



DAILY
B I B L E G U I D E

The Book of Matthew

Day2 278-289 of a Yearly Bible Reading Program

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Daily Bible Reading Plan

Day	Passage	☒
Day 278	Matthew 1-4	☐
Day 279	Matthew 5-6	☐
Day 280	Matthew 7-9	☐
Day 281	Matthew 10-11	☐
Day 282	Matthew 12-13	☐
Day 283	Matthew 14-15	☐
Day 284	Matthew 16-18	☐
Day 285	Matthew 19-21	☐
Day 286	Matthew 22-23	☐
Day 287	Matthew 24-25	☐
Day 288	Matthew 26	☐
Day 289	Matthew 27-28	☐

Welcome to the Book of Matthew!

Matthew writes his Gospel primarily to a Jewish audience. He presents Jesus as the promised Messiah and King. He constantly points to fulfilled prophecies from the Old Testament and highlights Christ's kingdom. Another interesting feature is the structure of the book. It is not arranged in a strictly chronological manner, instead arranging parts of Christ's ministry thematically. In doing so, there are five discourses highlighted, as found in Chapters 5-7, 10, 13, 18, and 24-25. Some believe this arrangement is an intentional callback to the five books of Moses.

A few quick facts about Matthew:

- The author is Matthew ("gift of God"), who is also called Levi ("joined"). At the time of his call, he was working for the Roman government as a tax collector.
- This book was written around A.D. 50.
- The key verse is 6:33 – "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."
- A brief outline:
 - Christ's background – Chapters 1-2
 - Christ's public ministry begins – Chapters 3-4
 - Christ's ministry in Galilee – Chapters 5-18
 - Christ's ministry in Judea – Chapters 19-25
 - Christ's death and resurrection – Chapters 26-28
- Key chapters:
 - Sermon on the Mount – Chapters 5-7
 - Olivet Discourse – Chapters 24-25

Chapter 1 Notes

In this chapter are the genealogy of Christ and His birth.

vs. 1-17 – Christ’s human genealogy is given here and in Luke 3:23-38. The two do not match exactly, each showing a different line connecting Christ to David. I believe Matthew shows Christ’s legal lineage through His earthly father Joseph. This is what the Jews would have checked to determine if He had a claim to David’s throne. It contains four Gentile women: Tamar (Genesis 38), Rahab (Joshua 2, 6:22-25), Ruth (Book of Ruth), and Bathsheba (II Samuel 11). The list is not exhaustive. For example, the three kings Ahaziah, Joash, and Amaziah are not listed in vs. 8 between Joram and Ozaias (Uzziah). It is thus edited to fit a series of three sets of generations containing 14 names: Abraham to David, David to Josiahs, and Jechonias to Christ. There is a total of 41 names in the list. The line connecting Christ to David goes through Solomon and Jeconiah (vs. 12). Jeconiah’s line was cursed in Jeremiah 22:30. Whether that was lifted with Zerubbabel in Jeremiah 22:24 or Haggai 2:23 is unclear. It seems easiest to conclude that the line used by Luke through Mary is a better line to use for the Davidic ancestry claim.

vs. 18-25 – Matthew’s Gospel does not deal with much of the details of Christ’s birth. What is highlighted is the Virgin Birth. Joseph is a good man who sought to minimize any scandal for Mary and simply pay for her to live separately. An angel reveals to him the true nature of Mary’s pregnancy. He is told to name the baby Jesus, a variation of the name Joshua meaning “savior”. For most other details concerning Christ’s birth, refer to Luke 2.

Chapter 2 Notes

In this chapter Herod attempts to kill the infant Christ.

vs. 1-12 – Christ was born around the year 4 B.C. in the final months of the reign of Herod the Great. Herod was a wily politician who somehow managed to rise to the top during the tumultuous times as Rome changed from republic to an empire. He instituted many building programs in the region, including a major remodel of the Second Temple in order to make it on the level of the other famed temples of the ancient world. His final days were marked by illness and paranoia. When the wise men (magi), scholar-priests from old Babylonia, come seeking the newborn king, he devises a plot to kill the supposed threat to his power. There is a lot of debate on what exactly occurred in the heavens to signal Christ's birth, but the basis of its expectation is Numbers 24:17. The wise men are directed to Bethlehem because of the prophecy of Micah 5:2. They arrive not at an inn or stable, but a house. Christ was likely a few months old at this time. They present their kingly gifts to the family and depart across the desert to avoid encountering Herod's men. I think the gifts were used to finance the family in their trip to Egypt.

vs. 13-18 – Herod's paranoia leads him to send soldiers to kill all children in the vicinity of Bethlehem under two years old. This is the fulfillment of the prophecy in Jeremiah 31:15. Joseph is warned by God in a dream and the family escapes before this terrible crime is committed. They flee for a short time into Egypt, fulfilling the prophecy of Hosea 11:1.

vs. 19-23 – Hearing that Herod is dead, the family returns to Israel. They decide to settle in Galilee to avoid the evil Archelaus. He was one of Herod's sons and ruled over Judah until he was deposed in A.D. 6.

Chapter 3 Notes

In this chapter Christ is baptized by John the Baptist.

vs. 1-12 – This parallels Mark 1:1-8, Luke 3:1-18, and John 1:19-34. We jump ahead to the year A.D. 26. John the Baptist is six months older than Christ and has been preaching repentance for the remission of sins in anticipation of the realization of the Kingdom of God to arrive. He stood out against the finery and luxury of the religious elite by wearing garments that were fit for a laborer in the wilderness. His role is to prepare the hearts and create anticipation for the arrival of Christ. He presses for immediate action because judgment was at hand. It was not he who would deliver it, but the Messiah that was coming. John baptized with water, but Christ would baptize with the Spirit (salvation) and fire (judgement).

vs. 13-17 – This parallels Mark 1:9-11 and Luke 3:21-23. Christ requests to be baptized by John the Baptist. John protests but gives in to Christ's command. We have an appearance of the Trinity here: Christ in the water, the Spirit as a dove, and the Father speaking from heaven. Why was Christ baptized? It was not because of His sins or need for repentance. It is Christ humbling Himself to even the ordinances that we mortals keep, consecrating Himself for the ministry to come, and leaving an example for us to follow.

Chapter 4 Notes

In this chapter Christ is tempted by Satan before beginning His public ministry.

vs. 1-11 – This parallels Mark 1:12-13 and Luke 4:1-13. Christ is put to the test before He begins His public ministry. He is weakened from fasting alone in the wilderness for 40 days when Satan comes to Him. Satan appealed to the lust of the flesh in tempting Him to made bread out of stones, to the lust of the eyes in tempting Him with the kingdoms of the world, and to the pride of life by tempting Him to let angels dramatically rescue Him. All three instances are countered by Christ quoting Scripture (Deuteronomy 8:3, Exodus 17:2, and Deuteronomy 6:13-14).

vs. 12 – This parallels Matthew 14:3-5; Mark 1:14, 6:17-20; Luke 3:14, 3:19-20; John 4:14, and 3:19-20. John the Baptist was arrested by Herod Antipas because of his preaching against the sins of the monarch. This Herod had divorced his first wife Pasaelis, daughter of Aretas IV of the nearby kingdom of Nabataea, in order to marry Herodias. Herodias had divorced her husband Herod Philip I in order to marry Herod Antipas. To make it all even stranger, Herod Antipas and Herod Philp I were half-brothers, and Herodias was also related to them both as a granddaughter of Herod the Great. This was the hottest story of the day and John preached vehemently against their wickedness. Herod Antipas had John arrested for fear of his preaching stirring a rebellion. With all of this unrest, Christ retreats from Judea to Galilee.

vs. 13-16 – This parallels Luke 4:31. Christ's public ministry begins in earnest in Capernaum ("village of Nahum"), which sat on the northern shore of the sea of Galilee. His preaching in this area is pointed out as a fulfillment of Isaiah 9:1.

vs. 17-22 – This parallels Mark 1:16-20 and Luke 5:1-11. Christ continues the theme of repentance before the coming judgment which John the Baptist had also preached. He begins to call men to follow him as disciples (learners). This was not uncommon for a rabbi to do. The first four are fishermen: Simon Peter, Andrew, James, and John. These forsook their work to become fishers of men.

vs. 23-25 – This parallels Mark 3-39 and Luke 4:42-44. Christ's fame spreads with this preaching and miracles.

Devotional Thoughts for Day 278

You are perhaps relieved that after nine months we have finally reached the New Testament. However, did you notice how many things we encountered today that were based on the foundation of the Old Testament? Without it, we would not understand why Christ's connection with David is so important, what John the Baptist's role is, or where the fulfilled prophecies come from. To really understand the New Testament, you need to understand the Old Testament. Do not neglect the richness of every book, chapter, and verse in your Bible!

Hymn for Day 278

Our hymn today is "On Jordan's Banks the Baptist's Cry", written originally in Latin by Charles Coffey and translated into English by John Chandler.

*On Jordan's banks the Baptist's cry
Announces that the Lord is nigh;
Awake, and hearken, for he brings
Glad tidings of the King of kings.*

*Then cleansed be every breast from sin;
Make straight the way for God within;
Prepare we in our hearts a home,
Where such a mighty Guest may come.*

*For Thou art our Salvation, Lord,
Our Refuge and our great Reward;
Without Thy grace we waste away,
Like flowers that wither and decay.*

*To heal the sick stretch out Thine hand,
And bid the fallen sinner stand;
Shine forth, and let Thy light restore
Earth's own true loveliness once more.*

*All praise, Eternal Son, to Thee,
Whose Advent doth Thy people free;
Whom with the Father we adore,
And Holy Ghost for evermore.*

Chapter 5 Notes

In this chapter the Sermon on the Mount begins

vs. 1-16 – This passage parallels Luke 6:20-23. Christ begins the Sermon on the Mount, which will end at Matthew 8:1. This is the King of Kings delivering His Royal Law to those that would be His subjects. This the longest and most important of Christ's public sermons. The overall theme of the sermon is that there is a new and higher standard, one that looks on the inside rather than the outside. It focuses on the motive of the heart rather than the action of the hand. The sermon focuses on the Law, and man's inability to keep it. Even if kept outwardly, the Law can still be broken in the heart. This first section concerns the new standard towards self. It opens with a collection of beatitudes, which show the necessary inward character of the believer. The word *blessed* is the idea of happiness, contentment, and satisfaction. Next is a discussion of the public character of the believer. We are to be witnesses in our Christian walk.

vs. 17-48 – The next section of the Sermon on the Mount concerns the new standard toward the Law. The Law could not produce righteousness. It could only reveal our unrighteousness. What is needed is not outward holiness but inward holiness. There are seven examples that follow to show these principles in action. The first in vs. 21-26 is the equation of the act of murder with the sins of anger and hatred. The second in vs. 27-30 is the equation of the act of adultery with the sin of lust. The third in vs. 31-32 deals with unscriptural divorces, a subject Christ will address more fully in Matthew 19:1-12. The fourth in vs. 33-37 concerns the swearing of oaths and the manipulation of them by unscrupulous men. The fifth in vs. 38-42 concerns retaliation and revenge. The sixth in vs. 43-47 is the contrast of love and hate. The seventh and final in vs. 48 is using the perfection of God as our standard and not other people.

Chapter 6 Notes

In this chapter the Sermon on the Mount continues.

vs. 1-18 – This section of the Sermon on the Mount deals with the new standard toward God, particularly in religious acts. The giving of alms for men's applause is condemned. The same with prayer. Christ takes the time on this subject to give us the Model Prayer in vs. 9-13. While it is customary to memorize and even recite this, it is given to us as a form or outline to guide our own prayers and not as a prayer itself. Finally, fasting for men's attention is also condemned. None of these acts are wrong, but if they are not done in purity of heart toward God and man, they are corrupt and invalid.

vs. 19-34 – This parallels Luke 6:24-36. This section gives examples of the new standard's priorities in a believer's actions. There are four subjects examined. First, a contrast of investing in earthly things that perish or in eternal treasures in Heaven. Second, the contrast of an eye fixed on good to an eye fixed on evil things. Third, the contrast of serving God with pureness of heart to working for worldly gain. The fourth and final is the contrast of worry to trust. This section is wonderfully elaborated with appeals to God's care for nature.

Devotional Thoughts for Day 279

Every parent will tell you that there is a vast difference in a child obeying through love rather than forced submission. God does not just want us to do what is right. He wants us to be right ourselves. Right things can be done for the wrong reasons. God sees our hearts. We may fool the people around us but He knows our hearts.

Hymn for Day 279

Our hymn today is “His Eye is on the Sparrow”, written by Civilla D. Martin in 1905.

*1. Why should I feel discouraged,
why should the shadows come,
Why should my heart be lonely,
and long for Heav’n and home,
When Jesus is my portion?
My constant friend is He:
His eye is on the sparrow,
and I know He watches me;
His eye is on the sparrow,
and I know He watches me.*

*Refrain
I sing because I’m happy,
I sing because I’m free,
For His eye is on the sparrow,
And I know He watches me.*

*2. Let not your heart be troubled,
His tender word I hear,
And resting on His goodness,
I lose my doubts and fears;
Though by the path He leadeth,
but one step I may see;
His eye is on the sparrow,
and I know He watches me;
His eye is on the sparrow,
and I know He watches me. [Refrain]*

3. *Whenever I am tempted,
whenever clouds arise,
When songs give place to sighing,
when hope within me dies,
I draw the closer to Him,
from care He sets me free;
His eye is on the sparrow,
and I know He watches me;
His eye is on the sparrow,
and I know He watches me. [Refrain]*

Chapter 7 Notes

In this chapter we conclude the Sermon on the Mount

vs. 1-12 – This parallels to Luke 6:37-42. In this section of the Sermon on the Mount, we apply Christ's new standard toward our interactions with others. This section is much abused today. It is not teaching us to never judge, but to not be judgmental. Reading the entire chapter instead of just vs. 1 proves this. It is an expression of the Golden Rule in vs. 12. If we are judgmental against others, they will be judgmental towards us. If we are generous to others, they will be generous to us.

vs. 13-29 – This parallels to Luke 6:43-49. In this section we are pressed to make a decision to follow Christ's new standard. Will we walk the narrow way to blessing or the broad way to destruction? Will we build on the rock of God's truth or the shifting sands of man's wisdom? We are warned that not all that appear to be on the right way truly are. There are many charlatans and counterfeits out there. They are exposed to us by their deeds, but God knows their hearts.

vs. 28-29 – The reaction to the Sermon on the Mount. His bold and practical teaching was the opposite of the scribes and rabbis. These would constantly quote other rabbis as authorities and rarely took hard stands on any subject. Christ pressed for a decision and a change of heart.

Chapter 8 Notes

In this chapter Christ ministers around Galilee

vs. 1-4 – This parallels Mark 1:40-45 and Luke 5:12-16. The dreaded disease of leprosy was practically a death sentence in these days. Anyone who contracted it were outcasts from society. It was taboo to make physical contact with a leper, yet Christ touched this man and healed him. Giving such help to the helpless would certainly increase Christ's popularity. See Leviticus 14:1-32 for details on the ceremonies involving a healed leper.

vs. 5-13 – This parallels Luke 7:1-10. The Centurion would be a Gentile by race but was a Jewish proselyte. We see a glimpse of his heart in his tender care for his ill servant; someone most Roman officers would not be concerned with. Remains of the synagogue he helped finance have been found. Note that Christ is not moved by the man's testimony, but by his faith and humility.

vs. 14-17 – This section parallels Mark 1:29-34 and Luke 4:38-41. Christ heals Simon Peter's mother-in-law. News of this miracle spread so that by evening many people were seeking Him to heal their loved ones also. Matthew notes that this is a fulfillment of Isaiah 53:4.

vs. 18-27 – This parallels to Mark 4:35-41 and Luke 8:22-25. Christ is pressed by His growing popularity to leave the area. The reason is likely that they would have tried to force His hand against the Romans in revolt. That was the type of Messiah they were looking for. Christ puts the loyalty of these followers to the test. He was not headed for a palace, but a cross. His work was urgent, so that it required forsaking family. The father in vs. 11 was not on his death bed, The man wanted to have loyalty to his family more than to Christ. In 1986 the remains of a boat from around the time of Christ were discovered in the Sea of Galilee. The wooden vessel measures 27 feet long, 7 1/2 feet wide, and a little over four feet deep. It appears to have had a mast for a sail and built for up to four rowers. This is probably like what Christ and His disciples sailed in. Christ is asleep as a storm comes up on the Sea of Galilee. Remember that there were professional fishermen on that boat who knew the dangers of sailing. The frightened disciples wake Christ who calms the storm with a command.

vs. 28-34 – This parallels to Mark 5:1-21 and Luke 8:26-40. Gadara ("the country of the Gergesenes", that is, Gergashites) was a predominately Gentile (Roman/Greek) town southeast of the Sea of Galilee. It was part of the Decapolis, a group of Gentile settlements and cities east of Galilee. Matthew notes that two demon possessed men were healed by Christ, while Mark and Luke only speak of one. This is not an error, just that Mark and Luke

chose to focus only on one of the two. There is much to glean here about the evil influence of demons and their master Satan. The exact number of demons involved is difficult to estimate. A Roman legion was around 6,000 soldiers but could double with reinforcements and auxiliaries. Mark notes that 2,000 swine perished. Swine were considered unclean by the Jews (Leviticus 11:7-8, Deuteronomy 14:8) but were a dietary staple and common sacrifice among the Romans. The townspeople would rather have the swine than the redeemed demoniacs!

Chapter 9 Notes

In this chapter Christ ministers in Galilee.

vs. 1-8 – This parallels Mark 2:1-12 and Luke 5:17-26. Christ returns to His new home in Capernaum, and the people flock to Him seeking miracles and to hear His preaching. He is in a house preaching and healing, the crowd is overflowing so that desperate measures must be taken to see Him. Roofs at this time were often made with mud or plaster on top of branches that rested on rafters. Such roofs require tearing a hole in the roof as here was not quite as destructive as it would be today with the type of roof described above. Much maintenance was required for roofs and repairs were common. This appears also to be the first encounter with the Pharisees who had come to examine Christ. Christ asserts His deity in forgiving the man's sins. He proves His deity by healing the man.

vs. 9 – This parallels Mark 2:13-14 and Luke 5:27-28. Matthew/Levi was a tax collector for Rome, probably collecting tariffs on trade goods on the commerce that came through nearby trade routes. He was probably wealthy due to the corrupt tax system at the time and extremely unpopular amongst his own people. The common people would have seen him as a traitor to their people.

vs. 10-13 – This parallels Mark 2:15-19 and Luke 5:29-32. Matthew is the one to host this feast according to Luke. Perhaps it is humility that makes him leave out this detail from his own account. The point of contention is that Christ willingly associates with sinners while the Pharisees avoided them. But Christ had not come to save the self-righteous. He came to seek and to save that which was lost (Luke 19:10).

vs. 14-17 – This parallels Mark 2:18-22 and Luke 5:33-39. John the Baptist had taught his followers to fast often to prepare their hearts for the coming Messiah. Christ, however, seemed to be doing the opposite in His ministry. This is less of a question and more of a rebuke on behalf of John's followers. They evidently had not listened to John proclaim Christ as the Messiah, choosing only to hear about fasting. Fasting here is a work of self-righteousness. Christ responds that it was time to celebrate the arrival of the Messiah. He also shows that His truth was incompatible with the ways of the Pharisees.

vs. 18-26 – This parallels Mark 5:22-43 and Luke 8:41-56. This section is a "two-for-one" event. A man named Jairus leaves his daughter at the point of death to seek out Christ for help. His request seems to indicate that he believed his quest may have been too late. While responding to the man's desperate plea, Christ is thronged and another healing takes place. A woman with an issue of blood had suffered for 12 with the malady and its consequences, such as being considered unclean the entirety of the time. She touches the

“the hem of his garment,” probably refers to the “fringes” mentioned in Numbers 15:38. Many people touched Christ that day, but only one acted in faith. Upon arriving at Jairus’s house, it appears that Christ was too late. But God always arrives on time. The funeral is interrupted and Christ raises her from the dead. This is the second of three people Christ raised from the dead (see Luk 7:36-50). Christ charges that none should tell (Luke 8:56), and they seem to have ignored Him (Matthew 9:26).

vs. 27-31 – Christ heals two blind men that call out for mercy. Notice here and in many other cases that healing is not dependent on God’s power, but on the faith of the one seeking it. Once again, no one listens to Him about the whole “don’t tell anyone” thing.

vs. 32-34 – Christ heals a possessed man that is unable to speak. There is a tendency in modern times to think these ancients were superstitious and mistook mental and physical illness for demon possession. I am afraid we are guilty of the opposite in our more “enlightened” age. The Pharisees cannot even admit that Christ is doing good but must force the flawed logic that He is doing good through evil means.

vs. 35-38 – This parallels Luke 10:1-16. What a summary of Christ’s ministry! His heart ached to help people and to see them turn to Him in faith. He remarks about the great need for more laborers to join the work. The solution He gives, which is often overlooked, is prayer.

Devotional Thoughts for Day 280

The ministry of Christ stood in stark contrast to the Jewish leaders of the time. He had compassion on the lowest of men. He did not turn away from those in need. Yes, he healed many of their hopeless diseases, but His main priority was the Gospel. We have as great a need today as ever for Christians to follow our Lord's example and go after the lost.

Hymn for Day 280

Our hymn today was written by Charles Wesley in 1742 and first appeared with the heading "A Prayer for Labourers."

*Lord of the harvest, hear
Thy needy servants cry,
Answer our faith's effectual prayer,
And all our wants supply.*

*On thee we humbly wait,
Our wants are in thy view:
The harvest, truly, Lord, is great,
The Labourers are few.*

*Convert and send forth more
Into thy church abroad,
And let them speak thy word of power,
As workers with their God.*

*Give the pure gospel-word,
The word of general grace;
Thee let them preach, the common Lord;
Saviour of human race.*

*O let them spread thy name,
Their mission fully prove,
Thy universal grace proclaim,
Thine all-redeeming love.*

Chapter 10 Notes

In this chapter Christ sends out the Twelve.

vs. 1-42 - This parallels Mark 6:6-13 and Luke 8:41-56. Christ sends out the Twelve, who are listed in verses 2-4, to preach throughout Galilee. The disciples go forth as the Messiah's emissaries, empowered to do miracles. This is a public offer of Christ to the Jews to be their Messiah. Christ's instructions spend a lot of time on fact that many will reject Him and the dangers they will face. Serving God is rarely without opposition and heartaches.

Chapter 11 Notes

In this chapter John sends messengers to Christ.

vs. 1-19 – This parallels Luke 7:18-35. John the Baptist is still imprisoned by Herod Antipas (see Matthew 4:12) and is months away from his execution. There are two theories as to why he sends his disciples to Christ. First, that he was having doubts as he languished in jail. Second, that he was trying to get his followers to turn to Christ. I prefer the latter. Christ's response is that He was fulfilling the prophecies of Isaiah 35:4-6 and 61:1. He was saying that, yes, He was the true Messiah. After John's disciples leave, Christ speaks about John the Baptist's role as forerunner of the Messiah. He declares that John fulfilled Malachi 3:1. Sadly, the hardness of men's hearts caused them to refuse both John and Christ.

vs. 20-30 – We see here the frustration of Christ as the hardness of men's hearts. They had rejected John the Baptist and Himself, as discussed in the previous section. Now He calls out the cities in Galilee that He had labored in. Despite all the miracles and sermons, men refused to repent. He compares them to some of the most wicked cities. He ends with repeating the offer of salvation and hope. Some had accepted this. Others would.

Devotional Thoughts for Day 281

I believe that when the lost stand before God they will have no excuse. They cannot say that they would have repented if only God had done this or that. They cannot say that they would have accepted the Gospel if the right person had reached out to them. No, they will have no one to blame but themselves. They chose sin over salvation. Those who know the sweetness of salvation have a difficult time comprehending just how hard hearts are. A loving God has done everything He can do to sway human hearts, only to see them reject and hate Him.

Hymn for Day 281

Our hymn today is “I Heard the Voice of Jesus Say,” written by Horatius Bonar in 1846.

*I heard the voice of Jesus say,
Come unto me and rest;
Lay down, thou weary one, lay down
Thy head upon my breast.
I came to Jesus as I was,
Weary, and worn, and sad,
I found in him a resting-place,
And he has made me glad.*

*I heard the voice of Jesus say,
Behold, I freely give
The living water; thirsty one
Stoop down and drink, and live;
I came to Jesus, and I drank
Of that life-giving stream,
My thirst was quenched, my soul revived,
And now I live in him.*

*I heard the voice of Jesus say,
I am this dark world's light;
Look unto me, thy morn shall rise,
And all thy days be bright.
I looked to Jesus, and I found
In him my Star, my Sun.
And in that light of life I'll walk,
Till traveling days are done.*

Chapter 12 Notes

In this chapter Christ is accused of breaking the Sabbath.

vs. 1-8 – This parallels Mark 2:23-28 and Luke 6:1-5. This is probably at Capernaum. The Jews of course observed the Sabbath rest, and the Pharisees made many extrabiblical restrictions on how people should do it. Christ and His disciples pass through a field of either wheat or barley. They take some of the heads, rub the chaff off them, and eat the raw grain. The Pharisees vehemently objected to this. Christ first defends Himself by appealing to the story of David and his men eating shewbread in I Samuel 21:1-7, which showed that exceptions to God's Laws had occurred before. On top of this, the priests themselves labored in their prescribed tasks on the Sabbath day. He then claims superiority over the Law and the Temple, being that He was the author and object of both. Hosea 6:6 is quoted to show that it was true worship from the heart that God sought, not just mindless adherence to the Law. The case is not closed as the Sabbath continues in the next event.

vs. 9-14 – This parallels Mark 3:1-6 and Luke 6:6-11. The Synagogue system rose out of the Babylonian Captivity. Without a Temple, Jews met to worship as local communities and hear the Law taught. When the Temple was rebuilt, the system continued and was a staple of Jewish culture. Christ attended Synagogue on the Sabbath as all God-fearing Jews did. The issue of laboring on the Sabbath day is pressed on him as the Pharisees single out a man with a withered hand and ask Christ if it were permissible for such a man to be healed on the Sabbath. Christ appeals to the greater laws of love and mercy before healing the crippled man. The miracle could not be denied and the Pharisees were upstaged. Plots to discredit and destroy Christ being in earnest here.

vs. 15-21 – This parallels Mark 3:7-12. Christ's popularity grows as the opposition on the Jewish leaders increases. Matthew points to the fulfillment of Isaiah 42:1-3.

vs. 22-45 – This parallels Mark 3:19-30 and Luke 11:14-15, 17-23. There is a lot going on here all at once. The people see Christ's miracles and discern that He must be the Messiah. The Pharisees rejected this and said He was doing good through some evil power. Beelzebub ("lord of the flies") is believed to be referring to the ancient Philistine idol mentioned in II Kings 1. To mistake Good for Evil is perhaps the highest forms of blasphemy. As the Pharisees press for Christ to prove Himself through performing a miracle on demand, He responds by offering the greatest sign possible: the Sign of Jonah. As Jonah had been in the belly of the fish for three days and three nights, so would He be buried in the earth for three days and three nights.

vs. 46-50 – This parallels Mark 3:31-35. Duty to family was a major aspect of Jewish culture. Christ is ministering and appears to neglect His mother and brothers (Matthew 13:55). Christ points to His followers and claims them as family. It is not that earthly family is not important. There are many examples we could appeal to in the Law to prove it. What is being taught here is there are stronger ties to a family through faith than to a family through blood.

Chapter 13 Notes

In this chapter are the parables of the Kingdom.

vs. 1-23 – This parallels Mark 4:1-25 and Luke 8:4-18. One of the primary methods of Christ's teaching was the use of parables, a fulfillment of Isaiah 6:9-10. These earthly stories were used to convey heavenly meanings. The Parable of the Sower shows that the Gospel is not received by all men. Some accept it willingly and flourish. Some accept it and fade quickly. Others are too hard-hearted to accept it.

vs. 24-30 – This parallels Mark 4:26-29. The Parable of the Sower teaches us that the righteous and the wicked, which may appear to be righteous, will be properly sorted in the end to meet the just reward.

vs. 31-32 – This parallels Mark 4:30-32. The Parable of the Mustard Seed is often interpreted as meaning the church of Christ begins small but grows to be massive. This interpretation is clouded by the inclusion of birds in the description. Birds in prophetic imagery are symbolic of evil. This could indicate that wicked men infiltrate God's church.

vs. 33 – The Parable of the Leaven is often interpreted to say that the church, pictured as leaven, slowly infiltrates the entire world. Again, there is an issue here because leaven is used as a picture of sin. This could then show the corruption of Christ's church.

vs. 34-35 – An interlude between the parables to explain Christ's use of them as a fulfillment of Psalm 78:2.

vs. 36-43 – The explanation of the Parable of the Tares. See comments on verses 24-30.

vs. 44 – The Parable of the Hidden Treasure teaches us that Christ gave Himself for the entire world (the field) even though only a few would be saved (the treasure). This story is based on a very real custom of the ancient world. In times of distress or trouble, people would often bury or hide their valuables. These hoards of coins and other valuables are still found today.

vs. 45-46 – The Parable of the Pearl of Great Price teaches us that Christ so willingly paid the awful price of our salvation.

vs. 47-50 – The Parable of the Drag Net is similar to the Parable of Tares, showing that this world is full of believers and unbelievers that God will sort out in the end.

vs. 51-52 – The Parable of the Housholder presses the responsibility of those that preach the Gospel. We must be careful to present the fulness of God's truth.

vs. 53-58 – This parallels Mark 6:1-6. A similar event occurs in Luke 4:16-31, but it appears to be a similar but separate event. Christ teaches in the synagogue at Nazareth. The people of the city refused to believe that the son of Joseph and Mary could be the Messiah. There is an old saying that familiarity breeds contempt. Their unbelief stifles the work of Christ.

Devotional Thoughts for Day 282

The oldest and most important division among mankind is between the believer and the unbeliever. We see great crowds following Christ, but also those whose stony hearts refuse to believe. Even some that seem to follow will fade away as their hearts are proven untrue. We must not let this discourage us from the work. The salvation of a soul is of measureless worth and importance. Press on, sow the seed of the Gospel, and glory in the results God gives.

Hymn for Day 282

Today's hymn, "The Sower," was written by William Cowper.

*Ye Sons of Earth prepare the Plough,
Break up your fallow Ground!
The Sower is gone forth to sow,
And scatter Blessings round.*

*The Seed that finds a stony Soil,
Shoots forth a hasty Blade;
But ill repays the Sower's Toil,
Soon wither'd, scorch'd, and dead.*

*The thorny Ground is sure to balk
All Hopes of Harvest there:
We find a tall and sickly Stalk,
But not the fruitful Ear.*

*The beaten Path, and High-Way Side
Receive the Trust in vain:
The watchful Birds the Spoil divide,
And pick up all the Grain.*

*But where the LORD of Grace and Pow'r
Has bless'd the happy Field;
How plenteous is the Golden Store
The Deep-wrought Furrows yield!*

*Father of Mercies, we have need
Of thy preparing Grace;
Let the same Hand that gives the Seed
Provide a Fruitful-Place.*

Chapter 14 Notes

In this chapter Christ feeds 5,000 and walks on water.

vs. 1-12 – This parallels Mark 6:14-16, 21-29 and Luke 9:7-9. Herodias schemes to have John the Baptist killed. At a banquet in front of many witnesses, Herod Antipas swears to give anything to his stepdaughter Salome (“peaceful”) danced for him. She is perhaps 13 years old. Such a thing was scandalous for the daughter of nobility to do. Dancing as entertainment was popular but usually was performed by slaves. Herodias closes the trap by instructing Salome to ask for the head of John the Baptist. Herod Antipas has been outmaneuvered and reluctantly sends the command. John is beheaded. His head is presented to Herodias, and his body is lovingly buried the rest of his body. This takes place in the hilltop fortress at Machaerus, east of the Dead Sea

vs. 13-21 – This parallels Mark 6:30-44, Luke 9:10-17, and John 6:1-14. Do not disconnect this event from what just transpired. People are frightened because John had been executed. They flock to Him for comfort at a place near Bethsaida on the northeastern shore of the Sea of Galilee. There is not enough food to feed the thousands that have gathered. Christ blesses a small lunch of five small loaves and two small fishes. The disciples pass this out to the crowd, and it is multiplied to more than enough. Since women and children were not counted in the 5,000, it could be safely assumed that the actual number was 20,000 or more. I believe this could be the high-water mark for Christ’s popularity. From this point Christ faces increasing rejection and opposition in the final year of His earthly ministry.

vs. 22-33 – This parallels Mark 6:45-52. Christ departs from the crowd, I think because had He stayed it would have sparked a popular rebellion. But it was not His time and that was not His purpose. He tells the disciples to sail west toward Capernaum without Him. They must have assumed that He would meet them later by either walking the four miles or by taking another boat. A violent storm rises during the fourth watch of the night, which is between 3:00 and 6:00 a.m. Christ is seen walking on the waves. The disciples assume He is ghost until He identifies Himself. Peter asks and is given permission to walk out to Christ. He makes it near to Christ before taking his eyes from Christ and focusing on the storm. He immediately sinks and Christ catches him. The wonder of the whole experience convinces the others in the boat that He was truly the Messiah.

vs. 34-36 – This parallels Mark 6:53-56. Christ ministers around Capernaum. He heals many that are brought to Him. Some even follow the woman’s action of touching His robe in Matthew 9:20-21.

Chapter 15 Notes

In this chapter Christ battles the Pharisees and feeds 4,000.

vs. 1-20 – This parallels Mark 7:1-23. The washing of hands referred to here is not a matter of cleanliness, but a ceremonial tradition. The accusation is not that Christ or the disciples had broken a Scriptural commandment because they had not. They were guilty of not following the extra-biblical traditions that the Pharisees based so much of their beliefs on. Christ responds that the Pharisees may be keeping their traditions, but they are not following the commands of God. The Pharisees made a loophole about the command to care for one's parents. A person could claim that their wealth had been set aside as a "gift" for God and thus could not be used to care for their family. Christ reveals they are guilty of the description in Isaiah 29:13 of worshipping God outwardly but having a wicked heart inwardly. Christ's message to the multitudes witnessing this exchange is that the sinful nature of fallen man is what defiles a person, and not the things around us. This concept astounds the disciples, and Christ has to further explain it in private.

vs. 21-28 – This parallels Mark 7:24-30. Christ departs to the far northern borders of Israel near the ancient Phoenician cities of Tyre and Sidon. The woman requesting His aid is a Gentile and thus would be looked down on by the Jews. Christ tests her faith in part to show those around her what true faith was. He departs as this event would bring out the crowds seeking Him.

vs. 29-31 – This parallels Mark 7:31-8:9. Christ seeks solitude by returning to the hills on the northeastern shores of the Sea of Galilee. Multitudes seek Him out and He heals many.

vs. 32-39 – This parallels Mark 8:1-10. After three days of ministry Christ has compassion on the multitudes following Him. The situation is very similar to when 5,000 were fed in Matthew 14:13-21, except this time seven loaves and a few fishes are used and seven baskets full of leftovers. You would think the disciples would have remembered when Christ miraculously fed the larger crowd just a few months prior to this.

Devotional Thoughts for Day 283

It is odd that the feeding of the 5,000 is so well remembered and the feeding of the 4,000 is often forgotten. Then again, the disciples themselves forgot about it! The two events were maybe a few months apart, yet they did not expect Christ to multiply a small meal again. Sadly, it is part of human nature to forget the goodness and power of God.

Hymn for Day 283

Our hymn today is “Break Thou the Bread of Life,” written in 1877 by Mary A. Lathbury.

*Break Thou the bread of life, dear Lord, to me,
As Thou didst break the loaves beside the sea;
Beyond the sacred page I seek Thee, Lord;
My spirit pants for Thee, O living Word!*

*Bless Thou the truth, dear Lord, to me, to me,
As Thou didst bless the bread by Galilee;
Then shall all bondage cease, all fetters fall;
And I shall find my peace, my all in all.*

*Thou art the bread of life, O Lord, to me,
Thy holy Word the truth that saveth me;
Give me to eat and live with Thee above;
Teach me to love Thy truth, for Thou art love.*

*O send Thy Spirit, Lord, now unto me,
That He may touch my eyes, and make me see:
Show me the truth concealed within Thy Word,
And in Thy Book revealed I see the Lord.*

Chapter 16 Notes

In this chapter Christ's identity and mission are discussed.

vs. 1-4 – This parallels Mark 8:10-12. This continues the discussion from the previous chapter concerning Christ giving a sign to His enemies to prove He was the Messiah. It would not have changed their minds. He had given them numerous signs before and they ignored them. An interesting feature of this passage is the ages-old saying that you may have heard something like this: "Red sky at night, sailor's delight. Red sky in morning, sailor take warning." Christ says that His enemies have enough sense to read the signs in nature of weather changes but not enough to see Who He is. He again says that they only sign they will receive is the sign of Jonas from Matthew 12:40

vs. 5-12 – This parallels Mark 8:13-21. Christ takes the opportunity to warn His disciples against the teaching of the Pharisees. He compares it to leaven, which is a picture of sin. Just a little dash of leaven (yeast) to a dough makes a huge difference in baking. Just a little wrong in the teachings of the Pharisees made a huge difference. They had corrupted the Jewish religion, which was the way God communicated His truth with mankind from Sinai to the Cross. There is a little comedy here as the disciples mistake His teaching for a rebuke for not bringing enough provisions for their trip.

vs. 13-20 – This parallels Mark 8:27-30 and Luke 9:18-21. Caesarea Philippi was a city about 25 miles north of the Sea of Galilee. At the time it was the center for Philip the Tetrarch's government over an area north and east of Galilee. Christ asks the disciples who the people believed Him to be. There was still much confusion on the issue. Peter gives the true answer: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." Christ responds by blessing Peter. No, Christ is not telling Peter he was to be the first pope. He is prophesying of what Peter will do in the Book of Acts. He will preach the gospel first Pentecost to the Jews and then to the Gentiles with Cornelius. The foundation of the church is not Peter, it is Christ (Ephesians 2:20). The command to not tell is a command to let God's work progress in God's time.

vs. 21-28 – This parallels Mark 8:31-9:1 and Luke 9:22-27. Christ's earthly mission is drawing near its climax in Jerusalem. He begins to prepare His disciples for what is to come. Peter, who had just had such a great moment, is rebuked for denying what would come. Christ then elaborates on the high cost of following Him. It is worth it, no matter what we may face. Note that He compares it to carrying a cross. Now, we look back and think of that as Christ's cross. I do not think it is. The disciples have no idea that He will be crucified, so there is no deeper meaning here. It is exactly what it says: carrying your

device of shame and execution. We are to die to self in order to experience new life through Christ.

Chapter 17 Notes

In this chapter is the Transfiguration.

vs. 1-13 – This parallels Mark 9:2-13 and Luke 9:28-36. Christ takes the inner circle of disciples to a mountain apart from the rest to witness Christ in His glory. Note the living example of the Bible - the Law (Moses) and the Prophets (Elijah) bearing witness of Christ and his mission. Peter lets his zeal get ahead of his brain again, and offers to build three homes for them to dwell in. The bright cloud that surrounds them is the shekinah glory of God, out which the Father testifies of Christ's identity. They are told to tell no man what they had witnessed for the time being. Christ explains that the prophecy of Elijah returning from Malachi 4:5 had already been fulfilled in John the Baptist. Peter writes of these events in II Peter 1:16-18.

vs. 14-21 – This parallels Mark 9:14-29 and Luke 9:37-43. While Christ and the inner circle of disciples were on the mountain, a man had brought his demon-possessed son to the disciple for healing. They could not help the troubled young man. Christ heals the young man and rebukes His disciples for not having enough faith to perform the action. It is not our great faith that makes the miraculous occur. It is our little faith that prompts a great God to move.

vs. 22-23 – This parallels Mark 9:30-32 and Luke 9:43-45. Christ continues to prepare His disciples for what is coming at Passover. He tells them plainly that He would die and rise again after three days.

vs. 24-27 –The tribute mentioned here is the Jewish Temple Tax of Exodus 30:13. It was a half-shekel of silver paid each year by every Jewish man. Christ's response is essentially that He, as Lord over the Temple, could well be exempt from the tax. Yet, for the sake of example, Christ submits to the tax. The fish mentioned here is believed to be a type of tilapia called *musht*. They carry their young in their mouths and have been known to carry small pebbles and even bottle caps in their mouths also. Many today call these fish "St. Peter's fish". The coin was a full shekel, enough to pay for both Peter and Christ.

Chapter 18 Notes

In this chapter Christ deals with offenses and forgiveness

vs. 1-4 – This parallels Mark 9:33-37 and Luke 9:46-48. The disciples are squabbling over which of them would be the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven. It is my opinion that Peter is in the middle of this and it involves the fact that James, John, and he had witnessed the Transfiguration while the others did not. Christ gives an object lesson to them using a small child. Children were not as well thought of in that culture as they are in ours today. Age brought respect in society. Christ stresses faith and humility as keys in the Christian life. Christ is trying to get the disciples to not look upward toward being great but instead to look below them at the lost and hurting. The priority is not in lifting righteous men up, but in strengthening the lost and struggling.

vs. 5-10 – This parallels Mark 9:42-50. To offend in this context is to lay stumbling blocks to hurt someone. Whoever opposed the weakest and lowest of God's children would face the judgment of God. The gravity of this teaching is shown in the measures Christ gives to avoid offenses, which repeat instruction from Matthew 5:29.

vs. 11-14 - The Parable of the Lost Sheep. This is Christ's purpose in this chapter. He wants the disciple to not look down on others but to help lift them up. He reiterates the value of even the little one.

vs. 15-17 – This section shifts the discussion from not offending other to how to handle being offended. Here is a very important and practical framework for dealing with conflict. If you have been offended or injured and it has not been made right, first go privately to seek reconciliation. If they refuse, take two or three respected witnesses to judge between the two of you. This does not mean taking people to gang up on the offender, but rather to let cooler heads evaluate and give their judgment. If this does not work, take it to the church. This form of church discipline puts community pressure on the injurer to repent. Hopefully this extreme step brings them to repentance and restoration. If not, the last step is to cast the offender out of the community of believers until they repent.

vs. 18-20 – There are few passages of Scripture so abused by taking them out of context as these are. They are an intricate part of the discussion of reconciliation, which is the theme we see preceding and following these verses. This is not a promise of the presence of Christ is two or three are gathered. In vs. 18-19 the authority of the church body is described. In vs. 20 Christ promises to guide such a body in situations such as conflict resolution. He is promising that the two or three (see verse 16) operating as the Bible instructs us will be guided by Christ's authority ("in My name").

vs. 21-22 – Note that Peter is the one to ask the question. He has been in the middle of the trouble since the Transfiguration. The rabbis taught that you only had a responsibility to forgive three times. Seven was going above and beyond. But Christ turns the question on its head. It's not about the number of times you forgive, but how fully you forgive.

vs. 18:23-35 – The Parable of the Unjust Steward is used to drive home the truth of forgiveness that has been developing. In this story, the steward owes his king 10,000 talents of silver, which are worth around \$840,000,000. To put this into perspective, one of the wealthiest men of the era, Crassus, was said to be worth 7,100 talents. Imagine then this debt being equal to the wealth of the richest person in the world, plus 30%. Unable to pay, the king invokes his right to seize the man's possessions and family to help pay the debt. The man begs for mercy and the debt is forgiven. He immediately finds someone who owed him 100 pence (denarii), which is about \$960. That is 0.0005% of the value he had just been forgiven. Does he show mercy to the man who comparatively owed so little? No! He throws the man in prison until the debt could be paid. The king calls the steward to account for his actions. He rescinds his forgiveness and the man is tortured until he could pay the unpayable debt, that is, for the rest of his life. The meaning is clear. We have been forgiven so much by God, so we should so forgive others. We should model God's forgiveness to the world.

Devotional Thoughts for Day 284

Every believer should spend time understanding and practicing the teachings of Christ in Matthew 18. We must guard our words and actions lest we hurt others. This is especially true of doing so willfully, but out of great love for another we should try to do so even accidentally. So many problems in our church, ministries, families, and work places could be solved if we only put such love into action. If you hurt someone, seek forgiveness and reconciliation. If you have been hurt, readily give forgiveness and reconciliation. It is one of the greatest object lessons we can give to the lost world of how Christ forgives us.

Hymn for Day 284

Our hymn today is “The Ninety and Nine.” The text was composed in 1868 by Elizabeth Cecilia Clephane. It came to the attention of Ira Sankey in 1874, who set it to music and became his signature solo during D.L. Moody’s Gospel campaigns. Remarkably, there is a recording of Sankey singing this song from 1898.

*There were ninety and nine that safely lay
In the shelter of the fold;
But one was out on the hills away,
Far off from the gates of gold.
Away on the mountains wild and bare;
Away from the tender Shepherd’s care.*

*“Lord, Thou hast here Thy ninety and nine;
Are they not enough for Thee?”
But the Shepherd made answer: “This of Mine
Has wandered away from Me.
And although the road be rough and steep,
I go to the desert to find My sheep.”*

*But none of the ransomed ever knew
How deep were the waters crossed;
Nor how dark was the night the Lord passed through
Ere He found His sheep that was lost.
Out in the desert He heard its cry;
’Twas sick and helpless and ready to die.*

*“Lord, whence are those blood-drops all the way,
That mark out the mountain’s track?”*

*“They were shed for one who had gone astray
Ere the Shepherd could bring him back.”*

“Lord, whence are Thy hands so rent and torn?”

“They’re pierced tonight by many a thorn.”

*And all through the mountains, thunder-riv’n,
And up from the rocky steep,*

There arose a glad cry to the gate of heav’n,

“Rejoice! I have found My sheep!”

And the angels echoed around the throne,

“Rejoice, for the Lord brings back His own!”

Chapter 19 Notes

In this chapter the rich young ruler visits Christ.

vs. 1-12 – This parallels Mark 10:1-12. Christ leaves Galilee and goes south to the Transjordan east of Judea. Many people from Jerusalem and Judea go to hear him along with Pharisees that are set on stopping Him. The trap they set here is asking His opinion on divorce. That was a sticky issue then as it is still today. Practically any answer you give could upset someone. Now, God did allow for divorce in Deuteronomy 24:1-4 because we are sinners and sometimes marriage should end. This is what Christ says in verse 9. Marriage was intended to be for life, but sin enters and that is not always attainable. Christ states that frivolous divorces are sinful, repeating what He said in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5:32. While this discussion is applicable in many ways today, we do need to remember that much of this argument is based on Jewish custom. For a more relevant discussion on the subject, see what Paul wrote in I Corinthians 7.

vs. 13-15 – This parallels Mark 10:13-16 and Luke 18:15-17. It was common for Jews to take their children to receive a blessing from notable men. This blessing would be spoken while laying hands on the child's head. The disciples intervened in these requests reasoning that Christ had more important things to do. But the Lord rebuked them and encouraged them to come. The word suffer in the KJV has shifted meanings over the years and should be understand as "allow."

vs. 19:16-30 – This parallels Mark 10:17-31 and Luke 18:18-30. Here a rich young man rushes to Christ and inquires what he must do to have eternal life. He must have been under conviction and is asking this honestly. However, if you pay careful attention to his words I think he was not seeking Christ's answer because he was a believer in Him. Rather, he was seeking some answer that would ease his conscience. I want to point out that the answer given here is rooted in the Old Testament, Jewish religion. It points to the Law, which cannot save but reveals our need for salvation. If anything, Christ is trying to press the conviction on this young man even harder. Christ's final response to this young man, as it reveals his character. His god was his great possessions that had control over his life. The "eye of the needle" in verse 24 is just that. There are fanciful stories about this being some sort of small gate in the walls of a city but there is no evidence for their existence at all. Note that Christ says it is impossible for men to save themselves, but God can do it! Peter's response is to contrast the disciples with the young man that has just left. Christ builds on the contrast in comparing the future rewards of each.

Chapter 20 Notes

In this chapter Christ prepares His disciples for what is to come.

vs. 1-16 – This parallels Mark 10:17-31 and Luke 18:18-30. The Parable of the Laborers needs careful attention to its details. Grape harvest would be around the time of the Feast of Tabernacles which is roughly in September. There would be about 12 hours of daylight at this time, which makes the math on this pretty straight forward. The first group is hired around 6 a.m. and work a full 12 hours. They are promised 1 penny (Roman denarius) for their pay, which is a standard wage for such a laborer. The second group is hired around 9 a.m. and works for 9 hours, the third group is hired around noon and works for 6 hours, the fourth group is hired around 3 p.m. and works for 3 hours, and the final group is hired around 5 p.m. and works only 1 hour. None of these are promised an amount for their labor, only that they will be paid. When it is time to pay all of these laborers, they are all paid one penny regardless of how long they labored. Those that had worked a full day complained that they should have received more, though that is the wage they had agreed to. They could not celebrate the goodness of the owner by overpaying so many others, only focusing on their own perceived slight. The coin does not represent rewards in heaven, nor does it represent salvation. It represents the satisfaction of the owner with the laborers. This ties thematically to the story of the rich young ruler and the discussion after it in the previous chapter, especially in Matthew 19:28-30. It is not seniority or even numerical success that brings the Lord's blessing. It is faithfulness to the work assigned to each of us.

vs. 17-19 – This parallels Mark 10:32-34 and Luke 18:31-34. Christ again warns His disciples about what is to come. He is very specific in the details given, including who was plotting His death (priests and scribes), how He would die (crucifixion), when He would rise (three days). This will all come shortly to pass as He travels to Jerusalem for this very purpose.

vs. 20-28 – This parallels Mark 10:35-45. There is a slight difference in the two accounts regarding who makes the request. Matthew says it was the mother of James and John while Mark says it was the two disciples themselves. The mother may have been the one to say the words, but her sons were on board with the request. The request is basically that Christ makes James and John the two most important people in the Kingdom when He takes the throne. This is of course counter to the parable in the opening of this chapter. Verse 28 is Christ's ministry in a nutshell and our example to follow.

vs. 29-34 – This parallels Mark 10:46-52 and Luke 18:35-19:1. There is another slight difference in these accounts. Matthew has Christ healing two blind men, while Mark and Luke have Him healing one. Mark even gives the blind man a name, Bartimeus (son of Timeus). I don't see this as an inconsistency, just that Mark and Luke are only speaking of one of the two that were healed. "Thou Son of David" is the blind men acknowledging Christ for who He is, the Messiah and heir to the throne of David.

Chapter 21 Notes

In this chapter Christ arrives at Jerusalem for the final Passover.

vs. 1-11 – This parallels Mark 11:1-11, Luke 19:29-44, and John 12:12-19. Christ arrives at Jerusalem before the Passover in what is called the Triumphal Entry. I believe this is Friday, the 9th of Nisan. Christ riding a donkey has major significance. First, it is a fulfillment of Zechariah 9:9. Second, it carries symbolism of peace. Horses are symbols of war, and when Christ returns this is what He will be riding (Revelation 19:11). This same crowd that reacts so joyously to His arrival will in a few days be crying for Him to be crucified. Spreading garments in the path of royalty was a sign of respect and waving (date) palm branches was a sign of victory. The cry of “Hosanna” means “save now.”

vs. 12-19 – This parallels Mark 11:12-19 and Luke 19:45-48, 21:37-38. This is the second time Christ cleansed the Temple. The first is at the beginning of His ministry in John 2:13-25. The sale of sacrificial animals was for the convenience of people travelling long distances. The exchange of currency to the approved coinage of the Temple, the Tyrian Shekel, carried an 11% upcharge. You can imagine how these were abused and how unpopular they were.

vs. 20-22 – This parallels Mark 11:20-26. A fig tree typically did not produce fruit this early in the year. However, one that had its leaves was expected to have fruit. This can be seen as symbolic of the nation of Israel. They looked well, but they failed to produce the fruits of righteousness God desired.

vs. 23-27 – This parallels Mark 11:27-33 and Luke 20:1-8. I think this is Monday, the 11th of Nisan. Christ is challenged on His authority to teach and “do these things” (cleanse the Temple). Christ does not answer their request (there was no right answer for His accusers) by forcing them into a similar position regarding John the Baptist. If they would not answer His question, He would not answer theirs.

vs. 28-32 – The Parable of the Two Sons illustrates obedience. One son obeys after delay and repentance. The other son acts like he obeys but does not. Christ then points this small parable’s application at those that challenged Him.

vs. 33-46 – This parallels Mark 12:1-12 and Luke 20:9-19. The Parable of the Husbandmen pictures God’s long-suffering mercy towards Israel. It illustrates how time after time Israel rejected God and His messengers. It ends with God sending the ultimate messenger only to be rejected again. You can observe a change in the tone of this parable from others as it

ends with harsh judgment Christ points to His rejection as fulfillment of Psalm 118:22-23.
Note that His enemies understood that they were targeted in these parables.

Devotional Thoughts for Day 285

One of my favorite features of the months leading up to the final Passover is how Christ tried to prepare the disciples for what was coming. He told them plainly He would die and rise again. He tries to stop any pride among them and promote humble unity. Still, they were caught completely off guard by what was coming. It would be afterward that they truly understood. But the fact that Christ tried to prepare them speaks volumes of His love and care for them.

Hymn for Day 285

Our hymn today is “Hosanna, Loud Hosanna” written in 1873 by Jennette Threlfall.

*Hosanna! loud hosanna!
The little children sang;
Through pillar'd court and temple
The lovely anthem rang;
To Jesus, who had bless'd them,
Close folded to His breast,
The children sang their praises,
The simplest and the best.*

*From Olivet they followed,
'Midst an exultant crowd,
Waving the victor palm branch,
And shouting clear and loud;
Bright angels joined the chorus,
Beyond the cloudless sky--
"Hosanna in the highest:
Glory to God on high!"*

*Fair leaves of silvery olive
They strewed upon the ground,
Whilst Salem's circling mountains
Echoed the joyful sound;
The Lord of men and angels
Rode on in lowly state,
Nor scorned that little children
Should on His bidding wait.*

*"Hosanna in the highest!"
That ancient song we sing,
For Christ is our Redeemer,
The Lord of Heaven our King.
Oh! may we ever praise Him.
With heart, and life, and voice,
And in His blissful presence
Eternally rejoice!*

Chapter 22 Notes

In this chapter Christ debates His enemies in the Temple.

vs. 1-14 – The Parable of the Wedding Feast warns us to be prepared for the coming Kingdom of Heaven. Not only do we see the rejection of the wedding invitation and subsequent open call, but we also see the judgment of those who wronged the servants. Then we have the additional episode with people found at the wedding not dressed appropriately. The “wedding garment” was probably the best clothing an individual owned and worn only on certain festivals and events such as weddings. To show up and not be dressed for the occasion was a tremendous insult. Some would even have extra clothes available in case someone came improperly dressed. This was not a mistake the man made in not dressing appropriately: it was an obvious insult. Though the Gospel call is broad, the way is still straight and narrow. Anyone can come to Christ but only on His terms. This man represents someone trying to make it to Heaven another way besides God’s way. There is similar parable in Luke 14:15-24.

vs. 15-22 – This parallels Mark 12:13-17 and Luke 20:20-28. Yet another trap is set. The Herodians were supporters of the ruling dynasty and also of the Roman rule. The question regards paying Roman taxes. If Christ says pay the Roman taxes, then He is supporting the occupying pagan government. If He says don’t pay the taxes, Rome is going to come after Him for sedition. Christ asks for and displays a Roman denarius, which featured the obverse an image of Caesar with an inscription listing his Imperial titles. Christ’s response is that we ought to obey government and religion in their proper places. Both are ordained of God. Paul expounds on this in Romans 13.

vs. 23-33 – This parallels Mark 12:18-27 and Luke 20:27-40. The Sadducees now lay their trap. One of the defining tenants of this group is their denial of the resurrection of the dead. They lay out their logic puzzle concerning a woman that is married to successive brothers in Levirate marriages (Deuteronomy 25:5-10). Who would she be married to after the resurrection? Christ destroys their argument based on its faulty foundation. They assumed that life after death was like life before death. He declares that the future state of mankind is different than the present, and that marriages do not exist in Heaven. If you think about it, one of the primary reasons for marriage is reproduction, which will not be necessary then. Christ then comments on the debate about the resurrection of the dead, by quoting from Exodus 3:6 and 16. God spoke to Moses centuries after the deaths of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob of those three being present and living. It disproved the notion that life ends with the grave.

vs. 34-40 – This parallels Mark 12:28-34. The next trap is laid by a lawyer, which means he was considered an expert in the contents of the Mosaic Law and its various customs. The question is one that was often debating, asking which of the commandments was the greatest. The trap is that whatever answer is given could be debated and various rabbis could be used to argue against it. Christ so expertly answers the question that there is no debate. First, He quotes from Deuteronomy 6:5 that man should love the Lord singularly and fully. Second, He quotes from Leviticus 19:18 that man should love his neighbor as himself. The entirety of the Law may be summarized in these two statements. Even the Ten Commandments fall under these two categories. The first four deal with loving God and final six deal with loving our neighbor.

vs. 41-46 – This parallels Mark 12:35-37 and Luke 20:41-44. Christ now is the one to ask a loaded question. He asks whose son the Messiah would be, which was obviously David (II Samuel 7:12-14, Isaiah 11:1-4). He then brings Psalm 110:1 to their attention. It was written by David and is a Messianic prophecy. The verse says, “The LORD [*Jehovah*, God] said unto my [David’s] Lord [*Adonai*, “master”], Sit thou on my [God’s] right hand, till I [God] make thine [Lord’s] enemies thy [Lord’s] footstool?” David then is writing that God would give the Messiah, identified as David’s Lord, victory over all His enemies. David then is seen both as the father and servant of the Messiah. Ancient cultures typically placed greater authority on the father than the son, so this creates a paradox. The Jews have no answer for this and are silenced.

Chapter 23 Notes

In this chapter Christ reveals the character of the Pharisees.

vs. 1-36 – This parallels Mark 12:38-40 and Luke 20:45-47. Christ now addresses the crowd and His disciples concerning the errors of the Pharisees. What many miss in this is that the primary issue is that they had corrupted true religion. This is not a diatribe against the Jewish religion. God had ordained that system to be in effect from Sinai to Calvary. It was how He chose to reveal His truth to man in those centuries. The Pharisees were not guilty of being faithful Jews; they were guilty of polluting and twisting the truth. Note that Christ opens this discussion in verses 2 and 3 by recognizing the authority of the religious leaders. That was not the problem. The problem was what they had done with their authority. They looked on the outside like the most faithful followers of the Jewish Law, but their hearts were full of evil. Sadly, this is still occurring today as wicked men twist and pervert Christianity. The sins of the Pharisees can be used as a guide to spot such false prophets today. We may list these as:

- They do not practice what they preach – verse 3
- They have no concern for those under them – verse 4
- They do things to be seen of men – verses 5-7
- They seek public honor – verses 8-12
- They deter people from God by their actions – verse 13
- They spiritualize their sin – verse 14
- They recruit others but do not help them – verse 15
- They focus on the irrelevant and minuscule – verses 16-22
- They neglect the true fundamentals of the faith – verses 23-24
- They focus on their appearance – verses 25-28
- They claim superiority and mastery – verses 29-33
- They attack other men that are truly sent from God – verses 34-35

vs. 37-39 – This parallels Luke 13:34-35. It is unclear to me whether Matthew moved these words from an earlier event for emphasis or if Christ spoke the same message twice. There is no problem with either. This lament over the spiritual condition of Jerusalem is one of the most moving sections of the Gospels. God had done so much for Israel only for them to

reject Him and face judgment. One day they will repent and claim Christ as their Messiah, but that was not for this time.

Devotional Thoughts for Day 286

One of the most difficult aspects of being a Christian today is dealing with actions of other so-called Christians. Satan is a master counterfeiter, so he knows how to make something fake look very real. But Satan also loves to corrupt that which is good and holy. Discern the hearts of others by their actions. Christ gave us a very thorough and accurate checklist in Matthew 23 to identify wolves among our shepherds.

Hymn for Day 286

Our hymn today was written by Isaac Watts and first appeared under the heading “Love to God and our Neighbor.”

*Thus saith the first, the great command,
"Let all thy inward powers unite
To love thy Maker and thy God
With utmost vigor and delight.*

*"Then shall thy neighbor next in place
Share thine affections and esteem,
And let thy kindness to thyself
Measure and rule thy love to him."*

*This is the sense that Moses spoke,
This did the prophets preach and prove;
For want of this the law is broke,
And the whole law's fulfilled by love.*

*But O! how base our passions are!
How cold our charity and zeal!
Lord, fill our souls with heav'nly fire,
Or we shall ne'er perform thy will.*

Chapter 24 Notes

In this chapter Christ begins the Olivet Discourse

vs. 1-3 – This parallels Mark 13:1-4 and Luke 21:4-7. The setting of the Olivet Discourse is Christ touring the work began by Herod the Great in renovating the Temple. He remarks that this splendid building will one day be torn down with nothing left standing. This was fulfilled in 70 A.D. as the Romans, under future Emperor Titus, destroyed most of the city after a lengthy siege. The disciples believe this prophecy to be part of the End Times and ask Christ what signs would come before the fulfillment of prophecy and the establishment of the Millennial Kingdom. The sermon that follows is focused on Israel during the Tribulation.

vs. 4-14 – This parallels Mark 13:5-13 and Luke 21:8-19. The various descriptions Christ gives here are not events leading to the Tribulation but rather during the Tribulation. These are the signs before He returns to deliver the Jews and set up His Kingdom. Verse 13 is not about Christians going through the Tribulation. This is saying that the survivors of the Tribulation will enter the Kingdom.

vs. 15-22 – This parallels Mark 13:14-20 and Luke 21:20-28. The Abomination of Desolation is an event prophesied in Daniel 9:27, 11:31, and 12:11. It is when the Antichrist desecrates the rebuilt Temple and proclaims his deity 3 ½ years into the Tribulation. This breaks the peace treaty he made with Israel, and the Jews become targets of fierce persecution.

vs. 23-31 – This parallels Mark 13:21-24 and Luke 21:25-28. Christ warns of false Messiahs who will appear, such as the Antichrist. Christ will not come with a rumor and in secret when He returns. It will be bold as swift as a lightning bolt across the sky. Creation will tremble and men will weep in fear when He comes again.

vs. 32-33 – This parallels Mark 13:28-29 and Luke 21:29-31. The Parable of the Fig Tree encourages the Jews to watch the signs around them to know that the end is near.

vs. 34-35 – This parallels Mark 13:30-33 and Luke 21:32-33. I like to describe prophecy as prewritten history. Christ speaks with all authority and assuredness that what He is describing will come to pass.

vs. 36-41 – This section is often applied to the sudden rapture of believers before the Tribulation's onset. It is better understood as the shock of Christ's return and judgment of the inhabitants of the earth. Some will perish with swift justice while others carry on into the Millennial Kingdom.

vs. 42-51 - This parallels Mark 13:34-37 and Luke 21:34-36. The passage gives instructions to those looking for His Coming. The illustration of the goodman and the thief shows that they must be vigilant and expectant. The illustration of the wise servant shows that they must be faithful and active, and then contrasts them with the unbelieving, evil servant.

Chapter 25 Notes

In this chapter Christ concludes the Olivet Discourse

vs. 1-13 – The Parable of the Ten Virgins is a warning for the Jews of the Tribulation to be ready for Christ's return. Those who are not are subject to His fierce judgment. To understand this parable, you need to know the basic structure of a Jewish wedding. First, a marriage contract was drawn up between the two families. The marriage is legal at this point though the wedding has not taken place. The groom prepares new home and to fulfill wedding contract. When everything is ready, the time is set for the wedding. The groom leads a torch-lit procession to bride's house, where she waits for him with her friends. The wedding party then walks to the groom's family home for a celebration. These lasted for seven days. The women mentioned in this passage were the friends of the bride. The groom's arrival is later than expected, catching five of them unprepared without enough fuel for their lamps. While they go to buy more fuel, the wedding carries on. When they finally return the wedding celebration has already started. The door to enter is shut, likely because it is very early in the morning. They are denied entrance on the grounds that they were not part of the wedding party that had already arrived.

vs. 14-30 – The Parable of the Talents (not to be confused with the Parable of the Pounds in Luke 19:11-28) is often used in its secondary application and not its primary application. We often use this to press the idea that we should use the blessings God has invested in us. That is true, but it is the basis for the actual interpretation. This parable is talking about judgment of the Jews at Christ's second coming. A talent here is a unit of measurement of weight and wealth. It is roughly 75 pounds. It would be worth \$72,000 in silver, which is more likely what is meant, or \$5,000,000 in gold. Either way, it is a massive amount of money. The servants with five and two talents invest the money in commerce and double it. The servant with one talent hides it away, fearing losing it. When called to account for their actions, this servant is rebuked and punished for doing nothing to increase his lord's investment.

vs. 31-46 – This is often misinterpreted as being a final judgment of the righteous and the wicked. However, it is dealing with the judgment of the nations after Armageddon. The reward of the faithful Gentiles is to be able to enter the Millennial Kingdom (verse 34). The unfaithful are judged and punished. The dividing line appears to be how they treated the Jews ("my brethren").

Devotional Thoughts for Day 287

The study of the End Times, which is called eschatology, is a fascinating. Granted, there are many different opinions about events and details the Bible speaks about as in the. The bottom line is that, no matter what comes, we must do our best to be ready for it. Time and time again the Bible equates that with faith and faithfulness. We should put our trust in Christ and be active in His servant. If we do, we will one day hear Him say, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant.”

Hymn for Day 287

Our hymn today is “At the Name of Jesus,” written in 1870 by Caroline M. Noel.

*At the name of Jesus,
every knee shall bow,
Every tongue confess Him
King of glory now;
'Tis the Father's pleasure
we should call Him Lord,
Who from the beginning
was the mighty Word.*

*Mighty and mysterious
in the highest height,
God from everlasting,
very light of light:
In the Father's bosom
with the spirit blest,
Love, in love eternal,
rest, in perfect rest.*

*At His voice creation
sprang at once to sight,
All the angel faces,
all the hosts of light,
Thrones and dominations,
stars upon their way,
All the heavenly orders,
in their great array.*

*Humbled for a season,
to receive a name
From the lips of sinners
unto whom He came,
Faithfully He bore it,
spotless to the last,
Brought it back victorious
when from death He passed.*

*Bore it up triumphant
with its human light,
Through all ranks of creatures,
to the central height,
To the throne of Godhead,
to the Father's breast;
Filled it with the glory
of that perfect rest.*

*Name Him, brothers, name Him,
with love strong as death
But with awe and wonder,
and with bated breath!
He is God the Savior,
He is Christ the Lord,
Ever to be worshipped,
trusted and adored.*

*In your hearts enthrone Him;
there let Him subdue
All that is not holy,
all that is not true;
Crown Him as your Captain
in temptation's hour;
Let His will enfold you
in its light and power.*

*Brothers, this Lord Jesus
shall return again,
With His Father's glory,
with His angel train;
For all wreaths of empire
meet upon His brow,
And our hearts confess Him
King of glory now.*

Chapter 26 Notes

In this chapter Christ is arrested and tried before the Jewish authorities.

vs. 1-5 – This parallels Mark 14:1-1, and Luke 22:1-2. I believe this is Tuesday, the 13th of Nisan. The Passover began at sunset the next day. The Jewish leaders are growing more desperate and determined to kill Christ. The High Priest then is Caiphas. He held this office from 18-36 under the Roman prefects Valerius Gratus and Pontius Pilate. The primary reason he had the position was because he was the son-in-law of Annas, the powerful former High Priest.

vs. 6-13 – This parallels Mark 14:3-9, and John 12:2-10. Some see Matthew and Mark discussing a different event than John, but I think the details are sufficient to see them as the same event. John identifies Mary, the sister of Lazarus, as the woman that anoints Christ's feet with expensive spikenard oil. John also identifies the complaining disciple as Judas. This rebuke seems to be the final straw for him to betray Christ. Christ remarks that this act was a burial preparation because the crucifixion is only a day away.

vs. 14-16 – This parallels Mark 14:10-11, and Luke 22:3-6. Judas agrees to betray Christ to the Jewish leaders for the price of 30 shekels. The significance of this amount is that it is the value of a slave's life in Exodus 21:32. This would be worth around \$725 today.

vs. 17-19 – This parallels Mark 14:12-16, and Luke 22:7-13. I believe this is Tuesday, the 14th of Nisan, shortly after sundown. It is called the Day of Preparation, and though not technically part of the Passover or Feast of Unleavened Bread was a vital time of preparation for them. The Last Supper then is not the Seder meal of the Passover, which would take place the following evening.

vs. 20 – This parallels Mark 14:17, and Luke 22:14-18. The Last Supper begins with Christ and the twelve disciples gathered in an upper room. This is likely a structure like a gazebo built on top of a flat roof.

vs. 21-25 – This parallels Mark 14:18-21, Luke 22:21-23, and John 13:21-35. Christ declares that one of His disciples would betray Him. There was no indication that it was Judas as the disciples tried to discern who it could be. John's account tells us that it was Peter that asked John to ask Christ who it was, and He responded by signaling that it was Judas when they sopped their bread in the same dish.

vs. 26-29 – This parallels Mark 14:22-25, and Luke 22:19-20. Christ institutes the Lord's Supper as a memorial for His church to observe. The simple elements of wine and bread are used to signify His shed blood and broken body. This is not part of the Passover or a

Christianization of Jewish customs. It is something new. Paul writes more about observing the Lord's Supper in I Corinthians 11.

vs. 30 – This parallels Mark 14:26, Luke 22:39, and John 18:1. The Last Supper closed with the singing of a hymn, probably part of the Hallel from Psalms 113-118. They leave to go to the Garden of Gethsemane ("oil press") on the Mount of Olives. It is probable this was a favorite refuge of Christ and familiar to the disciples.

vs. 31-35 – This parallels Mark 14:27-31, Luke 22:31-38, and John 13:36-38. Christ points to the prophecy of Zechariah 13:7 to say that all of the disciples would be ashamed and flee from Him in what was to come. He instructs them to meet Him in Galilee after the events to come. Peter boldly claims that he will not be ashamed of Christ, but Christ replies that before the cock crows Peter would deny Him three times.

vs. 36-46 – This parallels Mark 14:32-42, Luke 22:40-46, and John 18:1. This is before midnight on the Tuesday, the 14th of Nisan. Arriving at Gethsemane, Christ instructs the disciples to pray. He takes the inner circle of Peter, James, and John to pray with Him separately. Eventually He moves to a place alone. The disciples succumb to sleep while Christ consecrates Himself to the work ahead of Him.

vs. 47-56 – This parallels Mark 14:43-52, Luke 22:47-53, and John 18:2-12. Judas leads a mob to arrest Christ. He marks Christ by greeting Him with a kiss. In the confusion, Peter attempts to defend Christ by force, but is reprimanded. He tries to reassure them that what is happening is all part of God's plan.

vs. 57-68 – This parallels Mark 14:53-72, Luke 22:54-62, and John 18:15-18,24-27. Christ is taken to before Caiphas the High Priest and the Sanhedrin to be condemned. While this is occurring, the focus of the narratives shifts to Peter. Peter followed at a distance and blended into the many servants to see what was happening. He is identified three times and denies knowing Christ three times, as Christ said would happen. Meanwhile, Christ is charged with heresy. The false witnesses could only get their stories to agree in one point: the claim Christ made about destroying the Temple and rebuilding it in three days found in John 2:19-20. It is a mockery of a trial that condemns Christ. Such a trial should not have been held at night, and the accused should not have been beaten. The High Priest also was commanded not to rend His garments (Leviticus 21:10). Still, this is preliminary proceeding to establish the charge and guilt before the full Sanhedrin met around sunrise.

Devotional Thoughts for Day 288

The events of this Passover week would be the greatest tragedy known to man if it had not been for the greatest purpose God had given it. The innocent and holy Christ is condemned as a sinner and made to suffer its penalty of death. But this is not the end of the story! Christ will shed His blood for us and then rise again in victory. God is moving in this darkest of nights for the most glorious of mornings.

Hymn for Day 288

Our hymn today is a personal favorite. “'Neath the Old Olive Trees” was written by B.B. McKinney in 1929. Too few songs have been written about Gethsemane, but it would be difficult to surpass this song.

*1 'Neath the stars of the night
Walked the Saviour of light,
In the garden of dew-laden breeze;
Where no light could be found,
Jesus knelt on the ground,
There He prayed 'neath the old olive trees.*

*Refrain:
'Neath the old olive trees,
'Neath the old olive trees,
Went the Saviour alone on His knees:
"Not My will, Thine be done,"
Cried the Father's own Son,
As He knelt 'neath the old olive trees.*

*2 All the sin of the world
On the Saviour was hurled,
As he knelt in the garden alone;
Hear His soul-burdened plea,
Let this cup pass from Me,
"Even so, not My will, Thine be done." [Refrain]*

*3 My my song ever be
Of the love proffered me,
By my Lord all alone on His knees:
Praise His wonderful name,
He who bore all my blame,
As He knelt 'neath the old olive trees. [Refrain]*

Chapter 27 Notes

In this chapter Christ is condemned and crucified.

vs. 1-2 – This parallels Mark 15:1, Luke 22:66-23:1, and John 18:28. Christ is officially condemned to death on the charge of heresy. The Sanhedrin must now forward Christ to the Roman authorities to have the execution take place. In their scheme, this also passes the blame from themselves onto the Romans.

vs. 3-10 – This parallels Acts 1:18-19. Judas has remorse for his actions but not enough to repent. He seeks to return the money he had been paid but the Jewish leaders refuse it because it was associated with murder. Is it not strange that they so willingly paid the same coins to have Christ murder but now refuse to accept them? He casts the money down and leaves. The money is used to buy a field that had been left worthless because of excavations for clay. This would become a cemetery for Gentiles. Matthew points to a prophecy given by Jeremiah which is not found in the Book of Jeremiah. There is a similar one in Zechariah 11:13, but I think this is more likely a true prophecy made by Jeremiah that had been passed down through tradition. Judas chooses that plot of land to hang himself.

vs. 11-14 – This parallels Mark 15:2-5, Luke 23:2-5, and John 18:28-38. When Christ is turned over to the Romans, the charge is changed from heresy to sedition. Rome quickly and harshly put down any hint of rebellion, so this charge coupled with Christ's popularity would likely ensure a death penalty. Pontius Pilate is the Roman prefect who held that office from A.D. 26-36. We know very little about him outside of the Biblical records. Typically, the Roman government and its leaders stayed on the coast at Caesarea, but the gathering of the Jewish people for the Passover brought them to Jerusalem to assert their authority. Matthew only records the most basic of details of the events with Pilate and Herod Antipas (the same ruler that had killed John the Baptist).

vs. 15-26 – This parallels Mark 15:6-15, Luke 13-25, and John 18:39-40. Pilate attempts to diffuse the situation and rid himself of culpability. There was a tradition of the Romans releasing a prisoner at the Passover. Pilate attempts to release Christ, but the crowd chanted for Barabbas ("son of the father") instead. Who was Barabbas? He was likely one of the Zealots that violently opposed Roman rule. His name indicates he may have even claimed to be the Messiah. Pilate attempts to wash his hands of the entire affair, but the Jewish crowd readily accepts the guilt.

vs. 27-30 – This parallels Mark 15:15-19 and John 19:1-3. Romans did not merely execute or punish people; they humiliated and made examples of them. Pilate is hoping to placate the crowd with the release of Barabbas and by subjecting Christ to great physical

punishment. Christ is now in custody of the Roman military, whose members were likely from Syria with Italian officers. Christ is scourged: tied to post and flogged. In cruel mockery a purple robe is placed on His shoulders, a crown of thorns beaten onto His head, and a reed placed into His hand a scepter. He is beaten and ridiculed by the soldiers before being led to His crucifixion.

vs. 31-33 – This parallels Mark 15:20-22, Luke 23:26-33, and John 19:16-17. Part of the humiliation of a Roman crucifixion was the victim carrying his cross (usually just the horizontal beam) to the place of execution. Christ is so weakened from His beatings that He cannot carry His cross. Simon of Cyrene (a Greek/Roman colony in modern Libya) to carry the cross. The place of execution is called Golgotha (Hebrew, “place of the skull”) or Calvary (“a skull”). I believe this is the site today known as Godon’s Calvary, whose hillside resembles a skull. This also would be near the roads leading into the city so the many pilgrims coming in for the Passover would see this display of Roman authority.

vs. 34 – This parallels Mark 15:20. Christ is offered a drink of what is likely the Roman soldiers’ *posca*, a drink made of water and wine vinegar. Gall is added to this, which would act as a sedative. It was an act of mercy to the condemned, but He refuses. This fulfills the prophecy of Psalm 69:21.

vs. 35-38 – This parallels Mark 15:24-28, Luke 23:33-38, and John 19:18-22. Christ is one of three men condemned to be crucified this day. He is on the middle cross. There is a sign above His head containing the crime He had been condemned for, (rightfully) claiming to be the king of the Jews. The soldiers gamble for His clothes, fulfilling the prophecy of Psalm 22:18.

vs. 39-44 – This parallels, Mark 15:29-32 and Luke 23:35-43. The mob surrounding Calvary mocked Christ. Remember that these were the same people that had rejoiced and celebrated His arrival a few days before. Even the two other condemned men join in railing on Christ. Matthew does not record the conversion of one of these.

vs. 45-47 – This parallels Mark 15:33-35 and Luke 23:44-45. At noon the sky goes dark for three hours. This cannot be an eclipse. Such would be impossible during the full moon and would only last for at most seven minutes. It is my opinion that during this time the fullness of the weight our sins were pressed upon Christ. He cries out in agony, “Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?” These words are in Aramaic and mean “My God, My God, why has thou forsaken me?” It is a quote from Psalm 22:1, or rather Psalm 22:1 is prophetically quoting Christ at this moment.

vs. 48-50 – This parallels Mark 15:35-37, Luke 23:46, and John 19:28-29. Christ is given a drink of *posca* from a sponge. As the people continue to mock Him, He cries out and surrenders His life.

vs. 51-56 – This parallels Mark 15:38-41 and Luke 23:45-49. The death of Christ is marked by numerous signs. The veil that hung in the Temple tore from top to bottom. This is massive tapestry measured 82 feet high, 24 feet wide, 4 inches thick. There is an earthquake. The earthquake causes graves to open and some of their inhabitants are resurrected with Christ. Meanwhile at Calvary, the centurion in charge of the crucifixion is moved to confess Christ was the Son of God.

vs. 57-61 – This parallels Mark 15:42-47, Luke 23:50-56, and John 19:31-42. A secret follower of Christ in the Sanhedrin named Joseph of Arimathea (a town in Judah that may be Ramah) is given Christ's body. Burial preparations are rushed because sundown was approached which marked the 15th of Nisan and the beginning of Passover.

vs. 62-66 - The Jewish leaders rightly understood Christ's claim that He would rise again. Fearing that His followers would steal His body and claim He had risen from the dead, they are granted use of guards to provide security for the tomb. These troops were probably from a contingent of soldiers assigned to aid in guarding the Temple. To further dissuade any attempt to open the tomb, a seal is placed on its stone door.

Chapter 28 Notes

In this chapter Christ has risen from the dead.

vs. 1-8 – This parallels Mark 16:8, Luke 25:1-8, and John 20:1. The group of women have come to finish the burial preparations on Christ's body. Why had they waited so long? I believe Christ was crucified on Wednesday, and this is now Sunday. The reasons are first that Thursday and Saturday were Sabbaths, and the second that Fridays was spent gathering supplies and preparing for his task (Mark 16:1, Luke 23:55-56). Christ had risen sometime around nightfall on Saturday evening. The guard had passed out in fear as an angel rolled the stone away. An angel tells the women that Christ was risen and that they should go and tell the disciples. John tells us that Mary Magdalene rushed back to tell them after only seeing the stone had been rolled back.

vs. 9-10 – This parallels Luke 24:9-11. Christ appears to the women as they are headed back into Jerusalem to tell the disciples about the empty tomb.

vs. 11-15 – The guard could have been up to 16 soldiers in number, and all had abandoned their post after seeing the angel. Such dereliction of duty would guarantee the death penalty. Instead of admitting the truth, a cover story is concocted. It involved the soldiers falling asleep on duty, which was also punishable by death. Then a group of amateurs silently sneaked past them, broke the seal, rolled the heavy stone back, and carried away the body of an adult man. Also, the pungent scent of the spices would have escaped when the tomb was opened. If they had to resort to such a ridiculous story, it guarantees they were covering up something big!

vs. 16-20 – This possibly parallels I Corinthians 15:6. The eleven remaining disciples return to Galilee after the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Christ appears to them as promised. Matthew's account concludes with the Great Commission. There are three parts to this command that we are still to obey today. First, the Gospel message is to be proclaimed to all people. Second, those that accept it are baptized and organized into local churches. Third, the ongoing work of discipleship continues.

Devotional Thoughts for Day 289

We have read today of the most important event in human history. God became man to give Himself as a sacrifice to redeem us from our sins. All eternity hinges on what Christ did. Our eternal fate rests on what we do with this message. Will we love and trust the Christ of the Cross? Will we reject Him and trust our own self-righteousness? Nothing can compare to what He did for us.

Hymn for Day 289

Our hymn today is “My Song of Love Unknown,” written in 1664 by Samuel Crossman.

*My song is love unknown,
My Savior's love to me;
Love to the loveless shown,
That they might lovely be.
O who am I, that for my sake
My Lord should take frail flesh and die?*

*He came from His blest throne
Salvation to bestow;
But men made strange, and none
The longed for Christ would know:
But O! my friend, my friend indeed,
Who at my need His life did spend.*

*Sometimes they strew His way,
And His sweet praises sing;
Resounding all the day
Hosannas to their King:
Then Crucify! is all their breath,
And for His death they thirst and cry.*

*Why, what hath my Lord done?
What makes this rage and spite?
He made the lame to run,
He gave the blind their sight,
Sweet injuries! Yet they at these
Themselves displease, and 'gainst Him rise.*

*They rise and needs will have
My dear Lord made away;
A murderer they saved,
The Prince of Life they slay,
Yet cheerful He to suffering goes,
That He His foes from thence might free.*

*In life, no house, no home
My Lord on earth might have;
In death no friendly tomb
But what a stranger gave.
What may I say? Heav'n was His home;
But mine the tomb wherein He lay.*

*Here might I stay and sing,
No story so divine;
Never was love, dear King!
Never was grief like Thine.
This is my friend, in whose sweet praise
I all my days could gladly spend.*