot sun came up. Pilate gave his judgment on Jesus at the sixth hour or 6 am. **John 19:16** so Jesus was brought to Pilate around 4 am with a hand-picked crowd in attendance.

Pilate asked to answer the charge: Are you the King of the Jews? Jesus answered: You say so. Then the chief priests and elders accused Jesus of many things. But Jesus was silent, so Pilate was amazed. This man was on trial for his life. Yet he didn't defend himself.

Pilate then tested the crowd. He offered to free Jesus or Barabbas, a well-known Zealot. The people asked for Barabbas. Then Pilate asked: What then should I do with Jesus? Crucify him, they shouted. When Pilate saw a riot was about to break out, he took some water, washed

his hands, and said: I won't be guilty of killing this man. The crowd shouted: His blood be on us and on our children.

Then Pilate freed Barabbas, ordered Jesus scourged and then crucified.

The soldiers scourged Jesus and mocked him. They gave him a purple robe and a crown of thorns. Then they spit on him and struck him.

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

1. Pilate didn't take a long time to judge Jesus, less than two hours. Pilate ordered Jesus executed by 6 am. Jesus was placed on the cross by 9 am. What criteria did Pilate use to judge Jesus worthy of being crucified?
2. Pilate knew that the chief priests were jealous of Jesus. **Mark 15:10** Why were they jealous? How did this influence Pilate's actions in handling Jesus?
3. Pilate knew the crowd there very early in the morning was handpicked. Why then did he ask them if he should free Barabbas or Jesus? Why would they bring Jesus to him to be crucified and then ask for him to be freed? This makes no sense. Does this reveal Pilate's state of mind at the time?
4. Did the crowd saying: His blood be on us and on our children make Pilate think he would be free of blame if he crucified an innocent man?

Pericope 30

Jesus is Crucified, Dies, and Is Buried

Matthew 27:31-60

The Crucifixion

27:31 After the soldiers finished making fun of Jesus, they took off the cape and put his own clothes back on him. Then they led him away to crucify him. 32 On the way they found a man named Simon. He was from the city of Cyrene. The soldiers forced him to carry Jesus' cross.

33 They came to a place called Golgotha that means *the place of the skull*.

34 They gave him a drink of wine mixed with a drug called gall. When he tasted it, he refused to drink it.

[They gave me gall for my meat. In my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink. **Psalm 69:KJV**]

35 After they had crucified him, they divided his clothes among themselves by throwing dice.

[They divide my clothes among themselves. They throw dice for my clothing. **Psalm 22:18**]

36 Then they sat there and kept watch over him.

37 They placed a written accusation above his head. It read: This is Jesus, the King of the Jews.

38 At that time they crucified two criminals with him, one on his right and the other on his left.

39 Those who passed by insulted him. They shook their heads 40 and said: You were going to tear down God's Temple and build it again in three days.

[Jesus replied: Tear down this Temple and I'll rebuild it in three days. **John 2:19**]

Save yourself. If you're the Son of God, come down from the cross.

⁴¹The chief priests together with the experts in Moses' Teachings and the leaders made fun of him in the same way. They said: ⁴²He saved others, but he can't save himself. So he's Israel's King. Let him come down from the cross now and we'll believe him. ⁴³He trusted God. Let God rescue him now if he wants. After all, this man said: I am the Son of God. ⁴⁴Even the criminals crucified with him were insulting him the same way.

Jesus Dies on the Cross

⁴⁵At noon darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon.

⁴⁶About three o'clock Jesus cried out in a loud voice: Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani? that means: My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?

[My God, my God, why have you abandoned me? Why are you so far from helping me, so far away from the words of my groaning? **Psalm 22:1**]

⁴⁷When some of the people standing there heard him say that, they said: He's calling Elijah. ⁴⁸One of the men ran at once, took a sponge, and soaked it in some vinegar. Then he put it on a stick and offered Jesus a drink. ⁴⁹The others said: Leave him alone. Let's see if Elijah comes to save him.

⁵⁰Then Jesus loudly cried out once again and gave up his life.

⁵¹Suddenly, the curtain in the Temple was split in two from top to bottom.

[Brothers and sisters, because of the blood of Jesus we can go confidently into the Holy Place. Jesus has opened a new and living way for us to go through the curtain. The curtain is his body. **Hebrews 10: 19-20**]

The earth shook, and the rocks were split open. ⁵²The tombs were opened, and the bodies of many holy people who had died came back to life. ⁵³They came out of the tombs after he had come back to life, and they went into the Holy City where they appeared to many people.

⁵⁴An army officer and those watching Jesus with him saw the earthquake and the other things happening. They were terrified and said: Certainly, this was the Son of God.

⁵⁵Many women were there watching from a distance. They had followed Jesus from Galilee and had always supported him ⁵⁶Among them were Mary from Magdala, Mary, the mother of James and Joseph **Matthew 13:55**, and the mother of Zebedee's sons.

Jesus Is Placed in a Tomb

⁵⁷In the evening a rich man named Joseph arrived. He was from the city of Arimathea and had become a disciple of Jesus. ⁵⁸He went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Pilate ordered that it be given to him.

⁵⁹Joseph took the body and wrapped it in a clean linen cloth. ⁶⁰Then he laid it in his own new tomb that had been cut in a rock. After rolling a large stone against the door of the tomb, he went away. ⁶¹Mary from Magdala and the other Mary were sitting there, facing the tomb.

The Chief Priests and Pharisees Secure Jesus' Tomb

⁶²The next day, which was the Day of Rest—a Holy Day, the chief priests and Pharisees gathered together and went to Pilate. ⁶³They said: Sir, we remember how that deceiver said while he was still alive: After three days I will be brought back to life. ⁶⁴Therefore, give the order to make the tomb secure until the third day. Otherwise, his disciples may steal him and say to the people: He has been brought back to life. Then the last deception will be worse than the first.

⁶⁵Pilate told them: You have the soldiers you want for guard duty. Go and make the tomb as secure as you know how. ⁶⁶So they went to secure the tomb. They placed a seal on the stone and posted the soldiers on guard duty.

WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED SO FAR?

The crucifixion of Jesus is told very simply. Jesus was placed on the cross at 9 am. At 12 am, there was darkness over the land. At 3 pm, Jesus cried out and died. At 6 pm, the Great Sabbath and Passover would begin. There is no discussion of the physical suffering of a crucifixion that is intense. Only the bare facts are given.

Pilate embarrassed the Jews with the titulus placed above Jesus' head: This is Jesus, the King of the Jews. Two criminals were crucified with Jesus – one on his left and one on his right. Bystanders insulted him. The chief priests and scribes mocked him paralleling Satan in saying: *If you're the Son of God ...* **Matthew 27:43; 27:40**

Darkness was over the land for three hours as Jesus was made sin. Jesus was in great agony as in his human nature, he felt completely separated from God as God told him it would be when he prayed for three hours in the Garden of Gethsemane. This caused Jesus to cry out: My God, my God, why have you forsaken me. But in reality, God never left Jesus.

At 3 pm, Jesus again cried out loudly and gave up his spirit.

At that moment, curtain in the Temple was torn from top to bottom, there was an earthquake and rocks split open. Tombs were opened the bodies of many holy men came out and appeared to many.

The Roman Centurion and those watching Jesus saw the earthquake and the other things. They were terrified and said: Truly this was the Son of God. Some of Jesus' female disciples were watching from a distance.

A rich man named Joseph of Arimathea went to Pilate and asked for Jesus' body. Pilate agreed. So Joseph removed Jesus' body and placed it in his own nearby tomb. The women watched him do this.

On the Sabbath, the chief priests and Pharisees went to Pilate and asked for guards to be placed around the tomb. Pilate said: You already have Roman soldiers. Use them.

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

1. Why were the times of this Last Day so carefully noted?
2. What did the darkness over the land from noon to 3 pm mean?
3. What were the last words Jesus said? Read **Mark 15:34; Luke 23:46; John 19:30**
4. Why was the curtain in the Temple torn in two? What did this signify?

5. Why was there an earthquake at Jesus' death?
6. Why many people come out of their tombs and appear to many at Jesus' death?
7. What did the Roman Centurion mean when he said: Certainly, this is the Son of God. Matthew 27:54. This phrase appears in **Matthew 4:3, 6; 8:29; 14:33; 26:63; 27:40,43**. What does this title mean in each of these verses?

PART 6

God Raises Jesus To Life And He Appears To His Disciples

On the day after the Sabbath ended, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to the tomb at sunrise.

Suddenly, there was a powerful earthquake. An angel came down from Heaven, rolled the stone away and sat on the stone next to the tomb entrance. The Roman guards stood there shaking. The angel told the women. He has been risen. Go and tell his disciples he's going ahead of them into Galilee.

The women hurried way and met Jesus. Jesus said: *Chairo*-greetings. They bowed down, worshiped him, and took hold of his feet. Jesus said: Go tell my disciples to meet me in Galilee.

Later in Galilee, the Eleven disciples went to a mountain in Galilee where Jesus had told them to go. He then gave them the Great Commission. So ends the Gospel.

Matthew does something interesting. Back in the first chapter, Matthew says the angel tells Joseph that *Mary will have a son and you, Mary, will name him Jesus because he will save his people from their sins. Matthew 1:21.* Matthew then says:

All this happened so that what the Lord had spoken through the prophet came true: The virgin will become pregnant and give birth to a son, and they will name him Immanuel, that means: God is *with us.* **Matthew 1:22-23**

In the last chapter, Matthew states Jesus Great Commission that ends with Jesus saying:

And remember that I am always *with you* until the end of time. **Matthew 28:20**

This is really the Gospel of Immanuel, God is with us.

Pericope 31

Jesus Appears to His Disciples in Jerusalem

Matthew 28:1-15

Jesus Comes Back to Life

28:1 After the Day of Rest—a Holy Day, as the sun rose Sunday morning on the first day of the week, Mary from Magdala and the other Mary went to look at the tomb.

²Suddenly, there was a powerful earthquake. An angel of the Lord had come down from Heaven, rolled the stone away, and was sitting on it. ³He was as bright as lightning, and his clothes were as white as snow. ⁴The guards were so deathly afraid of him that they shook.

⁵The angel said to the women: Don't be afraid. I know you're looking for Jesus, who was crucified. ⁶He's not here. He has been brought back to life as he said. Come, see the place where he was lying.

⁷Then go quickly, and tell his disciples that he has been brought back to life. He's going ahead of them into Galilee. There they will see him. Take note that I have told you.

⁸They hurried away from the tomb with fear and great joy and ran to tell his disciples. ⁹Suddenly, Jesus met them and greeted them *lego*-said *chairo*-greetings. They went up to him, bowed down to worship him, and took hold of his feet. ¹⁰Then Jesus said to them: Don't be afraid. Go, tell my followers to go to Galilee. There they will see me.

The Guards Report to the Chief Priests

¹¹While the women were on their way, some of the guards went into the city. They told the chief priests everything that had happened.

¹²The chief priests gathered together with the leaders and agreed on a plan. They gave the soldiers a large amount of money ¹³and told them to say that

Jesus' disciples had come at night and had stolen his body while they were sleeping. ¹⁴They added: If the Governor hears about it, we'll take care of it, and you'll have nothing to worry about.

¹⁵The soldiers took the money and did as they were told. Their story has been spread among the Jewish people to this day.

WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED SO FAR?

Very early on the first day of the week after the seventh day, the Sabbath, two women named Mary went to the tomb. When the women arrived at the tomb, suddenly there was an earthquake. An angel appeared who had rolled away the stone from the entrance to the tomb and was sitting on it. The Roman soldiers stood nearby shaking.

The angel spoke to the two women: You're looking for Jesus but he's not here. He's been raised to life. Look inside. Now go quickly and tell his disciples that he's risen and has gone to Galilee where they will see him.

The women ran home with fear and great joy. On the way, Jesus met them saying: Chairo. They worshiped him and grabbed his feet. Go tell my disciples to go to Galilee where they will see me.

The Roman soldiers told the chief priests what happened. So the priests promised to bribe the soldiers so they would report the disciples stole Jesus' body. The promised they would make things right with the Governor Pilate. The soldiers agreed to do so.

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

1. Who was the other Mary? **Matthew 28:1**
2. What is the purpose of the earthquake?
3. Did the women look in the tomb to be certain Jesus' body wasn't there?
4. Why did the women grab hold of Jesus' feet?
5. Why would the soldiers agree to verified the story that the disciples had stolen Jesus' body? Soldiers would be shot for sleeping on duty. Its an implausible story.

Pericope 32

Jesus Gives His Disciples the Great Commission

Matthew 28:6-20

Jesus Gives Instructions to the Disciples

¹⁶The eleven disciples went to the mountain in Galilee where Jesus had told them to go. ¹⁷When they saw him, they bowed down in worship, though some had doubts *distazo* 2x.

¹⁸When Jesus came near, he spoke to them. He said: All authority in Heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹So wherever you go, make disciples of all nations: Baptize them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. ²⁰Teach them to do everything I have commanded you.

Remember that I am always with you Immanuel until the end of time.

WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED SO FAR?

The Eleven disciples obey Jesus' instructions given to the women. They meet him on a mountain in Galilee where Jesus had told them to go. Disciples are to baptize and to teach. They are to remember that Jesus is always with them.

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

1. When did Jesus identify the mountain where they were to meet in Galilee?
2. Why did some disciples doubt? What did they doubt? See **Matthew 14:31**.
3. This is the first mention of the Holy Trinity in the New Testament. Does it appear anywhere else?
4. Matthew bookends his Gospel with the concept of Immanuel –God Is With Us. What is the importance of this concept for Matthew?

EPILOGUE

What Is the Importance of According to Matthew?

According to Matthew is the first book in the canon of the New Testament that begins with the four Gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. The Gospels are anonymous but there are certain facts that suggest authors.

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