



Sermon on the Mount

An In Depth Study

B.P. Harris

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The Gospel According to Matthew

Notes and Comments

Part II—Chapters V – VII

B.P. Harris

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Sacramento

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Matthew

Matthew 5

5:1 And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain: and when he was set, his disciples came unto him:

On the Mount—Introductory Notes

This chapter begins what is commonly called by many the Sermon on the Mount. Some have likened the Sermon on the Mount in the New Testament to the giving of the Law on Mt. Sinai in the Old Testament, and so have likened the nine Beatitudes to the Ten Commandments. Perhaps, some comparison might have been intended with Mt. Sinai, but it seems more likely that the comparison was not with Mt. Sinai, but rather was with Mt. Gerizim ^a (also cf. Deut. 27:1-10).

It must be remembered that Mt. Gerizim was the place where blessings were pronounced upon the people if they but obeyed the Law (Deut. 28:1-2).

“ And it shall come to pass, if thou shalt hearken diligently unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to observe and to do all his commandments which I command thee this day, that the LORD thy God will set thee on high above all nations of the earth: ² **And all these blessings shall come on thee, and overtake thee, if thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God.**” KJV

These blessings, and resulting circumstances, might be categorized in a threefold manner. First, God promised to bless them by physical things, then God speaks of what will happen if they are attacked or persecuted, and then, finally, God speaks of the resulting witness from their bestowed blessings.

This, of course, is interesting because our Lord also pronounces a number of blessings in His Sermon on the Mount. He also declares what will happen if they are persecuted, and then He also speaks of their resulting witness. This can be seen in the following chart.

^a **Deut. 11:29** And it shall come to pass, when the LORD thy God hath brought thee in unto the land whither thou goest to possess it, that thou shalt put **the blessing upon mount Gerizim**, and the curse upon mount Ebal. KJV

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Mount Gerizim	Sermon on the Mount
Physical Blessings	Spiritual Blessings
<p>Deut. 28:3-6, 8, 12 <u>Blessed</u> shall you be in the city, and <u>blessed</u> shall you be in the country. ⁴<u>Blessed</u> shall be the offspring of your body and the produce of your ground and the offspring of your beasts, the increase of your herd and the young of your flock. ⁵<u>Blessed</u> shall be your basket and your kneading bowl. ⁶<u>Blessed</u> shall you be when you come in, and <u>blessed</u> shall you be when you go out. ⁸The LORD will command the <u>blessing</u> upon you in your barns and in all that you put your hand to, and He will <u>bless</u> you in the land which the LORD your God gives you. ¹²The LORD shall open unto thee his good treasure, the heaven to give the rain unto thy land in his season, and to <u>bless</u> all the work of thine hand: and thou shalt lend unto many nations, and thou shalt not borrow.</p>	<p>Matt. 5:3-11 <u>Blessed</u> are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. ⁴<u>Blessed</u> are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted. ⁵<u>Blessed</u> are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth. ⁶<u>Blessed</u> are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled. ⁷<u>Blessed</u> are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy. ⁸<u>Blessed</u> are the pure in heart: for they shall see God. ⁹<u>Blessed</u> are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God. ¹⁰<u>Blessed</u> are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. ¹¹<u>Blessed</u> are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.</p>
Result of Persecution	Result of Persecution
<p>Deut. 28:7 "The LORD shall cause your enemies who rise up against <u>you to be defeated before you</u>; they will come out against you one way and will flee before you seven ways.</p>	<p>Matt. 5:10-11 <u>Blessed are they which are persecuted</u> for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.</p>
Resulting Witness	Resulting Witness
<p>Deut. 28:9-10 "The LORD <u>will establish you as a holy people to Himself</u>, as He swore to you, if you keep the commandments of the LORD your God and walk in His ways. ¹⁰ <u>"So all the peoples of the earth will see that you are called by the name of the LORD,</u> and they will be afraid of you.</p>	<p>Matt. 5:14-16 <u>You are the light of the world</u>. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden;¹⁵ nor does anyone light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house.¹⁶<u>Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works,</u> and glorify your Father who is in heaven.</p>

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And so Matthew may have intended one to make a comparison with Mt. Gerizim and not with Mt. Sinai. Mt. Gerizim was the place where God made another covenant with Israel, a covenant commonly known as the **Palestinian Covenant**. However, since the name “Palestinian” is not a biblical word, perhaps, it would be better to designate it simply as the **Covenant of the Land**. This Covenant was in addition to the Covenant given on Mt. Sinai (Horeb).

Deuteronomy 29:1 These *are* the words of the covenant, which the LORD commanded Moses to make with the children of Israel in the land of Moab, **beside the covenant which he made with them in Horeb**. KJV

Now, it must be noted that though some connect this verse of Deuteronomy 29:1 as an introduction to what follows, the divisions of the modern Hebrew Bible actually connect this verse as a summary statement of everything that precedes it in chapter 28.

Darby also took it this way. He stated in his Synopsis the following—

“Chapter 29 is the personal application to the conscience of the people, both collectively and individually, **of all that precedes**...Thus we have, in these chapters, the relationship of the pious Jew with God, grounded upon the accomplishment of the promises made to the fathers, in the present enjoyment of the land...**the consequences brought in, either by their obedience or disobedience**: and, finally, after the disobedience, and when this has produced its fruit, the designs of God according to His purpose, which nothing could alter.”¹

This seems the most natural way to take this verse. The Covenant of the Land basically promised God’s peace and blessings upon the children of Israel if they but obeyed the Law of God that was given to Moses on Mt. Sinai, which Law was read before the children of Israel as they gathered upon Mt. Gerizim and Mt. Ebal in the Land. ^b If they did not obey the commands, they were told certain curses would come

^b **Joshua 8:33-34**

And all Israel, and their elders, and officers, and their judges, stood on this side the ark and on that side before the priests the Levites, which bare the ark of the covenant of the LORD, as well the stranger, as he that was born among them; half of them over against mount Gerizim, and half of them over against mount Ebal; as Moses the servant of the LORD had commanded before, that they should bless the people of Israel. ³⁴ And afterward he read all the words of the law, the blessings and cursings, according to all that is written in the book of the law. KJV

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upon them which would result in the invasion of their land by a far off nation which would come to dominate and oppress them.

In Deut. 28:49 they were told that nation would *swoop down on them like an eagle*.^c The eagle, of course, was the standard of the Roman legion. In fact, as can be seen in the following quote, the eagle many times was lifted up in the form of an eagle with outstretched wings, giving the appearance of *an eagle swooping down upon its prey*.

“...the standards were most commonly of silver, seldom of gold, in the form of an Eagle. The preference was given to the former metal, according to Pliny, because it is seen at a greater distance than the latter. But though the figure of the Roman Ensigns was always that of an Eagle they were not always precisely alike. **Sometimes they resembled an Eagle in a standing posture; at others, with outstretched wings, which was the most common form.**”²

What a sight it must have been when the army of Rome marched forward with their standards held high bearing down upon their foe.

Consequently, many Jewish and Christian commentators understand this verse as referring to the ultimate domination of the Roman Empire over Israel, the consequence of which, deprived the people of their promised blessing, leaving them instead under physical oppression (Deut. 28: 33).^d

This was the condition of the people of Israel when our Lord walked upon this earth. In Him, they placed their hope that He was the Messiah who would deliver them from their Roman overlords, and bring about the promised Messianic kingdom, as well as the promised blessings of the Covenant of the Land. But they did not understand the purpose of our Lord’s incarnation.

Yes, He came as the Messiah to bring them deliverance, but He came to bring them spiritual deliverance, not a physical deliverance from Rome. In fact, He told them to render “unto Caesar the things that are Caesars, and unto God the things that are God’s.” And He also told them that those who

^c **Deut. 28:49-50, 52** “The LORD will bring a nation against you from afar, from the end of the earth, as the eagle swoops down, a nation whose language you shall not understand, ⁵⁰ a nation of fierce countenance who shall have no respect for the old, nor show favor to the young. ⁵²And it shall besiege you in all your towns until your high and fortified walls in which you trusted come down throughout your land, and it shall besiege you in all your towns throughout your land which the LORD your God has given you.”

NASB

^d **Deut. 28:33.** A people whom you do not know shall eat up the produce of your ground and all your labors, and you shall never be anything but oppressed and crushed continually.

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“take up the sword shall perish by the sword.” The Lord did not deny that the people were under oppression—in fact, the word translated oppression, in the Greek LXX of Deut. 28: 33, is the same Greek word used by the Holy Spirit in the Gospel of Luke when speaking of Messianic deliverance. It is the Greek word *τεθραυσμένους* (downtrodden). And what is interesting is this is its only occurrence in the entire New Testament, being used of the Lord setting free those who are “downtrodden” (oppressed).

Lu. 4:18 "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, Because He anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor. He has sent Me to proclaim release to the captives, And recovery of sight to the blind, To set free those who are downtrodden (*τεθραυσμένους*) NASB

And so, it is true that Jesus did come as their Messiah to offer them deliverance from oppression, but it was not the deliverance and freedom from oppression they expected, nor the freedom they thought they needed. He offered them deliverance and freedom from the oppression of sin! And, yes, as the Christ, His purpose was to come and bring about a Messianic kingdom, but it was not a kingdom free from the rule of Rome as they expected.

Rather, Jesus speaks to them of a kingdom that had already appeared and was now in their midst (i.e. expressed in the Person of the Lord Jesus Himself). This was a part of the message Jesus was preaching—that the kingdom of heaven was now at hand.

It must be remembered that in the context of this passage of Scripture, the Sermon on the Mount was but an expression of what our Lord was teaching the people. It was a manifestation of His gospel of the kingdom. The Sermon on the Mount should not be divorced from the statement given to us in Matt. 4:23—

Matt. 4:23 And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, **and preaching the gospel of the kingdom**, and healing all manner of sickness and all

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manner of disease among the people. KJV

The Sermon of the Mount is a biblical record of the gospel of the kingdom that our Lord was preaching. It speaks of the characteristics of the kingdom that our Lord declared was at hand. This was not the Messianic kingdom they expected; this was a kingdom that was not of this world, ^e being a heavenly kingdom. It was the mystery form of the kingdom of God. The children of Israel did not understand this aspect of the kingdom, for the mystery of that kingdom was not something that was revealed in the Old Testament. In fact, our Lord tells His disciples that it was not given to the children of Israel, apart from faith in Him, to even know the mystery of this kingdom. That is the reason why He came and spoke to the people in parables. ^f

And so, (continuing our comparison with the Covenant of the Land) our Lord did come to bring about blessings, but it was not the physical blessing of the Covenant of the Land as they supposed; rather it was the spiritual blessings of that kingdom in mystery form.

This befuddled so many of the children of Israel. They had no concept of a kingdom that would exist in mystery form, full of spiritual blessings, and not the physical blessings promised on Mt. Gerizim.

Now, this is not to say that all the people of Israel failed to recognize that there was also present aspect of the kingdom of God distinct from the coming kingdom of the Messiah. Some did. But that present aspect, recognized by some, was not the same as the mystery aspect the Lord taught. The present aspect they recognized was their concept of the rule of God that all partook of simply because they consciously took upon themselves the “yoke of the kingdom.” Alfred Edersheim addresses this concept as follows.

A review of many passages on the subject shows that, in the Jewish mind, the expression 'Kingdom of Heaven' referred, not so much to any particular period, as in general to the Rule of God—as acknowledged, manifested, and eventually perfected. Very often it is the equivalent for

^e **John 18:36** Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence. KJV

^f **Mark 4:11** And he said unto them, Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God: but unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables: KJV

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personal acknowledgment of God: **the taking upon oneself of the 'yoke' of 'the Kingdom,' or of the commandments**—the former preceding and conditioning the latter...**And in this sense, the repetition of this Shema, as the personal acknowledgment of the Rule of Jehovah, is itself often designated as 'taking upon oneself the Kingdom of Heaven.'** Similarly, the putting on of phylacteries, and the washing of hands, are also described as taking upon oneself the yoke of the Kingdom of God.³

Therefore, it is true that some thought they all partook of that present aspect of the kingdom simply by one's acknowledgment of God and a conscious decision to obey His commandments (irregardless of the true nature of their lives). Not only that, they thought their present participation in the kingdom would also qualify them to be in the future kingdom of the Messiah. And this is what puzzled so many—our Lord said otherwise. Jesus said that only those who were born again would be able to be in that future kingdom.^g And not only that, He also said that only those of a certain character could truly receive the benefits of any present aspect of that kingdom.

Alfred Edersheim also addresses this point—

“As we pass from the Jewish ideas of the time to the teaching of the New Testament, we feel that while there is complete change of spirit, the form in which the idea of the Kingdom of Heaven is presented is substantially similar. Accordingly, we must dismiss the notion that the expression refers to the Church, whether visible (according to the Roman Catholic view) or invisible (according to certain Protestant writers). 'The Kingdom of God,' or Kingly Rule of God, is an objective fact. The visible Church can only be the subjective attempt at its outward realisation, of which the invisible Church is the true counterpart. When Christ says, that 'except a man be born from above, he cannot see the Kingdom of God,' He teaches, in opposition to the Rabbinic representation of how 'the Kingdom' was taken up: that a man cannot even comprehend that glorious idea of the Reign of God, and of becoming, by conscious self-surrender, one of His subjects, except he be first born from above.”⁴

^g **John 3:5** Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. KJV

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The Jews of our Lord's day did not understand this. Even one like Nicodemus, a Pharisee, a ruler in Israel, a teacher of the Law, did not understand this. Nor, did the disciples of our Lord understand this until the Lord revealed it to them. They thought, because they had simply been born of water, that is, they thought that simply because they were the physical descendants of Abraham, they would benefit from the present manifestation of the kingdom and, thus have a right to be in any future millennial kingdom. But, our Lord said no; he said that was not enough.

Our Lord said they had to be born again; they had to be born of the Spirit. Only then would they have a right to receive the benefits of the present aspect of the kingdom and only then would they have a right to be in the future millennial kingdom when the Messiah ruled over the whole earth.

But there was one additional thing they did not yet understand, and it was this—that the present mystery form of the kingdom would encompass an entire dispensation wherein the Gentiles would also be born again and so be able to also be in the kingdom during the age of grace, as well as in its future form in the millennium. This was the mystery of the kingdom that Jesus came to reveal. The physical millennial kingdom of the Messiah would come, but it would not appear immediately,^h because the entire dispensation of the Church must intervene.

Now some assert that this spiritual or mystery form of the kingdom came about only because Israel rejected the Lord, and if they had but simply believed, the Lord would have immediately set up His millennial kingdom. This is not so. There is not one verse that says such a thing. Scripture never says that our Lord would have set up His kingdom immediately if only the people would have believed. Our Lord never intended such a thing. If all of Israel would have believed Him, it would have not changed a thing, for the Lord did not come at that time to set

^h **Luke 19:11** And while they were listening to these things, He went on to tell a parable, because He was near Jerusalem, and they supposed that the kingdom of God was going to appear **immediately**
NASB

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up the millennial kingdom promised in the Old Testament. Rather, He came to make atonement for the sins of the world, then to build His Church, taking out a people from amongst the Gentiles for His Name, along with the ongoing remnant in Israel. Then, and only then, after the fullness of the Gentiles had come in,ⁱ would He return to judge the world and set up His millennial kingdom over all the earth.

It is simply wrong to suggest that the Church Age came about only because Israel rejected their King. Scripture never says such a thing, as we will presently see as we continue our study in this Gospel.

Nor is it right to suggest that the destruction of Israel in 70 AD came about because the nation rejected our Lord (oh how some, not all, but some have used that thought to persecute the Jewish people). Scripture never says such a thing as this either.

The failure of Israel to keep the Covenant of the Land was the reason Jerusalem was destroyed, and the Sermon on the Mount was meant to communicate that reason to the multitude, to explain why the promised physical blessing of the Covenant of the Land had failed to appear. It was not because of their rejection of the Son, but because of their *rejection of the commandments of God* given to Moses on Mt. Sinai. Israel had been given almost 1500 years to fulfill their part of the Covenant of the Land, but, once again, they were failing, and Jesus came to make this known. They thought they could keep the Law, but they could not, and so the time had come for the dispensation of the Law to come to an end. Man was never going to be able to keep the Law and Jesus came to make this known, first to Israel, and then to all the earth.

Repeatedly they were given the chance to keep their end of the Covenant, but they were never able to do so. The same thing happened to Israel in the times of Daniel, when Daniel, upon realizing this, included the following in his prayer.

Daniel 9:11 “Yea, all Israel have transgressed thy law,

ⁱ **Rom. 11:25** For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, **until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in.** KJV

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even by departing, that they might not obey thy voice; therefore the curse is poured upon us, and the oath that is written in the law of Moses the servant of God, because we have sinned against him. KJV

And so we see this is the reason for their lack of physical blessings and the reason why Israel was scattered among the nations after the destruction of Jerusalem. It was their failure to keep the Covenant of the Land, not their rejection of Christ (as terrible as that was); and so the prophesied worldwide dispersion of the children of Israel finally occurred. They had been given almost 1500 years to keep their part of the Covenant and they never did. (Even if one believes otherwise, believing instead that Israel was judged for rejecting our Lord, it still would make no difference, for our Lord asked God the Father to forgive them for their act of having him crucified. Jesus prayed, “Father, forgive them for they know not what they do,” and our Lord’s prayers were always answered, so that could never have been the reason for their judgment by God—Luke 23:34)^j

Jesus Christ came to save His people, not to judge. Jesus said: “For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through him. He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil” (John 3:17-19). Notice that verse 18 says those who do not believe in Him (i.e. reject Him) are judged already.

Rejection of the Lord Jesus Christ leads to eternal punishment in hell, not to a temporal judgment of their nation. Jesus says His purpose in coming was not to judge but to save. The coming judgment of the nation came about because of their rejection of the Law of Moses which they promised to observe in a Covenant made in the land. It was their breaking of their national covenant made with God upon Mount Gerizim and Mt. Ebal that led to the ultimate

^j **Luke 23:34** Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. And they parted his raiment, and cast KJV

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destruction of Jerusalem, not their failure to accept Jesus as their Messiah. That failure leads, as it does with any Jew or Gentile, to the eternal punishment of hell.

But they thought they were keeping the Law of God. They thought they were keeping the Covenant of the Land. They did not know of their utter failure in this regard, and this is the reason for our Lord's Sermon on the Mount—to show the people how they utterly failed in keeping their promised obedience, thereby, setting the stage for the ending of the Dispensation of the Law and the introduction of the Dispensation of Grace.

This seems to be the reason the Holy Spirit had Matthew write this Gospel the way he did, with the Sermon on the Mount at the forefront; it revealed to Israel the reason why God was going to judge their nation, and why the Dispensation of the Law was about to end, laying the basis for the Dispensation of the Church, whereby all of mankind could be saved. Indeed, the Sermon on the Mount brought finality to the fact that no one could ever keep the Law of God unto righteousness and salvation.

You see, dear brethren, God always intended to set up His spiritual kingdom before He would ever set up a physical kingdom upon earth; it simply was hid from Israel. He had to do this because He had to first take care of sin and death so men could have a right to be in that coming millennial kingdom.

And so our Lord's atonement was the first step in this process, whereby, before He would set up His physical kingdom upon earth, He would set up a heavenly kingdom, into which all who would believe in Him would be transferred from out of the kingdom of Satan. And so He had to solve the problem of the heavens by first establishing a spiritual kingdom.

Scripture tells us the tabernacle in heaven needed to be cleansed because Satan had rebelled. The writer of Hebrews speaks of this when he says—

“And according to the Law, one may almost say, all things are cleansed with blood, and without shedding of blood

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there is no forgiveness. It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. (Heb 9: 22-23 KJV).

Regarding this truth, J. N. Darby once said,

“Satan and his angels are there and cleansing is needed. This purging is not remission. God must have His house cleansed as well as His people made righteous.”⁵

Satan had rebelled against God, sullyng the things in heaven, and so it was necessary for him to finally be removed in judgment once and for all, and this required first our Lord’s death upon the cross, then His resurrection from the dead, the presentation of His shed blood in heaven, and, finally His triumphant ascension to the right hand of God upon high.

The apostle John refers to this judgment in his Gospel when he says—

John 16:11 Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged. KJV

And the apostle Paul also bears witness to this judgment in his epistle to the Colossians.

Colossians 2:15 *And* having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it. KJV

In commenting on John’s declaration in the Gospel of John, W. E. Vine writes—

“...the evil one, its prince, met his doom at the Cross. Then was fulfilled the word of the Lord, “the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in Me.” The triumph of Christ at Calvary meant the casting out of Satan (cp. Col. 2:15).⁶

And in commenting on Paul’s declaration in Col. 2:15, he writes—

“...this act on the cross and in His death was the

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consummating triumph over the gathered hosts of the powers of darkness acting under Satan...When the Lord was confronted by those who came out to take Him captive on the night of His betrayal, He said, 'This is your hour, and the power of darkness.' It was, as unseen by human eye, the preparation for the great attack against Him on the cross..."

"Led by Satan, 'the prince of this world,'...the spiritual host of darkness gathered together for a final assault. They clung around His soul like a dank, defiled garment, doing their utmost to harass Him and gain a victory. The victory was His. What to human eyes seemed an overwhelming defeat was a mighty triumph, and this is here described as the act of putting them off from Himself....He did so as a victor displays his trophies in his triumphant celebration of victory."⁷

Because of His triumphant victory and ascension into heaven, our Lord was able to establish a spiritual kingdom in righteousness, of which believing Israel and an untold number of Gentiles would be citizens.^k Only after the accomplishment of those things would God then turn to this earth and fully restore Israel to the land and subdue the nations of the Gentiles. Only then would Jesus return and set up his own millennial kingdom upon earth. Until that time, His kingdom would not be of this world;¹ it would be a "heavenly kingdom" during this Dispensation, during this Church Age, as Paul plainly bears witness to in his epistle to Timothy—

II Timothy 4:18 The Lord will deliver me from every evil deed, and will bring me safely to **His heavenly kingdom**; to Him *be* the glory forever and ever. NASB

And so we see that the Lord never intended to set up a millennial kingdom if only Israel had believed and accepted Him as their Messiah. Yes, the Lord Jesus did say how often he wished he could gather Israel, but they would not (as we will see later). And yes, the Lord Jesus did say the rulers of Israel would cast Him out and kill Him, and so the present form of the kingdom would be taken from them (i.e. the rulers of the nation) and given to another nation

^k **Col. 1:13-14**

Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, **and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son:**¹⁴

In whom we have redemption through his blood, *even* the forgiveness of sins:

KJV

Phil. 3:20 For our **citizenship** is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; NASB

¹ **John 18:36** Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, then My servants would be fighting so that I would not be handed over to the Jews; but as it is, My kingdom is not of this realm."

NASB

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(which we will explain later when we get to Matt. 21 & 23). But our Lord never said that if they did the opposite, accepting Him instead, that He would then immediately set up His kingdom upon earth. All it would have meant is that if Israel had not rejected Christ, but rather believed in Him, there would have been more Israelites in the Church, and so, also in the mystery form of His heavenly kingdom! The times of the Gentiles still would have occurred, for God wished to take out for Himself a people from among all the nations.

But Israel did not understand this. And the sad fact is their acceptance of Jesus as their Messiah did not occur, and so a blindness in part happened to Israel (being a part of God's ultimate plan all along, as He knows the end from the beginning).^m The consequence of Israel's rejection of Jesus as their Messiah was blindness, not their future destruction by the empire of Rome.

And so, the Sermon on the Mount explains the reason for Israel's ongoing oppression, and the reason for the absence of those physical blessings promised on Mt. Gerizim, all the while pointing to the end of the Law and the solution to their continual disobedience, which is none other than Christ Jesus our Lord.

And, it also explains the true character and actions of one who truly is submitting to the rule of God. And so its principles are applicable to the every Christian and it reflects the life of one who is walking by the Spirit.

William MacDonald has a helpful comment on this truth. He says the following:

"This sermon...was addressed to the disciples...and was intended to be the constitution, or the system of laws and principles, which was to govern the King's subjects during His reign. **It was meant for all—past, present, or future—who acknowledge Christ as King.** When Christ was on earth, it had direct application to His disciples. **Now, while our Lord reigns in heaven, it applies to all who crown Him King in their hearts.** Finally, it will be the code of behavior for Christ's followers during the

^m **Rom. 11:25** For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; **that blindness in part is happened to Israel**, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. KJV

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Tribulation and during His reign on earth.”⁸

And, of course, when brother MacDonald says—“Now, while our Lord reigns in heaven, it applies to all who crown Him King in their hearts”—he is speaking of the Church, for during this dispensation anyone who crowns the Lord Jesus King in their heart is, by definition a Christian, and a member of His Church.

And so, now that we have established the background and context, let us continue our study about these wonderful words our Saviour and Lord given in His Sermon on the Mount.

5:2 And he opened his mouth, and taught them, saying,

It is important to know to whom is the Lord speaking. This verse says “he opened his mouth, and taught them.” To whom is the pronoun “them” referring? When we look to the context we see that the antecedent of the pronoun (Greek—αὐτούς) must be the disciples of verse one. The Greek phrase of verse one reads: προσῆλθον αὐτῷ οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ. Literally, a very wooden translation would read (using the same word order): “They came to Him, the disciples of Him.” The verb and the pronoun are fronted and the subject and the possessive pronoun follow. In the Greek, the fronting of a word many times brings emphasis and this is exactly what I believe Matthew, or should I say, the Holy Spirit is doing. The beginning emphasis of the Sermon is that one must first “come to Him,” that is to Jesus.

This Greek verb, προσῆλθον (from προσέρχομαι), that is used in this verse by Matthew carries an interesting connotation in Scripture (when used in relationship with God). Moulton and Milligan state the following in regard to this word—

“The semi technical use of this verb of the approach of the worshipper to God is frequent in the LXX...”⁹

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And Bloomfield in his Lexicon has this to say—

“...of God or Christ, to come to God, to draw near unto, in prayer, worship, implying the devotion of heart and life... Of Christ, 1 Pet ii. 4...to whom coming, i. e. becoming his disciples, followers...”¹⁰

This is not to say that every time the verb is used it bespeaks of an act of faith of one coming to God. Obviously, that is assigning a meaning to the word it does not carry. For example, the same verb is used of the Scribes and Pharisees coming to Jesus (Matt. 15:1), and they certainly were not coming in faith, but rather were coming in hatred and unbelief. It is even used of Satan coming to Christ and of Judas coming to Christ when he kissed and betrayed Him (Matt. 4:3; 26:49). So, it certainly does not indicate faith and trust every time it is used. But, on the other hand, that does not discount the idea (of which Matthew would be well aware) that the verb is also used of one coming to God in trust and a living faith. For example, as was already mentioned, it was used that way frequently in the LXX, and it was used that way in the New Testament in such places as Heb. 11:6 (cf. also Heb. 10:22)—

“But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God (προσερχόμενον τῷ θεῷ) must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.” Hebrews 11:6 KJV

In fact, what is interesting is that Matthew uses this Greek verb more than any other New Testament writer. He uses it 50 times, whereas Mark uses it but 5 times, and Luke uses it 10 times and John uses it only once!

Clearly, it seems Matthew is fronting this verb for a purpose and that is to establish the fact that Jesus was more than a mere man, but was the Christ, the Son of the Living God. He uses it repeatedly of people coming to Jesus in faith for healing and near the end of his Gospel, in Matthew 28:9, he uses it of women coming before the Lord in faith on that

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resurrection morn, who, after coming to Him, fall down at his feet and worship Him.

Matthew 28:9 And as they went to tell his disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, All hail. **And they came and held him by the feet, and worshipped him.**
KJV

So, because of Matthew's repeated use of this verb for faith and adoration, it is not a stretch to say that Matthew is emphasizing the need for faith and trust in Christ as a prerequisite before one can fully appreciate and understand our Lord's Sermon on the Mount. All that follows will profit no one if they do not believe. The Beatitudes are spoken to those who come to Jesus in faith, to those who believe. They are spoken to our Lord's disciples as they come before Him and sit at His feet.

Yes, there were multitudes present to hear our Saviour speak, but the Lord in this opening portion was speaking directly to His own disciples. It matters not that those who may not have yet believed in Him also heard Him pronounce these blessings, for many times an unbeliever is presented in Scripture with an exhortation to live in godliness, even though they do not possess the life within to so live. This was the whole purpose for the giving of the Law. ⁿ It laid out a standard for man to live by, with which, he was not able to so live. Indeed, such exhortations can lead a person to cry out in despair to the One who is able to save them from their bondage to sin—the Lord Jesus Christ. And so these beatitudes will continually point the hearer and the reader to the Lord Jesus Christ, the only One who can insure these blessings by His own righteousness, by His own merit.

5:3 Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

A true believer will be one who humbles himself, or herself, trusting in righteousness of Christ and not their own righteousness or good works. Thus, being poor in spirit, bespeaks humbleness and reflects one

ⁿ **Rom. 7:22** For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: ²³ But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. ²⁴ O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? ²⁵ I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin. **8:1** *There is* therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. ² For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. ³ For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh. KJV

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who takes no pride in their own righteousness. As such, the Lord says the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these. This is a blessing because it extends the care and protection of God's kingdom to the one who is humble in God's sight. In God's kingdom no devil or evil spirit can harm a child of God apart from the permissive will of God. It must be remembered that those, to whom the Lord was speaking, were suffering physical oppression and even violence, in some cases, directly from the rule of Rome over their lives. This was the result of Israel's failure as a nation to obey the Law of Moses. Because of their failure to fulfill their part of that Covenant, God could not fully bring about a physical deliverance to them on a national scale. But on an individual scale, in the midst of such physical oppression, God could, and would, bring about spiritual deliverance to those who were spiritually oppressed, if they would but humble themselves and look to the providential care of God. This presupposes, of course, that such a one is a believer.

But it must be remembered that at this particular time the Lord had not yet fully explained to His disciples the mystery of the kingdom of heaven, and so they, more than likely, understood this to only refer to the coming millennial kingdom of the Messiah. They were not wrong in this understanding, for, indeed, the poor in spirit, who believe, do, indeed, partake of that millennial kingdom. But our Lord was not limiting it to that future coming kingdom, but was also referring to the present rule and protection of the kingdom of heaven over their spirits for the Holy Spirit uses the present tense of the verb "to be" and not the future tense. He says the kingdom of heaven "is" theirs, not the kingdom of heaven "will be" theirs.

This viewpoint was very different from the common Rabbinic view of the day. As we said before, the Pharisees taught the people that what was necessary to be in the kingdom was a simple recitation of the Shema and a simple decision to take upon themselves the "yoke of the kingdom." This

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was based upon the fact that they were physical descendants of Abraham. In their eyes, such an acknowledgement and decision was sufficient in God's eyes for any child of Abraham. Outward conformity rather than inward reality was more important in their eyes. Their blindness to their own spiritual condition caused them to develop this ritualistic outlook of religion that was based upon the mere observance of an untold number of man-made traditions incorporated into their interpretation of the Law. They thought that submission to those traditions insured the smile of God upon their lives and their special place in the present state of the kingdom. The problem with this view is that it produced a self-righteousness in their lives, a pride in their hearts, and a de-emphasis of those attributes that really earned the smile of God, such attributes as love, justice, mercy and faith.

And so, our Lord taught a different doctrine than that of the Scribes and Pharisees. He taught that inward character is the true basis of the kingdom, not outward ritual. The Scribes and Pharisees were not known for being poor in spirit, for being humble. And because they were more interested in establishing their own righteousness before God, they could not see their need to believe in Him who would become their Righteousness before God and so guarantee their place in the future kingdom of the Messiah and the blessings of the present state of the kingdom.

5:4 Blessed *are* they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.

This is a promise of comfort to those who are mourning not only from the physical oppression of Rome, but also from the spiritual oppression resulting from the incapability of anyone to keep the Law of Moses in its entirety (as required in Deut. 28). This too points to the Messiah, for only He can keep the Law of God in perfection, bringing about the comfort of forgiveness and the freedom from such spiritual

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oppression. As Paul says, “He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him” (II Cor. 5:21).

5:5 Blessed *are* the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.

This blessing bespeaks the blessing of life eternal, for only those who take part in the first resurrection will ever inherit the earth. Unlike verse 3, which uses the present tense, this verse does use the future tense and so our Lord is referring to a future state.

By speaking of the meek, our Lord is demonstrating that those who trust in their own righteousness (and so are not meek) will never be able to trust in the righteousness of the Lord, which is a requisite for inheriting the earth. ° The common notion of the children of Israel at that time was that they would inherit the earth by their birthright, by simply being the children of Abraham. They did not think that their personal character mattered that much for they thought they would inherit the earth because of the “merit” and character of Abraham, or so they thought.

Let me quote once more Alfred Edersheim comment on this notion so common among the Israelites in our Lord’s day.

“...no principle was more fully established in the popular conviction, than that all Israel had part in the world to come (Sanh. X. I), and this, specifically, because of their connection with Abraham. This appears not only from the New Testament, from Philo, and Josephus, but from many Rabbinic passages. ‘**The merits of the Fathers**,’ is one of the commonest phrases in the mouth of the Rabbis. **Abraham was represented as sitting at the gate of Gehenna, to deliver any Israelite** who otherwise might have been consigned to its terrors. In fact, by their descent from Abraham, all the children of Israel were nobles, infinitely higher than any proselytes. ‘What,’ exclaims the Talmud, ‘shall the born Israelite stand upon the earth, and the proselyte be in heaven?’ ”¹¹

° **Rom. 4:13** For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, **but through the righteousness of faith.** KJV

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They even believed that if any of Abraham's descendants "had, morally speaking, been as a dead body, his merit would have been imputed to them..."¹² This attitude produced the opposite of meekness—human pride and condescension. They did not know that it required meekness, the result of accepting God's revelation of His Son, in order to inherit anything. Many did not believe in Christ as the Lamb of God. They did not believe they had a need for the blood of Christ. As such, this beatitude keeps them focused on the Messiah, for it is only the meek that will ever have an ear to hear what Jesus says, and so believe. Only those who believe in Christ can really be meek, only those who do not trust in their own righteousness, nor in the righteousness or merit of their father Abraham can really be meek; only those who trust in the righteousness and the merit of their Messiah—the Lord Jesus, can be meek and so inherit the earth.

5:6 Blessed *are* they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.

This answers the despair of the meek who know their own failures and the reason for their oppression. The Lord tells them they are blessed and will be filled. They may be suffering the physical hunger and thirst of oppression, as foretold in the Covenant of the Land, but their spiritual hunger and thirst will be met. This too points to Christ for He is the Bread of Heaven and the source of Living Water.

5:7 Blessed *are* the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.

The one filled with self-righteousness, as many Pharisees were at that time, can never be merciful for their own heart knows nothing of their own need of mercy. Our Lord promises that those who are merciful, cognizant of their own sins, will obtain mercy because the Messiah came to seek and save those who are lost; such ones will obtain mercy.

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5:8 *Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.*

Those who are merciful, will more than likely be pure in heart, and so will see God. Why? Because God has promised to be with those of a broken and contrite heart.

Those who are pure in heart, free from the impurities of self-righteousness, will be able to see the beauties of our Saviour as he makes Himself known through the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

Those who see the Son, see the Father,^p and those who believe in their need for salvation can believe in their heart unto righteousness,^q without which no one will ever see the LORD (cf. Heb. 12:14).^r And so this beatitude also points to Christ Jesus our LORD.

In fact, this is one of the three main verses in which our Lord begins to unveil the true nature of His Person to His disciples. This will be more readily seen when we get to Matt. 6:33, and when we get to Matt. 7:22-23, but suffice it to say that when our Lord says that the pure in heart will see God, I believe He is directing the hearts of the people to Isaiah 40:9 which says—

Isaiah 40:9 O Zion, that bringest good tidings, get thee up into the high mountain; O Jerusalem, that bringest good tidings, lift up thy voice with strength; lift *it* up, be not afraid; say unto the cities of Judah, **Behold your God!** KJV

Isaiah says that those at that time (which refers to the time of our Lord's incarnation) will behold their God. And we also know the Holy Spirit very clearly says in the Gospel of John that no one has seen God—

John 1:18 No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared *him*. KJV

And Jesus says in John 6:46—

^p **John 14:8-9**
Philip saith unto him, Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us. ⁹ Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou *then*, Shew us the Father? KJV

^q **Rom. 10:10** For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. KJV

^r **Heb. 12:14**
Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord: KJV

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John 6:46 "Not that any man has seen the Father, except the One who is from God; He has seen the Father. KJV

Yet Jesus is saying that the pure in heart will be able to behold God. How? Of course, by beholding the Son of God, the LORD Jesus Christ who was very God of very God. He is the one Isaiah speaks about. But more of this when we get to Matt. 6:33. Suffice it to say this is the first inference in the Sermon on the Mount to our Lord Jesus Christ being God manifested in the flesh; the next verse is found in Matt. 6:33, and, finally, the most direct and succinct affirmation is found in Matt. 7:22-23.

5:9 Blessed *are* the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.

The actual Greek word translated *peacemaker* (εἰρηνοποιοί) in this verse is actually an adjective and not a noun. Literally it means *peace-making*, as in a peacemaking person. It is a combination of two Greek words, εἰρήνη (peace) and ποιέω (to do or make). So the first thing to understand is that Matthew is characterizing one who is engaged in making or bringing peace into the lives of others. The reason it is translated as a noun is because an adjective can be substantivalized in the Greek language by the addition of the Greek article, which Matthew supplies before the adjective. Thus, even though it remains an adjective, it is utilized as a noun. This is instructive for it indicates that we become "known" by what we "practice."

This points us to the one who has found peace with God, for only the one who is at peace with God can truly be at peace with others.

A peacemaker is one who seeks to reconcile two opposing parties. As such, a peacemaker will always be one who will be concerned about bringing all to a place of peace. ^s Why? Because lack of peace is a consequence of sin, whether it is found in the Church or in the world. The Blessed Trinity is at peace, for the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are holy and

^s **Prov. 16:7** When a man's ways please the LORD, **he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him.** KJV

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righteous, free from any taint of sin, and so a child of God the Father, who has been redeemed by the Son and has been filled with the Holy Spirit will always be concerned with bringing peace to all. This is why a peacemaker will be called a child of God; he or she will be like God the Father who dwells in perfect peace.

In this light, what is important to remember is that in this world the greatest need of reconciliation between two opposing parties is that of a sinner in opposition to God. God opposes the sin of a sinner and a sinner opposes the righteousness of God. As a peacemaker, a child of God will be involved in the Gospel, ever seeking to bring a sinner to faith in Christ, for it is only by faith in Christ that one can find peace and the reconciliation of God (Rom. 5:1).[†]

In other words, a child of God, being one who has found peace with God, will be characterized by that peace to such a degree that such a one will become known as a peacemaker, because such a one will always seek to reconcile opposing parties, especially the opposing party of a sinner against God. (It should be noted, that because of the propitiation of Christ, wherein He shed His blood upon the cross, God is not opposed to the sinner, per se—He is opposed to sin in such a one. God so loved the world that He gave His Only-Begotten Son. The blood of Christ allows God in righteousness, to now justify any sinner who believes in Christ Jesus unto salvation. In reality, God has already reached out to a lost world; it is the sinner who remains in opposition.)

5:10 Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

This beatitude, like the first, also promises the spiritual care and protection of God's kingdom. The first beatitude had no reference to outward circumstances, but dealt with the inwardness of the heart. This beatitude, however, deals with those who are brought into conflict with others because of the

[†] **Rom.5:1**Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. KJV

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inward condition of their heart. In other words, one who is poor in spirit, who inwardly trusts in the righteousness of Christ Jesus, will also be the one who outwardly lives by that same righteousness of the Son. This will bring such a one into conflict with ungodliness in the world.

It is apropos that this beatitude follows the beatitude of peacemakers, for it tells us that, as peacemakers, we cannot sacrifice or diminish the righteousness of God. Morality cannot be compromised for the sake of peace. Truth remains inviolate. Sin is sin and it will ever be. A child of God will be a peacemaker and seek to bring everyone to that place of peace in Christ Jesus, but our Lord says that such witness and effort will sometimes be met with persecution. (This beatitude, and the beatitude before, should be kept at the forefront of the minds of many today who call themselves Christian—who all in the name of peacemaking introduce all kinds of moral compromises into the Church. It is a grievous sin. A child of God will not seek peace at any cost, but will rather remain faithful to truth in any of his or her dealings with those of the world.)

This beatitude, like the first, also has present application and does not solely refer to the future millennial kingdom, but, as was stated before, this had not been clearly revealed by our Lord. The disciples thought the kingdom was going to appear immediately. ^u They had so much to learn.

5:11 Blessed are ye, when *men* shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against *you* falsely, for my sake.

5:12 Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.

This beatitude concludes the pronouncements of blessings to those suffering under sin and the oppression of Rome brought about by Israel's failures to keep covenant with God. Because of Israel's lack

^u **Lu. 19:11** And as they heard these things, he added and spake a parable, because he was nigh to Jerusalem, and because they thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear. KJV

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of national faithfulness and obedience to God, Jesus now says that His disciples will be blessed when they find themselves persecuted for “His Name sake.” In the previous beatitude He says they will be persecuted because of their righteous lives, but now He says they may be persecuted for simply following Him.

It is interesting to note that the world hates any who exhibit righteousness, but it especially hates a Christian who exhibits righteousness. The reason for this, of course, is that behind the world is the devil. In some cases, there is more toleration for righteousness when it comes from a false religion, than when it comes from the Christian religion. Satan opposes it all the more, for false religion will never save a soul from death, but the true religion of Christ will always save a soul from sin and death, and so Satan hates it.

But there is even more to this verse. Jesus intimates that there will even be religious persecution to His followers. The word “*men*” in this verse is not in the Greek. ^v Literally the verse can read, “You are blessed, whenever “they” might revile you and might persecute you, and might speak every evil thing against you, lying on account of Me.” To whom, does the pronoun “they” (in English) refer?

We know, from the next verse, that the “they” are the religious leaders of Israel, for our Lord says, “for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.” Throughout the history of Israel, when Israel forsook the way of the Lord, the religious leaders would persecute the prophets of God. This identifies the “they.” They are the same as those who would always persecute the prophets. We know from the Old Testament, this included both *civil* and *religious* leaders. Religion that is “impure” will always persecute those who practice “pure” religion. ^w It has always been so, and will always be, and our Lord confirms it in these verses.

You see, our Lord is not referring only to the persecution that might come from the world in a general sense. He is also referring to persecution that will come from religious men. (Oh, how true

^v **Matt. 5:11**
Μακάριοί ἐστε,
ὅταν ὀνειδίσωσιν
ὑμᾶς καὶ διώξωσιν,
καὶ εἴπωσιν πᾶν
πονηρὸν ῥῆμα καθ’
ὑμῶν ψευδόμενοι,
ἐνεκεν ἐμοῦ.

^w **Jam. 1:27 Pure religion** and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.

KJV

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believers have always been persecuted by religious leaders, Christian or otherwise.) But the Lord Jesus says to the one so persecuted—“rejoice”—for He says their faithfulness will certainly be rewarded.

And so our Lord promises the blessedness of inward peace and happiness to those within Israel who remained faithful to God and His Word. He did not promise physical deliverance from the oppression of Rome, but He promised spiritual blessedness to those so suffering, whether it might come from their current oppressors, i.e. Rome, or from the religious leaders of the day.

We saw above in the chart, that the promised result that was given to Israel upon Mt. Gerizim (if they kept covenant) was their physical deliverance from their enemies; but, since Israel broke the covenant, the promised physical deliverance was kept from them and instead the judgment of God prevailed. Many in Israel were looking for this physical deliverance by Christ. There was a whole party devoted to this deliverance. Certain ones were ready to take up the sword against Rome in the name of the Messiah. They were called zealots. But they were mistaken; they did not know that it was their disobedient hearts that was the reason for Rome’s oppression.

The decision had been made. It was too late. The Covenant of the Land required the temporal punishment and scattering of the people. The Lord Jesus as the Prophet would soon make that plain, but now He was laying a foundation in His Sermon for the coming judgment.

But our Lord, the ever loving One, who was full of comfort, riches, righteousness, and mercy, who was always ready to grant His presence to those who would humble themselves, offered to all the comfort of these beatitudes—if only they believed. He offered these blessed beatitudes to everyone who was being afflicted because of the sins of the nation and/or because of their own sins—if only they would come to Him in faith as did His disciples.

And so, through these beatitudes Jesus encourages

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His followers to remain faithful to God amidst any oppression and persecution that was theirs, or might be theirs, knowing that to them the kingdom of heaven was promised. He encouraged them to be happy because that kingdom was theirs, even in the midst of their oppression. He promised them rest because His spiritual kingdom was a place of comfort (vs.4), inheritance (vs. 5), satisfaction (vs. 6), mercy (vs. 7), a place full of the presence of God and a place where they could experience their permanent relationship with God (vs. 8-9).

These blessings are so much greater than the blessing pronounced upon Mt. Gerizim, for these blessings last unto eternity and bring about a present happiness to the deepest part of man—his spirit.

They are promises made to every believer. And now, as then, they are still applicable and available to every disciple of Christ, who is humble, who might mourn, who is meek, and who hungers and thirsts for righteousness, who is merciful, and is pure, who seeks peace for all, who is persecuted for righteousness' sake, and who is reviled and even persecuted for His Name sake. How blessed are these beatitudes, these spiritual blessings of promise, fulfilled and granted to us in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Ephesians 1:3 Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, **who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings** in heavenly *places* in Christ. KJV

5:13 Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savor, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men.

5:14 Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid.

5:15 Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house.

5:16 Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.

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In the Old Testament at Mt. Gerizim, Israel had been told that if they would be faithful to God, obeying His commandments and walking in His ways, they would become a witness to the world of the greatness of the LORD God and also of His physical protection promised to His people. But, alas, the opposite happened; the world saw a people seemingly abandoned by God because they did not obey His commandments and walk in His ways. And so, instead of leading the world to a belief and reverence for the LORD God, it led them to a place of indifference in the things of God.

Because of that, our Lord encourages His disciples to learn from that unfortunate result. The Lord still desired that a godly witness should bring salvation to an indifferent world.

Therefore, our Lord reminds His disciples that during the time of Israel's unfaithfulness, judgment and coming dispersion (for everything in the Covenant of the Land must be fulfilled) they, themselves, will be the ones who will be the salt of the earth and the lights of the world. The responsibility of witness had been transferred to them—the remnant. Therefore, He admonishes them to not be mixed with the things of the world or to be mixed with any man-made traditions.

In those days, when harvested salt was stored, sometimes the bottom layer would become useless by its coming into contact with the earth, whereby over time it would subsume into the ground, and thus become insipid by its admixture with the earth. One might still call it salt, but it was really now a mixture of earth and salt, incapable of being used for food. Such salt would not provide a pleasant seasoning for it was mixed with other elements that might cause a bitter or unpleasant taste. As such, this bottom layer of salt would be considered insipid and would be thrown out into the street, to be trodden down of men. Thus, our Lord wants them to not become insipid by any mixing of themselves with the world, or with religious man-made traditions, as Israel became corrupt by mixing themselves with the

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philosophies of the surrounding nations, as well as with the religious traditions of the Pharisees. He wants them to remain separate and pure so that they may, like salt, provide seasoning to bland lives, and, like salt, become a means of preservation to those who were corrupting themselves by sinful lives.

In the same way, Jesus says that they are the light of the world and, as such, our Lord desires them to continue to give light to a darkened world. To do so they must be honest and forthright in their all dealings, always being engaged in good works, so that they may give forth the light of God's presence to those living in darkness. Believers should never be ashamed of the Lord Jesus or of His Word; they should never try to hide their faith from others.

Thus, we see how our Lord in the opening portion of this Sermon on the Mount disabuses those of Israel in thinking that the Messiah had now come to deliver them from their physical bondage to Rome. He could not, for Israel had broken the Covenant of the Land, and, as such, the predicted consequences must come. He could not, for they had failed to fulfil the Law of Moses, and so, in accordance with the righteousness of God, they must now pay the consequences of their disobedience.

But, at the same time, our Lord presents Himself as a Rabbi, willing to receive all as His followers, if they but believe in Him and humble themselves before God and so receive the spiritual blessings of God available to the one who is a disciple of the Christ who might be suffering from oppression and persecution.

But I am sure that many in Israel wondered why that was necessary. Why did not God keep His promise and bring the physical blessings? How had they failed to keep the Law of Moses? Many thought that they, in their righteousness, had been faithful to the Law. They felt Israel had learned their lesson after their captivity in Babylon. They had abandoned their idolatry. They thought they were righteous fulfilling their condition of the Covenant of the Land. In fact, the Pharisees thought, they, more than anyone

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else, kept the Law of Moses fully and thus deserved the promised blessings. Our Lord now begins to answer these questions which must have been spinning around in the minds and hearts of those listening on the periphery.

Remember, in the opening verses of this Sermon, we showed that our Lord was speaking to His disciples and not, necessarily to the people at large, even though they were there to hear what He said to His followers. But now beginning from verse 17 to the end of the chapter our Lord is including the multitudes at large who were hearing His word.

John Gill also notices this change of address in these verses. He mentions in his commentary on Matthew 5:17 the following—

“From verse 3 to the 10th inclusive, our Lord seems chiefly to respect the whole body of his true disciples and followers; from thence, to the 16th inclusive, he addresses the disciples, whom he had called to be ministers of the word; and in this "verse", to the end of his discourse, he applies himself to the whole multitude in general; many of whom might be ready to imagine, that by the light of the Gospel, he was giving his disciples instructions to spread in the world, he was going to set aside, as useless, the law of Moses, or the prophets, the interpreters of it, and commentators upon it. Christ knew the thoughts of their hearts, that they had taken up such prejudices in their minds against him; wherefore he says, "think not"; he was sensible what objections they were forming, and what an improvement they would make of them against his being the Messiah, and therefore prevents them, saying, I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.”¹³

And so we see that those in the multitude who heard the Lord speak to His disciples must have wondered why Jesus, if He was the Messiah, was promising only spiritual blessings and not the promised physical blessings of Mt. Gerizim. Why did He not praise them and speak to them of their coming deliverance from the oppression of Rome? Was He nullifying the promises that were made by God?

And so, our Lord, knowing the thoughts of all, begins to answer their silent questioning, addressing

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the rest of this chapter to the multitude at large. Of course, in this He will speak of things that, in reality, only a regenerate person can apprehend, but He speaks them so the people will be without excuse.

They thought the Messiah had come to deliver them from their physical bondage from Rome because, in their eyes, they had fulfilled their part of the Covenant made at Mt. Gerizim. Our Lord plainly states they had not. Indeed, throughout the rest of the chapter He will now make known what God has always desired from all people—a righteousness that exceeds the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, which, as we will see, can only be the result of having the righteousness of the Messiah, the LORD Jesus Christ imputed to us.

5:17 Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.

In this verse He affirms that He is not nullifying or weakening the Law or the Prophets. Rather, He is fulfilling them. By ignoring the promise of physical blessings of the Law, perhaps, some were thinking He was destroying the cohesiveness of the Law. Equally, there were probably some who were thinking He was changing the Law for it was a common thought among many that when the Messiah would come, He would introduce His own Law based upon that Scripture that said a Prophet would arise like unto Moses (Deut. 18:18).^x And then, finally, some may have thought He intended to do away with the Law, not just weakening its cohesiveness, but actually undoing it completely. The Pharisees and Sadducees, of course, were at the forefront in this charge, for they thought the Lord was threatening their whole authority structure, which, for the Sadducees, meant their whole livelihood.

On the contrary, our Lord did not come to weaken, or change the Law of Moses, or to introduce a different Law that was completely detached from it, or to destroy it in its entirety; He came to do what

^x **Deut. 18:18** I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him. KJV

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Israel, nor anyone else, could ever do—keep the Law in perfection, in its entirety, thus fulfilling the Law within Himself so that, as Paul says, “the righteous requirement of the law should be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to flesh but according to Spirit.” (Rom 8:4 Darby). Our Lord fulfilled the Law in every way. He fulfilled all its shadows and symbols. He manifested the reality of all its ritual and ceremony. And He fulfilled its underlying morality and righteousness—in both its positive commands and negative commands.

The Law could never be destroyed for God’s holiness and justice can never be diminished or nullified and the Law was an expression of that. It had to be fulfilled and our Lord said He was the One sent by God to do so. Later on we will find that His fulfillment also included the payment of debt incurred by our sinful natures, our many sins, and our repeated disobedience to God’s righteous requirements. Truly the words of Isaiah were being fulfilled which said—

Isaiah 53:4-6 Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. ⁵ But he *was* wounded for our transgressions, *he was* bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace *was* upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. ⁶ All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. KJV

And so Jesus says that He came to fulfill the Law, and in fulfilling the Law, as it says in other Scriptures, actually become the “end of the Law” for righteousness unto all that believe (Romans 10:4).

Only He was able to keep the Law in perfection. Only He could obey every jot and tittle. The Law would find its end or completion in Christ, but only after it was fulfilled in Christ. This does not mean it would be destroyed for God would never destroy that which is good and perfect in every way.

The children of Israel did not understand this because they believed that they, the remnant that had

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returned from their Babylonian Captivity, were the ones who justly fulfilled the Law. They believed they were the ones who were being faithful to the Law of God and, as such, were entitled to the fulfillment of the blessing promised to them in that Law as expressed by the Covenant of the Land. And, yet, in spite of this, here comes Jesus, claiming to be the Messiah, and He says nothing about these promised blessings. On the contrary, and to their wonderment, He seems to indicate their physical oppression will continue.

Those in Israel, who were Zealots, must have thought to themselves, "Why is He not leading us into a war against Rome to bring back the Law of Moses as the only binding law among the people in the Land!"

Those in Israel, who were Pharisees, must have thought, "Why is He not emphasizing the 'zealousness for the Law,' teaching the people to observe the Law according to the 'teachings of the Fathers?'" "Why is He not quoting Rabbi so and so as His authority?" "Instead, He speaks with His own authority." "Does He plan to dilute Moses and institute His own Law?"

And those in Israel, who were suffering greatly under Roman oppression, must have thought to themselves, "Why is He not telling us that God will fulfill His physical promise of blessing for have we have kept the Law and deserve these blessings?"

To these all He says, "I did not come to annul the Law and the Prophets in any way." Rather, He was going to fulfill the Law in every way and bring them into a kingdom that was not of this world, a kingdom they did not know about, but a kingdom that was available to any that would trust and follow Him as the Christ. But our Lord continues.

5:18 For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.

In this verse our Lord goes one step beyond his

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promise in verse 17. He assures His hearers that not only is He not going to destroy the Law, He is assures them that everything promised in the Law will come to fruition, even down to the tiniest jot and tittle. * (Even though the KJV uses the word “fulfilled” in this verse, it is actually a different Greek word than the Greek word translated “fulfil” in verse 17; it carries the additional nuance of “fruition,” or “completion,” or “coming to pass.”) He gives this assurance by saying that everything in the Law will remain intact as long as the heavens and earth remain. But, it is important to understand what our Lord means by this verse, because some believe the Lord is saying that the Law, down to the tiniest jot and tittle, will pass away after the heavens and the earth pass away, or that they will pass, once He fulfills all things. But that is not what the Lord meant.

Now, most assuredly, the children of Israel knew that the present universe would someday come to an end, at which time God would create a new heaven and earth. Isaiah prophesied that this would happen in Isaiah 65:17.^y But this does not mean our Lord was saying the someday the Law would also come to an end. Our Lord was not speaking literally. He was using a proverbial phrase, or biblical idiom, to emphasize the permanency of the Law.

Even in English we speak this way. We might use the proverbial phrase “as sure as the sun will rise” to assure someone regarding the truth of a matter on which we might be speaking. Scripture uses a similar idiom in many different places such as the following—

Psalm 72:5 They shall fear thee as long **as the sun and moon endure**, throughout all generations. KJV

Now, obviously, no one would think that the Solomon was saying that someday the fear or reverence toward the Lord would come to an end because someday the present sun and moon will come to an end. He was actually saying the opposite using this common idiom for emphasis on the

* A jot referred to the smallest letter of the Hebrew or Aramaic alphabet, and a tittle referred to the tiniest hook or projection at the extremities of some Hebrew letters that differentiated similar looking letters from each other. Thus, a jot or tittle referred to those smallest and minutest portions of the Law.

^y **Isaiah 65:17**
For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind KJV

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permanency of the reverence or fear of the Lord.

Here is another example.

Jer 31:35-36 Thus says the LORD, Who gives the sun for light by day, And the fixed order of the moon and the stars for light by night, Who stirs up the sea so that its waves roar; The LORD of hosts is His name: ³⁶ **“If this fixed order departs From before Me,”** declares the LORD, “Then the offspring of Israel also shall cease From being a nation before Me forever.” NASB

This same language used in these verses in Jeremiah is given as an assurance to Israel that the Lord will never forsake His people as a nation, emphasizing that they will be His forever.

Or consider this from Hosea—

Hosea 6:3 “So let us know, let us press on to know the LORD. **His going forth is as certain as the dawn;** And He will come to us like the rain, Like the spring rain watering the earth.” NASB

As with the previous examples, everyone knows, technically speaking, that one day there will be no dawn, when everything melts with a fervent heat and a new heaven and earth is created (II Pet. 3:12-13).^z But that is not the focus of Hosea’s language. The focus is on the fact that since the beginning of creation the sun has risen day after day, the dawn has come, the sun and the moon have endured year after year, and, as such, it becomes a sure occurrence that everyone can count on. That is the purpose of using such language.

And so, in His Sermon, we see the Lord is using similar language; the purpose of our Lord in using the phrase regarding the heaven and earth was to assure people that He did not come to destroy the Law. The children of Israel understood Him; they knew He was speaking idiomatically. They knew He was not saying that the Law will only last as long as the present heavens and earth last, and then the time will

^z **II Pet. 3:12-13**
Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat?¹³ Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.
KJV

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come for the Law to end. They knew that He was really saying that you can count on the permanency of the Law as you can count on the fact that the heavens and the earth continue day by day.

This is also confirmed for us by the parallel passage in Luke where our Lord gives the same assurance, albeit with different phraseology, but the emphasis is the same. He says—

Luke 16:17 And it is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle of the law to fail. KJV

This shows that the Lord was saying that the standards of righteousness will never change, that the Law will remain inviolate for all of eternity. How could it be otherwise, since the Law is nothing more than a reflection of God's holiness and righteousness, which, of course, is eternal?

This permanency of the righteousness of the Law is emphasized over and over in the Old Testament. For example, consider the following passages from Psalm 119.

Psalm 119:89 Forever, O LORD, Thy word is settled in heaven. NASB

Psalm 119:142-144 Thy righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, And Thy law is truth. ¹⁴³ Trouble and anguish have come upon me; *Yet* Thy commandments are my delight. ¹⁴⁴ **Thy testimonies are righteous forever;** Give me understanding that I may live. NASB

Psalm 119:152 Of old I have known from Thy testimonies, That **Thou hast founded them forever.** NASB

Psalm 119:160 The sum of Thy word is truth, **And every one of Thy righteous ordinances is everlasting.** NASB

And so our Lord is reaffirming this truth. But in this affirmation He is also emphasizing two other points. First, the cohesiveness of the entire Law and then its ultimate fulfillment in Himself.

As for the first point, when our Lord references

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one jot or tittle, He is referencing the whole. If one takes away one jot or tittle then one takes away the whole. The Law must remain inviolate, for God's righteousness remains inviolate. The Law requires complete obedience in all things.

Deut. 8:1 All the commandments which I command thee this day shall ye observe to do, that ye may live, and multiply, and go in and possess the land which the LORD swore unto your fathers. KJV

Leviticus 18:5 So ye shall keep all my ordinances, and all my judgments, and do them; which if a man do, he shall live in them: I *am* the Lord your God. (Brenton's Version)

The Law cannot be divided. That would be like dividing Christ. The whole Law bespoke Christ and not even the tiniest precept could be destroyed or nullified. Every aspect needed to be fulfilled. This is why the assertion that only the civil and ceremonial Law was nullified, but not the moral Law, is not quite right.

If one nullifies any part, one does away with all, in the same way as if one breaks one commandment, one becomes guilty of all.

James 2:10 For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one *point*, he is guilty of all. KJV

This is the meaning that not even a jot or tittle will not pass away. If it is impossible for even the smallest jot or the smallest tittle to ever pass away, then most certainly it is impossible for the entire civil and/or ceremonial aspects of the Law to pass away. It can never pass away, but it can be fulfilled as we will now see.

Perhaps, we might explain it this way. The Law is like a mathematical equation that demands an answer. Let's say the Law, in its entirety, the moral, civil and ceremonial law, is $1 \times 1 \times 1 = ?$. This equation can never pass away. It will always demand an answer and every generation that will ever be born

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will be expected to solve the problem. It will ever demand an accounting, just like the Law demands an answer or accounting.

The answer to the problem, of course, would be the number one ($1 \times 1 \times 1 = 1$) and the number one would represent Christ! He answers the equation. He solves and fulfills the demand of the equation. There can be no other answer.

However, now that we have the answer, the equation no longer has a demand upon us to “fulfil” the equation, nor does it have a demand upon each succeeding generation to provide an answer. It has been provided. One simply has to accept it or believe it. The equation can still be seen, but it is never seen without its answer. It will now always be seen as $1 \times 1 \times 1 = 1$. Even unto eternity the equation will always be seen as $1 \times 1 \times 1 = 1$. The equation does not disappear. It still is there. It just no longer requires an answer.

It is the same with the Law, the moral, civil, and ceremonial. It no longer demands an accounting, for it has been fulfilled or answered in Christ. In other words, for eternity it will always be seen as the moral (1) times the civil (1) times the ceremonial (1) equals Christ (1)! As long as the answer exists, the equation will also exist, for the one points to the other.

One Christian once likened it to a shadow seen from behind and a shadow seen from the front. The Law, with its moral, civil and ceremonial ordinances is called in Scripture a shadow of Christ. If one is standing behind Christ, but only looking down on the ground, one will see the shadow upon the ground. But if one looks forward, following the shadow on the ground, one will eventually see the One that is casting the shadow—Christ. This would equate with Old Testament saints, who looked forward until they saw Christ. However, if one stands in front of Christ and sees Him first, one can then look behind Christ and see the shadow He casts upon the ground. But in this case, one can see the One casting the shadow first, and then look behind and follow the shadow upon the ground backward. This would equate with

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New Testament saints. As long as there is light there will be a shadow, and as long as there is a shadow, there must be the One casting the shadow.

And so we see that even though the Law can never be broken or destroyed, it can and is fulfilled in its entirety! Its demands have been met. The equation has been solved; the answer is Christ!

Therefore, just as the certainty of the Law's continuance is emphasized by the biblical idiom concerning the heavens and the earth, so too, the certainty of its fulfilment is emphasized by the same biblical idiom of the heavens and the earth.

As we said before, not only is the Lord going one step beyond His promise in verse 17 regarding the fact that He came not to destroy the Law (by including the biblical idiom regarding the heaven and the earth), He is also going one step beyond His promise in verse 17 regarding His promise to fulfill the Law.

So what our Lord is saying is that just as the Law will never be destroyed, not even down to its smallest jot or tittle, it also will most certainly be fulfilled or answered, so to speak, down to its smallest jot or tittle. This is a wonderful promise made by our Saviour, reiterated in verse 18 by His use of a biblical idiom. And this is why Christ is understood as not only being the end or completion of the Law, unto righteousness, but also as the fulfillment of the Law in every way.

Paul reiterates this in his epistle to the Galatians when he asks why, then, the Law was added.

Galatians 3:19 Why the Law then? It was added because of transgressions, having been ordained through angels by the agency of a mediator, until the seed should come to whom the promise had been made.²⁰ Now a mediator is not for one *party only*; whereas God is *only* one.²¹ Is the Law then contrary to the promises of God? May it never be! For if a law had been given which was able to impart life, then righteousness would indeed have been based on law.²² But the Scripture has shut up all men under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.²³ But before faith came, we were kept in

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custody under the law, being shut up to the faith which was later to be revealed. ²⁴ **Therefore the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ**, that we may be justified by faith. ²⁵ But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor. NASB

The Law with its commandments, ordinances and judgments will never pass; it is eternal. It was given to show mankind God's standard of righteousness. But it was meant to lead one to Christ, to instruct people concerning the Lord Jesus, much like a tutor. But once Christ has come, fulfilling it in every way it is no longer needed as a tutor, for we now have the Spirit of Christ in our hearts. As such, the believer is under grace, and no longer under law, i.e. the tutor, even though the tutor did not disappear. Amen.

How wonderful is this truth. John tells us that the Law came by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. ^a

Now, before we proceed, perhaps it would be helpful to include an excursus clarifying the relationship of the Law and the believer in this Age of Grace.

Excursus on the Law and Grace

Matt. 5:17 Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.

As we already mentioned in our comments above, the Law is eternal and will never be destroyed, neither in its moral, ceremonial, or civil aspects. It remains inviolate for all of eternity for it is nothing more than an expression of the righteousness and holiness of our God, given to mankind to show them their sin and their need of a Messiah—the Lord Jesus Christ; and it is a shadow that points to and finds its only fulfillment and understanding in Christ.

And so, as we also said in our comments above, Christ fulfilled the Law in all its aspects, in all its civil, in all its ceremonial and in all its moral aspects. He fulfilled the Law in its entirety down to its smallest jot and tittle.

^a **John 1:17** For the law was given by Moses, *but* grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. KJV

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So what is the relationship between the believer and the Law? Is a believer now under Law? The answer must be an emphatic no! A believer is not under Law, but under grace. Paul makes this very clear in his epistle to the Romans.

Romans 6:14 For sin shall not have dominion over you: for **ye are not under the law**, but under grace. KJV

But one may ask, “How? If the Law remains inviolate, remaining forever, how can one escape its requirements?” The answer is death. Paul continues in his epistle to Romans with this truth.

Romans 7:1-4 Know ye not, brethren, (for I speak to them that know the law,) how that the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth? ² For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to *her* husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of *her* husband. ³ So then if, while *her* husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man. ⁴ **Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ**; that ye should be married to another, *even* to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God.

You see beloved, the Law never dies; it is the believer who dies, who by death, is separated from the dominion of the Law! The Law can never die; it remains forever as a standard of God’s righteousness, but the believer must die if he or she is to be saved, and in that death, our old man, is crucified with Christ, and so is no longer subjected to the Law.

Romans 6:6-14 Knowing this, that **our old man is crucified with him**, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. ⁷ For he that is dead is freed from sin. ⁸ Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him: ⁹ Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him. ¹⁰ For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God. ¹¹ Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to

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be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. ¹² Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. ¹³ Neither yield ye your members *as* instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members *as* instruments of righteousness unto God. ¹⁴ For sin shall not have dominion over you: **for ye are not under the law,** but under grace. KJV

No one could ever live up to the standards of God's righteousness as manifested in the Law, which Paul also declares in his epistle, saying—

Romans 3:20 Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law *is* the knowledge of sin. KJV

And this is why Christ came—not to destroy that unreachable standard of righteousness that is the Law, but rather to fulfill that unreachable standard of righteousness that is the Law, which no man or woman could ever hope to fulfill.

The Covenant that gave us the equation that needed to be solved, so to speak, has been answered. Scripture says that Old Covenant has passed away (II Cor. 3:7, 11; Heb. 8:13). But the equation in that Old Covenant remains forever, and is now included in a New Covenant, along with the correct answer, so to speak, i.e. Christ. The writer of Hebrews clearly says the law is now written in our hearts. It is in our hearts because the answer to its demands is in our hearts, i.e. Christ—the One who answered or fulfilled every aspect it's moral, civil and ceremonial requirements.

The first part of the equation, the moral law, was fulfilled in Christ. And so, its demands are now met in us by living by the life of Christ within our hearts, not by a mere outward observance of its regulations according to the flesh (Rom. 8:2-4).

Romans 8:2-4 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. ³ For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of

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sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: ⁴ **That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.** KJV

The second part of the equation, civil law was fulfilled in Christ for He is King of kings and Lord of lords. And so, living by His life will always bring about justice in our dealings, for they will be governed by His love, and love does no harm to another.

Romans 13:9-10 For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. ¹⁰ **Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.** KJV

And, of course, the ceremonial law of sacrifices was fulfilled in Christ, for the blood of the Lamb has been shed and it fulfilled every aspect of that ceremonial law. The law regarding sacrifices remain, but sacrifices are no longer are needed for they were simply a shadow of Christ, and He has fulfilled each sacrifice by His one sacrifice for all time.

Hebrews 10:8-10 Above when he said, Sacrifice and offering and burnt offerings and *offering* for sin thou wouldest not, neither hadst pleasure *therein*; which are offered by the law; ⁹ Then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second. ¹⁰ **By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.** KJV

In the same way, the ceremonial laws of the Levitical priesthood remain, but they are no longer needed for we now have a priest of the order of Melchizedek. We now live by the inward power of an indestructible life after the order of Melchizedek, remembering that the Levitical priesthood was but a shadow of Christ (See Heb. 7:5-28).

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Col. 2:16-17 Let none therefore judge you in meat or in drink, or in matter of feast, or new moon, or sabbaths, ¹⁷ which are a shadow of things to come; but the body *is* of Christ. Darby's Version

Thus, we see how the Messiah became the end of the Law for righteousness unto all who believe. The Law continues with its absolute demand of righteousness, but now the believer, having been crucified with Christ, now meets that just demand of righteousness as a new creation, not with his own righteousness derived from the Law, but now with the imputed righteousness of Christ, the only One who could ever keep and obey the standard of righteousness that is the Law—moral, civil, and ceremonial, even down to its tiniest jot and tittles.

And so, now being a new creation, having been made alive in Christ Jesus ^b (after having first been made dead to a Law we could not keep) we are now able to meet that eternal standard of the Law, not with our own righteousness, but now, as a new creation, with the imputed righteousness of Christ, as Paul declares in the verses below.

II Corinthians 5:17 So if any one be in Christ, *there is* a new creation; the old things have passed away; behold all things have become new: Darby's Version

Rom. 3:21 But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; ²² Even the righteousness of God *which is* by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference: ²³ For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; ²⁴ Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. KJV

Rom. 4: 3, 23-25 For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness. ²³ Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; ²⁴ But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; ²⁵ Who was delivered for our

^b **Romans 6:11**
Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, **but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.** KJV

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offences, and was raised again for our justification. KJV

I Cor. 1:30 But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: KJV

And so, beloved, we are no longer under Law, even though the Law is eternal. We are now under Christ, being under grace. Christ died for us, having fulfilled the Law in its entirety so that the righteous requirement of the Law that was expressed in the moral, civil, and ceremonial law might now be fulfilled in us by the very Spirit of life we now have in Christ Jesus.

Romans 8:1-4 *There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.* ² For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. ³ For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: ⁴ **That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.** KJV

Before we continue, let me explain this fact one other way.

As we have been saying the Law will continue forever—the standard of righteousness can never be lessened for our God is Holy and Righteous in all His ways. But hallelujah, Christ met the just requirements of the entire Law for us, even to the point of becoming a curse for us ^c so that we, having become dead to the Law, might now live to Him, by the precious gift of the Holy Spirit.

Gal. 5:18 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law. NASB

But that does not mean the Christian becomes lawless, living without restraint. No, as Paul says we now live by Christ living in us.

^c **Gal. 3:10,13** For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed *is* every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them. ¹³ Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed *is* every one that hangeth on a tree. KJV

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Gal. 2:20 I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, **but Christ liveth in me:** and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me. KJV

The life of Christ is nothing else than living by the law and love of Christ—love being the fulfilment of the Law, and the Law now being inscribed on our heart as the law of Christ fulfilled in love.

II Cor. 3:3 *Forasmuch as ye are* manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart. KJV

I Cor. 9:21 to those who are without law, as without law, though not being without the law of God **but under the law of Christ**, that I might win those who are without law. NASB

Romans 13:8-10 Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for **he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law.**⁹ For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if *there be* any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.¹⁰ Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: **therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.** KJV

Christ ended the Law unto righteousness for every single believer by His complete fulfillment of the Law, as Paul says in Rom. 10:15. But the Law remains a standard of righteousness against sin, even as Paul also says in I Tim. 8-10.

I Tim. 1:8-10 But we know that the law *is* good, if a man use it lawfully⁹ **Knowing this, that the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners,** for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers,¹⁰ For whoremongers, for them that defile themselves with mankind, for menstealers, for liars, for perjured persons, and if there be any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine. KJV

Matthew

The Lord knew that the Law, with its standard of righteousness, would remain inviolate, and He knew that no one could truly obey the Law, fulfilling its just demands (as He will now show the children of Israel in the upcoming verses in Matthew 5:19-48) and that is why He fulfilled the Law for us, even unto the death upon a cross, so that those who trust Him might now be delivered from the penalty of death required by the Law,^d and might now be given the righteousness required by the Law, but not derived from the Law, but a righteousness derived from His very life, a life that completely obeyed the Law, so that He might now become in us the living standard of righteousness—the new rule of life for all.

F. F. Bruce succinctly puts this wonderful truth all together in his book, *Paul: Apostle of the Heart Set Free*.

“Thus by Christ’s incarnation and his offering himself for the sin of others, God (says Paul) ‘condemned sin in the flesh’ (Romans 8:3)—condemned it in human nature as a whole—and inaugurated the new age of spiritual freedom, the age, we may say, of the new covenant.”

“For in Romans 8:1-4 Paul echoes the sense, if not the very language, of the new covenant oracle of Jeremiah 31:31-34. In that oracle there is no substantial difference in content between the law which Israel failed to keep under the old covenant and the law which God undertakes hereafter to place within his people, writing it ‘upon their hearts.’ The difference lies between their once knowing the law as an external code and their knowing it henceforth as an inward principle. So for Paul there was no substantial difference in content between the ‘just requirement of the law’ which cannot be kept by those who live ‘according to the flesh’ and the just requirement fulfilled in those who live ‘according to the Spirit.’ The difference lay in the fact that a new inward power was now imparted, enabling the believer to fulfil what he could not fulfil before. The will of God had not changed; but whereas formerly it was recorded on tablets of stone it was now engraved on human hearts, and inward impulsion accomplished what external compulsion could not....”

“A written law-code was an inadequate vehicle for communicating the will of God; the will of God was given that form only for a temporary purpose—to make quite

^d **Deut. 28:15** But it shall come about, if you will not obey the LORD your God, to observe to do all His commandments and His statutes with which I charge you today, that all these curses shall come upon you and overtake you NASB

Deut. 21:22-23 And if a man have committed a sin worthy of death, and he be to be put to death, and thou hang him on a tree:²³ His body shall not remain all night upon the tree, but thou shalt in any wise bury him that day; (for he that is hanged *is* accursed of God;) that thy land be not defiled, which the LORD thy God giveth thee *for* an inheritance. KJV

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clear to man the inability and sinfulness to which he was prone in the flesh—that is, in his creaturely weakness. Doing the will of God is not a matter of conformity to outward rules but of giving expression to inward love, such as the Spirit begets. Hence, says Paul, ‘the written code kills, but the Spirit gives life’ (2 Corinthians 3:6). The written code kills, because it declares the will of God without imparting the power to do it, and pronounces the death-sentence on those who break it. The Spirit gives life, and with the life he imparts the inward power as well as the desire to do the will of God...The purpose of the law, that men should be holy as God is holy (Leviticus 11:44f., etc.) is thus (according to Paul) realized in the gospel.”¹⁴

This new relationship of the believer to the Law is what Paul means when he talks about establishment of the Law. In Romans 3:31 he says—

Rom. 3:31 Do we then **nullify** the Law through faith? May it never be! On the contrary, **we establish the Law**. NASB

Paul uses a word similar to the word used in Matt. 5:17, when Matthew declares that Christ did not come to “destroy” the Law. The word translated in Rom. 3:31 as “nullify” in the NASB, and as “make void,” in the KJV, while being a different Greek word, is, nevertheless, a word that also carries the nuance of “destroy.” In fact, in Rom. 6:6 the King James translators translated the word as “destroy” (also cf. I Cor. 6:13; 15:26; II Thess. 2:8 & Heb. 2:14).

When Paul says the Law is not nullified, he is saying the Law is not destroyed, thus acknowledging the affirmation of our Lord that He came not to “destroy” the Law or the Prophets.

And, when Paul says that rather “we establish the Law,” he is acknowledging the affirmation of our Lord that He came to “fulfill” the Law. Establishing the Law is found in our Lord “fulfilling” the Law. In other words, men misunderstood the righteous requirements of the Law (as the Lord will now enumerate in the rest of this chapter in Matthew). As such, the Lord Jesus will “establish” before the children of Israel the true intent of the Law.

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Paul demonstrates this principle of establishing of the Law, giving its true intent, by providing us an example in I Cor. 9: 9-10—

I Cor. 9: 9-10 For it is written in the law of Moses, Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn. **Doth God take care for oxen?** ¹⁰ **Or saith he it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, this is written:** that he that ploweth should plow in hope; and that he that thresheth in hope should be partaker of his hope. KJV

In other words, Paul does not “destroy” or “nullify” the law regarding the muzzling of an ox. No, rather he “establishes” that law in the New Covenant as a law written in our heart by the life of Christ, and, thus, makes known to the believer its true intent, which he now relates by the indwelling Spirit of God, that being, of course, God’s desire that His servants should always have hope in their work and that our love should always meet that hope as he explains in verse 10 above.

Galatians 5:5 For we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith. KJV

Thus, since the Christian is now dead to the Law and so not under the Law, a Christian does not need to worry about whether he or she might muzzle an ox while he is treading out the corn. It was just a concrete example taken from an agrarian society that was utilized to show forth an eternal principle of love, care and kindness. We are no longer under that Law and so are not bound by that Law. But we are under Christ and so are bound to fulfill the true intent of that Law established by the life and love of Christ in our heart who will lead us to meet the needs of our fellow believers who serve God, like Paul and Barnabas in ministry.

This is now the rule of life within the believer. In another place in his aforementioned book, F. F. Bruce said it this way—

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“According to Paul, the believer is not under law as a rule of life—unless one thinks of the law of love, and that is a completely different kind of law, fulfilled not by obedience to a code **but by the outworking of an inward power**.”¹⁵

This is all a part of the “fulfilling” of the Law our Lord came to do, fulfilling, not just its promises, types, and shadows, not just its rituals and ceremonies, but also all its commandments, judgments, statutes and ordinances down to its smallest jot and tittle, making known to all the “full” and “true” intent of the Law, as we will now see in the following verses. Amen.

5:19 Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach *them*, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

5:20 For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed *the righteousness* of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.

Our Lord in this verse begins a section of His Sermon that answers those who questioned His commitment to the Law of Moses and/or to the Prophets. It is as if He is telling them that not only is He not destroying the Law or the Prophets, He is the One who is actually fulfilling them, for that was the reason why He came.

He does this by beginning a dissertation on the true meaning of the Law in order to show them that they have not kept the Law, as they supposed. They thought they were being faithful and so felt they should be rewarded with the physical blessings promised. Our Lord is basically saying, “The Law has not failed. The promises remain intact. But you are wrong to suppose that you have kept your part of the Covenant of the Land and so should be physically blessed and delivered from Rome. You have not fulfilled your part. You have not kept Law, and let me show you why.

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With that, he begins with His introductory, “Ye have heard that it was said of old time....but I say unto you.” In each instance, He does this to show them how they have utterly failed in keeping the Law and so should not expect the physical deliverance and blessing. But in His candid pronouncements of their utter failure, He is also reminding them that He is fulfilling the Law. He is following the Law. He is being obedient to the whole Law, even (of which they do not yet realize) when it will require Him to become a curse upon a tree.^e

No man can ever keep the whole Law of Moses, nor keep the exhortations of the Prophets. There is none righteous, no not one. But there is the Messiah—God’s Only-Begotten Son, beloved of the Father. He has come to fulfill the Law in all its requirements—both positive and negative.

This failure of Israel to keep the Law was intended to show them the need of a Saviour who could keep the Law, pay the penalty required by the Law for all sin, and provide for them the forgiveness and requirement of righteousness it demanded by fulfilling it in Himself for all of Israel and for all of mankind, and then imputing that fulfillment to those of Israel and the Gentiles who believe.^f

This was the fulfillment of the Law, along with everything else written in the Law, the Prophets and the Psalms regarding the Christ.

Luke 24:44 And he said unto them, These *are* the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, **that all things must be fulfilled**, which were written in the **law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me.** KJV

They needed the righteousness of Christ; their own righteousness was not enough, even though they thought their righteousness was more than sufficient. They also knew that life was promised to the one who obeyed all the commandments. In more than one place, God declared the promise of life to anyone who obeys the Law.

^e **Gal. 3:10,13** For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed *is* every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them. ¹³ Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed *is* every one that hangeth on a tree. KJV

^f **Rom. 4:3, 10-11** For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and **it was counted unto him for righteousness.**

¹⁰ How was it then reckoned? when he was in circumcision, or in uncircumcision? Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision.

¹¹ And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which *he had yet* being uncircumcised: that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised; that **righteousness might be imputed unto them also.** KJV

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Leviticus 18:5 'So you shall keep My statutes and My judgments, **by which a man may live if he does them**; I am the LORD. NASB

And the apostle Paul says essentially the same thing—

Romans 10:5 For Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, That **the man which doeth those things shall live by them**. KJV

This promise never was altered, changed or loosened. The problem, however, is no one has been able to meet such a standard for the promised life, as Paul said in his epistle to the Romans, “There is none righteous, no, not one” (Rom. 3:10). But, God be praised, a few verses later Paul says this—

Rom. 3:19-24 Now we know that whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are under the Law, that every mouth may be closed, and all the world may become accountable to God; ²⁰ because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law *comes* the knowledge of sin. ²¹ **But now apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, ²² even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe**; for there is no distinction; ²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴ being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus. NASB

This is what our Lord was teaching—that He has come to do what the children of Israel could not do, nor what the Scribes and Pharisees claimed they could do, i.e. to keep the Law and the Prophets unto life as Moses exhorted all to do in the Law (Lev. 18:5) and as Ezekiel reminded all to do in the Prophets (Ezek. 20:11). ^g This exhortation was for all to keep the Law down to its smallest jot and tittle, to “fulfill” the Law in every part and in every way!

And now (getting to the verse before us) in order to illustrate the insufficiency of everyone else’s righteousness, and the sufficiency of His own, our

^g **Lev. 18:5** 'So you shall keep My statutes and My judgments, by which a man may live if he does them; I am the LORD. NASB

Ezek. 20:11 "And I gave them My statutes and informed them of My ordinances, by **which, if a man observes them, he will live**. NASB

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Lord tells them the only way they can be in His kingdom and receive its blessings is for their righteousness to surpass the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees! Yet to those then living, they must have thought, “Who could seemingly be more righteous than the Scribes and Pharisees?” They observed the Law down to its tiniest details. They intrinsically knew every aspect of the Law, priding themselves on their complete observance.

This statement of our Lord must have astonished His disciples and all His listeners and must have, most assuredly, angered the Scribes and Pharisees for they thought they would be the greatest in the kingdom of God. They must have thought, “Who is this man that he accuses us of not being righteous enough!” But they misunderstood the Law, they misunderstood the righteousness of God and its strict requirement of His holiness, and they also misunderstood the character of the kingdom of heaven of which He referred.

It is important to see that our Lord is making a comparison in these two verses. He says there will be two groups in the kingdom (in this context the kingdom is that future millennial kingdom). The first group is the least and the second group is the greatest. He identifies the least as those who loosen one of “these” commandments. Of what commandments is He referring? He is referring to the commandments that He will shortly innumerate, beginning in verse 21. The second group consists of the “greatest,” being the ones who observe the following commandments he is about to innumerate.

Now, in considering this verse, some have been puzzled by the explanatory conjunction that comes in the next verse (v. 20)—the conjunction “for,” or in Greek, the conjunction γὰρ. Of course, as an explanatory conjunction, it is supposed add to the understanding of verse 19.

Regarding this difficulty, Meyer said this regarding this usage of γὰρ in connection with the preceding verse: “Ver. 20. Γὰρ] Unnecessary difficulties have been raised on account of this

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connection (Ritschl and Bleek, who even declare δὲ to be more appropriate), and the obvious sense passed over (de Wette, who, as well as Hilgenfeld, refers back to Matt. 5:17)...”¹⁶

Because of this difficulty some have a tendency to simply ignore the natural connection of this verse to the previous verse, preferring to explain each verse in and of itself, without even considering the natural progression of thought. Others, who are unwilling to consider each verse in and of itself, and who understand the difficulty of the natural progression of thought, have even suggested that the adversative conjunction δὲ (but) would have made more sense (as Meyer mentions).

The reason for this difficulty of thought is that it seems the Lord in verse 20 is explaining why it is important to be in the second group, i.e. the greatest who are keeping the commandments, for only by being in that group is the way made clear for one's righteousness to surpass that of the Scribes and Pharisees. This would be well and fine, except that implies that only those who are known as the *greatest* will be able to enter the kingdom of heaven. The *least* will not be able to because their righteousness does not equal that of the greatest and so does not exceed that of the Scribes and Pharisees. Yet (and this is the difficulty) Jesus says in verse 19 the “least” are nevertheless in the kingdom of heaven! How can one be “in” the kingdom, if one cannot “enter” the kingdom!

This understanding occurs when one logically understands that each explanatory conjunction is connected with each preceding verse, i.e. the conjunction “for” of verse 18 is connected with verse 17 and the conjunction “for” of verse 20 is just connected with verse 19. So, the question becomes, “How one can be *in*, without ever *entering*?”

The answer is found, I believe, when we realize a few things, and when we realize verse 20 is an explanation of more than just verse 19. It is a concluding statement for verses 17, 18 and 19 taken together as a whole. Let me explain.

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In verse 17 we have a *statement*, and then we have an *explanation* in verse 18, then a *conclusion* in verse 19, then another *explanation* in verse 20 that makes a *concluding statement* for all three verses. Let's go through each one step by step.

Our Lord makes a statement in verse 17 that He did not come to destroy the Law and the Prophets, but rather to fulfill them. In verse 18 He then explains (using the explanatory conjunction γὰρ, translated in English as "for") that He means the Law and the Prophets in its entirety, down to its smallest jot and tittle. Then in verse 19, He makes a conclusion to those two verses using the inferential conjunction, οὖν (therefore). Let pause here.

Literally, our Lord begins verse 19 saying that whoever "might break" one of these smallest commandments, and he teaches thus, he shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven."

The word, which I translate as "might break," is a Greek word that refers to the practice of the Rabbis, wherein a commandment is "set aside" for different reasons, and/or a commandment's demand is given an exception or loophole (thus to break). Many times this was done by the Pharisees, who, because of their many traditions, would use this practice to nullify a commandment of God in order to follow the tradition (e.g. Mark 7:9-13)!

Mark 7:9-13 He was also saying to them, "**You nicely set aside the commandment of God** in order to keep your tradition."¹⁰ "For Moses said, 'Honor your father and your mother'; and, 'He who speaks evil of father or mother, let him be put to death';¹¹ but you say, 'If a man says to *his* father or *his* mother, anything of mine you might have been helped by is Corban (that is to say, given *to God*),'¹² you no longer permit him to do anything for *his* father or *his* mother;¹³ **thus invalidating the word of God by your tradition which you have handed down; and you do many things such as that.**" NASB

Therefore, the inference our Lord is making is that if one follows the same practice in regard to the forthcoming declarations that our Lord will make (starting

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in verse 21) regarding the commandments of God, and yet still teaches the truths that Christ fulfilled the Law down to its smallest jot and tittle, that person that is so teaching, will still be in the kingdom! (We will shortly explain why the teaching refers back to the truth that Christ fulfilled the Law, and not to the breaking of a commandment.)

However, because such a one sets aside or breaks one of commandments that our Lord will shortly enumerate, all in order to follow or maintain a man-made tradition, such a one will be named the “smallest” or “least” in the kingdom of heaven! There are consequences to setting aside one of our Lord’s commandments. But the fact remains that he or she will still be in the kingdom! Why? Because in spite of setting aside or breaking one of our Lord’s commandments, the righteousness of that one will still be greater than that of the Scribes and Pharisees because that one *still believes and so teaches the truth of verses 17*, which declares that only Jesus Christ fulfills the Law and the Prophets unto life. Why would this still qualify this disciple to be in the kingdom, even though the disciple may still be following the Pharisaical practice of setting aside or loosening a commandment? The answer, again is because they trusted in the righteousness of Christ, rather than their own righteousness, to fulfil the Law.

Paul, a Pharisee of Pharisees understood our Saviour’s meaning. Paul said this in regard to the Law and righteousness.

Philippians 3:9 And be found in him, **not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law**, but that which is **through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith:** KJV

And in another place Paul speaks of our Lord’s fulfillment of the Law, saying that Christ is the end of the law unto righteousness to everyone that believeth (Rom. 10:4—ASV). And in Acts 13:39, if I may provide my own translation, he states—“and from all things (which you were not able to be declared righteous in the Law of Moses), in this One, everyone

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believing is declared righteous!”

The point is that such a disciple will never try to justify or declare themselves righteous by their own works, as did the Scribes and Pharisees, and because of that they will have the right to finally enter into the millennial kingdom of the Lord.

Perhaps, part of the consternation with these verses by some comes from a misunderstanding of what those who are designated the *least* are actually teaching in verse 19. I believe the demonstrative adverb οὕτως (thus) in verse 19 is anaphoric, referring back to what precedes. This is not an uncommon use of this adverb. Sometimes it is used to refer back to an entire occurrence and other times it can simply refer back to a previous statement.

For example, the adverb is used in Lk. 2:48 where Joseph and Mary ask Jesus as to why he treated them “thus” (οὕτως). The adverb refers back to the entire occurrence of Jesus deciding to stay behind in Jerusalem after his parents had departed (Lk. 2: 43-47). And in Mk. 2:7 we see the adverb refer back to the truth of our Lord’s statement in vs. 5, where he declares, “Son, thy sins be forgiven thee.”

So the question becomes, when the Lord says in verse 19, “and teaches thus” or, quite literally, “and he teaches thus,” does the adverb οὕτως (thus) refer back to “breaking” a certain commandment, or does it refer back to the truth of the statement in verse 17 where our Lord declares that He did “not come to destroy, but to fulfill” the Law and the Prophets?” I believe it is the latter. It points to the fact that a disciple of our Lord (for He is first addressing them) who believes and so teaches the fact that Jesus fulfills the Law and the Prophets, and yet, in his walk as a believer, still falls into the practice of “setting aside” one of the Lord’s forthcoming commandments, that believer will still be “in the kingdom,” since he still teaches Jesus fulfills the Law! But that one will be known as the “least” in the kingdom, since, even though our entrance “into” the kingdom is based upon the imputed righteousness of Christ, our position “in” the kingdom is based upon the fidelity

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of our service and/or walk with the Lord.

But because that same believer's right to be in the kingdom is based upon the Lord's righteousness, granted to all who are born again, that disciple will still have a greater righteousness than the Scribes and Pharisees, who believed that they were able to fulfill the Law and the Prophets all in and of themselves (see Jn. 3:5 & Luke 16:15).^h

Perhaps, this truth might be better understood if we translated the conjunction καὶ in the verse, as "and yet," or even as an adversative, "but." Granted this is a not the primary usage of the conjunction, but, if the contexts warrants, it can be understood in this way. In fact, this very nuance of the conjunction, is provided for the English reader in Mark 12:12, where the same conjunction καὶ is translated as "and yet" in the New American Standard Bible, and is translated as the adversative "but" in the King James Version.

Mark 12:12 And they were seeking to seize Him; **and yet (καὶ)** they feared the multitude; for they understood that He spoke the parable against them. And *so* they left Him, and went away. NASB

Mark 12:12 And they sought to lay hold on him, **but (καὶ)** feared the people: for they knew that he had spoken the parable against them: and they left him, and went their way. KJV

Bauer, Arndt, Gingrich and Danker's *Greek Lexicon of the New Testament*, speaks to this nuance of the conjunction in the following entry (although they do not apply it to the verse before us).

"καὶ...g. emphasizing a fact as surprising or unexpected or noteworthy: *and yet, and in spite of that, nevertheless...*Matt. 3:14; cf. 6:26; 10:29; Mk. 12:12; J 1:5,10; 3:11, 32; 5:40; 6:70.; 7:28; I Cor. 5:2; 2 Cor. 6:9; Hb 3:9..."¹⁷

Therefore with this nuance and understanding, perhaps Matt. 5:17-20 could be translated and/or paraphrased as follows (adapting the KJV)—

^h **Jn. 3:5** Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and *of* the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. KJV

Luke 16:15 And he said unto them, Ye are they which justify yourselves [declare yourselves righteous] before men; but God knoweth your hearts: for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God. KJV

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“Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: **I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil**. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. Whosoever therefore shall set aside one of these least commandments, **and in spite of that**, he teaches thus, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach *thus*, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed *the righteousness* of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.”

Or, perhaps we might paraphrase it this way—

“Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: **I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil**. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. Whosoever then shall loose one of these least commandments, **and yet**, he *still* teaches thus, (*that I came to fulfill the Law*), he shall be called the least **in** the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach *thus*, the same shall be called great **in** the kingdom of heaven. For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed *that* of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.”

Part of the reason I believe this nuance better fits our understanding of the conjunction in this verse is that the children of Israel understood two things. First, the Pharisees were known for their zeal to fulfil the Law by “loosing: or “setting aside” certain commandments in order to fully obey their man-made traditions, which they thought was the only way to fulfill the Law in every way. This is why they had such an intricate system of loosening certain commandments of the Law in order to obey their traditions, which they believed were equally binding.

Emil Schürer describes their system as follows.

“There is always and everywhere only one duty—the fulfilling of the law, i.e. the fulfilling of all that has once been commanded by God, no matter of what kind it may be...If the requirement of the law is exactly fulfilled, duty

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is satisfied. Thus the only question that can be raised is: what is commanded? and what must be done that the commandment may be fulfilled?...All **casuistry**[†] is by its nature endless. The one case may have been divided into ever so many sub-species; but each sub-species can again be split into sub-divisions, and there is here no end to the dividing. The most conspicuous proof of this is furnished by the marvellous labours of the Pharisaic scribes. With all their diligence and acuteness in making distinctions, they never came to an end. But the testimony cannot be refused them, that they really worked hard to do so. Jewish law became in their hands a widely ramified science. They cut up the law into thousands upon thousands of single commands, and thus, as far as in them lay, set up a rule for the direction of every conceivable case of practical life. Marvellous however as were their performances, it is here that their most grievous error is found. All free moral action was now completely crushed under the burden of numberless separate statutory requirements. And such requirement reaches equally to everything, to the greatest as to the least, to the most important as to the most indifferent; every act, whether great or trifling, when estimated by a moral standard, is now of the same value; there is but one point of view for all: to do what is commanded, because it is commanded. ...All depends, not on the inward motive, but on the external correctness of an action. And all this petty and mistaken zeal insisted finally on being the true and genuine service of God. The more men wearied themselves out with it, the more they thought to gain the Divine approbation.”¹⁸

And so, the children of Israel were most aware of this zeal they had for the Law, for their system became so burdensome to so many of them (Matt. 23:4).ⁱ

And, second, the children of Israel knew that Jesus was critical of such a system, which substituted man-made traditions for the Word of God, all because they thought by so doing they could fulfil the righteous requirements of the Law by themselves. Jesus mentions the fallacy of this thinking in Matt. 23:23, where their traditions required an intricate system of tithing meant to insure the complete fulfilment of the law of tithes, yet, that system allowed them to ignore the Law requiring justice, mercy and faithfulness!

[†] From a biblical point of view, **casuistry** is the utilization of human wisdom for the purposes of creating a system of human behaviour, wherein ethical questions are resolved by analysis and by human reasoning.

ⁱ **Matt. 23:4** For they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay *them* on men's shoulders; but they *themselves* will not move them with one of their fingers. KJV

Matthew

Matt. 23:23 Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cummin, and **have neglected the weightier provisions of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness**; but these are the things you should have done without neglecting the others. NASB

They prided themselves on their fulfillment of one requirement of the Law (i.e. the tithes), but simply excused themselves in regard to other requirements of the Law. They ignored the commandment to be just and merciful—and so, oppressed defenseless widows in Israel. They ignored the Law against evil planning—and so, conspired evil against our Lord (see Zech. 7:9-10 with Matt. 23:9 & Mark 3:6).^j In one sense, one could say their *casuistry* caused them to “loosen” those weightier commandments of the Law in order to fulfill the Law as they interpreted it.

And, so what becomes “surprising or unexpected” (as per Bauer, Arndt, Gingrich and Danker) is that our Lord would still declare that believers who might later follow this same Pharisaic mindset and practice of “loosing” or “breaking” certain commandments in the name of their own traditions, would, nevertheless, still be “in the kingdom,” while the Scribes and Pharisees would not!

The children of Israel understood that Jesus was declaring the Pharisees’ supposed fulfillment of the Law by man-made traditions was insufficient and contrary to the righteousness of God. So if the Pharisees’ method of fulfilling the Law was insufficient, how would His disciples, who might follow the same method, still be able to be in the millennial kingdom?! (We must not forget that many Christians, were, nevertheless, still very zealous for the Law, following the same Pharisaic traditions—cf. Acts 11:2-3 and 15:5.).

The answer, of course, was because their right to be in the kingdom was based upon the Lord’s righteousness, which was imputed to them (as indicated by their adherence to His teaching, and so, their belief in our Lord’s declaration concerning Himself in verse 17). It was not based upon their own

^j **Zech. 7:9-10**

Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, saying, **Execute true judgment**, and **show mercy** and compassions every man to his brother:¹⁰ And **oppress not the widow**, nor the fatherless, the stranger, nor the poor; and **let none of you imagine evil against his brother** in your heart. KJV

Matt. 23:14 Woe unto you, scribes and **Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye devour widows' houses**, and for a pretence make long prayer: therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation KJV

Mark 3:6 The Pharisees went out and immediately **began conspiring** with the Herodians against Him, *as to how they might destroy Him*. NASB

Matthew

Pharisaic manner of pleasing God.

And so this verse becomes a tremendous declaration concerning the truth of our justification by faith, in opposition to any work of righteousness which we may have done.^k

All the works of righteousness done so meticulously by the Scribes and Pharisees could not gain them a position in the millennial kingdom, let alone an entrance into the everlasting kingdom of God. And yet, even though some disciples of the Lord might follow the same mindset of setting aside certain commandments in order to maintain certain traditions, not only would they still have a position in the kingdom, they also would gain entrance unto the everlasting kingdom of our Lord. Why?—because, unlike the Scribes and Pharisees, they never trusted in their own ability to completely fulfil the Law's requirements unto righteousness, rather they trusted in Christ's fulfilment of the Law unto righteousness, i.e. their justification to life! Thanks be to God for His grace by which we are saved.

And so, returning to the structure of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus shows them why He came as the Messiah—He came to point them away from their own supposed righteousness to Him, the Righteous One, who would fulfill every aspect of the Law for them, and then impute that required righteousness to them—if they only believed.

He also shows them how they do not deserve the physical blessings of the Covenant of the Land, yet at the same time He tells them to be of good cheer,¹ for He will fulfill the Law and grant them the forgiveness and the righteousness they need to stand in the presence of the Thrice Holy God, for He, the Messiah, will overcome all!

And so, Jesus will now begin in verse 21 to illustrate the insufficiency of their own righteousness, by showing them the type of righteousness that God really requires in the commandments of the Law of Moses. So with this in mind let's continue our study.

5:21 Ye have heard that it was said by them of old

^k **Titus 3:5** Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; KJV

¹ **Matt. 9:2** And, behold, they brought to him a man sick of the palsy, lying on a bed: and Jesus seeing their faith said unto the sick of the palsy; Son, **be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee.** KJV
John 16:33 These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of **good cheer; I have overcome the world.** KJV

Matthew

time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment:

5:22 But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire.

The True Application of the Sixth Commandment

A Scribe or Pharisee listening to our Lord would, in all probability, believe (like the rich young ruler) that they had kept the Law from their youth up.^m And, most assuredly, most would have believed that they never had murdered anyone, thus fulfilling this sixth commandment. And so, our Lord shows them such is not the case, for in God's eyes, hatred in one's heart also breaks the commandment. As such, who on earth could say they never broke the sixth commandment or that they fulfilled its requirement. The whole world must come under judgment, for none can ever say such a thing! But our Lord could!

These declarations of the Lord show that God expects more than just outward conformity, he also expects inward reality. It is not enough to just obey the Lord outwardly; He wants us to obey Him inwardly.

Those who are poor in spirit will be the ones who guard their hearts. The proud will be quick in unrighteous anger; the humble will seek to make peace. The proud will seek to divide and exclude; the humble will seek to unite and include. The proud will curse when cursed; the humble will bless when cursed. Our Lord shows the true requirement of the sixth commandment of the Law. Unfortunately, mankind has horribly failed in this. By this commandment alone, Israel could never claim they kept their part of the covenant to obey the Law of Moses, for as James says, if you break one commandment, you have become guilty of all.ⁿ

^m **Matt. 19:18-20**

He saith unto him, Which? Jesus said, Thou shalt do no murder, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness,¹⁹ Honour thy father and thy mother: and, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.²⁰ The young man saith unto him, **All these things have I kept from my youth up:** what lack I yet? KJV

ⁿ **James 2:10** For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all. KJV

Matthew

Let me conclude with a quote by Matthew Henry who nicely sums up these words of our Lord with these thoughts which we should all take to heart.

“The Jewish teachers had taught, that nothing except actual murder was forbidden by the sixth commandment. Thus they explained away its spiritual meaning. Christ showed the full meaning of this commandment. According to it we must be judged hereafter, and therefore ought to be ruled now. All rash anger is heart murder. By our brother, here, we are to understand any person, though ever so much below us, for we are all made of one blood. ‘Raca,’ is a scornful word, and comes from pride: ‘Thou fool,’ is a spiteful word, and comes from hatred. Malicious slanders and censures are poison that kills secretly and slowly. Christ told them that however light they made of these sins, they would certainly be called into judgment for them. We ought carefully to preserve Christian love and peace with all our brethren; and if at any time there is a quarrel, we should confess our fault, humble ourselves to our brother, making or offering satisfaction for wrong done in word or deed: and we should do this quickly; because, till this is done, we are unfit for communion with God in holy services. And when we are preparing for any religious exercises, it is good for us to make that an occasion of serious reflection and self-examination. What is here said is very applicable to our being reconciled to God through Christ. While we are alive, we are in the way to his judgment-seat; after death, it will be too late. When we consider the importance of the case, and the uncertainty of life, how needful it is to seek peace with God, without delay!”¹⁹

The apostle John, who never forgot these words of our Saviour uttered in the Sermon on the Mount, taught the Church this same truth when he wrote to the saints the following words—

I John 3:15 Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him. KJV

It might be noted this example alone shows it is not accurate to say that the Sermon on the Mount was not for the Church, but rather was for believers

Matthew

during the tribulation. The apostle John taught the same thing to believers in the Church age, fulfilling our Lord's commission to him and to the other apostles to preach the Gospel to every creature, and then, after preaching, to teach everyone who is converted (by which, such a one becomes a disciple of the Lord) to observe all things He had taught them.^o And, most certainly the Sermon on the Mount was one of the things He taught them!

5:23 Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee;

5:24 Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.

Now, some might take these next two verses as proof that the Sermon on the Mount was never meant for the Church during this Dispensation of Grace, but rather was meant for Jewish believers living during the tribulation of the last days, simply because Christians do not have an altar wherein they might bring sacrifices to God. However, let me suggest, this conclusion is based upon a misunderstanding of how one dispensation might relate to another.

Yes, the Lord is referring to the altar of the Temple, but it must be remembered the Lord was still talking to those who would be a part of that future Church that would begin on that Day of Pentecost after our Lord's crucifixion. And, equally important, it must be remembered that the Temple still stood for approximately another 40 years after that Day of Pentecost, and that also, for at least the first 10 years or so, the only ones in the Church were Jewish believers who continued to frequent the Temple.

Many Christians who were Jewish continued to worship and pray in the Temple even after the Church was first formed. Even Paul the apostle, many years after becoming a Christian decided to bring a sacrifice to the altar (see Acts 21:20-26).

But some believe that since the Church was not

^o **Matt. 28:19-20**

Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit,²⁰ **teaching them to observe all that I commanded you;** and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.
NASB

Matthew

yet in existence the Lord's words could not apply to those believers. But this is simply not true, as we will now attempt to demonstrate with a short excursus, but first we will address these two verses within the context of the preceding verses.

In these two verses the Lord continues to illustrate the insufficiency of the righteousness practiced by the Scribes and Pharisees by continuing to remind them that God requires more than just an outward adherence to the Law of Moses, but rather a complete transformation of the heart. He illustrates this again by referring to the freewill offerings mentioned in the Old Testament that were offered by a worshipper in love to God, which Matthew Poole once explained as that which is "freely offered to God in testimony of his faith and love to God, without any particular injunction from God."²⁰ In other words, it did not refer to a required sacrifice of the Law, but it referred to a sacrifice that was offered freely from the heart to God. David speaks of this type of sacrifice in Psalm 54:6-7.

Psalm 54:6-7 With a freewill-offering will I sacrifice unto thee: I will give thanks unto thy name, O Jehovah, for it is good.⁷ For he hath delivered me out of all trouble; And mine eye hath seen *my desire* upon mine enemies. ASV

Thus our Lord continues to refer to the type of righteousness that God desires in one's heart. A Pharisee thought the outward reality of a gift offered to God was sufficient to earn the blessing of God. Mark 7:10-12 is a perfect example of this mindset.

Mark 7:10-12 For Moses said, Honour thy father and thy mother; and, he who speaks ill of father or mother, let him surely die.¹¹ But ye say, If a man say to his father or his mother, *It is corban* (that is, gift), whatsoever thou mightest have profit from me by.¹² And ye no longer suffer him to do anything for his father or his mother. Darby's Version

Their hearts were so hardened that they could not even see the irony of seeking to honour God with a

Matthew

gift to show their love and fidelity to Him, by ignoring their love and fidelity to their own parents. Or, to put it another way, they could not see the irony of dishonour becoming a basis for honour! Thus Jesus is saying once more that true righteousness is deeper than just outward forms of piety. The righteousness that God requires is a righteousness that will surpass the outward righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, a righteousness that also sanctifies man's heart and not just the outward motions of the body.

Jesus is trying to teach that if one has true love for God, that love will show no partiality. In other words, just as dishonour cannot co-exist with honour, so too a withholding of love toward a fellow human cannot co-exist with a true love offered to God. So Jesus says if you want to show love and honour to God and you remember your brother has "ought" against you, first go and be reconciled with your brother, then your gift to God will be pleasing. That type of consistency of love will manifest a pure religion that is pleasing to God (James 1:27), wherein love will have no boundaries but will be shown to all without partiality as God showed His love to the world without partiality, loving the whole world, whether on one was deserving or not, or I should say, where no one was deserving for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

It is only when our hearts are right that God will accept our freewill offerings, and that is why it seems the Lord includes these two verse on freewill offerings after just talking about how anger worketh not the righteousness of God in verse 21 and 22. Usually when discord arises between brethren, anger is the underlying basis, either anger in the innocent one for being accused falsely of a wrong, or anger in the one for being wronged.

In that light, it should be noted that Jesus did not say, "Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee for being angry at him, or for saying *Raca* to him or for calling him a fool, leave there thy gift

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before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.” Rather Jesus leaves it indefinite, saying, “if you remember that your brother has ought against you,” go and first be reconciled to your brother. Jesus does not indicate what that “ought” is, which, while not excluding the anger mentioned in verse 22, broadens it to include “anything” (the Greek word translated “ought,” literally, means any “thing”). Nor does Jesus indicate whether the “thing” is justified or not, like he did in verse 22 where he clearly says that those “things” enumerated cause one to be guilty of judgment, of the council, and of hell fire, respectively. Jesus leaves it open ended and indefinite. He does not indicate if the “ought” or the “thing” against you is justified or not, for that will never make a difference to true love.

If the “ought” was justified against you, you will show remorse for the wrong that you did by going to your brother, thus showing your love for him, and if the “ought” was not justified and you were innocent of the accusation, it will show humility of heart by still going to him, trying to be reconciled with him, to one to whom you did no wrong, thus showing again love to him. If you were guilty, yet you do not go to your brother, that shows you have pride in your heart, not being able to admit your wrong, thus showing your supposed love is far short of the glory of God, for your pride is showing that you love yourself more than you love God or your brother. And if you were innocent, yet still go, it will show your humility before God and your concern as to what such false senses of injustice can sometimes do to a person, for such senses of injustice will many times grow into a bitterness that damages one’s spiritual walk before God. What did Jesus do when innocent and falsely accused with an “ought” (so to speak)? Scripture says He spoke before his accuser and calmly asked, “If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil: but if well, why smitest thou me? (John 18:23). Thus Jesus teaches that a true righteousness that exceeds the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, will be manifested in a love that shows not bounds.

Matthew

In reference to this type of love and righteousness, I can think of no better comment regarding this truth than that which was offered by D.L. Moody, whose broadened heart loved all men. He writes:

"If I am not willing to forgive those who may have committed some single offence against me, what a mean, contemptible thing it would be for me to ask God to forgive the ten thousand sins of which I have been guilty! But Christ goes still further. He says: "If thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee; leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift." It may be that you are saying: "I do not know that I have anything against any one." [But] has any one anything against you? Is there someone who thinks you have done them wrong? Perhaps you have not; but it may be they think you have. I will tell you what I would do before I go to sleep tonight; I would go and see them, and have the question settled. You will find that you will be greatly blessed in the very act. Supposing you are in the right and they are in the wrong; you may win your brother or sister!" ²¹(Exclamation mine.)

And so, as with the sixth commandment above, the apostles never forgot these words of our Saviour uttered in the Sermon on the Mount, for they taught the Church the same principle or truth, as can be seen in the apostle John's words to the Church—

I John 4:20-21 If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen. ²¹ And this commandment we have from Him, that the one who loves God should love his brother also. NASB

And so we see the apostle John continued to teach these same things to believers in the Church age, fulfilling our Lord's commission to him and to the other apostles to not only preach the Gospel to every creature, but then, after preaching, to teach everyone who believes (thereby becoming a disciple of the Lord) that they should observe all things He had

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taught them (Matt. 28: 19-20). And, most certainly, as we said earlier, the Sermon on the Mount was one of the things He taught them!

Excursus on Dispensational Truth

What is ironic is that some who believe these words in Matthew cannot apply to the Church Age, simply because the Church Age had not yet begun when those specific words were spoken to those disciples, nevertheless, believe that those same words must apply to Israel during the future and distant age of the Great Tribulation, which had not yet begun!.

But, dear brethren, if these disciples represent those Jewish believers in the Israel who will exist during the future tribulation that will come centuries later, why cannot they represent Jewish believers in the Church that will come in but three years or so? So, if these words cannot be applied to the Church simply because the Church Age had not yet begun, how can they then apply to the Israel in the Great Tribulation, which age, equally, had not yet begun? If it could not apply to believers in the Church because those disciples of our Lord were not yet a part of the Church, how can it then apply to the believers in the coming Tribulation, for those same disciples of our Lord were not, and never would be, a part of Israel in the coming Tribulation, i.e. Daniel's Seventieth Week.

I am afraid the viewpoint that disallows these words in Matthew's Gospel from every applying to the Church is really based upon one's dispensational theology driving one's interpretation of Scripture, rather than Scripture driving one's dispensational theology. Dispensational theology is true, but not when it is altered to exclude a large portion of Scripture, especially when such alteration is based upon the logical conclusions of theology, rather than the consistent application of Scripture.

Let's look at another example. Many of those who believe these words of Matthew's Gospel were never meant for the Church, because the Church was

Matthew

not yet in existence, nevertheless, will embrace the words of the John's Gospel as being spoken for the Church! Yet, were not those words spoken at the same time, i.e. before the Church was in existence!

If the non-existence of the Church disqualifies the words spoken by our Lord as recorded in Matthew as being intended for the Church, so too, the words spoken by our Lord as recorded in the Gospel of John should also be disqualified as being intended for the Church. Yet, such a thing never occurs. The precious promise of John 3:16, or the words spoken by our Lord in John 6, or the words spoken at the last Passover, when He said, "Let not your heart be troubled... and... I am the Vine; you are the branches...and...abide in Me..." All these words are used by those same brothers who reject Matthew as being intended for the Church. And most especially the words in our Lord's High Priestly prayer are always applied to the Church, especially when He prays—

John 17:20-21 Neither pray I for these alone, **but for them also which shall believe on me through their word;** ²¹ That they all may be one; as thou, Father, *art* in me, and I in thee, **that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.** KJV

These words are repeatedly taught as being applicable for the Church. Yet these words were spoken before the Church existed.

Now, some may say, "Well, John 17 is different because the Lord specifically includes those *who would believe on Him through His disciples' words*. So, that is why it is applied to the Church." Well, that is fine (although that does not explain the application of other portions of John's Gospel to the Church). But if the mere mention of those who would believe later through His disciples' words or witness automatically makes these words applicable to the Church, the same thing occurs in Matthew!

In Matthew 28:19-20, the also Lord mentions those who would believe later through the disciples' witness, specifically commanding them to teach them

Matthew

everything He had commanded them. Well then, if this reason is used to justify the application of John 17:20-21 to the Church, why is not the same principle applied to Matt. 28:19-20? If it is true with John, then it must be true for Matthew!

How can the words spoken by our Lord be disqualified in Matthew, yet affirmed in John? Again, it is the result of one's theology driving one's interpretation of Scripture, rather than the other way around, and it becomes an inconsistent application of dispensational truth to the Gospels. We must always try to be consistent in our interpretations.

However, if some are consistent and believe the reason the Sermon on the Mount must be disqualified is because the words simply were not spoken during the dispensation of the Church and for that same reason the words in John must also be disqualified, or if some agree with the above point and so say that the words in Matthew and in John were never intended for the Church Age because that dispensation had not begun, at least such ones are trying to be consistent, but at what cost! The Church loses those precious promises spoken and prayed for in the Gospel of John.

But, again, this viewpoint results from a misunderstanding and a misapplication of dispensation truth, i.e. as to how words spoken in one dispensation might relate to those in another dispensation that had not yet begun. In reality, such a viewpoint ends up robbing God's people of their spiritual inheritance as found in the Gospels.

To show the problem of such a viewpoint, Scripture, itself, provides a number of examples where words spoken to a group of people in one dispensation, were meant to be taken by those same people when the new dispensation began. In other words, even though they were spoken or delivered in a previous dispensation, that did not indicate they were not really meant for the subsequent dispensation.

For example, many agree that Scripture is divided into seven dispensations. First there is the

Matthew

dispensation of innocence with Adam and Eve in the Garden, then the *dispensation of conscience* from the time of the Fall until after Noah's flood, at which time, the *dispensation of human government* began. Then came Abraham, which introduced the *dispensation of promise*, which continued until God brought the children of Israel out of Egypt to Mt. Sinai, at which time the *dispensation of the Law* began. Then on the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2:1 the *dispensation of the Church* began, or, as some might designate it, the dispensation of Grace. ‡ Then, finally, after the end of the Church Age when the Lord returns again, we have the *Millennial dispensation*. These are what are commonly known as the seven dispensations.

Yet when we study these dispensations we find that God sometimes spoke words at the end of one dispensation, intending them to be applicable to the next dispensation (just as we are saying happened with our Lord speaking to the disciples in the Gospels). For instance, at the end of the "dispensation of conscience" God spoke certain words of promise to Noah, telling him He would establish His covenant with him.^p Obviously, these words were meant to be words of comfort and hope to Noah after the flood *in the next dispensation*. And just because they were spoken before that dispensation began did not mean they were not applicable. So too with our Lord's words to His disciples and the words in the Sermon on the Mount.

Or take another example—at the end of the dispensation of promise, God spoke to Moses certain words of encouragement, promise and even of specific commandments, all intended for *the next dispensation of Law*. In fact, the instructions for the feast of Passover were given to Israel during the dispensation of promise with the knowledge that they were meant for the dispensation of the Law. It did not matter that they were spoken before that dispensation even began.

The dispensation of the Law began at Mt. Sinai (Ex. 19 & Gal. 4:24), yet the instructions in regard to

‡ However, some believe the dispensation of Grace began with the death of our Lord upon the cross, when He said, "It is finished." Others, believe it began at the resurrection, and still others at His ascension.

^p **Gen. 6:18** But I will establish My covenant with you; and you shall enter the ark-- you and your sons and your wife, and your sons' wives with you.¹⁹ And of every living thing of all flesh, you shall bring two of every *kind* into the ark, to keep *them* alive with you; they shall be male and female. NASB

Matthew

Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread were given while they were still in Egypt (Ex. 12: 1-20). Yet this did not mean those instructions were not meant for Israel during the dispensation of the Law. Moses says they specifically were!

Num. 9:2-3 Let the children of Israel also keep the passover at his appointed season. ³ In the fourteenth day of this month, at even, **ye shall keep it in his appointed season: according to all the rites of it, and according to all the ceremonies thereof**, shall ye keep it. KJV

Equally, it should be noted some of the instructions could only be done for a limited time, e.g. **putting blood on the doorposts and lintels of the doors in Egypt**; yet, just because that aspect could only be done for a limited time, it did not invalidate the rest of those instructions as being intended for **Israel** during the next **dispensation of the Law**.

It is the same for the Sermon on the Mount. To demonstrate this point, let me repeat the exactly previous paragraph only substituting certain words, which I will also put in bold type below—

“Equally, it should be noted some of the instructions could only be done for a limited time, e.g. **bringing a gift before the altar in the Temple**, yet, just because that aspect could only be done for a limited time, did not invalidate the rest of those instructions as being intended for the **Church** during the next **dispensation of Grace**.”

As one can see, just because some of the instructions about the Passover could only be done for a limited time (i.e. in Egypt) without invalidating the other instructions, so too, the fact that the instructions regarding the offering of a gift on the altar in the Temple (Matt. 5:21-22) was limited (i.e. until its destruction in 70 A.D) that did not invalidate that portion of Scripture (i.e. the Sermon on the Mount) as being intended for the Church during the

Matthew

Age of Grace.

Until the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. many Jewish Christians, according to their liberty in Christ, continued to bring gifts to the altar in the Temple, and so were able to literally apply these two verses in Matt. 5:21-22 to their walk before the Lord. Just because this aspect could no longer be done did not invalidate the rest of the Sermon as being applicable to the Church in this dispensation, any more than the fact that the children of Israel no longer could apply the blood to the doorposts and lintels in Egypt invalidated the rest of the instructions regarding Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread as being applicable to Israel in the next dispensation of the Law. As those words were still meant for Israel, so too, the words of our Lord in the Sermon on the Mount were still meant for the Church. In fact, it is the Holy Spirit, Himself, that exhorts the Church to cling to the words of our Lord Jesus; and, for the most part, those words are found, in the four Gospels! (See Acts 20:35; I Tim 6:3).^q

If we have no problem obeying the exhortation of the Holy Spirit to consent to the words of our Lord Jesus when they are taken from the Gospel of John, then, dear saints, we should have no problem obeying the exhortation of the Holy Spirit when they are taken from the Gospel of Matthew.

Hopefully, this short excursus will help us now understand how words that are spoken in one dispensation, can be intended for the next dispensation, and also how the words of the Lord Jesus spoken to us in the Sermon on the Mount were always intended to be words for us in the Church.

5:25 Agree with thine adversary quickly, whiles thou art in the way with him; lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison.

5:26 Verily I say unto thee, Thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing.

^q **Acts 20:35** I have shewed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, **and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus**, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive. KJV

I Timothy 6:3 If any man teach otherwise, **and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ**, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness. KJV

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The True Application of the Eighth Commandment

These two verses have to do with those who failed to honor their debts owed to their creditors. As such, our Lord is showing how those who thought they had always obeyed the eighth commandment to never steal, actually were breaking the commandment by their failure to pay what they owe. In other words, if one borrows money from someone and then fails to repay that person, such a one is stealing from that person.

Many must have thought, “I have never broken into someone’s house and stolen property,” or, “I have never stopped someone on the highway and robbed them.” Therefore, I have kept the eighth commandment. But our Lord says there are many ways of stealing from others and failure to pay our debts is one of them.

The apostle Paul applies this portion of the Sermon on the Mount to the Church when he exhorts those Christians living in Rome to—

Romans 13:7 Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute *is due*; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour. ⁸ **Owe no man any thing**, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law. KJV

And he said to those in Corinth,

I Cor. 6:4-8 If then you have law courts dealing with matters of this life, do you appoint them as judges who are of no account in the church? ⁵ I say *this* to your shame. *Is it* so, *that* there is not among you one wise man who will be able to decide between his brethren, ⁶ but brother goes to law with brother, and that before unbelievers? ⁷ Actually, then, it is already a defeat for you, that you have lawsuits with one another. Why not rather be wronged? Why not rather be defrauded? ⁸ **On the contrary, you yourselves wrong and defraud, and that your brethren.** NASB

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5:27 Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery:

5:28 But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.

The True Application of the Seventh and Tenth Commandments

Many understand these two verses as only applying to the seventh commandment, but it seems the Lord is indicting those who break the seventh commandment in their heart with also breaking the tenth commandment.

If we were to translate verse 28 in a very literal manner, it might read as follows:

“But I say to you, that whoever looks at a woman with the intent to covet her, already adulterated her in his heart. “

I translated the word, usually translated “to lust” (ἐπιθυμῆσαι), as “to covet,” in order to show how the tenth commandment was also being violated. The Greek word is actually the same word (in infinitival form) that is used in Rom. 13:9 where Paul says, “Thou shalt not covet (ἐπιθυμήσεις),” and is the same word used in the Septuagint version of the tenth commandment in Exodus 20:17 which says—

Exodus 20:17 Thou shalt not covet (ἐπιθυμήσεις) thy neighbour's wife; thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house; nor his field, nor his servant, nor his maid, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any of his cattle, nor whatever belongs to thy neighbour. (Brenton's Version)

In other words, our Lord is saying that when one breaks the tenth commandment by coveting his neighbor's wife, as recorded for us in Exodus 20:17 above, such a one is also breaking the seventh commandment to not commit adultery! Such coveting is adultery in our Lord's eyes.

The Pharisees in their piety simply could not see

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this. They prided themselves that they never physically broke the seventh commandment, when all along they were repeatedly breaking this commandment in their hearts. Their self-righteous spirit blinded them to the fact that they were utter failures in obeying the commandment. As long as they refrained from the physical act, they thought they were still being righteous and just “before God.” As long as they refrained from the physical act, they thought they were still being righteous and just “before the woman” they coveted. And, as long as they refrained from the physical act, they thought they were still being righteous and just “before the man” to whom the woman was married. But the fact is, in God’s eyes, they were not only sinning against Him, they were also sinning against every woman they might adulterate in their hearts by their sinful and covetous thoughts!

J. B. Lightfoot once wrote the following concerning this sin of the heart—

“So a man, by these wanton thoughts, commits uncleanness with his heart... Eyes talking lasciviously to our own hearts; looking wantonly... Therefore, Solomon’s counsel is good; “Lust not after her beauty in thine heart: neither let her take thee with her eyelids.”²² [see Prov. 6:25] ^r

Thus our Lord’s declaration shows how man so easily rationalizes away the clear intent of Scripture by looking only on the outward while ignoring the inward. And yet Scripture says God looks on the inward, which, because of what He sees and knows, causes all to become guilty before Him. ^s

This is the religious milieu in which Jesus spoke—religious leaders thinking they were pure before God, keeping and fulfilling the Law in its entirety, but which, as the Lord continues to demonstrate, was utterly false.

5:29 And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not

^r **Proverbs 6:25**

Lust not after her beauty in thine heart; neither let her take thee with her eyelids. KJV

^s **I Sam. 16:7b**

“...for *the LORD* seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, **but the LORD looketh on the heart.** “KJV

Luke 16:15 “And he said unto them, Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts: for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God.” KJV

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that thy whole body should be cast into hell.

5:30 And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast *it* from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not *that thy whole body should be cast into hell.*

As Jesus already showed how man's breaking of the sixth commandment in one's heart by calling one a fool was enough to condemn such a one to fires of Gehenna, He now shows how breaking the seventh and tenth commandment, as well as breaking the aforementioned eighth commandment, was enough to condemn a man to hell.

The children of Israel were expecting God's physical blessing upon them and their deliverance from Rome because, unlike their forefathers before, who were led captive to Babylon, they were now obeying the Law of God. But instead the Lord indicts them all and says that rather than deserving the physical blessing of Gerizim for their obedience, they deserve the fires of Gehenna for their disobedience!

Before moving on, however, it should be mentioned that these were two Hebrew idioms that were used in these verses and so should not be taken literally. It is important to understand the language in which Scripture was written. The statement, "if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee," was an idiom meaning, "Stop your lusting or coveting." And the statement, "if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee," was an idiom meaning, "Stop your stealing or defrauding." It was not meant to be taken literally, any more than, let's say, the English idiom—"If you do that, *you will be cutting off your nose to spite your face*"—should be taken literally. In English the person is not warning the other person that if they are not careful they will actually be cutting off their nose! No, it is an English idiom which means—do not refrain from doing something, simply because you are trying to make your anger known to someone who might have offended you. For example, a good friend invites you to dinner for fellowship (of which you would

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immensely enjoy), but when you hear that a neighbor, with whom you are upset, is also going to be there, you decline the invitation so that neighbor will hear of it, and will therefore know how upset you are with him or her. This is “cutting off your nose, to spite your face.”

Or let's consider another English idiom, the idiom, “Hold your tongue.” This does not mean to literally hold your tongue with your fingers. It means in certain circumstance it is better to keep your opinion to yourself. In the same way, these two verses are not meant to be taken literally since it is simply a common Hebrew idiom.

But the main point is that the Lord is demonstrating to the children of Israel that even though they prided themselves for their righteousness before God, thus deserving God's blessings (in their eyes, at least), in reality, they were not being righteous at all in God's eyes, and, as such, really deserved death, as Paul the apostle reiterates, when he said, “for the wages of sin is death” (Rom. 6:23a).

5:31 It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement:
5:32 But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery.

For many in Israel, their attitude toward divorce had become quite lax. Alfred Edersheim mentions this unfortunate development among the people at that time, listing some of the more absurd reasons used by men for divorcing their wives, all of which, of course, was in contradiction to the true intent and application of the Law. He says—

“On the question: what constituted lawful grounds of divorce, the Schools were is divided. Taking their departure from the sole ground of divorce mentioned in Deut. 24:1: ‘a matter of shame’ [literally, nakedness],’ the School of Shammai applied the expression only to moral

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transgressions...But the School of Hillel proceeded on different principles. It took the words 'matter of shame' in the widest possible sense, and declared it sufficient ground for divorce, if a woman had spoiled her husband's dinner. Rabbi Akiba thought, that the words...'if she find no favour in his eyes,' implied that it was sufficient if a man had found another woman more attractive than his wife!"²³

How awful is the heart of man when devoid of the graces of the Spirit of God. God told the people through the prophets He hated divorce.

Malachi 2:15b-16 "Take heed then, to your spirit, and let no one deal treacherously against the wife of your youth. ¹⁶ **'For I hate divorce,'** says the LORD, the God of Israel, 'and him who covers his garment with wrong,' says the LORD of hosts. 'So take heed to your spirit, that you do not deal treacherously.'" NASB

In light of this, Jesus says that the only basis for divorce is when one of the parties commits fornication. And yet, later in the Gospel of Matthew we find, that even in this, forgiveness is the better option, not a divorce. (Did not God, as a husband, many times forgive the unfaithfulness of Israel?)

Ezekiel 16:32 "You adulteress wife, who takes strangers instead of her husband! NASB

Jeremiah 3:12-14 "...Return, thou backsliding Israel, saith the LORD; *and* I will not cause mine anger to fall upon you: for I *am* merciful, saith the LORD, *and* I will not keep *anger* for ever. ¹³ Only acknowledge thine iniquity, that thou hast transgressed against the LORD thy God, and hast scattered thy ways to the strangers under every green tree, and ye have not obeyed my voice, saith the LORD. ¹⁴ Turn, O backsliding children, saith the LORD; for I am married unto you: and I will take you one of a city, and two of a family, and I will bring you to Zion." KJV

Now some might wonder what should be done in those cases of physical abuse and/or other similar instances. In those cases, it seems that separation might be called for out of a sense of self-

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preservation. God does not expect one to suffer under physical abuse in such cases. But “separation” is not divorce. In those cases, one must remain single.

However, in such cases of separation, usually the other party, the one who is abusive, will inevitably violate their marriage vow by fornication, or they will divorce the other party (the one abused) and then go out and remarry themselves. When that happens, then that aggrieved spouse is free, for the other spouse, according to Scripture, breaks their marriage vow by their fornication, and/ or their remarriage. In that case, the aggrieved or separated party becomes free to also remarry, but, unlike the other spouse, can do so without sin (also see I Cor. 7:1-16).

J. Vernon McGee has a helpful comment on this topic.

“Adultery breaks the marriage relationship and provides the one ground for divorce. Somebody says to me, ‘Yes, but here is this poor Christian woman, married to a drunkard!’ Or a fine Christian man is married to a godless woman. What about that? Well, believers may separate on other grounds, which seems to be the whole point of 1 Corinthians 7, but divorce is permitted on only one basis, adultery.”

“...Now suppose there is a believer whose spouse got a divorce on another ground. What about the innocent party? Well, if there has been adultery there, and in most cases there has been, then the innocent party is permitted to remarry...”²⁴

In any case, our Lord continues to show the people of Israel that they are not obeying the Law as they think.

He is showing that, in addition to their breaking the eighth commandment by their lustful thoughts they are also breaking the eighth commandment by their frivolous attitude toward divorce. Jesus is telling them that when one divorces his wife for reasons other than fornication (as they were constantly doing, per the examples given by Alfred Edersheim) and then such a one makes a decision to marry another

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woman, they are actually committing adultery, for in God's eyes, anything other than fornication is not a basis for divorce. Because of this, such a one's marriage vow remains intact, and so their remarrying and having relations with another woman, or if the roles are reversed, the woman with another man, they are still breaking the eighth commandment!

How self-righteous were the people of Israel in those days. They felt slighted by God for not bringing the promised blessings of Deuteronomy 28, for they thought they were faithfully in keeping the Law of Moses as they promised, but, in reality, they were breaking the Law of Moses every day!

And so the Lord pulls back the curtain of their sin, showing them that they are incapable of obeying or fulfilling the Law of God, and showing them that by "the works of the Law shall no flesh be justified" (Rom. 3:20). ^t Of course, He is doing this to ultimately show them that He, as the Lamb of God, will be the One to take away all their sin and all their inability to fulfill the righteous requirements of the Law, if they will but believe and trust in Him.

5:33 Again, ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths:

The True Application of the Third and Ninth Commandment

This verse relates, in the first place, to the third commandment, and then, within it, to the ninth commandment. But in order to understand this verse, we must realize that in Israel swearing had become so commonplace in everyday life that the Rabbis had developed a category for every type of oath.

The oaths among Israel at that time were commonly divided into four categories. First was a category having to do with promises made, either to do something or not to do something. People would swear with an oath that they would do this or that, or

^t **Romans 3:20**
because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law *comes* the knowledge of sin.
NASB

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they would swear with an oath that they would not do this or that. Then there was a category having to do with an affirmation of innocence in regard to things that were left in one's care for safekeeping, but were either lost, broken or stolen. People would swear with an oath that they did not steal this item or that item, but that they were truly lost or stolen, etc. Then there were those oaths having to do with legal matters. In this case, the people would affirm the veracity of their statements with an oath. This type of oath, of course, relates to the ninth commandment which prohibits false witness. And then, finally, there was a category having to do with flippant oaths which were considered vain, because people would claim something was true, when there was no evidence that it was true, or when it was so obvious it could not be true! §

Except for the last category mentioned, the Rabbis condoned the use of all these varied and repeated oaths in everyday conversation, as long as they were being truthful. But in practice, truth was many times sacrificed. Yet, even in those cases, the Rabbis would hold such a one guiltless before God, just as long as the name of God was never invoked. If God's name was not mentioned they thought one could not be breaking the third commandment. This led, in some cases, to a careless attitude toward the actual sacredness of an oath or vow. This is why it was common for one to swear by heaven, or by Jerusalem, or by one's head, etc. They thought they would be free from sin, just as long as God's actual name was not mentioned. But this led, of course, to the lack of veracity in the lives of the people. This is the milieu in which our Lord spoke these words.

John Kitto who resided with Anthony Norris Groves on his first missionary journey to Baghdad relates the following about this very mindset.

"The oaths here enumerated were ...expletive or common oaths, which appear, from the instances adduced by Lightfoot, to have been in very common use, even among the grave doctors of the law, to strengthen their affirmations, and to give intensity to the expression of a

§ One example they used to demonstrate this type of oath was if someone claimed they saw a camel flying!

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purpose. These affirmations were not held to be oaths, in the legal sense. **They involved no legal obligation, nor did any legal penalty attach to their untruth or infraction.** They were vicious forms of affirmation, vain oaths, such as we find in all nations, and certainly, in their form of expression, less unholy than many which are but too often heard among ourselves. This view is supported by the following, which we find among other of Gill's citations. First, Philo, the Jew, says: 'The most high and ancient Cause need not be immediately mentioned in swearing; but the earth, the sun, heaven, and the whole world.' And then, Maimonides: 'He that swears by heaven, and by the earth, and by the sun, and the like, though his intention be nothing less than to Him who created them, this is not an oath.'"²⁵

Then he relates that even today, in that part of the world, such swearing continues to be commonplace. He relates that—

"...oaths of various kinds abound in the common conversation and address of all classes. Among these the one 'by the head,' mentioned in our Lord's enumeration, is very common, with others more or less analogous to those which he here condemns. Even the name of God is employed, carelessly and lightly, on all occasions, either as a simple expletive, or to strengthen affirmations the most common, trifling, or untrue. **Oaths thus become mere forms of speech, to which, as such, no one pays any attention or attaches any value.**"²⁶

This practice cause people to forget the importance of "truth;" they forgot that one's word was a reflection of one's character, which in turn was a reflection of God's character, since they were made in image and likeness of God. They thought they could be less than truthful in their dealings with each other just as long as they refrained from invoking the name of God. If they refrained from that, they thought they were guiltless before the Lord.

In fact, this mindset had become so prevalent in the lives of some in the Diaspora that one, Martial, the Roman poet, said the following about certain Jews living in Rome—

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“Ecce negas, iurasque mihi per templa Tonantis. Non credo: iura, verpe, per Anchialum—‘Ah! you deny it, and swear to me by the temple of the Thunderer. I don't believe you: swear, circumcised one, by Anchialum.’ Here ‘Anchialum’ (chai elohim, ‘the Lord liveth’) is an oath the Jew dared not break—the other, ‘by the temple’, he dared.”²⁷

And so we see how terrible had become the witness of God's people to outsiders. They had forgotten that their lives were to be a reflection of God; they had forgotten that God's name was put upon them as a witness for the nations, and, as such, all their words really did make a difference.

Numbers 6:27 And they shall **put My name upon the children of Israel**, and I will bless them. KJV

Deut. 28:10 And all people of the earth shall see that **thou art called by the name of the LORD**; and they shall be afraid of thee. KJV

And so, as with the other commands which the people thought they were not breaking (but, in reality, they were breaking) so it was with this command, they were breaking the third commandment because any type of falsehood takes the Lord's name in vain because God's name had been placed upon them and so their lives should reflect truthfulness, for God is true!

John 3:33 "He who has received His witness has set his seal to *this*, **that God is true**. NASB

In this light, Keil and Delitzsch make this helpful comment regarding the importance of respecting God's name in all our social intercourse.

“...’Thou shalt not take the name of Jehovah thy God in vain,’ is closely connected with the former two. Although there is no God beside Jehovah, the absolute One, and His divine essence cannot be seen or conceived of under any form, **He had made known the glory of His nature in**

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His name (Exodus 3:14., Exodus 6:2), and this was not to be abused by His people... The word prohibits all employment of the name of God for vain and unworthy objects, and includes not only false swearing, which is condemned in Leviticus 19:12 as a profanation of the name of Jehovah, **but trivial swearing in the ordinary intercourse of life, and every use of the name of God in the service of untruth and lying...**²⁸

And so we see that swearing had become so common that the people were losing all sense of truth and the sacredness of oaths.

Swearing, or the use of vows or oaths, was meant for special cases where one's character might not be known, or in those cases when a serious matter was taken up, or when a righteous decision had to be made (e. g. Lev. 5:1; Num. 5:19; Ex. 22:10-11).^u

Vows or oaths were not to be treated carelessly; they were not meant to be made common, but were only to be used in certain situations. And so, in order to restore the sacredness to vows and the proper understanding to the third and tenth commandment the Lord tells the people to not swear at all, as we will now see.

5:34(a) But I say unto you, Swear not at all;

When Jesus says to not swear at all, He was not saying that making a vow to the Lord or affirming the truth of a matter with an oath was wrong. After all, as we showed, such swearing was commanded in the Law and our Lord fulfilled the Law down to its smallest jot and tittle. This statement of Jesus must be understood within the historical context of the passage. As we saw above, swearing had become so commonplace in everyday life that the sacredness of the act was lost.

And so, it is this is the type of swearing that our Lord is discouraging when He says to not swear at all. (This will become self-evident when we discuss verse 37 below.) He is saying that such everyday swearing must be given up. In reality, if one thinks about it, Jesus is saying that such swearing is

^u **Lev. 5:1** 'Now if a person sins after he hears a public adjuration *to testify* when he is a witness, whether he has seen or *otherwise* known, if he does not tell *it*, then he will bear his guilt. NASB

Num. 5:19 'The priest shall have her take an oath and shall say to the woman, "If no man has lain with you and if you have not gone astray into uncleanness, *being* under *the authority* of your husband, be immune to this water of bitterness that brings a curse. NASB

Ex. 22:10 "If a man gives his neighbor a donkey, an ox, a sheep, or any animal to keep *for him*, and it dies or is hurt or is driven away while no one is looking, an oath before the LORD shall be made by the two of them that he has not laid hands on his neighbor's property; and its owner shall accept *it*, and he shall not make restitution. NASB

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completely unnecessary if you simply become a person characterized by truth. If you are characterized by truth your *yea* and your *nay* will be more than sufficient in all your everyday discourse.

And at the same time, He was saying that simply not using the name of God does not, in some way, justify their swearing. To that type of swearing, Jesus also says, “Swear not at all.” He says it matters not whether you invoke the name of God or not in your swearing, for God’s name is everywhere, and God’s name is still upon you as the people of God. And this explains why He makes the next statement.

**5:34(b) neither by heaven; for it is God's throne:
35 Nor by the earth; for it is his footstool: neither
by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King.
5:36 Neither shalt thou swear by thy head,
because thou canst not make one hair white or
black.**

I consider this portion almost a parenthesis. In other words, Jesus could have gone from verse 34a to verse 37 without this portion from 34b to verse 36. But as was just said, since they knew the awful consequences of one who used God’s name in vain, they would routinely affirm their vows or oaths, not by the name of the Lord, but by other things. They would substitute the name of heaven for the name of God, or the name of Jerusalem, for the name of God, or that of the earth. But in all this, Jesus is telling them this does not keep them from still breaking the third commandment for all these things belong to God and when one swears by something that is His, one is still swearing by Him. So, because of this, Jesus is still telling them that this does not excuse their habit of always swearing, they still are ruining the testimony of the Lord by their flippant use of oaths.

Consequently, what Jesus is really saying is just be truthful and honest in all your conversation and do not rely upon swearing. Swearing is a sacred act and so should only be used in limited situations.

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Perhaps, it might help us to understand this, if we use a modern day example. In American jurisprudence, an oath is usually required when testimony is given in court. It goes something like this. “Do you swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God.” This is a type of situation where such swearing is required and justified, for, in most cases, no one knows you or your character.

But what would we think of someone who, outside a courtroom, always had to say, “I swear I am telling the truth.” Would we not begin to wonder if this person is in a habit of not telling the truth! Would it not be odd for someone to always have to affirm he or she is telling the truth? Or what would we think of someone who always questions the statements of others with the question, “Really? Do you swear it is so?” Would we not think that person must always prevaricate, and so, because of that, they become suspicious of everyone else, for they view everybody as being like themselves?

This is why Jesus makes the next statement, concluding His previous statement of not swearing at all. (As we said before, one can almost treat verse 34b to 36 as a parenthesis.) If we view it in this way, verse 34a to 37 could be written as follows—

“But I say unto you, ‘Swear not at all (neither by heaven; for it is God’s throne: nor by the earth; for it is his footstool: neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King. Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black) but let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil.’”

5:37 But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil.

As just said, this verse concludes the parenthesis in verses 34b to 36, because this verse characterizes the life of one who truly is following the Law. One’s *yes* will be *yes* and one’s *no* will be *no*. Such ones do

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not need to justify themselves before others with an oath, nor do such ones need to emphasize that the truth is being told, for such ones will always be telling the truth.

This point is further emphasized, in my opinion, by the use of the present tense verb, ἔστω (to be) with the singular subject ὁ λόγος (your word).^v Because of this I believe the King James Version translation of λόγος as “communication” is better than a translation of λόγος as “word,” because our Lord is referring to one’s ongoing conversation or speaking.

I do not believe the Lord is just referring to one specific statement or declaration. If that was the case, then that would prohibit the use of oaths or swearing altogether, but, as we mentioned above, certain oaths were required in some instances in the Law. Therefore, He is referring to one’s word, meaning one’s conversation or speech resulting from social interaction. Thus the translation “communication” better brings out this nuance.

Obviously, it cannot mean just a single word since the Lord further defines it by two words—*yes, yes* or *no, no*. Thus it refers to one’s communication with others in social situations. This is why verse 33 should be understood by the context of verse 37. Jesus is saying, “Do not swear, but let your *yes, yes* or your *no, no* suffice in your conversations.”

As such, I believe the next phrase, τὸ δὲ περισσὸν τούτων, meaning “for whatsoever is more than these” (lit., but the excess of *these*, i.e. the *yeses* and the *noes*) refers to the having to use anything more than a simple *yes* or *no* in conversations with others. In other words, τὸ περισσὸν (the excess) refers to the practice of adding an oath or swearing in everyday conversations with others.

Such “excess,” Jesus says, comes from evil, or it could be understood as from the “evil one.” In either case, it presupposes that one may not be telling the truth and so one’s conversation needed an additional affirmation of veracity. And, whether it is evil or the evil one, it must be remembered that all lying proceeds from the father of lies—the devil.^w

^v Matt. 5:37
Ἔστω δὲ ὁ λόγος
ὑμῶν, ναὶ ναί, οὐ
οὐ· τὸ δὲ
περισσὸν τούτων
ἐκ τοῦ πονηροῦ
ἐστίν.

^w John 8:44 "You are of *your* father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own *nature*; for he is a liar, and the father of lies. NASB

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Satan always pretended to tell the truth, when in reality, he was always lying.^x

So what Jesus may be referring to, if this phrase refers to the devil, is that your pretending to tell the truth by adding oaths or swearing to your conversations is really no different than the devil pretending to tell the truth when he knows very well he is lying.

This concludes this opening section of the Sermon on the Mount which our Lord began with pronouncements of blessings to His disciples, to those trusting in Him and living a life of humbleness before the Lord. No doubt the mere mention of blessings would have reminded His disciples, and anyone else, who heard, of all the blessings promised at Mount Gerizim. No doubt, it would have raised their expectations that deliverance from Roman oppression was soon coming, and that the establishment of the Messianic kingdom was about to begin.

But, instead, as we showed, the Lord promised spiritual blessings, and He laid the basis for a spiritual kingdom in heaven, rather than a physical kingdom upon earth. This most naturally would have caused the people to wonder why the promises of the Covenant of the Land were being ignored since in their eyes they were fulfilling their part by obeying the commandments of God.

And so, as we demonstrated, He answered this expectation of the people, disabusing them of any notion that God had failed to honour His part of the Covenant. The Lord showed that they were not truly obeying the commandments of God; in fact, He showed them that no one could completely fulfill the righteous requirements of the Law for, indeed, just as the Holy Spirit would later declare by Paul, there are “none righteous, no not one.”^y

Our Lord showed that they were not keeping the sixth commandment in verses 21 and 22. In verses 25

^x **Gen 3:4-5** And the serpent said to the woman, "You surely shall not die! For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil. NASB

^y **Rom. 3:10-12** As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: ¹¹ There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. ¹² They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. KJV

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and 26 He shows how were breaking the eighth commandment. In verses 27 and 28 He shows how they failed to keep the seventh and tenth commandments. And in verses 33 to 37 he showed how they were failing to keep both the third and the ninth commandments.

He does not directly mention the first, nor the second commandments, perhaps because they had at least been cleansed of their worship of false gods and their making of idols, once they returned from their Babylonian Captivity (although He does hint at the breaking of the first commandment in Matt. 6:24 by their serving Mammon). But as for the fourth and the fifth commandments, which He also does not include, He does mention them later on in other situations. He mentions their failure of properly understanding the purpose of the Sabbath in Matthew 12:1-8, and He mentions their failure in obeying the fifth commandment regarding one's honor for one's father and mother in Matthew 15: 3-9.

So really, apart from the second commandment regarding the making of idols, our Lord indicts the children of Israel for their utter failure in truly keeping the ten commandments, which in turn explains why the promised blessings of Mount Gerizim could not come to fruition.

Of course, knowing the Pharisees and others would disagree with this judgment of their failure, the Lord now continues with other affirmations. He now turns their attention to another reason why they should not expect the immediate appearance of the Messianic kingdom upon earth with all the promised blessings of Mount Gerizim.

It is found in Deuteronomy 28:9, which mentions not only their need to "obey the commandments of God" for the promised blessings of God to come, but also their need to "walk in His ways."

Deut. 28:9 The LORD shall establish thee an holy people unto himself, as he hath sworn unto thee, **if thou shalt keep the commandments of the LORD thy God, and walk in his ways.** KJV

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“Walking in the ways” of the Lord has to do with more than just the proper outworking of the letter of the Law; it also has to do with the proper application of the spirit of the Law. It deals with societal acts of righteousness arising from interaction with neighbors and/or from any relationship with any human being.

It is as if our Lord is saying, “Fine, you disagree with me and you think you are obeying the commandments of God and so deserve the promised blessings of Gerizim. But have you forgotten that you also promised to walk in His ways? Have you kept your part of the Covenant to do this?”

And so our Lord now points them to another reason as to why the promised blessings had not come—their utter failure at keeping this aspect of the Covenant that they made with God upon Mt. Gerizim.

All of this, of course, was to prepare the hearts of the people to believe in Him as their promised Messiah, the One who would redeem them from all their sin, and impute to them the needed righteousness that God demanded from them in order to be in the eventual kingdom of God upon earth. Oh, how the people of Israel (and, indeed, all of mankind) needed to understand that only One Person in the entire universe could really obey all the commandments of God down to the minutest jot and tittle. Only One Person in the entire universe could truly walk in the ways of the Lord; and that One Person was none other than the LORD God Himself, the LORD Jesus Christ who was God manifested in the flesh.

And so with that in mind, may we continue our study, by God’s grace.

5:38 Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth:

5:39 But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also.

It is important to understand that the spirit of the

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Law must of necessity reflect the Spirit of God and the Spirit of Christ, for the Law is simply an expression of the holiness and righteousness of God the Father. Because of this, Scripture sees the Spirit of God as the Spirit of holiness;^z and the Lord Jesus Christ as the LORD our Righteousness.^a

As such, walking in the ways of the Lord means none other than walking in accordance with the very nature of God, which is all but impossible for one not born again, and is possible, but not always attainable for the one who is born again (i.e. until we are fully sanctified and glorified).

Consequently, walking in the ways of the Lord means walking in accordance with the ways of the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit as revealed to us in Scripture. In other words, we should walk as the Son of God walked, for He walked in the complete fullness of the Spirit and in complete accordance with the will of God the Father.

I John 2:6 He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked. KJV

As such, when we walk as Jesus walked, we are walking in the ways of God the Father and we are walking by the Holy Spirit of God, for the one who sees Jesus sees the Father who gave the Spirit to Him without measure (cf. Jn. 3:34; 14:9).

With this in mind we can see how these verses apply to walking in the “ways of the Lord.”

First of all, verses 38 and 39 deal with Exodus 21:24-27 and the equal application of justice.^b Its purpose was not to exact vengeance, but to insure justice. This form of justice is now known as *Lex Talionis*, the Latin term for “law of retaliation.” As such, generally speaking, this law was enforced by the use of a monetary fine or punishment, not an actual taking of a human body part.

This monetary enforcement was based upon Numbers 35:31, which stated that there could be no monetary punishment in the case of murder, which in the minds of the Rabbis implied there could be

^z **Rom. 1:3-4**

Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh;⁴ And declared *to be* the Son of God with power, according to **the spirit of holiness**, by the resurrection from the dead: KJV

^a **Jer. 23:6** In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this *is* his name whereby he shall be called, **THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS**. KJV

^b **Ex. 21:24-27**

Eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot,²⁶ And if a man strikes the eye of his male or female slave, and destroys it, he shall let him go free on account of his eye.²⁷ And if he knocks out a tooth of his male or female slave, he shall let him go free on account of his tooth. NASB

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monetary punishments in lesser offenses.^c

Thus, there was a monetary punishment assigned to an individual if the individual knocked out the tooth of a slave, or if he damaged his eye. Of course, according to this law, justice would demand a tooth for a tooth, an eye for an eye, but, in order to save one's tooth or one's eye, the slave would be given his freedom instead. The thought was that the loss of a slave would be equivalent to a monetary fine (see Ex. 21:26). However, it should also be noted that if monetary punishment was rejected, some Rabbis insisted upon a literal application of this law.

Jewish thought on this verse, is seen in the following Jewish commentary.

"In all these cases monetary compensation is intended. Strict justice demanded the principle of measure for measure, but Jewish tradition mitigated it to compensation to avoid the possibility of exceeding the exact measure (S). We must follow the Rabbis who interpreted that if the man does not pay the compensation, he is subject to the literal application of this law..."²⁹

And, regarding this same application of the law, Josephus says in his *Antiquities* the following—

"He that maimeth any one, let him undergo the like himself, and be deprived of the same member of which he hath deprived the other, unless he that is maimed will accept of money instead of it; for the law makes the sufferer the judge of the value of what he hath suffered, and permits him to estimate it, unless he will be more severe."³⁰

It should also be noted that the Gentiles also had a form of *Lex Talionis* that was just as severe. It is said among the ancient Greeks that Solon instituted a law that if one caused a one-eyed man to lose his one eye, the offender should therefore have both his eyes gouged out.

Of course, such a literal application of this law or any other similar law has been repeatedly used throughout human history to feed the fires of hatred

^c **Numbers 35:31**

Moreover, you shall not take ransom for the life of a murderer who is guilty of death, but he shall surely be put to death.
NASB

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and vengeance, when, in reality, the law in Exodus was meant to do the opposite.

Augustine once said the following about this law—

“...this command was not given for exciting the fires of hatred, but to restrain them. For who would easily be satisfied with repaying as much injury as he received ?”³¹

And—

“Do we not see men, only slightly hurt, eager for slaughter, thirsting for blood, as if they could never make their enemy suffer enough? If a man receives a blow, does he not summon his assailant, that he may be condemned in the court of law? Or if he prefers to return the blow, does he not fall upon the man with hand and heel, or perhaps with a weapon, if he can get hold of one? To put a restraint upon a revenge so unjust from its excess, the law established the principle of compensation, that the penalty should correspond to the injury inflicted. So the precept, “an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth,” instead of being a brand to kindle a fire that was quenched, was rather a covering to prevent the fire already kindled from spreading. For there is a just revenge due to the injured person from his assailant...”³²

And so we see that the true purpose of the law was to keep equity and restraint in the forefront of everyone’s mind (which true justice would demand). As such, this equity became a right bestowed by God upon all who were offended or hurt by another, as it should be, for it was rooted in the very righteousness and holiness of God.

However, without weakening this right and equity, it should also be noted that the voluntary foregoing of this right was also a possibility to the one so offended and it was this that became an example of walking in the “way of the Lord.” This aspect, of course, would be rooted in the mercy of God, just as equity or justice was rooted in the righteousness of God.

This is why the Lord says to “resist not evil,” and “whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other.” He says this in spite of the fact that

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one has a right to strike the offending party back on their cheek. Thus, if someone struck you on the cheek and dislodged a tooth, you would have the same right over the offenders tooth. Or, at least, the right to demand a just and equitable monetary compensation. But our Lord says why not just turn to him your other cheek and be forgiving?

This was “the way of the Lord.” This type of attitude was the goal of the spirit of the Law, but the people did not understand this.

How many times did God “turn the other cheek,” so to speak, in his dealings with Israel? How many times did the children of Israel offend God, yet God did not exact an equal retribution in kind? Of course, the greatest example of this is found in our Saviour.

What does Scripture say about our Saviour when He was offended, when He was smote on the cheek? The Septuagint version of Isaiah 50:6 reads:

Isa. 50:6 I gave my back to scourges, **and my cheeks to blows**; and I turned not away my face from the shame of spitting. (Brenton’s Version)

The Greek text of the phrase, “and my cheeks to blows,” reads “τὰς δὲ σιαγόνας μου εἰς ῥαπίσματα.” The Greek word for “smiting,” or “blow,” ῥαπίσματα (ῥάπισμα) is the same Greek word used by Mark in his Gospel when speaking of our Lord being “struck” upon the face (Mark 14:65).

Mark 14:65 Some began to spit at Him, and to blindfold Him, and to beat Him with their fists, and to say to Him, "Prophesy!" And the **officers received Him with slaps in the face**. NASB

And, not only that, the last phrase of the Syriac Version of Mark 14:65 actually reads that He was “struck upon his cheeks.”³³

Also the Greek word for cheek, σιαγόνας (σιαγών), in Isaiah 50:6 above, is also the same Greek word that Matthew uses in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5:39).

The same word is also used in the Brenton’s LXX

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version of Lamentations 3:30 which many believe was meant to be a prophetic picture of Christ (although it directly referred to the prophet).

Lamentations 3:30 He will give *his* cheek (σιαγόνα) to him that smites him: he will be filled full with reproaches.

This is an example of the “way of the Lord.” Our Lord bore our reproaches, and turned His other cheek in love. He did not demand the equity of the *Lex Talionis*. He did not demand just retribution, although that was His right. But rather he turned His cheek and cried out from the cross, “Father, forgive them for they know not what they do.” If the Lord acted this way, turning His cheek, so to speak, should not we also act this way when we find ourselves wronged?

This is why many are wrong when they claim that God judged Israel for their rejection of the Lord Jesus Christ and His crucifixion upon the cross. No, no, no, our Saviour Jesus Christ turned the other cheek, when He was reviled and unjustly condemned. God did not kill the Israelites because they killed His Son. God did not invoke the “law of retaliation.” No, He judged them in 70 A.D. because they failed to keep their part of the Covenant of the Land.

To say that He judged them because they crucified His Son, or to say the God the Son judged Israel because they rejected Him and crucified Him, striking Him upon the cheek, so to speak, is simply wrong. Our Saviour turned His other cheek when He hung upon the cross!

Indeed, if the truth be told, if our Lord acted according to the *Lex Talionis* of Ex. 21:24, He should have put to death the entire human race, for we all struck Him on the cheek! We all scourged Him on the back! We all spat in His face! We all nailed Him to the cross! We all blasphemed and mocked Him! We all crucified Him! The whole human race is accountable, not just the Jews, not just Pilate, not just the Roman soldiers, the whole human race! We all killed Him! He had every right to require our lives in return, but rather He forgave us and granted us

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eternal life by faith in Him. This hymn says it all—

I saw one hanging on the tree,
In agonies and blood,
Who fix'd his languid eyes on me,
As near his cross I stood.

Sure never till my latest breath,
Can I forget that look;
It seem'd to charge me with his death,
Though not a word He spoke.

My conscience felt, and own'd the guilt,
And plunged me in despair;
I saw my sins his blood had spilt,
And help'd to nail Him there.

Alas ! I knew not what I did:
But now my tears are vain;
Where shall my trembling soul be hid?
For I the Lord have slain.

A second look He gave, which said
"I freely all forgive;
This blood is for thy ransom paid,
I die, that thou may'st live."

Thus while his death my sin displays
In all its blackest hue,
(Such is the mystery of grace,)
It seals my pardon too.

With pleasing grief and mournful joy,
My spirit now is fill'd, '
That I should such a life destroy,
Yet live by Him I kill'd.³⁴

And so we see that walking in the ways of the Lord, means walking in love and mercy of our Lord with a heart full of forgiveness. Mercy and love can now be extended, because righteousness and justice have been satisfied, satisfied to the fullest measure by

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our Lord bearing our sins in His body upon the cross.

5:40 And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have *thy* cloke also.

In verses 38 and 39 our Lord spoke of not insisting on one's right, thus reflecting the way of the Lord. In these two verses the Lord continues this thought.

In the law, a creditor had a right to take away one's cloke (cloak) as a pledge. However, the creditor was required to give back the cloke (cloak) at night time, for the cloke was used by the poor for warmth. This law is given in Exodus 22:26-27.

Ex. 22:26-27 "If you ever take your neighbor's **cloak** as a pledge, you are to return it to him before the sun sets,²⁷ for that is his only covering; it is his **cloak** for his body. What else shall he sleep in? And it shall come about that when he cries out to Me, I will hear *him*, for I am gracious. NASB

The purpose of this law in Exodus was to hinder greediness by creditors. He was not to take something that was a necessity of life (cf. Deut. 24:6).^d The Greek word translated as *cloak* in Ex. 22:26-27 in the LXX is the same word translated as *cloke* (ἱμάτιον) in Matt. 5:40. This word, *cloke*, referred to the outermost garment that was worn, whereas the word translated *coat*, in our verse in Matt. 5:40, referred to the inner garment that was worn. (In order to better reflect this distinction, this word translated as *coat* in the KJV, was rendered as *shirt* in the NASB.)

The law in Exodus 22:26-27 did not mention a coat or shirt, i.e. an inner garment, but rather referred to the cloak or outer garment. Thus, what our Lord is saying by referring to one's coat or shirt being taken is that some creditor is being so greedy that he is even taking one's inner garment, rather than just one's outer garment as a pledge. Why? Because with their legalistic thinking, if one took the cloke, such one would have to give it back at night, but if the coat (shirt) or inner garment was taken, the law regarding

^d **Deut. 24:6** No one shall take a handmill or an upper millstone in pledge, for he would be taking a life in pledge. NASB

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giving it back at night would not apply, since the inner garment was not mentioned in the law! In other words, the creditor took something he did not have to give back at night. This revealed the greedy character of the creditor. So what our Lord is saying is that if someone does this, go ahead and give him your cloke or outer garment also. Do not resist the evil of greed.

He is saying that you have a right to keep your cloke or outer garment. A creditor cannot take that garment and keep it. That is your right. But give up that right and give that greedy one even your cloke.

The Lord is saying that this too reflects the way of the Lord. Over and over in the Old Testament, the Israelites were greedy, demanding of God something He did not have to give, but over and over God in His love gave forth what was demanded of Him and even more.

When the children of Israel demanded their food from God, as if it was a debt owed to them (since they said He was the One who had promised to bring them to a land flowing with milk and honey) He not only gave them their food, he also gave them more than He promised. But He did not need to do this. He never broke His promise—as they thought. They simply did not believe Him, thinking instead that God was killing them in the wilderness (Ex. 16:3).^e

You see, God had already provided for their food in the wilderness, by moving Pharaoh to let them take their own flocks and herds after Pharaoh had first refused (cf. Ex. 10:24 & 12:31-32).^f And the fact is—they still had these flocks when they complained before God (Num. 11:22)! They could have eaten from their own flocks and herds and trusted God for further provision when that ran out. But they demanded more of God, and God in His mercy gave it, so much, that at one point they got sick of all the extra food He had provided (cf. Num. 11). So God went above and beyond what was required, foregoing His right, so to speak.

And so Jesus once again shows them how they failed to keep their part of the Covenant of the Land. Their strict adherence to the letter of the law, because

^e **Ex. 16:3** The sons of Israel said to them, "Would that we had died by the LORD'S hand in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the pots of meat, when we ate bread to the full; for you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger." NASB

^f **Ex. 10:24** And Pharaoh called unto Moses, and said, Go ye, serve the LORD; **only let your flocks and your herds be stayed:** let your little ones also go with you. **Ex. 12:31-32** And he called for Moses and Aaron by night, and said, Rise up, *and* get you forth from among my people, both ye and the children of Israel; and go, serve the LORD, as ye have said. ³²Also **take your flocks and your herds,** as ye have said, and be gone; and bless me also. KJV

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of their greed, in contradiction to the spirit of the law, kept them from following the “ways of God.” May it never be so for us, but may we always be generous, as was God, whenever we are treated unfairly, or we are confronted by such greediness.

5:41 And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain.

5:42 Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away.

Next he says that when one is compelled to go one mile, give the person another mile. Go beyond what is demanded.

In those days, the Roman legions would have authority to compel Israelites along the way to bear their baggage for a distance. They were pressed into service for a specific purpose. For example, Simeon the Cyrene was pressed into service to bear the cross of Christ on the way to Golgotha. ^g

It was in the light of this historical environment that our Lord said that when they compel you to do one thing, do that and even more. This too reflects the way of the Lord when one is willing to do more than is expected or required.

For example, did not our Lord “go the extra mile,” so to speak, when He took care of the children of Israel in the wilderness for forty years. In His righteousness, He could have destroyed them all when they refused to believe the report of Joshua and Caleb, simply starting over with Moses (Num. 14:11-12). ^h But Moses prayed for them and God relented, and, instead, sent them into the wilderness for forty years, until the next generation was all that remained, which He then allowed to enter the Land. But in those forty years, even though they did not deserve it, and even though it was God’s right to start over with Moses, God continued to provide for their needs, even though they spurned God provision of a land flowing with milk and honey (Deut. 29:5). ⁱ

So Jesus is saying we should walk in the ways of the Lord and be generous, even when we are

^g **Matt. 27:32** And as they came out, they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name: him they compelled to bear his cross. KJV

^h **Num. 14:11-12** And the LORD said unto Moses, How long will this people provoke me? and how long will it be ere they believe me, for all the signs which I have shewed among them? ¹² I will smite them with the pestilence, and disinherit them, and will make of thee a greater nation and mightier than they. KJV

ⁱ **Deut. 29:5** And I have led you forty years in the wilderness; your clothes have not worn out on you, and your sandal has not worn out on your foot. KJV

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wronged or compelled to do what we do not desire to do, for that is what God has done throughout history.

The same thing is seen in verse 42 when the Lord says to give to the one that asks of us. We have a right to not give, but love, mercy and a generous spirit should always make us willing to give.

Now, of course, when it comes to money everybody is apt to say, "But what about this, what about that?" Most assuredly, people felt the same way in our Lord's day—thus our Lord's inclusion of this precept in His discourse.

What must be remembered is that our Lord is talking about our attitudes and the spirit of the Law. Obviously, our Lord is not saying one must give with no account of the circumstances. If that was the case He would not then say in the second clause to give to the one who wants to borrow. If this first clause referred to always giving freely to anyone who asks of you, with no aforethought or constraint, why then would anyone ask to borrow money of you, when all they had to do is simply ask for the money outright, knowing that the money would always be given freely? Or, why would a creditor ever make a loan, if the Lord meant one was to always give away money freely to another in the first place? Would not such a one just give the money outright according to the first clause of the verse? In other words, if a creditor told the borrower to remember the money was just a loan, would not the creditor then be disobeying the first clause to freely give to the one who asks of thee?

When we look at other Scriptures we see that wisdom is required in our giving to those in need, simply because we are called to be good stewards of what God has entrusted to us. Our money is not our own; it is God's. As such, other places in Scripture give context to what should govern our giving. For example, the Holy Spirit tells us in II Thess. 3:10 that if one will not work, such a one should not eat.^j

Even the Lord did not automatically give to the Canaanite woman who asked His help, without first eliciting from her her worship and faith (Matt. 15: 22-28). Yes, the woman did not ask for money, but

^j **II Thess. 3:10**

For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat. KJV

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our Lord's exhortation does not restrict it to money. People might ask us for other things, e.g. our help or our time. In this too, we should be willing to give. But wisdom from Scripture and the Holy Spirit must always guide us.

Let's take another example. Apollos was once asked by Paul for help in Corinth. Did Apollos automatically say yes? No. Scripture tells us that Apollos, presumably under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, said no (I Cor. 16:12).^k

So what we need to realize is that our Lord is talking with a Hebraic mindset. He is speaking proverbially. A proverb is language that uses a short, condensed, sometimes idiomatic language to communicate a specific truth, which if taken literally, in and of itself, might be misunderstood. It is a saying, which is given to emphasize a point. It should not always be taken in a strict literal manner.

For example, using the English language—if a person is discouraged and so decides to visit a friend for some encouragement, and the friend tells them to “keep your chin up and all will be fine,” anyone who speaks English as thier first language would not then leave their friend and walk around with their chin tilted upward, thinking that if they do so their problems will be solved. No—one would realize by the context that the friend was using a saying to emphasize the point that one must remain cheerful in the midst of adversity. This linguistic technique is common to all languages and I am sure if someone, who speaks English as their first language, travels to another country to live, such a one will also have to learn how to discern the use of such language and/or idioms in their new country. The same is true in the New Testament; sometimes sayings were given in a proverbial and/or idiomatic manner.

Now one must be careful, however, in determining if a saying is idiomatic or not. Otherwise, if one does not like a saying, all he has to do is say, “Oh, it is an idiom. It is not meant to be taken literally.” With that type of mindset, one can rationalize away any Scripture one does not like!

^k **I Cor. 16:12** As touching *our* brother Apollos, I greatly desired him to come unto you with the brethren: but his will was not at all to come at this time; but he will come when he shall have convenient time.
KJV

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Equally, one should be careful not to say, something to the effect, that the Gospel was originally written in Hebrew and the Hebrew word behind the Greek means “this,” or the Hebrew word, Jesus would have used would have been “this,” and so what Jesus really means is “this or that!”

Now, while it is always helpful to take into account that Jesus, more than likely, spoke originally in Hebrew, and sometimes in Aramaic (and even sometimes probably in Greek) we do not know what words He actually used, and so it is all conjecture to say this is the Hebrew or Aramaic word He really used. We simply do not know. But what we do know is the actual Greek word the Holy Spirit chose to use in the inspired text. But, as with English, we must also realize that it could be translating a Hebrew proverb and/or an idiomatic saying which must not be taken so literally that one ignores the general principle it intended to teach—within the overall context of Scripture. To do so could lead to terrible results.

For example, with the saying before us, what if a person approached us and asks us for money and we are not sure if the money was going to be used for a good thing. What if we suspect the person might use it for evil? How should we apply this verse of Scripture? Is our Lord saying to give indiscriminately and freely, even to people of questionable virtue, when He says to give to the one who asks from you and from the one who wishes to borrow from you? What if the person we give the money to uses it to commit a crime. Is our Lord saying it makes no difference—I think most would say the answer is no. There must be wisdom in our giving.

So with this being said, how can we discern when a proverbial or even idiomatic saying is being used, especially if we do not know the exact Hebrew or Aramaic words Jesus used? I think the answer is twofold—common sense and context.

Common sense usually warns a reader that a phrase or saying must be used idiomatically, and such suspicion is usually confirmed when the context of

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the passage, and the rest of Scripture is taken into account. God will never contradict Himself.

And so, when we do this, we see that the immediate context has to do with “walking in the ways of the Lord,” looking to see how God responded in similar situations. And when we do this we see that in the Old Testament, when the children of Israel were in the wilderness, God repeatedly “gave” to them what they asked, despite their unfaithfulness. In other words, He was more than generous (Ps. 105: 38-41).¹

Or, if consider the time when Solomon made a request before the Lord, we see that the Lord freely gave to him what he desired and even more (see I Kings 3:7-17). The way of the Lord was to be generous and to give when asked. Yet, context also tells us that sometimes God did not give what was asked. When Moses asked God to allow him to cross over into the promised land, God said no!

Deuteronomy 3:23-26 "I also pleaded with the LORD at that time, saying,²⁴ 'O Lord God, Thou hast begun to show Thy servant Thy greatness and Thy strong hand; for what god is there in heaven or on earth who can do such works and mighty acts as Thine?' ²⁵ **'Let me, I pray, cross over and see the fair land that is beyond the Jordan,** that good hill country and Lebanon.' ²⁶"But the LORD was angry with me on your account, and would not listen to me; and the LORD said to me, 'Enough! **Speak to Me no more of this matter.** NASB

Also, the Holy Spirit also says that when one is asked to be a pledge, such a one should not say yes, and so become a surety for a loan.

Pro 17:18 A man lacking in sense pledges, And becomes surety in the presence of his neighbor. NASB

And so, when taking into account the larger context of Scripture, we can see that this saying has a proverbial sense. It is given succinctly to teach a general principle. It is not meant to be taken in a strictly literal sense with no thought to context.

¹ **Ps. 105:38** Egypt was glad when they departed; For the dread of them had fallen upon them.³⁹ He spread a cloud for a covering, And fire to illumine by night.⁴⁰ They asked, and He brought quail, And satisfied them with the bread of heaven.⁴¹ He opened the rock, and water flowed out; It ran in the dry places *like* a river. NASB

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Consequently, with all this in mind (also realizing that Jesus is talking about walking in the ways of the Lord) we can see that overall principle Jesus is trying to communicate by this proverbial saying is simply this—“Be generous! Do not be stingy! Be ready to give! “The way of the Lord is not to be stingy, for He is generous and full of love and mercy.”

Charles Spurgeon has a very helpful comment on this verse of Scripture.

Be generous. A miser is no follower of Jesus. Discretion is to be used in our giving, lest we encourage idleness and beggary; but the general rule is, “ Give to him that asketh thee.” Sometimes a loan may be more useful than a gift; do not refuse it to those who will make right use of it. These precepts are not meant for fools ; they are set before us as our general rule; but each rule is balanced by other Scriptural commands, and there is the teaching of a philanthropic commonsense to guide us. Our spirit is to be one of readiness to help the needy by gift or loan, and we are not exceedingly likely to err by excess in this direction: hence the baldness of the command.³⁵

5:43 Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy.

5:44 But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;

We now come to the last part of this first portion of the Sermon on the Mount. The Jewish leaders and Scribes had developed such a system of hatred toward enemies that hatred of one’s enemies became as incumbent upon one as one’s love to one’s neighbors. If one did not hate everyone whom the leaders decided were enemies, they themselves would become an enemy to be hated.

John Lightfoot describes this attitude with the following quote.

“But as to the Gentiles ...it is forbidden them to deliver them from death if they are in danger of it. For instance; ‘A Jew sees one of them fallen into the sea; let him by no

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means lift him out thence: for it is written, 'Thou shalt not rise up against the blood of thy neighbour': **but this is not thy neighbour.**' And further; 'An Israelite, who alone sees another Israelite transgressing, and admonisheth him, if he repents not, **is bound to hate him.**'³⁶

And so the Lord was addressing this system of hatred, which was done in the name of the Lord, whereby the command to love one's neighbour was *loosened* by a Pharisaical mindset intent on following their man-made traditions and interpretations, based upon their self-justifying righteousness.

This type of obligatory indifference and utmost hatred was also applied toward Samaritans, as evidenced by our Lord's parable of the Good Samaritan (Lu. 10:25-37; cf. also Jn. 4:9; 8:48).

Alfred Edersheim addresses this common indifference and hatred that was practiced by Israel in those days, toward anyone they considered to be their enemies (i.e. those not considered to be their neighbor) especially if they were Samaritans.

"Whatever complexity of motives there may have been, there can be no doubt as to the main object of the lawyer's question: 'But who is my neighbour? He wished 'to justify himself,' in the sense of vindicating his original question, and showing that it was not quite so easily settled as the answer of Jesus seemed to imply. And here it was that Christ could, in a 'Parable,' show how far orthodox Judaism was from even a true understanding, much more from such perfect observance of this Law as would gain heaven..."

"...So far the Parable: its lesson 'the lawyer; is made himself to enunciate. 'Which of these three seems to thee to have become neighbour of him that fell among the robbers?' **Though unwilling to take the hated name of Samaritan on his lips, especially as the meaning of the Parable...**the 'lawyer' was obliged to reply: 'He that showed mercy on him,' when the Saviour answered, 'Go, and do thou likewise.'..."

The Parable implies not a mere enlargement of the Jewish ideas, but a complete change of them. The whole old relationship of mere duty is changed into one of love. Thus matters are placed on an entirely different basis from that of Judaism. The question now is not, 'Who is my

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neighbour?’ but ‘Whose neighbour am I?’ The Gospel answers the question of duty by pointing us to love. Wouldst thou know who is thy neighbour? Become a neighbour to all by the utmost service thou canst do them in their need. And so the Gospel would not only abolish man's enmity, but bridge over man's separation.³⁷

(Unfortunately, this same system of hatred is even practiced by many Christians today, all in the name of the Lord, simply because they have an inability to balance true righteousness with love and mercy within their lives, a balance which only can be attained through the denial of self, the working of the cross, and the ongoing sanctification and filling of the Holy Spirit.)

Now it should be stated that it matters not that the Jews based their system of hatred upon certain Scriptures from the Old Testament and/or from certain imprecatory Psalms (e.g. Ps. 5:5; 139: 21-22). The Lord knew this, and He made clear that He did not come to weaken Scripture. But the problem was that the Rabbis added to those Scriptures by turning this “hatred of one's enemies” into an actual commandment, supposedly given by God Himself! (And then, of course, only the Rabbis had the authority to decide whom the people must hate!)

In addition to that, at least in certain situations, they would also ignore the little phrase, “as yourself” in what truly was a commandment given by God in Scripture (Lev. 19: 18)—the commandment to “love one's neighbor as yourself.”

Notice that our Lord's quote in Matt. 5:43 of what they taught was this: “Thou shalt love thy neighbor” (minus the last phrase). Conveniently, the Rabbis left out the actual phrase given by God—as yourself).

The commandment actually read as follows:

Lev. 19:17-18 Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart: thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him. ¹⁸You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the sons of your people, **but you shall love your neighbor as yourself**; I am the LORD. NASB

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Unfortunately, mankind has always had a tendency to rationalize away Scripture when its demands are too much for our fallen human natures to obey. We have a desire to please God, yet our natures have an inability to live up to the true righteousness demanded in the Law. True righteousness also loves, and since that is not always possible for us to do, we excuse ourselves from obeying Scripture by narrowing the definition of who is our neighbor, all so we can exclude certain people. Or, if not that, as we just mentioned, we might exclude the phrase “as yourself” from the commandment. Or, we might just turn “hatred of one’s enemy,” into a new commandment of God!

The fact of the matter is that God told us to love our neighbor as ourselves and He never commanded us to “hate our enemy.” But this is exactly what some of the children of Israel (and, unfortunately, some Christians today) were doing, all in the name of zealously for God.

But when we keep Scripture intact, and we maintain the little phrase “as yourself” to the injunction, the injunction actually becomes a command to love everyone with whom we come into contact. Why? Because that person we come into contact with becomes a person we are commanded to love as if he or she was actually our self. And who among mankind does not desire to be loved, rather than to be hated? If we do not desire other people to hate us, then we should not hate them, for we are to see them as if they were ourselves standing before us.

The phrase *as yourself* does not mean to love others with the same proportion of love with which we love ourself (in fact, Scripture says we should not be lovers of ourselves),^m but rather the phrase means to love others, as if they were *yourself*. In other words, see anyone standing before you as if it was you, yourself, standing there before you, and then act toward them accordingly. Since no one ever wants to be hated, cursed or persecuted, do not hate, curse or persecute anyone else—which one would never do if one viewed them as if they were themselves.

^m II Tim. 3:1-4

This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come.² **For men shall be lovers of their own selves,** covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy,³ Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good,⁴ Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God. KJV

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In actuality this command to love your **neighbor** as **yourself** is another way of saying, “Do unto **others** as you would have them do unto **you**.” Why? Because as *others* are to be considered as *you*, so too, your *neighbors* are to be considered as *yourself*.

Thus, when we do this, we see that one’s neighbor actually becomes anyone before us (which does away with the question as to who is our neighbor) for everyone who is “near” us will automatically be seen as if they were *ourselves*. Indeed, the Hebrew word for “neighbor” (*rea*) in Leviticus 19:18 should be understood as one who is near, and not just a fellow Israelite. The Hebrew word neighbor actually refers to the one who is near (in its simplest sense).

Jamieson, Fausset and Brown say this—

“The word ‘neighbour’ is used as synonymous with ‘fellow creature.’ The Israelites in a later age restricted its meaning as applicable only to their own countrymen. This narrow interpretation was refuted by our Lord in a beautiful parable (Lu 10:30-37).³⁸

And so, we see it is not restricted to fellow countrymen, as some were wont to do in our Lord’s day. This can be demonstrated by understanding that this same Hebrew word *rea* is used in Exodus 11:2, wherein Egyptians, who were their enemies, were nevertheless being called their “neighbors.”

Exodus 11:2 Speak now in the ears of the people, and let every man borrow of his neighbour (*rea*), and every woman of her neighbour, jewels of silver, and jewels of gold. KJV

In fact, modern Jewry now views it much in the same way as can be seen by the comment of Rabbi J. H. Hertz in *The Pentateuch and Haftorahs*.

“...the translation of the Heb. word *rea* by ‘fellow-Israelite’ is incorrect. **One need not be a Hebrew scholar to convince oneself of the fact that *rea* means neighbour of whatever race or creed.** Thus in Exodus xi, 2—‘Let them ask every man of his neighbour, and every woman of her neighbour, jewels of silver, etc.’—the Heb. word for

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neighbour cannot possible mean ‘fellow-Israelite’, but distinctly refers to the Egyptians. As in all the moral precepts of Scripture, the word neighbour in Lev. xix, 18, is equivalent to ‘fellow-man’, and it includes in its range every human being by virtue of his humanity.”³⁹

We also see this truth in the LXX, where the Hebrew word *rea* is translated by the Greek word *πλησίον*, which means one who is near; in fact, it is the very same word used by the Holy Spirit in Matt. 5:43 for neighbor.

So, what we see is that the commandment to love one’s neighbor as yourself would include one’s enemy (just as Jesus taught). The LORD in the Law of Moses never gave a commandment to hate one’s enemy, even if they might be a stranger in your midst.

The Law specifically taught this in Lev. 19:34, which is also the same principle behind the Lord’s Golden Rule. In essence, it teaches that if you did not like being treated unfairly when you were a stranger in Egypt, then do not treat the stranger unfairly in your midst; rather, love him as yourself.

Leviticus 19:34 *But the stranger that dwelleth with you shall be unto you as one born among you, and thou shalt love him as thyself; for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God. KJV*

This mindset was none other than an expression of the very love of God, which would be another example of the “ways of the Lord” for God Himself, loved the stranger.

Deut. 10:17-19 For the LORD your God *is* God of gods, and Lord of lords, a great God, a mighty, and a terrible, which regardeth not persons, nor taketh reward: ¹⁸ He doth execute the judgment of the fatherless and widow, **and loveth the stranger, in giving him food and raiment.** ¹⁹ Love ye therefore the stranger: for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt. KJV

It is the same basis for love given by our Lord in Matt. 5:45, when He said: “That ye may be the

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children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.”

You see, beloved, with man, hatred of someone means an absence of love. However, with God, this cannot be; all God’s attributes work together in perfect harmony, simply because His attributes are a characterization of the One Divine Being. In other words, when God hates the evil in His creatures, He also loves them at the same time. This is, of course, because God’s attribute of holiness cannot ever abide evil, but it is also because God’s attribute of love can never be absent His mercy and care. The one does not operate without the other.

However, with man, at least with unredeemed man, such is not the case; generally speaking, any hatred of one’s fellow man usually nullifies any love. It is very difficult for fallen humanity to do anything else.

Consequently, this sole working of hatred in man cannot work the righteousness of God (cf. James 1:19-20). ⁿ The righteousness of God will always hate evil, but, at the same time, will always seek a way to overcome that evil in others by love and goodness.

Rom. 12:21 Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good. KJV

This is the concurrent and coequal working of God’s holiness and righteousness with His love and mercy, which is very difficult for man to understand or conceive. Even the prophet Habakkuk was confused as to how these two could work together at the same time when he said—

Hab. 1:13 *Thine* eyes are too pure to approve evil, And Thou canst not look on wickedness *with favor*. Why dost Thou look with favor on those who deal treacherously? Why art Thou silent when the wicked swallow up those more righteous than they? KJV

But such is the case! We must remember that all men are a part of God’s creation and so He can take

ⁿ **James 1:19-20**

Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath: ²⁰ **For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.** KJV

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no pleasure in their death, even if they are wicked.

Eze. 33:11 “Say to them, ‘As I live!’ declares the Lord God, **‘I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked**, but rather that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn back, turn back from your evil ways! Why then will you die, O house of Israel?’” NASB

Therefore, it is all that is evil in man that God so hates, not the man himself, for all men have been created in the likeness of God. James reminds us of this truth in James 3:9.

James 3:9 With it we bless *our* Lord and Father; and with it we curse men, **who have been made in the likeness of God**;¹⁰ from the same mouth come *both* blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be this way. NASB

This truth is what has caused some to succinctly say that “God loves the sinner, yet hates the sin.” Now some might think this is a *pious platitude*, too simple in its affirmation. But that simply is not the case; it is rooted in Scripture itself!

Zec. 8:17 And let none of you imagine evil in your hearts against his neighbour; and love no false oath: **for all these are things that I hate**, saith the LORD. KJV

Jer 44:4 Yet I sent you all My servants the prophets, again and again, saying, ‘**Oh, do not do this abominable thing which I hate.**’ KJV

Amos 5:15 **Hate the evil**, and **love the good**, and establish judgment in the gate: it may be that the LORD God of hosts will be gracious unto the remnant of Joseph. KJV

And so we see that, indeed, the Lord can hate the evil within an enemy, and, at the same time, love that enemy himself. The ultimate example of this, of course, is our Lord’s prayer of forgiveness for those who crucified Him. They definitely were His enemies, hating Him just as much, if not more than His ancestor David’s enemies hated him in Ps.

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25:19—

Ps. 25:19 Look upon my enemies, for they are many; And they hate me with violent hatred. NASB

And yet, our Lord, unlike His father David, did not hate them back in return, but, rather our Lord loved them and prayed for them. Compare David's response to his enemies and our Lord's response to His enemies.

When King David thought of his enemies, he prayed—

Ps. 139:19-22 O that You would slay the wicked, O God; Depart from me, therefore, men of bloodshed²⁰ For they speak against You wickedly, And Your enemies take *Your name* in vain. ²¹ **Do I not hate those who hate You, O LORD?** And do I not **loathe** those who rise up against You? ²² I hate them with the **utmost hatred**; They have become my enemies. NASB

When Jesus thought of His enemies, He prayed—

Luke 23:34a "...Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." KJV

With man, especially unredeemed man, such love is impossible. But with God, not only is such love possible, such love was demonstrated for Scripture says that when we were His enemies, when we were wicked sinners, when we were workers of iniquity, Christ died for us!

Romans 5:6-10 For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. ⁷ For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. ⁸ **But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.** ⁹ Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. ¹⁰ **For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son,** much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by

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his life. KJV

And so, it matters not that David prayed this way. We are now told to follow his son according to the flesh—Jesus the Messiah, our Lord and our God. King David was imperfect. Jesus was perfect. Not only was He full of love for God His Father, He also was full of love for all mankind—His very enemies. With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible, and this brings us to the verses 45-48.

5:45 That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.

5:46 For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same?

5:47 And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more *than others*? do not even the publicans so?

5:48 Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.

Jesus concludes this section with telling us to emulate God the Father, not fallen mankind in this matter of loving our enemies. Mankind only has the ability to love those who love them back in return, which, of course, leads to a hatred of those who will not love them back in return. And, unfortunately, some Christians end up emulating fallen mankind, rather than God. But God loves those who have not loved Him back in return, and Jesus says we should be like God, and not like mankind.

But, because we are imperfect, another problem arises when some do try to emulate God (who causes the sun to rise upon the evil and the good) and they end up going too far in the other direction and end up loving their enemies to the point where they condone the evil in them. Some in Christendom (who claim to be Christian) do this very thing, all in the name of love. In other words, some who call themselves Christian have fallen into a love that will tolerate

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almost any sin in the name of love.

But God is not that way. He is perfect in all His ways. He will truly love the vilest offender, but not without equally hating the evil in that very same offender, hating even the smallest of sins. Loving one's enemies does not mean tolerating sin! Jesus, who was very God of very God loved His enemies, yet hated their sin—

Heb. 1:8-9 But unto the Son *he saith*, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom.⁹ **Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity**; therefore God, *even* thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows. KJV

Sin should never be excused in the name of love. But equally, hatred should never be excused in the name of righteousness. But this only becomes possible by being perfect as our Father in heaven is perfect. He acts in perfection, exercising righteousness and love at the same time. So should we, but this takes the very life of God in our hearts, a life which is only found in His Only-Begotten Son, the Perfect One who fulfilled the Law and the Prophets in every way, always loving righteously, yet always hating evil.

Such living by His righteousness and love can only come from our sanctification—our ongoing transformation of that which is imperfect in our souls into that which is perfect, all according to His Word. This can only be accomplished by a complete surrender to God our Father, a constant looking to Jesus our Lord above, and the continual operation of the wonderful Holy Spirit of God in our lives (II Cor. 3:18).^o

Our old man always seems to be able to only do one or the other; it is difficult for it to be balanced. It either embraces a mindset that leads many into complete degradation, ever condoning a multitude of sins all in the name of love, or it embraces a hatred for any who will not follow its ways.

Beloved, a Christian should never be characterized

^o **II Cor. 3:18** But we all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit. NASB

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by hate. All too often, today, Christians have walked more like David, saying, "Do I not hate those who hate You, O LORD? And do I not loathe those who rise up against You? I hate them with the utmost hatred; they have become my enemies." And Christians do this in the name of righteousness.

But in doing this they are not being perfect as their Father in heaven is perfect. They have forgotten that the dispensation of the Law has ended. They have forgotten that Christ is the end of the Law unto righteousness. Instead of being characterized by "hate in righteousness," they should be characterized by LOVE IN RIGHTEOUSNESS. They should not pattern themselves after David; they should pattern themselves after Jesus, the son of David—Jesus, the one who does not tell us to hate those who rise up against the LORD, but rather tells us to forgive them, to love them, just as he loved and forgave the ones who rose up against Him, the ones who rejected Him and nailed Him to that awful cross.

Jesus did not "loathe" them as King David did, but rather He loved them. Jesus did not hate them with an "utmost hatred" as King David did, rather He forgave them. ^p

This is the way of the Lord. The Law and the Prophets were proclaimed until John the Baptist, but now the gospel of His heavenly kingdom must ever be proclaimed, ^q being encapsulated in this declaration: "For God so loved the world that He gave His Only-begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." This is the message of God's grace, of God's salvation; now is the acceptable time; now is day of salvation (II Cor. 6:1-2). ^r

Nevertheless, we should equally remember that God will not always cause the sun to rise upon the evil. The attribute of God's justice, like His attribute of love, must also work with His attribute of righteousness.

Acts 17:30-31 The times of ignorance therefore God overlooked; but now he commandeth men that they should

^p **Ps. 139:21-22**

Do I not hate those who hate You, O LORD? And do I not **loathe those who rise up against You?** 22 I hate them with the **utmost hatred;** They have become my enemies. NASB

^q **Luke 16:16** "The

Law and the Prophets *were proclaimed* until John; since then the gospel of the kingdom of God is preached, and everyone is forcing his way into it. NASB

^r **II Cor. 6:1-2**

And working together *with Him*, we also urge you not to receive the grace of God in vain-- ² for He says, "At the acceptable time I listened to you, And on the day of salvation I helped you"; behold, **now is "the acceptable time,"** behold, **now is "the day of salvation"**— NASB

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all everywhere repent: ³¹ **inasmuch as he hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom he hath ordained**; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead. ASV (Capitalization of Man is mine.)

God's righteousness, which is now working through love, by the blood of Christ, will one day demand an accounting from those who practice evil—that is, if they never accepted God's salvation.

One day the Lord will bring justice for those who never hated their enemies, but only loved their enemies, for those who never loathed them, but only prayed for them, who always shared with them the good news of salvation. ^s That day will come, and when it comes, this is how it is described. The same apostle John, who wrote, "for God so loved the world," also wrote this—

Revelation 19:11-15 And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him *was* called Faithful and True, **and in righteousness he doth judge and make war.** ¹² His eyes *were* as a flame of fire, and on his head *were* many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself. ¹³ And he *was* clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God. ¹⁴ And the armies *which were* in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. ¹⁵ **And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.**

The same Jesus who said, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do," will also be the One who will tread "the winepress of the fierce wrath of God." Oh, sinner take warning! Jesus the Saviour of all, is also the Man appointed to be the Judge of all.

But until that day comes, may we always obey the command of our Lord to love our enemies, ever praying for those who spitefully use us, for those who are always persecuting us, for our Saviour paid a great price for them, even for that darkest soul who hates us and is always persecuting us. May we ever

^s **Luke 18:7** And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them? KJV

Rev. 6:10 And they cried with a loud voice, saying, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?" KJV

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declare in love to all, “now is the acceptable time, now is the day of salvation.” Amen.

And so this concludes the first section of this Sermon on the Mount and shows us that God has not failed in His promise to Israel. God has not broken His promise of blessing that He had promised upon Mt. Gerizim in the form of a Covenant, i.e. the Covenant of the Land. God never failed; it was the children of Israel who failed. They thought they deserved God’s blessing and physical deliverance from Rome because they kept their part of the Covenant.

However, the opposite was true. Jesus showed them by His reference to at least six of the ten commandments that they were not truly obeying the commandments of God. Equally, they were not walking in the “ways of the Lord.”

Unlike the way of the Lord in foregoing one’s right when injured, they demanded the utmost revenge, never willing to turn the other cheek. Unlike the grace and generosity of the Lord when asked to do something more, they would never do so, never going the extra mile, when asked to go one. And finally, unlike the Lord, they would only show their love to a restricted few; they would not love their neighbors as themselves, nor would they love those who might hate them. But the Lord did; and He did so repeatedly with Israel throughout all their history, and especially when upon the cross.

The children of Israel failed miserably, yet what is so wonderful in this Sermon on the Mount is that our Lord was pointing them beyond their utter failure to Himself, the One who would fulfill all things, the One who would do what they could not do, the One who would give to them something deeper than mere physical blessings and physical deliverance. The Lord was preaching to them the gospel of the kingdom, a kingdom which was not of this world, a kingdom where they would receive a multitude of spiritual blessings and spiritual deliverances if only

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they would believe in Him. How wonderful is our LORD Jesus Christ, very God of very God!

Matthew 6

6:1 Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven.

6:2 Therefore when thou doest *thine* alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.

6:3 But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth:

6:4 That thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly.

6:5 And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites *are*: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.

The Lord now continues with another example of man's failure to properly walk before the Lord. However, in these instances He is dealing with personal acts of righteousness as opposed to those aforementioned societal acts of righteousness that occur when one human interacts with another human being.

He first speaks of charitable giving; then, He speaks of any prayer of adoration, thanksgiving, and/or personal need, and finally, in verses 16-18 the manner of fasting.

Our Lord declares that such acts should be done with the glory of God in mind, as opposed to those who might do it unto their own glory or those who might do it in order to enhance their own reputation as being righteous.

Many in Israel were so filled with spiritual pride that their religious piety actually became a source of

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spiritual sin within their hearts. They outwardly guarded their footsteps while inwardly ignored the condition of their hearts. And so they would make sure all knew how charitable they were in their giving, doing so publically for all to see. And in their prayers, they would stop and pray publically in open spaces and/or upon street corners, praying during those prescribed times of prayer in Israel, that being the third, sixth and ninth hour, * all so that others might see how humble they were. Our Lord refers to that practice of public prayer in these verses and also in Matt. 23:5.

Matthew 23:5 "But they do all their deeds to be noticed by men; for they broaden their phylacteries and lengthen the tassels *of their garments*. NASB

The phylacteries were those parchments of Scripture that were bound in leather containers upon their arms, hands and foreheads, which they utilized during prayer. They took literally the injunction of Deut. 11:18 and so bound these portions of Scripture to their hands, to their heads, and to the fleshly parts of their arm so that that it might rest against their heart during prayer.^a And so, at those prescribed times of prayer, they would outwardly present a picture of themselves for all to see as ones who were zealously obeying the minutest letter of the Law.

How unfortunate it was, however, that they ignored the spirit of the Law, expressed in the ways of the Lord which would never seek to bring glory upon oneself. The same thing happened in Isaiah's day when he wrote the following.

Isaiah 58:1-3 Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and declare unto my people their transgression, and to the house of Jacob their sins.² Yet they seek me daily, and delight to know my ways: as a nation that did righteousness, and forsook not the ordinance of their God, they ask of me righteous judgments; they delight to draw near unto God.³ Wherefore have we fasted, say they, and thou seest not? wherefore have we afflicted our soul, and thou takest no

* These times would correspond to our 9:00 AM, 12:00 PM, and 3:00 PM.

^a **Deut. 11:18**
"You shall therefore impress these words of mine on your heart and on your soul; and you shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontals on your forehead.
NASB

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knowledge? **Behold, in the day of your fast ye find your own pleasure,** and exact all your labors. ASV

Outwardly, Isaiah says the people delighted to know God's ways, resting on their reputation as a nation that obeyed God. Yet, according to the true intention of their hearts, Isaiah says they did such acts for their own pleasure. This, he says, is the reason why God did not acknowledge their righteousness.

This is what our Lord was saying was happening in His own day. The people, especially the Scribes and the Pharisees, could not understand why God was not recognizing their righteousness as a nation and so deliver them from their physical oppression, as promised in the Covenant of the Land. After all, according to their own estimation (as in Isaiah's day) they were obeying and following the ways of the Lord. But Jesus shows they were not. Rather they were following their own ways, seeking their own pleasure through outward displays of piety, ever seeking the acknowledgement of man, rather than seeking the acknowledgement of God (although they pretended otherwise). Jesus says that those who do such have their own reward—the fleeting praises of man. Pride is awful in a man; spiritual pride is worse.

The true way of the Lord is always to seek the glory of God. The Son always seeks the glory of the Father and the Father always seeks to glorify the Son and, equally, the Holy Spirit ever seeks to lift up and glorify Christ.^b None sought their own glory. This is the way of the Lord and this is the mind of Christ of which we are enjoined to have in ourselves. The people of Israel did not really understand what true piety was, for true piety never seeks its own.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

We should not think that this self-seeking glory mentioned by our Lord cannot apply today. Such a mindset is the plague of us all. We all have the same sin nature every that human being has, religious or otherwise. It is part of the old man we inherited from

^b **John 13:31-32**

Therefore, when he was gone out, Jesus said, Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him.

³² If God be glorified in him, God shall also glorify him in himself, and shall straightway glorify him. KJV

John 17:1 These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee. KJV

Jn.16:13 Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, *that* shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come.¹⁴ He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew *it* unto you. KJV

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Adam, and just as it manifested itself during the time of our Lord in Israel, so it has manifested itself throughout history in the Church (and not just in the Christian Church). Adoniram Judson once related how one of the early converts to Christ in Burma, upon hearing this portion of our Lord's Sermon on the Mount, said this about their own Buddhist priests.

"A few days ago I was reading with him Christ's sermon on the mount. He was deeply impressed, and unusually solemn. 'These words,' said he, 'take hold on my very heart; they make me tremble. Here God commands us to do everything that is good in secret, not to be seen of men. How unlike our religion is this! When Burmans make offerings to the pagodas, they make a great noise with drums and musical instruments, that others may see how good they are.'"⁴⁰

The old man that we inherited from Adam has permeated every ethnic group on earth. It still was alive and well in the Buddhist monks in Burma. Mankind has been filled with pride and self-glory ever since the beginning, and, unfortunately, it is not only the plague of unbelievers; it also plagues the heart of believers who have not put off the old man which grows corrupt according to the lusts of deceits (Eph. 4:22), that old man which we all have inherited from Adam.

In today's religious culture such pride and self-glory can manifest itself in many different ways. For example, it might come from insisting that one's name be publicized with every donated gift. Or, perhaps, it might come from making sure a building or structure is named after oneself. Or, finally, it could even come from boasting about one's biblical education, perhaps, by making sure that one's earned degree is noticed by others, whether by title or by letters printed after one's name.

Such self-seeking comes from rationalizing away our Lord's commandment in Matthew 23:6-10.

Matthew 23:6-10 And love the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues,⁷ And

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greetings in the markets, and to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi. ⁸ **But be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your Master, *even* Christ; and all ye are brethren.** ⁹ And call no *man* your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven. ¹⁰ Neither be ye called masters: for one is your Master, *even* Christ. KJV

This glorying in titles was not always the case; long ago saints would attend a Bible College to complete a course of instruction, not for a degree, or title, but for the benefit of gaining knowledge in the things of God. The most they might receive would be a diploma. But among many today, recognized degrees and titles have now become the desired option, thinking such degrees are necessary. And in order to provide the degrees, Bible Colleges and Seminaries have, in contradistinction to God's Word (II Cor. 6:14), yoked themselves together *with worldly organizations and accreditation boards*, all so they can bestow those degrees on those who graduate. Why? Is not the knowledge gained of God's Word sufficient? Why is it so important for the saints to have such letters behind their names or titles before their names—so important that a Bible College is even willing to make an educational “alliance” with a worldly organization that has the authority to confer legitimacy to the college program—all so such degrees can be bestowed?

However, I know some may disagree, believing a diploma is not sufficient. I know some believe a degree is a necessary thing—that is well and fine; we are all free in Christ Jesus. But we should all be careful to never to boast in our attainments, whatever they may be. If one earns a degree, one should be careful to never make it known for the purpose of gaining special recognition. Did not Paul say—

“For who maketh thee to differ *from another*? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive *it*, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received *it*?” I Cor. 4:7 KJV

Now, that does not mean that such brothers, who

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have devoted long hours to studying the things of God, or who have labored hard in acquiring the knowledge of Biblical languages, should not be respected. They should be respected. They should, in love, be honored for their hard labour. But it is important to always remember, “What do any of us have that we did not receive from the Lord?”

It is one thing for us to freely honor such saints for their labour; in fact, it is biblical. I Tim. 5:17 tells us,

“Let the elders that rule **well be counted worthy of double honour**, especially they **who labour in the word and doctrine**.” 1Tim. 5:17 KJV

But it is something completely different when such honor is overtly displayed, or when such honor is expected and/or demanded. Why not rather follow the way of the apostles of our Lord?

“For, I think, God has exhibited us apostles last of all, as men condemned to death; because we have become a spectacle to the world, both to angels and to men. We are fools for Christ's sake, but you are prudent in Christ; we are weak, but you are strong; you are distinguished, **but we are without honor**.” I Cor. 4:9-10 NASB

Why not rather take up the cross? Why not rather have a mindset that is willing to be unknown—a mindset that seeks no reputation above that of simply being a servant of God? Was that not the mind of our Lord?

“But [He] made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.” Philippians 2:7-8 KJV

Could it be that many think such recognition is a necessary thing, in order to insure the success of their ministry? Our Lord certainly did not think such recognition was necessary. He could have been born in the house of a rich man. He could have been

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educated by the foremost Rabbis of His day with full public recognition. But instead, He chose to be born in the house of a poor carpenter. He refused the “degrees” of His day—that public recognition of prestigious Rabbis and Doctors, among whom He once conversed (Luke 2:46-47). Instead, He trusted in the guidance of His Father and the power of the Holy Spirit to influence those among whom He ministered.

He was very God of very God, but He chose the path of lowliness, seeking never to enhance His own reputation by special recognition, as did the Scribes and Pharisees. Instead, He relied upon the recognition of the Holy Spirit, in whose power He went forth, and upon whom He entrusted any influence. ^c

Henry Craik, that blessed worker with George Müller of Bristol, provides a balance outlook on this important point in his book on *New Testament Church Order*.

“They who would seek in modern days to carry on, in any measure, the cause to which the Apostles were devoted, must cultivate an habitual sense of dependence leading to persevering prayer. They must, above all things, honour the Divine Spirit, **and trust to His effectual agency for the success of their labours.** No knowledge, even of Scripture, no natural capabilities, no acquired attainments, must be allowed to supersede the necessity of constant waiting upon God for the supply of power from on High. The training of a university, or the humbler aid of a Dissenting college,⁴¹ will be found miserable substitutes for the teaching of the Spirit, and the energy of His inward operations. Discourses may be prepared with assiduous care, and delivered with propriety and animation; crowds of interested listeners may be attracted by the natural endowments of the preacher, and yet he may be unto his hearers; ‘as a very lovely song of one that has a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument, for they hear his words but they do them not.’

By suited instrumentality, **and by the energy of the blessed Spirit, was the foundation of the Spiritual building laid at first, and by similar means must the building be carried on.** On the one hand, there is a danger lest men of ardent feelings, but defective knowledge, should so act as to lead away their hearers, under the

^c **Luke 4:14** And Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news about Him spread through all the surrounding district.
NASB

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influence of excited feelings, into paths of extravagance and folly; on the other hand, there has ever been the still commoner danger lest men should enter upon the work of the Christian ministry on the strength of a course of education, supposed to be a necessary preparation for so high a service. Everything is beautiful in its season. Let its own order be assigned to each. First let there be the higher qualifications of simple faith, and conscious dependence upon the strength that cometh from above; **and then let all the helps, connected with mental attainments and diligent study of the Scriptures, be rendered available for the furtherance of the Gospel.**^{2>42}

When one learns the lesson mentioned above, one can then, by God's grace, make oneself on no reputation like our Lord, freeing oneself from that mindset of self-aggrandizement that our Lord so warns us against in these first view verses of Matthew chapter 6.

6:6 But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.

The Lord Jesus is not prohibiting public prayer in this verse. Indeed, on more than one occasion in Scripture, the Lord is shown praying publically (cf. Matt. 11:25-26; Lu. 10:21; Jn. 11:41-42; 12:28). Rather the Lord is enjoining private prayer for those who, when the time for prayer arrives, always seek out a public place where their might offer their prayers to be seen of men so that they might obtain public recognition of their supposed spirituality. It applies to those who "love" such recognition—to those who love to show off their piety.

John Lightfoot addresses this mindset and practice as follows—

"That so much provision is made concerning reciting the phylacteries, and the prayers...that wheresoever a man had been, when the set time was come, he presently betakes himself to prayers: 'A workman, or he that is upon the top of a tree, he that rides on an ass, must immediately come

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down, and say his prayers,' &c. These are the very instances that the canonists give, which, with more of them, you may find in the tract *Beracoth*. Hence, therefore, those vainglorious hypocrites got an occasion of boasting themselves. For the hour of the phylacterical prayers being come, their care and endeavour was, to be taken in the streets: whereby the canonical hour compelling them to their prayers in that place, **they might be the more seen by all persons, and that the ordinary people might admire and applaud both their zeal and religion...** They addicted themselves to ejaculations, prayers, and blessings, upon the sight almost of anything meeting them either in the streets or in the way.”⁴³

In contradistinction to this, consider the mindset and practice of the apostle Peter, who, when the midday time for prayer arrived, betook himself to a private place, upon a rooftop, to say his prayers. As was said before, Israelites set apart three times of prayer each day—the third, sixth, and ninth hours. And it was at the sixth hour that Peter retired to a quiet place to pray.

Peter took to heart the exhortations of his Lord. (The word translated “closet” in the KJV, actually means an inner room of a house, or in some cases, a storeroom where one could find a quiet or secluded spot. In this case, apparently, the rooftop was a “closet,” so to speak, where Peter could find privacy away from the commotion of the household.)

6:7 But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking.

6:8 Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him.

An example of this type of vain repetition is found in I Kings 18:26.

I Kings 18:26 And they took the bullock which was given them, and they dressed *it*, and called on the name of Baal from morning even until noon, saying, O Baal, hear us. But *there was* no voice, nor any that answered. And they

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leaped upon the altar which was made. KJV

Throughout the first part of the day they repeated, over and over the phrase, “O Baal, hear us!” They must have thought that by their persistent chant that Baal would surely hear them. But, of course, such was not the case.

John Lightfoot in his commentary continues, and provides other examples of this same type of vain repetition among the heathen.

“See the civil battology† of the heathen in their supplications: ‘Let the parricide be dragged: we beseech thee. Augustus, let the parricide be dragged. This is the thing we ask, let the parricide be dragged. Hear us, Caesar. Let the false accusers be condemned to the lion. Hear us, Caesar. Let the false accusers be condemned to the lion. Hear us, Caesar,’ &c. ‘Antoninus the pious, the gods keep thee. Antoninus the merciful, the gods keep thee. Antoninus the merciful, the gods keep thee.’ See also Capitulinus, in the Maximini.”

“...And in this matter the Jew sinned little less than the heathen. For this was an axiom with them, ‘*Every one that multiplies prayer is heard.*’ Christ...does not so much condemn the bare saying over again the same petitions ... (for he himself spake the same things thrice, when he prayed in the garden) [but he condemned their false opinions regarding such praying], as if there were some power, or zeal, or piety, in such kind of repetitions; and that they would be sooner heard, and more prevail with God.⁴⁴

The emphasis in all this is not only on the repeated word or phrase itself, but also on the thought that God could be entreated by such persistent repetition of His name. It invokes the idea of a detached God who cares little for his creatures, who, because of this, must be cajoled and, indeed, in some cases, awakened from slumber by constant battology. It betrays a lack of faith in the goodness of God and also the omnipotence of God. It brings up an imagery of a throng of people, all calling out to God at the same time, who thereby think it is necessary to speak

† Battology refers to repeated use of the same word or phrase.

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out more forcefully and repeatedly so God will hear and pay attention to them.

And so in verse 8, Jesus assures their hearts that God is more than capable in hearing one's prayer for God is not only omnipotent, but is also omniscient. In this way, Jesus seeks to strengthen the faith of His disciples, encouraging them to pray with faith that God will not only hear their simple prayer, but that He already knows of their needs before they pray.

6:9 After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.

6:10 Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.

The word translated, "after this manner," is the Greek adverb οὕτως, modifying the verb "pray." Jesus is saying to not pray with needless repetitions, as if that will gain you the attention of God, but rather pray in this way. It is the same adverb used in Matt. 5:19, that was translated *thus*, but in this case the adverb is not anaphoric but cataphoric. And so, Jesus now shares a concise, yet profound prayer for His disciples to emulate.

Now some will indicate that this adverb precludes any thought that this is a prescribed and an exact prayer given by our Lord for His disciples to pray. But why? The adverb simply means to pray *thus*. It does not command, but neither does it preclude one from using the exact words given by Jesus. The focus is on providing a prayer that is pleasing to God in contradistinction to the vain repetitions of the heathen.

However, if one insists that this prayer must be prayed exactly as written, they must admit they are adding to Scripture. But, equally so, if one insists that this prayer not be prayed as written, they too are adding to Scripture, for nowhere does Jesus prohibit this prayer from being prayed literally. The Lord is not commanding one way or the other.

But why should it bother anyone if certain

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believers decide to pray the prayer as written? I am afraid that it may simply be because they belong to a non-liturgical tradition or background. On the other hand, why should it bother other believers if certain ones feel this prayer should only be taken as a general outline, and that Jesus did not intend that it be prayed carefully, word for word? More than likely, those who feel such a way would be from a liturgical tradition. What is important to realize for both groups of believers is that we are not to walk by our traditions, but by the Holy Spirit and the Word of God!

Praying this prayer, commonly known as the Lord's prayer, exactly as written could never be wrong for it is a prayer inspired by the Holy Spirit of God uttered from the lips of our Saviour. Do not believers from non-liturgical backgrounds routinely pray, word for word, other prayers given by fellow believers, and yet they do not object. Many believers will sing as a prayer to God, week after week, many prayers written as hymns. For example, the hymn: *Lord Jesus Christ, We Seek Thy Face*.

Lord Jesus Christ, we seek Thy face;
Within the veil we bow the knee;
Oh, let Thy glory fill the place,
And bless us while we wait on Thee.

These exact words are repeated week after week whenever the Lord leads those believers to sing that song in prayer. Why does that not make us uncomfortable?

Or, consider another example. Do not many pray, word for word, this prayer found in Ps. 139:23—

Psalm 139:23 Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: ²⁴ And see if *there be any* wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting. KJV

If we have no problem praying this prayer word for word as written, why would we have a problem praying the Lord's prayer word for word? It should

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not bother us if the prayer is prayed in Spirit with sincerity and full meaning.

Nevertheless, if the Lord's prayer is prayed in a perfunctory manner, simply by rote, it should, indeed, bother us, for it would equally bother God, for our worship and prayers, our walk and our service should always be in spirit by the leading of the Holy Spirit,^d never by a soul acting in accordance with religious traditions, apart from the filling of the Holy Spirit.

The Lord warns us against such a perfunctory mindset in Isaiah 29:13

Isa. 29:13 Then the Lord said, "Because this people draw near with their words and honor Me with their lip service, but they remove their hearts far from Me, and their reverence for Me consists of tradition learned *by rote*. NASB

In the Word of God, some prayers were fixed; many were prayers that were taken right from Scripture—for example, the recitation of the Shema (Deut. 6:4), and the singing of the Hallel at Passover (Ps. 113-118). But at other times free prayer was practiced and, indeed, encouraged in our Lord's day.

Alfred Edersheim addresses this point in his article in the *The Bible Educator*—

"This same Eliezer was (according to Jer. Ber. iv. 4) in the habit of every day saying some one new prayer for fear of failing into formalism, while other Rabbis either added a new eulogy, or some verses from Scripture, to the ordinary prescribed prayers. For as another sage, Eleazar, declared: "He that converteth prayer into a regular recurring duty, his is not devout supplication..."

"...Few questions require more careful answering than those of the proportion of fixed and free prayer in the synagogue, and what parts of the present Jewish prayer-book date from Temple times, or, at least, from the first century of our era. About fifty fragments of the ritual still in use in the synagogue on ordinary days, on Sabbaths, fast-days, the New Year's, and the Day of Atonement, undoubtedly belong to that period. Certain portions being early fixed, considerable latitude was allowed to the leader to insert between them longer or shorter prayers, which in

^d **John 4:24** God *is* a Spirit: and they that worship him must **worship him in spirit** and in truth. KJV

Jude 1:20 But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, **praying in the Holy Spirit**, KJV

Gal. 5:16 *This* I say then, **Walk in the Spirit**, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. KJV

Rom. 1:9 For God is my witness, whom **I serve with my spirit** in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers. KJV

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course of time became traditional, and finally a fixed part of the liturgy. Among the early Rabbis great difference of opinion prevailed on this subject. Rabbi Gamaliel insisted on strict adherence to the fixed forms; Rabbi Joshua thought that an abstract of the proscribed daily benedictions was sufficient; while Akiba only allowed it to those who could not remember the eulogies. On the other hand, Rabbi Elieser strongly insisted on free prayer.”⁴⁵

Therefore, while the Lord’s Prayer is an appropriate prayer to pray, word for word, as taught by the Lord, more than likely, our Lord was revealing to His disciples by the phrase “after this manner,” not a fixed prayer, but the general outline of a prayer that was pleasing to God in contrast to the long prayers and, in some cases, the perfunctory prayers being adopted by the Pharisees. ^e This is all the more confirmed in the Gospel of Luke, for we have an account of a another occasion where the Lord instructs His disciples regarding prayer that is pleasing to God, and on that occasion, while the Lord follows the general outline of this prayer in His Sermon on the Mount, He does not repeat it word for word, as if it was a fixed form of a prayer.

Luke 11:1-4 And it came to pass, that, as he was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples.² And he said unto them, When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth.³ Give us day by day our daily bread. ⁴ And forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil.
KJV

Therefore, we should give each other liberty as to whether believers decide to pray this prayer as written (all the while making sure, of course, to maintain in the Holy Spirit the focus intended by our Lord) or, whether believers decide to just follow the general outline of this prayer, praying this prayer freely from the heart.

With that being said we see that this prayer begins

^e **Matt. 23:14** Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayer: therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation.
KJV

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with the understanding of God as our Father. Jesus says to begin with “Our Father, which art in heaven.” This directs our hearts to remember two things.

First of all, it directs our hearts to remember that we are children of God. We have been called through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ into an eternal relationship with God as our Father by a new birth.

John 1:12-13 But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: ¹³ Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. KJV

We have been born again unto a living hope that cries out, “Abba Father.” ^f

Secondly, it reminds us that we are one family. Jesus teaches us to begin our prayer with, “**Our Father.**” Literally, the Greek could be translated, “Father of us.” We are not alone; we are one household—or, as Paul declares, “one body.”

I Cor. 12:12-14, 25 For as the body is one, and hath many members, and **all the members of that one body, being many, are one body:** so also *is* Christ. ¹³ For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether *we be* Jews or Gentiles, whether *we be* bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit. ¹⁴ For the body is not one member, but many. ²⁵ That there should be no schism in the body; **but *that* the members should have the same care one for another.** KJV

Therefore, we see that Jesus is saying our prayers should reflect our relationship, not only with God as our “Father,” but also with each other as “brethren.” As such, our daily prayers should never be just for ourselves, but also for our brethren. As one family, as one body, we should have the same care one for one another, and so we should always pray accordingly.

Daniel understood this principle as applied in the Old Testament. When he prayed to God, he would also pray for his brethren.

Daniel 9:3-8 And I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek

^f **I Pet. 1:3**

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. NASB

Romans 8:15-16

For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. ¹⁶

The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: KJV

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by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes: ⁴ And I prayed unto the LORD my God, and made my confession, and said, O Lord, the great and dreadful God, keeping the covenant and mercy to them that love him, and to them that keep his commandments; ⁵

We have sinned, and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled, even by departing from thy precepts and from thy judgments:⁶

Neither have we hearkened unto thy servants the prophets, which spake in thy name to our kings, our princes, and our fathers, and to all the people of the land.⁷ O Lord, righteousness belongeth unto thee, but unto us confusion of faces, as at this day; to the men of Judah, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and unto all Israel, that are near, and that are far off, through all the countries whither thou hast driven them, because of their trespass that they have trespassed against thee. ⁸ O Lord, to us belongeth confusion of face, to our kings, to our princes, and to our fathers, because we have sinned against thee.” KJV

Daniel kept himself pure. He refrained from sin; he kept the commandments of God. And yet, Daniel identified himself with his brethren, seeing Israel’s failure as his failure, and Israel’s sin as his sin. When he prayed he included himself when he said, “...we have sinned and committed iniquity, we have done wickedly and rebelled, even by departing from Your precepts and Your judgments.”

Daniel did not participate in the sins and rebellion of Israel and Judah. He did not dabble in idolatry as they did. In fact, Scripture bear witness to the righteousness of Daniel, calling him a righteous man, along with such men as Noah and Job. ⁸ But Daniel does not separate himself from the failures of his brethren.

This is the principle the Lord desires his disciples to never forget when they come daily in prayer to God their Father, especially after they are baptized (in the future) into the body of Christ by the baptism of the Holy Spirit, thereby constituting His Church upon earth. In that day, they should pray as brethren having been born again by the Holy Spirit with every other believer in Christ. Like Daniel, they should remember that they cannot exist independently from

⁸ **Ezekiel 14:14**

Though these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, they should deliver *but* their own souls by their righteousness, saith the Lord GOD. KJV

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other brethren. Therefore, the failure of the Church becomes their failure, and the sin of God's people becomes their sin.

We should never forget this truth. A spiritual assembly that is walking by the Spirit, being conformed to God's Word, will remember the words of the Lord Jesus, especially the words He taught His disciples to pray. An assembly that does not pray for the entire body of Christ is an assembly that is puffed up with spiritual pride; they have separated themselves from their brethren. They are in danger of being like that self-righteous Pharisee in Luke—

Luke 18:11-14 The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men *are*, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. ¹² I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. ¹³ And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as *his* eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. ¹⁴ I tell you, this man went down to his house justified *rather* than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted. KJV

If Daniel, would never pray like that, being an Old Testament saint, how much more should we never pray like that, being a New Testament saint?

A spiritual assembly will always recognize, like Daniel of old did with his brethren, that the Church's failure is our failure; their iniquity becomes our iniquity as the one Church, for we are all one in one body. A diseased member can make the entire body sick. We do not exist alone. We must pray for all.

We should humbly ask God our Father to forgive us if we ever neglect to pray for the whole Church. We should seek to make sure that even a small part of the Church's failure as a whole, can never be assigned to our lack of daily praying for them all. I have not prayed enough for my brethren—have you?

The next phrase in the prayer reminds us where God dwells. He is our Father—“**which art in heaven.**” God is high and lifted up. Yes, He is our Father, Abba, a term of endearment, but He is also

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God, in Heaven, a place created by Him in which to dwell (although it could never contain Him). It is a place where God manifest certain truths about Himself, one of them being His great omnipotence. As such He is known by the Hebrew word, El Elyon, God Most High.^h There is none higher than He, for He is the Creator of all things, and Heaven was created to be a place wherein God would reveal to all His creatures who He is, a place where His attributes could be made known, one of them being, as we said, His great omnipotence (also cf. Gen. 14:22; Dan. 4:35, 5:21; Ps. 103:19).

And so, because Jesus reminds His disciples that He is in the highest place of this creation, i.e. Heaven, He next reminds them that His name must be hallowed. The one follows the other. If the Father is the Most High, He must be honored and His name must not be taken in vain, for no one is His equal among created beings, angelic or otherwise. Only the Son and the Holy Spirit are equal to the Father in essence, being consubstantial. All others should be subservient in recognition of His greatness. Thus His name must be set apart in our hearts, in our minds and in our conversations.

Alford remarks—

“ἁγιασθήτω τὸ ὄνομά σου] De Wette observes: ‘God’s Name is not merely His appellation, which we speak with the mouth, but also and principally the idea which we attach to it,—His Being, as far as it is confessed, revealed, or known.’ The ‘Name of God’ in Scripture is used to signify that revelation of Himself which He has made to men, which is all that we know of Him...ἁγιάζω here is in the sense of keep holy, sanctify in our hearts...”⁴⁶

The Greek verb that is translated as “hallowed,” is ἁγιάζω and is used in the imperative mood with the meaning of “keeping sacred,” or “insuring a set apartness from others.” Thus we see our Lord’s concern that His disciples understand that “respect” and “honour” is a primary basis of prayer that is pleasing to God. Oh, how we need to understand that honour and respect are an essential ingredient of

^h **Gen. 14:19** And he blessed him, and said, Blessed be Abram of the **most high God**, possessor of heaven and earth. KJV

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prayer. We should never be flippant in prayer, for honour and respect are rooted in the very Being of the Godhead. The Son has always honoured the Father and the Father has always honoured the Son (Jn. 5:23; 8:54) ⁱ and so we should always honour both the Father and the Son in our lives and in our prayers. (Of course, the same would apply to our behaviour before the Holy Spirit. We should not grieve the Spirit of God.) All dishonour and disrespect come from the enemy of our souls and should never be practiced by a child of God.

As for the fact that Matthew uses the imperative mood in this verb, as well as for the other verbs used in this prayer, is another indication as to why His Name must be kept sacred, for the imperative mood in the aorist tense, used in prayers and entreaties, bespeaks a lessor addressing someone who is greater. It indicates that such a one should be honored and respected. Thus this use of the imperative mood (which in other contexts is many times a mood of command) is in this context, a mood of entreaty, made by one who is less.

As disciples of the Lord we must be careful to treat the Name of God with respect. Christians should never be flippant in any reference to God, whether we are speaking of the Name of the Father, or the Son, or the Holy Spirit, or of the Name that was Divinely given to the Son in his incarnation, i.e. the name of Jesus. It too must always be held sacred in our hearts, for He is our God, our Lord, our Saviour, the Christ, the Son of the living God. Amen.

And so we see that our Lord teaches us to first see God as our Father, underscoring our relationship with Him and our relationship with fellow believers. Then He desires that we understand He has set up Heaven as a place where His very Person is made known, so that when we approach in our spirits to that throne of grace in Heaven, we are careful to keep sacred His Name which represents His Person. And that leads us into the next portion of this prayer—our desire that every person in this world be brought to the same understanding and relationship.

ⁱ **Jn. 8:49** Jesus answered, I have not a devil; **but I honour my Father, and ye do dishonour me.**

KJV

Jn. 8:54 Jesus answered, If I honour myself, my honour is nothing: **it is my Father that honoureth me;** of whom ye say, that he is your God:

KJV

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Jesus next teaches us that we should be concerned for the end of unrighteousness and sin in this world by His desire that we pray that His kingdom would come. Obviously, this would refer to the Millennial rule of Christ upon the earth where Christ judges all sin, for the kingdom of Heaven, in its spiritual form, had already come in the person of the Lord Jesus Himself. Jesus is referring to the manifestation of the physical kingdom of God upon the earth (which occurs at His second coming).

Sin is the awful malady of mankind and it has harmed so many upon this earth, causing pain, deep hurt, despair, and in its ultimate form—death—and for those who are left behind, the awful grief of losing a loved one. Men have done so much evil in this world. People are murdered; untold misery has been brought upon women by the unbridled lusts of men; men (and women) ignore innocent lives. Human nature has been perverted by evil; great darkness has enveloped so many hearts. This is why Jesus is saying we should entreat God to send forth His kingdom to this earth, so that such evil can be punished and eradicated, so that so much suffering can be ended, so that innocent lives can be protected and brought into the light, and so that every human being can live in the peace and goodness of God. But Jesus does not leave it there. He says, **“Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in Heaven.”** When He adds that we should pray that God’s will should be done upon earth, He is also showing forth the love of God. Yes, we should pray for the cessation of sin upon this earth by the coming of the kingdom, but we should also pray that sinners be saved before that day arrives.

When we pray “Thy will be done,” we are praying for the salvation of lost souls. Scripture tells us plainly that one aspect of God’s will is that men and women should be saved, acknowledging who He is.

His will in this is shown in these verses.

I Timothy 2:3-4 This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, ⁴ **who desires all men to be saved** and

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to come to the knowledge of the truth. NASB

Isa 45:22 Turn to Me, and be saved, all the ends of the earth; For I am God, and there is no other. NASB

II Peter 3:9 The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, **not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.** KJV

Ezekiel 33:11a Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord GOD, **I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live.** KJV

So Jesus is teaching us that we should not pray for the one, without praying for the other. If we pray, “Thy kingdom come (so sin can be judged), we must pray, “Thy will be done” (so sinners can be saved).

Some make a mistake praying for the former without praying for the latter, thinking that the law can make one righteous. They seek to involve the Church in politics at the expense of the Gospel. They are concerned about the evil of men, but not the salvation of men. I once tried to get a number of fellow Christians to join me together in the sharing the good news of Jesus Christ in the streets of our city, but most would not (only two came to witness for our Lord). Yet many from that same church had no problem protesting certain evils in America, holding signs aloft in the street protesting the evil. They were bold to come out publicly to condemn, but were hesitant to come out to publicly to bear witness in love to the gospel of Jesus Christ. (And what is ironic is when one preaches God’s love in the gospel, by definition one must also preach God’s condemnation of evil, for the wages of sin is death but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.—Rom. 6:23).

Christians must remember that morality of the heart cannot be legislated by the law. It can enforce and punish, but it can never change one’s heart. (And is that not what those who protest desire?) The law has never made anyone holy or perfect; the law has

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never made anyone righteous in God's eyes.

Hebrews 7:19 For the **law made nothing perfect**, but the bringing in of a better hope *did*; by the which we draw nigh unto God. KJV

Romans 3:20 because **by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified** in His sight; for through the Law *comes* the knowledge of sin. NASB

Galatians 5:4 You have been severed from Christ, you who are seeking to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace. NASB

Ephesians 2:8 For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; *it is* the gift of God. NASB

Jesus is the only One who is holy and perfect. Jesus is the One who is righteous in every way. Jesus is the only One who can change the darkest heart. And so it is only Jesus who can save and bring sinners into morality. If we seek the coming of His kingdom, where all sin will be done away with, we must also pray that His will be done on earth—and that, beloved, will entail the sharing of the good news so that men and women might be saved.

But that is not all, there is also two other aspects of His will—sanctification and good works.

When we pray “Thy will be done,” we must also pray for the sanctification of those lost souls brought to salvation.

God's will for sanctification is shown in these verses.

I Thess. 4:3-4 **For this is the will of God, even your sanctification**, that ye should abstain from fornication: That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour.” KJV.

Romans 12:2 And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, **that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.** KJV

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We must realize that when we pray “Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven,” we are praying for the existence upon earth of all that exists in Heaven. In Heaven, obviously there is faith. Why? Because all who bow before His throne believe that He is—

Heb. 11:6 But without faith *it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.* KJV

And, of course, there is also a complete sanctification from evil, for evil cannot abide in His presence.

Isaiah 45:8 "Drip down, O heavens, from above, And let the clouds pour down righteousness; Let the earth open up and salvation bear fruit, And righteousness spring up with it. I, the LORD, have created it. NASB

Proverbs 20:8 Whenever a righteous king sits on the throne, **no evil thing can stand before his presence.** (Brenton's Version)

If we are concerned for the widespread influence of evil in this world, whether it is shown in society, in government, or even, unfortunately in our churches, so much so that we are drawn to pray “Thy kingdom come,” we must be also careful to pray “Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven,” which will entail our faithfully praying for the salvation of lost souls, and the sanctification of those who name the name of Christ.

Finally, the last aspect of the will of God that should be included in our prayer of, “Thy will be done,” is the doing of good works, not only for each other but also for lost souls in a dying world.

Scripture exhorts us to the following—

Titus 2:11-15; 3:1-2 For the grace of God that **bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men,** ¹² Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, **we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world;** ¹³ Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; ¹⁴ Who gave

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himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, **zealous of good works**.¹⁵ These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no man despise thee. **3:1** Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, **to be ready to every good work,**² **To speak evil of no man, to be no brawlers, but gentle, shewing all meekness unto all men.** KJV

In Titus all three aspects are brought together. Salvation is mentioned in Titus 2:11. Sanctification is shown forth in Titus 2:12 and good works are encouraged in Titus 2:14 and 3:1-2.

So in reality, when we pray “Thy will be done,” we are praying for the full manifestation of all that is contained in His Name, which we prayed might be hallowed. His Name is hallowed by love, for “God is love.” His name is hallowed by our desire for holiness, for God is “high and lifted up and His train fills the temple.” His Name is hallowed by our desire to be righteous, for God is “just, and the justifier of all who have faith in Jesus.” His Name is hallowed by patience, for God is “not willing that any should perish but all should come to repentance.” And, of course, God’s Name is hallowed by our good works, for God “maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and He sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust” (Mat 5:45).

And so we see that when we pray that God’s kingdom might come upon this earth because of all the evil, sin and heartache that exists, we must always be careful to pray that lost sinners are brought to salvation, believers are sanctified wholly, spirit, soul and body, and that as disciples we’re always zealous for good works. ‡

6:11 Give us this day our daily bread.

As it should be, the first part of this prayer dealt with the proper mindset or attitude of those who come before God with their petitions. A British subject would never approach their King or Queen with a flippant attitude or disregard for royal

‡ George Muller is a perfect example of one who held these three aspects in balance. See his *Narratives of Some of the Lord’s Dealings with George Muller*.

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protocol. An American citizen, coming with a petition for a pardon of a loved one, would never disregard the proper respect due to a President of the United States. In Scripture, Peter, when writing during the reign of one of Rome's worst emperors, i.e. Nero, admonished believers to honor the king.^j If such trepidation is shown to earthly rulers, how much more should it be shown to the King of all creation? (cf. Dan. 4:37).^k

As such, our Lord taught that the first part of one's daily prayer, before one ever introduces one's petition, is to maintain a proper understanding and respect for the One with whom we are approaching. In other words, it dealt with the Royal protocol of the King of all kings, if you will. It dealt with having a humble and respectful attitude before God.

Believers must be careful to never forget that even though God is our Father, He still is our King. And even if one does not take that into account, even as our Father He should be honoured, for we are told to always honour our earthly fathers. (Of course, this might be a mindset hard for modern men and women to understand, because in many western cultures, the honour of one's father and mother has all but been forgotten.)

But now that the proper etiquette of prayer has been established, and the proper respect and understanding has been shown to God, our Lord now encourages us to bring our personal petitions before Him. He teaches us to pray for our daily bread. Of course, this reminds us of the daily bread provided to the children of Israel after they escaped the slavery of Egypt on their way to the promised land. It reminds us that as our Father, God will always take care of us and provide for our every need.^l He loves us as a father loves his children.

Moreover, this imagery of daily bread should not be restricted to literal bread. It represents any need we might have. Jesus spiritually applied this imagery to Himself as the true Bread.

John 6:32-35 Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I

^j **I Pet 2:17**
Honour all *men*.
Love the
brotherhood. Fear
God. Honour the
king. KJV

^k **Dan. 4:37** Now
I, Nebuchadnezzar,
praise, exalt and
honor the King of
heaven, for all His
works are true and
His ways just, and
He is able to
humble those who
walk in pride."
NASB

^l **Deut. 8:3-4** And
He humbled you
and let you be
hungry, and fed
you with manna
which you did not
know, nor did
your fathers know,
that He might make
you understand that
man does not live
by bread alone,
but man lives by
everything that
proceeds out of
the mouth of the
LORD.⁴ "Your
clothing did not
wear out on you,
nor did your foot
swell these forty
years. NASB

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say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven.³³ For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world.³⁴ Then said they unto him, Lord, evermore give us this bread.³⁵ **And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life:** he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst. KJV

As such, being the true Bread from Heaven, the Holy Spirit tells us that through Christ Jesus God will provide for any need we might have, or any need we might pray for.^m So a child of God should always look to God for all of our daily needs, which is represented by daily bread. §

However, what is interesting in the Greek is that this petition for daily bread is closely connected with the spiritual condition of our heart. This is shown by it being connected to the next two petitions by the conjunction καὶ. This does not occur in the first part of the prayer. The first three verbal petitions stand on their own without a conjunction. In other words, one will not find a conjunction between the first three verbal phrases—ἀγιασθήτω, ἐλθέτω, γενηθήτω. But the remaining verbal petitions are joined together with the conjunction καὶ (and). Let me provide an interlinear of the prayer to demonstrate this fact.

Πάτερ ἡμῶν ὁ ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς, ἀγιασθήτω τὸ
Father of us the in the heavens, be hallowed the
ὄνομά σου.
name of you.
Ἐλθέτω ἡ βασιλεία σου. Γενηθήτω τὸ θέλημά
Let come the kingdom of you. Be done the will
σου, ὡς ἐν οὐρανῷ, καὶ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς.
of you, just as in heaven, and on the earth.
Τὸν ἄρτον ἡμῶν τὸν ἐπιούσιον ὃς ἡμῖν σήμερον
The bread of us, the daily please give to us today

^m **Phil. 4:19** And my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus. NASB

§ Again, another excellent example of God's provision in modern times for our every need can be found in the testimony of George Muller. See his *Narratives of Some of the Lord's Dealings with George Muller*, or in abridged form, *The Autobiography Of George Muller*.

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καὶ ἄφες ἡμῖν τὰ ὀφειλήματα ἡμῶν, ὥς καὶ ἡμεῖς
and forgive us the debts of us, just as also we
ἀφίεμεν τοῖς ὀφειλέταις ἡμῶν
are forgiving the debtors of us
καὶ μὴ εἰσενέγκῃς ἡμᾶς εἰς πειρασμόν, ἀλλὰ
and not please lead us into trials but
ῥῦσαι ἡμᾶς ἀπὸ τοῦ πονηροῦ.
deliver us from the evil.

Why is this significant? I think it is significant because Jesus is telling us that our petitions must never be divorced from the condition of our spiritual lives. The first three petitions stand on their own. God's name will be hallowed whether we wish it to be or not. God's kingdom will come whether we pray for it or not. And God's will will be done whether we seek it or not. But the last three petitions are closely intertwined. This is why, when considering the entire context of the Sermon, I believe the conjunctions were added to these petitions. It subtly groups the petitions closer together. Of course, the grammar itself would not necessarily communicate this in and of itself, but when the entire context is taken into account, I do believe it is not far-fetched to recognize this slight nuance and emphasis.

We must remember the underlying context of the Sermon on the Mount is what we have termed, the Covenant of the Land, in which the physical blessings of God were closely connected to the spiritual condition of the people. If Israel obeyed God and walked in His ways, God promised to physically bless and protect them.

Jesus came to show them that they utterly failed in this, and that, indeed, no one could ever hope to fulfill such conditions because through the Law no flesh could be justified. But, as we saw, Jesus pointed to Himself as the One who would fulfill all things and provide the obedience and walk before God that mankind could not do. Thus, through the Covenant of the Land, the people needed to be reminded that the

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condition of the inward and outward man were closely connected.

I believe that Jesus is teaching this same principle in His model prayer. This is why I believe the conjunctions were inspired by the Holy Spirit—to remind us that the inward and the outward are mutually important and closely intertwined.

So, the way this emphasis would play out in the lives of His disciples in the heavenly kingdom of God would be that when praying for any need, physical or otherwise, we should always remember the spiritual condition of our heart; we should keep short accounts with God and keep ourselves free from evil.

This does not mean, of course, God's care for us is non-existent if we ignore the inward condition of our heart, for even with Israel in the wilderness, as we mentioned before, God provided the people with basic necessities their life, in spite of their sin and rebellion.

Deuteronomy 8:3-4 "He humbled you and let you be hungry, and **fed you with manna** which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that He might make you understand that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of the LORD. ⁴ **"Your clothing did not wear out on you, nor did your foot swell these forty years.** NASB

But we must also remember that that did not preclude God from chastising His people because of their lack of spiritual fidelity. In some cases, this included their experiencing a lack in some things physical. The people did not starve, but in some cases they hungered.

Deut. 8:3 "He humbled you **and let you be hungry**, and fed you with manna which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that He might make you understand that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of the LORD. NASB

Also, in some cases, God allowed them to experience physical sickness as a chastisement. This

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too was because of their lack of spiritual fidelity. In fact, this consequence was included in the Covenant of the Land.

Deut. 28:58-60 If thou wilt not observe to do all the words of this law that are written in this book, that thou mayest fear this glorious and fearful name, THE LORD THY GOD; ⁵⁹ Then the LORD will make thy plagues wonderful, and the plagues of thy seed, even great plagues, and of long continuance, and sore sicknesses, and of long continuance. ⁶⁰ Moreover he will bring upon thee all the diseases of Egypt, which thou wast afraid of; and they shall cleave unto thee. KJV

As such, this same principle would apply to us today, not as a part of the Covenant, but as a general principle that one's spiritual walk is important to God. Remember, the things that happened to Israel were meant to be examples to the Church.

Paul reveals this in his epistle to the Corinthians where he says—

I Cor. 10:6-11 Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted. ⁷ Neither be ye idolaters, as *were* some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play. ⁸ Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand. ⁹ Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents. ¹⁰ Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer. ¹¹ Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come. KJV

Consequently, we find, even in the Church, that lack of spiritual fidelity can lead to a lack of certain physical needs. For example, we might pray for our daily bread representing our daily need of physical health, but if we ignore the condition of our heart we might find ourselves sick under the chastening hand of the Father.

Paul also reveals this in the same epistle to the

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Corinthians—

I Corinthians 11:30-32 For this cause many *are* weak and sickly among you, and many sleep. ³¹ For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. ³² But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world. KJV

So, dear brethren, it is important to realize that these petitions of personal needs are meant to work hand in hand. (And, of course, it should not be thought that anytime a believer is sick, such a one is sinning or ignoring the spiritual condition of his heart. In some cases, the most spiritual might be sick, not because of chastisement but because of God's eternal wisdom and plan, and/or because of a trial of faith, or for the purpose of manifesting the power of God in one who is weak. Consider the example of Job in the Old Testament and Paul in the New Testament.)

So with that being said, understanding that daily bread can represent any outward daily need we might have (and in a broader sense any need, physical, and/or spiritual), let's look at the two inward petitions conjoined with it.

6:12 And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.

If a child of God desires God to fulfill some need we might have we must not forget the need to confess our sins to God. We must remember to daily ask for forgiveness.

I John 1:8-10 If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.⁹ If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.¹⁰ If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us. KJV

The word translated "debts" literally means something that is owed to someone else. In this case, it refers to our failure to give to God that which is

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owed Him, which, of course, is our utmost fidelity and complete sanctification. However, we all fail in this, for as Paul says, such perfection is completely absent from every human being.ⁿ As such, debts are used as a metonym for sins, which word Luke actually uses in his version of the Lord's prayer (i.e. the Greek word for sin—ἁμαρτία).^o

Ellicott's commentary on the New Testament provides a helpful and insightful comment on this this clause and word.

“Forgive us our debts. — Duty—i.e., that which we owe, or ought to do—and debts are, it may be noted, only different forms of the same word. A duty unfulfilled is a debt unpaid. Primarily, therefore, the words "our debts" represent sins of omission, and "trespasses," the transgression of a law, sins of commission. The distinction, however, though convenient, is more or less technical. Every transgression implies the non-fulfilment of duty in a more aggravated form, and the memory of both presents itself to the awakened conscience under the character of an ever-accumulating debt. Even the sins against our neighbour are, in this sense, debts which we have incurred to God; and as the past cannot be undone, they are debts which we can never pay. For us, therefore, the one helpful prayer is, "Forgive the debt," and the gospel which our Lord proclaimed was, that the Father was ready to forgive. The confession of the debt was enough to ensure its remission, and then there was to come the willing service of a grateful love instead of the vain attempt, which Pharisaism encouraged, to score up an account of good works, as part payment, and therefore as a set-off, reducing the amount of debt. * The parables of the Two Debtors (Luke vii. 41) and of the Unforgiving Creditor whose own debt had been forgiven (Matt. xviii. 23—35) were but expansions of the thought which we find in its germ in this clause of the Lord's Prayer.⁴⁷

Consequently, in the second clause of this verse, the word translated “debtors,” would also refer to those who have sinned against us.

Jesus instructs us to remember that the heart of one, who truly seeks the mercy of God in the forgiveness of one's own sin, will also be one who will equally show mercy and forgiveness to the one

ⁿ **Rom. 3:23** For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; KJV

^o **Luke 11:4** And forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil. KJV

* Unfortunately, this same mindset of off-setting our sins by good works is practiced by many Roman Catholics and is a common principle in world religions such as Islam, Hinduism, etc.. This mindset denigrates the grace and the forgiveness of our Lord Jesus Christ that is freely granted to us through His blood that was shed upon the cross of Calvary.

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who might sin against us. Not only that, the Holy Spirit indicates that it must not be a stingy type of forgiveness, given out in measured doses, but rather a life characterized by mercy and forgiveness. The first use of the Greek verb translated as “forgive” is given in the aorist tense (in the imperative mood), while the second use of the same verb is given in the present tense, following the Majority Text (although some texts have the aorist ἀφήκαμεν, instead of the present tense ἀφίεμεν). The aorist tense in the Greek focuses on the action itself without any reference to time, per se (in the indicative the aorist can refer to past time). Thus, Matthew is revealing that our desire for God to grant us an actual act of forgiveness, every day, must come from hearts that are in the habit of continually showing mercy and forgiveness to others (thus the use of the present tense in the second usage of the verb). The verse could be translated as, “Please forgive us our debts, as we are forgiving our debtors.”

Now some may wonder how God’s forgiveness of our sins can be based upon the character of one’s walk as opposed to being based upon the blood of Christ. In other words, if the forgiveness of one’s sins, resulting in salvation, cannot be based upon our walk, i.e. our works, but rather must be based upon our faith, how can God’s forgiveness of our sins be based upon our walk, rather than on our faith in the blood of Christ? The answer is found in the difference between the objective truth of salvation and the subjective truth of our salvation, or one could say the objective truth of our forgiveness and the subjective truth of our forgiveness. We will take a closer look at this truth when we get to vs. 14 and 15.

6:13a And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil:

The first part of this verse has caused many questions among Christians. On the surface, according to many of our English translations, it seems Jesus is saying that we should ask that God

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would never lead us into a temptation that might result in our sin, for if one asks Him to never do such a thing, by definition, it must presuppose that “He might do such a thing.” And this is the problem the translation of the Greek word used here, πειρασμόν, as “temptation.” Most connect the word “temptation” with the idea of being tempted to sin. But God does not tempt one to sin. Indeed, He cannot, as James clearly says—

James 1:13-15 Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: **for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man:**¹⁴ But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed.¹⁵ Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death. KJV

Thus, James (who was the brother of Jesus) declares that God will never lead us into temptation. Temptation will never come from Him; it will come from the devil, or, perhaps, from evil company, or, as James says, from our own lusts, but it will never be from God. This may explain why some English versions now translate the word as “trial,” or test.”

No doubt this is a difficult word to understand in this prayer, but if we keep the idea of Israel in mind, especially in the light of the context of the Covenant of the Land (as we have been stating) I think the difficulty can be cleared up, or at least, made less difficult. But first, let’s consider the different nuances of this Greek word as used in Scripture.

In broadest terms, it seems the Greek word πειρασμός is used three different ways in Scripture:

- 1) Trials or temptations, which are temptations to sin.
- 2) Trials or temptations that are used for the proving of our character or faith.
- 3) Trials and afflictions resulting from some form of chastisement or judgment from men or from God.

In all three of these usages, I would say that the

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common underlying meaning is that of “someone or something being affected by some force for the purpose of revealing the underlying realities of the person or thing.”

In other words, with the first nuance, the force is the lust of the flesh, which reveals the underlying reality of sin within us. With the second nuance, the force is God, sending forth a trial or temptation to burn off any dross within us, so as to reveal the underlying reality of our faith. And with the third nuance (considering only the perspective of God) a chastening trial or affliction is sent forth from God to reveal the underlying reality of our walk before Him. In other words, to reveal that one thing in our life, we’re doing or allowing, that is displeasing to Him.

Thus, the word is glossed in many ways, depending on the overall context, but the underlying meaning is the same in all its uses, as that of someone undergoing an unpleasant experience brought about by some external force. With that in mind, let’s now look at each one of these three nuances and then determine which meaning would apply to Matt. 6:13.

The first nuance of the word, which is trials or temptations to sin, can be demonstrated by these two verses. It refers to one being tempted by others, or one being tempted by their own flesh.

Jam. 1:13-14 Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man. ¹⁴ But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. KJV

II Peter 2:9 The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished. KJV

The second nuance, which is trials or temptations sent for the proving of our character or faith, are demonstrated by these two verses.

James 1:2-3 Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, ³ knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. NASB

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I Peter 1:6-7 Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: ⁷ That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ. KJV

And, finally, the third nuance, which is, perhaps, the least considered, is trials or afflictions resulting from some chastisement of God, or some judgment from man. It can be demonstrated in these two verses.

Revelation 3:10 Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth. KJV

Acts 20:19 serving the Lord with all humility and with tears and with trials which came upon me through the plots of the Jews. NASB

To this third grouping we would add Matt. 6:13, but this must first be discussed, for this third nuance of the word is not usually associated with that verse, but I believe it is, indeed, the correct nuance.

Let me first include a close nuance to this third meaning that was recognized by some Greek lexicographers of the 19th century. (It should be stated that while they give a similar meaning, they end up assigning that nuance to our second grouping above, i.e. a trial for the proving of our faith. The reason I include it, though, is by metonymy they include glosses which will support the third nuance.)

The first is from Edward Robison's *Greek and English Lexicon of the New Testament*.

"E.g. (a) a state of trial into which God brings his people through adversity and affliction, in order to excite and prove their faith and confidence in him. Matt. 6:13 et Luke 11:4 μη εισενέγκης ἡμᾶς εἰς πειρασμόν, i.e. bring us not into a state of trial, lay not trials upon us...So Sept. and Deut. 7:19; 29:2...Hence meton. i.q. [same as] adversity, affliction, sorrow, Luke 22:28; Acts 20:19..."⁴⁸ †

† Of course, the third meaning cannot be applied to Luke 22:28 as our Lord was not being chastised or judged for sin, but, as we will see it can apply to Acts 20:19.

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And the next is from J. H. Bass' *Greek and English Manual Lexicon to the New Testament*.

“Πειρασμός, [οὔ], ό, (*from p. pass. of preced.*) 1. a trying, proving, trial, (I Pet. Iv.12,) 2. A tempting, or solicitation to sin, (Matt. Vi. 13; Luke iv.13.) 3. Calamity, sore affliction...”⁴⁹

Notice that that Bass includes “calamity, and “sore affliction,” although he does not include a reference. If we referred it to the two verses before us, i.e. Acts 20:19 and Rev. 3:10 we can see how the word would carry the idea of a trial of chastisement or judgment.

In Acts 20:19 Paul refers to trials brought about by his Jewish brethren who opposed him in Ephesus and, more than likely in the immediate vicinity. Luke does not describe what trials these were except that they came at the hand of the Jews. Thus, unless one wants to believe that Paul's faith wavered in his exchanges with his Jewish brethren (which we know was not possible) the better word to translate *πειρασμός* in this verse is “trial” as in the NKJV and the NASB, or by Bass' gloss, “affliction,” as opposed to the translation of “temptation” in the KJV.

I believe *trial* or *affliction* is the better translation because I do not believe Paul was saying that he was being tempted in some way by his Jewish brethren when he said, “Serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears, and **temptations**, which befell me by the lying in wait of the Jews: (KJV).” If he did mean “tempted,” one would have to believe that Paul was saying that they almost convinced him to sin in some way (which seems very unlikely)!

Consequently, the first nuance cannot apply. Nor can the second nuance apply since it was not God that brought the trial but it was the Jews. This leaves us with the third nuance which must be understood as a “trial,” or using a gloss from Bass, a “sore affliction” brought about as a chastisement or judgment. If so, what could this affliction be? I believe Paul gives us an answer in II Cor. 11:24-25.

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II Cor. 11:24-25 Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. ²⁵ Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep. KJV

Paul specifically says that during his life he was scourged by the Jews five times with thirty nine stripes. He does not say when this occurred, but by comparing Scripture with Scripture, it should not surprise anyone that one of those occasions could have been the time he spent in Ephesus during which he said he said these trials or afflictions came upon him by the plotting of the Jews. This becomes more apparent when we understand the nature of such scourging.

Regarding this type of scourging the *Dictionary of the Apostolic Church* says this:

“The maintenance of the synagogue community required certain disciplinary measures to keep obnoxious or hostile elements out. The following were the different forms of exclusion or excommunication used against unsubmitive members... [the last being]...corporal punishments such as the thirty-nine stripes for transgression of Mosaic commandments (Duet. 25: 2; II Cor. 11:24) or beating for rebelliousness against the Rabbinical authorities—Makkath Marduth (Nazir iv. 3; II Co 11:25, Ac 16:22).” ⁵⁰

When Paul says that he received thirty-nine stripes by the hand of the Jews, he would have been referring to those “judgments” made against him by synagogue officials, which should not surprise us since his Jewish brethren according to the flesh in the Diaspora, were continually opposing him, even when they came to Jerusalem (e.g. Acts 21:27).^p

Therefore, when we see this Greek word, *πειρασμός*, used this way in Acts 20:19, we see that the Greek word was sometimes associated with a disciplinary act, i.e. a chastening, and/or a judgment made by one in authority.

This also is, more than likely, the nuance that is being used in Rev. 3:10. Thus one could understand the “hour of temptation” that would come upon the

^p Acts 21:27-28

And when the seven days were almost ended, the Jews which were of Asia, when they saw him in the temple, stirred up all the people, and laid hands on him, ²⁸ Crying out, Men of Israel, help: This is the man, that teacheth all *men* every where against the people, and the law, and this place: and further brought Greeks also into the temple, and hath polluted this holy place. KJV

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whole world to be an “hour of affliction,” or an “hour of judgment.” In fact, every subsequent usage of the word “hour” (ὥρα) in Revelation, is associated with some type of judgment. ‡ In one place, it is even referred to as the “hour of his judgment.”(Rev. 14:7).

So that what we see is that the “hour of trial” that will come upon the “whole world,” is revealed later in the book to be an hour of judgment. This association of our Greek word, πειρασμός, with “judgment” becomes even clearer when we compare three verses from the Old Testament.

Those three verses are as follows—

Deut. 11:2-4 And know ye this day: for *I speak* not with your children which have not known, and **which have not seen the chastisement of the LORD your God**, his greatness, his mighty hand, and his stretched out arm,³ And his miracles, and his acts, which he did in the midst of Egypt unto Pharaoh the king of Egypt, and unto all his land;⁴ And what he did unto the army of Egypt, unto their horses, and to their chariots; how he made the water of the Red sea to overflow them as they pursued after you, and *how* the LORD hath destroyed them unto this day. KJV

Deut. 7:19 The **great temptations** (πειρασμοὺς) **which thine eyes saw**, and the signs, and the wonders, and the mighty hand, and the stretched out arm, whereby the LORD thy God brought thee out: so shall the LORD thy God do unto all the people of whom thou art afraid. KJV

Exodus 6:6 “Say, therefore, to the sons of Israel, ‘I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will deliver you from their bondage. I will also redeem you with an outstretched arm and **with great judgments.**’” NASB

In all of these verses Moses is referring to the mighty acts of God in bringing the children of Israel out of Egypt. But notice that in Deut. 11:2 Moses refers to these mighty acts as the “chastening of the Lord, yet in Deut. 7:19 he refers to them as “great temptations,” and in Ex. 6:6 he refers to them as “great judgments.”

And when we consider the context, we see that

‡ The one exception might be Rev. 17:12. But even here it may be associated with judgment, for the hour of receiving power may be the same hour in which the harlot is judged by God (cf. Rev. 17:16-18 with Rev. 18:10.

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Deut. 11:2 refers to this same action of God of bringing Israel out of Egypt as in the other two verses. But what is significant is that Moses decides to use a different Hebrew word to characterize those same acts. In Deut. 11:2 he uses a word which means “chastening,” or “disciplining.” And for comparison sake we also find the same Hebrew word used in Job 5:17 which reads—

Job 5:17 Behold, happy is the man whom God correcteth: therefore despise not **thou the chastening of the Almighty.** KJV

So what we learn from this is that this same action of God in delivering Israel from Egypt is variously understood as “chastisements,” “temptations,” and “judgments.”

Now, why is this significant? And how does this relate to Matt. 6:13? In order to answer this question, we must now examine the Greek version of Deut. 7:19.

The Greek word used in Deut. 7:19 by the LXX translators in translating the Hebrew word is the same Greek word used by Matthew in Matt. 6:13, i.e. the Greek word we have been studying, the Greek word *πειρασμός*.

Thus, the Greek word translated in Matthew 6:13 as “temptation,” in the phrase, “lead us not into temptation,” is the same Greek word used by the LXX translators to translate the underlying Hebrew word used in the phrase translated by the KJV translators as “the great temptations which thine eyes saw.”

Thus, if we translate the Greek word the same way in both places, we could translate this portion of the Greek text in Deut. 7:19 just as the Hebrew was translated by the KJV translators—“the great temptations which your eyes saw.” In fact, Brenton’s translation of this verse of the Greek LXX is essentially the same. He translates the verse as follows—

Deut. 7:19 the great temptations which thine eyes have

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seen, those signs and great wonders, the strong hand, and the high arm; how the Lord thy God brought thee forth: so the Lord your God will do to all the nations, whom thou fearest in their presence. (Brenton's Version)

Therefore, this same action, variously describe as a “chastening,” and a “judgment,” is further defined by the Holy Spirit in Deut. 7:19 by a Hebrew word which the LXX translators thought could be accurately communicated with the same Greek word used in Matt. 6:13, the Greek word, *πειρασμός*.

Consequently, if the underlying Hebrew word translated as “temptations” by the KJV translators in Deut. 7:19 can be understood by the Greek word *πειρασμός* that was used by the LXX translators, could it not be that the LXX translators were well aware that the Greek word *πειρασμός* also carried a nuance of “chastening” and/or “judgments,” since this same act of God was so understood in Deut. 11:2 and Ex. 6:6?

In other words, of our three nuances of *πειρασμός*, we know first could never apply in Deut. 7:19, for we are told that God does not tempt man to sin. So the “great temptations,” which the children of Israel witnessed in Egypt, could not refer to temptations to sin. Nor could the second nuance apply for God was not trying to prove or purify the faith of Pharaoh, for Pharaoh was an unbeliever. Scripture says that Pharaoh was raised up to show forth the great power of God, not to have his faith purified.⁹ So that leaves us with the third nuance; these mighty acts were a “chastisement” or “judgment” of God upon Pharaoh.

Now some maintain that the “great temptations” refer to the children of Israel and not Pharaoh. But that is unlikely for the context is clearly referring to Pharaoh. In fact, this is further clarified when Moses refers to the same thing in Deut. 29:2-3 and restates it in such a way that it could only be construed with Pharaoh. (If it did refer to the children of Israel then, of course, the second nuance might apply.)

Deut. 29:2-3 And Moses called unto all Israel, and said unto them, Ye have seen all that the LORD did before you

⁹ **Rom. 9:17** For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth. KJV

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eyes in the land of Egypt **unto Pharaoh**, and unto all his servants, and unto all his land; ³ **The great temptations which thine eyes have seen**, the signs, and those great miracles. KJV

And the LXX translators once again chose πειρασμός to translate this same Hebrew word. So this temptation (πειρασμός) can only refer to the third nuance or meaning of πειρασμός—trials or afflictions resulting from some “chastisement” or “judgment” of God. Therefore, an English translation of “trials,” or “afflictions” would communicate this in a clearer way than the KJV’s choice of “temptations.” In fact, this is the way the NASB chose to translates it.

Deut. 29:3 The great trials which your eyes have seen, those great sings and wonders. NASB

It would also work to translate the LXX version of this verse by using one of Bass’ glosses of the word—afflictions.

Deut. 29:3 The great afflictions which your eyes have seen, the signs, and those great wonders.

Now, one last thing must be mentioned. Some might object to a meaning of “affliction” or “trial” resulting from a “chastisement” or “judgment” of God, because chastisements only apply to believers, of which Pharaoh was not. This, of course, is based upon Hebrews 12:7-8 which says,

Hebrews 12:7 If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? ⁸ But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons. KJV

However, it is important to never forget, as with other doctrines, we must consider the entire context of Scripture. In the broader context of Scripture, chastisements of God are, indeed, sometimes inflicted upon unbelievers, as David writes about in II

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Sam. 22:48 (wherein the LXX translators use the cognate participle παιδεύων).

II Samuel 22:48 The Lord who avenges me *is* strong, chastening (παιδεύων) the nations under me. (Brenton's Version)

In this context, such "chastisement" is understood as a "judgment" of God, which fits in nicely with the chastening referred to in Deut. 11:2 concerning Pharaoh.

In Psalm 2 the heathen kings are told to accept the chastening of the Lord.

Psalm 2:10 Be wise now therefore, O ye kings: be instructed [chastened] (Heb. yaw-sar'; LXX παιδεύθητε), ye judges of the earth.¹¹ Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling.¹² Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish *from* the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed *are* all they that put their trust in him. KJV

In Psalm 50 the wicked are indicted by God for their refusal of His chastisement.

Psalm 50:16-17 But to the wicked God says, "What right have you to tell of My statutes And to take My covenant in your mouth? ¹⁷ "For you hate discipline [chastisement] (Heb. moo-saw'r'; LXX παιδείαν), And you cast My words behind you. NASB

And in Psalm 94 the heathen nations are warned, regarding their chastisement from God.

Psalm 94:10 He who chastens the nations, will He not rebuke, *Even* He who teaches man knowledge? NASB

And so we see that God does, indeed, chasten those who might not believe; it all depends on the context.

Consequently, coming back to the point in hand, since the third nuance of the Greek word can be applied to both believes and/or unbelievers, does this not help us to determine which nuance applies to

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Matt. 6:13?

Since we know that God will never tempt us to sin (Jam. 1:13), we can eliminate the first nuance. Equally, since we are told to “count it all joy when we fall into various trials since the testing of our faith produces patience (Jam. 1:2-3; I Pet. 1:6), we can eliminate the second nuance, for why would we pray to be kept from a trial that will benefit our faith? And so that leaves us with the third nuance, which perfectly fits within the context, as we will now see.

If we adapt the third nuance of the Greek word *πειρασμός* in Matt. 6:13, it would then read as “lead us not into a *chastening* trial,” or, perhaps, “lead us not into a *sore* affliction,” or even, “lead us not into a *trying* judgment.” This would be an appropriate request to God, for God does wish to judge His people.

With this understanding this becomes similar to the exhortation of Paul in I Cor. 11:28-32 when he tells us we should judge ourselves, for if we do not will be judged by the Lord.

I Cor. 11:28-32 But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. ²⁹ For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. ³⁰ For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep. ³¹ **For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged.** ³² **But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord,** that we should not be condemned with the world. KJV

Or it becomes similar to the exhortation of the Lord through the Spirit to the seven churches in the book of Revelation where he admonishes them to repent. For example, consider the warning given to the church in Thyatira.

Rev. 2:20 'But I have *this* against you, that you tolerate the woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, and she teaches and leads My bond-servants astray, so that they commit *acts of* immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols ²¹ 'And I gave her time to repent; and she does not want to repent of her immorality.²² 'Behold, I will cast her

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upon a bed *of sickness*, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of her deeds.²³ 'And I will kill her children with pestilence; and all the churches will know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts; and I will give to each one of you according to your deeds. NASB

Or consider his warning to the church in Laodicea, where he declares—

Rev. 3:19 As many as I love, **I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.** KJV

He does this after He indicts them for their lukewarmness.

Rev. 3:15 'I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot; I would that you were cold or hot. ¹⁶ **'So because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of My mouth.** ¹⁷ 'Because you say, "I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing," and you do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked,¹⁸ I advise you to buy from Me gold refined by fire, that you may become rich, and white garments, that you may clothe yourself, and *that* the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and eye salve to anoint your eyes, that you may see. NASB

This understanding of “*trying* judgment,” or “*chastening* trial,” also clarifies the second part of the request—“but deliver us from evil.”

However, to see how this helps clarify the second part of the verse, we must decide if the evil applies to evil within us, or does it apply to evil from without, i.e. the Devil. Some versions, like the NKJV, add a definite article and understand it as the evil without, i.e. the Evil one, while the KJV understands it simply as evil, which could be understood as “evil within.”

There is, indeed, a definite article in the Greek (ἀπὸ τοῦ πονηροῦ) as included by the NKJV, but the translators took the Greek word πονηροῦ (evil) as a genitive masculine adjective, which, with an article, becomes a substantive (the Evil one). But the word could equally be understood as a genitive neuter

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adjective (being inflected the same as the masculine) which could then be understood as “the evil,” or “the evil *thing*.”

With the latter view, “the evil” becomes that which is displeasing to God that may result in our chastisement or judgment. It becomes that “evil *thing*” within us that we are allowing in our life. For example, in the Epistle to the Corinthians it is the lack of discerning the Lord’s body, which Paul warns the believers in Corinth that if they do not judge that “evil thing” they will be judged and chastened by the Lord with some type of affliction.

I Cor. 11:30 For this reason many among you are weak and sick, and a number sleep. NASB

Or “the evil” could be the result of following evil teaching, as demonstrated in the example of Jezebel, who misled the church in Thyatira, teaching Christians to commit fornication and eat things sacrificed to idols. Or the “evil thing” may be the pride and lukewarmness of the believers like those in Laodicea. In any case, the evil is that thing in our lives which we allow to remain, which **we refuse to judge**, which, in turn, is so displeasing to the Lord that **He judges or chastens us with some affliction**. Therefore, it seems that understanding it as “the evil *thing*” better reflects the context of the prayer.

But I would not disagree if one prefers the former, for one would then be asking God to deliver them from “the Evil one” who walks around as a roaring lion seeking someone to devour.^r Why? Because if one succumbs to that roaring lion, resulting in a life of sin or backsliding, that certainly would also elicit the judgment or chastening of the Lord.

Either way, whether one views it as the “Evil one,” or the “evil thing” (perhaps it is both), succumbing to such evil will only end in a trial or affliction resulting from the chastisement or judgment of God. “For whom the LORD loves he chastens, and scourges every son whom he receives.” (Hebrews 12:6 Darby).

^r **I Peter 5:8** Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: KJV

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This then becomes the essence of this portion of our Lord's prayer. We should ask the Lord to lead us not into an "affliction," a "testing," a *trying* judgment, but rather to deliver us from the Evil one, or from the evil thing, so that we will not need such a time of chastisement. In other words, it becomes a plea to God to deliver us from that evil thing we are not dealing with,^s so that God Himself will not have to lead us into a *chastening* trial, or a time of *testing*, in order to deliver us from that sin or evil thing we should have dealt with ourselves. It becomes our plea to God to help us "judge ourselves," so we will not have to be "judged." § This is, I believe, the essence of what our Lord is teaching us in this prayer.

Moreover, with this nuance we can also understand how it fits in with the overall context of the Covenant of the Land. If we recall, Jesus is disabusing those in Israel into thinking they had fulfilled their part of the Covenant of the Land. He showed them they had not fulfilled their part, but had instead broken the commandments and not followed the way of the Lord. Our Lord clearly delineates that which was so displeasing to God in their lives, especially in those who thought themselves the most righteous, the Scribes and Pharisees—some of whom had become so deceived in their opposition and blasphemy of the Lord that they were actually being led around by that roaring lion, the Devil (cf. John 8:13,44, & 59)

He reveals to them that they, like their fathers before them in the wilderness, were equally displeasing to God because their hearts had become hardened and dull by their continuing refusal to judge the evil *thing* within their lives,.

I Cor. 10:1-11 For I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea;² and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea;³ and all ate the same spiritual food;⁴ and all drank the same spiritual drink, for they were drinking from a spiritual rock which followed them; and the rock was Christ.⁵ Nevertheless, with most of them God was not well-pleased; for they were laid low in the

^s **Hebrews 12:1**

Wherefore ... let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset *us*, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us. KJV

§An example of this is seen in the fact that the children of Israel disobeyed God in not driving out the all the evil nations in the land of Canaan, some out of disobedience to God, and others because their faith faltered and they simply gave up. (See Jud. 1:27-36).

Because of this God led them into times where they were tested, chastened, judged and afflicted.

"So the anger of the LORD burned against Israel, and He said, "Because this nation has transgressed My covenant which I commanded their fathers, **and has not listened to My voice,**"²¹ I also will no longer drive out before them any of the nations which Joshua left when he died,²² in order to **test Israel** by them, whether they will keep the way of the LORD to walk in it as their fathers did, or not."(Jud. 2:20-22 NASB77)

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wilderness. ⁶ Now these things happened as examples for us, that we should not crave evil things, as they also craved. ⁷ And do not be idolaters, as some of them were; as it is written, "The people sat down to eat and drink, and stood up to play." ⁸ Nor let us act immorally, as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in one day. ⁹ Nor let us try the Lord, as some of them did, and were destroyed by the serpents. ¹⁰ Nor grumble, as some of them did, and were destroyed by the destroyer. ¹¹ Now these things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come. NASB

As the writer of Hebrews states, their hearts were hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.

Heb. 3:8-13 Harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness: ⁹ When your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my works forty years. ¹⁰ Wherefore I was grieved with that generation, and said, They do alway err in *their* heart; and they have not known my ways. ¹¹ So I swear in my wrath, They shall not enter into my rest.) ¹² Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. ¹³ But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.. KJV

Thus, our Lord is teaching His disciples (and us) to not follow the same example, but daily ask God our Father for our daily bread, our daily needs, as we day by day keep short accounts with Him. And then, to daily ask His forgiveness for all our sin, as we always make sure to follow His ways in being merciful to our fellow human beings, by forgiving any who might sin against us. And then, finally, by asking God to keep us from a chastening trial by delivering us from the evil *thing* in our life, by asking the Father to search our hearts for those evil things that might displease Him, and then asking, by His grace, to deliver us from that evil. ^t

So many times in the Old Testament God chastised Israel because she would not forsake her sins. So too, our Lord is teaching us that, as His

^t **Ps. 139:23-24**
Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: ²⁴ And see if *there be any* wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting. KJV

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disciples, His people in the New Testament, under the new covenant, we must be careful to walk in the light so that His blood can cleanse us from all our sins, so that a chastening trial will not become a necessary thing, for we are first judging ourselves by the guidance of the precious Holy Spirit. ^u

6:13b For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.

Matthew now closes with a doxology which is missing from the parallel account in the Gospel of Luke. Before we discuss the purpose of this doxology, we must briefly discuss the various views regarding its legitimacy.

Because Luke's version of this prayer does not contain this doxology, some believe Luke's account preserves the original and this doxology had been added to Matthew's Gospel by some subsequent copyist because the prayer, with the added doxology, was largely in use in the liturgy of the Church. Luke's account is found in Luke 11:1-4. ^v

Historically, the West (Roman Catholic) generally rejects it as original, while the East (Eastern Orthodox) generally accepts it as original. Protestant Churches before the 18th century generally accepted the doxology as original, but, now, most Protestant Churches (because of modern textual criticism) reject it as original. This is partially based upon the assumption that the oldest manuscripts are the best.

However, such an assumption is erroneous. Sometimes the oldest may contain corruptions and the later manuscripts may preserve the original. To simply believe the oldest manuscripts are the best, *carte blanche* (which, to be fair, not all textual critics believe), betrays a lack of spiritual discernment regarding the battle that waged over the Word of God in the first few centuries of the Church, and indeed, which still continues today with all the new philosophies regarding what constitutes a proper translation. (And what is so ironic, is many of the same textual critics who affirm the oldest MSS are

^u **I John 1:7** But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. KJV

I Cor. 11:31 For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. KJV

^v **Luke 11:1-4**
And it came to pass, that, as he was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples. ² And he said unto them, When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth. ³ Give us day by day our daily bread. ⁴ And forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil. KJV

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the best, and the latter manuscripts are inferior, perform a flip flop when it comes to certain manuscripts of the Hebrew Old Testament. With them, they affirm the oldest Hebrew MSS, e. g. the DSS, is inferior to the later Hebrew MS, the Masoretic, from the 10th century!)

It simply must be noted, that many times the best manuscripts are, indeed, the later manuscripts, because they were copies of earlier copies that became worn out through continual usage because they were so well respected, whereas the inferior copies were set aside and preserved, not because they were better copies but because they were considered inferior! Thus the better manuscripts became nonextant through continual usage, while the inferior manuscripts remained extant (to be discovered later as the so-called oldest and best manuscripts), because, they were considered corrupt in certain areas and so sat on a shelf, so to speak, where they were preserved because they were not in constant use (especially during all the heretical controversies in the early centuries of the Church, where even many apocryphal gospels were also set aside from constant usage).

Perhaps, a modern day example that might help explain the point being suggested would be if one were to find two automobiles of the same make, one in pristine condition found in a private garage, the other in a state of rusted deterioration found in the company yard of an automobile dismantler. If the question would be asked, "Which automobile do you suppose was more reliable? Many people would answer, "Well the one in the private garage in pristine condition. Certainly, not the one that is so rusted through." But the fact of the matter is that the opposite may have been true. The automobile in the company yard may have been the more reliable car. The reason why it appeared in such poor condition is because for years it was in constant use, having had many thousands of miles put on its odometer, through harsh winters and baking summers. Why? Because it was so reliable! However, the car in seemingly

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pristine condition may have actually been a lemon which was parked in the private garage, waiting for someone to replace its defective parts.

This is why some manuscripts, coming from later centuries, may actually be better manuscripts, than those coming from earlier centuries. The manuscripts of an earlier century may have been put aside into storage because of certain “defective parts” of the text. In other words, because of certain corruptions in certain parts of the text, they were kept out of circulation from use in the Churches and so were able to survive longer. While, on the other hand, the later manuscripts were worn out from their constant use in the Churches because they were the better manuscripts. As such, the text preserved in those manuscripts might have come from a long line of replacements (the better text type) because each scroll or book of Scripture became worn out from continuous use and so had to be continually copied anew. It simply is not true that the older manuscripts must always be the better manuscripts.

In the same way, it is not necessarily true that the shorter versions of those same older texts must be the better versions. A later manuscript with longer versions, may, indeed, be the more accurate and faithful copy of the original.

Let me give another example to demonstrate this point that the shortest copy is not necessarily the best. In my comments I will make shortly, regarding verses 14 and 15, I will quote from a small booklet entitled *Safety, Certainty and Enjoyment*, by George Cutting. I had an old copy of the booklet in my library, which I was going to use for the quote. But, much to my surprise, this older booklet was not completely faithful to the original publication of the author; it had actually changed some words and in some cases, deleted complete sentences with no indication it was a revision of the original.

And so, upon examination, I found newer copies of the booklet, published much later, that were actually more accurate than my older copy, retaining the original words and sentences that were left out by

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the older copy!

For example, the older publication begins with, “You are traveling—traveling from time into eternity. And who knows how near you may be this moment to the Great Terminus?”

The later booklet, published much later began this way: “WHAT AN OFT-REPEATED QUESTION! Let me put it to you, my reader: for traveling you most certainly are — traveling from Time into Eternity and who knows how very, very near you may be at this moment to the GREAT TERMINUS?” The later booklet was the more faithful to the original.

So, as you can see, the older publication, being a shorter version, even though it was closer in time to the original publication, was not necessarily the better copy, but the later publication, containing a longer version of the text, was nevertheless the more accurate.

The same can be said for our Greek MSS of the New Testament. Older, shorter versions are not always the best. The later, longer version, published or copied at a later date, may actually be the more accurate. (Of course, that does not mean that all later manuscripts are always better! Sometimes a later manuscript may also have some form of corruption. For instance, using the same example above, there were some examples where a later publication of *Safety, Certainty and Enjoyment* was found wanting and the older publication was better, being more faithful to the original! So, there is no hard and fast rule. But with spiritual discernment, and not mental acuity alone, especially a spiritual discernment regarding the Historic Christian Faith, the better manuscript can more than often be affirmed.)

Nevertheless, in spite of the claim that only the later manuscripts contain the doxology, and the older manuscripts do not, and so the doxology must be a later addition that crept into the text over time, such is simply not the case! There are some older manuscripts that do contain the doxology in Matthew. Let me provide an excellent quote from

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Dean Burgon on this matter.

“Having elsewhere considered St. Luke’s version of the LORD’S Prayer, I will in this place discuss the genuineness of the doxology with which the LORD’S Prayer concludes in St. Matt. vi. 13,— ὅτι σοῦ ἐστὶν ἡ βασιλεία καὶ ἡ δύναμις καὶ ἡ δόξα εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας. ἀμήν,— words which for 360 years have been rejected by critical writers as spurious, notwithstanding St. Paul’s unmistakable recognition of them in 2 Tim. iv. 18,— which alone, one would have thought, should have sufficed to preserve them from molestation.

The essential note of primitive antiquity at all events these fifteen words enjoy in perfection, being met with in all copies of the Peshitto:—and this is a far weightier consideration than the fact that they are absent from most of the Latin copies. Even of these however four (k f g¹ q) recognize the doxology, which is also found in Cureton’s Syriac and the Sahidic version; the Gothic, the Ethiopic, Armenian, Georgian, Slavonic, Harkleian, Palestinian, Erpenius’ Arabic, and the Persian of Tawos; as well as in the Διδαχὴ (with variations); ... Chrysostom comments on the words without suspicion, and often quotes them (In Orat. Dom., also see Hom. in Matt. xiv. 13): as does Isidore of Pelusium (Ep. iv. 24). ... What then is the nature of the adverse evidence with which they have to contend and which is supposed to be fatal to their claims?

Four uncial MSS. (ⲛBDZ), supported by five cursives of bad character (I, 17 which gives ἀμήν, 118, 130, 209), and, as we have seen, all the Latin copies but four, omit these words; which, it is accordingly assumed, must have found their way surreptitiously into the text of all the other copies in existence. But let me ask,—Is it at all likely, or rather is it any way credible, that in a matter like this, all the MSS. in the world but nine should have become corrupted...?”

“One and the same reply has been rendered to this inquiry ever since the days of Erasmus. A note in the Complutensian Polyglott (1514) expresses it with sufficient accuracy. ‘In the Greek copies, after *And deliver us from evil*, follows, *For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever*. But it is to be noted that in the Greek liturgy, after the choir has said *And deliver us from evil*, it is the Priest who responds as above: and those words, according to the Greeks, the priest alone may pronounce. This makes it probable that the words in

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question are no integral part of the LORD'S Prayer: but that certain copyists inserted them in error, supposing, from their use in the liturgy, that they formed part of the text.' In other words, they represent that men's ears had grown so fatally familiar with this formula from its habitual use in the liturgy, that at last they assumed it to be part and parcel of the LORD'S Prayer. The same statement has been repeated *ad nauseam* by ten generations of critics for 360 years. The words with which our SAVIOUR closed His pattern prayer are accordingly rejected as an interpolation resulting from the liturgical practice of the primitive Church. And this slipshod account of the matter is universally acquiesced in by learned and unlearned readers alike at the present day."⁵¹

And so we see that the common assertion that the doxology is a later addition does not hold up to scrutiny and the fact of its inclusion in the text actually is witnessed to by manuscripts of an earlier date than the so-called best MSS. The earliest witness of all is a quote from the Gospel of Matthew in the Didache which was written a few decades after Matthew composed his gospel. And the fact of the matter is the Didache does reference the existence of the doxology to the prayer in a varied form. The document, composed near the end of the first century or in the beginning of the second, states the following—

"Neither pray as the hypocrites; but as the Lord commanded in His Gospel, thus pray: Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so on earth. Give us to-day our daily (needful) bread, and forgive us our debt as we also forgive our debtors. And bring us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one (or, evil); for Thine is the power and the glory forever. Thrice in the day thus pray."⁵²

Notice the doxology is written as an integral part of the prayer taught by the Lord, albeit they do leave off the word "kingdom," for which reason we know not. But that fact remains, the prayer did not end with the petition "but deliver us from the evil one," which many claim was the original. This manuscript is one

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of the earliest witnesses to the existence of a doxology to the prayer.

Of course, we could go on, as Dean Burgon mentioned, the Peshitto (Peshitta) contains the doxology and it equals the date of the Codex Sinaiticus and Codex Vaticanus and, according to some, actually predates them by a full century!

So with this being said, let's get back to this part of the prayer in Matthew. If we accept the fact that this doxology is original in Matthew, the question must be asked as to why Luke version of the prayer does not contain the doxology, yet Matthew's Gospel does. There have been various answers to this. I found a succinct and helpful explanation to this from a book from the early 1800's which I will provide below.

"There were two occasions on which our blessed Savior delivered that form of prayer which is known by his name. The first was in the sermon on the Mount, about the time of Pentecost; the second was in answer to the request made him in the text, about the Feast of Tabernacles, many months afterwards. You are not to confound the two occasions, as though the Evangelists St. Matthew and St. Luke had but given different accounts of one and the same delivery. The occasions were wholly dissimilar, separated by a considerable interval of time: on the one, Christ gave the prayer of himself, with nothing to lead to it but his own wish to instruct; whereas, on the other, he was distinctly asked by one of his disciples, who probably did but speak in the name of the rest."

"...there are certain variations in the versions which should not be overlooked. Some of these, indeed, are very slight, requiring only to be mentioned...There is, however, one remarkable variation. On the second occasion of delivering his prayer, our Lord altogether omitted the doxology with which he had concluded it on the first. He quite left out, that is, the words, 'For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.' Now there can be little doubt, that, in constructing his form of prayer, Christ had respect to the religious usages of the Jews... Without attempting generally to prove this, it will be worth our while to consider what was the Jewish custom as to the conclusion of their prayers, whether public or private.

We find, that in the solemn services of the Temple,

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when the priests had concluded a prayer, the people were wont to make this response ; "Blessed be the name of the glory of his kingdom for ever and ever." Public prayer — prayer, that is, in the Temple, finished with a doxology very similar to that which concludes the Lord's Prayer...Observe, then: our Lord gives his prayer on the first occasion with the doxology, on the second, without it: what may we infer from this? Surely, that he wished his disciples to understand that the prayer was designed both for public use and for private.

In the Sermon on the Mount the prayer had concluded with the doxology; and the disciples, we may believe, had thence gathered that the prayer was intended to be used in the Temple. But they still wanted a form for private devotion, and on this account preferred the request which is contained in our text. Our Lord answers the request by giving them the same form, but with the omission of the doxology; thus teaching that his prayer was adapted to the closet as well as to the church. If regard be had to Jewish usages, nothing can seem less objectionable than this explanation of the insertion of the doxology in one place and its omission in another. The prayer was delivered twice, to prove that it was to serve for public use and for private. Christ showed that it was to be a public prayer by giving it with a doxology; a private, by giving it without; for a doxology was that which was then used in the Temple, but not in a house.

And this further explains why our Lord did not add 'Amen,' in concluding his prayer on the second occasion. It was usual amongst the Jews not to add the Amen to prayers which were only petitionary, but to reserve it for expressions of thanksgiving and benediction; whereas, the doxology being omitted, the Lord's prayer, you observe, became purely petitionary. There is evidence of this in the Book of Psalms: the book is full of prayers, but the prayers do not end with Amen. If the Psalmist use the Amen, it is after such an exclamation as this: 'Blessed be the Lord for evermore.' You may trace just the same custom in the writings of the Apostles. Thus St. Paul asks the speaker with tongues, 'How shall he that occupieth the room of the unlearned say Amen, at thy giving of thanks' and it is generally after some ascription of praise, or expression of benediction, that he adds an Amen: 'The Creator, who is blessed forever, Amen.' "Now the God of peace be with you all, Amen.'

Now it is a fact of very great interest, which thus

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appears fairly established—namely, that the second delivery of the Lord's prayer, as compared with the first, goes to the proving that the petitions in this prayer are equally adapted to private and to public devotion; that we cannot find a more suitable or comprehensive form, whether for the gathering of 'the great congregation,' for domestic worship, or for the retirement of our closet. Our Lord did not indeed mean to tie us down to the use of this prayer, as though we were never to use any other, or never to expand into larger supplication. But he may certainly be thought to have given this prayer as a perpetual, universal model: and to have asserted its containing an expression for every want and every desire which may lawfully be made the subject of petition unto God.⁵³

So if one accepts this doxology as original for both public and private use, we must ask ourselves how it fits in with the rest of the prayer.

I believe each of the three nouns—the kingdom, the power, and the glory—would correspond to each of the three immediate personal petitions we have just discussed. Of course, one cannot deny that it would also correspond to the first three petitions regarding the things of God. It reaffirms that the **kingdom** is God's, when one prays, "Thy kingdom come." And it reaffirms the **power** of God would one acknowledges that His will is being done in heaven. And, of course, finally, the **glory** of God is reaffirmed in the phrase, "Hallowed be Thy name"

But in the immediate context (for the doxology begins with the causal conjunction ὅτι, translated "for") I believe the doxology is explaining the three petitions of need that were just enumerated.

In other words, Jesus is teaching us to pray for our daily bread, because His is the **kingdom**. He is teaching us to ask for the forgiveness of our sins because His is the **power**. And He is teaching us to pray that God would keep us from chastisement, delivering us from evil for His is the **glory**.

The reason why we can ask the Father for our daily bread is because we have been invited to dine at the table of the King of kings—the kingdom is His, and only His!

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II Samuel 9:7,13 And David said unto him, Fear not: for I will surely shew thee kindness for Jonathan thy father's sake, and will restore thee all the land of Saul thy father; **and thou shalt eat bread at my table continually.** ¹³ So Mephibosheth dwelt in Jerusalem: **for he did eat continually at the king's table;** and was lame on both his feet. KJV

The reason we can ask the Father to forgive us our debts, is because He has the power to remit. He has the power to forgive sins—the power is His, and only His!

Matt. 9:6 But that ye may know that **the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins**, (then saith he to the sick of the palsy,) Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house. KJV

And, finally, we can ask the Father to deliver us from evil, so as not to be led into a chastening trial, because we are always called to show forth His glory—the glory that is His, and only His!

Psalms 79:8-9 Do not remember the iniquities of *our* forefathers against us; Let Thy compassion come quickly to meet us; For we are brought very low. ⁹ **Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of Thy name; And deliver us, and forgive our sins,** for Thy name's sake. NASB

Isaiah 40:4-5 Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain: ⁵ **And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed,** and all flesh shall see *it* together: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken *it*.

How wonderful is this doxology! I believe it is an integral and original part of the prayer given by the Lord for His disciples to pray, and in this present dispensation, for His Church to pray. It fits perfectly within the context of the Sermon on the Mount and in the context of the overall prayer.

It affirms that man's **kingdoms** will ever fail, that a kingdom of his own making can never provide for the true needs of mankind. Israel has ever proven that point; the rise and fall of Gentile powers have proven

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that point; and, indeed, the secularization and making the Church into a worldly kingdom has proven that point, as well as all the mini, spiritual kingdoms created by those with the same spirit manifested by Diotrephes. In all of these, only the kingdom of God can bring those provisions truly needed by mankind.

It affirms that the **power** of man will ever fail him, for it could never solve the problem of sin and death. Old Testament sacrifices could never take away sin. Only the power of God, manifested in the cross of Christ, could solve the problem of sin and death.

And, finally, the glory of man will ever fall short of the **glory** of God. Man will never be able to manifest the glory of God, if God in His grace does not deliver us from evil. Only God our Father, who commands light to shine out of darkness, can insure that “the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ,” is ever manifested in His people.

The burden of the Lord Jesus, manifested in this doxology, is the burden of the Father and of the burden Holy Spirit and it should be the burden of our hearts. It inclusion teaches us that we are one body in Christ and, that as such, the focus of our prayers must always be for the manifestation of His kingdom, the manifestation of His power, and the manifestation His glory, both in the Church, and in our own lives.

6:14 For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you:

6:15 But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

We now come to two verses that in the mind of some prove that the Sermon on the Mount could never apply to the present dispensation of grace. For example, consider this comment made by Lewis Sperry Chafer.

“The “kingdom of heaven” as announced and offered in the early part of Matthew’s Gospel is also accompanied with positive demands for personal righteousness in life and conduct. This is not the principle of grace: it is rather

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the principle of law. It extends into finer detail the law of Moses; but it never ceases to be the very opposite of the principle of grace. Law conditions its blessings on human works: Grace conditions its works on divine blessings. Law says: "If ye forgive, ye will be forgiven,"...(Mt. vi. 14, 15): while grace says: "Forgiving one another even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you" (Eph. iv. 32). So, again, law says: "Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees ye shall in no wise enter the kingdom of heaven" (Mt. v. 20). This is not a present condition for entrance into heaven. Present conditions are wholly based on mercy: "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but by his mercy he saves us" (Tit. iii. 5).⁵⁴

Now, Lewis Sperry Chafer's writings are very beneficial, but our brother's viewpoint on this issue robs the Church of a large part of her spiritual inheritance. The view that our Lord's Sermon on the Mount is not meant for the Church contradicts the Lord's command to his eleven apostles to teach believers "to observe all things" He taught them. The full phrase could be translated, "teaching them **to keep** all things I have commanded you." The word *observe*, τηρεῖν, (to keep) is the same Greek word used by Paul in the phrase "to keep the unity of the Spirit." In other words, we should *keep* the words of our Saviour with the same zeal with which we keep the unity of the Spirit! (see Matt. 28:20 & Eph. 4:3).^w

Our Lord's teaching to forgive others if we wish to be forgiven by the Father is, indeed, meant for us today in the Church. Some mistakenly believe it was intended for Jewish believers in the tribulation and for the kingdom of God in the Millennium, because of a misunderstanding of objective truth and subjective truth (at the minimum), or, if not from that, then from a hyper-dispensationalist viewpoint which seeks to overlay one's theology over the words of our Saviour, rather than the other way around. As we have said before, that which is called dispensational theology is true and is based upon Scripture, but that which is called hyper-dispensational theology is misleading and is not based upon Scripture, but is rather based upon one's

^w **Matthew 28:20**

Teaching them to observe [τηρεῖν] all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, *even* unto the end of the world. Amen.

Ephesians 4:3

Endeavouring to keep [τηρεῖν] the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. KJV

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logic that is taken from certain presuppositions.

But, let's assume this view is not from a hyper-dispensational understanding, but is merely a misunderstanding of objective and subjective truth. If so, perhaps a short discussion on the subject might help clarify this statement of our Lord on forgiveness.

Simply stated, as we will presently see, subjective truth is objective truth realized. It depends upon the veracity of objective truth. It is the objective truth of eternity experienced temporally in the present moment. Let's first look at this objective truth.

Objectively, our sins are forgiven by God in a judicial act of forgiveness granted by God at the moment of our salvation when we are born again. At that moment every sin, past, present, or future is forgiven by God for all time, covered by the blood of Christ.

Paul speaks of this judicial act of forgiveness in Romans 4:6-8. He says this—

Romans 4:5-8 But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness. ⁶ Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, ⁷ *Saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered.* ⁸ *Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.* KJV

In this verse he says that David spoke of this judicial act of forgiveness prophetically when he said that God “imputeth” or reckons the needed righteousness of salvation to the one whose iniquities have been forgiven. The same Greek word for forgiveness is used here as it was used by Matthew. It is written as an aorist indicative passive verb, meaning that this past “judicial punctiliar act” (being in the indicative) was accomplished by God when we believed (referred to in verse 5, but actually based upon verse 3).

Salvation is by grace through faith, and that not of ourselves, it is a gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast (Eph. 2:8-9). Paul says that

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Abraham believed God (vs. 3), and as a result his faith was counted for righteousness because his sins were forgiven by God (vs. 7), resulting in a blessed state where his sin will never be imputed (vs. 8). This is the objective truth of our salvation and the objective fact of our forgiveness of every sin.

The apostle John refers to another aspect of objective truth when he declares the following—

I John 3:5 And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin. KJV

John uses the aorist tense when he writes that our Lord came to take away our sins. Grammatically, in and of itself, this would not necessarily indicate that all our sins were taken away at one time. But when taken with the context of the entire epistle and the greater context of the rest of the New Testament we can see that John is, indeed, referring to the fact that our Lord's atonement took away, in one single act, the sins of everyone who believes. The aorist tense nicely demonstrates this "punctiliar" act, if you will. If he had used the present tense, an ongoing or repeated taking away of our sins could have been indicated. In other words, John might have been saying Jesus took away your past sins, but any future sins still need to be taken away. But John was not saying that; our Lord took away all our sins, past, present and future, once for all, by His one sacrifice.

The writer of Hebrews states the same truth regarding His one sacrifice. He says—

Hebrews 9:25 Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others; ²⁶ For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. ²⁷ And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: ²⁸ So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation. KJV

And, finally, the apostle John makes this very

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clear in another portion of his epistle. He writes—

I John 2:12 I am writing to you, little children, because **your sins have been forgiven** you for His name's sake. NASB

In this verse, John makes clear this objective truth by using the perfect tense of the verb translated, “have been forgiven.” Notice that John does not say your sins are being forgiven, nor does he say they will be forgiven, but he says they have been forgiven.

Nor does he say that only your past sins have been forgiven, nor that your future sins will be forgiven, nor even that your present sins are being forgiven. He says that your “sins,” without any qualification, have already been forgiven. The perfect tense in the Greek indicates this. Generally speaking it indicates an action that has occurred in the past, which results in a condition that continues into the present. John is telling them that their sins have been forgiven and that state of forgiveness has not disappeared; it still exists in this present time. He is declaring that which was prophesied in the Old Testament, that our sins are gone, to be remembered no more, cast into the darkest depth of the sea (See Isa. 43:25; Jer. 31-34; Mic. 7:19).^x

And so we see that all these verses point to the objective fact of the forgiveness of our sins. Yet, in spite of this fact, what is significant is that in I John 1:9, John declares that we must be confessing our sins in order to have our sins forgiven! The first phrase in that verse could be translated, “If we are confessing our sins.”

What? How can that be if our sins have already been forgiven—past, present and future? Why is forgiveness of our sin now conditional? What are you saying, John?

Well, this is the reality of the subjective truth of our salvation and/or forgiveness of sin, as opposed to objective truth.

A. T. Robertson says it this way.

“**If we confess** ἐὰν ὁμολογῶμεν (1). Third-class

^x **Isa 43:25** I, even I, am the one who wipes out your transgressions for My own sake; And I will not remember your sins. NASB

Jer 31:34 And they shall not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, Know the LORD, for they shall all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, declares the LORD, “for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more. NASB

Mic 7:19 He will again have compassion on us; He will tread our iniquities under foot. Yes, Thou wilt cast all their sins Into the depths of the sea. NASB

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condition again with ἔαν and present active subjunctive of ὁμολογέω, "if we keep on confessing." Confession of sin to God and to one another (Jas 5:16) is urged throughout the N.T. from John the Baptist (Mr 1:5) on. **Faithful** (πιστός). Jesus made confession of sin necessary to forgiveness. It is God's promise and he is "righteous" (δίκαιος)."⁵⁵

Objectively, any sin we have committed or will commit has already been forgiven. But subjectively, in order to experience that eternal and objective forgiveness of sins—temporally—we must confess our sins.

Objective truth does not depend upon our actions or work. It depends on the action or work of Christ. It is granted once and for all to all who believe. However, subjective truth does depend on our actions; it allows us to experience, in time, the objective truth accomplished by the work of Christ.

In order to subjectively experience that objective truth we must walk in the light, making sure that the old man within us does not rule over our walk, but remains, by faith, reckoned as dead (Rom. 6:6-11). Thus, the continual confession of our sins is a continual declaration that we no longer are bound by sin, indeed, that we are dead to sin. It is a declaration that any sin, which we, unfortunately, might sometimes commit, is a sin covered by the blood of Christ and so is a sin forgiven by Him and experienced by us because of our confession.

This is the difference between objective truth and subjective truth. Objective truth is spiritually apprehended by our spirit, by faith, and subjective truth is the experience of that exercise of faith in our soul.

Those who focus on the objective and forget the subjective become self-righteous. Equally those who focus on the subjective and ignore (or do not understand) the objective, become unsure of their salvation. In reality, they end up with the belief that forgiveness of sin is completely dependent on our continued action of confession. Subjectively this is true, objectively it is not. In Time, it is true. In

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Eternity, it is not.

Unfortunately, in Time, a Christian sometimes ignores the things of God and so continues in sin. If he or she does so, they will be disciplined by God, maybe even to the extent of being taken home by death (cf. Heb. 12:5-8 with I Cor. 11:29-31). But, even though such a Christian is not (in Time) experiencing the forgiveness of God in their life, eternally they still will be saved because objectively, every single sin they ever committed has already been forgiven by God, even apart from their daily confession.

Paul said it this way—

II Timothy 2:11-13 It is a trustworthy statement: For if we died with Him, we shall also live with Him; ¹² If we endure, we shall also reign with Him; If we deny Him, He also will deny us; ¹³ If we are faithless, He remains faithful; for He cannot deny Himself. NASB

In verse 12, Paul says that if a Christian denies the Lord (thus, meaning such a one would be living in sin), He will deny us. This is in our subjective experience. Such a Christian will not be experiencing the wonderful forgiveness of our Lord. But in the next verse, Paul says if we are faithless (defining such a Christian who denies the Lord), He remains faithful for He cannot deny Himself. This refers to objective truth which is depended upon the actions and work of Christ. In eternity, that Christian will not be denied, but be accepted in the Beloved.

Although this might be a lengthy quote, it is well worth to include this example adapted from George Cutting's little booklet entitled, *Safety, Certainty, and Enjoyment* for it nicely demonstrates this truth.

When as a child of God you do anything to grieve the Holy Spirit of God, your communion with the Father and the Son is, for the time, practically suspended; and it is only when you judge yourself and confess your sins that the joy of communion is restored.

Suppose your child has been guilty of some misdemeanor. His countenance shows that something is

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wrong. Half an hour before he was enjoying a walk with you around the garden, admiring what you admired, enjoying what you enjoyed; in other words, he was in communion with you, his feelings and sympathies were in common with yours.

But now all this is changed, and as a naughty, disobedient child, he stands in the corner, the very picture of misery. Upon his confession of his wrongdoing you have assured him of his forgiveness, but his pride and self-will keep him sobbing there. Where now is the joy of half an hour ago? It has disappeared. Why? Because fellowship between you and him has been interrupted. What has become of the relationship that existed between you and your son half an hour ago? Has that disappeared too? Surely not. His relationship depends upon his birth; his communion, upon his behaviour.

But presently he comes out of the corner with a broken and contrite heart, confessing his wrong-doing, so that you see he hates the disobedience and naughtiness as much as you do, and so you take him in your arms and cover him with kisses. His joy is restored because communion is restored.

But to carry our illustration a little farther—suppose while your child was still in the corner, before he confessed his wrong-doing, you heard a cry that the house was on fire. What would you do? Leave him in the corner to perish in the fire simply because he had not yet admitted his wrong-doing? Of course not! Impossible! Very probably you would be the very first person in the house to find him and safely carry him out. Ah, yes, you know very well that the love of a relationship is one thing, and the joy of communion is quite another.

When the believer sins, communion is for a time interrupted, and joy is lost until the believer comes to the Father with a broken heart, confessing his or her sins. Then, upon confession, the believer knows he or she is forgiven, for Scripture plainly declares that “if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9).”⁵⁶

Therefore, we can now see why our Lord equates God’s forgiveness with our willingness to forgive those who sin against us. Refusal to forgive one who wrongs us, who comes to us in true repentance, asking our forgiveness, is a sin in and of itself for it betrays a heart that is merciless or hardened, and/or

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self-righteous! When we allow such a heart to reside within us we are “sinning” against God, and against our brethren.

Our unwillingness to forgive others becomes a sin, in and of itself, which needs our confession to God in order to be forgiven, temporally, by God. How can we expect God to forgive us if we are unwilling to forgive others? This is what Jesus is saying in verses 14 and 15.

Matt. 6:14-15 For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: ¹⁵ But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses. KJV

A Christian, who lives with a self-righteous or hardened heart, is a Christian who needs to first confess that one particular sin of being unforgiving, before such a one can fully experience God’s forgiveness for their other sins.

Scripture says, “If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear (Ps. 66:18 KJV). And so, one must first confess to God that one particular sin, if we want God to forgive us for our other sins. Yes, if you were to die without doing so and you found yourself in the presence of God, you would find that sin of an unforgiving heart had already been forgiven by God, as well as every other sin, because of the shed blood of His Son, for that is the objective truth of our salvation. But, while you were still on earth, you would have never experienced that eternal forgiveness of God, because you never confessed that sin of an unforgiving heart. That requires us to “keep on confessing” all our sin, as A. T. Robertson put it.

6:16 Moreover when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.

6:17 But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face;

6:18 That thou appear not unto men to fast, but

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unto thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly.

This little word, “moreover,” now picks up where our Lord left off in verse 5. If you remember we said the Lord was providing examples of man’s failure to properly walk before the Lord. He first spoke of charitable giving, then, of any prayer of adoration, thanksgiving, and/or personal need, and finally, in verses 16-18 the manner of fasting. He declared that if one was following the ways of the Lord such acts would be done with the glory of God in mind, as opposed to those who would do it for their own glory or those who might do it in order to enhance their own reputation as being righteous.”

These three acts were considered by many in Israel to the primary indicators of man’s righteousness before God, and so it makes sense that our Lord would now include the third of them, i.e. fasting.

The Jewish book of Tobit, written approximately a century before the Lord gave this Sermon, speaks to this common mindset, saying—

Tobit 12:6-9 Then he took them both apart, and said unto them, Bless God, praise him, and magnify him, and praise him for the things which he hath done unto you in the sight of all that live. It is good to praise God, and exalt his name, and honourably to shew forth the works of God; therefore be not slack to praise him. ⁷ It is good to keep close the secret of a king, but it is honourable to reveal the works of God. Do that which is good, and no evil shall touch you. ⁸

Prayer is good with fasting and alms and righteousness. A little with righteousness is better than much with unrighteousness. It is better to give alms than to lay up gold.⁹ **For alms doth deliver from death, and shall purge away all sin. Those that exercise alms and righteousness shall be filled with life.** KJV

Of course, there is nothing wrong with charitable giving. We are told to be cheerful givers. There is nothing wrong with praying. We are told to pray without ceasing. And there is nothing wrong with

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fasting. Our Lord fasted forty days. The problem is when one believes the mere performance of these righteous acts can earn someone the blessing and/or salvation of God. The statement above in Tobit that alms shall purge away all sin, bringing life, was not an isolated idea among the people; it was a standing pillar of thought among many in Israel.

And so, in order to show those in Israel that such thinking falls short of God's standard of holiness, our Lord reveals to them (as He did with giving and prayer) that even man's best attempts to righteousness still fall short, for they are done with unrighteous thoughts and motives, and so are in complete opposition to the ways of God. He did this to once again show them how they had failed in keeping their part of the Covenant of the Land, and so were not entitled to God's promised blessing, let alone the promise of eternal life.

This shows how the Pharisees were so ignorant of true righteousness; they thought they deserved God's blessing by what they considered to be their superior works and acts of piety. This is what was behind the fasting referred to in these verses. The Pharisees fasted more often than the Law required thinking they could earn God's favor by their devotion. It was common for them to fast twice a week, on both Monday and Thursday. This practice of bi-weekly fasting, for the purpose of enhancing one's righteous standing before God (and in their case before men) is referred to by our Lord in the Gospel of Luke.

Luke 18:9-14 And he spake this parable unto **certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous**, and despised others: ¹⁰ Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. ¹¹ The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men *are*, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. ¹² **I fast twice in the week**, I give tithes of all that I possess. ¹³ And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as *his* eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. ¹⁴ I tell you, this man went down to his house justified *rather* than the other: for every one

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that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted. KJV

All these acts of righteousness, commonly called today, a mitzvah, * were considered to be acts of righteousness done in obedience to God's commands. These commandments (Heb. *mitzvot*—pl.) were incumbent upon of every Israelite to perform. They must "do them." This is seen in Lev. 22:11, which states—

Leviticus 22:31 Therefore shall ye keep my **commandments** (Heb. *mitzvot*), **and do them:** I *am* the LORD. KJV

And so, the Pharisees and others thought the "doing" of them, as stated in Leviticus, not only earned them the favour of God, but also the blessings of God. But what the Pharisees forgot was that God not only looks on the righteous act itself, but He also looks at how any righteous act is done! In other words, our motives must be free from any taint of sin, or any taint of pride, or self for any act to be pleasing to God. They forgot this fact. The prophet Jeremiah reminded Israel of this when he said—

Jer 17:10 I the LORD search the heart, *I* try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, *and* according to **the fruit of his doings.** KJV

What mattered to God was not just the "doing," but also the "fruit" of our doings. What does it produce? In other words, does it produce a harvest of glory for God, or does it produce a harvest of glory for man.

Samuel also mentions the same principle. ^y To God, what is important is not simply the outward appearance of our "doings," but also the inward motive of our "doings."

The reason for this is because God wishes us to walk by faith and not by sight. Faith is a function of the human heart or spirit, being that which allows our righteousness acts to be accepted by God. Faith acts

* Today, many consider a mitzvah as simply a good deed done to others, but, technically speaking a mitzvah was a commandment of God. From a Jewish perspective, the very first mitzvah or commandment of God in the Bible, was to believe in God. As such faith should have remained the basis for every other mitzvah performed; unfortunately, this was not always the case.

^y **I Sam. 16:7** But the LORD said to Samuel, "Do not look at his appearance or at the height of his stature, because I have rejected him; for God sees not as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart." NASB

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apart from sin or self. Faith arises from those who know that in their flesh dwelleth no good thing, not from those who take pride in their own righteousness, not from those who justify themselves in their doings.^z Faith arises from those who know their weakness, not from those who boast in their human strength or self-confidence. Faith is based upon humility, not upon pride. Early on in Scripture this principle was established by the Spirit of God.

In Gen. 15:6 we are told the following concerning Abraham.

Gen. 15:6 And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness. KJV

Abraham performed a mitzvah that was pleasing to God—he believed. His act of righteousness was done from a state of human weakness, not of strength. His act of righteousness was founded on humility, and not on pride. He was near a hundred years old and had never been able to beget a son of himself, so on what could he boast before men? Such an exercise of strong faith from a weak state is most pleasing to God for it is empty of sin and self. This is why the first and foremost act of righteousness that God desires from all men and women is for them to believe. Such an exercise of faith is a righteous act, a mitzvah, in and of itself. Indeed, it becomes a strong foundation for all other acts of righteousness. It becomes the means whereby every subsequent act of righteousness should be performed.

Hebrews 11:33 Who **by faith** conquered kingdoms **performed acts of righteousness**, obtained promises, shut the mouths of lions. NASB

This is why all acts of righteousness should be performed from a position of faith, for only then will they be done without sin or self. Only then will such acts be done for the glory of God.

This is what was lacking in these three acts of righteousness mentioned by our Lord and why they were so contrary to the ways of God. They were not

^z **Romans 7:18**

For I know that in me (**that is, in my flesh,)** **dwelleth no good thing**; for to will is present with me; but *how* to perform that which is good I find not. KJV

Luke 16:15 And he said unto them, **Ye are they which justify yourselves before men**; but God knoweth your hearts: for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God. KJV

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being done by or in faith.

Their charitable giving was not done in faith. Since the giving mentioned by our Lord was done publically with great fanfare, more than likely, our Lord was referring to the giving of the rich and not of the poor. The poor would have no reason to sound a trumpet with their giving, for they would be giving so little they probably would be embarrassed. As such, our Lord was probably referring to those of the Pharisees who were rich. If this is the case, it explains why they would wish to make their giving known. The rich have always used their wealth to influence and to control others. The Pharisees desired power in the things of God. They wished to control the spiritual direction of the nation. Because they had no faith in the power of God to uphold those whom He wished to be in authority, they resorted to human means to maintain their positions of power, and one of those means was the flaunting of their wealth. Thus they made sure the public knew they possessed much wealth (which in their mind was an indication of God's blessing). They were saying, in essence, "God is with us, so you should listen to us, and obey us." In doing so, they were not seeking the glory of God, but were seeking glory for themselves so they could maintain their control over people's lives. Faith would have trusted in God to sustain their influence. But they had no faith.

This principle still applies today. In the Church money continues to be used, in some cases, to control people's lives. In some cases, it is used to sustain religious kingdoms that have been created by Christian leaders who are walking by sight and not by faith. And so, such wealth is paraded before Christians through various means as proof of God's blessing. Yet many times, those who have the greatest wealth complain they do not have enough! And so they beg God's people for more and more, using every human tactic and marketing ploy available in order to sustain their ministries. Money allows them to do what they wish to do in the name of God. But they have no faith. Early Christians

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accomplished more in poverty, than those today ever accomplish in their wealth. May the Lord forgive us all that this still exists today.

The same is true with prayers. More than likely, it was the leaders who would stand on street corners in public praying. Those who were not in places of leadership would not be so bold; usually they are more reticent to speak in public. So, why would such men seek to pray out loud for all to witness and hear? For the same reason as their public giving—control and influence. Since followers are many, and leaders are few, those who were wishing to lead in Israel, it seems, were trying to convince their followers through their public prayers that they were the spiritual ones and so should be trusted. It seemed to all be about power and influence. Because they did not trust in God to sustain them and assure their influence according to His will, they needed to insure that such was the case with public actions intended to draw attention to themselves for the purpose of influencing public thought.

Again, unfortunately, the same continues today in the Church. Many times public prayers are made by Christian leaders to show forth their own glory, rather than really praying with the glory of God in mind. Sometimes prayers are made into mini-sermons, rather than being real petitions to God. Again such acts of prayers are done to insure one's spiritual influence and control, rather than being prayers filled with faith in the power of God to control all things. This should be a dire admonition to us all to come to God in prayer with only His glory in mind, in true praise and humility, with no sub-conscious desire to glorify ourselves by the projection of spiritual words intended to influence the thoughts of others, or to gain the respect of the hearers. May God keep us all from such insincerity of prayer.

And finally, their fasting was not being done in faith. Faith humbles us, because it admits that we are powerless to control the circumstances of life. Fasting is meant to be an expression of this to God, asking Him in the process for His assistance and care.

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But the Pharisees were using this humbling act not to gain the real favour and deliverance of God, but to gain the favour and continuing submission of the people. Again, such fasting was being publically made known to others by “disfigured faces” to obtain the admiration of the people for the purposes of spiritual control. In other words, the thought, apparently, was that if the people can be convinced that I am so spiritual, then I can control their lives for they will entrust their spiritual matters to me. Again it betrayed a lack of faith in the power of God.

This is why the Lord told them to wash their face so that others would not even know they were fasting. To do so without public recognition would show the Father that they were sincere and that they were doing that mitzvah from faith, trusting in God to justify their spiritual positions before the people. In other words, they were exercising faith in the ability of God to influence the hearts of the people, rather than trusting in their own machinations to influence the direction of the people.

As such, Jesus says (as He said with giving and prayer) that if such an acts of righteousness are done by faith, trusting in God for the outcome, those will be the acts that will gain the reward of God the Father.

How significant it is that Jesus connects reward with a righteous act from faith, for the first mention of reward in Scripture is revealed in connection with Abraham performing a righteous act, a mitzvah of faith.

Genesis 15:1 After these things the word of the LORD came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram: I *am* thy shield, *and* **thy exceeding great reward**. KJV

Genesis 15:6 And **he believed in the LORD**; and he counted it to him for righteousness. KJV

May we all take these admonitions of the Lord to heart, always being zealous for good works, but doing all our good works as righteous acts done in faith, performing every work of righteous by faith,

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apart from all sin or self, doing everything without any thought for ourselves or for any public recognition, so that our Lord Jesus Christ alone will gain all the glory!

II Thessalonians 1:11-12 To this end also we pray for you always that our God may count you worthy of your calling, and fulfill every desire for goodness and the **work of faith** with power; ¹² **in order that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you**, and you in Him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ. NASB

6:19 Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal:

This verse must be seen in the light of the ongoing context. We mentioned how the three previous righteous acts were more than likely done by those who were rich. For example, we mentioned almsgiving; usually a poor man would not want a trumpet sounded at the moment of his giving, for the poor could not contribute much. Therefore, it was probably the religious leaders our Lord was making reference to, more than likely the Pharisees and Chief Priests. This is all the more confirmed when we read similar pronouncements in Scripture made against them for the same reasons referred to above.

For example, our Lord, in verse 7 above, warned against bringing many words into our prayers and in Matt. 23:14 He indicts the Scribes and Pharisees for doing that very thing.

Matt. 23:14 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you devour widows' houses, even while **for a pretense you make long prayers**; therefore you shall receive greater condemnation. NASB

In Matt. 6:2 above, our Lord speaks of the attention brought about by those who wished to make their charitable giving made known to all, indicating their emphasis on wealth. And in Lk. 16:13-15, when

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talking of the same principle mentioned before us in verse 24, regarding God and mammon, our Lord indicts the Pharisees for their love of money, indicating their accumulation of the same.

Luke 16:13-15 "No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one, and love the other, or else he will hold to one, and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon." ¹⁴ Now the Pharisees, **who were lovers of money**, were listening to all these things, and they were scoffing at Him. ¹⁵ And He said to them, "You are those who justify yourselves in the sight of men, but God knows your hearts; for that which is highly esteemed among men is detestable in the sight of God. NASB

It is a well-known fact that many of the Pharisees and the Chief Priests were wealthy. Because of their love of money they would accumulate as much as they could, in some cases, by unjust means (as was the case with those controlling the activities of the Temple, who turned it into a place for business by selling things). ^a To them, because they could only walk by sight because of their lack of faith, they believed their ability to accumulate wealth was a sign of God's blessing.

Finally, self-serving public prayers were identified with the Pharisees in Matt. 23:5 when mention was made of their phylacteries.

Matthew 23:5 But **all their works they do for to be seen of men**: they make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of their garments. KJV

Therefore we see that it was, in all likelihood, the Pharisees who were laying up great wealth for themselves to reassure their unbelieving hearts that they were blessed by God, thereby justifying themselves before men and God. Not only that, they used their wealth to insure their continuing power over the people, using those funds for their own selfish ends. This is the context of our Lord's declaration that you should not lay up treasures for yourself upon earth. He is pointing to the example of

^a **John 2:16** and to those who were selling the doves He said, "Take these things away; **stop making My Father's house a place of business.**" NASB

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the Pharisees, whom the Holy Spirit identifies as “lovers of money.”

So if our Lord was including in His thoughts the rich religious leaders of the day who would amass wealth in order to justify themselves before God to the people, how would this apply to His disciples (and to us today in His Church) as we seek to obey His admonitions? What does our Lord actually mean? Is He forbidding us to have savings accounts? Are Churches never to set aside money for specific purposes? Are Christians called to live lives of poverty? These are such an important questions to answer for in America we are plagued by men who preach a gospel of prosperity, teaching that if you are properly submitted to God you will be rich in material things, having much wealth. Such men are false prophets who denigrate the very name Christian by their false teaching. On the other extreme there are some in Christian cults who teach a false asceticism, teaching that every Christian, if properly submitted to God, will be one who will give away all their money to God (i.e. personally to them or to their organization)! Such men are usually the head of a cult, or if a true Christian, are men who still inculcate a cult like environment where everybody is called to live frugally (except the leader to whom you are expected to submit and to surrender your money!).

So, it is important to understand this portion of our Lord’s Sermon on the Mount, so that our lives may be a glory to Him and only Him. So, to answer these questions let’s look closely to these verses.

When we do so, one of the first things we notice is the little word “yourselves.” Matthew uses the personal pronoun ὑμῖν in this verse, rather than the reflexive pronoun ἑαυτοῖς (which he repeatedly uses in other places, for example in Matt. 14:15 and 23:31).^b

Most, if not all, translations translate this personal pronoun as a reflexive. Indeed, this is one of the few places in the New Testament where ὑμῖν is translated as a reflexive (at least in the KJV). But the fact remains that Matthew chose a personal pronoun

^b **Matt. 14:15** And when it was evening, the disciples came to Him, saying, “The place is desolate, and the time is already past; so send the multitudes away, that they may go into the villages and buy food for themselves (ἑαυτοῖς) NASB

Matthew 23:31 “So you testify against yourselves (ἑαυτοῖς), that you are sons of those who murdered the prophets. NASB

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rather than what one would expect, i.e. the reflexive pronoun ἐαυτοῖς. Is there a reason for this? Perhaps it might be this.

No doubt this personal pronoun is being used reflexively according to the context of the verse. But equally true, within the greater context of the passage, especially verse two, perhaps, the personal pronoun is being used for another reason other than just a reflexive sense (although, I am the first to admit the nuance is slight). Let me explain.

As a reflexive pronoun one would tend to put the emphasis on the fact that the wealth was for one's self, but with the personal pronoun (while not negating the aforementioned) the emphasis would seem to be put on the one to whom the treasures belonged. In other words, perhaps the Greek might be rendered woodenly, "Lay up not—to you—treasures upon earth where moth and rust does corrupt." It is difficult to render into English, but it seems the nuance might be this. Whereas understanding it as a reflexive pronoun speaks to spending one's treasures selfishly upon oneself, betraying a form of greediness, as a personal pronoun it speaks to the flaunting of one's wealth on earth in order to enhance one's own standing in the community. (And, of course, this was done many times to insure one's continued influence and control over the community.)

Perhaps, a good example of this type of emphasis in olden times would be the pyramids of Egypt. They were built from treasures or substances procured by the Pharaoh, for the purpose of building a monument to his greatness (among other things).

If we bring it up to modern times, it might be explained by one who donates money to a Bible College with a demand, or a hint, or at least a hope that one's name will be publically acknowledged for the gift, perhaps, by a simple plaque bearing their name.

In the world, it might be explained by someone who donates money for a new wing of a hospital with the stipulation that the wing be named after them. Or, it may simply be that one who is wealthy might give

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much of their wealth away so they might gain a reputation as being a caring philanthropist.

Our Lord is saying why not rather give to that Bible College with the stipulation that there not be any public recognition. Or, why not become a hidden philanthropist?

(Of course, in all these examples, one cannot deny such charitable giving is a good deed, and should not be denigrated. Some philanthropists might do so publically, not for personal recognition, but with a hope that he or she might become an example that would encourage others to the same charitable giving. But our Lord is saying that when such good deeds are done “to oneself” in order to gain oneself attention before people in order to enhance one’s own reputation, they weaken the goodness of the deed. As such their reward will not be from God, but will be from those people. In other words, they receive what they desire—the recognition of men, but they lose the recognition of God that is given to those who give in secret with no desire for outward recognition. This exhortation should cause us all to look to our motives for giving.)

Consequently, even though in this context it seems best in English to translate the personal pronoun as a reflexive pronoun, in the Greek, the slight nuance of the personal pronoun should not be ignored. This helps us answer our question about a “savings account,” or laying up treasures upon earth. God is not forbidding savings accounts or laying aside of money here on earth in and of itself. He is forbidding the laying aside of money here on earth “to or for ourselves.”

It must be remembered that many times God did lead people to lay up and save treasures upon earth (and God would never lead someone to do something that is sinful). But it is important to remember that it was always done with others in mind, and not just for or to themselves.

For example, in the Old Testament God led Joseph to lay up treasures (i.e. corn), not for himself alone, but for others, i.e. the Egyptians during the

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coming famine.^c

In the New Testament, Paul made money for his missionary journeys by working with his own hands, which he likens to the common practice of parents “laying up” for their children.^d Thus, we see that Paul laid up treasures upon earth, not to spend selfishly on himself, or to use for self-glorification, but rather for the work of God (also cf. the treasure laid up for Jesus—Matt. 2:11)^e

Perhaps it might be helpful to mention that everything we do must be done according to the leading of the Holy Spirit. Paul is not declaring that all parents should save up all their money as inheritances for their children, and, if they do not, they are somehow being neglectful. It depends, first, on whether God grants money for this purpose, and second, if He desires that to be done. Obviously, this practice is not always done. There are many examples in history where godly men and women died penniless in the service to God with no material inheritance for their children—their inheritance to their children was the spiritual inheritance of their faith). But equally, one cannot say that it is wrong if God leads some parents to leave an inheritance—(perhaps, God is raising up one of the children to be a mighty servant of God who will then use that money for the Lord’s work).

I do not believe the Holy Spirit, through Paul, would use this example of parents laying up for their children if it was sinful (See excursus at the end of this chapter on God’s providential care for examples of this fact.)

Our Lord exhorted His disciples that when the time came for them to travel outside of the land of Israel, carrying forth the Gospel to distant lands, they should take a minimum of provisions, which of course would entail a certain laying up of funds.

Luke 22:36 And He said to them, "But now, whoever has a money belt is to take it along, likewise also a bag, and whoever has no sword is to sell his coat and buy one. NASB

^c **Gen. 41:35** And let them gather all the food of those good years that come, and lay up corn under the hand of Pharaoh, and let them keep food in the cities.³⁶ And that food shall be for store to the land against the seven years of famine, which shall be in the land of Egypt; that the land perish not through the famine. KJV

^d **II Cor. 12:14** Behold, the third time I am ready to come to you; and I will not be burdensome to you: for I seek not yours, but you: for the children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children. KJV

^e **Matt. 2:11** And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh. KJV

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And even our Lord during the time of His earth sojourning, along with His twelve, laid up funds in a money box, not just for Himself, of course, but for all His disciples and for any who might be in need, being poor.

John 13:29 For some were supposing, because Judas had the **money box**, that Jesus was saying to him, "Buy the things we have need of for the feast"; or else, that he should **give something to the poor**. NASB

Now, of course, this money box never contained great wealth. Scripture says our Lord was poor.^f But the point in all this is that God the Father did allow Jesus and His disciples to lay aside some money on earth, little as it was, but it was laid aside for the others, and not just selfishly for themselves.

So now we can see the Lord is not saying that it is always wrong for one to lay up treasures on earth. He is saying it is wrong to ever lay up treasures for or to "yourself" upon earth, whereby your accumulation becomes the source of funds for self-centered acts, or for self-centered glory.

And so we see that if someone uses this verse to brow beat you into giving away all your money to God, which usually means give it to them, or their organization and/or ministry, such a person is misunderstanding this verse, at the best, and at the worst is purposely misleading the innocent Christian into surrendering their money to them or their organization or so-called ministry for their own aggrandizement, and/or for the honour and respect that might come from other Christians because it becomes a big ministry (with the idea that if it is large and successful it must be of God).

A Christian, a Church, or ministry can lay up money for specific purposes (cf. Acts 4:34-35). Jesus is not forbidding that. But He is forbidding the practice whereby it is done for ungodly purposes, whether it be for the purpose of living selfishly, or whether it is done for the purpose of facilitating the things of God by worldly means, seeking to obtain and maintain control and influence over God's people

^f **II Cor. 8:9** For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich. KJV

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(things which are all done by those who are not walking by faith). Such has always been the case with those who have no trust in God.

They cannot trust in the provision of God, so they lay up treasures for themselves to insure their comfort in this world with no thought for others.

James 5:1-5 Come now, you rich, weep and howl for your miseries which are coming upon you. ² **Your riches have rotted and your garments have become moth-eaten.** ³ **Your gold and your silver have rusted; and their rust will be a witness against you and will consume your flesh like fire.** It is in the last days that you have stored up your treasure!

⁴ Behold, the pay of the laborers who mowed your fields, and which has been withheld by you, cries out *against you*; and the outcry of those who did the harvesting has reached the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth. ⁵ **You have lived luxuriously on the earth and led a life of wanton pleasure;** you have fattened your hearts in a day of slaughter. NASB

They cannot trust in the power of God, so they “lay up treasures for themselves” to protect their positions, power, and/or standings in the world through worldly alliances (as has been done by the Church, and by some Christian ministries). An example of this from the Old Testament, which Paul says was written for our instruction, ^g would be the example of King Ahaz who made a worldly alliance with Tiglath-pileser, rather than trusting in God.

II Kings 16:7-8 So Ahaz sent messengers to Tiglath-pileser king of Assyria, saying, “I am your servant and your son; come up and deliver me from the hand of the king of Aram, and from the hand of the king of Israel, who are rising up against me.” ⁸ And Ahaz took the silver and gold that was found in the house of the LORD and in the treasuries of the king's house, and sent a present to the king of Assyria. NASB

They cannot trust in the ordering of God, so they lay up treasures unto themselves to secure positions of influence and to facilitate their continuing control

^g **I Cor. 10:11**

Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come. KJV

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over people. Simon Magus (who was unsaved) was a perfect example of this in the New Testament. (Unfortunately, some Christians will sometimes do the same thing to maintain influence by money.

Acts 8:9-10; 18-21 Now there was a certain man named Simon, who formerly was practicing magic in the city, and astonishing the people of Samaria, claiming to be someone great; ¹⁰ and they all, from smallest to greatest, were giving attention to him, saying, "This man is what is called the Great Power of God." ¹⁸ Now when Simon saw that the Spirit was bestowed through the laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered them money, ¹⁹ saying, "Give this authority to me as well, so that everyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit." ²⁰ But Peter said to him, "May your silver perish with you, because you thought you could obtain the gift of God with money! ²¹ "You have no part or portion in this matter, for your heart is not right before God. NASB

All these examples are done from a lack of faith in the provision of God, the power of God and the ordering of God. As Christians we must never forget the lesson of a Gideon, or the lesson of the loaves and fishes, or, indeed, the lesson of our Lord Himself, who had nowhere to lay His head. God is in control and accomplishes all things according to His will.

So, our Lord is not teaching in this verse that a savings account is wrong, that is, as long as it is held as a good steward of God under the continued guidance of the Holy Spirit, wherein the money is held in trust, to be used generously as the Lord leads, never to only be used selfishly "for "yourself or "to" yourself in self-aggrandizement.

But, equally, it is also important to realize that if the Lord does not grant money to us as servants of God, or as a Church, or a ministry, that does not mean that we are not blessed by God, or not in submission to God. Such servants, Churches, or ministries, which are poor, whether by circumstances or by the giving away of one's money under God's leading, have much wealth in heaven as we will now see. And, indeed, they possess a special blessing of God for they, like their Lord before them, follow a

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path whereby their poverty becomes a source of spiritual wealth for others.^h

6:20 But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal:

Our Lord in this verse explains that eternal treasures are more important than temporal treasures. He declares that treasures in heaven, contrary to the treasures on earth, can, indeed, be laid up for “yourself,” “but that can only be done by not laying up treasures on earth for “yourself!” As we mentioned before, which is clarified further in this verse, the focus is not on the “laying up;” the focus is on for “yourself.”

Perhaps this can be better explained by looking at the comparable passage found in the Gospel of Luke where our Lord uses the same phrase regarding “laid up treasure for oneself.”

Luke 12:16 And He told them a parable, saying, "The land of a certain rich man was very productive.¹⁷ "And he began reasoning to himself, saying, 'What shall I do, since I have no place to store my crops?'¹⁸ "And he said, 'This is what I will do: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods.'¹⁹ 'And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years *to come*; take your ease, eat, drink *and* be merry.'" ²⁰ "But God said to him, 'You fool! This *very* night your soul is required of you; and *now* who will own what you have prepared?' ²¹ **"So is the man who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God."**
NASB

Notice that this rich man’s existing storehouse is not condemned. He had already laid up certain treasures in his first barns and Jesus did not condemn him for that. But it was only when the man’s lack of faith in the provision and care of God is revealed, which causes him to build larger barns (presumably to glorify his own wealth and insure his complete comfort) that Jesus condemns him as someone who

^h **Rev. 2:9a** “I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich)...”
KJV

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lays up treasure “for himself,” and is not rich toward God and caring for others.

God sometimes grants wealth to certain individuals, but it is always given with the understanding that it is God’s and should be used as He directs. It is never given to an individual to waste upon himself. It is never given to be used for individual glory, nor is it ever given to puff oneself up. As such, rather than seeking such individual glory, our Lord says to do the opposite. In contradistinction to earth, He says to “Lay up—unto yourself—treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not corrupt.” In other words, rather than using the money granted to you on earth for your own glory (or your own greediness) use your money for the glory of God, giving to those in need, not with great fanfare to draw attention to yourself, or by some expectation or demand that there be some public acknowledgment, but, rather, give it secretly, and the Father who sees in secret shall reward you in heaven openly.

Our Lord is not saying it is necessarily wrong, in and of itself, to lay up treasures. But He does say it is wrong to lay up treasures “for yourself,” that is unless those treasures for yourself are laid up in heaven! Any treasure laid up selfishly for yourself upon earth our Lord says is wrong.

If we only seek His glory, using any substance He might grant us unto His glory, using it as good stewards of the Lord who realize the money or treasure is not ours, but His, who realize it must be used as He leads, with no thoughts of self-aggrandizement, or thoughts to use the money to control or indebt other people to us, if we do that, then our Lord says we will have true treasure in heaven. Such treasures will be recognized as belonging to us by a Heavenly Father who rewards us openly for our good works and faithfulness on earth as good stewards. And how wonderful will be that treasure in heaven, for what better treasure will they ever be than the loving words of our Father in heaven who says, “Well done thou good and faithful servant” (cf. Matt. 25:23; Luke 19:17)

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So, beloved, if you find yourself with treasures upon earth, realize that it belongs to God and you are just a steward; use them for His glory, never unto “yourself,” or selfishly for “yourself,” and then you will find true treasure in heaven.

6:21 For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

Jesus says that if your heart is in the same place on earth where your treasures are undergoing rust and corruption, then your heart, being in the same place, will also become rusted and corrupt, frozen in place, so to speak—unable to be moved by the Holy Spirit regarding the needs of others.

But if those same treasures—that are not laid up “for” yourself, or “to” yourself—are kept for God, as good stewards, then Jesus is saying your heart will never become rusted, frozen in place, unable to be moved by God to be used for His work, or for those in need. Those treasures will then be used to lay up treasures in heaven by your good deeds.

So we see that Jesus is never saying to His disciples, “Do not lay up treasures on earth.” Sometimes God leads His servants to do so. But Jesus is saying, “Do not lay up treasures on earth for yourself.” He is saying that we are simply stewards and any treasure is God’s to use as He moves our hearts, whether in gifts to His Church or in distribution to the poor. The focus is all on whether you are doing it for “yourself,” because of a lack of faith in God’s power and provision, or because of a greedy and selfish heart.

6:22 The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light.

6:23 But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!

Our Lord now speaks of an eye that is single or an

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eye that is evil. Among the Jewish people at that time an “evil eye” bespoke a person who was greedy or covetous, and so, most believe that an eye that is single would represent the opposite, a person who is generous and giving. No doubt that is true, for it fits within the context of this passage. However, in Scripture the eye is also associated with the spirit, which is sometimes called the heart of man.

In his epistle to the Ephesians, Paul the apostle, speaks of the “eyes of our heart.”

Eph. 1:18 *I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints.* NASB

Also, our Lord speaks of the eye as a lamp giving light within (the word translated “light” in KJV is better translated “lamp,” Gr. λύχνος as in the NASB).

Matthew 6:22 "The **lamp** of the body is the eye; if therefore your eye is clear, your whole body will be full of light. NASB

And in Proverbs, the spirit is identified as a lamp giving light within.

Proverbs 20:27 The spirit of man is the lamp of the LORD, Searching all the innermost parts of his being. NASB

Moreover, in the book of Revelation John specifically equates the seven eyes of the Lamb as being the seven Spirits of God.

Revelation 5:6 And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth. KJV

And so we see that Scripture identifies the two together. This is not unusual since man is a processional being in which the spirit, soul and body

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are closely related through the processional life within him. Thus, bowels, in Scripture can be equated with the emotions of the soul. A neck, i.e. a stiff neck, can be associated with the will of man. The heart can be associated with the spirit of man, and, in many places the eyes and the ears of man together can be associated with that inward heart of man. Thus, Scripture can speak in Isaiah 6:10 of an insensitive heart in the same breath with dim eyes and dull ears.

Isaiah 6:10 “Render the hearts of this people insensitive, Their ears dull, And their eyes dim, Lest they see with their eyes, Hear with their ears, Understand with their hearts, And return and be healed.” NASB

Even the Jews of our Lord’s time closely equated the inward man with the eyes of man. In one of their writings, the *Pirke Aboth*, they said the following.

Pirke Aboth 5. 22 Every one who has three things is one of the disciples of Abraham our father. And *every one who has* three other things is one of the disciples of Balaam the wicked. ***If he has a good eye***, and a lowly soul and a **humble spirit, he is of the disciples of Abraham** our father. ***If he has an evil eye***, and a boastful soul and a **haughty spirit, he is of the disciples of Balaam** the wicked.⁵⁷

And so we see that according to Scripture and according to the current understanding of the Jewish people, our Lord was speaking of the character of man’s inward life when he spoke of our eyes. And when He was using the symbol of a lamp within man, he was also speaking of the condition of man’s spirit.

Consequently, when our Lord speaks of man’s eye being single or clear, He is speaking of man’s spirit being single or clear. The word translated “single” is a Greek word (ἀπλοῦς) meaning “unfolded,” “open,” “clear sighted.” Some, like Lange, understand it to include the idea of one not being double sighted. He says:

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“We conclude, therefore, that it refers to the contrast between proper sight and deceptive or double sight. The word is never used to indicate healthy. Hence we might agree with Elsner and Olshausen in explaining it as *an eye which does not see double*— double sight being a disease.”⁵⁸

So if our “spirits” are undefiled, having a pure conscience before God, our “sight” (eyes) will be straightforward, being able to see clearly. We will not be double-minded, as James says (Jam. 1:6-8),ⁱ but will wax strong in faith. We will have a sincere heart before God that will be able to exercise faith in the providence of God, and so we will be able to be generous with the things God might have entrusted to us.

If He entrusts us with treasures upon earth, they will be treasures, not just for ourselves, but will be treasures for the work of God and the poor and needy in our midst. This is why a “good eye” was equated with a generous man and an “evil eye,” being clouded and dim, was equated with a covetous man.

As such, a person with a clouded or dim eye will be one who has a spirit that is clouded and dim and so will not be able to exercise much faith in the provision of God, for he or she will not be able to see the true and spiritual nature of things.

This is why in Scripture we are exhorted to never set our eyes upon wealth or treasures of the earth—

Proverbs 23:4-5 Do not weary yourself to gain wealth, Cease from your consideration *of it*.⁵ **When you set your eyes on it, it is gone.** For *wealth* certainly makes itself wings, Like an eagle that flies *toward* the heavens. NASB

But we are exhorted to lift up our eyes or hearts to the Lord of the heaven, so that our eyes will be focused on treasures in heaven.

Psalms 123:1 Unto thee **lift I up mine eyes**, O thou that dwellest in the heavens.² Behold, as the eyes of servants *look* to the hand of their master, As the eyes of a maid to the hand of her mistress; So our eyes *look* to the LORD our God, Until He shall be gracious to us. KJV

ⁱ **Jam. 1:6-8** But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. ⁷ For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord. ⁸ A double minded man *is* unstable in all his ways. KJV

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Lam. 3:41 Let us **lift up our heart** with *our* hands unto God in the heavens. KJV

A person with a single, clear seeing eye can correctly see that God controls the treasures of the earth, and so such a person, who might have certain treasures entrusted to him on earth, can easily give to others, when so directed by God. Such a person, being generous, will be able to be full of the light of the Lord and so, in that light, will be able to walk by faith looking only to God to provide what is necessary for everything He orders.

This is why it is so important to have a clean heart, for without a clean heart we will not have a clear eye, and without a clear eye we will not be able to walk by faith, and without a walk of faith, we will not be able to see that God takes care of His own, and without that knowledge, we will end up hording for ourselves treasures upon earth, for we think that is the only way we can guarantee our life upon earth (or in the things of the Lord, the only way we can insure we have funds to carry on His work).

Again, our Lord directs the attention of those in Israel, especially the Scribes, Chief Priests and Pharisees, to the things of the heart. The reason why the religious leaders were deceived into thinking they were pleasing God, obeying His commandments and walking in His ways is because they did not guard their hearts but operated only outwardly in the flesh. To walk by the flesh, does not mean, necessarily walking by the awful sins of the flesh, it can also mean walking by the religious flesh which sees no evil within itself, for it cannot see for such a one has a darkened eye, because they have darkened spirits which cannot see God. Such ones may walk in supposed purity of the body, but not of the soul or spirit. The Pharisees, while outwardly pure, were, nevertheless, inwardly impure, being whited sepulchres.

If a disciple of Jesus wishes to be kept from also being deceived with an evil or darkened eye (for a

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believer, whose salvation is eternally secure, can still, sometimes, walk like the world, even the religious world, serving God with that which will burn—the wood, hay and stubble)^j such a disciple must always seek to have a pure heart, a clear conscience, a right spirit. Such a believer must always keep the prayer of David at the forefront of their mind.

Ps. 139:23 Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: ²⁴ And see if *there be any* wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting. KJV

But if a sin is left unconfessed in a disciple, or if he or she does not periodically ask the Lord to search and try his or her heart to reveal wrong thoughts, roots of bitterness, or unknown departures from the ways of the Lord that have been replaced with selfish or self-centered ways, then the disciple may developed an eye that is dim, mixed with the ways of the world, eventually producing the darkness the Lord speaks about. Such a disciple cannot serve the Lord in purity for such a disciple will begin to lay up treasure upon earth for themselves and unto themselves, having little for others or for the Lord. This will eventually weaken the purity of the disciple's love for the Lord and his or her love for his or her neighbor. This is why our Lord concludes with the verse regarding two masters, after He speaks about the single eye, the evil eye, as we will now see.

6:24 No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.

Now, for some people our Lord's exhortation may have been too much (like the rich young ruler of Matt. 19:21-22). They might think something like, "I can still lay up treasures "for myself" and "to myself," but also lay up treasures in heaven by my good works, by my philanthropy." They may have thought that they could be the master of their wealth, rather than the wealth becoming the master of them.

^j **I Jn. 2:11** But the one who hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness, and does not know where he is going because the darkness has blinded his eyes.

NASB

I Cor. 3:15 If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire. KJV

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Most of the Pharisees and Sadducees thought exactly this very thing. Riches, to them were a sign of God's blessing upon their lives and a vindication of their chosen way of life.

Our Lord now indicates the opposite. He indicates that it is impossible for one to serve two masters, i.e. God and Mammon. The Holy Spirit indicates this by using the Greek verb δύναται in this verse. The verb indicates that one simply does not have the "ability" within oneself or the "power within oneself, to serve two different masters. Someone might think to themselves, "I can control money. My money or wealth does not control me. I am its master; it will never be my master." Jesus is saying that is not true, such a mindset is impossible. He is saying that if you lay up treasures upon earth for "yourself," you will become its slave or servant.

The Holy Spirit also makes this clear in this verse by His use of the present infinitive δουλεύειν (to serve). In the Greek, the present infinitive can take on the characteristic of a substantive.

Dana and Mantey in the Greek Grammar indicate this as can be seen in the quote below.

"It is well to notice particularly the difference between the aorist and present infinitive. The aorist infinitive denotes that which is eventual or particular, while the present infinitive indicates a condition or process. Thus "pisteusai" [aorist infinitive] is to exercise faith on a given occasion, while "pisteuein" [present infinitive] is to be a believer; "douleusai" is to render a service, **while "douleuein" [δουλεύειν] is to be a slave**; "amartein" [aorist infinitive] is to commit a sin, while "amartanein" [present infinitive] is to be a sinner. These distinctions are typical and basal, though plastic in actual usage."⁵⁹

Thus the first part of the verse could be translated: "No man can be a slave to two masters," and the last part could be translated, "You cannot be a slave to God and Mammon." Of course, all believers, Old Testament or New testament are called to be slaves or servants of God, to serve only Him. In the Old Testament Israel was called to do so by Joshua—

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Joshua 22:5 "Only be very careful to observe the commandment and the law which Moses the servant of the LORD commanded you, to love the LORD your God and walk in all His ways and keep His commandments and hold fast to Him **and serve Him with all your heart and with all your soul.**" NASB

And, of course, we in the Church are called to serve God, as Paul relates in the book of Acts—

Acts 24:14 "But this I admit to you, that according to the Way which they call a sect **I do serve the God of our fathers**, believing everything that is in accordance with the Law, and that is written in the Prophets. NASB

In fact, within the context of this Sermon on the Mount, since our Lord indicates that if one serves the one, you cannot serve the other, He is indicting to the Pharisees, who thought they could serve God and Mammon and still expect the promised blessing of the Covenant of the Land, that they cannot. He is once again demonstrating that they broke their part of the Covenant by their love of Mammon.

Within the context of the Covenant of the Land, Moses relates that those religious leaders in Israel will not be blessed, as they desire, because they failed to serve the Lord, to only be servants of God (Deut. 28:45,47). ^k They thought they could, indeed, be servants of God and Mammon; not only that, they thought their Mammon, so to speak, was direct evidence of God's blessing, but Jesus says no! He says the opposite. He says that it is their Mammon that is actually keeping them from God's blessing. It is their treasures that they laid up for themselves that is keeping them from being rewarded by God.

In light of the power of riches to distract one's devotion to God, it is interesting that some believe the word Syriac word "Mammon" was actually a heathen god. But whether that was actually true or not, there is no doubt that it is being equated by Jesus as being something that is worshiped in place of God. Our Lord is equating treasures laid up for oneself as

^k **Deut. 28: 45, 47**

Moreover all these curses shall come upon thee, and shall pursue thee, and overtake thee, till thou be destroyed; because thou hearkenedst not unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to keep his commandments and his statutes which he commanded thee: ⁴⁷

"Because you did not serve the LORD your God with joy and a glad heart, for the abundance of all things. KJV

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something that will eventually enslave one to its control and power! John Gill provides some helpful information regarding this word.

“The word *Mammon* is a Syriac word, and signifies, money, wealth, riches, substance, and everything that comes under the name of worldly goods... The account and interpretation Irenaeus gives of the word, is very wide and foreign; who says, that— ‘Mammon, according to the Jewish way of speaking, which the Samaritans used, is one that is greedy, and would have more than he ought; but, according to the Hebrew language, it is called adjectively *Mam*, and signifies one that is gluttonous; that is, who cannot refrain himself from gluttony.’ Whereas it is not an Hebrew word, nor an adjective, but a substantive, and signifies riches; which are opposed to God, being by some men loved, admired, trusted in, and worshipped, as if they were God; and which is incompatible with the service of the true God: for such persons, whose hearts go after their covetousness, and are set upon earthly riches, who give up themselves to them, are eagerly and anxiously pursuing after them, and place their confidence in them; whatever pretensions they may make to the service of God, as did the Scribes and Pharisees, who are particularly struck at by this expression, both here and elsewhere, they cannot truly and heartily serve the Lord.”⁶⁰

And so, in conclusion regarding the place of money or treasures in the life of a believer, we see that our Lord does not forbid the laying aside money one earth, in and of itself. He is forbidding the laying aside of money or treasures for “ourselves” upon earth. There is nothing wrong for one to lay aside money for specific needs. Our Lord and His disciples laid aside money for their specific needs, as well as for the needs of the poor, all in a common money box (Jn. 13:29).¹ Paul laid aside money for himself and his co-workers by working with his own hands, on their missionary journeys, so as not to be a burden to those to whom he ministered (Acts 20:34; II Thess. 3:8). Parents are not wrong in laying up money for their children, as led by the Lord (II Cor. 12:14). And Churches are not wrong to lay aside money for the work of the Lord (Acts 4:34-35).^m

¹ **John 13:29** For some were supposing, because Judas had the money box, that Jesus was saying to him, "Buy the things we have need of for the feast"; or else, that he should give something to the poor. NASB

^m **Acts 4:34-35** Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold,³⁵ And laid *them* down at the apostles' feet: and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need. KJV

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However, in all these examples, of course, one must still be led by the Holy Spirit. We must not lay up money according to our own wisdom or understanding. As with Jesus, we must do nothing out of ourselves but only as we are led by God. ⁿ The point in this is that sometimes the Lord does lead His children to sometimes lay aside money on earth as good stewards of God.

Perhaps, one thing that might help us in determining whether it is our Lord leading us to do such a thing is our attitude toward the poor. Even though our Lord and His disciples had a common money box, it obviously did not contain much money for Jesus had no place to call His own; he had nowhere to lay His head. It did not contain great treasure, and none should ever think so; our Lord died poor upon the cross. Nevertheless, they did lay aside some money on earth. But what is so telling, is that when Judas was sent out the night of our Lord's betrayal, the other disciples presumed, without asking, that the Lord had directed Judas to give some money to the poor. They certainly would have not made such a presumption if such was not the common practice of our Lord and the disciples.

This will always be one telltale sign that we are not laying up money for ourselves. We will make it a practice to always be willing to give money to the poor. As James, the brother of our Lord says,

James 2:15 If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, ¹⁶ and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and be filled," and yet you do not give them what is necessary for *their* body, what use is that? KJV

And, another telltale sign will be that such giving or philanthropy will never be done for one's own glory or recognition. In many cases, where possible, it will not even be done in a public manner, but will be done privately, in secret, as our Lord commanded.

But what the Lord does forbid, in all of this, with a dire warning, is the laying aside of money or treasures on earth for "ourselves." Our Lord warns His disciples in this portion of Scripture and the Holy

ⁿ **Jn. 5:30** I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me. KJV

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Spirit warns the disciples of this in another portion of Scripture—saying the same thing, albeit with different words—that Mammon can be dangerous to a believer’s spiritual well-being.

I Tim. 6:7-10 For we have brought nothing into the world, so we cannot take anything out of it either ⁸ And if we have food and covering, with these we shall be content.⁹ But those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a snare and many foolish and harmful desires which plunge men into ruin and destruction.¹⁰ For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, **and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith, and pierced themselves with many a pang.** NASB

When a Christian seeks riches, laying aside great wealth for themselves under a guise of serving God and not Mammon, they are short on faith, not believing in the fact that God will always provide that which is necessary for whatever He orders. And that leads us into the next verse.

6:25 Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?

An interesting point in this verse is that the usual concluding or inferential conjunction, translated as “therefore,” that Matthew uses in the Sermon on the Mount is the Greek particle οὖν. He uses it 12 times in the Sermon. However, in this verse, Matthew does not use this conjunction. Rather he uses the Greek phrase διὰ τοῦτο, which is still translated as “therefore” by the KJV translators.

This is significant because Matthew chooses to conclude this portion using the demonstrative pronoun τοῦτο, rather than the simple οὖν. This change gives greater emphasis to the words of Jesus that were just spoken in verses 22-24. The pronoun points back to those words. Literally, the phrase might be translated as, “because of this.”

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Additionally, the Greek verb combined with the negative particle μή, translated as “take no thought,” involves the idea of “distraction.” Vine mentions that it is related to the Greek word, μέμνηναι, which in turn he relates with μερίζω, which he glosses as, “to draw in different directions, distract.”

In other words, it is as if Jesus is saying, “because of the importance of keeping your eye single, straightforward and pure (which as we already mentioned is closely equated with a human spirit that is full of faith), do not be distracted (i.e. take no thought). Why? Because a bad eye, or double eyesight, will lead one to the worship or service of Mammon instead of God, so do not be distracted. Why? Because one will never be able to serve two Masters, so do not allow yourself to be drawn into two different directions, meaning, do not allow yourself to be drawn away by Mammon or riches.

Moreover, the word translated as “life” in verse 25 is actually the Greek word for “soul,” which, when put together with the emphasis of the previous verses would render the following sense—“Because of the danger of a bad eye (a **spirit** lacking much faith), do not be distracted by your **soul**, which worries about what you might eat, or what you might drink, nor let yourself be distracted by your **body**, in regard what you might have to array yourself. The soul is more than food, and the body is more than clothing, is it not?”

The whole man is inferred in these words. The human spirit is inferred in verses 22 and 23 by the imagery of the eye. The soul is directly mentioned in verse 24, as well as the human body. The whole man is to be sanctified and kept whole for God.

The spirit of man, under the imagery of the eye, must be kept single and clear if one wishes to please God. It must be filled with the single vision of faith, so it can perceive the true nature of things, and so trust God. The human soul must not be distracted by the things of this earth, by the lure of money, or by fear of impoverishment, for it was created for greater things, to be transformed. And, finally, the human

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body must not be distracted by clothes or the vain things of life.

Jesus is saying if you allow yourself to be distracted. If you take so much thought for what you will eat or what you will drink, or how you are arrayed, you will find yourself serving Mammon and not God. For with a single eye, with a spirit of faith you will serve God. But with a double seeing eye, with a spirit that does not believe or trust, you will serve Mammon.

6:26 Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?

6:27 Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature?

6:28 And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin:

6:29 And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.

6:30 Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, *shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?*

Our Lord then offers examples of how God graciously cares for the things He has created. For example, God cares for the fowls of the air. They never lay up treasures for themselves upon earth in barns, so to speak, yet God feeds them. If God provides for them, will He not provide for you? He is inferring by this language that man should exercise more faith in the providence of God.

Of course, Jesus is not saying the birds of the air are exercising faith, but He is saying that they were not created in the image and likeness of God as you were, yet they seemingly have more faith than those of you who hoard riches to your own detriment and spiritual well-being!

Then, in verse 27, Jesus addresses the things of

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the body. Many commentators believe our Lord is referring to the length of one's days as the Greek word translated "stature" can refer to one's age. For example, John Gill makes the following comment on this verse.

"**add one cubit unto his stature**, or "to his age"; so the word is rendered, Joh 9:21 to the days of his life, he is so solicitous about; for a cubit may as well be applied to a man's age, as an "hand's breadth" is to his days, Ps 39:5...the sense of the words is this, that no man, by all the care and thought he can make use of, is ever able to add one cubit, or the least measure to his days; he cannot lengthen out his life one year, one month, one day, one hour; no, not one moment."

But the King James translators took it to refer to one's height in this verse as the word also carries that connotation. For example, the same Greek word is used of Zacchaeus in Luke 19:3 and, obviously, the word referred to his stature or height.^o

In our case, it seems Jesus is, indeed, using it of the length of one's days, but with the imagery of one's stature. Stature is the visible manifestation of the process of life. One knows a baby has, potentially, many years left on earth, because of its small stature. But every year as one grows in stature, one's age on this earth decreases, and when such a one stops growing one knows the countdown has begun and there is nothing that can be done. You cannot add even one cubit to your stature, giving evidence that you have added more years to your life. Your length of days is fixed by God and you cannot change it.

So Jesus is saying do not let your soul distract you with thoughts of Mammon. What good will it do to hoard your treasures, building larger and larger barns, thinking you will lengthen your days upon earth, when no man is able lengthen his days upon earth—so why even try? The birds look to God; they do not build barns, and God still provides for them, and you are worth more than the fowls.

Again, Jesus is basically saying do not lay up

^o **Luke 19:3** And he was trying to see who Jesus was, and he was unable because of the crowd, **for he was small in stature.** NASB

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treasures upon earth for yourself, rather have faith in God, for if you do not, you will find that your eye may become evil and you will finally become a slave to money or possessions, spending more time in service to it, than in service to God.

Next in verse 28, Jesus turns to the clothing of the body. It does not seem that Jesus is only referring to the basic clothing of the body, but, rather, to any type of clothing. There are different words used in the New Testament for clothing. Some specifically refer to inner garments (χιτών) and some refer to outward costly garments (ἱματισμός). But this word (ἔνδυμα) is used for many different types of clothing in the New Testament. It is used of the rough clothing of John the Baptist,^p but also of the finer clothing of a wedding garment,^q and even of the glorious raiment of an angel of God.^r

And so, the clothing that our Lord is referring to is clothing that might indicate ones status in life. In this sense, our Lord is referring to those who are so distracted by the outwardness of things that they busy themselves with status, reflected in the type of clothing they wear. They worry that they might not be able to procure the proper apparel to maintain their dignity and power in the world. This seems to be why the imagery of Solomon was used. Who was wealthier than Solomon? Who possessed more glory and respect among men than he? And yet Jesus says the lowly lily was arrayed more magnificently than Solomon. Why? Not because, so to speak, the lily laboured and toiled, spending so much time spinning its clothing to reflect its perceived status before men, but, rather, simply because the lily accepted what was provided by the Creator.

Jesus is saying if the lily can do this, why cannot you? Why cannot you trust in God to provide you what is necessary? Do not be distracted by such outward things, for they will fail you. Your life may be required tomorrow and you will be thrown into the furnace, clothes and all, just like the grass of the field. What type of glory will you have then? So accept what God gives. He will clothe you

^p **Matthew 3:4**

And the same John had his raiment of camel's hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins; and his meat was locusts and wild honey. KJV

^q **Matthew 22:11**

And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment. KJV

^r **Matthew 28:3**

His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow: KJV

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appropriately, giving you the clothing appropriate for the one whose eye is single, seeing things aright, being able to behold the fowls of the air and the lilies of the field, being able to learn the lessons they teach.

Finally, Jesus directs our attention as to why these things are hard for some people; it is because of their lack of faith. This is why He concludes with the statement, “O ye of little faith.”

The two English words “little faith” is the translation of the one Greek word—ὀλιγόπιστοι. The word, according to Vine is made up of these two Greek words—“*oligos*, little, *pistis*, faith.” This unique Greek word is used only five times in the New Testament (six in some manuscripts) and this sixth one, where a variant exists, is Matthew 17:20. Here are two translations, one following the one variant and the other following the other variant.

Matthew 17:20 And He said to them, "Because of the **littleness of your faith** (ὀλιγοπιστίαν); for truly I say to you, if you have faith as a mustard seed, you shall say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it shall move; and nothing shall be impossible to you. NASB

Matthew 17:20 And Jesus said unto them, Because of your **unbelief** (ἀπιστίαν): for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you. KJV

Now, for our purposes, it matters not which variant is correct. The purpose is to discern the true meaning of “*oligos*” in this compound word as referenced by Vine.

We will discuss this in greater detail when we reach Matthew 17, but suffice it for now to point out that a better translation for this word might be short-lived faith,” rather than “little faith.” In other words, Jesus is saying the reason you worry about what you’re going to eat or what you’re going to drink, or how you are going to be clothed is because your faith fails you. Your faith is short-lived! O, ye of short-

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lived faith.

This, of course, is demonstrated by our variant. Either one scribe, for one reason or the other, understood ἀπιστίαν in Matt. 17:20 as equivalent to ὀλιγοπιστίαν, or he understood ὀλιγοπιστίαν as equivalent to ἀπιστίαν. Unfortunately, somewhere along the line, a scribe made a change from the original text. But the point it demonstrates is that the word ἀπιστίαν seems to convey a similar thought as the word ὀλιγοπιστίαν (or vice versa), which only makes sense for Jesus says it is not the enormity of one's faith, but the presence of one's faith, for even if one has faith as "little" as a mustard seed, one could remove a mountain.

So what our Lord is saying is that the reason why you end up trusting in treasures you can lay aside for yourself (for whatever reason), which leads you to become enslaved to Mammon, whether individually as a person, or corporately as a Church, is because your faith is short-lived! You start out fine, but your faith is short lived, and by your actions, because you are not able to trust in God, you end up, in reality, serving Mammon. Your faith you once had in God's care, wavered into unbelief. Your trust in God's providence was short-lived. (This is not talking, of course, about our faith in God unto salvation, but our faith and trust in God's providence.)

What a dire warning this is to us today in America. We are rich materially, but we poor spiritually. We are rich in substance, but we are poor in faith. We boast in our riches but we are lukewarm in our actions. We cannot trust in the providence and care for God. Even as Churches, we cannot trust that God will always provide what He orders. And so in our unbelief we indebt the Church of God with loans to do what we think He desires, and then resort to gimmicks and begging to fulfill our contractual obligations because the giving of the saints might be falling short. This betrays a complete lack of faith. We think we are serving God, but such actions invariably end up with our serving Mammon instead, wherein we become completely subservient to its

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demands!

6:31 Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?

6:32 (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.

Our Lord now reiterates again what he said in verse 25, this time, however, using the more common conjunction οὖν (therefore). He is no longer emphasizing what He said before, in verses 22-24, but He is now emphasizing what He will now say after, in verses 32-33.

The first time Jesus says “to take no thought” is to warn that those who lay up treasures for themselves upon earth will eventually become subservient to Mammon, rather than to God.

The second time, when Jesus says to “take no thought,” it is to warn us that our lack of faith in God’s care, which caused us to trust Mammon, rather than in God, will cause us to be no different than the Gentiles. Why is this significant? Because, to those in Israel who trusted in their money, this would be the antithesis of who they thought they were. They thought wealth was a sign of God’s blessing, a sign that they were pleasing God. Jesus says the opposite. Your striving for wealth (which they gained through their greed, unrighteousness, and hording) was actually a sign that you were not pleasing God, a sign that they were not being blessed by God, but rather was a sign they were acting like the Gentiles who served and worshipped the creature rather than God.

This judgment by our Lord, might seem to indicate that Mammon in those days was, indeed, once equated with a god, an idol, for obviously, He is equating those that laid up treasures for themselves upon earth (more than likely, many from the Sadducees, Scribes and Pharisees) as being just like idol worshippers, i.e. the Gentiles. He infers they were worshipping at the feet of Mammon by their

short-lived faith in the care of God, the One who knows their every need.

Excursus on God's Providential Care

Dear brethren, we know that God will always provide for that which He orders in our lives, whether it is as individual believers, individual ministries or Churches. We must only have faith and a submissive heart to God's will. There are many examples in Scripture that reveal how this care is obtained.

One of the earliest examples in Scripture was that God would provide bread in accordance with the sweat of our brow (Gen. 3:19).^s Despite man's sin, God still provided bread for the one who worked. This was a part of His providential care. He provided rain for the ground in which to grow grain and strength and knowledge whereby it could be made into bread. Therefore, work has always been one of the foremost means whereby God cares for us. This is why it is wrong to expect God to provide for us without our willingness to work (see II Thess. 3:10-12).^t By taking that mindset, we are basically saying to God that we do not agree with His terms for our care, and, rather we desire Him to provide for us on our own terms. This betrays a carnal mind.

However, in some cases, we find rain was withheld in Scripture, limiting the supply of bread, yet God's promise to His believers held firm. Consequently, we see an additional means whereby God provided for the needs of many. For example, God instructed Joseph to store up grain for seven years to cover the seven years of drought that was coming. Yet it is important to notice that Joseph did not lay up this grain just for "himself," nor, indeed, just for Pharaoh's family, but he stored it up for many peoples, including his family still in Canaan (cf. Gen. 41:28-57 with 45:5-8).

Thus, sometimes God may provide for us by instructing us to lay some money aside for future needs. But this must never be done because of our lack of faith in God's providential care, but, rather, it

^s **Gen. 3:19** By the sweat of your face You shall eat bread, Till you return to the ground, Because from it you were taken; For you are dust, And to dust you shall return." NASB

^t **II Thess. 3:10, 12** For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat. ¹² Now them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread. KJV

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should be done in response to God's providential leading, wherein He might lead us to lay something aside for a future need, always with the thought of others. Why? Because He knows the future and has decided to make provision by this means. In some cases, this might be so we will not be a burden to others, or it might be so that we can help others with their needs.

In the same sense, we may also see that sometimes God may lead His servants to lay aside money so as not to be a burden to their children in their old age, and/or to help them in their needs. The apostle Paul speaks of this principle, as we have already seen, in II Cor. 12:14. ^u

Other times, however, God may not provide for us in that way. Sometimes He does not lead us to lay up something in advance. But that does not matter to one who trusts in Him, for one does not do one or the other simply according to one's own discernment. One lays up when so led by God, and one does not lay up when such guidance is lacking. In those cases, perhaps God desires to provide for us through a miraculous manner, rather than by preparations done before. This type of provision is demonstrated in Scripture by the example of Israel in the wilderness for forty years (Neh. 9:20-21), ^v and by the example of Elijah and the widow of Zarephath (see the full story in I Kings 17:1-16).

In all these examples, though, we always see that God never leads His people to lay up provisions or treasures just for themselves. It always includes someone else. Also, in all these examples we see that faith or trust in God's provision was always evidenced.

Adam worked with faith, in the sweat of his brow, trusting in God's promise of bread if he but worked. Israel wandered in the wilderness, trusting in God's provision of manna, (although sometimes their faith was short-lived). And, of course, Elijah obeyed God, trusting in His care, travelling to Zarephath, where God provided for him and for the widow and her son.

Additionally, we also have the example in

^u **II Cor. 12:14**

Behold, the third time I am ready to come to you; and I will not be burdensome to you: for I seek not yours, but you: for the children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children. KJV

^v **Neh. 9:20-21**

Thou gavest also thy good spirit to instruct them, and withheldest not thy manna from their mouth, and gavest them water for their thirst. ²¹

Yea, forty years didst thou sustain them in the wilderness, *so that* they lacked nothing; their clothes waxed not old, and their feet swelled not. KJV

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Scripture where God will provide for the needs of His servants through the free will offerings of His people.

Sometimes, because of circumstances beyond our control, work may not be available, or not enough work is available. Or sometimes persecution may hinder God's normal means of provision. Yet, even in those cases we find God providing for His own. Again, with the example with Elijah, we find him having to hide by the brook of Cherith, presumably because of the danger of persecution by Ahab and Jezebel. Yet, because God had not yet led him to Zarephath He provided for His care by the miraculous intervention of ravens (I Kings 17:1-6).

In any case, in all these examples given to us, we see that God's care will never fail. This was true in the Old Testament. It was true in the New Testament, and it is still true today in the dispensation of the Church.

God is always faithful and Jesus is calling His people to believe this, and to trust in Him and not in ourselves, and, most certainly, not in Mammon of this world!

Perhaps, we might close with the testimony of a servant of God by the name of George Muller. He served as an elder in a Church in Bristol in the 19th century. God always provided for his needs, sometimes even in miraculous ways.

He was led by God to never let anyone know of his needs, or the needs of hundreds and thousands of orphans he was led to shelter and care for in orphanages he built in Bristol. He was a firm believer that if a work was of God, then God would always provide for the necessary things of the work. If the work was not of God, then funds would not be provided. He trusted in the providence of God and never resorted to asking for money from others, directly or indirectly, but simply brought all the needs of the work to God and God alone. He never made appeals for funds; he never sent out letters asking for offerings. In fact, he never even sent out letters making known the needs of the work. Rather, he brought every need privately to God in prayer,

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knowing that God would always provide for their needs. And at the end of the year he would publish an account of how God provided!

How unlike this is today when Christian leaders use every type of technique known to man to raise money, imploring God's people for funds for the Church and/or ministry and in reality, even for themselves (indirectly through their stated salaries). Their faith in the providence of God is simply faltering and short-lived.

How different is the testimony of George Muller; it is so direly needed today. Let me provide a short portion below. It is a testimony to God's faithfulness and is a direct affirmation of our Lord's exhortation to us to trust wholly in God's gracious care, taking no thought for what we will eat or drink.

"About this time I began to have conscientious objections against any longer receiving a stated salary... For these reasons I stated to the brethren, at the end of October 1830, that I should for the future give up having any regular salary. After I had given my reasons for doing so, I read Philippians iv., and told the saints, that if they still had a desire to do something towards my support, by voluntary gifts, I had no objection to receive them, though ever so small, either in money or provisions. A few days after it appeared to me, that there was a better way still; for if I received personally every single gift, offered in money, both my own time and that of the donors would be much taken up; and in this way also the poor might, through temptation, be kept from offering their pence, a privilege of which they ought not to be deprived; and some also might in this way give more than if it were not known who was the giver; so that it would still be doubtful whether the gift were given grudgingly or cheerfully. For these reasons especially, there was a box put up in the chapel, over which was written, that whoever had a desire to do something towards my support, might put his offering into the box. **At the same time it appeared to me right, that henceforth I should ask no man, not even my beloved brethren and sisters, to help me,** as I had done a few times according to their own request, as my expenses, on account of travelling much in the Lord's service, were too great to be met by my usual income. For unconsciously I had thus again been led, in some measure, to trust in an

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arm of flesh; going to man, instead of going to the Lord at once. To come to this conclusion before God, required more grace than to give up my salary...”

“...We leaned on the arm of the Lord Jesus. It is now twenty-nine years, since we set out in this way, and we do not in the least regret the step we then took. Our God also has, in his tender mercy, given us grace to abide in the same mind concerning the above points, both as it regards principle and practice; and this has been the means of letting us see the tender love and care of our God over his children, even in the most minute things, in a way in which we never experimentally knew them before; and it has, in particular, made the Lord known to us more fully than we knew him before, as a prayer hearing God. As I have written down how the Lord has been pleased to deal with us since, I shall be able to relate some facts concerning this matter, as far as they may tend to edification...”

“Nov. 18th, 1830.—Our money was reduced to about eight shillings. When I was praying with my wife in the morning, the Lord brought to my mind the state of our purse, and I was led to ask him for some money. About four hours after, we were with a sister at Bishopsteignton, and she said to me, **“Do you want any money?”** **“I told the brethren,”** said I, **“dear sister, when I gave up my salary, that I would for the future tell the Lord only about my wants.”** She replied, “But he has told me to give you some money. About a fortnight ago I asked him, what I should do for him, and he told me to give you some money; and last Saturday it came again powerfully to my mind, and has not left me since, and I felt it so forcibly last night, that I could not help speaking of it to Brother P.” My heart rejoiced, seeing the Lord's faithfulness, but I thought it better not to tell her about our circumstances, lest she should be influenced to give accordingly; and I also was assured, that, if it were of the Lord, she could not but give. I therefore turned the conversation to other subjects, but when I left she gave me two guineas...”

“On January 6th, 7th, and 8th, 1831, I had repeatedly asked the Lord for money, but received none...On the evening of January 8th I left my room for a few minutes, and was then tempted to distrust the Lord, though he had been so gracious to us, in that he not only up to that day had supplied all our wants, but had given us also those answers of prayer, which have been in part just mentioned. I was so sinful, for about five minutes, as to think it would

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be of no use to trust in the Lord in this way. I also began to say to myself, that I had perhaps gone too far in living in this way. But, thanks to the Lord! this trial lasted but a few minutes. He enabled me again to trust in him, and Satan was immediately confounded; for when I returned to my room (out of which I had not been absent ten minutes), the Lord had sent deliverance. A sister in the Lord who resided at Exeter, had come to Teignmouth, and brought us £2. 4s.; so the Lord triumphed, and our faith was strengthened.

Jan. 10. To-day, when we had again but a few shillings, £5. was given to us, which had been taken out of the box. I had, once for all, told the brethren, who had the care of these temporal things, to have the kindness to let me have the money every week; but as these beloved brethren either forgot to take it out weekly, or were ashamed to bring it in such small sums, it was generally taken out every three, four, or five weeks. As I had stated to them, however, from the commencement, that I desired to look neither to man nor the box, but to the living God, I thought it not right on my part, to remind them of my request to have the money weekly, lest it should hinder the testimony which I wished to give, of trusting in the living God alone. It was on this account that on January 28th, when we had again but little money, though I had seen the brethren on January the 24th open the box and take out the money, I would not ask the brother, in whose hands it was, to let me have it; but, standing in need of it, as our coals were almost gone, I asked the Lord to incline his heart to bring it, and but a little time afterwards it was given to us, even £ 1. 8s. 6d. **I would here mention, that since the time I began living in this way, I have been kept from speaking, either directly or indirectly, about my wants, at the time I was in need.** But whilst I have refrained, and do still habitually refrain, from speaking to my fellow creatures about my wants at the time, I desire to speak well of the Lord's goodness, after he has delivered me; not only in order that he thus may get glory, but also that the children of God may be encouraged to trust in him. On February 14th we had again very little money, and, whilst praying, I was led to ask the Lord, graciously to supply our wants; and the instant that I got up from my knees, a brother gave me £1, which had been taken out of the box."⁶¹

And in another place he mentions this—

“We have no regular income now, even as we had not

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then. We ask no human being now for help; even as we did not then. We depend alone upon God, by his grace; even as we did then. Who is there in the whole world who will state that I ever asked him for help in this orphan work, from its commencement, on Dec. 9, 1835, up till now? Now, as we have no funds to live upon; as we have no regular subscribers or donors upon whom we could depend; as we never ask help from man, but God alone; and as, finally, we never did go into debt for this work, nor do we now...⁶²

“For several years I had not been so poor, with regard to means for myself, as when I was going away for change of air. But seeing it to be the will of God that I should go, I was sure that He would help me. Thus it was. On Aug. 13th my dear wife received from a sister in the Lord £5 for change of air; and from a Christian lady near Bridgewater was sent to me for my own personal expenses £1, from Cork £2, and from a brother in Bristol £1... Thus the Lord sent me for my own personal expenses such an abundance, that from Aug. 13th to Sept. 13th, 1850, I received altogether £61. 13s. 6d. **Truly I serve a good master, and this I delight to show. Not only with regard to the obtaining of means for the work in which I am engaged have I found *simple trust* in the Lord alone the easiest, the happiest, and the best way, but also in the obtaining of supplies for my own personal necessities. It is now about twenty-one years since I have solely trusted in God for my personal supplies, without any certain income whatever, so that, as ministering in word and doctrine and as a director of the Scriptural Knowledge Institution, I have no stated regular income whatever; and yet the Lord has been pleased so abundantly to supply me with means, that, if I had sought with all my might to obtain a good salary, I could not have had nearly as much as He has given me, whilst I have left the supplies of my temporal necessities entirely in His hands.**⁶³

The question this testimony should prompt in us is this: “Are we walking by faith, trusting in the provision of God to meet every need, or are we still using worldly means to meet those needs, indebting God’s work and then begging God’s people for money, by using guilt, or any other method that might seem successful?” Jesus never begged; Jesus

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never used guilt or various marketing strategies to raise money. Rather, He just trusted in God His Father through prayer. George Muller did the same, following the same example of his Master. Do we? I know I sometimes fall short; do you? May God forgive us for our lack of faith today. May God forgive the Church for its lack of faith today. May we take the exhortation of our Lord to heart in this portion of His Sermon on the Mount and conform our lives and walk to that of our Master.

6:33 But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

Our Lord now continues the same thought, saying that since you are dishonoring God by your service to Mammon, acting no different than the Gentiles, do this instead—seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and see how God your Father will provide for your food and drink, and those clothes that are necessary to carry out your station in life. Jesus is saying trust in God, not in the Mammon of earth.

This is all the more emphasized because the Holy Spirit switches from kingdom of heaven, to kingdom of God. We mentioned this change in part I of our commentary on Matthew. This is what we said.

“Nevertheless, in spite of this, one finds, in a few places where Matthew retains the phrase “kingdom of God,” rather than the phrase “kingdom of heaven” (e.g. Matt. 6:33; 12:28; 21:31, 43). “

“More than likely, this is done for special emphasis upon the very nature and Person of God the Father as opposed to His ruling or authority. In other words, even though the two phrases are synonymous, more than likely, the phrase “kingdom of heaven” in Matthew was used to emphasize a slightly different aspect of that kingdom. The phrase “kingdom of heaven” emphasizes the overall “rule of God” upon earth, whereas the phrase “kingdom of God” emphasizes not only the rule but also the Divine Person behind that rule being manifested. It slightly changes the focus away from the simple rule of God upon earth to the

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“character” of the One ruling. Thus one’s focus is enlarged to include the character His kingdom and not just the authority of His kingdom.”⁶⁴

Alfred Edersheim states:

“...A review of many passages on the subject shows that, in the Jewish mind, the expression ‘Kingdom of Heaven’ referred, not so much to any particular period, as in general to the Rule of God—as acknowledged, manifested, and eventually perfected. Very often it is the equivalent for personal acknowledgment of God: the taking upon oneself of the ‘yoke’ of ‘the Kingdom,’ or of the commandments—the former preceding and conditioning the latter.”⁶⁵

Consequently, to the Jewish mind, when Jesus switches to the kingdom of God, actually using His name and not just the appellation “Heaven,” one’s focus (contextually) would naturally be directed to the character of God and, thus, His kingdom upon earth being expressed. In other words, the kingdom of heaven must necessarily reflect the same character of the One who rules in heaven. Thus, Jesus is saying, do not be distracted from the wants and desires of the soul and body. Your Father in heaven already knows your needs, and just as He provides for every need in heaven, He will provide for every need of those who are His upon earth. This, of course, is also emphasized because Jesus says not only to seek the kingdom of God, but also to seek His righteousness.

This twofold reference, not only to the kingdom of God, but also to the righteousness of God would direct the Jewish mind to the morning recitation of the Shema within the daily prayers. The Shema was an expression of the children of Israel’s willingness to submit to God’s kingdom and their agreement to obey His commandments. The commandments, or His Word, of course, would be the same as “His righteousness.” The Psalmist tells us—

Psalm 119:172 My tongue shall speak of thy **Word: for**

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all thy commandments are righteousness. KJV
(capitalization of Word is mine)

So when Jesus declares that one is to also seek His righteousness, a Jewish mind would naturally understand this as a reference to the commandments of God as found in the Word of God.

Once again, let me quote Alfred Edersheim.

“... the Mishnah gives this as the reason why, in the collection of Scripture passages which forms the prayer called 'Shema,' the confession, Deut. vi. 4 &c., precedes the admonition, Deut. xi. 13 &c, because a man takes upon himself first the yoke of the Kingdom of Heaven, and afterwards that of the commandments. And in this sense, the repetition of this Shema, as the personal acknowledgment of the Rule of Jehovah, is itself often designated as 'taking upon oneself the Kingdom of Heaven.' Similarly, the putting on of phylacteries, and the washing of hands, are also described as taking upon oneself the yoke of the Kingdom of God. To give other instances: Israel is said to have taken up the yoke of the Kingdom of God at Mount Sinai...While thus the acknowledgment of the Rule of God, both in profession and practice, was considered to constitute the Kingdom of God, **its full manifestation was expected only in the time of the Advent of Messiah.** Thus in Targum on Isaiah xl. 9, the words 'Behold your God!' are paraphrased: 'The Kingdom of your God is revealed.'”⁶⁶

The standard Jewish Encyclopedia also makes reference to this truth—

“The aim and object of the Law, according to Pharisaic principles, are the training of man to a full realization of his responsibility to God and to the consecration of life by the performance of its manifold duties: the one is called “ol malkut shamayim” (the yoke of God’s Kingship) and the other “ol hamizwot” (the yoke of His commandments). Every morning and evening the Jew takes both upon himself when reciting the “Shema’ ” (Ber. ii. 2). “The Torah preaches: Take upon yourselves the yoke of God’s Kingdom; let the fear of God be your judge and arbiter, and deal with one another according to the dictates of love” (Sifre, Deut. 323).”⁶⁷

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Thus, one can understand how our Lord is directing the children of Israel to their commitment to submit to God's kingdom and God's commandments, of which, within the foregoing context, He is saying they are failing to do by their submission to Mammon rather than to God. It is as if Jesus is saying that rather than honouring their commitment to take upon themselves the "yoke of the kingdom of God," they are in practice taking upon themselves the "yoke of Mammon!"

This is also made clear because the Pharisees were the ones who boasted of their own righteousness and their own special place in God's kingdom, but Jesus is saying that their love of Mammon makes them no better than the Gentiles, who, of course, were idolaters. It must be remembered that the Pharisees believed the Gentiles could never have a place in the kingdom of God unless they gave up their idols.

In regard to this Jewish viewpoint the Standard Jewish Encyclopedia continues—

"The Kingdom of God, however, in order to be established on earth, requires recognition by man; that is, to use the Hasidæan phrase borrowed from Babylonia or Persia, man must "take upon himself the yoke of the Kingdom of God" ("Ol Malkut Shamayim"; "Heaven" is a synonym of "God"; see Heaven). This the Israelites do daily when reciting the Shema' (Ber. ii. 2); so do the angels when singing their "Thrice Holy" (Hekalot); and in the future **"all men shall take upon themselves the yoke of the Kingdom of God when casting away their idols"** (Mek., Beshallah, 'Amalek, 2)."⁶⁸

So when Jesus declares that all those who worship Mammon are no better than the Gentiles, He is saying that your boast of taking upon yourself the yoke of the kingdom of heaven is but an empty boast!

He is reminding them of whom God is and that they should trust in Him to fulfill His promise to care for them, not in their Mammon to do so. This, again, demonstrates clearly as to why the promised blessings of the Covenant of the Land were not

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theirs. In every way, by their actions, they betray their total lack of trust in God as their Father, and a total misunderstanding of His righteousness being expressed.

And so Jesus is exhorting them to remember their promise to take upon themselves the yoke of the kingdom and their promise to obey His commandments. He is exhorting them rectify their failure by “seeking first the Kingdom of God and His true righteousness,” and not the Mammon of the earth. He is exhorting them to take no thought as to what they will eat or drink or wear, for God is faithful in His kingdom to provide for every one of His subjects. And He is exhorting them to first seek His kingdom to see how “all these things shall be added unto them,” for that is in accordance with the character and righteousness of God. And, finally, His second phrase, to seek His righteousness, leads them into a deeper meaning of His exhortation (which we first mentioned in our comments on Matt. 5:8 where we stated there were three principle places where the Lord Jesus began to infer the true nature of His Person), of which we will now discuss.

If we remember, our Lord already stated that the Messiah came to fulfill the smallest jot and tittle of the Law. Thus only the Messiah’s righteousness could fulfill the needed requirement of the Covenant of the Land for the blessings of God to be granted. So His reference in this exhortation to seek the kingdom of God and His righteousness is a continuing unfolding of His Deity.

These references are not always made openly, nor are they always apparent on the surface (fulfilling the prophecy of Isaiah regarding the dullness of the people’s hearts), ^w but to those with an open and pure heart they are in Scripture to be apprehended by faith.

We already saw how our Lord intimated in Matthew 4:17, when He began his public ministry declaring that all should repent for the kingdom of Heaven was at hand, that He Himself was the kingdom of Heaven standing in their midst (with Heaven being the appellation of God). But here, with

^w **Matt. 13:14-15**

And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, **By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand;** and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive:

¹⁵ For this people’s heart is waxed gross, and *their* ears are dull of hearing, and *their* eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with *their* eyes, and hear with *their* ears, and should understand with *their* heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them. KJV

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the switch to God, we see that in His teaching He is also emphasizing (for those who could see and hear, and whose hearts were not dull) that the kingdom of God was the same as the kingdom of Heaven, with simply a slight difference of emphasis. If the kingdom of Heaven was first emphasizing the nature of Heaven's rule as seen in our Lord, then the kingdom of God would be first emphasizing the nature of God the Father as seen in our Lord Jesus. In other words, if Jesus is saying that you must look to Me standing in your midst as an example of what true submission is in the kingdom of Heaven, so you must look to Me standing in your midst to see what the true nature of God the Father is, just as Jesus declares in another place (Jn. 14:9).^x

I believe this is made all the more clear to those, who had faith among the children of Israel, because of a familiar Aramaic Targum that was composed by Rabbi Jonathan ben Uzziel who lived shortly before our Saviour was born. He was a contemporary of the Rabbi Hillel.

I will show how this is made all the more clear by looking at his paraphrase of Isaiah 40: 9-11; but first let me provide a more literal translation of the Hebrew text of those verses as found in the King James Version. It renders the Hebrew as follows:

Isaiah 40:9 O Zion, that bringest good tidings, get thee up into the high mountain; O Jerusalem, that bringest good tidings, lift up thy voice with strength; lift *it* up, be not afraid; say unto the cities of Judah, **Behold your God!**¹⁰ **Behold, the Lord GOD will come with strong hand,** and his arm shall rule for him: behold, his reward *is* with him, and his work before him.

However, Jonathan ben Uzziel's Aramaic Targum of Isa. 40: 9-13 renders it as follows—

Isaiah 40: 9-11 "Upon a high mountain get up, ye prophets, that bring good tidings unto Zion ; lift ye up your voice with strength that bring good tidings to Jerusalem; lift it up, be not afraid, say to the cities of the house of Judah, **The kingdom of your God is revealed.**¹⁰ **Behold,**

^x **Jn. 14:9** Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou *then*, Shew us the Father? KJV

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the Lord God shall be revealed, and the strength of the arm of His might shall rule before Him: behold, the reward of those who perform His word is with Him, because their works are manifest to Him. ¹¹ He shall feed those that are of His flock like a shepherd: He shall gather the lambs with His arm, and He shall carry the tender ones in His bosom; He shall lead gently those that give suck.”

Now, a Targum was a loose translation of the Hebrew language into the Aramaic language of our Lord’s day, and, in some ways, since it often paraphrases the text, it could be considered to be a sort of a commentary. Many times these Targums would be read after the reading of Hebrew Scriptures in the synagogue, and so they became very familiar to an Israelite.

This practice of reading these Targums in the synagogues was also done in order to help the people understand the meaning of the Hebrew text that was being read, as Aramaic (the language spoken after their return from captivity) was the common language of the people. This practice can be traced back to the time of Ezra, where Ezra would read the Hebrew and others would provide a “targum” of the text (see Neh. 8:2, 8). ^y

As such, what is interesting, in the Targum before us, is that it shows us how certain Messianic verses were understood by the people of the time. In the aforementioned verses just quoted, we can see from the Targum that they understood the Hebrew phrase, “Behold, your God,” at the end of verse 9, as, “The kingdom of your God is revealed” (which obviously must be understood as a commentary on the verse). And in the first part of verse 10, the phrase, “Behold, the Lord GOD will come,” is rendered, “Behold, the Lord God shall be revealed.”

Consequently, since this is how the verse was targumed to the people, it becomes a very significant Targum in understanding the Lord’s exhortation to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness.

When our Lord’s exhortation is considered in light of the Targum and the actual Hebrew Text, we see that if one is seeking the kingdom of God, one will,

^y **Neh. 8:2,8** Then Ezra the priest brought the law before the assembly of men, women, and all who *could* listen with understanding, on the first day of the seventh month. ⁸ And they read from the book, from the law of God, **translating to give the sense so that they understood the reading..** NASB

Matthew

in all reality, actually be seeking God!

This is most significant for we have already shown how the Lord declared that He, Himself, was the kingdom of Heaven upon earth (see comments on Matt. 4:17). As such, when our Lord says to seek first the kingdom of God (which is the same as the kingdom of Heaven with a slight difference in emphasis) He is saying to seek Him, since as the Targum intimates, the manifestation of the kingdom of God is a manifestation of God! In other words, this is a firm declaration of the deity of the Messiah.

The Targum gives this further emphasis in the first part of verse 10 when it declares, “Behold, the Lord God shall be revealed.” The God that they would behold, when Isaiah says, “Behold your God,” will be none other than the LORD God revealed!

How wonderful is this verse of Isaiah, for it refers to LORD God being manifested upon the earth, which is none other than our LORD and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

This truth is also affirmed when our Saviour was born in Bethlehem, at which time, the angel declared to the shepherds the following—

Luke 2:11 For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, **which is Christ the LORD**. KJV (capitalization mine)

In light of this, how wonderful also is the next verse from the Targum which renders verse 11 as follows—

Isaiah 40:11 He shall feed those that are of His flock **like a shepherd**: He shall gather the lambs with His arm, and He shall carry the tender ones in His bosom; He shall lead gently those that give suck.”

Truly our Lord, who was the LORD God revealed, was also the Good Shepherd, the Shepherd of Israel.

And so, we can see the second time in the Sermon on the Mount where our Lord intimates that He is none other than the LORD God Almighty of the Old Testament come in the flesh. When they beheld Him,

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they were beholding God—He who was very God of very God. And, since the one they were beholding was also called, in Isaiah 40:10, Lord GOD (YHWH in Hebrew), † we also see that He is the LORD. And, finally, when He exhorts His hearers to not only seek the kingdom of God, i.e. God Himself, but also seek His righteousness, we see again that He is the LORD, as He is called the LORD our Righteousness.

Jer. 23:6 In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: **and this is his name** whereby he shall be called, **THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS**. KJV

Thus, not only is Jesus being shown to be God, but He is also being shown to be the LORD (Jehovah, Yahweh, YHWH) of the Old Testament. When Jesus says to “seek ye first the kingdom of God,” He is saying (to those who can see and hear) that one must first seek Him for the kingdom of God the Father upon earth is none other than Himself, standing right there in their midst. And if one is truly seeking for the righteousness of God the Father, being manifested upon earth, one must first seek Him, for He is **THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS** standing right there in their midst.

So in a very real sense, Jesus is the “Kingdom” of God, and Jesus is the “Righteousness: of God. Jesus is God’s “Kingdom” upon earth, for He is the only One who ever fully obeyed each and every command God, and each and every desire of God the Father upon earth. No other man has ever been able to do such a thing. And, in a very real sense, Jesus is “our” “Righteousness,” for He is the only One who has ever been able to fully manifest the exact righteous character of God the Father upon earth, because He is the only One who is “the express image of His Person,” the “exact representation of His nature,” being of “one” substance with the Father (see Heb. 1:3 & John 10:30). ^z No one else has ever been, or will ever be consubstantial both with the God the Father, and (in a different and limited sense) consubstantial with Man. The Son of God, the Son of

† GOD, when in all caps in the King James Version, is a translation of the Hebrew name YHWH, also variously translated as Jehovah, LORD and sometimes Yahweh. (See Fig. 3 in comments on Matthew 7: 21-23 below).

^z **Hebrews 1:3**

Who being the brightness of *his* glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high. KJV

John 10:30 I and *my* Father are one. KJV

Matthew

Man, indeed, is the only Mediator between God and man, the Man Christ Jesus.

To everyone who thus seeks first the “Kingdom” and the “Righteousness” of God the Father, in the Person of His beloved Son, will be the ones to whom everything will be added to them!

How wonderful is this second reference to the Divine Nature of the Messiah in Matthew’s record of the Sermon on the Mount, for it is the basis of everything we are in Him. Amen

6:34 Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.

Finally, our Lord concludes with the exhortation to leave tomorrow to tomorrow, since each day will always, potentially, have its own evil or trouble with which one will have to deal. So why add to life’s normal vicissitudes with worry about that which God has promised to take care of in accordance with His providential care of His children? Jesus is reminding them that God will always provide for those in His kingdom, and, of course, to those who by faith see that He is the LORD God come in the flesh, He will care for them as a shepherd cares for his sheep.

Matthew 7

7:1 Judge not, that ye be not judged.

We are now brought into the final section of our Lord’s Sermon on the Mount with our Lord’s admonition in regard to judgments. Why would He begin this portion with this exhortation regarding judging? The reason I believe is because our Lord knew human nature. He knew that it was the tendency of those who are religious to always be in judgment of others. And since our Lord began this Sermon with the declaration that our righteousness must exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees (Matt. 5:20), who, of course, were known

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for always judging others, He emphasizes, that those whose righteousness must exceed the righteousness of the Pharisees must be careful not to fall into the same practice of carelessly judging everyone else so easily.

Judging others has always been a character of fallen human nature. From the very beginning when Adam sinned and disobeyed God in the garden of Eden, Man did not readily admit his guilt, but rather tried to justify himself, by first judging Woman as the one responsible for his actions. God never asked him if Eve ate of the tree, but rather asked Adam if he ate of the tree. But fallen human nature, being what it is, caused Adam, to first judge Eve as being the one to blame (Gen. 3:11-12). ^a Not only that, Adam even indirectly blamed God by declaring that it was God Himself who gave him Woman in the first place! The same thing, of course, was done by Eve. She first blamed the serpent before admitting her own guilt (Gen. 3: 13). ^b And, of course, even before Adam sinned, we see that the Devil made an unrighteous judgment by declaring that God was not being truthful (Gen. 3:4-5). ^c Such is the judging done by sin, which, because it is done out of a self-protecting pride, becomes the foundation of all self-righteousness.

And so, on the surface, when our Lord mentions that our righteousness must be greater than that of the Scribes and Pharisees, he knew the tendency of human nature would be to become puffed up, bringing others into judgment for not being as righteous as they perceived they were being. (Oh, how we all suffer from this.)

Remember, the entire backdrop of this Sermon on the Mount was the Covenant of the Land, whereby the Pharisees believed they should receive the physical blessings promised since they were “righteously” fulfilling their part of the agreement by obeying the commandments of God, walking in the ways of the Lord. Of course, as we have seen, such was not the case when our Lord declared to all the true intent of the commandments and the true

^a **Gen. 3:11-12**

And he said, Who told thee that thou *wast* naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat? ¹² And the man said, **The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat. KJV**

^b **Gen. 3:13** And the LORD God said unto the woman, What *is* this *that* thou hast done? **And the woman said, The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat. KJV**

^c **Gen. 3:4-5** And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: ⁵ For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil. KJV

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character of one who was walking in the ways of the Lord, thereby showing the Pharisees their utter failure in fulfilling their part of the Covenant.

In light of this, we must also remember that Jesus knew of the danger of the leaven of the Pharisees, later telling His disciples to be careful to not do as they do (Luke 12:1; Matt. 23:3). And, of course, one of those things would be their continual judgment of others, being based upon their pride and self-righteousness.

Luke 16:14-15 And the Pharisees also, who were covetous, heard all these things: and they derided him. ¹⁵ And he said unto them, **Ye are they which justify yourselves before men;** but God knoweth your hearts: for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God. KJV

Luke 18:11-14 The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, **I thank thee, that I am not as other men are**, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. ¹² I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. ¹³ And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as *his* eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. ¹⁴ I tell you, this man went down to his house justified *rather* than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted. KJV

As such, knowing our human heart, and our tendency to judge others in comparison with our own level of sanctification, our Lord warns all those who were hearing this Sermon to be careful of this type of judging.

So this leaves us with the question as to what type of judging was our Lord referring? A common notion held by the world, and many of those in that part of Christendom that is known as liberal Christianity, believe that Jesus is forbidding all types of judging. Many times we hear of Christians being accused by those from that part of Christendom as being so judgmental (whenever they might call certain things a sin), hearing them say something like, “You’re being so judgmental. Jesus commanded us not to judge!”

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However, such a view of our Lord's exhortation can only be sustained by one lifting the saying out of the overall context of Scripture and out of the immediate context of that portion of the Sermon. Verse one must not be divorced from verses two through five, since they are the verses that explain the meaning of our Lord's saying. So with that in mind, let's first look at the immediate setting of the verse.

The first thing to notice is that the Greek word, translated as "judge" in verse one, is inflected as a present imperative Greek verb, which, when it is negated many times in the Greek, will indicate that it may refer to an action that is actually ongoing at the time. Robertson says, "In general μή is used with the present imper. to forbid what one is already doing."⁶⁹

As such, this would indicate to a Greek reader that our Lord may have been referring to actual judging that was ongoing at the time He was speaking, either silently in the hearts of some of the hearers, or even, perhaps, verbally by some of the listeners. This would not be an uncommon occurrence in our Lord's life. Many times Scribes and Pharisees would be present at our Lord's discourses falsely judging what He was saying.

For example, in Luke 11: 39-54 we find an exchange occurring between Scribes and Pharisees with our Lord. During this exchange it says that they were trying to find something by which to accuse him.^d Certainly that was "judging," if not yet vocally, then most assuredly a judging being done in their hearts, for one does not speak forth an accusation without first formulating the accusation in one's heart. Then, immediately after that exchange, we find that the Lord was before a gathered crowd where He continues His discourse, actually using some sayings similar to what we find here in Matthew (e.g. Luke 12: 21-31).

The King James translation seems to obscure this fact by seemingly indicating in Luke 12:1 that it was only after waiting for a large crowd to gather that He continued on with his speaking. But the Greek seems to indicate that it was "during the time" (Gr. ἐν οἷς)

^d **Luke 11:53-54**

And as he said these things unto them, the scribes and the Pharisees began to urge *him* vehemently, and to provoke him to speak of many things:⁵⁴ Laying wait for him, and seeking to catch something out of his mouth, that they might accuse him. KJV

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of this exchange with the Scribes and Pharisees that the crowd had gathered and that, as such, the same Scribes and Pharisees would have still been present when our Lord continued His preaching with the wider audience. (This is clarified in such translations as Young's Literal Translation, which renders it as "at which time," and the New International Readers Version, which renders it as "during that time." In another place the KJV translated the phrase as "whereupon" and in another place as "wherein.")

This is significant for there is no reason to think the judging being done by the Scribes and Pharisees would have ceased. More than likely, they would have continued doing so either silently in their hearts (cf. Mk. 2:7-8), ^e or maybe even verbally, muttering to themselves in a mocking and arrogant manner. In fact, on another occasion when our Lord made known the same declaration we have here in Matthew's Sermon on the Mount, the declaration, "Ye cannot serve God and mammon," Luke specifically says the Pharisees arrogantly were scoffing or deriding Jesus. ^f That certainly was a type of "judging."

The reason this is significant, is that while our Lord was giving His Sermon, apparently His opponents, more than likely those Scribes and Pharisees who were present, were censoring our Lord for what He was teaching. So when our Lord says, "judge not, that ye be not judged," He may have been directly referring to those Scribes and Pharisees who were judging Him, warning them to be careful about what they were either thinking or saying, since God will not hold them guiltless for false judgments.

As we said, this was not uncommon. We find our Lord's opponents again publically judging Him in John 8:48-50.

John 8:48-50 The Jews answered and said to Him, "Do we not say rightly that You are a Samaritan and have a demon?" ⁴⁹ Jesus answered, "I do not have a demon; but I honor My Father, and you dishonor Me. ⁵⁰ "But I do not seek My glory; there is One who seeks and judges. NASB

^e **Mk. 2:7-8** Why doth this *man* thus speak blasphemies? who can forgive sins but God only?

⁸ And immediately when Jesus perceived in his spirit **that they so reasoned within themselves,** he said unto them, Why reason ye these things in your hearts? KJV

^f **Luke 16:13** No servant can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon. ¹⁴

And the Pharisees also, who were covetous, heard all these things: and they derided him. KJV

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In fact, such judging of our Lord was prophesied by Isaiah. In the Greek LXX of Isaiah we find the following.

Isaiah 53:3 But his form was ignoble, and inferior to that of the children of men; *he was* a man in suffering, and acquainted with the bearing of sickness, for his face is turned from *us*: **he was dishonoured**, and not esteemed. (Brenton's Version)

Now one might wonder how this is saying our Lord would be judged. If we notice, Isaiah says our Lord would be "dishonoured by men." The word used in the LXX for "dishonoured" is the Greek word ἀτιμάζω, meaning to hold in contempt. It is the same Greek word used in John 8:49, where we find Him equating their unjust accusation or judgment against Him with "dishonor." So we see that part of the dishonour our Lord would experience would be the result of the unjust judgments made against Him.

This occurred over and over with our Lord. The Scribes and Pharisees were always judging Him, ever opposing Him with their self-righteous judgments.

Let's consider one other example where we find our Lord being judged, for it will help us with understanding this verse in Matthew. It is found in John 7:23-24.

John 7:23-24 "If a man receives circumcision on *the* Sabbath that the Law of Moses may not be broken, are you angry with Me because I made an entire man well on *the* Sabbath? ²⁴ **Do not judge** according to appearance, **but judge with righteous judgment.**" NASB

This occurrence was based upon our Lord's opponents judging Him as being unrighteous by their accusation that he broke the Law on the Sabbath by His healing of a man (see John 5:1-16).

They continued their accusations regarding this manner until the Lord rebukes them with a command to stop their judging! The word translated "judge" (κρίνετε) in John 7:24 is the same Greek verb that Matthew uses in Matt. 7:1. It also is inflected as a

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present imperative verb. As such, the verse could be translated as, “Stop judging according to appearance, but judge righteous judgment. The verb is being used the same way it is used in our verse here in Matt. 7:1. It is referring to judging that was ongoing at the time of our Lord’s pronouncement. John even uses the exact same phraseology— μὴ κρίνετε—“do not judge,” or “stop judging!” Yet notice that this phraseology does not mean to never judge at all, for the next part of the verse concludes with, “but judge with righteous judgment.”

Therefore, this demonstrates that our Lord was not declaring that no one should ever judge another, like the world and liberal Christianity would like everyone to think. In the immediate context, our Lord was declaring that the Scribes and Pharisees should stop all the unrighteous judging they were doing right at that time! This is also confirmed in the greater context of Scripture by comparing other similar exhortations given to us by the Holy Spirit of God.

For example, Paul censures those who judge, not because they are making judgments, but because they are making judgments in hypocrisy, as can be seen in Romans 2:1-3.

Rom. 2:1-3 Therefore you are without excuse, every man *of you* who passes judgment, for in that you judge another, you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things. ² And we know that the judgment of God rightly falls upon those who practice such things. ³ And do you suppose this, O man, when you pass judgment upon those who practice such things and do the same *yourself*, that you will escape the judgment of God? NASB

And Paul instructs the Christians in Corinth not to judge, using the same Greek word as Matthew uses (I Cor. 4:5). ^g Yet in the very next chapter we find Paul, himself, judging and, not only that, also instructing the Corinthian Christians to judge!

1 Cor. 5:3 For I verily, as absent in body, but present in spirit, have judged already, as though I were present, *concerning* him that hath so done this deed. KJV

^g I Cor. 4:5

Therefore judge (κρίνετε) nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God. KJV

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1 Cor. 5:12-13 For what have I to do to judge them also that are without? do not ye judge them that are within? ¹³ But them that are without God judgeth. Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person. KJV

How can he say not to judge, and then in the next chapter say “to judge?” The answer is that the one is unrighteous judging and the next is righteous judging! The one is being careful not to judge the inward motives of a person, the other is being careful to judge the outward sin of a person.

James, the brother of our Lord provides another distinction between unrighteous judging and righteous judging. In James 4:11-12 and 5:9, James exhorts the saints not to judge. This would obviously refer to unrighteous judging of individuals because the context is speaking of quarrels between the brethren, in which one side, or both sides, are filled with hate, coveting, love for the world, jealousy, and selfish pride and self-aggrandizement (James 4:1-10).

James 4:11 Do not speak against one another, brethren. He who speaks against a brother, or judges his brother, speaks against the law, and judges the law; but if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law, but a judge *of it*. ¹² There is *only* one Lawgiver and Judge, the One who is able to save and to destroy; but who are you who judge your neighbor? NASB

James 5:9 Do not complain, brethren, against one another, that you yourselves may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing right at the door. NASB

Yet in chapter 5, verses 1 through 5, we see James making sweeping judgments, not of individuals, per se, but of wholesale groups (in this case, the rich) who were embracing sinful or carnal practices. This then, by definition, being inspired by the Holy Spirit, would be spiritual or righteous judging.

James 5:1-5 Come now, you rich, weep and howl for your miseries which are coming upon you. ² Your riches have rotted and your garments have become moth-eaten. ³ Your

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gold and your silver have rusted; and their rust will be a witness against you and will consume your flesh like fire. It is in the last days that you have stored up your treasure!

⁴ Behold, the pay of the laborers who mowed your fields, and which has been withheld by you, cries out *against you*; and the outcry of those who did the harvesting has reached the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth. ⁵ You have lived luxuriously on the earth and led a life of wanton pleasure; you have fattened your hearts in a day of slaughter. ⁶ You have condemned and put to death the righteous *man*; he does not resist you. NASB

You see beloved. Our Lord is not forbidding judging. He is forbidding unrighteous judging. The Scribes and Pharisees were continually judging others and their judgments were based upon their own pride and self-righteousness. As such, their judgments were often unrighteous and false. This is what our Lord is forbidding. This is the type of judging our Lord is referring to when he cries out, “Do not judge, so that you may not be judged!”

To separate the first clause from the rest of the sentence and, therefore conclude that Jesus is forbidding judging of any kind, would be no different than saying that when Jesus says, “Do not work for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life (Joh 6:27a NASB), he is separating the first clause from the second and so is saying to never labor for food! Of course He is not saying that! He is qualifying the first clause with the second part of the verse. He is saying to understand the first clause by the second clause. The same thing is true of Matthew 7:1 of which John 6:27a is of similar structure—a negative clause, followed by qualifying phrase.

Therefore, Jesus is not saying to never make a judgment, in same way He was not saying to never work for food. That would be ignoring the context of the entire verse. He is saying to be careful in any judgment you make for God will hold you accountable for any unrighteous judgment. This should cause us all to pause and not be so quick to judge our brethren, especially for those things which

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are not even sins, per se, like judging a brother who shares something at the Lord's Table, with a judgment such as, "That brother is not in Spirit." In many cases, this is done with a self-righteous and judgmental spirit (that will never be admitted, of course).

Know that such a one will be measured with the same measure by our Lord in heaven; so we ought to be careful in making judgments. If we judge a brother for not being in Spirit, God will judge us, or remind us of those times when we were not in Spirit!

The world and liberal Christianity are simply wrong when they state that Jesus is saying we should not judge another human being. Usually, such pronouncements against judging are because the world and many in liberal Christianity do not have a very discerning spirit as to what is really sin. So, since they do not like to be judged as sinners themselves, they (in their unbelief and/or carnality) say to the one who is making a judgment, "Do not judge!" And what becomes so ironic in all of this is that their negative pronouncement against another human being for judging is a judgment in and of itself! So they are doing the very thing they are condemning another for doing! *They are judging another human being, for their judging of another human being!* Such are the twisted labyrinths of sinful human nature.

So when we put all of this together we can see that our Lord was exhorting His hearers to be careful in the judgments they make, for if they make unrighteous judgments, they will have to answer to God. He was not forbidding the making of judgments; he was forbidding the making of false judgments, self-righteous judgments, presumptuous and self-serving judgments, and/or unrighteous judgments. And this brings us to the immediate context of these verses which will further affirm the conclusions we have made above concerning the overall considerations of context.

7:2 For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be

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judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.

The second verse further clarifies the meaning of the first verse. So if we want to understand what Jesus means in verse 1, we have to understand verses 2-5.

The first clue is found in the portion of verse 2 that states, "For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged." The question that must be asked is, "Judged by whom?" "Who will judge us according to how we judge?" Answering this question also answers the question of who will judge us in verse 1. The answer can be found, I believe in the parallel passage in Luke.

Luke 6:36-38 Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful. ³⁷ Judge not, and ye shall not be judged: condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned: forgive, and ye shall be forgiven: ³⁸ Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. **For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again. KJV**

As can be seen our Lord begins this portion with the same pattern we have in Matt. 7:1-2. In other words, God will do this or do that, if you do not do this or do that. If you are merciful, God will be merciful. If you are forgiving, God will be forgiving. So, since there is no contextual reason to believe otherwise, Jesus is saying to also be careful by which measure you measure others, for that same measure will be applied to you by God. And if that is true, then the following would also be true. Be careful in how you judge, for God will judge you the same way.

All of this has to do with our practical walk before God, not our eternal standing in Christ. A child of God may be very judgmental toward others, without mercy and with no forgiveness, but that does not mean that such a person will be equally judged by God with no mercy or forgiveness, thus affecting their eternal security. Our eternal standing before

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God is not dependent upon our own actions or righteousness. It is dependent solely upon Christ's actions and righteousness, which is imputed to us through faith. So, Jesus is not nullifying that truth by these exhortations. That remains inviolate, an eternal blessing granted to us by faith. But that does not mean a believer can act in any unrighteous way he or she wants with no consequences whatsoever. Every child of God will have to stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ, and it is to that judgment our Lord is referring when He says, "Judge not, so that you will not be judged," and, "For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged." Our actions do have consequences, but not of an eternal nature.

The apostle Paul says the same thing to the Church when he says,

II Corinthians 5:4-10 For we that are in *this* tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life. ⁵ Now he that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing *is* God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit. ⁶ Therefore ***we are always confident***, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord: ⁷ (For we walk by faith, not by sight:) ⁸ We are confident, *I say*, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord. ⁹ Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him. ¹⁰ **For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.** KJV

Notice there is no fear in Paul's words for he says the Spirit is our guarantee. Guarantee of what? The Spirit is our guarantee of the eternal life mentioned in verse 4. So if we have the Spirit of God in us we are guaranteed eternal life. Why? Because the Holy Spirit is received by our faith in Christ Jesus, not by any work of righteousness which we have done. ^h As such we can be confident, as Paul says in verse 8 that to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord. But notice that does not change the fact that we will still have to give an account of our service to

^h **Titus 3:5-7** He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, ⁶ whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, ⁷ that being justified by His grace we might be made heirs according to *the* hope of eternal life.. NASB

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Him on this earth. We will still have to give an account to Him in regard to whether we were just in our dealings with others, whether we were forgiving to our brethren or not. Paul says that we will receive according to what we have done, whether good or bad, and most certainly, unrighteous judging of our brethren is bad. Presumptuous and self-serving judging of our brethren is bad. An unforgiving heart to our brethren is bad, as is a merciless heart. And Paul warns us that if such things are true of our relations with others, we will receive in proportion to what we given.

Scripture never indicates as to what we will actually receive for the bad, i.e. all our self-righteous judging, or merciless attitudes, but we know it will not affect our eternal joy or standing before God.

If I were to venture a guess, I would say it would be the absence of a “Well done, thou good and faithful servant.” Now some may think that an absence of a “well-done” by the Lord is not so bad. But, dear brethren, you forget we will be in the presence of our Master, in all His glory and holiness, looking into His very eyes. All our senses will be free from the old man, free from sin, free from the flesh, free from the self. As such, we will be standing in His presence with the same sense of holiness and hatred of sin that He has. With that being the case, if we do not receive a well-done because we falsely judged our brethren, or we refused to be forgiving, I am sure it will pierce us to our very heart.

Or, perhaps, what we receive for the bad will be a simple look from the Saviour, upon which, when our eyes meet His, we will see His disappointment and hurt and so we will turn away with tears in our eyes, weeping in sorrow that we had so wasted our life in self-righteous pride. Maybe that simple look of disapproval will be enough to completely undo us to tears, as it did to Peter when he saw the disapproving and sorrowful look of the Saviour.

Luke 22:61 And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how

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he had said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. ²² And Peter went out, **and wept bitterly.** KJV

Such a look from our Saviour may be the meaning behind Paul's words in II Tim. 2:12-13, when he says, "If we deny Him, He will deny us." Not a denial of our eternal salvation, but a denial of a reward for our service, or a denial of a well-done for our faithfulness. Yet, because our salvation is by faith, and not by works, Paul also says, "If we are faithless, He remains faithful, for He cannot deny Himself." In other words, even though our rewards are based upon our faithfulness, our salvation is based upon His faithfulness!"

W. E. Vine has a helpful comment on these two verses in II Timothy 2:12-13.

"On the part of Christ, He will not cause us to lose our salvation, but He will disown us in the matter of reward for fidelity if that has not been the case....The Lord ever acts consistently with His own character and this involves the withholding of a reward from those who are faithless." ⁷⁰

This may also what the apostle John was referring to in his epistle when he says—

I John 2:28 And now, little children, abide in Him, so that when He appears, we may have confidence and not shrink away from Him in shame at His coming. NASB

Perhaps, we will shrink away from His Judgment Seat in tears when we are measured by the same measure by which we measured others, and we are shown how judgmental and unforgiving we had been. But I believe such shrinking away in shame will be but for a moment for Scripture also says that He will wipe away every tear from our eyes. (We must be careful to never ascribe any purgatorial sense to these verses.)

Isaiah 25:8 He will swallow up death in victory; **and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from off all faces;** and

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the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth: for the LORD hath spoken *it*. KJV

Revelation 21:4 And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, **neither sorrow, nor crying**, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. KJV

Some think this only refers to our tears from our time on earth. I am not so sure of that. I think it might also include those tears shed by us at the Judgment Seat of Christ. For I believe that if one turns away their faces from the Lord in tears and shame after one does not hear His “well done,” or if one does not hear His approval for their service and/or our actions done while dwelling upon earth, such a one will then hear from behind a voice gently say, “Dear child, do you still love me?” And such a one will cry out (as Peter did before) with eyes still wet with tears, “Yea, Lord you know that I love you.” Then I believe they will feel Him reach out and bring them close unto His arms, as that Great Shepherd that He is; and then He will gently wipe away every tear from their eyes, and quietly say, “All is forgiven. I died that you might go free. Enter into the joy of your Lord.”

How wonderful and full of love is our Lord, being merciful and forgiving as we should have been in our lifetime on earth. But also how sobering a thought this should be to our hearts. For even though such shame we may experience might last but for a moment, in light of eternity, it will be a terrible moment to a child of God, when it is shown how they failed the Saviour.

May we all take to our hearts the warning from our Saviour when He says, “Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again,” so that we do not grieve His heart when we see Him face to face.

In light of this, even though our Lord may have been speaking directly to His opponents when He said, “Do not judge, so that you will not be judged,” by application it refers to us all for we are told to

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beware of the leaven of the Pharisees.

May the Lord keep us from living a life of self-righteousness, making false or unrighteous judgments against others—false judgments that are made to the detriment of all involved.

Sometimes we are called to judge; truth must be spoken. But may we ever learn to speak the truth in love. May we never speak the truth in hate or in contempt. And this brings us to the final verses of this immediate context which further explains our Lord's exhortation in verses 1 and 2.

7:3 And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye?

7:4 Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye?

7:5 Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye.

These final three verses will further explain what our Lord meant by not judging someone. They will show that our Lord was not forbidding judging in and of itself, but that He was forbidding self-centered and self-righteous judging of others, thus demonstrating that verse 1 is a declaration that everyone should always be careful when having to make judgments about other things or persons. This is made clear because our Lord equates the judging of another with the act of seeing and desiring to remove a “mote” in a brother's eye after one makes sure to remove the “beam” in one's own eye. If the Lord in verse 1 was saying that one should never judge another, He then might have said something like the following: “How can you say to another, ‘Let me take out the splinter in your eye;’ yet, a beam is in your own eye? Hypocrite, no one has a right to remove splinters out of the eye of another, for you all have splinters and beams in your own eyes. Leave the removal of splinters to Me.” This, then, would have reinforced

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the idea that Jesus was forbidding any judging of another human being at all, like many in liberal Christendom and many in the world believe.

If our Lord meant to say that one should never judge another human being, then He should have said something like was suggested above. But our Lord did not say that. Instead, He said to first remove the beam out of your own eye, and then you can remove it out of the eye of another, which, as we said before, is equated with judging.

So what our Lord is saying is *to not judge others in a hypocritical manner*. Make the judgment; remove the “mote” out of your brother’s eye; but make sure you have first removed the “beam” from your own eye.

You see beloved, Scripture commands that judgments are to be made, but Jesus says they must be made with a spirit of gentleness and humility because everyone has a “mote” of some type in their own eye. In other words, by recognizing that we all have motes to be removed in our own eye, should cause us to never be self-righteous and proud.

Additionally, another way we might look at it is that verse 5 also explains what type of judging our Lord is referring to in verse 1.

In verse 4, Matthew uses the Greek word κάρφος for that which is in our brother’s eye. It is the word translated as “mote” in the King James Version. It is only used five times in the New Testament, all in reference to that which is in one’s eye. However, in the Greek Old Testament it is also used of the small olive twig that was in the mouth of the dove that had returned to the ark after being let loose by Noah (Gen. 8:11).ⁱ The Hebrew word it translates is normally used of leaves in the Old Testament, but it also is used of branches (e.g. Neh. 8:15).^j

Therefore, the word can mean more than just a leaf, it could mean a small twig; in this case, the dove may have had a small twig with a leaf attached to it. In any case, the point is that it was a small piece of the olive tree. Why is this significant? Because the Greek word bespeaks a piece of a tree that had not

ⁱ **Genesis 8:11**

And the dove returned to him in the evening, and had a leaf of olive, a sprig in her mouth; and Noe knew that the water had ceased from off the earth. Brenton’s Version

^j **Nehemiah 8:15**

And that they should publish and proclaim in all their cities, and in Jerusalem, saying, Go forth unto the mount, and fetch olive **branches**, and pine branches, and myrtle branches, and palm branches, and branches of thick trees, to make booths, as *it is written*. KJV

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yet hardened into a solid piece of wood. It was still freshly sprouted, new wood, if you will, that had not fully grown into hard wood. But it was “wood” nevertheless (i.e. in substance).

This is significant because the next word used by Matthew in verse 4 is the Greek word δοκός, translated as “beam.” This Greek word is definitely used of wood that had hardened into a usable piece of lumber that could be used in a building. Liddell and Scott refer to it rafters and/or joists of a floor.

Therefore, because of the context, it seems Matthew is using the Greek word κάρφος, not as a leaf, but as a newly formed twig that had not yet hardened into a branch, but was, nevertheless, lodged in one’s eye. (Now some may wonder how a small twig could be in one’s eye. Of course it could not, but neither could a leaf, let alone a whole beam! Our Lord is using hyperbole to illustrate a point). Thus, a comparison is being made, showing that the *mote* and the *beam* are of the same nature or substance! They are both wood, one being little, not yet fully grown or hardened, and the other being large, fully grown and hardened. And not only that, the large beam is lodged tight within one’s eye, becoming a permanent part of the structure of the person, so to speak, like a joist that is firmly attached to the structure of a building! And so, which is worse? The beam, of course!

And that is what our Lord is saying. He is saying to not be so quick to judge a small twig in the eye of a young brother who may be stumbling, perhaps, a new Christian who is struggling with a certain sin, or if not a new Christian, perhaps an older Christian who might not say the right thing at the right time in a meeting and so is judged as not being in spirit. Why should you not do this? Because you, being a Christian, also have sin in your life! Perhaps, it is not the same sin as the one you are judging in another. Perhaps, it is not an outward and obvious sin. Perhaps, it might even seem to some to be a harmless and insignificant sin. But, beloved, sin is sin, and whether it be small or large, it is all of the *same nature or substance*, i.e. sin (like a twig and beam

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both having the same substance as wood).

Perhaps you judge someone as not being in Spirit. Are you always in Spirit? Maybe a brother is not in Spirit on a Sunday meeting, and so you wish to judge him as speaking wrongly. But are you in Spirit on Monday, when you lash out in anger to your wife, or speak crossly to your children? Is your outburst of anger any better than someone saying the wrong thing at a breaking of bread meeting? Or, on Monday, when you discuss the situation with another, is there any spiritual pride in your judgment of that one? Is there any disdain in your voice when you speak of that one you are judging. These all are sins. Is saying something out of place at the Lord's Table any worse sin than the sin of spiritual pride, disdain or contempt that you have allowed to harden and grow into a "beam" in your own eye life? Again, sin is sin, whether innocuous or obvious.

So our Lord is saying, "Do not be so quick to judge, thou sinner! You also have sin in your life!" And, what is worse is that you have allowed the sin in your life to become a beam in your eye, firmly planted as a permanent part of the structure (i.e. your life)! What hypocrisy! First take care of your own mote, that sin in your own life that you have allowed to grow into a fully hardened beam! For if you do not, your judging of another becomes a sin, in and of itself, for it arises from self-righteous heart, and so becomes an unrighteous judgment itself!"

Perhaps this explains why our Lord speaks of two things being of the same substance or nature.

Paul also speaks to this principle in his epistle to the Romans. He says—

Romans 2:1-3, 21-22 Therefore you are without excuse, every man *of you* who passes judgment, for in that you judge another, you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things. ² And we know that the judgment of God rightly falls upon those who practice such things. ³ And do you suppose this, O man, when you pass judgment upon those who practice such things and do the same *yourself*, that you will escape the judgment of God? ²¹ you, therefore, who teach another, do you not teach yourself?

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You who preach that one should not steal, do you steal? ²²
You who say that one should not commit adultery, do you
commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob
temples? NASB

And, of course, in another place, our Lord also
says the same thing in the story of the woman caught
in adultery.

John 8:1 Jesus went unto the mount of Olives. ² And early
in the morning he came again into the temple, and all the
people came unto him; and he sat down, and taught them. ³
And the scribes and Pharisees brought unto him a woman
taken in adultery; and when they had set her in the midst, ⁴
They say unto him, Master, this woman was taken in
adultery, in the very act. ⁵ Now Moses in the law
commanded us, that such should be stoned: but what
sayest thou? ⁶ This they said, tempting him, that they
might have to accuse him. But Jesus stooped down, and
with *his* finger wrote on the ground, *as though he heard*
them not. ⁷ So when they continued asking him, he lifted
up himself, and said unto them, He that is without sin
among you, let him first cast a stone at her. ⁸ And again he
stooped down, and wrote on the ground. ⁹ And they which
heard *it*, being convicted by *their own* conscience, went
out one by one, beginning at the eldest, *even* unto the last:
and Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the
midst. ¹⁰ When Jesus had lifted up himself, and saw none
but the woman, he said unto her, Woman, where are those
thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee? ¹¹ She said,
No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I
condemn thee: go, and sin no more. KJV

As one can see, the Scribes and Pharisees were
once more testing our Lord, bringing to Him a
woman caught in adultery. According to the Law, the
woman must be stoned, and so they asked the Lord
for His opinion. Our Lord eventually replies that
those of the Scribes and Pharisees that were without
sin should cast the first stone. One by one everyone
left, leaving the woman alone. Obviously, according
to the Sermon on the Mount, they would all have had
a “beam” in their own eye that they had not yet
removed, and so they had no moral authority to judge
the woman. Sin infects us all and no one should

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become proud and self-righteous in their judgments.

But that is not all. Sin or “beams” in our own eye blinds us to true justice and causes us to judge unrighteous, and that is another reason why the Lord restricts such judging to those who have first removed the beam from their own eye.

In John 8:4 the Scribes and Pharisees tell our Lord the woman was caught in the very act of adultery. Consequently, they drag her to the Lord for His pronouncement that she should be stoned. But, if she was caught in the very act, where was the man?! The Law very clearly says that both must be stoned (Deut. 22:22-24)!

Deuteronomy 22:22 If a man be found lying with a woman married to an husband, then they shall both of them die, *both* the man that lay with the woman, and the woman: so shalt thou put away evil from Israel. KJV

Oh, the superciliousness of man. In their smug self-righteousness they excuse the man, and condemn the woman! The Lord knew this, of course, and that may have been the reason why the Lord said, “He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first.” Some even believe our Lord meant those of you who are without this very same sin! In fact, J. Vernon McGee suggest our Lord was writing out upon the ground the very names of those with whom each one had committed adultery.

He has this to say regarding this incident.

“Jesus stoops and writes on the ground...This is the only record that we have of His writing anything...What did He write? Of course we don’t know, but I can make a suggestion. Turning back to the prophets, we pick up something quite interesting: ‘O LORD, the hope of Israel, all that forsake thee shall be ashamed, and they that depart from me shall be written in the earth, because they have forsaken the LORD, the fountain of living waters’ (Jer. 17:13). Now, who had forsaken the Lord? This woman? Yes, she had. The religious rulers? Yes, they had. Their names shall be written in the earth. This is what I think He wrote, linking their names with sins of their past. Perhaps He wrote the name of a woman living in Rome. One old

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Pious Pharisee had had an affair in Rome when he was a young fellow. His wife didn't know about it; but our Lord knew that old rascal. As He just wrote the name of the woman, the Old Pharisee came over and saw it—and suddenly remembered that he had another appointment. Perhaps one of the scribes made regular trips to Ephesus, a great sinning place, to a certain address over there which Jesus wrote in the sand. The scribe look at it and said, 'Oh, my gracious!' He left hurriedly...'Thou hast set our iniquities before thee, our secret sins in the light of thy countenance.' (Ps. 90:8). Secret sin on earth is open scandal in heaven."⁷¹

In any case, each one was convicted within their own heart and so left.

Consequently, returning to Matthew, the use of these two Greek words in verse 4 may be telling us to be careful to not judge someone for doing something we have done or, God forbid, something we are doing! Leave that for someone else to do; you take care of the sin in your own life.

For example, if you have a problem with pride, do not judge someone for their pride. If you have a problem with anger, do not judge someone for anger. First, be sanctified in that area of your life (removing the beam out of your own eye), then help your brother remove that similar type of mote out of his or her eye.

Simply put, everybody has that sin which so easily besets them.^k So, do not judge your brother so quickly for a sin, if that sin is the same sin that so easily besets you! Rather, seek God's forgiveness for your sin, and then leave it behind, and sin no more.

On the other hand, if it is not a sin that so easily besets you, and if God leads you to bear witness to the truth of His holiness, and if He leads you to speak out against something that Christians do that is contrary to the Word of God, then, speak as you are led by the Spirit. But speak with humility and grace for we are all sinners saved by His grace and sanctified over time by His life. Do not be proud, but be humble, speaking the truth in love. This is what Paul speaks about in Gal. 6:1 when he says,

^k **Heb. 12:1**
Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, **and the sin which doth so easily beset us**, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us. KJV

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Galatians 6:1 Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.
KJV

In this verse it is important to notice that Paul does not tell every Christian to do this, but only those Christians who are spiritual. Christians who are carnal or soulical in their life should refrain from such direct judging for they have beams within their own eyes to deal with. Leave such judging to those who are spiritual, those Christians who have been able, by God's grace, to remove many, many, of those beams out of their own eyes. They are the ones who can "see clearly to cast out the mote" out of their brother's eye (as Jesus says in Matt. 7:5).

So, in order to conclude this portion of the Sermon on the Mount on judging we might summarize it as follows.

1) In the overall context, Jesus may have been warning His opponents, the Scribes and the Pharisees, to stop their continuous judging of Him and others. But, by its inclusion in the Holy Writ, the Holy Spirit is applying it to us all, exhorting us to be careful and sober in any judgments we make.

2) Jesus is "not" forbidding judging, in and of itself, but is forbidding all unrighteous judgments that result from self-seeking and self-righteous mindsets, as well as any judging that is rooted in religious pride.

3) The declaration by our Lord that those who judge should be careful in their judging because God will judge them by the same measure or standard, does not alter the eternal security of a believer. It refers to a believer's rewards, not to their salvation. It points forward to the Judgment Seat of Christ where every believer will receive for the things done in the body, whether good or bad.

4) Jesus teaches that all should be humble before God, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. He forbids any judging of another by one who is suffering from the same sin, or, at the minimum, by

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one who is not able to see clearly enough because of some other beam in their own eye, i.e. sin in their life, that they tolerate without confessing it to God. As such, He is effectively teaching that only the one who is spiritual,¹ who is not currently grieving the Holy Spirit, should be the one to judge others, for such ones have made sure to cast out all beams in their own eyes by the leading of the Holy Spirit. They have been made to see clearly, by recognizing not only their own shortcomings and sin, but also the sin of “self,” which plagues us all.

5) Our Lord explains the negative injunction against judging of verse 1, by the positive exhortation to judge clearly in verse 5. Because of the presence of sin in this world, judgments must be made by the godly in order to check the spread of sin. However, unrighteous, and/or self-righteous judgments are of no help whatsoever, since they only add to sin in the world, being a sinful act in itself!

6) This portion of the Sermon on the Mount is applied to the unrighteous judging of individuals persons and not, necessarily to the judging of things and/or the wholesale judging of carnal, soulical, or sinful practices that are embraced by larger groups (e.g. our Lord’s judgments against the Pharisees as a sect or group, in and of themselves, in Matthew 23).

7) Finally, this whole portion points to the fact that, in real sense, only the Lord Jesus is pure enough, righteousness enough, and just enough to competently judge another. The reason, of course, is true judgment requires impeccability, and the only man who is, or ever was impeccable was the Man Christ Jesus, the Judge of us all.^m The Lord Jesus never had to worry about a beam, let alone a small mote in His own eye. He was without sin and without a sin nature! Such knowledge should cause us to pause and keep us from being able to so quickly judge others. One who assumes he or she is spiritual and so can always “easily” judge another individual of some mote in their eye, or of not being in spirit, in all likelihood, is being not spiritual in that judgment at all, but is, more than likely, being soulical, or self-

¹ **I Cor. 2:15** But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man. KJV

^m **Acts 17:31** because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead. NASB

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righteous. A truly spiritual Christian will be “quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger” (Jam. 1:19). And if they are led by the Holy Spirit to judge, they will do so soberly, and with all humility and love, knowing they are no better than the one they must judge, for there is none righteousness no not one, and all our righteousness that we do possess, is as filthy rags in His eyes. Our only righteousness is His righteousness which has been graciously imputed to us. May our Lord be praised!

7:6 Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you.

Some believe these verses indicate that our Lord is comparing Divine doctrines not only to pearls, but also to that which is holy. They believe holy doctrines or Divine truths should not be given to unreceptive individuals, to those who have hardened hearts, to those who will show their disdain for the truth of God’s Word, first by their utter contempt, and then by turning their anger toward us in violence.

So let’s look closely to this verse and see what our Lord means. However, in discussing this verse, let’s reverse the order and first begin with our Lord’s statement regarding “pearls,” then regarding “that which is holy.”

Our Lord’s reference to pearls would be well understood by those in living in Israel at that time. The joining together of different portions of Scripture were likened to the stringing together of pearls. Alfred Edersheim mentions this practice in his book *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*.

“A favourite method was that which derived its name from the stringing together of **pearls** (Charaz), when a preacher, having quoted a passage or section from the Pentateuch, strung on to it another and like-sounding, or really similar, from the Prophets and the Hagiographa.”⁷²

An example of this practice can be found in Paul’s

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epistle to the Romans. In Rom. 9:33 Paul says this—

Rom. 9:33 just as it is written, ‘Behold, I lay in Zion a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense, And he who believes in Him will not be disappointed. NASB

Search as one may, one will not find where this is written; one will not find a verse from the Old Testament that says, “Behold, I lay in Zion a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense.” The reason for this is because Paul is not quoting from one verse in the Old Testament, but from two verses—Isa. 8:14 and Isa. 26:16—which he then strings together. This might better illustrate these quotes. I will put the portions from different verses in italics.

“Just as it is written, ‘*Behold, I lay in Zion, a stone of stumbling, and, a rock of offence, and, he who believes in Him will not be disappointed.*’”

Paul is not saying that the thing that is written is, “Behold, I lay in Zion a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence.” He is saying, “It is written, Behold, I lay in Zion a stone of stumbling, and, *(it is also written)* a rock of offence, and, *(it is also written)* he who believes in Him will not be disappointed.” This is an example of stringing together of pearls—pearls being portions or snippets from different verses.

Consequently, it seems our Lord’s use of “pearls” is more than just an elementary statement of truth or a quoting of a certain verse from Scripture (that would constitute one simple pearl, so to speak, but clearly our Lord is referring to many pearls)—and so it seems He is referring to in-depth dissertations of Scripture where many portions of Scripture are put together in order to impart wisdom to those whose hearts are open, pure, and who are willing to hear and receive it.

As such, with the additional warning of the swine turning and trampling under their feet the pearls, it seems that swine would refer to those who were more than simply wicked, but those who were so wicked that they would only respond to Divine things with

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the utmost hatred and hardness of heart.

In the Old Testament we have an example of those who were such in Amos 5:10-11. They were so hardened in their wickedness that they would refuse all uprightness; they would trample down the poor; and they would afflict the just. As such, Amos says the prudent would keep silent when having to be in their presence (meaning, more than likely, in the presence of those wicked judges or rulers in Israel).

Amos 5:10 They hate him that reproveth in the gate, and **they abhor him that speaketh uprightly.**¹¹ Forasmuch, therefore, as **ye trample upon the poor**, and take from him presents of wheat: ye have built houses of hewn stone, but ye shall not dwell in them; ye have planted pleasant vineyards, and ye shall not drink the wine of them.¹² For I know how manifold are your transgressions and your sins mighty: **they afflict the just**, they take a bribe, and they turn aside *the right of* the needy in the gate.¹³ Therefore the **prudent shall keep silence in this time; for it is an evil time.** Darby's Version

Perhaps, the Lord did this very same thing when He remained silent before king Herod. Herod had amply proved that he was one so hardened in wickedness when he turned upon and beheaded John the Baptist, our Lord's cousin (Matt. 14:3-11). Perhaps, by remaining silent our Lord was not only being prudent, as Amos declared, but was also being careful not to cast pearls before swine, for our Lord knew the wicked and hardened heart of Herod.

And so, it seems the common understanding of this saying of our Lord would, indeed, apply to the latter part of the verse, but I do not think that is the case for the first part of the verse that is referring to that which is holy not being given to dogs, for this simple reason —what is more holy and sacred than the doctrine of the salvation, i.e. the Gospel? And is it not given to every creature, regardless as to whether the person is wicked or not, violent or not, or whether the person acts vicious like a dog or not? The Gospel, which is holy and sacred, is given to all! And, unlike the “pearls,” in the second part of the verse, that

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strings many truths together, the Gospel is the very basic doctrine of salvation for the “vilest offender who truly believes” (as the famous hymn states).

Who was more violent and wicked than Paul? ⁿ In fact, Paul claims he was the chief of sinners. ^o And yet God in His mercy saved Him through “that which was holy,” i.e. the Gospel, which was given to Him, first by the Lord Himself, and then, presumably also by Ananias in Damascus (Acts 9:1-18).

Therefore, I do not believe that our Lord was referring to holy doctrines in the first part of this verse. I believe He was referring to something else, and this is better understood if we translate the first part of this verse in a very literal manner.

The Greek of the first part of verse 6 reads as follows: μή δώτε τὸ ἅγιον τοῖς κυσίν. A very literal, and perhaps better translation, would be—“Do not give the holy thing to the dogs.” The two Greek words, τὸ ἅγιον, are neuter singular and so can be properly translated as “the holy thing.” This I believe is the better translation, because the translation, “that which is holy,” tends to obscure what I believe is the meaning of the verse.

Perhaps, part of the reason the first part and the second part of the verse have been combined together in thought is simply because they have been combined together in English Bibles into one verse. But, of course, we know that chapter and verses were added later to Scripture. There were no verses in the original Gospel writing. As such, perhaps this one verse could have been better understood, if only it had been edited into two separate verses.

That being said, there are a few translations which do make a distinction between the phrases “that which is holy,” and the phrase “cast not your pearls” by including a period or semi-colon after “dogs,” rather than just a comma. In fact, the Robinson-Pierpoint Greek text shows this distinction by including a period at the end of the first clause.

But, of course, as the current verse system is standardized for all Bibles, a new verse designation cannot be created without adding confusion to

ⁿ **I Timothy 1:13**

even though I was formerly a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent aggressor. And yet I was shown mercy, because I acted ignorantly in unbelief. NASB

^o **I Timothy 1:15**

This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief. KJV

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readers who are familiar with the traditional chapter and verse designations. And so, for those who see this distinction between these two clauses, a semi-colon or period must suffice.

The following versions and/or paraphrases include a semi-colon or period after the first clause: New King James Version, Douay-Rheims, NIV, New Jerusalem Bible, New Living Translation, and the Revised Standard Version. I will provide one paraphrase which shows this the clearest (I consider it a paraphrase for it follows a dynamic equivalent philosophy of translation, while I believe a philosophy of complete equivalence to be the better and more objective method of translation).

Matthew 7:6 “Don't waste what is holy on people who are unholy. Don't throw your pearls to pigs! They will trample the pearls, then turn and attack you.” (The New Living Translation)

Therefore, if “that which is holy,” or “the holy thing,” should stand on its own, to what would it refer? “Holy things,” or “most holy things,” have very specific meanings in Scripture. The Law specifically tells us of things that are holy, being designated in various translations as “the holy things.”

Leviticus 22:2,10 Speak to Aaron and to his sons, and let them take heed concerning **the holy things** of the children of Israel, so they shall not profane my holy name in any of the things which they consecrate to me: I *am* the Lord.¹⁰ And no stranger shall eat **the holy things**: one that sojourns with a priest, or a hireling, shall not eat the holy things. (Brenton's Version)

These were all holy gifts or sacrifices dedicated or offered to the Lord. As such they were holy, set apart to the LORD, and as such, they were not to be considered common or used by others, except the ones the LORD so designated.

But that is not all. All the things connected with the Tabernacle were also considered “holy things.”

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Numbers 4:15 And Aaron and his sons shall finish covering **the holy things**, and all the holy vessels, when the camp begins to move; and afterwards the sons of Caath shall go in to take up *the furniture*; but shall not **touch the holy things**, lest they die: these shall the sons of Caath bear in the tabernacle of witness. (Brenton's LXX Version)

In fact, the things connected with the Tabernacle were so holy that even the Levites, who were assigned to carry them, could never look upon them until they were first covered.

Numbers 4:17-20 And the LORD spake unto Moses and unto Aaron, saying, ¹⁸ Cut ye not off the tribe of the families of the Kohathites from among the Levites: ¹⁹ But thus do unto them, that they may live, and not die, when they approach unto **the most holy things**: Aaron and his sons shall go in, and appoint them every one to his service and to his burden: ²⁰ **But they shall not go in to see when the holy things are covered, lest they die.** KJV

And, when we come to the Temple, we find that everything connected with the temple or with its service, its upkeep and/or worship was also considered to be a "holy thing."

I Kings 7:51 So the work of the house of the Lord which Solomon wrought was finished; and Solomon brought in **the holy things** of David his father, and all **the holy things** of Solomon; he put the silver, and the gold, and the furniture, into the treasures of the house of the Lord. (Brenton's LXX Version)

I Chronicles 23:27-28 For by the last words of David the sons of Levi *were* numbered from twenty years old and upward. ²⁸ For their office is to assist the sons of Aaron with the service of the house of the LORD, in the courts and in the chambers and in the purifying of **all holy things, even the work of the service of the house of God.** KJV

However, many times throughout Israel's history these holy things were not always recognized as

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sacred, as only belonging to the Lord to be used as He willed, just as the following verses reveal.

II Chronicles 24:7 For the sons of the wicked Athaliah had broken into the house of God and even **used the holy things** of the house of the LORD for the Baals. NASB

Ezekiel 22:8 Thou hast despised mine **holy things**, and hast profaned my sabbaths. KJV

Ezekiel 22:26 Her priests have violated my law, and have profaned mine **holy things**: they have put no difference between the holy and profane, neither have they shewed *difference* between the unclean and the clean, and have hid their eyes from my sabbaths, and I am profaned among them. KJV

Ezekiel 44:8 "And you have not kept charge of My **holy things** yourselves, but you have set *foreigners* to keep charge of My sanctuary." NASB

Thus, we can see that in the Old Testament “the holy thing” would be anything connected to the Tabernacle or Temple, its ordering, its service, and/or to those things dedicated to the exclusive use of the LORD as He may have ordered or allowed.

All these things were considered to be holy as was the nation of Israel itself.

Exodus 19:6 And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an **holy nation**. These *are* the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel. KJV

Moreover, when we come to the New Testament, we also find something else that is set apart as holy, in this case, being designated a “holy nation” —the Church itself.

I Peter 2:9 But ye *are* a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an **holy nation**, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light. KJV

All these examples should be taken into account

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when trying to understand our Lord's injunction in the first clause of verse 6.

Consequently, when we take all this into account we can see that "that which is holy" are those things so designated by the Lord and those things set apart to Him, in His Temple, in its service and in its worship.

These are the things that should be considered when trying to understand what our Lord is referring to when He says that that which is holy should not be given to dogs. These are the things that should not be made common or profane by having them given to those to whom they do not belong.

In spite of this understanding, however, the complete opposite happened many times during the history of the Old Testament, and, unfortunately, even today by the Church. Just as it happened in the Old Testament, "holy things" are still being given to dogs.

But some might ask, "How are "holy things" now being given to dogs? In what way does it apply to us and to the Church?" To answer that question let's look at a few passages found between II Chronicles 14-16.

In the beginning of the reign of king Asa (which Scriptures identifies as a good king) ^P a million man army of Ethiopians came to make war with him and with Judah. This is found in II Chronicles 14:9-10.

II Chronicles 14:9-10 Now Zerah the Ethiopian came out against them with an army of a million men and 300 chariots, and he came to Mareshah. ¹⁰ So Asa went out to meet him, and they drew up in battle formation in the valley of Zephathah at Mareshah. NASB

Now listen to the response of King Asa when confronted with this threat.

II Chronicles 14:11-12 And Asa cried unto the LORD his God, and said, LORD, *it is* nothing with thee to help, whether with many, or with them that have no power: help us, O LORD our God; for we rest on thee, and in thy name we go against this multitude. O LORD, thou *art* our God;

^P **II Chron. 14:2-4**
And Asa did *that which was good and right in the eyes of the LORD his God:* ³

For he took away the altars of the strange *gods*, and the high places, and brake down the images, and cut down the groves:⁴ And commanded Judah to seek the LORD God of their fathers, and to do the law and the commandment. KJV

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let not man prevail against thee. ¹² So the LORD smote the Ethiopians before Asa, and before Judah; and the Ethiopians fled. KJV

As can be seen above, Asa looked only to God, and God honored the faith of the king and delivered His people from what seemed to be an impossible situation.

Now, contrast this when later on in his reign he was confronted by another threat, but a very insignificant threat when compared to a million man army of the Ethiopians! This time king Asa was not able to exercise the same faith as he did before, but rather succumbed to a solution that entailed taking “holy things” out of the Temple of God, into which he had brought them during the years between these two wars.

II Chronicles 15:18-19 And he brought in **the holy things** of David his father, and **the holy things** of the house of God, silver, and gold, and vessels. ¹⁹ And there was no more war until the thirty-fifth year of Asa's reign. (Brenton's LXX Version)

So near the end of his reign, many years after God's mighty deliverance from the million man army, we find king Asa's faith faltering. He lost his walk of faith and his spiritual discernment in the things of God. And so, in order to achieve his goal of victory, this time he resorts to human means.

II Chronicles 16:1-3 In the six and thirtieth year of the reign of Asa Baasha king of Israel came up against Judah, and built Ramah, to the intent that he might let none go out or come in to Asa king of Judah. ² Then Asa brought out silver and gold out of the treasures of the house of the LORD and of the king's house, and sent to Benhadad king of Syria, that dwelt at Damascus, saying, ³ *There is* a league between me and thee, as *there was* between my father and thy father: behold, I have sent thee silver and gold; go, break thy league with Baasha king of Israel, that he may depart from me. KJV

This human solution, the opposite of faith, entails

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taking those treasures of the house of the Lord, which II Chron.15:18-19 identifies as “holy things,” and then giving them to the “dogs,” so to speak, in order to secure salvation from the harassment of Baasha, king of Israel.

Asa thought he could insure the peace and well-being of his people by this act of political maneuvering and human wisdom. But listen to God’s estimation of this.

God sends Hanani the seer to rebuke the king, telling him that this lack of faith in God would only lead to many more wars.

II Chronicles 16:7-10 And at that time Hanani the seer came to Asa king of Judah, and said unto him, Because thou hast relied on the king of Syria, and not relied on the LORD thy God, therefore is the host of the king of Syria escaped out of thine hand.⁸ Were not the Ethiopians and the Lubims a huge host, with very many chariots and horsemen? yet, because thou didst rely on the LORD, he delivered them into thine hand.⁹ For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew himself strong in the behalf of *them* whose heart *is* perfect toward him. Herein thou hast done foolishly: therefore from henceforth thou shalt have wars.¹⁰ Then Asa was wroth with the seer, and put him in a prison house; for *he was* in a rage with him because of this *thing*. And Asa oppressed *some* of the people the same time. KJV

Faith had routed a million man army raised up against king Asa. But lack of faith, and the profaning of the “holy things” of the Lord, caused Asa to never gain the peace and security he desired, but rather, nothing but distress and war.

These two incidents demonstrate to us the consequences of a walk devoid of faith in the providence and in the power of God. It shows us the results of one who forgets the promises of God and one who departs from the principles and exhortations of the Word of God. King Asa brought nothing but disgrace to Judah and disgrace to God because he abandoned his walk of faith, “giving away that which is holy unto dogs,” all in order to secure his goals and aspirations, which he wrongly thought would benefit

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the people of God.

This is I believe is what is behind our Lord's exhortation in Matt. 7:6a regarding not giving that which is holy to dogs. Our Lord is saying that anything that is under the purview of the Lord must never be given to anyone else; it must not be taken away from the Lord and granted to someone else, either to meet some need, or to obtain some relief or desired goal. Rather, we are to respect the "holy things" of the Lord, respect the purview of the Lord, and in that respect wait in faith for the promised deliverance or provision of God.

Consequently, perhaps now we can now see how our Lord's command can apply to us today. We must be ever careful to maintain our walk by faith before God, for without faith it is impossible to please God. We are not talking about our faith in God; king Asa and Jehoshaphat never lost his faith in God; we are talking about our daily walk of faith in the power and providence of God. To seek deliverance or provision in any other manner is dishonouring to God and demonstrates a complete lack of faith.

This injunction of our Lord reveals His great zeal He had for the house of His Father and how it is wrong to make "common" those things God has given to us in order to achieve that which we think is pleasing to the Lord. ^q Scripture says it is not pleasing to Him, even when it seems to bring about success. It might bring about short term success, but, in truth, it brings about long term disaster.

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Without faith it is impossible to please God. King Asa was pleasing to God when he exercised faith, but when he abandoned that trust and sought deliverance for the nation by his own ingenuity, seeking to maintain the work and the life of the people of God by worldly wisdom and means, he displeased God, for it showed that he did not believe in God's ability to provide for what He ordered. He thought he was still pleasing God, but his lack of faith blinded him to

^q **John 2:16** And said unto them that sold doves, Take these things hence; make not my Father's house an house of merchandise. ¹⁷ And his disciples remembered that it was written, The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up. KJV

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the true nature of things. The same is true today in the Church.

Perhaps it might be helpful to see how this would be applicable today by comparing a walk and a work of “faith” in a ministry from the 19th century with the walks and works of many in ministries today.

In the 19th century, God led George Müller and Henry Craik to begin a Gospel Ministry called the *Scriptural Knowledge Institution for Home and Abroad*. Trusting wholly in God (as did Asa at first) they laid out these principles governing the work, especially in regard to how funds for the work were obtained.

Now, perhaps it should be mentioned that while God might allow an individual to borrow money or incur debt, as mentioned in both the Old And New Testaments (e.g. Ex. 22:14; Lev. 25:35-37; Matt. 5:42; Philemon 1:18-19), the Church and His Work is different (in the same way it was different for Israel as a nation). * Why? Because He has personally taken the responsibility for the Church’s deliverance, growth and necessary needs. As such, to seek deliverance, growth, or those necessary needs by worldly alliances and partnerships (as done by Asa) is a denial of our Lord’s fidelity to care for His people, and is an affront to Him as our King of kings and Lord of lords.

What would we say if an earthly king’s subjects sought protection and/or provision from anyone else other than their own king? What would that say of the people’s opinion of and trust in their sovereign? And what message would that convey to people of other kingdoms regarding the character and capability of that king?

George Müller and Henry Craik understood this and so determined to maintain the testimony and prerogative of their Sovereign to do as He wishes in His Church and in His work without their resorting to any other means to seek deliverance and/or provision for its needs. They walked completely by faith. Therefore, they resolved the following—

* What is allowed or proper for an individual and what is allowed or proper for a Church or a Work, is completely different. In the same way, what was allowed to individual Israelites and what was allowed to the nation as a whole was different. In the Old Testament an individual was allowed to borrow money, the nation was not—For the LORD thy God blesseth thee, as he promised thee: and thou shalt lend unto many nations, **but thou shalt not borrow**; and thou shalt reign over many nations, but they shall not reign over thee. **Deut. 15:6 KJV**

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1. We consider every believer bound, in one way or other, to help the cause of Christ, and we have Scriptural warrant for expecting the Lord's blessing upon our work of faith and labour of love: and although, according to Matt. 13: 24-43, 2 Tim. 3:1-13, and many other passages, the world will not be converted before the coming of our Lord Jesus, still, while he tarries, all Scriptural means ought to be employed for the ingathering of the elect of God.

2. The Lord helping us, **we do not mean to seek the patronage of the world;** i.e., we never intend to ask unconverted persons of rank or wealth to countenance this Institution, **because this, we consider, would be dishonourable to the Lord.** In the name of our God we set up our banners, Ps. 20: 5; he alone shall be our Patron, and if he helps us we shall prosper, and if he is not on our side, we shall not succeed.

3. We do not mean to ask unbelievers for money (2 Cor. 6:14-18); though we do not feel ourselves warranted to refuse their contributions, if they of their own accord should offer them. Acts 28: 2-10.

4. **We reject altogether the help of unbelievers in managing or carrying on the affairs of the Institution.** 2 Cor. 6:14-18.

5. **We intend never to enlarge the field of labour by contracting debts (Rom. 13: 8), and afterwards appealing to the Church of Christ for help,** because this we consider to be opposed both to the letter and the spirit of the New Testament; but in secret prayer, God helping us, we shall carry the wants of the Institution to the Lord, and act according to the means that God shall give.

6. We do not mean to reckon the success of the Institution by the amount of money given, or the number of Bibles distributed, &c., but by the Lord's blessing upon the work (Zech. 4: 6); and we expect this, in the proportion in which he shall help us to wait upon him in prayer.

7. While we would avoid aiming after needless singularity, we desire to go on simply according to Scripture, without compromising this truth; at the same time thankfully receiving any instruction which experienced believers, after prayer, upon Scriptural ground, may have to give us

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concerning the Institution.⁷³

These two godly servants of Christ looked only to God for the supply of every need in their work—spiritual or material. As such, one of the most important “holy things” of the Temple of God, and of the Church (for we are the Temple of God in this dispensation) was honoured by them and kept in its proper place for the glory of God.

That particular “holy thing,” of course, was the testimony of the Lord gained by allowing Him to provide for all our needs, spiritual or material, as He promised. This “holy thing,” i.e. testimony, was represented in the Temple (and in the Tabernacle) by the ark of the testimony. It represented God’s fidelity and power in all things, whether spiritual and material, to ever provide for His people through the Person and work of His Son. This is a most sacred thing. If this “holy thing” is honored and held sacred, then whenever our deliverance comes, He becomes the One to receive glory. Faith, and a willingness to wait for His provision and deliverance, gives Him His proper place in our ministry and service so that only He gets the glory.

This *testimony of God* before the world is a most solemn responsibility, a most holy thing, for it testifies to a lost world, not only who our Lord really is, but also is a testimony to the complete veracity of God’s promises as given in His Word, both spiritual and material. When this holy thing is kept in the forefront of our minds, it also bears witness to the truth of our eternal salvation.^r However, when we ignore this most holy thing and treat it as common, giving the holy thing of promised care and deliverance to others, so that our supposed deliverance is gained by relying on others or by worldly associations, those others become the ones to receive the glory and testimony of deliverance. When we look to others to fulfill what He has promised to do, because of our lack of faith, or our lack of patience, or our inability to have our plans for God’s work delayed or even not granted, we rob Him of His

^r **II Cor. 1:18** But as God is faithful, our word to you is not yes and no.¹⁹ For the Son of God, Christ Jesus, who was preached among you by us-- by me and Silvanus and Timothy-- was not yes and no, but is yes in Him.²⁰ For as many as may be the promises of God, in Him they are yes; wherefore also by Him is our Amen to the glory of God through us. NASB

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prerogative, glory and testimony. In essence, looking to others to meet our needs is the modern equivalent of giving “that which is holy unto dogs.”

As we said before, this aspect of “that which is holy” is shown in the Old Testament by the holy things of the Tabernacle, especially the ark of the testimony, those holy things which were held sacred and so were only borne aloft in their journeys by the sons of Kohath. They were the ones called of God to bear aloft the ark of the testimony and the other holy things. It was not given to others to discharge this responsibility but was something reserved for them.

Numbers 4:4-6, 15 "This is the work of the descendants of Kohath in the tent of meeting, **concerning the most holy things.** ⁵ "When the camp sets out, Aaron and his sons shall go in and they shall take down the veil of the screen and cover the ark of the testimony with it; ⁶ and they shall lay a covering of porpoise skin on it, and shall spread over it a cloth of pure blue, and shall insert its poles. ¹⁵ "And when Aaron and his sons have finished covering the holy *objects* and all the furnishings of the sanctuary, when the camp is to set out, **after that the sons of Kohath shall come to carry them**, so that they may not touch the holy *objects* and die. These are the things in the tent of meeting which the sons of Kohath are to carry. NASB

This taught the children of Israel that every “holy thing” was to be treated sacred. Those holy things, especially the ark of the testimony, were not to be profaned by giving their care to others. All the holy things of the Tabernacle and Temple bespoke something of the nature, character and purpose of God as revealed in Christ, even in the way they were handled. So that if they were mishandled or given to others to bear aloft in front of the people, the testimony of Christ was marred.

Unfortunately, that was exactly what happened, many times throughout Israel’s history. Many did not understand the importance of this testimony, and/or they simply ignored it. In some cases, they even turned over some of the responsibilities of the holy things to foreigners!

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Ezekiel 44:6, 8-9 "And you shall say to the rebellious ones, to the house of Israel, "Thus says the Lord God, "Enough of all your abominations, O house of Israel, ⁸ **"And you have not kept charge of My holy things yourselves, but you have set *foreigners* to keep charge of My sanctuary."** ⁹ "Thus says the Lord God, "No foreigner, uncircumcised in heart and uncircumcised in flesh, of all the foreigners who are among the sons of Israel, shall enter My sanctuary. NASB

By doing this Israel ignored the purpose of these holy things. Those "holy things" were given by God to be pictures of His beloved Son and His Work, which, when honoured, would bring glory to Him, bespeaking something of His beauty and faithfulness. But when those things were given to others, as king Asa did long ago, in order to secure a means of deliverance, the glory and testimony that belonged to God alone was transferred to unbelievers, or at least to those who were uncircumcised in their heart.

Now some may say, "Well that was the Old Testament; now we are under the New Testament." True enough, but do we forget that the apostle Paul instructed the Church that the things of the Old Testament were written for our instruction?

I Corinthians 10:11 Now these things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come. NASB

It was Paul that took the Old Testament examples of Israel and the Temple of God and applied them to the Church.

I Corinthians 9:13 Do ye not know that they which minister about **holy things** live *of the things* of the temple? and they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar? KJV

I Corinthians 3:16 Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and *that* the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? ¹⁷ If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which *temple* ye are. KJV

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So, in applying these Old Testament types to us today, when God says he will meet our every need and Christians do not believe His promise and end up, for example, indebting His Church and/or work to some non-Christian entity, all in order to obtain the funds we desire (to do what we think is His will), we are, like Asa, giving that which is holy to those to whom it does not belong, thus robbing God of His glory and robbing Him of the opportunity to show forth the testimony of His faithfulness through Christ to a dying world.

Or, to use another example, we are told that it is the prerogative of Christ, as Head of the Church, to give gifts to men; As such, Scripture says He gives some as pastors and teachers.^s This prerogative is another “holy thing.” But when we take that prerogative away from Him and grant it to an educational board of accreditation, we rob Him of His glory and the opportunity to show the world that it is “not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord.”

It used to be that one’s qualifications for ministry was simply the calling of the Holy Spirit of that one who was so given by Christ; now, in many cases, it is restricted to those who meet certain educational standards set by an accreditation board. Thus, for example, control over who is able to teach in a recognized position in a Bible College or Seminary has now been taken away from Christ, and has now been given to a committee or accreditation board that requires the Bible College or Seminary to adhere to a set of standards they have set up. (And some of these accreditation boards are made up of men and/or women, who actually hold to heretical doctrines that denigrate our Saviour, or, in other cases, by men and women, who, while being sound in the faith, nevertheless are carnal by their acceptance of certain practices contrary to God’s Word.)

And what is more ironic is that if the godly men who founded the Bible College were still alive, some would now be denied a position of teaching in the

^s **Eph. 4:7-11** But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.⁸

Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.⁹ (Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth?

¹⁰ He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.)¹¹ And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers. KJV

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very Bible College they founded, simply because they do not have a proper accredited degree!

Nor does it matter if exceptions might be made, for the fact of the matter is, that in many cases, the decision of deciding who teaches in a Bible College or Seminary has been taken away from Christ as the Head of the Church and has been given to those who biblically have no right to oversee the issue. This prerogative of Christ is a most holy thing, and Christian leaders have taken that holy thing, which properly belongs only to Christ, and have given it to others. For what purpose? For some, I am afraid it is to gain the ability to grant a recognized degree, which requires the adherence to the accreditation board's set of standards. This is the modern day example of giving away that which is holy. And if that is not the reason, why not simply grant a diploma or certificate of completion to one who completes the course of instruction (as most Bible Colleges did when they were first founded)? Why would not that suffice? I am afraid (and may the Lord forgive me if I am exaggerating—only they would know for sure in their hearts) it is because they fear that a diploma or certificate of completion will not be taken seriously, not having the prestige of a recognized and respected degree. But why would this even matter to a Christian? Are we not to have the mind of Christ who made Himself of no reputation before men? Did that ever hinder His influence or success?

Philippians 2:5 Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: ⁶ Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: ⁷ **But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant**, and was made in the likeness of men. KJV

Beloved, if this is not the reason, then why not simply keep Bible Colleges and Seminaries as they were when first founded. They did not seek accreditation from worldly boards, or from boards holding to carnal principles. They simply gave their graduates a certificate of completion in honour of their hard labour (which they should do).

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I am afraid we have given away the holy thing of Christ's prerogative, in order to gain ourselves reputations among men. He who "made Himself of no reputation" is no longer the standard.

Where does the concept of accredited Bachelor's degrees, or Master's degrees, or Doctorates even come from? One will not find it in the Bible. Beloved, it has come from the educational systems of the world that were originally rooted in the Roman Catholic Church of the Middle Ages!

So much of what is still practiced by the Evangelical Church, unfortunately, is still rooted in the man-made traditions of Roman Catholic Church. This practice or idea of degrees is not a Biblical injunction. Rather it is a man-made tradition. Let me just provide a couple quotes in regard to this common practice in order to demonstrate its origins.

"Ecclesiastical authority in the Middle Ages controlled the orthodoxy of all distribution of knowledge—religious and, for the most part, secular—in the universities (when they were established) and outside of them. When lay masters were admitted, it was only by obtaining the ecclesiastical *licentia docendi* †...Teachers of schools without such licence were liable to excommunication. Though the universities were autonomous as against the control of diocesan chancellors, the latter retained control of the licensing of teachers, and this control was passed on continuously in the Anglican Church after the Reformation."⁷⁴

† *Licentia Docendi*
was a teaching
license, i.e. a
"license to teach."

"Alexander had indeed the interests of education at heart, and, in the Third Council of Lateran, c. 18 (1179), he dealt generally with the same important subject for the whole Catholic world. This question is one that needs to be very closely considered by students of the history of European education. In 1170 the Pope had legislated for the Gallican Church on the subject...."⁷⁵

Of course, the conferment of degrees is perfectly fine for secular Colleges and/or Universities. Scripture never forbids such a practice in such schools. In fact, in many instances, the possession of such secular degrees is good and necessary! If a

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surgeon is going to operate on you, you want to make sure he or she has earned their Doctorate of Medicine!

However, in the work of the Lord it is different. We should not follow the standards of the world in the Church or in the work of the Lord. Paul specifically tells us in Col. 2:9 that we should never follow the traditions of men or the principles of the world.

Colossians 2:8 Take heed lest there shall be any one that maketh spoil of you through his philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ. ASV

Rather, we are told to follow Christ. He is the Head of the Church, the One to whom we must hold fast. He chose a different path and standard for His Church and His Work. He did not institute or require a hierarchical set of degrees for service, but, rather, instituted the way of the cross and the fullness of the Holy Spirit for service. Is not His way sufficient? Is that not the way He used with His apostles? In His wisdom did he ever think a recognized degree was the best way to influence others? No, of course not. He taught them and then sent them out in the fullness of the Spirit.

Scripture's *licentia docendi*, if you will, is the Father's placement of the believer into the Body of Christ, the gifting of Christ that is done from on high, and the Holy Spirit's filling and manifestation of the appropriate spiritual gift, along with the "setting apart" of that person so chosen and deemed ready for the work of the Lord (See I Cor. 12:18; Eph. 4:7-11; I Cor. 12:7 and Acts 13:2).

Sometimes this preparation might occur privately in an "Arabia" (Gal. 1:15-17). Other times it might occur publically in a "School of Tyrannus," where one is taught by one gifted like Paul (thus, the Biblical basis for our Bible Colleges—Acts 19:9). But whether it is the one or the other, the resulting qualification for service is the gifting of Christ and the filling of the Holy Spirit, not a degree system

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adopted from the educational systems of the world!

Not only that, apart from the aforementioned degree system rooted in the Roman Catholic Church, Scripture also tells us it is important to keep our ministry free from harmful associations. For example, we are told to reject a heretic and thus heresy (Titus 3:10 KJV), ^t and we are told to not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers, nor to have any fellowship with unrighteousness (II Cor. 6:14, 17).^u Yet both of these admonitions are ignored by many Bible Colleges and Seminaries, all for the sake of a degree system not even found in the Bible.

If an accreditation board will countenance a heretical group or ungodly mindset that denigrates our Saviour, a Bible College or Seminary should have nothing to do with such a ministry, work or accreditation board. But that is not the case. Rather, for the sake of reputation, and for the ability to grant degrees, the holy things of the Temple of God in this dispensation, i.e. the Church, are being profaned, thus marring the testimony of the Lord.

Where is our spiritual discernment? Why is a degree so important that this compromise is tolerated? Is not the filling of the Spirit and fidelity to the Word more important than a degree? Why not rather have faith in the ability of the Holy Spirit to provide the spiritual influence that is needed in our ministry? Why not rather be willing to make ourselves of no reputation like our Master, the Lord Jesus Christ? ^v Why not be willing to be like the apostles of the Master, those who trusted in the power and influence of the Holy Spirit, those who were willing to serve the Lord without any honour from the world, or even from other Christians who were puffed up in their knowledge (consider the ridicule of Paul by those upon Mars' Hill, and by certain Christians in Corinth—see Acts 17:18-32 & II Cor. 10:7-12)? Could it be because they do not believe God can accomplish much with the poor and the simple, the lowly and the unknown who have no accredited degree?

Oh, that Bible Colleges and Seminaries would

^t **Titus 3:10** A man that is an heretic after the first and second admonition reject. KJV

^u **II Cor. 6:14-17** Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness and what communion hath light with darkness?

¹⁷ Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean *thing*; and I will receive you. KJV

^v **Phil. 2:6-7** Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God:

⁷ But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men. KJV

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take this to heart and not make such compromises with unbiblical accreditation boards. Should we not rather seek to emulate the apostles, who were willing to be known as the “dregs of all things” before the world? They understood that even though they might be considered a dreg by society, it would never thwart the power and influence of the Holy Spirit? ^w

In the beginning, Bible Colleges were ministries that simply taught the saints the truths of God’s Word. The saints would attend a Bible College to complete a course of instruction, not for a degree, but for the benefit of gaining knowledge in the things of God. Is not the knowledge gained of God’s Word sufficient? Why is it so important for the saints to have such letters behind their names or titles before their names—so important, that a Bible College is even willing to make an educational “alliance” with a worldly organization that has the authority to confer legitimacy to a college program?

Today, like Asa of old, many Christians have lost their faith in the power of God to deliver, provide and/or to influence people. To accomplish their goals they have taken the “holy things” of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit and given it to those to whom they do not belong.

Many no longer have the faith that God will provide what He has promised in His Word, or they are not patient enough to wait for His provision, and so they provide for themselves in some other way or means. And so, as a result, human might and power are emphasized over the Spirit and the ways of the Lord (cf. Zech. 4:6). They have lost their walk of faith. They want to serve God, but they do not want to wait until God provides, and they do not want to follow His ways. So they convince themselves that the traditions of man, so popular today, are the divine way. And in this, they are no different than king Asa, who lost his faith, thinking his chosen path, was God’s chosen path.

Faith is so important in our service to God. It keeps the holy things of God in their proper place, and it causes us to trust only in Him for our material

^w **I Cor. 4:9-10, 12-13b** For I think that God hath set forth us the apostles last, as it were appointed to death: for we are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men.¹⁰ We *are* fools for Christ's sake, but ye *are* wise in Christ; we *are* weak, but ye *are* strong; ye *are* honourable, but we *are* despised.¹² And labour, working with our own hands: being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it:^{13b} we have become as the scum of the world, **the dregs of all things, even until now.** KJV & NASB

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and our spiritual needs In this regard, let me once again quote a portion from the writings of George Müller. It might be lengthy, but it is a quote well worth reading.

“As, with reference to the growth of every grace of the Spirit, it is of the utmost importance that we seek to maintain an upright heart and a good conscience, and, therefore, do not knowingly and habitually indulge in those things which are contrary to the mind of God, so it is also particularly the case with reference to the growth in faith. **How can I possibly continue to act faith upon God, concerning anything, if I am habitually grieving him, and seek to detract from the glory and honor of him in whom I profess to trust, upon whom I profess to depend?...**”

“In our natural state we dislike dealing' with God alone, **Through our natural alienation from God we shrink from him, and from eternal realities. This cleaves to us more or less, even after our regeneration. Hence it is that, more or less, even as believers, we have the same shrinking from standing with God alone, from depending upon him alone, from looking to him alone;** and yet this is the very position in which we ought to be, if we wish our faith to be strengthened. The more I am in a position to be tried in faith with reference to my body, my family, my service for the Lord, my business, etc., the more shall I have opportunity of seeing God's help and deliverance; and every fresh instance in which he helps and delivers me will tend towards the increase of my faith. On this account, therefore, the believer should not shrink from situations, positions, circumstances, in which his faith may be tried, but should cheerfully embrace them as opportunities where he may see the hand of God stretched out on his behalf, to help and deliver him, and whereby he may thus have his faith strengthened.”

“The last important point for the strengthening of our faith is, that we let God work for us, **when the hour of the trial of our faith comes, and do not work a deliverance of our own.** Wherever God has given faith, it is given, among other reasons, for the very purpose of being tried...At first our faith will be tried very little in comparison with what it may be afterwards; for God never lays more upon us than He is willing to enable us to bear. **Now when the trial of faith comes, we are naturally inclined to distrust God, and to trust rather in**

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ourselves, or in our friends, or in circumstances. We will rather work a deliverance of our own somehow or other, than simply look to God and wait for His help. But if we do not patiently wait for God's help, if we work a deliverance of our own, then at the next trial of our faith it will be thus again, we shall be again inclined to deliver ourselves; and thus with every fresh instance of that kind, our faith will decrease; whilst, on the contrary, were we to stand still in order to see the salvation of God, to see His hand stretched out on our behalf, trusting in Him alone, then our faith would be increased, and with every fresh case in which the hand of God is stretched out on our behalf in the hour of the trial of our faith, our faith would be increased yet more. Would the believer, therefore, have his faith strengthened, he must especially, *give time to God*, who tries his faith in order to prove to His child, in the end, how willing He is to help and deliver him, the moment it is good for him."⁷⁶

Beloved, that which is sacred belongs to the Lord. We should not give that which is holy to those to whom it does not belong. The holy things of the Lord should remain in their proper place so our Lord Jesus will be the only one to receive honour and glory in all things. This is what I believe our Lord is saying in the first part of Matthew 7:6.

**7:7 Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you:
7:8 For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.**

If verse 7 refers to the holy things of the Lord being respected by His children then, perhaps this might explain why the topic of prayer is once again introduced, since it was already addressed in the previous chapter (Matt. 6: 6-13).

It is as if our Lord could be addressing king Asa when he forgot the care, deliverance and protection that God gave him when he was confronted by the million man army. It is as if He is saying, "Asa, do not give that which is holy to the dogs. Ask and you will receive my care; seek and you will find by

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deliverance. Do not give the holy things of My Temple to the king of Syria, Ben-hadad, in order to secure your peace and safety; knock and I will open to you so you can enter into My presence where you will have my complete peace, safety and care.”

In other words, this portion of our Lord’s Sermon on the Mount is telling us to maintain the sacredness of the holy things God has given to His people (whether individually as believers or together as His Church). And He is telling us to never give control of those things to others, nor to ever seek deliverances of our own making, or to give that which is holy to others in order to maintain our ways, which we think are His ways. Rather, He says to look up to Him, to have faith in Him, to trust His Word; to ask, seek and knock for He will always provide. And that leads to verses 9-11. Our Lord encourages His people to ever look to Him, to never lose their faith, to always ask, seek and knock. Why? Because of the answers to the next three questions given in the next three verses.

7:9 Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone?

7:10 Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent?

7:11 If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?

Our Lord reminds them that the Father is much more loving and caring than any earthly father. As such, look to Him, He will provide for your needs.

Isaiah 45:22 Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I *am* God, and *there is* none else. KJV

Not only must we first look to the Lord to be saved from the wages of sins, and from death and hell, we must keep on looking to Him for our all our needs, both spiritual and physical. We must always be looking to God, ever walking by the Spirit, always walking by faith, ever knowing that if we ask we will

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receive, if we seek we will find, if we knock it shall be opened.

These verses are speaking of the promised care and provision of God to those who are in service to Him, whether it be spiritual, monetary, or physical. They are not referring to answers to any and all prayers we might make. In other words, this portion must be taken in the immediate context of verse six—not giving away the holy things of God to gain what we wish in our ministry. It refers to trusting in the faithfulness of God to honour His Word. It is not referring, necessarily, to individual requests of things that we may desire for ourselves, but is referring to the promises of God made in Scripture regarding His care, deliverance and promised provision for His people who are doing His will. Ask, seek, and knock for those things and God will certainly give them.

Notice that the imagery in these verses is about those basic necessities that are necessary for sustaining life—bread and fish. Sometimes Christians have fallen away from the Faith, because they have asked God for some particular thing, based upon these verses, believing they will receive it, and when they do not receive it they become disappointed and fall away from the Lord, because they do not believe prayer works as Jesus said.

Beloved, do not be disappointed; God has not failed you. You simply misunderstood the context of these verses. It is referring to the basic care and provision of God, given to those in service to Him, not to individual things we may pray for because we think we need them or want them. Sometimes we do not realize it, but sometimes we pray amiss (see James 4:3).^x But I also know (for I have experienced this myself) that sometimes we pray, not for selfish things, but for something sincere, like the healing of one who is dear, perhaps, our little baby or child, or, perhaps our spouse or family member, or maybe even a beloved friend, and no matter how much we asked, sought or knocked, our loved one remained sick, or maybe even died.

Oh, dear Christian, may God comfort you. God

^x **James 4:3** Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume *it* upon your lusts. KJV

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deeply cares for you; it would not even surprise me that even now, Jesus still weeps when we weep. ^y He loves and cares for us so much. But please know God did not fail you. He did not break His promise made in these verses. These verses refer to God's promise to provide for everything He orders in our service to Him, for everything done by His people in accordance with His will. In that regard, if we have faith and obey His Word, if we persist in prayer, and wait on Him to provide for our needs, no matter how long it might take, He will grant us our petition.

7:12 Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets.

Jesus began His Sermon with the revelation that the Covenant of the Land, which promised the blessing of life, required all to obey the commandments of God and all to follow the ways of the Lord. He now concludes with the same affirmation, diluting it down to what is commonly called the Golden Rule.

The Golden Rule teaches the opposite of selfishness. It teaches one to love one's neighbor as oneself. In other words, treat that person as if that person was yourself. In that way, since no one ever wishes ill will for oneself, no one will ever wish ill will for another, simply because that other person standing in front of you will be seen by you, as being you!

7:13 Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat:

7:14 Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.

Many take these two verses as referring to the way of salvation, the narrow gate being Christ, leading to

^y **John 11:33-36**

When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews also weeping which came with her, he groaned in the spirit, and was troubled, ³⁴ And said, Where have ye laid him? They said unto him, Lord, come and see. ³⁵ **Jesus wept.**

³⁶ Then said the Jews, Behold how he loved him! KJV

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heaven and the broad gate being the gate that leads to hell. Most certainly this is true if we take “life” as referring to our eternal salvation, for there are not many roads leading to heaven; there is only one and that is the Lord Jesus.

Jesus, Himself, said, “I am the way, the truth and the life, no man cometh to the Father but by Me” (John 14:6). And the apostle Peter declared to lost souls regarding the Lord Jesus that “neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved” (Act 4:12).

And so these two verses certainly should serve as a warning to unbelievers that salvation is only through Christ. However, this warning must be understood within the context of this Sermon, which will give it a slightly different emphasis and teaching.

Within the context of this Sermon we will see that the “life” our Lord speaks about is more than just the promised life of endless duration. He is also speaking about the fullness of that eternal life as a possession.

Again (for we must never forget this if we wish to understand this Sermon) this whole Sermon has been spoken to those who thought they were fulfilling the Covenant of the Land and so were expecting their deliverance from Rome and the promised blessings of “life” recorded in Deut. 30:19-20.

Deut. 30:19-20 "I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, **that I have set before you life** and death, the blessing and the curse. **So choose life in order that you may live**, you and your descendants,"²⁰ by loving the LORD your God, by obeying His voice, and by holding fast to Him; for this is your life and the length of your days, that you may live in the land which the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give them." NASB

But, as we have seen, the Lord showed them they were not fulfilling their part of the Covenant, following the Lord or His ways, nor were they really obeying the commandments of God, but were breaking them from within their heart one after the

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other. And, yet the Lord promised them blessings if they would be but ‘poor in spirit,’ if they would be meek, if they would hunger and thirst for righteousness, etc. He promised them that they would be “rewarded” by God if they would be careful to not practice their righteousness before men. And He promised that if they sought first the kingdom of God and His righteousness the things of daily life would be added to them.

In other words, He promised the blessings of “life” to those who would follow His teachings as found in this Sermon on the Mount. This, obviously, would include the type of blessings most expected when He said that those who were meek would inherit the earth (this would refer to the future millennial kingdom of the Messiah), but for the most part He was referring to a different type of blessing. He was referring to the spiritual blessing of life that would characterize His spiritual kingdom (i.e. the present form of the kingdom, the mystery form of the kingdom), of which not everyone yet understood.

And so we see that the concept of “life,” promised to those who enter the narrow gate, following the narrow way, must be understood within the fuller context of the Covenant of the Land, the blessings of “life” which our Lord clearly showed could only be obtained if their righteousness surpassed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees.

This is the context in which His hearers were told to enter through the narrow gate, for He is declaring that He is the gate to life. He is the only means whereby the children of Israel could be righteous enough to gain the blessings of life as promised in the Covenant of the Land, for He is the only one who fully obeyed the Law and followed in the ways of the Lord. He is the only One who could fulfill the Law and the Prophets, the only One who could fulfill all righteousness. And because of that, He granted that perfect fulfillment and righteousness to all who will believe in Him. He is asking the children of Israel (and by the written Word, He is asking everyone else) to look to Him as their Messiah, to trust in Him

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even though they did not yet fully understand. He is declaring that all the promises and blessings of God will be found only in Him, and if they enter through Him, they will gain not only eternal salvation, but, if they follow the narrow path, they will also receive the promised blessing of life, both spiritual in the mystery form of the kingdom now, and physical blessings promised to those who will rule and reign with Him in the future millennial form of the kingdom.

Thus, our Lord is essentially using the same paradigm with the hearers of His Sermon that Moses used with the children of Israel when he first set before them the Covenant of the Land, saying, “I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day, that I have set before thee **life** and death” (Deut. 30:19).

As Moses gave the children of Israel a choice between life and death, so too does our Lord. He presents to the children of Israel first (and then ultimately to the rest of the world) a choice between life and death—to those who choose to enter the narrow gate—life, and to those who choose to enter the broad gate—death.

No doubt one must first be justified by faith before one can gain entrance into the full blessings of life, so one cannot ignore the salvation aspects of this verse. But, obviously, within the context our Lord is speaking of more than simply the durational aspects of eternal life. Why?—Because our Lord says in verse 14 that the gate and narrow way “leads” to life.

In other words, one must travel along that way to reach the life after one passes through the gate. Whereas the eternal life of salvation is possessed at the moment of justification, at the moment one believes, at the moment one enters the gate, so to speak, not to sometime in the future.

I John 5:12 He that **hath the Son hath life**; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life. ¹³ These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that **ye may know that ye have eternal life**, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God. KJV

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Perhaps, the “gate” might bespeak our justification by faith to life, the moment we believe, and the “way” bespeaks our ongoing life of sanctification through obedience.

In light of this, it is important to remember that eternal life is used in more than one way in Scripture. It is used of duration, in the sense of that eternal life which is endless, never ending, which we receive when we believe. ^z And it is used in a substantial sense, that is, the substantial quality of that life which God created to be ours now, in the Millennium, and, indeed, for eternity, i.e. the aspects or characteristics of that eternal life which we will receive in the future.

The eternal life that we receive in our justification we cannot work or strive for; it is a gift of God granted to us only by faith!

Romans 6:23 For the wages of sin *is* death; **but the gift of God *is* eternal life** through Jesus Christ our Lord. KJV

However, the eternal life we receive in the future is granted to us as a reward for our service, based upon what we do. This was the promise made by our Lord to Peter in Mark 10:28-30. ^a And it was the life which the rich young ruler was seeking. It was the benefits of that life one could possess in the Millennium. This is why some get confused when Jesus tells the rich young ruler that if he wanted eternal life he must keep the commandments of God and give all his wealth to the poor. Jesus is not saying by this that one earns his salvation by good works (for He was using the Jewish concept of eternal life which has to do with more than just salvation from hell). No, he was referring to the substantial quality or benefit of eternal life that is rewarded by God to one for their good works. This is no different than what the apostle Paul declares in I Tim. 6:18-19 (and we certainly know that Paul did not believe in justification by works or that one is saved by good works). I will use Tyndale’s translation.

I Tim. 6:18-19 And, that they do good, and **be rich in good works**, and ready to give and to distribute, laying up

^z **John 10:28** And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any *man* pluck them out of my hand. KJV

^a **Mark 10:30** But he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; **and in the world to come eternal life.** KJV

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in store for themselves a good foundation **against the time to come that they may obtain eternal life.** Tyndale

Paul was speaking from a Jewish perspective of eternal life which is more than just life eternal, meaning endless life. He was speaking of that eternal life that could be “obtained” in the future by being “rich in good works.” Unfortunately, this Jewish concept of eternal life is not fully understood by many today.

Many Christians, when they read the phrase “eternal life,” think only of endless life, but the phrase means so much more than that in Scripture.

Nor is this twofold nuance unique to the biblical languages of Hebrew or Greek. In the English language we might also speak the same way in regard to life. One might say, “I hope so and so has a long life.” Or one might say, “I hope so and so enjoys a full life.” The former refers to the duration of one’s existence, while the latter refers to the characteristics, or to the substantial quality or benefits of that life.

Now, Scripture does not fully reveal the full benefits or characteristics of that “eternal life” that God will grant to us, not only in the future millennial kingdom, but also into eternity, except, as Paul the apostle says, it will be more than we could ever think.

I Cor. 2:9 But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. KJV

Obviously, every believer participates in eternal life, for it is received in Christ Jesus the moment we believe. But our Lord equally makes clear that in His millennial kingdom certain benefits of that life will vary according to our rewards which we will receive when we come before the Judgment Seat of Christ and are rewarded for our service (II Cor. 5:10; Col. 3:24-25; also cf. Luke 19:12-26).^b None of these verses have to do with our endless eternal life that is our by faith in Christ, that everlasting life we have in presence of God. No, they have to do with the

^b **II Cor. 5:10** For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things *done* in *his* body, according to that he hath done, whether *it be* good or bad. KJV

Colossians 3:24-25 Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ.²⁵ But he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done: and there is no respect of persons. KJV

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benefits, rewards, or the manifestation of that eternal life we possess in the millennium by the rewards God gives us for our service. (After the millennium, of course, in the new heavens and new earth, every Christian will possess equally all the same benefits as they are granted to us equally in Christ Jesus.)

Perhaps, it might help us to understand this Scriptural truth by including a comment from Joseph C. Dillow's excellent book, *The Reign of the Servant Kings, a Study of Eternal Security and the Final Significance of Man*.

"The phrase "eternal life" (**zoen aionion**) occurs forty-two times in the New Testament. Its common meaning of the free gift of regeneration (entrance into heaven on the basis of faith alone) is well documented. However, many are not aware that in eleven of those forty-two usages (26 percent), eternal life is presented to the believer as something to be earned or worked for." ⁷⁷ 135-36

Then, in another place, Dillow expands upon this truth regarding this twofold usage of the New Testament term, "eternal life."

"The Old Testament doctrine of the afterlife and rewards is very vague. That the rich life promise on the basis of obedience could result in rewards in heaven is only faintly intimated (Dt. 5:29). But the idea that obedience could be related to the acquisition and growth of a rich spiritual (as well as material) life is clear. We should not therefore be surprised to find such an equation in the New Testament."

"And we do find that equation in the references to eternal life being conditioned upon obedience. As long as we remember that eternal life is fundamentally a quality of life in relationship to God, this should not cause us any difficulty with the numerous passages which stress justification by faith alone. It is extremely important to note that in every place where eternal life is presented as something which can be obtained by works, it is contextually **always** described as a future acquisition. Conversely, **whenever eternal life is described as something in the present, it is obtained by faith alone.**"

"In Gal. 6:8, for example, eternal life is something earned

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by the sower...A man reaps what he sows. If we sow to please the Spirit, we will reap (future tense) eternal life. Paul calls it a harvest 'if we do not give up.' Eternal life is earned by sowing to the Spirit and persevering to the end. It is what we get if we do good works. There is nothing here about the inevitability of this reaping. It depends upon us. We will reap, Paul says, 'if we do not give up.' Eternal life is not static entity but a relationship with God. It is dynamic and growing and has degrees. Some Christians have a more intimate relationship with their Lord than others. They have a richer experience of eternal life. Jesus Himself said, 'I came to give life more abundantly' (John 10:10)."⁷⁸

Our brother illustrates this truth in another place with the story of the rich young ruler, which quote we will provide below; then we will provide the remaining portion of the quote above.

"After informing the rich young ruler that he must sell all he has if he would obtain eternal life, the disciples ask; 'We have left everything to follow You! What then will there be for us?' (Mt. 19:27). Peter's question deals with rewards. That they saw a connection between leaving everything and obtaining some reward is obvious... [However,] a difficulty now arises: since eternal life is usually equated with regeneration, how can it be obtained by abandoning father, mother, home, children, and the other things listed? The answer is...that, every time eternal life is presented in Scripture as something to be obtained by a work, it is always a future acquisition. It becomes synonymous in these contexts with a richer experience of that life given freely at regeneration."⁷⁹

"In this sense it is parallel to physical life. Physical life is received as a gift, but then it must be developed. Children often develop to their full physical and mental ability under the auspices of their parents. In order for eternal life to flourish, we must also be obedient...Whenever eternal life is viewed as a reward in the New Testament, it is presented as something to be acquired in the future. But when it is presented as a gift, it is something acquired in the present. No one can receive it as a reward, i.e., experience it to a more abundant degree, until he has received eternal life freely as a gift to begin with."⁸⁰

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Understanding this fuller Jewish and, indeed, New Testament concept of eternal life might help us now understand our Lord's use of a narrow and broad gate and its corresponding ways. But we must also examine the order of the gates and ways our Lord speaks about. This too will aid our understanding.

The first thing that needs to be mentioned is that most think our Lord is referring to a way or path that leads to a gate, so that one travels along a path to a gate to which he or she must then decide as to whether they will enter or not. So, in many people's minds they see a narrow path leading to a narrow gate which is life, and a broad path or way, along which most people travel, that leads to the gate of hell. But that is not what our Lord is saying. Notice that he mentions the gate first and then the narrow way. In other words, one must first enter a gate and then continue along a narrow way. Not the other way around.

It is much like John Bunyan's story of Christian in his book *The Pilgrims Progress*. In the story, a man, who was named Christian, is directed by one named Evangelist, to a Wicket-Gate through which he must first pass if he would escape the City of Destruction. He writes:

"So in process of time, **Christian** got up to the Gate. Now over the Gate there was written, "Knock, and it shall be opened unto you'." He knocked...At last there came a grave person to the Gate, named **Good-will**, who asked, Who was there? and whence he came; and what he would have?

Chr. Here is a poor burdened sinner. I come from the City of Destruction; but am going to Mount Zion, that I may be delivered from the wrath to come: I would, therefore, sir, since I am informed that by this Gate is the way thither, know if you are willing to let me in?

Good-w. I am willing with all my heart, said he; and with **that he opened the Gate...** We make no objections against any, notwithstanding all that they have done before they came hither. They in no wise are cast out'; and, therefore, good Christian, come a little way with me, and I

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will teach thee about the way thou must go. **Look before thee, dost thou see this narrow way? That is the way thou must go;** it was cast up by the patriarchs, prophets, Christ, and his apostles, and it is as straight as a rule can "make it: this is the way thou must go."⁸¹

Now this might seem backward to those who always thought Jesus was referring to a path that leads one to the gate to heaven or a path that leads one to the gate to hell, but Jesus puts the gate first and then speaks of the way. Perhaps this view is so popular because so many in the world view heaven or hell being determined by how good or bad person has been, by how many good or evil deeds one has done. But, of course, the opposite is true; heaven is granted by grace through faith, not by any works of righteousness which one may have or may have not done. And so we must understand that Jesus is referring to a "gate" and then a "way" after one passes through the gate. In this sense the gate bespeaks our justification by faith and the way refers to our justification by works, i.e. our sanctification.

The former guarantees eternal life, a life that never ends, an eternal salvation that is eternally secure by the righteousness of Christ and not by any works or righteousness we may have done or will do. It is wholly of Him. We need only to believe and pass through the gate. The latter, however, depends on our works, resulting in that reward of life eternal, a reward of the fruits of eternal life, the millennial rewards for our works, those rewards given for faithful service to God.

And so, now that we have explained the order of the gates and the way, let's examine what may have been behind the imagery of those gates and ways in the analogy used by our Lord.

More than likely, Jesus was using the imagery of the gates leading to the Temple Mount complex built by Herod, of which every Jew certainly was aware, since the whole nation was greatly impressed by its magnificence.

You, see beloved, in Jerusalem at that time, one could only reach the Temple by going through certain

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gates. Since our Lord does not refer to a specific gate we do not know which one He meant, but that does not matter for, generally, speaking (which every Jew would know) most gates unto the Temple Mount had narrow tunnels following the entrance of the gate through which one must travel in order to arrive on the surface of the Temple platform. This is because the Temple complex was elevated high above most gates which were constructed below. After one passed through a gate one had to then travel upwards to reach the surface of the Temple complex, i.e., to the surface that was the outer court of the Temple.

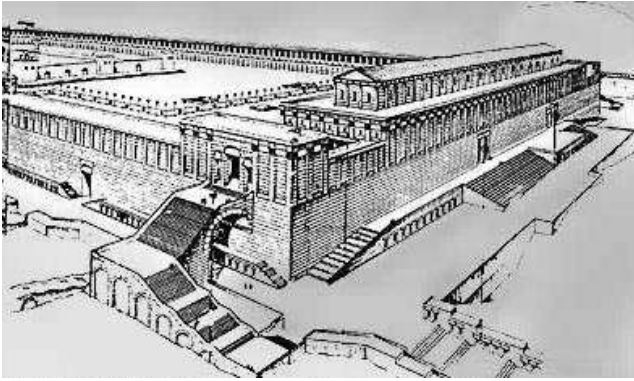
However, the two main exceptions were two magnificent gates (and comparatively speaking, “broad gates”) which led directly to the surface of the Temple enclosure by the construction of great arches that brought an external staircase unto the top portion of the complex where the gate was located. The first is known today as Wilson’s Arch and the other is known as Robinson’s Arch. These two great arches were associated with the wealthy part of Jerusalem, known as the upper city, located to the west of the Temple Mount.

Thus, these two entrances were raised up to the surface of the Temple Mount by means of great external arches, alleviating any need for any internal, subterranean, tunnel beneath the Temple Mount to lead up to the surface of Mount.

Most other gates, like Warren’s Gate and Barclay’s Gate along the Western Wall, as well as the main Huldah gates on the southern wall, had long subterranean tunnels leading up to the surface of the Temple Mount, for those gates were located below.

For the purposes of our analogy we will only refer to two gates along the Western Wall near the southwestern corner—the gate known as Barclay’s Gate and the magnificent Gate above the arch known today as Robinson’s Arch, which led into the Royal Portico of Herod’s Temple (see Fig. 1).

Fig. 1 The Temple Mount During Herodian Times ⁸²



In the picture above we can see the southwestern corner of the Temple Mount. To the right, we see the aforementioned Huldah gates of the southern wall, where, after passing through, one must travel along its subterranean tunnels leading upward to the surface of the complex. And to the left, in the foreground, we see the magnificent Robinson's Arch with its L shaped external stairway leading up from the valley floor to the Gate at the surface of the Mount.

This grand arch contained the gate complex leading to the entrance of what is known as the Royal Portico, which can be seen with the pitched roof of its central aisle rising above its two side aisles. As can also be seen, this Royal portico ran along the southern wall with its western entrance facing the Gate at Robinson's Arch.

Finally, one can see the flat-roofed edifice encompassing the entire Gate complex of Robinson's Arch, rising far above the surface of the Temple Mount, which, when added to the height of the southwestern corner of the surrounding wall of the Mount, created a pinnacle of such great height that the historian Flavius Josephus, who lived in the days of our Lord, said that one standing on the edge would "be giddy, while his sight could not reach to such an immense depth." ⁸³ Some believe this was the location where Satan took our Saviour, tempting him to cast himself down from the pinnacle of the temple

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(Matt. 4:5-6).^c

We do not know the exact width of this gate but some believe it may have been upward to 50 feet in width, corresponding to the 50 foot width of the staircase. The length of the arch over the valley floor was approximately 42 feet.

This magnificent Gate of Robinson's Arch served as the entrance to the Royal Portico, which some believe was the entrance King Herod would use when entering his Royal Portico. He obviously built it as a monument to his own glory, perhaps to rival the magnificence of the Temple complex proper with its surrounding courts and enclosures. In any case it became a center for commercial activity combined with governmental and religious activity. In fact, some believe this was the exact area where our Lord with great zeal and righteous anger drove out the moneychangers and those who sold doves.

Mark 11:15-17 And they come to Jerusalem: and Jesus went into the temple, and began to cast out them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the moneychangers, and the seats of them that sold doves; ¹⁶ And would not suffer that any man should carry *any* vessel through the temple.¹⁷ And he taught, saying unto them, Is it not written, My house shall be called of all nations the house of prayer? but ye have made it a den of thieves. KJV

One must understand that the reason Jesus was so upset was not simply because the people were being dishonest, turning the Mount into a den of thieves. No, it was also because they were conducting business upon the Temple Mount, turning it into a center of commercial activity. Scripture clearly says He was also upset because they were making it into a house of merchandise, something which had no place with the things of the Lord. ^d In fact, the Greek word translated "merchandise" (ἐμπορίον) is the word from which we get our English word "emporium." Our Lord was chastising them because they had turned the sacred area into a large "emporium," thereby making money off the things of the Lord.

Of course, king Herod had no scruples about such

^c **Matt. 4:5-6** Then the devil took Him into the holy city; and he had Him stand on the pinnacle of the temple, ⁶ and said to Him, "If You are the Son of God throw Yourself down; for it is written, 'He will give His angels charge concerning You'; and 'On *their* hands they will bear You up, Lest You strike Your foot against a stone.'" NASB

^d **John 2:15-16** and he made a scourge of cords, and cast all out of the temple, both the sheep and the oxen; and he poured out the changers' money, and overthrew their tables; (Joh 2:15 ASV) ¹⁶ and to them that sold the doves he said, Take these things hence; make not my Father's house a **house of merchandise**. ASV

things for he intended it to be that way, since to him money was a source of power and control. All this morass of wealth, power, politics and religious service was severely censored by our Lord.

This was the area to which the Gate of Robinson's Arch led! And this was first thing brought to the attention of one passing through the Gate.

In contrast to this, there was another gate, known today as Barclay's Gate (that was named after the explorer that discovered it in the 19th century). This gate can also be seen in the Fig. 1 as a small gate to the lower left of Robinson's Arch, down near the bottom of the Western Wall. If one were to compare these two gates, the gate atop Robinson's Arch would most naturally be known as a "Broad Gate" being nearly 50 feet wide, and this one as a "narrow gate," not as magnificent and being more than half that width, measuring about "18 feet 10 inches."⁸⁴

In addition, whereas the Robinson's Arch Gate opened immediately onto a "broad pathway" leading into and within the Royal Portico, Barclay's Gate opened immediately into a "narrow" subterranean passageway leading up to the surface of the Temple Mount that was metres above. And what is even more interesting is that as Robinson's Arch was a broad external "L" shaped staircase leading up to the surface of the Temple Mount, whereas Barclay's Gate had an internal subterranean staircase, also shaped in an "L," except that it was flipped over giving the appearance of the Greek letter gamma, Γ. This narrow staircase (5.8 m wide) extended under the surface upward from Barclay's Gate for about 68 feet, then it turned southward at a right angle and continued up to the surface for about another 42 feet.

Consequently, we have Robinson's Arch Gate being about 15 metres wide, with the pathway beyond the gate being at least 15 metres in width, opening up to a broad area at least 32 metres wide (being the width of the Royal Portico), and Barclay's Gate being about 5.7 metres wide, with the pathway beyond the gate measuring approximately 5.8 metres in width.

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This could have been the imagery behind our Lord's statement concerning a narrow gate and narrow way and a broad gate and a broad way.

It should not surprise us, if our Lord one day decided to ascend the broad staircase of Robinson's Arch. Perhaps, upon reaching the first platform where the staircase turns east, He gazed up at the massive and magnificent gate before Him atop that highest archway. Then, perhaps, after He reached the top of that archway, He then peered down below to His left, over the edge of the archway, to see the lesser used Barclay's Gate with its narrower entrance and its less elaborate opening. Perhaps, it could have been this sight that caused Him to use them for His analogy. And we must not also forget that if He continued through the Gate of Robison's Arch to the broad opening or way leading directly unto the Royal Portico, He would have seen the place where men were trafficking in religious commerce, making profit off the things of the Lord, in the name of the Lord, but in reality in the name of sordid gain! What a contrast that would have made with the narrow gate and narrow pathway that was far below, where one's focus remained on the sacredness of the place and not on making money off the things of the Lord (even though it may have still been used for the Lord).

And so, with all this in mind, let's now return to our Lord's exhortation.

If we accept the traditional understanding that these gates represent heaven and hell, that is, that they represent the way to salvation or the way to perdition (which we said is a legitimate interpretation, although we prefer to take the imagery within its fuller contextual meaning of our rewards granted at the Judgment Seat of Christ), then one can see how the Broad Gate, that so many admired and which so many loved to use over the lowly gate, was in reality just an entrance into nothing but a false religiosity and certain destruction (cf. Mk. 13:1-2).^e Its beauty and magnificence was deceiving.

And one can equally see how the narrow gate so

^e **Mk. 13:1-2** And as He was going out of the temple, one of His disciples said to Him, "Teacher, behold what wonderful stones and what wonderful buildings!"
² And Jesus said to him, "Do you see these great buildings? Not one stone shall be left upon another which will not be torn down." NASB

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far below, that few preferred to use, was in reality the gate that led to eternal life. Unlike the Broad Gate high above, it did not represent the best of man's energy and creativity in approaching God. Rather the narrow gate, that is now known as Barclay's Gate, represented Him, "who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant...and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross (Phil 2: 6-8).

The outward staircase represented man's attempt to reach God by his own works and creativity, whereas the lower staircase represented the fact that we are saved by the One who first descended into the lower parts of the earth that He might ascend to the highest parts of the heaven for us all (Eph. 4:9-10). As Peter declared—

Acts 2:27 Because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. ²⁸ Thou hast made known to me **the ways of life**; thou shalt make me full of joy with thy countenance. KJV

But, if we are to understand the two gates from the fuller context of the Sermon on the Mount, and also from the fuller Jewish understanding of eternal life, we can see how they represent the two ways to live the Christian life. We can now understand how the mixing of riches with the things of the Lord, represented by the Gate above Robinson's Arch and the Royal Portico, will bring nothing but heartache to the Christian and ultimate destruction to one's spiritual life, exactly as the Lord warned when He said, "broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it."

Paul warns the Christian of the same thing.

I Timothy 6:9-10 But those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a snare and many foolish and harmful desires which plunge men into ruin and **destruction** (**ἀπώλειαν**). ¹⁰ For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away **from**

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the faith, and pierced themselves with many a pang. NASB

Paul in these verses is speaking to Christians. He is warning them of the danger of mixing the love of money with the things of the Lord. Of course, we know this would also be true of those who are only pretending to be Christians, but in reality are not. But in the immediate context we know it is primarily a warning to genuine Christians because it says such mixture will cause them to “wander away from the faith.” One first has to be “in the faith” to be able to “wander away from the faith!” So this definitely is a warning to believers.

And, with that being the case, how interesting it is that the very same Greek word for destruction (ἀπώλειαν), used by the Holy Spirit of our Lord’s warning in Matt. 7:13, is the very same word used by Paul in I Tim. 6:9!

In this context, of course, this destruction could not be referring to hell, but would rather refer to the ruin of one’s testimony and Christian life. It would be similar to the imagery of the wood, hay and stubble of one’s service being burnt up, wherein the one would still be saved (for one can never lose one’s salvation) but only as through fire (I Cor. 3:12-15).

I Cor. 3:12-15 Now if any one build upon *this* foundation, gold, silver, precious stones, **wood, grass, straw**,¹³ the work of each shall be made manifest; for the day shall declare *it*, because it is revealed in fire; and the fire shall try the work of each what it is.¹⁴ If the work of any one which he has built upon *the foundation* shall abide, he shall receive a reward.¹⁵ **If the work of any one shall be consumed, he shall suffer loss, but he shall be saved, but so as through *the* fire.** (Darby’s Version)

Obviously, this “consuming” would be a form of “destruction” of which every Christian should be aware and so pray that it might not ever be.

Many admired this Gate and way to the Royal Portico just at is done today. So many Christians think money and wealth will aid them in the cause of Christ. The whole Roman Catholic Church is built

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upon this premise with its amassing of great wealth and great cathedrals (although one must recognize that they also do many good works, as the Lord recognized in regard to the Church in Thyatira—Rev. 2:19).^f And many Evangelicals think the same way, with the rise of mega-churches, which focus on magnificence and numbers, in contrast to that which is lowly and insignificant. They too mix money with the things of the Lord, even selling for profit those things that were freely given to them by the Lord, which things they should, instead, also be giving away freely. They build bigger and bigger buildings by indebting the work of the Lord, in some cases, to worldly bankers. They may possess grand edifices, but they must not forget that grand edifices can be built very quickly with wood, hay and stubble. Indeed, beautiful and intricately carved wood can be built upon the foundation that is Christ (I Cor. 3:10-15), but wood still burns and burn it will for it was not built with the gold, silver and precious stones. They see numbers as a sign of God's blessing, not realizing it may be a sign of God's mercy, not of His blessing. Numbers do not guarantee spirituality. The Church of Jerusalem might have been the largest Church in the New Testament, but it was one of the most carnal churches in the New Testament. And one of the most insignificant and small Churches in the New Testament—the Church in Philadelphia—may have been one of the most spiritual!

This false mindset of believing in the necessity of money to build great edifices or cathedrals for the work of the Lord is exactly the same mindset that condoned the Temple's Royal Portico. And from that Portico they were also selling things to fund their work, yet we know the Lord's view of that practice.

They turned the Father's house into a house of merchandise. And today, many in the Church, which is the Father's house or Temple in this dispensation, have turned it into a house of merchandise, selling things at a profit for the work of God, as they did in our Lord's day. Books, Christian art, seminars on tape, t-shirts, etc. are all sold in Church lobbies

^f **Revelation 2:19**

I know thy works, and thy love and faith and ministry and patience, and that thy last works are more than the first. ASV

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and/or websites. In fact, in some mega-church lobbies, they have even allowed ungodly corporations to sell their goods, from coffee to burgers! May God forgive us. They think the end justifies the means. It does not. If Paul walked by the same mindset, when he was short on funds for his ministry, he could have written short words of exhortation or admonitions on parchment (we know he wrote other things) and then he could have sold them for a profit to fund his work! Tertius could have helped him. Think of it, he could have carried along little table to sell his goods to the Christians in Corinth, or to those in Ephesus, and then use the profit to serve the Lord. Oh, beloved, forgive me for my sarcasm, but this is what is being done today.

Many Christians today love the Broad Gate that leads to the wonderful Royal Portico, which is supplemented by things sold in the Father's house, presenting itself to the world at large as something that must have the blessing of God upon it. And by their worldly mindset they are leading many Christians to spiritual destruction. Because they have no faith, and because they find so much comfort in things that can be seen, they believe the largeness and magnificence of their work must be pleasing to God. Like the disciple of old they come before the Lord and declare to Him the following—

Mark 13:1 And as He was going out of the temple, one of His disciples said to Him, "**Teacher, behold what wonderful stones and what wonderful buildings!**" NASB

But, the Lord answers the same way, as He must, if it is built with wood, hay, and stubble, and by compromise and gain—

Mark 13:2 And Jesus answering said unto him, **Seest thou these great buildings? there shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.** KJV

And so, dear brethren, to escape this consequence

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and ruined testimony, we must choose the narrow gate and the narrow way, which to us is the way of the cross—the way of the cross that leads us to deny ourself, to daily take up our cross, and follow after the Master in the way of the Lord.

If we do this, entering the narrow and lowly gate and follow upward the lowly path, we will find the abundance of that eternal life that we received, not by our good works, but by our faith in Christ Jesus.

John 10:10b I am come that they might have life, and that they might have *it* more abundantly. KJV

We will receive it now in the form of spiritual blessings (during the mystery form of the kingdom), and then in the future millennial kingdom, we will find it in the form of rewards given to us for our faithful service, our fidelity to the promises God's Word, and our zealousness for good works.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Alfred Edersheim in his timeless classic, "The Temple its Ministry and Services," tells us that the injunction of the Lord to His disciples in Matt. 10:9-10, which reads—"Provide neither gold, nor silver, nor brass in your purses, nor scrip for your journey, neither two coats, neither shoes, nor yet staves; for the workman is worthy of his meat"- is the same injunction that applied to one entering the Temple and its precincts.

The injunction stated, according to Edersheim, that "no man might go on the Temple Mount with his staff, as if on business or pleasure; nor yet with shoes on his feet - sandals only being allowed; nor with the dust upon his feet; nor with his scrip, nor with money tied to him in his purse,"⁸⁵ for the Temple was the house of God and should be considered sacred and holy. It was disregard for this sacred respect that caused the railing judgment of our Lord upon the money changers who trafficked within the Temple precincts, as told by the Apostle John:

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“And He found in the temple those who were selling oxen and sheep and doves, and the money changers seated at their tables. And He made a scourge of cords, and drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and the oxen; and He poured out the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables; and to those who were selling the doves He said, 'Take these things away; stop making My Father's house a place of business.’” John 2: 14-16. NASB

The Lord was heartbroken and upset when the sacredness of the Lord's house was profaned, and in applying the same temple injunctions to the ministry, the Lord was clearly telling His disciples that ministry was to be considered with the same sacredness that one accorded the Temple and its environs. As the Temple was to be an expression of the Lord and His mercy, so too, ministry was to be considered an expression of the Lord and His mercy.

A ministry received by the Lord is sacred and its purity must be maintained. Unfortunately, the opposite is true today in many Christian circles, and as the temple of old was profaned with the things of the world so too ministry today has been profaned.

Christian ministry has become a place of business. No longer is it necessary to trust in the Lord for financial support. Profit drives the finances of many ministries today, not just prayer. When we depend upon the Lord for financial support it purifies our service, but today we don't need to depend upon the Lord, we just need a good marketing strategy (and our service and hearts have suffered for it).

It was reported in a local newspaper that a well-known Christian ministry generated \$6.6 million dollars in profit from the sale of souvenirs including shirts, hats, books and tapes." Why does not shame fill our hearts when we hear of such things? The work of the Lord is being profaned and changed into "places of business" just as it was in the temple of old and no one is crying out, "This must stop!"

Not only that, the sacredness of the Lord's ministry is also being profaned by the common practice of charging people money to come hear the

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Word of God being taught at a conference or a seminar.

Once men would teach the Word of God freely, but now it is common to charge money to come and hear the Word. This same ministry, the paper tells us, would charge people \$60 to come hear the Word of God being taught at some rented facility in the town.

Now the usual excuse for the charging such money is that people are paying for materials or they are paying for accommodations, or perhaps for the food, but even if that is the case, where is the Christian's faith in the provision of the Lord? When the five thousand came to hear the instruction of the Lord, did He charge them money for the fish and the loaves He provided (Luke 9:11-17)? Or did He provide the food freely?

If the Lord leads His people to put on a conference or seminar, can he not provide the means, so that His injunction "freely ye have received, freely give," may be fully manifested and honored? The only reason Christians would not do this is because they are either impatient to wait for the Lord's provision or they do not realize that such a practice is contrary to the example of the Lord.

Imagine if Paul were to manage a ministry like we do today. He could have charged people to come hear the Word of God when he taught in the school of Tyrannus (Acts 19:9). He could have then made many copies of his message and give it to those who came to hear him teach as something included in the price.

Did Paul give us this example to follow? Did he tell us this is how you fund the work of God? No! What did Paul do instead? He preached the Word of God without charge. And he encouraged those in Ephesus to do the same thing saying, "I have coveted no one's silver or gold or clothes. You yourselves know that these hands ministered to my own needs and to the men who were with me. In everything I showed you that by working hard in this manner you must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He Himself said, 'It is more blessed

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to give than to receive." Acts 20: 33-35.

This is the example he gave us to follow! Never did he give us an example of charging money for ministry. Never did he give us an example of charging money for hospitality. Never did he give us an example of charging money for his written epistles! (He wrote many other epistles that were not a part of Scripture, but were full of instruction). And never did he give us such an example of charging money in order to fund the work of the Lord.

Ministry is sacred because it is an expression of the grace of God. Our salvation is free and it is complete sacrilege to offer a message or the instruction of the Lord for money, let alone finance a work of the Lord with worldly means and methods. It seems a cloud of biblical ignorance and lack of spirituality has descended over the eyes of the modern day Christian. If one really understood the sacredness of ministry, they would never utilize such tactics.

Granted, some do so out of ignorance - we should pray for them that they learn to hear the voice of the Lord and understand the example He left for us to follow and the example of His apostles that He gave to us in His Word. Others do so out of the weakness of their faith to trust in the Lord and His promises - we should pray for them that their faith be strengthened. And others, unfortunately, in some parts of Christendom do so out of greed and the desire to live a life in religious self-comfort, protecting their religious livelihood no matter what compromise might be necessary - for those we need to pray that they would soften their hearts to the convicting power of the Holy Spirit.

Paul tells us to be imitators of him, just as he was of Christ. Paul patterned his life and his ministry after the Lord Jesus, and Paul gave us his life and ministry to be a pattern for us today. (I Cor. 11: 1; 4: 16; Phil 4: 17; 4: 9; II Thess. 3: 7-9).

This noble pattern has been followed done through the centuries by godly men like Anthony Norris Groves who gave up a lucrative business and

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followed the Lord in simple childlike faith, or Hudson Taylor who trusted in God alone to finance China Inland Mission, or C.T. Studd who gave away a fortune and died in poverty freely giving himself and the Word of God to people in China, India, and Africa.

Other untold men down through the centuries, while not being called of God to sell all and leave for the mission field, nevertheless, lived modestly and worked with their own hands in some livelihood in order to offer the Word of God without charge, or others served after the example of Peter and ministered freely - full time to the saints - never seeking a salary but trusting in the care of their heavenly Father to move the hearts of the saints to give cheerfully to the work of the Lord. These too lived modestly and not in palaces or mansions.

We should realize the work is the Lord's, and when we charge people money to come hear instruction, we are in reality saying the Lord is charging money (as it is His work). When we sell things for profit to finance the Lord's work, we are in reality saying the Lord is selling things for profit to finance His work.

Dear brethren, why does the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, who owns the cattle on a thousand hills, need to charge money for the instruction of the Word, or sell things to further His work? That would be like a King sending an ambassador to another country, and then having the ambassador charge the host country money to pay for his own salary and the cost of his operations. What would the citizens of that country think of such a King that could not even provide for his own embassy and ambassador? And yet, that is what we are doing.

If we truly confess that we only do things as the Lord leads, then when we charge people money for ministry, we are telling the world, that after much prayer, the Lord Jesus spoke to us and said, "I do not have the money for you right now, but I want My work to go on, so charge people money until the time comes when I am able to, once more, provide for you

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the money you will need.”

Forgive me for even thinking such a thing, but that is exactly what we are saying if we say the Lord has led us to utilize such means to do His work. Where is our faith today? May the Lord provide eye salve for our eyes that once again we may all be able to see and buy the gold refined by fire that we may all learn to operate by faith unto the glory of God.

Our God is a great God and He owns the cattle on a thousand hills. He can supply the needs of the ministries He raises up without using the ways of the world. O may we seek the Lord's forgiveness on this issue. Our King takes care of His servants. He provides for all the needs of those He sends out. May we repent of our lack of trust and restore sacredness to the Lord's ministry.

7:15 Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.

7:16 Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?

7:17 Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit.

7:18 A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.

7:19 Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.

7:20 Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.

Why does the Lord, who was a true Prophet, now speak about false prophets shortly after speaking about treasures upon earth and treasures in heaven, after speaking about serving God and serving Mammon, after speaking about trusting God and being content with what He provides, after speaking about judging righteously, making sure to remove the beams out of our own eyes, after speaking about not giving what is holy unto dogs, and after speaking about the two gates and two ways?

Perhaps it is because in Scripture false prophets are primarily known for two things. First and

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foremost, they are known as ones who judge falsely, as ones who prophesy peace when there is no peace, as ones who always seem to flatter people, rather than convict people of their unrighteous ways. And secondly, they are known as ones who loved unrighteous Mammon, as ones who would prophesy for money, as ones who turned their supposed service to God as a way to make money and support themselves because they had little faith in God or His promises.

So with that in mind, let's look at these two characteristics of false prophets. First, let's look at the message of false prophets, for their message is not really any different today. False prophets always speak those things they think people want to hear. Let's begin with Jeremiah 14:13-14 and 23:14-17.

Jeremiah 14:13-14 But, "Ah, Lord God!" I said, "Look, the prophets are telling them, 'You will not see the sword nor will you have famine, but I will give you lasting peace in this place.'" ¹⁴ Then the LORD said to me, **"The prophets are prophesying falsehood in My name. I have neither sent them nor commanded them nor spoken to them; they are prophesying to you a false vision, divination, futility and the deception of their own minds. NASB**

Jer 23:14-17 "Also among the prophets of Jerusalem I have seen a horrible thing: The committing of adultery and walking in falsehood; And they strengthen the hands of evildoers, So that no one has turned back from his wickedness. All of them have become to Me like Sodom, And her inhabitants like Gomorrah.¹⁵ "Therefore thus says the LORD of hosts concerning the prophets, 'Behold, I am going to feed them wormwood And make them drink poisonous water, For from the prophets of Jerusalem Pollution has gone forth into all the land.'" ¹⁶ Thus says the LORD of hosts, **"Do not listen to the words of the prophets who are prophesying to you. They are leading you into futility; They speak a vision of their own imagination, Not from the mouth of the LORD."**¹⁷ "They keep saying to those who despise Me, The LORD has said, "You will have peace" ; And as for everyone who walks in the stubbornness of his own heart, They say, Calamity will not come upon you. NASB

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In these verses, we can see that false prophets always assure people that everything is fine with the Lord. They assure them that their evil ways are not really evil and that God is really for them, and not against them. They assure them that because God is not displeased with them and their practices, they need not fear that God will discipline them or send upon them calamity as a chastisement.

True prophets, on the other hand, always judged righteously and spoke the truth of the Lord, and for that they were hated by the people, especially by those in places of authority.

II Chronicles 18:7 And the king of Israel said unto Jehoshaphat, *There is* yet one man, by whom we may enquire of the LORD: **but I hate him; for he never prophesied good unto me, but always evil:** the same *is* Micaiah the son of Imla. And Jehoshaphat said, Let not the king say so. KJV

False prophets would speak flattering and pleasant words to the people; they would not expose their carnal ways, nor warn them that the way they were following would lead to their destruction. And for that they were loved by the people!

Lamentations 2:14 Your prophets have seen for you False and foolish *visions*; And **they have not exposed your iniquity.** So as to restore you from captivity, But **they have seen for you false and misleading oracles.** NASB

Isaiah 30:9-10 For this is a rebellious people, false sons, Sons who refuse to listen To the instruction of the LORD; ¹⁰ Who say to the seers, "You must not see *visions*"; And to the prophets, "You must not prophesy to us what is right, **Speak to us pleasant words,** Prophecy illusions. NASB

These are the signs of a false prophet—examples of the type of fruit they always produce (and it is no different today). False prophets always preach pleasant words to people; they hardly ever speak

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about sin, rather they always speak about self-esteem, and self-love. They always speak positive words to make people “feel” good. If you hear someone like that—beware!

A true prophet, on the other hand, will always address the shortcomings of God’s people. That is why God sends them; He sends them to expose our harmful practices, our harmful attitudes and our sinful ways. They speak about the need to deny ourselves, and the taking up of our cross in our service to God, rather than loving ourselves in our service to God. They speak about esteeming others as being more important than ourselves, rather than speaking about esteeming ourselves over others.

II Kings 17:13-14 Yet the **LORD testified against Israel, and against Judah, by all the prophets, and by all the seers, saying, Turn ye from your evil ways, and keep my commandments and my statutes,** according to all the law which I commanded your fathers, and which **I sent to you by my servants the prophets.** ¹⁴ Notwithstanding they would not hear, but hardened their necks, like to the neck of their fathers, that **did not believe** in the LORD their God. KJV

Yet false prophets will never speak this way. Why? Because the people would not like it. People do not like to be told they are wrong. They love it, when those that supposedly represent the Lord, excuse their worldly ways (also cf. II Tim. 4:2-3). ^g

Jer 5:31 The prophets prophesy falsely, And the priests rule on their own authority; **And My people love it so!** But what will you do at the end of it? NASB

And when the people are happy, the false prophets know they will be paid. And this brings us to the second thing false prophets are primarily known for in Scripture. False prophets love money. They were always known in Scripture as those who would preach for money. They expected payment for their prophesying. (Yet, did Samuel ever expect payment? Did John the Baptist ever ask for money?)

^g **II Tim. 4:2-3**
Preach the word; be urgent in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. ³ **For the time will come when they will not endure the sound doctrine; but, having itching ears, will heap to themselves teachers after their own lusts.**

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Jeremiah 6:13 "For from the least of them even to the greatest of them, **everyone is greedy for gain**, And from the prophet even to the priest Everyone deals falsely.
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Micah 3:5 Thus said the LORD to **the prophets Who lead My people astray, Who cry "Peace!" When they have something to chew**, But launch a war on him who fails to fill their mouths . ⁸⁶

Micah 3:11 The heads thereof judge for reward, and the priests thereof teach for hire, **and the prophets thereof divine for money**: yet will they lean upon the LORD, and say, *Is not the LORD among us?* none evil can come upon us. KJV

II Pet. 2:15 forsaking the right way they have gone astray, having followed the **way of Balaam**, the son of Beor, **who loved the wages of unrighteousness**. KJV

You see, beloved, one of the reasons the people would harden their necks and not listen to the true prophets of God is that they had no faith. This was mentioned in the verses from II Kings 17:13-14 above. It speaks of their lack of faith in verse 14. The same was true of the false prophets; one of the reasons that false prophets would never tell the people to trust in God and walk by faith, is that they themselves could not walk by faith, for they had no faith in the promises of God. They could not trust in God for their support and so the people's money became paramount to them, because they found that money was something they could gain from them by continuing with their flattering messages. They knew the people would pay them for "pleasant words."

So, perhaps, we can now begin to see why our Lord includes this warning on false prophets in this portion of His Sermon, especially after talking about the characteristics of the "broad way." One of the fruits of false prophets was their love of money because of their lack of faith.

False prophets are the ones who love to spend their time in the Royal Portico, making money off the

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things of the Lord. They always pretend to be righteous, but the fruit of their supposed righteousness is neither righteous nor holy, but rather, prideful and base.

As such, false prophets will always be known as ones who bring carnality and worldliness into the things of God. Why? Because they do not have the faith to rely upon God for their needs. They have no faith to walk by faith! And so, what false prophets need more than anything else is money!

Money is the lifeblood of their ministry. Without it, their ministry would dry up. And so because they must prop up their ministry with money, they are always preoccupied with raising funds. They are always asking for offerings. Every television program they broadcast seems to end with a plea for money (which they call offerings), and every newsletter they mail, concludes with an appeal for funds.

Contrast their fruit and character with the fruit and character of a true prophet in the Lord, or, at least, one who spoke as a prophet—the apostle Paul (see I Cor. 2:16; 14:37; 15:51-54; I Thess. 4: 15-18).

Paul did his ministry without much money; false prophets do their ministry with thousands upon thousands of dollars, if not millions. Paul many times would be homeless, cold and hungry; false prophets many times will have huge mansions, which are warm and secure.

Now, of course, we are not saying there is something wrong with having a home, and being warm and secure. Paul says we should be content with food and covering. But if necessary, because of a shortage of funds (since Paul would never dare ask for money, or sell spiritual things for money) he would go out to work with his own hands to provide for himself a place wherein to dwell in warmth and safety, if at all possible (many times he suffered in the cold, being homeless—I Cor. 4:11-12).

False prophets, on the other hand, never do such things. Their hands are not calloused, but soft. They would never dream of working with their own two hands for they have a ministry to do! And yet, Paul

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the apostle, who sometimes would work late into the night, so as not to be a burden to others, accomplished more in his ministry than they ever do with all their millions of dollars, and world-wide ministries. His fruit will last unto eternity; theirs will be burnt up in time.

If false prophets truly believe they are speaking for God, believing that they are pleasing in His sight, then, let them prove it by waiting upon God to provide for their needs through prayer. Let them never sell things for profit, or accept royalties from books. Let them no longer ask anyone for one penny, either for themselves or their work, directly or even indirectly (through newsletters that are subtly intended to elicit giving, even though the purported purpose is to simply ask for prayer). In other words, let them truly live by faith with God's help. After all, if they are speaking for the God who has promised to meet their every need, and God decides to delay their provision, for whatever reason, God has still provided them two hands by which to work! Is this not what the apostle Paul did when funds were short?

And, if I may speak to the false prophets, "Did not Paul tell us to follow his pattern and imitate his ways in Christ Jesus (I Cor. 4:17; 11:1; Phil. 4:9; II Tim. 3:10-11)? Where did Paul ever sell the things of God for money? Where did he ever beg for money through his letters? Where would he always end his messages with an appeal for funds for his work?

Yes, he asked for money for the poor in Jerusalem, but where did he ever ask for money for himself? And the one time it might have appeared to some that he may have been asking for money, he makes clear, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, he was not! (I Cor. 9:15)."^h

But false prophets will never do this; they will continue to do what they have always done ever since the days of the Old Testament, peddle the Word of God for money. They simply will never freely give as they have received. They sell their wares to help fund their ministry, and if they ever do give something away for free, it usually is done as a marketing ploy

^h **I Cor. 9:15** But I have used none of these things: neither have I written these things, that it should be so done unto me: for *it* were better for me to die, than that any man should make my glorying void. KJV

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to raise more money!

Perhaps, this is not common in other places, but here in America, such practices are rife. And what is so heart-breaking is that those practices are considered both legitimate and acceptable by some who are rightful bearers of the truth. But our Lord says the opposite; they are not acceptable, for they mix the things of God with the things of the world.

But some may wonder in all of this, “Does not this not just apply to unbelievers? In other words, can a true believer also be a false prophet?” The answer is, indeed, one can, not in doctrine, of course, for, as Jesus said, “unless you believe that I AM, you shall die in your sins” (Jn. 8:24), but they can in their practices, being false because of their carnal ways of serving God, false because of their peddling of God’s Word, ever begging God’s people for money, false because of their unwillingness to live by faith, trusting in the promises of God, and/or false because of their unwillingness to work with their own two hands in their service to God.

We can see this in a few places in Scripture. For example, some believe Balaam was actually a true believer, a true prophet of God, who, unfortunately, because of his love of money, backslid into sin, and became a “false” prophet (Num. 22-24). Others believe the old prophet in Bethel was a true prophet of God, who because of his backslidden ways, misled another prophet of God that had come from Judah (I Kings 13:11-31).

The question in that story, of course, would be, “What caused this old prophet in Bethel to backslide?” Perhaps it was because he decided to stay in Bethel and be paid by king Jeroboam for his services. This possibility seems to be implied, for the king tries to give money to the prophet from Judah, thus indicating that this may have been his common practice for prophets (I Kings 13:7-8).

Perhaps, the temptation of a constant source of revenue was too great for the old prophet, and so the old prophet convinced himself that he could stay in Bethel and influence the king of Israel for good, all in

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the name of the LORD. But, the opposite happened; the king led him into falsehood and destruction, just as it did with Balaam before him. And, as such whatever the reason may have been for his backslidden state, this old prophet of God became false, actually lying in the name of the LORD to the prophet of God from Judah.

And so the answer is yes, a true believer can be a “false” prophet, but since the term is now usually applied to a heretic, perhaps it would be best not to apply the actual nomenclature to a believer, and instead, just say that such a one is “acting” like a false prophet, or, if not that, then at least, such a one is imitating a false prophets’ carnal ways, following their practice of seeking Mammon in the name of the Lord.

If this was not a real danger and possibility for a true believer, then why would the Lord warn His disciples about the danger of Mammon; why would he warn them of false prophets, emphasizing their fruit, or why would our Lord warn those saints in Pergamum about the teaching of Balaam (Rev. 2:14)?

That being said, brethren, I do believe the immediate context of Matthew 7:15-20 identifies those false prophets as ones who “pretend” to be saved, but in reality are not. The Lord identifies them as wolves in sheep’s clothing, and a wolf is not a sheep!

But I also believe the Holy Spirit includes this in His Sermon as a warning to believers everywhere (as the Holy Spirit also did in Rev. 2:14), because everything an unbeliever can do, a Christian is liable to do. Can unbelievers sin? Indeed, they can and do, but so can believers. Can unbelievers be carnal? Indeed, they can and are, but so can believers as Scripture clearly labels them in I Cor. 3:1.

Everything an unbeliever can practice (save a total life of continual sin, absent the chastening of the Lord—Heb. 12:6-8), a Christian can practice. And that is the problem in modern Christianity. Some Christian leaders may not actually be false prophets, in the sense of pretending to be a Christian when they

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are not, but they can certainly be carnal, following the same false and misleading practices of a false prophet, and that should be a warning to anyone who speaks in the name of the Lord.

Dear Christian, not only should we ever be vigilant against the false doctrine and heresy of false prophets, we should also be vigilant against the carnality and base gain brought into the things of the Lord by false prophets. We should never imitate their ways or fruit.

You see, beloved, those who follow the way of the cross, will never peddle the Word of God for sordid gain. Those in the “broad way” will. The “broad way” is the way of carnality and the way of the false prophet, and the one which follows that way will ever hate the narrow way, the way of the cross. Whether one is really or saved or not does not matter in this case, for anyone who refuses to follow the way of the cross, is by definition carnal like those false prophets.

The broad way ever leads to destruction, and so does the way which does not include the denial of self and the taking up of one’s cross daily to follow the Lord.

Remember, dear saint, destruction does not always refer in Scripture to eternal destruction in hell; it also can refer to the spiritual ruin of the life of a true believer in this present life. As such, may we ever beware of false prophets, not only their doctrine, but also their ways, for those ways will dishonor the Lord and bring nothing but deception, carnality and base gain into the things of the Lord before the world, where things are commonly sold for a price, because faith is not strong enough to wait and to trust in God’s provision. Nor is it strong enough to consider that it may never come at all, because what we are doing is not really His will, and God has never promised to provide for that which He has never ordered. A true believer must be open to this in humility, but a false prophet never will, for they are deceived, believing they are speaking for God, and so, when provision does not come, they resort to “divining” for money, never obeying the Lord to

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freely give, as we have freely received. And so, true believers must always be careful to never act the same way, for if they do they run the risk of bringing ruin and spiritual destruction to their own heart and to the hearts of others.

May we ever be beware, dear Lord of false prophets and their ways, and always by thy grace be able to recognize their fruit. Amen

7:21 Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.

7:22 Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?

7:23 And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.

We now come to one of the most important parts of the Sermon on the Mount—the final reference by the Lord Jesus as to His Deity.

Many times we hear heretics and unbelievers say that Jesus never claimed to be God. That viewpoint simply is not true and these next few verses fully bear that out, for He clearly affirms that He is God manifested in the flesh, the LORD God Almighty.

We will examine these verses from three different perspectives or aspects. First we will look at our Lord's claim to Divinity. Then we will discuss the identity of those who say, "Lord, Lord." And, finally, we will discuss the meaning of our Lord's declaration in verse 23 that he never knew them. So let's begin with our Lord's affirmation of His Deity.

We mentioned in Matthew 5:8 that Jesus inferred His Divine Nature, and in Matthew 6:33, He inferred it once more, a little more clearly. But now in these verses our Lord plainly affirms His Divinity.

This is such a tremendous declaration of our Lord Jesus that it is unfortunate that many see this declaration simply as His assertion that He has rightful authority as a Rabbi. Others simply see this

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as an outward assertion that Jesus is Lord, meaning Master. In other words, their understanding of the vocative, “Lord, Lord,” is nothing more than someone outwardly confessing that Jesus is the Lord in their life. This, too, is unfortunate, because the phrase, “Jesus is Lord,” in the New Testament does not simply mean “Jesus is Master,” as many Christians believe. Rather it means “Jesus is LORD,” that Jesus is Jehovah,” Jesus is Yahweh.” The declaration, “Jesus is Lord” is an assertion of His Deity, not simply His Lordship.

Now, of course, the Lordship of Jesus, i.e. Jesus as our Master is, indeed, rooted in His Deity, i.e. Jesus being LORD,ⁱ but that is forgotten by many today and they simply emphasize the Lordship aspect, rather than the Deity of Christ in such a confession. (I am afraid this is becoming a norm among much of Evangelicalism because the Blessed Trinity is no longer taught in depth and certain aspects of the Historic Christian Faith are no longer affirmed. Rather portions of the Faith are being denied by many, many Evangelical theologians, pastors, and teachers.) ‡

Perhaps, one of the reasons our Lord’s Deity is not clearly seen in these verses is because of the way many English versions translate certain verses from the Old Testament. Now you might wonder, “The Old Testament?” “How does an English translation of the Old Testament affect this verse in the New Testament? Let me explain.

The phrase “Lord Lord” is an appellation of God from the Old Testament, but this is not readily known, because it is rarely translated that way in English. But, since Matthew wrote in Greek, and, since he was familiar with the Greek LXX, perhaps it will help us understand this Name of God, if we first present the Greek LXX version of this appellation as found in the Old Testament (see Fig. 2) along with mine, and with Brenton’s English translation.

ⁱ **Mal. 1:6** A son honoureth *his* father, and a servant his master: if then I *be* a father, where *is* mine honour? and **if I *be* a master, where *is* my fear?** saith the **LORD** of hosts unto you, O priests, that despise my name. And ye say, Wherein have we despised thy name? KJV

‡ See B. P. Harris, *Understanding the Trinity* (available from Assembly Bookshelf)

Fig. 2 The Appellation Lord Lord

NEW TESTAMENT	
Greek	English
Matthew 7:21 Οὐ πᾶς ὁ λέγων μοι, Κύριε, κύριε , εἰσελεύσεται εἰς τὴν βασιλείαν τῶν οὐρανῶν· ἀλλ' ὁ ποιῶν τὸ θέλημα τοῦ πατρὸς μου τοῦ ἐν οὐρανοῖς.	Matthew 7:21 Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord , shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. KJV
OLD TESTAMENT	
Greek LXX	English
Deuteronomy 9:26 καὶ εὐξάμην πρὸς τὸν θεὸν καὶ εἶπα κύριε κύριε βασιλεὺ τῶν θεῶν...	Deuteronomy 9:26 “And I prayed to God and said Lord, Lord , King of the gods...” (my translation)
Judges 16:28 καὶ ἐβόησεν Σαμψων πρὸς κύριον καὶ εἶπεν κύριε κύριε μνήσθητί μου ...”	Judges 16:28 And Samson cried before the Lord, and said, Lord Lord , remember me...” (my translation)
I Chronicles 17:24 λεγόντων κύριε κύριε παντοκράτωρ θεὸς Ἰσραὴλ...”	I Chronicles 17:24 “saying, Lord, Lord , Almighty God of Israel...” (Brenton’s LXX Version)
Psalms 108:21 (109:21) καὶ σύ κύριε κύριε ποιήσον μετ’ ἐμοῦ ἔλεος ἐνεκεν τοῦ ὀνόματός σου ὅτι χρηστὸν τὸ ἔλεός σου	Psalms 109:21 But thou, O Lord Lord , deal <i>mercifully</i> with me, for thy name’s sake: for thy mercy is good. (Brenton’s LXX Version)
Psalms 139:8 (140:7) κύριε κύριε δύναμις τῆς σωτηρίας μου ...”	Psalms 140:7 “ Lord Lord , power of my salvation...” (my translation)
Psalms 140:8 (141:8) ὅτι πρὸς σέ κύριε κύριε οἱ ὀφθαλμοί μου ἐπὶ σέ ἤλπισα μὴ ἀντανέλης τὴν ψυχὴν μου	Psalms 141:8 Because, Lord Lord , towards you are mine eyes; upon you I hope; please do not nullify my life. (my translation)

As many know, Matthew as well as many

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Christians in the early church routinely used the Septuagint (LXX) Old Testament. For example, in some cases, Matthew follows the LXX reading rather than the Masoretic reading, which shows the LXX preserved the original reading over against the Masoretic. These supposed variations made known by the translation of the Septuagint have actually been proven to be based upon a different Hebrew text as brought to light by the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls. In certain cases, I believe the LXX preserves the underlying Hebrew original (e.g. Matt. 4:4 & Deut. 8:3—reading *God*, as opposed to *LORD*; Matt. 19:5 & Gen. 2:24—reading *two shall be*, rather than *they shall be*). Now, some might conclude that Matthew was not using the Greek LXX, but rather a different underlying Hebrew text. Of course this is possible, but most do not disagree that Matthew was quite familiar with the LXX. As such, in order to understand Matt. 7:21-23 we must examine the LXX use of the vocative κύριε, κύριε (Lord, Lord) as used by Matthew.

As can be seen in Fig. 2, the phrase is used repeatedly as an address to God. In Deut. 9:26 it is used in prayer to the God of Israel. Clearly, in Deut. 9:26 the phrase is an indication of Deity! The same can be said of I Chron. 17:24, where it referred to the Almighty God of Israel, and in the other verses, where it is used in both prayer and praise to God. Clearly, the phrase—Lord Lord (κύριε κύριε)—was used for the God of Israel by Greek speaking Jews as a Name for God.

Now some might think that this is just the result of translation Greek, because of a reason we will shortly explain. But this usage is further affirmed by its use in the Inter-Testament writings of the Jews. Consider the following examples where it appears in those aforementioned writings.

III Maccabees 2:1-2 reads—

“The high priest, Simon, knelt in homage in front of the sanctuary and holding out his hands with due reverence, he prayed, ‘**Lord, Lord [κύριε κύριε]** King of the heaven, and ruler of all creation, holy among the holy ones,

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sovereign, conqueror of all, pay heed to us who are sorely vexed by a wicked and corrupt man, reckless in his effrontery and might.”⁸⁷

The Book of Jubilees 14:2a, 4-8 reads—

“And he said: '**Lord, Lord**, what wilt thou give me, seeing I go hence childless... and He brought him forth abroad, and said unto him: 'Look toward heaven and number the stars, if thou art able to number them.' And he looked toward heaven, and beheld the stars. And He said unto him: 'So shall thy seed be.' And he believed in the Lord, and it was counted to him for righteousness. And He said unto him: 'I am the Lord that brought thee out of Ur of the Chaldees, to give thee the land of the Canaanites to possess it forever; and I will be God unto thee and to thy seed after thee.' And he said: '**Lord, Lord**, whereby shall I know that I shall inherit (it)?’”⁸⁸

The Testament of Abraham 9:4 reads—

“Thus says Abraham your slave, '**Lord, Lord [κύριε κύριε]**, in every deed and word which I have asked of you you have heeded me, and have fulfilled my every wish.”⁸⁹

The Apocalypse of Moses 25:3 reads—

“But you will confess and say: '**Lord, Lord [κύριε κύριε]**, save me, and I will turn no more to the sin of the flesh.’”⁹⁰

And, finally, even Philo, who lived concurrent with the Lord, records for us in his writings (*De Confusione Linguarum* 1:173) a prayer of Moses using the same appellation.

“Some persons therefore, admiring exceedingly the nature of both these worlds, have not only deified them in their wholes, but have also deified the most beautiful parts of them, such as the sun and the moon, and the entire heaven, which, having no reverence for anything, they have called gods. But Moses, perceiving their design, says, "**O Lord, Lord [κύριε, κύριε]**, King of the gods," [Deuteronomy 10:17], in order to show the difference between the ruler and those subject to him.”⁹¹

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So we can see that the phrase “Lord Lord” was an appellation used in prayer to God. It is a vocative of direct address wherein the Divine Nature of the Person is being affirmed.

And, not only that (for the one who still believes the “appellation” is a title and not a name) one can see “κύριος κύριος directly affirmed to be an actual name ascribed to God in Jeremiah.

In Jeremiah we read—

Jeremiah 44:26 "Nevertheless hear the word of the LORD, all Judah who are living in the land of Egypt, 'Behold, I have sworn by My great name,' says the LORD, 'never shall My name be invoked again by the mouth of any man of Judah in all the land of Egypt, saying, "As the **Lord GOD** lives." NASB

As can be seen above the name that the LORD says will never be invoked again is “the Lord GOD.” In the Greek Septuagint version of this text the last phrase actually reads as follows: ζῇ **κύριος κύριος** ἐπὶ πάσῃ γῇ Αἰγύπτῳ--“The **Lord Lord** lives, in all the land of Egypt.”

And so we see that the Holy Spirit identifies the phrase, “Lord Lord” (κύριος κύριος) as an actual name of God. “Lord Lord” is not a simple exclamation of earnestness where one might repeat the name for emphasis (as for instance Jesus does with Paul),^j rather, it is revelatory declaration of the nature of God.

This becomes all the more apparent when we understand those underlying Hebrew words from which the name “Lord, Lord (κύριε κύριε) is derived in the Hebrew Bible.

The underlying Hebrew words in this verse in Jeremiah are the two words Adonai Jehovah.§ In the King James Version they translated it as Lord GOD (as well as in the 1995 edition of NASB above).

Now some may wonder why the second Hebrew word, “Jehovah,” is translated as GOD in the KJV, when in other places they translate it as LORD. The reason is as follows.

By the time of our Lord, many in Israel believed

^j **Acts 9:4** And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, **Saul, Saul,** why persecutest thou me? KJV

§ Please see the partial repeat below of the Excursus on the Name Jehovah that is taken from Part I of *The Gospel According to Matthew*.

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the name of YHVH (Jehovah) was too sacred to pronounce. As such, whenever the name appeared they would pronounce the name of *Adonai* instead. This eventually was indicated by the inclusion of the vowel points from the word *Adonai*.

You see, originally the Hebrew language did not utilize vowels. Individual words were understood within the context. (Today with the explosion of texting the same thing is occurring in English where many are able to identify certain words without ever using vowels!) Thus the name YHVH began to be written with the vowel points of *Adonai* so that one would be reminded to read it as *Adonai*, and not as it was really pronounced. In English, however, since *Adonai* was translated as “Lord,” and YHVH or Jehovah was translated as “LORD,” the King James translators decided to translate YHVH or Jehovah as “GOD whenever it followed *Adonai* so as to not appear redundant (i.e. Lord LORD).

Thus, in the King James Bible, they translated the Hebrew names as follows (Fig. 3).

Fig. 3
KJV Translations for the Hebrew Names of God

Hebrew Name	English Name
Adonai and Adon	Lord
Jehovah (YHVH)	LORD
Elohim	God
Adonai Jehovah	Lord GOD

Many other English Versions have followed the same pattern as the King James translators.

Now, while this might make sense to some, I am afraid it has broken up the continuity of God’s Word. Truth must be consistent. If I was to say, “ $2 \times 6 = 12$, and $6 + 6 = 12$, and so $12 \div 6 = 2$,” everybody would understand the true nature of those numbers. However, if I was to say, $2 \times 6 = 12$, and $6 + 6 = 12$, and so $12 \div 6 = 3$,” everybody would be confused. Why?—because it is not consistent.

Well, beloved, it is the same way with God’s Word. Unfortunately, many English versions are not

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fully consistent in their translations of the name of God as they could be, and so, in some cases, I am afraid, some might become confused with the variations.

To be consistent, if one decides to translate YHVH, or Jehovah as LORD, then one should always translate YHVH, or Jehovah as LORD, even if it follows *Adonai*. The only reason why I can surmise why they would not is simply because of a concern for euphony. But why should human euphony supplant Divine Revelation?

It would have been much less confusing if English translators would have consistently translated Jehovah as LORD, even when combined with *Adonai*. If they had translated Adonai Jehovah as Lord LORD much clarity could have been brought to the text, especially to our verse in Jeremiah 44:26. It would have then read in the NASB as follows (if I might adapt it)—

Jeremiah 44:26 "Nevertheless hear the word of the LORD, all Judah who are living in the land of Egypt, 'Behold, I have sworn by My great name,' says the LORD, '**never shall My name be invoked** again by the mouth of any man of Judah in all the land of Egypt, saying, "**As the Lord LORD lives.**"

Thus, this consistency would have brought some insight to our verse here in Matthew 7:21 when our Lord says, "Not everyone that saith unto me, **Lord Lord**, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven..."

Euphony did not seem to bother the Greek translators; they did not seem to have a problem with a supposed redundancy or euphony when they translated Adonai Jehovah as κύριε κύριε. So with this insight, let me now provide those verses once more from Fig. 2 (now Fig. 4) below, with Adonai Jehovah now added to the Greek and Lord GOD changed to Lord LORD to bring them into line with the rest of the KJV's translation of Jehovah as LORD.

Fig. 4 The Appellation Lord Lord Revised

NEW TESTAMENT	
Greek	English
Matthew 7:21 Οὐ πᾶς ὁ λέγων μοι, κύριε, κύριε , εἰσελεύσεται εἰς τὴν βασιλείαν τῶν οὐρανῶν· ἀλλ' ὁ ποιῶν τὸ θέλημα τοῦ πατρὸς μου τοῦ ἐν οὐρανοῖς.	Matthew 7:21 Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord , shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. KJV
OLD TESTAMENT	
Greek LXX (with Hebrew names)	English (KJV adapted)
Deuteronomy 9:26 καὶ εὐξάμην πρὸς τὸν θεὸν καὶ εἶπα κύριε κύριε (Jehovah Elohim) βασιλεὺ τῶν θεῶν...	Deuteronomy 9:26 “And I prayed to God and said LORD God , King of the gods...”
Judges 16:28 καὶ ἐβόησεν Σαμψων πρὸς κύριον καὶ εἶπεν κύριε κύριε (Adonai Jehovah) μνήσθητί μου”	Judges 16:28 And Samson cried before the Lord, and said, Lord LORD , remember me...”
I Chronicles 17:24 λεγόντων κύριε κύριε (Jehovah Elohim) παντοκράτωρ θεὸς Ισραηλ..	I Chronicles 17:24 “saying, LORD Lord Almighty God of Israel...” (Brenton’s LXX Version)
Psalms 108:21 (109:21) καὶ σύ κύριε κύριε (Jehovah Adonai) ποιήσον μετ’ ἐμοῦ ἔλεος ἔνεκεν τοῦ ὀνόματός σου ὅτι χρηστὸν τὸ ἔλεός σου	Psalms 109:21 But thou, O LORD Lord deal <i>mercifully</i> with me, for thy name’s sake: for thy mercy is good. (Brenton’s LXX Version—adapted)
Psalms 139:8 (140:7) κύριε κύριε (Jehovah Adonai) δύναμις τῆς σωτηρίας μου ...”	Psalms 140:7 “ LORD Lord , power of my salvation...”
Psalms 140:8 (141:8) ὅτι πρὸς σέ κύριε κύριε (Jehovah Adonai) οἱ ὀφθαλμοί μου ἐπὶ σέ ἤλπισα	Psalms 141:8 Because, LORD Lord , towards you are mine eyes; upon you I hope...”

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In fact, when we also look at the nominative form κύριος κύριος of the Greek vocative κύριε κύριε, we continue to see they had no problem with a supposed redundancy or euphony in many, many other places in the Hebrew Old Testament. For example here are just a few verses (Fig. 5) from the book of Ezekiel where the Hebrew was translated into Greek by the nominative, **κύριος κύριος**. (As I will adapt Brenton's Version of the Greek Septuagint, I will change his English translation of "Lord God" to "Lord Lord," this time to show consistency with the translation of Greek word κύριος, by the English word, "Lord," in the New Testament, especially to show consistency with the verses before us, i.e. Matt. 7:21-22.)

Fig. 5 The Appellation Lord Lord in Ezekiel

Eze 12:10	"Say to them, Thus saith the Lord Lord... "
Eze 13:20	"Therefore thus saith the Lord Lord... "
Eze 14:6	"... Thus saith the Lord Lord... "
Eze 20:39	"...thus saith the Lord Lord... "
Eze 21:13	"... it shall not be, saith the Lord Lord. "
Eze 22:3	"...Thus saith the Lord Lord... "
Eze 22:31	"... saith the Lord Lord. "
Eze 23:28	"Wherefore thus saith the Lord Lord. "
Eze 23:46	"Thus saith the Lord Lord... "
Eze 26:15	"For thus saith the Lord Lord... "
Eze 26:19	" For thus saith the Lord Lord... "
Eze 26:21	"...no more forever, saith the Lord Lord... "
Eze 28:12	"...Thus saith the Lord Lord... "
Eze 28:25	"Thus saith the Lord Lord... "
Eze 29:19	"Thus saith the Lord Lord... "
Eze 34:8	"As I live, saith the Lord Lord... "
Eze 34:10	"Thus saith the Lord Lord... "
Eze 36:2	"Thus saith the Lord Lord... "
Eze 36:3	"...Thus saith the Lord Lord... "
Eze 36:5	"Therefore, thus saith the Lord Lord... "
Eze 38:3	"... Thus saith the Lord Lord... "
Eze 38:10	"Thus saith the Lord Lord... "
Eze 38:17	"Thus saith the Lord Lord... "

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And now let us include, once again, our verses from Matt. 7:21-22.

Matthew 7:21-22 Not everyone that saith unto me, **Lord Lord**, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.
²² Many will say to me in that day, **Lord Lord**, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? (KJV adapted)

As one can see, if there had been consistency in translation, one may have been better able to understand how our Lord was affirming His Divinity in Matthew 7:21-22. I know that such phraseology sounds strange in an English ear. The repetition of **Lord Lord** does not seem normal. But obviously it did not seem abnormal to a Greek speaking person, especially since they could have used the Greek translation, δέσποτα κύριε, for *Adonai Jehovah*, instead of κύριε κύριε, as some translators did in a few places (e.g. Gen. 15:8; Jer. 1:6; 4:10).

As we mentioned in the introduction to the Gospel of Matthew (Part I), Matthew may have written an earlier Gospel in the Hebrew language (as the Gospel was to the Jew first) but when the time had come for him to “go into all the world,” he composed a Greek Gospel not only for Gentiles to read, but also all the Greek speaking Hellenistic Jews to read, i.e. those who routinely utilized the Greek Septuagint for their reading of Scripture. Therefore, it matters not whether our Lord first spoke these words in Aramaic, or in Hebrew, for the Holy Spirit chose the repetition of the Greek vocative, κύριε κύριε, in these verses by our Lord, which would have been a most familiar combination to any Greek speaking Jew, as well as any Gentile believer who also utilized the Greek LXX.

A Hellenistic Jew would immediately understand that our Lord was declaring that He was the Lord LORD (Adonai Jehovah)—the Lord Lord (κύριε κύριε) of the Greek Old Testament.

Now, perhaps, some may still object and believe

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the Lord was not referring to Himself as Adonai Jehovah, but rather Adon Adon (using the singular) which is repeatedly used in the Old Testament of one who was simply a master or lord (e.g. Gen. 23:6;44:30; Ex. 32:22). This really makes no difference for the singular Adon, which was used of man, was also used of God many times and so our Lord could still have been referring to Himself as the LORD of the Old Testament.

Exodus 34:23 Thrice in the year shall all your men children appear before the **Lord** (Adon) GOD, the God of Israel. KJV

Psalms 8:9 O LORD our **Lord** (Adon), how excellent is thy name in all the earth! KJV

Isaiah 3:1 For, behold, the **Lord** (Adon), the LORD of hosts, doth take away from Jerusalem and from Judah the stay and the staff, the whole stay of bread, and the whole stay of water. KJV

In each of these cases the singular *Adon* is used, but notice how the name still refers to God. So even if Jesus was referring to Himself as *Adon Adon* and not Adonai Jehovah it makes no difference (nor if He was referring to Himself as *Jehovah Adonai*, or, of course *Jehovah Jehovah*). This becomes all the more apparent because even if He was referring to Himself as “*Adon Adon*,” it still could not refer to anything but His Divine Nature. Why?—Because this appellation was used of Jesus “in that day” (Matt. 7:22), and no ordinary human being (even one who might be considered to be a great personage) is ever granted the authority by God in Scripture to so judge in that coming day, or to make a decision as to who is able to enter into the kingdom of God. That prerogative only belonged to the LORD God Almighty, who is also referred to as Lord (Adon) in Isaiah 51, when involved in judgment.

Isaiah 51:22 Thus saith thy **Lord** (Adon) the LORD, and thy God *that* pleadeth the cause of his people, Behold, I have taken out of thine hand the cup of trembling, *even the*

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dregs of the cup of my fury; thou shalt no more drink it again: KJV

The same identity of One so judging is also made in Malachi.

Malachi 3:1-2 Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the **Lord** (Adon), whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the LORD of hosts. ² **"But who can endure the day of His coming? And who can stand when He appears? For He is like a refiner's fire and like fullers' soap.**

You see, dear brethren, our Lord declares that He is the one who will judge those persons "in that day," which is a well-known Hebraism for that day of judgment. Over and over in the Old Testament "that day" referred to the time when the LORD God would judge His people (as well as the nations of the earth).

So even if Jesus was referring to Himself as "Adon Adon," it still would not refer to Him as man, a human lord, for His Jewish hearers would know that such judgment was not left to any human personage. They would know that Scripture says the only One to judge Israel and the nations "in that day," is none other than He who is Lord (Adon), i.e. LORD (Jehovah), God (Elohim) Himself.

And so, any way you look at it, if our Lord was originally referring to Himself as Adon Adon, He was still referring to Himself as very God of very God, the Judge of the whole earth, Jehovah God Himself. And, any way you look at it, the Holy Spirit used a Greek appellation that was known by Jews in the Diaspora as referring to the LORD God Almighty. (And, of course, the KJV translators also believed this by translating it into English using an uppercase "L"—"Lord Lord," not as "lord lord.")

So this concludes the first part of our discussion on this verse—the affirmation by our Lord of His Divine Nature. It is wrong for some to assert that Jesus never claimed to be God. He did! And it is

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found in this very verse at the culmination of His Sermon on the Mount. He had been inferring it in Matt. 5:8, and, again, in a slightly fuller way in Matt. 6:33, and now here He directly declares it with all authority. Amen, dear Lord.

Let us now turn to the second aspect we mentioned concerning these verses—the identity of those who say, “Lord Lord.”

We already mentioned that the phrase, “in that day,” referred to the time of our Lord’s Second Coming when He comes to judge and begin His Millennial rule upon earth. As such, in that context, we must ask ourselves as to whom this group of people might be, who refer to Jesus as “Lord Lord.”

The New Testament repeatedly refers to “that day” when our Lord returns in judgment.

Matthew 24:36 But of **that day** and hour knoweth no *man*, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only. KJV

Luke 10:12 But I say unto you, that it shall be more tolerable in **that day** for Sodom, than for that city. KJV

I Thessalonians 5:1 But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you.² For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night.³ For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape.⁴ But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that **that day** should overtake you as a thief. KJV

II Thessalonians 1:10 When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in **that day**. KJV

II Timothy 1:12 For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against **that day**. KJV

II Timothy 4:8 Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown

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of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at **that day**: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing. KJV

All these verses refer to the time of our Lord's second coming wherein occurs His judgment of Israel, His judgment of the nations, and of course, His judgment of the Church, which is known as the Judgment Seat of Christ. All these judgments determine who will be in the kingdom of Heaven when it is established on earth during the Millennium. So this will help us decide as to who is in this group of people who cry out, Lord, Lord.

Now, it must be admitted that most view this group as referring to those who profess faith in Christ, but in reality are not true believers. Obviously, such a group does exist for Scripture repeatedly refers to such.

I Corinthians 5:11 But actually, I wrote to you not to associate with **any so-called brother** if he should be an immoral person, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or a swindler-- not even to eat with such a one. NASB

II Corinthians 11:13-15 For **such men are false apostles**, deceitful workers, **disguising themselves as apostles of Christ**.¹⁴ And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light.¹⁵ Therefore it is not surprising if his servants also **disguise themselves as servants of righteousness**; whose end shall be according to their deeds. NASB

II Peter 2:1 But there were **false prophets** also among the people, even as there shall be **false teachers** among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, **even denying the Lord that bought them**, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. KJV

II John 1:7-11 For **many deceivers** are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is **a deceiver** and an antichrist. KJV

Now, first let me say that no one is going to deny that in a general sense this verse warns believers that

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we must ever be vigilant to “test the spirits,”^k knowing that not everyone who says, “I am a Christian,” is necessarily a Christian, but rather may be a wolf and heretic in sheep’s clothing.

It is also possible that some will even say they believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, when asked, but when that person is pressed, one finds out that, yes, they do believe in the Lord, but they believe in a different Lord! They do not believe in the Lord of the Historic Christian Faith. They believe in a different Jesus, just as the apostle Paul warns us in his epistle to the Corinthians—

II Corinthians 11:3-4 But I am afraid, lest as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds should be led astray from the simplicity and purity *of devotion* to Christ.⁴ For if one comes and **preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached**, or you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted, you bear *this* beautifully. NASB

And so we should always be sure to be vigilant for the Faith, making sure that we do not allow anyone to exist among us who does not believe in the Lord Jesus Christ of the Scriptures, which is borne witness to by the Historic Christian Faith, knowing that the enemy of our souls will always try to ruin the Lord’s Church by heresy.

But is this the group to which our Lord is referring? I do not think so, for a number of reasons which we will now discuss.

Since “that day,” which our Lord references, occurs at the end of the Great Tribulation, we must consider the different groups present at that time.

- 1) First, there will be those who follow the Anti-Christ, having received his mark.
- 2) Then there will be those known as the 144,000 who follow the Lamb, i.e. those from the twelve tribes of Israel.
- 3) Then there would be those who are known as

^k **I John 4:1**
Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.
KJV

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righteous Gentiles who do not take the mark of the beast, but are kind and helpful to those 144,000 as referenced in Matthew 25:32-40.

4) Then, there are those from the Gentiles or nations, who have not yet received the mark of the beast by the time our Lord returns, but they had no concern for the Lord's brethren, as referenced in Matt. 25:41-46. (It should be mentioned, as an aside, in regard to this group, that it will take some time for the mark of the Beast to be given to everyone in the entire world; and since this endeavour does not seem to begin till later in the seven year period of tribulation, it seems some will make it to the end of the seven year period without ever yet getting the mark. Those would be the ones in this fourth group. They are not saved, like the previous third group. They would be those who were planning on getting the mark when the time came for them to receive it.)

5) Then there would be those people known as "tribulational saints" (a nomenclature developed by those who hold to a pre-tribulational rapture viewpoint). These would be those saints from Israel (i.e. the Lord's brethren, according to the flesh known as the 144,000), along with those tribulational saints from the nations (Gentile believers) who refuse to worship the Beast.

6) Then, for those who hold to a post-tribulational viewpoint of the rapture, the fifth group, i.e. the tribulational saints mentioned above, would not be a separate group at all, since according to the post-tribulational viewpoint, such ones would simply be known as the Church.

7) And, finally, we have a seventh group, of which we will not yet identify, but we will identify and discuss presently.

These are the six groups that could exist right before, and right up to "that day." I do not believe

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there could be any other group that could stand before the Lord on that day (except the seventh which we will presently discuss). These six groups would encompass anyone who might be alive in "that day."

So, if that is the case, this greatly affects one's understanding of who these people must be, i.e. the people who will say in that day, "Lord, Lord." They can only be from one of these groups.

As such, could they be from the first group, those who followed the Anti-Christ, having received his mark? No, for they are already judged right before the Second Coming and at the moment of the Second Coming. They have no appeal. They lost all chances of appeal when they took the mark of the Beast.

Revelation 14:9-11 And another angel, a third one, followed them, saying with a loud voice, "If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives a mark on his forehead or upon his hand, ¹⁰ **he also will drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is mixed in full strength in the cup of His anger; and he will be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb.**" ¹¹ "And the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever; and they have no rest day and night, those who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name." NASB

Revelation 19:20-21 And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone. ²¹ And the remnant were slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, which *sword* proceeded out of his mouth: and all the fowls were filled with their flesh. KJV

Could it be from the second group known as the 144,000? No, for they have the name of the Father in their forehead and Scripture states they have no guile. So they could not be from this group, for those in Matt. 7:21 are certainly are filled with guile.

Revelation 14:1, 5 And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on

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the mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty *and* four thousand, having his Father's name written in their foreheads. ⁵ **And in their mouth was found no guile:** for they are without fault before the throne of God. KJV

But what of the third group. Could they be a part of that group? No, for Scripture says that those in that group will be told immediately by the Lord to enter into the kingdom, whereas those who say, "Lord Lord," on that day are told they cannot then enter the kingdom of heaven.

Matthew 25:34 Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, **Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom** prepared for you from the foundation of the world: KJV

How about the fourth group? Could they be from it? No, for the fourth group is never shown to be crying out, "Lord Lord" in their defense. Nor do they ever bring up any works they have done by the name of the Lord as a reason to be allowed into the kingdom. So those who say, "Lord, Lord, could not be a part of the fourth group either.

Matthew 25:41, 44-45 Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, **Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels:** ⁴⁴ Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee? ⁴⁵ Then shall he answer them, saying, **Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me.** KJV

Then we have the fifth group, the tribulational saints. Could they be from this group? It would be very unlikely, for those in this group, while never experiencing the wrath of God during the tribulation, will nevertheless, experience the wrath of the Anti-Christ for not worshiping the beast.

Revelation 13:15 And he had power to give life unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both

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speak, **and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed.** KJV

Rev 12:11 And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; **and they loved not their lives unto the death.** KJV

Revelation 20:4 And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and *I saw* the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and **which had not worshipped the beast**, neither his image, neither had received *his* mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. KJV

As such, if those who cry out “Lord Lord” are not real believers, being false believers, it would be very unlikely they would choose to be killed or beheaded by pretending to be followers of Christ. So, it is unlikely they would be this fifth group. Besides, Scripture says that everyone alive during the tribulation, who are not saved, will, indeed, worship the Beast. And so, if those who cry out, “Lord Lord,” are not really saved, their names not being written in the book of life, they will worship the Beast, according to Rev. 13:8 (see below). So they could not be a part of this group either, as those in this fifth group, the tribulational saints, never worship the beast! So that still leaves this group crying out, “Lord Lord,” a mystery. Who are they? Where do they come from, if they are not a part of any of the groups listed above? Scripture does not speak of any other group alive during the tribulation that could be this group.

Revelation 13:7-8 And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations. ⁸ **And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb** slain from the foundation of the world. KJV

So that leaves us with the sixth group, which we do not need to discuss, for if one is post-tribulational,

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one believes the fifth group, the “tribulational saints” are, indeed, one and same as the Church. As such, since the Church would never worship the Beast, taking his mark, all the same reasons we have just discussed above would still hold true if this sixth group is the same as the fifth group. Thus, I do not believe they could be from this group either. So that leaves us with the seventh group, which we did not identify, but which we will now do.

If one believes those who cry out, “Lord Lord,” are not really saved, then this seventh group would have to be all those who ever pretended to be a part of the Church from the Day of Pentecost until now, and up to the time of a pre-tribulational rapture.

As such, those who say, “Lord Lord” to our Saviour would include such ones as Simon, who practiced magic in Samaria, also known as Simon Magus (Acts 8:9-24). It would include every wolf in sheep’s clothing, like the ones Paul mentioned in Acts 20:29, as well as the false apostles who disguised themselves as servants of righteousness in II Cor. 11:13-15.

Indeed, it would refer to everyone throughout Church History who outwardly professed faith in Christ, but inwardly were unregenerate. They could not be from the Tribulation, or be a part of any of those six groups who lived through the Great Tribulation for all the reasons we have already listed.

Moreover, we know that if any of these mentioned above ever appeared before Christ on that day, seeking entrance into His kingdom, He certainly would reject them with the pronouncement, “Depart from me, I never **knew** you” (if we assume the Greek word ἔγνων in verse 23 is properly translated, as we have it in the KJV), for Scripture says that Jesus knows His own.¹

So, if this is true, then we would identify this seventh group as all those throughout Church History who pretended to be Christians, but were not, or, as all those who thought they were saved, but were not! But, there is one problem with this viewpoint that assumes the Lord is talking to unbelievers, or to those

¹ **John 10: 14** I am the good shepherd; and **I know mine own**, and mine own know me,. ASV

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who only pretended to be saved, or to those who falsely believed they were saved—this solution cannot be! Let me explain why.

According to this viewpoint, the ones who are being judged are not real Christians. They are false, or they are ones who always believed they were saved, but in reality were not, being deceived. But if that is true, they could not be present in “that day” to be judged simply because they would not be alive to be standing before our Lord. Why?—Because as they would not yet be resurrected!

Scripture speaks of two resurrections—the First Resurrection and the Second Resurrection. The First Resurrection occurs before the Millennium and the Second Resurrection occurs after the Millennium.

The First resurrection includes the dead in Christ who have lived and died since the Day of Pentecost, and then, if one holds to a pre-tribulational viewpoint of the rapture, any who remain alive until the coming of the Lord, who are then “changed in the twinkling of an eye” to meet the Lord in the air.

Also, the First Resurrection would include every tribulational saint who died during Daniel’s Seventieth week, i.e. the seven year tribulational period, for Scripture clearly says they are also a part of the First Resurrection in Rev. 20:4-5.^m

And, if one holds a post-tribulational viewpoint, nothing would change; the same ones listed above would still be included in the First Resurrection. The only difference would be nomenclature; the “tribulational saints” would not be listed as a separate group as they would simply be a part of the Church.

Additionally, it seems all the Old Testament saints would be included in the First Resurrection, along with the dead in Christ, for this reason.

Scripture says very clearly that there are only three orders of resurrections—Christ, the first-fruits, those who are Christ’s at His coming, then the end (meaning the end of the 1000 years).

I Corinthians 15:21-23 For since by man *came* death, by man also resurrection of *those that are* dead.²² For as in

^m **Rev. 20:4-5** And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and *I saw* the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received *his* mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.⁵ But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This *is* the first resurrection. KJV

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the Adam all die, thus also in the Christ all shall be made alive.²³ But each in his own rank: *the* first-fruits, **Christ; then those that are the Christ's at his coming.**²⁴ **Then the end,** when he gives up the kingdom to him *who is* God and Father; when he shall have annulled all rule and all authority and power. (Darby's Version)

Obviously, the Old Testament saints could not be raised in the third order or rank, i.e. "the end," simply because our Lord says that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob will be with Him in the "beginning" of Millennium.ⁿ (There is not the word, *cometh*, as shown in KJV.) Therefore, they too must take part in the First Resurrection (Matt. 8:11).

As for the resurrection at "the end" of the Millennium, this is called the Second Resurrection, and would include the rest of the dead not involved in the First Resurrection.

It is important to notice that after the Lord's resurrection, there are only "two" other final resurrections, not two and a half, or three, or four. There are only two stated in Scripture.* Every human being is either raised in one or the other, each in his own order. There can be no other resurrections inserted to provide a solution to some eschatological problem. The Greek word translated "order" or "rank" (τάγμα) is very precise word, being a military term; it will not allow the insertions of other "orders" of resurrections, or the splitting up of resurrections to allow other groups.

This same word is used in the LXX to indicate the "order" of the tribes of Israel gathered around the Tabernacle (Num. 2:34).^o And so, in the same way, as one cannot insert other tribes into the order of tribes around the Tabernacle, so too one cannot insert other resurrections into the order of resurrections listed by Paul. There are only two groups or orders of resurrections after the resurrection of our Lord—the First and the Second Resurrection. Every human being will be in one or the other.

It should be noted, however, that just because the Old Testament saints are included with the dead in Christ in the First Resurrection, does not mean they

ⁿ **Matthew 8:11**

And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven. KJV

* As such, those on the day of our Lord's resurrection (Matt. 27:51-53) must have returned to the grave, much as Lazarus returned to the grave.

^o **Num. 2:34** And the children of Israel did all things that the Lord commanded Moses; thus they **encamped in their order** (τάγμα), and thus they began their march in succession each according to their divisions, according to the houses of their families. Brenton's Version

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are a part of the Church. The Church, and Israel and every other Gentile believer in the Old Testament are distinct and should never be confused. This is confirmed in Heb. 12:22-23 where all three are delineated—the general assembly (Greek, πανηγύρει, festive assembly, bespeaking Israel. See Ez. 46:11 LXX), the Church of the Firstborn (obviously meaning the Church of Christ) and then the spirits of the just men made perfect (meaning all the Old Testament saints, like Adam, Noah, etc., who were not a part of Israel but were of the Gentiles).^p

This fact that Old Testament saints are included with the dead in Christ should not surprise us. It must be remembered that every believer, Old Testament or New Testament, must be included “in Christ” to be saved, for there is no other name given among men whereby one might be saved. There is no other way except in Christ to come to the Father. Abraham could not come to God the Father except through Christ. Indeed, not only is Christ the way and the truth, He is also called the Life and so, apart from being “in Christ,” no one could be ever be raised unto eternal life! He is the resurrection and the life. As Paul says, in the verse above, “For as in Adam all die,” which would the whole human race, and so would include every Old Testament saint as well, so “also in the Christ all shall be made alive,” which must also include the Old Testament saints.

But, just because judicially for resurrection and eternal life, one must be in Christ, does not mean that one should confuse the Church with Israel, or with other Old Testament saints. All three are distinct, but all three must be “in” Christ in order to judicially receive eternal life.

Romans 6:23 For the wages of sin *is* death, but the gift of God *is* eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. KJV

So we see that only believers, those who are saved can take part in the First Resurrection! All others are brought to life in the Second Resurrection at the end, i.e. at the end of the Millennial reign of Christ, at

^p **Hebrews 12:22**

But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels,²³ To the **general assembly** and **church of the firstborn**, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and **to the spirits of just men made perfect**. KJV

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which time will be the Great White Throne Judgment.

Revelation 20:4-6; 11-14 And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and *I saw* the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received *his* mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.⁵ But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This *is* the first resurrection.⁶ Blessed and holy *is* he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.¹¹ And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them.¹² And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is *the book* of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.¹³ And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works.¹⁴ And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.¹⁵ And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.

And so, let's get back to this seventh group who are standing before the Lord crying out, "Lord Lord." Since unbelievers are not raised at the beginning of the Millennium, and since they cannot be unbelievers from any of the six groups, the ones standing in this group must be believers out of the First Resurrection!

If they were unbelievers, they would not yet be alive, standing before the Lord, but would be in the grave, waiting till the end of the Millennium when they would be raised in the Second Resurrection.

And if they are believers, they would have to include everyone who behaved like they did throughout all of Church history, including any who were alive when the Lord walked on this earth.

The parallel passage in Luke clearly makes this

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known for it says the ones crying out “Lord Lord,” actually saw the Lord while He was on earth. In fact, Luke says they were eating and drinking in His presence, and hearing Him teach in their streets—

Luke 13:25-28 When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, **saying, Lord, Lord,** open unto us; and he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence ye are: ²⁶ **Then shall ye begin to say, We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets.** ²⁷ But he shall say, I tell you, I know you not whence ye are; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity. ²⁸ There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and you *yourselves* thrust out. KJV

Therefore, those to whom Jesus refers to in Matt. 7:21-23 would have to also include those who were alive with Him during the days of His incarnation.

And so, since they were resurrected, seeking entrance into the Millennium, they must be believers, since anyone who is an unbeliever, who lived in the first century with the Lord, cannot be raised to life until after the “end” of the Millennium at the time of the Second Resurrection.

Therefore, this group must be a part of the First Resurrection, which would make them believers. (Nor could they be unsaved, unresurrected, disembodied spirits seeking entrance into the kingdom of God, since Scripture never speaks of such a judgment. Any unsaved person who has ever lived on this earth will be resurrected and judged at the end of the Millennium, at the Great White Throne Judgment.)

But this poses a problem when we come to verse 23 when our Lord says “I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.” How could the Lord ever say that to one who was a true believer? This thought, of course, is why some conclude this group must be unbelievers. But, as we have just mentioned, such cannot be the case, since any unbeliever during

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the last two thousand years that might pretend to be a Christian will not be resurrected at that time. Any unbelievers, including those who falsely claim to be Christians, will not be raised until the time of the Second Resurrection, a thousand years later.

Others solve the problem by declaring that since they are Christians, and our Lord tells them to depart, must prove that a Christian can lose His salvation. Of course, this solution must be rejected outright! There is no need to even discuss it. So that leaves us with the same problem—"How the Lord could ever say, 'I never knew you...?'"

The answer, I believe, is first found in providing a better translation of this verse, and then, secondly, by understanding what actually happens at the Judgment Seat of Christ. And, finally, by understanding the eschatological significance of Daniel 12:8-13. So let's continue and see if we can clear up this apparent problem.

Our Lord's declaration, in Matt. 7:23, in most English translations, convey something like this: "I never knew you, Depart, or go away from me." Now while this is a perfectly good translation, it can be misleading depending on how the word translated "knew" and "depart" is understood, as they each have more than one shade of meaning in Greek. Even in English each of these words carry more than one meaning, depending on context.

For example, if a king was speaking to someone in English and said "Depart from me," one could take it to mean "get out of my sight; I do not ever want to see you again." Yet also, if a the king said, "Depart from me," one could take it to mean, "Leave me; I do not want to see you right now; I am upset with you. Leave my palace immediately" The former would mean depart from me permanently, the other could mean depart from me temporarily, despite the fact that both commands resulted from the displeasure of the king. The former could mean leave forever; the latter could mean leave for now.

In fact, in the aforementioned passage in the Gospel of Luke, that was similar to Matthew's

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passage, Luke uses the same type of imagery. In this passage the verb translated as “depart” carries an idea of “standing away from” or “standing apart” (Lu. 13:25-27).

Luke 13:25-27 When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; and he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence ye are: ²⁶ Then shall ye begin to say, We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets. ²⁷ But he shall say, I tell you, I know you not whence ye are; **depart from me**, all ye workers of iniquity. KJV

The Greek word that the Holy Spirit has Luke utilize is the Greek word, ἀπόστητε, which W. E. Vine defines as— “to stand off, or aloof, or to depart from anyone.” ⁹²

This meaning of “standing away from,” in Luke creates a sense of temporary removal comparable to an example found in Gen. 45:1 where Joseph commands a portion of those in his presence to “depart” or “withdraw” from him.

Genesis 45:1 Joseph could no longer control himself before all his attendants, and he cried out, “**Have everyone withdraw from me!**” So there was no one else about when Joseph made himself known to his brothers. ⁹³

This imagery is of an ancient ruler’s prerogative to dismiss anyone in his presence, or anyone who might displease him. It does not necessarily mean a permanent banishment or removal. Obviously, Joseph was not commanding that all his attendants be banished forever, never to be in his presence again.

In the same way, our Lord, in Matt. 7:23 is not necessarily dismissing those in the verse to a permanent departure or banishment. The word does not necessarily imply that. It all depends on the context.

Indeed, every other usage of the word in the New Testament does not indicate a permanent departure

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according to its context. The Greek word is only used in two other places, in Luke 9:39, where an evil spirit departs or withdraws from a young child, but then comes back, and then it is also used in Acts 13:13, where Mark departs from Barnabas and Saul.

Now this would be the closest to the imagery of permanent departure, but we know that this departure was also temporary, at least in relationship with Barnabas (and even with Paul in a broader context); it did not result in a permanent separation. Mark was reunited first with one and then, later, with the other (see Acts 15:37, 39; II Tim 4:11).

Now, in other places the Lord does speak of a permanent departure of certain ones from His presence, as in Matt. 25:41. But in the first place, even though in English we have the same word “depart,” it is not the same Greek word that is used in Matthew 7:23. And then, in the second place, when this command is given it clearly indicates the place to which they are being told to depart!

Matthew 25:41 Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, **into everlasting fire**, prepared for the devil and his angels. KJV

But in Matt. 7:23 our Lord does not command that they depart “into everlasting fire.” In fact, He does not indicate at all where they are to depart to, except that they are told to depart away from His presence. The Greek word Matthew uses is ἀποχωρέω, which is made up of two words— ἀπό and χωρέω. The preposition ἀπό, of course, means “from” or “away from,” and the Greek verb χωρέω carries the idea of “giving space to.” Bloomfield defines it as follows.

“Χωρέω, f. ἦσω, (χώπα,) *to give place or room, to give way, yield; hence in N.T. 1. to go away from a place...*”⁹⁴

Therefore, this use of the English “depart,” in Matthew 7:23, carries the idea of making a space away from one’s presence. In other words, the idea is that they are standing before the Lord, taking up space before Him, and He then tells them to leave His

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presence, yielding up the space they are occupying before Him. This, of course, means they would have to depart to another place and, in all likelihood, when we compare Scripture with Scripture, this place probably is what is referred elsewhere as the “darkness outside” (outer darkness), which most take as a reference to hell, despite the fact that Scripture never says so (which we will explain when we get to those verses later in the Gospel).

But suffice it to say at this point, in Luke it will be a place where there will be sorrow and tears (weeping and gnashing of teeth) for a life wasted in service to the Lord. And it must be a place away from the immediate presence of the Lord. They will have to withdraw from the Lord, yielding up their place before Him. But it does not say where that place is except that it is in the darkness outside (which, at least in Matt. 22:13 would be outside the king’s palace in the darkness, i.e. the night, as weddings were often an evening occasion; but, again we will discuss this more when we get to those verses).

Thus, with this understanding, perhaps a different interpretation of this verse might have become common if the second part of our Lord’s declaration might have been translated as follows, “And then will I profess unto them, ‘I never knew you. Withdraw from Me!’” Or, maybe if it had been translated as, “And then will I profess unto them, ‘I never knew you.’ ‘Leave Me!’” And that brings us to our next phrase in this matter of translation, the phrase, “I never knew you.”

The Greek verb we have in this phrase is ἔγνων, the aorist form of γινώσκω. Like the English word “know” the Greek word has different meanings. In English the word “know” can mean a simple awareness of a person, as in “I know that teacher;” or it can mean an intimate relationship with another, as in “I know my children,” or it can mean confidence gained by the recognition of a fact, as in, “I know the sun will rise in the morning.” Even though the same word is used in all three examples, context must determine which meaning of “know” is being

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conveyed. The same is true in Greek; one must be careful to glean the appropriate meaning of the word from the context, because the word can have different shades of meaning according to its context.

Greville Ewing provides a nice concise list of the varied meanings of this word in his Greek Lexicon

ΓΙΝΩΣΚΩ [γινώσκω]...**I know, perceive, feel, am acquainted with, understand, am conscious of, discern, distinguish, approve, acknowledge with approbation, know carnally, think, am aware.** ⁹⁵

As such, I believe the correct understanding or shade of meaning for this verb in Matt. 7:23, according to its overall context, would be either—*approve*, or *acknowledge with approbation*.

Bloomfield also assigns this understanding of “approve” to the verb in this verse, along with a meaning of “recognize” (although, it should be mentioned that he still follows the traditional interpretation of this verse that affirms that those referred to are unbelievers).

“οὐδέποτε ἔγνων ὑμᾶς, i.e. **‘I never recognized you as my servants, or approved you’**...This is considered a Hebraism...**having the sense approve.**” ⁹⁶

This same Greek verb prefixed with the Greek preposition ἐπί is also used in I Cor. 16:18—the Greek verb ἐπιγινώσκω. The NASB and Darby translate that Greek verb as follows.

I Corinthians 16:18 For they have refreshed my spirit and yours. Therefore **acknowledge** (ἐπιγινώσκετε) such men. NASB

I Corinthians 16:18 For they have refreshed my spirit and yours: **own** (ἐπιγινώσκετε) therefore such. (Darby’s Version)

Then we have other versions of the Bible who translate the Greek verb, either by the English word “recognize, or, in some cases, by “give recognition.”

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As one can see, the verb used in this verse in First Corinthians does not mean simply “to know,” or to be aware of, for the simple reason that Paul says they had already refreshed their spirits, and from the fact that just three verses earlier he said they already “knew” one of them—Stephanus.⁴

As such, the word in that context meant to know in the sense of *approve*, to give them approval (if you will) with approbation, or to give them *recognition* as doing God’s will **on their behalf**.

I Corinthians 16:17 I am glad about the coming of Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus, for that which was lacking **on your part** they have supplied. KJV

In other words, as Darby translates the word, “own” them, since they are acting on your behalf.

This is the same way I believe the Lord is using the word (except with negation). He is saying to the group standing before Him that He never sent them out with His *approval*. He never gave them His *recognition* as acting **on His behalf**, for the simple reason they never sought His will in the matter. As such, He is telling them that He does not “own” them as acting on His behalf, in spite of the things they did in His name.

Therefore, let’s now add this understanding to our verse, “And then will I profess unto them, ‘I never approved you.’ ‘Withdraw from Me, ye that work iniquity!’ ” Or one could translate it as—“And then will I profess unto them, ‘I never acknowledged you with approbation.’ ‘Leave Me, ye that work iniquity!’ ” And that brings us to our final phrase of the declaration—“ye that work iniquity.”

The word that is translated “iniquity” is an “alpha-privative” word in Greek; the Greek word is ἀνομία. Alpha-privatives are words that are negated in meaning by adding a prefix “α.” For example, πίστις would be “belief,” and “ἀπιστία” would mean “unbelief.” Thus, with our word in Matt. 7:23, translated as iniquity, it too is an alpha privative formed by the alpha “α” prefixed to νομία, which

⁴ **I Cor. 16:15** I beseech you, brethren, **(ye know the house of Stephanas,** that it is the firstfruits of Achaia, and *that* they have addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints) KJV

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means “lawfulness.” Thus, as ἀπιστία (unbelief) is the opposite of πίστις (belief), so too, ἀνομία (lawlessness) would be the opposite of νομία (lawfulness). This is why many modern English translations do not translate this word as iniquity, but rather as “lawlessness.” For example, the New American Standard Bible and the New King James Version translate it as such, as they also do in I John 3:4 in the phrase “sin is lawlessness.” I bring this up because William MacDonald has this helpful comment on this verse which might aid our understanding of this word. He says the following—

“...Thus it is not entirely accurate to say ‘that sin is a transgression of the law (1611 KJV), but rather that sin is lawlessness. It is **insubordination to God, wanting one’s own way, and refusing to acknowledge the Lord as rightful Sovereign. In essence it is placing one’s own will above the will of God.** It is opposition to a Living Person who has the right to be obeyed.”⁹⁷

Thus we can see that the idea is an expression of one who is insubordinate, refusing to do God’s will.

And so this brings to us the question, “We know that unbelievers practice lawlessness. Indeed, the Anti-Christ will be known as a man of lawlessness. But are true believers capable of working lawlessness?” The answer would be, unfortunately, yes. Believers can practice everything unbelievers practice, save a life of sin minus the chastening of the Lord. “Are unbelievers carnal?” Yes! “Are believers able to be carnal?” Unfortunately, yes (I Cor. 3:1). “Are unbelievers unfaithful?” Many times yes. “Are Christians ever unfaithful?” Again, unfortunately, yes. And so, in the same way that we can ask, “Do unbelievers commit lawlessness?” And we must answer, “Most certainly, they do.” We can ask, “Do believers ever commit lawlessness?” And, unfortunately, we must answer “Yes they do.”

As the apostle John tells us, “All sin is lawlessness (ἀνομία),” and so, unfortunately, since we all know that we, as believers, can still sometimes sin (I John 1:8),[†] believers are able to still fall into lawlessness.

[†] **I John 1:8** If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. KJV

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In the Old Testament LXX, this same Greek word is used of King Saul. In the first part of I Chron. 10:13 it reads: καὶ ἀπέθανεν Σαουλ ἐν ταῖς ἀνομίαις αὐτοῦ, which could be translated, “and Saul died in his lawlessness.” Of course we know that King Saul was saved, being a changed person who was given another heart by the Spirit of God (I Sam. 10:6, 9).^s However, as we know, he fell away from the Lord into a backslidden state from which he never recovered and so he died in his *lawlessness* or *carnality*. King Saul is a reminder to us of what it means to be carnal believer as opposed to a spiritual believer like King David. But as we know, even a spiritual believer is capable of sinning, and so even a spiritual believer can be lawless at times. And so, in those times when King David fell, this same Greek word was used of him in the Greek Old Testament. In fact, David used it of himself in the Psalm 38:9.

Psalm 39:8 Deliver me from all my transgressions: make me not the reproach of the foolish. KJV

The first part of that verse in the LXX version reads in the Greek as follows: ἀπὸ πασῶν τῶν ἀνομιῶν μου ῥῥσάι με (Ps. 38:9 LXX). And in English it could be translated: “Deliver me from all my lawlessness.” And, then he also used it again of his behaviour when he numbered Israel. The last portion of the verse could be translated from the LXX as, “Therefore, now O Lord, remove the lawlessness of your servant.”

And so we can see that, indeed, lawlessness can apply to a believer, either intermittently, as with David, or increasingly, more and more, as with Saul, who, in total ignorance and blindness, fell away into a backslidden or lawless state.

This understanding also fits better with the overall context of the Sermon on the Mount since our Lord is explaining that those in Israel who falsely believed they were keeping the Law were not really keeping the Law at all, but were in actuality were practicing “lawlessness,” by not doing the will of God.

^s I Samuel 10:6

"Then the Spirit of the LORD will come upon you mightily, and you shall prophesy with them **and be changed into another man.** NASB

I Samuel 10:9

And it was *so*, that when he had turned his back to go from Samuel, **God gave him another heart:** and all those signs came to pass that day. KJV

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As such, our Lord was presenting Himself as the One who came to fulfill the Law down to every jot and tittle, and as the only one who could truly be seen as one who never practiced “lawlessness, as He was the only one who ever was sinless and acted lawfully in every way.” Indeed, He hated lawlessness.[†]

Furthermore, the word translated as “workers” and as “work” in the KJV is actually a participle that is substantivized by the use of the definite article (although it is usually not translated into English as it would be awkward). This is why some translations translate it not as those who “work,” but rather as you “workers” (e.g. Darby, English Standard Version, Complete Jewish Version). This becomes significant because this particular group boasts to our Lord about all the “work” they had done for Him. Thus, more than likely, this group refers to those who had put themselves into the ministry, or work of God, and not, necessarily, to just any brother in the assembly. In other words, whether they were set apart by an assembly or not, they would be Christians who involved themselves in a “work” or “ministry” for the Lord, like Paul and Barnabas, who were first set apart from the Church in Antioch unto the work (Acts 13:2), or, perhaps like the household of Stephanus who addicted themselves to the work or ministry in Corinth (I Cor. 16:15), without the Lord’s approval.

Therefore, when we put all this together, I believe our verse would be better understood as—“And then will I profess unto them, ‘I never approved you.’ ‘Withdraw from Me, you workers of lawlessness!’ ” Or, it could be paraphrased, utilizing William MacDonald’s observations, “Withdraw from Me, you workers who are insubordinate to God,” or, “Withdraw from me, you workers who refuse to acknowledge My rightful place as Sovereign in my Work,” or maybe, “Withdraw from Me, you workers who place your own will above the will of God!

Diotrephes may be a perfect example of this type of worker (i.e. if he never repented).

3 John 1:9-11 I wrote unto the church: but Diotrephes,

[†] **Heb. 1:8-9** But of the Son *He says*, “Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever, And the righteous scepter is the scepter of His kingdom.”⁹

“Thou hast loved righteousness and hated lawlessness (ἀνομίαν); Therefore God, Thy God, hath anointed Thee With the oil of gladness above Thy companions.” NASB

I Pet. 2:22 “Who committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in His mouth.” NASB

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who loveth to have the preeminence among them, receiveth us not. ¹⁰ Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words: and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth *them* out of the church. ¹¹ Beloved, follow not that which is evil, but that which is good. He that doeth good is of God: but he that doeth evil hath not seen God. KJV

Diotrephes, seemed to be a perfect example of one who would cry out, “Lord Lord,” and yet be one to whom the Lord might say at the Judgment Seat of Christ, “I never approved you. Withdraw from Me, you worker of lawlessness!”

Diotrephes followed his own will and not the will of God. He lived in a carnal state of lawlessness, ignoring the law of Christ, his Master, who said the following—

Matthew 20:25 But Jesus called them unto him, and said, Ye know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. ²⁶ Not so shall it be among you: but whosoever would become great among you shall be your minister; ²⁷ and whosoever would be first among you shall be your servant. ASV

There is no indication that Diotrephes was not a true believer; more than likely, he was. But most certainly he was also a carnal Christian who was completely blind to his state of carnality. His self-righteousness so blinded and deceived him that he believed he had a greater knowledge of God’s will than even the apostle John! Not only that, in order to bolster his supposed superiority, perhaps, he even claimed to have seen God (see vs. 11)!

But notice, rather than claiming that he was unregenerate and so should not be a part of the Church, let alone having a place of an authority over the Church, John says that when he comes he will expose his “works,” and, perhaps (if true), his false claim to have seen God. He exhorts Gaius to wait and to just let him handle Diotrephes when he comes; and, in the meantime, to never imitate those things

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which are evil (and so would be lawlessness), but rather to imitate those things which are good (and so would be lawfulness).

III John 1:11 Beloved, do not imitate what is evil, but what is good. The one who does good is of God; the one who does evil has not seen God. NASB

Paul said the same thing, exhorting believers to be careful to never practice evil, but only good.

I Thessalonians 5:15 See that none render evil for evil unto any *man*; but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all *men*. KJV

Moreover, John also tells Gaius, in the verse above, that only the one continually doing good is the one who is continually existing, or is “being” of God, i.e. the one doing, or the one manifesting those works that come from God in us, working through us. (cf. Phil. 2:13).^u III John 1:11 is not referring to our past salvation, but our present manifestation of that salvation. In one sense, one could say that those who are abiding in Christ are being “of” God, but those who are not abiding in Christ are not being “of” God. It bespeaks a dynamic relationship with God where God is actively working through us, because we are not being lawless or insubordinate to His will. It is the difference between the working of a spiritual Christian and the working of a carnal Christian.

Again, Paul says a similar thing when he says that believers should be careful how they build on the foundation of Christ Jesus, for if their works come “of” themselves or “of” their own wills, those works will be burned up as wood, hay and stubble (although he assures them they will still be saved), but if their works are “of” God, i.e. gold, silver and precious stones, they will receive a reward.^v

Believers should never practice or render evil to another; they should never act lawless, ignoring God’s will, but, unfortunately, sometimes they do, just as Diotrephes was doing.

Such lawlessness, and such a refusal to follow the

^u **Phil. 2:13** For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of *his* good pleasure. KJV

^v **I Cor. 3:12** But if any man buildeth on the foundation gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay, stubble; ¹³ each man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it is revealed in fire; and the fire itself shall prove each man's work of what sort it is.

¹⁴ If any man's work shall abide which he built thereon, he shall receive a reward.

¹⁵ If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as through fire. ASV

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law of Christ, that wonderful law of liberty expressed by the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, so blinds a Christian that one could even imagine Diotrophes, himself, saying to the Lord on that day, “Lord Lord, look at what I did for you. Look how I was zealous for your Church and for your truth” (i.e. if he never repented after John came to rebuke him)!

So now that we have a fuller understanding of the underlying Greek text, perhaps we can now answer the question how the Lord could be saying what he says in Matt. 7:23 to a group of true believers, especially if they all were like Diotrophes who was more interested in building a little spiritual kingdom for himself with him on top, rather than building the spiritual kingdom of our Lord with our Lord Jesus on the top! But first, let’s review what we have found:

1) “Lord Lord” is an actual affirmation of the Lord’s Deity.

2) Because those crying, “Lord Lord” include those from the time of our Lord’s incarnation on earth, they must be true believers, since all unbelievers throughout history are not resurrected until after the Millennium, in that which is called the Second Resurrection.

3) The word translated “depart” can mean “withdraw,” to “leave,” or to “move to another place.”

4) Nowhere does our Lord command this group to depart to hell or into the everlasting fire (as He does for others in other Scriptures).

5) The word translated “knew” can mean “acknowledge,” “recognize,” or “approve with approbation, or to “own” (as one acting at His behest).

6) The word translated “iniquity” would better be understood as “lawlessness” in contradistinction to “lawfulness.” As such, it carries the idea of one who is not following the will of the Lord, but rather is following one’s own will.

7) The substantivized participle points to those in ministry, whether they were set apart by a Church or

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not, who, because of the word “lawlessness,” were acting according to their own will or authority.

All of this indicates that this group of believers was displeasing the Lord, not because their profession of faith was not genuine, but because they were being “lawless” in their service to God. As such, they were being judged by Christ (this being the Judgment Seat of Christ) for their failure to follow God’s will, just as our Lord mentions at the beginning when He says, “Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; **but he that doeth the will of my Father** which is in heaven.” (And, within the context of the passage, He would also be referring to the will of God as expressed in the Sermon on the Mount by our Lord’s admonitions and exhortations.)

Perhaps, these would be Christians who were proud in their service to God, rather than being “poor in spirit,” ones who were self-righteous in their service to God, always judging others falsely, while ignoring the beam in their own eyes. Perhaps, they would be ones who only concerned themselves with outward righteousness, never dreaming that the thoughts and intents of their hearts were also breaking the commands of God.

Perhaps, it would be Christians, who by their self-righteous hatred, thought (in their own eyes) they were pleasing God by their zeal for righteousness; but in our Lord’s eyes, they were actually breaking the command to never kill. Or, perhaps, they would be those who, rather than loving their enemies, were those hating their enemies, and rather than praying for those who disagreed with them in their service to God, were instead, saying “Raca” to them.

Perhaps, they were Christians who always made sure they got all the attention, always making sure their names were known to others, always seeking praise from their fellow believers, rather than being willing to do their ministry without any praise or acknowledgement from men—rather than being willing to remain unknown as our Lord did and as did

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His apostles.

Perhaps, they were ones who built spiritual kingdoms unto themselves, laying up treasures for “themselves” on earth, rather than building up the Lord’s kingdom and trusting in Him for their own needs or the needs of the ministry.

Perhaps, they were the ones, who because of their little faith, ending up peddling the Word of God, selling the things of the Lord to support themselves and their ministries, rather than trusting in the provision of the Lord by faith. As such, maybe they were ones who ended up following the practices of false prophets, wherein the amount of funds became the measure of their success, and so they had no qualms in turning the sacred Gospel into a gospel of prosperity.

Perhaps, they were ones who, because of a lack of faith in their lives, entered by the Broad Gate, and so followed the broad way unto that Royal Portico (so to speak) that they loved so much. As such, their refusal to follow the narrow gate and the narrow way (which will always entail the taking up of one’s cross) caused them to introduce the ways of the world into the Church and into their ministries—all for the sake of money and supposed success. It caused them to adopt the traditions of man, thus invalidating the Word of God, introducing new practices, which were never a part of the Church, and new doctrines, which were never taught by the apostles.

Perhaps, all these are the “lawless” acts which the Lord censures. Certainly they are practices, acts and doctrines, which are not taught by our Lord in the Sermon on the Mount and so reflect practices, acts and doctrines, which are not a part of the will of God. Perhaps, these are the things which turn such believers into “workers of lawlessness,” rather than “workers of lawfulness.”

Despite the exhortation of the Holy Spirit to abide in the “law of Christ,” perhaps, they were the ones who remained in their carnal state of lawlessness, refusing to obey the law of Christ (especially as revealed in the Sermon on the Mount)—thus they

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became workers of lawlessness in our Lord's eyes.

Despite Paul's admonition for believers to abide in the "law of the Spirit of life" in Christ Jesus, they were the ones who continued in their carnal state of lawlessness, refusing to live by a law that will always mortify the flesh—thus they became workers of lawlessness in our Lord's eyes.

Despite the freedom offered by the "law of liberty" in Christ Jesus, they not only refused to stand in that liberty as found in Christ, they also kept others from standing in it, preferring to keep the saint in bondage to their own authority instead—thus they became workers of lawlessness in our Lord's eyes.

As such, perhaps, we can now see how the Lord could say to believers, "I never approved you; I never approved your service; I never recognized or owned the manner in which you served Me; I never acknowledge as Mine the things you taught as the Word of God, or the things you brought into my Church and into the ministry. You served Me according to your own will, not according to My will. You think the magnitude of your service entitles you with entrance into my kingdom on earth. It does not; withdraw from Me, you workers of lawlessness."

Perhaps, this also will help us understand the immense importance of the Sermon on the Mount in the life of a Christian. It should not be ignored or relegated to another dispensation. It contains the words of the Lord Jesus Christ of which the apostles were commanded to teach to every disciple (Matt. 28:20).^w And, it includes the words, of which Christians are told, to consent or submit to (I Tim. 6:3-11).

1 Timothy 6:3-11 If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, *even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ*, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness; ⁴ He is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, ⁵ Perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself. ⁶ But godliness with contentment is great gain. ⁷

^w **Matthew 28:20**
Teaching them to **observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you:** and, lo, I am with you always, *even* unto the end of the world. Amen. KJV

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For we brought nothing into *this* world, *and it is* certain we can carry nothing out. ⁸ And having food and raiment let us be therewith content. ⁹ But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and *into* many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. ¹⁰ For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. ¹¹ But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness. KJV

Not only that, it also reminds us that we will all appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ; and it reminds us that its importance should never be ignored, minimized or forgotten. Most think it only involves our being rewarded by God for our service. It does not. It also includes our being judged for those things we have done that were never authorized by God, things of which He never approved. Paul says very clearly that a Christian will be judged not only for the good he or she has done in their life, but also for the bad.

Col. 3:22-25 Servants, obey in all things *your* masters according to the flesh; not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing God: ²³ And whatsoever ye do, do *it* heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; ²⁴ Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ. ²⁵ **But he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done:** and there is no respect of persons. KJV

This Judgment Seat of Christ is where we will all give account of ourselves to God for how we lived.

Romans 14:10-12 But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. ¹¹ For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. ¹² **So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God.** KJV

Now some wonder how a Christian can receive for the wrong he or she may have done in this life. Did

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not the Lord Jesus die for those sins? Indeed, He did, but our Lord never said we will not reap what we sow when what we sow are those sins, i.e. those lawless deeds, **for which we have not repented or asked forgiveness**. Yes, “if we confess our sins, He is righteous and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 Jn. 1:9). But if we do not confess our sins (of which, those who cried, “Lord, Lord,” did not) the Lord said He would judge us with loving discipline.

1 Corinthians 11:31 But if we judged ourselves rightly, we should not be judged.³² But when we are judged, we are disciplined by the Lord in order that we may not be condemned along with the world. NASB

Our Lord only disciplines those who are His and those whom He loves;^x this chastening of the Lord, will even extend, if necessary, to the time of Judgment Seat of Christ. This explains why some will turn away from the Lord in shame at His coming.

1 John 2:28 And now, little children, abide in Him, so that when He appears, we may have confidence and not shrink away from Him in shame at His coming. NASB

The phrase “not shrink away from Him in shame” is the Greek phrase—*μη αίσχυνθῶμεν ἀπ’ αὐτοῦ*. John uses a passive verb which could be translated—be made to shrink away in shame, or, perhaps, to be put to shame. He also uses the same preposition which is prefixed to the Greek word *ἀποχωρεῖτε* (withdraw from) used by Matthew in Matt. 7: 23, the Greek preposition *ἀπό* (from). John is saying that some Christians will be made to shrink away in shame “away from” the Lord. Why? How could that be? The answer is because some never judged themselves. Some never confessed all their sins. Some lived in a state of carnal lawlessness, ignoring the law of Christ, the law of liberty, the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, ever grieving the Spirit.

This does not mean that our Lord’s promise in 1 John 1:9, “to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us

^x **Hebrews 12:6-8**

For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.⁷ If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?⁸ But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons. KJV

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from all unrighteousness” simply failed. It did not. It means we did not meet the condition of I John 1:9—to confess our sins.

And so, our Lord in love will judge such ones who lived in carnality, never confessing their sins to Him. He will judge them at His bema seat judgment, since they never judged themselves. And part of this judgment, apparently, will be to make them “leave” or “withdraw” from His presence, which will result in their being put to shame, as John said in I John 2:28.

This is the negative side of the Judgment Seat of Christ. Because they denied Him in their service, following the broad way, the Lord will deny them in His presence, saying, “I never approved you,” I never recognized your lawless service, or your religious, but lawless lifestyle.” This will be His act of judgment against us, His discipline of those He loves!

But, it is important to remember, that just as our judging of ourselves results in our forgiveness, so too, His judging of us will result in our forgiveness; He will not ever deny Himself. This is why this act of withdrawal cannot be permanent! God be praised.

Paul explains it this way—

II Timothy 2:11 It is a trustworthy statement: For if we died with Him, we shall also live with Him; ¹² If we endure, we shall also reign with Him; **If we deny Him, He also will deny us;**¹³ **If we are faithless, He remains faithful; for He cannot deny Himself.** NASB

All accounts are settled at the Judgment Seat of Christ before the Millennium begins. But the Lord will never leave those whom He just judged in that “darkness outside” (outer darkness), so to speak. Their withdrawal is not permanent, but temporary.

His telling such ones to “withdraw,” or to “depart” from His presence will be His act of denying us, just as Paul warned us when he said, “If we deny Him, He also will deny us.” But it cannot last long, for it will be an act of loving discipline, and as Paul also said in the next verse, “If we are faithless, He remains faithful; for He cannot deny Himself.”

Every sin of a believer has been covered by the

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blood of Christ, whether past, present or future, whether confessed or unconfessed. Our salvation is eternal and secure! And even though communion can be interrupted by our sins, or by our lawlessness, our eternal salvation will never be interrupted!

But, that being said, even though, we need never fear for our eternal salvation, we are told to fear the working out of that salvation.

Philippians 2:12 Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, **work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.** ¹³ For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of *his* good pleasure. KJV

And that working out of our salvation entails keeping short accounts with God, obeying His will and always confessing our sins, knowing that one day all accounts will be settled before God and that will be at the time of the Judgment Seat of Christ.

But, thanks be to God, ultimately, all will be made right, all accounts will be settled and closed forever. Why?—because we are not saved by our own righteousness. We are not saved by how well we can take up our cross, or, indeed, if we even can take up our cross. Perhaps, we fell down under its weight, and were never able to take it up again, and so lived a life following the broad way, where we served God in compromise and lawlessness, living by our religious, and perhaps, even moral man-made traditions, rather than only living by the traditions of God which is the Word of God. It matters not because we are not saved by those things. We are saved by the grace of God through faith. It is not by any works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saves us.

And so, because of this wonderful truth, we know from Scripture that every believer who might be told to leave His Judgment Seat will, nevertheless, be lovingly forgiven and brought once more into His presence to be embraced in His arms before the Millennium ever begins (see Fig. 6 below).

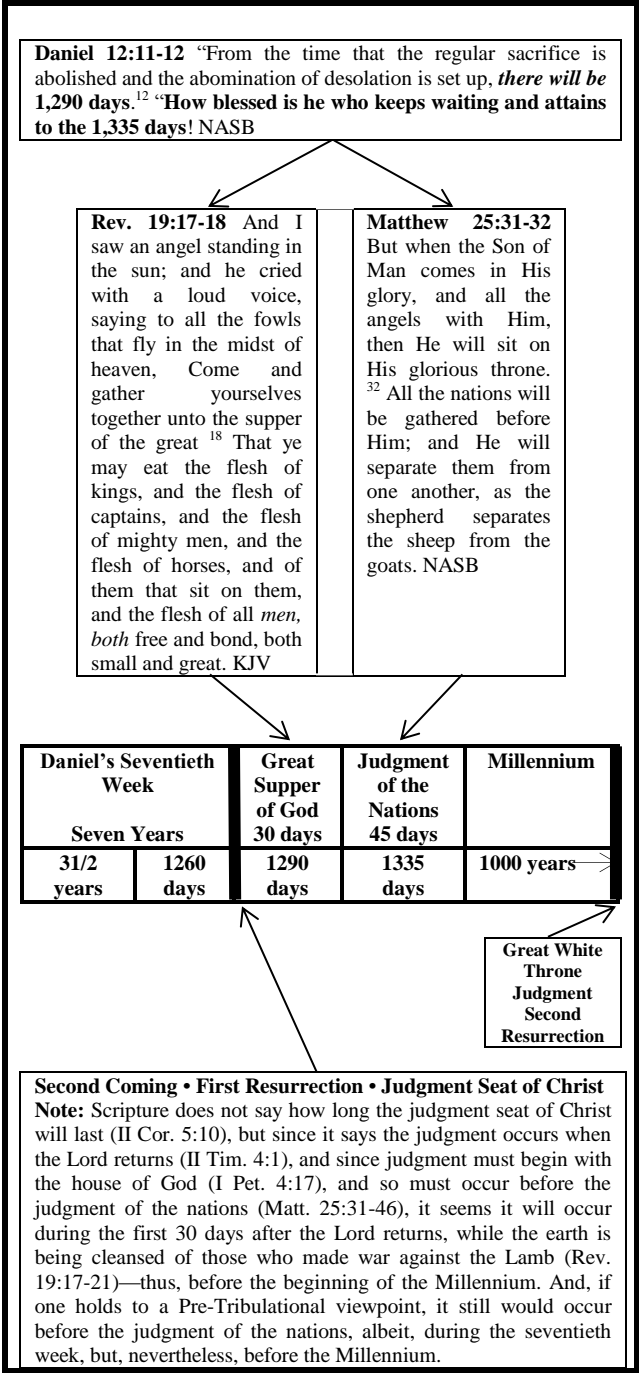
Fig. 6 The Order of Judgments in Scripture

The Types of Judgments	The Ones who are Judged	The Time of the Judgments
Judgment Seat of Christ Rom. 14:10-12; II Cor. 5:10; Col. 3:24-25	All believers—they take part in the First Resurrection I Cor. 15:22-23,51-52 Rev. 20:5-6	At the Second Coming (ἐπιφάνεια) of the Lord II Tim. 4:1 cf. II Thess. 2:8
Judgment of the Nations Matt. 25: 31-46 Matt. 13:40-43 II Thess. 1:5-9	Those who are alive, surviving the Great Tribulation who do not make war against the Lord when He returns Matt. 25: 41-45 cf. Rev. 19:19-21	After the Second Coming but before the beginning of the Millennium, perhaps the last 45 days cf. Daniel 12:12 and Matt. 25:31-46
Great White Throne Judgment Rev. 20:7-15	Those in the Second Resurrection Rev. 20:5,12	At the end of the Millennium Rev. 20:5

No doubt they will experience sorrow, as John says some will shrink away in shame. No doubt they will shed tears for their wasted their lives spent in selfish disregard. They will not be rewarded as others, because of their stubbornness, and because of their carnal, lawless and insubordinate ways, but they will be in the kingdom, and will reign with Him in some measure. Why?—because Scripture says that all who partake in the First Resurrection are said to reign with Him (See Fig. 7).

Revelation 20:6 Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, **and shall reign with him a thousand years.** KJV

Fig. 7 The Time of the End



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Even though our judgment at the Judgment Seat of Christ will begin before or sometime during the 75 day transition period that will come between the Second Coming and the beginning of the Millennium (depending on whether one holds to a pre-tribulational viewpoint or post-tribulational viewpoint), we know that before the end of that period, all will be forgiven and every believer will be stand blessed in His presence (See Margin note). †

And so even though, for a short while, at the bema seat Judgment of Christ, some may be made to shrink away in shame from the presence of the Lord. By the time the Millennium begins they will be secure by His side forever, for salvation was always of the Lord, and entrance was always guaranteed to all whose righteousness surpassed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, which is the righteousness of Christ imputed to all who believe.

Those who cried out to him, “Lord Lord,” may have thought their own strength and righteousness earned them a place in the kingdom. But they were wrong; they were blinded by their carnality and unconfessed sin, and so they were judged by the Lord at His Judgment Seat and told to withdraw from His presence. But it was only for a moment, for they are blessed with the imputed righteousness of Christ, based upon their faith in Him, and not by any works of righteousness they may have done. And, as such, they are His and none whom He has been given will ever be lost!

How wonderful is our Lord. All who are raised in the First Resurrection will be blessed and reign with Him despite the fact that we all must first stand before Him at His Judgment Seat—some to joy, and some to shame, and some to both joy and shame, but certainly all to eternal blessedness.

He may not have “known” those who boasted of their works they had done for Him, in the sense of approving or authorizing them with approbation, but He “knew” them as His own brethren, despite their rebellious and carnal ways, and so He forgave them

†This transition period is revealed in Dan.12:8, which asks what will be the end or outcome (NASB) of these things, which from other Scripture we know refers to the Millennium. Then in verse 11 and 12 two time periods are referenced—first 1290 days and then 1335 days. We know from the book of Revelation that after the abomination occurs midway through the seven year period, there is 1260 days from that time till the Second Coming. Thus, the 1290 days refers to 30 days after the Lord returns and 1335 refers to 75 days after the Lord returns. Thus, we have a 30 day period after the Lord returns (more than likely the Great Supper of God) and then another 45 days (more than likely the judgment of the nations). Then we have the outcome or end of those things—the Millennium. (See Fig. 6 & 7 pages 369-370)

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and brought them into His kingdom, for He could never deny Himself.^y

May we all take this to heart and pray that instead of hearing from the lips of our Saviour at that time “Depart from Me, we will all hear Him say instead, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant.”^z

7:24 Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock:

7:25 And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock.

7:26 And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand:

7:27 And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it.

Peter, who most assuredly, sat and heard this Sermon on the Mount, and who most assuredly heard many of its sayings repeated in different places, once said this in his Second Epistle.

II Peter 1:10 Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: ¹¹ For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. KJV

Peter is encouraging Christians, not to make sure as to whether they are saved, but to make sure their salvation is steadfast and firm. The word translated as “sure” above is the Greek word *βεβαίαν*. It carries an idea of making something strong and firm. The same word is used by Paul in II Cor. 1:7, ^a wherein the King James translates it as “steadfast,” and the New American Standard Bible translates it as “firmly grounded.”

And so we can see that Peter is not saying to make sure you are saved by looking to your character

^y **II Timothy 2:13**

If we are faithless, He remains faithful; **for He cannot deny Himself.** NASB

^z **Matthew 25:23**

His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord. KJV

^a **II Cor. 1:7** and

our hope for you is **firmly grounded**, knowing that as you are sharers of our sufferings, so also you are *sharers* of our comfort. NASB

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and/or righteous deeds (for true assurance comes from looking to the character of Jesus our LORD, and His RIGHTEOUS DEED upon the cross), he is saying to make sure that your salvation (your calling and election) is “steadfast,” that it is “firmly grounded” in this life.

Paul says a similar thing in Col. 2:6-7, using the verbal form of this same word—

Colossians 2:6-7 As you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, even so walk, ⁷ rooted and built in Him and **steadfast** (βεβαιούμενοι) in the faith, as ye have learned: and therein be plenteous in giving thanks. Tyndale’s Version

Paul refers to our salvation (our calling and election, if you will) in verse 6. He speaks to believers referring to the fact that they already had received Christ Jesus the Lord. Because of that he encourages them to be rooted and built up, to be “steadfast” in the faith.

Peter is saying the same thing, albeit in a different manner, but it helps us understand what Jesus is saying at the conclusion of His Sermon on the Mount.

Jesus is not saying to us that salvation is only for those who follow His teaching in this Sermon, and that eternal perdition is for those who ignore His teaching. No, He is declaring that a “steadfastness” in one’s life will come to those who follow His sayings. He is declaring that those who follow His sayings will become “firmly grounded,” on a strong foundation, a foundation that will remain steadfast though any trial, or tribulation, through every vicissitude of life. He is saying that if you follow my sayings you will be “established” in the faith.

The implication, within the context, is that if one does this, one will never have to worry about whether one will gain a welcoming entrance into the kingdom of God. Why?—Because such ones will be “poor in spirit,” not proud in their own self-righteousness. They will be looking to the righteousness and work of the Messiah as their only reason to enter into the

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kingdom, not the amount of their own work and/or ministry they use as their reason for their being allowed into the kingdom, when the Lord cries out, “Withdraw from; I do not recognize you or your righteous works done in my name. They will not fear hearing such a censure from the Lord, for they did not do their works to be seen by man, to receive the praises of others.

As such, as Peter explains in I Pet. 1:11, their entrance into the everlasting kingdom, let alone the Millennial kingdom, will be abundantly supplied to them. The supply will come from God’s grace and Christ’s righteousness, not from how many, “Lord, Lord’s, did we not...” they might say.

The Sermon on the Mount is so important in the life of a believer. It was given for the disciples of the Lord Jesus, for His Church, and not just for a remnant of the nation of Israel existing centuries later during Daniel’s Seventieth Week (as some teach).

Most assuredly the Church and Israel are distinct, but the Sermon on the Mount is given for all who would live righteously, for it is none other than an expression of the very nature and character of Christ who came to fulfill the Law of God, which, in turn, is none other than an expression of the very nature and character of God the Father. The Sermon on the Mount is one of the very things that Christ commanded His apostles to teach to everyone who is baptized in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Our Lord’s warning is dire. Those who hear and follow the commands of our Lord in this Sermon will find for themselves a strong foundation on which to build a faithful and fruitful Christian life. But those who hear, and those who ignore these commands of the Lord as not being applicable to them or this dispensation, will be left on a weak foundation that will eventually succumb to the rain, and wind, and floods that life brings.

A Christian must realize that ignoring our Lord’s sayings in this Sermon may lead to one doing many works “for” the Lord, doing many works in the name

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of the Lord, but not doing them with His approval or will. Obedience is paramount. Doing the will of the Father is what is important. Some Christians who ignore this warning of our Saviour might find an entire lifetime of Christian work being burned up when we all appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ, because they were works done in our natural strength and not by the direction of Christ through the guidance and power of the Holy Spirit.

May we all hear and listen and observe the sayings of our Lord, for they are the commands of Christ given to His followers to bring glory to God. Amen.

7:28 And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine:

7:29 For he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.

Matthew now concludes this wonderful section of his Gospel with the declaration that the multitudes were completely astonished at our Lord's teaching. The Greek word carries the idea of being "awe-struck." The word literally means to "strike out." Robertson defines it as being "struck out of themselves."⁹⁸ In other words, our Lord's teachings were cutting them to the quick, if you will.

The verb is in the imperfect tense and so might be paraphrased as follows: "And it came about, when Jesus had finished these sayings, the multitude *were continuing to be* awestruck by His teaching."

The imperfective tense might imply that the words of the Lord were still ringing in their ears after He finished His teaching. It is as if they continued to discuss among themselves the Lord's words after He finished talking, and each time they did, they continued to be awestruck by its truth and awestruck by the fullness of its wisdom.

Robertson calls this use of the imperfect a descriptive imperfect. He states that it is "a sort of moving panorama...The aorist tells the simple story.

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The imperfect draws the picture. It helps you to see the course of the act. It passes before the eye the flowing stream of history...”⁹⁹

The multitude must have been whispering among themselves, repeating His sayings to each other, saying to each other that they had never heard someone teach like He did. Perhaps, they said things like, “I never heard that commandment of God interpreted in that way. Am I displeasing God? Is this why we are suffering under Roman oppression.” Or, perhaps they might have said, “Is He really the Messiah? Did you hear Him claim to be the LORD God? What if it is true? He justly told us our faults, yet I also felt His mercy and love. What wondrous words fell from His lips!”

Perhaps, these were some of the things being said after our Lord finished His discourse, and every time they were reminded of His Sermon it continued to “strike their hearts with awe.” His teaching was so different; He spoke with so much authority. He was not like one of the Scribes. Jesus spoke by Life; the Scribes spoke in a perfunctory manner only repeating what this Rabbi said or that Rabbi said.

Oh, what wondrous words were the words that fell from the lips of our wondrous Saviour! What would we say if we heard our Saviour teach today? What would we say if we actually could hear His very voice with its every inflection and sound still ringing in our ears? Would we be awestruck?

And yet, dear brethren we can hear Him speak this very same Sermon on the Mount to our hearts, if we but listen to them by the witness of the Holy Spirit in our hearts! How or why? Because the Word of God is living and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword; it pierces to the dividing asunder of our soul and spirit and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of our heart. May we but open our ears to hear what the Spirit says to us today.

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Beloved, this is the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. This is the Good News He came to announce to all. It is the Good News of God's rule in our hearts. It is not just the Good News of the kingdom of God intended for a later time. It is the Gospel of the heavenly kingdom that is now. It is the Gospel of the kingdom of God in mystery form. And it is the Gospel of the kingdom of God in the Millennium. It is a message for any form or manifestation of God's kingdom, for it is given by Him who is the perfect manifestation of the kingdom of God—the Lord Jesus Christ. God's Words manifest His kingdom or Rule, and His kingdom or Rule was manifested in everything our Saviour ever said. The Sermon on the Mount is an expression of Christ, who Himself is the visible image of an invisible God. It is wrong to say that it only was given for one form of the kingdom, for that would be like saying that the Father's nature and character was only given for one part of human history.

If the Law is eternal, and it is "established" for us in this dispensation by the Spirit of God (as Paul says in Rom. 3:31) ^b how much more should the Sermon on the Mount, given by the Son who fulfilled the Law, be established for us in this dispensation?

May we ever abide in both the doctrine and the teaching of Jesus Christ. Amen

^b **Romans 3:31**

Do we then make
void the law
through faith?
God forbid: yea,
we establish the
law. KJV

Short Excursus on the Name of Jehovah

Today, most Christians accept the fact that Jehovah (the Latinized form of Yahovah) is no longer considered to be the actual pronunciation of the Hebrew name. Nevertheless the name Jehovah has become a common English appellation used by many English speaking Christians for the Old Testament name YHVH. But, just because it may be an incorrect pronunciation, does not mean the name should be rejected out of hand by English speaking Christians; it simply means it should just be

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recognized as one of many English translations of the Hebrew name YHVH (sometimes YHWH)—others being Yahweh, Yahveh and LORD.

The most common appellation used by English speaking Christians (and Jews) is the name LORD. Yet, no one rejects LORD because it is not an exact equivalent to YHWH. Most, simply accept it as the English translation for YHWH; in the same way, most accept the English “God” as an acceptable translation for the Hebrew “Elohim.”

In this same way, Jehovah, has become an acceptable translation of YHVH even though, obviously, most do not consider it an exact equivalent to YHVH. What is important to realize is that no one knows the exact pronunciation of YHVH, so, unless one wants to adopt the pronunciation of Adonai, or Ha-Shem for YHVH, Jehovah, Yahweh, Yahveh, or LORD are all acceptable translations of the Tetragrammaton into a foreign tongue. If that is understood, then I do not believe there is anything wrong with using Jehovah as a translation of YHVH, any more than using LORD. After all, most Jews (if not all) reject Jehovah as an accurate pronunciation of the name, so, obviously, no one can be guilty of taking His Name in vain, as some think would be the case, if, indeed that was an accurate pronunciation. It becomes just another English translation of the name like LORD.

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