

# Seven Bible Studies 2017

## Gospels

### January 7: Matthew 1-2 (Doug Twaddell)

Matthew 1-2

Matthew is also referred to as Levi (Mk 2:14; Lk 5:27). Before he followed Christ, he earned a living as a tax collector for the Roman government. He would have been disliked by most Jews and hated by some. The lack of oversight and wildly fluctuating tax valuations meant the occupation easily lent itself to exploitation of their fellows Jews. Because of the assumption of their corruption, under Jewish law tax collectors were not allowed to be judges or even witnesses at trial. It was undesirable to exchange money or do business with them because they might be in possession of stolen money. Often their families were viewed in this same light.

Matthew begins with a genealogy from Abraham to Christ. Comparing the genealogies here and in Luke can be very revealing. Matthew traces through David's son Solomon, while Luke goes through David's son Nathan. Proving that there is no doubt Jesus is qualified as a descendent of David to assume the royal throne. The two lists converge at Zerubbabel and then separate again to follow different sons of his. In Haggai 2:23, God tells Zerubbabel that he will be "like a signet ring." He is exactly that in the way he ties the two seemingly separate lines together.

While recognizing there are differences when comparing Matthew's list with Luke's, I also want to focus on the fact that there even is a list. Most Americans don't know the names of their great-great grandparents, let alone anything else about them. Those that work very hard may be able to find information some 500-1000 years in the past. Imagine being able to trace your personal history back some 4000 years and knowing intricate details about many of those people. This was vital, not just for a Jewish male, but for someone that would lay claim to the throne of David and claim to be the Messiah of prophecy.

The events of the birth and childhood of Jesus that Matthew records are all fulfillments of various prophecies by Isaiah, Micah, Hosea and Jeremiah specifically, but also others. In a concise and economical way, Matthew records for us all we need to know about Jesus' heritage, His birth, the need to run to Egypt as a young child to escape Herod's wrath fueled by paranoia and the final return of Jesus and His family to Israel when they settle in Nazareth.

#### **Comment:**

Christina McClung:  
Thank you

#### **Comment:**

Michael Rogers:  
And part of the proof that the state of Israel today and Judaism is NOT the holy nation selected by God anymore, is the fact that in 70 AD when Jerusalem was destroyed, that ended the traceable lineage of Jews from that time. God's church is NOT a building or a nation anymore,

but the church of His beloved Son Jesus Christ, which is why we are known as the church of Christ. Thanks Doug Twaddell

### **Comment:**

Marc Hermon:

Thank you Doug. I loved the Zerubbabel reference. I also always find it fascinating about the five women mentioned in the lineage. Also I've had to use 1:24-25 before as a proof text that sex does not equal marriage. Joseph had clearly entered into a marriage commitment with Mary and God almost a year before he had a "union" with her.

### **Replies:**

Ginger Hermon:

Here is Rahab again! 5 mothers in the line of the Messiah finding deliverance, physical and spiritual, through the mercy of God! Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, Bathseba, & Mary.

### **Comment:**

Marc Hermon:

The five prophecies mentioned are interesting with how they are stated:

1:22 Lord said through the prophet...about Immanuel which is a continuation of yesterday's study in Isa. 7

2:5 what the prophet has written...about Bethlehem in Micah 5:2

2:15 Lord said through the prophet...about return from Egypt Hos. 11:1

2:17 said through the prophet Jeremiah..about Rachel weeping who was buried in Bethlehem after she died in childbirth to Benjamin. Jer. 31:15

2:23 what was said through the PROPHETS (plural)...That He would be called a Nazarene. This one's interesting because we can't find an OT reference to it. Perhaps since prophets is plural it was just orally transmitted around as a common understanding that He would be from Nazareth. It seems more likely that by using the word Nazarene, Matthew was actually referring to the many prophecies of the Christ being despised, looked down upon and persecuted.

Regardless, Jesus acknowledged it to Paul, "And I answered, Who art thou, Lord? And he said unto me, I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom thou persecutest." -Acts 22:8

### **Replies:**

Charles Fry:

A common thought on "Nazarene" is that Matthew may have been referring to Isaiah 11:1, where the Messiah is called a "netser", or shoot (a branch) out of the root of Jesse. The name Nazareth may be derived from the same word..

Ginger Hermon:

So thankful for these prophecies. Last year we had a good study @ the camp out on Day 1 of the 6 month NT study. One prophecy we discussed in further detail was Rachel's weeping. Figuratively speaking, Rachel lamented her lost "children." In the OT, the occasion of Rachel's weeping was terrible suffering of her descendants. Israel had been taken into Assyrian & Babylonian captivity. The desolation was so heart-wrenching she refused to be comforted. However, the Lord spoke and instructed her to refrain

from crying. There would be a reward for her work of bringing children into the world. The Hebrew people had turned away from God, but through divine discipline they were brought to repentance and turned back to the Lord. In Matthew's day Rachel's death in childbirth on the way to Bethlehem is seen again with connection between Ramah and Bethlehem. As in Jeremiah, the situation is heart-wrenching as Rachel mourns her children being carried away. Yet the hope of salvation lives on. Jesus escapes! Just as Rachel was comforted with the promise that her children would be restored, so Matthew's readers are meant to understand that the long-awaited Messiah had been born and the hope of salvation was at hand. Prophecy had been fulfilled!

### **Comment:**

Steven Wright:

Thank you Brother Doug Twaddell! I know you said "Most" which is different than "some," this isn't a boast but much father I've come! I have names of "greats" many in my family tree, and, can reach back a plenty to 1400 you see! (sorry, I couldn't resist!)

### **Comment:**

Steven Wright::

Ok, I'll be serious now! (but seriously, I was serious when i said "Thank you earlier Doug Twaddell! and so, thank you again!) ok, here's this:

### **Comment:**

Steve Wright:

Revisiting the question: "Why a Virgin Birth?"

1. The problem
  - a. (Genesis 49:10)
    - i. God announced very early that His plan for redemption involved the Messiah coming from the tribe of Judah.
    - ii. Specifically, from the line of David (Ruth 4:22; 2nd Samuel 7:11 – 16)
    - iii. The succession of Kings after David and Solomon however, proved to be for the most part, a pretty dismal line.
  1. Things go from bad to worse and eventually we encounter Jeconiah – upon whom God pronounces a "Blood curse" (Jeremiah 22:30)
    - a. This curse seems to create quite a grim and perplexing paradox:
      - i. The Messiah had to come from the royal line.
      - ii. But there is now a blood curse upon that very line!
    - b. but remember you cannot outmaneuver God – he has a contingency plan for every contingency!
2. The solution
  - a. The answer emerges in the "Differing" genealogies of Jesus Christ recorded in Matthew and in Luke.
    - i. Matthew, in true Levitical fashion, focuses on the Messiahship of Jesus and presents him as the Lion of the Tribe of Judah.
      1. So Matthew, (as any Jew would), traces the legal line from Abraham through David, then through Solomon (The royal line) to Joseph, the legal father of Jesus (Mt. 1: 1 – 17).

ii. Luke (on the other hand), as a physician, focuses on the humanity of Jesus and presents him as the Son of Man.

1. Luke traces the blood line from Adam (the first man) through David - - and his genealogy from Abraham to David is identical to Matthew's.

a. But then after David, Luke departs from the path taken by Matthew and traces the family tree through another son of David (the second surviving son from Bathsheba), Nathan, down to Heli, the father of Mary, the mother of Jesus (Luke 3:23 – 38).

iii. But then, how can we have inheritance through a daughter, instead of a son?

1. There are two solutions for that problem:

a. 1st – I think we understand here that Matthew gives the real and actual descent of Joseph, and Luke the real and actual descent of Mary.

i. We can support this understanding/conclusion with the scripture:

1. The most natural meaning of “begat” is preserved in Matthews account.

a. Jesus comes from David's royal line and so fulfills prophecy.

b. It is not elsewhere stated that Mary is of Davidic descent (although the tracing out of the Names AFTER David in Luke's list will bear this out), there is presumptive evidence in the language of the angel to Mary in (Luke 1:32) and as well in the enrollment of Mary in (Luke 2:5).

2. we also note the lack of proper article with Joseph's name in Luke's list, whereas every other name on the list appears with the article.

a. This puts Joseph's name outside of the genealogical series properly so – called.

b. Indicating that Joseph belongs to the parenthesis “As was supposed.”

c. Making it read thus, “being son (as was supposed of Joseph) of Heli.”

3. Luke had already clearly stated the manner of Christ's birth (we shall say some more about this also), so that no one would think he was the son of Joseph.

a. Jesus would then be the grandson of Heli, which also happens to be a perfectly and completely biblically allowable meaning of “son.”

i. (there is just no way of attacking this problem without finding a Biblical resolution – ONLY – the one true God could work such a thing at once so remarkable and miraculous as this!

ii. THEN WE HAVE . . .

3. Zelophehad

a. The law of Moses required inheritance to come through the sons of a father.

b. A notable exception was permitted however, in which inheritance should come through the daughters, if no sons were available and the daughter(s) married within her tribe (Num. 26:33; 27:1 – 11; 36:2 – 12; Joshua 17:3 – 6; 1st Chron. 7:15)

- i. The daughters of Zelophehad, petitioned Moses for a special exception, which was granted after they entered the land of Canaan under Joshua.
- ii. The claims of Christ can rely solely upon this particular exception granted to the family of Zelophehad.
  - 1. Heli, Mary's father, Like Zelophehad, was without sons, apparently.
  - 2. Mary married within the tribe of Judah.
  - 3. Jesus was born of Mary (though she was a virgin).
  - 4. So . . . Jesus was born of David and carried legal title to that line, but avoiding the blood curse of Jeconiah
  - 5. (Psalm 40:7)
- a. We also have a much . . .
  - 4. Earlier glimpse
- a. Although the point is worth emphasizing that there is no way for God to be out maneuvered, this plan of God's for bringing the Messiah, was no afterthought, or, post facto remedy.
  - i. It was first announced in (Gen. 3:15)
    - 1. That there a woman has "seed" is biologically true albeit, seemingly contradictory by what can be normally observed. (even today we speak of the male "sperm," with a seed, and for the woman we say she has "eggs.")
      - a. So it was that "Seed of the woman" while being a statement of biological fact, also became one of the prophetic titles of the Messiah; AND . . . the very first hint (in the third chapter of Genesis) of the virgin birth.
    - 5. Everything comes together in the intertwining of the two parts of Jesus' family tree.
      - a. And speaking of genealogies . . .
  - i. John also presents a genealogy, of sorts, of the Pre-Existent one in the first three verses of his account (Jn. 1: 1- 3) and then later connects with Matthew's AND Luke's at (Jn. 1:14)
  - ii. Which truth is also stated hundreds of years before John by the mouth of the prophet Micah (5:2).

## Replies:

Charles Fry:

Paul wrote in Romans 1:3 "concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh,". Since he was not born of Joseph, according to the flesh, but was born of Mary, according to the flesh, those inferences from Luke about Mary too being a descendant of David must be more than suggestive.

## Comment:

Ginger Hermon:

Thank you, Doug Twaddell, for leading our Saturday study in the Gospels. I appreciate your intro and thoughts above! We are very blessed to have four gospel writers and their unique insights. I'm thankful Matthew had a fondness for numbers. Thanks to this, he gives numerical

details, arranged contents of his book in a systematic way and mentions things only a person in his position would know. There is so much in these two short chapters!!!

## Comment:

Charles Fry:

God chose the lineage of Judah for the scepter of the kingdom, as indicated in the prophetic blessings of Genesis 49. If it had been Jacob's choice the chosen lineage would have been that of Joseph (see the blessing of Ephraim in Genesis 48, and Judah and Joseph in Genesis 49). While Joseph is a prophetic shadow of Jesus, God didn't choose his line. However, I think there is an honorary nod given to Joseph and Jacob, in that Mary's husband was Joseph son of Jacob. 😊

## January 14: Matthew 3-4 (Doug Twaddell)

January 14, 2017

Matthew 3-4

Matthew introduces us to Jesus' cousin, John, in the third chapter. We see that he lives the life of a recluse and may have followed the restrictions of the Nazarite vow. As he is baptizing people after they confess their sins (v6), many of the Jewish religious elite come to see what is going on. In a very short lesson, he gives them much of the information that Christ will also speak to them later. He calls them a "brood of vipers," tells them to "bear fruits worthy of repentance," informs them that they cannot lean on "Abraham as their father" adding that their "tree" is about to be "cut down" because it is not "bearing fruit." (vs7-10)

We also see what John knew to be part of his purpose. He points out that his baptism is for repentance, but the Christ would baptize with the Holy Spirit and with fire (v11). This has to be a prophecy about the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2. Not only would Christ Himself be greater than John, His purpose would be greater. He will separate the wheat from the chaff, meaning He would make a distinction between those that are acceptable to God from those that are not. (v12)

Matthew then gives us an account of Jesus' baptism. John objects at first, but then relents when Jesus explains that this is necessary. When Jesus "comes up out of the water," the voice of God is heard. The specific detail that He came up out of the water should not be overlooked. Not only does He come out of the water, He first comes up. In order to come up and out of something, it is only logical that you must be completely in it. Then there is the voice of God. There are very few times that God speaks aloud from heaven and most of those are in the Old Testament. This had to be an event of great magnitude and importance for God to lend His voice audibly to the proceedings. I wonder what the reaction of those standing there, including the religious elite, was to that sound.

Chapter 4 switches scenes to Jesus alone in the wilderness as Satan takes his best shots at derailing the purity and reputation of the Messiah. As Satan attempts this, he hurls three flaming darts at Him. Satan appeals to His hungry flesh by pointing out that Jesus has the ability to turn stones into bread. Satan also appeals to his pride by questioning whether God would really protect Him as He promised. Finally, Satan appeals to Jesus both as a man and as God by suggesting that he is willing to simply step aside and allow all mankind to worship Christ with Jesus knowing that then He would not have to suffer through the sacrifice of Himself for many that will never believe. Jesus defeats these attacks by quoting the word of

God. Yes, Satan also quoted the scriptures at one point, but he used it contrary to the point and context. Jesus used the scripture correctly and within the context of God's purpose.

After this, John is arrested and Jesus begins His public work. Verse 17 tells us that His primary message was this: "Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." That message is the foundation and main purpose of the Messiah. Jesus begins to call those that will eventually be named as Apostles. As I look back at working side by side with my father and grandfather in the field or fixing fence, I have often thought about Zebedee's reaction to his sons simply walking away from the family business. Jesus then begins the process of letting people know who He is by healing many that were sick or paralyzed. It is worth noting that these were not "tricks" or "audience plants." Those that He healed were well known in their communities and there was no doubt about their illness or healing. Naturally, these miracles cause quite a stir and Jesus begins to amass a very large following.

### **Comment:**

Sundy McClung:  
Thank you.

### **Comment:**

Marc Hermon:  
Thanks Doug! I'm really enjoying these outlines that the teachers are posting. It's very helpful.

3:11 says baptize with "the Holy Spirit and with fire". Although the Holy Spirit should be a fire within us that we should not "quench" and the Holy Spirit descended on the apostles "like" tongues of fire, I don't believe the fire mentioned in this verse is the Holy Spirit. If we look at the context of the verse John is now talking to a mixture of believers and the Pharisees "brood of vipers" that have just shown up. It is significant that verse 10, 11 and 12 all end with the word fire. In that context, in my opinion they all refer to the same thing. The judgement of sinners by Christ. John is in the middle of an accusatory speech and he is basically saying the Messiah will give peace and comfort through the Holy Spirit to those who repent and are baptized and obey God AND fiery judgement on the "brood of vipers" who do not.

"And all the people that heard him, and the publicans, justified God, being baptized with the baptism of John.

But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptized of him."  
Luke 7:29-30

### **Comment:**

Steven Wright:  
Thank you brother Doug Twaddell! The contextual application for the "baptism of fire" would indeed indicate the judgment and therefore the fires of hell for the disobedient. Because of the Two baptisms being mentioned together in the text and then explained farther into the text, with people jumping to a conclusion, before actually digesting the text, an easy confusion can occur ; since one of the signs that accompanied the Apostles being "Baptized" by the Holy Spirit" was the "cloven tongues of fire," resting on the heads of each apostle, people incorrectly think that is what it means. It doesn't! A certain incorrect cultural misappropriation also occurs, where the phrase "baptism of fire" is used to describe a very difficult trial or hardship. Yes, the scriptures do speak of "fiery trials" which we must endure, and we can certainly feel "Immersed" by such trials at times, but the fact remains that the clear, scriptural context of "Baptize with fire" is condemnation to the eternal fire of hell! Also regarding the

Nazarite vow, where normally an individual could voluntarily take that vow, imposing it upon themselves for what period of time they would designate ( a year long term, seems to have been considered normal), in the case of Samson, Samuel, and John the Immerser, it was imposed by God and/or the child's parent (s). So also upon the mother's of these men prior to their conceiving them, since for these, the vow was to be upon them for the entirety of their lives. This also answers the question for us of, "when does a human life begin? " as far as God's perspective is concerned.

## **Comment:**

Marc Hermon:

I agree with Doug that the baptism of the Spirit is probably in reference to Acts 2 but it could also refer to Acts 10. As far as I understand it, we receive the Spirit when we are obedient to the water burial that He commanded but this is probably different than the "baptism of the Holy Spirit" prophesied in Joel where God poured out His Spirit upon man when establishing his Kingdom. This seems to have happened three times for the purpose of God demonstrating to the world whom He had chosen.

- 1.) Jesus (Matt 3)
- 2.) Apostles (Acts 2)
- 3.) Gentiles (Acts 10).

The third "baptism of the Holy Spirit" from on High is the most interesting because it happened before water immersion. This was God's demonstration to the Jews, that they shouldn't deny water immersion to the Gentiles because He had chosen to save them.

"Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?"

And he COMMANDED them to be baptized in the name of the Lord." Acts 10:47-48

## **Replies:**

Steven Wright:  
for you Marc Hermon

Steven Wright:  
not letting me post it . . .sorry!

## **Comment:**

Marc Hermon:

I wasn't sure if we should read the Bible straight through or do it in the 7 sections that we are attempting. I'm really happy we decided to do it this way. I've been totally amazed how so many of our readings have been so wonderfully connected. Reading Isaiah on Friday and then Matthew on Saturday has been exceptionally exciting. The last two weeks we've read some of the exact same words on both days. Matt 4:15-16

## **Replies:**

Ginger Hermon:  
"A voice in the wilderness preparing the way of the Lord!" One of the purposes of Jesus' baptism was to confirm His identity as Messiah.

## Comment:

Charles Fry:

I agree that John the Baptist is laying out two alternatives, that Jesus would baptize with the Holy Spirit or else Jesus would baptize with fire. Either new life by the Spirit, or else fiery judgment. I agree that the baptism of the Holy Spirit certainly occurred in Acts 2 and Acts 10, accompanied by signs, including speaking in other languages in both instances. Then I have a couple of "however"s. I don't know of a text that says Jesus was baptized with the Holy Spirit. I know he was anointed with the Holy Spirit (Luke 4:16-21, Isaiah 61:1-2, Hebrews 1:9) and his anointing with the Holy Spirit was "by God" and included anointing with power (Acts 10:38). He is the Christ, Messiah, Anointed One, and his anointing with the Holy Spirit by God included power or authority.

Coming back to John's prophecy that Jesus would baptize with the Holy Spirit, which John couldn't do, again it seems to be either the Spirit or else the fire. No third alternative. Consequently, I have a strong notion that Jesus baptizes his followers with the Holy Spirit. Like Jesus, disciples receive an anointing (2 Corinthians 1:21-22, 1 John 2:20, 27). This is in keeping with the way the holy anointing oil poured on the head of the high priest flowed down and his whole body was anointed (as in Psalm 133). Christians are anointed with the same Spirit Jesus was anointed with, but not the same power or authority.

Similarly, the Holy Spirit is spoken of as being poured out by Jesus in the prophecy of Joel quoted by Peter at Pentecost (Acts 2:17-18), and Peter said Jesus had done it, as shown by the signs and wonders of the tongues (both the appearance of fire and the intelligible languages) and sound of wind (Acts 2:33). "He has poured out what you now see and hear." Likewise, what Peter refers to as being baptized by Jesus with the Holy Spirit (Acts 11:16) is also described by Luke as the Holy Spirit being poured out on the Gentiles (Acts 10:45). Paul also wrote that the love of God is "poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who he has given to us" (Romans 5:5) and that we have "the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior," (Titus 3:5-6). So the events at Pentecost and in Cornelius house are described both as baptism with the Holy Spirit and the Holy Spirit being poured out, and that metaphor of pouring the Holy Spirit is also applied to all believers, as is the anointing with the Spirit.

What differs in the matter of the anointing of the Messiah and the anointing of the believer is a matter of degree, of power and authority. The same is true in regard to Jesus baptizing with the Holy Spirit. John prophesied baptism with the Spirit or else with fire, no third alternative. When the time was imminent for Jesus to pour out the promised Holy Spirit he not only told the disciples they would be baptized with the Holy Spirit, he also told them that they would receive power in order to be his witnesses (Acts 1:5, 8). Luke also reports that Jesus told the apostles to stay in Jerusalem "until you are clothed with power from on high" (Luke 24:49). While the promise of Jesus baptizing with the Holy Spirit seems to be broad promise, either baptized with the Spirit or else with fire, the specific promise of power given to the apostles when that began to happen is not broad or general. Somehow, perhaps in reaction to other religious groups, the two promises, one from the prophets regarding the outpouring of the Spirit for "as many as the Lord our God shall call" (Acts 2:39), and one (power, signs) specifically for the chosen witnesses, have become conflated, making John's prediction more difficult to understand than it ought to be.

<http://charlesfry.blogspot.com/>

## Comment:

Jay Graham:

If this were not a "closed" study I probably would not respond due to the potential of confusion to some who do not need to be confused. With this said-- It is my thought Jesus would not need to be immersed by the Holy Spirit. Unlike the apostles, Jesus would already have a "full measure of the Spirit". I do believe the baptism of the Spirit and fire were the same thing that came upon the apostles in Acts 2 (for the Jews) and Cornelius and his household (opening the door for the for the Gentiles). There is also the representation of Judgment by "fire" toward all those who refuse the gospel. Unfortunately this is a serious misunderstanding by those who claim all christians receive this manifestation of the Spirit. it causes them to expect something that is not for them AND to ultimately refuse the true meaning and necessity of immersion.

## Comment:

Ginger Hermon:

Thanks, Doug Twaddell! Once again an excellent summary of our reading for the day. I'm grateful Christ gave us the example of fulfilling all righteousness (through baptism) & defeating the tempter by quoting scripture. I certainly have verses that I meditate upon during moments of weakness. Philippians 4:8, Romans 12:1-2, & 21.

## January 21: Matthew 5-7 (Doug Twaddell)

Matthew chapters 5-7

These chapters give an account of the first extended public teaching of Jesus that we have recorded. As chapter 4 closed, we are told that "great multitudes followed him" wherever He went. He goes to a mountainous area so He can address the entire group.

He begins with some simple explanations of how individuals that are in certain situations or strive for certain mindsets would be blessed. Two of these are simply issues we might find ourselves dealing with. We don't choose to be in mourning or persecuted for righteousness sake. Don't miss the specific designation that the persecution is because of doing things in obedience to God that draw the attention of those that oppose Him. If we suffer for doing wrong, we are reaping what we sowed. The others are characteristics that we should develop in ourselves. Being poor in spirit, having a meek spirit, hungering and thirsting after righteousness, being merciful, being pure in heart and striving to be a peacemaker are mindsets that we can and should develop.

Jesus then compares us to salt and light. This should help us understand our influence in the world. Like salt influences and enhances the flavor of a meal, we should influence and enhance the world around us for good. Like a light can show how to get to a certain place when it is dark around us, we should show people how to find the truth of Jesus. Also, like a lamp shines a light on an entire room so that those in the house can see what is happening, we should shine a light on the world so that people can see what is going on to make any changes necessary. One of the main ways we shine this light is through our good deeds that we do for others. This light shining is not for our glory, but so that our good works will bring attention to God and His purpose for mankind.

Jesus then assures everyone, perhaps most of all those in positions of religious power and authority at the time, that His purpose is not to destroy the Law of Moses but to fulfill and

complete it. The Old Law will be coming to an end but it should not be a time for despair or concern. Instead, it should be a time of rejoicing and praising God.

Jesus then begins a section that I have always found interesting. I call it the “DO MORE” speech. He systematically goes through some of the major points of the Law of Moses and shows them how they have missed the purpose of the law. He reminds them that they should not murder, but calls them to do more: not even to harbor thoughts about their brother that desire their harm. He also points out that these thoughts can interfere with their ability to worship God. He reminds them that they should not commit adultery, but calls them to do more: not even to have sexual thoughts about a woman that is not their wife. He also points out that this will sometimes require drastic steps to accomplish. He takes note that it was allowed for a man to divorce his wife with a piece of paper, but calls them to do more: to hold marriage up to a higher standard than most men and not divorce except in extreme circumstances. He reminds them that they should not swear falsely, but calls them to do more: not to swear by anything. Those that know us should never have any questions about our promises. He reminds them that the law says you take back what has been taken from you, but calls them to do more: to turn the other cheek, forgive and have mercy on those that wrong you. He reminds them to love their neighbor (what He later calls the second greatest command) and they have been told to hate their enemies, but calls them to do more: to love, do good and pray for their enemies. He reminds them that they should do charitable deeds, but calls them to do more: do it without wondering what you will get in return. He reminds them that they should pray, but calls them to do more: don’t pray so that others acknowledge you. He reminds them that they should fast, but calls them to do more: don’t fast for the sympathy of others. This is all a good lesson for us. We should not be trying to figure out the minimum we need to do to be acceptable. We should strive to do more.

Next he addresses the idea of wealth or riches. He points out what Solomon discovered: you can have all the wealth in the world but it means nothing without God. His first comment on the subject is about where we want our savings account. Do we want earthly wealth that can be gone either in an instant or over the long term or do we want heavenly wealth man can never take away. His second comment is about who we serve. When (not if) we have to make a choice between what is best for our checking account and what is best for our service to God, what will we choose. We cannot (not should not try but cannot) serve both. Yes we can and should use our wealth in our service to Him, but when we can’t do both what will we choose. His final point is that God will take care of our needs if we let Him. When he says, “Seek first the kingdom of God and all these things will be added to you.” (6:33), He is referring to “these things” that He just talked about: “What shall we eat?” “What shall we drink?” “What shall we wear?” He is not talking about a fancier car, a nicer house or a better job. He is talking about the necessities of life. Paul says, “And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content.” (1 Tim 6:8)

Now He tackles judging. This is something that many of us still struggle with. He does not say we cannot make judgements. He does say we should be cautious about the standard we use to judge. If we judge with the standard God is applying to all of mankind, we are judging righteously. If we judge by a standard that we or another man has set up, we are in danger of administering unrighteous standards and having those same standards applied to us.

He also addresses asking God for things. Again, He is not saying that God is our genie in a bottle. We are not promised that we can have anything our heart desires as long as we ask God. He is talking about the basic needs of life: specifically food. He teaches that God is our Heavenly Father. If we, as imperfect mistake-prone earthly fathers, know how to give our children the things they need; God, the perfect all-knowing Heavenly Father, will obviously know how to give us what we need (not want).

He now gives some shorter lessons. Treat people the way you want them to treat you. The way to heaven is narrow and difficult while the way to hell is wide and easy. Pay attention to the people that are teaching you. Their actions will give them away whether they are true teachers leading to salvation or false teachers leading to damnation.

Finally, He gives what is perhaps the most revealing and intimidating teaching of the whole lesson. There are going to be some that will be surprised at the end of time. They are going to be under the false impression that they are saved, but they are not. He defines those that will be allowed in as those who "do the will of My Father in heaven." He even gives the example of two men: one builds his house in a way that will stand against the foes of water and wind (according to God's standards) and one that ignores those foes to build the way he wants to (according to his own or man's standards). One stands and one falls. We cannot simply build the way we want to. We must build according to the pattern that will stand against our foe.

Those that were listening were astonished at these teachings. Jesus did not beat around the bush or teach to itching ears. He told the truth and was able to speak with authority because of that truth. May those that hear us teach hear the complete, unadulterated, unbiased truth.

### **Comment:**

Diana Ross:

It is a humbling thing to think of these words.

### **Comment:**

Thank you, Doug! I can almost 'hear' you orate these messages!

### **Comment:**

Marc Hermon:

As I was reading this today, Ginger brought me a salad and I was reminded that the word "salad" came from "salt" because the Romans would salt vegetables and leafy greens. To be honest I can't think of a great spiritual analogy there.

However, that did make me think of our word "salary" which also comes from "salt" because salt was very valuable and Roman soldiers were actually paid in salt. Perhaps Christians are called salt because they give "value" to the Earth in God's eyes. Perhaps we are "preserving" the world from its final destruction for the time being by keeping the world palatable to God during his long suffering towards it.

Now that I think about if we correlate broccoli and cauliflower with sin perhaps we can make the "salad" analogy work also.

### **Replies:**

Kevin Crittenden:

No, that would be brussel sprouts - the sin that leads to death.

Steven Wright:

I think Doug Twaddell is worth his salt, don't you?

Steven Wright:

Thank you for the fine summaries brother Doug Twaddell!

Charles Fry:

I liked this comment, despite the fact there seemed to be some disparaging of cauliflower, broccoli, and Brussels sprouts. Good eats!

### **Comment:**

Linda Whitworth Davis:

Thank you for the good introduction to today's reading. Very helpful!

### **Comment:**

Ginger Hermon:

Thank you, Doug Twaddell! I'm so grateful we have these instructions from Christ. Truly, we must do more & go the extra mile. I think Christ's message is summed up well in Matt. 5:48, "Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect."

## **January 28: Matthew 8-10 (Doug Twaddell)**

Matthew 8-10

Following Jesus' ground breaking and challenging lesson, we are told that "multitudes" followed Him. We know that some wanted to hear his teachings, but many wanted to see healings or other miracles. Matthew now records several of those events.

The first is the healing of a man with leprosy (called Hansen's disease today). In the US it is fairly rare (178 cases in the US in 2015) with most infections worldwide in Africa and South America. It is easily treated today, but in the 1st century it was devastating. God had given provisions for dealing with it that included total separation of the individual from society. Because it is caused by bacteria, the immune system of some people could fight it off. So, God also made provisions for determining if someone was cured from the disease. A man with this disease approaches Jesus and expresses belief in His healing abilities. Jesus actually touches him. This could have been the first physical interaction he had experienced in many years. I am not sure the meaning of this to the man can be completely understood. Jesus then tells him to follow the Law of Moses to be declared cleansed by the priests.

Next, a Roman Centurion comes to Him and expresses his concern for a servant that is paralyzed. First, let's note that this is not a Jew, but a Roman soldier. Second, he is not concerned about himself or a family member but a servant. Either the servant was very valuable, much loved or this is an unusual Roman soldier. When Jesus says He will go to this man's house, the man has an interesting response. He says that he understands having authority because he has others under him and he is confident that Jesus has authority to command those under Him and the servant will be healed. Christ called this great faith. Most were still discussing where this power came from or how it could happen. This Roman understood that Jesus was able to heal because He had authority over these diseases and issues.

Now Jesus comes to Peter's house and finds his mother-in-law ill. He heals her and she is immediately strong enough to serve them. Naturally, many start arriving with people that needed Jesus' healing power. Jesus was able to heal them all and turned no one away.

Jesus then realized that to leave they were going to have to cross the Sea of Galilee. Before He gets in the boat, he answers a couple of would be followers. He reminds us that following Him is difficult and that we have to leave our past behind and look to the future.

Once they get in the boat, a storm comes that threatens their safety. While everyone else is panicking, Jesus is soundly asleep. When they wake Him, He questions their faith because of their fear and orders the storm to stop, which it does. Unlike the Roman soldier earlier, they begin questioning how He could have this authority.

When He encounters a man that is being tormented by a group of demons, He orders them into some hogs which immediately run off a cliff. Interestingly, the people of the area they ask Him to leave, so He gets back in the boat and goes away.

When another man is brought to him who is paralyzed, He first forgives him of his sins. When questions arise about His authority to do that, He points out that it would be easy to say that without any proof. To prove it, he heals his body as well as his soul.

Matthew now recounts his first meeting with the Messiah. Matthew is a Jew that collects taxes for the Roman government. He would have been mistrusted and hated by most Jews. (see my first post about Matthew) Matthew simply leaves his position and follows Christ.

Matthew also talks about an instance when Jesus is sitting with many tax collectors and other sinners. When the Pharisees see it, they question the wisdom of the meeting. Jesus gives His famous reply that the sick have need of a physician. He also instructs the Pharisees to consider the meaning of Hosea 6:6 where God says, "I desire mercy not sacrifice." Would Jesus tell us that we need to consider that meaning as well?

Jesus also has to deal with the Pharisees questioning why His disciples are not fasting. His answer is that they will fast when the time comes, but that time is not yet. Ironically, that time will come when the disciples are under duress from the Pharisees.

On His way to a ruler's house to heal his daughter, a woman with a medical problem touches Christ's robe and is healed. Jesus makes it known that it was not His robe that healed her, it was her faith. When He reaches the ruler's house, he says she is sleeping and simply takes her hand and raises her up.

Two blind men follow Him, calling Him the Son of David, and he tells them that they will be healed according to their faith. They both go away able to see again.

When He casts out another demon so the man effected can speak again, there is disagreement about the source of His authority. While some are trying to figure it out, the Pharisees try to convince them that Jesus is doing this by the power of Satan. It would seem that, through many of these accounts, Matthew is encouraging us to recognize Jesus' authority and properly assign the source. When we can do that accurately, many other questions are answered and many doubts are reassured.

From town to town the same thing happens: masses of people come to him for help and teachings. As He interacts with them, He is "moved with compassion" and calls them "sheep without a shepherd." No doubt this is a condemnation of the Jewish religious leadership of the day.

Even though Matthew only specifically describes his own calling by Christ, he indicates that at this time all twelve are present and designates who they are. These twelve are then sent, by Jesus, to "the lost sheep of Israel." They are not allowed to go to Gentiles or Samaritans. Obviously, this is not because Jesus is ignoring those people or doesn't care about them. These men are simply not equipped or ready for the unique challenges of teaching those groups or for the backlash that will come from the Jews. They are told to take nothing with them, but to give freely of what they have been given; the power to heal and teach. They are

told to evaluate who they are speaking to. If they will listen, stay. But, if they are rejecting the teaching, it is ok to move on. He warns them that they will encounter resistance to the message. No matter what happens, they are to continue on and not give up. They are also supposed to speak the truth and hold nothing back. God will be behind them and they should not fear anything man can do.

In 10:32-33, Jesus gives a teaching that we should all take to heart. If we are willing to speak about Christ to others, Christ will be willing to speak to the Father about us. If we refuse to speak about Him, He will refuse to speak about us. In this, Jesus admits that not all will accept His teachings. Even within families there will be dissention. We have to love Christ above all and be willing to stand against opposition no matter the form or source. We are to resist this opposition through servitude, kindness and mercy.

### **Comment:**

Steven Wright:

Thank you Doug Twaddell! A while slew of miracles in this set!

### **Comment:**

Kevin Crittenden:

I agree! Thank you very much!

### **Comment:**

Janet Gordon Gentry:

Thanks, Doug. You did a fine job tying it all together.

### **Comment:**

Butch O'Neal:

Thanks, Doug. I liked the comparison of the apostles faith in the boat, and the Roman soldier's faith.

### **Comment:**

Marc Hermon:

Interesting tricky T-F questions I collected from this reading:

- 1.) Jesus said we are to be like snakes.
- 2.) The most faithful person Jesus found in Israel was a Gentile
- 3.) Jesus and his disciples did not fast.

### **Comment:**

Ginger Hermon:

Action packed chapters! Thanks for the detailed summary, Doug Twaddell! It's so good to study with you. :-) Now that we are studying Isaiah I enjoy looking back on the prophecies. Isaiah 35:5-6 predicts the Messiah would perform signs of healing, "Then will the eyes of the blind be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped. Then will the lame leap like a deer, and the mute tongue shout for joy." We witness prophecy coming true in these passages.

## February 4: Matthew 11-13 (Doug Twaddell)

Matthew 11-13

When John (the baptizer) has heard about what Jesus is doing from his prison cell, he sends two of his followers to find out if He really is the Messiah of promise. Jesus tells them to tell John about everything they are seeing and hearing. He specifically refers to prophecies from Isaiah (35:5-6 and 61:3) about the sick being healed and the Good News preached to the poor.

As they leave, Jesus addresses the crowd about John. Most, if not all, of them knew who John was and many would have personally heard him teach in the wilderness. Some may have even been baptized by John. He asks them a simple question, "What did you go to the wilderness to see?" Just like today, people could have had differing reasons to check out John. Some went to see him for a side show or a diversion (a reed shaken by the wind). Some went to see if he was really as rough, perhaps in appearance and message, as others said (a man clothed in soft garments). However, some went truly believing that John was a prophet and to hear his message. Jesus assures them that John was a prophet, quoting from Malachi 3:1, calling him a messenger to prepare the way for Messiah.

He then turns His attention to the current generation of Jews. He says they are like children that are never happy with the way others respond. John and Jesus were presenting very different lifestyles. They condemned John for not interacting with society and they condemned Jesus for doing just that. It is dangerous when we argue against something simply to be argumentative. Not only does no good come from it, but those that are paying attention will eventually dismiss everything we say, even if we are right.

Jesus then gives stern rebukes to some of the cities that He has been traveling through. Even though they had seen wondrous miracles meant to confirm His approval by God and given them teachings that carried an authority that they could not explain, they were not repenting of their disobedience.

Jesus offers His famous invitation: "Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." This promise comes with a requirement: "Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me." The promise of comfort and rest in Christ comes only with my willingness to incorporate His teachings into my life and bear up under the difficulties of living those teachings.

As Jesus and His followers are walking through a field on the Sabbath, they are seen by some Pharisees picking grain and eating it. The Pharisees cry foul and claim they were violating the Sabbath rules. Jesus calls to their attention two facts. First, David and his men ate the showbread from the Tabernacle in violation of the law. However, God seems to have allowed it because they were not immediately struck dead. Second, He points out that the priests, in order to fulfill their duties, must violate the Sabbath laws. I should also point out that I cannot think of anything in the ACTUAL Law of Moses that forbids what they were doing. It would seem this is only a violation of their interpretive extension of those laws. He suggests to them that if they knew the meaning of God's statement, "I desire mercy and not sacrifice," (Hosea 6:6) then there would be no issue. Jesus then boldly claims to be the Lord of the Sabbath.

On this same Sabbath, Jesus goes to a synagogue and notices a man whose hand is withered. They ask Jesus a question, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?" Jesus points out that all of them would rescue one of their sheep if it was in distress on the Sabbath, so why would it not be good to help a human? He then heals the man.

When Jesus becomes aware of the Pharisees plotting against Him, he leaves to avoid any issues. I want to make note that we are told that Jesus was able to heal everyone that came to Him. Modern "faith healers" will tell you that if they cannot heal you it is your fault because you do not have enough faith. This does not ever seem to be an issue for Jesus or His apostles.

When Jesus casts out a demon from a man, the Pharisees make the claim that He is doing this by the power of Satan. Jesus responds to this by examining the logic of their statement. Why would Satan lessen his grip on humanity voluntarily? If Satan was casting out his own demons, he would be hurting his own cause. However, if Jesus is casting out these demons by the power of God, they better recognize it and fall into agreement. This appears to be what Jesus is referring to when He recognizes a sin called “blasphemy against the Spirit.” The context would indicate that this sin is seeing something that could only have been done by the power of God and attributing that power to Satan. This sin, Jesus says, is not forgivable.

Jesus then explains to us that words have consequences. What we say is a reflection of our hearts. He also tells us that God is going to take all that we say (or type, post, tweet, etc) into account on the day of judgement. We can be forgiven of those things, but that requires us to repent of them and ask God for forgiveness. Again I remind all of us (myself the most) that our words have consequences.

The scribes and Pharisees now proclaim they want to see a sign from Jesus. What have they been seeing already! Jesus calls the sign they will be given “the sign of Jonah.” Like Jonah was in the fish for 3 days and nights, Jesus will be in the earth for 3 days and nights. Nineveh was better than they are because they repented. The queen of the south was better because she honored Solomon’s wisdom. If they don’t get their act together, Jesus tells them that the issues He is trying to help them overcome will return with a vengeance and overtake them completely.

Jesus gives a saying that, for some, is difficult to decipher. On the surface, it would seem that he is denying respect or connection to his family. However, He is not doing that and never did that. He honored his mother in many ways. What He does is emphasize depth of His connection to his followers. This is an allusion to the spiritual adoption by God of those that follow Him.

Jesus now teaches a series of parables. The Greek word *parabole* literally means a placing of one thing by the side of another. Metaphorically it means to compare two ideas, often through a fictitious narrative, to convey a doctrine or precept. This was a favorite teaching method of Christ, because it required a person to think it through and come to a conclusion. God wants His people to be informed and knowledgeable, not unthinking robots.

First, He presents the lesson of the sower. This is a lesson in not prejudging (the sower put seed everywhere), a lesson in not getting discouraged about results and a lesson in guarding our own hearts. Then He gives the lesson of the wheat and tares. We are to understand that good and evil will continue together until all are gathered and separated (judgement day). Next is the lesson of the mustard seed. Even though it is small (the start of the kingdom), it will grow into a great tree (the completion of the kingdom). Now is the lesson of the leaven. Here he uses this analogy to describe the spreading of the Gospel. Remember that later He uses the same illustration to describe the danger of the false teachings of the Pharisees. We also find out that this process of teaching in parables was prophetically described in Psalm 78:2. Now he talks about a hidden treasure and a pearl of great price. In both cases, the lesson is that when we find something that has unmeasurable value (the kingdom of heaven) we should be willing to give everything up (our own selfish will) to obtain it. Finally, He gives the lesson of the dragnet. Again, the lesson is that on judgement day good and bad will be separated with the bad being sent to destruction.

When He comes to His own country where He is known as the son of Mary and Joseph, a simple carpenter and they know His brothers and sisters by name, they cannot wrap their minds around where He got all of this information. It should not be surprising that they would have difficulty accepting who He really was. Even though people today never personally knew Jesus as a young boy growing up, many still have trouble accepting who He really was and the wisdom He can offer.

## **Comment:**

Steven Wright:  
Thanks brother!

## Comment:

Janet Gordon Gentry:

Very good conclusions! Thanks, Doug, for helping me understand these words of Jesus.

## Comment:

Marc Hermon:

"He will not quarrel or cry out: no one will hear his voice in the streets" - This is one of many passages that pricks my conscience. I confess that this spirit of Christ has not always been the easiest for me to emulate. Along with, "He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth." Being contentious with the world is vanity. My boys and I have been trying to focus on love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control and which one of these tools would be the best to use in various situations that have arisen.

## Comment:

Ginger Hermon:

Thanks, Doug Twaddell. Another set of chapters packed with important details. I love reading the gospels! It has always seemed mysterious to me when John sent his disciples to ask if Christ was the Messiah. The reason it seems mysterious is because John had witnessed his baptism. John said he may not have known Jesus to be the Messiah had it not been for the sign after His baptism. John 1:32 " Then John gave this testimony: I saw the Spirit come down from heaven as a dove and remain on him. I would not have known him, except that the one who sent me to baptize with water told me, "The man on whom you see the Spirit come down and remain is he who will baptize with the Holy Spirit." I have seen and I testify that this is the Son of God." One other thought I have from today's reading is how Matthew stresses the close relationship between faith and miracles. The lack of faith in Jesus' hometown is evidence of this correlation.

## Comment:

Charles Fry:

John the Baptist didn't see much of Jesus' ministry. The gospel of John notes that Jesus had begun to preach in Judea before John was arrested (John 3:22-30), but the gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke indicate that overlap was quite short, that "After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. 'The time has come,' he said. 'The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!'" (Mark 1:14-15, and see Matthew 4:12). So Jesus' ministry had barely begun when John was shut away in the Machaerus Fortress (according to historian Josephus, see Tad Morris's recent evidence post). That Herodian fortress was in modern Jordan, about halfway down the length of the Dead Sea, far from Judea, and even farther from Galilee. All John the prisoner could know was rumors, and reports from his own loyal disciples, who were not necessarily fans of Jesus (that passage in John 3). So John, in his isolation, wanted the straight story. Jesus' answer, rather than testifying of himself, was "tell him what you hear and see."

## Comment:

Ginger Hermon:

Thank you, Charles Fry. I agree 100%. Excellent historical & geographical lessons on John & Jesus during that time. Thank you! 🙏 I think I just put too much importance on the "sign" of Christ's baptism (proving He was Messiah). I need to concentrate more on the purpose of His baptism fulfilling all righteousness.

# February 11: Matthew 14-16 (Marc Hermon)

Today's reading for February 11, 2017  
Matthew 14-16

Our thoughts are with Doug and his family today as they look forward to the resurrection.

## Matt 14

Herod arrested John because he had rebuked him for taking his brother's wife. After a foolish oath to Herodias' daughter, Herodias conspires to have John beheaded. When Jesus heard of the death of John he at various times throughout the day during this chapter attempts to withdraw to solitary places for prayer. In the evening he feeds 5000+ people and then finally gets some solitary prayer time. Later in the night he walks on water and Peter walks to him until he "took his eyes off Jesus and he began to cry, Save me or I'll perish Lord, help me or I die." Those in the boat see Jesus for who he is, the Son of God!

## Matt 15

Jesus converses with the Pharisees and accuses them of considering their man-made traditions more important than God's actual requirements of obedience. Jesus quotes from our reading in Isaiah yesterday that "they worship him in vain". Jesus lists many sins that He considered to be much worse than not washing your hands before dinner. A Gentile woman pleads with Jesus to heal her daughter and Jesus puts her to a test. Her answer is one of my favorite stories in the Bible. In unbelievable humility she throws herself at the mercy of Jesus and says, "even the dogs get to eat crumbs from the Master's table". She captured three amazing ideas in this simple statement. 1.) compared to Jesus we are just beggars, 2.) Jesus is clearly the Master 3.) She felt that the healing of her daughter would be just "crumbs" compared to the ultimate power that she without a doubt understood that he had. Jesus is amazed by her faith. The two people in the Bible that most impressed Jesus with their faith was a Gentile Centurion and a Gentile woman. Jesus this time feeds 4000+ people.

## Matt 16

Jesus warns his disciples of the yeast of the Pharisees, and there is (at least to me) a comical section about the disciples thinking he was upset that they didn't bring any bread even though Jesus points out that in the last two chapters he's fed about 10,000 people with bread. Clearly he could provide bread for 13????? Next, we have Peter's confession. Jesus calls him Peter which is a rock (Petros) and says upon this rock (petra-more massive rock) He will build his church. The apostate church thinks this meant that Christ was going to build his church on Peter as the first pope. Some people feel the rock means the confession of Peter. I take it to mean more exactly what it says. That the church would be built on Peter but not Peter only. He was a rock amongst the foundation of the apostles with Christ as the chief cornerstone. Refer to Eph. 2:20. I would point out that 16:19 says the same thing as 18:18 but in ch. 18 it's being said to all of the disciples, not just Peter. Jesus tells his disciples what is about to happen to him and Peter rebukes him. Jesus refers to him as Satan, and thus ends the shortest reign of a pope EVER!!! :) We end the chapter with two verses that have caused confusion for many. There are many theories so I will give you mine. Verse 27 talks about the second coming of the Son of Man at the end of time. Verse 28 talks about the coming of the Son of Man "in his kingdom". Jesus says that the Son of Man coming in his kingdom will happen before many of them will die, giving them something to look forward to very soon. Keep in mind, that Jesus had just been telling the disciples that he would build his kingdom (church) on them as the foundation. So 27 and 28 are two different times. Mark 9:1 and Luke 9:27 are the parallel passages but they just say the "kingdom of God come with power", which I think very clearly refers to the church. Keep in mind also, that we started this with Jesus thinking about the

death of John the Baptist who died before seeing the kingdom come. He reassures his disciples that they will see the kingdom and they will be it's foundation.

### **Comment:**

Ginger Hermon:

Thank you, Marc. I shouldn't be surprised because the Bible is God-breathed but it fascinates me how our studies have woven together thus far. And as you mentioned, our hearts continue to pour out in love to Dale's beloved family. I'm confident there have been times this week Doug has reflected Jesus' need to be in prayer and solitude. I pray he feels deep love from the brethren today and has peace knowing Dale is well pleased with his son. ❤️

### **Comment:**

Charles Fry:

Matthew 7:24-25 (NIV)

24 "Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. 25 The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock.

Jesus had previously used the "petra" word for rock, the big rock.

The same word turns up again in Matthew 27:59-60

59 Joseph took the body, wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, 60 and placed it in his own new tomb that he had cut out of the rock. He rolled a big stone in front of the entrance to the tomb and went away.

Big rock!

Jesus said that thing, about building on the rock, at Caesarea Philippi, a city built in the shadow of a great rock cliff face on Mt Hermon, one of the three primary sources of the Jordan River. At the foot of the rock, the upper area the city, was a cave with water flowing from it, considered by some to be a sacred place and a gateway to the underworld (Hades). It was and is lush, with verdant growth. There were numerous pagan images arrayed in niches carved into the foot of the rock, a shrine for Pan, and a couple of pagan temples the day Jesus and his disciples had their conversation there. To visit the site now is to see ruins, much of the ancient city flooded as the living water still flows, though no longer from the mouth of the cave but rather pushing out between paving stones of the ancient street. There are scattered building stones and empty niches, and the massive rock stands virtually unchanged since the day Jesus stood there and spoke of building on the rock. The stone the builders rejected, the rock of offense, the bedrock on which the apostles and prophets are grounded and upon which living stones are still added (1 Cor 3, Eph 2:0, 1 Pet 2).

## **February 18: Matthew 17-19 (Doug Twaddell)**

February 18

Matthew 17-19

Jesus now takes Peter, James and John with him to a mountain where He is transfigured and Moses and Elijah appear. The apostles want to honor all three of them with tabernacles. When they see a bright cloud and here the voice of God, Moses and Elijah disappear. God tells them, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!" (17:5) Even though two other

prominent messengers of God were briefly there, God wants them to listen to His Son. When they ask about the prophesy of Elijah coming first, Jesus informs them that he has already come. In a moment of clarity, they understand He is speaking about John the Baptist.

Someone now comes to Jesus with his son who seems to have epilepsy. He had brought the boy to the disciples, but no one could heal him. Jesus heals him, but the disciples ask why they could not. He tells them it is because of their own unbelief as well as the need for prayer and fasting.

While they are in Galilee, Jesus reminds them that He is going to die at the hands of men. This causes great sorrow. Based on other passages, I do not think the disciples fully understood yet what He was speaking of. However, they are beginning to get a sense that Jesus' life will end at some point.

When they get to Capernaum, they are questioned about the temple tax. Jesus tells Peter to go catch a fish and in its mouth will be the money owed for the tax for Peter and Jesus.

The disciples now begin to question who will be the greatest in the kingdom. I am sure they are thinking about an earthly kingdom. Jesus takes the unusual step of pointing out a child. He tells them that they must become like a little child just to get in. He is speaking about humility. A child is completely trusting, innocent and eager to please. It would appear these are some of the qualities He is referring to. My favorite working definition for humility is "knowing your place." A child, if taught well, knows the parameters of the parent child relationship. If we come to know and understand that we are the created and God is the creator and accept our role and place in that relationship, we are well on our way to understanding humility as God defines it.

Jesus then issues a stern warning to anyone that would lead "these little ones" astray. Again, I think He is continuing the analogy. He is not just talking about physical children, but also those who have adopted the humility He spoke of. If anyone takes advantage of that humility, it will not go well for them. Because of that, Jesus suggests taking drastic steps to keep from sinning or leading others to sin. I do not believe He means to literally cut our hand off or pluck out our eye. However, we may need to take serious steps to protect ourselves and others. Things like controlling, limiting, or allowing monitoring of our internet use. Paying closer attention to the movies and TV shows we watch. Placing stricter limits on the amount time we play video or computer games as well as the kinds of gaming we participate in. These steps would seem radical to some, but what is it worth if it saves our soul?

Jesus then speaks to how far a shepherd (Him/God) would go to save a sheep (us). As he is giving this teaching, I cannot help but assume that His inner thoughts went to the suffering and death he would endure for those sheep.

This leads Him to a discussion about issues between brethren. He offers a simple three step progression to take if a brother has wronged you. First, go talk to him yourself. If you can work it out that way it is best for everyone. If not, then take someone with you. Perhaps in the presence of another they will understand their wrong. As a last resort, bring it before the church. If even then they will not listen, you have done all you can. This seems to be what Jesus is referring to when he tells them that whatever they bind or loose here will be bound or loosed in heaven. If we have issues with a brother here, we should deal with it here and now. If we hold on to unforgiven wrongs they will follow us into eternity. He also points out that when we deal with this (two or three are gathered) He will be present to assist.

Because of this discussion, Peter has a question, "How often should I forgive my brother? Up to seven times?" I am confident that Peter thought this was plenty and he would receive a pat on the back for being so magnanimous. However, Jesus says that is seventy times too few. Now Jesus utters one of my favorite parables. A man owes his master a great deal of money. I believe in today's dollars it would be about \$57,600,000. There is no way this man making minimum wages would ever be able to pay that back. When he begs his master to give him time to pay it (something he could never do) the master completely forgives the debt and lets him walk away. The servant then goes and finds someone that owes him some money. I believe in today's dollars it would be about \$3,200. Even earning a minimum wage it could have been repaid if given time. However, the servant has that man thrown into prison until the

debt is paid. That act made this about revenge not repayment. When the king is told what happened, he has the servant thrown into prison to be tortured every day until his large debt is repaid. The lesson is about forgiveness and is about us. We owe a debt of sin (5.76 million dollars) that we can never repay. The master is willing to forgive us that debt. Because of that mercy, we should be willing to forgive others when they commit small sins (\$3,200) against us. Jesus now leaves Galilee and goes into Judea east of the Jordan. The Pharisees ask him if it is lawful for a man to divorce his wife. Instead of saying "yes" or "no," Jesus quotes scripture to them. He points out that in Genesis 1:27 God made humans "male and female." He also reminds them of Genesis 2:24, "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife and they shall become one flesh." When He comments that man should not pull apart what God has put together, they understand that he did not like divorce. Their next question is, "Why did Moses allow it?" His answer went straight to the heart of the matter. Their hearts were hard and could not accept what God wanted. He then emphasizes that divorce is not part of God's plan, but allows there is sexual immorality it is allowed. Concerned, His disciples comment that it might be better to not marry. Jesus says that some cannot accept that. There are some that are content to not marry and can control themselves in that state. But, there are some that cannot. Being married or unmarried is not a qualification for salvation; being sexually pure is.

Interestingly now, some children are brought to Him. The disciples try to prevent them, but Jesus gets on to them and invites the children in. Apparently they had already forgotten the lesson Jesus taught with the children back in Capernaum of Galilee, so Jesus emphasizes it again.

A man now comes to Him with a question: "What good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?" The implication is that he only has to do one thing. Jesus tells him to "keep the commandments." There were many of those. So the man asks, "Which ones?" Again, he seems to want to know the bare minimum requirement either so he can feel confident or so he doesn't work too hard or give up too much. Jesus gives him a short list of six commands. The man brags, "All these I have kept from my youth." But still asks the question, "What do I still lack?" When Jesus tells him that he must sell what he has and give it to the poor, the man goes away sad because he is unwilling to make that sacrifice. The disciples are concerned because, in their society, it was assumed that great riches meant God was pleased with you. When Jesus points out that it is difficult for a rich man to enter heaven, He is trying to help us understand that it can be difficult for us to give up our own will for God's will. However, with God's help, we can. We should all be asking the question, "What do I still lack?" When we realize the answer, we should make every effort to accomplish it.

Perhaps thinking that they understood what Jesus was saying, Peter asks that since they gave up everything, what will they get in return? Jesus says that they will have the opportunity to sit on twelve thrones with Him and everyone else will also be rewarded for their obedience and faith. He warns, though, that in order to gain these things, we must become a humble servant who yields to the will of God.

## **Comment:**

Charles Fry:

In the story of the two drachma tax at the end of 17 it seems Peter erred in his presumption as he answered the tax collectors. I like the fact that Jesus spoke to him in the house, a bit of chiding, but not overmuch, and not in a way yo embarrass Peter before those others. I think Jesus was cognizant of Peter's feelings. He was certainly concerned about needless offenses when Jesus told Peter how to resolve the problem he had created with his hasty words. "But so that we may not cause offense," Jesus said. Sometimes offense is unavoidable but when it can be honestly avoided it should be. And, somewhat like a thoughtful parent with a child, he told Peter how to fix the problem, and didn't just fix it for him.

## Comment:

Steven Wright:

Thanks brother Doug! I especially appreciated your thoughts on the humility issue of the "Little ones" (that is, to say "godly and therefore humble ones!") All of this, very good! Again thank you! And thank you also Charles!

## February 25: Matthew 20-22 (Doug Twaddell)

February 25

Matthew 20-22

Jesus continues the discussion from chapter 19 about what the reward will be of those that follow Him. He tells a parable about a land owner that hires workers at three different points during the day. At the end of the day, they all receive the same amount for their work. Naturally, those that worked all day assumed they would get a bonus. Jesus explains that they are receiving what they agreed to. The lesson is that the reward for following Christ is not up for negotiation. The reward we receive is more than we deserve no matter how long we work or how much we do.

Because their end destination is Jerusalem, Jesus very plainly points out that He will be betrayed, the Jewish leaders will condemn Him to death and the gentiles will mock, scourge and crucify Him. He also tells them that He will rise again on the third day.

The mother of James and John now gets involved. I find it interesting that she is following Jesus, but not surprising that a mother would want to speak up for her children. Her request is that her sons be allowed to have positions of authority in the kingdom of Jesus. Obviously, she is thinking about a physical kingdom. Jesus does not say no. Instead, he asks if they can go through the things that he will go through. They say "Yes," but they do not fully understand what He is talking about. He informs them that they will endure things, but positions in the kingdom are not His to give.

When the others hear this conversation, they were not happy. Jesus again teaches them that it is not important who is the greatest. What is important is who will be the willing servant.

As they are leaving Jericho, two blind men call to Him from the side of the road. The large group with Jesus tries to get them to be quiet, but they just get louder. Jesus has compassion on them and heals them. They now follow Him.

When they get to the Mount of Olives, just outside Jerusalem, He tells two people to go into town and find a donkey with its colt and bring them. Jesus rides the donkey into Jerusalem which fulfills a prophecy from Zechariah 9:9. Some of the people give their coats for him to sit on. Others lay down their coats or cut branches from trees for the animals to walk on. As He enters the city, multitudes of people cry praises to Him.

He goes to the Temple and chases off the money changers and those selling doves for sacrifice. While these things were allowed, they were not to be doing that on the Temple grounds. Also, they were apparently taking advantage of the buyers because Jesus calls them thieves. This and the children shouting "Hosanna to the Son of David" angers the Jewish leaders. They speak to Him and the inference is that He should tell them to stop. Jesus quotes from Psalm 8 about the young praising Him. He leaves the city to stay in Bethany for the night.

In the morning as they are going back to Jerusalem, He sees a fig tree with no fruit. He pronounces that no fruit will ever grow on it again and it withers. Mark records that they noticed it had withered the next morning. When they are amazed, Jesus tells them that if they have faith, they will be able to do even greater things.

When He arrives at the Temple, the Jewish leaders want to know who gave Him the authority He to do all these things. He says He will tell them if they will answer a question. He asks if the baptism of John was from heaven or from men. This is a question they dare not answer. No

matter how they answer it they are in trouble. Instead of answering they claim they don't know. Jesus refuses to tell them where He gets His authority. However, He does tell them a parable about a man with two sons who asks them to go work in his vineyard. One says "no," but later feels bad and goes to work. The other says "yes," but never does. Jesus wants to know which was obedient. Obviously the first one is and He begins to praise the sinners that are turning to Him and chastise the leaders for being like the second son.

His next parable is even more condemning of the Jewish leadership. He tells of a landowner that left his vineyard in the hands of renters and left. When it came time for him to collect what was his, he sent two waves of servants who the renters beat or killed. He then sends his son to collect and they kill him, too. Jesus asks them what will happen to the renters. They all agree that they will be punished and others will take their place. Jesus quotes Psalm 118:22-23 and tells them that the kingdom of God will be taken from them and given to another nation. When they realized He was talking about them, they want to kill Him. They don't however, because the people believe He is a prophet.

Jesus has another parable for them. This one is about a king that is hosting a wedding for his son. When those that had been invited were called, they refused to come. Some did other things and some killed the messengers. The king then punished those that were invited. He then sent more servants to find anyone from the streets, no matter who they were, that was willing to come. The wedding was filled, but the king noticed one person that did not have the proper garment. The king had him removed from the feast. Jesus closes this parable with the statement, "For many are called, but few are chosen." The lesson for us is that we are those that are called from the streets. Even though we are invited in, we still must prepare ourselves.

After this, the Jewish leadership, who wanted to kill Him earlier, begins looking for ways to trick Him into saying something that will condemn Him. The Pharisees start with a question about whether a Jew should pay taxes to Caesar. Jesus asks them whose image is on the money. Since Caesar's image is on the coins, He tells them to give to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's.

Now it's the Sadducees turn. They have a complex theoretical question about a woman. She had married a man, but he died before they had any children. According to the law, she married his brother, but he also died with no children. This continued through all seven brothers. They wanted to know whose wife she would be in the resurrection. Jesus tells them, "You are mistaken, not knowing the scriptures nor the power of God." These were men that had spent most of their lives studying, memorizing, interpreting and teaching the old law and the history of the Jews. Jesus is saying that even though they could quote it, they did not fully understand or believe it. To prove His point, He quotes from Exodus 3:6 where God places Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the present tense even though they had been dead a long time. The implication is that God is the God of the living; not just those living physically but those living spiritually.

When the Pharisees take their turn, they want to know what the most important commandment is in the Law. Jesus had many to choose from, but He quotes from Deuteronomy 6:4-5. This is part of what they called the Shema. It was taught to children early and often. It was written down and placed in a box on the doorpost of houses to be touched and quoted when passing it. Jesus says that loving God with every part of your being and life is the most important thing. Without being prompted, He adds that the second most important is to love you neighbor as if they were you. He then points out that all the rest of the Law and Prophets are directly related to these two. If we can accomplish those, we will be willing to do the rest and will know how God wants us to respond to others.

Jesus now has a question for them. Whose son is the Christ? From the prophets, they knew the answer was the son of David. Jesus brings up Psalm 110. In this psalm, known to be written by David and understood to be about the Christ, David calls the Messiah "Lord." When Jesus asks them why David would call his son his Lord, they could not answer Him. This put an end to their questions.

### **Comment:**

Butch O'Neal:  
Thank you, Doug!

### **Comment:**

Steven Wright:  
Thank you Doug!

### **Comment:**

Marc Hermon:  
"Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave— just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

Just think if the world actually believed this.

### **Comment:**

Ginger Hermon:  
Thank you, Doug! I especially appreciate you mentioning the passages from Psalm. Every chapter is filled with amazing lessons for us. Love it! I don't feel like I understand the message behind the fig tree withering. I read the following and wondered if it was a good summary? "The fact that Jesus was hungry and approached the fig tree looking for fruit illustrates his identity and authority as the Judge of Israel who finds that the nation, despite its "leafy" appearance, has not produced the fruit God desired."

### **Replies:**

Charles Fry:  
I definitely think the fig tree was a purposeful demonstration to the disciples that Jesus has the authority to judge, to condemn as well as to heal. They'd seen him to so many good things, use power to heal, pronounce people forgiven, generally as previously mentioned, being a servant, despite his obvious power and authority. That day with the fig tree they saw he was serious about his warnings of impending judgment.

Ginger Hermon:  
Thank you, Charles Fry. Authority was definitely an overarching theme in this chapter. The fig tree being sandwiched between Jesus cleansing of the temple and Jesus teaching in the temple underscores judgement and authority.

## **March 4: Matthew 23-25 (Doug Twaddell)**

March 4, 2017

Matthew 23-25

Jesus now turns His attention fully on the scribes and Pharisees. He starts by pointing out that they are hypocrites. They place tremendous burdens on the behavior of the people, but they are not willing to help. Also, what good works they do are not for the right reasons. All they really want is recognition and praise from men. Jesus tells those following Him not to desire the accolades and honors from men. Instead, strive to serve others.

He follows with a series of specific accusations against the religious leadership. It would be easy for us to read these and agree with Jesus. However, I do not think He is telling us these things simply for informational purposes. I believe we are to look at what they were doing and seriously ask the question, "Does this describe me?" Do we make it so difficult to follow the Bible that no one can live up to our standards? Do we take advantage of the less fortunate to advance our position? Do we work very hard to make a convert and then attempt to conform him to our likeness? Do we put our confidence in our religious activities? Do we get so wrapped up in the details that we forget to love, forgive or show mercy? Are we rotten on the inside even though we keep up a good appearance? Do we believe we are better than others and would not have made the mistakes they made?

As Jesus thinks about the spiritual state that His people are in, He is grieved. He laments that He was willing to shelter and protect them, but they were not willing to accept it. As a result, they are empty and desolate. If we behave the same way they did, we will also be spiritually empty and desolate.

As Jesus is leaving the Temple grounds, He prophesies that one day all of this will be left in ruin. I believe He is not only speaking about the physical Temple, but also the religion of the Law of Moses. This prompts his disciples to ask when and how this will happen. He now makes a series of teachings and predictions about His second coming. First, He says that there will be people that will claim to be Him and people will be deceived by them. Second, He tells us that there will be wars and rumors of wars, but that will not be the end. In fact, even the natural disasters that will strike will only be the beginning. There will also be times when Christians are hated and mistreated by the world. The world will lose its morality and belief. If we are faithful through all of this, we will be rewarded.

24:16-26 seems to be a direct reference to the siege of Jerusalem and the destruction of the Temple in about 70AD. Jesus is warning those that will listen to leave immediately without concern for anything but their lives. I would be interested on hearing discussion of this section. To me He is pointing out what will happen and emphasizing that this is not His second coming. Even though there will be those that say He has returned; He has not. Starting with verse 27, He begins to explain what will happen at the end of time. It will come so quickly that it will be over before we realize it. Christ will appear in the clouds with power and glory. At the sound of the trumpet, those that are His will be gathered to Him.

Jesus tells them to watch the signs, but He also tells them that no one can know exactly when it will happen. He uses Noah as an example. Even though the people were warned, everyone was going about their normal routines and then suddenly everything changed. That is how the end will come. Perhaps one of the most misunderstood passages is 24:40-41. The word that is translated "left" is often associated with the concept of "left behind." A more accurate association would be "left out." The word means to send away, to give up a thing. One will be accepted and one left out. One will be admitted and one sent away. His point is to always be ready, because the end will come without warning leaving no time to repent. The faithful servant is always doing the will of his master. The servant that goofs off thinking the master is not there will be caught off guard and punished for his disobedience.

Jesus tells two parables. The first is about a wedding party that is waiting on the groom to arrive. Five of them bring extra oil for their lamps in case he is late. Five do not come prepared. When they have to leave to find more oil, the groom arrives and the wedding goes on without them. Again, they are left out.

The second parable is about a man that gives various amounts of money to three servants and leaves. Two of the servants use the money given them to make more. In fact, they double their money. The servant that received the least amount does nothing with his. When the master

returns, he is very pleased with the first two and angry with the third. He calls him a wicked and lazy servant. Again, that servant is kicked out of the presence of the master. These parables are to emphasize Jesus' previous teaching. We are to always be ready for the return of Christ and to do as much as we can to be busy and fruitful with what God gives us.

To point out why that is important, Jesus gives a graphic rendition of the final judgement. He talks about humanity being divided into two groups. This division is based on the actions they took toward those around them. I do not believe this is meant to be a checklist for the faithful. It is meant to emphasize the importance of our individual actions and our interactions with others. When we see those less fortunate than ourselves, we should do what we can. Whether it is some food, a drink, shelter, clothing or a visit, anything we do and everything we do matters. I am reminded of Galatians 6:9-10, "Let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith." In the description from Revelation 20 of the judgement before the throne of God, we are told twice that we will be judged "according to our works." (vs 12, 13)

### **Comment:**

Steven Wright:

Very good! Thank you brother Doug!

### **Comment:**

Marc Hermon:

Yes, many people use 40 & 41 to talk about the rapture and the "left behind" concept. The problem is the comparison to verse 39 where it talks about the ones that were "left behind". They received immediate and swift destruction. The Left Behind Series is a wicked form of false teaching promising second chances that God never promised. As Jesus, himself said in John 5 28-29, "Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out-those who have done good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned."

### **Replies:**

Ginger Hermon:

Remember Lot's wife! Swift destruction.

### **Comment:**

Bryan Bown:

thx Marc for pointing out v39 with 40&41 the ones who didnt beleive the flood was coming did not receive a second chance.I believe Jesus would have explained the differance between them if it was so

### **Comment:**

Butch O'Neal:

Thank you, Doug! Great Lesson!

### **Comment:**

Marc Hermon:

The disciples in their question it seems presume that the destruction of Jerusalem and the coming of Christ are the same event. Jesus talks about both events and differentiates between

the two as one taking place at a time prophesied by Daniel and one happening at a time that even He did not know.

Chapter 24 has always been a challenging passage because of how it seems to jump back and forth between the two questions. I like to divide the chapter into two chapters: (Ch 24A vs. 1-31) and (Ch 24B vs 32-51)

Ch 24A Verses 1-29 refer to the persecution of the Jews and culmination in the destruction of Jerusalem in vs. 29 using the same language as the destruction of Babylon, Edom and Egypt among others in the Old Testament. In verse 27 there is a mention of the second coming of Christ but only as a comparison that it would be way more obvious of an event so don't believe the false christs (vultures) who will be preying on people during this current event. Verses 30-31 then discusses a later event of the second coming. Ch 24A gives us much detail about the destruction of Jerusalem and a little about the second coming.

Ch 24B is a mirror image of Ch 24A. It again starts with the destruction of Jerusalem and ends with the second coming of Jesus but this time most of the emphasis is on the second coming. Verses 32-35 refers to the destruction of Jerusalem again and says that when you see the things mentioned in the first part of Ch24A you know it is about to happen. There is a warning that the destruction of Jerusalem was imminent within their generation. Verses 36-51 again talks about the second coming that will come swiftly on both the righteous and the unrighteous and even the Son (at least at that time) did not know when that day would be.

### **Comment:**

Ginger Hermon:

Thank you, Doug Twaddell! Excellent summary & thoughts behind these 3 chapters. There is SO much to deeply consider. We must keep Christ's return on the forefront of our mind and always be ready!

### **Comment:**

Ginger Hermon:

I appreciate the vivid examples Jesus references in chapter 23: phylacteries, blind guides, straining gnats but swallowing camels, cleaning outside of cups but not inside, whitewashed tombs, snakes, brood of vipers, hen gathering chicks under her wings.

## **March 11: Matthew 26-28 (Doug Twaddell)**

Reading for March 11

Matthew 26-28

This final section of Matthews' account begins with the Jewish religious leadership going into council to plan on killing Jesus. Their only concern seems to be how the people will react. Meanwhile, in Bethany, Jesus is at the house of Simon the leper. This is where Mary (she is named in John 12) anoints Jesus with oil. Jesus refers to it as a preparation for His burial. Also, Judas agrees to betray Christ.

Jesus gives His disciples instructions about where to prepare the Passover. During the meal, Jesus points out that someone will betray Him. Speculation begins about who it might be. Jesus cryptically indicates who it might be based on dipping some bread in herbed oil. When Judas follows the others by asking if it is him, Jesus plainly says it is.

Next, Jesus gives instruction on how to remember Him. The unleavened bread used for Passover is to represent His body and the wine is to represent His blood that brings in the new Covenant. This becomes the Lord's Supper or Communion remembrance for the church as instructed by the Apostles.

After the meal, they walk to the Mount of Olives just outside Jerusalem. Along the way, Jesus explains that all of those with Him will stumble. They are going to fall to temptation and fear. Peter is insistent that he will not even in the face of death. However, Jesus gives him a reference point, the rooster crowing, so that he will remember their conversation.

Now, Jesus moves away, taking only Peter, James and John with Him, to pray. He then goes a little farther alone. His prayer shows how much the prospect of suffering and dying is weighing on Him. He emphasizes how important it is to Him that the will of the Father be accomplished, no matter what. When He returns to the three with Him, they are asleep. He wakes them up and then moves away to pray more. They fall asleep again and He lets them be. When He returns the third time, He wakes them and announces that it is time for the betrayal.

Judas approaches with an armed mob who, when he greets and kisses Jesus, arrest Him. Peter (named in John 18) tries to take matters into his own hands with a sword which draws a stern rebuke from Jesus. Jesus points out that He is allowing this to happen because it is part of the Father's plan according to prophecy.

He is taken to the High Priest where two false witnesses are found to accuse Jesus of blasphemy. They also spit on Him, beat Him and ridicule Him.

Outside this event, Peter is standing among the crowds. This is where he is asked three times about his connection to Jesus and three times denies it. Immediately after the third time, the rooster crows and Peter is crushed by his failure.

The next morning they take Jesus to Pilate, the governor. When Judas realizes what is happening and his role in it, he is crushed by his failure. He returns the money and commits suicide. The reactions of Peter and Judas are striking in their difference. Peter, while disappointed, does not allow his sin to destroy him. He repents and seeks forgiveness. Judas allows his sorrow to define him. He gives up seeing no hope. When, not if, we fail Christ, what matters the most is our reaction to it. We can repent in sorrow and seek forgiveness moving forward or we can give up by losing sight of our hope and the forgiving power of God through Christ.

Pilate is frustrated by Christ. Even though Jesus may have committed blasphemy in the eyes of the Jews, it is not worthy of a death sentence in a Roman court. He attempts to gain Christ's freedom by offering to release Him in a traditional gesture of mercy during the feast. The crowd will have no part of it and actively calls for His crucifixion. Jesus is then whipped and humiliated by dressing Him in a scarlet robe and a crown of thorns. The soldiers pretend to bow and worship Him as they, too, spit on and beat Him. Then they put His own clothes back on Him and start the walk to His death. When Jesus cannot physically carry the crossbeam any longer, they pick Simon from Cyrene out of the crowd to do it.

When they get to Golgotha, they crucify Him with two others who were thieves. Another prophecy is fulfilled when some cast lots for his clothes. When they announce His crime with a sign over his head, they write, "This is Jesus the King of the Jews." For the six hours He is on the cross, the crowd, soldiers and two thieves mock and revile Him.

Matthew only records one thing said by Jesus from the cross. "My God, My God, why have you forsaken Me." Jesus is expressing how alone He feels as He carries the weight of the sins of the world on top of all of the physical suffering.

When Jesus dies, several things happen that could not have been kept quiet. There is an earthquake and mass resurrection of the dead. The veil in the Temple is torn from the top to the bottom. I have always wondered what the priests in the holy place thought when they could suddenly see into the Holy of Holies and did not die? I have also wondered who fixed the veil? This above all should have been a sign to the priests. All of these things even caused one of the Roman Centurions on hand to proclaim, "Truly this was the Son of God!"

Jesus, who had no home or possessions, was buried in the tomb of a rich man which Pilate sealed and guarded at the request of the Jews. They were concerned that Jesus' followers would steal the body and then claim that He had risen from the dead. It is interesting because this proves that they were listening to His teachings and claims. Despite their efforts, Jesus did come out of the tomb. The grave was empty as He appeared to people in person. Even the Jewish religious leaders were forced to bribe the soldiers because they could not honestly dispute what had happened.

Jesus then gives some final instructions. He confirms the authority that has been given to Him. He confirms that baptism is the method of converting disciples. He confirms that our actions are important in being obedient to His commands.

### **Comment:**

Steven Wright:

Interesting, how the Jewish leaders hear the words spoken by them to Judas (upon his remorse), returning to them from the mouth of Pilate (as they felt no remorse), "See ye to it!" Also: The "dipping sauce" (sop), that Jesus was dipping the "Lechem oni" (Bread of affliction) into, was called "Charoset." It was made out of fruit, Garbanzo beans (Chick peas), olive oil, Tahini (Sesame seed paste), and seasonings. A progenitor of today's Hummus. It was to represent the mortar used in the laying of the bricks, when the Jews were slaves in Egypt. They would also dip the "Bitter herbs" into this mixture.

### **Comment:**

Ginger Hermon:

Doug: Thanks for your devotion in sharing the gospel every Saturday! What an incredible blessing it is to study together. And a great joy to read everyone's perspective and insight. After weekly readings in the subject of prophecy and reading Isaiah 53 last night, I have a greater appreciation for Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane. Today my heart was pierced over and over as I deeply pondered Jesus' soul being overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. He had at his disposal 12 legions of angels but because His unwavering love He fulfilled all prophecy. Praise Him! <3

### **Comment:**

Ginger Hermon:

Two more quick things... #1) I've always had it in my mind that Judas withdrew from the upper room prior to Jesus instituting the Lord's Supper. Is that accurate? #2) I believe the hymns the Lord and disciples sang between the Passover and Mount of Olives were from Psalm 115-118. I encourage everyone to read those passages as well.

## Replies:

Charles Fry:

It seems that Judas was there for the beginning of the meal and the foot washing, as reported in John 13, and the resumption of the meal, also in John, with the conversation about the betrayer, mentioned also by Matthew, Mark and Luke, and then he left. In Luke's record we have Jesus instituting the New Covenant ceremony before the comments about the betrayer, with those comments being in the context of his imminent death, Luke 22:20-23. Judas must have been there for the foot washing and the institution of the memorial, before he went out to do as Jesus said he would. This is an account of a hard heart and the deceitfulness of sin.

Ginger Hermon:

Thanks for the clearing that up for me, Charles!

## Comment:

Marc Hermon:

When He utters, "My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?" it was meant to open the eyes of the Jews that knew their scripture since what he was doing was quoting the first verse of David's prophecy of the Messiah in Psalm 22 which we studied a few weeks ago. He was proclaiming from the cross that prophecy was being fulfilled before their very eyes! This would bring to mind the other parts of that Psalm.

vs. 6-7 "scorned by men and despised by the people. All who see me mock me; they hurl insults, shaking their heads: He trusts in the Lord; let the Lord rescue Him. Let him deliver him since he delights in him."

vs 14 "I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint"

vs.15 "My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth; you lay me in the dust of death."

vs 16 "Dogs have surrounded me; a band of evil men has encircled me, they have pierced my hands and my feet"

vs. 17 "I can count all my bones; people stare and gloat over me.

vs. 18 "They divide my garments among them and cast lots for my clothing"

vs. 24 Jesus is not questioning his Father. He has total confidence. "For he has not despised or disdained the suffering of the afflicted one; he has not hidden his face from him but has listened to his cry for help."

and finally Psalm 22 concludes with...vs 31

"They will proclaim his righteousness to a people yet unborn --FOR HE HAS DONE IT!" (It is Finished!)

## Comment:

Denise Waits:

I've always wondered why there aren't any other historical accounts of those who were raised from the dead following Jesus' death. Thoughts?

## Replies:

Charles Fry:

There is no definite answer to the question, beyond another question, "Why should we expect any other historical account of that event?" We don't know how many, we don't know how long dead, we don't know who, except that they were holy people. We don't know whether they were taken up to heaven, or died again like Lazarus. (Though I think they did die again.) We do have some apparent external reference to the darkness and the earthquake, but not in a religious context. Any such references are remarkable given the minimal historical documents we have from that period of time outside of the NT itself. The manner of Matthew's mention suggests there were people still alive who could corroborate the story, as also with the torn veil of the temple, the darkness, the earthquake. Including such details in his report would be absurd if there were people still alive who could say, "I was there, that never happened," and if no affirmation possible among people who lived through the events referenced.

Keith Owens:

Just some late night musings from someone who cannot sleep thus far tonight. I have always appreciated that those raised went into the city, and we are told of that. In turn, that causes one to wonder why those raised went into the city and what difference it makes. If none were recognized, then it would prove nothing, symbolize nothing, and mean nothing to anyone who saw them. To me, that would seem inconsistent with so many details given to fulfill the many prophecies surrounding Jesus' death and resurrection, particularly when we are told they went into the city when the Lord arose. If, however, they were recognized, they take on some significance because if they were raised then the reports of Jesus' raising would be easier for the saints to accept. This event also points to something fundamentally changing in the way death relates to the believer. Remember, it is specified that they were the righteous dead. They were where Jesus had been, and now they have returned with Him. A foreshadowing of 1Thess 4, where we are told that Jesus will bring with Him the righteous dead who will then be raised, and we who are alive will be changed to meet them and the Lord in the air, for all eternity. I could certainly be wrong, but for me those holy ones point to the hope that we all share... the hope of a resurrection enabling us to be with the Lord just as those holy ones raised with the Lord. I'll stop there for I do not wish to write a book at this late hour.

## Comment:

Charles Fry:

Regarding what was on the table in a first century a.d. temple era Passover meal, we can be sure there was unleavened bread, either wheat or barley, and a roasted lamb with bitter herbs. Those things were prescribed. We know from the gospels there were cups and "fruit of the vine" to drink as well. Other than that, we don't know, because we have no contemporary accounts except the gospels. Exactly what their bitter herbs were, we don't know. It is reasonable to guess that the dip on the table may have been what Doug mentioned, or maybe what Steven suggested, though the latter is a harder inference, in my opinion. Many commentators assume that one can look at the Talmud or the symbolic Passover Seder practiced by Jews, but these sources are much later than the temple era and do not give us a picture of the ancient Passover meal. For a long time after the destruction of the temple the Jews did not observe the Passover, which was a pilgrimage feast. Eventually the rabbis concluded they needed a symbolic observance, and invented symbolic rituals for the diaspora. Roasted lamb is not on the table for a Passover Seder. The Passover lamb and supper are symbolically remembered in the traditions of the Seder, but not duplicated. There really is no way to correlate the items on the Seder table with the temple era meal, except in terms of prescribed symbolism. No one has the information available to reconstruct the actual Passover meal and customs, beyond the basics mentioned in the Bible, from any source currently

available. Josephus and Philo are no help here, writing only about the temple aspect of the Passover sacrifice, not the meals of the pilgrims.

## March 18: Mark 1-2 (Doug Twaddell)

Reading for March 18

Mark 1-2

Even though Mark never names himself, he was consistently given credit for this book by the early church writers. Mark's mother owned a house in Jerusalem large enough for the church to meet (Acts 12:12). Peter may have been a regular visitor, based on a servant girl recognizing his voice through a door, and called Mark his son (1 Peter 5:13). This common phrase may indicate that Peter baptized him. Mark's cousin was Barnabas (Colossians 4:10), which may be why he was invited to go with Paul on his first journey. Because Mark returned home before the trip was barely started, Paul did not want to take him on the next one. Barnabas lobbied for his cousin, but Paul was unmoved. Paul took Silas and Barnabas took Mark as they went in different directions (Acts 16:36-41). However, Mark appears to be with Paul while he was a prisoner in Rome (Colossians 4:10, Philemon 24). Paul also sends specifically for Mark toward the end of his life calling him "useful to me for ministry" (2 Timothy 4:11). This would indicate that Mark had regained Paul's trust and that Timothy knew him as well.

Mark begins his account with quotations from Malachi 3:1 and Isaiah 40:3 which speak about someone preparing the way for the Messiah. He then gives a description of John and his work, including the baptism of Christ, followed by a very brief account of Satan tempting Christ in the wilderness. Mark does not spend any time discussing Jesus birth or early years. Instead, he seems determined to get right to the work of the Messiah including an account of Peter, Andrew, James and John being called by Him.

Mark describes those at Capernaum being astonished at the authority he seemed to hold when he taught. When he casts an unclean spirit out of a man (even seeming to have a conversation with the spirit itself) they are amazed and His fame begins to spread.

Upon entering the house of Simon (Peter), whose mother-in-law was ill, He heals her. The next thing you know the whole city is bringing their sick and afflicted to Him to be healed. In the morning, well before daylight, he goes off by himself to pray. They finally find Him, indicating that the town is looking for Him, and he announces that they are leaving to go to other cities. This takes Him all through the area of Galilee.

Jesus encounters a man with leprosy. When the man expresses his confidence in Jesus ability to heal him, Jesus does. He tells the man not to tell anyone. I am not sure how someone cured of leprosy could go unnoticed, but it doesn't matter. The man tells anyone within earshot what happened. Now Jesus cannot openly go into a city because of the crowds He is gathering. Instead, He stays outside of the cities and the people come to Him from everywhere.

When He goes back to Capernaum, the crowds grow very large around the house He was in. When the friends of a lame man cannot get through the door, they open an area of the roof and lower him in by ropes. Jesus tells him that his sins are forgiven. The scribes that are there began thinking that only God can forgive sins. Without them saying a word out loud, Jesus addresses their contemplation. He comments that it would be easy for Him to say the man's sins are forgiven. How could you prove that? So, to show them His power, He heals the man of his physical issues.

When He leaves the city to go to the Sea of Galilee, many follow Him. He sees Matthew (Levi) collecting taxes and tells him to follow and he does. When He has supper at Matthew's house, there are many other tax collectors there. These may have been Matthews's friends and co-workers because no self-respecting Jew would have ever entered a tax collectors house to eat. When the Jewish religious leadership questions this, Jesus tells them that it is the sick that need a doctor. Those that sin need repentance.

When Jesus is asked about why His disciples are not fasting like the followers of John and the followers of the Pharisees, he has an interesting statement. He says that the friends of the bridegroom don't fast while the bridegroom is present. The main comment I will make is to note is that Jesus is referring to Himself as the Bridegroom. The church is not established yet, but Jesus is already laying the foundation of the marriage described in Revelation given to John.

As Jesus and his followers are walking through a field of grain on the Sabbath, they pick some of the grain. The Pharisees are appalled and claim they are violating the Law of Moses. Jesus points out that David and his men ate the showbread that was only for the priests, when they were desperately hungry, without penalty. He points out that the Sabbath was made for man. It was put in place to help and teach man. Instead, the Pharisees had put so many restrictions in place that it seemed like man was a servant to the Sabbath.

## **Comment:**

Ginger Hermon:

Thanks, Doug! I especially appreciated the history you wrote in the first paragraph. It's good for us to make these connections, see the big picture, and not just think about the chapters assigned. A few comments... 1.) I think it's fascinating that Mark begins the book with the prophecy of Isaiah. Truly, John the Baptist played a significant role in preparing the way for Jesus. Through him all men might believe in Jesus (John 1:7). What John the Baptist testified was true: John 10:41, "Though John never performed a miraculous sign, all that John said about this man (Jesus) was true." 2.) Mark mentions Jesus was with the wild animals in the desert. I think he's the only gospel writer who reports their presence. It's interesting and helps emphasize God kept Jesus safe during these 40 days.

## **Replies:**

Ginger Hermon:

Also, to confirm, Mark is the first gospel that was written, correct?

## **March 25: Mark 3-4 (Doug Twaddell)**

March 25, 2017 Reading

Mark 3-4

After picking grain on the Sabbath, Jesus goes to a Synagogue and sees a man with a withered hand. He knows that the Pharisees are watching closely, so He asks them if you should do good or evil on the Sabbath and proceeded to heal the man.

The Pharisees begin trying to figure out how to get rid of Jesus. He leaves Jerusalem and goes to Galilee. People begin arriving from all over. He has His disciples make sure that a boat is ready for them to use if the crowds put them in danger because of their desire to get close to Him.

Jesus hand selects the 12 apostles from His disciples. His plan is to send them out to preach with the power to heal and cast out demons. He gave them this power so they would have proof that their message was from God.

The crowds become so overwhelming that they cannot go about daily tasks, like eating. When those that knew Him when He was younger hear what is going on, they try to get ahold of Him because they think He is crazy.

The scribes try to claim that He is doing all these things because He is serving Satan. Jesus gathers them to discuss this accusation. He points out that it is not logical that Satan would work against himself. If Satan was doing that, he would be defeating his own purpose and building up his enemy. Jesus then makes a very strong accusation against them. He tells them that they are committing blasphemy against the Holy Spirit and that it will not be forgiven. This particular sin seems to only be possible when someone has evidence that something has happened by the power of God but attributes it to Satan. We know from other passages that many of the Jewish religious leaders believed that Jesus was the Son of God, but did not voice that belief openly because of fear. It is definitely possible that some of these men recognized the power of God, but tried to mislead the people by convincing them that it was from Satan.

When Jesus' mother, Mary, and His brothers arrive, everyone points out to Him that they are here. They may have been among those that were trying to escort Him away because they questioned His sanity. Instead of acknowledging their relationship, He points out that His family is anyone who does the will of God. It is worth noting that Joseph, Jesus' earthly father, is not mentioned. It may be that he simply does not come, but the omission of Him in other accounts during this part of Jesus' life would indicate that Joseph had died.

Jesus now gets into the boat so He can teach those that are along the shore. He tells them the parable of the sower. Not understanding this teaching, the apostles ask Him about the meaning. He points out that the Word of God touches many different hearts. Some are not receptive at all. Others are receptive, but they either loose interest or the distractions of the world get in the way. However, some hearts are receptive and the word grows to produce fruit.

He also tells them the parable of the lamp. It does no good to light the lamp and then cover it up. It should be put on a pedestal to give maximum coverage for the light. He uses this opportunity to warn that we should be careful how we judge others. Whatever standard we use, we should be willing to judge ourselves by.

Jesus also points out that the kingdom of God grows even though we might not completely understand how. He compares it to a farmer that plants the crop, but does not control the growth. The farmer simply cares for and watches the crop until it is time for the harvest. We, too, cannot control the growth of the church. We can simply plant, care for and watch with the knowledge that one day there will be a harvest. He also compares it to a mustard seed. It may start off small and humble, but it grows into a mighty plant.

Jesus decides they need to go to the other side of the Sea of Galilee. They are spread out among several boats. While they are crossing, a storm forms. While everyone else is panicking as they fear for their lives, Jesus is asleep. They wake Him up while asking, "Do you not care that we are perishing?" What a question to ask Jesus, especially after all the miracles they had personally witnessed. Jesus simply stands up and says, "Peace, be still!" Amazingly, the storm, even the wind, completely and totally stops. Jesus connects their fear to a lack of faith. If they had faith in the power of Christ, which they had seen with their own eyes, they would not have been afraid at all.

## Comment:

Butch O'Neal:  
Thank you, Doug!

## Comment:

Marc Hermon:  
Mark 3:25 "If a house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand." (Not only today's Bible reading but also summative statement of this week in politics. :)

## Replies:

Kevin Crittenden:  
Politics is a house that I cannot stand.

## Comment:

Ginger Hermon:  
Thanks, Doug! I can hear your voice as I read each Saturday's gospel summary. It's a great encouragement. <3 A few things that triggered my thoughts... The crowds became so overwhelming. This is an important statement! Even non-Christian contemporary writers give this description for Jesus (multitude of followers). This provides evidence! Another thing that really hit me was thinking of Jesus quoting Isaiah. As mentioned last night, Jesus fulfilled the prophecies in Isaiah exactly. Finally, last thing I'll mention is only Mark records the parable in 4:26-29. I appreciated your thoughts on this. The mysterious power of the seed - The Word - is emphasized. While we, God's Kingdom, may be oblivious to how God makes the seed grow, we are called to lead people to repentance and obedience to God. "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you." (Matthew 28:19-20) As well, we are called to be reapers in God's harvest. "Then He said to His disciples, 'The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.'" (Matthew 9:37-38)

## Comment:

Charles Fry:  
A theme Mark highlights more than the other gospels is the weakness, slowness, failures of the disciples. Perhaps Mark's own less than stellar early experience as a helper to Barnabas and Saul sharpened his insight into understanding that all disciples need to know that even Jesus chosen ones had such problems.

Mark 4:39-41 (NIV)

39 He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, "Quiet! Be still!" Then the wind died down and it was completely calm.

40 He said to his disciples, "Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?"

41 They were terrified and asked each other, "Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!"

Notice the fear wasn't over when the squall ended. Notice the very strong word, "terrified" and that this was said after the weather was stilled. Terrified of Jesus?

## April 1: Mark 5-6 (Doug Twaddell)

Reading for April 1, 2017

Mark 5-6

This chapter begins with an account of a man that was tormented by an evil spirit. The community had decided to chain him up, but he was able to break the bindings and was now living in a graveyard. When Jesus approaches him, the spirit begs Jesus not to bother him. Jesus commands him to leave the man and also asks the spirit's name. The spirit calls himself "Legion, for we are many." The spirits ask to be sent into a herd of swine. I find it interesting that a herd of swine could be found in Israel. The swine then run off a cliff into the sea and drown. Naturally, those taking care of the sheep run and tell everyone. When they return, the previously uncontrollable man is clothed, calm and acting normally. They beg Jesus to leave the area. The man wants to go with Jesus, but Jesus tells him to go proclaim what has happened to anyone that will listen.

When they return to the other side of the sea, a great many people gather. Jairus, one of the rulers of the local synagogue, pleads with Jesus to help his daughter who is dying. This would have taken great courage. This man is likely to have been in on various efforts to find a way to silence Jesus. But now, when there is no hope, he turns to Christ for help.

On the way to Jairus' home, a woman is in the crowd that has had a bleeding problem for 12 years. She is convinced that if she can just touch Jesus' clothes she can be healed. She finally gets close enough to touch Him and immediately she is healed. Jesus also knows immediately what has happened. When she realizes that she is found out, she is scared. Jesus does not scold her, but praises her for her faith.

While Jesus is still talking to her, a servant of Jairus arrives to tell him that his daughter is dead. Jesus tells Jairus not to be afraid. When they get to his house, Jesus goes in with only Peter, James and John. He tells the family and friends that are mourning that she is only sleeping. They don't believe Him, so He makes them all leave. Jesus takes the girl's hand and tells her to get up. She immediately comes back to life.

When Jesus leaves he goes back to the area of Nazareth. On the Sabbath Day, He is teaching in the synagogue. Those listening cannot understand how the carpenter's son they knew could have come by the education Jesus seems to possess. Instead of being interested in the information, they reject Him. Jesus comments that a prophet is often rejected by those that know him. It is even true today that people often have to overcome their background with those that knew them when they were younger.

Jesus leaves that area and sends the apostles out in groups of two. They are only allowed to take the clothes on their back. They are told that some will not receive them, but instructed that God will deal with them at the judgement. As they preach repentance, they also cast out demons and heal.

When King Herod hears about the amazing things that Jesus is doing, he is concerned. Even though there is disagreement about whom Jesus is, Herod is convinced that He is John the Baptist back from the dead. Herod knew that he had killed John the Baptist. When Herod had married his brother's wife, Herodias, John had been outspoken against it. Herod had John imprisoned, but Herodias was not satisfied with that. At a feast, Herod's daughter entertained

them and Herod was so pleased he told her he would give her anything up to half his kingdom. As per her mother's suggestion, she asked for the head of John the Baptist. Even though he did not want to do that, he consented and instructed that John would be beheaded. The disciples gave John's body a proper burial.

When the apostles return from their travels, they are excited to share with Jesus all their experiences. Jesus encourages them to go to a deserted place by themselves to rest. Apparently, they had not even taken much time to care for their basic needs, like eating, because they were so busy.

When they leave in a boat, the crowds see them going and rush to meet them when they land. Jesus sees all of the people and has compassion on them. He begins to teach them. As the day is coming to a close, the disciples are concerned about the crowd. There is no food where they are at and it will take some time to get back to the city. Jesus tells them to give them something to eat. The disciples are now concerned because they do not have enough money to buy all the food that would be needed. Jesus asks them what they have on hand. All they have is five loaves of bread and two fish. Jesus has the crowd sit in groups. He then blessed the food and begins dividing it up. Before too long, everyone is full and there are twelve baskets of leftovers. With two loaves and five fish, Jesus had fed over 5000 people and ended up with much more than He started.

Now Jesus has the Apostles travel by boat to Bethsaida while He sends the crowds away and spends time alone to pray. About evening, the boat is in the middle of the sea and is in trouble. A storm is making difficult for them to make any headway. About 3am, Jesus comes walking on the water toward them. Thinking it is a ghost, they panic. Jesus assures them that it is Him. The wind immediately stops when He steps into the boat. This amazes them. It is beyond their understanding. Mark records that they also had not understood what happened with the loaves and fishes because their hearts were hardened.

When they land at Gennesaret, they are recognized right away. Everyone begins to bring anyone they know that is sick or handicapped. Everywhere they go, crowds follow just so they can touch his clothes and be healed. Mark points out that everyone that touched His clothes was healed. Perhaps this is one of the reasons that, later on, people are trying to get ahold of Paul's handkerchief thinking they will be healed by touching it.

## **Comment:**

Ginger Hermon:

Jesus: The Great Physician! I marvel over these miracles. Yet nothing compares to His ability to heal us from all sin. Thank you, Doug Twaddell I love these testimonies.

## **April 8: Mark 7-8 (Doug Twaddell)**

Reading for 4-8-17

Mark 7-8

The Pharisees notice that some of Jesus' disciples did not follow the established ritual for washing their hands before they ate. This was not a part of the Law, just a tradition of the Jewish leadership. When they ask Jesus about it, He references Isaiah 29:13. He points out that the people are treating the traditions of men as if they were commands of God. By doing this, they are worshiping in vain. He is not saying that traditions are innately wrong. His concern is that the traditions are considered a higher authority than God's direct commands.

He points to one example. The law said that children should care for their parents. In opposition to that law, it had become a tradition that the children could tell their parents that the money they had to give to them had been promised to the Temple. This tradition allowed a loophole to avoid the commandment. Jesus indicates that they had set up many such traditions.

Apparently referring back to the original accusation of not participating in a traditional hand washing, Jesus tells the crowd it is what comes out of a man that defiles him, not what goes into him. His disciples ask for clarification as they go into a house. Jesus reminds them that when evil comes out of a person, whether in words or actions, it is a reflection of the person's heart. These are the things that defile a person, not the things they eat. This would have been shocking for a Jew to hear because of their high regard for the dietary laws and traditions that had intensified those restrictions.

When Jesus travels to the area of Tyre and Sidon, He would like to be incognito. That becomes impossible. A gentile woman comes to Him asking for help for her daughter who had a demon. Jesus comments on whether He should give to dogs (Gentiles) what was intended for children (Jews). She responds that even dogs are allowed to eat the crumbs that the children drop. This is an interesting viewpoint of some of the Jews tepid reaction (or outright rejection) of Christ. She may not know it, but she is alluding to something that God will say later when He tells the Jews that He will give the kingdom to the Gentiles. Jesus immediately removes the demon from the girl.

Now He travels to the Sea of Galilee where a man is brought to Him who is deaf and has a speech impediment. Jesus puts His fingers in the man's ears and touches His tongue and the man is healed. Jesus tells them not to tell anyone, but how do you hide this? In fact, the more Jesus asks them to keep it quiet, the more it is spread. That is human nature, isn't it? All this time His fame and popularity expands.

Again, the crowds become enormous. Jesus again becomes concerned about their ability to have food. He approaches his disciples to find out how much food they have. They only have seven loaves of bread and a few small fish. Just like before, Jesus has the people sit down while he blesses the food. After everyone is full, they collect seven baskets of leftovers. This time He had fed about 4,000 people. Jesus and his disciples leave in a boat to the area of Dalmanutha.

The Pharisees start arguing with Him asking for a sign. Jesus becomes frustrated. First, He asks them why they are looking for a sign. What do they think Jesus has been doing all this time? Second, He tells them that they will not be given a sign. Jesus is pointing out that signs have been given and they are ignoring them. If they cannot recognize Him from the signs He is doing, they would not accept any sign.

When they get into the boat again, we are told that no one had brought any bread with them. Jesus uses this as a teachable moment to point out that the leaven (influence) of the Pharisees and Herod can spread and should be guarded against. The disciples start wondering if Jesus is referring to the fact that they did not bring any bread. Jesus becomes frustrated at their lack of understanding. He reminds them of the time He fed 5,000 with only five loaves and when He fed 4,000 with seven loaves. He asks them to remember how much was left over. Jesus wanted them to connect the dots. He wanted them to realize that, under the right conditions, a little can go a long way. If left unchecked, false doctrine and evil can negatively impact many people. With God's help, the smallest amount of good, though it seems insignificant, can have a positive impact on many people.

When Jesus arrives in Bethsaida, a blind man is brought to Him. He leads the man out of town, spits in his eyes and touches him to heal him. Jesus then asks if he can see anything. The man describes men looking like trees and walking around. Jesus puts His hands on the man's eyes again and the man can see perfectly clearly. Again, Jesus instructs the man not to go back to town and not to tell anyone. How can you hide a former blind man that can now see?

Jesus and His disciples now travel to Caesarea Philippi. On the way, He asks what rumors they hear about who He is. They answer John the Baptist, Elijah, one of the prophets or there are other ideas. Jesus asks them who they think He is. Peter says that He is the Christ. Jesus takes this opportunity to teach them about what He will have to suffer and that He will die and rise again three days later. Peter takes exception to this idea and pulls Jesus aside to discuss it. Jesus becomes very stern with Peter. He says, "Get behind me Satan." This is an indication that Peter is not thinking about what God's will is but what his own desires are.

Jesus uses this opportunity to teach about the cost of following Him. If we sincerely follow Him, we will have to deny our own wishes and will. Instead, we will have a burden to carry and sacrifices to make. We have to give these things up willingly. We can gain an eternal spiritual life by giving up our temporary physical life. In the end, what will it matter if we have been successful by worldly standards (money, possessions, power, authority, notoriety, etc.), but, by pursuing these things, we miss out on our eternal reward. If we are ashamed or embarrassed by Christ and the lifestyle He requires, Jesus will be ashamed and embarrassed by us on the day of judgement.

### **Comment:**

Steven Wright:

Thanks Doug! Good point about the Gentile woman! See you soon in Abilene!

### **Comment:**

Charles Fry:

Mark 8:21 (NIV) 21 He said to them, "Do you still not understand?"

The Lord has challenged me with that question with embarrassing repetitiveness.

### **Comment:**

Ginger Hermon:

Thanks, Doug! So many good thoughts regarding these 2 chapters. I am glad you pointed out Isaiah 29. Another good one from this readings is Isaiah 35:5-6, "Then will the eyes of the blind be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped."

## **April 15: Mark 9-10 (Doug Twaddell)**

Reading for 4-15-17

Mark 9-10

Jesus begins the 9th chapter by informing them that some of them will see the "kingdom of God" established with power. That phrase can mean different things throughout the scripture. Here it is referring to the church.

6 days later, Jesus takes Peter, James and John to a mountain and His appearance is altered right before their eyes. Also, Elijah and Moses show up. Peter, with his usual "speak before

thinking” energy, suggests setting up monuments to Christ, Elijah and Moses. We are told that he said this because he did not know what else to say. Many times, especially when we speak before thinking, we say things that we later regret. Obviously, God will not allow any monuments. Instead, they hear a voice similar to what they heard at Jesus’ baptism. Jesus tells them not to tell anyone and they do keep this secret.

As they are trying to figure out what seeing Moses and Elijah seemingly raised from the dead meant, they ask about the teaching from the scribes that Elijah would precede the Messiah. This teaching is taken from Malachi 4:5. Jesus does not tell them that John the Baptist was figuratively Elijah. He agrees with the scribes while also referencing the many prophecies about the suffering of the Messiah and the disrespect He will be shown.

When He gets back to the rest of the disciples, there is another great crowd around them. A man tells Jesus that the disciples could not heal his son who had an evil spirit. Jesus shows exasperation with His disciples and has the boy brought to Him. Jesus is able to cast the spirit out. His disciples approach Him privately wanting to know why they could not help the boy. Jesus tells them that it was apparently a difficult spirit and could only be cast out with prayer and fasting.

Jesus now travels through Galilee as He teaches them about His coming death and resurrection. However, they did not understand and were afraid to ask for clarification.

When they get to Capernaum, Jesus tells them that He knows they were discussing something on the way that they did not want Him to hear. It turns out they were trying to decide who would be the greatest. Whatever criteria they were expecting, Jesus tells them something completely different. If they want to be the greatest, they must become the lowliest servant. Jesus then uses a child as an object lesson. They must be willing to serve everyone and not consider anyone to be below their attention.

They are also concerned because they saw someone casting out demons in the name of Christ. Because they did not know him, they told him to stop. Jesus again surprises them by telling them to leave the man alone. If he is doing good deeds in the name of Christ, he can’t turn around and say disparaging things about Jesus.

Jesus also tells them that anyone that causes one of His sheep to stumble, they will be severely punished. Sin is such a detriment to our service to God that He tells us to do everything we can to eliminate whatever causes us to give in. His is not advocating literally mutilating our bodies. He is telling us to take our sin and its causes seriously.

Jesus now travels to Judea. The Pharisees have a question for Him about the legality of divorce. Jesus wants them to look at what Moses said. When they point out that Moses allowed it, Jesus tells them that it was because of their stubbornness and hard hearts. However, God never intended for divorce to be a part of our lives. A man and woman should become one, apart from their parents, and never be separated from each other. He then gives some difficult teaching. When divorce and remarriage take place, there is sin that occurs. He does not indicate that it is unforgivable or is an automatic condemnation to hell, but there is sin involved nonetheless.

Again, some children want to get close to Jesus and the disciples do not think it is a good idea. Jesus once more uses them as an object lesson. They seem to have a very difficult time understanding that the humility and innocence of a child is to be emulated not despised.

A man comes to Jesus wanting to know how to gain eternal life. After a discussion about the basics of the law, Jesus tells him to sell his possessions and give the money to the poor. This is

not a requirement of all followers of Christ, but this man seems to have many possessions and was not able to part with them. These things were causing him to trust in his stuff and not trust in God. Jesus describes this as taking up his cross. All followers have sacrifices they must make and burdens they must bear. Not all of us have exactly the same issues to deal with, but everyone will have something. It is important for us to be honest with ourselves and be willing to give up the things that hinder us from fully trusting God.

Peter, after hearing this exchange, points out that they have given up everything to follow Christ. Jesus tells them that anyone, not just them, who is willing to sacrifice to follow Christ, will gain much more than that as a reward in heaven.

While they are traveling to Jerusalem, Jesus again reminds them that when they get there He will be betrayed, condemned to death, beaten, mocked, killed by the Gentiles and come back to life after three days.

James and John come to Him with a request. They want to be honored in the kingdom (they are thinking about a physical kingdom) by sitting on Jesus right and left hands. Jesus asks them if they are able to be overwhelmed (baptized) the same way He will be. They say they can bear it, but don't understand what is about to happen. Jesus tells them they will indeed have to go through similar trials and suffering, but God will reward those who are deserving. This causes some hard feelings among the other ten. Jesus has to once again teach them about humility and servitude. He points out that leaders in the world wield their authority over those under them. Jesus does not want them to lead this way. He wants them, and us, to lead by serving. He uses Himself as an example. God is going to grant Him great authority because of His willing sacrifice for others, even those who do not appreciate it.

As they approach Jericho, a blind man named Bartimaeus is begging by the side of the road. As He cries out to Jesus, others are telling him to be quiet. He just becomes more urgent in his pleas. Jesus brings him near and heals him. Bartimaeus begins to follow Christ.

### **Comment:**

Butch O'Neal:  
Thank you, Doug!

### **Comment:**

Ginger Hermon:  
It was such an honor & privilege to hear two great lessons from you today, Doug! Thank you!!!  
<3

## **April 22: Mark 11-12 (Doug Twaddell)**

Reading for April 22, 2017

Mark 11-12

Jesus enters Jerusalem riding a donkey as the people praise Him. This is a fulfillment of prophecy. However, it is late in the day and He does not want to stay in Jerusalem, so they go to Bethany.

On the way back the next day, Jesus is hungry and sees a fig tree. Unfortunately, there are no figs because they were out of season. Jesus pronounces that no one will ever eat figs from that tree again.

When they get to Jerusalem, they go to the Temple and Jesus is aghast at the scene. People are exchanging money and selling doves. They had to turn their Roman currency into a form that was acceptable for the Temple. Under the Law, the poor could substitute doves for the sacrifice. What was not allowed was making money off the exchange or overcharging for the doves. These things were not to take place on the Temple grounds, either. Jesus is only upset because of where they are doing their business and that they are cheating the disadvantaged. His statements in 11:17 are two quotes from the prophets. The first is from Isaiah 56:7 where God is talking about Gentiles who will serve the Lord. The second is from Jeremiah 7:11 where God is talking about the idolatry of Judah. God indicates that He has seen His house become a "den of thieves." This could refer to the people of Jeremiah's day robbing God of the honor and worship that is only due Him. However, I believe it is also a reference to God seeing back then what is going on in front of Jesus now. When Jesus drives the merchants out, the Jewish leaders are more convicted in their desire to kill Him. They now travel back to Bethany for the night.

On the way back to Jerusalem the next day, they see the fig tree dead clear down to the roots. Jesus uses it as an object lesson about the power of faith. God is able to do much more than we could ever ask or imagine. Jesus instructs them to pray without doubting. He also tells them that harboring ill toward someone can interfere with our prayers. We should forgive others so our prayers can be heard and so God will forgive us.

In Jerusalem, the Jewish leaders challenge Him as to the authority He has to do all the things He has done. They are most certainly thinking about the merchants He dislodged because they would have been getting a portion of the profits. Instead of answering, Jesus asks them a question that if they will answer, so will He. He wants them to divulge the source of the Baptism of John. They reason that if they say it was from heaven, Jesus will want to know why they did not believe. If they say it was from men, the people will be angered because John was widely accepted as a prophet. They chicken out and say they don't know. Jesus tells them that He will not answer their question, either.

Now Jesus tells another parable. This one is about a vineyard owner who leases his property to caretakers and goes to another country. When it is time for harvest, he sends a servant to bring him some grapes. The caretakers beat him up and send him away empty handed. The owner sends a succession of servants and they are all either beaten or killed. Having only one son, the owner decides that maybe they will respect him. The son is sent, but they kill him so they can take the vineyard for themselves. Jesus points out that the owner will destroy the caretakers and let others take over. He then quotes from Psalm 118:22-23. The Jewish leaders know that God is the owner, the vineyard is the kingdom of God, they are the caretakers and Jesus is referring to Himself as the Son. Instead of learning from the parable, they become even more determined to rid the world of this Jesus but are afraid right now because of what the people think about Him.

Some of the leaders come to Him to see what He will say about paying taxes to Caesar. If they can get Him to defy the authority of Rome, it will be easier to have Him killed. Jesus gives an answer they are not expecting. He tells them that since the money has Caesar's image, it is appropriate to give it to him. He also reminds them not to neglect giving to God what belongs to Him.

The Sadducees now approach with a question. Their question is about a man that marries but dies before he has any children. In accordance with the Law of Moses, the man's brother

marries the wife. Unfortunately, he also dies before any children are born. This process continues until she has been married to all seven brothers and then she dies. They want Jesus to tell them who she will be married to at the resurrection. This is interesting because the Sadducees did not believe in a resurrection. Jesus' answer stuns them all. He points out that they do not understand the scriptures or the power of God. He quotes from God's conversation with Moses at the burning bush (Exodus 3). God refers to Himself in the present tense (I AM) and twice says He "is" the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (again indicating the present tense). If God recognizes them in the present even though they had been dead for many, many years, then God is the God of the living (resurrection) and not the dead. They have no response for this reasoning.

A scribe now wants Jesus to tell them what the greatest commandment is. With all the commandments that were given through Moses, Jesus had many to choose from. I can just see those around Him trying to guess which one He would pick. Jesus tells them that the most important thing is to love God with every part of your being and life. He also reveals the command that is second greatest; to love your neighbor as yourself. When the scribe agrees with Jesus and even explains why Jesus is correct, Jesus tells him that he is close to understanding the kingdom of God. We, too, should strive to make these the most important things in our life. If we love God with everything, we will only want to do what He asks from us. If we love our neighbors as much as we do ourselves, our behavior toward others will be honorable and upright.

Since no one else is willing to ask another question, Jesus decides to ask one of His own. He wants to know how the Christ can be the son of David when David referred to the Christ as his Lord? The common people seem to understand and accept this, but not the leadership. Jesus then warns them to watch out for the scribes. Even though they look and sound religious, it is all for show and they do not act the way God wants them to.

While Jesus is sitting near the place where people are giving their money offering to the Temple, He sees many rich give a lot of money. However, there was a poor widow who only gave a small sum. Jesus points out to His disciples that she gave more than all the others. He was not judging as men would judge based on the mathematical total. He was judging based on their willingness to sacrifice and the purpose in their hearts. How does God see us when He judges by those standards?

### **Comment:**

Butch O'Neal:  
Thank you, Doug!

### **Comment:**

Steven Wright:  
About the fig tree . . . Something gets lost in the translation here . . . The point is "By their fruits you shall know them!" People familiar with how figs grow, will know that the first season of fruit appears on the branches BEFORE the leaves emerge! Then there can be two or three subsequent rounds of figs after the tree is in full leaf. SO, if one sees a tree in full leaf, one should expect to find figs! Jesus was not expecting anything besides what the tree was expected to perform, that is, he was not Looking for figs at the wrong time of year. The fig tree was like some people, putting on a show of something but not producing what the master wanted. A person looking at the tree, would think it was a beautiful, productive, tree; close inspection however, proved it to be otherwise! That was the lesson! You may be able to fool some, or even most people, but you cannot fool the LORD and, in the end, you will be condemned and you will perish in your vanity!

## Replies:

Doug Twaddell:

So the comment about not being the time for figs doesn't mean they were out of season? That is how I always read it.

Steven Wright:

Right. Thought transfers badly in translation. Ends up saying something very different.

Steven Wright:

Compare the rendering of the same incident in (Matthew 21:18 - 22)

Charles Fry:

Our climate is pretty similar to that of Israel. This is what our fig tree looks like right now, with leaves and green figs. The leaves will be thicker in a few weeks. Passover this year was a week and a half ago, a little earlier than some years.



Doug Twaddell:

Thank you for the information. Very helpful.

## Comment:

Steven Wright:

And of course, Jesus also used the incident to teach his disciples about the power of faith.

## Comment:

Charles Fry:

Faith... And judgment... Mark lays out events so that we have the triumphant entrance, an obvious fulfillment of prophecy of the coming King, concluding with the big nothing as Jesus arrived at the temple, looked around, and left for Bethany. Rather than being crowned, the anointed one was ignored by the priests and rulers. When he came into the temple the next morning, considering Mark said he looked around the evening before, it seems evident he came to do what he did, moving with deliberate purpose among the despoilers of the sanctuary and the sheep of his pasture, and teaching as he went. The cursing of the fig tree is not incidental. Up until then, the disciples had seen Jesus exercising patient control, always doing miracles that brought healing or peace. He fed people and calmed storms. Always benevolent in what he did, even under great pressure. He spoke of judgment, but showed persistent restraint, the path of peace. But our redeemer is also the divinely appointed judge of all, and he showed a glimpse of that aspect of his authority, just a glimpse, when he overturned tables and condemned a leafy but fruitless tree.

## Replies:

Ginger Hermon:

I agree. The fact that the cleansing of the temple is sandwiched between the two parts of the account of the fig tree in Mark 11 may underscore the theme of judgement. The withering could be prophetic of the Jewish authorities who were about to reject their Messiah.

## Comment:

Kevin Crittenden:

This morning, when Kathleen and I were on our way to deliver Katelyn back to her mother, Kathleen mentioned that she wondered why Jesus cursed the fig tree. Being a good husband, I wondered with her. Perhaps the reason is:

A – The fig tree had no fruit on it. But it was not the season for figs so the tree was behaving in a way consistent with its nature; the way God designed it to be. So no fault can be found in the tree itself. I doubt the tree itself was being punished.

B – The tree was cursed as punishment for its owners so that THEY would no longer profit from it. This is in keeping with Genesis 3:17 -

And to Adam he said, “Because you have listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, ‘You shall not eat of it,’ cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life;

The ground was cursed because of Adam’s sin. The concept of “curse” seems to imply an inability to fulfill the natural purpose for which something was created. A cursed fig tree cannot bear figs. The ground that is cursed cannot grow things as well as occurred in the Garden of Eden. A womb that is cursed will remain barren. Cursed things cannot perform their natural functions.

But no mention is made of the owners.

Furthermore, if the fig tree was somebody’s property, then if Jesus had harvested from it, that would have been in violation of the Mosaic commandment not to steal. “It’s only a fig” would not be a valid excuse. So if the tree was in somebody’s front yard, Jesus would have knocked on the door and asked for permission.

Of course, destroying the tree would have been the destruction of somebody’s property – something that would require restitution. But no mention was made of this. So I don’t think that the tree belonged to anyone.

C – Jesus was wanting to show His power. But Jesus did not use his power and perform miracles merely to show off. Everything He did was out of compassion – His miracles helped people. But no people were helped by this curse.

So why did Jesus curse the fig tree?

I see the remarks, Charles, that you made on this. Was He not showing this same authority by exorcising demons and curing the sick? That action helped people; I’m still mystified by this fig tree.

## Comment:

Charles Fry:

Yes, Kevin, the same power and authority, but this event, along with driving out the money changers and sellers, does have a different "feel" to it than the other miracles and actions of Jesus, I think. A couple of minor points that you raise, first.

At Passover, which is our time frame in this story, even if the figs were not yet ripe, there should have been figs, especially on a leafed out tree. But there were none.

Eating a handful of grain, or of fruit, was not viewed as stealing, but rather gleaning. The Law had some specific permissions about gleaning (Lev 19:9-10 for example). I don't think anyone of his people would fault Jesus for picking a few figs to eat (unless it was on a Sabbath...)

On the one hand, Jesus had the power, authority, and right to do whatever he wanted with any tree, whether cultivated or wild, but most likely this was a wild fig tree growing along the path between Bethany and Jerusalem. The biggest fig tree I've ever seen was in Jerusalem, growing in a little area of ground south of the temple mount, and I'm pretty sure it was uncultivated, being in an urban area and 30 or 40 ft tall. It was huge, compared to any fig tree I've ever seen here. Most likely, it was a wild fig tree that Jesus cursed, and an unfruitful one at that.

Back to the purpose, God presents himself to us in the Bible as Creator, Redeemer, and Judge. Jesus repeatedly warned of judgment and the fire of hell, but whenever his disciples showed any inclination to shut people out, whether children, or gentile women, or some guy casting out demons in Jesus name, or to call down fire from heaven on uncooperative Samaritans, Jesus always rebuked them. He preached judgment, but practiced enormous patience. The signs and wonders were always acts of mercy, and he didn't even "judge" demons "before the time" (Mark 5:1-13 w/Matthew 8:29). But he is judge, by divine appointment (John 5:22-30). People today have some inclination to bypass the reality that Jesus has power both to save and to destroy. On this one occasion, Jesus showed his disciples that he has that power of both life and death. He could have incinerated those crooks in the temple, instead of dumping their tables and chasing them out, but he didn't. The fig tree utterly affirmed that he could have. and that he does have authority to judge, with the power to back it up. He told a parable a couple of days later, describing himself in judgment this way: "Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.'" (Matthew 25:41-43). The cursed fig tree was an object lesson for his disciples, affirming the teaching about the cursed who do not feed him when he is hungry.

## Comment:

Kevin Crittenden:

Thanks!

## April 29: Mark 13-14 (Doug Twaddell)

Reading for 4-29-17

Mark 13-14

As they are leaving the Temple grounds, His disciples point out the impressiveness of the structures. Jesus predicts its destruction. Peter, Andrew, James and John want to know when it will happen and how will they know it is coming. First, Jesus points to three things that will not be signs: different people will claim to be the returned Messiah; nations will continue to fight wars; and natural disasters will occur. What He does say to watch for is persecution from multiple sources. However, He wants them to continue to preach the word to everyone. Eventually, there will be an abomination so severe that it will be unmistakable. When that happens, the believers are to get as far away from Jerusalem as possible. He tells them not even go back for possessions. He also tells them that it could be worse, but God will show mercy to those that believe and shorten this time period. Again, He emphasizes for them not to be deceived by false prophets and those claiming to be the Messiah.

Now He begins to tell them what will happen at some point after that tribulation. The natural order of the physical will be altered. The Son of Man will return as His angels gather those that serve Christ. He uses a fig tree as an example. You can tell when summer is near by the new growth on the tree. In the same way, they will know when the destruction of the Temple is near. However, they cannot know when the second coming will be. We are to be diligently watchful for our Masters return

The chief priests and scribes are trying to figure out how to take Jesus into custody. Because it is the Passover, they decide to wait until it is over to avoid an angry mob.

While at the house of Simon the leper in Bethany, a woman (who John identifies as Mary the brother of Lazarus) breaks open an alabaster flask of expensive oil and pours it on Jesus head. Someone (who John identifies as Judas Iscariot) criticizes her by arguing that it could have been sold and the money given to the poor. Most likely his frustration is that he could have stolen some of it as he often did. Jesus tells them to leave her alone because they can help the poor anytime, but she has anointed Him for burial.

Judas now begins to make arrangements with the council to betray Jesus for a sum of money.

Jesus sends two of His disciples to prepare a place for them to celebrate the Passover together. When they gather for the feast, Jesus announces that one of them will betray Him. Naturally, they want to know who it is. To find out, they each ask about their own guilt so that when Jesus says "no" they are vindicated. Jesus finally tells them that it is the one who will dip bread in oil at the same time He does.

This is when Jesus establishes the method for honoring and remembering His death and its significance. The only bread that would have been allowed in the house was unleavened and they would have been drinking wine from grapes.

Jesus also takes this opportunity to predict that they will all stumble and scatter that night. However, after He is raised, He will meet them in Galilee. Peter protests the idea that he will stumble. Jesus tells him, specifically, that he will deny Jesus three times before the rooster crows twice. Peter is even more forceful in his protest claiming that he would rather die first.

They leave the city and go to the garden of Gethsemane. Jesus instructs them to wait for Him while He goes off to pray, but He takes Peter, James and John with Him. He confesses to them that He is hurting in His very soul about what is going to happen. He goes a little farther away and asks the Father if there is another way to accomplish the goal of salvation. He is willing to go through with the Fathers will and the overwhelming events that are about to occur if there is no other way. When He returns to find them sleeping, he warns them to watch and pray so that temptation will not overtake them. When He tells them that the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak, I cannot help but think that, even though it is for all of them, perhaps it is a specific point

to make to Peter. After He finds them asleep a third time, he wakes them up and points out the arrival of Judas.

The mob arrives with Judas in the lead. When they get to Jesus, Judas greets Him as Rabbi and kisses Him. This was the confirmation to the leaders that this was Jesus. Peter (identified by John) takes a sword and cuts off the ear of the High Priest's servant. Other accounts point to the healing of this man, but Mark does not. When Jesus addresses the mob by telling them that they are fulfilling scripture, all His disciples run away.

Mark includes a curious event with a young man who is naked except for a linen cloth. When some in the mob try to grab him, he leaves the cloth behind and runs away.

Jesus is taken to the Sanhedrin. It is noted that Peter follows as far as the courtyard where he warms himself by a fire. When they cannot find anything worthy of death, false witnesses begin to come forward. The problem is that they don't have their stories straight. When the High Priest becomes frustrated at both the insufficient charges and the silence of Jesus, He asks Jesus directly if He is the Christ, the Son of God. Jesus now has something to say. When He says that the claim is true and that He will be sitting at the right hand of God, the High Priest tears his clothes and condemns Jesus for blasphemy. This leads the council to condemn Him to death and they begin the process of humiliating Him by spitting on Him and beating Him.

Meanwhile, Peter in the courtyard is approached by a servant girl who accuses him of being with Jesus. Peter denies it and hears a rooster crow. When she accuses him a second time, he denies it again. When others begin to level the same accusation based on his speech and genealogy, Peter denies it again with cursing and swearing. When he then hears the rooster crow a second time, he realizes he is guilty of the very thing that Jesus predicted.

### **Comment:**

Ginger Hermon:

My heart is pierced over & over again when I read these denials from Peter. Praise God, like Peter, I'm restored over & over again, thanks to His death & resurrection. ❤️ thank you for sharing details of Christ's prophecy, testimonies from these chapters and institution of the Lord's Supper. Very good lessons no matter how many times we read them!

## **May 6: Mark 15-16 (Doug Twaddell)**

Reading for 5-6-17

Mark 15-16

Having secured (in their mind) a confession of blasphemy from Jesus, the Sanhedrin now has a difficult task. Under the old Law, they only needed to secure witnesses and to carry out the stoning. One of the ways the Roman government maintained control over subdued people was to have complete control over capital punishment. The Jewish leadership needed to convince the Romans that Jesus had committed a crime the Romans would consider worthy of death. To do this, they take Him to Pilate.

Since the Romans won't punish Jesus for blaspheming God, the Jews twist His claim to be the King of the Jews (spiritually) to try and convince Pilate that He is a threat to the authority of the Roman Caesar. Pilate is confounded when Jesus refuses to defend Himself or contradict his accusers.

Pilate had started a tradition at Passover to show the Jews that he could be merciful. During the feast, he would release a prisoner and pardon them. He offers to release Jesus in honor of the feast, but the Jewish leaders stirred up the crowd to demand the release of Barabbas (a man found guilty of murder and rebellion) and crucify Jesus. Pilate continues to attempt to free Jesus, but, in the end, he consents to the wishes of the crowd. He lets Barabbas go and has Jesus flogged and delivered to be crucified.

The soldiers take over and have their way with Jesus. They dress Him in purple (color of royalty), put a crown of thorns on His head, mock Him as King and spit on Him. As He is led to the site of the crucifixion, He reaches a point where He can no longer carry the crossbeam. They pull Simon, a Cyrenian, from the crowd and force him to carry it the rest of the way.

As they are preparing to nail Him to the cross, they offer Him a mixture of wine and myrrh to drink. This was intended to be a mild sedative that would make it easier to control the victim while they drove the nails. Jesus refuses it. He willingly submits to the horrific treatment and does not struggle to get away. I cannot help but wonder what the soldiers must have thought when they saw Jesus' humility.

After they crucified Him, they cast lots for His clothes and nailed the accusation above His head for everyone to read, "The King of the Jews." Two thieves were crucified with Him (fulfilling a prophesy from Isaiah 53:12). Many in the crowd and the Jewish leaders continue to make fun of Him. After about six hours of hanging on the cross, Jesus accepted a drink of sour wine and died. At that moment, the veil of the Temple was torn from the top to the bottom signifying the end of the Law of Moses and Temple worship. I have often wondered what the priests in the Temple thought when they were suddenly able to see into the Holy of Holies. A centurion, who would have been a Roman soldier, was even able to recognize and confess that Jesus must have been the Son of God. We also find out that there were many of His followers, especially women, who were watching as He died.

Joseph of Arimathea, who was on the council, went before Pilate and formally asked for the Body of Jesus. There is no doubt that the Jewish leadership was monitoring what happened to Jesus. This would have outed Joseph as a follower of Christ. Pilate allowed it and Joseph prepared the body, with help, and laid Jesus in a tomb of rock and rolled a stone in front of the entrance.

After the Sabbath was over ("very early on the first day of the week"), Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Salome brought spices to honor the body. When they arrive, the first thing they notice is that the stone has been moved. When they go into the tomb, they see a young man (an angel) sitting there. He tells them not to be frightened and that Jesus had risen from the dead. He wants them to go and tell the disciples to head for Galilee and Jesus will meet them there. However, they do not tell anyone.

After His resurrection, Jesus appears to Mary Magdalene. When she tells others about seeing Him, they don't believe her. Jesus also appears to two men (Luke records they were walking to Emmaus) and they begin telling everyone, but they do not believe them, either. Eventually, Jesus appears to the eleven apostles and is not pleased with their unbelief. He tells them to preach the Gospel to the whole world. Those that believe are to be baptized. He also tells them that they will be able to work miraculous signs and wonders. Mark's account ends with Jesus being taken up to heaven and the Apostles going out to preach and work miracles to confirm the truth of their message.

### **Comment:**

Kevin Crittenden:

Thank you, Doug! You ask what the soldiers were thinking. Soldiers then, as today, are trained to de-humanize their opponents so making it possible to kill. Soldiers are asked to subjugate their own humanity; that innate knowledge of God's proscription of murder. Can you imagine killing another human being? Probably not. Now think of that other human being as a "gook" or "hun" or whatever derogatory term you want, and that those people are bent on destroying your family. Killing them becomes possible and easier. Perhaps in Jesus' time, Romans used "Jew" as a derogatory term; I doubt they had the sensibilities towards human life that we have today. They were trained to obey orders, not necessarily to think about them. Our troops today learn quickly in a war zone to regard everything as a deadly threat. When they return home, they are overwhelmed by the pace of life here - hyperalert to all movements as being possible threats. This is part of PTSD.

### **Comment:**

Butch O'Neal:

Thank you, Doug!

### **Comment:**

Gaylene Green:

Another thing I hadn't thot of.

### **Comment:**

Ginger Hermon:

It was a great blessing to be with you and other beloved brethren this weekend, Doug! Thank you for another gospel book summary. Hundreds of years of prophecy fulfilled in a short 30+ year life span, and many fulfilled in 1 day. 2,000+ years later His Kingdom still communes each Lord's Day; therefore proclaiming His death and Resurrection! Praise God for His plan of salvation. Looking forward to meeting in the sky! ❤️