

Chapter 16: The Ministry of Jesus Christ

Now we will study Matthew 5-7. In these chapters Jesus preaches a sermon to a large multitude of people. The commandments that are given by Him detail exactly what God desires from us regarding our behaviour, faith, and attitude towards Him and each other. These teachings are core to the Christian Faith and can sometimes be misunderstood; therefore we must study them carefully. Each part of these chapters is covered under different subheadings. We will consider each commandment that is given to us and summarise what we have learned at the end of each subsection.

You will be blessed.

- 1 And seeing the multitudes, He went up on a mountain, and when He was seated His disciples came to Him.*
- 2 Then He opened His mouth and taught them, saying:*
- 3 "Blessed are the poor in spirit, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*
- 4 Blessed are those who mourn, For they shall be comforted.*
- 5 Blessed are the meek, For they shall inherit the earth.*
- 6 Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, For they shall be filled.*
- 7 Blessed are the merciful, For they shall obtain mercy.*
- 8 Blessed are the pure in heart, For they shall see God.*
- 9 Blessed are the peacemakers, For they shall be called sons of God.*
- 10 Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*
- 11 "Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake.*
- 12 "Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.*
- 13 "You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men.*
- 14 "You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden.*
- 15 "Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house.*
- 16 "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.*

Matthew 5:1-16 (NKJV)

Jesus begins by telling the people that even though they may live in difficult circumstances they will be blessed by God and will enter the kingdom of Heaven. Of course this depends upon their belief in Him and requires their commitment to God's teachings. Notice what is said in verses 14-16. Jesus described those who believe as salt. Therefore He demonstrated that the world is to be flavoured by those who believe in Him, but if they lose their taste they will become useless and as a result they would not be able to season the rest of the world. Jesus tells the people to let their light shine to others. Therefore He requires us not to hide our faith. If we consider the salt we can conclude that

our faith must also be strong. Because if our belief in Him is weak, we will effectively become tasteless and unable to season (impact) the rest of the world.

Live Righteously

17 "Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill.

18 "For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled.

19 "Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

20 "For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.

Matthew 5:17-20 (NKJV)

At the time of Jesus, the Pharisees were renowned for studying and teaching the Law of Moses. They would carefully consider many matters and consider their obligations within the laws and decide upon a correct course of action. Unfortunately people tried to interpret the law in ways that are contrary to its purpose. The people of this time adapted some elements of the law to suit their own purposes, and as a result of this transgression, Jesus corrects them by providing specific examples of their teachings and the correct interpretation, which God desires, for His people. Therefore Jesus instructs them that anyone who teaches others to break the commandments will have no great position in the kingdom of Heaven. He warns the people that their righteousness should exceed the scribes and Pharisees. Therefore Jesus requires all those who believe in Him to fully understand God's will and not attempt to bend or break His rules to suit their own purposes, as the Pharisees and scribes did.

Settle your differences with each other quickly

21 "You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder, and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment.'

22 "But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment. And whoever says to his brother, 'Raca!' shall be in danger of the council. But whoever says, 'You fool!' shall be in danger of hell fire.

23 "Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you,

24 "leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.

25 "Agree with your adversary quickly, while you are on the way with him, lest your adversary deliver you to the judge, the judge hand you over to the officer, and you be thrown into prison.

26 "Assuredly, I say to you, you will by no means get out of there till you have paid the last penny.

These verses are specific examples of misinterpretations of God's will by the scribes and Pharisees. Jesus said that just following the letter of God's law is not sufficient commitment from us. We must understand the spirit of the law also. This example proves to us that God does not just desire us to live in peace with each other in terms of abstaining from murder, but also we must be careful not to cause offence to others. The word "Raca" used in verse 22 is a descriptive term used to describe someone as foolish and irresponsible. Therefore by understanding this we can realise that Jesus requires us not to condemn people's actions in this manner. Many times when people cause offence to others they begin to argue and fight, which leads to more sin. It is God's desire for all those who believe to reconcile their differences with others quickly to prevent the situation escalating to a point of severity. If we are to escape God's judgement and consequential action from those whom we have offended we must settle our differences them quickly to prevent anger and hostility.

Wage war against sin, making oaths and loving your enemies

27 "You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not commit adultery.'

28 "But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

29 "If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell.

30 "And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell.

31 "Furthermore it has been said, 'Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.'

32 "But I say to you that whoever divorces his wife for any reason except sexual immorality causes her to commit adultery; and whoever marries a woman who is divorced commits adultery.

33 "Again you have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform your oaths to the Lord.'

34 "But I say to you, do not swear at all: neither by heaven, for it is God's throne;

35 "nor by the earth, for it is His footstool; nor by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King.

36 "Nor shall you swear by your head, because you cannot make one hair white or black.

37 "But let your 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' 'No.' For whatever is more than these is from the evil one.

38 "You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.'

39 "But I tell you not to resist an evil person. But whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also.

40 "If anyone wants to sue you and take away your tunic, let him have your cloak also.

41 "And whoever compels you to go one mile, go with him two.

42 "Give to him who asks you, and from him who wants to borrow from you do not turn away.

43 *"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.'*
44 *"But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you,*
45 *"that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.*
46 *"For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same?*
47 *"And if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the tax collectors do so?*
48 *"Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.*

Matthew 5:27-48 (NKJV)

Jesus gives more examples of misinterpreted commandments in these verses. Notice also that He mentions oaths (promises). God prefers that we should not make promises that we cannot keep. Consider our own actions and remember how many times we have made commitments that we have not fulfilled. Jesus regards this as an evil activity as to promise to fulfil something and then not to complete it causes that promise to become a lie.

Jesus requires us to take radical action to remove sinful thoughts from our lives. We must remove all thoughts of sin from our minds as much as possible. He demonstrates to us by mentioning that even our lustful desires are seen as sin in the eyes of God.

Jesus also asks us to love our enemies and do good deeds to them. This is very difficult for us to understand, as it can be contrary to our own desire. He uses the example of God who provides for all of mankind regardless of whether they love or hate Him. Therefore it is God's will that we do the same to our enemies. Jesus is instructing us that if we do not repay an evil deed but rather do good to those who hate us, we are not perpetuating evil. We are resisting the temptation to retaliate against those who harm us and as a result we can demonstrate the power of good over evil because we have refused to perform an evil act as retaliation towards an offence. Consider the following verses:

17 *Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men.*
18 *If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men.*
19 *Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord.*
20 *Therefore "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; If he is thirsty, give him a drink; For in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head."*
21 *Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.*

Romans 12:17-21 (NKJV)

Jesus taught us that we should not allow ourselves to be overwhelmed by evil. The only defensive weapon we have is to perform good to those who perform evil, as the effect of our good deeds will neutralise the potential for the continuation of evil acts, and will give place for God's vengeance rather than our own.

Don't seek your own glory

1 *"Take heed that you do not do your charitable deeds before men, to be seen by them. Otherwise you have no reward from your Father in heaven.*

2 *"Therefore, when you do a charitable deed, do not sound a trumpet before you as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory from men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward.*

3 *"But when you do a charitable deed, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing,*

4 *"that your charitable deed may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will Himself reward you openly.*

Matthew 6:1-4 (NKJV)

Prayer and Fasting

5 *"And when you pray, you shall not be like the hypocrites. For they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward.*

6 *"But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly.*

7 *"And when you pray, do not use vain repetitions as the heathen do. For they think that they will be heard for their many words.*

8 *"Therefore do not be like them. For your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him.*

9 *"In this manner, therefore, pray: Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name.*

10 *Your kingdom come. Your will be done On earth as it is in heaven.*

11 *Give us this day our daily bread.*

12 *And forgive us our debts, As we forgive our debtors.*

13 *And do not lead us into temptation, But deliver us from the evil one. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.*

14 *"For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.*

15 *"But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.*

16 *"Moreover, when you fast, do not be like the hypocrites, with a sad countenance. For they disfigure their faces that they may appear to men to be fasting. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward.*

17 *"But you, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face,*

18 *"so that you do not appear to men to be fasting, but to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly.*

Matthew 6:5-18 (NKJV)

Both of these quotations directly relate to the perception of religious practice from other people and God's understanding of our own reasons for fulfilling such actions. Jesus is asking us to be sure of

our intentions when we perform charitable deeds, prayer and fasting. It is not God's desire for us to perform such acts to simply gain attention, and recognition from others. God our Father prefers us to perform these deeds in secret, to avoid the temptation and sin of seeking recognition to boost our own ego and social status. Therefore Jesus instructs us not to perform any act to seek our own glory but to do it to seek the glory of God.

Prayer is most important. It is the mechanism by which mankind communicates to God. Unfortunately the prayer that is given to us by Jesus in verses 9-15 has in some cases been misused. You may be aware that many established churches this prayer is recited en masse. This is performed as a ritual for some, but if we notice that in verse 7 Jesus says "*when you pray, do not use vain repetitions as the heathen do. For they think that they will be heard for their many words.*" and in verse 9 He also says "*In this manner, therefore, pray*". We can conclude that it was Jesus' intention to provide this as a model for prayer. His instruction informs that repetition should not be used because He encourages us to speak to God by acknowledging Him, asking for His will to be done, asking Him to fulfil our needs, asking Him for forgiveness as we forgive others, and to ask for His protection whilst always acknowledging His power and glory.

Health, wealth and worrying

19 "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal;

20 "but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal.

21 "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

22 "The lamp of the body is the eye. If therefore your eye is good, your whole body will be full of light.

23 "But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is that darkness!

24 "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.

25 "Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing?

26 "Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?

27 "Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature?

28 "So why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin;

29 "and yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.

30 "Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?

31 "Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?'

32 "For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things.

33 *"But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.*

34 *"Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.*

Matthew 6:19-34 (NKJV)

In verses 19 – 24 Jesus commands us not to seek after material wealth. He tells us that we cannot serve God and mammon. The definition of this word is *"wealth regarded as an evil influence"*. (Miller, Fellbaum et al) Therefore Jesus is telling us that if we work towards gaining wealth this will become an evil influence in our lives, and will prevent us from serving God, as we will either hate, despise or offend Him with our actions as we can't seek material wealth and seek the kingdom of God, because the wealth will cause us to become selfish, self-seeking, and corrupt. This is not the lifestyle that God desires for us as He is seeking a selfless and repentant heart, someone who is prepared to sacrifice everything to seek His kingdom.

Consider what Jesus said in verses 22-23. *"The lamp of the body is the eye"*. This organ allows us to see and perceive light and darkness. Remember how the scriptures refer to light as good and darkness as evil. Jesus is warning us, that if we only concentrate our focus upon evil deeds, which includes the pursuit of wealth, we will become corrupted and our body will be full of evil both in thought and deed.

So many times in our lives we worry about many different things. Jesus explains to those who are listening to Him (verses 25-33) that they should not occupy their minds with worry for basic needs as our Father will provide them all to us. We are required to seek God's Kingdom above all the trivialities of our lives.

Judging others

1 *"Judge not, that you be not judged.*

2 *"For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you.*

3 *"And why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye?*

4 *"Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me remove the speck from your eye'; and look, a plank is in your own eye?*

5 *"Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye.*

Matthew 7:1-5 (NKJV)

It is imperative that we do not judge others, as the exact judgements we use on others will be applied also to us. If we attempt to help someone to remove their sin how can we? We are also blinded by our own sin, just like the plank being in our own eye, our own wrongful deeds obscure us from being able to see clearly the path of truth and as a result we are unable to help others. Jesus commands us not to pass judgement on other people, as this is a hypocritical act. Consider how God views our capacity for judgement by reading the following quotations:

5 You meet him who rejoices and does righteousness, Who remembers You in Your ways. You are indeed angry, for we have sinned - In these ways we continue; And we need to be saved.

*6 But we are all like an unclean thing, And **all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags**; We all fade as a leaf, And our iniquities, like the wind, Have taken us away.*

Isaiah 64:5-6 (NKJV)

1 Therefore you are inexcusable, O man, whoever you are who judge, for in whatever you judge another you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things.

2 But we know that the judgment of God is according to truth against those who practice such things.

3 And do you think this, O man, you who judge those practicing such things, and doing the same, that you will escape the judgment of God?

4 Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance?

5 But in accordance with your hardness and your impenitent heart you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God,

6 who "will render to each one according to his deeds":

Romans 2:1-6 (NKJV)

We are sinners and God views even our righteous acts as filthy and unclean. Remember Jesus' teaching on prayer and fasting. How many people have performed these acts simply to be recognised as being righteous to others? Therefore it is intolerable for us to pass judgement upon another person's actions because of the unrighteousness of our own. We must approach Our Father with a repentant heart in order to be truly saved from our sin. If we attempt to highlight the sin of another person we are trying to take the attention away from our own unrighteousness. If we accuse someone of being a liar have we not also lied in our own lifetime? If we accuse any person of any sin have we not all sinned in our lifetime also? Therefore we should not judge others, as the mercy of Our Father should lead us to repent of our own sin rather than to highlight the sinful acts of other people. Only God is able to correctly judge, it is not our place to do so, but rather we must work on ourselves, examine our thoughts and deeds and remove all elements of sin from our lives if we truly desire to please Our Father.

Sharing the truth with others

6 "Do not give what is holy to the dogs; nor cast your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you in pieces.

7 "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.

8 "For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.

9 "Or what man is there among you who, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone?

10 "Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent?"

11 "If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!"

Matthew 7:6-11 (NKJV)

Jesus tells those who believe in Him some important advice about sharing their faith with others. Those who are unwilling to receive the truth will not hold it of any value as He demonstrates using the example of giving pearls to swine. A pig has no concept of the value of a pearl but only seeks the value of food. This is the same for someone who does not desire to receive Jesus as they will devalue these words and may seek to do harm to those who teach His message.

In verses 7-8 Jesus promises that anyone who seeks the truth will find it. Just as you the reader have studied this book, you have sought the truth and now you receive it. Anyone who desires this knowledge will seek it and those who do not wish to know the truth will consider it to have no value. He has given an open invitation to all people because Our Father will not refuse anyone who seeks Him.

Walk the path of truth

12 "Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.

13 "Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it.

14 "Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.

15 "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves.

16 "You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles?"

17 "Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit.

18 "A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit.

19 "Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

20 "Therefore by their fruits you will know them.

Matthew 7:12-20 (NKJV)

Living our lives according to the teaching of Jesus can be difficult. He is asking us to forsake all selfishness and wrath, to do good to our enemies, to refrain from judgement, to live selflessly in fear of Our Father, and for His love to be the centre in all that we do. Jesus rightly says that the way is narrow and difficult and there are few who find it. This is especially true if we consider the influence of our peers, the media, and all other previously discussed forms of social pressure. This is because we are always persuaded to act selfishly and to seek our own happiness and well being above everything else. Which is contrary to Jesus' teachings.

In order for us to walk the path of truth and obtain everlasting life we must focus upon Jesus' teachings and follow them wholeheartedly. He forewarns us that there will be false prophets. Those who will appear to be righteous and followers of Jesus on a superficial level, but secretly they seek to

deceive us, like wolves who stalk and devour their prey. Therefore we must study the scriptures ourselves to avoid being deceived by those who seek to make us stumble and stray from the righteous path. Only by completely focusing on God's word and through prayer are we able to fully learn all the knowledge and wisdom we need to avoid walking on the path that leads to destruction.

How to enter the Kingdom of Heaven

21 "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven.

22 "Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?'

23 "And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'

24 "Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock:

25 "and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock.

26 "But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand:

27 "and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall."

28 And so it was, when Jesus had ended these sayings, that the people were astonished at His teaching,

29 for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.

Matthew 7:21-29 (NKJV)

It is important that we do not just simply display an outward appearance of belief to gain recognition from others. It is also eternally important for us to obey Jesus' teachings as those who refuse to obey He will not recognise. Regardless of any amazing things we can accomplish in our lives, if we refuse to accept and obey the will of Our Father He will reject us. Therefore let us reason together. What is His will? It is those words that Jesus spoke in Matthew 5,6 and 7. Also it is Our Father's will that we believe in Jesus as His son. Consider again what we learned in John:

16 "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

17 "For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.

18 "He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

19 "And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.

20 "For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed.

21 "But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God."

We must believe in Jesus to obtain everlasting life. If we do not believe we will face Our Fathers condemnation. Also if we refuse to attempt to follow Jesus' teachings can we truly say that we believe them? We must believe in Him and follow His teaching. This is the will of God.

Dark sayings of old

Read Matthew 13. In this chapter we discover how Jesus used parables to explain some details regarding the Kingdom of Heaven. As we previously learned a parable is a short story, which is intended to provoke its audience to consider moral and philosophical issues. However it is beyond the scope of this book to discuss the parables in detail.

We learn in verses 34-35 that Jesus fulfilled David's prophecy, which is recorded in Psalm 78:1-4 by using parables as a teaching method. In order to fully understand them we must consider the parables recorded in Matthew 13 and their explanation. Many of the metaphors, which are used, interrelate with each other. Consider the parable of the sower and Jesus' explanation of the representation of the bird and see if this can be applied to another parable recorded in verses 31 and 32. Remember to visualise what you are reading. What does a mustard plant look like? Why does it grow into a tree? Consider and research these questions if you desire to fully understand Jesus' teachings. Always remember the basis for these parables can in some cases be found in the Old Testament (Consider verse 52). Research the parable recorded in verse 33. What is leaven? How do the children of Israel interpret the use of leaven from the Old Testament writings? If we are willing to learn and seek the truth, all of these mysteries will be revealed to us.

10 And the disciples came and said to Him, "Why do You speak to them in parables?"
11 He answered and said to them, "Because it has been given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given.
12 "For whoever has, to him more will be given, and he will have abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him.
13 "Therefore I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand.
14 "And in them the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled, which says: 'Hearing you will hear and shall not understand, And seeing you will see and not perceive;
15 For the hearts of this people have grown dull. Their ears are hard of hearing, And their eyes they have closed, Lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, Lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, So that I should heal them.'

Matthew 13:10-15 (NKJV)

The Way, The Truth and The Life

For the remainder of this chapter please study the scriptures as directed. Remember to consider each verse carefully. If there are any word definitions you are unsure of remember to research them.

We will study some chapters from Matthew and John and return to a more detailed study at John 18. Please read the summaries for guidance.

Matthew 8 & 9

Jesus demonstrates His ability to heal the sick and confirms Isaiah's prophecy that He will take away sickness from the people. He also demonstrates His authority over demons and evil spirits by commanding them to leave the people they afflicted.

The Pharisees doubt Jesus and accuse Him of performing these great works through the power of Satan.

Matthew 10

Jesus sends His 12 disciples to the people to continue His work giving them power to cast out evil spirits and heal the sick. He gives them specific instruction of how they should live, journey and perform the tasks that He gave to them.

Matthew 11

Jesus explains His ministry to John the Baptist's disciples and rebukes the cities through prophecy. He tells the people to come to Him and be given rest from their burdens.

Matthew 12

The Pharisees accuse Jesus of being unlawful by healing on the Sabbath and He rebukes them with teaching. Jesus also reveals to us that the one blasphemy that will not be forgiven is blasphemy against the Holy Spirit.

Matthew 23

Jesus rebukes the Scribes and Pharisees by demonstrating their corruptness and hypocrisy.

Matthew 24

Jesus foretells the destruction of the temple and His return on the day of judgement. He also warns them against impostors who will claim that they are Christ, and false prophets who will deceive many people.

Matthew 25

Jesus describes His return using parables and demonstrates how He will judge us.

John 4

Jesus journeys to Samaria and speaks to a woman about Himself and the Living Water that He will give to those who thirst, which will give everlasting life. Jesus also tells her how the true worshipers of Our Father will worship Him. Afterwards He journeys to Galilee and heals a nobleman's son.

John 5

Jesus heals a man at Bethesda pool and instructs the Jews that He is God's son and that He performs His will. He also teaches them that anyone who believes in His word and in God who sent Him will obtain everlasting life. Consider these verses from chapter 5:

20 "For the Father loves the Son, and shows Him all things that He Himself does; and He will show Him greater works than these, that you may marvel.

21 "For as the Father raises the dead and gives life to them, even so the Son gives life to whom He will.

22 "For the Father judges no one, but has committed all judgment to the Son,

23 "that all should honor the Son just as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him.

24 "Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life.

25 "Most assuredly, I say to you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God; and those who hear will live.

26 "For as the Father has life in Himself, so He has granted the Son to have life in Himself,

27 "and has given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of Man.

28 "Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice

29 "and come forth--those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation.

John 5:20-29 (NKJV)

John 6

Jesus feeds approximately five thousand people. Consider the following verses:

27 "Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life, which the Son of Man will give you, because God the Father has set His seal on Him."

28 Then they said to Him, "What shall we do, that we may work the works of God?"

29 Jesus answered and said to them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent."

30 Therefore they said to Him, "What sign will You perform then, that we may see it and believe You? What work will You do?"

31 "Our fathers ate the manna in the desert; as it is written, 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat.'"

32 Then Jesus said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, Moses did not give you the bread from heaven, but My Father gives you the true bread from heaven.
33 "For the bread of God is He who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world."
34 Then they said to Him, "Lord, give us this bread always."
35 **And Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst.**
36 "But I said to you that you have seen Me and yet do not believe.
37 **"All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out.**
38 "For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.
39 "This is the will of the Father who sent Me, that of all He has given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day.
40 **"And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day."**

John 6:27-40 (NKJV)

John 7

Jesus teaches in the temple during the middle of the feast of the tabernacles. Whilst He was there the people questioned Him. Consider the following responses carefully:

15 And the Jews marveled, saying, "How does this Man know letters, having never studied?"
16 Jesus answered them and said, "My doctrine is not Mine, but His who sent Me.
17 "If anyone wants to do His will, he shall know concerning the doctrine, whether it is from God or whether I speak on My own authority.
18 "He who speaks from himself seeks his own glory; but He who seeks the glory of the One who sent Him is true, and no unrighteousness is in Him.
19 "Did not Moses give you the law, yet none of you keeps the law? Why do you seek to kill Me?"
20 The people answered and said, "You have a demon. Who is seeking to kill You?"
21 Jesus answered and said to them, "I did one work, and you all marvel.
22 "Moses therefore gave you circumcision (not that it is from Moses, but from the fathers), and you circumcise a man on the Sabbath.
23 "If a man receives circumcision on the Sabbath, so that the law of Moses should not be broken, are you angry with Me because I made a man completely well on the Sabbath?
24 "Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment."

John 7:15-24 (NKJV)

28 Then Jesus cried out, as He taught in the temple, saying, "You both know Me, and you know where I am from; and I have not come of Myself, but He who sent Me is true, whom you do not know.
29 "But I know Him, for I am from Him, and He sent Me."

John 7:28-29 (NKJV)

37 On the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink.

38 "He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water."

39 But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.

John 7:37-39 (NKJV)

John 8

Once again the Pharisees test Jesus by bringing Him a woman accused of adultery and watched His response. Notice how He corrected them.

2 Now early in the morning He came again into the temple, and all the people came to Him; and He sat down and taught them.

3 Then the scribes and Pharisees brought to Him a woman caught in adultery. And when they had set her in the midst,

4 they said to Him, "Teacher, this woman was caught in adultery, in the very act.

5 "Now Moses, in the law, commanded us that such should be stoned. But what do You say?"

6 This they said, testing Him, that they might have something of which to accuse Him. But Jesus stooped down and wrote on the ground with His finger, as though He did not hear.

7 So when they continued asking Him, He raised Himself up and said to them, "He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first."

8 And again He stooped down and wrote on the ground.

9 Then those who heard it, being convicted by their conscience, went out one by one, beginning with the oldest even to the last. And Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst.

10 When Jesus had raised Himself up and saw no one but the woman, He said to her, "Woman, where are those accusers of yours? Has no one condemned you?"

11 She said, "No one, Lord." And Jesus said to her, "Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more."

12 Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, "I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life."

John 8:2-12 (NKJV)

Consider also the following verses. Notice how the Pharisees accuse Jesus and how He responds to them.

31 Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, "If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed.

32 "And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

33 They answered Him, "We are Abraham's descendants, and have never been in bondage to anyone. How can you say, 'You will be made free'?"

34 Jesus answered them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, whoever commits sin is a slave of sin.

35 "And a slave does not abide in the house forever, but a son abides forever.

36 "Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed.

37 "I know that you are Abraham's descendants, but you seek to kill Me, because My word has no place in you.

38 "I speak what I have seen with My Father, and you do what you have seen with your father."

39 They answered and said to Him, "Abraham is our father." Jesus said to them, "If you were Abraham's children, you would do the works of Abraham.

40 "But now you seek to kill Me, a Man who has told you the truth which I heard from God. Abraham did not do this.

41 "You do the deeds of your father." Then they said to Him, "We were not born of fornication; we have one Father--God."

42 Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love Me, for I proceeded forth and came from God; nor have I come of Myself, but He sent Me.

43 "Why do you not understand My speech? Because you are not able to listen to My word.

44 "You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it.

45 "But because I tell the truth, you do not believe Me.

46 "Which of you convicts Me of sin? And if I tell the truth, why do you not believe Me?

47 "He who is of God hears God's words; therefore you do not hear, because you are not of God."

48 Then the Jews answered and said to Him, "Do we not say rightly that You are a Samaritan and have a demon?"

49 Jesus answered, "I do not have a demon; but I honor My Father, and you dishonor Me.

50 "And I do not seek My own glory; there is One who seeks and judges.

51 "Most assuredly, I say to you, if anyone keeps My word he shall never see death."

52 Then the Jews said to Him, "Now we know that You have a demon! Abraham is dead, and the prophets; and You say, 'If anyone keeps My word he shall never taste death.'

53 "Are You greater than our father Abraham, who is dead? And the prophets are dead. Whom do You make Yourself out to be?"

54 Jesus answered, "If I honor Myself, My honor is nothing. It is My Father who honors Me, of whom you say that He is your God.

55 "Yet you have not known Him, but I know Him. And if I say, 'I do not know Him,' I shall be a liar like you; but I do know Him and keep His word.

56 "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad."

57 Then the Jews said to Him, "You are not yet fifty years old, and have You seen Abraham?"

58 Jesus said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM."

59 Then they took up stones to throw at Him; but Jesus hid Himself and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by.

The words I AM which Jesus used to describe Himself in verse 58 directly relate to Exodus 3:13-14 where God names Himself "*I AM WHO I AM*". Therefore Jesus explained to the people that He is God. For He is God's son and He came forth from Him. This is why the people sought to throw stones at Him because the Pharisees did not believe Him and interpreted His words as blasphemy, thinking that Jesus sought to take the place of God and accused Him of madness. However Jesus was informing them that the Father and Himself are as one, and that He is a manifestation of God because He is His son, which fulfils the prophecy in Isaiah 7:14 that says His name shall be called Immanuel, which means God is with us.

John 9

Jesus heals a man who was born blind and teaches Him about Himself after the Pharisees rejected the man's testimony.

John 10

After healing the man born blind Jesus teaches those present about His role as the Good Shepard. Consider the following verses:

1 "Most assuredly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door, but climbs up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber.

2 "But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep.

3 "To him the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep hear his voice; and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.

4 "And when he brings out his own sheep, he goes before them; and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice.

5 "Yet they will by no means follow a stranger, but will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers."

6 Jesus used this illustration, but they did not understand the things, which He spoke to them.

7 Then Jesus said to them again, "Most assuredly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep.

8 "All who ever came before Me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them.

9 "I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture.

10 "The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.

11 "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep.

12 "But a hireling, he who is not the shepherd, one who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees; and the wolf catches the sheep and scatters them.

13 "The hireling flees because he is a hireling and does not care about the sheep.

14 "I am the good shepherd; and I know My sheep, and am known by My own.

15 "As the Father knows Me, even so I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep.

16 "And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock and one shepherd.

17 "Therefore My Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again.

18 "No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This command I have received from My Father."

John 10:1-18 (NKJV)

John 11

Jesus raises Lazarus from the dead thus demonstrating His power over death.

John 12

Jesus rides into Jerusalem on a donkey thus fulfilling the prophecy written in Zechariah 9:9.

John 13

Jesus teaches His disciples that they must be serve each other by washing their feet as an example for them. Jesus also forewarns the disciples of His imminent betrayal by Judas Iscariot.

John 14 - 17

In these next few chapters it is recorded how Jesus explains His ministry in detail to His disciples and warns and comforts them. He also prays to the Father on their behalf before His betrayal takes place. Consider the following verse carefully:

Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.

John 14:6 (NKJV)

Jesus gives many teachings in the next few chapters but we must consider this one carefully. This is most important to us as He teaches that no one can go to God unless it is through Him. Therefore only through belief in Jesus can we reach our Father who created us, and only through believing in Jesus can we become sons and daughters of God and join His family and Kingdom.