

The Sermon on the Mount

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

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

As I read through the gospels, I am struck by the fact that Jesus is often followed by the multitudes. This chapter picks up after we have been told of the call of the disciples, and chapter 4 ends with these verses.

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

Matt. 4:24 And his fame went throughout all Syria: and they brought unto him all sick people that were taken with divers diseases and torments, and those which were possessed with devils, and those which were lunatick, and those that had the palsy; and he healed them.

Matt. 4:25 **And there followed him great multitudes of people from Galilee, and from Decapolis, and from Jerusalem, and from Judaea, and from beyond Jordan.**

Point is made that there is a great multitude from many areas of Israel that are following Him because of his miracles. Verse one sounds as if Jesus was trying to separate Himself from the multitudes for an opportunity to teach His disciples, and I believe that was His main intent. By the end of this discourse, as recorded at the end of chapter 7, you become aware that at least a part of the multitude had followed them and heard His instruction.

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

After doing a phrase search, I found that the phrase “kingdom of heaven” is unique to the gospel of Matthew. I think in context with the flow from chapter 4, this is the term Jesus used in reference to “the kingdom,” the time the Jews were looking for when Messiah would rule on the throne of David. I think it will become clear that the kingdom is composed of those who accept Jesus as Lord and Savior because the character expected from its citizens as detailed in this teaching needs supernatural empowerment (from the Holy Spirit). I’ve often heard this section described as the “be attitudes,” or attitudes that should characterize the life of every believer.

Blessed in the Greek references “extremely blessed, fortunate, well off, happy.” At first read it seems an odd word to use with some of these character traits until you recognize the eternal spiritual benefit that accompanies such character.

The poor in spirit are those who realize their need for a Savior. They realize that they are spiritually destitute without God’s provision for their healing, for forgiveness of their sins. Those who look to God as Lord will inherit the kingdom of heaven, the kingdom in which He is acknowledged as King. We know from other scriptures that this kingdom will be established on earth and will continue for time without end.

Is. 9:6 For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called

Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.

Is. 9:7 Of the increase of *his* government and peace *there shall be* no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice **from henceforth even for ever.**

Dan. 6:26 I make a decree, That in every dominion of my kingdom men tremble and fear before the God of Daniel: for he *is* the living God, and stedfast for ever, and **his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed,** and his dominion *shall be even* unto the end.

Luke 1:31 And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS.

Luke 1:32 He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David:

Luke 1:33 And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and **of his kingdom there shall be no end.**

I think it is also interesting to note that those who are poor in spirit are often those who are truly poor in this world. Those who are poor seem more willing to recognize their need before the Lord than the rich. Why? I think it is because it requires humility to admit you are a sinner. The rich often mistakenly account their wealth as God's approval on their life. Others who are rich are bound by pride in what "they" have accomplished. Scripture declares this truth elsewhere.

James 2:5 Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?

Matt. 19:24 And again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.

Recognizing that you are poor in spirit leads naturally into developing the character traits that follow: mourning over sin, meekness, a hunger for righteousness, showing mercy, having a pure heart, being a peacemaker and being willing to suffer for faith in Christ. In fact, you can't develop the following traits with first becoming "poor in spirit."

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

It's easy to want to interpret this verse out of context; but I think that sandwiched between the *poor in spirit* and the *meek*, you would have to connect this *mourning* to that which depicts repentance and sorrow for sin. Everyone who turns to God in faith and repentance will be comforted.

The Greek for *comforted* includes "to call near." That is exactly the term used by Paul in his letter to the Romans in connection with being chosen as part of God's family.

Rom. 8:30 Moreover whom he did predestinate, **them he also called:** and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.

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

The Greek for *meek* defines it as humble. Webster defines it as “Mild of temper; not easily provoked or irritated; patient under injuries; not vain, or haughty, or resentful; forbearing; submissive.” I’ve often heard it described as strength under control. This verse appears to be a quote from one of the psalms.

Psa. 37:11 But the meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace.

Another clue as to what is meant might be found in another psalm.

Psa. 149:4 For the LORD taketh pleasure in his people: he will beautify the meek with salvation.

(2/09) In God’s eyes, those who are meek are those who have accepted the gift of His salvation by faith. One who has been saved has had to humble himself and admit his need for a Savior and has yielded himself in submission to the Lord.

Salvation is a reference to “deliverance, preservation and victory.” This is another promise of enjoying the blessings of the kingdom. It gives credence to my thoughts that our heaven will include enjoyment of the “new earth” upon which Jesus will rule His kingdom for time without end.

Is. 65:17 For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind.

2Pet. 3:13 Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.

Redeemed man will then enjoy the earth as God had intended for him from the beginning.

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

This is obviously not a reference to physical hunger, but to spiritual hunger. Scripture is clear that God will be found by those who seek Him and that He will give us the desires of our heart if we acknowledge Him as Lord in our life. Only those who hunger for spiritual nourishment will be seeking the Lord. (2/09) When we acknowledge Him as Lord, the desires of our heart will be centered in His desires for us.

Deut. 4:29 But if from thence thou shalt seek the LORD thy God, thou shalt find *him*, if thou seek him with all thy heart and with all thy soul.

Psa. 9:10 And they that know thy name will put their trust in thee: for thou, LORD, hast not forsaken them that seek thee.

Psa. 34:10 ...they that seek the LORD shall not want any good *thing*.

Psa. 37:4 Delight thyself also in the LORD; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart.

Heb. 11:6 But without faith *it is* impossible to please *him*: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and *that* he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.

I think it is interesting to note that the desire for righteousness results in being *filled*, which the Greek defines as being “gorged...supplied in

abundance...satisfied." In other words, the provision will be overflowing, far more than we need; *satisfaction* is a reference to contentment and fulfilled desire.

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

This verse again seems to be taken from the psalms.

Psa. 18:25 With the merciful thou wilt shew thyself merciful; with an upright man thou wilt shew thyself upright;

The Greek defines *mercy* as compassion, and Webster defines it as "Forbearance to inflict harm under circumstances of provocation, when one has the power to inflict it; compassionate treatment of an offender or adversary."

This would fall into the category of reaping what you sow.

Gal. 6:7-8 Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but **he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.**

Showing mercy should be the natural result of having been shown mercy. Every person who has accepted Jesus as Lord has been shown amazing mercy; He became the sacrifice for our sin to redeem us and provide our salvation. When we accept that salvation, we are indwelt by the Holy Spirit and are empowered to sow the things of the Spirit in our lives. One of those things is to show mercy to others.

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

To be *pure* is to be clean and free from moral defilement, to be innocent and genuine. This speaks to me of our motives. It's ministry or service without expectation. It's kindness for the sake of being kind and sacrifice from a heart of love. Scripture tells us that the heart is deceitful and wicked.

Jer. 17:9 The heart *is* deceitful above all *things*, and desperately wicked: who can know it?

In this body of flesh we will continue to struggle with its influence on our lives, but as believers we are new creations in Christ; we have new hearts. I can't wait for the day that we completely shed this body of flesh and are clothed in incorruption as described by the Spirit through Paul in his letter to the Corinthians.

1Cor. 15:51-53 Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal *must* put on immortality.

When that happens, we shall see God; we will glory in His presence.

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

A peacemaker is one who seeks to bring about reconciliation where there is division and promotes unity in hopes of preventing division to begin with. It's interesting that this trait follows that of having a pure heart, because I think only those with pure hearts can really bring about peace. Their interest is other-centered rather than self-centered. In context with the rest of the passage, I

would think that the focus of these efforts would be toward bringing about reconciliation between sinful man and his Savior. Most effective in this effort would be a focus on influencing by example and developing the character traits being identified in this teaching. Why the reference to being called “the children of God?” I think it is because that was also the ministry of the Lord Jesus, to reconcile sinful man with God. Scripture is clear that we become sons of God and joint-heirs with Christ when we accept Jesus as Savior.

1John 3:1 Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, **that we should be called the sons of God**: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.

Rom. 8:16 The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God:

Rom. 8:17 And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, **and joint-heirs with Christ**; if so be that we suffer with *him*, that we may be also glorified together.

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

Persecution can reference suffering that ranges from harassment to being grieved to being put to death. *Righteousness* is a reference to being holy and pure; and we established in verse 6 that this is descriptive of those who are seeking God and striving to live godly lives. These are they who will be allowed to enjoy the benefits of God's Kingdom.

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

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

Now the Lord Jesus makes it clearer. Choosing to follow Him will possibly result in your being taunted, insulted, harassed, grieved and killed “for my sake.” He is declaring that He is righteous, pure and holy which carries the implication that He is God. The sad part is that people will even resort to telling lies about those that follow Jesus to justify their wicked actions. Then, far beyond our normal way of thinking, we are to rejoice with great joy when we are persecuted in that manner. Why? Because it will result in great reward in heaven. Then He reminds them that this type of treatment towards God's messengers is to be expected since the prophets of old had been persecuted in the same way. Again, Jesus is identifying Himself as God and comparing His followers with the prophets.

I'm always amazed when I think about any type of reward in heaven. Just getting to go to heaven and live in the presence of the Savior is beyond my imagination, but to think that there is a possibility of even more. The difference seems to be that our salvation is a gift offered for the taking. The rewards given to believers, however, will be earned by righteous living.

1Cor. 3:13 Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is.

1Cor. 3:14 If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward.

1Cor. 3:15 If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.

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

"Ye" – A reminder that Jesus is talking specifically to His followers.

The Lord now compares those that choose to follow Him in faith and obedience to salt. What is the benefit of salt? It's used to enhance the flavor of food and as a preservative for meat. If, however, the salt no longer gives the desired benefit, it is good for nothing. As believers, we are responsible to show people the benefits of following the Lord in faith and obedience, how to truly enhance their life experience. We are technically preserving life by spreading the gospel and leading others to faith and eternal life. Spiritually speaking, we are the living among a world of dead people.

I think there are many churches today that are more focused on providing for the physical and social needs of people than on providing for their spiritual needs, that which affects/determines eternal life. This reminds me of the words that the Lord had for the church at Sardis.

Rev. 3:1 And unto the angel of the church in Sardis write; These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars; I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead.

Rev. 3:2 Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God.

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

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

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

Jesus is still directing His words to His followers. This time He describes His disciples as "the light of the world." You can't hide a city on a hill, because a city necessarily has lights, and light illuminates and facilitates vision. The intention of a light is to reveal what is in the dark. A candlestick doesn't just give light to one person; it gives light to everyone in its presence.

The Lord then makes the application. The "good works" or moral/virtuous actions of the disciples form the light that shines before men. Those same "good works" glorify God the Father in heaven. The only works that truly qualify as "good" are those done in obedience to and in honor of God; they are done to bring glory to God and not to self. Unless what we claim to believe is evidenced by how we live, our message will have no effect on those around us. There are many scriptures that equate light with good and darkness with evil.

Job 30:26 When I looked for good, then evil came *unto me*: and when I waited for light, there came darkness.

Is. 5:20 Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!

John 3:19 And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.

2Cor. 6:14 Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?

That is why James was so careful to declare that faith without works is dead.

James 2:17-19 Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works. Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble.

True faith will be evidenced by the works of the Spirit in the life of the believer. Those works serve as a light to the dark world around them and give evidence of the life that is available through Jesus Christ. Paul also teaches this truth using the same example of light.

Eph. 5:8-9 For ye were sometimes darkness, but now *are ye* light in the Lord: walk as children of light: (For the fruit of the Spirit *is* in all goodness and righteousness and truth;)

I am also reminded that a candlestick isn't self-lit; it has to be lit from another source. Each person of faith is lighted, so to speak, by the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit. He is the source from which our light is able to shine.

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

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

I think the Lord is beginning a transition statement with these verses as He prepares to talk about the true intent of the law. His presentation will present an application to the heart of a person that goes beyond the legalistic observance of the law that they have been taught. Jesus is careful to point out that He has come in fulfillment of the law and the message of the prophets. In fact, God's law, His word, will be fulfilled to the tiniest detail. I believe "till heaven and earth pass" was an idiom that gave emphasis to the truth of the statement.

Jesus fulfilled the law by succeeding in every point in which we fail(ed).

Scripture teaches that disobedience to the law results in death.

Rom. 6:23 For the wages of sin *is* death;

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

Jesus fulfilled the law by living a sinless life and laying His life down as the sacrifice for our sin so that we could be declared sinless as well. That is the truth that Paul declared in his letters to the Galatians and Corinthians.

Gal. 3:10 For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed *is* every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.

Gal. 3:11 But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, *it is* evident: for, The just shall live by faith.

Gal. 3:12 And the law is not of faith: but, The man that doeth them shall live in them.

Gal. 3:13 **Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us:** for it is written, Cursed *is* every one that hangeth on a tree:

2Cor. 5:21 For he hath made him *to be* sin for us, who knew no sin; **that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.**

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

The thing that stands out in this verse is that there will be those in “the kingdom of heaven” who will break these commandments and teach others to do the same, and those who will obey the commandments and teach others to do likewise. This would obviously have particular application to Messiah’s 1000-year earthly kingdom which the Jews were so anticipating, since there will still be those who refuse to acknowledge Jesus as LORD at that time.

I think there is also application to be made to believers until that time regarding the rewards we earn now as part of His kingdom. If we disregard God’s instruction in any area of our life and teach others to do the same, we will be among the least in the kingdom. If, however, we pay careful attention to God’s word and try to follow its instruction as we make daily choices and teach others to do the same, we shall be recognized as among the elite in the kingdom. I think note has to be made of the fact that we teach by example just as surely as by words; in fact, I think our example speaks to others much more loudly than the words we say.

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

This verse would have carried a certain amount of shock value to Jesus’ followers. The scribes and Pharisees were recognized as the spiritual elite among the people. Jesus is declaring that unless your life is more moral and holy than those who are recognized as the most spiritual, you won’t even get to enter the kingdom. It was a statement of fact that left no room for debate. Now He is ready to explain His statement and instruct them regarding the heart of the law, which was totally different than how the religious leaders taught it.

Matt. 5:21 Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment:

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

“danger” = liable to (a condition, penalty or imputation):—in danger of, guilty of, subject to.

The first law that Jesus uses to explain His teaching is the commandment: Thou shalt not kill. The penalty for murder—death. This was the judgment according to God’s instructions; it wasn’t determined by man.

Ex. 21:12 He that smiteth a man, so that he die, shall be surely put to death.

In defense of the religious leaders, this would seem to be pretty cut and dried. Jesus explains, however, that if you are even angry with your brother without cause you are guilty and subject to judgment as well. Jesus is wording it so that unjustified anger is equivalent to murder. **Raca** is a term that was basically designating someone as worthless; disgracing someone in that way is also wrong and is subject to judgment by the “court,” which in that time was the Sanhedrin. Calling someone a fool makes you subject to condemnation in hell.

This is pretty heavy teaching. I found as I read on in Exodus 21, there was a clue to this extended application of this commandment.

Ex. 21:13 And if a man lie not in wait, but God deliver *him* into his hand; then I will appoint thee a place whither he shall flee.

Ex. 21:14 But if a man come presumptuously upon his neighbour, to slay him with guile; thou shalt take him from mine altar, that he may die.

Ex. 21:17 And he that curseth his father, or his mother, shall surely be put to death.

These verses imply that intent/motive is to be considered in applying the law. I think we all know that anger unchecked can lead to murder. Showing contempt for another is a silent way of saying, “The world would be better off without you.” As I looked further, I found that both of these attitudes were clear infractions against the commands given in Leviticus.

Lev. 19:17 Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart:

Lev. 19:18 Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: I *am* the LORD.

I have not done a study on the laws God gave in light of this sermon, but I am sure there is more enlightenment to be found as I apply myself. Jesus was clear in stating that it is what is found on the inside that defiles a man.

Matt. 15:17 Do not ye yet understand, that whatsoever entereth in at the mouth goeth into the belly, and is cast out into the draught?

Matt. 15:18 But those things which proceed out of the mouth **come forth from the heart; and they defile the man.**

Matt. 15:19 For **out of the heart** proceed **evil thoughts**, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies:

Matt. 15:20 These are *the things* which defile a man: but to eat with unwashen hands defileth not a man.

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

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

“Therefore” – Based on what I have just said....

My paraphrase—If you find yourself at the altar to give a voluntary offering to the Lord and you suddenly remember that someone has a reason to be mad at you, you should leave your gift at the altar and go make reconciliation with that person, and then come back and make your offering. In other words, make sure your heart is right with the Lord before you present Him with a sacrifice that would be hypocritical. If we really love the Lord enough to make voluntary sacrifices to Him, we should be honoring Him in our lives with obedience. When we knowingly disobey His word and then give a public show of obedience, it is hypocritical.

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

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

The NLT gives a good understanding of these verses:

Come to terms quickly with your enemy before it is too late and you are dragged into court, handed over to an officer, and thrown in jail. I assure you that you won't be free again until you have paid the last penny.

This is very timely advice considering today's "sue happy" culture. The implication in these verses is that the person being sued has actually done something to deserve it since the assumption is that not making reconciliation will put him in jail.

I must admit that this seems out of place to me except that it does connect to getting reconciled with one who may be mad at you as was discussed in the previous verses. In this instance, however, this would seem to be referencing a known dispute—not something that would have just popped into your mind on the way to the altar. This goes along with the teaching to be at peace with all men whenever possible.

Rom. 12:18 If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.

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

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

Jesus next deals with the command not to commit adultery. Then the bombshell—If you have even looked at someone with the desire to do so, you are guilty in your heart. I don't think any other explanation is necessary.

Sad to say, today's culture feeds this temptation constantly in so many ways—from fashions, to entertainment, to businesses whose success is dependent on appealing to our lusts through advertising. You have to be so careful to guard your eyes as well as your heart.

In checking out one of the commentaries, I found a verse that clearly details this truth. In context, God was explaining the reason for the fringes they were to wear on the borders of their garments.

Num. 15:39 And it shall be unto you for a fringe, that ye may look upon it, and remember all the commandments of the LORD, and do them; and **that ye seek not after your own heart and your own eyes, after which ye use to go a whoring:**

Matt. 5:29 And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast *it* from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not *that* thy whole body should be cast into hell.

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

Based on my comments above, I think it is quite understandable why these two verses follow the previous two. It is through the eye that the temptation seed to commit adultery is planted. Jesus is making the point that it would be better to go through life handicapped than to yield to the temptation to live a life of sin and end up in hell.

Matt. 5:31 It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement:

Matt. 5:32 But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery.

The next issue addressed is divorce. The book of Deuteronomy is the first place that I could find instruction regarding divorce. Later in Matthew Jesus explained why that instruction was given.

Matt. 19:8 He saith unto them, Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: **but from the beginning it was not so.**

God's intention was for marriage to consist of one man and one woman; they, in fact, before God became one flesh.

Gen. 2:24 Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.

Jesus added the truth that God yokes them together in the flesh.

Matt. 19:6 Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.

Jesus now declares that the only acceptable reason for getting a divorce is because of adultery. If the guilty part remarries, he/she is causing the one they

marry to commit adultery as well. If you divorce for any other reason and remarry, both parties are guilty of adultery. The gospel of Mark makes it clear that the application is to both male and female-initiated divorce.

Mark 10:11 And he saith unto them, Whosoever shall put away his wife, and marry another, committeth adultery against her.

Mark 10:12 And if a woman shall put away her husband, and be married to another, she committeth adultery.

In 1Corinthians Paul teaches that a person who has divorced should remain unmarried or be reconciled to his/her spouse.

1Cor. 7:10 And unto the married I command, *yet not I, but the Lord*, Let not the wife depart from *her* husband:

1Cor. 7:11 But and if she depart, let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to *her* husband: and let not the husband put away *his* wife.

(2/09) I know these words will cause anger in the hearts of some who read them, but I see no other way to understand them. It breaks my heart to think how many families have been destroyed because of lack of commitment and an easy out available through the legal system. Sad to say that even in the "church" the divorce rate is said to be no better than that of the rest of the world. More important in the life of the believer, this is evidence of lack of submission to God's will and/or lack of faith in the power of God to be able to heal their marriage.

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

Matt. 5:34 But I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by heaven; for it is God's throne:

Matt. 5:35 Nor by the earth; for it is his footstool: neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King.

Matt. 5:36 Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black.

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

I thought it was interesting that this section should follow that on lack of commitment in marriage. Up until recently I believe that most wedding vows were taken as an oath before the Lord.

This instruction is a bit confusing since I found places in the Old Testament where instruction was given to swear by God's name.

Deut. 6:13 Thou shalt fear the LORD thy God, and serve him, and shalt swear by his name.

Deut. 10:20 Thou shalt fear the LORD thy God; him shalt thou serve, and to him shalt thou cleave, and swear by his name.

It was also clearly taught that vows to God were considered very serious and were binding.

Num. 30:1 And Moses spake unto the heads of the tribes concerning the children of Israel, saying, This *is* the thing which the LORD hath commanded.

Num. 30:2 If a man vow a vow unto the LORD, or swear an oath to bind his soul with a bond; he shall not break his word, he shall do according to all that proceedeth out of his mouth.

It would seem that by invoking God's name you are making a vow to Him in the process. The Lord continues to explain that there is really nothing you can swear by over which God is not sovereign. You don't even have control over the true color of the hair on your head, God does. In other words, since you are really without authority over anything you might use to swear by, you should limit your response to either "Yes" or "No."

If you swear in God's name, and don't follow through on your promise or you are proven false, then you have taken God's name in vain in addition to the sin of lying.

(2/10) Nehemia Gordon shed more light on this section in his book The Hebrew Yeshua vs. the Greek Jesus.

"What Yeshua is saying in the Hebrew is not to swear falsely!"

This corresponds exactly with Leviticus 19:12.

Leviticus 19:12 "And ye shall not swear by my name falsely, neither shalt thou profane the name of thy God: I am the LORD."

Back to Nehemia Gordon:

"It seems that some Pharisees took this as permission to swear falsely as long as the name of YHWH was not used....Yeshua protests that it is forbidden to swear falsely by anything....Any vow 'by anything' is binding. If you say, yes, I swear to do such and such, no matter what you vowed by, you must keep your word."

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

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

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

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

Verse 38 is another quote from the law.

Ex. 21:23 And if *any* mischief follow, then thou shalt give life for life,

Ex. 21:24 **Eye for eye, tooth for tooth**, hand for hand, foot for foot,

Ex. 21:25 Burning for burning, wound for wound, stripe for stripe.

The principle in this instruction is that the punishment should fit the crime.

Jesus is declaring that those in His kingdom should be more concerned about showing love than getting justice. It's the same principle found in the book of Proverbs.

Prov. 25:21 If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink:

Prov. 25:22 For thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head, and the LORD shall reward thee.

This type of response is so unexpected that it could cause the wicked person to be ashamed and give you an open door to share with him the things of the Lord. This type of response goes totally against the flesh. Only those who are acting

with the empowerment of the Spirit, those who have accepted Jesus as Lord, can hope to respond in this way.

Is Jesus saying that it is wrong to defend yourself. I don't think so. Scripture is full of times when God's people have defended themselves against their enemies. In none of the examples in this section of verses did there seem to be an indication of severe injury or a threat to life. They seemed to be examples of heated argument or insult or unfair laws. I think the principle is that it is better to trust God for your defense and to avoid physical violence or confrontation whenever possible. The psalmist declared this truth time again.

Psa. 59:17 Unto thee, O my strength, will I sing; for God *is* my defence, *and* the God of my mercy.

Psa. 62:2 He only *is* my rock and my salvation; *he is* my defence; I shall not be greatly moved.

Psa. 89:18 For the LORD *is* our defence; and the Holy One of Israel *is* our king.

Psa. 94:22 But the LORD is my defence; and my God *is* the rock of my refuge.

I think it is also important to note that the application was mistreatment of the individual. It is not addressing defense on behalf of another, of those you love or those that are weaker.

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

This verse really goes with the previous section, but is a little different in that the reference has nothing to do with mistreatment or unfair laws. This is addressing a choice you have to make any time you are approached by someone who wants to borrow from you. The law was clear that you should not refuse to lend to the poor.

Deut. 15:7 If there be among you a poor man of one of thy brethren within any of thy gates in thy land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not harden thine heart, nor shut thine hand from thy poor brother:

Deut. 15:8 But thou shalt open thine hand wide unto him, and shalt surely lend him sufficient for his need, *in that* which he wanteth.

Considering the context, I don't think that is the main application here. I think the principle would be that everything we have has been given to us by God. We are only stewards of what we possess. In that regard we should be willing to share whenever we have the opportunity. I think it falls under the category of you can't outgive God. I know that whatever we give to anyone else in honor of Him while trusting Him for our needs will never go unrewarded. Again, I believe that living according to that principle is only possible through the empowerment of the Spirit.

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

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

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

As quoted previously, Leviticus 19 records the instruction to love your neighbour, but it does not say “and hate thine enemy.” This must be an addition of the religious teachers in which they were adding to God’s word and making an incorrect inference. Also as quoted previously, the closest quote I could find that mirrored this teaching was from Proverbs.

Prov. 25:21 If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink:

Prov. 25:22 For thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head, and the LORD shall reward thee.

Again, Jesus is giving instruction that goes totally against what they had been taught. It goes against how we would naturally want to respond and feel justified in our response. These were not empty words from the mouth of the Lord; during His ministry He exemplified this very truth.

- He said, “Love your enemies,” and you seeing Him healing the ear of one of those who had come to arrest Him and going to a cross for those who had rejected Him.
- He said, “Bless them that curse you,” and you hear Him speaking words of encouragement and comfort to a disciple who cursed Him.
- He said, “Do good to them that hate you,” and you see Him performing miracles without respect to person for the masses who will later turn on Him.
- He said, “Pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you,” and you hear Him asking the Father to forgive those who had Him crucified.

What motivation does the Lord give for living such a selfless life? To be counted among “the children of your Father in heaven.” Living by this whole higher standard boils down to what we treasure most—the pleasures of the flesh and this world for a season or the pleasure of the Father for eternity. It’s as hard and as simple as that. The Lord’s love for man is unconditional. He created the sun, and it rises on those who do what is evil and those who do what is good; He sends rain on those who are righteous and those who are unrighteous.

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

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

The Lord makes the application to His unconditional love quite clear in these verses. To love those that love you is no spiritual achievement; even the publicans, the tax collectors, those considered lowest in society, do that. To embrace and be friendly to your brother, those that are dear to you, is no spiritual achievement; the publicans do that too.

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

The standard against whom citizens of the kingdom are to measure themselves—God the Father (as exemplified before men in Jesus, God in flesh).

I am reminded that the Lord never asks us to do anything that is impossible for us to do. He is not being unreasonable in His request. This would seem to be an impossible instruction to those listening to Jesus that day, but the Lord doesn't lower His standards. He knows that He is going to empower them to live according to His teaching. After His death, burial, resurrection and ascension, He sent the Holy Spirit to indwell each and every believer and empower them to live obediently. Even as I write these words, I am ashamed of my own failures. I have no excuse for sin of any kind.

Lord, please make me constantly aware of the presence of your Spirit, and strengthen me to yield to His leadership and direction in every choice I make every day. Humble me and strengthen me to become perfect, spiritually mature, and follow the example of your Son Jesus. Whatever it takes, Lord, in my life; I'm yours.

Matt. 6:1 Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven.

Matt. 6:2 Therefore when thou doest *thine* alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.

Matt. 6:3 But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth:

Matt. 6:4 That thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly.

The Lord shifts gears a little as we begin this chapter. He now begins to address areas in which we are giving the appearance of doing things to please Him. The specific address here is to those who are doing deeds of compassion in order to impress others. When your motive is to impress others and you accomplish that objective, you have received your reward. These are not deeds that will qualify as rewards when put to test by fire.

1Cor. 3:13-15 Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.

Jesus identifies those who act in that manner as hypocrites, "an actor under an assumed character." In other words, they aren't what they appear to be. In other words, they appear to be serving the Lord, but in actuality they are serving self. I can't help but wonder how many in the "church" today fall into that category.

Those in the kingdom of heaven are to example the selfless actions of Jesus. Obviously, you can't hide what your right hand is doing from your left. I think the Lord is making the point that our actions should be done with a heart towards pleasing the Father without regard to what men will think of us. When we show compassion to others, we should be just as willing to show that compassion if no one else ever knows about it but the Lord. Nothing we do in submission and obedience to Him goes unnoticed by the Father. The day is coming (referenced in the passage from Corinthians above) when all that we have done in ministry with a pure heart will be rewarded openly.

As I looked at this again, I think it is important to note that Jesus says "when" you do your good deeds. It is expected that one who is part of the kingdom will be one who shows compassion for his fellowman through acts of kindness and provision.

I have found this to be a really hard teaching as a mom, grandma, and friend/teacher. You teach most effectively by example, and that example has to be visible. I think my struggle is most in the area of guarding my heart in the process. I know I struggle with pride, and I tend to be a people pleaser. I continually ask the Lord to help me in this area. He knows my heart better than I do. I am not going to let this struggle hinder me from serving. I'll be happy to be just a doorkeeper in the house of the Lord, though I'm striving for more.

Matt. 6:5 And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites *are*: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.

Matt. 6:6 But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.

Matt. 6:7 But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen *do*: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking.

Matt. 6:8 Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him.

After service, the Lord addresses how we pray. Again, it was the custom of some in those times to make a public show of their prayers to God in order to impress others. Again, as with service, if your goal is to impress others, and you achieve your goal, you have received your reward. Those who pray in this manner are obviously not talking to God, they are putting on a performance before men; they are hypocrites. Jesus is saying that you shouldn't try to be like these men who are deemed so spiritual. Your prayer time should be a private time of communication between you and the Father. Prayers that are offered up from a heart of gratitude and burden for self and others are heard clearly by the Father and will be rewarded openly. He warns them about using vain repetitions like the heathen with the mistaken assumption that you are making your prayer more potent. Our prayer time is for our benefit—not the Father's; He already knows what's on our heart before we share it with Him. It's a time of fellowship that we have heart to heart with Him. If we pay attention to our prayers, we can learn much about ourselves and our relationship to God.

“vain repetitions” – I think it is important to note that Jesus isn't teaching that it is wrong to repeat prayers to Him. In fact, in Luke's account of this teaching He uses an illustration showing that persistence pays.

Luke 11:5-8 And he said unto them, Which of you shall have a friend, and shall go unto him at midnight, and say unto him, Friend, lend me three loaves; For a friend of mine in his journey is come to me, and I have nothing to set before him? And he from within shall answer and say, Trouble me not: the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give thee. I say unto you, Though he will not rise and give him, because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will rise and give him as many as he needeth.

There is a difference, however, in persistence and empty repetition of words. I can't help but think of the Catholic use of rosaries. I am sure there are many sincere prayers made with the rosary, but I believe they are probably more often than not used as part of an empty ritual. I also can't help but think about what is being embraced by the “emergent church” according to what I am reading and hearing. The use of mantras or repetitive phrases and contemplative prayer are focusing more on the process than on communication between the believer and God. These are the types of processes used by the “heathen” in their worship, i.e., the Hindus, Buddhists, etc. Again, the key is what is going on in the heart. At this point the Lord decides to instruct His followers as to what is an acceptable prayer. I think it is important to note that even this prayer, when memorized and repeated ritually, can become “vain repetition.” It's meant to be

a model only. I think it is also important to note that this prayer is composed of words, communication, not silence. We may sometimes find ourselves speechless in trying to share our heart with the Lord, and we may find ourselves overwhelmed by His presence that results in silence, but it isn't a time of emptying ourselves in trying to connect with Him. That is not a biblical concept. We're connected to Him the moment we say, "Our Father."

In reading through this again, I thought it important to note that neither is this a prohibition against group prayer. Jesus taught that there is power in agreement in prayer.

Matt. 18:19 Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven.

Matt. 18:20 For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.

The disciples exemplified it as they waited for the anointing of the Spirit.

Acts 1:13 And when they were come in, they went up into an upper room, where abode both Peter, and James, and John, and Andrew, Philip, and Thomas, Bartholomew, and Matthew, James *the son* of Alphaeus, and Simon Zelotes, and Judas *the brother* of James.

Acts 1:14 These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren.

It is included in the instruction concerning the elders praying together for healing of the sick.

James 5:14 Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord:

James 5:15 And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him.

Jesus is addressing the actions of individual believers in this teaching.

Matt. 6:9 After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.

"After this manner" indicates a model, an example.

"Our Father" – This is an address showing relationship that acknowledges our dependency and His authority and power.

"which art in heaven" – This is a recognition of His existence as one in authority over His creation and dwelling in oversight of it.

"Hallowed be thy name" – A name is associated with one's character according to the Greek. It is important that we recognize God as holy and pure in character. His character is why we can always trust Him to do what is right and what is best for those who are part of His kingdom.

Matt. 6:10 Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as *it is* in heaven.

“Thy kingdom come.” – This represents a desire to see God on the throne and Satan’s kingdom abolished. Today it’s a prayer by the believer for the second coming of Jesus.

“Thy will be done...” – This represents a desire to live in an environment where God’s will is always done; where sin is no more present; where the flesh no longer has any influence on our lives; a place where we will never have to question our motives again. I can’t wait!

Matt. 6:11 Give us this day our daily bread.

This represents a desire for God to provide our needs. It is recognizing that what we are given comes from Him. It’s also an instruction to trust God daily; we are to focus on today—not tomorrow.

Prov. 27:1 Boast not thyself of to morrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth.

Not one among us can guarantee that we will live to see tomorrow.

(12/08) In reading this again, I thought about the physical and spiritual application of this phrase. I think the main reference is to physical, but we certainly need a daily portion of God’s word as well.

(2/10) As I was listening to James Merritt one morning, he made a stronger point than I did in my initial observation—my paraphrase: When we ask God to “give” us something, we are acknowledging Him as the one in possession of what we need.

Matt. 6:12 And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.

The Greek for the word *debts* includes moral failure as well as obligations. Luke’s account of this instruction is worded as follows: “And forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us.” The point being made is that we are asking to be treated comparable to our treatment of others. I’m not sure that is something we think about very often when we pray. We are very quick to justify our offenses or just hope that time heals the hurt. It’s a hard thing to humble oneself before someone else and admit wrong and ask forgiveness. The Lord is teaching us to examine ourselves and act with humility and forgiveness toward others before we come to Him seeking the same.

Matt. 6:13 And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.

The Greek for *temptation* is a reference to “putting to proof” as well as solicitation. James clearly states that God does not tempt man.

James 1:13 Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man:

I thought it was interesting to note that the Greek for *evil* included a reference to the devil. These two phrases form one thought, so I think the Lord is instructing His disciples to pray for God’s deliverance when the enemy tries to tempt us to do wrong. Job is the prime example. Satan sought to tempt him to sin by testing him through extremely trying circumstances. He does the same with us in varying degrees. God brought Job through the process in victory, and He will do

the same for us. We possess the indwelling Holy Spirit to empower us for that very purpose. In fact, Paul shares God's promise to deliver us in his letter to the Corinthians.

1Cor. 10:13 There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God *is* faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear *it*.

"Thine is the kingdom...." – This closing is again acknowledging God's sovereignty and power in His kingdom. It is acknowledging that God's sovereignty and power will never diminish neither will His kingdom end. He is, always has been and always will be worthy of our praise and worship. In other words, we aren't praying to "a god" who cannot provide for His creation; we are praying to THE all powerful, eternally existent sovereign God who is bound by no limitations in what He can do.

"Amen" – In the Greek this makes reference to being trustworthy, firm and sure. It's an affirmation of the truth of the previous statement.

Matt. 6:14 For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you:

Matt. 6:15 But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

At this point Jesus again emphasizes that we cannot expect God to respond to us any differently than we respond to others. It doesn't mean that He loves us any less; in fact, it's proof that His love is pure. He is more concerned that we grow spiritually than in granting our every petition. He is in the process of sanctifying us, making us more like His Son Jesus.

Rom. 8:29 For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate *to be* conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.

A loving Father will allow one to experience the consequences of sin as an opportunity to learn. He knows that spiritual growth results in producing joy in our lives and allowing us to experience the abundance of His blessing.

Rom. 14:17 For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.

John 10:10 The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have *it* more abundantly.

Matt. 6:16 Moreover when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.

The next deed addressed is fasting. As with doing good deeds and prayer, there were those who wanted to make sure that everyone knew they were fasting by their expression of mournfulness and appearance of fainting strength. Again, they have received their reward by accomplishing their objective. Jesus minces no words and is definitely not politically correct in assessing such people; He

calls them hypocrites. They are not sincere in their motive for fasting; they're putting on a show to establish a reputation for being something they are not.

**Matt. 6:17 But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face;
Matt. 6:18 That thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly.**

Jesus is teaching that our fasting should be an act of sacrifice before the Lord. We should take extra care to look especially nice and not indicate in any way that we are fasting. Again, God the Father is looking at our hearts. When our works are judged, He will reward us openly for all our truly righteous works.

Reminder – This is a teaching to those who are followers of Christ. Jesus has already endured the judgment for our sin. The only judgment the believer will have to face is that for reward. Those who have rejected Christ will endure the Great White Throne judgment for public indictment to eternal condemnation.

Matt. 6:19 Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal:

Matt. 6:20 But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal:

Matt. 6:21 For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

Treasure is basically a reference to anything you value. It's interesting that these verses follow the instructions regarding actions taken for the purpose of winning the admiration of others. That is one kind of treasure. Other treasures are more material in nature. Jesus is teaching that treasures accumulated on earth are subject to being destroyed and/or stolen. Treasures accumulated in heaven, however, are eternal; they cannot be destroyed or stolen. The more focused we are on amassing earthly treasure, the less effort is given to accumulating heavenly treasure. The type of treasure we put the most effort toward accumulating is a clear indicator of who is on the throne of our heart.

I believe this is a real challenge for the believer in today's world. Everything in our culture is geared to being successful, which in the world's terms is having more and more of the best available. Possessing wealth and enjoying the kudos of men is not a sin; but when the wealth and admiration become the focus of your ambitions and energy, they basically become idols in your life. They will eventually result in your becoming a spiritual pauper.

This begs the question—What is heavenly treasure? Frankly, I think the best answer is found in the words of Isaiah.

Is. 64:4 For since the beginning of the world *men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen*, O God, beside thee, *what he hath prepared for him that waiteth for him.*

There are some specific treasures mentioned in scripture.

Col. 2:3 In whom are hid all **the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.**

2Tim. 4:8 Henceforth there is laid up for me **a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.**

James 1:12 Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive **the crown of life**, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.

1Pet. 5:2 Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight *thereof*, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; Neither as being lords over *God's* heritage, but being ensamples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a **crown of glory** that fadeth not away.

Matt. 6:22 The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light.

Matt. 6:23 But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!

“single” = clear, pure, unmixed

“evil” = hurtful, diseased

It seems to me that the Lord is using these two words in direct contrast to one another. In context with the preceding and following verses, I think you have to understand the reference to be toward the treasures you are striving to accumulate and the master you serve. A believer's eyes should be pure and clearly intent upon gaining heavenly treasure. If that is your intention, it stands to reason that your body will be filled with the things of the Spirit that will be obvious to others.

Gal. 5:22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith,

Gal. 5:23 Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.

If, however, your focus is on earthly things, your body will be filled with things of the flesh.

Gal. 5:19 Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are *these*;
Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness,

Gal. 5:20 Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies,

Gal. 5:21 Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like:

Matt. 6:24 No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.

This verse is a statement of fact; you can only serve one master. When I see this wording, I can't help but think of God's declaration of his feelings toward Jacob and Esau and Jacob's relationship with Rachel and Leah where scripture explains itself.

Gen. 29:30 And he went in also unto Rachel, **and he loved also Rachel more than Leah**, and served with him yet seven other years.

Gen. 29:31 And when the LORD saw that Leah *was* hated, he opened her womb: but Rachel *was* barren.

The Greek for *hate* actually includes “to love less.” The masters in view in this case are named—God and mammon. *Mammon* is a reference to earthly wealth and riches. This thought follows directly in context to the previous verses. The

interesting paradox is that in serving God you will accumulate wealth and riches, but they are of the eternal kind, not the temporary physical kind of this life. I believe there are Christians who possess true faith, but who are more intent on accumulating worldly treasure than heavenly treasure. They love God less than they love the treasure of this world. They probably wouldn't admit it, but their actions and lifestyle declare otherwise. You cannot truly call yourself a servant of God when you are consumed with attaining worldly treasure.

Matt. 6:25 Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?

Matt. 6:26 Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?

Matt. 6:27 Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature?

Matt. 6:28 And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin:

Matt. 6:29 And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.

The Lord now declares that His followers should not be anxious about having enough to eat or drink or wear. These are simple provisions for God to make when compared to giving you life in the first place. In other words, why would He give you life and then not provide for that life to be sustained? He instructs them to observe the birds; they don't plant seed to grow produce and reap a harvest, yet the Father provides them food. The implication: Don't you think He values you much more than they? He then poses another question: Can you make yourself grow taller? The implied answer: No, but God can; He is in authority over His creation. Knowing that, then answer this question: Why are you anxious about having enough to wear. Look at the lilies of the field; they grow without putting forth any labor and they are more beautifully adorned than even King Solomon was (the richest king of Israel). In other words, God gives them life and provides for their nourishment for growth and their clothing.

Matt. 6:30 Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?

Matt. 6:31 Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?

Matt. 6:32 (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.

Conclusion: If God takes the care to clothe the grass of the field so beautifully even though it only lives for a short time, don't you think He will provide for you? The sad statement—O ye of little faith. You should not be anxious about what you eat, drink or have to wear. Your heavenly Father knows that these are things you need; they aren't luxury items. Scripture is abundant with statements of the Lord's faithfulness in providing for His own.

Phil. 4:19 But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

Psa. 23:1 The LORD *is* my shepherd; I shall not want.

Psa. 34:10 ...but they that seek the LORD shall not want any good *thing*.

Psa. 68:19 Blessed *be* the Lord, *who* daily loadeth us *with benefits, even* the God of our salvation. Selah.

Psa. 84:11 For the LORD God *is* a sun and shield: the LORD will give grace and glory: no good *thing* will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.

“For after all these things do the Gentiles seek” – I think the key here is that the Gentiles have to be concerned with these things because they do not recognize God as their Father. (12/08) Remember, Jesus is ministering to and teaching the house of Israel at this point in time.

Matt. 6:33 But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

Matt. 6:34 Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day *is* the evil thereof.

The point of this section of teaching—Seek to accumulate the treasures of God’s eternal kingdom by living according to His righteousness (as exemplified in His Son Jesus). When our focus is on serving God, we don’t have to worry about having what we need; He will provide it. We are, as instructed in the model prayer, to trust God daily for our needs. We aren’t to be anxious about tomorrow, but to take each day as it comes. We aren’t guaranteed tomorrow. When tomorrow comes, God will be just as sufficient for the needs of that day as He is for today’s.

These verses are not teaching that we are not to make provision for ourselves and our families with hard work and preparation. The point is that we are not to be anxious about the results of that hard work and preparation since we have a heavenly Father who is watching out for us. Scripture is clear in teaching that we should have a good work ethic.

Prov. 6:6 Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise:

Prov. 6:7 Which having no guide, overseer, or ruler,

Prov. 6:8 Provideth her meat in the summer, *and* gathereth her food in the harvest.

Proverbs 31 (the whole chapter)

2Th. 3:10 For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat.

Ex. 20:9 Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work:

1Tim. 5:8 But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.

Part of serving God is to work and provide for ourselves and our family in accordance with His instruction and with a heart of submission and obedience to Him. The key is the attitude of the heart. If our hearts are yielded to Him in all that we do, we can rest in the truth that He will provide our needs according to His purpose, which is always righteous and good.

I think another thing that causes man to stumble over this truth is the ability to discern need from want. God's ways and thoughts are much higher than ours.

Is. 55:8 For my thoughts *are* not your thoughts, neither *are* your ways my ways, saith the LORD.

Is. 55:9 For *as* the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.

What He determines to be our needs may be very different than what we determine them to be.

There are many in this world who do not have the essential needs in life, and Jesus is not saying that God is not concerned with the needs of the unbelieving masses. We must remember that this teaching is directed to those who have chosen to follow Christ and are trusting in God for their provision.

Matt. 7:1 Judge not, that ye be not judged.

Matt. 7:2 For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.

“judge” = to distinguish, i.e. decide (mentally or judicially); by implication, to try, condemn, punish

This seems to be a verse that many pagans like to use against Christians. The difficulty comes in distinguishing between proper discernment and condemnation. The application here, I believe, is in condemning others for their sin. In other words, if you are quick to condemn others, they will be quick to condemn you; if you are strict in your standards for condemnation, you will be judged by strict standards for your own life choices. Oftentimes, pagans expect Christians to live by even higher standards than many Christians establish for themselves.

As we go into the following verses, I think it becomes clear that the main point of this particular teaching is to avoid hypocrisy. Again, this goes back to our motives and the attitude of our heart. The objective is not to be a hindrance to others growing in the faith or coming to saving faith. Paul addressed this principle in his letter to the Romans.

Rom. 14:12 So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God.

Rom. 14:13 Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumblingblock or an occasion to fall in *his* brother's way.

Matt. 7:3 And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye?

Matt. 7:4 Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye?

Matt. 7:5 Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye.

Jesus illustrates His teaching on judgment with a word picture. He basically says, “You are pointing out a twig in your brother's eye while ignoring the big board in your own eye. That is hypocritical. First, get rid of the big board in your eye, and then you will better understand how to help your brother get rid of the twig in his eye.”

The discernment being addressed here is in reference to discerning the sin in your own life and being willing to repent and forsake that sin. Getting rid of sin in your own life results in clearer vision. Getting rid of our sin causes us to come face to face with our need for God's love, mercy and forgiveness. This prepares our heart to deal with others in love, mercy and forgiveness.

Important to note is that Jesus is not telling us not to confront others with their sin; He is telling us to deal with our own sin first. Then we are to help others without hypocrisy. Jesus gives us a good standard in the gospel of Luke.

Luke 6:31 And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise.

As I went on to the next verse, it caused me to come back to this section. It seems that the main application here is regarding your actions toward a “brother,” a fellow believer. Although the Greek word for *brother* is inclusive of mankind in general, the context when taken with the following verse would seem to be more in reference to interaction with someone in the kingdom.

Matt. 7:6 Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you.

“dogs” = Easton’s: As the dog was an unclean animal, the terms “dog,” “dog’s head,” “dead dog,” were used as terms of reproach or of humiliation.

Psa. 22:16 For dogs have compassed me: the assembly of the wicked have inclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet.

“swine” = Easton’s: ...regarded as the most unclean and the most abhorred of all animals.

Is. 65:4 Which remain among the graves, and lodge in the monuments, which eat swine’s flesh, and broth of abominable *things is in* their vessels;

2Pet. 2:22 But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog *is* turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire.

This verse clarifies that we are to be discerning about our interactions with others. We are not to share our spiritual treasure with those who won’t treasure it. This actually makes me think of the debates that occur between believers and atheists or “pro choice” proponents or those who reject scripture as God’s word, etc. Debate for debate’s sake accomplishes nothing. It just provides a platform for the believer and the treasure he is defending to be mocked and degraded. On the other hand, we should not decline to be ready “to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear.” (1Peter 3:15) This requires discernment regarding “dogs and swine,” those who hate God and His truth vs. those who are seeking the truth.

I want to be clear that I am not condemning programs that offer an opportunity for learned men on both sides of an issue to be presented in a respectful manner. In such audiences there are true seekers as well as mockers. You don’t avoid declaring the truth for fear of attack. Jesus clearly exemplified that truth. I think, however, that participation in such formats should be thoughtfully and prayerfully considered.

Matt. 7:7 Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you:

Matt. 7:8 For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.

All of a sudden the location of these verses makes a lot more sense to me. In the matters of revelation of our own sin and discernment of “dogs and swine” and understanding of the truth, the Lord is declaring that all we have to do is ask the Father from a sincere heart.

James 4:3 Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume *it* upon your lusts.

It's easy to verbalize a request to the Father. Jesus expressly grouped "asking...seeking...and knocking" to illustrate perseverance as an indicator of the condition of the heart—Is the request sincere? I like the CJB translation of these verses.

Keep asking, and it will be given to you; keep seeking, and you will find; keep knocking, and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who keeps asking receives; he who keeps seeking finds; and to him who keeps knocking, the door will be opened.

Any time we approach God with a sincere heart seeking His truth and/or provision, we will receive. Again, we have to guard against preconceived ideas of expectation as to how He will answer. We just need to ask in faith with confident expectation of His answer.

Mark 11:23 For verily I say unto you, That whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; **and shall not doubt in his heart**, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith.

In thinking through this section again, it seemed important to clarify that those who are part of God's kingdom and recognize Him as Lord would only approach Him with requests that are according to His revealed will. This would rule out presumptuous prayers that position God as "Santa Claus" to provide the desires of our flesh.

John 15:7 If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.

1John 5:14 And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us:

Matt. 7:9 Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone?

Matt. 7:10 Or if he ask a fish, will give him a serpent?

Matt. 7:11 If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?

Again, Jesus illustrates the truth He is teaching using a father and son. My paraphrase—"Who among you would give a stone in response to his son's request for bread? Or a serpent in response to his request for a fish? You, all of whom are sinners, know how to give good gifts to your children. Don't you think that your Father in heaven, who is holy and righteous, can be counted on to give good things to His children?"

In Luke's gospel the Lord goes on to identify good gifts as the Holy Spirit, the source of the believer's empowerment and provision that indwells every believer for preservation and security until the time he/she is in possession of his/her full inheritance as a joint heir with Christ.

Luke 11:13 If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall *your* heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?

1Cor. 3:16 Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and *that* the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?

Eph. 1:13 In whom ye also *trusted*, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise,

Eph. 1:14 Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.

(12/08) It is through the Holy Spirit that God “gifts” every believer.

1Cor. 12:4-11 Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal. For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; To another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another *divers* kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues: But all these worketh that one **and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will.**

Matt. 7:12 Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets.

Conclusion to this section: Live according to the golden rule as quoted above from Luke and as stated in this verse. The modern version—Do unto others as you would have them do unto you. Why does Jesus say that this is the teaching of the law and the prophets? Because (also as quoted previously) the law tells us to “love your neighbor as yourself.”

Lev. 19:18 Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: I *am* the LORD.

Zech. 8:17 And let none of you imagine evil in your hearts against his neighbour....

Matt. 7:13 Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide *is* the gate, and broad *is* the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat:

Matt. 7:14 Because strait *is* the gate, and narrow *is* the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.

Enter what? The context of the teaching is the kingdom of heaven, God’s kingdom. I thought the Greek for the word *straight* was thought-provoking:

“narrow (from obstacles standing close about)”

In other words, the way that leads to **life** is a narrow one that is surrounded by obstacles that would prevent our staying on that path. The way that leads to **destruction** is spacious and obstacle free. The Greek for *find* is also enlightening.

“get, obtain, perceive, see”

In other words, it will take some discernment and desire to identify the narrow way. It's not hidden; it is, however, beset with obstacles and not a popular route. You'll find yourself going against the crowd along the way. There will be few that find and choose to follow this road in comparison to the many that will be content to follow the easily traveled road to destruction.

It just hit me that the way/ road leads to the gate that provides entrance to life or destruction. Once in the gate, the believer will find that his life is full and abundant, spacious and secure, and blessed with all the treasures of the kingdom. Those who enter the gate that leads to destruction will find their lives empty, confining and full of misery. Both gates give entry to one's eternal existence.

Matt. 7:15 Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.

Matt. 7:16 Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?

Matt. 7:17 Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit.

Matt. 7:18 A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither *can* a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.

Matt. 7:19 Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.

Matt. 7:20 Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.

For the first time I am actually understanding more of the flow of these verses. The false prophets in sheep's clothing are obstacles on the narrow way in the life of the believer and those who are seeking the truth. The Greek for “false prophets” makes reference to “religious impostors”; in other words, they are pretending to be what they are not in order to deceive others. The Lord often references His followers as sheep.

Psa. 100:3 Know ye that the LORD he is God: *it is he that* hath made us, and not we ourselves; *we are* his people, and the sheep of his pasture.

John 10:26 But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you.

John 10:27 My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: These false prophets are masquerading as followers of the Lord, and they want to satisfy their hunger by destroying sheep. The Lord then anticipates the obvious question—“How can we identify a false prophet among the sheep?” Jesus reveals that what they produce will identify them. A good tree produces good fruit. You can't gather grapes or figs from thornbushes. A rotten tree produces bad fruit. The Lord is saying that false prophets, ravaging wolves, are corrupt trees and true believers, God's sheep, are good trees. The bad trees are going to be cast into the fire.

Rev. 20:15 And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.

The Lord then emphasizes again that it is what is produced through the “ministry” of these false prophets that will identify them. I remember a statement Jon Courson gave in one of his teachings. My paraphrase: If it eats sheep, it’s a wolf.

Matt. 7:21 Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.

Matt. 7:22 Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?

Matt. 7:23 And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.

These are very serious verses that should cause each one of us to carefully examine our lives. The first thing I notice is that Jesus is identifying Himself as “Lord,” the supreme authority or master. He then says that not everyone that addresses Him as “Lord” will get to enter the kingdom of heaven. In other words, you can know who He is without truly serving Him as Lord. He is very clear in stating that those who DO the will of His Father in heaven are the ones who qualify to enter the kingdom. I can hear many shouting—“But salvation is a gift.” That is true. True faith, however, is proven by obedience to the will of the Father. The book of James clearly addresses this truth.

James 2:17 Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.

James 2:18 Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works.

James 2:19 Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble.

James 2:20 But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?

James 2:21 Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar?

James 2:22 Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect?

Jesus then acknowledges that there will be some who will claim to have prophesied in His name, cast out devils and performed miracles; yet, He will tell them that He never recognized them as His followers. He then identifies these people as “workers of iniquity.” This again goes back to the false prophets in sheep’s clothing; there are many who “claim” the name of Christ falsely. This also tells me that miracles can be performed by false prophets. This makes me think of other verses

Matt. 24:24 For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if *it were* possible, they shall deceive the very elect.

2Th. 2:8 And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming:

2Th. 2:9 *Even him*, whose coming is **after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders....**

I think we tend to forget that Satan is capable of miraculous things within the parameters allowed Him by our Sovereign God. The story of Job vividly depicts this truth.

Job 1:8-2:7 And the LORD said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that *there is* none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil? Then Satan answered the LORD, and said, Doth Job fear God for nought? Hast not thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land. But put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face. **And the LORD said unto Satan, Behold, all that he hath is in thy power; only upon himself put not forth thine hand.** So Satan went forth from the presence of the LORD. And there was a day when his sons and his daughters *were* eating and drinking wine in their eldest brother's house: And there came a messenger unto Job, and said, The oxen were plowing, and the asses feeding beside them: **And the Sabeans fell upon them, and took them away; yea, they have slain the servants with the edge of the sword;** and I only am escaped alone to tell thee. While he *was* yet speaking, there came also another, and said, **The fire of God is fallen from heaven, and hath burned up the sheep, and the servants, and consumed them;** and I only am escaped alone to tell thee. While he *was* yet speaking, there came also another, and said, **The Chaldeans made out three bands, and fell upon the camels, and have carried them away, yea, and slain the servants with the edge of the sword;** and I only am escaped alone to tell thee. While he *was* yet speaking, there came also another, and said, Thy sons and thy daughters *were* eating and drinking wine in their eldest brother's house: And, behold, **there came a great wind from the wilderness, and smote the four corners of the house, and it fell upon the young men, and they are dead;** and I only am escaped alone to tell thee.... Again there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan came also among them to present himself before the LORD.... And Satan answered the LORD, and said, Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life. But put forth thine hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse thee to thy face. **And the LORD said unto Satan, Behold, he is in thine hand; but save his life.** So went Satan forth from the presence of the LORD, and smote Job with sore boils from the sole of his foot unto his crown.

This illustrates that Satan has power to utilize evil men in his schemes, to make fire fall from heaven that is wrongly attributed to the actions of God, to cause a tornado to wreak destruction in a specific spot, and to cause Job to develop boils all over his body. The scripture is very clear that he was only allowed to act within the parameters established by God. Scripture is also very clear in declaring Satan to be the god of this world.

2Cor. 4:3 But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost:
2Cor. 4:4 In whom **the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not**, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.

Eph. 2:2 Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to **the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience:**

Rev. 12:9 And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called **the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world:** he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.

I think one of the greatest tools used by the forces of Satan is deception.

2Cor. 11:14 And no marvel; **for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light.**

2Cor. 11:15 **Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness;** whose end shall be according to their works.

We tend to believe what we see and experience. We need to remember that what we see and experience can be deceiving. I believe that anything we see, hear or experience that doesn't line up with God's word in every way is a tool of deception in the hands of the enemy. It may appear to be good and harmless, but it will lead us down the path of regret and will eliminate our ability to be effective in ministry before our Father in heaven.

"that day" (v22) – This indicates that there is a future day of reckoning for all before Jesus, Who is pictured here in the position of Judge. Other scripture clearly declares that the Father has delegated all judgment to the Son.

John 5:22 For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son:

Rom. 14:10 But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.

2Tim. 4:1 I charge *thee* therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom;

Matt. 7:24 **Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock:**

Matt. 7:25 **And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock.**

Matt. 7:26 **And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand:**

Matt. 7:27 **And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it.**

"Therefore" – Considering everything I've told you....

Jesus is basically saying (my paraphrase): If you have listened carefully to what I've told you and live accordingly, you are like a wise man who builds his house on a well placed, strong foundation so that it can't be destroyed by the powerful forces of nature. If you have heard what I have said and choose to ignore the instruction, you are like a foolish man that carelessly built his house on a poor foundation and will easily be completely destroyed by the forces of nature. (1/08) In other words, living according to God's will through faith in Jesus will enable us to weather the storms of life and emerge safe and secure through the provision of the Holy Spirit. If, however, we ignore God's will as revealed in His word, the storms of life will destroy us because we will be without God's provision of the Holy Spirit.

We know that as believers, the foundation of our faith is the **rock** Jesus Christ.

Deut. 32:3-4 Because I will publish the name of the LORD: ascribe ye greatness unto our God. *He is **the Rock***, his work *is* perfect: for all his ways *are* judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right *is* he.

1Sam. 2:2 *There is none holy as the LORD: for *there is* none beside thee: **neither is there any rock like our God.***

Psa. 89:26 He shall cry unto me, Thou *art* my father, my God, **and the rock of my salvation.**

1Cor. 10:4 And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and **that Rock was Christ.**

1Pet. 2:5-8 Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion **a chief corner stone**, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded. Unto you therefore which believe *he is* precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, **And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them** which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed.

Matt. 7:28 **And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine:**

Matt. 7:29 **For he taught them as *one* having authority, and not as the scribes.**

Jesus came to the end of His teaching. The people were amazed because He taught them as the authority behind the truth He was teaching. (Note that at this point His audience consisted of more than His disciples.) He wasn't teaching from scripture about God's authority, which is how the scribes taught. The scribes would be comparable to our pastors and seminary instructors today. They can only teach according to their understanding of God's truth. Jesus was the author of that truth, and could teach it with authority within the right context with the proper application and intent.