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Matthew Questions Verse by Verse

Introduction to Matthew

NIV SB: Although the first Gospel is anonymous, the early church fathers were unanimous in holding that Matthew, one of the 12 apostles, was its author. However, the results of modern critical studies—in particular those that stress Matthew's alleged dependence on Mark for a substantial part of his Gospel—have caused some Biblical scholars to abandon Matthean authorship. Why, they ask, would Matthew, an eyewitness to the events of our Lord's life, depend so heavily on Mark's account? The best answer seems to be that Mark's Gospel represents the testimony of Peter (see Introduction to Mark: Author), and Matthew would certainly be willing to follow Peter's apostolic authority.

What is your take on questioning Matthew's authority?

1) There is absolutely no objective evidence that "Matthew relies on Mark's account". That is merely subjective speculation by unbelievers. In fact, Matthew wrote well before Mark. Mark made use of Matthew, through the Spirit, and produced via divine inspiration a Gospel attuned to the gentile point of view as part of Peter's ministry to the church at Rome toward the end of the apostolic period. As Peter's protégé at this time, Mark wrote under Peter's apostolic authority (in the same way that Luke wrote under Paul's). Matthew and John, both apostles in their own right, wrote the first and last Gospels respectively. The "deconstruction", "demythologization" and "form/source criticism" of the Gospels has been a cottage industry for secular scholars (and unbelievers associated with traditional Christianity) since at least the late 19th century. There are many forms and flavors of this sort of "scholarship". As someone who has had to deal with these issues both in seminary and in a (related) secular field (Classics), I can certainly tell you that in my opinion these pretend areas of scholarship are a complete waste of time at best, and trap at worst – because some weak believers who become enamored of "scholarship" have gotten trapped in these swamps over the years; few have ever returned to solid

ground. All someone needs to do is read the Gospels in Greek a few times to understand that there is absolutely nothing to these elaborate theories – except for the ambitions of self-aggrandizing pseudo-scholarship.

Many elements in Matthew's Gospel point to a Jewish or Jewish-Christian readership: Matthew's concern with fulfillment of the OT (he has more quotations from and allusions to the OT than any other NT author); his tracing of Jesus' descent from Abraham (1:1–17); his lack of explanation of Jewish customs (especially in contrast to Mark); his use of Jewish terminology (e. g., "kingdom of heaven," where "heaven" reveals the Jewish reverential reluctance to use the name of God; see note on 3:2); and his emphasis on Jesus' role as "Son of David" (1:1; 9:27; 12:23; 15:22; 20:30–31; 21:9, 15; 22:41–45).

Would you agree that Matthew's gospel was written primarily to the Jews?

2) It is written for us all, but the original audience of this earliest Gospel mostly consisted of Jewish believers in Judea and its environs, and so Matthew naturally reflects that milieu. However, it is a wonderfully "open" book when it comes to any point of view and as such reflect the Spirit's opening up of the Word of God to gentiles as well as to Jews. After all, the book is in Greek, not Hebrew (*pace* false theories of an original Hebrew or also of an original Aramaic Matthew).

Matthew 1:22-23 (NASB)

²² Now all this took place to fulfill what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet: ²³ "Behold, the virgin shall be with child and shall bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel," which translated means, "God with us."

Is the name Immanuel a metaphor or should it be taken literally?

2b) I take it as literal – and in so doing I believe I have the Spirit of God.

Matthew 3:1 (NASB)

3 Now in those days John the Baptist *came, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, saying,

NIV SB: Many interpreters place John's baptismal ministry at a point on the middle reaches of the Jordan River, where trade routes converge at a natural ford not far from the modern site of Tel Shalem.

Do you agree that this was the place where John was baptizing?

3) I am not certain. I don't think what we have in the NT gives us enough to go on to say for sure. In any case, trying

to track down specific present-day geographical locations for events that happened in the ancient world generally is difficult enough; for things that would yield no archaeological artifacts the task of proving a theory is nigh on impossible. One thing I can tell you is that topography changes over time. Anyone who has ever gone back to a place they once knew or visited thirty or forty years in the past will understand this. Over two thousand years, roads, rivers, even hills can change considerably. The coastline of Greece has risen and sunk considerably since ancient times, depending upon the specific location. In cases where there is a significant theological or spiritual benefit to finding something out (or a historical one; i.e., knowing the location of a battle could tell us something about the campaign), it can be an important question. I'm not sure that applies here.

Matthew 3:15 (NASB)

¹⁵ But Jesus answering said to him, "Permit *it* at this time; for in this way it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." Then he *permitted Him.

NIV SB: 3:15 Jesus' baptism marked the beginning of his Messianic ministry. There were several reasons for his baptism:(1) The first, mentioned here, was "to fulfill all righteousness." His baptism indicated that he was consecrated to God and officially approved by him, as especially shown in the descent of the Holy Spirit (v. 16) and the words of the Father (v. 17; cf. Ps 2:7; Isa 42:1). All God's righteous requirements for the Messiah were fully met in Jesus. (2) At Jesus' baptism John publicly announced the arrival of the Messiah and the inception of his ministry (Jn 1:31–34). (3) By his baptism Jesus completely identified himself with humanity's sin and failure (though he himself needed no repentance or cleansing from sin), becoming our substitute (2Co 5:21). (4) His baptism was an example to his followers.

NIV SB gives a number of reasons for our Lord's baptism, without explicitly naming the one which you consider correct - immersing in the sins of humanity, although this might be alluded to in point 3. I wanted to know your view on the four reasons for baptism given here.

4) On the four reasons, number four is the only one which should be blotted out entirely. It is not only incorrect (even John recognized by his objection that the example was questionable – if it had been an example, which it was not), but would give the false impression that water-baptism is necessary when it is not even a good thing for a Christian to do (as a purely Jewish ritual *anticipating* the Messiah, continuing it denies that Christ has already fulfilled those prophecies). The other three I would accept as applications.

For example, in #1, the quotation is obviously correct. And it is true that Jesus met all of God's righteous requirements. But that neither explains the baptism nor explains what "righteous requirement" was being fulfilled (the symbolism of the cross). In #2, this may be true, but it is not stated in scripture that this was the purpose (and compare Matt.4:12-19 which places the actually beginning of the active phase of Jesus' ministry after John's imprisonment). As you say, #3 is to my way of thinking the best explanation, though I phrase things differently (the water = the sin of the world; the immersion = the spiritual death of our Lord in propitiating it; the surfacing = the resurrection).

Matthew 3:17 (NASB)

¹⁷ and behold, a voice out of the heavens said, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased."

NIV SB: 3:17 voice from heaven. The voice (1) authenticated Jesus' Messianic sonship, echoing Ps 2:7 ("This is my Son"), (2) identified Jesus with the suffering servant of Isa 42:1 ("with him I am well pleased"), and perhaps (3) identified Jesus with Abraham's willingness to offer Isaac as a sacrifice, echoing Ge 22:2 ("whom I love"). This word from the Father must have greatly encouraged Jesus at the very outset of his earthly ministry. my Son. See notes on 14:33; Jn 3:16.

Could you explain why is Isaiah 42:1 associated with the suffering servant? What part of Isaiah 42 refers to suffering?

5) Isaiah 42:2: "He will not cry out, nor raise His voice, nor cause His voice to be heard in the street" (NKJV) is prophetic of our Lord's humble acceptance of the trials He was put through leading up to the cross (cf. 1Pet.2:23: "who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously" NKJV; cf. v.24; cf. et Is.53:7: "He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so He opened not His mouth" NKJV).

Matthew 4:12 (NASB)

¹² Now when Jesus heard that John had been taken into custody, He withdrew into Galilee;

Why did our Lord withdraw into Galilee when He heard that John had been taken in to custody?

6) I would prefer to translate "He went back" (*anachoreo*, with *ana-* often meaning "back"; cf. Latin prefix "re-" as in "returned"). Prior to this He was being tested in preparation for His public ministry. The reason that it started in Galilee was at least twofold: 1) to fulfill prophecy (Is.9:2; Matt.4:16); 2) to avoid immediate and direct confrontation with the religious establishment in Jerusalem – which would have "forced the issue" long before the intended three and a half year ministry was completed (as may be seen by the reaction He received whenever He went up to Jerusalem for the mandatory festivals).

Matthew 4:15 (NASB)

¹⁵ "The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, By the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles—

4:15 Galilee of the Gentiles. A region that, from the Jewish perspective in Jesus' day, was "in darkness" and "the land of the shadow of death" (v. 16), probably because it was far removed from the religious influences of Jerusalem and because large numbers of Gentiles lived there. Matthew may have chosen this text (Isa 9:1–2) because of his interest in the universal appeal of the gospel (see 2:1–12; 13:38; 28:19; see also Introduction: Recipients).

The last sentence sounds as if Matthew made the choice, rather than through the Spirit recognizing the application of the passage - what is your take?

7) Matthew wrote under divine inspiration. Also, the gospel has a mainly Jewish audience in mind. The passage quoted from Isaiah demonstrates that this is indeed the meaning of the prophecy.

Matthew 4:25

²⁵ Large crowds from Galilee, the Decapolis,^[a] Jerusalem, Judea and the region across the Jordan followed him.

Matthew 4:25 That is, the Ten Cities

What is Decapolis?

8) This was an area of trans-Jordan in what is mostly today Syria known as the "ten cities" because they had a mutual relationship, being all Hellenistic in culture and Greek speaking.

Matthew 5:3 (NASB)

³ "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

a) NIV SB: 5:3 Blessed. The word means more than "happy," because happiness is an emotion often dependent on outward circumstances. "Blessed" here refers to the ultimate well-being and distinctive spiritual joy of those who share in the salvation of the kingdom of God.

Do you agree with this definition of "blessed"?

9) The word means "blessed" and also, as a result of being blessed, "happy". Our Lord's point is that the happiness which accrues to believers in spite of the travails of this life: nothing should be able to rob a believer of the peace and the joy which is his/hers in Jesus Christ. That is **true** happiness.

b) What does "poor in spirit" mean?

10) On the beatitudes generally, see the link:

[http://ichthys.com/mail-New-Testament-Interpretation-Melchizedek.htm#woes and beatitudes](http://ichthys.com/mail-New-Testament-Interpretation-Melchizedek.htm#woes_and_beatitudes)

Here is what I have posted on this before (at different link):

The "poor in spirit" of Matthew 5:3 is better translated "spiritually blessed are the poor" – i.e., the ones who are children of God are blessed even though they are poor **because** they are spiritually blessed.

That is, being poor is no fun (believe me), but "in their spirit" the poor, who are believers in Jesus' presentation (unbelievers are not "blessed" in any way; see the link above) are "blessed" nonetheless in all things spiritual, especially if they are taking advantage of what the Lord provides to grow, progress and produce for Him – and how much more blessed/happy shall we be when He returns for us! The rewards to come and their anticipation here and now is part of the peace and joy which the world cannot take away from us.

How do we know that this verse refers to personal loss? Should this verse be interpreted by bringing Isaiah 61 into the context?

10b) We can bring in Isaiah 61:1: "He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted". In other words, comforting those to

whom He comes – including those who are mourning – is part of Messiah's prophesied package of blessings.

Matthew 5:4 (NASB)

⁴ "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.

Could you clarify this verse? What type of mourning is meant here by Jesus?

11) I would say it refers to any type of mourning for any type of loss; this is first and foremost for the loss of life of a dear one, but need not be restricted to that sort of loss (e.g., 1Sam.16:1; Is.66:10).

NIV SB: 5:4 those who mourn. Over both personal and corporate sins (see Ezr 9:4; Ps 119:36).

Do you agree that mourning over sins is meant here?

12) No. This passage is speaking about believers experiencing personal loss. We can be at peace and retain our happiness and joy even in the midst of grief – because we have the Spirit and anticipate the Lord's return and our deliverance in all things.

¹⁷ "Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill. ¹⁸ For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished.

What does Jesus mean by "until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished"? Since our Lord came to fulfill the Law and the Prophets (verse 17) and since as a result the Law of Moses is no longer to be observed, is He here referring to Old Testament prophecies referring to the end times?

13) Jesus is the fulfillment of the Law (Rom.10:4); the Law has been fulfilled by His life and death. All other prophecies will indeed be brought to pass "before heaven and earth pass away" at the end of the Millennium, but the cross is what has accomplished this prophecy – every "jot and tittle", since He died for all of our sins.

Matthew 5:22 (NASB)

²² But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be guilty before the court; and whoever says to his brother, 'You good-for-nothing,' shall be guilty before the supreme court; and whoever says, 'You fool,' shall be guilty *enough to go* into the fiery hell.

What does our Lord here mean by "court" and "supreme court"? How are these courts different from the "fiery hell"?

14) The first two (a strange translation by the NASB) are human judgment (a local judge in the first instance, the national council in the second); "fiery hell" is the place where those who are condemned at the last judgment – for rejecting Christ – will be thrown. So this is an ascending scale used by our Lord for emphasis: these behaviors considered of no account or even justifiable are seen to be incompatible with the walk of a believer. They are sins, and all sins are punishable by eternal condemnation. Herein is the gospel: the Law cannot save, merely demonstrate the need for a Savior; but we are all saved from all our sins by the blood of Christ through faith because Christ died for every single sin.

One thing isn't clear to me here - how is it that our Lord moves from earthly judgments to a heavenly one?

14b) Probably because this life is where we exercise the image of God – for a brief time – in choosing our ways, and all that comes afterwards is the result of those choices we make as the clock ticks down.

Matthew 5:29-30 (NASB)

²⁹ If your right eye makes you stumble, tear it out and throw it from you; for it is better for you to lose one of the parts of your body, than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. ³⁰ If your right hand makes you stumble, cut it off and throw it from you; for it is better for you to lose one of the parts of your body, than for your whole body to go into hell.

I take it these words are not to be taken literally - how should we understand them?

15) This is covered at the link:

<http://ichthys.com/mail-153fish.htm#pluck%20out%20your%20eye>

From another posting:

The key thing to me about our Lord's examples is that no one in the world would actually do this, namely, pluck out their eye if, for example "it" lusted after a woman. In short order the entire world of men would be blind if that were

common practice, whereas in the history of the world following our Lord's use of this example no one has yet done this (no one sane, in any case). So it does serve to show how impossible sinlessness is – apart from the Spirit; and it does, as you suppose very correctly, point the way all that much more emphatically to the need for help in order to be saved – and He is our only help, the only Name given under heaven whereby we must be saved.

I would add also what is explained at the link, namely that this is an emphatic way to make anyone who thinks about it realize that we have no hope apart from a Savior who will take away our sins – because even if we take the most dramatic measures we cannot be saved without God's merciful intervention at the cross.

Matthew 5:33-37 (NASB)

³³ "Again, you have heard that the ancients were told, 'You shall not make false vows, but shall fulfill your vows to the Lord.' ³⁴ But I say to you, make no oath at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God, ³⁵ or by the earth, for it is the footstool of His feet, or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. ³⁶ Nor shall you make an oath by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black. ³⁷ But let your statement be, 'Yes, yes' or 'No, no'; anything beyond these is of evil.

NIV SB: 5:33–37 The OT recognized the useful role of swearing oaths in certain situations (even God swore oaths: see, e. g., Ge 22:16; Jos 5:6; Ps 89:3–4, Ps 35; Isa 45:22; Jer 22:5; Eze 26:7; see also notes on Ge 9:13; 15:17; Dt 6:13; Jer 22:5; Heb 6:13) —common profanity is not in view. Jesus urged such honesty and integrity in all human speech that swearing oaths in support of assertions or commitments would not be necessary.

The last point regarding integrity in speech deeming oaths redundant is interesting - would agree that this is what our Lord means here?

16) I think it is more the question of humility versus "making a show" of one's own sanctity by overdoing things – along the lines of having a trumpeter announce one's contributions (as opposed to giving in secret). Both stem from the same sort of arrogance that imagines works, "something I do", as more important than the truth and than the Lord in whom we have put our faith. The life of faith versus the life of arrogant self-justification which lacks all faith and which seeks to impress God and men with superfluous actions was a characteristic of the legalistic generation of our Lord's day – just as it is today.

Matthew 5:39 (NASB)

39 But I say to you, do not resist an evil person; but whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also.

NIV SB: 5:39 resist. Here it probably means in a court of law. slaps. The Greek verb used here means "slaps you with the back of the hand." It was more an insult (cf. 26:67) than an act of violence. The point is that it is better to be insulted even twice than to take the matter to court. Ancient Near Eastern society had become very litigious.

This sounds like a very reasonable explanation - would you agree with this note?

17) I understand that people are uncomfortable with this verse. It is a high standard. The only thing I would say about "turning the other cheek" to mitigate it at all is that our Lord is clearly not describing a situation where our life (or the life of someone else) is in danger. If the Father's will were being done on earth – and only in the Millennium when our Lord reigns and we reign with Him will this even be close to being the case in the way people behave – then no one would "make himself a prey" by acting according to our Lord's perfect standard (Is.59:15). Please see the link:

<http://ichthys.com/mail-Freedom-Responsibility.htm#turn%20the%20other%20cheek>

I read an interesting observation by some commentators - since most people are right-handed, being struck on the right cheek means that it was a backhand slap - which clearly shows that insult is meant here rather than for example an attack on one's life. Do you think this point has some value?

17b) No. Luke 6:29 merely has "the one, the other" without regard to left or right, from which I think we would be justified in understanding that the same thing is meant here: since most people are right-handed, it's natural to start with the right in describing something to them and then move to the left. Also, the Greek has *rapizo* "smite" and *tupto* "strike" in the two respective chapters. "Slap" is an interpretation, but "punch" is equally likely – and you can equally punch a person in the left or right cheek regardless of "handedness".

Matthew 5:43 (NIV)

43 "You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor^[a] and hate your enemy.'
Matthew 5:43 Lev. 19:18

Leviticus 19:18 doesn't mention hating the enemy?

18) No. That is the current "interpretation" which our Lord is contradicting (analogous to the false interpretation of divorce, giving, the Sabbath, etc.). This is standard "popular morality" in the ancient Mediterranean world, but it is not godly to hate.

Matthew 6:1 (NASB)

6 "Beware of practicing your righteousness before men to be noticed by them; otherwise you have no reward with your Father who is in heaven.

NIV SB: reward from your Father. Spiritual growth and maturity or perhaps a heavenly reward of some kind—or both.

How should we understand the reward here?

19) We receive rewards for everything we do in the power of the Spirit:

"And whoever in the name of a disciple gives to one of these little ones even a cup of cold water to drink, truly I say to you, he shall not lose his reward."

Matthew 10:42 NASB

These "specific act" rewards are no doubt of less import than the crowns which represent much effort over long periods of time, consistently maintained – but they will be wonderful. This also helps to explain, by the way, how there can be absolute differentiation between every believer and every other believer, and how there can be three levels of reward by gate in the New Jerusalem even for those who have not earned a single crown: there will be significant variation between the highest rewarded non-crown believer and the lowest.

Matthew 6:6 (NASB)

6 But you, when you pray, go into your inner room, close your door and pray to your Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees *what is done* in secret will reward you.

NIV SB: 6:6 Jesus' followers are not to make a show of their praying, in contrast to "the hypocrites" (v. 5). This does not mean that all prayer should be private, as the plurals "our" and "us" in vv. 9–13 indicate. room. The Greek word here probably means "storeroom," because unlike most of the rooms in the house, it had a door that could be shut.

I) Do you agree with the points that plurals "our" and "us" indicate that not all prayer should be private?

II) Is "storeroom" the right rendering?

20) Taking the last first, the word *tameion*, means "pantry", so that any small enclosed room is what is meant, often used to store things – just as a closet or a pantry is; the root has to do with being a household steward. As to the plurals, they indicate plurality, not anything having to do with public/private. There is a time for each; Jesus is addressing multiple disciples – that is the reason for the plural.

Matthew 6:7 (NASB)

⁷ "And when you are praying, do not use meaningless repetition as the Gentiles do, for they suppose that they will be heard for their many words.

NIV SB: 6:7 babbling like pagans. They used long lists of the names of their gods in their prayers, hoping that by constantly repeating them they would call on the name of the god that could help them. Jesus is not necessarily condemning all long prayers, but meaningless verbiage in praying.

Do you agree that this is what our Lord means here - long lists of names? I thought that an unnecessary repetition of one intention during one prayer could also be considered "babbling" or "meaningless repetition"?

21) I think our Lord's words speak for themselves here. The example cited may be an example of this but it does not exhaust the possible situations which might fall into this category (as you note). I think the attitude of heart is what counts. If there is no need to be saying the same thing over and over as a rote, that would seem to me to be another case (one thinks of Tibetan "prayer wheels" and other pointlessness). What comes to mind for me are people who pray long *in public* in order to "seem holy"; I think one can get a good idea of what Jesus means here by attending almost any Protestant (or Catholic?) church on Sunday morning and being subjected to interminably long prayers devoid of anything of much importance (not to mention being filled with doctrinally questionable pronouncements).

Matthew 6:10 (NASB)

¹⁰ "Your kingdom come.

Your will be done,

On earth as it is in heaven.

NIV SB: your will be done. Logically follows "your kingdom come." The NIV scansion and punctuation suggest that "on earth as it is in heaven" be read with each of the three preceding petitions.

Do you agree that "on earth as it is in heaven" relates to each of the three preceding petitions?

22) I wouldn't necessarily distinguish (i.e., I don't see the problem), because "heaven and earth" cover every eventuality. Clearly, we believers should hallow the Father's Name now, strive to follow His will, and delight ourselves with the coming of His kingdom. Just as clearly, only after the Father's advent to the New Jerusalem in the New Heavens and New Earth will it be the the case that His Name is properly hallowed and never abused, and that His will is completely and perfectly done by all. This is the wonderful state of affairs we are to contemplate when we pray this part of the prayer, looking forward to the eternal state of things and all the blessings that will be ours on that wonderful eternal day to come.

Matthew 6:13 (NASB)

¹³ 'And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from ^[a]evil. ^[b][For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.]

Matthew 6:13 Or *the evil one*

Matthew 6:13 This clause not found in early mss

Should the second sentence be a part of this verse?

23) No. The doxology or ascription seems to have been imported from St. John Chrysostom; either that or he reflects the liturgical form of the prayer as it was adapted for use in the post-apostolic church. In any case, this sentence is not part of the Word of God.

Matthew 6:16 (NASB)

¹⁶ "Whenever you fast, do not put on a gloomy face as the hypocrites *do*, for they ^[a]neglect their appearance so that they will be noticed by men when they are fasting. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full.

Matthew 6:16 Lit *distort their faces*, i.e. discolor their faces with makeup

Could you explain the footnote - was it a common practice to discolor the face with makeup during fasting?

24) The verb *aphanizo* means, literally, to remove from sight, and can thus mean "to destroy" (that is what it means in Matt.6:19 and 6:20, as well as in Acts 13:41; at Jas.4:14 it means something more like "vanish"). In classical usage, "hide", "obscure", "disfigure", "mar", "disguise" are also found, and this seems to be the sense in our context, with the last being perhaps the best. How a person would do this, whether merely by acting sullen and gloomy, or by actually treating the face with cosmetics, is not clear, but I would come down on the side of the former rather than the latter (in the absence of further evidence). In other words, the translation is good; the footnote probably wrong.

Matthew 6:22-23 (NASB)

²² "The eye is the lamp of the body; so then if your eye is clear, your whole body will be full of light. ²³ But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light that is in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!

What specifically is our Lord here referring to by the eye?

25) The eye is the perceptive faculty. If we are looking "with open eyes", one might say, then well and good, we will see clearly, that is, obtain an objective assessment of what is seen and heard, so that we may believe the truth of it. But if our eye is "jaundiced" or if we are looking with eyes nearly shut, if our view is prejudiced against the truth, if our hearts are hardened, then even if we do see the good and hear the truth, we are likely not to recognize and accept it. This is a very important passage wherein our Lord demonstrates the reasons why truth and objective goodness in and of themselves do not benefit people; one has to accept goodness and truth and respond to it. But most people would rather walk in their own ways, and they have closed or blinded their own eyes to the truth (of natural revelation, for example, and, in this case, to the presentation of the gospel) so as not to receive it. The eye here is thus the portal to the heart and its clearness or badness is reflective of the state of the heart which has conditioned it to see things one way or the other.

Matthew 6:27 (NASB)

²⁷ And who of you by being worried can add a *single* ^[a]hour to his ^[b]life?

Matthew 6:27 Lit *cubit* (approx 18 in.)

Matthew 6:27 Or *height*

Could you explain the footnotes - what is the correct rendering? "Hour to his life" or "cubit to his height"?

26) The Greek says "add a cubit to his *helikia*"; the word *helikia* most often refers to maturity/age, so that one could, I suppose, by seeing cubit here as metaphorical for a "length of time" translate as NASB does (along with some other versions, such as ESV). However, the use of *helikia* for physical stature (attained at maturity) is common enough in Greek, making the NASB rendering highly doubtful. There is no question about the text here.

Doesn't it seem more likely that our Lord would here refer to the length of life rather than height as it's the former about which we tend to worry more?

26b) Regardless of likelihood, from a philological point of view I believe "height" has to be correct. In terms of the theology, it makes sense to me that having dealt with length of life already, our Lord would not be repeating the same thing again with no additional meaning. It makes sense to me that He would next address the issue of "where am I in the world?" Many people in fact don't spend all day worrying about death (they have learned to pretend it won't actually happen to them), but they do worry about almost everything else that happens in this life. In Luke 12:25 our Lord only mentions the cubit. I would say that expanding this by way of application to the life in general is fine; but the interpretation is the interpretation.

Matthew 7:1-2 (NASB)

7 "Do not judge so that you will not be judged. ² For in the way you judge, you will be judged; and by your standard of measure, it will be measured to you.

Could you explain this passage in light of the fact that God judges all righteously?

27) God is THE Judge and certainly has the right of evaluation of all – the last judgment will be the time when all are finally and thoroughly judged for their failure to accede to His will (believers are given a judgment for reward). For more on this passage please see the link:

[http://ichthys.com/mail-Christian-Walk.htm#Judge not that ye be not judged](http://ichthys.com/mail-Christian-Walk.htm#Judge_not_that_ye_be_not_judged)

Matthew 7:6 (NASB)

⁶ "Do not give what is holy to dogs, and do not throw your pearls before swine, or they will trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you to pieces.

Could you explain the relationship of this verse to the previous verses?

28) I don't see any direct, thematic relationship; after warning His listeners off of hypocrisy and being judgmental, our Lord also treats the opposite extreme: just as we should not assume we are better than others and others worse than us, in a similar way we should also not assume that others will rejoice with the truth the way we do. We shouldn't look down on others without cause; we shouldn't assume others are "good" without cause either.

NIV SB: 7:1 The Christian is not to judge hypocritically or self-righteously, as can be seen from the context (v. 5). The same thought is expressed in 23:13-39 (cf. Ro 2:1). To obey Christ's commands in this chapter, we must first evaluate a person's character-whether one is a "dog" (v. 6) or a false prophet (v. 15), or whether one's life shows fruit (v. 16). Scripture repeatedly exhorts believers to evaluate carefully (see Jn 7:24) and choose between good and bad people and things (sexually immoral, 1Co 5:9; those who masquerade as angels of light, 2Co 11:14; dogs, Php 3:2; false prophets, 1Jn 4:1). The Christian is to "test them all" (1Th 5:21).

I'm not sure if my understanding of this note is correct, but it seems that the NIV SB may be here establishing an interesting link between Matthew 7:1-5 and 7:6 - we should evaluate someone's character before judging. Would you say it is possible that our Lord starts with denouncing hypocrisy in verses 1-5 and then tells us not to give what is holy to dogs, meaning that if we do correct someone, we should first make sure that we live up to the standard we are applying to others and secondly, that this correction is given to those who would be willing to receive it rather than those who would "trample it under foot"?

28b) I don't think verse six goes with what precedes anymore than it does with what follows, not, at least, in the sense of the passages being meant to explain each other. I think if we try to inject verses one through five into verse six we will end up missing the otherwise clear point of verse six: there are people out there who will not appreciate any truth we attempt to share with them and will in fact react negatively to our attempts to do so. If there is a connection, it would be along the lines you suggest, but to make it clear that even if we are without hypocrisy (subject problems solved) we shouldn't make it our business to "share" with everyone at any time (object problems), but only with discretion.

Matthew 7:7 (NASB)

7 "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.

7:7 Ask ... seek ... knock. Greek present imperatives are used here, indicating continual asking, seeking and knocking. Persistent prayer is being emphasized (cf. Jas 4:2-3; cf. also Ge 32:26 and note).

Do you agree that the present tense indicate that continuous asking, seeking and knocking are meant by Jesus?

29) Generally speaking, aspect (i.e., present vs. aorist stem) is not of much significance, but it does seem that in the imperative there is sometimes a difference. Our Lord uses the present stem when He could have used the aorist; the aorist would not have ruled out multiple requests, but the present does lean that way, opening the passage up to the idea that we do sometimes need to be persistent and ask more than once; the conclusion "**persistent prayer is being *emphasized***", however, strikes me as a bridge too far.

Matthew 7:24-27 (NASB)

²⁴ "Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine and acts on them, may be compared to a wise man who built his house on the rock. ²⁵ And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and *yet* it did not fall, for it had been founded on the rock. ²⁶ Everyone who hears these words of Mine and does not act on them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. ²⁷ The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and it fell—and great was its fall."

The general meaning of this passage is clear to me, but I would like to know how specifically to understand the testing of the house ("And the rain fell, and the floods came. . ."). Should we take it to mean the testing of faith? Or temptations?

30) I think that is a good application. What is the house? If it is our edifice of faith that we have built up in spiritual growth then it will stand against all tests; if we have relied on human security instead – and for unbelievers this means not believing the words of the gospel and committing to a life of following Christ – then all expectations about anything to come in this life and the next are fallacious. So, for an unbeliever, don't believe the gospel, your house will fall (the second death); for a believer, don't grow in the Word and its application, your house will fall (spiritual decline, the sin unto death, even apostasy: Lk.8:13).

Matthew 7:28-29 (NASB)

²⁸ When Jesus had finished these words, the crowds were amazed at His

teaching; ²⁹ for He was teaching them as *one* having authority, and not as their scribes.

In light of these words, how did the scribes teach? Did they have no authority?

31) My interpretation is that the scribes and company taught somewhat like one experiences in modern Protestant or other "churches" these days; nothing of substance and no conviction behind specific doctrinal pronouncements; lots of "doubts" on the other hand. In contrast, our Lord went right to the heart of the matter and taught with the conviction of one who knows the truth and has perfect confidence in it.

Matthew 8:4 (NASB)

⁴ And Jesus *said to him, "See that you tell no one; but go, show yourself to the priest and present the offering that Moses commanded, as a testimony to them."

a) NIV SB: 8:4 don't tell anyone. Jesus did not wish to stir up the popular, but mistaken, expectations that a wonder-working Messiah would soon arise as king of the Jews and deliver them from the Roman yoke.

You made the point that our Lord didn't want to make the logistical aspect of His ministry too difficult with crowds, here the NIV SB suggests another argument - what is your view?

32) I prefer my view. In this particular case, touching a leper was something that might be wrongly construed, so our Lord gives the individual in question a way to resolve the issue of his healing without naming Jesus.

b) Should we take this verse to mean that the Law wasn't fulfilled until our Lord's sacrifice and needed to be observed until then? But then how would this correspond for example to the meaning of Sabbath being changed why Jesus was still in the course of His ministry?

33) See previous answer; Our Lord followed the Law (the true Law) and the only "breaking" that took place was for the sake of fulfilling His purpose in completing the Law – in other words it was not a "breaking" at all. As our Lord tells us, He is "Lord of the Sabbath" so that the rules only applied to Him to the extent that He wished to comply so as not to offend (in the same way that He did not really owe the temple tax but told Peter to pay it for both of them – and gave him the means to do so). The Sabbath "was made for man, not man for the Sabbath", so that the whole idea of

anyone finding fault with our Lord for doing good on the Sabbath was and is offensive.

c) What does our Lord mean by "as a testimony to them"?

34) See previous answers; the offering would be a token that God had healed leprosy (something no doubt that these individuals doubted possible).

Matthew 8:8 (NASB)

⁸ But the centurion said, "Lord, I am not worthy for You to come under my roof, but just say the word, and my servant will be healed.

NIV SB: 8:8 I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. In Greek the words "I do not deserve" are the same as those used by John the Baptist in 3:11 ("I am not worthy"). The entire statement reveals how highly the centurion regarded Jesus. Or perhaps his response reflects his own sense of moral guilt in the presence of Jesus.

Could centurion's words stem from both high regard for Jesus and sense of guilt? Can we somehow make this judgment at all?

35) The Greek actually says "sufficient" (*hikanos*); as a gentile who realized the holy character of our Lord as well as his own sinfulness, this is an appropriate, humble response. I wouldn't want to use the word "guilt".

Matthew 8:11-12 (NASB)

¹¹ I say to you that many will come from east and west, and recline *at the table* with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven; ¹² but the sons of the kingdom will be cast out into the outer darkness; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

Could you clarify this verse? How should we understand "sons of the kingdom"?

36) This means the contemporary Jews of Jesus' day (and other Jewish unbelievers of other generations) who, as sons of Abraham, were by birthright entitled to the kingdom (i.e., "sons of the kingdom" = those who are part of or belong to the kingdom; cf. "sons of surety" = "hostages" in 2Ki.14:14), but who had forsaken that birthright through their unwillingness to submit to the Father and the Son through faith.

Matthew 8:15 (NASB)

¹⁵ He touched her hand, and the fever left her; and she got up and ^[a]waited on Him.

Matthew 8:15 Or *served*

a) Could you explain the footnote - which rendering is better?

b) Why did Peter's mother in law wait on our Lord when He was right by her? Or did she wait for someone else?

37) This probably means she made them a meal and served it to them.

Matthew 8:28 (NASB)

28 When He came to the other side into the country of the Gadarenes, two men who were demon-possessed met Him as they were coming out of the tombs. They were so extremely violent that no one could pass by that way.

NIV SB: 8:28 region of the Gadarenes. The region around the city of Gadara, six miles southeast of the Sea of Galilee. Mark and Luke identify the region by the capital city Gerasa, located about 35 miles southeast of the Sea (see note on Lk 8:26).

Commentators see a major difficulty in reconciling Matthew's account with that of Mark and Luke as to the location of the miracle. Which reading is correct - "region of Gadarenes" or of "Gerasenes"?

37b) All three of the synoptic gospels mention this place, and they all spell it slightly differently (at least in the original hand in Aleph). This is, in my opinion, much ado about nothing. When we have disciples called by different names entirely, it is not too much to understand that certain places with difficult names were variously pronounced (and spelled), according to the preference of the one doing the writing. I doubt any of the gospel writers had ever seen the place spelled in a text, so they each transliterated it into Greek as it seemed best to them. In the LXX, the town Megiddo is spelled dozens of different ways – a problem of making Hebrew names into Greek (which as we know is a problem with all Hebrew names coming into Greek, and Aramaic ones too). The point is that it is the same place, whether or not we wish to come up with a standard English transliteration – which will be different in Greek from whatever we decide is "right" – the town/region is the same in any case. No problem.

Matthew 8:29 (NASB)

29 And they cried out, saying, "[a]What business do we have with each other, Son of God? Have You come here to torment us before the time?"

Matthew 8:29 Lit *What is to us and to you* (a Heb idiom)

Since the footnote gives a Hebrew idiom, should we understand that the angels use this language?

38) This Hebrew idiom is also present in Jewish Aramaic and Jewish Greek, so there is no telling what language the man was speaking in at the time – probably Greek. It is my impression that fallen angels who possess a person would speak in that person's language – or at least in the language he/she is being addressed in (otherwise there is little point in speaking at all).

Matthew 8:28-34 says that our Lord healed two demoniacs, but Mark 5:1-20 only mentions one?

39) There were two (as Matthew says) but Mark and Luke focus on the one who had the "legion". See the link: <http://ichthys.com/mail-double.htm>

Matthew 8:30 (NASB)

³⁰ Now there was a herd of many swine feeding at a distance from them.

NIV SB: 8:30 herd of pigs. Large numbers of Gentiles lived in Galilee. Normally Jews did not raise pigs, since they were considered the most ceremonially unclean of all animals.

I remember you saying that these animals were raised illegally, so I take it you assumed that Jews were responsible for it? Here the NIV SB suggests that the herd belonged to the Gentiles.

39) No one knows to whom the herd belonged but our Lord was sent to minister to the "lost sheep of Israel" and only otherwise ministered to non-Jews indirectly (as in the case of the Samaritan woman and the Syro-Phoenician woman), so for Him to cross the sea to this place to minister would be unusual if it were populated by gentiles only.

Matthew 8:34 (NASB)

³⁴ And behold, the whole city came out to meet Jesus; and when they saw Him, they implored Him to leave their region.

NIV SB: 8:34 pleaded with him to leave. They were probably more concerned about their financial loss than about the deliverance of the miserable demon-possessed men (see note on Mk 5:17).

I always assumed that fear was the main motivation here - do you agree with this note?

40) What I find most remarkable about the passage is that after witnessing the amazing power of God the people ask Jesus to leave. They are definitely in fear, but instead of reacting to this legitimate impression of the majesty of God by prostrating themselves and seeking His truth and forgiveness, they would rather be relieved of the confrontation; the financial loss is merely an irritant and a means to making this terrible choice.

Matthew 9:8 (NASB)

8 But when the crowds saw this, they were awestruck, and glorified God, who had given such authority to men.

Why is "men" here used in the plural, since the crowds have only witnessed Jesus performing miracles? Or should we take the expression "who had given such authority to men" as meaning "who had given such authority for the benefit of men" (Bengel's commentary)?

40b) Because Jesus was clearly a man (and not so clearly to those who saw Him, God), but was performing miracles which only God can do – which should have impelled more to draw the correct conclusion about Him. By saying "men" and not "to a man", they were able to distance themselves from identifying Him as unique.

Matthew 9:11-12 (NASB)

11 When the Pharisees saw this, they said to His disciples, "Why is your Teacher eating with the tax collectors and sinners?"¹² But when Jesus heard this, He said, "It is not those who are healthy who need a physician, but those who are sick.

Jesus knew that Pharisees were "sick" also, so does He here accept Pharisees' own perception of themselves in the sense that since they do not see the need for a physician, He will not heal them?

40c) He doesn't accept it, but He very wisely puts them into the position of either having to recognize that they need help too, or else to confirm themselves in their hard-hearted illusion of legalistic perfection.

Matthew 9:15-17 (NASB)

¹⁵ And Jesus said to them, "The attendants of the bridegroom cannot mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them, can they? But the days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast. ¹⁶ But no one puts a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment; for the patch pulls away from the garment, and a worse tear results. ¹⁷ Nor do *people* put new wine into old wineskins; otherwise the wineskins burst, and the wine pours out and the wineskins are ruined; but they put new wine into fresh wineskins, and both are preserved."

I understand both the point our Lord makes in verse 15 and in verses 16-17. What is unclear to me is the relationship between the two. What is the link between them?

41) They both relate to doing what is appropriate to the circumstances of one's ministry. There is a time for everything. Figuring out the right thing to do at the right time is a significant part of spiritual growth; the principle also has broader applications as well. For Jesus' disciples, it meant that being involved with the people they were ministering to along with Jesus was what was important at the time, not what the Pharisees thought to be important; for us today, it means not trying to change the old when we should be serving the new since the two have little in common in fact (e.g., trying to change the Roman Catholic church – or any traditional church – from within would, it seems to me, violate our Lord's implicit advice here).

Matthew 9:24 (NASB)

²⁴ He said, "Leave; for the girl has not died, but is asleep." And they *began* laughing at Him.

I'm wondering how we should understand these words spoken by our Lord. Should they be taken literally, possibly meaning that the girl had actually died, but when our Lord said that she was asleep, her life returned to her?

42) On the one hand, death can be called sleep (our Lord says the same thing about Lazarus in John's gospel); on the other hand, our Lord's genuine love and mercy is seen shining through here. What tel-evangelist today would not put up on every possible medium an announcement of a dead person brought back to life? But our Lord, partly out of a desire to preserve freedom of action for His own ministry, but also out of consideration for the girl and her family – lest they become celebrities to no good end – does what He can under the circumstances to protect their privacy.

Matthew 10:2 (NASB)

² Now the names of the twelve apostles are these: The first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; and James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother;

Why is "the first" put before Simon?

43) This just indicates we have a sequence, namely, the order in which our Lord called the disciples.

Matthew 10:4 (NASB)

4 Simon the ^[a]Zealot, and Judas Iscariot, the one who betrayed Him.

Matthew 10:4 Or *Cananaean*

a) Could you explain the footnote? How should Simon's name be rendered?

[see next]

b) NIV SB: 10:4 the Zealot. Either a description of Simon's religious zeal or a reference to his membership in the party of the Zealots, a Jewish revolutionary group violently opposed to Roman rule over the Holy Land (see chart).

What is your take on this note?

44) The word *kananaios* (and so then also *kananistes*) seems to mean "from Cana", but we know from Luke 6:15 and Acts 1:13 that Simon was a "Zealot", that is, a member of a political movement wishing to bring in the kingdom by force (he was thus apparently rescued from this false approach by our Lord's teaching of the truth). So scholars (notably Schürer) have derived the Greek adjective (and noun) from the Aramaic word for zeal (*qan'an*) – it is used thus in the Targums and other Jewish literature, notably for those who opposed the Romans. So while it is possible that Simon was a Zealot *and* from Cana, the translation "Zealot" here is probably correct.

Matthew 10:9-10 (NASB)

⁹ Do not acquire gold, or silver, or copper for your money belts, ¹⁰ or a bag for *your* journey, or even two coats, or sandals, or a staff; for the worker is worthy of his support.

Do the last words of verse 10 mean that our Lord wanted the apostles to be fully dependent on the provisions given by people they visited?

45) He wanted them to be totally dependent on God, and for the ministry thus to be seen to have both the clearly supernatural origin it did have, and also for there to be absolutely no question of a profit motive – the twelve would only use/take what they needed and would acquire nothing in the process (setting them noticeably apart from other pseudo-ministries of that day, not to mention most in our own day).

Matthew 10:13 (NASB)

13 If the house is worthy, give it your blessing of peace. But if it is not worthy, take back your blessing of peace.

NIV SB: 10:13 If the home is deserving. That is, "If the head of the house loves peace" (Lk 10:6). let your peace return to you. Either (1) retract your blessing or (2) leave the house.

How should we understand "take back your blessing of peace"?

45b) Matthew does have the third person imperative but Luke has the future ("it will"); so our Lord is describing the blessing (peace) that will abide in a house that treats these apostles well, but notes that if on entering the house proves unworthy in not responding, then they will leave and their blessing with them.

Matthew 10:15 (NASB)

¹⁵ Truly I say to you, it will be more tolerable for *the* land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for that city.

a) Could you explain these words? Why is the judgment on the city who rejects the apostles more severe than Sodom and Gomorrah?

b) Some use this passage to support the notion of there being different degrees of eternal punishment - do you agree with this?

46) To take the last part first, in the Bible I find only "the second death" as being the result of refusing to accept Jesus as Lord in this life, Dante notwithstanding, and that is certainly bad enough and terrifying enough to get anyone's attention – if there is even a spark of desire to put God in front of self. The main problem I see with positing differences in hell is that it might lead some (falsely) to assume that "since I am not so bad as X, hell won't be so bad for me" – and that is the peak of self-delusion. As to Sodom and Gomorrah, Lot is saved, but a city that completely rejects the gospel will by definition not have any who escapes condemnation.

Matthew 10:26 (NASB)

²⁶ "Therefore do not fear them, for there is nothing concealed that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known.

Why does our Lord encourage His disciples by reassuring them that "there is nothing concealed that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known"? Are these words spoken for the disciples to realize that regardless of that

situation on this side of heaven, everything will at some point become clear, i.e. eventually everyone will be judged?

47) Yes. That is a good way to put it. Once we truly do realize that absolutely everything that is taking place is in God's plan, that He is not being taken by surprise by any event, that He has already made perfect provision in eternity past for everything in our lives, and particularly for anything of which we might be fearful, then we can begin to relax and rest in the faith that makes these blessed truths more visible than what our eyes see and our ears hear.

Matthew 10:28 (NASB)

²⁸ Do not fear those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.

Is soul here used as a synonym of spirit?

48) No. What we have here is the word *psyche* and *psyche* refers to "physical life"; if we believers are killed (i.e., if our physical life on this earth is taken away), it does not affect our eternal life (or resurrection bodies). But for those who deny the Lord, the end result is the second death rather than eternal life. Therefore God is worthy of fear but human beings are not.

Matthew 10:34 (NASB)

³⁴ "Do not think that I came to bring peace on the earth; I did not come to bring peace, but a sword.

NIV SB: 10:34 At first glance this saying sounds like a contradiction of Isa 9:6 ("Prince of Peace"), Lk 2:14 ("on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests") and Jn 14:27 ("Peace I leave with you"). It is true that Christ came to bring peace—peace between the believer and God, and peace among humans. Yet the inevitable result of Christ's coming is conflict—between Christ and the antichrist, between light and darkness, between Christ's followers and the devil's followers. This conflict can occur even between members of the same family (vv. 35-36; Mk 10:29-30).

Do you agree with how the NIV SB reconciles this verse with Isaiah 9:6, Luke 2:14 and John 14:27?

48b) Anyone who has read the whole Bible will not, I think, see any contradiction, because the matters correctly brought up here by the NIV SB will be well known. This is the thing the world gets wrong and many Christians too, thinking that we are supposed to bring in the Millennium by our own

devices, when in truth only Christ can bring it in, and the sword of the second advent will proceed the prophesied world peace of the Millennium.

Matthew 10:42 (NASB)

⁴² And whoever in the name of a disciple gives to one of these little ones even a cup of cold water to drink, truly I say to you, he shall not lose his reward."

How should we understand "in the name of a disciple"? Does it mean "as taught by the disciple", "acting as a disciple"?

49) The versions which translate "because he is a disciple" have it right, I think. Theoretically, the phrase could also apply to the giver, and in Greek through the figure of speech known as *apo koinou* it could go with both at the same time. The idea is that if the motivation is of a Christian helping another Christian, that is an act whose reward will not be lost.

Matthew 11:6 (NASB)

⁶ And blessed is he who does not take offense at Me."

Matthew 11:6 Lit *whoever*

Matthew 11:6 Or *stumble over Me*

How should we understand "he who does take offense" (or "stumble over")? It seems that belief isn't directly implied here, but rather not dismissing Jesus?

50) That's right. Remember what Paul says: "we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness" (1Cor.1:23). The generation of Jesus' day, a "generation" which in spiritual terms is still on the scene, was expecting a conquering, glorious Messiah, and were surprised at Jesus – how could someone who to all appearances was a mere human being be the long-hoped-for liberator from the Romans (regardless of the miracles He was performing)? To believe in Him required and requires (for those with this issue) not to stumble over that particular impediment of thwarted expectations and to believe in Him even so. The blessed are those who do believe in the actual Jesus who came to suffer and die for our sins – an absolute necessity if anyone were going to be saved.

Matthew 11:7-9 (NASB)

⁷ As these men were going *away*, Jesus began to speak to the crowds about John,

"What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind? ⁸ But what did you go out to see? A man dressed in soft *clothing*? Those who wear soft *clothing* are in kings' palaces! ⁹ But what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and one who is more than a prophet.

Could you explain this series of questions asked by our Lord and His reference to the reed, man in soft clothing and prophet?

51) The third question is the one to which the answer is obviously "yes!", and our Lord uses the first two to call attention to the extraordinary nature of John's ministry and his exceptional nature as a prophet (question #1 is obviously "no" because no one would seek out a common place, and question #2 is obviously "no" because no one would seek a typical celebrity "out of place").

Matthew 11:11 (NASB)

¹¹ Truly I say to you, among those born of women there has not arisen *anyone* greater than John the Baptist! Yet the one who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.

a) Does by saying that "the one who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he" Jesus mean that all those who are saved are, in their eternal state, greater than the greatest believer who is still on the earth?

52) That is my understanding as well. I believe our Lord says this because it makes the dramatic point that we should all be looking ahead, not to status on this earth, for even if we were #1 on earth it couldn't be compared to being the absolute last in line at the judgment seat of Christ. For unbelievers, this makes it clear that it is better to be saved than to be the most highly sought-out celebrity in this life; for believers, this makes it clear that finishing the course is more important and better than any momentary "spiritual success" or renown, especially if it doesn't really carry any weight in God's eyes, and *most* especially if it leads to a diminution of faith and the danger to salvation that always entails.

b) NIV SB puts forward a different interpretation: 11:11 greater than he. John belonged to the age of the old covenant, which was preparatory to Christ. The least NT believer has a higher privilege in Christ as a part of his bride the church (Eph 5:25–27, 32) than John the Baptist, who was only a friend of the bridegroom (Jn 3:29). Another view, however, stresses the expression "whoever is least," holding that the key to its meaning is found in 18:4 — "whoever takes the lowly position of this child." Such a person, though "least," is regarded by God as even greater than John the Baptist.

53) I don't agree with either of the above; in terms of the second one, we are talking in this verse about the objective "least" whereas Matthew 18:4 is speaking about acting in humility in spite of any actual authority one might possess; in terms of the first interpretation here, the Church consists of everyone from Adam and Eve to the last person saved during the Tribulation – so that this is what I call a "hyper-dispensationalist" interpretation. Scofield, Chafer and co. developed this set of doctrines (dispensationalism) in order to explain eschatology (primarily), but their followers have used this collective set of ideas as a hammer to pound down every rough spot in scripture with which they either don't agree or have trouble understanding. Instead of a lens used to reveal the truth, dispensationalism as currently practiced has become in many cases a means of blinding true understanding of what scripture actually says, means and teaches.

c) Does this passage again be taken to implicitly teach that eternal rewards are not equal?

54) While it is true that there is a distinction in eternal rewards, it is also true that every believer will have a certain basic "package" which, even bereft of all additional reward, will result in unimaginable eternal bliss with no jealousy, envy, sadness or regret. However, this passage is deliberately comparing apples (things on earth) with oranges (things after the resurrection), so I don't believe it can be used for that purpose.

I thought I would come back to it, as I probably didn't make my question clear enough. I was referring here to our Lord's words "least in the kingdom of heaven", which could be taken that there are different level of rewards - if someone is considered "least", then there must also be those who are greater.

54b) There are most certainly different levels of reward in heaven, and, yes, I would agree that this verse can be taken as proof of that (very nice!).

Matthew 11:12 (NASB)

12 From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and violent men take it by force.

NIV SB: 11:12 From the days of John the Baptist. From the beginning of Jesus' ministry.

Do you agree that "from the days of John the Baptist" our Lord meant from the beginning of His ministry?

55) The focus of the assault is in this time period, but the principle goes back to the beginning of human history – the Church Age changes the situation as the Church moves over to the spiritual offensive (not without opposition, I should add), evidenced by the great mass of believers entering the lists for Christ and His Church during this era.

Matthew 11:17 (NASB)

17 and say, 'We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we sang a dirge, and you did not mourn.'

NIV SB: 11:17 played the pipe. As at a wedding. sang a dirge. As at a funeral. The latter symbolized the ministry of John, the former that of Jesus. The people of Jesus' "generation" (v. 16) were like children who refused to respond on either occasion.

It seems that the NIV SB interprets these words in a manner exactly opposite to yours, even though it requires to change the chronological order of "playing the flute" and "singing a dirge" - do you think that such a take is possible?

55b) I don't remember taking this verse as "Jesus/John"; I do recall explaining the next verse as John's separation vs. Jesus' engagement. I don't think it's necessary to match these up with weddings/funerals one way or the other. The point is that "this generation" is just looking for an excuse to reject the teaching of the truth, in a very childish way.

I thought you did make the match here - flute was played to John who didn't dance, and dirge to our Lord who didn't weep:

On Luke 7:31-35, most exegetes take both of these examples as describing children at play. They mimic adult behaviors as is common in all culture. In this example, they are described as playing at a (wedding?) celebration and inviting onlookers to "have a good time" (dance), and later as playing at a funeral and inviting onlookers to "mourn". They castigate those who do not do so. This Jesus uses as an analogy against those who were "not pleased" with John (they didn't like the fact that he didn't "dance" and used his asceticism as a reason to devalue what he was saying) and yet were still "not pleased" with Jesus (they didn't like the fact that he didn't "mourn" and used his lack of similar asceticism as a reason to devalue what He was saying).

Jesus makes it crystal clear with this analogy that the people who find fault with Him or John on either basis are really only "playing games" and are not serious about the message but only interested in discovering a way to find fault with the messenger.

55c) My "issue" is with the wording "symbolized the ministry"; what was at issue was only the behavior of John vs. that of Jesus – a very small detail in two ministries which were complementary in every way. It is true that John called to repentance – but so did our Lord. It is true that our Lord promised the Kingdom – but John proclaimed the coming King. I would be hesitant in the extreme to back-characterize anything important from the facts that John lived ascetically as an example while Jesus met with people where they were (and certainly not in any sort of profligate way).

Matthew 11:19 (NASB)

¹⁹ The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, 'Behold, a gluttonous man and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!' Yet wisdom is vindicated by her deeds."

What does our Lord mean by "wisdom is vindicated by her deeds"? Are these words spoken to say that the effectiveness of both John's and Jesus' ministry proves their way of living was right? I read numerous interpretations, your clarification will be most helpful.

55d) The Greek conjunction which connects this sentence with what goes before is *kai*, not *alla*. And while *kai* can occasionally be adversative in biblical Greek, there are no indications that such is the case here. So what we have here is a case of faulty punctuation (there being no punctuation in the original Greek, of course). This sentence is something else that the "know-it-alls" said about Jesus, implying with these sanctimonious words that if our Lord had true wisdom, He would not be associating with this rabble or acting in a way contrary to the national expectations for a "prophet" (eating and drinking as opposed to fasting and living ascetically like John).

I'm still not entirely sure why our Lord says "Yet wisdom is vindicated by her deeds"?

55e) I guess I didn't make this one clear enough. Jesus didn't say this. This is what the Pharisees said in their self-righteousness about Him, implying that because He ate with sinners His deeds proved that He was not wise. The versions punctuate incorrectly to make it sound as if Jesus is quoting this as a proverb rather than quoting the Pharisees (which is the true case).

Matthew 11:21 (NASB)

²¹ "Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the miracles had occurred in Tyre and Sidon which occurred in you, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes.

Could you explain the reference to Tyre and Sidon?

56) Tyre and Sidon are gentile cities, so our Lord's remark casts the lack of gratitude and lack of spiritual responsiveness in these two Jewish cities in a starkly negative light.

Matthew 11:27 (NASB)

²⁷ All things have been handed over to Me by My Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father; nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and anyone to whom the Son wills to reveal Him.

What does our Lord mean by "no one knows the Son except the Father"?

56b) No one was accepting the Lord for who He was – but the Father knew; further, without the Son, it's impossible to accept the Father (the verb here in both cases is *epi-gignosko*, not *gignosko*, i.e., the full-knowledge that comes only with faith).

Matthew 11:28 (NASB)

²⁸ "Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.

NIV SB: 11:28 weary and burdened. Probably a reference to the "heavy ... loads" the Pharisees placed "on other people's shoulders" by insisting on a legalistic interpretation of the law (23:4).

Do you agree that the reference is to the heavy loads placed by pharisaical legalism?

57) I would not want to limit this wonderful passage. Sin is a heavy load, as is the consciousness thereof. Every human being becomes aware from an early age of the problem of death and imperfection – and, as Romans chapter one tells

us, also of the existence, magnitude and righteousness of God. Facing death and judgment under the burden of sin is indeed a heavy load whose only relief is the salvation which comes through faith in Christ alone.

Matthew 12:8 (NASB)

* For the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath."

Was it our Lord who gave the Law to Moses? If so, could we understand that since He is the One who gave it, He can also change it?

58) Yes (see Q/A #18 and #33 above). This really is the point: the Sabbath was designed by God for the benefit of man; Jesus Christ took on true humanity and as Lord of the Sabbath made use of that day for the benefit of man – the true purpose of the Sabbath.

Matthew 12:17-21 (NASB)

17 This was to fulfill what was spoken through Isaiah the prophet:

18 "Behold, My Servant whom I have chosen;

My Beloved in whom My soul is well-pleased;

I will put My Spirit upon Him,

And He shall proclaim justice to the Gentiles.

19 "He will not quarrel, nor cry out;

Nor will anyone hear His voice in the streets.

20 "A battered reed He will not break off,

And a smoldering wick He will not put out,

Until He leads justice to victory.

21 "And in His name the Gentiles will hope."

Could you clarify why Matthew quotes Isaiah at this particular point and how this quotation is linked to the events presented so far in the chapter?

58b) This affirmation of our Lord as the Messiah and the fulfillment of all the Messianic promises comes after the deliberate rejection of Him by the nation's leaders. As a result, He will die for the sins of the people – and for all people – with the result that He will be the hope of all nations, the Savior of the world.

Could "not quarreling" nor "crying out" be matched with the fact that our Lord withdraws (verse 15) and the battered reed to be the man whom our Lord healed (verses 10-13)?

58c) I wouldn't reject that as an application. For me, verse nineteen speaks of the cross; verse twenty of His policy of mercy as a result; verse twenty-one of the results of the expansion of the gospel. So Matthew is "looking ahead" at

this point and foreshadowing all that is to come at this appropriate "take off" point.

Matthew 12:19 (NASB)

¹⁹ "He will not quarrel, nor cry out;
Nor will anyone hear His voice in the streets.

Is this prophecy a reference to our Lord's humility?

59) Yes: to [His kenosis](#) and the uniqueness of the first advent (see the link), and in particular also to the courage with which He endured the gauntlet of suffering in order to get to the cross (cf. Is.53:7 quoted at Acts 8:32).

Matthew 12:27 (NASB)

²⁷ If I by Beelzebul cast out demons, by whom do your sons cast *them* out? For this reason they will be your judges.

Does this verse mean that there were other Israelites capable of casting out demons who were not among the apostles?

60) No. What it means is that contemporary Jews recognized that demon possession was common enough in their day and made efforts to cast them out – one would think by invoking the Name of the Lord. Those who criticized our Lord for doing something effectively which others whom they approved of were actually unable to do were thus indirectly condemning their own judgment: Jesus establishes with these words that He is doing nothing other than what Jews in very good repute were trying to do – except that He was not vainly "play acting". Clearly, criticizing Him for this (in blasphemous terms) was completely inconsistent with applauding others who vainly tried to do the same thing.

How should we understand our Lord's words "For this reason they will be your judges"?

60b) Since even the Pharisees' own sons are doing what Jesus is doing (although without the Spirit and therefore without effect), they bear witness to the fact that the Pharisees' objection/accusation is groundless.

Matthew 12:31 (NASB)

³¹ "Therefore I say to you, any sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven people, but blasphemy against the Spirit shall not be forgiven.

NIV SB: 12:31 blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven. The context (vv. 24, 28, 32) suggests that the unpardonable sin was attributing to Satan Christ's authenticating miracles done in the power of the Holy Spirit (see note on Mk 3:29).

NIV SB provides an explanation which sounds very reasonable - do you agree it's correct?

61) Yes, as far as it goes; since the Spirit testifies to the truth of the gospel, calling the Spirit satanic is a firm rejection of the gospel; and rejection of the gospel is always thus blasphemy because it calls God a liar, impugning the truth of the message the Spirit is mediating. Thus the only unpardonable sin is rejecting the gospel, rejecting Jesus Christ: the refusal to accept Him and His sacrifice was the only sin for which Christ could not die since it is by taking on humanity and dying for sin that all are saved who accept Him and His work on the cross.

Matthew 12:32 (NASB)

32 Whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven him, either in this age or in the age to come.

What does our Lord mean by "the age to come"?

61b) Eternity is meant: refusing to accept Jesus as Savior results in eternal condemnation

Matthew 12:36 (NASB)

36 But I tell you that every careless word that people speak, they shall give an accounting for it in the day of judgment.

NIV SB: 12:36 day of judgment. At Christ's second coming; sometimes referred to as "that day" (7:22; 2Ti 1:12, 18), "the day of slaughter" (Jas 5:5; see note there).

How do we know that Christ's second coming is meant here rather than the final judgment?

62) As you discern, the note is incorrect; our Lord is speaking about unbelievers here. Those who are held to account at the last judgment are unbelievers and their judgment comes at the end of history (the Great White Throne of Revelation 20 = the judgment of the goats in Matthew 25).

Matthew 12:42-45 (NASB)

42 *The Queen of the South* will rise up with this generation at the judgment and

will condemn it, because she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and behold, something greater than Solomon is here. 43 "Now when the unclean spirit goes out of a man, it passes through waterless places seeking rest, and does not find it. 44 Then it says, 'I will return to my house from which I came'; and when it comes, it finds it unoccupied, swept, and put in order. 45 Then it goes and takes along with it seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they go in and live there; and the last state of that man becomes worse than the first. That is the way it will also be with this evil generation."

Could you please explain the relationship between the teaching given in Matthew 12:42 and the one which follows - Matthew 12:43-45?

63) As with an earlier question, the relationship is not necessarily one of interdependent connection. Our Lord is talking in this section about the hardness of those who refuse to accept Him, and in the first part you ask about "this generation" compares unfavorably to gentile foreigners of the past who came from remote areas to hear the truth and yet our Lord's contemporaries who have the truth thrown into their laps are not interested in it. The passage about the unclean spirit makes a similar point in that our Lord has given His hearers a wonderful blessing, the truth of the gospel, but it is of no use to them if they do not respond so as to be liberated from spiritual bondage – the end will be worse than the beginning.

Matthew 12:47 (NASB)

47 Someone said to Him, "Behold, Your mother and Your brothers are standing outside seeking to speak to You."^[a]

Matthew 12:47 This verse is not found in early mss

Should verse 47 be a part of the scripture?

64) It's a little hard to say. It's not present in Vaticanus; Sinaiticus doesn't have it in the text per se but Aleph also accidentally omits another short phrase; both that phrase and verse 47 are in the bottom margin and appear to be in the same hand or the hand of a contemporaneous corrector. Since the omission may be explained by homoioteleuton (similar ending of a phrase causing the eye to jump forward), there are good reasons for including it. Moreover, since the sentence may be the basis for our Lord's reply in the next verse, there is much evidence to consider it original. On the other hand, these reasons also explain an inclusion of something not actually present in the original.

What we can say is that Mark 3:32 and Luke 8:20 do reference the interlocutors telling our Lord about the presence of His family – so it happened like this, whether or not we ought to include the additional words here.

Matthew 13:3 (NIV)

¹² He told them still another parable: “The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed into about sixty pounds of flour until it worked all through the dough.”

Why did Jesus include the very specific number of 60 pounds in a parable?

64b) This amount ("three dry measures" *tria sata*) was apparently a standard amount of flour for baking up a batch of bread. So this is analogous to a "six pack of beer" or a "dozen donuts" where no one in our culture would say "five beers" or "ten donuts". Analogously, few people would bother going through the process for one loaf of bread (that's not efficient in time, fuel or effort).

Matthew 13:12 (NASB)

¹² For whoever has, to him *more* shall be given, and he will have an abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has shall be taken away from him.

How should we understand this passage? Is Jesus here saying that those who have an open heart to the truth will accept it and grow ("*more* shall be given, and he will have an abundance") and those unwilling to receive the truth not only have got no part in it, but will draw even further away from it ("but whoever does not have, even what he has shall be taken away from him")?

65) Yes! That is precisely it!

Matthew 13:35 (NASB)

³⁵ *This was* to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet: "I will open My mouth in parables; I will utter things hidden since the foundation of the world."

Psalms 78:2 (NASB)

² I will open my mouth in a parable; I will utter dark sayings of old,

Matthew 13:35 says "hidden since the foundation of the world", but Psalm 78:2 "dark sayings of old"?

66) The Greek is a closer translation of the Hebrew than the respective English versions seem to suggest: our Lord uses *κεκρυμμενα* to translate *חֵיִלּוֹת*, and *ἀπὸ καταβολῆς κόσμου* to translate *מִיְיָ־קֶדֶם*. Both of these seem to me to be essential equivalents, suggesting "not easily known" and "very old"

respectively. I don't think either element is meant to have a technical meaning beyond that.

Matthew 13:52 (NASB)

⁵² And Jesus said to them, "Therefore every scribe who has become a disciple of the kingdom of heaven is like a head of a household, who brings out of his treasure things new and old."

Could you clarify this passage?

67) To me this means that someone versed in the Law who becomes a believer in Christ will be able to draw on the store of information and truth in the Law (now correctly appreciated and understood) as well as from the new truths he has learned as a result of being born again and indoctrinated in the New Covenant.

Matthew 14:3-4 (NASB)

³ For when Herod had John arrested, he bound him and put him in prison because of Herodias, the wife of his brother Philip. ⁴ For John had been saying to him, "It is not lawful for you to have her."

a) Why was Herod's marriage unlawful?

b) Do you agree with the facts presented in NIV SB: 14:3 Herod had arrested John. See note on Mk 6:17. Herodias. A granddaughter of Herod the Great (see this chart). First she married her uncle, Herod Philip (Herod the Great also had another son named Philip), who lived in Rome. While a guest in their home, Herod Antipas persuaded Herodias to leave her husband for him. Marriage to one's brother's wife while the brother was still living was forbidden by the Mosaic law (Lev 18:16). Philip's. The son of Herod the Great and Mariamne, the daughter of Simon the high priest, and thus a half brother of Herod Antipas, born to Malthace (see chart).

68) The marriage was un-LAW-ful, that is, not illegal in our sense but contrary to the Law of Moses – something the "ruler of his people" should legitimately be taken to task for by the Messiah's prophet as setting exactly the wrong example (Lev.18:16; 20:21). The rehearsal above seems OK (but I'm not an expert on this family tree).

Matthew 14:22 (NASB)

²² Immediately He made the disciples get into the boat and go ahead of Him to the other side, while He sent the crowds away.

Why did Jesus not go with the disciples? Do you agree with the argument presented in NIV SB: 14:22 made. The Greek word used here means "to compel" and suggests a crisis. John records that after the miracle of the loaves and fish the crowds "intended to ... make him [Jesus] king by force" (6:15). This involved a

complete misunderstanding of the mission of Jesus. The disciples may have been caught up in the enthusiasm and needed to be removed from the area quickly.

69) Mark 6:46 says that our Lord had gone up the mountain "to pray"; having some time of His own to spend in prayer to the Father was essential, and our Lord found just the right means to keep current in His prayer life – even at the cost of sleep and convenience.

Matthew 15:2 (NASB)

² "Why do Your disciples break the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands when they eat bread."

NIV SB: 15:2 tradition of the elders. After the Babylonian exile, the Jewish rabbis began to make meticulous rules and regulations governing the daily life of the people. These were interpretations and applications of the law of Moses, handed down from generation to generation. In Jesus' day this "tradition of the elders" was in oral form. It was not until c. AD 200 that it was put into writing in the Mishnah (see note on Ne 10:34).

Why was it after the exile that the rabbis began to make rules and regulations?

70) Israel had fallen into gross sin resulting in exile primarily because of idolatry. Those who returned were conscientious about "keeping the Law" instead of this past pattern of bad behavior, but, unfortunately as often happens, after a few generations teaching and guidance meant to reinforce the truth began to take on the character of "truth itself" – which is always especially unfortunate when the suggestions and guidance are completely misinterpreted in the bargain. Herein we see the problem with most traditional Christian "churches". And it is not only the R.C. church or hyper-Calvinism which are at fault; I have seen this phenomenon develop in the very next generation after a good teacher leaves the scene for heaven-home. I certainly hope this never happens to Ichthys! The shortness of the time would seem to be likely to prevent that if nothing else; however it should be said that what is posted to this site is interpretation of the Word of God not the Word of God, and it is "good" only to the extent that 1) it is correct, and 2) it is used/understood correctly.

Matthew 15:12 (NASB)

¹² Then the disciples *came and *said to Him, "Do You know that the Pharisees were [^a]offended when they heard this statement?"

Matthew 15:12 Lit *caused to stumble*

Would you agree that "caused to stumble" is best rendered "offended"? Is that the true meaning?

71) A *skandalon* is a "stumbling block" and the verb here is derived from that noun. Our English word "scandal" comes from this root directly and gives I think a good guide to the meaning: the "stumbling" is metaphorical rather than literal, so that "offense" is a good translation often ("give offense" for the verb); by the way, "offense" comes from Latin *ob-fendo* which means literally to "knock against" so that it too can be considered a virtual calque.

Matthew 15:13 (NASB)

¹³ But He answered and said, "Every plant which My heavenly Father did not plant shall be uprooted.

Does Jesus say that to indicate that Pharisees did not rise to prominence according to God's will?

72) Yes, as the next verse indicates as well. Just because a person is recognized by the society as a "great religious leader" does not mean that he/she is even of God in the first place. Only those planted and tended by the Lord will grow to the point of actually producing a crop blessed and rewarded by the Lord – and the same is true today as well.

Matthew 15:14 (NASB)

¹⁴ Let them alone; they are blind guides ^[a]of the blind. And if a blind man guides a blind man, both will fall into a pit."

Matthew 15:14 Later mss add *of the blind*

Should the "of the blind" be a part of this verse?

73) It is not in the original of Sinaiticus; it is in B. This is a tough call because on the one hand with the word *typhlos* occurring three (or four) times there is plenty of opportunity for it to have fallen out; on the other hand the addition of "of the blind" is a likely candidate for a gloss (and that would explain its absence from some parts of the manuscript tradition). The word is not necessary since our Lord immediately adds that the guides are leading the blind – in case that part was not understood. So I would prefer to leave it out. Also, adding "of the blind" detracts from the emphasis that would otherwise fall on the Pharisees as "blind guides" by sharing the characteristic of blindness

with those being guided; but it is clear that the guide bears the greater responsibility for that blindness.

Matthew 15:19 (NASB)

¹⁹ For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness,

Is there a reason why Jesus mentions both adulteries and fornications, which seem to mean the same thing?

74) There is certainly overlap, but while "adultery" qualifies as "fornication", not all "fornication" (*pornea*) is necessarily adultery, since the latter entails any sort of sinful sexual or sexually related behavior, whereas the former requires violation of the marital pledge.

Matthew 15:22 (NASB)

²² And a Canaanite woman from that region came out and *began* to cry out, saying, "Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David; my daughter is cruelly demon-possessed."

NIV SB: 15:22 Canaanite. A term found many times in the OT but only here in the NT. In NT times there was no country known as Canaan. Some think this was the Semitic manner of referring to the people of Phoenicia at this time. Mark says the woman was "a Greek, born in Syrian Phoenicia" (7:26; see note there).

How should Matthew's calling the woman "Canaanite" and Mark's calling the woman "a Greek, born in Syrian Phoenicia" be reconciled?

75) The two terms are synonyms as the Phoenicians were Canaanites. Matthew is writing from a Jewish perspective while Mark, writing from Rome under Peter's authority, goes out of his way in a number of places to make what he writes more accessible to gentile readers who may not be conversant to the same degree with Jewish culture and history.

Matthew 15:27 (NASB)

²⁷ But she said, "Yes, Lord; [a]but even the dogs feed on the crumbs which fall from their masters' table."

Matthew 15:27 Lit *for*

I understand how "but" seems to be more fitting here than "for", but doesn't that slightly change the tone of the sentence?

76) This is a translation problem. What we have here is actually a particle combination, *kai gar*; this usually

introduces an emphatic response (often translated in English "in fact" or "indeed"); since the woman is picking up what our Lord has said and taking it a step farther, something like, "Yes, Lord, but *don't . . . ?*, might convey the idea best.

Matthew 15:36 (NASB)

³⁶ and He took the seven loaves and the fish; and giving thanks, He broke them and started giving them to the disciples, and the disciples *gave them* to the people.

Should we also make it a practice to give thanks before meals?

77) In my opinion that is not a bad idea, but I would be very reluctant to lay that down as a necessary principle of behavior (for then it would be bound to lose all meaning); if it becomes too ritualized, it also is likely to become a pointless exercise. The attitude of gratefulness to the Lord for what He has done and provided is the key thing (secondarily I suppose the positive witness it might provide for those who hear the prayer); but an attitude which is never expressed is a problem too. Something in the middle done from the heart could not be far wrong.

Matthew 15:39 (NASB)

³⁹ And sending away the crowds, Jesus got into the boat and came to the region of Magadan.

NIV SB: 15:39 Magadan. Also called Magdala, the home of Mary Magdalene. In 2009 the remains of a 2,000- year- old synagogue were discovered in Magdala. Mk 8:10 has "Dalmanutha" (see note there; see also map).

Would you say "Magadan" (or "Magdala") and "Dalmanutha" are two names for the same place, or are these two places located in close proximity?

78) I would certainly disagree with the note that the town has anything whatsoever to do with Mary Magdalene; see the link:

[http://ichthys.com/4A-Christo.htm#1%29 To Mary Magdalene %28Jn.20:11-18](http://ichthys.com/4A-Christo.htm#1%29%20To%20Mary%20Magdalene%28Jn.20:11-18)

Whether or not Madagan and Magdala are the same place I would not be willing to say. Contemporary identification of biblical name sites, especially less well-known ones, is a

treacherous morass. As to the names themselves, they are little attested (especially Dalmanutha). They are pretty clearly the same place since our Lord's departure thence occurs directly after the feeding of the 4,000. My own guess would be that Magadan is the chief city and Dalmanutha is the region/territory, for one reason because Mark says "parts" (Greek: *mere*) of Dalmanutha.

Matthew 16:2-3 (NASB)

² But He replied to them, "[^a]When it is evening, you say, '*It will be fair weather, for the sky is red.*' ³ And in the morning, '*There will be a storm today, for the sky is red and threatening.*' Do you know how to discern the appearance of the sky, but cannot *discern* the signs of the times?

Matthew 16:2 Early mss do not contain the rest of v 2 and v 3

a) Should the second part of verse 2 and verse 3 be a part of the scripture?

b) Could you explain what our Lord means by the prediction of the weather presented here? How is it that red sky is a sign of fair weather and a sky which is "red and threatening" is a sign of a storm? It seems that both have the same colour, yet signify opposite conditions.

79) a) No (absent, e.g., in both Aleph and B); b) This is a longstanding truism often repeated by sailors, and apparently generally accurate where the wind normally comes from the west and move to the east (as is true in Palestine). So a red sky at morning highlighted by the sun coming up in the east indicates the reflection of the sun off clouds coming in from the west.

Matthew 16:7 (NASB)

⁷ They began to discuss *this* among themselves, saying, "*He said that* because we did not bring *any* bread."

NIV SB: 16:7 because we didn't bring any bread. Apparently the disciples took Jesus' statement about "yeast" (v. 6) to somehow relate to their being short of bread. Perhaps they thought they would be required to bake bread when they arrived at the other side of the lake and were being warned by Jesus not to use any yeast provided by the spiritually contaminated religious leaders.

Would you agree this is what disciples' thinking was?

80) Only about the fact that, as the scripture says, they thought His mention of yeast had to do with their failure to remember to bring bread. I don't think the rest of the speculation makes much sense. The disciples were often

fixated on mundane things and thus failed to "get the message" our Lord was trying to communicate to them.

Matthew 16:16-17 (NASB)

¹⁶ Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." ¹⁷ And Jesus said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal *this* to you, but My Father who is in heaven.

NIV SB: 16:16 Peter answered. See note on Lk 9:20. Messiah. See second NIV text note on 1:1; see also note on Jn 1:25. The Hebrew word for Messiah ("anointed one") can be used of anyone who was anointed with the holy oil, such as the priests and kings of Israel (e. g., Ex 29:7, 21; 1Sa 10:1, 6; 16:13; 2Sa 1:14, 16). The word carries the idea of being chosen by God, consecrated to his service, and endowed with his power to accomplish the assigned task. Toward the end of the OT period the word assumed a special meaning. It denoted the ideal king anointed and empowered by God to rescue his people from their enemies and establish his righteous kingdom (Da 9:25–26). The ideas that clustered around the title Messiah tended to be political and national in nature. Probably for that reason Jesus seldom used the term. When he did accept it as applied to himself, he did so with reservations (cf. Mk 8:27–30; 14:61–63).

Since Jesus answers Peter "Blessed are you", should we understand that Peter's understanding of the word "Christ" was correct and referred to the One and only Messiah rather than "anyone who was anointed" or being political and national in nature?

81) Absolutely. Peter uses the definite article here: "***the*** Christ/Messiah"

Matthew 16:19 (NASB)

¹⁹ I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven."

NIV SB: 16:19 keys. Perhaps Peter used these keys on the day of Pentecost (Ac 2) when he announced that the door of the kingdom was unlocked to Jews and converts to Judaism and later when he acknowledged that it was also opened to Gentiles (Ac 10; cf. Isa 22:22; Rev 3:7 and notes). bind ... loose. Not authority to determine, but to announce, guilt or innocence (see 18:18 and context; cf. Jn 20:23 and note; Ac 5:3, 9).

Do you agree with the interpretation that Peter used the "keys" during Pentecost and by acknowledging the kingdom of God being opened to the Gentiles?

82) In my view, the keys are the gospel. The apostles had a special mandate and also special gifts and authority to spread the gospel to the gentiles during the incipient period of the Church or "apostolic period". Here is a link on this:

<http://ichthys.com/mail-Enoch%20and%20Gospel%20questions.htm#binding>

Matthew 16:20 (NASB)

20 Then He warned the disciples that they should tell no one that He was the Christ.

Why does our Lord warn the disciples here not to tell that He is Christ?

83) Because our Lord's divinely ordained approach – and, indeed, the plan of God generally – is designed to allow for maximum freedom of determination for the human race to choose its own eternal destiny. We live with a veil between us and eternity so that we can only see what is coming "through a glass darkly" (1Cor.13:12 KJV). That is true of unbelievers (who don't see God in His glory or their eternal fate in the lake of fire) and also for us believers – if we were able to see God in His glory and not perish, Jesus in His resurrected glory, and heaven above and the New Jerusalem, we would not be able to think about anything else (so what we choose would not be such a matter of faith). As it is, we and they see the world in its mundane material appearance and must see beyond in faith (for believers) or are able to ignore the spiritual realities which lie behind (in the case of unbelievers). For our Lord's situation, there is also the added reason that the freedom of movement He required to carry out the divine plan for His ministry necessitated refraining from being absolutely direct about His status when dealing with the ruling elite. If He had proclaimed Himself as the Messiah openly and directly in Jerusalem, that would have forced immediate action – either of worshipping Him (for He **is** the Messiah) or putting Him to death immediately. As it was, things ran their perfect course in their perfect time so as to accomplish all righteousness.

Matthew 16:28 (NASB)

28 "Truly I say to you, there are some of those who are standing here who will not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom."

a) Could you explain the meaning of this verse?

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

84) The first NIV SB point is correct: it is the transfiguration which is in view; that is why it is only "some" whom our Lord says will see it (Peter, James and John).

Matthew 17:1 (NASB)

17 Six days later Jesus *took with Him Peter and James and John his brother, and *led them up on a high mountain by themselves.

Is there a reason Jesus chose these particular apostles? Were they the most prominent?

84) Peter and John were, along with Paul, the two disciples whose ministries to the gentile world would be the most long-lasting and most profound. Why James? John never did anything without his brother (cf. Mk.5:37; 10:35-41; 14:53; Lk.8:51; 9:54), who seems to have been the elder whose lead John followed (until his death).

Matthew 17:2 (NASB)

2 And He was transfigured before them; and His face shone like the sun, and His garments became as white as light.

How specifically should we understand the word "transfigured"?

85) One could translate, "His appearance was changed", with the rest of the verse explaining the change. Specifically, our Lord appeared "in glory" in some similar way to how He will appear at the second advent. I would not want to invest the Greek word *metamorphoo* here with any special technical sense; the change is explained, and it is one of appearance only (our Lord in His humanity was not resurrected until after His death on the cross).

Matthew 17:9 (NASB)

9 As they were coming down from the mountain, Jesus commanded them, saying, "Tell the vision to no one until the Son of Man has risen from the dead."

Why didn't Jesus want anyone to know about the vision until He was risen?

86) Probably to keep the focus on the issues at hand: His crucifixion, propitiation of the sins of the world, and rising from the dead. The events on the mount have to do with the second advent, not the first.

Matthew 17:20 (NASB)

20 And He *said to them, "Because of the littleness of your faith; for truly I say to

you, if you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move; and nothing will be impossible to you.

NIV SB: 17:20 little faith. Not so much the quantity of their faith as its quality—a faith that is bathed in prayer (see Mk 9:29). mustard seed. See 13:31-32 and notes. say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there.' A proverbial statement meaning to remove great difficulties (cf. Isa 54:10; Zec 4:7 and note; 1Co 13:2). In this context it probably refers to removing the problems associated with the work of the kingdom.

I'm not clear about the distinction between the quantity and quality of faith here.

86b) The Bible does not distinguish between the two and trying to make such a distinction only confuses the issue. We all know what our Lord means when He says "Ye of little faith" and "Your faith is great", so we all wish to emulate the latter rather than the former.

Matthew 17:24-26 (NASB)

²⁴ When they came to Capernaum, those who collected the two-drachma *tax* came to Peter and said, "Does your teacher not pay the two-drachma *tax*?" ²⁵ He **said*, "Yes." And when he came into the house, Jesus spoke to him first, saying, "What do you think, Simon? From whom do the kings of the earth collect customs or poll-tax, from their sons or from strangers?" ²⁶ When Peter said, "From strangers," Jesus said to him, "Then the sons are exempt.

a) I don't know how to understand Peter's reply. Does "yes" here mean that our Lord didn't pay or does it mean that He did pay? The question is "Does your teacher not pay the two-drachma *tax*", so the answer "Yes" could mean "Yes, He doesn't pay" or "Yes, He does pay".

89a) Greek is often odd-sounding to English speakers when it comes to questions and answers because Greek assumes much that English is loath to assume. A long way of saying that "Yes" means "Yes He does" – Peter has jumped past one step as is common in Greek.

b) Could you clarify the meaning of our Lord's words - why does He phrase things this way - "from their sons or from strangers" - as if it was not possible to collect it from both?

89b) I think this is just to make the point that the Heir is exempt from taxation because of His position. Peter gets it immediately, so it can't be too complicated.

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

Do you agree with this note? I thought that only our Lord was meant as a child who is exempt.

89c) You are correct. He is the Son of God, analogous to the Prince who pays no taxes.

Matthew 18:6 (NASB)

⁶ but whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble, it would be better for him to have a heavy millstone hung around his neck, and to be drowned in the depth of the sea.

NIV SB: 18:6, 10 14 little ones. All believers, regardless of age (see Mk 9:42 and note; Lk 17:2).

Do you agree that believers are meant by "the little ones"?

90a) The point made by the note is true, but the context clearly is speaking about the young (and therefore impressionable) – it seems an even greater measure of divine displeasure is forthcoming for tripping up the very young (akin to heavier sentences in secular law for crimes against children).

Matthew 18:8-9 (NIV1984)

⁸ If your hand or your foot causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life maimed or crippled than to have two hands or two feet and be thrown into eternal fire. ⁹ And if your eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into the fire of hell.

Please explain how we should interpret these passages. Do you agree with NIV SB: 18:8–9 Hyperbole: Deal as drastically as necessary with sin in order to remove it from your life. This calls for self- discipline. See note on 5:29–30.

90b) No self-mutilation can save; only grace accepted through faith can save – the blood of Christ alone washes away sin. Also, no one in history has done this – and our Lord did not expect anyone to do these things. Indeed, the examples are perfectly chosen as impossible things no one can do (cf. the camel going through the eye of the needle – but "nothing is impossible for God": Matt.19:24-26). The point is precisely that we need help from God in order to be saved, and nothing we can do, no matter how severe, could ever save us. This passage destroys salvation by works and throws anyone listening onto the mercy of God – exactly where we need to be to be saved.

Matthew 18:10 (NIV1984)

¹⁰ "See that you do not look down on one of these little ones. For I tell you that their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father in heaven.^[a]

a) Could you relate to the point made in the footnote? Should verse 11 be a part of the scripture?

b) Why does our Lord give as a reason for not looking down on the little ones the fact that their angels see God's face in heaven?

90c) Verse eleven is not in any of the older mss. and seems to have been imported here from Luke 19:10 (possibly the result of a parallel written in the margin of a ms. and assumed by later copyists to be part of the text). As to the reason for the statement in verse ten, it's human nature to think differently about people we know are related to the rich and powerful. So, for example, we would probably treat the U.S. President's kids differently than some ordinary children. Our Lord's point is that every child has the benefit of angelic protection (to safeguard free will), so that if we were seeing things through God's eyes we would realize that every child – and every person – is important to God, and would be more inclined to act in love out of respect for the One who loves them. Every human being is important to God. After all, He created us all, and more than that He sent His one and only Son to die for the sins of all. The mention of their angels reminds (or should remind) us all that God is involved deeply in the lives of every single person, so that for us to take it upon ourselves to despise anyone else, even "little ones" who may seem to us to be of no particular importance (more so in the ancient world than today; cf. Lev.27:1-7).

Matthew 18:12-14 (NASB)

¹² "What do you think? If any man has a hundred sheep, and one of them has gone astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine on the mountains and go and search for the one that is straying? ¹³ If it turns out that he finds it, truly I say to you, he rejoices over it more than over the ninety-nine which have not gone astray. ¹⁴ So it is not *the* will of your Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones perish.

NIV SB: 18:12–14 The parable of the lost/wandering (see vv. 12–13) sheep is also found in Lk 15:3–7. There it applies to unbelievers, here to believers. Jesus used the same parable to teach different truths in different situations.

How do we know that Matthew 18:12-14 refers to believers and Luke 15:3-7 to unbelievers?

91) It applies to both in both places: our Lord's attitude of wanting all to be saved applies to unbelievers (1Tim.2:4); His attitude of wanting all believers to come back after wandering is likewise applicable to all (cf. the prodigal son: Lk.15:10-32).

Matthew 18:15 (NIV1984)

¹⁵ "If your brother sins against you,^{1a} go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over.

Matthew 18:15 Some manuscripts do not have *against you*.

Could you relate to the point made in the footnote?

92) "Against you" is not part of the text, but it is a legitimate translation. Greek often leaves things out which are understood (like the direct object which is impossible to do in English). Here the verse makes no sense at all unless we understand that "you" are the one who has been offended.

Could it not be that a sin is meant here that has not been committed against the person who is then told to show the sinner's fault, but rather our Lord here teaches how to help others recognize where they have done wrong? Is this possible?

92b) The problem with that is that it would give license to intervene – like a busybody – in other people's affairs. There is a time and a place to correct a brother, but it certainly should not be a regular occurrence, and we ought to be very careful about making the practice a rare one. This passage is paralleled in Luke 17:3 where our Lord says that if our brother responds we should "forgive him". We certainly can't forgive what was done to other parties, so it seems clear to me that our Lord in both passages is addressing personal affronts and how we are to handle them when they come from other believers.

Matthew 18:17 (NIV1984)

¹⁷ If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector.

Our Lord says: "and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector", and yet he showed mercy to tax collectors and sinners, treating them like the lost sheep that He wanted to reunite with the flock, hence I'm not sure how to understand these words.

93) In my view we should understand this to be a breach of a very serious nature rather than a garden variety disagreement. Paul commanded the exact same treatment for the incestuous Corinthian man, and yet his motive was not for the person's destruction but his salvation (1Cor.5:5); when the man did repent, Paul took pains to make sure that he was accepted again into fellowship:

If anyone has caused grief, he has not so much grieved me as he has grieved all of you to some extent—not to put it too severely. The punishment inflicted on him by the majority is sufficient. Now instead, you ought to forgive and comfort him, so that he will not be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow. I urge you, therefore, to reaffirm your love for him.
2nd Corinthians 5:2-8 NIV

Do you mean here that the man who was handed over to Satan in 1 Corinthians 5:5 is the same man referred to in 2 Corinthians 5:2-8? If so, how do we know that? Also, since 1 Corinthians 5:5 says that the man was handed over "for the destruction of the flesh", doesn't that imply that he died?

93b) He was handed over "so that his spirit might be saved" which indicates first and foremost a recovery (and from what we know about the sin unto death deliverance in respect of his eternal life even if he refused to recover). As to "How do we know?", this is an issue among interpreters with two schools of thought: 1) it is the same man; 2) it is not the same man. The first opinion is the more venerable – and I would say also the most logical. The Spirit has given us a second letter to the same congregation and the 2nd Corinthians 5:2-8 is most naturally taken to be this same individual on first (and second and third) readings. The better question might be "why don't some people think so?", and the reasons usually have to do with perceived non-matching details between the two accounts (not only what you mention here, but also the different impression received on a number of points in the second account as compared to the first). However, having read these epistles many times, I don't see any difficulties that cannot be explained, and in fact the second passage only seems to make good sense when understood in light of the first – not to mention that it illuminates the first. Also I think that any serious Christian who has read Acts and the Pauline epistles carefully and

closely will understand that there are "different impressions" all around when it comes to lining up the historical details. To me, that is not a problem but is rather an indication of what happens when we have a very lacunose record that we may mistakenly assume is complete because of our familiarity with it (the same thing is apt to happen in interpretation of the gospels if we are not careful: cf. 21:25). When dealing with the historical portions of the New Testament, therefore, we need to take care to remember that it is not as if we had the complete jig-saw puzzle and were trying to fit the pieces in correctly, but more of a situation where we have about five percent of the pieces and will want to put them in the approximate area where they belong in order to be able to fill in a general idea of the rest by godly interpretation.

Matthew 18:18 (NASB)

¹⁸ Truly I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven.

This is a difficult verse - could you clarify it? What does Jesus mean here?

94) I believe that our Lord is speaking about the power of the gospel. For our Lord also says: "you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (Jn.8:32). By giving the gospel, the apostles would most definitely be the instruments whereby many, Jew and gentile alike, would be liberated from the bondage of sin, both on earth (saved with the opportunity to serve), and in heaven (looking forward to life eternal). This is connected to the issue of the "keys to the kingdom", on which please see the link:

<http://ichthys.com/mail-Enoch and Gospel questions.htm#binding>

Matthew 18:19 (NASB)

¹⁹ Again I say to you, that if two of you agree on earth about anything that they may ask, it shall be done for them by My Father who is in heaven.

NIV SB: 18:19 anything. Probably not a reference to prayer generally but to disciplinary decisions, especially in the context of vv. 15-18.

Do you agree that this verse refers to the disciplinary decisions? So far I have not interpreted it in this way.

94b) No, I don't agree, especially in light of the next verse: "For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them" (Matt.18:20 NIV).

Matthew 18:24 (NASB)

²⁴ When he had begun to settle them, one who owed him ^[a]ten thousand talents was brought to him.

Matthew 18:24 A talent was worth more than fifteen years' wages of a laborer

If one talent was worth more than fifteen years' wages, it seems that the sum of ten thousand talents is extortionate?

95) Nice observation. Codex Sinaiticus has "many" instead of "myriads". This is corrected to the majority reading in that ms. by what is thought by most to be corrector "C" (ca. 7th century). Sinaiticus is (apparently) the only ms. to have the reading "many", so most critical texts don't even take notice of the "issue".

Do you think "many" is the correct reading, or is the majority reading right on this?

95b) Yes. I think "many" is what Matthew wrote.

Matthew 19:8-9 (NIV1984)

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

What was the purpose of Moses' teaching? Why were the Israelites given a statute regarding divorce that was later to change?

96) The purpose of the Law was to set apart a special people for the Lord amidst a pagan world. I would not say that the statute changed; it is merely that all law has, to some degree, to be interpreted and applied with a measure of flexibility. That is because human circumstances are infinitely variable. If statute-making were crystal clear, there would be no need of judges, but we do have that function throughout the history even of Israel (Ex.18:26), and even from the earliest days (cf. Matt.18:13-26). We add to this the additional and important "layer" that the Law in its entirety was a shadow of the plan of God, and as such taught the imperfection of humanity and the need for a

Savior (especially in all of its behavioral pre- and proscriptions). Finally, since human beings were the ones doing the judging/interpreting, of necessity there would be, over time, imperfections creeping into such analysis. In a legalistic and self-serving environment such as obtained in our Lord's day (and also apparently for many generations prior to His first advent), this would inevitably result in traditions that bore little relationship to the spirit of the commandments, even as they seemed to the untrained (and unbelieving) eye to be legitimate interpretations. This is why Jesus Christ is the fulfillment of the Law . . . for all who believe (Rom.10:4).

Is your point here about the Law teaching the imperfection of humanity that at least some of ordinances, like the one on divorce, were given in acceptance of our weakness - so that ideally there should be no divorce at all, but since God knew there would be marital problems, He decreed how such issues were to be dealt with? So taken together, could we say that the Law exposes the imperfection of humanity in two ways - firstly, by showing our inability to fulfill at least some parts of it (that has been my understanding so far), and secondly, by helping us understand that at least some ordinances which we are able to fulfill, we are able to fulfill only because in the first place they accommodate for our sinful nature and inability to live a perfect life (in this case, resulting in no instance of a divorce)? Wouldn't this mean that the Law is both a perfect standard which is unattainable and a realistic behavioural instruction for Israel?

96b) I agree completely with the first part; the second thing the Law does is give the solution by foreshadowing the death of Christ for our sins. The part of the Law we are talking about here is the legal code (as opposed to the spiritual code) which was necessary for Israel as a nation "in the world", and in that part of the code there most certainly were accommodations, regulating slavery, for example (which no one would consider a "good" institution), and the taking of interest (even though in a world of perfect believers "there need be no poor people among you" ; Deut 15:4); marriage falls into this same category: realistically (and we are talking now about the "real world" nation of Israel being regulated) there would be imperfect marriages and there would be divorces. As is the case with all such regulation, the purpose is to prevent abuse (the woman has a documented legal status in such cases and is free to remarry).

How do we distinguish between the spiritual and the legal code? Isn't your point about the legal code similar to what I wrote about ordinances which were given in accommodation for our weaknesses?

96c) Yes, I would say so. Whether purely religious strictures or purely functional societal rules or a combination thereof, it would be hard for anyone to point to any aspect of the Law which ever came close to being consistently followed in general terms – let alone obeyed perfectly.

Matthew 19:9 (NASB)

⁹ And I say to you, whoever ^[a]divorces his wife, except for ^[b]immorality, and marries another woman^[c] commits adultery ^[d]."

Matthew 19:9 Or *sends away*

Matthew 19:9 Lit *fornication*

Matthew 19:9 Some early mss read *makes her commit adultery*

Matthew 19:9 Some early mss add *and he who marries a divorced woman commits adultery*

Could you refer to the last two footnotes?

97) The variations indicated by note "c" are results of attempted harmonization with the text at Matthew 5:32, "makes her commit adultery" (NASB); the insertion is not original, but, as mentioned, the wording does occur earlier. The variation in note "d" is only backed up by P25, a fourth century papyrus (and seems to me from the Greek to constitute a gloss); it is not part of scripture.

Matthew 19:10-12 (NASB)

¹⁰ The disciples *said to Him, "If the relationship of the man with his wife is like this, it is better not to marry." ¹¹ But He said to them, "Not all men *can* accept this statement, but *only* those to whom it has been given. ¹² For there are eunuchs who were born that way from their mother's womb; and there are eunuchs who were made eunuchs by men; and there are *also* eunuchs who made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. He who is able to accept *this*, let him accept *it*."

a) I'm not sure about the basis of disciples' words. They say that if such is the relationship between spouses, it's better not to marry, but what do they mean by that? Do they mean that it's better not to make a commitment that's hard to keep, either for the man or for the woman?

b) Who does our Lord mean by the first two types of eunuchs - those "who were born that way" and those "who were made eunuchs"?

c) NIV SB: 19:12 born that way. Impotent. made eunuchs. By castration. choose to live like eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. Those who have voluntarily adopted a celibate lifestyle in order to give themselves more

completely to God's work. Under certain circumstances celibacy is recommended in Scripture (cf. 1Co 7:25–38), but it is never presented as superior to marriage.

Would you not say that celibacy is presented as superior to marriage, as it allows a greater commitment to the ministry?

98a) I think they are seeing it from the man's point of view. They had grown up in a patriarchal society where a man's authority at home was bounded only by his will and good nature. Contemplating marriage where a woman could not be divorced at will made it seem wholly unworkable from their cultural point of view.

98b) I think everyone understands that some people born male are not able to fulfill the male role in a marriage (for a variety of reasons we need not get in to any more than our Lord did). Those who are "made" are those castrated by others (as was common in oriental courts, for example, cf.: Is.39:7).

98c) Yes, but with emphasis on the important caveat, "He who is able to accept this, let him accept it". The vast majority of human beings most definitely cannot remain unmarried without falling into sexual sin. And it is far "better to marry than to burn", as Paul points out (1Cor.7:9). No one should think of physically altering him/herself – as that is not only contrary to scripture but also would do no good in terms of the incontinence of the lust in any case. "Single bliss" is only for those who can handle it, and very few can handle it. Many married men win wonderful eternal rewards. David was married (and then some); Abraham was married; Peter was married. In fact, most of the great believers of the Bible were married. Paul achieved a tremendous amount for the Lord and his single status was clearly a help in that regard (as well as a sacrifice; cf. 1Cor.9:5); but then Paul endured many things that few of us can convince ourselves of being capable of emulating, even in the comfort of our easy-chairs (cf. 1Cor.4:8-13; 2Cor.4:7-12; 6:3-10; 11:16-33; Phil.3:7-11).

Matthew 19:17 (NASB)

17 And He said to him, "Why are you asking Me about what is good? There is only One who is good; but if you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments."

Some commentators reconcile the wording used by our Lord in this verse through manuscript tradition - apparently some good manuscripts have here an identical reading to that used in Mark and Luke - what is your take on this?

98d) Those commentators are out of line since the text of Matthew is clear (the Greek reflects what NASB has in your quote included above).

Matthew 19:29-30 (NASB)

²⁹ And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother ^{1a}or children or farms for My name's sake, will receive ^{1b}many times as much, and will inherit eternal life. ³⁰ But many *who are* first will be last; and *the* last, first.

Matthew 19:29 One early ms adds *or wife*

Matthew 19:29 One early ms reads *a hundred times*

a) Could you refer to both footnotes? How should the verse read?

b) Could you explain the link between Jesus' words from verse 30 and 29?

99a) Both phrases should be included (they are both in Sinaiticus).

99b) I think the connection is that while the disciples are focused on what is going on here on planet earth (cf. Matt.19:27), our Lord, after assuring them that they have made the right choice, is also quick to remind them (and us) that this world is temporary, and that what really counts is not our status or possessions or situation here in this ephemeral and fundamentally compromised world, but where we will come out in the ranking at the judgment of the Church: better to be among the first then even if that means we are among the last now, because that ranking is from Him and is eternal, whereas where we rank in the eyes of the world is unimportant and incredibly short-lived.

Matthew 19:30 (NASB)

30 But many who are first will be last; and the last, first.

I read an interesting interpretation according to which this verse could apply not only to the young ruler from verses 16-26, who might be considered among the first in this world through his wealth and status, but also to Peter and the apostles. In verse 27 Peter says "Behold, we have left everything and followed You; what then will there be for us?", which some take as an assumption that they were among the first and our Lord's words are a warning against complacency - what is your take on such a view?

99c) I don't have a problem with that as an application. Clearly, the reversal of the worldly order of things at the last judgment is what is meant. We who serve the Lord as our first priority are often disadvantaged in worldly terms and in the estimation of the world. In truth, God is blessing us now even as we are tested and tried, and the rewards that are to come to those who persevere and truly live their lives for Christ will put all such worldly concerns in the shade. The reversal will truly be great, even among believers (not to mention the difference between heaven and hell for believers and unbelievers respectively).

Matthew 20:13-16 (NASB)

¹³ But he answered and said to one of them, 'Friend, I am doing you no wrong; did you not agree with me for a denarius?' ¹⁴ Take what is yours and go, but I wish to give to this last man the same as to you. ¹⁵ Is it not lawful for me to do what I wish with what is my own? Or is your eye envious because I am generous?' ¹⁶ So the last shall be first, and the first last."

a) How should we understand this parable? Doesn't it say that eternal rewards will be equal for all who have been saved? I read a number of interpretations and some make more sense than others, your input will as always be greatly appreciated.

b) How should landowner's last words be interpreted? Normally the words "the last shall be first, and the first last" have been said in the context of the eternal status being opposite to one's earthly status (Matthew 19:30), but here it seems to suggest that those who worked least will be put above those who worked longest - please clarify.

100) On this one, the best thing seems to give you the interpretation I have written up in CT 6 under "the judgment and reward of the Church":

With the use of the word "so" (Greek *houtos*, οὕτως, "thus / in this way") in verse sixteen above, we see that it is the reversal of the expected **order** that constitutes the fulfillment of the "last/first – first/last" prophecy. Applying this to the Church at large, the denarius represents the award of salvation which all who trust in Christ will possess equally. The workers hired first represent those who seem in the world's eyes according to the world's standards as likely to receive a larger reward, while those hired last appear to be precisely the opposite, namely, those whose reward will be the least. But in fact, the situation is exactly the reverse of worldly impressions. For our purposes here, the critical

point of interpretation is the greater honor given to those whose production is often invisible to us here and now being represented **by the order** of evaluation: rather than having to wait at the end of the line, this group is promoted by being given their wages first (while on the contrary those who **appear** to our sight to be worthy of more, are not, and are in fact placed behind the truly more worthy). Thus this parable indicates that those who are truly first in God's eyes will receive their judgment and reward first, while those who may seem more prominent to us but are actually not so in truth will have to wait until later, a situation which also reflects their relatively lesser rewards.

I'm not clear about this - one the one hand you wrote that "the denarius represents the award of salvation which all who trust in Christ will possess equally", which is an identical reward for all saved, but on the other you still wrote that some will receive more honour than others.

100b) The focus is salvation, and salvation is our goal. As when Peter says "you are receiving the end result of your faith, the salvation of your souls" (1Pet.1:9 NIV) – even though he certainly understands that there will be a judgment before Christ's *bema* for the purpose of evaluation and reward. So we all hope for salvation, and to be saved is the entire point of this life; within our individual lives, some will respond better to the Lord than others, and will be rewarded more than those others – within the community of those saved.

You wrote that the work of those who receive their rewards first was invisible, but more effective, so should we take the parable to mean that what they have done in the short time was equal to the production of those who have laboured for longer?

100c) This is not an individual evaluation (as with the other parables), but a collective one – and we shall all be individually evaluated. So we have to take care in matching the details here. The point, I think, is a collective one. Israel has been around a long time, and the Church Age is relatively new – and yet even though Israel has born "the burden of the day", the gentiles of the Church Age will not be disadvantaged nor those of Israel advantaged by their status – all will be equally part of the Bride of Christ. Individually, reward will depend upon what we have done

(or not) as individuals, and the level of reward achieved will be justly rewarded by the Lord, not on the basis of appearances but on the basis of actual spiritual accomplishments.

NIV SB: 20:1-16 This parable occurs only in Matthew's Gospel. In its original setting, its main point seems to be the sovereign graciousness and generosity of God extended to latecomers (the poor and the outcasts of society) into God's kingdom. It is addressed to the grumblers (v. 11) who just cannot handle this amazing expression of God's grace. They almost certainly represent the religious leaders who opposed Jesus.

Would you say that this interpretation could be true? I know you take this passage as referring to believers of varying productivity, which is in accordance with the fact that in the parable all workers receive the payment, but the NIV SB proposes that those who grumble against the landowner are religious leaders. One aspect of this interpretation which seems to be in its favour is that many religious leaders could be considered as having been in the vineyard for a long time, whereas those who come late can be taken as being the sinners who repent. Your view on this will be appreciated.

100d) No, because the religious leaders were in fact not even doing the work of the vineyard – and they will not be paid. They are the ones who will kill the Son and throw Him out of the vineyard. So this interpretation fails on several critical counts.

Matthew 20:29-34 (NASB)

29 As they were leaving Jericho, a large crowd followed Him. 30 And two blind men sitting by the road, hearing that Jesus was passing by, cried out, "Lord, have mercy on us, Son of David!" 31 The crowd sternly told them to be quiet, but they cried out all the more, "Lord, Son of David, have mercy on us!" 32 And Jesus stopped and called them, and said, "What do you want Me to do for you?" 33 They *said to Him, "Lord, we want our eyes to be opened." 34 Moved with compassion, Jesus touched their eyes; and immediately they regained their sight and followed Him.

The fact that Matthew mentions two blind men and Mark and Luke only one can perhaps be reconciled with there being one who was more prominent and spoke, but how should we understand that according to Matthew our Lord was leaving Jericho when this miracle took place, but according to Luke - as He was coming towards it?

100e) I'm not sure that the the two are not a different incident, but it is true that Matthew often calls attention to all participants instead of the most prominent one (as in the case of the Gadarene demoniac: Matt.8:28ff.; see the link: <http://ichthys.com/mail-double.htm>). As to where the incident involving Bar-Timaeus took place, I don't think that in fact the accounts of Mark and Luke are

irreconcilable. Mark says in verse 46b, "while He was going through [the city] away from Jericho" – which two phrases taken together most likely mean "moving away from the city center but still technically in the greater area called "Jericho". Luke says in verse 36 that Bar-Timaeus heard the noise of the crowd "passing through" i.e., the center of town (verse 35 says that he was sitting by the road, no doubt on the far side of the town) when Jesus had approached the city from the east. After the healing, Luke has in verse one of chapter nineteen, "and having come in (i.e., to the city), He passed [completely] through Jericho". This means that Bar-Timaeus was sitting in the "suburbs", so to speak, on the west side, but still in what was known as "Jericho". In fact, that is the only way to understand *eiselthon* in verse one of chapter nineteen. So Luke adds a wonderful detail explaining how the blind man could have gotten prepared (physically and also in his heart) for what he would do when Jesus came by (i.e., he heard the commotion in the city center – something that might not have happened had he been on the eastern side of town outside of the city where our Lord first entered).

Matthew 21:11 (NASB)

¹¹ And the crowds were saying, "This is the prophet Jesus, from Nazareth in Galilee."

21:11 the prophet. Refers either to a prophet in general (see 13:57) or to the prophet predicted in Dt 18:15–18 (see note on 18:15; see also Dt 34:10–12 and note on 34:12).

Do you think that "prophet" here has a generic meaning, or is it the reference to "the" prophet?

101) It is hard to know what the multitude who had come up to Jerusalem for Passover really thought about our Lord – who is **the** Prophet in fact – but it seems unlikely that they recognized that He was the Messiah (which is who **the** Prophet is), even if that was implied in using this phrase on behalf of many. Here we have a case of the words being true in every respect, but of those uttering them not understanding the significance of what they are saying (as happens in unbelieving and undernourished churches all over the world every Sunday morning):

And one of them, Caiaphas, being high priest that year, said to them, "You know nothing at all, nor do you consider that it is expedient for us that one man should die for the people, and not that the whole nation should perish." Now this he did not say on his own authority; but being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the nation.
John 11:49-51 NKJV

Matthew 21:12-17 (NASB) ¹² And Jesus entered the temple and drove out all those who were buying and selling in the temple, and overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who were selling doves.¹³ And He *said to them, "It is written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer'; but you are making it a robbers' den."

¹⁴ And *the* blind and *the* lame came to Him in the temple, and He healed them. ¹⁵ But when the chief priests and the scribes saw the wonderful things that He had done, and the children who were shouting in the temple, "Hosanna to the Son of David," they became indignant ¹⁶ and said to Him, "Do You hear what these *children* are saying?" And Jesus *said to them, "Yes; have you never read, 'Out of the mouth of infants and nursing babies You have prepared praise for Yourself?'" ¹⁷ And He left them and went out of the city to Bethany, and spent the night there.

NIV SB: 21:12–17 In the Synoptics the clearing of the temple occurs during the last week of Jesus' ministry; in John it takes place during the first few months (Jn 2:12–16). Two explanations are possible:(1) There were two clearings, one at the beginning and the other at the end of Jesus' public ministry. (2) There was only one clearing, which took place during Passion Week but which John placed at the beginning of his account for theological reasons—to show that God's judgment was operative through the Messiah from the outset of Jesus' ministry. However, different details are present in the two accounts (the selling of cattle and sheep in Jn 2:14, the whip in Jn 2:15, and the statements of Jesus in Mt 21:13; Jn 2:16). From Matthew's and Luke's accounts we might assume that the clearing of the temple took place on Sunday, following the so-called "Triumphal" Entry (21:1–11). But Mark (11:15–19) clearly indicates that it was on Monday. Matthew often compressed narratives.

a) Did the clearing take place on Sunday or Monday? How can Matthew's and Luke's accounts be reconciled with Mark's?

102) First, there were two clearings of the temple, one at the inception of our Lord's ministry (John's account), and the one during Passion week (recorded in the synoptic Gospels). As to the chronology of the withering of the fig tree, Mark's rendition is chronological; Matthew's is presented as a flashback. One should translate Matthew 21:19 "Now when He was going back to the city early [that morning], He had become hungry and . . . ". This also explains why it seems in many English translations that Matthew is describing an immediate and visible withering of the fig tree (whereas

Mark places the days events in between cursing and withering); but in fact what the disciples say in verse twenty is "How did the fig tree dry up so quickly?" – a question which calls attention to the fact and speed of its withering and not to a miracle of instantaneous transition before their very eyes – they are seeing this after the passage of a day.

When did the triumphal entry take place? Could you comment on the point made in the NIV SB?

102b) Our Lord entered Jerusalem on a Sunday (see the link: [http://ichthys.com/mail-Death-Martyrdom-Resurrection.htm#Palm Sunday](http://ichthys.com/mail-Death-Martyrdom-Resurrection.htm#Palm%20Sunday)). "We might assume" many things . . . without doing our "homework" first. Matters of chronology are difficult in all ancient history and the reconstruction of "passion week" is a vexed issue because there are many groups which, for reasons that escape me, wish to argue about when the crucifixion took place (in addition to the traditional position, there is also a "Wednesday" and a "Thursday" school of thought). I have a lot at the site about these and related issues. For an overview of the week please see the link: <http://ichthys.com/4A-Christo.htm#2>) The triumphal entry

Was the temple cleansed on that prior Sunday also?

102b) That is what I have concluded (see prior link).

Matthew 21:18-22 (NASB)

¹⁸ Now in the morning, when He was returning to the city, He became hungry. ¹⁹ Seeing a lone fig tree by the road, He came to it and found nothing on it except leaves only; and He *said to it, "No longer shall there ever be *any* fruit from you." And at once the fig tree withered. ²⁰ Seeing *this*, the disciples were amazed and asked, "How did the fig tree wither *all* at once?" ²¹ And Jesus answered and said to them, "Truly I say to you, if you have faith and do not doubt, you will not only do what was done to the fig tree, but even if you say to this mountain, 'Be taken up and cast into the sea,' it will happen. ²² And all things you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive."

a) Could you explain the meaning of this occurrence? If there were no figs on the fig tree, was it not due to this not being the time when it would bear the fruit? And yet Jesus curses the tree?

b) How can Matthew's and Mark's accounts of this event be reconciled, particularly with regard to chronology?

103) I think the point is that while in our human estimation we might not see ourselves as "ready", we have to adopt our Lord's point of view instead so as to have fruit at the time He wants us to have it (even if that doesn't seem like "the right time" to us). Had this tree done so, it would have served the Son of God; if we do so, we will serve those who belong to Him in ways we never could have imagined. The tree is a tree so not really culpable; but we have free will, after all, and so do have to answer for all we do – and fail to do.

Matthew 21:24-25 (NASB)

²⁴Jesus said to them, "I will also ask you one thing, which if you tell Me, I will also tell you by what authority I do these things. ²⁵The baptism of John was from what *source*, from heaven or from men?" And they *began* reasoning among themselves, saying, "If we say, 'From heaven,' He will say to us, 'Then why did you not believe him?'"

Was our Lord's question about John's authority in some way linked to Pharisees' question about His own authority? Why did Jesus give this particular reply?

104) The Pharisees have nothing to do with Jesus' authority; He put things this way to demonstrate that they had absolutely no interest in hearing a truthful answer inasmuch as they were not after truth but only seeking to muzzle our Lord and counter His ministry.

Would you say it's possible that our Lord asks this question, because it's directly related to answering the question which Pharisees asked? So whatever they answer with respect to John, would be true with respect to Jesus? If they say "From heaven", then they will condemn their own unbelief, since they rejected John (Matthew 21:32) and in the same way they rejected Jesus. If they say "From men", then just as they feared the reaction of the people if they stated that about John's ministry, then even more the fear would be warranted if they said that Jesus' ministry was from men. So would you say our Lord here answers with a question, because Pharisees' treatment of John directly parallels treatment of our Lord?

104b) Your analysis is "spot-on". As to "So would you say our Lord here answers with a question, because Pharisees' treatment of John directly parallels treatment of our Lord?", I would say that He answers their question with a question because they are not really looking for an answer to the question they ask but really only seeking a way to accuse Him and trap Him.

Matthew 21:32 (NASB)

32 For John came to you in the way of righteousness and you did not believe him; but the tax collectors and prostitutes did believe him; and you, seeing this, did not even feel remorse afterward so as to believe him.

How specifically should we understand the expression "way of righteousness"?

104c) Jesus is "the Way" and everything He did "fulfilled all righteousness". So the "way" here is the only way to please God, the only way of salvation. John revealed that "way" because He bore witness to Him who is the "Way", our dear Lord and Savior Jesus Christ in whom we have the righteousness of God by grace through faith.

Matthew 21:33-46

a) Could you explain the meaning of this parable of "the tenants"?

105) As it says in verse 45: "Now when the chief priests and Pharisees heard His parables, they perceived that He was speaking of them". These leaders of the Jewish state and religion had purloined the vineyard and were using it to their own advantage, meaning that they were not doing what God wanted (learning and teaching the truth), but merely supporting their comfortable lifestyles through mulcting the nation; when the Messiah came, therefore, they would do to Him as they had done to all God's prophets who had likewise called them to account.

b) Matthew 21:44 (NIV1984)

44 He who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces, but he on whom it falls will be crushed.^[a]

Matthew 21:44 Some manuscripts do not have verse 44.

Could you comment on the point made in the footnote?

106) Verse 44 is part of the text and is in most of the most ancient mss. Some critics want to exclude it because of its similarity to Luke 20:18 and because it is absent in one strain of text. Please see the fine analysis in Metzger's *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (London 1970).

Matthew 22:7 (NASB)

7 But the king was enraged, and he sent his armies and destroyed those murderers and set their city on fire.

22:7 burned their city. A common military practice; here possibly an allusion to the coming destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70.

Do you think our Lord here alludes to the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70?

107) I certainly would not exclude that possibility; however, its main reference is eschatological referring to the Messiah's return when all of His enemies will be made "the footstool of your feet" (Ps.110:1).

Matthew 22:11 (NASB)

“But when the king came in to look over the dinner guests, he saw a man there who was not dressed in wedding clothes,

NIV SB: 22:11 not wearing wedding clothes. It may have been the custom for a host to provide guests with wedding garments. This would have been necessary for the guests at this banquet in particular, for they were brought in directly from the streets (vv. 9–10). The failure of the man in question to avail himself of a wedding garment was therefore an insult to the host, who had made the garments available.

a) Do you agree with this interpretation?

b) I know from the previous question regarding this passage that this man represents the Gentiles who are invited to the feast and given the good news, but refuse to act accordingly (believe in Jesus Christ). What I'm not sure about is how to interpret the fact that his man does actually enter the feast.

108) As you say in "b", that is my understanding of the passage; the banquet per se I take to be the Millennium; many will come into the Millennium (and many more will be born into it) who will not, for all the generosity of the King, accept Him in their hearts (no wedding clothes: cf. Rev.3:4-5; 4:4; 7:13; 16:15).

I'm wondering if these verses could be used as evidence for God electing us on the basis of our free-will choice which he knew from eternity past and thus as an argument against hyper-calvinism. The king sees a man not dressed in wedding clothes and on this basis he throws him out into "the outer darkness". Clearly, if the wearing of the wedding clothes was not a matter of a free-will choice on part of the guest, then the king would not have thrown him away. So it is a matter of choice. And yet our Lord summarises the parable by saying that "few are chosen". It looks to me like a summary of God's plan and the relationship between the choice and free will - God chooses those whom He knew would choose Him. What do you think?

108b) I don't have a problem with that. I'm not sure there is force here however: "as many as you find there, **invite** to the wedding feast" (v.9). This person was called, but he chose to disrespect the One who gave the invitation – a good

example of unbelievers who will experience the blessings of the Millennium under the perfect King, but will still refuse to accept Him through faith.

Matthew 22:35-37 (NASB)

³⁵ One of them, a lawyer, asked Him *a question*, testing Him, ³⁶ "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?" ³⁷ And He said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.'

What is the nature of the test here? What answer was the Pharisee hoping for?

109) Apparently this was the answer he was looking for – which demonstrates that he was thinking of things in the correct way (rather than that Jesus "passed the test"); for he says (as recorded in Mark 12:32-33):

So the scribe said to Him, "Well said, Teacher. You have spoken the truth, for there is one God, and there is no other but He. And to love Him with all the heart, with all the understanding, with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love one's neighbor as oneself, is more than all the whole burnt offerings and sacrifices."

And our Lord says of him (v.34):

Now when Jesus saw that he answered wisely, He said to him, "You are not far from the kingdom of God." But after that no one dared question Him.

How do you think we should understand the list used by our Lord in this verse and in Mark 12:30? Do we know if our Lord read the Septuagint?

109b) I would imagine that He had the text of the LXX and of course the Hebrew scriptures memorized at a very early age. All of these expressions, in their original forms and in the New Testament express the same thing: giving God our "all".

Matthew 22:41-42 (NASB)

⁴¹ Now while the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them a question: ⁴² "What do you think about the Christ, whose son is He?" They *said to Him, "The son of David."

Was this question by our Lord in any way linked to the previous test by the Pharisee (verse 36 - "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?")?

110) At this point of finally being asked the right question and having received an affirmation from at least one of their number as to what was really important in the Law, our Lord slices through several layers of pharisaical thinking to expose the hollowness of all of their unbelieving thoughts towards Him. For by asking this question Jesus makes it clear that the Son of David, the Messiah, had to be also the Son of God, divine as well as human, otherwise David would not be subordinate to Him (calling Him "Lord").

Matthew 23:1-3 (NASB)

23 Then Jesus spoke to the crowds and to His disciples, ² saying: "The scribes and the Pharisees have seated themselves in the chair of Moses; ³ therefore all that they tell you, do and observe, but do not do according to their deeds; for they say *things* and do not do *them*."

a) I find these verses difficult to understand. Jesus has exposed and rebuked on numerous occasions not only Pharisees' deeds, but also their lack of understanding of the true meaning of the scriptures and yet He commands the people to observe "all that they tell you". I don't know how to reconcile these words with Matthew 15:1-14 or Matthew 16:11-12 and even with the words which quickly follow in Matthew 23:13 (NASB):

Matthew 23:13 (NASB)

¹³ "But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you shut off the kingdom of heaven from people; for you do not enter in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in."

b) NIV SB note on Pharisees: On free will and determination, they held to a mediating view that did not allow either human free will or the sovereignty of God to cancel out the other.

Could you clarify this view and explain how can it be derived?

111) In addition to being religious leaders, the Pharisees were to a large degree secular officials – and the Bible is always strong on obeying secular authority, even when it is far from perfect. They were the ones who carried out a good deal of the judicial and administrative oversight of the state. Indeed, it was mostly only in the area of foreign policy and the taxation necessary to maintain the defense establishment which protected it that the Romans interfered in those days. In addition, while our Lord tells the people to follow their judicial/administrative commands, He also is quick to tell them not to behave the way they behave. To me this is a clear dividing line between secular measures

("render unto Caesar what is Caesar's") and spiritual matters ("and render unto God what is God's").

Matthew 23:5 (NASB)

⁵ But they do all their deeds to be noticed by men; for they broaden their phylacteries and lengthen the tassels *of their garments*.

I can understand how broadening a phylactery could be taken as an act of outward piety, but what is the meaning of lengthening the tassel of a garment?

112) It is the same idea, namely, an over-doing of the command (in this case Deut.22:12) to appear more righteous than others (when that whole way of thinking is only possible if someone does not really care for God's opinion and is only looking to impress human beings).

Matthew 23:8-11 (NASB)

⁸ But do not be called Rabbi; for One is your Teacher, and you are all brothers. ⁹ Do not call *anyone* on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven. ¹⁰ Do not be called leaders; for One is your Leader, *that is*, Christ. ¹¹ But the greatest among you shall be your servant.

How should we understand these words? Particularly with the reference to not calling one a "Father"?

113) The sentiment is that even supposedly humble acts which are only done out of flattery have the tendency to elevate human beings beyond their proper due to the detriment of our appreciation of the Lord. As to "father"; this is not speaking of refraining from calling one's biological father by that name, but refraining from calling another human being "father" out of misplaced respect or adulation which elevates the person beyond any legitimate status. It's not the technical detail which is as important here as it is the mind-set of making "gods" of men in the supposed Name of God. If a Pharisee was actually teaching the Law aright, he was only doing his job; it is alright to admire that and to emulate that but not to idolize or canonize or apotheosize a person for the same. In all things, the middle road is often the one of true humility and prudence. A good teacher should be shown respect and have his authority respected, but only to a reasonable point and within proper bounds. The Pharisees had created a "Rabbi cult" which produced competition for being just such a "top gun" (as is also obvious from the Talmud and even

conservative Jewish practice today) – and we see this sort of thing in evangelicaldom as well.

Matthew 23:14 (NASB)

¹⁴ [1^a]Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you devour widows' houses, and for a pretense you make long prayers; therefore you will receive greater condemnation.]

Matthew 23:14 This v not found in early mss

Should this verse be a part of the scripture?

114) The verse is in the other two synoptic gospels, but not in Matthew (as the best mss. make clear). For more analysis, see Metzger (*op. cit.*).

Matthew 23:16-22 (NASB)

¹⁶ "Woe to you, blind guides, who say, 'Whoever swears by the temple, *that* is nothing; but whoever swears by the gold of the temple is obligated.' ¹⁷ You fools and blind men! Which is more important, the gold or the temple that sanctified the gold? ¹⁸ And, 'Whoever swears by the altar, *that* is nothing, but whoever swears by the offering on it, he is obligated.' ¹⁹ You blind men, which is more important, the offering, or the altar that sanctifies the offering? ²⁰ Therefore, whoever swears by the altar, swears *both* by the altar and by everything on it. ²¹ And whoever swears by the temple, swears *both* by the temple and by Him who dwells within it. ²² And whoever swears by heaven, swears *both* by the throne of God and by Him who sits upon it.

Our Lord's reasoning and replies make perfect sense, but I'm not sure how the Pharisees arrived at their understanding of things - could you explain what was their reasoning?

115) I would only be able to speculate that gold and offerings were tangible things of earthly value which the Pharisees really prized more than the spiritual principles they represented.

Matthew 23:29-32 (NASB)

²⁹ "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you build the tombs of the prophets and adorn the monuments of the righteous, ³⁰ and say, 'If we had been *living* in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partners with them in *shedding* the blood of the prophets.' ³¹ So you testify against yourselves, that you are sons of those who murdered the prophets. ³² Fill up, then, the measure *of the guilt* of your fathers.

What is the meaning of these words?

116) They willing affirm that those who killed the prophets were "our fathers", and by doing so make it clear that in fact, when push came to shove, they would have stood with their

fathers rather than with the prophets who opposed them – just as in fact they were doing and would do when they lobbied to have Christ crucified. Contrast the sons of Levi who killed their own brethren and chose the Lord over blood ties (and thus won the priesthood: Ex.32:26-29).

Matthew 23:34-35 (NASB)

³⁴ "Therefore, behold, I am sending you prophets and wise men and scribes; some of them you will kill and crucify, and some of them you will scourge in your synagogues, and persecute from city to city,³⁵ so that upon you may fall *the guilt* of all the righteous blood shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the^a temple and the altar.

On the one hand our Lord says that some "prophets and wise men and teachers" they will persecute, using future tense, on the other He says "from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah", referring to those repressed in the past.

117) Those killed in the past are the pattern (followed by the fathers); the future actions predicted in verse 34 will be the work of the sons (following the pattern of their unbelieving fathers).

Matthew 24:2 (NASB)

² And He said to them, "Do you not see all these things? Truly I say to you, not one stone here will be left upon another, which will not be torn down."

NIV SB: 24:2 not one stone ... left. Fulfilled literally in AD 70, when the Romans under Titus completely destroyed Jerusalem and the temple buildings. Stones were even pried apart to collect the gold leaf that melted from the roof when the temple was set on fire. stone. See note on Mk 13:1. thrown down. Excavations in 1968 uncovered large numbers of these stones, toppled from the walls by the invaders.

The chapter is about Jesus' second coming, so should we understand this verse about having a double applicability and referring both to the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD and to the second advent?

117) Yes. See the link:

<http://ichthys.com/Tribulation-Part1.htm#Day of the Lord>
[Paradigm](#)

Matthew 24:15 (NASB)

¹⁵ "Therefore when you see the abomination of desolation which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand),

Why does Matthew add "let the reader understand"?

118) I think because it requires some degree of interpretation of the Old Testament passages to "get this right"; the Greek actually says "a holy place" and one would have to spend some time in the book of Daniel to recognize that the temple court is meant. Ironically, English renderings such as the one above make it seem as if the statue will be inside of the temple (which is absolutely incorrect).

Would you say it's possible that these words were spoken by our Lord, or is that an addition from Matthew?

118b) This was spoken by our Lord and refers to prophecy in Daniel – that is what should be read and understood to fully grasp the specifics of the eschatology.

Matthew 24:20 (NASB)

20 But pray that your flight will not be in the winter, or on a Sabbath.

Would you say it is possible that our Lord is here referring not only to Tribulational Sabbath observance, but maybe also to Jewish own self-imposed superstitious limitation based on observance of Old Testament commandment?

119) Those who flee will have been educated on these matters by Moses and Elijah, so that one would hope few would be restrained by those sort of false scruples (but it is a good point).

Matthew 24:22 (NASB)

²² Unless those days had been cut short, no life would have been saved; but for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short.

NIV SB: 24:22 days ... cut short. Some hold that this statement means that the distress will be of such intensity that, if allowed to continue, it would destroy everyone. Others believe that Christ is referring to the cutting short of a previously determined time period (such as the 70th "seven" of Da 9:27 or the 42 months of Rev 11:2; 13:5). the elect. The chosen people of God (see also vv. 24, 31).

I cannot understand the point made in the footnote - it seems it is based on the assumption that the time of the distress and the determined time period of the Tribulation are two separate concepts? As far as I understand it from your writings, both refer to the same period.

120) I think the note is trying to distinguish between a metaphorical and a literal interpretation; the former meaning merely that if these trends were to continue without the Lord's return all would be destroyed, and the

latter meaning that a literal subtraction of the period represented by the biblical calculations given is necessary to preserve the elect – I think the latter is the correct *interpretation*, but that does not mean that the former is not also a true *application* of the principle.

Matthew 24:24 (NASB)

²⁴ For false Christs and false prophets will arise and will show great signs and wonders, so as to mislead, if possible, even the elect.

Does our Lord's words "if possible, even the elect" imply that the elect can or cannot be misled?

121) There will be one third of the Church that is deceived and falls away; on the other hand, they will not then be in the number of the elect for all eternity. Those who are not deceived and persevere will either be martyred or see the Lord's second advent return (about half and half from my reading of scripture). The effect of our Lord's words is to bring home to us that the power of the deception of antichrist will such like as the world has never seen, and we should not take it for granted that it will be "easy as pie" for us to see through his devices, even though we may feel now that this is the case. It is a clarion call to become as prepared as possible in every conceivable way in anticipation of the heavy burden of those difficult days.

Matthew 24:33 (NIV)

³³ Even so, when you see all these things, you know that it^[a] is near, right at the door.

Matthew 24:33 Or *he*

Which rendering is correct?

122) Greek is ambiguous on this point, but while I certainly would not rule out "He" as included in the idea, I would not think that it is exclusively "He" inasmuch as our Lord is talking about Himself, after all ("I"), and the next referent is "all these things" in the following verse (the context has been the entire list of Tribulational events, after all).

Matthew 24:36 (NIV)

³⁶ "But about that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son,^[a] but only the Father.

Matthew 24:36 Some manuscripts do not have *nor the Son*.

Could you relate to the point made in the footnote?

123) It probably should be included. One can see how this would be taken out by those who, understanding that Christ is God, cannot imagine how it would be possible for Him not to know. However, this is another example of the earthly *kenosis* of our Lord at time of writing – there is now no self-imposed barrier between the humanity and deity of Christ.

Matthew 25:1-13

a) Regarding the parable of the ten virgins you wrote in <http://ichthys.com/Tribulation-Part3A.htm>:

Like the wise virgins in our Lord's parable (Matt.25:1-13), we too must commit ourselves to stocking up on the oil of truth while it is yet day, that our lamp of faith may not be extinguished during that dark night to come.

And in <http://ichthys.com/Tribulation-Part4.htm>:

In that parable the light of the lamp represents faith so that the five virgins whose lamps are extinguished before the bridegroom arrives stand for those who fall away in the Great Apostasy. Thus the five wise virgins whose lamps continue to shine represent those who maintain their faith until the end of the Tribulation (in contrast with those who fall away).

I take it then we should understand that the oil stands for the truth and the light for faith - but how should we understand the fact that all ten virgins fall asleep?

You wrote:

Just as being physically tired often induces physical sleep which, if it comes on suddenly and unexpectedly at an inappropriate time or manner, may have extremely negative consequences, so also allowing oneself to become spiritually tired is a problem at any time – how much more so during the dramatic testing of the Tribulation?

It seems that both these believers who kept their faith and those who lost it in the end went through a period of "spiritual sleep"?

124) Falling asleep in this instance does not seem to be of any spiritual significance; it is part of the "furniture" of the parable and serves to advance its beginning to the critical time. The fault lies not in sleeping (we all have to sleep literally) but in being unprepared for the time of crisis.

b) How would you explain the fact that the prepared virgins don't want to share their oil with those unprepared:

Matthew 25:9 (NASB)

⁹ But the prudent answered, 'No, there will not be enough for us and you *too*; go instead to the dealers and buy *some* for yourselves.'

I understand that the truth which empowers the faith cannot be "transferred" onto another person in an instant, but rather requires a lengthy commitment, but here the issue is presented not as if the oil cannot be transferred, but rather as the virgins not willing to share it - what is your view?

125) To the extent that there is a valid spiritual lesson here I would have to say that it lies only in the fact that the wise virgins are unable to comply with the request – and unwilling. Would we really give up our claim on eternal life for the sake of someone else? That is what is implied here "lest there should not be enough for us and you". In the event, it is not possible to do so. Lesson for unbelievers: you cannot count on the intercession of your friends and family if you reject Christ.

Matthew 25:24-25 (NASB)

²⁴ "And the one also who had received the one talent came up and said, 'Master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow and gathering where you scattered no *seed*. ²⁵ And I was afraid, and went away and hid your talent in the ground. See, you have what is yours.'

Why is God compared to a master who reaps where he didn't sow and gathers where he scattered no seed?

126) Unbelievers emphasize the unyielding nature of God's perfect character in order to justify their unwillingness to submit to Him; in fact of course He sacrificed His own dear Son on their behalf as well as ours so that His perfect justice would be satisfied and He could provide salvation. In other words, this self-serving "fear" which merely was an excuse for the unbeliever to do what he really wanted to do (ignore God in this life), should really have led him to exactly the opposite conclusion – as the Master here makes clear and as

the Lord will make clear at the last judgment in each and every case.

I understand that the unproductive servant has a wrong perception of the character of his master here and based on this wrong perception he draws the wrong conclusion also, since, as you wrote, he should have been led to the exact opposite attitude - one of commitment to deliver. One aspect of this parable which I cannot understand is why the master agrees with the servant by saying "you knew that I reap where I did not sow and gather where I scattered no seed", rather than rebuking the unfaithful servant for what he said about him. Some commentators state that rather than repeating servant's words, the master here asks a question - "You knew ...?" What is your take?

126b) I don't see how making it a question changes the fundamental calculus of the situation. It sounds better in English, so one might be able to defend the translation (Greek questions where no question word or signal occurs are notoriously hard to locate without a very good sense of the language – they think somewhat differently than we do on this point). I would still stick with my interpretation here: the Master only agrees with the slave's assessment of His awesome nature. The correct response then is to seek mercy – which our Master always provides to those who ask it.

It also seems to me that this perception on part of the servant is obviously false since he was given the talent, so he shouldn't say of the master that he sows where he didn't reap, because clearly the servant was given a means to generate profit. Would you agree?

126c) In the analogy, the "seed" is the money. "Sowing" is putting it to work.

Matthew 25:31-46: the parable of the talents

a) NIV SB: 25:31–46 The two most widely accepted interpretations of this judgment are:(1) It will occur at the beginning of an earthly millennial kingdom (vv. 31, 34; see Rev 20:4 and note on 20:2). Its purpose will be to determine who will be allowed to enter the kingdom (v. 34). The basis for judgment will be the kind of treatment shown to the Jewish people ("these brothers and sisters of mine," v. 40) during the preceding great tribulation period (vv. 35–40, 42–45). Ultimately, how one treats them will reveal whether or not one is saved (vv. 41, 46). (2) The judgment referred to occurs at the great white throne at the end of the age (Rev 20:11–15). Its purpose will be to determine who will be allowed to enter the eternal kingdom of the saved and who will be consigned to eternal punishment in hell (vv. 34, 46). The basis for judgment will be whether love is shown to God's people (see 1Jn 3:14–15). See note on v. 40.

I understand from your writings that you consider the second interpretation to be correct. Could you explain why these verses cannot be taken to refer to the

beginning of the millennial reign? Would you say that verse 46 makes this interpretation incorrect, as it talks about "eternal punishment", and this will not come until the White Throne judgment?

127) Yes, that is the clearest proof of what is going on here. We know clearly that the Last Judgment occurs at the end of human history, so this must be taking place at that time, not at the beginning of the Millennium. Also, this then becomes the clearest treatment of what we would postulate must also take place at that time, namely, the judgment of the millennial believers who, like the Church which has already received its resurrection and reward, must likewise be resurrected and rewarded.

Matthew 25:46 (NASB)

⁴⁶ These will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."

b) NIV SB: 25:34–40 Rewards in the kingdom of heaven are given to those who serve without thought of reward. There is no hint of merit here, for God gives out of grace, not debt.

What is meant here by "there is no hint of merit here"?

128) I think the person who wrote the note is trying to distinguish between rewards based on grace and the Roman Catholic idea of works of supererogation.

c) NIV SB: 25:40 least of these brothers and sisters of mine. To whom does Jesus refer? The principal views are: (1) all who are hungry, thirsty, poor, needy or otherwise distressed—but this seems too comprehensive; (2) apostles and other Christian missionaries—but this seems too restrictive; (3) the Jews mentioned in the first interpretation in the note on vv. 31–46; (4) Jesus' disciples (12:46–50; 28:8–10); (5) "God's people" mentioned in the second interpretation in the note on vv. 31–46.

How do you interpret the "least of these brothers and sisters of mine"?

129) Compare Romans 12:16: "Be of the same mind toward one another. Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own opinion" (NKJV; cf. Jas.2:1-6). The idea here though is that legitimate production done for the Lord on behalf of even the most marginal Christians is still worthy of reward, even though in terms of actual effect it might be minimal – it is still a service the Lord appreciates and rewards.

Matthew 26:5 (NASB)

⁵ But they were saying, "Not during the festival, otherwise a riot might occur among the people."

Why did the chief priests and elders think that a riot could occur if Jesus was to be seized during the festival?

130) Our Lord was attracting great crowds who saw Him as a prophet – even if they did not actually put their faith in Him. Also, these rulers obviously did not understand the nature of our Lord's ministry but were viewing it through the lens with which they looked at all such "movements" where supporters would fight on behalf of their leaders if acted against in a violent fashion.

Matthew 26:8 (NASB)

⁸ But the disciples were indignant when they saw *this*, and said, "Why this waste?"

John 12:4-5 (NASB)

⁴ But Judas Iscariot, one of His disciples, who was intending to betray Him, *said,
⁵ "Why was this perfume not sold for three hundred denarii and given to poor people?"

In Matthew 26:8 plural is used - "disciples" - but in John 12:4-5 it is only Judas reported to make the remark to Jesus?

131) Judas' reaction is the important one because it is one of complete hypocrisy. We can also imagine Judas, who seems to have been well thought of and perhaps influential among his peers, being the "leader" in this indignation.

Matthew 26:18 (NASB)

¹⁸ And He said, "Go into the city to a certain man, and say to him, 'The Teacher says, "My time is near; I *am to* keep the Passover at your house with My disciples.'"

Since Jesus says "to a certain man", how did the disciples know whom He meant?

132) It was more common for women (and slaves) to be carrying pitchers of water (Mk.4:13; Lk.22:10), so it would be easy for them to recognize the first man they saw so doing as the "one" our Lord had in mind. Also, we see here that Matthew does not include the detail but the other two synoptic writers do. This shows us that, clearly, there are many details that were left out (cf. Jn.21:25), so that we should always have faith that these things "make sense", even if we cannot figure them out just yet.

Matthew 26:26-28 (NASB)

²⁶ While they were eating, Jesus took *some* bread, and after a blessing, He broke *it* and gave *it* to the disciples, and said, "Take, eat; this is My body." ²⁷ And when He had taken a cup and given thanks, He gave *it* to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you; ²⁸ for this is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for forgiveness of sins.

How should we understand the words "Take, eat; this is My body" and "Drink from it, all of you, for this is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for forgiveness of sins"? Like you wrote, Jesus didn't bleed to death, so the blood is not to be taken literally, so the way our Lord puts things here ("this is My body" and "this is My blood") seems quite direct?

133) So "is" here means "represents", but the use of the copula makes the analogy and the symbolism more vivid. Obviously enough it is a symbol since our Lord's body was not composed of bread nor was His blood wine – but it is through His body (His willingness to become a human being) and His blood (His spiritual death for all sin on the cross) that we have life (eternal rather than temporal).

Matthew 26:28 (NIV)

²⁸ This is my blood of the^[a] covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.

Matthew 26:28 Some manuscripts *the new*

Is "the new" a part of the scripture?

134) Not here. Later (e.g., 1Cor.11:25; 2Cor.3:6), Paul does call it the "new" covenant/testament to distinguish it from the Law, but, after all, there really is only **one** covenant/testament, namely, the peace and life eternal we have with the Father based upon our acceptance of the sacrifice of the Son. The "old" is merely a shadow of the "real" or "new".

1 Corinthians 11:25 (NASB)

²⁵ In the same way He took the cup also after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me."

How should we understand the fact that Paul also uses quotation marks and yet says "new covenant"?

134b) Quotation marks as such do not exist in ancient Greek. This is an editorial interpretation (so no need to make anything of it).

Matthew 26:29 (NASB)

²⁹ But I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom."

NIV SB: 26:29 drink it new ... in my Father's kingdom. At the Messianic banquet (see Lk 22:16 and note).

How should we understand "the Messianic banquet"?

135) See the link:

"The Wedding Super of the Lamb"

[http://ichthys.com/Tribulation-Part6.htm#II. The Wedding Supper of the Lamb](http://ichthys.com/Tribulation-Part6.htm#II.The%20Wedding%20Supper%20of%20the%20Lamb)

Matthew 26:30 (NASB)

³⁰ After singing a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

NIV SB: 26:30 hymn. The Passover fellowship was concluded with the second half of the Egyptian Hallel Psalms (Ps 115-118). Ps 113-114 were sung before the meal. Mount of Olives. See note on Mk 11:1.

How do we know that these Psalms were sung during the Passover celebration?

135b) If I'm not mistaken, this reference comes from the Tosefta (essentially a supplement to the Mishnah). It is usually assumed to have a fairly early date, but that date is after the destruction of Jerusalem (no earlier than the second century and I have my doubts about it being so early). I do not know of any contemporary writer who gives these details and there is nothing about this in the Bible. Our Lord and His disciples did sing a hymn on this occasion, however.

Matthew 26:34 (NASB)

³⁴ Jesus said to him, "Truly I say to you that this *very* night, before a rooster crows, you will deny Me three times."

26:34 before the rooster crows. The reference may be to the third of the Roman watches into which the night was divided (see note on 14:25; see also Mk 13:35 and note). Or it may simply refer to early morning when the rooster crows.

I always took it as a reference to a crowing rooster, so could you explain the interpretation according to which Roman watches are meant?

136) In our context it is an actual rooster crow – which Peter hears; this was also apparently a name sometimes given to the last night watch since roosters characteristically crow well before dawn.

Matthew 26:39 (NASB)

³⁹ And He went a little beyond *them*, and fell on His face and prayed, saying, "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as You will."

NIV SB: 26:39 cup. A symbol of deep sorrow and suffering. Here it refers to his Father's face being turned away from him when he who had no sin was made sin (perhaps a sin offering) for us (see 27:46; 2Co 5:21 and note).

Why does the note say "perhaps", as if something else could be meant here?

137) No doubt to avoid being censured for being on the wrong side of the "penal substitution" controversy (whichever side the Study Bible reader may be on), not wanting to adopt it nor fail to address it. Jesus died for our sins and the Father accepted that perfect sacrifice; getting overly and unnecessarily specific in regard to technical vocabulary of human legal systems can be misleading. We could never "pay off" our sins, no matter what terminology is used.

Matthew 26:50 (NIV)

⁵⁰ Jesus replied, "Do what you came for, friend."^[a] Then the men stepped forward, seized Jesus and arrested him.

Matthew 26:50 Or "*Why have you come, friend?*"

What is the correct rendering?

138) It is not a question. The rendering in the main text is the best way to take this, literally "for which you came" (statement) = "[Get on with doing the thing] for which you came".

Matthew 26:54 (NASB)

⁵⁴ How then will the Scriptures be fulfilled, *which say* that it must happen this way?"

NIV SB: 26:54 Scriptures be fulfilled. In view of v. 56 probably a reference to Zec 13:7 (see notes on Mk 14:49; Lk 24:44).

The NIV SB note suggests that Zechariah 13:7 is meant by our Lord, but could these words be taken as a more general reference to all of the crucifixion?

139) You are correct; it contemplates the entire set of prophecies about the Messiah's sacrifice.

Matthew 26:63 (NASB)

⁶³ But Jesus kept silent. And the high priest said to Him, "I adjure You by the living God, that You tell us whether You are the Christ, the Son of God."

a) Did the high priest say "whether You are the Christ, the son of God" because he knew that Christ was to be the son of God, or did he just use this title because Jesus used it to describe himself?

140) I think his motive was to have Jesus incriminate Himself; in God's plan it provides the perfect unveiling of the truth – and demonstrates the total hardness of the Jewish rulers against the truth.

b) NIV SB: 26:63 I charge you under oath. Jesus refused to answer the question of v. 62 (see v. 63a). But when the high priest used this form, Jesus was legally obliged to reply.

Do you agree with the footnote?

141) The former was a false accusation; the latter was a direct request for the truth of a statement. Our Lord had no interest as well as no obligation to reply to false charges; but His entire public ministry was dedicated to the truth. There is no longer any need for parables in imparting the truth, moreover, since the day of the great sacrifice by which we are saved is now at hand.

Some commentators propose that our Lord here was obliged to answer based on Leviticus 5:1 - what is your take?

141b) This is (clearly) not the same situation as envisioned in Leviticus 5:1 at all. However, our Lord was gracious in responding in any case.

Matthew 26:65-66 (NASB)

⁶⁵ Then the high priest tore his robes and said, "He has blasphemed! What further need do we have of witnesses? Behold, you have now heard the blasphemy; ⁶⁶ what do you think?" They answered, "He deserves death!"

a) NIV SB: 26:65 tore his clothes. Ordinarily the high priest was forbidden by law to do this (Lev 10:6; 21:10), but this was considered a highly unusual circumstance. The high priest interpreted Jesus' answer in v. 64 as blasphemy (see note on Mk 14:64).

I take it that breaking the Law by the high priest went unnoticed?

142) More importantly, wrongly condemning an innocent man to death for political purposes is "breaking the Law" – even though it is never spelled out that way.

b) Why does the high priest ask "what do you think" having already torn his clothes?

143) No doubt to compel everyone else to join in the false accusation and thus share the blame for the judicial murder.

Matthew 27:6 (NASB)

⁶The chief priests took the pieces of silver and said, "It is not lawful to put them into the temple treasury, since it is the price of blood."

Was it a commandment of the Law not to put "the price of blood" into the treasury?

144) I'm not aware of this "treasury" per se being in the Law, but we do have this in Deuteronomy:

"You shall not bring the wages of a harlot or the price of a dog to the house of the LORD your God for any vowed offering, for both of these are an abomination to the LORD your God."

Deuteronomy 23:18 NKJV

Matthew 27:16 (NIV)

¹⁶At that time they had a well-known prisoner whose name was Jesus^[a] Barabbas.

Matthew 27:16 Many manuscripts do not have *Jesus*; also in verse 17.

Could you relate to the point in the footnote?

145) It's not part of the true text.

Matthew 27:19 (NASB)

¹⁹While he was sitting on the judgment seat, his wife sent him *a message*, saying, "Have nothing to do with that righteous Man; for last night I suffered greatly in a dream because of Him."

Could we take this occurrence as an indication that God gives chances to repent and it is by our wilful choices that we condemn ourselves? I suppose the whole crucifixion can be interpreted in this way - there is no way to pierce through a hardened heart.

146) I would strongly agree.

Matthew 27:24 (NASB)

²⁴ When Pilate saw that he was accomplishing nothing, but rather that a riot was starting, he took water and washed his hands in front of the crowd, saying, "I am innocent of this Man's blood; see *to that* yourselves."

NIV SB: 27:24 washed his hands. See Dt 21:6; Ps 26:6 and notes; 73:13.

NIV SB gives scriptural references for Pilate's gesture, but he wasn't a believer, so I don't know how they relate to the point. Was washing of hands a gesture known in cultures beyond Jewish?

147) Pilate was a shrewd and professional Roman official. As any good governor of a foreign province or occupied territory or any ambassador would do, Pilate took pains to learn something about the culture and practices of his charges. He went along with the demand for crucifixion to avoid being charged with indifference to defiance of Caesar, but with this coopted and adapted ritual, he makes it clear that he was well aware of Jesus' innocence.

Matthew 27:46 (NIV)

⁴⁶ About three in the afternoon Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "*Eli, Eli,^[a] lema sabachthani?*" (which means "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?").

Matthew 27:46 Some manuscripts *Eloi, Eloi*

Could you relate to the footnote?

148) They mean the same thing but the version in the note is the more normal Aramaic rendering of "my God", and that is what Jesus actually said.

Matthew 27:50-51 (NASB)

⁵⁰ And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice, and yielded up His spirit. ⁵¹ And behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth shook and the rocks were split.

Why was the veil of the temple torn after Jesus' physical death rather than right after His payment for sins?

149) A good question. The actual way into heaven was cleared by His spiritual death; this splitting of the veil, however, was to symbolize that victory, and those watching – even the believers – could scarcely have been expected to understand yet the difference between His spiritual death and the physical death that now occurred as our Lord lay down His life by giving up His spirit.

Matthew 27:52-53 (NASB)

⁵² The tombs were opened, and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised; ⁵³ and coming out of the tombs after His resurrection they entered the holy city and appeared to many.

What was the reason the bodies of saints being raised?

150) This temporary resuscitation was a vivid demonstration of the life-giving power of our Lord's sacrifice (cf. 2Ki.13:21).

Matthew 27:54 (NASB)

⁵⁴ Now the centurion, and those who were with him keeping guard over Jesus, when they saw the earthquake and the things that were happening, became very frightened and said, "Truly this was the Son of God!"

Is there any chance this was the centurion mentioned in chapter 8?

151) Possible, but there were a good number of centurions in Judea at the time, and the duties undertaken by the one on Good Friday seem to be those of a lower order of rank than the man who had resources to bless the local Jewish community (roughly speaking, centurions were both the "senior NCO" and the "officer class", though not generals, of the Roman army, so that the difference between a relatively junior one versus a relatively senior one could be as great as that of an SFC and a full Colonel today)

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