

# Matthew: His Life And His Gospel

## – Part 10

**Matthew 12:38-42** [New King James] *“Then some of the scribes and Pharisees answered, saying, ‘Teacher, we want to see a sign from You.’ But He answered and said to them, ‘An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. The men of Nineveh will rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and indeed a greater than Jonah is here. The queen of the South will rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and indeed a greater than Solomon is here.’”*

It was characteristic of the Jew that they asked for signs and wonders from those who claimed to be messengers of God, [**1 Corinthians 1:22**].

The word “*adulterous*” is not to be taken literally, it means apostate and behind its use is an Old Testament prophetic picture. **The relationship between Israel and God was conceived of as a marriage bond, [Isaiah 54:5] Israel failed often to be a faithful wife, [Jeremiah 3:6-11].**

This word used by Matthew describes something worse than physical adultery, it describes that infidelity to God from which all sin, physical and spiritual, springs.

Jesus was saying to the scribes and Pharisees, *“I am God’s sign, and you have failed to recognise me.”*

After your religious leaders have murdered me I will be in the grave three days and three nights before I will be resurrected back to life.

[Please download and study the article on this website with the title, ‘*Three Days And Three Nights*’ found under the main heading ‘*Religion*’.]

What is our personal reaction when we are confronted with God in Jesus Christ? Is that reaction bleak hostility as was the case of the scribes and Pharisees? Or is it humble acceptance of God’s warning and God’s Truth, the Christian Bible, as it was in the case of the people of Nineveh, [**Jonah 1:15-17; Jonah 3:1-10**].

**Matthew 12:43-45** [New King James] *“When an unclean spirit goes out of a man, he goes through dry places, seeking rest, and finds none. Then he says, ‘I will return to my house from which I came.’ And when he comes, he finds it empty, swept, and put in order. Then he goes and takes with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter and dwell there; and the last state of that man is worse than the first. So shall it also be with this wicked generation.”*

In this compact parable there is a great deal of truth. We must note that the evil spirit is banished but **not** destroyed.

**We may be convicted of our sins and resolve not to sin again, but unless we replace that banished sinful nature with the indwelling of the Holy Spirit and daily prayer with the study of God’s Word, the Christian Bible, we leave plenty of room in our heart and mind for sin to creep back into our lives.**

The **only** real and permanent cure for evil action of sin is Christian action of love and service of God and other human beings.

**1 John 4:4** [New King James] *“You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.”*

**Only with the active presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives do we have the power to resist the spirit of Satan and his demons who at this time are allowed by the Eternal God to control the society in which we live, [1 John 5:19; Ephesians 2:2; Revelation 12:9].**

The Holy Spirit is **only** given to those who obey God, [Acts 5:32] and will lead us into all truth, [John 16:13] and develop the very character of God in us, as we follow His lead, [Galatians 5:22-25].

**Matthew 12:46-50** [New King James] *“While He was still talking to the multitudes, behold, His mother and brothers stood outside, seeking to speak with Him. Then one said to Him, ‘Look, Your mother and Your brothers are standing outside, seeking to speak with You.’ But He answered and said to the one who told Him, ‘Who is My mother and who are My brothers?’ And He stretched out His hand toward His disciples and said, ‘Here are My mother and My brothers! For whoever does the will of My Father in heaven is My brother and sister and mother.’”*

Jesus Christ is **not** denying His responsibility towards His physical family, even on the cross Jesus Christ provided security for His mother, [John 19:25-27] and His mother and brothers were present in the upper room at Pentecost, [Acts 1:14].

**Instead, Jesus Christ was pointing out that spiritual relationships were just as binding as physical ones.**

True friendship and true love are founded on certain things and without them cannot exist.

**Friendship is founded on a common ideal –**

Even people with very different backgrounds can be firm friends if they have before them a common ideal for which they work and towards which they press. It is the ideal that unites them. The first disciples of Jesus Christ are an example of this ideal that bound them as a team that was united.

**Friendship is founded on a common experience –**

Also on the memories which come from that experience. It is when two people have passed through some great experience in their lives they can then together look back on it and be bound together in real friendship.

**True love is founded on obedience and on nothing else –**

**John 15:14** [New King James] *“You are My friends if you do whatever I command you.”*

**There is no way of showing our real love for Jesus Christ unless we have the humble spirit of obedience to Him.**

**John 15:15-17** [New King James] *“No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you. You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you. These things I command you, that you love one another.”*

The “fruit” we are to bear is the very character of the Eternal Creator God, [Galatians 5:22-25].

**Matthew 13:1-2** [New King James] *“On the same day Jesus went out of the house and sat by the sea. And great multitudes were gathered together to Him, so that He got into a boat and sat; and the whole multitude stood on the shore.”*

**This is a definite turning point in the ministry of Jesus Christ. At the beginning of His ministry He was teaching in the synagogues, but now we find Him teaching on the seashore or countryside.**

**Matthew 13:3-9** [New King James] *“Then He spoke many things to them in parables, saying: “Behold, a sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seed fell by the wayside; and the birds came and devoured them. Some fell on stony places, where they did not have much earth; and they immediately sprang up because they had no depth of earth. But when the sun was up they were scorched, and because they had no root they withered away. And some fell among thorns, and the thorns sprang up and choked them. But others fell on good ground and yielded a crop: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!”*

**There are very few people who can grasp or understand abstract ideas, most of us think in pictures, a parable makes the truth clear in our minds.**

For example, try to put into words what beauty is, even after many words those listening would **not** have a clear idea of beauty.

But if we point out to a person another human being who is beautiful then no more description is needed.

The same applies to “goodness,” we all recognise a good person or a good deed when we see them.

**An effective teacher must begin to teach people things they do not understand, with things they do already understand, every parable does this, beginning with material things that are understood by everyone.**

Also by teaching by the use of parables is that it compels interest. A story-teller has always been a person to whom people of every age will listen to.

**Also a parable allows a person to discover the truth it is teaching for themselves, for there are many things in life that we have to discover for ourselves.**

**Unless we discover the Truth, God’s Word, [John 17:17] for ourselves, by the active indwelling of the Holy Spirit, [John 16:13] it remains a second-hand and external thing that is easily soon forgotten.**

The other side of a parable is that it conceals the truth it holds from all who too lazy to think or are blinded by Satan to see, [Mark 4:10-12].

**The parable puts the responsibility fairly and squarely on the individual.**

**A final thing we must remember is the parables that Jesus Christ used were spoken, not read. The impact had to be immediate, not the result of long study with commentaries and dictionaries, so it means that a parable is designed to give only one point of truth, not an allegory.**

**Matthew 13:10-17** [New King James] *“And the disciples came and said to Him, ‘Why do You speak to them in parables?’ He answered and said to them, ‘Because it has been given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given. For whoever has, to him more will be given, and he will have abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him. Therefore I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. And in them the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled, which says: “Hearing you will hear and shall not understand, and seeing you will see and not perceive; for the hearts of this people have grown dull. Their ears are hard of hearing, and their eyes they have closed, lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, so that I should heal them.” But blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears for*

*they hear; for assuredly, I say to you that many prophets and righteous men desired to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it.’”*

Jesus Christ quotes **Isaiah 6:8-13**.

Isaiah after being shown in vision the glory of the Eternal God in heaven, responded to God’s request for someone to go to the people with an important message.

God warned Isaiah that not everyone would respond to that message.

Isaiah then asks God when would these people respond?

God’s reply was when the people had come near to human self-destruction and have nowhere to go except to turn to the Eternal Creator God for help, [**Matthew 24:21-22; Revelation 20:4-6, 11-13**].

**This parable was aimed at two sets of people, the “hearers of the word” as a warning of how they should respond to what He was saying to them, [verses 1-9].**

**The other group of people were the disciples, [verses 10-17] who were being trained by Jesus Christ to be “preachers of the word,” who would meet with a large number of people with closed minds to what they were preaching, these verses also for the disciples, not the crowd who just “heard the words.”**

**Matthew 13:18-23** [New King James] *“Therefore hear the parable of the sower: When anyone hears the word of the kingdom, and does not understand it, then the wicked one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is he who received seed by the wayside. But he who received the seed on stony places, this is he who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; yet he has no root in himself, but endures only for a while. For when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he stumbles. Now he who received seed among the thorns is he who hears the word, and the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful. But he who received seed on the good ground is he who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and produces: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.”*

It is held by most scholars that their verses that transgress the law that a parable is **not** an allegory and that it is too detailed to be grasped by listening at the first hearing, may **not** have been the actual words of Jesus Christ for the disciples and general public until the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, [**Acts 2:1-4**].

Only then would the truth be revealed to them, [**John 16:13**].

Notice that the same separation is made in the following parables.

**Matthew 13:24-50** [New King James] *“Another parable He put forth to them, saying: ‘The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field; but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat and went his way. But when the grain had sprouted and produced a crop, then the tares also appeared. So the servants of the owner came and said to him, “Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?” He said to them, “An enemy has done this.” The servants said to him, “Do you want us then to go and gather them up?” But he said, “No, lest while you gather up the tares you also uproot the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest, and at the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, ‘First gather together the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn.’”’” Another parable He put forth to them, saying: ‘The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field, which indeed is the least of all the seeds; but when it is grown it is greater than the herbs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and nest in its branches.’ Another parable He spoke to them: ‘The kingdom of heaven is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal till it was all leavened.’ All these things Jesus spoke to the multitude in parables; and without a parable He did not speak to them, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying: ‘I will open My mouth in parables; I will utter things kept secret from the foundation of the world.’ Then*

*Jesus sent the multitude away and went into the house. And His disciples came to Him, saying, 'Explain to us the parable of the tares of the field.' He answered and said to them: 'He who sows the good seed is the Son of Man. The field is the world, the good seeds are the sons of the kingdom, but the tares are the sons of the wicked one. The enemy who sowed them is the devil, the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are the angels. Therefore as the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of this age. The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness, and will cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears to hear, let him hear! Again, the kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and hid; and for joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking beautiful pearls, who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a dragnet that was cast into the sea and gathered some of every kind, which, when it was full, they drew to shore; and they sat down and gathered the good into vessels, but threw the bad away. So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come forth, separate the wicked from among the just, and cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth.'"*

Note in **verse 34** it was only the parable **not** the explanation of the parable that Jesus Christ spoke to the crowds.

This was confirming what Jesus Christ had already told His disciples in **verse 11**.

**The New Testament word mystery was used in a special and technical way.**

**To us today a mystery means something that is dark and difficult and impossible to understand, but in New Testament times a mystery [Greek "*mustērion*"] was the technical name for something which was dark and unintelligible to the outsider, but which was crystal clear to the person who had been initiated and who therefore had learned to understand its meaning.**

This allows us to understand what Jesus Christ was meaning in **verse 12** when we realise that all our understanding of the Truth that Jesus Christ brought from God the Father, [**John 14:6**] would be revealed to us by the active presence of the Holy Spirit, [**John 16:13**] which was **not** available as yet to the crowds who heard the words of Jesus Christ.

**John 6:44** [New King James] *"No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day."*

The vast majority in each generation will **not** have their time to receive salvation from eternal death through Jesus Christ. Only God the Father knows the best time for these people to accept Jesus Christ as their Saviour, most will be resurrected back to physical human life, in a very different world, freed from the deception of Satan, [**Revelation 12:9; Revelation 20:1-3, 11-13**].

**Matthew 13:51** [New King James] *"Jesus said to them, 'Have you understood all these things?' They said to Him, 'Yes, Lord.'"*

The disciples understood at least in part, but not enough to yet be "*preachers of the word.*"

**Matthew 13:52** [Amplified Bible] *"He said to them, therefore every teacher and interpreter of the sacred writings who has been instructed and trained for the Kingdom of Heaven and become a disciple, is like a householder who brings forth out of his storehouse treasure that is new and treasure that is old, the fresh as well as the familiar."*

**The "*treasure*" that was found in the Old Testament law and statutes were familiar to the Jewish disciples, they were now expected to add what was new, the preaching of Jesus Christ, to qualify to be teachers of the Kingdom of God.**

This applies to every true Christian today and all who teach Christianity.

We can only understand much of the New Covenant teaching when we have understanding of the Old Covenant made between God and Israel, especially the covenant made with Abraham that was based on his faith in the promises that God made. Proof of who Jesus Christ is are clearly shown by the Old Testament prophecies of the coming “Messiah” that the Jews looked for, the anointed one, that Jesus Christ enacted in His physical life on earth.

**Matthew 13:53-58** [New King James] *“Now it came to pass, when Jesus had finished these parables, that He departed from there. When He had come to His own country, He taught them in their synagogue, so that they were astonished and said, ‘Where did this Man get this wisdom and these mighty works? Is this not the carpenter’s son? Is not His mother called Mary? And His brothers James, Joses, Simon, and Judas? And His sisters, are they not all with us? Where then did this Man get all these things?’ So they were offended at Him. But Jesus said to them, ‘A prophet is not without honour except in his own country and in his own house.’ Now He did not do many mighty works there because of their unbelief.”*

The residents of Jesus Christ’s home town had known Him since He was a young child and could **not** bring themselves to believe the spiritual truth that He brought to them as a prophet. **They did not listen to the message because they could not see beyond the man. This barrier made it impossible for Jesus Christ to make any effect on them or do many healings.**

**Matthew 14:1-12** [New King James] *“At that time Herod the tetrarch heard the report about Jesus and said to his servants, ‘This is John the Baptist; he is risen from the dead, and therefore these powers are at work in him.’ For Herod had laid hold of John and bound him, and put him in prison for the sake of Herodias, his brother Philip’s wife. Because John had said to him, ‘It is not lawful for you to have her.’ And although he wanted to put him to death, he feared the multitude, because they counted him as a prophet. But when Herod’s birthday was celebrated, the daughter of Herodias danced before them and pleased Herod. Therefore he promised with an oath to give her whatever she might ask. So she, having been prompted by her mother, said, ‘Give me John the Baptist’s head here on a platter.’ And the king was sorry; nevertheless, because of the oaths and because of those who sat with him, he commanded it to be given to her. So he sent and had John beheaded in prison. And his head was brought on a platter and given to the girl, and she brought it to her mother. Then his disciples came and took away the body and buried it, and went and told Jesus.”*

As far as Herod was concerned John the Baptist had two faults.

John was too popular with the people, that might cause the people to rise in rebellion which would put his own rule in jeopardy.

John also told the truth, Herod had seduced his brother’s wife and persuaded her to leave his brother and marry him. In doing this Herod had broken two laws.

Herod had divorced his own wife without cause and married his sister-in-law, which were both prohibited under Jewish law.

Without hesitation John the Baptist had rebuked Herod, a dangerous thing to do to any eastern despot, but John was a man who fearlessly rebuked evil, wherever he saw it.

**Herod did not want to kill John the Baptist, but he gave the order so that he would not be embarrassed in front of his guests. It is easy to give in to a crowd and allow ourselves to do what we know is wrong.**

**Matthew 14:13-21** [New King James] *“When Jesus heard it, He departed from there by boat to a deserted place by Himself. But when the multitudes heard it, they followed Him on foot from the cities. And when Jesus went out He saw a great multitude; and He was moved with compassion for them, and healed their sick. When it was evening, His disciples came to Him, saying, ‘This is a deserted place, and the hour is already late. Send the multitudes away, that they may go into the villages and buy themselves food.’ But Jesus said to them, ‘They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat.’ And they said to Him, ‘We have here only five loaves and two fish.’ He said,*

*‘Bring them here to Me.’ Then He commanded the multitudes to sit down on the grass. And He took the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, He blessed and broke and gave the loaves to the disciples; and the disciples gave to the multitudes. So they all ate and were filled, and they took up twelve baskets full of the fragments that remained. Now those who had eaten were about five thousand men, besides women and children.”*

Jesus Christ sought solitude after news of John’s death, sometimes we need to deal with our grief alone.

But Jesus Christ did not dwell on His grief but returned to the ministry He came to do.

Jesus Christ showed His great compassion, in these acts of mercy, He had sought peace and quiet, instead He faced a vast crowd eagerly demanding what He could give to them.

Jesus Christ might have shown resentment that the crowd had invaded His time of quiet privacy, but far from that He was moved with compassion and healed all those who were sick.

**As a true Christian we must never deal with the needs of other people with our eye on the clock.**

We also see in this account that all gifts are from God the Father, [verse 19].

**Jesus Christ worked and performed a miracle through the hands of His disciples that day and He still does if we truly surrender our lives totally to Him and use the gifts He gives us through the active indwelling of the Holy Spirit, [1 Corinthians 12:4-11].**

When Jesus Christ told His disciples to feed this vast crowd, to them it seemed an impossible task with what little they had to offer.

**1 Corinthians 1:26-31** [New King James] *“For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, that no flesh should glory in His presence. But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification and redemption, that, as it is written, ‘He who glories, let him glory in the LORD.’”*

**Little offered to Jesus Christ will become much in His hands, this can be of great encouragement to the majority of those who have been called to be disciples of Jesus Christ.**

There is one final lesson for all of us to learn from this miracle that Jesus Christ performed.

God blesses us greatly in life but it is never right to waste God’s gifts, [verse 20]. God’s generous giving and our wise using of what God has given go hand-in-hand.

**Matthew 14:22** [New King James] *“Immediately Jesus made His disciples get into the boat and go before Him to the other side, while He sent the multitudes away.”*

Jesus made the disciples depart to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, the reason for this is found in John’s account, [John 6:14-15].

The crowd wished to make Jesus Christ king by force. It was a dangerous situation and the disciples might have complicated it for they were still thinking of Jesus Christ in terms of earthly power to overcome the oppression of Rome.

Jesus Christ sent the disciples away for such a situation was best dealt with alone, [verse 23].

Jesus Christ went into the wilderness to pray by Himself, by this time night had come.

**Matthew 14:24** [New King James] *“But the boat was now in the middle of the sea, tossed by the waves, for the wind was contrary.”*

One of the sudden storms, for which the Sea of Galilee was notorious, had come down and they were struggling against the wind and waves, making little progress.

**Matthew 14:25-33** [New King James] *“Now in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went to them, walking on the sea. And when the disciples saw Him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, ‘It is a ghost!’ And they cried out for fear. But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, ‘Be of good cheer! It is I; do not be afraid.’ And Peter answered Him and said, ‘Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water.’ So He said, ‘Come.’ And when Peter had come down out of the boat, he walked on the water to go to Jesus. But when he saw that the wind was boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink he cried out, saying, ‘Lord, save me!’ And immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and caught him, and said to him, ‘O you of little faith, why did you doubt?’ And when they got into the boat, the wind ceased. Then those who were in the boat came and worshiped Him, saying, ‘Truly You are the Son of God.’”*

**Peter was given to acting on impulse, and without thinking what he was doing. It was Peter’s mistake that again and again he acted without fully facing the situation and without counting the cost.**

**The wonderful thing about Peter was that every time he fell, he rose again. It was true that even his failures brought him closer to Jesus Christ the Master and Saviour he loved.**

**Matthew 14:34-36** [New King James] *“When they had crossed over, they came to the land of Gennesaret. And when the men of that place recognised Him, they sent out into all that surrounding region, brought to Him all who were sick, and begged Him that they might only touch the hem of His garment. And as many as touched it were made perfectly well.”*

There is no word here that Jesus Christ preached or taught at any length, there is just a simple record that He healed.

**The most tremendous thing about Jesus Christ was that He showed people what God was like by His actions.**

**Jesus Christ did not tell people that God loved them, He showed them that God loved them.**

There is little use in preaching the love of God without showing the love of God in our lives, we do this through the active presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives. Love is the first *“fruit”* of the Holy Spirit, [Galatians 5:22-25].

**These people recognised Jesus Christ as a great healer, but how many understood who He truly was?**

**They came to Jesus Christ for physical healing but did they come for spiritual healing?**

They came to prolong their physical lives, but did they come seeking eternal life through faith in Jesus Christ?

**It has always been the case that so many of us only remember God when we need Him, all other sources of help having failed us.**

**Ingratitude towards our Creator God who gave us life and who sustains our life is the ugliest of sins.**

Jewish men wore tassels on the lower edge of their robes according to God’s command, [Deuteronomy 22:12]. By Jesus Christ’s day these tassels had become a sign of holiness, [Matthew 23:5].



It was natural for people seeking healing should reach out and touch these tassels. But one sick woman learnt that healing came from faith in the person of Jesus Christ, **not** from His cloak, [Matthew 9:19-22].