



REV. D. THOMAS PORTER, PH.D.

3422 Fallview Court ♦ Land O' Lakes, FL 34639
http://PorterHouse.info ♦ DrTom@PorterHouse.info
813.962.5758^{Office} 813.728.5713^{Cell}
Saturday, March 18, 2017
See more at <http://DThomasPorter.com/BibleStudies>

LESSON NOTES (EXPLORE THE BIBLE)

LEARNING FROM MATTHEW — SEEKING TO UNDERSTAND THE NEW KINGDOM
(Matthew 16, 17 & 19) Lord's Day, March 19, 2017

OVERVIEW

"Sessions 1, 2 & 3" for the *Explore the Bible Series: Just Who is This Jesus?*

Romans 13 is an irritating chapter in Scripture. It is there we learn that paying taxes is more than pragmatics. Paying taxes is part of our duty as believers in Jesus the Christ; He made it quite clear we are give to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's. Paul added to the conversation in Romans by declaring, "For because of this you also pay taxes, for rulers are servants of God, devoting themselves to this very thing...." (Romans 13:6). Yep, we pay our taxes not because of IRS codes, but because we answer to a higher power.

**A QUESTION TO GET YOU THINKING:
WHO GETS TO DETERMINE THE VALUE
OF A 2003 HYUNDAI SANTA FE WITH 117
THOUSAND MILES ON IT? AND, WHAT IF
THE PRICE IS 117 MILLION DOLLARS?**

In the days of Matthew, however, the Roman equivalent of the IRS was even more ominous. Tax collection was done by agents, almost always indigenous individuals; i.e., people who knew where the money was. Rather than pay these collectors a "salary," they were paid by a commission of sorts where they could charge whatever the market bore. When this system was implemented among the Maccabee-impassioned citizens of Judah, all hell broke loose. It was neither politically correct to be a tax collector nor a Jew. To be both? Well, that was Matthew. When Matthew was given the opportunity to serve the Lord God Jehovah, he became the worst disciple—no teacher or prophet of any standing would permit a *tax collector, a whore of Rome* to be a student. Yet, Jesus the Christ showed that anyone could be a follower, if he follows the One. And so we have this rather poignant description, by none other than Matthew himself...

As Jesus went on from there, he saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax collector's booth. "Follow me," he told him, and Matthew got up and followed him. While Jesus was having dinner at Matthew's house, many tax collectors and "sinners" came and ate with him and his disciples. When the Pharisees saw this, they asked his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and 'sinners?'"



On hearing this, Jesus said, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.' [He is quoting Hosea 6:6] For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners." –Matthew 9:9-13

Note the irony—Jesus' reputation was on the line. Jesus was consorting with a whore of Rome. Matthew's reputation was on the line as well. Matthew was consorting with a revolutionary, a man who would soon prove Himself to be Deity, Rome's most serious adversary, ever. How do we know they were "consorting?" Nothing sealed the bargain of friend-

ship more publicly than eating dinner together, not at the local Village Inn, but in one's home. Jesus was indeed consorting with sinners.

CONTEXTUAL ISSUES MATTHEW 16

Matthew 16:1-12. *Taking metaphors seriously.* Once, when Jesus was confronting some Pharisee & Sadducee knuckleheads, He told them they were wicked and adulterous because they "required a sign from heaven." He said—you want a sign? I'll give you a sign! Jonah.

He dropped the mike and walked away.

When they went across the lake, the disciples had forgotten to bring bread. Jesus used the moment to teach—"Be on guard against the yeast of the Pharisees & the Sadducees." They missed it—among themselves they said it's because we didn't bring any bread.

Jesus was neither deaf nor dumb and called them out—You of little faith. Don't you get it—Don't you remember the five loaves & the five thousand, the seven loaves and the four thousand? Why don't you understand I was not talking about bread... Be on your guard. The yeast of the Pharisees will turn you into law worshipping, compliance adoring idolaters, and the yeast of the Sadducees will turn you into culture vamping, politically appropriate citizens, not of heaven, but of hell.

Q Why did they want signs from heaven? Why do we want "signs" from heaven?

Q What are the modern manifestations of Pharisee and Sadducee yeast today?

MATTHEW 16:1-12

The Pharisees and Sadducees came to Jesus and tested him by asking him to show them a sign from heaven.

²He replied, ^A"When evening comes, you say, 'It will be fair weather, for the sky is red,' ³and in the morning, 'Today it will be stormy, for the sky is red and overcast.' You know how to interpret the appearance of the sky, but you cannot interpret the signs of the times.

⁴A wicked and adulterous generation looks for a miraculous sign, but none will be given it except the sign of Jonah." Jesus then left them and went away.

⁵When they went across the lake, the disciples forgot to take bread. ⁶"Be careful," Jesus said to them. "Be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees."

⁷They discussed this among themselves and said, "It is because we didn't bring any bread."

⁸Aware of their discussion, Jesus asked, "You of little faith, why are you talking among yourselves about having no bread? ⁹Do you still not understand? Don't you remember the five loaves for the five thousand, and how many basketfuls you gathered? ¹⁰Or the seven loaves for the four thousand, and how many basketfuls you gathered? ¹¹How is it you don't understand that I was not talking to you about bread? But be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees." ¹²Then they understood that he was not telling them to guard against the yeast used in bread, but against the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

^ASome early manuscripts do not have the rest of verse 2 and all of verse 3.

CONTEXTUAL ISSUES MATTHEW 16

Matthew 16:13-20. *Follow the Christ, or get out of the way.* Afterwards, the group came to the rather poignant area of Caesarea Philippi. While there, He asked His disciples:

Who do people say the Son of Man is?

They replied... John the Baptizer, others say Elijah, others Jeremiah, or one of the prophets.

But who do you [plural] say I am?

Simon Peter answered:

You're the Christ, the Son of God the living.

The Christ replied:

Closer to God are you, Simon Barjona, for my Father in heaven revealed this to you. I tell you that you are Rock, and on this rock I will build My those who have been called out—the gates of Hades will not overcome my called out. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven. Whatever you bind on earth, will be bound in heaven; whatever you loose on earth, will be loosed in heaven.

Then He told them to keep His actual persona as the Christ to themselves—don't tell anyone.

- Q Where did this dialectical conversation occur? Why there?
- Q Just what was the Christ's question? Why did He ask it, given verse 20?
- Q Characterize the unique characterization of Peter's response to the question.
- Q Who was Simon Peter's father's name? See verse 4.
- Q So, on just what rock are we, the called out [the assembly of free, voting citizens in a city (cf. Acts 19:32,38,41)], built upon? So what? Christ Himself; the confession that Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ; Christ's teachings, a major emphasis of Matthew's witness; or Peter himself.¹
- Q Why did Jesus the Christ tell them not to tell anyone else who He truly was?

MATTHEW 16:13-20

When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say the Son of Man is?"

14 They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets."

15 "But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?"

16 Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

17 Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven. 18 And I tell you that you are Peter, [i.e., petros, πέτρος "rock," nominative masculine singular] and on this rock [πέτρα, dative feminine singular] I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. 19 I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be [or *have been*] bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be [or *have been*] loosed in heaven." 20 Then he warned his disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Christ.

¹Peter himself, understood in terms of his role on the day of Pentecost (Ac 2), the Cornelius incident (Ac 10) and his leadership among the apostles. Eph 2:20 indicates that the church is "built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets." The rock on which the church is built may be Peter's inspired *church*. In the Gospels this word is used only by Matthew (here and twice in 18:17). In the Septuagint it is used for the congregation of Israel.

Matthew 16:21-28. *Jesus calls Peter a dirty name.* Afterwards, Jesus explained more and more about His upcoming trip to Jerusalem and what He would suffer there to satisfy the leaders, priests and professors. Bottom line—He was to be killed and on the third day be raised to life.

The Rock was not happy. Peter took Jesus aside and rebuked the Son of God—“Never Lord, this shall never happen to You!”

Jesus was even less happy. Turning to him, He said: “Get behind me, Satan! You are trying to get Me to fall; you have the things of men on you mind, not the things of God.”

Look... if you’re really going to follow Me, take up your cross and follow Me. You’ve got to deny yourself to follow Me. If you want to save your life, you will lose your soul. If

you want to save your soul, lose your life. Think about it... What good will it be if you gain the whole world and lose your soul? Just what is the price for a soul?

The Son of Man will come in His Father’s glory, with angels no less, and each person will be rewarded according to what he has done. Amen, some who are standing here will not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming into His Kingdom.

- Q Why was Peter so incensed about the Christ’s pronouncement that He was to die, to suffer at the hands of church leaders, church priests, and professors of theology?
- Q What was Jesus response to us who deny the suffering of the Christ? What do we do to deny His suffering?
- Q Just what is the price of following Jesus the Christ? Why isn’t this preached, taught, and exemplified consistently, daily, constantly, completely?
- Q What is the value of a 2003 Hyundai Santa Fe with 117 thousand miles on it? And, then, what is the value of your soul?
- Q What is the reward of losing our life to the cause of Christ?

MATTHEW 16:21-28

From that time on Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life.

22Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. "Never, Lord!" he said. "This shall never happen to you!"

23Jesus turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men."

24Then Jesus said to his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. 25For whoever wants to save his life [or soul] will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it.

26What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul? 27For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father's glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what he has done. 28I tell you the truth, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom."

20-20 HINDSIGHT. When Peter was thinking about his last days on earth and wanted to leave a legacy, he highlighted four points:

- (1) We were eyewitnesses to His power.
- (2) Father God Himself commended the Christ—we heard the Father’s voice.
- (3) The word of the prophets has been confirmed—Jesus is the Anointed One!
- (4) Scripture came not from a prophet’s interpretation, but from Holy Spirit Himself.

- Q What kind of witnesses were there?
- Q What did they see “with their own eyes?”

Q So, how many witnesses were present on that sacred mountain?

Q So, then why can we be confident in the Scriptures as evidence, as witness to the Truth?

Matthew 17:1-4. *A mountain of revelation, a courtroom of evidence.* About a week later (Luke indicates 8 days), Jesus left with Peter James & John (James’ brother). They were led by the Christ to a high mountain (possibly Mount Hermon; it was relatively close to Caesarea Philippi) to pray, according to Luke.

While there, Jesus the Christ was “transfigured” right in front of them; i.e., His body was “meta-morphized” in front of them, a dramatic change in appearance. His face shone brightly, and His clothes were just as white as the light of His face. As they stared, there next to Jesus stood Moses and Elijah having a three-way conversation.

Peter was impressed with himself. It’s good we’re here; we can, if you wish, put up three temples/tabernacles up—one for each of you, including Moses and Elijah.

- Q Who went with Jesus to the “high mountain?” Why them? Why not all twelve?
- Q What happened to body of Jesus the Christ?
- Q With whom was He talking? Why those two?
- Q What was Peter’s proposal? Why? How does this contrast with Matthew 16:16? Do you suppose Christ will

get as angry as last time when Peter overstepped his bounds, and forgot just Who he was following?

2 PETER 1:16-21

We did not follow cleverly invented stories when we told you about the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. ¹⁷For he received honor and glory from God the Father when the voice came to him from the Majestic Glory, saying, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased." ¹⁸We ourselves heard this voice that came from heaven when we were with him on the sacred mountain. ¹⁹And we have the word of the prophets made more certain, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. ²⁰Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. ²¹For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

MATTHEW 17:1-4

After six days Jesus took with him Peter, James and John the brother of James, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. ²There he was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and his clothes became as white as the light. ³Just then there appeared before them Moses and Elijah, talking with Jesus. ⁴Peter said to Jesus, "Lord, it is good for us to be here. If you wish, I will put up three shelters—one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah."

WHO GETS TO DETERMINE THE VALUE OF A 2003 HYUNDAI SANTA FE WITH 117 THOUSAND MILES ON IT? AND, WHAT IF THE PRICE IS 117 MILLION DOLLARS?

Matthew 17:5-13. Peter plans; Father God laughs. While Peter was pontificating, Father God interrupted Peter's proposal. Speaking from a cloud, He said:

Listen up! This is My son. I love Him. I am well pleased with Him. Comprehend Him. Listen.

Totally freaked, they hit the ground. Whether out of fear or respect, all three did a faceplant. My Jesus took pity, walked over and touched them:

"Get up—no need to be afraid," He said. Sure enough, when they got enough courage to look up, they only saw Jesus!

As they returned from the mountain, Jesus commanded them—"Don't tell anyone what you've seen, until the Son of Man has been raised from the dead."

Don't the Scriptures say Elijah must come first and restore all things?, they asked. Jesus smiled, and said,

"Of course, Elijah comes; in fact, he has already come, but people did not recognize him. They did what they wanted to him, just as they will also do to the Son of Man. He too will suffer at their hands."

It was then that the disciples understood Jesus was talking to them about John the Baptizer.

- Q Who interrupted Peter's power point on building three temples? Why?
- Q What was key to what Father God said about this Jesus of Nazareth? Better than 16:16?
- Q Those three face plants: how much fear, and how much respect?
- Q What makes you hit the ground? What will it take for you to see only Jesus? Has He not come to you? Has He not touched you? Has He not told you not to be afraid?
- Q Who did they see after Jesus touched them?
- Q When were they allowed to tell others about this event? Why wait until then?
- Q What did "they" do to John the Baptizer? How was it similar to what they did to the Anointed One? How was it different? What did you do to the Son of Man before you knew He was resurrected?

MATTHEW 17:5-13

While he was still speaking, a bright cloud enveloped them, and a voice from the cloud said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!"

⁶When the disciples heard this, they fell facedown to the ground, terrified. ⁷But Jesus came and touched them. "Get up," he said. "Don't be afraid." ⁸When they looked up, they saw no one except Jesus.

⁹As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus instructed them, "Don't tell anyone what you have seen, until the Son of Man has been raised from the dead."

¹⁰The disciples asked him, "Why then do the teachers of the law say that Elijah must come first?"

¹¹Jesus replied, "To be sure, Elijah comes and will restore all things. ¹²But I tell you, Elijah has already come, and they did not recognize him, but have done to him everything they wished. In the same way the Son of Man is going to suffer at their hands." ¹³Then the disciples understood that he was talking to them about John the Baptist.

Epilogue 17:14-20. *We still don't get it; Jesus has to intervene.* Afterwards, they encountered a crowd who had a man whose son was mentally and/or spiritually ill. He has seizures, falls into cooking fires and the water. The man told Jesus that His disciples could not heal his son. Help me.

Jesus was not happy. You are so perverse, so unbelieving. How long must I put up with you? Bring the boy here! Jesus told the demon within the boy to get out of dodge; and the boy? He was healed immediately. The demon had met the Master.

Later, in private, they asked Jesus what happened. Why couldn't we drive it out?

Your faith is little, too little. Amen I say to you, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed—you can tell a mountain to get out of the way. Nothing will be impossible for you.

Q With whom was Jesus the Christ irritated? How was this irritation/anger manifested?

Q Why did Jesus heal the boy? [Hint: who is in charge?; 16:16, 17:5]

Q Why don't we believe 17:20?

MATTHEW 17:14-20

When they came to the crowd, a man approached Jesus and knelt before him. ¹⁵"Lord, have mercy on my son," he said. "He has seizures and is suffering greatly. He often falls into the fire or into the water. ¹⁶I brought him to your disciples, but they could not heal him."

¹⁷"O unbelieving and perverse generation," Jesus replied, "how long shall I stay with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring the boy here to me." ¹⁸Jesus rebuked the demon, and it came out of the boy, and he was healed from that moment.

¹⁹Then the disciples came to Jesus in private and asked, "Why couldn't we drive it out?"

²⁰He replied, "Because you have so little faith. I tell you the truth, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there' and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you."

Matthew 18:1-14. *Humility personified and operationalized.* After teaching the disciples that at times it's good not to "offend" the powers that be, He had a fish pay a tax that He was not, in reality, required to pay.

Then His knuckleheads wanted to know who is the greatest in God's kingdom? Asking the Greatest, the Greatest Himself gave a counter-intuitive answer: a child who in my name welcomes Me. In fact, don't mess with my children! It's a sin beyond comprehension. As to sin in general, it's better you cut your hand off than let it allow you to sin. If your eye causes you to sin, gouge it out! Don't look down on one of these little ones—their angels report directly to Father God.

Think about it... If you own a hundred sheep and one wanders off, will you not go look for the one? And, when you find it, will you not be happier about it than the 99? Similarly, Father God is also not willing that any of "these little ones" be lost.

Q Who's greater in the kingdom, the little resource-poor child or the Reverend Doctor Pastor? Why?

Q To what extent can one make a moral case for greater punishment for those who cause a believing child to sin? What would be an appropriate punishment?

Q Who are the little ones in the Kingdom of Heaven? Do they include the unborn, but aborted? Do they include the toddler? The mentally disabled? The humble, but theologically ignorant?

MATTHEW 18:1-14

At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?"

²He called a little child and had him stand among them.

³And he said: "I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. ⁴Therefore, whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

⁵"And whoever welcomes a little child like this in my name welcomes me. ⁶But if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a large millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea.

⁷"Woe to the world because of the things that cause people to sin! Such things must come, but woe to the man through whom they come! ⁸If your hand or your foot causes you to sin cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life maimed or crippled than to have two hands or two feet and be thrown into eternal fire. ⁹And if your eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into the fire of hell.

¹⁰"See that you do not look down on one of these little ones. For I tell you that their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father in heaven. [older mss. leave out verse 11; *The Son of Man came to save what was lost.*]

¹²"What do you think? If a man owns a hundred sheep, and one of them wanders away, will he not leave the ninety-nine on the hills and go to look for the one that wandered off? ¹³And if he finds it, I tell you the truth, he is happier about that one sheep than about the ninety-nine that did not wander off. ¹⁴In the same way your Father in heaven is not willing that any of these little ones should be lost.

Matthew 18:15-35. *Relational pragmatics: their sin, your sin.* So, if your friend sins against you, go to your friend, explain your friend's sin, just between the two of you. If your friend listens, you still have a friend. But, if not, take a witness or two with you and try explaining again. Still not resolved: take it to the church. If still not resolved with all this help, treat your friend like you would treat a pagan or a tax collector—loving, but not spiritually close.

Remember whatever you practice on earth will be remembered in heaven.

As to agreement, whatever and whenever two or more of you ask and come together by My authority (in My name), not only will I be there, but it will be done for you by Father God.

Peter asked, how often should I forgive my friend when he sins against me, the traditional seven times?

Jesus shared a narrative to illustrate the morality He was teaching... The king had a subject who owed him millions of dollars, and the king forgave him, but the subject was unwilling even to forgive a few dollars owed to him.

When the king heard about this injustice, he not only declared the unforgiving subject "wicked," the king put him in jail to be tortured until he paid back all he owed. So what? That's how Father God will treat each of you unless you forgive your friend down deep, as part of who you really are.

- Q How would you characterize the import of forgiveness from this interaction between Jesus, Peter, and the disciples?
- Q What are the consequences of failing to forgive people who sin against us? Who will exact these consequences?
- Q Why forgive "from the heart?"

MATTHEW 18:15-35

"If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over. ¹⁶But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that 'every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.' [see Deuteronomy 19:15] ¹⁷If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector.

¹⁸"I tell you the truth, whatever you bind on earth will be [or *have been*] bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be [or *have been*] loosed in heaven.

¹⁹"Again, I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. ²⁰For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them."

²¹Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, "Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?"

²²Jesus answered, "I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times [or *seventy times seven*].

²³"Therefore, the kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. ²⁴As he began the settlement, a man who owed him ten thousand talents [millions of dollars] was brought to him. ²⁵Since he was not able to pay, the master ordered that he and his wife and his children and all that he had be sold to repay the debt.

²⁶"The servant fell on his knees before him. 'Be patient with me,' he begged, 'and I will pay back everything.' ²⁷The servant's master took pity on him, canceled the debt and let him go.

²⁸"But when that servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii [a few dollars]. He grabbed him and began to choke him. 'Pay back what you owe me!' he demanded.

²⁹"His fellow servant fell to his knees and begged him, 'Be patient with me, and I will pay you back.'

³⁰"But he refused. Instead, he went off and had the man thrown into prison until he could pay the debt. ³¹When the other servants saw what had happened, they were greatly distressed and went and told their master everything that had happened.

³²"Then the master called the servant in. 'You wicked servant,' he said, 'I canceled all that debt of yours because you begged me to.

³³Shouldn't you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?' ³⁴In anger his master turned him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed.

³⁵"This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart."

TEXTUAL ISSUES MATTHEW 19

Matthew 19:1-12. *Relational legalities: breaking His covenants.* While healing & teaching in Judea on the other side of the Jordan river, large crowds followed. Crowds attract all kinds of folk, in this case, the conservative religious types who thought He needed to be tested. Pressing Him with a tough question, they asked...

Can a husband divorce his wife for any reason?

Jesus was not impressed:

God joined men and women together in marriage as one. If God has put them together, humans are not to separate them.

Not to be outdone, they countered:

Then why does the Law command a husband to give his wife a divorce certificate before sending her away?

Again, Jesus was not impressed with their scholarship...

The Law permits you to divorce your wives because your hearts are hard, cruel, and unrepentant. It was not that way in the beginning. I tell you, anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, and marries another woman—he commits adultery.

I know this is difficult to accept, but only to those who have received this teaching. Just as some eunuchs were born that way, others were made that way—others renounce marriage because of the kingdom of heaven. The ones who can accept this teaching, should accept this teaching.

- Q Why did the legalists of Jesus' day need (want?) an answer to this question² (besides wanting Jesus the Christ to be put on the spot)?
- Q Under what circumstances should a husband divorce his wife if she has indeed committed adultery? (See Matthew 5:28 before you answer.)
- Q Under what circumstances should one renounce marriage, according to this teaching of Christ Jesus?

MATTHEW 19:1-12

When Jesus had finished saying these things, he left Galilee and went into the region of Judea to the other side of the Jordan.

²Large crowds followed him, and he healed them there.

³Some Pharisees came to him to test him. They asked, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any and every reason?"

⁴"Haven't you read," he replied, "that at the beginning the Creator `made them male and female,' ⁵and said, `For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh'? ⁶So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate."

⁷"Why then," they asked, "did Moses command that a man give his wife a certificate of divorce and send her away?"

⁸Jesus replied, "Moses permitted you to divorce your wives because your hearts were hard. But it was not this way from the beginning. ⁹I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, and marries another woman commits adultery."

¹⁰The disciples said to him, "If this is the situation between a husband and wife, it is better not to marry."

¹¹Jesus replied, "Not everyone can accept this word, but only those to whom it has been given. ¹²For some are eunuchs because they were born that way; others were made that way by men; and others have renounced marriage because of the kingdom of heaven. The one who can accept this should accept it."

²During these times, Pharisees debated how to interpret Scripture's rules concerning divorce, trying to pull Jesus into their disputes. In this a well-regarded rabbi named Hillel taught husbands could divorce their wives if she did anything at all to displease him, such as burning his food. "A stricter school headed by Shammai limited grounds for divorce to marital infidelity. Jesus clearly sided with Shammai but pointed much deeper, beyond the technicalities of divorce to God's original design for marriage."

TEXTUAL ISSUES MATTHEW 19

Matthew 19:13-22. *Children teach—Jesus expands*. The knuckleheads still had not learned their lesson taught recently about the humility and nature of children. They actually shooed away those who had brought the children to be blessed by the Creator of the universe.

Again, Jesus was not pleased. *Let them come to Me—do not get in their way because the Kingdom of Heaven belongs to such people as these*.



MATTHEW 19:13-22

Then little children were brought to Jesus for him to place his hands on them and pray for them. But the disciples rebuked those who brought them.

14 Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these."

15 When he had placed his hands on them, he went on from there.

16 Now a man came up to Jesus and asked, "Teacher, what good thing must I do to get eternal life?"

17 "Why do you ask me about what is good?" Jesus replied. "There is only One who is good. If you want to enter life, obey the commandments."

18 "Which ones?" the man inquired.

Jesus replied, "'Do not murder, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not give false testimony, 19 honor your father and mother,' and 'love your neighbor as yourself.'"

20 "All these I have kept," the young man said. "What do I still lack?"

21 Jesus answered, "If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me."

22 When the young man heard this, he went away sad, because he had great wealth.

When He had placed His hands on them, He went on from there. Then it happened...

A man asked, "Rabbi, what good thing must I do to get eternal life?" Jesus was clearly bothered—Why do you ask me about what is "good?" There is only One who is "good." If you want to enter life, obey the commandments. Which ones, he wondered. Jesus became more specific—don't murder, don't screw around on your wife, don't steal, don't lie, honor your parents, and love your neighbor as yourself.

Whew. I've done all those. What do I still lack? Jesus gave him a great, but devastating answer: Sell your possessions, give the money to the poor and follow Me. Then you will have treasure in heaven. He left sad, for he had great wealth.

- Q Why did Jesus the Christ bless these children brought to Him? How did He do so? (see Matthew 17:7)
- Q What was theologically troubling about the young man's question? ["Good." "Do." "Get."]
- Q What commandment did Jesus not mention which was particularly applicable to the young man?
- Q To what extent was Jesus the Christ mis-truthing when He implied only Father God was "good?" Why would He mis-direct, and re-direct the conversation here?
- Q What was Christ's answer about "Do?" "Good?" "Get?"
- Q What did the young man lack which made him turn the other way? Should we be expected to sell it all and follow Him, Jesus the Christ?

Matthew 19:23-30. *Finding perfection*. Then Jesus turned to the disciples and taught His hardest lesson:

Amen, it is hard for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Let Me repeat Myself—it's easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter God's Kingdom.

They freaked. Astonished, they asked, then who can be saved?

Jesus just looked at them and said—With people entering the Kingdom is indeed impossible, but with God, all things are possible.

Peter countered, as usual. We've left everything to follow You! What will be left for us?

Amen, at the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man sits on His glorious throne, you who have followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones—judging the tribes of Israel. Everyone who has given it all up—including houses, siblings, parents, children, land for My sake, will not only receive a hundred times as much, they will also inherit eternal life. Here it is folks—those who seek to be first will be last, and many who are last will be first.

- Q Why did Jesus the Christ say it is difficult for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of Heaven?
- Q Why were the knuckleheads astonished?
- Q What was wrong about the young man's question which prompted this extended discussion of who is responsible for a person entering the Kingdom of Heaven?
- Q What are the consequences for those who give up everything? Did Stalin give up everything for the USSR? Hitler for the Third Reich? Paul for The Way?
- Q So, who do you guess will be "first in the kingdom" of Heaven?

MATTHEW 19:23-30

Then Jesus said to his disciples, "I tell you the truth, it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven.

24 Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God."

25 When the disciples heard this, they were greatly astonished and asked, "Who then can be saved?"

26 Jesus looked at them and said, "With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."

27 Peter answered him, "We have left everything to follow you! What then will there be for us?"

28 Jesus said to them, "I tell you the truth, at the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man sits on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. 29 And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother [or wife] or children or fields for my sake will receive a hundred times as much and will inherit eternal life. 30 But many who are first will be last, and many who are last will be first.

16:4 *the sign of Jonah.* See 12:39-40 and Lk 11:30.

16:6 *yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees.* See v. 12.

16:13 *Caesarea Philippi.* To be distinguished from the magnificent city of Caesarea, which Herod the Great had built on the coast of the Mediterranean. Caesarea Philippi, rebuilt by Herod's son Philip (who named it after Tiberius Caesar and himself), was north of the Sea of Galilee, near the slopes of Mount Hermon. Originally it was called Paneas (the ancient name survives today as Banias) in honor of the Greek god Pan, whose shrine was located there. The region was especially pagan. *Son of Man.* See note on Mk 8:31.

16:16 *Christ.* See NIV text note on 1:17. The Hebrew Scriptures' equivalent (*Messiah*) is used of anyone who was anointed with the holy oil, such as the priests and kings of Israel (e.g., Ex 29:7,21; 1Sa 10:1,6; 16:13; 2Sa 1:14,16). The word carries the idea of being chosen by God, consecrated to his service, and endowed with his power to accomplish the assigned task. Toward the end of the Hebrew Scriptures period the word assumed a special meaning. It denoted the ideal king anointed and empowered by God to rescue his people from their enemies and establish his righteous kingdom (Daniel 9:25-26). The ideas that clustered around the title *Messiah* tended to be political and national in nature. Probably for that reason Jesus seldom used the term. When he did accept it as applied to himself, he did so with reservations (cf. Mk 8:27-30; 14:61-63).

16:18 *Peter . . . rock . . . church.* In the Greek "Peter" is *petros* ("detached stone") and "rock" is *petra*. ("bedrock"). Several interpretations have been given to these words. The "bedrock" on which the church is built is

- (1) Christ;
- (2) Peter's confession of faith in Jesus as the Messiah (v. 16);
- (3) Christ's teachings--one of the great emphases of Matthew's Gospel;
- (4) Peter himself, understood in terms of his role on the day of Pentecost (Ac 2), the Cornelius incident (Ac 10) and his leadership among the apostles. Eph 2:20 indicates that the church is "built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets." The rock on which the church is built may be Peter's inspired *church*. In the Gospels this word is used only by Matthew (here and twice in 18:17). In the Septuagint it is used for the congregation of Israel. In Greek circles of Jesus' day it indicated the assembly of free, voting citizens in a city (cf. Ac 19:32,38,41).

Hades. The Greek name for the place of departed spirits, generally equivalent to the Hebrew *Sheol* (see note on Ge 37:35). The "gates of Hades" may mean the "powers of death," i.e., all forces opposed to Christ and his kingdom (but see note on Job 17:16).

16:19 *keys.* Perhaps Peter used these keys on the day of Pentecost (Ac 2) when he announced that the door of the kingdom was unlocked to Jews and proselytes and later when he acknowledged that it was also opened to Gentiles (Ac 10). *bind . . . loose.* Not authority to determine, but to announce, guilt or innocence (see 18:18 and the context there; cf. Ac 5:3,9).

³Adapted, corrected, and revised by D. Thomas Porter from Compton's Interactive NIV © 1996.

16:20 *not to tell*. Because of the false concepts of the Jews, who looked for an exclusively national and political Messiah, Jesus told his disciples not to publicize Peter's confession, lest it precipitate a revolution against Rome (see note on 8:4).

16:21 *began*. The beginning of a new emphasis in Jesus' ministry. Instead of teaching the crowds in parables, he concentrated on preparing the disciples for his coming suffering and death.

16:23 *Satan*. A loanword from Hebrew, meaning "adversary" or "accuser" (see NIV Job 1:6; see also Rev 2:9).

16:24 *take up his cross*. See notes on 10:38; Mk 8:34.

16:27 *Son of Man*. See Mk 8:31. *is going to come*. The *parousia*, the eschatological coming of Christ.

16:28 There are two main interpretations of this verse: 1. It is a prediction of the transfiguration, which happened a week later (17:1) and which demonstrated that Jesus will return in his Father's glory (16:27). 2. It refers to the Son of Man's authority and kingly reign in his post-resurrection church. Some of his disciples will witness--even participate in--this as described in the book of Acts. The context seems to favor the first view. See note on 2Pe 1:16.

17:1-9 The transfiguration was at least:

- 1) a revelation of the glory of the Son of God, a glory hidden now but to be revealed fully when he returns;
- 2) a confirmation of the difficult teaching given to the disciples at Caesarea Philippi (16:13-20); and
- 3) a beneficial experience for the disciples, who were discouraged after having been reminded so recently of Jesus' impending suffering and death (16:21). See notes on Mk 9:2-7; Lk 9:28-35.

17:1 *six days*. Mark also says "six days" (Mk 9:2), counting just the days between Peter's confession and the transfiguration, whereas Luke, counting all the days involved, says, "About eight days" (Lk 9:28).

Peter, James and John. These three disciples had an especially close relationship to Jesus (see 26:37; Mk 5:37).

high mountain. Its identity is unknown. However, the reference to Caesarea Philippi (16:13) may suggest that it was Mount Hermon, which was just northeast of Caesarea Philippi (see note on Lk 9:28).

by themselves. Luke adds "to pray" (Lk 9:28).

17:2 *he was transfigured*. His appearance changed. The three disciples saw Jesus in his glorified state (see Jn 17:5; 2Pe 1:17).

17:3 *Moses and Elijah*. Moses appears as the representative of the Law and the promise of salvation, which was soon to be fulfilled in the death/resurrection of Jesus. Elijah appears as the appointed restorer of all things (Mal 4:5-6; Mk 9:11-13). Lk 9:31 says that they talked about Christ's death. See note on Lk 9:30.

17:4 *three shelters*. See notes on Mk 9:5; Lk 9:33.

17:5 *them.* Jesus, Moses and Elijah. *This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.* The same words spoken from heaven at Jesus' baptism (3:17). No mere man, but the very Son of God, was transfigured.

17:10 The traditional eschatology of the teachers of the law, based on Mal 4:5-6, held that Elijah must appear before the coming of the Messiah. The disciples reasoned that if Jesus really was the Messiah, as the transfiguration proved him to be, why had not Elijah appeared?

17:12 *In the same way.* As John the Baptist was not recognized and was killed, so Jesus would be rejected and killed.

17:15 *seizures.* See note on 4:24.

17:18 Not all seizures were the result of demon possession, but these were.

17:20 *little faith.* Not so much the quantity of their faith as its quality--a faith that is bathed in prayer (see Mk 9:29. *mustard seed.* See 13:31-32 and notes. *say to this mountain, "move from here to there."* A proverbial statement meaning to remove great difficulties (cf. Isa 54:10; 1Co 13:2). In this context it probably refers to removing the problems associated with the work of the kingdom.

17:22 The second prediction of Christ's death, the first being in 16:21.

17:24 *two-drachma tax.* The annual temple tax required of every male 20 years of age and older (Ex 30:13; 2Ch 24:9; Ne 10:32). It was worth half a shekel (approximately two days' wages) and was used for the upkeep of the temple.

17:26 *the sons are exempt.* The implication is that Peter and the rest of the disciples belonged to God's royal household, but unbelieving Jews did not (see 21:43).

18:10 *their angels.* Guardian angels not exclusively for children, but for God's people in general (Psalm 34:7; 91:11; Hebrews 1:14). *always see the face of.* Have constant access to.

18:12-14 The parable of the lost sheep is also found in Lk 15:3-7. There it applies to unbelievers, here to believers. Jesus used the same parable to teach different truths in different situations.

18:15 *brother.* A fellow believer.

18:17 *church.* The local congregation. Here and 16:18 are the only two places where the Gospels speak of the "church." *pagan.* For believers with a Jewish heritage, this meant any Gentile. *tax collector.* This verse establishes one basis for excommunication. It does not mean, however, we stop loving and caring for the "excommunicated" friend—Jesus called a tax collector to be one of the twelve, and "non-Jews" were some of the first people to whom He sought out (see John 4).

18:25 For this practice of selling into slavery see Ex 21:2; Lev 25:39; 2Ki 4:1; Ne 5:5; Isa 50:1.

19:1 *the other side of the Jordan.* The east side, known later as Transjordan or Perea and today simply as Jordan. Jesus now began ministering there (see Lk 13:22).

19:3 *for any and every reason.* This last part of the question is not in the parallel passage in Mark (10:2). Matthew possibly included it because he was writing to the Jews, who were aware of the dispute between the schools of Shammai and Hillel over the interpretation of Dt 24:1-4. Shammai held that "something indecent" meant "marital unfaithfulness"--the only allowable cause for divorce. Hillel (c. 60 B.C. - A.D. 20) emphasized the preceding clause, "who becomes displeasing to him." He would allow a man to divorce his wife if she did anything he disliked--even if she burned his food while cooking it. Jesus clearly took the side of Shammai (see v. 9), but only after first pointing back to God's original ideal for marriage in Ge 1:27; 2:24.

19:10-12 See 1Co 7:7-8,26,32-35.

19:11 *this word.* The disciples' conclusion in v. 10: "it is better not to marry." Not everyone can accept this teaching. Jesus then gives three examples of persons for whom it is meant in v. 12.

19:12 *have renounced marriage because of the kingdom of heaven.* Those who have voluntarily adopted a celibate life-style in order to give themselves more completely to God's work. Under certain circumstances celibacy is recommended in Scripture (cf. 1Co 7:25-38), but it is never presented as superior to marriage.

19:16 *eternal life.* The first use of this term in Matthew's Gospel (see v. 29; 25:46). In John it occurs much more frequently, often taking the place of the term "kingdom of God (or heaven)" used in the Synoptics, which treat the following three expressions as synonymous: (1) eternal life (v. 16; Mk 10:17; Lk 18:18), (2) entering the kingdom of heaven (v. 23; Mk 10:24; Lk 18:24) and (3) being saved (vv. 25-26; Mk 10:26-27; Lk 18:26-27).

19:17 *There is only One who is good.* The good is not something to be done as meritorious in itself. God alone is good, and all other goodness derives from him—even the keeping of the commandments, which Jesus proceeded to enumerate (vv. 18-20).

If you want to enter life, obey the commandments. "To enter life" is the same as "to get eternal life" (v. 16). The requirement to "obey the commandments" is not to establish one's merit before God but to more fully understand His will/purpose for us. Scripture always teaches God's presence in our lives is a gift, a gift of God's mercy received through faith (see Eph 2:8) and justified by the Son's sacrifice (Romans 3:25-26).

19:20 *all these I have kept.* See note on Mk 10:20.

19:21 *perfect.* Greek *teleios* τελειος, "goal, end" as in "teleological." His goal was eternal life, but wealth and lack of commitment stood in his way.

19:28 *I tell you the truth* (i.e., "amen.") *judging.* Governing or ruling (cf. the Hebrew Scriptures use of "judge").

19:29 *will receive a hundred times as much.* Mark adds, "and with them, persecutions" (see Mk 10:30).