

THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

The scholarly consensus now - which may not be worth much - is that Mark was the first Gospel written, and that Matthew abridged it but then added his own material to make it longer. The so-called Griesbach Hypothesis is that Mark used Matthew i.e. Matthew came first.

Matthew is the tax collector in 9:9-13, who is called Levi in Mark 2:13-17. It was by no means unusual for a person to have two names e.g. Simon Peter, John Mark. By the second century, Matthew had become the Church's favourite Gospel.

Dating is not easy. There is precious little reason to contest John Wenham's view that the three Synoptic Gospels were all written before the year A.D.55., with Matthew being dated perhaps as early as A.D. 40. John A. T. Robinson, hardly a theological conservative, also set out to show that the whole New Testament should be dated much earlier than most liberal critics would allow. In fact, there seems to be little reason why it may not be dated even earlier. Craig Keener dates Matthew in the late 70s. This may well be so, but the epistles assume at least one Gospel, and the epistles were all written by the mid-60s.

Matthew's Gospel is based on five lengthy discourses (chapters 5-7; 10; 13; 18; 24-25), each of which leads into a transitional saying such as 'When Jesus had finished saying these things ...' (7:28-29; 11:1; 13:53; 19:1; 26:1-2). This is often linked with the Pentateuch (i.e. five books), the idea being that Matthew is presenting Jesus as the new Moses. Matthew's use of the term 'kingdom of heaven' may also indicate concern for Jewish avoidance of the name of God.

The Genealogy of Jesus (1:1-17)

I heard of a person who was converted through reading Matthew's genealogy, so one can never tell what God might use!

The Jewish pop star, Helen Shapiro, read these verses, and wrote: 'I could relate the events to me and my culture.'

1. How is Jesus described? (1:1) What is the significance of these descriptions? Are we dealing with mythology or hard history? _____

In Luke 3:23-38, Luke traces Jesus' genealogy back to Adam, 'the son of God'. It is often claimed that Matthew focuses on Joseph's genealogy while Luke concentrates on Mary. But it may be that Luke traces the physical descent of Joseph, and Matthew his legal and royal descent.

Matthew's genealogy is arranged in three fourteens of generations, possibly to help memorisation. Notice, to begin with, that Jeconiah is counted twice (1:11, 12). Between Joram and Uzziah, three names are omitted. So the genealogy is incomplete. The three sections are from Abraham to David (1:1-6a), David to the exile to Babylon (1:6b-11), and from the exile to the Messiah (1:12-17). For what it is worth, the numerical value of 'David' in Hebrew, counting only the consonants, is 14.

2. What is remarkable about the inclusion of:

(a) Tamar (1:3; Gen.38) _____

(b) Rahab (1:5; Josh 2; 6) _____

(c) Ruth (1:5) _____

(d) the wife of Uriah the Hittite (1:6; 2 Sam.12) _____

(e) Ahaz (1:9; 2 Chron.28) _____

(f) Amon (1:10; 2 Chron.33:21-25) _____

3. After the exile, Israel had no king, and many of the names are not known to us from other sources. How might God's kingdom appear at times? _____

4. 'Messiah' is the Hebrew, 'Christ' (cristov") is the Greek (1:16). It means 'anointed one'. Prophets, priests and kings were anointed with oil in the Old Testament. With whom was the Messiah anointed? (Isa.61:1; Acts 10:38) _____

The Virgin Birth of Christ (1:18-25)

1. What do we really understand about ordinary human births? (Eccles.11:5)

2. How was the Son of God born into this world? (1:18-20) Why did Joseph respond the way that he did? How was his mind put at rest? _____

This is a betrothal or a pledge, which is more than our modern engagement. Although the couple were regarded as husband and wife, sexual relations had not begun. To break the betrothal was counted as a divorce.

3. From whom would the Messiah be descended? (1:20; Isa.11:1; Jer.33:15)

4. Why was Jesus given this name? (1:21) _____

Jesus is Anglicised Greek for 'Joshua', which means 'Yahweh is salvation'.
Note Ps.130:8.

5. What Scripture was fulfilled? (1:22-23; Isaiah 7:14) What is so appropriate about a virgin birth for the Son of God? _____

The Hebrew word is *'almah* and the Greek word is *parthenos*, and they both mean 'virgin'.

6. What do you make of John Shelby Spong who writes: 'The virgin of a literal Bible, the virgin of the annunciation, Bethlehem, and the manger, corrupted by the years of an overlaid male theology, will have to go'? Who has to go - Matthew or Spong? _____

7. Why is Jesus called Immanuel? (1:23; see Isa.9:6; Rev.22:16; Matt.28:17-20; Col.2:9) _____

8. What did Joseph do after the angel told him of what God was doing? (1:24-25; cf. 13:55-56 for later children) _____

Roman Catholic doctrine is that Mary was perpetually virgin, but this is hard to square with Scripture.

King Herod and King Jesus (Matthew 2:1-12)

1. Where was Jesus at this time? (2:1, 11) Who came from the east? Who was king at this time? _____

King Herod the Great was not a Jew but an Idumean. He married ten wives, executed the first (Mariamme, a Jewess) in 29 B.C., then killed two of his sons, Aristobulus and Alexander, in 7 B.C., and another son Antipater in 4 B.C., a few days before his own death. The emperor Augustus is supposed to have commented: 'I would rather be Herod's pig than Herod's son'.

From the usual reckoning, Herod died in 4 B.C. which shows us that there is something wrong with our calendar. We are about four years out.

2. What did the Magi seek to do? (2:2) How did they get to Jerusalem? What does it reveal about Jesus, that these men came to worship Him? (2:2,

8, 11) _____

The Magi may have come from Babylon, but Persia is another possibility. Their names were probably not Melchior, Balthasar, and Caspar.

3. What was Herod's response to all this? (2:3) Why did he feel like this? Why was all Jerusalem disturbed? _____

4. Whom did Herod consult? (2:4) What was their answer to his question? (2:5-6; from Micah 5:2) For what was Bethlehem noted? (1 Sam.16:1) _____

The chief priests (Sadducees) and the teachers of the law (Pharisees) became Jesus' most determined opponents (Matt.21:23; Luke 22:66-71; John 11:45-53).

5. What do verses 7-8 reveal about the character of Herod? _____

6. What did the Magi then do? (2:9-10) How were they led? _____

7. What did the Magi do when they arrived at the house? (2:11) How many gifts were there? What do these gifts indicate? _____

The Magi's three gifts gave rise to the widespread notion that there were three of them. They were Gentiles and not Jews, and probably not kings.

Gold signified royalty, incense divinity, and myrrh was used at deaths, to slow down the decay of a body (Ps.72:10-11; Isa.60:3, 9-11).

C. H. Spurgeon wrote: 'These choice offerings, especially the gold, would help Joseph and Mary to provide for the Royal Child, who was so soon to be exiled. God brought providers from the far East to supply the needs of his Son. Remember, Omnipotence has servants everywhere. Before the babe starts for Egypt, Oriental sages must pay his charges.'

8. Why did the Magi not return to see Herod? (2:12; note 10:16) _____

*Holy Jesus, every day
Keep us in the narrow way,*

*And when earthly things are past,
Bring our ransomed souls at last:
Where they need no star to guide,
Where no clouds Your glory hide* (William Chatterton Dix).

To Egypt and Nazareth (Matt.2:13-23)

1. What did the angel say to Joseph in a dream? (2:13) How would Egypt, the place of oppression in Exodus, now become the place of refuge? How is this consistent with the view of history set out in Revelation 12:1-5? (note too Ex.1:15-16; Esther 3:6) _____

2. How did Joseph respond to this revelation? (2:14) For how long did the holy family stay in Egypt? (2:15) What did this fulfil? (Hos.11:1) What is implied from the way that Hosea 11:1 is cited in the New Testament? _____

In its original context, Hosea 11:1 is actually referring to Israel as God's son being called out of Egypt. Jesus is thus the son that succeeded where Israel failed (note too that He succeeded when tempted in the wilderness whereas Israel failed).

Herod the Great seems to have died in 4 B.C.

3. What was Herod the Great's response to all these events? (2:16) _____

The Jewish historian, Josephus, does not mention this massacre, and modern historians are often sceptical of it (e.g. W. H. C. Frend), but, as noted above, Herod killed three of his own sons as well as his first and 'favourite' wife Mariamme, so it hardly seems out of character.

The massacre recalls the events surrounding the birth of Moses (Ex.2).

4. What did this massacre fulfil? (2:17-18; Jer.31:15) _____

Rachel died near Ephrath (Bethlehem, cf. Gen.35:16-19), but Jeremiah 31:17 refers to Israel's return from exile (Jer.31:17). From death would come hope; the time of spiritual exile is nearly over for true Israel.

5. After Herod's death, what was Joseph told, again by an angel in a dream? (2:19-20) _____

6. What did Joseph do next? (2:21) _____

7. But who replaced Herod the Great as king? (2:22) What was he like? So what did Joseph do? _____

On Herod's death, the kingdom was divided among his three sons - Archelaus became ethnarch of Judaea (4 B.C. - A.D. 6), Philip became tetrarch of the northern Transjordan (4 B.C. - A.D. 34), and Antipas became tetrarch of Galilee and Perea (4 B.C. - A.D. 39). Archelaus was such a tyrant that he was removed by the Roman emperor (Caesar Augustus) in A.D. 6.

8. Where did Joseph go to live? What did this fulfil? (2:23) _____

There is no actual Old Testament text which says this. It seems to refer to the fact that the Messiah would be rejected (see John 1:46; Isa.53:2-3).

Jesus and John the Baptist (Matt.3)

1. Who was John the Baptist? (3:1; note 11:9-11) What was he doing, and where? _____

2. What was John's message? (3:2; note 4:17) Why should people repent? _____

The main idea is that of reign or rule. The king has come to reign over His people.

3. How is the work of John portrayed in Isaiah 40:3? (3:3) For whom does the voice prepare the way? What does this imply about Christ? _____

John was the voice; Jesus was the Word (John 1:1-9). He is the messenger who points to the Messenger (Mal.3:1; 4:5-6).

4. What did John wear? (3:4) Of whom should that remind us? (2 Kings 1:8) How was John like Elijah? _____

Locusts were the only winged insects that were clean, and so allowed to be eaten (Lev.11:20-23).

5. What kind of response did John get from the people of Judea? (3:5) What did the people do, and what did John do? (3:6) Is this the same as Christian baptism? (cf. Acts 19:1-7) _____

6. What did John say to the Pharisees and Sadducees who came to him? (3:7)
How seeker sensitive is that?! What is about to come? (3:7) _____

7. What is the evidence of repentance? (3:8; cf. Acts 26:20) _____

8. What is a dangerous presumption in dealing with God? (3:9; John 8:33, 39;
Rom.9:6) What can God do if He so wishes? What does John mean by this?

9. What does the coming of the Messiah bring? (3:10) Is the gospel just good
news? _____

10. With what does John baptize? (3:11) What does it signify? How is that
different from the baptism of the coming one? How does John compare with
the coming one? _____

'Fire' signifies purification, and carries with it implications of judgment
(Isa.4:4). This occurred at Pentecost (Acts 1:4-5).

11. How is the Messiah described? (3:12) What picture is painted here? How
does the time framework cause John some difficulties later? (cf. Matt.11:1-6) __

12. From where did Jesus come? (3:13) For what purpose? _____

13. Why did John try to deter Him? (3:14) What does this reveal about the
person of Christ? _____

14. What is the purpose of Christ's being baptized? (3:15) Why did Jesus submit to a rite which has to do with repentance and cleansing? _____

Jesus is not a sinner but He identifies with sinners.

15. What did Jesus do next? (3:16a) Does this prove that Jesus was actually immersed in the water? _____

Charles Spurgeon: 'The baptism of Christ was the picture, the type, the symbol of the work, which he afterwards accomplished. He was immersed in suffering; he died, and was buried in the tomb; he rose again from the grave; and all that is set forth in the outward symbol of his baptism in the River Jordan.'

John Gill argues: 'We learn this from it, that since it is said, that he came up out of the water, he must first have gone down into it; must have been in it, and was baptized in it ... That Christ should go down into the river, more or less deep, to the ankles, or up to the knees, in order that John should sprinkle water on his face, or pour it on his head, as is ridiculously represented, can hardly obtain any credit with persons of thought and sense.'

Gill is saying rather more than the text says.

16. What actually happened at the baptism? (3:16-17) How were the three Persons of the Trinity involved? Who is proclaimed? (Isa.42:1; Ps.2:7) The Jehovah's Witness tells you: 'You believe that the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are the same person. That is ridiculous.' How do you reply to him? _____

Remember that the Trinity is defined as three Persons in the one essence or substance.

Israel is a dove in Hosea 7:11. Matthew 10:16 uses the expression 'as innocent as doves'. Doves were used as sacrificial animals by the poor (Lev.5:7). Jesus may thus be the innocent new Israel sacrificed for the poor.

The Temptation of the Son of God (Matt.4:1-11)

1. Who led Jesus out into the desert? (4:1) For what purpose? How can the Spirit use the devil? _____

Martin Luther: 'Temptation and adversity are the two best books in my library.' Also: 'Not understanding, reading, or speculation, but living, nay rather dying and being damned make a theologian.'

Recall that Adam was tempted in the Garden, and failed; while Israel was tempted in the desert, and also failed.

2. What happened in the desert? (4:2) _____

Note Moses (Ex.34:28) and Elijah (1 Kings 19:8) for the forty days.

3. How does the tempter throw doubt on Christ's person? (4:3) What is the first temptation? _____

4. What is Jesus' response? (4:4) Where does this come from? (Deut.8:3) In the original context, did Israel obey God? (Num. 11:4-6) _____

Peter Craigie on the Deuteronomy passage: 'The command of God contained within it the provision of God.'

Don Carson: 'Israel demanded its bread but died in the wilderness; Jesus denied himself bread, retained his righteousness, and lived by faithful submission to God's Word.'

5. What was the second temptation? (4:5-6) What does the devil do with Psalm 91? What does this show us about the devil? (note Gen.3:1; 2 Cor.2:11; 11:3, 14) How has the devil misused Psalm 91? _____

Note: in Luke 4:1-12 the second and third temptations are reversed. Either Matthew or Luke was only concerned to give the temptations, not their order.

6. What was Jesus' reply? (3:7; Deut.6:16) In what way is it wrong to test God? (cf. Ex.17:7) _____

Note that at the right time, God did send angels to aid Christ (see Matt.4:11; Luke 22:43).

7. What did the devil do next? (4:8) What was his offer to Jesus? (4:9) In what sense is the devil the god of this world, and so could make this offer? _____

8. What was Jesus' response to this temptation? (4:10; Deut.6:13) What does the fact that Jesus was worshipped (e.g. 2:2, 11) reveal about His person? _____

9. How did Christ meet each of the three temptations? What should this teach us in our attempts to resist temptation? What else should we learn about life in Christ? (Heb.4:16) _____

J. C. Ryle: 'Knowledge of the Bible never comes by intuition. It can only be got by hard, regular, daily, attentive, wakeful reading.'

9. What did the devil do next? (4:11) What does it reveal to us about Christ, that angels attended Him? (cf. Hebrews 1 which tells us that Christ is above the angels, and Hebrews 2 which tells us that in becoming man, He placed Himself a little lower than the angels while He was here on earth.) _____

Jesus begins to preach (4:12-17)

1. Why did Jesus return to Galilee? (4:12) _____

2. Why did Jesus move from Nazareth to Capernaum? (4:13-16; cf. Isa.9:1-2) What does this indicate about the calling in of the Gentiles? How is the spiritual state of the people described? _____

3. What do the two parts of Jesus' message mean? (4:17) Why did Jesus proclaim this message? (see 3:1, and remember what had happened to John in 4:12) _____

Calling disciples and healing the sick (4:18-25)

1. Where was Jesus walking? (4:18) Whom did He see? What were they doing? _____

2. What did Jesus call on them to do? (4:19) What did He mean? _____

3. How did Peter and Andrew respond? (4:20) _____

Note: this is not their first encounter with Jesus. It is their call to apostleship, not their conversion (which is found in John 1:35-42).

Charles Spurgeon: 'They were busy in a lawful occupation when he called them to be ministers. Our Lord does not call idlers, but fishers!'

4. Whom else did Jesus see? (4:21-22) What were they doing? What did Jesus call on them to do? How did they respond? To what sort of men did Jesus entrust His apostleship? _____

5. What two things did Jesus do throughout their synagogues in Galilee? (4:23) Why did He teach and heal? _____

6. What was the result of this? (4:24-25) What does this indicate? _____

Characteristics of God's Kingdom People: The Sermon on the Mount (Matt.5-7)

The Sermon on the Mount, despite its only being 111 verses, is surely the most compelling sermon ever preached. It is both beautiful and terrible, uplifting and shattering. Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones has complained that 'the most obvious feature of the life of the Christian Church today is, alas, its superficiality.' Matthew 5-7 is surely the remedy. Augustine called the Sermon on the Mount 'the perfect measure of the Christian life'.

Compare Tolstoy to C. S. Lewis. Tolstoy argued that Jesus told us to love our enemies and not to judge, therefore there should be no army and no legal system. In his novel *Resurrection*, published in 1899, he writes: 'If men will but fulfil these commandments, the kingdom of heaven will be established here on earth, and they will attain the greatest good possible to them.' C. S. Lewis asked: 'Does one "care for" or "enjoy" the Sermon on the Mount? I suppose no one "cares for" it. Who can like being knocked flat on his face by a sledge-hammer?' What did Tolstoy miss in his response to the Sermon on the Mount? _____

The Beatitudes (5:1-12)

1. Where was Jesus? (5:1-2) What did He do? What did His disciples do?

Note that sitting is the posture that is the position of the teacher (see Matt.23:2; 24:3). The teacher sat to teach, as a king would sit on the throne to make proclamations.

2. Jesus' Sermon on the Mount begins with the Beatitudes - nine 'Blesseds'. How is 'blessed' related to being happy, yet different? _____

The Greek word is 'makarios'. From 1960 to 1977 Cyprus had as its president Archbishop Makarios, which is literally 'Archbishop Blessed'. The Jerusalem Bible translates it as 'How happy', the GNB has 'Happy', and the Living Bible is worse with 'Fortunate'. 'Beatitude' comes from the Latin *beatus* for 'blessed'. Warren Wiersbe has referred to the 'Be-happy-attitudes', but that seems to be more clever than wise. Jesus is describing the character of a true Christian.

3. Whom does Christ bless first? (5:3) What does He mean by this? What does He promise such people? _____

The world says 'Believe in yourself'. Not so the Christian. Calvin: 'he only who is reduced to nothing in himself, and relies on the mercy of God, is poor in spirit'. Charles Wesley: *False and full of sin I am, / Thou art full of truth and grace*. As Luther was dying, he wrote on a piece of paper: 'We're beggars, that's the truth.'

4. How can those who mourn be blessed? (5:4) What is promised to them? Relate this to the fruit of the Spirit being joy (Gal.5:22) _____

5. Who else are blessed? (5:5; the NASB has 'gentle') What is the difference between being meek and being weak? (see e.g. Num.12:3 for Moses; 2 Samuel 16:5-14 for David; and Matthew 11:28-29 for Jesus) What is promised to the meek? How does this differ from the world's view? _____

Matthew Henry: 'They are meek who are rarely and hardly provoked, but quickly and easily pacified; and who would rather forgive twenty injuries than avenge one, having the rule of their own spirits.'

Contrast that to the view of James McClelland ('Diamond Jim'), a Labor politician who became Chief Judge of the Land and Environment Court of NSW. In the 1980s he wrote: 'To a generation living under the shadow of the bomb, it may not seem very important whether God is the property of Anglicans or Catholics or Methodists, since human survival depends not on the hand of God, but on the trigger finger of a Reagan or an Andropov.'

6. Who are blessed in verse 6? Is righteousness a forensic term (as in 2 Cor.5:21) or does it refer to righteous living (as in Matt.5:20) or is it both? What is promised to them? _____

7. How are the merciful blessed? (5:7) How are we to be merciful? How is mercy illustrated in Luke 10:30-37; 1 Samuel 24 and 26; and Matthew 18:21-35? How is God described by Paul in Ephesians 2:4? How is Christ described in Hebrews 2:17? What is promised to those who are merciful? _____

Portia in Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*:

*The quality of mercy is not strain'd,
It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven
Upon the place beneath. It is twice blessed:
It blesses him that gives and him that takes.
'Tis mightiest in the mightiest; it becomes
The throned monarch better than his crown.*

8. Who are the pure in heart? (5:8) What is promised to them? (cf. Ps.24:3-4; 1 John 3:2) _____

Kierkegaard wrote: *Purity of heart is to will one thing.*

Spurgeon: 'Foul hearts make dim eyes Godward.'

9. What does it mean to be a peacemaker? (5:9) How is a peacemaker different to an appeaser? (Jer.6:14; Luke 12:51-53) What are peacemakers called? _____

When Neville Chamberlain came back from München with his agreement with Hitler, he proclaimed: 'We have peace in our time.' He thought that he was a peacemaker but he was only an appeaser.

John MacArthur quips that peace is when everybody stops to reload.

List the various aspects of a biblical peace:

Isaiah 9:6 _____

Colossians 1:20 _____

John 14:27; 16:33 _____

Isaiah 52:7 _____

Ephesians 2:14; 4:3 _____

Romans 12:18 _____

Richard Baxter: 'He that is not a son of peace is not a son of God.'

10. What is the 8th and 9th beatitude? (5:10-12; see Luke 6:26; John 15:18-20) How should a Christian respond to unjust persecution? (e.g. Acts 5:40-41) How were the true prophets treated in the Old Testament? (cf. Neh. 9:26) What is the attitude of the worldly person? (e.g. 1 Kings 22:8) _____

In the year 2000 Dr Everett Julyan, a Christian doctor, was denied work in Glasgow because of his opposition to abortion.

Back in the 18th century George Whitefield was ridiculed in a play that portrayed him as Dr Squintum (he had a squint). He responded not by becoming bitter, but crying out 'All hail such contempt!' His great contemporary, John Wesley, once wrote in his journal: 'I was honoured by having stones, dirt, rotten eggs and pieces of dead cats thrown at me.'

Izaak Walton of fisherman (angler) fame wrote of Richard Sibbes: 'Heaven was in him/ Before he was in heaven.'

Salt and Light (5:13-16)

1. What does Jesus pray about His people's relationship with the world in John 17:15, 18? _____

2. What does Jesus call Christians in 5:13? What does salt do? (Mark 9:50; Col.4:6; Ezek.16:4). What is the warning that is issued here? John Stott has written: 'When any community deteriorates, the blame should be attached where it belongs: not to the community which is going bad but to the church which is failing in its responsibility as salt to stop it going bad.' Is he right?

William Wilberforce said that the conversion of one was the elevation of fifty.
3. How else are Christians described? (5:14-16) What is the meaning of the two images used here? Reconcile this with Matthew 6:1, 4 _____

J. C. Ryle: 'It is the property of light to be utterly distinct from darkness. The least spark in a dark room can be seen at once. Of all things created, light is the most useful: it fertilizes; it guides; it cheers. It was the first thing called into being (Gen. 1:3). Without it, the world would be a gloomy blank.'
When encountering troubles as the rector of Blackfriars in 18th century London, William Romaine was surprisingly supported by the local publican who explained: 'Indeed, sir, I am more indebted to you than you to me; for you made my wife, who was one of the worst, the best woman in the world.'

The greater righteousness (Matt.5:17-20)

John Newton: 'Ignorance of the nature and design of the law is at the bottom of most of our religious mistakes.'

1. What does Jesus say about His relationship with the Old Testament law and prophets? (5:17) Note that in verses 21-48 there is a recurring pattern of 'You have heard that it was said to people long ago ... but I say unto you.' Note too Matthew 12:8 and Mark 7:18-19. How does Christ fulfil, and not abolish, the whole of the Old Testament? _____

Dietrich Bonhoeffer writes of Christ: 'He has in fact nothing to add to the commandments of God except this, that he keeps them.'

2. What point does Jesus make in verse 18? When will this be accomplished?

Jesus establishes the true meaning of the law. Then He fulfils the law in His life by keeping it completely. Finally He fulfils it in His death.

3. What is the warning uttered in verse 19? What is the Christian attitude to law? _____

Augustine: 'The law is given that grace may be sought; grace is given that the law may be fulfilled.'

4. What righteousness is Christ referring to in Matthew 5:20? Is it forensic as in Romans 3:21-22? Or is more being said? (see Matthew 12:33) Compare the Christian way of life to the Pharisaic understanding of righteousness. _____

Murder in the Heart (Matt.5:21-26)

1. Noting the pattern of 'You have heard it said ... but I say unto you', what does that tell you about Jesus' concept of His own authority? (5:21-22, 27-28, 31-32, 33-34, 38-39, 43-44 - the 'six antitheses') How is it different from that of the Old Testament prophets who declared: 'Thus says the Lord'? _____

2. What is warned against in 5:21? What is the Old Testament teaching on capital punishment (Gen.9:6; Ex.21:12), just wars (Deut.20:10-18), abortion (Ps.139:13-16), and euthanasia (2 Sam.31:4)? _____

3. What, however, does Jesus warn against? (5:22) _____

The NKJV is probably right to include being angry 'without a cause', but even if it not said, it is meant. Anger is not always wrong (Mark 3:5).

There does not seem to be any gradation at work in verse 22. 'Raca' is untranslated in the NKJV and the NIV. Others have translated it in various ways - 'nitwit' (R. V. G. Tasker), 'blockhead' (William Hendriksen), 'idiot' (Robert Guelich, R. T. France), and 'imbecile' (F. F. Bruce).

3. Is Jesus forbidding us to call people 'fools'? (Ps.14:1; Matt.23:17, 19; Gal.3:1) What is Jesus getting at? (Matt.15:19; 1 John 3:15) _____

It is wrong to engage in muckraking, expressions of unloving contempt, character assassination, and a hurtful belittling of other people. This commandment is broken in every school playground, tennis club, hairdresser's salon, place of work, and place of worship.

4. How does Christ illustrate this principle (in two ways):

(a) in worship (5:23-24) _____

For helpful cross references, see Isa.1:15; 1 Peter 3:7.

(b) before the courts (5:25-26) _____

Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones spiritualises all this, and says that the opponent is God. The message is then: 'Make friends quickly with God, or else you will be eternally paying the penalty.' It is more likely that the message is that of Ephesians 4:26. The Christian ought to reconcile quickly with his enemy. A quadrans was what a day labourer would receive for a few minutes' work.

Inner Purity (Matt.5:27-30)

Back in the 19th century Dostoyevsky wrote *The Devils* where the revolutionary Peter Verkhovensky calls virginity 'a stupid prejudice ... an out-of-date convention'.

1. What does Jesus do with the seventh commandment in verses 27-28? (note Job 31:1, 9) _____

2. Is the Bible opposed to the body as such? _____

C. S. Lewis: 'If I object to boys stealing my nectarines, I am not objecting to boys or nectarines.'

3. Where does sin come from? (5:28; cf. 15:17-20) _____

4. Why does Christ address males in this way, and Paul addresses females in

1 Timothy 2:9? Why the difference? _____

5. In the light of this, when does David actually sin in 2 Samuel 11? _____

6. What is the remedy for this? (5:29-30) Is this literal or metaphorical? What exactly does Jesus mean? _____

See Colossians 3:5. John Owen used to say: 'Be killing sin or it will be killing you.' If your foot had gangrene, you would consent to its being cut off; if you have skin cancers, you get them cut off.

Spurgeon: 'Better a blind saint than a quick-sighted sinner.'

7. What is the remedy to lust? (Phil.4:8) _____

Dietrich Bonhoeffer: 'The essence of chastity is not the suppression of lust, but the total orientation of one's life towards a goal.'

Divorce (Matt.5:31-32)

1. What is the starting point for the Christian understanding of marriage? (Gen.2:24; Mal.2:10-16) _____

C. S. Lewis, John Stott, and James Montgomery Boice, have suggested that there be two forms of marriage - one under state rules and one under Christian rules.

2. What does Moses mean when he permits divorce for 'some indecency'? (5:31-32; Deut.24:1-4) _____

Rabbi Hillel and his followers said that if the wife spoiled the dinner or was troublesome and quarrelsome, or she spoke disrespectfully of the man's parents, he could divorce her. Rabbi Akiba and his followers were very liberal - if the husband found a better-looking woman, he could divorce his wife. Rabbi Shammai said that the indecency was sexual, but then said that it included appearing on the streets with one's hair down, or with uncovered arms, or with a slit in the side of one's skirt.

3. What is the exceptive clause that allows a lawful divorce and remarriage? (5:31-32; note Matt.1:18-19) What divorces are forbidden? (e.g. Matt.14:3-4)

Jesus interprets the 'indecenty' as sexual too - as Rabbi Shammai did - but He identifies it as actual sexual sin.

The Old Testament civil penalty for adultery was meant to be death (Lev. 20:10) which would obviously leave the innocent partner free to remarry.

In the early 16th century, Erasmus tried to make divorce allowable for lust because of verses 27-28. That is stretching it, to put it mildly.

Taking Oaths (Matt.5:33-37)

1. How important are words? (Matt.12:36-37) _____

2. What oaths must be fulfilled? (5:33-34a) Were Old Testament oaths compulsory? (Deut.23:22) Once they had been undertaken, did they become compulsory? (Num.30:2; Deut.23:21) _____

3. What point is made in Ecclesiastes 5:5? _____

4. Christ seems to abolish all oaths, but does He? (Hebrews 6:17; Matt.26:63-64; Rom.9:1; 2 Cor.1:23) _____

5. Can we get out of an oath because fulfilling it will be costly to us? (Ps.15:1, 4b) _____

6. What about unlawful oaths? If we take an unlawful oath, can we break it? (Mark 6:22-29) _____

7. Generally speaking, should we avoid taking oaths? (Matt.5:34-36) Why? _____

8. In 1921 the fundamentalist Baptist, John R. Rice, entered a Masonic lodge in Texas. On entry he took an oath which stated that he would not give away any Masonic secrets. It added:

Binding myself under no less a penalty than that of having my throat cut across, my tongue torn out by its roots, and buried in the rough sands of the sea ... should I ever knowingly or willingly violate this my solemn oath and obligation as an Entered Apprentice Mason.

What do you make of that? _____

9. What should we do? (5:37; James 5:12) What does this mean for how we speak to one another e.g. when we say that we will do something or when we warn an erring youngster about what will happen if he/she continues to misbehave? _____

Love your enemies (Matt.5:38-48)

1. What are we to do with an evil person? (5:38-42) _____

2. Spurgeon says: 'Good law in court may be very bad custom in common society.' What does the 'eye for eye, tooth for tooth' principle mean in the Old Testament? (Ex.21:24-25; Lev.24:19-20; Deut.19:21) Is it meant to be vindictive? _____

3. Is private vengeance allowed to the Christian? (Lev.19:17-18; Rom. 12:17, 19, 21) When is the 'eye for an eye' principle quite appropriate? (Rom.13:3-4; recall Spurgeon's comment above) _____

4. What four examples does Jesus give us to show what He means? (Matt. 5:38-42; note Matt. 27:32; Deut.15:7-8) _____

5. Are we meant to understand that a Hitler or a Stalin must not be resisted? Should you fight a child molester or a rapist? What about giving to a drunkard who asks for another drink or a loafer who refuses to work? _____

William Wilberforce used to quote Matthew Henry's comment that 'It is the second blow that starts the fight.'

6. What is Jesus responding to in 5:43-44? What does the Old Testament actually teach about how we are to treat our enemies? (Proverbs 25:21) _____

The NKJV has more in v.44 than does the NIV; some of it may come from Luke 6:27-28. The first part of verse 43 is from Leviticus 19:18, but there is no Old Testament passage which tells us to hate our personal enemies. A text in the Dead Sea Scrolls tells the Qumran people to hate their enemies. Note that Christ prayed for those who crucified Him (Luke 23:24) and Stephen prayed for those who stoned him (Acts 7:60).

7. Why should we love our enemies and do good to them? (5:45) _____

8. What other reason is given in 5:46-47? How is camaraderie different to Christ's view of love? _____

NKJV has 'tax collectors' in v.47; NIV adds 'pagans' (or it could be 'Gentiles').

Alfred Plummer: 'To return evil for good is devilish; to return good for good is human; to return good for evil is divine.'

9. How does Jesus conclude this section? (5:48) Can God command the impossible? _____

The idea is perfection in the sense of being all-round and consistent.

William Hendriksen sees this as the conclusion to verses 43-47, but Don

Carson seems to be right in that it is the conclusion to verses 21-47.

In his *Confessions* Augustine prayed: 'Give what You command, and command what You will.'

For those who take the Sermon on the Mount seriously, and only for those, there is Hebrews 10:14.

Secret Righteousness: Giving, Praying, and Fasting (Matt.6:1-18)

Jesus deals here with the secret discipline of the Christian.

1. What is Jesus' general principle in 6:1? Why is this, as Calvin calls it, 'a very necessary admonition'? (cf. Luke 16:15; John 12:42-43; note Matt.5:20) _____

The NKJV ('charitable deeds') is wrong; the NIV ('acts of righteousness') is right.

2. The general principle of secret righteousness is applied to giving (6:2-4), praying (6:5-15), and fasting (6:16-18). In what way are we to be generous to those in need? (6:2-4) In what subtle and self-effacing ways can we be guilty of blowing our own trumpets? _____

The hypocrites did not literally blow trumpets, of course. Jesus is making fun of their hearts.

3. How are we to forget self in being generous to the poor? (6:3) How does this work out in Matthew 25:34-39? _____

This is a proverbial saying which is also found in the Old Testament (Jonah 4:11). The Stoic emperor, Marcus Aurelius, once wrote: 'do not let your own ear hear you.'

4. What is the difference between the reward of the hypocrites and the reward of the true Christian? (6:2, 4; for v.4, the NKJV adds 'openly') How can a Christian, saved by grace alone, receive a 'reward'? (see Eph.2:8-10) _____

C. S. Lewis said it is like the father who gives his child money to buy him a birthday present. Charles Wesley prayed for

*A heart resigned, submissive, meek,
My great Redeemer's throne,
Where only Christ is heard to speak,
Where Jesus reigns alone.*

Augustine wrote of 'the soul's affectionate quest for God'. Christ tells us the wrong way to pray in verses 5 and 7, and the right way to pray in verses 6 and 8.

1. Are we forbidden to pray in public? (6:5-6; see Acts 1:14, 24; 2:42; 3:1)

Solomon's long prayer at the dedication of the temple in 1 Kings 8 is a public prayer.

2. Where should we pray? (note Matt.14:23) _____

Samuel Hebich was a missionary to India in the 19th century. He used to attend a prayer meeting, which sounds very spiritual, but he noticed after a while that whenever a certain young lady was present, his prayers became more fervent. He saw what he was doing. In effect, he was not praying *to* God but *in the presence of* the young lady. So he began to pray for grace, that God would take away his corrupt motives. God answered Hebich's prayer, but Hebich never married.

3. How is prayer to be intelligent? (6:7) What are some prayer practices that Jesus might be condemning? _____

Thomas Chalmers wrote in his diary: 'Make me sensible of real answers to actual requests, as evidence of an exchange between myself on earth and my Saviour in heaven.'

4. What are we to remember about God when we pray? (6:8; Isa. 65:24) _____

Catullus was praying to the goddess Diana, when he added at the end of his prayer 'whatever name you prefer'. Isaac Ambrose, the Puritan, said that 'when a man indeed draws nigh to God in prayer, he forgets prayer, and remembers God'.

5. In verses 9-13 we have the six petitions of what we call the Lord's Prayer, meaning that the Lord gave it to us, not that He ever prayed it. It is not essentially a liturgical prayer so much as a model prayer. Simone Weil, a converted French Jewess who died during World War II, used to recite it in Greek with absolute attention each morning. If her mind wandered, she would go back to the beginning and start again.

Jesus begins with God's name, His kingdom, and His will. To whom do we pray? (6:9) Is there any indication in Scripture that we ought to pray to Mary and the other saints, or to angels? How is God described? How can a holy God in heaven be the Father of sinners? _____

Note for the greatness and majesty of God, that on ten occasions, Isaiah refers to God as the Holy One e.g. Isa.40:25; note too Ezek.39:7; Ps.8:1; 34:3; Rev.4:10-11; 5:13. Note for calling upon God as 'Father', John 1:12; Gal.4:4-7. The early Church had the practice of not disclosing the Lord's Prayer to those outside the faith.

Thomas Watson: 'In this petition, we pray that God's name may shine forth gloriously, and that it may be honoured and sanctified by us, in the whole course and tenor of our lives.'

6. What is prayed for in verse 10a? What does this mean? _____

Isaac Watts wrote:

*Jesus shall reign where're the sun
Does his successive journeys run;
His Kingdom stretch from shore to shore,
Till moons shall wax and wane no more.*

7. What else are we to pray for in verse 10b? _____

In one sense everything is God's will because God is sovereign (Matt.10:29), but Jesus is speaking of God's revealed will (Matt.7:21).

Notice that adoration and submission come before human requests.

8. Why do you think Jesus begins the petitions with a reference to 'our daily bread'? (6:11) How did God feed the Israelites who were led out of Egypt through the desert on the way to the Promised Land? (Ex.16:11-26) What does this have to say to the 'health and wealth' gospel? _____

Some of the early Fathers found this petition in the Lord's Prayer so startling that they spiritualised the text, and referred it to the Lord's Supper. Calvin called this view 'exceedingly absurd'.

J. C. Ryle: 'We are here taught to acknowledge our entire dependence on God, for the supply of our daily necessities. As Israel required daily manna, so we require daily 'bread.' We confess that we are poor, weak, needy creatures, and beseech him who is our Maker to take care of us. We ask for 'bread,' as the simplest of our needs, and in that word we include all that our bodies require.'

9. What is the second petition? (6:12) Why is sin referred to as a debt? What is said about forgiveness in verses 12, 14-15? What was David like before he confessed his sin? (Ps.32:3-5) If we are forgiven, how is that demonstrated in our relationships with other sinners? (Matt. 6:13; see 18:23-27, 28-30, 32-33)

Augustine: 'Confession shuts the mouth of hell, and opens the gate of paradise.'

10. What is the final petition? (6:13) Why do you think that Bernard of Clairvaux called sin 'a sweet poison'? _____

The Greek word for 'testing' and for 'temptation' are one and the same, but either way, Jesus is saying that we need to be praying for spiritual strength in difficult times. Similarly, deliverance can be from 'evil' or 'the evil one' - the Greek allows either translation.

Remember that Israel was tempted or tested in the wilderness, and failed. Spurgeon once said that he had known strong temptation without falling into sin. And he added that in such a situation one should have the same gratitude as the man who is almost eaten by a shark.

James Montgomery Boice cites lines from an anonymous Christian at the end of the 16th century:

*In all the strife of mortal life
Our feet shall stand securely;
Temptation's hour shall lose its power,
For thou shalt guard us surely.*

*O God, renew, with heavenly dew,
Our body, soul, and spirit,
Until we stand at thy right hand,
Through Jesus' saving merit.*

11. What does the doxology tell us about God? (6:13b in the NKJV; it is not in every manuscript and is not included in the NIV) _____

12. Should a Christian fast? (6:16-18) How should he/she fast? (6:17) What is promised to those who fast in secret? (6:18) _____

In the Old Testament there were three compulsory feasts (Passover, Pentecost, Tabernacles) and one compulsory fast (the Day of Atonement). Then there were other fasts associated with repentance, or a special desire to seek God (2 Sam.12:14-16; Neh.1:4-7; 9:1-2). The Pharisees went beyond what God commanded by fasting twice a week (Luke 18:12). For the Christian, there is no specific day for fasting but there is still fasting undertaken on special occasions (Acts 13:2-3; 14:23). As early as the first century or perhaps the second century the *Didache* said that Christians were to fast on Wednesdays and Fridays because the hypocrites fasted on Mondays and Thursdays. That precisely misses Jesus' whole point.

Only one Master (Matt.6:19-24)

On 8 March 1713 Matthew Henry went to London and preached. On the way home he was robbed of all his money, which was about 10 or 11 shillings. Later he recorded his response to the experience:

1. his gratitude that he had never been robbed before;
2. an acknowledgment of the evil of the love of money;
3. an acknowledgment of the power of Satan;
4. the vanity of worldly wealth.

He concluded: 'How loose, therefore, we should sit to it.'

Compare that to Bill Gates of Microsoft fame, who once said: 'religion is not very efficient. There's a lot more I could be doing on a Sunday morning.'

1. How are we to live with regard to earthly riches? (6:19-21) Is there much danger of human beings becoming so heavenly-minded as to be no earthly use? (Col.3:1-2; Prov.23:5) _____

James Montgomery Boice asks: 'Who owns your possessions?'

2. What is to be the focus of the Christian? (6:22-23) How was this not true of the rich fool in Luke 12:15-21? _____

If your eye (not 'eyes' as the NIV has it) is good, it is literally 'single'. Spurgeon paraphrases this: 'If our religion leads us to sin, it is worse than irreligion.'

3. Why can we not serve two masters? (6:24) Why does Jesus say not just that we *must not* serve two masters, but that we *cannot*? What does this mean for us? (Ephesians 5:5) _____

*I would not give the world my heart,
And then profess Thy love.*

Count Helmuth von Moltke was a Protestant opponent of Hitler, who refused to join in any plot against Hitler's life. When he was brought before the Nazi People's Court in January 1945, the head of the court, Ronald Freisler harangued him: 'We and Christianity resemble each other in only one respect: we claim the whole man!' Von Moltke agreed. He was hanged with piano wire.

4. What is the right attitude to earthly things? (1 Tim.6:7-8) What is the right attitude to God? (Ps.73:25) _____

Griffith Thomas: 'Worldliness is a spirit, an atmosphere, an influence permeating the whole of life and human society, and it needs to be guarded against constantly and strenuously.'

J. C. Ryle: 'Open transgression of God's law slays its thousands, but worldliness its tens of thousands.'

Joseph Alleine: 'There is no surer evidence of an unconverted state than to have the things of the world uppermost in our aim, love, and estimation.'

Worry is a sin (Matt.6:25-34)

The poet W. H. Auden referred to the twentieth century as 'an age of anxiety'.

1. What does Jesus tell us in verses 25, 31, 34? What is the difference between worry and concern? (2 Cor.11:28; it is actually the same Greek word)

2. What sort of things ought we not worry about? (6:25) Why not? How are some things better than others, rather than good being better than evil? (cf. 1 Kings 3:5, 7-9, 10-14; Luke 10:41-42) _____

3. Is Jesus being ascetic here i.e. is He denying the needs of the body? (6:32b) What are to be our priorities? (6:33) _____

4. What do the pagans seek after in life? (6:32a) _____

5. What lessons does Jesus draw from nature? (6:26, 28-30) What ought this mean for us? _____

John Stott cites some verses:

*Said the robin to the sparrow:
I should really like to know
Why these anxious human beings
Rush about and worry so.
Said the sparrow to the robin:
'Friend, I think that it must be
That they have no heavenly Father,
Such as cares for you and me.'*

6. How is worrying futile? (6:27) _____

The NKJV speaks of adding a cubit to one's stature; the NIV of adding an hour to one's life. Both translations are possible, but the NIV clearly makes more sense. It is a proverbial saying.

Teresa of Avila in 1575: 'My health has never been good, but it has been a lot better since I stopped taking so much care of it.'

7. What is Christ's advice for us? (6:34) How can we do this? _____

8. What is David's testimony? (Ps.37:25) What ought to characterise our lives? (Phil.4:6-7) _____

Philip Doddridge:

*O God of Bethel by whose hand
Thy people still are fed;
Who through this weary pilgrimage
Hast all our fathers led ...
Through each perplexing path of life
Our wandering footsteps guide;
Give us each day our daily bread,
And raiment fit provide.*

Judge not (Matt.7:1-6)

There is not a verse of the Bible which is more misused today than Matthew 7:1. As J. C. Ryle said: 'It is possible to press the words of the Bible so far that they yield not medicine, but poison.'

1. What does Jesus mean in 7:1? Is He telling us to be non-judgmental, and to never judge anybody else? (note John 7:24) Why should we not be hypercritical? _____

2. How will we be judged? (7:2) _____

It was Vinet who said that one could construct the most exalted ethic from every man's standards for his neighbour and the most degraded ethic from every man's own conduct.

3. Whom should we judge first? (7:3-5; Gal.6:1) What is the meaning of this rather grotesque image? What do we learn from David's judging in 2 Samuel 12:1-7? _____

John Chrysostom: 'Correct him but not as a foe, nor as an adversary exacting a penalty, but as a physician providing medicines.'

4. What does Jesus tell us to do in verse 6 (see Proverbs 9:8.)? How are we to obey this? How does Jesus carry this principle out in Matthew 21:23-27? If a fellow has just left his wife for his secretary, and he tells you that he cannot believe that Christ performed miracles, how should you respond to him? _____

Asking, seeking, knocking (Matt.7:7-12)

1. What promise does Jesus make in 7:7-8? Why is the unbeliever not forgiven of his sins? _____

Calvin: 'nothing is better adapted to excite us to prayer than a full conviction that we shall be heard'.

John Newton:

*Behold the throne of grace,
The promise calls us near;
There Jesus shows a smiling face,
And waits to answer prayer.*

2. What simple arguments does Jesus uses in 7:9-10? (note Eph.3:20) _____

C. S. Lewis prayed for his brother as he went off to World War II. Lewis had to stay at home, and he wrote:

*How can I ask thee, Father, to defend
In peril of war my dearest friend to-day,
As though I knew, better than Thou, the way,
Or with more love than thine desired the end?
..... But prayer
Thou givest to man, not man to thee
.....
Man's word becomes, by miracle, a cause.*

3. What is Jesus' conclusion in 7:11? Robert Schuller says that 'Jesus never called any person a sinner!' Is that true? What does Jesus say about human nature? What does He promise us? _____

J. A. Bengel calls this 'an illustrious testimony to the doctrine of original sin'.

4. What is Jesus saying about being generous in verse 12? How is this the centre of the law, not the gospel? Is it a new teaching? (Ex.22:21) How can the Golden Rule be misused? (see Machen's comment below) _____

The verse begins with the word *oun* ('therefore' - NKJV; 'so' - NIV). Calvin says that this means nothing, but that is rather lame. According to Don Carson, Jesus is connecting v.12 with all that has gone before, even going back to 5:17-20, on the law. It is more convincing to say that Jesus is connecting verse 12 with verses 7-11. The connection seems to be this: in vv.7-11 Jesus speaks of God's goodness to His people; v.12 is the application of this: we are to be good to others.

J. Gresham Machen said that a drunk would interpret it to mean that he should buy his friend another drink because that is what he would want.

The narrow gate and the narrow way (Matthew 7:13-14)

1. How many paths are set before each one of us? (Deut.30:19; Ps.1:6; Jer.21:8) _____

2. How many entrances are there? How do they differ? (Matt.7:13-14) _____

3. How many ways are there? How do they differ? _____

4. How many true Christians are there at any one time? _____

5. How many destinies are there? How do they differ? (cf. Matt.25:34, 41) _____

The broad way is, says John Stott, 'the suicide road'.

By their fruits (Matt.7:15:-20)

Francis Schaeffer, 'Our generation is more ready to believe the big lie than any other in the history of Western Man.'

1. What are we to do with false prophets (literally, 'pseudoprophets')? How do they appear? (7:15; note Jer.23:16; Acts 20:29-30; 2 Cor.11: 13-14) _____

'Wolves in sheep's clothing' is an image that is found in one of Aesop's fables.

2. In the light of this truth, what test must we apply to every teacher and preacher? (7:16-20) _____

v.16 is 'fruits', not NIV's 'fruit'. Arthur Pink says that the fruits are creed, character and converts.

3. Test the following claims:

The Jesus Seminar says that about 18% of Mark is accurate. _____

Bishop John Shelby Spong says that the Church 'must be broken open and freed of its noninclusive prejudices. That is why slavery, segregation, sexism, bigotry, and homophobia tear at the very soul of the church.' _____

Just before the Reformation, Pope Alexander VI came to the papal throne. He had four children, he made one a cardinal, and he was corrupt. _____

In the 1950s Paul Tillich was all the rage in liberal circles. But there was no need even to read his books. Considering the wine and women he got through, it is a wonder he had time to write anything. Hannah Tillich's memoirs of him are enough to damn him. _____

4. Where does good fruit come from? (7:16-20) What does this mean? Can a non-Christian implement the Sermon on the Mount in his life? _____

Deluded prophets (Matt.7:21-23)

Charles Haddon Spurgeon: 'If the professed convert distinctly and deliberately declares that he knows the Lord's will but does not mean to attend to it, you are not to pamper his presumption, but it is your duty to assure him that he is not saved.'

1. Who will decide our eternal destiny? (7:21-23) What does this imply about the person of Jesus? (see too Matt.25:31-32) _____

2. What four things will many professing Christian workers trust in?

(a) Note Rom.10:9; Luke 6:46 _____

(b) Num.24:17 (note who uttered this true prophecy) _____

(c) Judas in Matt.10:1 _____

(d) Matt.24:24; John 2:23-24 _____

3. Were such people ever saved? (7:23) What is one of the distinguishing marks of a Christian? _____

John Legg: 'Real calling, real repentance and real faith lead to obedience.'

Rock or sand? (Matt.7:24-27)

Dietrich Bonhoeffer: 'Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ, living and incarnate.'

1. What are the two responses to Jesus' words? (7:24-27) How did many respond to Ezekiel? (Ezek.33:31-32) What does James say in James 1:22-25?

2. What sort of things happen to both the obedient believer and the careless hearer? _____

J. C. Ryle: 'The religion that can stand trial is the true religion.'

William Borden volunteered to go as a missionary to China, and all his friends told him that it was a waste of his talents. Despite his poor health, he finally made his way to China, but on the way, in Egypt, he fell very sick, and died. He had one final message to his friends: 'No reserve, no retreat, and no regrets.'

3. What are the different endings of the two kinds of people? _____

Matthew Henry: 'unless we consent to him as our Lord we cannot expect any benefit by him as our Saviour.'

Conclusion (Matt.7:28-29)

1. How did the people respond to the Sermon on the Mount? (note too John 7:15, 46) _____

2. How was Jesus' teaching different? (see Matt.24:35) _____

The Mishnah is 1100 pages of disputes and opinions, and all very well if you like arguments about whether you can set a broken limb on the Sabbath.

Or try Bertrand Russell: 'We stand on the shore of an ocean crying to the night and to the emptiness. Sometimes a voice answers out of the darkness, but it is the voice of one drowning and in a moment the silence returns.'

C. S. Lewis: 'The discrepancy between the depth and sanity and (let me add) shrewdness of His moral teaching and the rampant megalomania which must lie behind His theological teaching unless He is indeed God, has never been satisfactorily got over.'

The Deeds of the Messiah (Matt.8-9)

It is as Robert Hawker says in reflecting on Matthew 8: 'Behold the wonders of our wonder-working God.' After the wondrous words of Matthew 5-7, we read of the wondrous deeds of Matthew 8-9.

Jesus heals a leper (Matt.8:1-4)

1. What happened after the preaching of the Sermon on the Mount? (8:1) _____

2. Who came to Jesus? (8:2) What did he ask? (contrast to Mark 9:23-24) _____

3. What did Jesus do in response? (8:3) Did touching the leper make Jesus unclean or did it make the leper clean? (note Lev.13:8, 45-46) What happened?

4. What did Jesus say to him? (8:4) Why? (see Lev.14:3-7; also Matt.5:17)

The faith of a centurion (Matt.8:5-13)

This story is found in Matthew 8 and also in Luke 7. There is a supposed difference in that in Luke's account the centurion sent elders to Jesus to plead for his servant, whereas in Matthew's account he seems to come himself.

There is no contradiction. As Augustine put it: 'he who does something through another does it also through himself'. Note Pilate in Matthew 27:26.

1. Where did Jesus go to? (8:5) Who came to Him? What was the plight of the centurion's servant? (8:5-6; it is the word for 'torture') _____

A Roman centurion was meant to be in charge of 100 soldiers, although in reality it was often something closer to 80. His slave - he calls him his 'boy' - was probably the closest person he had to family as Roman soldiers had to serve for 20 years, and families were forbidden to them. Luke tells us that this centurion had built a synagogue for the Jews (Luke 7:5).

2. What was Jesus' response? (8:7) _____

Most Palestinian Jews would not enter a Gentile home, and most Jews hated Roman soldiers.

3. Set out the two aspects of the centurion's faith as demonstrated in 8:8-9.

(a) v.8a; note also Mark 1:7; Luke 5:8 _____

Love: Love bade me welcome, wrote George Herbert, yet my soul drew back,/

Guilty of dust and sin. He goes on to write: *I cannot look on thee.*
Contrast this to Robert Schuller: 'Once a person believes he is an "unworthy sinner" it is doubtful if he can honestly accept the saving grace God offers in Christ.'

(b) vv.8b-9 _____

4. What extraordinary thing does Jesus do in verse 10? _____

The only other example of Jesus praising a person's faith concerns another Gentile, the Canaanite woman (Matt.15:28).

5. What does Jesus say will happen? Are the Old Testament saints in the kingdom of God? (8:11; Isa.25:6-9) _____

6. What is the other side of this prophecy? (8:12) What do verses 11-12 have to say to us? _____

7. What is the outcome for the centurion and his servant? (8:13) Again, what is this illustrating for us? _____

Peter's mother-in-law and others (Matt.8:14-17)

1. Where did Jesus go? (8:14) What did he find? _____

2. What did He do to Peter's mother-in-law? (8:15) How did she respond? What is this teaching us about Christian service? _____

Note: Peter, who is supposed to be the first pope, was married - something for the Roman Catholic Church to consider.

3. What else did Jesus do that evening? (8:16) Is demon possession the same as sickness? How did Jesus cast out demons and heal the sick? _____

4. How is this linked to Isaiah 53:4? (Matt.8:17) _____

Many charismatics and Pentecostals say that Jesus came to take away both sin and disease. That is true, but it does not mean that the Christian never sins again or falls sick. It means that Christ's death does away with sin and its consequences, although throughout this life we continue to know sin and

sickness.

The cost of following Jesus (Matt.8:18-22)

1. Why did Jesus give orders to go over to the other side of the lake? (8:18)

2. Who came up to Jesus before they had actually crossed the lake? (8:19)
By what title did he call Jesus? What did he say to Him? _____

3. What did Jesus say to him in reply? (8:20) How is it that the Lord of all the earth has no real estate to call His own? By what title does Jesus refer to Himself? (note Dan.7:13-14) What might it mean to follow Jesus? How does the health and wealth gospel fit in - or not fit in - with this? _____

4. What did another disciple say to Jesus? (8:21) _____

It is possible that the man's father was not yet dead, and that the man was asking to delay his discipleship until his father was dead and buried. Remember that it was usual to bury the body on the same day as the death had taken place.

Kenneth Bailey: 'The phrase "to bury one's father" is a traditional idiom that refers specifically to the duty of the son to remain at home and care for his parents until they are laid to rest respectfully.'

5. What is Jesus' rather enigmatic response to him? (8:22) What does Jesus mean by this? _____

Calming a storm (Matt.8:23-27)

1. What happened next? (8:23; note 8:18) _____

2. Then what happened? (8:24) What was happening to the boat? What was Jesus doing all this time? _____

3. What did the disciples do? (8:25) Did they have faith in Jesus? _____

4. What is Jesus' rebuke to the disciples and what is His rebuke to the winds and the sea? (8:26) What happened? What does this show about Jesus? _____

Mark 4:40 says that the disciples had no faith, but the meaning is the same. We are not to press the meaning of words in a wooden way. It is somewhat akin to the exasperated teacher who says to the student: 'Don't you have any brains?'

5. What was the response of the disciples to Jesus' action? (8:27) Did they know the answer to their question at this time? _____

*Begone, unbelief,
My Saviour is near,
And for my relief
Will surely appear:
By prayer let me wrestle,
And he will perform;
With Christ in the vessel,
I smile at the storm.*
- John Newton

Healing two demoniacs (Matt.8:28-34)

1. Where did Jesus go to then? (8:28) Who met Him? How are they described? _____

The Gadarenes were south-east of the Sea of Galilee.

For some reason, Mark and Luke only mention one demoniac (Mark 5:2; Luke 8:27).

William Barclay did not believe in demons, so he said that Jesus played along with the idea of demons in order to cure the man who was actually insane. If that was the case, one can only feel sorry for the pig farmers.

2. What do the demoniacs recognise about Jesus, and what do they know about their fate? (8:29) _____

3. What was some distance away? (8:30) What does this indicate about the region? _____

The Decapolis (the region of ten cities) was a Gentile area.

4. What did the demons beg of Jesus? (8:31) _____

5. What did Jesus do? (8:32) What happened? _____

6. How did the pig farmers respond? (8:33) _____

7. How did the townspeople respond to the miracle? (8:34) What does this reveal about them? _____

John Legg: 'Pigs and peace were more important than the deliverance of the possessed men.'

The authority to forgive sins (Matt.9:1-8)

1. How did Jesus get to Capernaum? (9:1; see 4:13) _____

2. Who came to Him? (9:2) Whom did they bring with them? What did Jesus see in them? What did He say to the paralysed man? _____

3. Why did the some of the scribes say that Jesus was blaspheming? (9:3) In what sense was He forgiving sins? How is God's forgiving of sins different from our forgiving of sins? _____

4. What does Jesus say about the thoughts of the scribes? (9:4) _____

5. What is the answer to the question in verse 5? _____

John Legg: 'Opinion is divided as to which is in fact easier. Most agree that forgiving sins is easier to *say*, as distinct from *do*. However, his opponents were working on the premise that forgiving is harder since only God can *do* it. Jesus seems to combine both ideas!'

6. What is the spiritual meaning of the miracle? (9:6) What does it reveal about Jesus? What did Jesus say to the paralytic? _____

B. B. Warfield referred to the miracles as 'the trailing clouds of glory'.

7. What did the man do in response to this? (9:7) _____

8. How did the crowd respond? How much understanding did they have of

Jesus? (9:8) _____

The calling of Matthew (Matt.9:9-13)

1. Whom did Jesus see next? (9:9) What was the man doing? Why do we find the expression 'tax collectors and sinners' in Scripture, as if the terms were synonymous (Matt.18:17; 21:31)? What did Jesus say to him? What was Matthew's response? _____

Mark and Luke call him Levi, but it is the same man. It was not uncommon to have two names - like Simon Peter and John Mark.

The KJV's 'publican' is misleading now.

R. T. France suggests that Matthew was in the pay of Herod Antipas, not the Romans. In Egypt there is one record of a tax collector beating an old woman because her relatives were behind on their taxes.

2. What was Jesus doing at Matthew's house? (9:10) Who else was there? ____

3. Why did the Pharisees object? (9:11) Why do you think they objected to Jesus' disciples, not to Jesus Himself? _____

C. T. Studd wrote:

*Some want to live within the sound
Of church or chapel bell:
I want to run a rescue shop
Within a yard of hell.*

4. How is coming to Jesus in faith like a sick person going to the doctor? (9:12) How is this related to the verse from Hosea 6:6? (Matt. 9:13) For whom has Christ come? Who will respond to Christ's call? _____

James Denney said that the kingdom of heaven is not for the well-meaning but for the desperate.

The Good News Bible has 'respectable' for 'righteous', for reasons of its own.

Fasting when the Bridegroom is here (Matt. 9:14-17)

1. What is the question posed by the disciples of John the Baptist? (9:14) Who fasts and who does not? _____

2. When is it inappropriate to fast? (9:15) Who is the bridegroom? Are there any implications about fasting here? _____

3. How can a new patch make an old garment worse? (9:16) What is the point of this illustration? Can we simply add joy to legalism or the gospel to Pharisaism? _____

4. What is the point about new wine not being put into old wineskins? (9:17) How new is Jesus' gospel? _____

Goatskins were used to hold wine. As the wine fermented, it would expand, which could burst a used skin that was already stretched.

A sick woman and a dead girl (Matt.9:18-26)

Matthew only gives us the bare details. Mark 5:22-43 and Luke 8:41-56 give much more detailed accounts. John Owen, the leading Puritan theologian of the 17th century, outlived all eleven of his children. Three times, Christ raises people from the dead - Jairus' daughter, the widow of Nain's son, and Lazarus.

1. Who came to Jesus? (9:18) What did he do, and what did he ask for? Did he have faith in Jesus? _____

His name was Jairus, and he was the ruler of a synagogue. Luke 8:42 tells us that this was his only daughter.

As a liberal, William Barclay said that the girl was just in a deep trance.

2. What was Jesus' immediate response? (9:19) _____

3. Who interrupted Jesus' going to Jairus' daughter? (9:20) What was wrong with this woman? What did she do? According to Old Testament law, should she have done this? (Lev.15:19) _____

4. What was the woman thinking to herself? (9:21) What does this indicate about her faith? _____

5. What does Jesus say to her? (9:22) What happens to her? What is the difference between weak faith and false faith? What is wrong with her faith? What is right with it? _____

J. C. Ryle: 'Faith brings an empty hand, receives everything, and can give nothing in return.'

6. What did Jesus find when He entered Jairus' house? (9:21) _____

Jews would hire flute players to play mourning music, and would also hire professional mourners.

7. What does Jesus say to the crowd? (9:24) _____

8. What followed? (9:25) What does this reveal to us about Jesus? _____

9. What resulted from this? (9:26) _____

Two blind men and a demoniac (Matt.9:27-34)

1. Who followed Jesus after that? (9:27) What did they ask for? What did they call Jesus? What did they mean by this title? _____

2. Why did Jesus wait until they were indoors? (9:28) What did He ask them? Why? How did they respond? _____

3. What did Jesus do next? (9:29) Why did He touch their eyes? What did He say to them? _____

Jesus does not heal people with same diseases in the same way. The evangelist John Macneil imagined a conversation between the two blind men of Mark 8 and John 9. Macneil imagined the blind man in John 9 asking the man in Mark 8: 'What did you feel when He put that mixture of clay and spittle on your eyes?' The Markan man replied: 'I do not know anything about clay and spittle.' 'Don't you remember?' asked the John 9 man. 'There was nothing put on my eyes,' said the man of Mark 8. So the conversation goes on about being sent to the pool of Siloam. Finally, the man in John 9 said: 'I

do not believe you have been healed at all; you must still be blind. If He did not put the clay on your eyes, you are still blind.' Out of this imaginary conversation, John Macneil says: 'Two denominations emerged - the Mudites and the Antimudites.'

4. What happened then? (9:30) But what did Jesus tell them? Why did He speak this way? _____

5. How did the two men respond? (9:31) Was this wrong? _____

6. Who was the next man to be brought to Jesus? (9:32)

7. What happened next? (9:33) How did the crowd respond? _____

8. But what was the explanation of the Pharisees? (9:34) Were they denying that the miracles took place? How significant is this? _____

The accusation that Jesus was doing the work of the devil will be treated in more detail in Matthew 12.

A plentiful harvest but few labourers (Matt.9:35-10:25)

1. Where did Jesus go? (9:35) What two things was He doing? _____

2. How did He respond to the crowds? (9:36; see Num.27:17-23; Ezek.34:2-6) What did this reveal about Him, and what does it reveal about the condition of the Hebrews? How should we respond to similar conditions? _____

3. What does Jesus call on His disciples to do? (9:37-38) What is this teaching us? _____

4. Whom did Christ call to Himself? (10:1) What is an apostle? What authority did He give to them? _____

Apostles ('sent ones') were eye-witnesses of Christ who were directly commissioned by Him and who were enabled to carry out 'the signs of an

apostle' (2 Cor.12:12).

5. List the twelve apostles (10:2-4). Why did Jesus choose twelve? (cf. Rev.21:12-13) _____

6. What implications flow from the fact that Judas the betrayer was given authority to cast out evil spirits and heal diseases? (note Matt.7:22) _____

7. To what people were the twelve to confine their ministry? (10:5-6) Why was this so? When was this changed? (Matt.28:19-20) _____

8. What were the twelve to proclaim? (10:7) What exactly does that mean? _____

9. What would be the evidence that this was true? (10:8a) _____

10. What does Jesus say about provisions for the apostles? (10:8b-10) Why does Jesus say this? (10:8b) What implications might be drawn from this? (see 1 Cor.9:1-18) _____

11. What was to happen to those who showed hospitality to the apostles and received them for who they were? (10:11-13; see verse 40; also Acts 16:15)

12. How were the apostles to respond to those who rejected them? (10:14; see Acts 13:51; 18:6) What does this signify? _____

13. What does verse 15 mean for the post-Christian Western world? Are there degrees of hell? (cf. Luke 12:47-48) _____

14. How does Jesus describe the apostles in the world? (10:16) How, then, were they to conduct themselves? What does this mean for us? _____

15. What does Jesus warn His followers about? (10:17) Will those who flog them be religious or irreligious? _____

16. What would happen to Jesus' followers? (10:18) What does this imply about the expansion of the gospel? _____

17. How are Jesus' followers to respond to this? (10:19-20) What is promised to them? Has this promise ever been misused? Does it apply to lazy preachers? Is it unspiritual to plan ahead? _____

John Legg: 'It does not forbid forethought, only anxiety.'

18. What can make the opposition to a Christian testimony even more hurtful? (10:21) _____

19. Why is the Christian hated? (10:22) Who will be saved? _____

20. What does Jesus tell His disciples to do on this occasion if they encounter persecution? (10:23) What does Jesus mean by the coming of the Son of Man? _____

Liberal commentators say that Jesus got this wrong, but the coming of the Son of Man does not always refer to the Second Coming. John Legg refers this to the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, but the resurrection fits better i.e. it is coming not to earth but to God the Father, as in Daniel 7:13-14.

21. Why is persecution to be expected? (10:24-25) How should this help us to respond to it? (see 2 Tim.3:12) _____

C. H. Spurgeon: 'If the Master of the family is likened to Beelzebub, the fly-god of the Philistines, and named after the prince of demons, by what names will they call us? Doubtless malice will quicken wit, and sarcasm will invent words which pierce as daggers, and cut like knives God was slandered in Paradise, and Christ on Calvary, how can we hope to escape? Instead of wishing to avoid bearing the cross, let us be content to endure dishonour for

our King's sake.'

Fear and faithfulness (Matt.10:26-42)

1. Why should the Christian not fear those who persecute him? (10:26) To what event is Jesus referring? _____

2. What are Christians to do with the message that Christ gives us? (10:27)_____

There is a change after the confession at Caesarea Philippi, and a yet greater change after Pentecost. Up until then, there was a kind of 'Messianic secret' operating in that Jesus was often wary of disclosing that He was the Messiah.

3. Whom are we not to fear? (10:28) Why not? Whom are we to fear? Why?

Jesus is surely referring to God here, not the devil.

Note Proverbs 29:25.

4. What are two sparrows worth? (10:29) Does God's sovereign control of His world even extend to the death of one sparrow? _____

5. Again, what is the extent of God's sovereign control and knowledge over His world? (10:30) _____

6. Why should we not fear? (10:31) Why are human beings valuable? (note Gen.1:26) Here are some quotations from Peter Singer: 'If we compare a severely defective human infant with a nonhuman animal, a dog or a pig, for example, we will often find the nonhuman to have superior capacities, both actual and potential, for rationality, self-consciousness, communication, and anything else that can plausibly be considered morally significant.' And: 'The fact that a being is a human being, in the sense of a member of the species Homo sapiens, is not relevant to the wrongness of killing it; it is, rather, characteristics like rationality, autonomy, and self-consciousness that make a difference.' Is Jesus guilty of what Peter Singer called 'speciesism'? _____

7. What happens if we confess Christ before the world? (10:32) What happens if we do not? (10:33) _____

8. What is a possible misunderstanding of Christ's mission? (10:34) What did He come to do? How is Christ the Prince of Peace? (Isa.9:6) How does peace differ from appeasement? _____

9. Indeed, what will be some of the effects of His coming into the world? (10:35-36) _____

10. Are we meant to love our families? What, then, does Jesus mean in verse 37? Can you think of any applications of the truth of this verse? _____

Sometimes this can be a most difficult issue. William Carey cajoled his most reluctant wife into going to India with him in 1793, but she broke down there, and lost her mind.

11. What does it mean to follow Christ? (10:38) How is every Christian a martyr in principle? _____

12. How can we find our life yet lose it, and lose our life yet find it? (10:39) _____

13. To receive the apostles' message is to receive _____, and to receive Christ is to receive _____ (10:40). If we reject the apostles, can we know Christ? _____

14. What does verse 41 mean? Do you think 1 Kings 17:10-16 illustrates what Jesus is saying? What does Paul say in 2 Timothy 1:16-18? _____

15. What does the smallest deed done as a Christian bring with it? (10:42) _____

John's doubts answered (Matt.11:1-19)

1. What did Jesus do after instructing His disciples? (11:1) _____

2. Where was John the Baptist? (11:2) Why? _____

3. What went through John's mind while he was in prison? (11:3) What factors might have influenced him in coming to these doubts? _____

4. What is Christ's reply to these doubts? (11:4-5; He is referring to Isaiah 35:4-6 and 61:1-2) Is the evidence for Jesus' Messiahship sufficient? _____

5. What blessing does Jesus pronounce? (11:6) What does it mean for us? _____

6. What two things does Jesus say that John was not? (11:7-8) _____

7. Is John a prophet? (11:9) How is he more than a prophet? Work through Malachi 3:1 carefully, and see how John fits into this prophecy (see Matt.11:10). What does this imply about Jesus? _____

8. How is John greater than other men, yet lesser than the least in the kingdom of heaven? (11:11) What does Jesus mean by this? (note Matthew 13:17) _____

9. Verse 12 is awkward to translate. The NIV has the kingdom forcefully advancing, but the ESV says that the kingdom has suffered violence. The immediate context seems to favour the ESV, as John has been imprisoned by violent men, but John Legg has it both ways. He writes: 'It is, perhaps, better

to see this verse as including both sides of the picture: the kingdom has been advancing since Christ began to establish it, during the days of John the Baptist's ministry, but at the same time has been laid hold of by violent men.' What, in your view, is the meaning of the verse? (it might be better to flesh out John Legg's interpretation so as to get both interpretations) _____

10. What does it mean, that all the prophets and the Law prophesied until John? (11:13) Into what era had the world entered? _____

11. Who is John? (11:14; Malachi 4:5-6) What does that make Jesus? _____

John 1:21 means that John was not literally Elijah; he was not Elijah returned to earth from heaven.

12. What is the implication of the saying in verse 15? _____

13. How is Jesus critical of this generation who saw and heard John the Baptist and Jesus Himself? (11:16-17) How is the response of most people just an example of game-playing? _____

14. How are John and Jesus different? (11:18-19) Yet how were they criticised by the populace? How is wisdom vindicated? What does that mean? What should this teach us about the different people that God uses in His kingdom? _____

Judgment on the hard-hearted, rest for the weary (Matt.11:20-30)

1. Why did Jesus rebuke the cities in which He had ministered? (11:20) _____

2. Why does Jesus pronounce a woe on Chorazin and Bethsaida, two cities

around the Sea of Galilee? (11:21) What is the comparison with Tyre and Sidon, Phoenician cities from where Jezebel (Elijah's great enemy) hailed?

The knowledge of what would happen in certain circumstances is referred to as middle knowledge.

3. On what principle will it be more tolerable on the day of judgment for Tyre and Sidon than for the Galilean cities? (11:22; see Luke 12:47-48) Are there degrees of punishment in hell? _____

4. Similarly, what will be the fate of Capernaum? (11:23-24) Why? How will it compare in the day of judgment to Sodom? _____

Again, note the middle knowledge - God knows what would have taken place in other circumstances.

5. In verses 25-27 Jesus is praying to His Father, but in verses 28-30 He turns to issue a general invitation to the people nearby and to all who would hear. It is one of a number of passages where the doctrine of election is set side by side with a general invitation to all to believe. Another example is found in John 6:37. Where does faith come from? (11:25-26) Whom does God choose? (note 1 Cor.1:26-29) _____

Let us pray with Charles Spurgeon regarding the lowliness of Christ's people: 'Lord, let me be one among them!'

6. What does verse 27 tell us concerning the greatness of Christ? How many mediators are there between God and us? _____

7. Show from verses 29-30 how Christ is meek and approachable (see too 2 Cor.10:1). _____

8. Compare the burdens of the Pharisees to those of Christ (Matt.23:4; 1 John 5:3). Explain how this is so. _____

9. What is the invitation and promise contained in verse 28? To whom is the invitation given? _____

John Mason from the 17th century: 'Have you sins, or have you none? If you have, whither should you go, but to the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world? ... Come as you are; come poor, come needy, come naked, come empty, come wretched, only come, only believe; His heart is free, His arms are open; 'tis His joy and His crown to receive you. If you are willing, He never was otherwise.'

The Sabbath and the Servant (Matt.12:1-21)

1. What of controversies ought we to avoid? (2 Tim.2:23-24) _____

2. Where was Jesus at this time? What did the disciples do? (Matt.12:1) Was this allowed? (Deut.23:24-25) _____

2. How did the Pharisees respond? (Matt.12:2) To what would they have appealed? (Ex.34:21) _____

The Pharisees had a list of 39 forms of work which were forbidden on the Sabbath. In the days of the Maccabees (2nd century B.C.) the Jews allowed themselves - men, women and children - to be slaughtered rather than supposedly break the Sabbath.

3. What is the first point in Jesus' reply to them? (12:3-4; see 1 Samuel 21:1-6; Lev.24:9) What should a Christian doctor do if he is on his way to a celebration of the Lord's Supper, and he receives a call from a sick patient?

4. What is Jesus' point about the example of the priests (12:5-6; the Old Testament priests had to work hard on the Sabbath - see Num.28:9-10. Note also John 7:22-23) _____

5. What the principle set out in the Old Testament (12:7; Hosea 6:6, also quoted in Matthew 9:13) What does this mean? _____

Error is so often not truth denied but truth distorted.

So Jesus gives a specific case (David), a general case (the priests), and the basic principle, all from the Old Testament.

6. What does Christ say about His fulfilment of the Old Testament in: 12:5-6, regarding the temple _____

12:8, regarding the Sabbath _____

7. Where did Jesus go from there? (12:9) What is it called 'their synagogue'?

8. Who was in the synagogue? (12:10) What did the Pharisees ask Jesus? What was their motive? (see also 19:3; 21:23-27; 22:15) _____

9. How does Jesus respond this time? (12:11-12) What is the nature of His argument? How is it different from what we read in verses 1-8? Is there such a thing as natural law? (note Matt.6:26; 10:31 and Rom.2:14-16) _____

The Pharisees only permitted healing on the Sabbath if there was a danger of death.

10. What did Jesus say to the man? (12:13) What happened then? What does this show about Jesus? _____

11. How did the Pharisees respond? (12:14) What does this show about the human heart and the evidence of miracles? _____

12. What was Jesus aware of? (12:15) How did He respond? How did many of the people respond? What did He do to them? What did He command them? (12:16) What sort of popularity did He seek to avoid? _____

13. What did this fulfil? (12:17-21; Isa.42:1-4) How would Jesus carry out His ministry as the servant of Yahweh? To whom would He minister? What implications might this have for us? _____

Two kingdoms (Matt.12:22-50)

1. Who was brought to Jesus? (12:22) Does this mean that all illness is attributed to demons? What did Jesus do, and what was the result? _____

2. How did the people respond? (12:23) What did their question imply? _____

3. What was the response of the Pharisees? (12:24) Did they argue that miracles never happened? How does this help us to answer rationalistic sceptics? What, then, did the Pharisees argue? _____

4. What is the meaning of Jesus' general illustration in verse 25? _____

5. How is this applied to the matter at hand? (12:26) _____

6. Do the disciples of the Pharisees ever drive out demons? (12:27) What is the point of this little counter attack by Jesus? _____

7. What is the meaning of Christ's driving out of demons? (12:28; see 1 John

3:8) _____

8. In verse 29, Jesus uses a brief parable to make a similar point. Who is the strong man, and who binds him? When? _____

9. Is neutrality possible in this context? (12:30) How, in other contexts, is right to be broader? (see Mark 9:38-40) _____

10. What sin cannot be forgiven? (12:31-32) In the context, what do you think this means? Did Peter commit it when he denied Jesus three times? What do Hebrews 6:4-6 and 10:26-29 have to say on this issue? What about 1 John 5:16? Can this sin be committed by someone - like Peter - who then repents? _____

The blasphemy against the Holy Spirit seems to be only possible to be committed by men and women who willfully persist in hard-hearted unbelief and inexcusable impenitence, deliberately rejecting the counsel of God against themselves, and are therefore given up to a reprobate mind. J. C. Ryle describes it as 'the union of the clearest head-knowledge of the Gospel with deliberate rejection of it, and deliberate choice of sin and the world.'

11. Why is it useless to try to get good fruit from a bad tree? (12:33) What does this have to say to us about the Christian faith and life? What is the role of fruit? _____

12. What was the basic problem with the Pharisees - the tree or the fruit? (12:34) How does Jesus apply this generally in verse 35? _____

13. For what shall we give account in the judgment? (12:36) How does judgment by works work in this case? (12:37) Given the teaching in Matthew

12:33-37, what do need to do first? Then what? _____

14. What did some of the scribes (teachers of the law) and Pharisees ask Jesus for? (12:38) Is this a good sign (pardon the pun)? _____

15. What does Jesus say about those who seek a sign? (12:39; see 1 Cor.1:22) If the signs point to the authority of the one who performs them, why is the request so evil? John Wimber was into 'power evangelism', and said that the gospel needs to be accompanied by miracles for it to be effective. Is that so?

16. What is the only sign given to the scribes and Pharisees? (12:39) What does Jesus mean by this? (12:40) _____

Note: Jews counted part of a day as a full day, so 'three days and three nights' in the belly of the great fish can be an expression that to the English speaker only means 'two days'.

'Son of Man' is Jesus' favourite self-designation.

17. How will the men of Nineveh be better off in the judgment than those of Jesus' generation? (12:41) How does Jesus describe Himself? _____

18. How is the same point made with regard to Solomon and the Queen of Sheba? (12:42; see 1 Kings 10) Again, how does Jesus describe Himself? _____

Note: the Ninevites and the Queen of Sheba were Gentiles.

19. What happens when an unclean spirit leaves someone who is not truly converted to Christ? (12:43-45; see 2 Peter 2:20-21) How does that describe Jesus' generation? What would be some applications for today? _____

20. Who was outside while Jesus was speaking? (12:46) Who are His brothers? (see Matt.13:55-56) _____

21. How does Jesus describe His true family? (12:47-50) Does the Virgin Mary have any spiritual advantages over the rest of us? _____

Note: Many manuscripts do not have verse 47. Its omission or inclusion makes no difference to the story and the lesson.

He spoke in parables (Matthew 13)

The parable of the sower: a parable about hearing the word of God (Matt.13:1-23)

This parable is recorded in Matthew, Mark and Luke. Jesus only explains three parables, all in Matthew 13 - the sower (vv.1-23), the wheat and the tares (vv.24-30, 36-43), and the dragnet (vv.47-50).

1. How is this parable foundational (Mark 4:13) _____

2. How do the parables reveal and conceal? (Matt.13:10-17; see Isa.6:9-10) How might they be compared with Aesop's fables, with their moral lessons derived from simple (and unhistorical) stories? What is the lesson for us from verses 16-17 (see 1 Pet.1:10-12)? _____

3. In the parable, who is the sower or farmer? What is the seed? _____

4. Where did Jesus go at first? (13:1) Why did He sit down? _____

Remember that the teachers sat to teach.

5. What happened next? (13:2) Why might Jesus have got into a boat? _____

Speaking over water amplifies the human voice.

6. What kind of hearer is represented by the first soil? (13:4, 18-19) How might Felix, the governor of Judea, be an example of this first type of soil? (Acts 24:24-25) _____

7. What kind of hearer is represented by the second soil? (13:5-6, 20-21; note John 6:66) What does this kind of hearer not realise? (Acts 14:22) _____

8. What kind of hearer is represented by the third soil? (13:7, 22) How might Demas illustrate this third soil? (Col.4:14 and Philemon 23-24, then 2 Tim.4:10)

In his *Screwtape Letters*, C. S. Lewis said that the surest road to hell is the gradual one.

9. What kind of hearer is represented by the fourth soil? (13:8, 23) How does such a person respond to the gospel of Christ? Are all Christians equally fruitful? What kind of fruit is Jesus referring to? _____

10. Who has ears to hear? (13:9) _____

Since Joachim Jeremias' work, a number of commentators have said that Jesus' main point is that there is a guaranteed harvest. But the main point seems to be a more general one: how people respond to the word of Christ.

The parable of the wheat and the tares (Matt.13:24-30, 36-43)

The NIV refers to the tares as 'weeds'. This would have been the bearded darnel, which is poisonous, but early on, it looks exactly like wheat.

It is the second parable that Jesus tells (vv.24-30) and explains (vv.36-43).

1. To what is the kingdom of heaven compared? (13:24) _____

2. What happened next? (13:25) _____

3. What resulted from this? (13:26) _____

4. How did the man's servants respond? (13:27) _____

5. What did the man say? (13:28) What question flows from this? _____

6. What is the man's response to their question? (13:29-30) Why does He answer in this way? _____

7. Why did Jesus explain this parable? (13:36) _____

8. Who is the Son of Man who sowed the good seed? (13:37; John 1:3) What was the original condition of the world? (Gen.1:31) Who are the good seed?

9. Who are the tares (weeds)? (13:38-39) Who is the enemy? What is the harvest? _____

10. What will happen if the Church tries to carry out God's judgment? (note Luke 9:51-56) _____

Back in the time of the Reformation, some Anabaptist extremists gained control of Münster in Westphalia in 1534-5. In February 1534 they won victory at the Town Council elections, and Münster was established as the New Jerusalem. It proved to be anything but the New Jerusalem. The town was besieged, but inside the city walls opponents were murdered, all books were banned except the Bible, polygamy was instituted, and communism was proclaimed. The ungodly were to be slain. The result was fanaticism, which only came to an end when the town was overrun by Catholic and Lutheran armies. There are still cages hanging from the church tower at St Lambert's Church in Münster today in which corpses of Anabaptist leaders at Münster had been left to rot.

11. Should the Church discipline sinners? (Rev.2:20-21) But what dangers are to be avoided by the Church on earth? _____

Helmut Thielicke, an evangelical, surely misuses this parable to say that the German Church was right not to discipline Rudolf Bultmann and the

demythologisers who did not believe that the resurrection of Christ actually happened.

Charles Spurgeon: 'Where evil is clear and open, we may not hesitate to deal with it; but where it is questionable, we had better hold our hand till we have fuller guidance.'

12. What will happen at the last judgment? (13:40-42) What does eternity mean for the righteous, and what does it mean for the unrighteous? _____

Many modern evangelicals (e.g. F. F. Bruce, John Stott, and Philip Edgcumbe Hughes) believe in annihilationism, the belief that the unbeliever does not suffer forever in the judgment but is annihilated. It would be comforting to believe it, but Jesus teaches here about a state of conscious regret and anguish.

The parables of the mustard seed and the leaven (Matt.13:31-33)

Jesus tells two little parables, both to do with growth - the parable of the mustard seed and the parable of the leaven. James Montgomery Boice and others (notably the dispensationalist, John Nelson Darby) have interpreted these parables as dealing with the spread of evil, but Jesus begins the parables with 'The kingdom of heaven is like ...' (vv.31, 33). It is the kingdom of heaven, not the kingdom of Satan. Others have interpreted the parables in an inward sense - the seed or the yeast grows within the individual person's life. That is true enough, but the first meaning has to be the outward growth of the kingdom of heaven. It has small, apparently insignificant beginnings, but it will grow and have a great impact.

1. To what does Jesus compare the kingdom of heaven? (13:31) How is it described in its beginnings? (13:32; Luke 12:32) What is it like later? Who are symbolised by the birds of the air in the branches of the tree? _____

Kenneth Scott Latourette looked over the history of the Church, and wrote that 'it becomes apparent that the course of Christianity in the history of mankind has been somewhat like that of an incoming tide. As one stands on the shore and watches the tide sweep in, he sees that each major wave carries the waters a little higher than did its predecessor. Each retreat from a major wave carried the flood a little less farther back than did the one before it. In each major advance it becomes more widely potent in human life than in the one before it, and each recession is marked by less dwindling of the impact of Christianity than the one which immediately preceded it.'

Note Daniel 2:31-35, 44-45.

2. How is the influence of Christ's kingdom extensive and beneficial? (13:33)

The kingdom's presence is everywhere, like a giant shrub or like leaven in bread. Yeast indicates corruption in some passages (Matt.16:1; 1 Cor.5:7-8; Gal.5:9). But here it indicates pervasive influence for good.

The parables of the treasure and the pearl of great price (Matt. 13:44-46)

Both parables make much the same point; they are parables to do with the worth of the kingdom.

1. How is the kingdom of heaven worth everything? See what the Proverbs say with regard to God's wisdom (Prov.2:4-5; 3:13-15; 8:11, 18-19). What does the Bible say about true riches? (Matt.6:21; Eph.3:8; Phil.3:8-9) _____

2. What is it worth giving up to obtain this kingdom? (see also Matt.10:37-39) Did Pilate think like this? Or Felix? (Acts 24:25) _____

Jim Elliott: 'He is no fool who gives up what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose.'

Augustine: 'what I feared to be parted from was now a joy to part with'.

3. How is Christ worth everything? (note the value of the human soul in Matt.16:26) _____

Charles Spurgeon: 'Lord, by Thy good Spirit, keep me ever in mind of that great day of days, which will make eternity bright with immeasurable bliss, or dark with unutterable woe! May I look at everything in the blaze of light which surrounds Thy judgment seat!'

John Mason wrote the hymn:

*I've found the pearl of greatest price,
My heart doth sing for joy;
And sing I must for Christ is mine,
Christ shall my song employ.*

The parable of the dragnet (Matt.13:47-52)

1. To what is the kingdom of heaven compared in verse 47? _____

2. What is the parable of the dragnet about? (13:47-50) What happens at the judgment? Does hell exist? _____

In A.D. 155 or 156 Polycarp of Smyrna was brought before the proconsul, and ordered to say 'Caesar is Lord'. He refused. The proconsul then tried to intimidate Polycarp by threatening him with the wild beasts, but Polycarp was unmoved. Then he threatened to burn Polycarp at the stake. Again, Polycarp refused to be intimidated: 'You threaten me with fire which burns for an hour, and after a little while is extinguished, but are ignorant of the fire of the coming judgment and of eternal punishment, reserved for the ungodly.'

3. What does Jesus ask His disciples, and how do they answer? (13:51) How accurate is the self-perception of the disciples? _____

4. What does Jesus tell Christian scribes? (13:52) In order to teach others, what must we understand? _____

Spurgeon comments: 'We must in our instruction of others cultivate variety, but we must not aim at it by poisoning the children with deadly drugs for the sake of giving them novel dishes. Only things worth putting into a treasury are worth bringing forth to the household. That scribe had need be well instructed who has to keep on handing out a variety of precious truth throughout a long life. Lord, make us sufficient for these things. Instruct us, that we may instruct our household. May we make no reserve for self, but bring out for thy people all that which thou hast put in our charge. Oh, to be accepted of thee in the day of thy return, because found faithful to our trust!'

Admiration is not faith (Matt.13:53-58)

1. What happened after Jesus had finished teaching in parables? (13:53) _____

2. How did the people respond to Jesus' teaching in the synagogue in Nazareth? (13:54) Why is the question so wrong-headed? _____

3. What do they know about Jesus? (13:55-56) Where does this lead them? (13:57a) _____

Charles Spurgeon: 'They grew sarcastic, and harped upon the family names of James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas. They hinted that he could not have learned much wisdom in a carpenter's shop, and as he had not been among the rabbis to obtain a superior education, he could not really know much. How could he have attained to such eminence? He was a mere nobody. Why, they knew him when his parents lost him when they went up to the feast at Jerusalem! They could not listen to the talk of the carpenter's son.'

Chris Cunningham describes the know-it-all Pharisees of the religious world as 'orangutans with a vocabulary.'

4. What is Jesus' response to them? (13:57) What implications might this have for today? _____

5. Why did Jesus not do many miracles there? (13:58) _____

J. C. Ryle: 'Behold in this single word the secret of the everlasting ruin of multitudes of souls! They perish forever, because they will not believe.'

Don Fortner says that unbelief has a number of characteristics:

1. it ignores the obvious;
2. it exalts the irrelevant;
3. it stumbles over the truth;
4. it blocks out the supernatural;
5. it can never see the glory of God; and
6. it alone holds lost souls in condemnation under the wrath of God.

J. C. Ryle: 'There are three great enemies against which God's children should daily pray — pride, worldliness, and unbelief.'

The beheading of John the Baptist (Matt.14:1-12)

1. Who heard about Jesus at this time? (14:1) _____

Herod Antipas was one of the sons of Herod the Great (of Matthew 2 fame!) He was the tetrarch of Galilee and Peraea from 4 B.C. to A.D. 39.

2. Who did Herod think Jesus was? (14:2) Why did he think this? (14:2-4)

What had John the Baptist been preaching? _____

Note that John the Baptist never performed any miracles (John 10:41). Herod's conscience was really playing on him.

3. What does verse 5 reveal about Herod Antipas? _____

4. What happened on Herod's birthday? (14:6-7) _____

5. What did Herodias ask for and why? (14:8) _____

6. How much sin is a result of weakness rather than maliciousness? (14:9) Is it wrong to break an evil oath? _____

7. What did Herod do next? (14:10-11) _____

8. What did John's disciples do? (14:12) _____

Verse 12 is a most melancholy verse.

A. T. Robertson observed on John the Baptist: 'It cost him his head; but it is better to have a head like John the Baptist and lose it than to have an ordinary head and keep it!'

Feeding the five thousand (Matt.14:13-21)

The feeding of the five thousand (men) is the only miracle (apart from Christ's own resurrection) that is recorded in all four Gospels. John 6:4 tells us that it took place at the time of the Passover. Matthew's account lacks some of the details found in the other accounts.

1. What happened after Jesus heard of these things? (14:13; because of possible chronological difficulties, John Legg says that this refers back to verses 1-2) What did the multitudes do? (14:13) How did Jesus respond to the multitudes? (14:14) _____

2. What happened at evening? (14:15) What was the problem, and what was the solution, according to the disciples? How often do the disciples predict a miracle by Jesus? _____

3. What did Jesus say in response? (14:16) _____

4. Did this seem a reasonable thing to say? (14:17; see Num.11:21-23;

Ps.78:19) What were the resources available to the group? _____

5. What did Jesus tell His disciples to do? (14:18-19) Then what did Jesus do? What should we do before meals? What did the disciples then do? _____

6. What is remarkable about the meal? (14:20; cf. Psalm 104:27-28) How many were fed? (14:21) _____

7. What lessons might we derive from this episode? _____

Walking on the Water (Matt. 14:22-36)

There are three miracles recorded here: Jesus walks on the Sea of Galilee (14:25), then Peter does the same thing, for a time at least (14:29), and finally, the storm ceases, as soon as Jesus and Peter got into the boat (14:32).

1. What happened immediately after the feeding of the five thousand men? (14:22) _____

2. What, however, did Jesus do? (14:23) What ought we to learn from this? (note Matt.6:6) _____

3. What happened to the boat? (14:24) Where was it at this time? _____

4. What miracle is recorded in verse 25? What does this show us? (note Job 9:8) _____

William Barclay says that this whole miracle was a misunderstanding because Jesus was actually walking on the shore. So the lesson becomes: Be careful

where you walk on the beach because some people might worship you as the Son of God!

Livy says that the Romans divided the night into four, whereas the Jews divided it into three. The fourth watch was between 3.00 a.m. and 6.00 a.m.

5. How quick were the disciples to believe what was happening? (14:26) What did they think, and how did they respond? _____

6. Why should the disciples not be afraid? (14:27) Why should Christians not be afraid? (Isa.43:2) _____

Literally, Jesus says: 'Be of good cheer. I am. Do not be afraid.' It is rarely translated that way because it sounds strange English. But note Exodus 3:14.

7. What was Peter's bright idea? (14:28) What does this reveal about Peter? (note too that Peter does ask first!) _____

8. What did Jesus say to Peter, and what did Peter do as a result? (14:29) Again, what is this meant to teach us? _____

9. What was Peter's great mistake in verse 30? What is the lesson for us? _____

'Peter' means 'rock'!

10. What did Jesus do next? (14:31) Why did He rebuke him? How is Peter's faith true but deficient? _____

11. What was the next miracle? (14:32) _____

12. What did those in the boat do in response to these words and miracles? (14:33) Whom are we allowed to worship? _____

Martin Luther used to say of Christ: 'You shall point to this man and say that He is God.'

13. Where did they come to next? (14:34) _____

This was a Gentile area.

14. What happened there? (14:35-36) _____

15. From the whole passage, show how faith in Christ casts out fear, recognises Jesus as divine, and focuses on Christ more than the circumstances.

The Word of God, Tradition, and the Nature of Sin (Matt. 15:1-20)

There are actually two issues at stake here - the one of authority (Scripture or tradition) and the one of sin (moral or ceremonial).

1. Who came to Jesus, and what did they confront Jesus with? (15:1-2) _____

Josephus: 'the Pharisees have delivered to the people a great many observances by succession from their fathers, which are not written in the law of Moses'. Many of those traditions were later written up in the *Mishnah*, then the *Talmud*.

One Pharisaic school claimed that 'He who lightly esteems hand-washing will perish from the earth.'

2. What charge does Jesus bring against the Pharisees? (15:3-6) What example does He use to make His point? From Matthew 15:4 and the parallel passage in Mark 7:10, who are the two authors of Exodus 20:12 and Exodus 21:17?

This is an issue of religious authority, not hygiene. John Wesley told the early Methodists: 'Do not stink above ground.' Good advice!

The Pharisees said: 'If you make a gift devoted to God, called Corban, that is binding, and you are excused from looking after your aged parents.'

In verse 6 Jesus says that the Pharisees literally 'unLorded' the Word of God.

Later, the Pharisees came to teach: 'The Scriptures are water; the Mishnah wine; but the Gemara (to make up the Talmud), spiced wine.'

3. Why does Jesus refer to *your* tradition? (15:3, 6) _____

4. How are the words of Isaiah 29:3 applicable to the Pharisees? (15:7-8; cf. Isa.1:11) How could we do something similar today? (look at some of the examples below) _____

Jim Packer calls the issue of authority is 'the most fundamental problem that the Christian Church ever faces'.

The Council of Trent in 1546 stated: 'Scripture and tradition are to be received by the Church as of equal authority'. The Second Vatican Council in the 1960s also said: 'Sacred tradition and sacred Scripture form one sacred deposit of the Word of God, which is committed to the Church.'

Sir Henry Wotton was once asked by an Italian priest: 'Where was your religion to be found, before Luther?' Wotton replied: 'My religion was to be found then, where yours is not to be found now, in the written Word of God.'

Joseph Smith in a book *Doctrines of Salvation* (a mis-title if ever there was one) wrote: 'Guided by the *Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants*, and the Spirit of the Lord, it is not difficult for one to discern the errors in the Bible.'

Professor C. H. Dodd wrote in his commentary on Romans: 'Sometimes I think Paul is wrong, and I have ventured to say so.'

J. C. Ryle: 'The whole Bible, and nothing but the Bible, must be our rule of faith, - nothing added and nothing taken away.'

5. Whom did Christ call to Himself? (15:10) What did He call upon them to do? Why? _____

6. What point does Jesus make about the nature of sin in verse 11? (see also Matt.23:25-26; Col.2:20-23) _____

There are food laws in the Old Testament, but Jesus abolishes them.

7. What are the disciples worried about? (15:12) What does this tell us about the disciples and about the Pharisees? _____

8. What is Jesus' response to the news that the Pharisees were offended? (15:13-14) Of what does He accuse the Pharisees? _____

9. What does Peter ask Jesus? (15:15) What is the spiritual state of the disciples? (15:16) _____

10. What is *not* sin, and what *is* sin? (15:17-18) _____

11. Where does sin come from? (15:19; Jer.17:9; James 1:14) What are some of the main sins that offend God? (15:19) What is the meaning of each one? Why did the Puritan Ralph Venning call sin 'the plague of plagues'? _____

In the early part of the 20th century *The Times* ran an essay competition on 'What is wrong with the world?' G. K. Chesterton sent in his essay, consisting of two words: 'I am.'

Tolstoy: 'Everybody thinks of changing humanity and nobody thinks of changing himself.'

Here is Anna Russell's *Psychiatric Folksong*:

1. *I went to my psychiatrist to be psychoanalysed
To find out why I killed the cat, and blackened my wife's eyes.*
2. *He put me on a downy couch to see what he could find
And this is what he dredged up from my subconscious mind.*
3. *When I was one, my mummy hid my dolly in the trunk,
And so it follows naturally that I am always drunk.*
4. *When I was two, I saw my father kiss the maid one day
And that is why I suffer now from kleptomania.*
5. *When I was three, I suffered from ambivalence towards my brothers,
So it follows naturally I poisoned all my lovers.*
6. *I'm so glad that I have learned that lesson it has taught
That everything I do that's wrong is someone else's fault.*

12. How did the Pharisees get it so wrong on the sufficiency of Scripture and the nature of sin? (15:20; note how the Pharisees were morally blind yet concerned for ceremonial cleanness in John 18:28; 19:31) How are we fall into the same kind of trap today? _____

Testing a Gentile Woman (Matt. 15:21-28)

In C. S. Lewis' *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, Susan and Lucy hear from Mr and Mrs Beaver about the great Lion, Aslan, who is the son of the great Emperor-Beyond-the-Sea. At first they are rather fearful about the prospect of meeting the King of Beasts, and they ask whether he is safe. Mr Beaver gives the superb answer: 'Who said anything about safe? 'Course he isn't safe. But he's good.'

1. To where had Jesus withdrawn? (15:21) _____

The Gentile region of Tyre and Sidon in Phoenicia is modern Lebanon. This was Jezebel's old stamping ground.

2. Who comes out to meet him, and what does she cry out? (15:22) Why did she come to Jesus? _____

3. What is Jesus' first response to her? (15:23a) _____

Archbishop Trench: 'The Word has no word.'

But Samuel Rutherford says: 'It is but Christ's outside that is unkind.'

4. How do the disciples respond? (15:23b) Are Christians always helpful? _____

5. When Jesus break His silence, what does He say? (15:24; note 10:5-6) _____

Jesus, like Paul in Acts, went to the Jews first, then the Greeks (cf. Acts 13:46; Rom.1:16)

6. But how does the woman respond to that? (15:25) What does she know about Jesus? What does she call Him in verses 22, 25, 27? What should we learn from that? _____

7. How does Jesus appear to be even harder in verse 26? (note Matt.7:6) _____

Somehow, Donald English refers to Jesus' answer here as 'balanced' and 'not encouraging for the present, but not dismissive in the long run'. He calls it 'a generous, if for the moment negative, response.' How the Gentile woman could have understood it this way is surely bewildering.

8. What is the woman's reply to Jesus' apparently harsh words? (15:27) _____

Charles Spurgeon: 'Let us accept the worst character that the Scripture gives us, and still find in it an argument for hope.'

Isaac Watts: *Alas! And did my Saviour bleed/ And did my Sovereign die?/ Would He devote that sacred head/ For such a worm as I?*

9. Why did Jesus commend her faith? (15:28; the only other occasion is in 8:10, also to do with another Gentile) What happened next? _____

James Denney said that the kingdom of God was not for the well-meaning but for the desperate.

J. C. Ryle: 'Health is a good thing; but sickness is far better, if it leads us to God. Prosperity is a great mercy; but adversity is a greater one, if it brings us to Christ. Anything, anything is better than living in carelessness, and dying in sin. Better a thousand times to be afflicted, like the Canaanite mother, and like her to flee to Christ, than live in ease, like the rich "fool", and die at last without Christ and without hope.'

Feeding the Four Thousand (Matt.15:29-39)

1. Where did Jesus go then? (15:29) What was He doing? _____

This was in the region of the Decapolis, a mainly Gentile area.

2. Who followed Him? (15:30) What did He do? _____

3. How did the people respond to all these miracles? (15:31) _____

Notice how they refer to God.

4. What is Jesus' motive for feeding the four thousand? (15:32) Is it true to say, with B. B. Warfield, that the only reason for the miracles was to authenticate the claims of the one who performed them, whether a prophet or an apostle, or the Messiah Himself? _____

5. In the light of Matthew 14:13-21, why is the question in Matthew 15:33 so remarkable? _____

6. What are the resources of the disciples? (15:34) Why did Jesus ask this question, assuming that He already knew the answer? _____

7. What did Jesus tell the crowd to do? (15:35) Then what did He do? (15:36) _____

8. What was the result? (15:37) What does this show us? _____

9. How many were involved in this miracle? (15:38) _____

10. What did Jesus do next? (15:39) _____

This is back in Jewish territory.

Demanding a Sign (Matt.16:1-12)

1. What did the Pharisees and Sadducees ask Jesus for? (16:1; see 1 Cor.1:22-23) What was their motive? How reasonable was this? _____

Martin Luther:

*Feelings come, and feelings go,
And feelings are deceiving.
I trust the Word of God alone;
Naught else is worth believing!*

2. What is Jesus' answer to them? (16:2-3) Why does He respond in this way? _____

3. Why is this sign-seeking so evil? (16:4; see 12:38-42) What is the only sign given to this sign-seeking generation? What does Jesus mean by this?

4. What happened next? (16:4b-5) _____

5. What does Jesus say to the disciples? (16:6) _____

6. What are the disciples talking about? (16:7) _____

7. But what is Jesus talking about? (16:8) Why does He rebuke the disciples?

(16:8-11) What was Jesus warning against? What does He mean by this? _____

8. What did the disciples understand at the end of this conversation? (16:12)
How is there leaven in false teaching? _____

The Confession of Christ, the Cross, and Discipleship (Matt.16:13-28)

This next section is clearly crucial, and tells of a break-through by Peter.

1. Where did Jesus go to next with His disciples? (16:13; this was a pagan region) What did He ask them? Why does Jesus so often call Himself the Son of Man? (cf. Dan.7:13-14) _____

2. What are some of the people saying about Jesus? (16:14) How are these all mistaken? _____

3. What does Jesus ask them concerning Himself? (16:15) Why is this such a crucial question? _____

4. What is Simon Peter's answer? (16:16) What does he mean by this description? (note Psalm 2) _____

5. How did Peter gain this understanding? (16:17) How is faith the gift of God? Is it ever the result of our free will? (note 1 Cor.2:14) _____

6. What does Jesus say to Peter about himself and the church? (16:18) What promise does Jesus attach to the statement? _____

The word is *hades*, and it could refer to hell or death.

The notion of the papacy is supposedly traceable back to Jesus' words in

Matthew 16:18-19 where Simon pevtra" is blessed by the Lord. Jesus then declares that upon this pevtra He would build His Church. The pevtra has been viewed in three main ways:

- (a) Peter's confession of faith (R. V. G. Tasker, A H. McNeile);
- (b) Christ Himself (Augustine at times, Luther, D. B. Knox, G. A. F. Knight; note 1 Cor.3:11).
- (c) Peter himself is the rock, just as Abraham is the rock in Isaiah 51:1-2 (Oscar Cullmann, R. T. France, William Hendriksen, Craig Keener). Abraham was chronologically the father of the faith in the Old Testament sense, and Peter is his counterpart in the New Testament. To me, this seems the most natural reading.

7. Granted that the keys refer to doctrine and discipline, what authority is invested in Peter in verse 19? (see Isa.22:15, 22) What is the connection between the Church and the kingdom of heaven? How is this promise treated in Matthew 18:18? _____

8. Why does Jesus tell His disciples not to tell anyone that He is the Christ (Messiah)? (16:20) _____

9. Having established who He is, what does Jesus go on to prophesy about His work in verse 21? _____

10. What is Peter's response to this? (16:22) Does he hear all of verse 21? How can we do the devil's work with the best of intentions? _____

11. How does Jesus address Peter? (16:23) Why was Peter's thinking so radically wrong? Does Jesus mean that Peter is demon possessed? If not - and it is surely not - what does it indicate to us about the possibility of the devil's swaying the thinking and the behaviour of a Christian? _____

C. H. Spurgeon: 'He knows not the taste, the aroma, the essence of spiritual things; and however much he may honour Jesus in words, he is an enemy, a real Satan towards the true Christ.'

The death of Christ is, as J. C. Ryle stated, 'the central truth of Christianity. Right views of his vicarious death and the benefits resulting from it, lie at the very foundation of Bible-religion. If we are wrong here, we are ruined forever. Error on many points is only a skin disease. Error about Christ's death is a disease at the heart.'

Richard Baxter: 'To intend well in doing ill is no rarity.'

12. Having dealt with His person (16:13-20), His work (16:21-23), Jesus now deals with Christian discipleship (16:24-28). What does Jesus tell His disciples? (16:24) What does it mean to take up one's cross? Contrast Benny Hinn ('I'm sick and tired of hearing about streets of gold. I don't need gold in heaven. I've got to have it now') and Martin Luther ('The theology of the cross teaches that punishments, crosses, and death are the most precious treasures of all'). _____

Matthew Henry: 'The first lesson in Christ's school is self-denial.'

13. What does it mean to lose one's life and to find it? (16:25) How is this the opposite of what we would expect? _____

Dietrich Bonhoeffer in *The Cost of Discipleship* (1937): 'Only when we have become completely oblivious of self are we ready to bear the cross for his sake ... When Christ calls a man, he bids him come and die.'

14. What is the soul or life of a man worth? (16:26) What, then, should we aim for in life? _____

15. What will happen at the judgment? (16:27) What does it mean to be judged by our works? How is this compatible with justification by faith? _____

16. To what is Christ referring to in verse 28? _____

Surely it is the resurrection.

The Transfiguration (Matt.17:1-13)

1. Notice that Matthew says the transfiguration took place 'after six days' (17:1) while Luke 9:28 says it was 'about eight days after these sayings'. What does this show about Scripture? Why are we not told what mountain it was? (Mt Tabor or Mt Hermon or perhaps another mountain) Was it because of fear of turning it into an idolatrous holy place? Whom did Jesus take with Him? (17:1) _____

2. What happened on the mountain? (17:2) _____

Robert Hawker: 'All that we can possibly frame to ourselves of this transfiguration therefore is, that the Godhead shone forth in the manhood in a more than ordinary manner. The Son of God was pleased to manifest himself in his double-nature glory more than in the usual appearances of Christ in the days of his flesh. It was a moment of peculiar manifestation of the glories of his person. It was the personal glory of the God-Man, as God-Man.'

3. Whom did they meet? (17:3) What do Moses (the law-giver) and Elijah (the prophet) represent? What does this reveal about life after death? Did they know one another? _____

4. What was Peter's suggestion? (17:4) What do you make of that? Why is it so inappropriate? What did Peter later make of the whole episode? (2 Peter 1:16-18) _____

J. C. Ryle: 'There is laid up for Jesus, and all that believe on him, such glory as the heart of man never conceived' (see 1 John 3:1-2).

5. What happened before there could be any response to Peter's suggestion? (17:5) What did the Father say? (see the baptism in Matt.3:17) Why is He well pleased with the Son, and not with Moses, Elijah, Peter, James and John? (see John 8:29) _____

6. How did the three disciples respond? (17:6) What does this show about Jesus in His glory? _____

7. How does Jesus comfort them? (17:7) _____

8. What did they see at the end? (17:8) What point is being made here? _____

9. Why did Jesus tell the disciples to say nothing of the vision until the resurrection? (17:9; recall 16:20, and also note 2 Cor.12:1-6 for Paul's reluctance to tell of his vision of Paradise) _____

10. What do the disciples then ask Jesus? (17:10) What was Elijah to do in the prophecy? (17:11; see Malachi 4:5-6) _____

It seems to be the restoring aspect of Elijah's work that is causing the confusion. There seems to be no place left for a suffering Messiah.

11. What does Jesus say about Elijah? (17:12-13) Who is he? What happened to him? And what will happen to the Son of Man? _____

Note that all through His ministry Jesus is teaching that suffering must precede glory.

Jesus Heals a Demon-Possessed Boy (Matt.17:14-21)

1. Who came to Jesus? (17:14) What did he do? What was wrong with his son? (17:15) _____

2. What had he done? (17:16) How had the disciples failed? _____

3. What is Jesus' response to the disciples? (17:17) _____

Note that this is said to believers, not unbelievers.

4. What did Jesus do then? (17:18) _____

5. What did the disciples ask Jesus? (17:19) _____

6. How had the disciples failed (17:20-21; verse 21 is not in all manuscripts)
What is the lesson for us? _____

This is not to be interpreted in a silly way. The White Queen in Lewis Carroll's *Alice Through the Looking-Glass*, said: 'Why, sometimes I've believed as many as six impossible things before breakfast.' Moving mountains by prayer was a proverbial saying (see 1 Cor.13:2).

*Faith, mighty faith, the promise sees,
And looks to that alone;
Laughs at impossibilities,
And cries, 'It shall be done!'* (Charles Wesley)

Another Passion Prediction (Matt.17:22-23)

1. What did Jesus prophesy as the disciples gathered in Galilee? (17:22-23)
How did the disciples respond? (recall 16:21-23) What does this reveal about the disciples? _____

Paying the Temple Tax (Matt.17:24-27)

1. What happened when the band of disciples came to Capernaum? (17:24)

The temple tax has its origins in Exodus 30:12-16. In the time of Jesus it was two drachmas (NIV) or half a shekel (ESV).

2. What was Peter's answer? (17:25) What does Jesus' little parable imply about the relationship with the temple and the relationship between the disciples? Who are the true sons of the temple? _____

3. What lesson is drawn from the parable? (17:26) _____

4. Why was the temple tax to be paid? (17:27) What does this tell us about evangelism? (see 1 Cor.9:19-23) How did it come to be paid by Peter, for himself and for Jesus? So often this miracle is regarded as trivial - but is it?

Christ's Little Ones (Matt.18:1-14)

1. What did the disciples ask? (18:1) _____

2. How did Jesus illustrate His response? (18:2) What is His answer to their question? (18:3-4) What does this mean for us? _____

Children humbly trust and receive, knowing that they earn nothing.

3. What do we do when we welcome a little child into the kingdom? (18:5) What do we deserve if we lead a little one astray? (18:6) When is such indignation at sin appropriate? _____

John Legg points out that the term 'little ones' does not refer to children in Matthew 10:42, but children seem to be especially in mind in Matthew 18.

4. Is sin inevitable? (18:7) Are we held responsible for it? _____

5. How seriously should we take the fight against sin? (18:8-9; note 5:29-30 for adultery) _____

6. Who protects God's little ones? (18:10; see more generally Ps.34:7; 91:11; Heb.1:14) What does this mean for us? _____

B. B. Warfield sees no guardian angel here, but says that the angel is the disembodied spirit of the disciple (see Acts 12:15). This seems less than

convincing, but the meaning would remain somewhat the same.

7. What is the meaning of the little parable that Jesus then tells? (18:11-14; some manuscripts do not have verse 11) _____

Luke 15:1-7 deals with conversion more than backsliding whereas Matthew 18:12-14 deals with reclaiming the backslider more than converting the unbeliever.

Handling Sin in the Church (18:15-20)

1. What is the first step that Jesus speaks of when there is sin in the church? (18:15) What kind of sin must He be talking about? When does 1 Peter 4:8 apply and when does Matthew 18:15 apply? What is the goal in this first step? Why is Jesus concerned to keep the issue contained at this stage? (recall vv.12-14; and note Gal.6:1) _____

The words 'against you' are in numerous manuscripts but not all.

2. What happens if the erring brother does not listen? (18:16) Why is there a need for two or three witnesses? (note Deut.19:15) _____

3. When happens next if the erring brother will not listen to the two or three witnesses? (18:17) What is the result of excommunication? _____

4. How does God treat this discipline when it is carried out biblically? (18:18; remember the promise to Peter in 16:19) _____

5. Are verses 19-20 referring to small prayer meetings or to church discipline? What assurance is given to two or three Christians agreeing here on earth? _____

The Parable of the Unforgiving Servant (Matt.18:21-35)

Corrie ten Boom's *The Hiding Place* tells of a church service in Munich after the war. Corrie met a former S.S. man who had stood guard at the shower room door in the processing centre at Ravensbruck where Corrie had lost her father and her sister through the Nazis. Corrie hesitated to shake this man's hand even though he was now a professing Christian. Here are Corrie's words:

Even as the angry, vengeful thoughts boiled through me, I saw the sin of them. Jesus Christ had died for this man; was I going to ask for more? Lord Jesus, I prayed, forgive me and help me to forgive him.

I tried to smile, I struggled to raise my hand. I could not. I felt nothing, not the slightest spark of warmth or charity. And so again I breathed a silent prayer. Jesus, I cannot forgive him. Give me Your forgiveness.

As I took his hand the most incredible thing happened. From my shoulder along my arm and through my hand a current seemed to pass from me to him, while into my heart sprang a love for this stranger that almost overwhelmed me.

1. What subject does Peter raise with Jesus? (18:21) What had Peter heard Jesus say on this subject before this? (Matt.6:12, 14-15) _____

There is recorded the opinion of one second century rabbi who said that people should forgive others up to three times, but not the fourth.

2. What does Jesus reply? (18:22; the NIV has 77 times) What does He mean by this? _____

Jesus may have had Lamech in mind (Gen.4:24).

3. How does Jesus describes God's forgiveness? (18:23-24) How is sin like a debt? _____

Ten thousand talents is a ridiculous amount. It depends on which talent was in Jesus' mind but it would be something like the wages for one million days' work by a labourer.

In the Lord's Prayer we pray 'Forgive us our debts' rather than 'trespasses'. We owe a debt to God that we cannot pay (Ps.49:7-9).

4. How does this make judgment such a fearful prospect? (18:25-26) What is significant about the fact that the servant did not ask for forgiveness but for time to pay off the debt? _____

Spurgeon: 'The promise was not worth the breath which spoke it.'

5. What does the king do? (18:27) _____

6. What do we owe each other? (18:28) _____

100 denarii is substantial but not ridiculous. It is about 3-4 months' wages for a labourer.

Benjamin Keach: 'O what have sinners done, and in what a poor, miserable, and wretched state are all men naturally? Owing so much, and not having one farthing to pay. What is any debt owing to us, compared to this?'

7. What did the second servant plead for? (18:29, an echo of verse 26) _____

8. How did the first servant reveal that he was not really a man of grace? (18:30) Why have we become such a litigious society? _____

C. S. Lewis: 'Everyone says forgiveness is a lovely idea, until they have something to forgive.'

9. How does the king respond to the ungracious behaviour of the first servant? (18:31-34) Of what is verse 34 a picture? _____

10. It is reputed that Catherine the Great said that forgiveness was God's job. Is that what this parable is saying? What is the lesson? (18:35) Can we be forgiven yet remain unforgiving? _____

Archbishop Robert Leighton: 'We ought to forgive ourselves little, and others much.'

11. Why did Robert Murray M'Cheyne write this hymn:

*When I stand before the throne,
Dressed in beauty not my own
When I see thee as thou art,
Love Thee with unsinning heart,
Then, Lord, shall I fully know,
Not till then, how much I owe.*

C. H. Spurgeon told a story that illustrates this — a young man in the army of Nicholas the Great was addicted to gambling. He had gambled so much that he had lost everything he owned and had accumulated a very great debt, which he could not pay. He had come from a good family. But he brought shame upon his family's name

by his deeds. At last, he reached the end of his rope. Completely hopeless, he sat at a table and added up his debts. When the overwhelming sum was known, he wrote these desperate words across the bottom of the page, "Who is able to pay all this?" Exhausted and hopeless, he fell asleep at the table where he sat. As he slept, the Emperor walked through the barracks. When he saw the paper on the table, the great debt, and the question, "Who is able to pay all this?" he leaned over and wrote one word — "Nicholas!"

Marriage and the Kingdom (Matt.19:1-12)

Since 1975 Australia has had a 'no fault' divorce law.

In the United States in 1890 one marriage in 17 ended in divorce; today it is nearly one in two.

Seneca (first century): 'No woman need blush to break up her marriage since the most distinguished ladies have adopted the practice of reckoning the year not by the names of the consuls but by the names of their husbands. They divorce in order to remarry. They remarry in order to divorce.'

1. Where did Jesus go? (19:1) Who followed Him? (19:2) _____

This area was ruled by Herod Antipas, who had divorced his wife to marry Herodias.

2. What did the Pharisees ask Him? (19:3) What was their motive? _____

The Jewish historian Josephus wrote: 'I divorced my wife, being displeased at her behaviour.'

3. How does Jesus begin to answer that question in 19:4-6? Why should this be our starting point? What are the basic principles of marriage? _____

Jesus is quoting Genesis 2. It is a foundation text, one which the apostle Paul quotes, for example, in 1 Cor.6 and Eph.5.

4. What objection do the Pharisees then raise? (19:7; see Deut.24:1-4) _____

5. On what grounds does Moses allow divorce? (19:8) Was this a command or a concession? Can you think of a parallel approach to some issue today (e.g. polygamy)? _____

The school of Shammai said it referred to sexual immorality, while the school of Hillel said that a man could divorce his wife if she was a bad cook.

6. On what ground is divorce allowed? (19:9; porneia is not only adultery, but any kind of sexual unchastity) Is it commanded in this circumstance? How might the following texts help us in this situation: Matt.1:19; Luke 17:3-4; John 4:16-18.

7. How do the disciples respond to this teaching? (19:10) _____

8. Who should remain unmarried in order to serve the kingdom of heaven? (19:11-12; see 1 Cor.9:5) Given his lifestyle as an itinerant evangelist, should John Wesley have got married?! _____

Children come to Jesus (Matt.19:13-15)

1. Who came to Jesus next? (19:13) For what purpose? How did the disciples react to this? _____

2. What, however, was Jesus' response? (19:14) Who belongs to the kingdom of heaven? _____

Much ink has been spilt over the relevance of this account for infant baptism. It probably does have some implications but there are more obvious texts that deal with that issue.

3. What did Jesus do with the children? (19:15) What does this teach us? _____

The rich young ruler: almost there (Matt 19:16-26)

There are two obvious problems:

(a) It seems that Jesus denies His own goodness and hence His deity

(compare vv.16-17 and John 20:28-29).

(b) It seems to teach salvation by works, that the way to heaven is the Franciscan way of poverty (compare vv.21-25 with John 3:16).

Mark simply refers to a man, Matthew says that he was young, and Luke tells us that he was the ruler of a synagogue.

1. What was the question of the rich young ruler? (19:16) What does it imply? _____

2. What are the two surprising things said in verse 17? _____

3. What does the man ask? (19:18) And what is Jesus' reply? (19:18-19) Is this surprising? _____

4. What did the rich young ruler think that he had done? (19:20) Had he succeeded in this? What did he ask next? _____

Heinrich Bullinger in 16th century Zurich: 'The Law is a certain looking-glass, wherein we behold our own corruption, frailness, imbecility, imperfection, and our judgment, that is, our just and deserved damnation.'

Joseph Hall: 'no man receives the Holy Ghost, but he who has felt the terrors of Sinai.'

5. What did Jesus say then? (19:21) Why, in your opinion, did He say this? _____

6. What did the man do then? (19:22) Why didn't Jesus stop him, and give him the gospel? _____

7. What does Jesus say about the possibility of a rich person entering the kingdom of heaven? (19:23-24) _____

Some have said that there was a gate in Jerusalem, known as the needle, through which a camel might just squeeze. According to James Edwards, that is a legend that goes back no earlier than the ninth century. Calvin says that 'camel' (καμήλον) should be read as 'cable' (καμίλον). But Jesus is saying that, as bizarre as it sounds, it is easier for a dromedary to pass through the eye of a sewing needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God. It is a proverbial saying to indicate that something is impossible.

8. Why were the disciples so worried? (19:25) _____

9. What is Jesus' 'consoling' word to them? (19:26) _____

There is a progression - salvation is hard for rich men (v.23), impossible for rich men (v.24), in fact, impossible for everybody (vv.26).

I take God at His word and deed.

'Christ died to save me', this I read;

And in my heart I find a need

Of Him to be my Saviour (Dora Greenwell)

The first will be last and the last will be first (Matt.19:27-30)

1. Verse 27 is obviously closely connected to verse 26. What is the point of Peter's claim and question? (19:27) _____

John Legg: 'Peter is often criticised as being mercenary at this point, but Jesus does not take him to task severely, although there is an element of rebuke implied in his reply.'

2. What does Jesus say will happen in the regeneration? (19:28) How is the regeneration both individual and cosmic? (e.g. Titus 3:5 for the individual side of regeneration; Rom.8:20-21 for the world) _____

3. What does Jesus promise His disciples? (19:29) What is the comparison between what they have left and what they will receive? _____

Mark 10:30 dryly adds 'and with persecutions'!

Herman Ridderbos says that 'judging' here means 'governing', and 'the twelve tribes of Israel' denotes the coming Church.

When people spoke of Dr Lloyd-Jones' giving up his promising medical

career, Lloyd-Jones replied: 'I gave up nothing.'

4. What is Jesus' final comment? (19:30) What does this mean for us?

The parable of the labourers in the vineyard (Matt.20:1-16)

1. Again, 20:1 must be connected to 19:30. What is the kingdom of heaven like? (20:1) _____

2. How many lots of labourers are hired? (20:1-12) What is promised in wages to the first lot? (20:2) _____

3. What happened at the third hour i.e. about 9.00 a.m.? (20:3-4) What is the agreed wage? _____

Grapes left too long on the vine become too sugary, or perhaps the next day was the Sabbath.

4. What happens with a third lot at noon, and a fourth lot at 3.00 p.m.? (20:5) _____

5. Finally, what happens with a fifth lot of workers at 5.00 p.m.? (20:6-7) _____

6. At the end of the day some of the labourers had worked for __ hours, some __, some __, some __, and some only one hour.

7. What happens at payment time? (20:8-10) _____

Jesus is not telling us how to run a farm or a business. 'A fair day's work for a fair day's wage' is a good business principle, - and a biblical principle.

8. Is it ever too late to repent? _____

John MacArthur tells of a Jewish woman who came to trust in Jesus as the Messiah, and died a week later.

9. Is there a place for envy and complaining in the kingdom of grace? (20:11-16) Will Josiah complain about Manasseh? (compare 2 Chron.33 for Manasseh and 2 Kings 22-23 for Josiah) Does the Bible teach that all Christians enjoy the same measure of glory? (see 1 Cor.3:8, 14-15) _____

10. What does God owe us - grace or justice? (20:13-16) _____

R. A. Torrey tells how he received a letter from a Presbyterian elder in Melbourne. This elder was confused. He explained that he had been a member of the church for 30 years, a Sunday School superintendent for 25 years, and an elder for 20 years, and yet God was not answering a prayer request. He asked Torrey: 'Can you explain it to me?' Torrey reminded the man that God owes us nothing but justice. We have no claims on Him. We deserve nothing from Him. Torrey told this story at a meeting, and at the close of the meeting, a man came up to him and identified himself as the elder who had written to him, and confessed that his thinking had been very wrong.

A thought: for verse 16, read Ex.1:15-17. Notice that the Bible names the two midwives but not the Pharaoh.

A third prophecy of Jesus' death and resurrection (Matt.20:17-19)

The cross is the centre of the Christian faith, not only in terms of substitution but also in terms of discipleship and Christian living.

1. Where was Jesus going? (20:17) What did Jesus tell His disciples about what would happen to Him as the Son of Man? (20:18-19) What detail does Jesus compared to the two previous prophecies? (16:21-23 and 17:22-23) _____

Living under the cross (Matt.20:20-28)

Even Christian authors have fallen for the gospel of self-esteem, and produced books with titles like *Love Yourself*; *You Can Learn to Like Yourself*; *The Sensation of Being Somebody*; and *Self Esteem: You're Better Than You Think*. Augustine pointed out that 'All other vices are to be apprehended when we are doing wrong, but pride is to be feared even when we do right.'

1. What is the request of the mother of James and John? (20:20-21) How does she make this request? What does it show us about how she viewed Jesus, and how she viewed His kingdom? _____

2. What does Jesus say in reply? (20:22a) _____

Jesus replied in the plural: 'You (i.e. the mother and the two sons) do not know what you are asking' (20:22a).

3. What does it mean to drink Jesus' cup? (20:22-23; see Matt.26:39; Jer.25:15-16; Rev.16:19) How was this fulfilled in the lives of James and John? (Acts 12:1-2 and Rev.1:9) Who has determined who is where in the kingdom of heaven? _____

The NIV and the ESV omit the 'baptism' references but they are in the account in Mark 10, and are authentic, although they may not belong in Matthew's Gospel.

Take up thy cross,' the Saviour said, / If thou wouldst my disciple be.

4. How did the other ten respond to James and John? (20:24) Why does self-seeking in others always irritate us? _____

5. Contrast the world's view of greatness and power, and Christ's way (20:25-27). _____

John Legg says that Christ is not criticising the exercise of worldly power, and that is true in itself, but He is implying that it was generally abused. Simone Weil said that 'Christianity is pre-eminently the religion of slaves'. John Chrysostom: 'Nothing is higher than lowliness of mind, and nothing lower than boastfulness.'

Richard Hobson once attracted criticism in Liverpool, England, by carrying a cripple on his back to church (it was starting to rain). This was seen as unseemly for a man of the cloth.

6. What is at the very heart of the gospel? (20:28) What is a ransom? For whom was the ransom given? How is Christ both our substitute and our example? _____

Two blind men (Matt.20:29-34)

One can only speculate that the taunt against king David as he went up to conquer Jerusalem may well have been in mind here (see 2 Sam. 5:6-8). The

blind and the lame would repel David from Jerusalem. So David dubbed the Jebusites as 'the blind and the lame'.

1. Where were Jesus and the disciples going? (20:29) Who was following Him? _____

The critics find contradictions here. Matthew 20:30 mentions two blind men, but Mark 10 and Luke 18 only mention one, Bartimaeus. That is hardly a contradiction. The second problem concerns Jericho. Matthew says that Jesus was leaving Jericho. Mark and Luke, on the other hand, say that Jesus was drawing near to Jericho (Mark 10:46). That is a more difficult problem, but the explanation may lie in the fact that Jericho was rebuilt by Herod the Great for his winter palace. It is a reasonable suggestion that Luke and Mark thought of Jesus drawing near the old Jericho while Matthew thought of His leaving the new Jericho. John Legg, however, says that Jesus first encountered the two men as He was entering the city but actually healed them on His way out. Hence Matthew only describes the culmination of the event.

2. What did the two blind men cry out to Jesus? (20:30) What did they mean by these titles? _____

3. How did the crowd respond? (20:31) How did the blind men respond to that rebuke? What should that teach us? _____

4. Why did Jesus ask what He did in verse 32? _____

5. What did the two blind men ask for? (20:33) _____

6. How did Jesus respond? (20:34) What motivated Him? What happened? (note Isa.35:5) _____

Joseph Hart's hymn *Come, ye sinners, poor and wretched*, describes Jesus as 'full of pity joined with power'.

The triumphal entry (Matt.21:1-11)

1. Where did Jesus and His disciples come to? (21:1) What task did Jesus give to two of His disciples? (21:2) _____

2. What was to be their answer if anyone questioned them? (21:3) What is this teaching us? _____

3. What does this fulfil? (21:4-5; Zech.9:9-10) Why is this remarkable? _____

4. What did the disciples do? (21:6-7) _____

5. How did most of the crowd respond? (21:8) _____

Mark and Luke say that the colt had never been ridden before, so an unbroken animal remained calm in the midst of the noisy crowds.

6. What did the crowds cry out? (21:9) What did they mean by this? Does it mean that they had saving faith in Jesus? (see Luke 19:41-44) _____

7. Describe the crowds' view of Jesus (21:10-11) What does this teach us? _____

The fickleness of the crowd is brilliantly portrayed by Shakespeare in *Julius Caesar*.

Cleansing the Temple (Matt.21:12-17)

1. Where did Jesus go next? (21:12) What did He do? _____

2. Of what did Jesus accuse the money-changers and the temple leaders? (21:13; cf. Isa.56:7; Jer.7:11) How would the running of the temple compromise the witness of God to the Gentiles? _____

3. Who came to the temple, and what did Jesus do? (21:14) _____

4. How did the chief priests and the scribes respond to what Jesus did, and how He was being acclaimed by children? (21:15) What did the praise of the children mean? _____

5. What is the point of Jesus' response? (21:16; see Psalm 8:2 in the Greek

translation, the Septuagint) To whom is the praise directed in Psalm 8:2? To whom is it directed in Matthew 21:16? What does this show us about Jesus?

6. What did Jesus do next? (21:17) _____

Cursing the fig tree (Matt.21:18-22)

1. What did Jesus do the next morning? (21:18) How is Jesus truly man? ____

2. How is verse 19 a remarkable miracle? How is it different from Jesus' other miracles? _____

Bertrand Russell was a fierce unbeliever, and he accuses Jesus of 'vindictive fury' here. Professor T. W. Manson was supposed to have been a believer, but he is no better. He sees it as 'a tale of miraculous power wasted in the service of ill-temper', and does not believe it actually happened.

3. How did the disciples respond to this miracle? (21:20) _____

4. What is the meaning of Jesus' response? (21:21-22; recall 17:20) What, do you think, is the meaning of the miracle? (see Matt.3:8-10) What is the warning to an unfruitful church? _____

No pearls to swine (Matt.21:23-27)

1. What was the challenge of the chief priests and the elders to Jesus? (21:23) _____

2. What is Jesus' question to them? (21:24-25) _____

3. How did they respond to this question? (21:25-26) What does this reveal about their motives? _____

4. Why does Jesus refuse to answer their question? (21:27) When is it pointless to keep answering questions? How should we deal with deliberate distractions? Was Bertrand Russell an atheist because of his scientific outlook or because of his immorality? _____

The parable of the two sons (Matt.21:28-32)

1. Give the details of the parable of the two sons (21:28-30). _____

2. How does Jesus get His hearers to hang themselves? (21:31a; see Luke 10:36-37 for the same technique) How can we do this in presenting the gospel to unbelievers? _____

3. What is the point of the parable? (21:31b-32) Who responded to John's call to repent? Is the Christian message simply: 'Be good'? What is the Christian message? _____

In 1739 George Whitefield began open-air preaching to the colliers at Kingswood in England. Whitefield faced 20,000 hardened coalminers. 'Having no righteousness of their own,' he writes, 'they were glad to hear of a Jesus, Who came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. The first discovery of their being affected was to see the white gutters made by the tears, which fell down their black cheeks. Hundreds were brought under deep conviction, which, as the event proved, ended in a sound conversion.'

Contrast that to the Duchess of Buckingham who wrote to Lady Huntingdon: 'It is monstrous to be told that you have a heart as sinful as the common wretches that crawl on the earth. This is highly offensive and insulting; and I cannot but wonder that your Ladyship should relish any sentiments so much at variance with high rank and good breeding.'

The vilest offender who truly believes

That moment from Jesus a pardon receives.

Blaise Pascal: 'There are only two kinds of men: the righteous who think they are sinners and the sinners who think they are righteous.'

The parable of the wicked tenants (Matt.21:33-46)

This parable is also found in Mark 12 and Luke 20. The parable is quite straightforward. The vineyard is Israel (Psalm 80; Isaiah 5:1-7). In the original context, the parable was directed at Israel, but it is also applicable to the Gentile Church (Rom.11:20-22).

1. What had the master done with his vineyard? (21:33) What had God done for Israel? (see Deut.4:7-8; Ps.147:19-20; Zech.2:8) _____

2. Yet what did the tenants do in response? (21:34-36) How did Israel treat the prophets of God? (see 1 Kings 19:1-2; 2 Chron.24:20-21; 36:15-16; Amos 7:12-13; Jer.7:25-26; Matt.5:10-12) _____

3. What was the culmination of this attitude? (21:37-39; see John 1:11) What are some of our privileges today? _____

4. What will happen to these privileged tenants? (21:40-41) How does Jesus employ the 'get them to hang themselves' approach? (remember how Nathan employs this technique in 2 Sam.12:5) _____

5. What would God do with the one that the tenants rejected? (21:42) Should this surprise us? (Psalm 118:22-23; note also 1 Pet.2:4-8) _____

6. What is Israel's status now? (21:43; Acts 13:46) What is the message for us today? _____

7. How is the rejected one actually the judge? (21:44) _____

The RSV excludes this verse, but it is in Luke 20:18.

8. How did the chief priests and Pharisees respond to this parable? (21:45-46)
 Why did they not act against Jesus? What did the crowds think of Jesus?
 What does this reveal about the chief priests and Pharisees, and about the
 crowds? _____

John Newton wrote of Jesus: *Dear Name! The rock on which I build.* To the unbeliever, He is the rock under which he is crushed through unbelief; to the believer, He is the rock of salvation upon which he builds.

The parable of the wedding feast (Matt.22:1-14)

1. To what does Jesus compare the kingdom of heaven? (22:1-2; Isa.25:6)

2. Whom does the king invite to the wedding feast of his son? (22:3-4) _____

There is the original invitation, a reminder, and then another call.

3. How do people respond to this invitation:

v.5 _____

J. C. Ryle: 'Open sin may kill its thousands; but indifference and neglect of the Gospel kill tens of thousands.'

v.6. _____

4. How did the king respond to this rejection? (22:7) To what is Jesus referring? _____

Israel was cast aside as God's special people and in A.D. 70 the Roman army destroyed the city of Jerusalem.

5. Who are invited then? (22:8-10) Have we been invited? (Matt.11:28; John 7:37; Acts 17:30) _____

6. Some reject the invitation outright, but what has the man done in verse 11?

The Bible often uses being clothed as a picture of being justified (Gen.3:21; Rom.13:13-14; Eph.4:24; note Isa.64:6; 61:10). Augustine made the suggestion that a wedding robe was offered to every guest. John Legg, however, says that this is not one of Paul's letters, and that Jesus is referring not to imputed righteousness but the moral fruit of righteousness - which is the more usual meaning in Matthew's Gospel.

7. How does the king confront the man? (22:12) What is the man's response? (note Rom.3:19) _____

I once listened to a man who was obviously not a Christian who told me that his favourite hymn was *What a Friend We Have in Jesus*. I was bewildered.

8. What did the king do then? (22:13) What is Jesus describing here? _____

9. Notice how verse 3 emphasises the will of the person and verse 14 the doctrine of election. How would you reconcile these verses? What are they telling us? To whom is the gospel offered? Who will respond with faith? _____

*Jesus, Thy blood and righteousness
My beauty are, my glorious dress;
Midst flaming worlds, in these arrayed;
With joy shall I lift up my head.*

.....

*O let the dead now hear Thy voice!
Now bid Thy banished ones rejoice!
Their beauty this, their glorious dress,
Jesus, the Lord our Righteousness* (Count von Zinzendorf)

God and Caesar (Matt.22:15-22)

In the Middle Ages, the pope claimed the authority to depose kings and emperors. Hence in 1570 when the pope excommunicated Elizabeth I of England, he also said that her subjects should rise up and depose her, i.e. a heretic could not be a monarch. That is one error. In the United States there has been a tradition of the separation of church and state, which has lately been interpreted as a rigid wall of separation of the state from any religion except humanism (e.g. no prayers or Bibles in public schools since 1962). That is the error we increasingly face today.

1. What did the Pharisees do? (22:15) With whom did they cooperate? (22:16) What do they say to Jesus? How seriously does Jesus take their flattery? (22:18) _____

5. How did those who heard this respond to what Jesus said? (22:22) _____

The God of the living (Matt.22:23-33)

The Sadducees were a small, not very popular, high priestly party who venerated the Law of Moses but little else. Josephus wrote: 'The Sadducees hold that the soul perishes along with the body.'

1. What happened the same day that the Pharisees and Herodians had tried to trap Jesus on the issue of paying tribute to Caesar? (22:23) How did the Sadducees decide to take Jesus on over the issue of the resurrection of the body? (22:23-24) Did Moses teach this (recall that Israel was originally divided up into clans and tribes)? (Deut.25:5-6) _____

2. What far-fetched example did they present to Jesus, in the hope of trapping Him? (22:25-28) What sort of questions might people ask today? _____

3. What two things do the Sadducees not know? (22:29) What Scriptures did they not know? What is this teaching us? In what way did they not know the power of God? (recall Jer.32:17; Psalm 115:3) _____

J. B. Phillips wrote a book entitled *Your God is too small*.

4. What will it be like in the resurrection? (22:30) So how relevant is the example from Deuteronomy 25 to this question? _____

5. How does Jesus prove the resurrection from Exodus 3:6? (Matt.22:31-32) To whom was this spoken? (two answers) Why did Jesus quote this verse, and not more obvious texts like Job 19:25-26; Isaiah 26:19; and Daniel 12:2? What does that teach us about evangelism? What does Jesus teach about a saving relationship with God? _____

Hint for part of the answer: The Sadducees put the Pentateuch above the rest of the Old Testament.

6. How did the crowd respond? (22:33) _____

The two great commandments (Matt.22:34-40)

1. What did the Pharisees do after this? (22:34) _____

2. What did one of them do, and why? (22:35) _____

3. What is his question to Jesus? (22:36) _____

There are, apparently, 613 commandments.

4. What is Jesus' answer? (22:37-38; Deut.6:5) Has anybody ever kept this commandment? _____

5. What is the second great commandment? (22:39; Lev.19:18) Again, has anybody ever kept this commandment? _____

6. What does Jesus say about these two great commandments? (22:40) Is Jesus dealing with the law or the gospel? _____

David's son and David's Lord (Matt.22:41-46)

Christ Himself triggers off this controversy.

1. What question did Jesus ask the Pharisees? (22:41-42a) Why is this question so central? _____

John Newton:

*"What think ye of Christ?" is the test;
To try both your state and your scheme;
You cannot be right in the rest,
Unless you think rightly of Him.*

2. What was the Pharisees' response? (22:42) Is this correct? (2 Sam.7:16; Isa.9:6-7; Jer.23:5-6; Mic.5:2; Matt.1:1-17; 20:30; 21:9) _____

3. But what does Jesus ask in response to that? (22:43-45; Psalm 110:1) Who was the human author of this Psalm and who was the divine author? _____

David wrote: 'The Lord (Jehovah) said to my Lord (Adonai).' In Greek it is 'My Kyrios said to my Kyrios.'

4. How can David's son also be David's Lord? Did the Pharisees know the answer? (22:46) _____

In Revelation 22:16 Christ is the root of David (the source of David) and the offspring of David (a descendant of David).

Compare the following verses:

- (a) Luke 2:7 - As a man, He was born of Mary in a feed trough; Hebrews 7:3 - As God, He has no father or mother.
- (b) Luke 2:40,52 - As a man - a human being - He grew up; Hebrews 13:8 - As God, He never changed.
- (c) Matthew 8:24 - As a man, He slept in a boat; Hebrews 1:3 - As God, He upholds the world.
- (d) John 7:1,9 - As man, He was in one place at one time; Matthew 28:20 - As God, He is everywhere at the same time.
- (e) Luke 23:46 - As man, He died; Hebrews 7:22-25 - As God, He lives forever.

Cyril of Alexandria in the fifth century wrote: 'While visible as a babe in swaddling clothes, and yet in the bosom of the Virgin who bare Him, He was filling all creation as God, and was enthroned with Him who begat Him.'

Edward Caswall:

*Lo! within a manger lies
He who built the starry skies.*

Hypocrites! (Matt.23:1-39)

In Matthew 23 Christ unleashes an onslaught of withering invective against the Pharisees for their hypocrisy and distorted values. It no doubt hit its mark, and it is revealing that it also offends the inclusivist sensibilities of the arch-liberal Episcopalian bishop, John Shelby Spong, who, while claiming to be a Christian who loves the Bible, criticised Christ for being 'narrow-minded, vindictive, and even hypocritical' (see J. S. Spong, *Rescuing the Bible from Fundamentalism*, San Francisco: Harper, 1991, pp.10, 247, quote from p.21). Such is liberal hypocrisy and unbelief!

If verse 14 is omitted as not being original, there are seven woes pronounced in verses 13-36. Apart from the 7 woes, there are 6 hypocrites, 2 blind guides, 2 blind fools, and one 'serpents, brood of vipers'.

1. To whom was Jesus speaking? (23:1) _____

2. What do the scribes and Pharisees do? (23:2) _____

Remember that the teacher sat to teach.

3. How were Christians to respond to them? (23:3) _____

4. Of what were the scribes and Pharisees guilty?

v.3b _____

v.4 (cf. Matt.12:9-14; Acts 15:1, 28) _____

vv.5-7 _____

See Exodus 13:9, 16; Numbers 15:38-39

5. Contrast verses 5-7 (the Pharisees) with verse 8-10 (the Church) _____

Richard Baxter: 'Church greatness consists in being greatly serviceable.'

6. What great principle does Jesus set forth in verses 11-12? _____

7. What is Jesus' charge against the Pharisees in verse 13? What sort of effect does an unconverted teaching office have on the church? _____

Verse 14 probably comes from Mark 12:40.

8. Does missionary zeal prove salvation? (23:15) _____

I heard of an American basketballer who turned his back on a million dollar contract in order to become a Mormon missionary in Australia. Was he zealous? Yes. Was he saved? No.

9. What is the religious sin mentioned in verses 16-19? How can we fall into this trap? _____

Buddhist monks undertake 10 precepts and 227 rules.

10. How does Jesus deal with this in verses 20-22? _____

11. Of what else are the Pharisees accused? (23:23-24; note Hos.6:6) How can

we be guilty of something similar? _____

In the original Aramaic, qalma is a gnat, and gamla is a camel. Norman Webb in Wesley College in Sydney University was accused of serving brandied strawberries at a dinner. He actually denied every Christian doctrine, campaigned for abortion, and ran off with another woman - but the charge was serving brandied strawberries!

On the morning of his execution, the Scottish covenanter, Donald Cargill, wrote: 'I have followed holiness, I have taught the truth, and I have been most in the main things.'

12. Where else did the Pharisees go wrong? (23:25-28) _____

13. How did the Pharisees treat the prophets? (23:29-36) Who sent the prophets? (23:34) From Jeremiah 7:25, what does this imply? _____

Zechariah in presumably the one mentioned in 2 Chronicles 24:20-22. Berechiah in verse 35 is possibly a copyist's error from Zechariah 1:1.

14. What does Jesus prophesy in 23:36? When was this fulfilled? _____

15. What is Christ's attitude to those who are not saved? (23:37; note Jer.9:1) Herman Hoeksema argues that the doctrine of election means that God has no love for the non-elect, and no desire to see them saved. Is that right? _____

16. What is it that prevents Jerusalem from coming to Christ? (23:37; cf. John 5:40) _____

J. C. Ryle: 'Let it be a settled principle in our religion, that man's salvation, if saved, is wholly of God; and that man's ruin, if lost, is wholly of himself.'

17. What punishment will follow? (23:38) _____

This happened in Jeremiah's day (Jer.12:7) but the temple was rebuilt. However, it has not been rebuilt since the Romans destroyed it in A.D. 70.

18. How are we meant to interpret verse 39? _____

William Hendriksen says that it refers to the second coming. J. Marcellus Kik sees a hint here of repentance, and that Israel will finally recognise her Messiah (cf. Rom.11:25-26).

Things to come (Matt.24)

William Hendriksen says that the Roman-Jewish war of A.D. 66-70 including the destruction of Jerusalem points to the second coming of Christ. He also says that 'the answer suits more than one event in history'.

J. Marcellus Kik says that 24:3-35 are about the destruction of Jerusalem, while verses 36 to the end are about the second coming. The time text is verse 34. Kik's views make good sense of this verse.

J. C. Ryle sees the first tribulation as pointing to a second tribulation when Jerusalem will be destroyed again by the Antichrist. But would this mean that the temple would have to be rebuilt? Surely, 2 Thessalonians would demand 'yes'.

1. What were the disciples impressed by? (24:1; recall 23:38) What does Jesus say about the temple? (24:2) _____

Josephus says that it was so thoroughly destroyed that no one coming after could ever believe that it had ever been inhabited.

2. What three questions do the disciples then raise? (24:3) _____

'The close of the age' may simply refer to the end of the Jewish dispensation.

3. Verses 4-14 surely refer to the destruction of the temple. What does Jesus warn His disciples about? (24:4) _____

4. What are misleading signs of the end?

24:5, 11 _____

24:6-7 _____

24:9, 10, 12 _____

24:14 _____

This might only be referring to what is said in Acts 2:5; Rom.1:8; Col.1:6, 23.

This would mean that Jesus is referring to evangelism done amongst the Gentiles before the destruction of the temple in A.D. 70.

There may be a second fulfilment in all this.

5. How are we to respond to all this?

24:4 _____

24:8 _____

It is not sorrows but birth pains i.e. the birth of something new.

24:13 _____

24:14 _____

6. What would happen? (24:15; Dan.9:22-27; 11:31; 12:11; Luke 21:20) _____

In 168 B.C. Antiochus Epiphanes erected a statue of Zeus in the temple, and so began the Maccabean Wars. What Antiochus did, the Romans would do.

7. What does Jesus tell the Christians to do? (24:16-18) _____

Eusebius of Caesarea says that many Christians fled to Pella in Perea, across the Jordan during the war with the Romans.

8. How does Jesus describe the destruction of Jerusalem? (24:19-20) _____

The Seventh Day Adventists say that this has a second fulfilment, and shows that Christians were keeping the Sabbath. That is speculation.

9. What is said in verses 21-22? _____

Josephus records that one woman killed her son in order to eat him.

10. Who would appear? (24:23-26) _____

Apparently one Egyptian led 30,000 into the desert where they expected God to lead them.

11. How will the second coming be very different from the Roman-Jewish war? (24:27) _____

12. What will the destruction of the temple mean for Judaism? (24:28) _____

Judaism today has no temple, no priests, and no sacrifices.

The suggestion that perhaps the carcass here refers to our Lord Jesus Christ, who was slain for our sins, and the eagles refer to chosen sinners who flee to him for salvation and life is more fanciful than convincing.

13. David Dickson and J. C. Ryle refer verses 29-35 to the second coming; Spurgeon refers them to both the end of the temple and the ushering in of the second coming, but recall that Marcellus Kik says that verses 29-35 refer to the destruction of Jerusalem and the passing of Judaism. To what is verse 29 referring? Is it meant to be literal? (note Isa.13:10 for the passing of Babylon; Ezek.32:7-8 for the passing of Egypt; Joel 2:31 for the passing of Israel) _____

Note the 'immediately' in verse 29.

A. E. Housman wrote of World War I as 'the day when Heaven was falling, the hour when Earth's foundation fled'. Shakespeare often writes in a similar vein.

14. How could verses 30-31 refer to the second coming? Could they refer to the destruction of Jerusalem? _____

The tribes of the earth could be 'the tribes of the land' (as R. V. G. Tasker and R. T. France think). The angels could be missionary messengers.

15. What does verses 32-33 refer to? _____

Spurgeon says that verses 29-31 refer to the second coming, but in verses 32-33 we leap back to A.D. 70.

16. Verse 34 gives a time frame. Ryle and Hendriksen say that the Jewish people will not pass away before Christ comes again. What do you think? ____

It seems best to retain the usual meaning for 'generation'.

17. What does Christ teach about His word? (24:35) _____

We may not be sure of the interpretation of every verse in Matthew 24, but we can be sure of its infallible authority.

18. What is said about Jesus' second coming? (24:36, 42-43; note 1 Thess.5:1-3) How is it that Christ does not know? _____

There was a genuine emptying in the incarnation.

The Montanists in the second century thought Christ would come soon to Phrygia; William Miller thought Christ was coming in 1843 or 1844; the Jehovah's Witnesses say that it was an invisible coming in 1914 that only they know about; and there was a Pentecostal group that told us it would be in October 1992.

C. H. Spurgeon: 'We need not therefore be troubled by idle prophecies of hair-brained fanatics, even if they claim to interpret the Scriptures; for what the angels do not know has not been revealed to them.'

19. Will we have any warning of this great event? (24:37-41) How does Jesus illustrate His point? _____

This is not referring to any rapture but to the second coming.

20. How are we to expect the unexpected? (24:44) What does it mean to be ready? _____

21. How is this illustrated in the parable in verses 45-51? What does the faithful and wise servant do? What does the wicked servant do? What happens to the wicked servant when the master returns? What is the parable teaching us? _____

Note that the wicked servant is a nominal Christian, not a rank unbeliever.

The wise and foolish virgins (Matt.25:1-13)

1. To what is the kingdom of heaven compared? (25:1)_____

Most weddings took place at night. It seems that the groom was coming to fetch the bride after the betrothal. The ten virgins - unmarried friends of the bride - were to go out to meet the groom.

2. How are the ten virgins described? (25:2) _____

3. How are the wise and the foolish virgins distinguished? (25:3-4) _____

4. What happened next? (25:5) To what does the delay refer? Who is the bridegroom? What did the ten virgins do? _____

Often critics appeal to 1 Thess.4:15-17 to assert that the early Church believed that Christ's second coming would be within a few years or decades at the most. But the 'we' there refers to Christians, not to Paul himself, as can be seen by 1 Thess.5:2.

5. What happens next? (25:6) To what event is this referring? _____

6. Is there a second chance after Jesus comes again? (25:7-9) What does the oil represent? (see Rom.8:9) _____

7. What happens when the bridegroom comes? (25:10) What does it mean that the door was shut? (see Gen.7:16) Who is secure and who is forever shut out of the kingdom? (note Heb.9:27) _____

Charles Wesley:

*Far from a world of grief and sin,
With God eternally shut in.*

8. What happens when the five foolish virgins arrive? (25:11-12; see 7:21-23) Tennyson wrote of the 'larger hope' - the hope that ultimately we will all get there. Is there a larger hope? _____

9. What is the lesson for us? (25:13) What does it mean to be ready? _____

C. S. Lewis: 'If we are all going to be destroyed by an atomic bomb, let that bomb when it comes find us doing sensible and human things - praying, working, teaching, reading, listening to music, bathing the children, playing tennis, chatting to our friends over a pint and a game of darts - not huddled together like frightened sheep and thinking about bombs.'

The parable of the talents (Matt.25:14-30)

The parable of the workers in the vineyard (Matt.20:1-16) makes it clear that salvation is only by grace, not works. But the parable of the talents makes it clear that judgment is by works. It is justification by faith, but judgment by works. 'Watch,' says the parable of the ten virgins (Matt.25:1-13). 'Work,' says the parable of the talents.

1. What is the kingdom of heaven compared to in 25:14-15? Do we all receive the same talents, privileges, and responsibilities? _____

A talent was a measure of weight of money.

2. What ought we to do with the talents that have been entrusted to us? (25:16-17) _____

This talent need not be spectacular. G. N. M. Collins was Professor of Church History at the Free Church College in Edinburgh, and he particularly loved preaching at a certain place. One Sunday morning he came back to the house he was staying at, and he heard a blind, bed-ridden woman praying for the service. He understood more of why he loved preaching there.

3. What sort of thing does the man do in verse 18? What sort of thing might Jesus have in mind? _____

4. What happened after a long time? (25:19) To what is Jesus referring? _____

5. How are we judged? (25:20, 22; see Rev.20:13) How does Christ find these two men? (note too 1 Cor.4:1-2) _____

6. How does Jesus respond to the first two men? (25:21, 23) _____

7. What is the third man thinking? (25:18, 24-25; note James 4:17) _____

Richard Baxter said: 'To do no harm is the praise of a stone, not of a man.'

8. What is Christ's response to this? (25:26-27) What should the man have done? What does Jesus mean by this? _____

9. By what principle does Christ deal with us? (25:28-29) _____

10. What is the destiny of the man who buried his talent? (25:30) _____

Horatius Bonar:

*Go, labour on while it is day;
The world's dark night is hastening on;
Speed, speed thy work; cast sloth away;
It is not thus that souls are won.*

The parable of the sheep and the goats (Matt.25:31-46)

1. Who is Jesus? (25:31) What does He say that He will do? (25:31-33; Daniel 7:13-14) Who will be judged? _____

Richard Neville said on ABC radio that one can maintain a spiritual life but not believe that Jesus is the Son of God. That makes no sense in the light of Jesus' claim here.

2. What will Jesus say to the sheep? (25:34) When was this prepared for them? _____

3. How will the sheep be judged? (25:35-40) Is this the way of salvation or the evidence of salvation? What are the sheep unaware of? (note 6:1-4) Who are 'the least of Jesus' brethren'? (cf. 12:50; 28:10; although we need to remember Galatians 6:10) _____

4. What will Jesus say to the goats? (25:41) For whom was this prepared? _____

Graham Greene, the novelist and a Roman Catholic, just before he died in 1991 was asked whether he believed in hell. Greene answered: 'I don't believe in Hell. I never have believed in Hell. I think it is contradictory. They say God is mercy ... so it is contradictory.' But Christ uttered the words of verse 34 and He uttered the words of verse 41.

5. Where will the goats have gone wrong? (25:42-45) _____

6. What are the two destinies before all mankind? (25:46) How long do they last? _____

The same adjective is used for both, which is not made clear by the NKJV which has 'everlasting punishment' and 'eternal life'.

*When we've been there ten thousand years,
Bright shining as the sun,
We've no less days to sing God's praise
Than when we'd first begun* (John Newton).

The last Passover (Matt.26:1-30)

1. What did Jesus say to His disciples after telling them these parables? (26:1-2) How was the feast of the Passover celebrated, and what was its meaning? (Exodus 12) _____

2. What did Caiaphas and the other religious leaders plot to do? (26:3-5) How did they plan to carry out their plan? Why were they so careful? _____

3. Where was Jesus in verse 6? _____

4. Who came up to Him, and what did she do? (26:7) _____

This is not the same as the anointing in Luke 7:36-50. John 12 tells us that the woman in Matthew 26 was actually Mary, the sister of Martha and Lazarus.

5. How did the disciples respond? (26:8-9) _____

6. But what is Jesus' evaluation of her action? (26:10) _____

7. What, in effect, is the meaning of her action? (26:11-12) What does Jesus say about the poor in verse 11? And what does He imply about the spread of the gospel in verse 13? _____

8. What did Judas do? (26:14-16) What does this teach us? _____

Exodus 21:32 gives 30 pieces of silver as the compensation for a dead slave (note Zech.11:12).

9. What did the disciples ask on the first day of Unleavened Bread? (26:17)

10. What did Jesus reply? (26:18-19) Who do you notice about His authoritative tone? _____

11. What was Jesus doing in the evening? (26:20) _____

12. What did Jesus prophesy? (26:21) _____

13. Did the disciples guess who it was? (26:22) What should that teach us? _____

14. What did Jesus' answer in verse 23 tell them? Would Jesus be betrayed by a friend or an enemy? _____

15. How are divine sovereignty and human responsibility seen together in verse 24? How does verse 24b show that annihilationism - the belief that there is no conscious suffering in hell but only obliteration - is not true? _____

16. What does Jesus tell Judas? (26:25) Was Judas' question a serious one? (note 26:14-16) _____

17. What did Jesus do with the bread and the wine? (26:26-28) What new

meaning is given to the Passover? What is the purpose of the fulfilling of the covenant? What is the point of the eating and drinking? _____

The Lord's Supper is thus a rite of covenant renewal.

18. When would be the next time that Christ would feast with His disciples? (26:29; Rev.19:7-9) _____

19. How did the group finish the first Lord's Supper? (26:30) _____

This was quite possibly a Psalm.

Peter's denial prophesied (Matt.26:31-35)

1. What did Jesus prophesy concerning His disciples? (26:31) Who else prophesied this? (Zech.13:7) _____

2. But what would take place after that? (26:32) Where would Jesus meet them? _____

3. What did Peter say about himself? (26:33) How much self-understanding does Peter possess? _____

4. What is Jesus' response to Peter's claim about himself? (26:34) _____

5. Is Peter convinced by the prophecies of Scripture and of Jesus? (26:35) What about the other disciples? How can true Christians delude themselves, all with good intentions? _____

In the garden of Gethsemane (Matt.26:36-56)

1. Where did Jesus go next? (26:36) What was He intending to do, and what did He ask the disciples to do? _____

2. Whom did He take with Him? What is His state of mind? (36:37) _____

3. What did Jesus say to Peter, James and John? (36:38) What task was given to them? _____

4. What happened next? (26:39) What does this reveal about Jesus? (note Heb.2:18; 4:15; 5:7) What does Jesus mean by the 'cup'? (Isa.51:17; Jer.25:15-18) Was it possible for salvation to come except by the suffering and death of the Son of God? _____

Since there are two persons here, there must be two wills.

5. What did Jesus find when He returned to His disciples? (26:40) Why does He rebuke them? _____

6. What is the command and the warning in verse 41? _____

Note that the spirit does not refer to the soul and the flesh to the body, but to the two realms - that of the Spirit and that of the old Adam. John Legg, however, takes 'flesh' to refer to their weary bodies.

7. What does Jesus do for the second time? (26:42) Again, what is pressing upon Jesus' soul at this time? _____

8. Again, what did Jesus find for the second time? (26:43) _____

9. What happened the third time? (26:44-46) What hour has now approached? Who has arrived? _____

10. Who came with Judas? (26:47) With what were they armed? _____

11. What was to be the sign of betrayal? (26:48) Again, what does this teach us? _____

12. What did Judas do next? (26:49) How is this so ironic? _____

13. What is Jesus' reply to Judas? (26:50) Why is this such an amazing way to address Judas? What effect might this have ultimately had on Judas? What did the crowd do to Jesus? _____

14. How did one of the disciples respond? (26:51; for more details, see John 18:10) _____

15. What did Jesus tell him to do? (26:52) What is the meaning of the saying? _____

16. How was Jesus' suffering and death voluntary? (26:53) _____

17. What was the betrayal, arrest, suffering and death of the Messiah actually doing? (26:54-56) _____

The trial (Matt.26:57-68)

1. To whom was Jesus led to next? (26:57) _____

According to the Mishnah, a capital trial could not be held during the night. We need to remember that only Pilate, not any Jewish authority, could pronounce a sentence of death.

2. Who was following? (26:58) Where did Peter get to? _____

3. What was the intention of the majority of the Sanhedrin? (26:59-60) How was this intention frustrated? _____

4. Finally, what was the testimony of two false witnesses? (26:60-61; note Deut.17:6) _____

Note: this is not mentioned in Matthew's Gospel, but is found in John 2:19.

5. What did Caiaphas say to Jesus? (26:62) What was Jesus' response to Caiaphas? (26:63a; Isa.53:7) _____

6. Caiaphas then put Jesus on oath. What did he ask Him? (26:63) _____

7. What is Jesus' reply to Caiaphas, and what is Caiaphas' response to that

reply? (26:64-65; see Ps.110:1; Dan.7:13-14) Is Jesus claiming to be a great prophet? _____

8. What was the Sanhedrin's verdict? (26:66) _____

9. How did the members of the Sanhedrin mock Jesus? (26:67-68) _____

Mark 14:65 adds the detail that Jesus was blindfolded.

*Bearing shame and scoffing rude,
 In my place condemned He stood;
 Sealed my pardon with His blood:
 Hallelujah! what a Saviour!* (Philipp Bliss)

Peter's denial (Matt.26:69-75)

1. What did the servant girl say about Peter? (26:69) _____

2. What did Peter say in response? (26:70) _____

3. Then what happened? (26:71) How did Peter respond this time? (26:72) _____

4. What was said next? (26:73) How was Peter recognised? _____

5. What is Peter's response on this third occasion? (26:74) What took place then? _____

6. What effect did this have on Peter? (26:75) Of what are Christians capable in certain circumstances? _____

Thomas Cranmer recanted six times before he stood firm, and was burnt at the stake on 21 March 1556.

Judas' betrayal, remorse, and suicide (Matt.27:1-10)

1. What did the chief priests and elders do in the morning? (27:1) _____

2. To whom did they lead Jesus? (27:2; recall John 18:31) _____

3. How did Judas respond to Jesus' condemnation? (27:3-4) _____

Dorothy Sayers in her radio play *The Man Born to be King* softens the traditional portrayal of Judas, but these verses are the only ones that she had to work with.

4. What did Judas do next? (27:5) List the similarities and the differences between this remorse and true repentance? _____

Acts 1:18 indicates a difficulty, but one cannot kill oneself by casting oneself headlong unless it is done from a height. Perhaps the rope broke when Judas hanged himself.

5. What was the response of the chief priests to what Judas did? (27:6) What does this indicate about their spiritual and moral state? _____

6. What did they do with the 30 pieces of silver? (27:7-8) _____

7. What did this fulfil? (27:9-10; Jer.18-19; Zech.11:13) _____

Matthew attributes this to Jeremiah when it is really a combination of Jeremiah 18-19 and Zechariah 11. Matthew probably refers only to the major prophet, as Mark 1:2-3 refers to Malachi and Isaiah under the heading of 'Isaiah'.

Jesus before Pilate (Matt. 27:11-26)

1. Who was Pilate? (27:11) What did he ask Jesus, and what did Jesus answer? _____

2. Why was Pilate greatly amazed by Jesus? (27:12-14; recall Isa.53:7) _____

Jesus' non-answers seem to have impressed Pilate rather than antagonised him.

3. What was a custom at the Feast of the Passover? (27:15) Who might possibly be released? (27:16) _____

4. What did Pilate do? (27:17) What is motivating Pilate at this stage? (27:18) What does Pilate know about the chief priests and the elders? _____

5. What did Pilate's wife do, and why? (27:19) Can God speak in dreams to pagans? Does this make Pilate's wife a Christian? _____

6. What did the chief priests and the elders persuade the crowd to do? (27:20-21) What happened as a result? _____

7. What did Pilate do? (27:22-23) What does this show about Pilate? _____

8. What did Pilate do next? (27:24) What does Pilate think he is doing? Is he succeeding? _____

9. What did the crowd shout in reply? (27:25) Why is this so terrible? _____

10. What was Pilate's next act? (27:26) _____

The scourging took place with a whip that consisted of bone and metal in the lashes. This was not the Jewish lashing which was limited to forty lashes (cf. 2 Cor.11:24). Under a Roman scourging, many a convicted criminal died before he could be crucified.

The crucifixion (Matt.27:27-44)

1. What did the Roman soldiers do to Christ? (27:27-31) Why were they mocking Him in this way? What is so ironic about this? _____

2. Who carried Jesus' cross? (27:32) Why? _____

3. Where did they come to? (27:33) _____

4. What was offered to Christ? (27:34) Why do you think He refused it? _____

This was probably just part of the mockery (see Ps.69:19-21).

5. What did the soldiers do? (27:35) What did this fulfil? (Ps.22:18) _____

6. What was the charge against Jesus? (27:36-37) What is the meaning of this? _____

7. Who were crucified with Jesus? (27:38) _____

8. How did the people respond to His crucifixion? (27:39; Ps.22:7) What were the sorts of thing that they said to Jesus? (27:40) _____

9. In what way did the chief priests, scribes and elders join in the mocking? (27:41-43) Again, how is this deeply ironic? _____

10. How did the two brigands initially respond to the one being crucified with them? (27:44) _____

Luke 23:39-43 adds the detail that one of the brigands was converted in his dying hour.

The death of Jesus (Matt.27:45-56)

1. What happened about the sixth hour i.e. about noon? (27:45) What does this signify? _____

2. What did Jesus cry out about the ninth hour i.e. about 3.00 p.m.? (27:46; Ps.22:1; Gal.3:13) What is the meaning of this cry? (it is in the Aramaic language) _____

F. F. Bruce: 'This is the hardest of all the hard sayings.'

In 1513 Martin Luther set out to lecture on the Psalms at the University of Wittenberg. He came to Psalm 22, from which this verse is cited, and he was bewildered.

James Henley Thornwell: 'Who, at the foot of Calvary, can pronounce sin to be a light matter?'

*He suffered in our stead,
He saved His people thus;
The Curse that fell upon His head,
Was due by right to us.*

Isaac Watts:

*Alas! And did my Saviour bleed
And did my Sovereign die?
Would He devote that sacred Head
For such a worm as I?*

Os Guinness: 'No other God has wounds.'

3. What did some of the bystanders think that Christ was doing? (27:47) _____

4. What did one person do? (27:48) But how did the others react? (27:49) _____

5. Then what happened? (27:50) What is the Christian definition of death? (cf. James 2:26) _____

6. What happened in the temple? (27:51; see Heb.10:19-20, which implies it was the inner curtain or veil) What else happened? What does all this signify? _____

7. What else happened? (27:52-53) _____

Small wonder that John Owen was to write *The Death of Death in the Death of Christ*.

8. How did a centurion and some others respond? (27:54) What did they realise? Did they have good reason to say this? _____

It is difficult to gauge exactly what they would have meant by this.

9. Where were the women? (27:55-56) Where were the men?! _____

At the tomb (Matt.27:57-66)

1. Who came to Pilate at evening? (27:57-58; see John 19:38; Isa.53:9) For what purpose? What was Pilate's response? _____

2. What did Joseph do with Jesus' body? (59-60) _____

3. Who else was at the tomb? (27:61) _____

4. What did the chief priests (Sadducees) and the Pharisees do? (27:62) _____

5. Of what were they afraid? (27:63-64) Why would it be ludicrous for the disciples to do as the Jewish religious leaders feared? Were they in any fit state to perpetrate a fraud? _____

6. What did Pilate say in response? (27:65) What happened as a result?
(27:66) _____

7. Is there any possibility that Jesus was not actually dead? _____

Risen from the dead! (Matt.28:1-15)

1. What happened on the Sunday? (28:1) Who went to the tomb? _____

2. What had happened? (28:2-4) _____

3. What did the angel say to the women? (28:5) _____

4. What is one proof of the resurrection of Jesus? (28:6) _____

5. What did the angel tell the women to do and say? (28:7) _____

6. How did they respond to this? (28:8) Who met them then? (28:9) What did they do to Jesus? Does He try to correct them? _____

7. What does Jesus tell them? (28:10) How does He describe His disciples? Why does He use this term? _____

8. What did the guards do, and how did the chief priests respond to them? (28:11-5) What does this reveal about them all? _____

This probably indicates that Matthew was writing in Jewish Christian circles, which still interacted with Jews.

Historical indications of the reality of Jesus' resurrection: the certainty of His death, the empty tomb, the failure of the authorities to produce the body, the dissolute state of mind of the disciples, the resurrection is in harmony with Old Testament prophecies and with all Jesus said about Himself, the absurdity of alternative theories.

