

Introduction

Matthew—the Historical Record of Jesus Christ

“It seems fitting that the first book of the New Testament—the Gospel of Matthew—begins with these words: ‘the historical record of Jesus Christ.’ This Gospel was written from a strong Jewish perspective to show that Jesus truly is the Messiah promised in the Old Testament.”¹

The Gospel of Matthew provides a bridge from the promises of the Old Testament to the fulfillment of those promises in the New Testament. The New Testament begins with four accounts of the life of Jesus Christ—each one from a different perspective and for a unique purpose. “These accounts present the ‘good news’ concerning the Son of God, telling of His life on earth and His death on the cross for the sin of mankind. The first three Gospels take a similar view of the facts surround this Person, while the Fourth Gospel is unique in its presentation. Because of this common view of Jesus Christ the first three New Testament books are called the Synoptic Gospels.”²

The word *synoptic* comes from two Greek words that together mean “to see with or together.”³ “While Matthew, Mark, and Luke have distinctive purposes, they nevertheless view the life of Jesus Christ in a common way”⁴ thus they are described as the Synoptic Gospels. “It is important that we understand these sources and what they are trying to accomplish. The Gospels are neither biographies of the life of Christ nor are they a disinterested record of certain events in His life. Each writer wants the reader to know the truth about Jesus and become a disciple. To accomplish this purpose, each Gospel is aimed at a certain audience and each writer is selective of the events he includes.”⁵ Notice the unique characteristics of each gospel:⁶

| GOSPEL | TARGET | PORTRAYAL OF JESUS | PRIMARY FOCUS |
|----------------|--------------------|---------------------------|-------------------|
| Matthew | Jews | Messiah (Son of David) | Genealogy |
| Mark | Gentiles (Romans) | Servant (Son of Man) | Ministry/Miracles |
| Luke | Intellectuals | Perfect Man (Son of Adam) | Jesus’ Humanity |
| John | Eyewitness Account | God-Man (Son of God) | God Became Man |

¹ *The HCSB Study Bible* 1603.

² *The Bible Knowledge Commentary – New Testament* 13.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ Source: https://www.blueletterbible.org/faq/don_stewart/don_stewart_188.cfm accessed on September 9, 2018.

⁶ *Ibid.*

The Circumstances of the Writing of Matthew

What do we know about the author of this book?

- The author of this book is the Apostle Matthew, also known as Levi the tax collector.
 - Arno Gaebelein explained: “The instrument chosen by the Holy Spirit to write this Gospel was Matthew. He was a Jew. However, he did not belong to the religious, educated class, to the scribes; but he belonged to the class which was most bitterly hated. He was a publican, that is a tax gatherer... Only the most unscrupulous among the Jews would hire themselves out for the sake of gain... For this reason the tax gatherers, being Roman employees, were hated by the Jews even more bitterly than the Gentiles themselves.”⁷
 - “The author did not identify himself in the text. However, the title that ascribes this Gospel to Matthew appears in the earliest manuscripts and is possibly original. Titles became necessary to distinguish one Gospel from another when the four Gospels began to circulate as a single collection.”⁸
 - “Many early church fathers cited Matthew as its author, including Pseudo Barnabas, Clement of Rome, Polycarp, Justin Martyr, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, and Origen.”⁹
 - “Matthew was certainly not one of the more prominent apostles. One might think the First Gospel would have been written by Peter, James, or John. But the extensive tradition that Matthew wrote it strongly commends him as its author.”¹⁰
- Modern scholars try to dispute the authenticity of Matthew’s authorship.
- Internal Support of a Matthew’s Authorship
 - Identification of this Disciple as Levi (in Mark 2:14 and Luke 5:27) and repeatedly as “Matthew the Tax Collector” in this gospel.
 - In Matthew 17 and 18, the author “includes three terms for coins that are found nowhere else in the New Testament: ‘the two-drachma tax’ (Matt 17:24); ‘a four-drachma coin’ (17:27), and ‘talents’ (18:24). Since Matthew’s occupation was tax collecting, he had an interest in coins and noted the cost of certain items.”¹¹

⁷ Gaebelein, Arno. *The Gospel of Matthew: An Exposition* (Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux Brothers, 1961) 4.

⁸ *HCSB Study Bible* 1604.

⁹ *TBKC-NT* 15.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ *TBKC-NT* 15.

- “The omissions from the First Gospel are significant too, for Matthew omitted the Parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector (Luke 18:9-14) and the story of Zacchaeus, a tax collector who restored fourfold what he had stolen (Luke 19:1-10).”¹²

When was the Gospel of Matthew written?

- An exact date of writing is not possible to determine, but most conservative scholars date the writing of this gospel before the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70.
 - The *Scofield Reference Bible* gave the earliest possible date at A.D.37.
 - “Since church tradition has strongly advocated that the Gospel of Matthew was the first Gospel account written, perhaps a date somewhere around A.D. 50”¹³ would be acceptable since it is believed that the Gospel of Mark was written sometime around A.D. 55.
- Some scholars, however, believe that Mark was the first gospel written. The editors of the *HCSB Study Bible* state: “The date for the composition for Mark is best inferred from the date of Luke and Acts. The abrupt ending of Acts which left Paul under house arrest in Rome implies that Acts was written before Paul’s release... This evidence dates Acts to the early 60s. Luke and Acts were two volumes of a single work, as the prologues to these books demonstrate. Luke was written before Acts... a date in the late 50s is reasonable. If Luke used Mark in writing his own Gospel, as seems likely, by implication Mark was written some time before the late 50s, perhaps the early to mid-50s. Thus, despite Matthew’s dependence on Mark, Matthew may have been written any time beginning in the mid-50s once Mark was completed.”¹⁴
- Liberal scholars all want to date the writing of the Gospel of Matthew much later than this because a later date allows them to question the veracity of the gospel’s content.

(THIS SECTION COMPLETED ON 9/9/2018)

¹² *TBKC-NT* 15.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ *HCSB Study Bible* 1605.

What is the purpose for the writing of the Gospel of Matthew?

- As we stated earlier, the Gospel of Matthew was written for the Jews to proclaim the arrival of the long-awaited Messiah—Jesus of Nazareth.
- Secondly, Matthew wanted the Jews to consider that if Jesus was the promised Messiah, then they crucified the Anointed One of the Lord.
 - “What would now become of them? Was God through with them?”¹⁵
 - Matthew encourages the Jews in this gospel explaining “for though their act of disobedience would bring judgment on that generation of Israelites, God was not through with His people. His promised kingdom would yet be instituted with His people at a future time. In the meantime, however, believers are responsible to communicate a different message of faith in this Messiah as they go into all the world to make disciples among all nations.”¹⁶

The Structure of the Gospel of Matthew

What is the structure of the Gospel of Matthew? How is it divided?

- According to the *HCSB Study Bible*:
 - The book is divided into three major sections.

“He introduced new major sections with the words ‘from then on Jesus began to’ (4:17; 16:21). These transitional statements divide the Gospel into the introduction (1:1-4:16), body (4:17-16:20), and conclusion (16:21-28:20).”¹⁷
 - The book is divided into five major blocks of teaching. Each of these blocks of teaching “concludes with a summary statement (8:1; 11:1; 13:53; 19:1; 26:1).
 - Matthew 8:1 – “When he came down from the mountain...” after the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7).
 - Matthew 11:1 – “When Jesus had finished instructing his twelve disciples...” after his instructions to his disciples about ministry (Matthew 10).
 - Matthew 13:53 – “And when Jesus had finished these parables, he went away from there...” after teaching the parables about the Kingdom (Matthew 13).

¹⁵ *TBKC-NT* 16.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *HCSB Study Bible* 1606.

- Matthew 19:1 – “Now when Jesus had finished these sayings...” after Jesus finished teaching his disciples about forgiveness and humility (Matthew 18).
- Matthew 26:1 – “When Jesus had finished all these sayings...” after teaching them about the coming of the kingdom and end times (Matthew 24-25).
- The scope of our study will be limited to the life and ministry of Jesus Christ taken from the first twenty chapters of the Gospel of Matthew. Since we will not be focused on the last eight chapters (which deal with the Passion Week, Christ’s resurrection and His ascension), we will not follow this structure of three sections with five major discourses.
- We will divide this study into chronological segments of information, with particular focus on the teaching blocks within each segment. Our structure contains four sections:
 - **Early Life of the Messiah** – Matthew 1:1 - 2:23
 - **Early Ministry of the Messiah** – Matthew 3:1 - 9:38
 - Sermon on the Mount – Matthew 5-8
 - **Ministry of Jesus’ Disciples** – Matthew 10:1 - 13:58
 - Mission Challenge – Matthew 10
 - Kingdom Parables – Matthew 13
 - **Final Ministry of the Messiah** – Matthew 14:1 - 20:34
 - Teachings on Humility & Forgiveness – Matthew 18
- Summary: 14 chapters on the life and ministry of Jesus and 6 chapters on His teachings.

What are some unique features of the Gospel of Matthew?

- The words of Jesus are prominent in Matthew’s Gospel.
 - Out of a total of 1,068 verses in the book, 644 of those contain the words of Jesus.¹⁸
 - That means that 60% of the verses are all—or have portions that are—printed in red.
 - “Of the Gospel accounts Matthew has the largest blocks of discourse material. No other Gospel contains so much of Jesus’ teachings.”¹⁹

¹⁸ Richards, Lawrence O. *The Teacher’s Commentary*. (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1987), 518.

¹⁹ *TBKC-NT* 16.

- Parables – this book contains 35 parables²⁰—which is more than any of the Gospels according to Lawrence O. Richards.
- The Gospel of Matthew is also filled with quotations and allusions to the Old Testament.
 - “Matthew includes approximately 50 direct citations from the Old Testament.
 - “In additions about 75 allusions are made to Old Testament events. This is undoubtedly because of the audience for whom the book was intended.”²¹
- Richards also points out that this book “records 20 of Jesus’ miracles, 3 of which are found only in this Gospel (Matt. 9:27, 31, 32-33; 17:24-27).
 - Healing of the two blind men.
 - Healing of the demon-possessed man who was mute.
 - The coin in the mouth of the fish they caught.

The Historical, Cultural and Geographic Background of Matthew

As we study through the Gospel of Matthew, we will encounter several different groups, or Sects. Who are these groups and what did they stand for?

- Priests
 - These were a group of Aaron’s descendants who served in the worship of God—originally in the tabernacle and eventually the temple.
 - “These priests were the only ones authorized to offer sacrifices, and were to instruct the people in the meaning of the divine Law.”²²
 - “The High Priest was the president of the Sanhedrin (the Jewish governing body), giving him both religious and political power. The “chief priests” (mentioned 64 times in the New Testament) were temple officers with seats on the Sanhedrin, who also had significant political influence.”²³
- Rulers – refers to the members of the Sanhedrin.

²⁰ Richards 518.

²¹ *TBKC-NT* 16.

²² Richards 518.

²³ *Ibid.*

- Pharisees
 - A religious sect that “arose in the time of the Maccabees”—referring to the time in between the completion of the Old Testament and the events of the New Testament.
 - “The Pharisees were the conservatives of Jesus’ day. They held to the authority of the written Law, but also to the authority of the oral traditions that interpreted Mosaic Law and taught how it should be applied.”²⁴
 - “The Pharisees were known... for their special commitment to keeping the laws of tithing and ritual purity.”²⁵
- Sadducees
 - “This was the liberal party of Jesus’ time... and was solidly represented in the Sanhedrin. The Sadducees acknowledged only the Books of Moses as Scripture, denied the existence of angels, and believed in neither resurrection nor the immortality of the soul.”²⁶
 - “[T]he Sadducees came from the leading families of the nation—the priests, merchants, and aristocrats. The high priests and the most powerful members of the priesthood were mainly Sadducees (Acts 5:17).”²⁷
- Scribes
 - “The scribes were the scholars of both the Pharisean and Sadducean parties.”²⁸
 - They were highly respected for their knowledge and interpretation of the Law and the Prophets, but Jesus was often in conflict with this group because He questioned their interpretation of Scripture.
- Herodians
 - “This party was political rather than religious in character. It was linked with the ruling family of Herod, and supported Roman rule... [and saw Jesus’] claim to be the Messiah as a political threat.”²⁹
 - “Although the Herodians should not be equated with the SADDUCEES, they sided with the Sadducees in their pro-Roman sympathies and opposed the PHARISEES, who were anti-Roman. The Herodians joined forces with the Pharisees, however, in their opposition to Jesus.”³⁰

²⁴ Richards 519.

²⁵ *Nelson’s Student Bible Dictionary* 194.

²⁶ Richards 519.

²⁷ *NSBD* 228.

²⁸ Richards 519.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

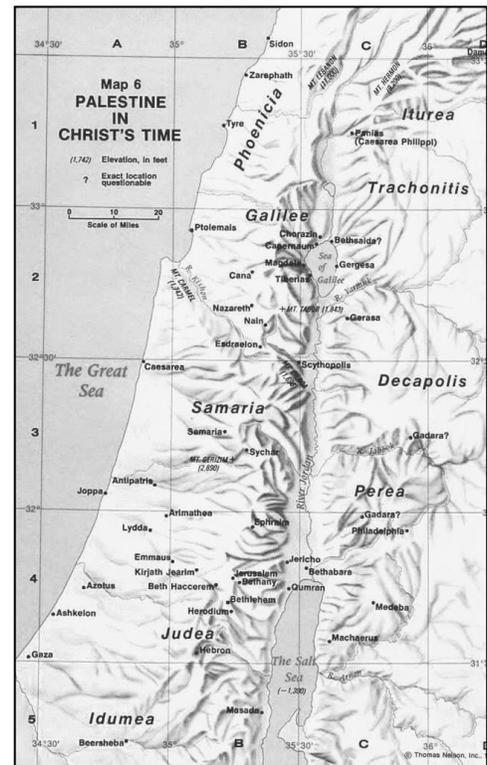
³⁰ *NSBD* 106.

- Galileans
 - “This was a political party, as well as a geographical designation. The ‘Galileans’ were what we would call today ‘freedom fighters,’ who opposed the Romans and the Hellenization of their land.”³¹
 - Hellenism refers to “a style of Greek civilization associated with the spread of Greek language and culture to the Mediterranean world after the conquests of Alexander the Great.”³²
 - Even though many of Jesus’ disciples were from the region of Galilee, only Simon the Zealot was associated with the political party of Galileans before following Jesus.
- Samaritans – the much hated, multi-racial (Jew/Gentile) people group who lived in the land between Judea and Galilee.

(THIS SECTION COMPLETED ON 9/23/2018)

We will also encounter geographical references as we study through the Gospel of Matthew. What are some of these places and where are they?

- Palestine – divided into three districts:
 - Location – a narrow strip of land along the eastern side of the Mediterranean Sea;
 - Land Area – “only some 140 miles long. In the north it reaches only 23 miles inland from the sea; in the south, about 80.”³³; this region was similar in shape to the US State of New Hampshire, only New Hampshire is over 220 miles long and 110 miles wide in the south;



³¹ Richards 519.

³² NSBD 106.

³³ Richards 519.

- Galilee
 - Location – northernmost district of Palestine;
 - Land Area – “60 by 33 miles”³⁴ or about 1980 miles² (about the size of NWA)
 - Landmarks –
 - Sea of Galilee (or Lake Gennesaret) “lies about 700 feet below the sea level, making it the world’s lowest fresh water lake and the second lowest lake after the Dead Sea.”³⁵)
 - Cities – Nazareth (Jesus’ hometown), Capernaum (“Jesus’ base during His 3-year ministry in Israel”³⁶), Cana (site of His first miracle), and Bethsaida.

- Samaria
 - Location – situated in between the other two districts of Palestine;
 - Land Area – “its greatest extent was 56 miles long and 47 miles wide”³⁷
 - Landmarks –
 - Mt. Gerazim – the place that Samaritan religion claimed was “the one place of divinely ordered worship.”³⁸
 - “Its cities are seldom mentioned in the Gospels, as Jesus’ ministry during His lifetime was primarily to the Jewish people, who did not live there.”³⁹
 - John 4 records Jesus’ encounter with a Samaritan woman at Jacob’s well near the town of Sychar.

- Judea
 - Location – southernmost district of Palestine;
 - Land Area – “only 57 miles wide and about 45 miles in length”⁴⁰
 - Landmarks –
 - Mt. Zion and Mt. Moriah are 2 of 4 mountains that Jerusalem sits on.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Source: <http://www.israeljerusalem.com/lake-of-gennesaret.htm> accessed on October 6, 2018.

³⁶ Source: <http://www.israeljerusalem.com/capernaum-israel.htm> accessed on October 6, 2018.

³⁷ Richards 519.

³⁸ *TBKC-NT* 286.

³⁹ Richards 519.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

- Dead Sea – “One, the surface of the Dead Sea, which lies 1,418 feet below the sea level, is the lowest point on the earth's surface. Two, the Dead Sea is the earth's saltiest body of water. Its 34% salt content is ten times more salty than the ocean and precludes marine life, hence its name.”⁴¹ Three, while only 30 miles long and 9 miles wide at its widest point, the Dead Sea is “990 feet deep.”⁴²
- Cities/Towns – Jerusalem (location of the Temple), Bethlehem (birthplace of Jesus), Emmaus, Bethany, and Bethel.

And finally, we will be introduced to several institutions with which the people of Jesus' day were very familiar. What are some of these institutions?

- The Sanhedrin
 - The Sanhedrin was the governing body of the Jews in both political and religious matters.
 - “The Sanhedrin, headed by the high priest and composed of the ‘chief priests,’ scholars of Scripture, and lay members, governed the Jewish population in Palestine, and also had authority over Jews anywhere in the Roman Empire.”⁴³
 - The Sanhedrin functioned under the authority of the Roman Empire; thus its authority was limited in some things (e.g. the death penalty).
- The Synagogue
 - “When the temple was destroyed in 586 B.C. by Nebuchadnezzar, the Jews were taken captive to Babylon. There they began to meet in small groups on the Sabbath to study the Scriptures and worship God. When the people returned to the land and the temple was rebuilt, these weekly meetings of local communities for study of God’s Word continued.”⁴⁴
 - Everywhere there were groups of Jewish people in the Roman Empire; there was a synagogue there for them to worship and study Scripture.
 - Jesus often read Scripture and then would explain its meaning there.

⁴¹ Source: <http://www.israeljerusalem.com/dead-sea.htm> accessed on October 6, 2018.

⁴² Ibid.

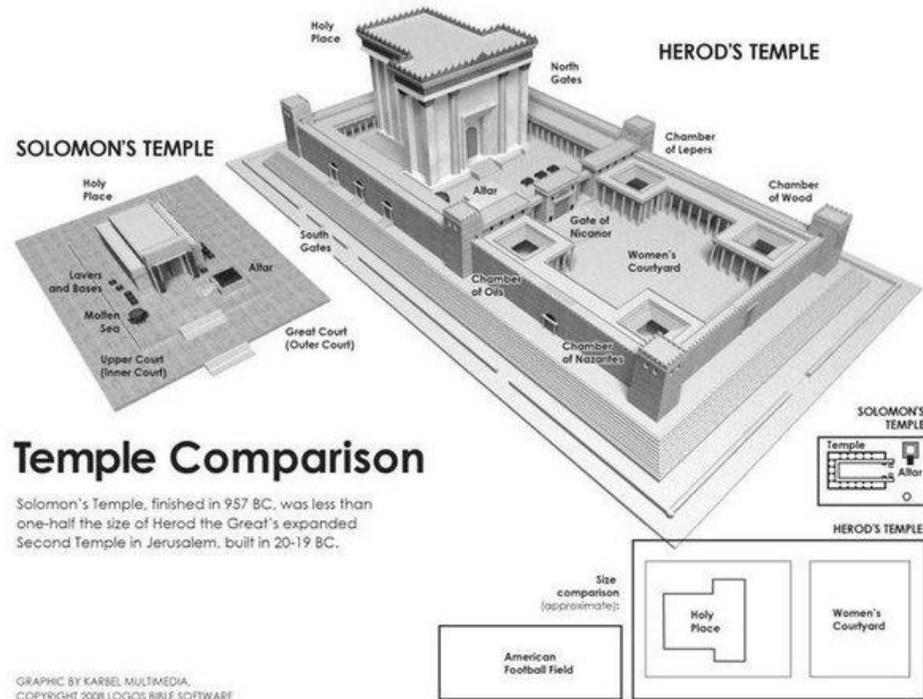
⁴³ Richards 522.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

- Paul made a habit of teaching/evangelizing the synagogue first when he entered a new area.

- The Temple

- In Jesus' day, the Temple was not the original temple built by Solomon; it was the temple that had been rebuilt by the returning exiles. The rebuilding process was started in 538 B.C. and completed by 515 B.C.⁴⁵



- “The Jewish people were required to appear at Jerusalem for several of the festivals established in the Old Testament. Jesus often preached on such occasions. And member of the Jerusalem church worshiped in the temple daily, and preached there about Jesus.”⁴⁶
- “As the central Jewish place of sacrificial worship from about 515 B.C.E. until its destruction by the Romans in 70 C.E., the second temple in Jerusalem played a major role in the religious and national life of the Jewish people.”⁴⁷
- Today, the Islamic Dome of the Rock now stands in the place where the Temple once stood.

⁴⁵ Source: <https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/second-temple/> accessed on October 6, 2018.

⁴⁶ Richards 522.

⁴⁷ Source: <https://www.bibleodyssey.org/places/main-articles/second-temple> accessed on October 6, 2018.

Part One: Early Life of the Messiah

“The first chapter of the Gospel of Matthew is divided into two parts. In the first to the seventeenth verse we find the genealogy of Jesus Christ, and in the last part of the chapter the account of the birth of the promised One. In the second half we see Him as Son of God and Saviour, while in the first, in the genealogy, His royal descent is proven. He is the rightful heir to David’s throne, and thus His Kingship is legally established.”¹

I. Birth of Jesus Christ (1:1-25)

“The First Gospel has a summary statement in its first verse: ‘A record of the genealogy of Jesus Christ the Son of David, the Son of Abraham.’ Why does David’s name appear before Abraham’s? Would not Abraham, the father of the nation, be more significant to a Jewish mind? Perhaps Matthew listed the name of David first because the King who would rule over the nation was to come through David (2 Sam. 7:12-17).”²

A. Genealogy of a King

The Importance of a Genealogy

Why is the genealogy included in Holy Scripture?

- Reminder of Christ’s Humanity
 - Whereas Luke’s Gospel focuses on His deity, Matthew focuses on His humanity.
 - “Genealogy is the first emphasis in the Gospel of Matthew. When we think of Jesus, we must realize that we are dealing with a Man. The person who came from heaven (John 1:1-2) was also fully human, and it is His heritage as a human being that Matthew wants us to understand first.”³

¹ Gaebelain 17.

² TBKC-NT 17.

³ Richards 525.

- Evidence of the Fulfillment of His Covenant
 - “[T]he opening verse connected Him [Jesus] back to two great covenants in Jewish history: the Davidic (2 Sam 7) and the Abrahamic (Gen. 12; 15).”⁴
 - Abrahamic Covenant – “God gave Abraham great and special promises. These included the promise of possession of the land of Palestine forever, a great people to live in it, a special relationship with God for Abraham’s descendants, and ultimately a descendant (seed) through whom all the peoples of the earth would be blessed (Gen 12, 15; and 17).”⁵
 - Davidic Covenant – “The second significant genealogical element is the relationship to David. Later in Israel’s history God promised to David that the Messiah would come through his family line. The ultimate King would be born from the family of David, Israel’s greatest king.”⁶
- “In tracing the genealogy of Jesus from Abraham and from David, Matthew was demonstrating Jesus’ right to rule. Jesus’ genealogy not only established Him as a true Man, but also was the foundation of His claim to the throne of Israel as the promised Seed of David.”⁷

The Unique Aspects of Each Genealogy

*What are the differences between the genealogies in Matthew 1 and Luke 3?
What is the significance of this?*

- Matthew’s focus was on Jesus’ royal lineage.
 - Matthew 1 traces Jesus’ lineage through His legal father, Joseph; whereas Luke 3 traces Jesus lineage through His mother, Mary.
 - Luke starts with Jesus, through the line of Joseph’s family back to King David, then back to Abraham and eventually all the way back to Adam.
 - Matthew places greater importance on being the son of David, over the son of Abraham. Matthew starts with Abraham and moves forward to King David (14 generations), then continued moving forward from David to the Babylonian captivity (another 14 generations), and from there through His mother’s lineage to the birth of Jesus (another 14 generations).

⁴ TBKC-NT 18.

⁵ Richards 526

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

- Matthew also includes several females in its list of descendants.
 - “Women in a genealogy is something which is very rarely the case. There were many noble, devoted and believing women in the Old Testament. Sarah, Rebekah, Deborah... Instead of them we discover four who are only known, at least three, by their shame, and the other belonged to a race which was according to the law cursed.”⁸
 - Women of the Old Testament in Matthew’s Genealogy of Christ
 - Tamar – disguised herself so to secretly prostitute herself out to her father-in-law in order to become pregnant (Genesis 38)
 - Rahab – a prostitute (Joshua 6; see also Hebrews 11:31)
 - Ruth – a foreigner
 - Wife of Uriah (Bathsheeba) – an adultress (2 Samuel 11)
 - “Matthew may have included these women in order to emphasize that God’s choices in dealing with people are all of His grace. Perhaps also he included these women in order to put Jewish pride in its place.”⁹
 - The last woman to be mentioned in the genealogy is Mary, the birth mother of Jesus.

Were there really only 3 sets of 14 generations between Abraham and Jesus?

- There are obvious omissions in Matthew’s genealogy.
 - “The most prominent omission is in verse eight. Three kings are left out. These are Ahaziah, Joash and Amaziah. Who were they? They are the descendants of the daughter of wicked Ahab, Athaliah. Athaliah desired to annihilate the kingly seed of the house of Judah... This is undoubtedly the reason why the Holy Spirit left out these three kings.”¹⁰
 - There were other omissions that we will not discuss in this setting.
- Why did Matthew’s genealogy leave these out?
 - “Jewish reckoning did not require every name in order to satisfy a genealogy.”¹¹
 - “Perhaps the best solution is that the name ‘David’ in Hebrew numerology added up to 14.”¹²

⁸ Gaebelain 25.

⁹ TBKC-NT 18.

¹⁰ Gaebelain 22-23.

¹¹ TBKC-NT 18.

- “Matthew’s genealogy answered the important question a Jew would rightfully ask about anyone who claimed to be King of the Jews. Is He a descendant of David through the rightful line of succession? Matthew answered yes!”¹³

(THIS SECTION COMPLETED ON 10/7/2018)

B. Miraculous Birth of the Christ

The Influence of Matthew’s Purpose for Writing

How did Matthew’s purpose in appealing to Jews integrate itself into his own Gospel account?

- Integrating Jewish tradition
 - Matthew uses extensive quotes from the Old Testament. In his 53 direct quotes and allusions, Matthew draws no less than 25 of the 39 Old Testament books.¹⁴
 - In the first two chapters of Matthew there are no less than 16 references to the Old Testament.¹⁵
- How does Matthew use his appeal to Jewish tradition?
 - Matthew uses the authority of familiar scripture to make direct conclusions for his readers.
 - He continues throughout the Gospels to reaffirm his assertions.

What is unique about how the birth of Jesus is described?

- Jesus is born of a virgin
 - In verse 18, the words, “of Jesus Christ” in the Greek text are in the emphatic position. This implies that the circumstances of Jesus’ birth are different from everyone else in the genealogy.¹⁶

¹² TBKC-NT 18.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Richards 527

¹⁵ Ibid.

- Jesus was made pregnant by the Holy Spirit. This is different from Greek myth about fake deity making themselves turn into human form. The miracle performed by God did not require Him to assume a material form. ¹⁷
- The Angel of the Lord that appears to Mary to tell her that she will become pregnant does not tell her a medical explanation of how this would become possible. It is truly miraculous. Somehow, God would “overshadow” Mary by His Spirit “to bring about a miraculous conception. Once formed in Mary’s womb, Jesus was born through the normal process that brings children into the world.” ¹⁸
 - “Thus, from the beginning Jesus had two natures. His divine nature as God’s Son was joined with a human nature, in Mary’s womb, by direct act of the Author of all creation.”¹⁹
 - God is not limited in His work by our own understanding.
- How was Jesus’ immaculate conception received?
 - Mary and Joseph were engaged and “had not yet come together.” These facts, as recorded by Matthew, emphasize that Mary and Joseph were not living together as husband and wife when Mary became pregnant.
 - The custom of the day was for the man to subject his unfaithful fiancée to divorce and public humiliation. ²⁰
 - Joseph was righteous in
 - “not want[ing] a wife who was guilty of adultery”²¹ and
 - “Not being vindictive” and allowing mercy to temper “his sense of doing what was right” ²² making plans to divorce Mary as quietly as possible.
- How Does Joseph overcome not wanting a wife guilty of adultery?
 - Required the Angel of the Lord to testify to the validity of God’s will and work being done by directing and explaining the miraculous events to Joseph.

¹⁶ HCSB Study Bible 1609.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Knight, George W. *A Simplified Harmony of the Gospels: Using the Text of HCSB*. (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2001), 9.

¹⁹ Ibid

²⁰ Ibid 14.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

- This a role played multiple times throughout the Gospel accounts. The first is when an angel appears to Zachariah to tell that he will father John the Baptist in his old age (Luke 1:5). Again, in Luke 1:26 to first tell Mary that she will become pregnant.
- We'll see the involvement of Angels aiding in the fulfillment of directing people through the Gospel of Matthew.
- Joseph is reminded that he is a descendant of David
 - Matthew is writing to a Jewish audience, yes – but the fact remains, the scripture here is God breathed (2 Timothy 3:16). The appeals to Jewish tradition are more than just logical and informational sprinkles; they are transformational to our understanding of our Messiah.
 - The angel of the Lord reminds Joseph that he is the son of David – that he is the descendant of a great king and worthy to receive this surprising intelligence of his relation to the Messiah (Matthew 1:20).
 - Joseph was a carpenter (Matthew 13:55) and we see the tendency of those who are born to little and given great honors or privilege to disregard what honor they've been given. The angel's reminder is a reminder for Joseph to value himself.
 - The same can be said to every believer – the son's and daughters of the one true living God. That we can forget the dignity of our birth to remember the dignity of our new birth.

What is the significance of Jesus' name and being called Immanuel?

- “Jesus” is the same name as “Joshua”. There are two Joshuas in the Old Testament who both illustrations of the coming Messiah.²³
 - Joshua – Israel's captain at their first settlement in Canaan.²⁴
 - Joshua – Israel's high priest at their second settlement after the captivity.²⁵
- There is a reason that Jesus is given his name. that He will save his people from their sins. (Matthew 1:21).

²³ Henry, Matthew. “St. Matthew.” In *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible Vol. 5*, (New York, NY: Fleming H. Revell Company), 7

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

- Jesus didn't come to deliver the Jews from their sins – not to deliver them from Roman control.
- Matthew is answering, one of the questions a Jewish skeptic would have been asking, that is “What has happened to the promised earthly kingdom of Israel?”²⁶
- From his Birth we know that Christ is the Son of God and the mediator between God and Man
 - Fulfilled Prophecy referred to by Matthew back to what was told to king Ahaz in Isaiah 7:14.
 - Matthew will continue to point out those fulfilled prophecies.
 - Immanuel is a curious name but very precious in that it identifies Christ as “God incarnate among us”²⁷
 - Immanuel – God with us: is the cause of a major change in the self-narrative all people have.
 - From the perspective of our nature, we see God as greater and bigger and better than us.
 - From the perspective of the law given to us by Moses (the perspective of Matthew's audience and our context), we see God our punisher.
 - But Immanuel, allows us to see God as God with us. Jesus brings God and Man together.

(THIS SECTION COMPLETED ON 10/14/2018)

²⁶ Richards, 527.

²⁷ Henry, 8.

II. Early Childhood of Jesus Christ (2:1-23)

In the first chapter of Matthew, the gospel writer presents Jesus as the rightful heir to the throne of Judea as well as the realization of the promised Messiah of Scripture. “One of Matthew’s approaches to reaching Hebrew readers was to use extensive quotes from the Old Testament. In his 53 direct quotes and many allusions, Matthew draws from no less than 25 of the 39 Old Testament books! Clearly, Matthew was determined to bridge the gap between the Old and the New.”¹ Lawrence Richards continues by saying, “There are no less than 16 references to the Old Testament in these first two chapters of Matthew.”² This will be a focus in our study this evening—the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy in the early years of Jesus of Nazareth.

A. Worshiping the Christ-child

Matthew 2:1-12

Wise Men from the East

When did the wise men from the east arrive in Judea?

- It's not what most people think!
 - The wise men did not arrive simultaneously with the shepherds as many works of art and nativity scenes at Christmas.
 - “Though not all scholars agree on the timing of the arrival of the Magi from the East, they apparently came some time after the birth of Jesus. Jesus and Mary and Joseph, though still in Bethlehem, were now in a house (v. 11), and Jesus was called a Child (*paidion*, vv. 9, 11) rather than a newborn Infant (*brephos*, *Luke 2:12*).”³
- The Magi had been on an extended journey which accounts for the timing of their arrival.

Who were these wise men? From where did they originate?

How did they know to look for the King of the Jews

¹ Richards 527.

² Ibid.

³ *TBKC-NT* 20.

- It is impossible to determine an exact answer to this question.
 - Most likely, these wise men were “Gentiles of high position from a country, perhaps Parthia, northeast of Babylon, who were given a special revelation by God of the birth of the King of the Jews.”
 - “This special revelation may simply have been in the sky, as might be indicated by their title (specialists in astronomy) and by the fact they referred to a star which they saw. Or this revelation could have come through some contact with Jewish scholars who had migrated to the East with copies of Old Testament manuscripts.”⁴
- Could there have been a “Daniel Connection”?

What led the wise men to come seeking the baby born King of the Jews?

Herod the Great—King of Judea

Why was Herod troubled by the news shared by the wise men from the east?

- To understand Herod’s mindset, we have to understand some of his family background.
 - “Herod was not the rightful king from the line of David. In fact he was not even a descendant of Jacob, but was descended from Esau and thus was an Edomite... This fact caused most of the Jews to hate him and never truly to accept him as king... If someone had been rightfully born king, then Herod’s job was in jeopardy.”⁵
 - So how did Herod become the King of Judea? “Herod’s father had attached himself to Julius Caesar’s party, been made a Roman citizen, and appointed procurator (ruler) of Judea. Herod and his brothers were given government roles, but a decade of battling followed before Herod was proclaimed king of Judea by Rome, and was able to enforce his rule. As king, Herod was both brutal and decisive, punishing or executing his enemies, and rewarding his friends. Rivals were murdered.”⁶

⁴ TBKC-NT 21.

⁵ TBKC-NT 21-22.

⁶ Richards 528.

- “While Herod’s power was growing, his control over himself and his family was slipping. Herod had married 10 wives and had a number of sons. While these sons schemed to gain the throne, his wives hatched plots and counterplots. Herod became more and more suspicious and paranoid... Herod finally had the two sons of his favorite wife, Mariamne, executed by strangulation in the very city where he had married their mother 30 years earlier. Antipater, Herod’s oldest son and designated heir, tried to poison his father and was put in chains.”⁷
- Now an old man with a fatal disease, Herod is still grasping to maintain power and control over the people of Judea. The threat of a new born king of the Jews only fueled his suspicions.

What did Herod do as a result of his paranoia?

- He sought the counsel of the scribes and Pharisees as to what the Old Testament taught about the birthplace of the Messiah.
 - Why didn’t somebody get excited about this possibility?
- He shared this information with the wise men.
 - He asked them to return to him and tell him where the one born King of the Jews was located.
 - He also inquired about the time frame in which the star appeared.
- He killed all the male children 2 years old and under in the area of Bethlehem.

(THIS SECTION COMPLETED ON 10/28/2018)

⁷ Ibid.

Encounter with the Christ Child

How were the wise men able to find the Christ child?

What are some unusual things about this?

- Directions
 - Told by the scribes and Pharisees that the Messiah was to be born in Bethlehem.
 - “The star they had seen in the East now reappeared and led them to a specific house in Bethlehem where they found the Child Jesus.
- There were several unusual things about the star that they were following.
 - “Bethlehem is about five miles south of Jerusalem. ‘Stars’ (i.e. planets) naturally travel from east to west across the heavens, not from north to south. Could it be that ‘the star’ which the Magi saw and which led them to a specific house was the Shekinah glory of God? That same glory had led the children of Israel through the wilderness for 40 years as a pillar of fire and cloud.”¹
 - “All other efforts to explain this star are inadequate (such as a conjunction of Jupiter, Saturn, and Mars; a supernova; a comet; etc.).

What did the wise men do once they found Jesus?

- They worshiped the Christ child.
 - They fell down and worshiped Him.
 - “Their worship was heightened by the giving of gifts . . . gold . . . incense and . . . myrrh. These were gifts worthy of a king and this act by Gentile leaders pictures the wealth of the nations which will someday be completely given to the Messiah.”²
- The Significance of the Three Gifts
 - There are some that see great significance in the character of the gifts that were given by the wise men to the Christ child. People often see the gifts as symbols:
 - Gold – representing His deity

¹ TBKC-NT 22.

² Ibid.

- Incense – representing the fragrance of His life
- Myrrh – representing His fatal sacrifice because it was used for embalming
- “These gifts were obviously the means by which Joseph took his family to Egypt and sustained them there until Herod died.”³

*In what unique way did the Holy Spirit choose to communicate in Matthew 2?
List all the instances where He worked in this way?*

- The Holy Spirit warned of impending danger multiple times through dreams.
 - Matthew 2:12 – the wise men were warned in a dream to not return to Herod.
 - Matthew 2:13 – Joseph was warned in a dream to flee to Egypt with his family.
 - Matthew 2:19 – Joseph was told in a dream that it was okay to return to Israel.
 - Matthew 2:22 – Joseph was warned in a dream to go to Galilee, not Judea.

- These were not the first time that the Lord communicated to Joseph through a dream.
 - Matthew 1:20
 - Why do you think God communicated to these men in this way? How did God normally communicate to His people?
 - God normally communicated through His prophets, but it has been about 400 years since God had raised up a prophet to speak to His people.
 - This time between the Old Testament prophets and the birth of Christ is referred to as the Intertestamental Period or *Silent Period* of biblical history.
 - It is my opinion that:
 - These were very important messages that needed to be heeded and miraculously speaking to a person in a dream would get his attention.
 - God chose to communicate so often through dreams here in Matthew 1-2 because it was the most expeditious way to communicate with Joseph and the wise men.
 - These heavenly visions occurred in Galilee, Judea, Egypt and Israel.

³ Ibid.

B. Fulfilling Old Testament Prophecies

What events in Matthew 2 were fulfilling Old Testament prophecy?

- Jesus being born as “king of the Jews” (2:2) – Jeremiah 23:5-6
 - ⁵“Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, and he shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. ⁶In his days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell securely. And this is the name by which he will be called: ‘The Lord is our righteousness.’”
 - “The promised Messiah of the Jews was to be God and man. He is called in this context ‘The Lord Our Righteousness’ (v.6), and was to be born of David’s line.”⁴
- A star led revealed the time and place of the Messiah’s birth (2:2) – Numbers 24:17
 - “I see him, but not now;
I behold him, but not near:
a star shall come out of Jacob,
and a scepter shall rise out of Israel;
it shall crush the forehead of Moab
and break down all the sons of Sheth.”
- Jesus was born in Bethlehem (2:6a) – Micah 5:2
 - “In context that Old Testament prophecy speaks of the Messiah, whose origins lie hidden in eternity. He is to rule in Israel in the name of Yahweh, and to be great to the ends of the earth. It is through this Person that Israel is to find peace.”⁵
- Jesus would shepherd the people of Israel (2:6b) – Ezekiel 34:23
 - “And I will set up over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he shall feed them: he shall feed them and be their shepherd.”
- Kings of foreign lands would bring gifts to the Messiah (2:11) – Psalm 72:10-11
 - ¹⁰May the kings of Tarshish and of the coastlands
render him tribute;
may the kings of Sheba and Seba

⁴ Richards 527.

⁵ Richards 527.

bring gifts!

¹¹ May all kings fall down before him,
all nations serve him!

- The Messiah was to come out of Egypt (2:15) – Hosea 11:1
 - “When Israel was a child, I loved him,
and out of Egypt I called my son.”
- Mourning the death of the children 2 years old and down (2:17-18) – Jeremiah 31:15
 - Thus says the LORD:
“A voice is heard in Ramah,
lamentation and bitter weeping.
Rachel is weeping for her children;
she refuses to be comforted for her children,
because they are no more.”
- Mirrors the directions given to Moses to return to Egypt (2:20) – Exodus 4:19
 - And the LORD said to Moses in Midian, “Go back to Egypt, for all the men who were seeking your life are dead.”
- Jesus’ home town was Nazareth, making Him a Nazarene (2:23) –
 - “The fact that the family moved to Nazareth was once again said to be in fulfillment of prophecy (Matt. 2:23). However, the words **He will be called a Nazarene**, were not directly spoken by any Old Testament prophet, though several prophecies come close to this expression.”⁶
 - “Isaiah said the Messiah would be ‘from [Jesse’s] roots’ like ‘a branch’ (Isaiah 11:1) ‘Branch’ is the Hebrew word *neser*, which has consonants like those in the word ‘Nazarene’ and which carry the idea of having an insignificant beginning.”⁷
 - “Since Matthew used the plural **prophets**, perhaps his idea was not based on a specific prophecy but on the idea that appeared in a number of prophecies concerning Messiah’s despised character... [T]hose who lived in Nazareth were thought of as compromisers who consorted with the enemy, the Romans. Therefore to call one ‘a Nazarene’ was to use a term of contempt.”⁸
 - Consider John 1:46 – ““Can anything good come out of Nazareth?”

⁶ TBKC-NT 23.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

These verses show how that Jesus' first coming literally fulfilled prophecy, but people did not recognize Him as the Messiah immediately. How likely do you think that we will make the same mistakes as we look for His second coming?

How likely is it that when Jesus returns the second time, He will do what modern writers on prophecy say He will do? Why or why not?

(THIS SECTION COMPLETED ON 11/4/2018)

Part Two: Early Ministry of the Messiah

III. Introduction to the Messiah (3:1 – 4:11)

A. The Forerunner of Christ

First Impressions of John the Baptizer

What do we know of John the Baptizer?

- We find him in Matthew “preaching in the wilderness”
 - Matthew quotes from the book of Isaiah (Isa. 40: 3)
 - This is another example of Old Testament prophecy being fulfilled throughout the Gospel of Matthew.
- We find John wearing camel hair clothing and wearing a leather belt. We also know that his diet consisted of locusts and wild honey (Matt 3:4).
 - This type of wardrobe and diet was not normal at this time.
 - In fact, John would have resembled a prophet that we would find in the old testament more so than any of his contemporaries.
 - Note there is about a 400-year gap between the end of Malachi’s ministry in the Old Testament and the beginning of the New Testament.
- From the Gospel of Luke, we can gain additional insight regarding John.
 - He is the son of Zechariah, A Levitical priest. This would make John a Levite by Jewish tradition.
 - We don’t however find John acting like a priest as we might expect. “Perhaps like Habakkuk he was shaken by the ritualism and emptiness of the region of his day”¹
 - We see John’s response to the Sadducees and Pharisees calling them a brood of vipers which would seem to support this concept.
 - He is the son of Elizabeth
 - Elizabeth, was also a relative of Mary, Jesus’ mother, and therefore, John and Jesus would also be related.

¹ Richards 532

What significance or relation is there between Elijah the prophet and John the Baptist?

- Another prophecy, not quoted by Matthew reveals another messenger that would act as a Forerunner for the Messiah from Malachi.
 - Malachi 3:1 - “Behold, I send my messenger, and he will prepare the way before me. And the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple; and the messengers of the covenant in whom you delight, behold, he is coming, says the Lord of Hosts.”
 - We note though, that in Malachi 4:5 this “messenger” is named.
 - “Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the Lord’s come.”
- Similarities between John and Elijah
 - They dressed similarly
 - John in Camel hair clothing
 - Elijah wore a garment of hair (2 Kings 1:8)
 - Their ministries were located in the same area
 - John preached from the wilderness East of Jerusalem and near the Jordan River.
 - Elijah parted the Jordan and was taken up near it.
 - Their diets were even the same
 - John ate locusts and Honey
 - Elijah was instructed to go into the wilderness where the Ravens brought him bread and flesh in the mornings and evenings.
- There are some major problems with making John and Elijah out to be the same person though.
 - According to the Gospel of John (John 1:19-23), John the Baptist directly denies being Elijah
 - More importantly, John being Elijah would have required some sort of reincarnation or rebirth for Elijah. This wouldn’t be possible because Elijah never died (he is one of only two people mentioned in the Bible who were taken up directly to heaven).
 - Elijah is taken up to heaven in a whirlwind (2 Kings 2:11)
 - He couldn’t be born again.
 - At Jesus transfiguration (an event recorded in all three synoptic gospels (Matt 17:1-8; Mark 9:2-8; Luke 9:28-36)) Elijah the prophet is there.
 - Not John the Baptist.
 - Elijah and John cannot be the same person

- Note that Jesus does say in Matthew 11:14 that “if [people] are willing to accept it, [John the Baptist] is Elijah who is to come”
 - This isn’t a contradiction though, because Jesus is saying that he served in the same role that Elijah will serve in his own second coming.
 - None of the contemporaries listening to Jesus say this would have thought that Elijah was resurrected or reincarnated (because he didn’t die).
 - Even King Herod (not a Jew) speaks about John the Baptist and Elijah as two separate persons in Mark 6:14-16
- The significance then is that while John the Baptist and Elijah play similar roles in preparing the way for Christ, they are separate and therefore too the prophecies found in Isaiah and Malachi are separate.

B. The Baptism of Christ

Significance of Baptism

What is the contemporary significance of Baptism?

- Contemporary Baptisms
 - Signify to everyone witnessing that a person had died with Christ to their sinfulness and been restored through Christ by accepting Him as a personal savior.
 - Baptisms are a public proclamation
 - Baptisms symbolize the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ.
- John however was not calling for a Baptism like the ones we see today.
 - There were no Baptisms of Salvation, like what we can see today because there was not yet a savior who could rescue us.
 - John was preparing a way for the one who would come after him (Jesus).
 - Instead, John was calling people to take part in a Baptism of Confession.
 - Matthew 3:6 demonstrates that those who were being baptized in the River Jordan were also confessing their sins.
 - Matthew 3:11 makes it clear that John was baptizing with water for repentance.

What are the differences between a Baptism of Repentance and Baptism of Salvation?

- Repentance was called for by both John and Jesus
 - To Repent (Greek, *metanoia*) means to change one's mind and attitude. This is a decision that should literally change one's direction in life.
 - John's message was to believe in the one who is greater than himself, who is Jesus, and prepare by repenting (changing directions) back onto a path that was in accord with God's word.
 - We repent today as we acknowledge our sinfulness and need for a savior. The difference is that today, salvation has already been purchased on our own behalf.

- Major differences
 - There is no security in a baptism of repentance.
 - The problem with cleaning something up is that it can become dirty again.
 - John warns those he baptized to bear fruit in "keeping" with repentance in Matthew 3:8
 - Salvation offers us security and freedom from the bondage of sin.

If repentance didn't offer permanent security, why did the people bother with it?

- John offered warnings against those who failed to repent.
 - He compared them to the dust that settles off of wheat that can be separated simply by tossing it up in the air. The picture created separates out the religious people who either had or had no substance.
 - Specifically, John was speaking towards the spiritual elitists who were busy playing the politics game in the Sanhedrin and elsewhere.
 - These people thought they were safe – because they "have Abraham as [their] father".
 - John's reminder to them is that privilege and placement on earth, won't matter in eternity.

- These warnings are not irrelevant for contemporary application.

- Just because some people are able to make their way to church each week, maybe three times a week, it does not necessarily mean they are continually allowing their path to be corrected to point towards God.

Jesus' Submission to Baptism

Did Jesus need to repent of sinfulness?

- No!
- We know Jesus did not need to repent of any sin because he was without sin all together. He was God from the beginning.

Why would he consent to a Baptism of Repentance if he had nothing to repent of?

- First, Jesus is endorsing the Baptism of Repentance that John was calling for.
 - Like contemporary baptisms that symbolize salvation, Jesus endorses John's teaching that confessing one's sinfulness and need for a savior is a part of salvation.
- This is the moment where Jesus launches his public ministry
 - Jesus' baptism is the starting place for his public ministry.
 - Some would say that the three trials that he faces in the desert are where his ministry begins; but, through his Baptism, he legitimizes the work of the Forerunner, John the Baptist.
- Jesus was identifying with the sinfulness of the people he had come to save.
 - Because Jesus had no sin, there was no reason for him to repent or take part in a baptism that symbolized repentance. By doing so though, Jesus identified with the sinfulness of all man which made the baptism of salvation become possible.
 - Jesus' public ministry begins the same way that it ended, with He without sin identifying/becoming sin, so that God's relationship with man could be restored.

(THIS SECTION COMPLETED ON 11/25/2018)

C. The Temptations of Christ

Matthew 4:1-11

In the first section of Matthew 4, we find the account in Scripture of the temptation of Jesus Christ. Just before this at the end of chapter three, Jesus is introduced to the public for the first time at his baptism. Richards notes, “The baptism of Jesus launched His public ministry. But it did even more than that. It demonstrated how fully Christ as a Man identified Himself with humanity. One of the central doctrines of the Christian faith is that of *Incarnation*.”¹ He goes on to say that “God, in the person of the Child of promise would fully identify Himself as a human being. In every way this promised individual would be God, yet would be God *with us*.”²

Here at His baptism, Jesus’ divine origin is also confirmed—the Holy Spirit anointed Him by descending upon Him in the likeness of a dove and God the Father spoke from heaven confirming that Jesus was and is the Son of God. This is extremely important because it is immediately contrasted with Jesus’ identification with humanity in His temptations. Richards stated, “If the baptism of Jesus impresses us with the complete identification of the Saviour with us in our humanity, His temptation stretches our minds to grasp the depths to which Jesus stooped.”³

The Kenosis (or Emptying) of Christ

What is the kenosis of Christ? Why is it important?

- *Kenosis* refers to the emptying or self-humbling of Jesus.
 - “The act of the incarnation is described by the strong word *ekenōsen* (English, *kenosis*), from *kenōō*, meaning “to empty.”⁴
 - The primary passage that teaches this is Philippians 2:5-11.
⁵ Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, ⁶ who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷ but **emptied himself**, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. ⁸ And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. ⁹ Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰ so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹ and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

¹ Richards 533.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid 534.

⁴ Walvoord, John. *Jesus Christ Our Lord*. (Location: Publisher, Year) 139.

- Various renderings of *ekenōsen* in Philippians 2:7:
 - KJV – “made himself of no reputation”
 - NIV – “made himself nothing”
 - NLT – “gave up his divine privileges”
 - NCV – “gave up his place with God”
 - AMP – “emptied Himself [without renouncing or diminishing His deity, but only temporarily giving up the outward expression of divine equality and His rightful dignity]”
 - The vast majority of English translations follow the literal translation found in the ESV—“emptied himself.”
- The exact meaning of *kenosis* is hotly debated among theologians. An excellent source for more information on this subject is John Walvoord’s book, *Jesus Christ Our Lord*.
- A clear understanding of this concept is important because it is important to grasp who Jesus was while He was here on earth; so for our purposes here, we will simply focus on the best understanding of the doctrine of *kenosis* rather than all the different viewpoints.
 - **PRESUPPOSITION** – “Christ did not give up any divine attribute or any essential quality of deity in becoming man.”⁵
 - **CLAIM #1** – “the humiliation of Christ consisted in the veiling of His preincarnate glory. It was necessary to give up the outer appearance of God in order to take upon Himself the form of Man.”⁶
 - **CLAIM #2** – “the union of Christ to an unglorified humanity unquestionably involved divine condescension and was a necessary factor in His ultimate humiliation on the cross.”⁷
 - **CLAIM #3** – even though the incarnate Christ did not surrender “the relative attributes of omnipresence, omnipotence and omniscience, He did embark upon a program where it was necessary to submit to a voluntary nonuse of these attributes in order to obtain His objectives. Christ does not seem to have ever exercised His divine attributes on His own behalf...”⁸

⁵ Walvoord 143.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

- “He did not use His divine knowledge to make His own path easier.
- “He suffered all the inconveniences of His day even though in His divine omniscience He had full knowledge of every human device ever conceived for human comfort.”⁹
- **CLAIM #4** – “on two specific occasions Christ is revealed to have performed His miracles in the power of the Holy Spirit (Matt. 12:28; Luke 4:14-18). In these instances Christ chose voluntarily to be dependent upon the power of the Father and the Holy Spirit to perform His miracles.”¹⁰
- **CONCLUSION** – “The act of kenosis as stated in Philippians 2 may therefore be properly understood to mean that Christ surrendered no attribute of Deity, but that He did voluntarily restrict their independent use in keeping with His purpose of living among men and their limitations.”¹¹

How is this ‘emptying’ process described in Philippians 2?

- “The ‘emptying’ process Paul described is one of progressive humiliation.”¹²
- Philippians 2:7-8
 - “emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant”
 - “born in the likeness of men”
 - “becoming obedient to the point of death”
 - “even death on a cross”

The Temptations of Jesus

Considering all that we have learned about the kenosis of Christ, what are we to assume about Jesus’ temptations?

- Jesus was tempted as a man—His divine attributes were not at play in His temptation.

⁹ Walvoord 144.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Richards 534.

- “When a physically weakened Jesus, after 40 days of fasting in the desert, was tempted by Satan, He did not seek strength from His divine nature to resist. The very first words of Jesus in response to Satan’s initial temptation sets the tone.”¹³
- Matthew 4:3-4
³And the tempter came and said to him, “If you are the **Son of God**, command these stones to become loaves of bread.” ⁴But he answered, “It is written,
“**Man** shall not live by bread alone,
but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.” *(emphasis added)*
- Jesus’ response was as a man.
 - Satan called Him the Son of God (as He was), but Jesus responded by referring to Himself as a man. He was dealing with everything that any one of us might be dealing with after 40 days in the desert with no food.
 - Arno Gaebelein wrote, “Hunger is a part of His humanity. Was there or is there in the Word of God one word which could have told Him to change stones into bread? ... had God given anywhere one word to Him, who had come to do His will that He was to end His suffering as man, His hunger by a miracle? Nowhere is to be found such a direction. If He had entered upon the suggestion of Satan He would have acted according to His own will and that would have been the will of the enemy.”¹⁴

What were the three temptations of Jesus?

- According to Matthew 4:
 1. Turning stones into bread.
 2. Throw yourself down from the pinnacle of the temple.
 3. The Kingdoms of the world if he would bow down to Satan.
- According to Luke 4:
 1. Turning stones into bread.
 2. The Kingdoms of the world if he would bow down to Satan.
 3. Throw yourself down from the pinnacle of the temple.
- In each gospel, the writer places the temptation in the order from the least to the most important based upon their purpose and target audiences.

¹³ Richards 534.

¹⁴ Gaebelein 89.

In this passage (Matthew 4:1-11), how many times was the Old Testament quoted? By whom?

- There are five Old Testament quotes in this passage:
 - “Man shall not live by bread alone.” (Deut 8:3)
 - “He will command his angels concerning you” (Psalm 91:11-12)
 - “On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone”
 - “You shall not put the Lord your God to the test” (Deut 6:16)
 - “You shall worship the Lord your God, and him only shall you serve.” (Deut 6:13)

- Only three of these Old Testament quotations were spoken by Jesus. The other two were spoken by Satan. What can we learn from this?
 - Satan knows the Bible better than we do.
 - He will try to twist the words of Scripture and distort their meaning (Gen 3:1ff).

Conclusion

In these temptations, Jesus was tempted in every way that we are tempted—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life. Hebrews 4:15 sums it up:

“For we do not have a high priest
who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses,
but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are,
yet without sin.”

(THIS SECTION COMPLETED ON 1/6/2019)

IV. The Ministry of Jesus Begins (4:12-25; 9:9-13)

After Jesus triumphed over Satan's temptations, the Bible records that "angels came and were ministering to him" (4:11). For certain, Jesus' human flesh was weak after 40 days in the wilderness without food. In most study Bibles, this next section of Scripture will be identified as the beginning of Jesus' public ministry. The Synoptic Gospels omit several early events in the public ministry of Jesus. These events are found in John 1:19 – 4:45 and include many familiar events in the life of Jesus including: John the Baptist identifying Jesus as the Messiah, the miracle of the water turned to wine at the wedding in Cana, the first cleansing of the temple, and the encounters with Nicodemus and the Samaritan woman at the well.

"There has been and is still a great deal of wrestling, so to speak, with these events as they are recorded in the different Gospels, to arrange them in a perfect chronological order, or, as it is said, to harmonize the Gospel record... To charge the writers of the Gospel with ignorance of certain facts is charging the Holy Spirit with it. In each Gospel the Holy Spirit makes prominent the events which are calculated to impress the specific teachings of the respective Gospels, and He has always arranged the events in such an order to suit Himself. Every Gospel is therefore to be studied and read separately from the others. They are in their contents not the mechanical reporting of the life of Jesus of Nazareth, but the spiritual unfolding of the blessed person and work of our Lord and Saviour as King of the Jews [in Matthew], servant in obedience [in Mark], Son of man [in Luke] and the Only-Begotten of the Father [in John]."¹

According to Matthew's account, Jesus' public ministry did not begin until John the Baptist had been arrested and imprisoned. "The reason for John's imprisonment was not presented here, but it was stated later (14:3)."² We find out later that Herod the tetrarch imprisoned John the Baptist because John had publicly condemned him for having an immoral relationship with Herodias, his sister-in-law. He wanted to execute him immediately but feared the backlash of the people of Jerusalem, so he just put him in prison. Later in Matthew 14, Herodias' daughter manipulated her father to execute John as a birthday promise to her. Not wanting to publicly renounce the promise made to his daughter, he carried out the beheading of this prophet.

A. Preaching in Galilee

When John the Baptist was arrested, where did Jesus go? Why?

- He withdrew into Galilee. "He went from Nazareth and settled in Capernaum (Luke 4:16-30 explains why he left Nazareth).
 - Luke 4:16-30 explains that Jesus went to His home town of Nazareth at the beginning of His public ministry. The people in the synagogue became angry as Jesus presented the eternal truth that He is the Messiah.

¹ Gaebelien 97.

² TBKC 27.

- In Luke 4:24, He proclaims, “Truly, I say to you, no prophet is acceptable in his hometown,” so Jesus moved on to live in the city of Capernaum.
- The purpose for Jesus’ return to Galilee was to fulfill the prophecy of Isaiah “that light would come to this region.”
 - Isaiah 9:1-2 are quoted by Luke in verses 15-16.
 - Isaiah 9 also contains the famous passage, “For unto us a child is born...” (verse 6), which is a clear prophecy of the Messiah.
- It is interesting that the “light” of the Messiah would go first to the “most oppressed, the darkest and the most corrupt province.”³
 - All of the Jewish elite despised Galilee. “An inhabitant of Galilee was looked upon as... an ignorant countryman.”⁴
 - Consider the account from John 1 of Jesus’ call of Philip and Nathanael.
 - ⁴⁵ Philip found Nathanael and said to him, “We have found him of whom Moses in the Law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.”
 - ⁴⁶ Nathanael said to him, “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” Philip said to him, “Come and see.”

What was the message that Jesus preached in Galilee?

- Verse 17 – “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”
- This was the same message that had been preached by John the Baptist.
- “The two fold message of John was now proclaimed by the Messiah... Repentance was mandatory if fellowship with God was to be enjoyed.”⁵

B. Selection of His Disciples

Where did Jesus find these first four disciples?

- The simple answer is that they were fishing in and mending nets near the Sea of Galilee when he found them, but this is not the first time Jesus met these men.

³ Gaebelien 99.

⁴ Ibid 100.

⁵ TBKC 27.

- In John 1:35-42, we find that Andrew was one of the disciples of John the Baptist.
- He was with John on the day that he identified Jesus as the “Lamb of God.”
- I always struggled to understand how these men could just drop everything to follow Jesus when it seemed that he had just met them.
 - Understanding that their encounter with Jesus in John 1 occurred before John the Baptist was arrested and their call in Matthew 4 occurred after his arrest, helps me to understand how they could follow Him.
 - They knew exactly what they were doing and who they were following when Jesus called them to follow Him in Matthew 4.

What were the occupations of these four men?

- They were fishermen!
 - Peter and Andrew were fishing at the moment Jesus called them.
 - James and John were mending their nets when Jesus called.
 - “They were not from the class of wise men, learned in the written and oral law, but they were fishers.”⁶
- 1 Corinthians 1:26-29 – “²⁶For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. ²⁷But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; ²⁸God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, ²⁹so that no human being might boast in the presence of God.”

What did Jesus tell the men to do?

- He told them to “follow” Him.
 - Their obedience was immediate and without question.
 - Imagine all the questions we might have had...
 - Where are we going? What do I need to pack? How long will we be gone?

⁶ Gaebelein 101.

- What about all our fishing equipment? What should I do with that?
 - How will we support ourselves? Where will we get food and clothes?
 - What about our father? Doesn't the Bible say to honor father and mother?
- We often overcomplicate the issue of obedience with too much concern for temporal things. We need to focus more on things with eternal value!
- He told them that they would become “fishers of men.”
 - “The message of the coming kingdom needed to be proclaimed widely so that many could hear and could become, by repentance, subjects of His kingdom.”⁷
 - They were going to “cast their nets” to bring in as many as possible to the kingdom.
 - Bringing the souls of men and women all over the world into the kingdom of God—that is something of eternal value!

The only other record of Jesus calling His disciples in the Book of Matthew is found in chapter nine. What were the circumstances of this event in Matthew 9:9?

- A tax collector named Matthew was sitting at his tax collector's booth when Jesus called out to him saying, “Follow me.” Just like the others, he immediately obeyed.
- Fishermen were not highly regarded in the culture of that day, but tax collectors were hated because they were seen as traitors—placing their allegiance with Rome.

C. Ministry to the Multitudes

“The work of the Lord was not limited to preaching. His deeds were as important as His words, for a great question in the minds of the Jews would be, ‘Can this One claiming to be Messiah perform the works of Messiah?’ Matthew 4:23 is an important summary statement crucial to Matthew's theme.”⁸ There are three aspects of ministry done by Jesus here in Matthew 4:23—teaching, preaching, and healing diseases.

⁷ TBKC 27.

⁸ Ibid 28.

Jesus' Teaching Ministry

Where was Jesus' teaching ministry done?

- This ministry of teaching was “exclusively done in their synagogues.”⁹
- By teaching only in synagogues, the places where Jews gathered for worship, Jesus' teaching ministry was focused specifically on Jewish people.
- Jesus went to synagogues throughout the region of Galilee.

What was the content of Jesus' teaching?

- When Jesus taught in the synagogues, he spent time “expounding the scriptures, the law and the prophets.”¹⁰
- The Gospel of Luke gives further information about Jesus' teaching in Luke 4:16-21.
¹⁶And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up. And as was his custom, he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and he stood up to read. ¹⁷And the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written,
¹⁸“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me
to proclaim good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives
and recovering of sight to the blind,
to set at liberty those who are oppressed,
¹⁹to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.”
²⁰And he rolled up the scroll and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. ²¹And he began to say to them, “Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.”

Jesus' Preaching Ministry

Where was Jesus' preaching ministry done? And to whom did he preach?

- Most likely, Jesus' preaching ministry was primarily done in public settings.
- It is also likely that He was preaching to large crowds of people—both Jews and Gentiles—“from Galilee and the Decapolis, and from Jerusalem and Judea, and from beyond Jordan.”

⁹ Gaebelein 103.

¹⁰ Ibid.

What was the content of Jesus' preaching?

- He continued to proclaim the gospel of the kingdom.
- “His message was that God was moving to fulfill His covenantal program with Israel and to establish His kingdom on the earth.”¹¹

Jesus' Healing Ministry

What was the effect of Jesus' healing ministry?

- It made Him famous.
- It kept Him very busy.
- It provided validation for His claim to be the Messiah.
 - “This authenticated that He is indeed the Prophet, for His words were backed up by authenticating signs.
 - “All these actions should have convinced the Jewish people that God was moving in history to accomplish His purposes.
 - “They were responsible to get ready by repenting from their sins and acknowledging Jesus as the Messiah.”¹²

(THIS SECTION COMPLETED ON 1/13/2019)

¹¹ TBKC 28.

¹² Ibid.

V. Teaching Discourse #1 – The Sermon on the Mount (5:1 – 7:29)

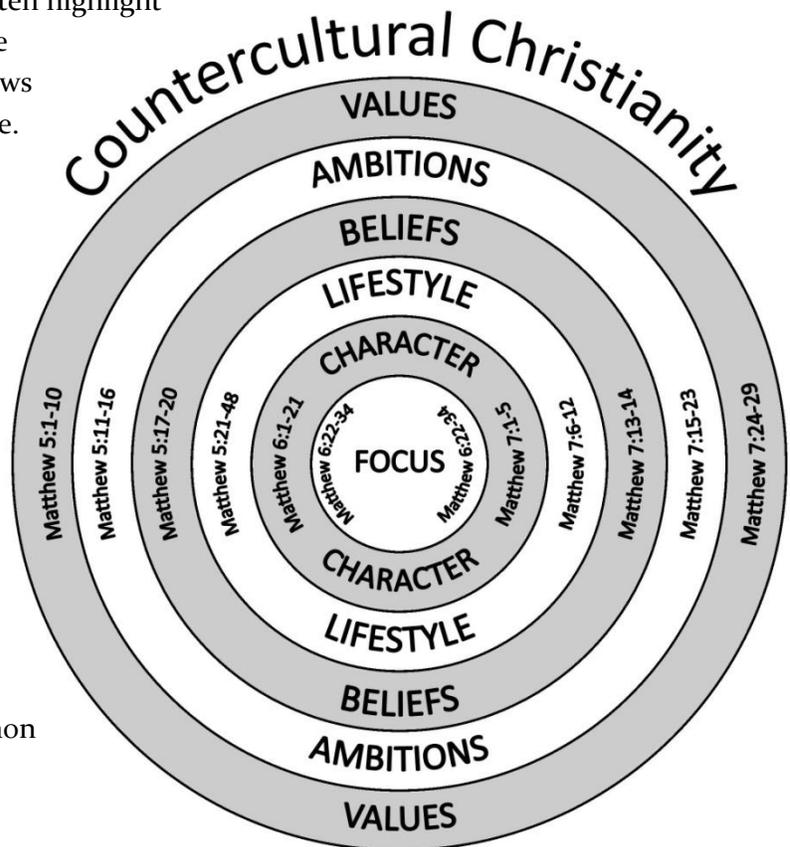
We find ourselves today, living in a society that scoffs at what they consider an outdated belief system. They rightly accuse us of being hypocritical because what we say we believe and the way we live our lives do not seem to correspond. So what will it take to change their view of Christianity? What will it take to change the world around us?

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus challenged the culture of His day and His words are continuing to challenge us even now. I believe that our lives must be defined by living counter to the cultural and social norms of society today. I believe that we must become 'Countercultural' Christians!

What does that mean? I believe that it means that every aspect of our lives must be changed—be brought under the submission of Christ. When this happens, our VALUES will change; our AMBITIONS will change; our BELIEFS will change; our LIFESTYLE will change; our CHARACTER will change. In fact, the FOCUS of our lives will change!

No one likes change! From a cultural point of view, it is hard to see the need for change if you have never spent any time outside your home culture. Having lived outside my 'home' culture for over half of my adult life, I have learned to recognize differences from one culture to another. What I have discovered—after taking the time to try to understand them—is that these differences are not always bad; in fact, they will often highlight flaws or short-comings in my home culture. It is when we see these flaws that we will be motivated to change.

So as we consider this first major teaching discourse of Jesus, our goal is to highlight Christ's teachings about our values, ambitions, beliefs, lifestyle, character and the focus of our lives. I want to share an info graphic that will hopefully help you to understand the structure we will be using to help understand the big picture of this teaching session. This delineates the corresponding sections of the sermon and the way in which we will be considering each section.



Counter-cultural Values: Wise and Foolish Builders

Matthew 7:24-29

In Jesus' teaching on the wise and foolish builders, contrast these builders in relationship to their character and the consequences.

- Sensible Builder (Wise Man)
 - Characteristics – listens to Jesus; obeys by doing;
 - Consequences – able to withstand the rain, floods and wind;
- Short-sighted Builder (Foolish Man)
 - Characteristics – hears the truth; does not obey it;
 - Consequences – destroyed by the rain, floods and wind;

As you think about the mindset of each builder, what were their primary concerns?

- Sensible Builder (Wise Man)
 - Long-term commitment
 - Quality construction
 - Perseverance in the difficult building process
- Short-sighted Builder (Foolish Man)
 - Short-term payoff
 - Quick construction
 - Desire to have an easy building process

God is in the process of 'building' our lives—what kind of builder will you be?

Counter-cultural Values: Beatitudes and Bad-attitudes

Matthew 5:1-10

God wants to *change* us from the inside out. He wants to change our system of values. What we value in life will determine how we live, what we do, what we buy and how we interact with others. To show us what we should **value** in life, Jesus shared what we now call 'The Beatitudes'—the attitudes we need to be blessed by God.

What are the Beatitudes of Christ? What are some correlating 'Bad-attitudes' that the world seems to value?

Beatitudes

- Poor in spirit
- Those who mourn
- The meek
- Hunger and thirst for righteousness
- The merciful
- Pure in heart
- The peacemakers
- Persecuted for righteousness

Bad-attitudes

- Arrogant and cocky
- Apathetic and cold
- Abusive and cruel
- Addicted to wicked and sinful things
- Austere and compassion-less
- Adulterous desires
- Agitators and problem makers
- Advanced for unrighteousness

Do any of the 'Bad-attitudes' describe you?

- Do you find yourself...
 - being an instigator and always keeping things stirred up?
 - looking out for yourself first, or promoting yourself above others?
 - looking for ways to get ahead—no matter who gets hurt in the process?
 - to be indifferent when people are hurting, and thankful it's not you?
 - speaking to people with a harsh tone of voice, or saying hurtful things?
 - being unforgiving or overly strict?
 - lacking compassion for others situations?
 - drawn into lustful thoughts, fantasies or emotional affairs?
 - in a full-blown addiction to gambling, porn, alcohol or drugs?
- If you found yourself saying 'Yes!' to any of those questions, then your VALUES are out of whack and you need the Holy Spirit of God to change you from the inside out!

Counter-cultural Ambitions: Known by Their Actions

Matthew 7:15-23

How would you describe a person with typical, worldly ambitions?

- It depends on who you ask!
 - Ambition is “an earnest desire for some type of achievement or distinction, as power, honor, fame, or wealth, and the willingness to strive for its attainment.”
 - Henry Wadsworth wrote: “Ambition is so powerful a passion in the human breast, that however high we reach we are never satisfied.”
- Typically, to refer to someone as being ambitious carries with it a negative connotation.

How did Jesus describe a person with unhealthy ambitions? (Matthew 7:15-23)

- Verse 15
 - False Prophets in Sheep’s Clothing – portraying themselves as something they are not; a con-man or scam artist;
 - Ravenous Wolves – their only concern is satiating their own appetites; no concern for the well-being of others;
- Verses 16-20
 - Recognizable by the fruit of their lives.
 - A person’s true ambition will reveal itself if given enough time.

What does Jesus say will happen to these people with unhealthy ambitions?

- Verse 21 – Warned by God
- Verses 22-23 – Shamed and rejected by God

Counter-cultural Ambitions: Measure of Success

Matthew 5:10-16

Last week, we studied about 'The Beatitudes.' Jesus shared these things to show us what we should value in life—the attitudes we need to be blessed by God. This is the reason that Matthew 5:3-12 begin with the word, 'Blessed.' This word can be translated many different ways, but the idea is that these are the attitudes that we need to be blessed by God—to be happy.

According to Matthew 5:10-16, how is a believer to measure success?

- Verse 10 – Blessed (or happy) when persecuted.
- Verse 11-12 – Blessed (or happy) when verbally or physically assaulted.
- Verse 13 – Blessed (or happy) when creating a thirst for God in others. If a believer is unable to maintain his saltiness, he is a failure.
- Verse 14-15 – Blessed (or happy) when shining a light for all to see God.
- Verse 16 – Blessed (or happy) when bringing glory to God and not himself.

How can Jesus ask us to have these self-effacing ambitions for our lives?

- We are called to be Christ-followers!
 - Jesus came to give His life away, and He asks us to do the same!
 - Michael W. Smith – “Secret Ambition”
Nobody knew His secret ambition
Nobody knew His claim to fame
He broke the old rules steeped in tradition
He tore the holy veil away
Questioning those in powerful position
Running to those who called His name
But nobody knew His secret ambition
Was to give His life away
- We have a choice to make—live according to the world’s standards or by God’s standards.
 - Francesca Battistelli – “It’s Your Life”

It's your life
Whatcha gonna do?
The world is watching you
Everyday the choices you make
Say what you are and who
Your heart beats for

It's an open door
It's your life
To live the way that you believe
This is your opportunity
To let your life be one that
lights the way

- If you want to be that one that lights the way, you cannot have the same ambitions that the world flaunts! You must have counter-cultural ambitions! It's your life; whatcha gonna do?

(THIS SECTION COMPLETED ON 1/27/2019)

Counter-cultural Beliefs

Matthew 5:17-20

Last week, we studied about 'The Beatitudes.' Jesus shared these things to show us what we should value in life—the attitudes we need to be blessed by God. This is the reason that Matthew 5:3-12 begin with the word, 'Blessed.' This word can be translated many different ways, but the idea is that these are the attitudes that we need to be blessed by God—to be happy.

What did Jesus mean when he said, “I have come to fulfill the Law”?

- He is the anointed One—the promised Messiah and fulfillment of the promises of the Old Testament.
 - The idea behind this word “fulfill” goes beyond Jesus’ position as Messiah. It also has to do with action—the actual carrying out of the Law.
 - Jesus upheld the Law perfectly.
 - James 2:10 – “For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become guilty of all of it.”
- Thayer’s Greek Lexicon
 - This word talks about “universally and absolutely being fulfilled,” or in other words to cause God’s will—as made known by the Law—to be obeyed as it should be; and God’s promises given through the prophets to receive fulfillment.
 - Jesus was not just the fulfillment of the Law—He did what it said!
 - Because of His perfect obedience to the Law, He was able to become the perfect sacrifice for sin.

What is the Bible referring to when it talks about an “iota” and a “dot”?

- Other Translations of these concepts:
 - KJV – one jot or one tittle
 - AMP – smallest letter or stroke [of the pen]
 - NLT – not even the smallest detail

- This is referring to the smallest letter of the Hebrew alphabet.

Smallest Letter & Stroke

Matthew 5:18



*jot, yod, or
smallest Letter*



*tittle or stroke
- an extension or ornament*

What are some of the ways that God's commands are being relaxed in our society?

- Verse 19 – “whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments”
 - From the Greek word λυω meaning to “loosen, unbind, dissolve or relax.”
 - We understand the concept of breaking the Law. But what about relaxing the Law, setting aside the Law, and ignoring the Law?
 - God's Word is clear. God's Word is precise. There is no wavering there, but mankind has a tendency to 'relax' the Law. Why do we do that?
- Why do we act as if the explicit obedience to God's Word is unimportant?
 - Satan has been teaching us to do this since the Garden of Eden.
 - When he was tempting Eve, he asked her, “Did God really say that you could not eat this fruit or even touch it?” He questioned God's authority and twisted God's words all while making God's commands seem unimportant.
 - It was that little bit of relaxing of the Law that caused the downfall of all mankind.
- Had it been me in the garden with the serpent, would I have chosen to disregard God's commands and done what I wanted to do? I'm sure I would have—as would you. It is in our nature to want to relax the rules and see God's Law as irrelevant to what we want.

What are some of the ways that God's commands are being relaxed in our society today? How is the gospel being distorted?

- The Cake Mix Gospel
 - When making a cake, every ingredient is important. If we change one, or leave one out, it can change the final result (Pineapple Upside-down Cake).
 - When making a cake, the conditions in which the cake is baked is important. Things like elevation and humidity will affect the final product (Typhoon Cake).
 - Acts 18:24-26 – Apollos in the city of Ephesus; diligent follower of John the Baptist; what Apollos knew was good but it was insufficient; there was something missing.
 - There is a problem with some churches and preachers today. Many times, they want to leave out certain aspects of biblical teaching, and we cannot leave anything out (i.e. people are sinners who stand condemned to spend an eternity in hell; or the necessity of a blood sacrifice to appease the guilt of sin).

- The Cool Gospel
 - Jesus is our bro! Jesus is our buddy!
 - The Cool Jesus – from the 1999 movie, Dogma.
 - People are trying to portray Jesus Christ as a cool dude—a weed-smoking, beer-drinking, free-loving guy who loves everybody and says anything goes.
 - Marketing Jesus is cheap and powerless. We don't need to 'spin' the message we need to say it. We need to stop shaping Jesus in some misguided effort to make Him appealing. Jesus doesn't need to be like us; we need to be like Him.

- The Carnal Gospel (Prosperity Gospel / Health and Wealth Gospel)
 - What Jesus can do for me: health, wealth, happiness and prosperity?
 - Mark 8:31-35
 - God never promises us health, wealth and happiness—in fact, in James, God tells us to count it all joy when we experience trials and tribulations. That's when we know that God is at work in our lives. How self-serving was the gospel for the original disciples of Christ?



- How did Jesus' 12 disciples die?
 - Peter – crucified upside down
 - Andrew – crucified
 - James – beheaded
 - John – only one to die of natural causes
 - Philip – tortured then crucified
 - Bartholomew – beaten then beheaded
 - Matthew – killed with a spear
 - Thomas – killed with a spear
 - James the son of Alphaeus – stoned
 - Judas (not Iscariot) – stoned to death
 - Simon – crucified
 - Matthias – stoned to death

- The Careful Gospel
 - This is the gospel that says, “We don’t want to offend anyone...”
 - We don’t want to tell people that they’re sinners.
 - We don’t want to make someone feel uncomfortable.
 - We don’t want to be offensive, but we must not be afraid to speak the truth.
 - The philosophy is “keep ‘em comfortable and keep ‘em coming back!”

- The gospel without URGENCY is not the gospel!

2 Corinthians 6:2b (NLT) – “Indeed, the “right time” is now. Today is the day of salvation.”

What is the real, gospel message?

- Matthew 7:13-14 – ¹³Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. ¹⁴For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few.”

- Jesus tells us this clear message of the gospel just before his discourse about being aware of false prophets “who come to you in sheep’s clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves.”
- Trusting in Christ is a simple process, but it’s not easy! Because of that, those who find salvation are few.
- If we want to live counter-culturally in our beliefs, we must not be afraid to say that Jesus is THE way, THE truth, and THE life; and no one can go to the Father unless they go through Him and Him alone.
 - There is too much syncretism and universalism in the world today.
 - The world tells us that any old path will get you to God so long as you’re sincere in your beliefs. You can be sincere and you can be sincerely wrong.
 - It’s not about making people feel comfortable. It’s not about inclusivism. It’s about getting the truth of God’s Word to the world—no matter race, creed or ethnicity. There is only one way and His name is Jesus!

(THIS SECTION COMPLETED ON 2/6/2019)

Counter-cultural Lifestyle

Matthew 5:21-48

What is Christ's counter-cultural instruction for the way we should live our lives in the area of anger?

- Matthew 5:22 – three levels of anger: 1) do not get angry, 2) do not insult others, and 3) do not call other people names;
- Matthew 5:24 – reconcile with people you have problems with before you go to worship
- Matthew 5:25 – avoid anger to avoid ending up in court

What is Christ's counter-cultural instruction for the way we should live our lives in the area of lust?

- Matthew 5:28 – Jesus takes the law to not commit adultery to the next level—don't even look at a woman with lust;
- Matthew 5:29-30 – he suggests drastic measures to avoid this issue;
- 2018 Pornography Statistics (<https://www.charismanews.com/us/73208-15-statistics-about-the-church-and-pornography-that-will-blow-your-mind>)
- Illustration: “Dad will you take my data plan off my phone?”
- Accountability is the key!
- Jesus addressed the men looking at women, but in our world today, women are beginning to struggle with this issue also.

What is Christ's counter-cultural instruction for the way we should live our lives in the area of divorce?

- Matthew 5:32 – we've got to get beyond the idea that marriage is something that we will give a try to see if it will work out; there's no way out; we've got to resolve in our hearts that it will work.
- Matthew 19:5-8 – Moses allowed divorce because of the hardness of their hearts, but it was not that way from the beginning;

- The culture tells us that a cheating spouse does not deserve a second chance, but it is God's will that the bonds of marriage never be broken.
- We've got to get this mindset in our brains today:
If I marry, it is for life! That's God's design!
- What if I have had a divorce and now I'm remarried? What should I do? Stay married! Make it work! Do everything you can to stay together! That is living counter to the culture!
- We must get rid of the idea of disposable marriages.

What is Christ's counter-cultural instruction for the way we should live our lives in the area of swearing oaths?

- Matthew 5:33-35 – Do not swear an oath at all!
- Matthew 5:37 – Just tell the truth, and let your character and your lifestyle speak more loudly than words of swearing to God that something is true!
- I don't have to "swear to God" or "swear on somebody's grave" to convince people that I am telling the truth if my lifestyle has character.
- This is what it means to be a "man of your word."
Let your "yes" be "yes" and your "no" be "no."

What is Christ's counter-cultural instruction for the way we should live our lives in the area of retaliation?

- Matthew 5:39b – do not retaliate when faced with physical violence;
- We must not allow people to control or manipulate our emotions and cause us to respond in an ungodly manner.
- Romans 12:17-21
- We cannot be people who seek revenge—the world does but God is calling us to live at a higher level. He's calling us to live counter to the culture.

(THIS SECTION COMPLETED ON 2/24/2019)

Counter-cultural Lifestyle (Continued)

Matthew 5:41-48

What is Christ's counter-cultural instruction for the way we should live our lives in the area of selfishness?

- Matthew 5:41
- What is Jesus talking about when referring to “go an extra mile”?
 - The Roman government occupied Israel at this time, thus Roman soldiers were present anytime people were traveling from place to place.
 - According to Roman law, a soldier could commandeer anyone to carry all their equipment for them, but they could not force them to go more than one mile.
- Why would Jesus encourage them to go second mile?
 - Can you imagine the impression that it would make on the soldier if a person continued on with them even after they had fulfilled their legal obligation?
 - Jesus encourages us to not just comply with what we have to do, but go above and beyond our responsibility and it will make an impression on others!
 - Society today is extremely selfish of two closely related things—time and energy. We are all guilty of this at times. How selfish are we of our time and energy?
- The other thing we are selfish of is our possessions.
 - Matthew 5:40 – This is the same concept! If anyone is taking something away from you, give him that plus more.
 - Matthew 5:42 – We may not always have the money to give to help someone with their need, but let's not be selfish with what God has blessed us with. We need to be a river, not a reservoir, of blessing
 - Is it really worth losing our testimony over some temporal stuff?

What is Christ's counter-cultural instruction for the way we should live our lives in the area of dealing with difficult people?

- Matthew 5:43-44 – We must love our enemies and pray for our enemies.

- My prayers may not change those difficult people, but my persistent prayer for those people will change my attitude toward them!
- In loving difficult people, we are demonstrating the love of God to the world (Matthew 5:45).
- Matthew 5:46-47 – Showing love for one another here in the church is nothing to brag about—anybody can love somebody who loves them. God calls us to love people who hate us and treat us like trash. That is ‘loving’ in a way that is counter to the culture!

God is calling us to live in a way that will be different from everyone else in the world—to live counter-culturally. If I live this way, won't I get trampled on?

- Won't people walk all over me? If I don't look out for myself, then who will?
- People whose lives are not characterized by obedience to God's Word will not understand a counter-cultural philosophy of life.

Counter-cultural Lifestyle: Provision and Principle

Matthew 7:7-12

People will not understand why you are living a counter-cultural lifestyle. In Matthew 7:6, Jesus said, “Do not give dogs what is holy, and do not throw your pearls before pigs, lest they trample them underfoot and turn to attack you.” Thinking back to the question, “If I don't look out for myself, then who will?” we realize the answer to this in Matthew 7:7-11.

What must our attitude be when trying to live a counter-cultural lifestyle? (Matthew 7:7-11)

- Dependency upon God
- Desire for God
- Diligence in Pursuing God

In what way does Galatians 5:22-23 speak into a counter-cultural lifestyle?

How does the fruit of the Spirit contradict the attitudes that Jesus dealt with in Matthew 5?

| | | | |
|------------------|--------------|---------------------|------------|
| Anger | (Mt 5:21-26) | Gentleness | (Gal 5:23) |
| Lust | (Mt 5:27-30) | Self-control | (Gal 5:23) |
| Divorce | (Mt 5:31-32) | Faithfulness | (Gal 5:22) |
| Swearing Oaths | (Mt 5:33-37) | Goodness | (Gal 5:22) |
| Retaliation | (Mt 5:38-40) | Patience / Kindness | (Gal 5:22) |
| Selfishness | (Mt 5:41-42) | Love / Joy | (Gal 5:22) |
| Difficult People | (Mt 5:43-47) | Love / Peace | (Gal 5:22) |

The simple resolution to all of these things is to live by the “Golden Rule.” What is that?

- “Do to others as you would like them to do to you.”
- When others around you see you act in this way, they will see that you are different!

(THIS SECTION COMPLETED ON 3/17/2019)

Countercultural Character

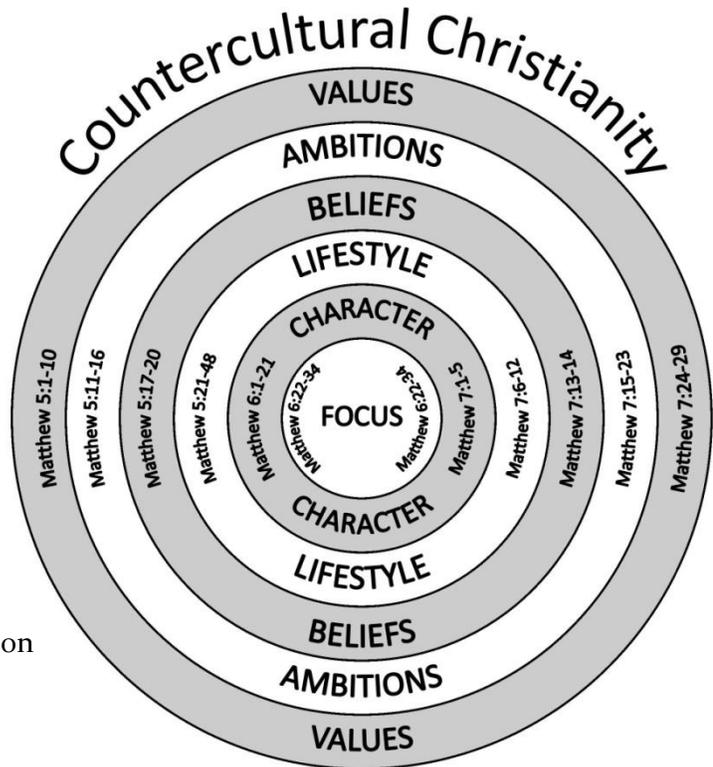
Matthew 6:1-21

What are some of the issues that Jesus dealt with here in Matthew 6?

- Generosity – 6:1-4
- Prayer – 6:5-15
- Discretion in Fasting – 6:16-18
- Treasures/Desires – 6:19-21
- Commitment/Devotion – 6:22-24
- Anxiety/Worry – 6:25-34

What issue is Jesus dealing with in Matthew 7:1-5?

- Being judgmental.
- This is an issue of a person's character.
- A person of countercultural character will not be like the person described here.



When we look at our Countercultural Christianity diagram, what do we notice about these passages?

- The first four of these issues deal with a person's character.
- The last two deal with the focus of a person's life.

Anonymity in Generosity (6:1-4)

How does Jesus describe the philanthropists of His day?

- He called them hypocrites—from the secular Greek (ὕποκριτής) meaning “an actor, stage player” and in Biblical Greek meaning “a dissembler, pretender, hypocrite.”¹
- They did good things to be seen by others.
- If this is their attitude, the Bible says that they have already received all their reward for their good deeds.

¹ Source: <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strongs=G5273&t=KJV> accessed March 24, 2019.

How does Jesus describe generosity that is countercultural?

- Do not draw attention to yourself.
- Do not seek the praise of others for what you have done.
- Matthew 6:3-4 conveys the idea that giving “should be so secret that the giver readily forgets what he gave. In this way he demonstrates true righteousness before God and not before people, so God in turn will reward him. One cannot be rewarded, as the Pharisees expected, by both man and God.”²
- This type of giving has no strings attached!

Considering this teaching about anonymity in giving, how should this affect tributes made to donors (i.e. everything from having one’s name on a building to a donation sticker in a book)?

- [Allow time for people to answer from the audience.]
- I don’t have a final answer for this issue, but it definitely makes me think.
- In general terms, I think there is a difference between someone naming something in honor of someone’s generosity and a person’s gift being contingent upon appropriate homage being given for the gift.
- We must not forget who owns all that we have and for whom our gift is being given.
- Simply put... It’s not about us!

Humility in Prayer (6:5-15)

How does Jesus describe people who prayed in public in His day?

- He again refers to these individuals as hypocrites.
- Jesus is describing “the practice of prayer, which the Pharisees loved to perform publicly. Rather than making prayer a matter between an individual and God, the Pharisees had turned it into an act to be seen by men—again, to demonstrate their supposed righteousness. Their prayers were directed not to God but to other men, and consisted of long, repetitive phrases (Matt 6:7).”³

How does Jesus describe a counter-cultural attitude in prayer?

- Prayer that is pleasing to God should be:
 - Done privately.

² *The Bible Knowledge Commentary* 32.

³ *TBKC* 32.

- Authentic communication with God, not “empty phrases” that sound good but mean nothing to you.
- To the point, not incessant babbling.
- Jesus gave them a model to follow, not a verse to regurgitate.

Based on Jesus’ model prayer, what things should we include in our prayers?

- Recognition of God for who He is.
- Pray for God’s will to be accomplished in and through you.
- Pray for God’s provision for your daily needs.
- Pray for forgiveness and the grace to forgive others.
- Pray for deliverance from the temptations that we will face.

Discretion in Fasting (6:16-18)

Once again, Jesus refers to hypocrites here in 6:16—this time He is referring to their appearance and disposition when fasting. What is fasting and what is its significance?

- Fasting is “going without food or drink voluntarily, generally for religious purposes. Fasting, however, could also be done for other reasons. It was sometimes done as a sign of distress, grief, or repentance.”⁴
- “Fasting emphasized the denial of the flesh, but the Pharisees were glorifying their flesh by drawing attention to themselves.”⁵

How does Jesus describe a counter-cultural attitude when fasting?

- Essentially, Jesus told them to not let anyone know when they were fasting.
- In fact, he said that they were to wash their face and comb their hair and act outwardly like everything was normal.
- Then, and only then, will your fasting reap the reward you are seeking.

Discernment in Judging (7:1-5)

For the fourth time in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus refers to hypocrites in 7:5. The word “hypocrite” occurs only 18 times in the ESV—13 of those occurrences are found in the Gospel of Matthew.

⁴ *Nelson’s Student Bible Dictionary*. (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2005), 80.

⁵ *TBKC* 32.

For what is Jesus referring to hypocrites in this section?

- He was calling them out for their judgmental attitudes.
- With His rhetoric in 7:3-4, Jesus made it clear that they were holding others to a higher standard than what they themselves were willing to live by.

How does Jesus describe a counter-cultural attitude toward judging?

- We ought to be concerned first with our own problems and issues.
- “This passage does not teach that judgments should never be made; Matthew 7:5 does speak of removing the speck from your brother’s eye. The Lord’s point was that a person should not be habitually critical or condemnatory of a speck of sawdust in someone else’s eye when he has a plank—a strong hyperbole for effect—in his own eye. Such action is hypocritical... Furthermore, when seeking to help another, one must exercise care to do what would be appreciated and beneficial.”⁶

Treasures of the Heart

All of these character issues that we have found here in Matthew 6 & 7 are issues of the heart. Jesus drills down on this topic in Matthew 6:19-21.

Understanding the context surrounding these verses, what is Jesus trying to teach us about the treasures of our hearts?

- We are presented with two choices in these sections—we can live according to the world’s standards or we can choose to live counter-culturally.
- Here in 6:19-21, Jesus summarizes all of these character issues and boils it down to one main issue—where is your heart?

What does Jesus say about treasures on earth and about treasures in heaven?

- If we store up treasures here on earth, they will only be temporary. These treasures will either be stolen or destroyed.
- Treasures stored up in heaven will not meet the same fate. If we focus on the eternal while here on the earth, it will have eternal value.
- Finally, the location of our treasure is determinative of the focus of our hearts!

(THIS SECTION COMPLETED ON 3/24/2019)

⁶ TBKC 33.

Countercultural Focus

Matthew 6:21-34

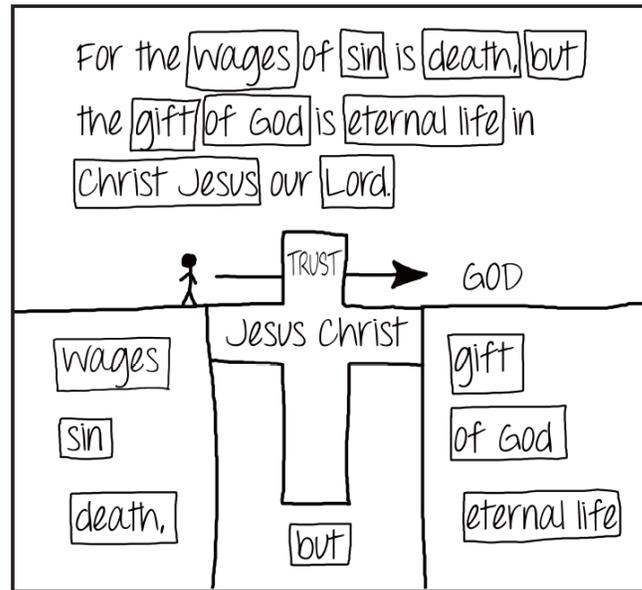
When considering the secular view of focus, what is the cultural norm?

- FOCUS – Follow One Course Until Successful
- “You were not created to please others, live to be happy and focus on pleasing yourself.” (www.prideandinspiration.tumblr)
- “If it doesn’t make you happy anymore then it’s time to let it go and focus on yourself.” (www.livelifehappy.com)
- “You want something? GO and GET IT, period!”
- “Focus on what you want, not ‘how’ it will happen. The universe takes care of the ‘how’ through coincidences, serendipity, and synchronicities.”
- “You can spend a lifetime trying to be One with the Great Spirit; or, simply focus on Love and realize You already are.”



*Consider this secular concept of becoming what you want to be.
What’s wrong with this picture?*

- Leap of Faith – faith in what?
- Depravity of Man – we are unable to improve ourselves because of depravity
- The most disturbing thing about this graphic is how close it is to a common evangelistic tool called “The Bridge of Faith” or “Bridge to Life.” It is disturbing because of what it removes from the counter-cultural, biblical concept.



What is the counter-cultural response to this idea?

- The most simplistic answer is found in Romans 6:23 which says, “For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”
- The death and resurrection of Jesus Christ is the source of my faith which enables me to be reconciled with God.
- This is much better than becoming what I want to be—I am becoming what He wants for me!

This central passage of the Sermon on the Mount can be divided into four main topics, characterized by a few simple questions. They are: 1) what are you looking at? 2) what are you working for? 3) what are you worried about? and 4) what are you focused on?

What are you looking at? (Matthew 6:22-23)

Read Matthew 6:22-23. What happens if a near-sighted person tries to function without his/her glasses?

- Nothing is in focus because the eye is unhealthy and unable to focus.
- It is impossible for me to function normally without my glasses.

What is the effect of looking at someone cross-eyed?

- When someone crosses their eyes, essentially they are trying to focus on two different things at the same time. This causes them to see double.
- In the same way, it is impossible for us to be focused on both light and darkness.

What you are looking at determines your spiritual well-being.

So what are you looking at?

- This is not just referring to guarding your eyes from inappropriate content (i.e. pornography, filth, etc.), even though those things are important to guard against.
- The real question is whether or not our focus is on things that glorify God.
- What are you spending your days focused upon?
- Potential problem areas: idolatry, coveting, reading material, television shows, social media, video games, websites, memes, etc.
- How much time are we wasting each day? Do we really not have time to spend focused on God and His Word, or is it just not a priority? Where is the majority of your time spent?

(THIS SECTION COMPLETED ON 4/24/2019)