

# ***THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST***

SPREADING THE SOUL-SAVING MESSAGE OF JESUS

## **MATTHEW LESSON 5 (Chapters 12-15)**

### **Introduction by narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:**

*THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST.* Spreading the soul-saving message of Jesus. And now, Ben Bailey.

Jesus is the Master Teacher. Matthew 12-15 teaches us about the life and teaching of Jesus Christ, the King. This lesson is going to discuss Jesus' life, how He lived, and how He dealt with others. It also gives us some insight into the teaching and practical lessons of Jesus. In Matthew 12:1-14, we see how Jesus is Lord. The Sadducees and the Pharisees—the “religious elite” of their day—saw Jesus and His disciples picking heads of grain on the Sabbath, and began to condemn them. Later in the text, Jesus heals a man on the Sabbath, and the Sadducees and Pharisees condemn Him then, too, for doing work on the Sabbath. In this context, however, Jesus not only showed them (because of their inconsistency regarding King David) that they did not understand Sabbath law, but also proved that He knew what could occur on the Sabbath because **He** was Lord of the Sabbath. Notice Matthew 12:8. Jesus responded to these Jews by showing them that “the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath.” The idea of “lord” carries with it the concept of “master” or “owner.” This teaches us the deity of Christ, in that Christ was present during creation and knew that God instituted the Sabbath, how He instituted it, and the laws that governed its teaching. If Jesus is Lord of the Sabbath, and if He is Lord of those who may be healed on the Sabbath, then the practical lesson is that we need to allow Jesus to be Lord in every aspect of our lives. Jesus is Lord! **He** must be the Master and Owner of **our** lives. The idea behind this is found in Acts 2:36. As Peter preached the first Gospel sermon, the people heard his words that Jesus was predestined by God to die, that He was approved by signs, and that He was Lord even over King David. Peter brought his sermon to a climax by saying, “Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.” Jesus **must** be Lord of our lives. We must allow Him to rule and reign in our lives today. How do we do that? We do it by giving ourselves fully to Him, by submitting to His will, and by promising that we will live faithfully in service in His kingdom.

The text of 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 illustrates how Christians should submit themselves to God. We know from that context that the Spirit of God dwells in us, that our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, and that we were bought at a price. Therefore, we must glorify God in our bodies and in our spirits, which are His. As children of God, we no longer live for ourselves. When we became Christians by going down into the water of baptism, upon arising out of the water, we in essence said, “We are going to give our lives to the service of God, and we are going to let Him be Lord of our lives.” This principle is perfectly illustrated in the question asked by Saul in Acts 9:1-6. Saul (in Acts 8) had been making serious threats against the church. The Lord confronted Saul on the road to Damascus. Saul saw the bright light and asked, “Who are You, Lord?” Christ said, “I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting.” Saul then said, “Lord, what would You have me to do?” (vs. 6). **That** is the idea. Saul—trembling and astonished—asked, “What do You want me to do?” The Lord told Saul, “Arise and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do.” This is the mindset that every Christian must have. Since Jesus is Lord of the Sabbath, and since He is Lord of creation, we need to submit to His will and be willing to obey Him in every way.

Further in Matthew 12, Jesus teaches us that there can be no middle ground for His followers. Christians cannot live partly for the world, partly for themselves, and partly for Jesus. We must be either for Him or against Him. Notice what Jesus said in Matthew 12:30 concerning our commitment to Him: “He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who does not gather with Me scatters abroad.” The idea is that we must be **fully** committed to God and His service. We cannot live with one foot in the world and one foot in the church. We must be fully committed to God. In James 4:4, James said, “Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.” In principle, then, we are taught that we must be **100%** for God. We cannot be 99% for God and then 1% for ourselves and for the world. We must have total commitment to Jesus in order to be pleasing unto Him. In John 8, some were hearing and believing Jesus’ words, but Jesus said of them, “You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning” (vs. 44). Although these people believed in Jesus, they made no commitment. As a result, they were on the devil’s side, not God’s side. The question is: Whose side are **we** on? Our commitment and our decision to follow Jesus fully are the things that will determine that we are on Christ’s side.

In Matthew 12, Jesus teaches us not only about whose side we need to be on, but also the valuable lesson that “we are what we speak.” We are not what we **eat**; rather, we are what we **speak**. That is what Jesus said in Matthew 12:35-37. We must understand that what comes out of our mouths represents who we are. Our shell of a body is not who we are. Our spirit, our personality, and our being represent who we really are. The only way you can know a person’s spirit is by what he says and does in this life. Thus, we must be careful about what we say. Look at Jesus’ words in Matthew 12 concerning the idea that we are what we speak. In Matthew 12:35, Jesus said, “A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good things, and an evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth evil things.” Jesus went on to say that we are either justified or condemned by the things we say. Thus, He said that we should let no idle communication come from our mouths. Our words can justify us by being right and holy. Or, they can condemn us by exhibiting a spirit that has not been trained by the Word and teaching of Christ. Thus, we must be very careful what we say. In James 3, James considered the tongue—especially as it applied to teachers. James said, “Let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment.” Those who teach the Gospel should especially be careful what that they say because their words can either save or condemn those who hear them. The Proverbs writer said in Proverbs 23:7, “As a man thinks in his heart, so is he.” Our mouth is only an echo, so to speak, of what we think in our hearts. Our voice and our speech are a picture of what we are like on the inside. Spiritually, then, we are what we speak, and we must be very careful about what we say because we can affect someone for good or bad.

In Matthew 13, we see some of the parables that Jesus uses. This chapter is full of eight parables that Jesus used to illustrate certain important teachings in order to encourage His disciples and followers. The first parable is that of the four soils (or hearts). A sower went out to sow some seed. That was his job; he simply spread the Word. But as that seed fell, it fell on four different kinds of soils. The first soil was the wayside soil. The second was rocky soil. The third was thorny soil. The fourth was the good soil, indicative of the good heart that received and obeyed the Word of God, allowing it to produce much fruit. The question we need to ask ourselves today is this: What kind of soil are **we**? The soil represents man’s heart. The seed represents the Word of God (Lk. 8:11ff.). When the Word of God is sown, do we have the right kind of heart? Are we willing to hear God’s Word? Romans 10:17 says, “Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” Having heard that Word, are we the type of person who will obey it? Jesus said in Matthew 7:21,

“Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven.” Are we the type of soil that will produce fruit? That is the key. We may hear the Word initially and obey it. But will it produce fruit in our lives? In John 15, Jesus taught that if we do not produce fruit, we will be the branches that are cut off from the main trunk. Christians should always produce fruit—specifically the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:19ff.). Thus, as children of God, we must be careful that our hearts are open to the Word of God. If we are not careful, Satan can come into our lives and take away the seed (just as in the parable of Christ), replacing it with desires, passions, and lusts of the flesh. If we are not careful, the thorns and thistles of this world (which represent various pleasures) can drown out the seed. Or, we might be like the seed that fell on the stony ground and could not take root. This type of person hears the Word with joy at first, but the Word does not take root. We need to let the Word of God take root in our lives, and always live lives that will be pleasing to God by submitting to His will.

In Matthew 13, Jesus also teaches through parables the power of the Gospel. In verses 31 and 33, we see the idea of Jesus’ teaching about the seed being small while the kingdom is large. The seed starts out small, but grows just like a mustard seed—which, while it is one of the smallest seeds imaginable, can be planted and will grow into a large tree that can even house birds. This stresses to us the power of the Gospel. The seed is the Gospel (Lk. 8:11ff.). If the seed is the Gospel, then that Gospel, when it takes hold, can have powerful, life-changing results. Romans 1:16 teaches us that the Gospel is God’s power to save. James said in James 1:21, “Receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.” According to the writer of the Book of Hebrews, the Word of God is “living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart” (Heb. 4:12). The Word of God has such power that it can break open our hard shell and create in us a new life. It can grow and multiply in all those who do God’s will. We see, then, the power of the seed, the Gospel.

We also notice in Matthew 13:44-46 about how the kingdom (the church) is likened unto a hidden treasure that someone finds. He sells all that he has in order to secure the treasure. When Jesus used this illustration, He was telling us about what a treasure and joy it is to be a member of the Lord’s kingdom, the church. There is no greater place in all the world than the church for which Jesus died. It is the one thing that is of worth more value than anything else because it is the only place where a soul can be saved. You cannot find greater value in all the world than in being right with God. It is in the church—the body of the saved—where reconciliation occurs (Eph. 2:16-19). This passage, then, teaches us that whatever it may cost us, we need to be sure that we are in the kingdom, the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. I often think of the passage in Proverbs 23:23, which illustrates for us how important it is to have the truth. The writer said, “But the truth, and do not sell it, also wisdom and instruction and understanding.” The idea of “buying the truth and selling it not” is that no matter what it might cost us to be a member of the Lord’s church (even if we have to give up family, friends, or previous lifestyles), it is worth it because it is the greatest treasure in the world. It is of more value than anything we could ever imagine.

In Matthew 14, Jesus deals with some trouble that had arisen because of John the Immerser. In verses 1-12, we see that John is beheaded because of some of his teachings. Herod had taken a wife that he should not have taken. He took his brother’s wife, which was wrong. John, because he was a bold and godly preacher, told Herod that it was unlawful for Herod to have the woman as his wife. The lesson we learn from this is that we ought not to kill the messenger if we do not like the message. John did not make all of this up on his own. He was not preaching something new. John was simply saying what God had

already said. In Genesis 2, God made them “male and female”—one man, one woman, for life. That was the original design of marriage. The only reason for divorce is given in Matthew 19:9, and in that instance the innocent party has the right to remarry. But that is not the case in Matthew 14. John was beheaded because he stood up for the Truth. We need to learn that when someone tells us what God says, and then points us to the Bible, we should not be angry with the messenger because he said what God wanted him to say. Proverbs 27:5 teaches us an important principle concerning learning and obeying the truth, and loving those who teach it. This text says, “Open rebuke is better than love carefully concealed.” If I were to tell you that I love you, yet you were not living your life the way you should, and you were not doing the things you should, then my words would be empty and useless. But if I came to you out of love to talk to you about God, the Gospel, and the plan of salvation, even if it offended you, whether you realized it or not, my motives were pure. Out of love, I was trying to help you learn the correct way to live. Paul said in Galatians 4:16, “Have I therefore become your enemy because I tell you the truth?” We never become a person’s enemy by telling him the truth. Rather, we are that person’s best friend—whether he or she ever realizes it or not. At times, Jesus had to speak very openly and sternly to some of the religious leaders of His day. In Mark 12:24, He said to the Sadducees, “You do not know the Scriptures or the power of God.” Jesus said that they were wrong because they did not know God or the Word of God. Those might seem like very harsh words. But they were spoken out of love for those people who had persisted in sin and pride for so long. Thus, in Matthew 14, we learn that we must heed the message and not kill the messenger.

In Matthew 14:13-21, we find the account of Jesus feeding the 5,000 men. They had been following Jesus, and they were hungry. Jesus did not want them to starve, so, in a miraculous way, Jesus made food for these 5,000 people. Not only do we see the compassion of Jesus, as well as an important miracle, but it is evident that Jesus did not make food merely for the sake of making food. We know that is the case because in John 6, Jesus performed a miracle. The miracle then led to the teaching, “I am the Bread of life.” Jesus saw the people’s needs, and He helped them. But it did not stop there. The miracle was not an end; rather, it was a means by which to teach them the Gospel. Jesus’ point was: “Now you have been filled physically, but I will give you spiritual bread and water so that you will never hunger or thirst again.” The practical principle for us that Jesus is all the spiritual sustenance we need today. If we have Jesus in our lives, and if His words and His teachings are being lived in our lives, we do not have to worry about other teachings or “spiritual truths,” because Jesus is all we need to get to Heaven. If we have a relationship with Him, and if we are His children, then regardless of what other religious leaders or other people may say, Christ and Christ alone can save us. Jesus is the same yesterday, today, and forever (Heb. 13:8).

As we turn our attention to Matthew 14:22-33, we see an event in Jesus’ life that is very intriguing. In this text, Jesus has sent His disciples on across the Sea of Galilee, planning to join them shortly. He wanted to stay on the mountain to pray. As Jesus goes to them (walking on the water), the disciples cry out and say, “It is a ghost!” Jesus sees their fear, and gets in the boat with them. A storm arises. But Jesus, as He had done in the past, calmed the storm. He said, “Peace. Be still.” The storms—the raging waters and wind—automatically died down. From this, there are practical lessons that we can learn as well. We need to know that Jesus is able to calm the storms in **our** lives. Just as He took away the disciples’ fear on the Sea of Galilee, and just as He calmed the waves, the water, and the wind (which could very easily have overtaken the boat), in a spiritual sense, Jesus can calm any storm that may arise in our lives. The Bible says in 1 Peter 5:7, “Cast all your care upon Him, for He cares for you.” Isn’t it wonderful to know that in times of trouble,

difficulty, and weakness, we can cast our cares on God, knowing that He has promised to help us during those trials? One of the most marvelous things about the God Whom we serve is that He is always available to help. In Hebrews 13:5-6, we find, "I will never leave you nor forsake you. So we may boldly say: 'The Lord is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?'" We need to put our faith and confidence in God. We need to trust in Him during difficult times. An example of this is found in the life of Paul in Acts 27:25. The people were at sea. They had to throw some of their cargo overboard, and it looked as if they might suffer a shipwreck. Paul, however, receives a vision in which he learns that everything will be all right. Paul said, "Therefore take heart, men, for I believe God that it will be just as it was told me." We need to have that same kind of faith and confidence, knowing that God will see us through the troubles and difficulties that we experience in life.

In Matthew 15, as we continue to survey the teachings of Christ, we come to one of the most relevant lessons for the religious world today. Look at what Jesus said in Matthew 15:7-9 concerning our worship, and how, if we are not careful, we can worship God in vain. Jesus said, "Hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy about you, saying: 'These people draw near to Me with their mouth, and honor Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.'" Notice that Jesus said, "In vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men." These people thought that they were right, yet all along their worship had been displeasing to God. Why was this the case? They honored Him with their lips, but they did not have their hearts in the right place. Yes, they were mouthing the right words, but they were not worshiping as they should have been. What was the key problem? They were "teaching as doctrines the commandments of men." Anytime we insert man's teachings, man's ideas, or man's opinions into our worship, into our doctrine, or into the Christian way of life, and we enforce those things on others (especially things that are not in the Bible), then we have done exactly what the people discussed in Matthew 15 had done. We need to stick with the Bible alone. We need to speak where the Bible speaks and be silent where the Bible is silent. The Bible teaches us that very principle. In Revelation 22:18-19, the people were told not to add to or delete from the words of the book, lest the condemnations in the book fall on them. We need to simply do what the Bible says. We must not add to or take away from God's Word. We simply need to do what the Scriptures teach. That is a very simple way to know that we are right with God.

There is a passage that a lot of people in the religious world today need to remember. In 1 Corinthians 4:6, Paul said that he and Apollos had figuratively transferred some things to themselves "that you may learn in us not to think beyond what is written." An important teaching for us today is, "Do not go beyond what is written." If it is **not** in the Bible, we must not even **think** about doing it! If it **is** in the Bible, then we **must** do it. But we need to stay within the God-given boundaries, which are found within His Word. If men are teaching things that are not found within the Bible, then we better not have anything to do with them. If men are teaching another way of salvation that is not true to the Scriptures, we will never be saved through such teachings. We need to simply do what God says and be happy. Proverbs 30:6 says, "Do not add to His words, lest He rebuke you, and you be found a liar." This is a very practical principle that applies to the religious world today. Many in our world, for example, would like to bring instrumental music into worship. In a worldly setting, there is nothing wrong with using instruments of music. But understand that in the New Testament (which is our rule of conduct today), there is not a single passage which teaches us that we can use instruments of music in our worship of God. In Ephesians 5:19, the Bible says that we are to "speak to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord." This is what the Christian is to do in worship. Every passage that we find in the New Testament about music in wor-

ship speaks only of singing. There is not a single mention of instrumental music being authorized. So, if we are going to stay within the boundaries of God's Word, and if we are not going to "go beyond what is written," add to, or take from, God's Word, then we will not use instruments of music in our worship because they are not authorized within the Bible. If we were to do such a thing, then Matthew 15:9 could apply to us as well. It could be said of us that we "taught as doctrines the commandments of men." We can know that we are right with God if we do what the Bible says, and if we will not add things like instruments of music—which are not found within the New Testament.

In Matthew 15:21-28, the chapter closes with a discussion about the faith of a Gentile woman. This woman came to Jesus, realizing that she was a Gentile. But she said, "Even the little dogs eat the crumbs which fall from their masters' table." Here we see her persistence in coming to Jesus, as well as her humility in comparing herself to a little dog. She had a faith that led to her receiving Christ's blessing. These are the types of qualities that a person needs to possess today if he or she desires to become a Christian. A person needs persistence—to do whatever it takes to get to Jesus. And, once a person has come to Christ, that person needs to have the humility and faith needed to obey Him. A person must believe that Jesus is the Christ. In John 8:24, Jesus said that belief in Him as the Son of God is essential if we hope to be saved. Once a person believes in Christ, that person must have the persistence to go on and repent of his or her sins. A person must make changes in his or her life so that he or she can be pleasing to God. In Luke 13:3, Jesus said, "Unless you repent, you will all likewise perish." A person must stop living in a wrong fashion, and must turn to Jesus and do what is right. That person also must confess Christ as God's Son. In Acts 8 we find that as Philip and the Ethiopian nobleman were traveling down the road, they came to water and the nobleman said, "What hinders me from being baptized?" Philip said, "If you believe with all your heart you may." Here is the good confession he made in Acts 8:37—"I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." A person must make that same confession today. And, a person also must be baptized in water for the remission of sins. In Acts 2:37, when the Jews asked, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?," the answer that Peter gave was this: "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (vs. 38). Have **you** been following the life and teaching of Christ? Is your life patterned after Christ's? If you have never obeyed the Gospel, you can do that today by submitting to Jesus. May God help you to do so as you strive to live faithfully to Him.

### **Narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:**

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## **STUDY QUESTIONS FOR MATTHEW LESSON 5 (CHAPTERS 12-15)**

1. What important lesson does Matthew 12:8 teach?
2. What is the practical implication for us today of the lesson found in Matthew 12:8?
3. According to Acts 2:36, what has God made Jesus Christ to be?
4. According to 1 Corinthians 6:19-20, what are our bodies?
5. What important lesson is taught in Matthew 12:30?
6. What important lesson is taught in James 4:4?
7. What spiritual lesson did Jesus teach in Matthew 12:35-37?
8. According to John 8:44, what is the devil?
9. According to Matthew 12:35, what comes forth from a good heart?
10. According to Matthew 12:35, what comes forth from an evil heart?
11. What is the message found in Proverbs 23:7?
12. What four types of soil did Jesus discuss in Matthew 13 in the parable of the sower?
13. In the parable of the sower in Matthew 13, what does the seed represent?
14. According to Galatians 5:19ff., what should the seed (mentioned in Matthew 13) produce?
15. In Matthew 13:44-46, to what is the kingdom (the church) compared?
16. According to Jesus' teaching in John 15, what will happen to those Christians who do not produce fruit?
17. In Matthew 14, who died, and what was the cause of his death?
18. What important truth is contained in Proverbs 27:5?
19. In Matthew 14:13-21 when Jesus fed 5,000 men, what was the ultimate purpose of His miracle?
20. What important truth is contained in Galatians 4:16?
21. What important truth is contained in 1 Corinthians 4:6?
22. What important truth is contained in Revelation 22:18-19?
23. According to Acts 2:38, how does a person obtain remission of sins?