

Matthew: His Life And His Gospel – Part 9

Matthew 11:1-6 [New King James] *“Now it came to pass, when Jesus finished commanding His twelve disciples, that He departed from there to teach and to preach in their cities. And when John had heard in prison about the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples and said to Him, ‘Are You the Coming One, or do we look for another?’ Jesus answered and said to them, ‘Go and tell John the things which you hear and see: The blind see and the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear; the dead are raised up and the poor have the gospel preached to them. And blessed is he who is not offended because of Me.’”*

Jesus Christ continued to preach the Kingdom of God message in the towns of Galilee.

John the Baptist, now in prison, sent two of his disciples to Jesus Christ to ask if Jesus Christ was the One John had preached was about to come, [**John 3:1-16**].

I believe the question was asked by John for his remaining disciples, for he had no doubt who Jesus Christ was, [John 1:28-35].

Matthew 11:7-11 [New King James] *“As they departed, Jesus began to say to the multitudes concerning John: ‘What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind? But what did you go out to see? A man clothed in soft garments? Indeed, those who wear soft clothing are in kings’ houses. But what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I say to you, and more than a prophet. For this is he of whom it is written: “Behold, I send My messenger before Your face, Who will prepare Your way before You.” Assuredly, I say to you, among those born of women there has not risen one greater than John the Baptist; but he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.’”*

For a fuller study on the life of John the Baptist please download and study the article under his name listed under the main heading, ‘Ancestors [Learning From Them]’.

Matthew 11:12 [New King James] *“And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force.”*

What Jesus Christ is saying is that the becoming part of the Eternal Kingdom, [created family grown large] of God is not for the well-meaning but for the desperate, no-one can drift into the Kingdom of God, it takes total dedication to its king, Jesus Christ.

Matthew 11:13-15 [New King James] *“For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John. And if you are willing to receive it, he is Elijah who is to come. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!”*

This, as much of Matthew’s gospel is, is directed to the Jewish people who were expecting the prophet Elijah to come before the expected Messiah, [**Malachi 4:5-6**]. Once again Jesus Christ tells the people that John the Baptist was that “Elijah” if they were willing to accept the fact, [**verse 15**].

Matthew 11:16-19 [New King James] *“But to what shall I liken this generation? It is like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling to their companions, and saying: ‘We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we mourned to you, and you did not lament.’ For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, ‘He has a demon.’ The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, ‘Look, a glutton and a winebibber, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!’ But wisdom is justified by her children.”*

This saying of Jesus Christ can be applied to every generation since. Jesus Christ was saddened by the sheer perversity of human nature. No matter what was offered or suggested, they did not want to do it, and they found fault with it.

The plain fact is that people do not want to listen to the truth, mostly because it will demand that they change the way they live.

Yet the ultimate verdict on their lives will be the truth; that is the eternal wisdom of God as expressed in His Word, the Christian Bible.

Matthew 11:20-24 [New King James] *“Then He began to rebuke the cities in which most of His mighty works had been done, because they did not repent: ‘Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say to you, it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for you. And you, Capernaum, who are exalted to heaven, will be brought down to Hades; for if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say to you that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for you.’”*

Clearly most tremendous things happened in these towns of which we have no record, [John 21:25] and shows how little we know of Jesus Christ.

The Greek word translated “woe” is “ouai” expresses sorrowful pity, it is speaking of the pain felt by Jesus Christ for humans who rejected the most precious thing in the world that was being offered to them.

Watching a tragedy being played out and powerless to stop humans rushing to their ruin.

God offers to all humanity through Jesus Christ the opportunity of eternal life in His created family, [the Kingdom of God] but only those who live by love towards Him and other human beings can be a part of that kingdom, [Matthew 22:36-40].

1 John 4:8, 16 [NIV] *“Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.” ... “And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him.”*

God is love, and only those who are developing this character in their lives can be part of His created family. This love is one of the “fruits” of the Holy Spirit and our being led by Him in our lives, [Galatians 5:22-25] given only to those who obey God, [Acts 5:32].

1 John 4:19 [New King James] *“We love Him because He first loved us.”*

God showed us this love through the life and sacrifice of Jesus Christ His Son, [John 3:16-17] but this true love cannot be forced, we have to choose to love any person, including our Creator God.

The Greek word used to describe this love is “*agapé*,” a spontaneous affection and benevolence irrespective of the “*rights*” or response of the recipient of this love, [Romans 5:8] a sacrificial love, [John 3:16-17] that puts aside the personal desires, [Philippians 2:5-8] to serve the object of that love.

This process of developing this love of God in our minds and hearts can only begin with the surrender of our lives to the Eternal God.

Romans 12:1 [NIV] *“Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God, this is your spiritual act of worship.”*

The Greek word translated “*bodies*” is “*soma*” meaning whole life, physical body, mind and “*human spirit*,” [John 32:8; Proverbs 20:27; 1 Corinthians 2:11].

We do this out of gratitude for what Jesus Christ has done for us that we could never do ourselves, [1 Corinthians 15:3-4] and the offer of the gift of eternal life, [Romans 6:23; Romans 8:11].

Romans 12:2 [NIV] *“Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is, his good, pleasing and perfect will.”*

Only after this surrender will the active Holy Spirit in us re-educate us to live a life that is in harmony with our Eternal Creator God.

Matthew 11:25-27 [New King James] *“At that time Jesus answered and said, ‘I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and prudent and have revealed them to babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight. All things have been delivered to Me by My Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father. Nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and the one to whom the Son wills to reveal Him.’”*

Jesus Christ is speaking out of personal experience, all the intellectual had no use for Him and the message that He brought to all humanity. Jesus Christ was not condemning intellectual power, but intellectual pride.

Jesus Christ is **not** connecting ignorance and faith, but humility and faith.

The centre of Christianity is faith in Jesus Christ, He alone can reveal God the Father to people, [**John 14:9**].

It is also true that this knowledge of God the Father is given by Jesus Christ **only** to those who are humble enough and trustful enough to receive it, [**Mark 10:13-15; Luke 18:15-17**].

Matthew 11:28-30 [New King James] *“Come to Me, all you who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.”*

Jesus Christ was speaking to people who were desperately trying to find God, desperately trying to live a good life yet were finding the task impossible, and who were driven to weariness and to despair.

A yoke was used to join two animals in one task, and placed on the strongest part of the animal’s body. Usually it was an experienced lead animal that was yoked to a young animal who was learning how to fulfil the work that needed to be done.

The Greek word translated “easy” is “*chrēsios*” signifying well-fitting and fit for the job.

The Greek word translated “burden” is “*phōrtiōn*” meaning a task or service.

A close relationship with the Creator God changes meaningless, wearisome toil into spiritual productivity and purpose.

Matthew 12:1 [New King James] *“At that time Jesus went through the grainfields on the Sabbath. And His disciples were hungry, and began to pluck heads of grain and to eat.”*

In Palestine in the time of Jesus Christ the cornfields and cultivated lands were laid out in narrow strips, and the ground between the strips was always a public right of way. It was on one of these strips that Jesus and the disciples were walking when this incident happened. There is **no** suggesting whatever that the disciples were stealing. The law expressly laid it down that the hungry traveller was entitled to do just what the disciples were doing as long as they only used their hands to pluck the ears of ripe corn, [**Deuteronomy 23:25**].

Matthew 12:2 [New King James] *“And when the Pharisees saw it, they said to Him, ‘Look, Your disciples are doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath!’”*

In the eyes of the scribes and Pharisees, the fault of the disciples was **not** that they had plucked the corn and eaten the grains of corn, but that they had done so on the Sabbath.

The scribes had made the Sabbath law very complex, they looked on the disciples' plucking of the corn as reaping, rubbing it in their hands as threshing, separating the grain and chaff as winnowing and by the whole process they had prepared a meal on the Sabbath day when everything eaten on the Sabbath had to be prepared the day before.

To meet the criticism of the scribes and Pharisees Jesus put forward three arguments.

Matthew 12:3-4 [New King James] *“But He said to them, ‘Have you not read what David did when he was hungry, he and those who were with him: how he entered the house of God and ate the showbread which was not lawful for him to eat, nor for those who were with him, but only for the priests?’”*

King David and his men eating the showbread in the tabernacle which only the priests could eat, [**Leviticus 24:5-9**].

Matthew 12:5 [New King James] *“Or have you not read in the law that on the Sabbath the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath, and are blameless?”*

The temple ritual always involved work, the kindling of fires, the slaughter and preparation of animals to be sacrificed, the lifting of them onto the altar and a host of other tasks. This work was actually doubled on the Sabbath day, [**Numbers 28:9**]. Any one of these actions would have been illegal on the Sabbath day for any ordinary person, but not the priests.

This is saying that the worship offered to God took precedence of all the Sabbath rules and regulations.

Matthew 12:6-7 [New King James] *“Yet I say to you that in this place there is One greater than the temple. But if you had known what this means, ‘I desire mercy and not sacrifice,’ you would not have condemned the guiltless.”*

Jesus Christ quoted **Hosea 6:6**. **What the Eternal God requires is love and kindness far more than ritual.**

Matthew 12:8 [New King James] *“For the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath.”*

When Jesus Christ claimed He was Lord of the Sabbath or One greater than the Temple, [**verse 6**] the Pharisees considered this to be heresy.

The religious leaders did **not** realise that Jesus Christ as the Son of God created all things including the Sabbath, [**Exodus 31:12-18**].

John 1:1-3, 14 [New King James] *“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.” ... “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.”*

Jesus Christ who was the Word created all things in the universe, became Jesus Christ the Son of God and Son of Man.

It was God of the Old Testament, [**1 Corinthians 10:4; 1 Corinthians 3:11**] Jesus Christ, who gave the two tablets of the law to Moses.

It should be noted that in Hebrew and Aramaic the phrase *“Son of Man”* is **not a title, but simply a way of saying “a man,”** [**Psalms 8:4; Ezekiel 2:1; Ezekiel 2:6, 8; Ezekiel 3:1, 4, 17, 25**].

In all these cases the Son of Man, spelled without capital letters in the original text.

In the Greek manuscripts of the New Testament in the early and best all the words were written completely in capital letters, so it would be impossible to tell where special capitals are necessary.

Therefore, in **Matthew 12:8**, the phrase “*Son of Man*” should be written without capital letters, and **the phrase does not refer to Jesus Christ, but simply all human beings.**

Jesus Christ was saying “*humanity is not the slave of the Sabbath. We are masters of it to be used for our own good.*”

To be used as a special time of physical rest, extra time in study of God’s Word, the Christian Bible, and speaking to our Eternal Creator through prayer.

Matthew 12:9-14 [New King James] *“Now when He had departed from there, He went into their synagogue. And behold, there was a man who had a withered hand. And they asked Him, saying, ‘Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?’ that they might accuse Him. Then He said to them, ‘What man is there among you who has one sheep, and if it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will not lay hold of it and lift it out? Of how much more value then is a man than a sheep? Therefore it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath.’ Then He said to the man, ‘Stretch out your hand.’ And he stretched it out, and it was restored as whole as the other. Then the Pharisees went out and plotted against Him, how they might destroy Him.”*

This incident is a crucial moment in the ministry of Jesus Christ. On it Jesus Christ deliberately and publically, as far as the scribes and Pharisees were teaching, broke the Sabbath law.

Within the law of the Sabbath there was a case of if an animal fell into a pit it could be rescued without breaking the Sabbath law.

Jesus Christ used this example to show it was a good thing for the animal. How much more must it apply a good deed for a human being, who is of greater value than an animal, Jesus Christ then reversed the argument.

Jesus Christ then argued, if it is right to do good on the Sabbath, then to refuse to do good is evil.

The scribes and Pharisees had nothing to answer, for their own argument had recoiled on their own head.

So Jesus Christ healed this man, and their pride being dented in public, the scribes and Pharisees plotted how to get their revenge.

Matthew 12:15-21 [New King James] *“But when Jesus knew it, He withdrew from there. And great multitudes followed Him, and He healed them all. Yet He warned them not to make Him known, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying: ‘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 will declare justice to the Gentiles. He will not quarrel nor cry out, nor will anyone hear His voice in the streets. A bruised reed He will not break, and smoking flax He will not quench, till He sends forth justice to victory; and in His name Gentiles will trust.’”*

The quotation used by Matthew is from **Isaiah 42:1-4**, which is sometimes called the “*servant song*” are about the Servant Messiah, Jesus Christ, who will bring to the world the knowledge of God, and His justice, mercy and loving compassion.

Jesus Christ in His ministry did **not** cry aloud, the Greek word used is for the barking of a dog, bawling of a drunken person or the uproar of a discontented audience in a theatre.

In Jesus Christ there is the quiet, strong serenity of one who seeks to conquer by love, and not by strife of words.

A reed that is broken cannot stand erect. A smoking flax refers to the weak light of a person's witness for Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ did **not** come to discourage people but to encourage them.

Jesus Christ did **not** come to extinguish the weak flame of witness but to nurse it back to a clearer and stronger light.

It is only in Jesus Christ that the whole world, Jews and Gentiles, have any hope of a better future that is based on the love of God for all humanity.

Matthew 12:22-29 [New King James] *“Then one was brought to Him who was demon-possessed, blind and mute; and He healed him, so that the blind and mute man both spoke and saw. And all the multitudes were amazed and said, ‘Could this be the Son of David?’ Now when the Pharisees heard it they said, ‘This fellow does not cast out demons except by Beelzebub, the ruler of the demons.’ But Jesus knew their thoughts, and said to them: ‘Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and every city or house divided against itself will not stand. If Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then will his kingdom stand? And if I cast out demons by Beelzebub, by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore they shall be your judges. But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, surely the kingdom of God has come upon you. Or how can one enter a strong man’s house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man? And then he will plunder his house.’”*

The people were amazed at this healing for this man's condition was attributed to demon-possession; they began to wonder if Jesus Christ was the man that was so long expected who would be the Son of King David, the great Saviour and Liberator who was to come.

The scribes and Pharisees had a very different view of this exorcism.

Jesus Christ was casting out demons because He was in league with the prince of demons, Beelzebub or Satan.

Jesus Christ gave three unanswerable replies to this charge.

If Satan is lending his power to the destruction of his own demonic agents, then there is a civil war in the kingdom of evil and that kingdom is doomed, [verses 25-26].

There were some Jews themselves who expelled demons, [verse 27]. By whose power do they do this?

Jesus Christ cast out demons by the power of the Holy Spirit in Him, [verses 28-29].

Eventually the whole power of Satan, [strong man of this world, **1 John 5:19**] will be bound for a 1,000 years at the beginning of the Kingdom of God in its fullness, with the return of Jesus Christ, [Revelation 20:1-4].

Matthew 12:30 [New King James] *“He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who does not gather with Me scatters abroad.”*

In this war against Satan and his influence in this world there can be two sides, we are either with Jesus Christ or we are automatically on the side of Satan's world, this present society, [1 John 5:19].

Yet there are certain natural things in human nature that make us to seek the impossible neutrality.

The sheer inertia of human nature – so many people desire only to be left alone; they shrink away from anything that is disturbing, including having to make a choice.

The choice to follow Jesus Christ as His disciple is a complete change in the way we live, [Acts 17:5-9] our world is “*turned upside down.*”

There is a natural cowardliness in human nature – the basic thought that makes people refuse to become a Christian is what other people will think and say, [Luke 12:8-9].

Most people would rather have physical comforts and security than adventure – the older we grow and the more involved we become in society the more difficult it is to face the adventuristic challenge of becoming a Christian.

All who are **not** with Jesus Christ in their lives, through the active presence of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Jesus Christ leading us, [Romans 8:9; Galatians 5:22-25; John 16:3] are part of Satan’s world, [Revelation 12:9].

This is the truth we all have to face.

Matthew 12:31-32 [New King James] “*Therefore I say to you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven men. Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven him, either in this age or in the age to come.*”

This statement was given as a warning to the Pharisees who had called the work of the Holy Spirit in Jesus Christ, [verse 28] as the work of Satan, [verse 24]; it was **not** condemning them.

There was still hope for the Pharisees to repent and change their attitude towards Jesus Christ.

Some Pharisees tried to help Jesus Christ escape Herod, [Luke 13:31].

Some Pharisees helped to bury the body of Jesus Christ, [Luke 23:50-53].

Some Pharisees became disciples after Jesus Christ was resurrected, [Acts 15:5].

It is because of the work of the Holy Spirit in our journey to salvation that we should not “*grieve Him,*” [Ephesians 4:30] or “*quench*” Him, [1 Thessalonians 5:19].

[For a fuller study on the unpardonable sin please download and study the article ‘*Is There An Unpardonable Sin?*’ listed under the main heading ‘*Sin*’ on this website.]

[For the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives please download and study the articles on this website under the main heading ‘*Holy Spirit.*’ You will be eternally grateful you did.]

Matthew 12:33-37 [New King James] “*Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or else make the tree bad and its fruit bad; for a tree is known by its fruit. Brood of vipers! How can you, being evil, speak good things? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good things, and an evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth evil things. But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment. For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.*”

The nature of a tree determines its fruit, in the same way what kind of words we say reveals what is in our heart and mind, what our real character is like. Evil words come from an evil character.

The only way we can alter what we say is to change its source, our heart and mind.

“*Idle*” the Greek word used is “*argōs*” meaning useless, barren, non-productive, used for instance of a barren tree.

Jesus Christ is speaking about the words that a person utters in their unguarded moments, the words they speak before considering the effect they will have on those who hear them.

It is quite possible for a person's public utterances to be fine and noble, and for their private conversation to be coarse and obscene.

A person will say in anger what they really think, what they have often wanted to say, but which in cool control of prudence has kept them from saying.

Proverbs 10:18-21 [New King James] *“In the multitude of words sin is not lacking, but he who restrains his lips is wise. The tongue of the righteous is choice silver; the heart of the wicked is worth little. The lips of the righteous feed many, but fools die for lack of wisdom.”*

Control of the words we utter is essential, [**Proverbs 10:31-32**].

A person may say after an uncontrolled utterance that they never meant what they said, but that will not free them from the responsibility of having said it, for often it leaves a wound that nothing will cure or erects a barrier that nothing will take away.

Never forget that we will be judged by the words we speak with care and deliberation, but also by the words we speak when the conventional restraints are gone, and the real feelings of our heart burst out of our mouth.

Our eternal future is dependent on what is in our heart and mind and the words that they produce.