

THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST

SPREADING THE SOUL-SAVING MESSAGE OF JESUS

MATTHEW LESSON 6 (Chapters 16-20)

Introduction by narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:

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

“This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him” (Mt. 17:5). Welcome to our study of the Book of Matthew. We now enter into the second part of the life and teaching of Jesus found in Matthew 16-20. In these chapters, Jesus is teaching about the kingdom, and about the relationship of the citizens of the kingdom to God and to the world. Jesus is going to begin His teaching in Matthew 16:13-18 by discussing the church. From this context, we learn that Jesus promised that He would build His church. Jesus is in the region of Caesarea Philippi, and says to His disciples, “Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?” His disciples said that some people said He was Elijah, John the Baptist, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets. Then Jesus asked, “But who do you say that I am?” Peter responded by saying, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” Using that statement, Jesus is going to teach us about the church and about our relationship to the church. Let’s look at Peter’s response in Matthew 16:16, and then Christ’s response in verse 18. Jesus asked, “Who do you say that I am?” Peter answered, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” In response to Peter’s statement, Jesus then said, “I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it.” In the religious world today, people do not seem to understand that the church belongs to Jesus. He was the One Who promised to build the church. He said, “I will build **My** church.” He built it, and He is the Owner of it.

In 1 Corinthians 3:11, the Bible teaches us, “For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.” The prophets and the apostles are said within Scripture to be the ones who led up to the final plan that was centered on Christ. Thus, Jesus is the Foundation of the church. He is the One Who built the church, and He is the One Who purchased the church. In Acts 20:28, Paul said that Jesus purchased the church with His own blood. The church does not belong to any man today. And it should carry no one’s name except the One Whom God glorified, or names given in the Bible. Jesus owns the church. Suppose that you have a house. You have been working on and paying for that house. Whose name is going to be on the deed to that house? Whose name will be on the title? Will it be your neighbor’s or friend’s name? No. Your name will be on the title. Why? You worked for the house. You purchased it. It was your sweat and blood that paid for it. The same principle applies to Christ. Just as we would not allow another person to put his name on the title to our house, the church for which Christ died should not wear any other name except the name that God has given for it. Jesus is the Head of the church. Ephesians 1:21-23 teaches us that He is the Head of the church, which is His body. We need to make it clear that there is only one body. The church is the body. Ephesians 4:4 says that there is but one body. If the church is the body, and if there is only one body, then there is only one church. Listen to what Jesus said in Matthew 16:18. “I will build **My churches.**” Is **that** what He said? No. He said, “I will build **my church** [singular] and the gates of Hades will not prevail against **it**” [singular]. In God’s plan, the church has always been singular. There is but one body (1 Cor. 12:25-27), although there are many mem-

bers. We understand that the church about which we read in the New Testament is not a denomination. Denominationalism is condemned by God. In 1 Corinthians 1:10-13, Paul wrote,

“Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. For it has been declared to me concerning you, my brethren, by those of Chloe’s household, that there are contentions among you. Now I say this, that each of you says, ‘I am of Paul,’ or ‘I am of Apollos,’ or ‘I am of Cephas,’ or ‘I am of Christ.’ Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?”

The idea is that Jesus is the only One Who can build the church because **He** died for us, and we are baptized in **His** name. But did you see what the Christians were doing in the first century? They were saying, “I am of Paul,” or “I am of Apollos,” or “I am of Cephas.” You can imagine that these Christians would have said, “Yes, we are a part of the one, universal body of Christ. We are just the sect that follows Paul.” Or, “We are the sect that follows Cephas.” Or, “We really like Apollos because he is an eloquent speaker.” You see, they were following **men**. Paul said, “Let there be **no divisions** among you.” If we bring this down to the twenty-first century today, we can see just how relevant this teaching actually is. Most people today would say, “Yes, we are a part of that big, universal body. We are just followers of this Reformation leader.” Or, “We follow this act in the Bible.” Or, “We follow so-and-so.” But the Bible still says, “Let there be no divisions among you.” Division is condemned within the Scriptures. Thus, denominationalism is not from God. You cannot be a part of a denomination and be pleasing to God. Why is that the case? Acts 2:47 says that when a person obeys the Gospel, the Lord adds that person to His church. When you are baptized for the remission of your sins, you become a member of the Lord’s church—the church that was predicted in Daniel 2:44 to occur in the time of the Roman Empire during the first century, and the church that was prophesied in Isaiah 2:4 to begin in Jerusalem. This was fulfilled when, in Acts 2, Peter stood up on the Day of Pentecost and preached the Gospel. Thus, we must give God’s Son the glory that He deserves by being a part of the church that He established.

In Matthew 16 Jesus also teaches us another very important lesson about the priorities that we ought to have in this life. Ask yourself: What are some of my main priorities right now? For what am I living? What are my goals? What is it that I want to get out of this life? Compare those questions with the proper priorities that Jesus taught. Look at the two questions that Jesus asked in Matthew 16:26. Jesus asked, “For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?” These rhetorical questions are both answered by the word “nothing.” A person will not gain anything if he loses his soul. And a person cannot give anything for his soul. A person’s soul is the most important thing that he or she possesses. Too many people are chasing the almighty dollar, or are living for worldliness, lust, or pleasure. We need to realize that there is one reason to live—to make sure that we get right with God. This world, this Earth, provides your one and only chance to get to Heaven. Your soul is the most important treasure that you have, and if you waste this life, then you have wasted it all. We need to have the attitude of the apostle Paul as expressed in Philippians 1:21—“For me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.” We need to learn from the wise sage King Solomon, who sought meaning in everything in life—building, gardening, wine, and women. You name it, and Solomon sought pleasure in it. But then he wrote in Ecclesiastes 12:13-14, “Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is man’s all. For God will bring every work into judgment, including every secret thing, whether good or evil.” We need to understand that our lives are about fearing God and

keeping His commandments. That is why we are here. In Isaiah 43:7, God said through Isaiah, “Everyone who is called by My name, whom I have created for My glory; I have formed him, yes, I have made him.” We have been created to glorify God in this life. Thus, we must realize that proper priorities are important.

In Matthew 17, Jesus is transfigured before His disciples. Jesus took Peter, James, and John up to a high mountain, and there He was transfigured before them. His face began to shine, and Moses and Elijah appeared with Him. Additional gospel accounts tell us that Peter was afraid and did not know what to say. So, he blurted out, “Lord, it is good for us to be here. Let us make three tabernacles—one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.” The text tells us that suddenly a voice came booming down from Heaven, saying, “This [not Moses, and not Elijah] is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased. Hear **Him**.” We no longer are supposed to listen to the teaching of Moses regarding salvation. We do not need the prophet Elijah or the other prophets. Christ is the only One Who brings us salvation. There are some important points that we can learn from this passage. The first point is that Matthew 17:8 teaches us that, at the end of Christ’s transfiguration, “when they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no one but Jesus only.” Elijah had been there. Moses had been there. The disciples were frightened. God’s voice came down from Heaven. They then looked up, and where were Moses and Elijah? They were no longer there. Only Jesus was left. Jesus is the only One left because He is the only One Who can save us. Moses cannot save us. “The Law came through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ” (Jn. 1:17). Thus, people today cannot be saved by Moses, but can be saved through Christ. The idea of Jesus alone being left reflects the fact that it is the New Testament, not the Old Testament, that saves. Moses was there representing the Torah—the Old Law. Elijah was there as “the prince of the prophets,” and representing the prophetic speeches. But who was left? It was Jesus and the New Law. We no longer live by the Ten Commandments. We do not follow the teaching of Moses for salvation. We live by the New Law. Ephesians 2:14ff. and Colossians 2:14-15 both teach that the Old Law has been nailed to the cross. In Hebrews 8:13 we read, “In that He says, ‘A new covenant,’ He has made the first obsolete. Now what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away.” Thus, we do not follow the teaching of Moses today. Some of the Ten Commandments were brought into the New Law by the Savior. But you will see, as you read Colossians 2 and 3, that the Sabbath has not been brought back in. Paul said, “Let no one judge you in regard to a new moon or the Sabbath.” We are not following Sabbath law today in the sense that we worship on Saturday. Christians are called to gather on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7).

But there is a second point—one that we can learn from 2 Peter 1:16-21, which deals with the inspiration of Scripture. Many people have not made the connection together between Matthew 17 and 2 Peter 1. Peter recalled to mind the time when he was with the Lord as He was transfigured. The mountain was overshadowed and the voice of God spoke. Then Peter says in verse 19, “We have the prophetic word confirmed.” What “prophetic word”? The voice of God spoke from Heaven, and Peter says that the Scriptures are just as sure as the very voice of God that he, Peter, and John had heard from Heaven. Thus, it says in 2 Peter 1:21 that “holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.” From the transfiguration, Peter makes the point that the Word of God is just as sure and just as steadfast as if God had been speaking to us via a voice from Heaven. God **is** speaking to us today. He is speaking to us through His Word. Hebrews 1:1-2 says, “God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son.” Jesus’ words are found in the New Testament. Thus, we must listen to Jesus and Jesus alone if we are going to be saved.

As we look in Matthew 18, we see that Jesus is going to be doing some teaching on the kingdom and on the characteristics of those who are a part of the kingdom. In Matthew 18, Jesus teaches us that if we are really going to be converted, become a part of the kingdom, and be great in the kingdom, then we must be converted and become like a little child. What is “greatness in the kingdom” all about? Is it about having the best seat? Is it about carrying the most honor? Is it about making the most converts? Is it about doing the most good works? No. Here is what Jesus said. If you want to be great in the kingdom, two things are necessary. First, we must be truly converted. There are a lot of people who have not been converted to Christ. There are a lot of people who **think** they have been converted, but who have not been. Some people may have gone through a process of some kind, and may have even gotten wet during that process. But there is a difference between going through some religious process and being truly converted to Christ. How does a person know if he or she has been converted to Christ? The answer is: Will you follow Him regardless? Would you be willing to give your life for Jesus? Is He your number-one goal in life? Are you striving—more than anything else—to go to Heaven? Have you been converted to the point that, even if it meant losing your life, you still would remain true to Jesus? True conversion does not concern itself with the exterior things of this world. Rather, we are to be focused solely on doing God’s will. And nothing can get in the way of that. Second, not only must a person be truly converted, but that person must become like a little child. The idea is that we must have childlike aspects of humility, trust, and an ability to emulate the teachings of God in the kingdom. We must have the type of faith that a small child has. Anyone who has children understands this idea. If you have children, you could tell those children just about anything (even if it wasn’t true) and they would believe you because **you** were the one who said it. A child wants to look up to and follow his mom or dad—because **they** are the child’s parents. The same principles are true in our relationship to God. We must have the type of attitude that says, “God said it; that settles it.” Whether we believe it or not, that settles it, and we must do what God has said. So, we must be truly converted, and we must become like little children.

But a part of our relationship in the kingdom has to do with a brother who may have sinned. In Matthew 18:21-35, Jesus deals with the relationship between Christians when one of them has sinned against the other. This is a personal sin. If someone has sinned against you, what do you do? You first go to the person to talk to him. If he will not hear you, then you take two or three others with you. If he still will not hear them, then you tell it to the church. If he sinner will not hear the church, then he is to be treated as if he is a heathen or an infidel. This is personal sin—where one person has sinned against another. The way to solve that problem is set forth in Matthew 18:21-35, and should be the way that we deal with problems like this. If two people come together out of love, they ought to be able to work things out. If that does not happen, then others need to be brought in to help. Finally, if the matter has to be taken before the church, and the one who sinned will not hear the church, then he becomes like a heathen or an infidel to the church. That does not mean that we should cut off all contact. We should try to help, and we should try to do what we can to bring the person back. But we cannot have that same closeness that we ought to have in the family of God.

Matthew 19 introduces some teachings regarding the home, and especially the relationships that God created in Genesis 2. In Matthew 19:1-12, Jesus is questioned by the Jews about marriage, divorce, and remarriage. In Matthew 19:3, we see how the Jews came to Jesus and said, “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for just any reason?” Jesus said, “Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning made them male and female?” The Jews then asked, “Why then did Moses command to give a certificate of divorce, and to put her away?” Jesus then said, “Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, per-

mitted you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so.” In Matthew 19, Jesus teaches them the proper reason for divorce. There are two lessons that we want to pull from this text that are important for us today. The first is that, from this text, we learn that God’s original plan for the home was one man and one woman. God has never approved of homosexual relationships. I am not trying to be mean or unkind. But if we are going to say what the Bible says, then we must acknowledge that this is what God has said on this matter. In Matthew 19:4, what does God have to say about the relationship in the home? God said, “Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning made them male and female?” That was God’s original design for the home. Nowhere in that do you find man and man or woman and woman. God made them male and female—Adam and Eve—and thus that is the proper way of intimacy in relationships inside the home. There are several passages in the Old and New Testaments which teach us that homosexuality is wrong. Romans 1:26-28 teaches us that it is unnatural, vile, and an abomination before God for men to lie with men or for women to lie with women. It simply is not what God wants. Think of the words of 1 Corinthians 6:9-10. Can people living in homosexual relationships be right with God? Listen to what the Bible says. “Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God?” These are people who are not going to go to Heaven because of their lifestyles. Who are these people? “Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God.” There is a host of people here who will not inherit the kingdom of God—adulterers, immoral people, drunkards. But in that group of people—whom God says will not go to Heaven—are homosexuals and lesbians. That is not what I am saying; it is what the Bible says in plain language. Those types of relationships are not designed by God. They are not approved by Him, and a person cannot claim to live the Christian life and be like that. Leviticus 18:22 said that if a man were to lie with a man, he should be taken out and stoned. It was an abomination to God.

But in this text, as we look back to the question that the Jewish religious leaders asked, we see that they wanted to know, “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for just any reason?” Suppose she burns the toast or doesn’t clean the house well. Could a man just divorce her? Jesus said, “What did Moses say?” They said, “Moses commanded that the man write her a certificate of divorce.” Jesus said, “Moses permitted you to write her a certificate of divorce because of the hardness of your hearts.” The idea was that Moses never commanded divorce. In Deuteronomy 24 there was an allowance given, but Moses permitted it because the people were already doing it because of the hardness of their hearts. They had already made up their minds, so Moses gave some laws to regulate their actions. But from the beginning, it was not so. God never intended for me to put away their wives, or for women to put away their husbands. That was not the original pattern. Now there is an exception given in Matthew 19:9. Notice here that there is one and only one reason given in the Bible for divorce. This is the only exception where a person can divorce his or her mate and remain pleasing to God. Jesus said, “And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery.” The idea here is that there is only one way that a person could divorce his or her mate and still be right in God’s sight. Divorce is not what God wants. In Malachi 2:16 we read that God “hates divorce.” But God did make an exception when a person’s mate committed fornication (sexual immorality—something that takes place outside the marital bond). Hebrews 13:4 says, “Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers God will judge.” If a married person has a sexual relationship with another person outside of the marriage, then the other party has the right to divorce his or her mate. We are not saying that the guilty party can

remarry, because the text does not say that. But it does give the innocent party the right to divorce the person who is guilty of fornication, and it ultimately gives the innocent party the right to remarry a person who is a scriptural candidate for marriage. So, while the world may say that it is acceptable to divorce for any reason, Jesus said that there is only one reason. Paul did not give another reason. There is only one reason—adultery. I say this with all kindness, but if someone is living in a relationship that does not meet the criteria set forth in Matthew 19:9, then they need to know that their relationship is an adulterous relationship. If you have been divorced for some other reason than fornication (as set forth in Matthew 19:9) and you have remarried, then you are not living in a relationship that is right before God. To be right, you must stop living in that sinful relationship so that you can be pleasing to God. You may ask, “How can I know that’s what I need to do?” Read Ezra 9 and 10, where God told the people not to take foreign wives. But they did so anyway. They were in wrong relationships, and God told them to get out of those marriages. They had children, and it was a difficult situation to be sure. But in order to be right with God, we sometimes have to do difficult things.

Finally, in Matthew 20 we notice that Jesus teaches us about the kingdom. In verses 1-16, He likens the kingdom to a vineyard—a place of work where fruit is produced. That is the idea that Jesus is trying to teach us. In Matthew 20:1, Jesus said, “For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard.” The church is a vineyard. It is a place of work where fruit is produced. We work in the kingdom because we love the Lord and because we want to help others obey the Gospel. As we work, we are producing spiritual fruit for God—whether it be love, joy, peace, kindness, tenderness, or mercy. All of those things (mentioned in Galatians 5) are the fruits that a Christian should produce. Jesus said in John 15 that if we do not produce fruit, then we will be cut off from the vine and not be pleasing to God.

As we think about the life and teaching of Christ, one of the most practical lessons that Jesus gave us is that in this life we must deal with our sin problem. Up to the point of Jesus coming into the world, the only way to do that was through the blood of bulls and goats. But that blood (mentioned so often in the Old Testament) could never **really** take away sin, Hebrews 10:3-4 tells us. But now, Jesus has come. He is the way to salvation. I want you to know that God loves you. The Bible says in Romans 5:6-8 that “when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” God loves you so much that He sent His Son to this world. Christ had equality with God (Phil. 2:5), and was present at creation (Jn. 1:1-4). But He ultimately went to the cross and bore the sins of the world (1 Pet. 2:24). Jesus loved you so much that He gave His life for you.

You can become a Christian today by obeying the words of Christ. In John 14:15, Jesus said, “If you love Me, keep My commandments.” What does Jesus command us to do to be saved? We must hear God’s Word. Once we have heard that Word, we must believe that Jesus is the Son of God. Once we believe in Him, we have to be willing to change our lives (an action known as repentance). We also must confess His name before men. And, yes, the Bible teaches that we must be baptized for the remission of our sins. Notice what the people were told in Acts 2:37 when they asked, “Men and brethren, what shall we do?” In Acts 2:38, Peter told them, “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.” There are many today who teach that all a person has to do to be saved is “just believe.” That is not what Jesus or His followers taught. In Mark 16:16, Jesus said, “He who believes

and is baptized will be saved.” In 1 Peter 3:21, we read that “baptism does also now save us.” In Acts 22:16, Saul was told, “Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.” In John 3:5, Nicodemus was told, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.” Are you a child of God—a Christian? Are you a part of the Lord’s church? If not, you can become a Christian today. We are hoping that you will do just that, and that you will conform your life to the life of Christ.

Narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:

THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST is brought to you by loving, caring members of the church of Christ. The McLish Avenue church of Christ in Ardmore, Oklahoma, oversees this evangelistic effort. For a free CD or DVD of today’s broadcast, please write to:

THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST
607 McLish Ave.
Ardmore, OK 73401

You may call **580-223-3289**. Please visit us on the web at www.thegospelofchrist.com. We encourage you to attend the church of Christ, where “the Bible is loved and the Gospel is preached.”

STUDY QUESTIONS FOR MATTHEW LESSON 6 (CHAPTERS 16-20)

1. In Matthew 17:5, what did God say to Peter, James, and John?
2. How does God's statement in Matthew 17:5 apply to us today?
3. What specific subject was Christ discussing in Matthew 16:13-18?
4. According to Christ's own comment in Matthew 16:18, how many churches did He say He would build?
5. According to Ephesians 1:21-23, of what is Christ the Head?
6. According to Ephesians 1:22-23, what is a synonym for "the church"?
7. According to Ephesians 4, how many bodies are there?
8. According to the teaching contained in Matthew 16:18, Ephesians 1:21-23, and Ephesians 4:4, how many churches did Christ establish?
9. In 1 Corinthians 1:10-13, what did Paul condemn?
10. How do Paul's statements in 1 Corinthians 1:10-13 apply to the concept of denominationalism today?
11. What two important questions did Christ ask in Matthew 16:26?
12. According to Ecclesiastes 12:13-14, what is our duty while we are here on Earth?
13. What important event regarding Christ is recorded in Matthew 17?
14. In Matthew 17:5, what did God say concerning Christ?
15. What important spiritual lesson is contained in Matthew 17:5 that applies to us today?
16. According to 2 Peter 1:21, how did the Scriptures come about?
17. In Matthew 18, Jesus discussed two things that a person needed to do to be a legitimate citizen of the kingdom of God. What were those two things?
18. With what specific issue was Jesus dealing when He gave the instruction that is provided in Matthew 18:21-35?
19. In Matthew 19:9, Jesus provided the only reason for divorce that is acceptable to God. What was that reason?
20. What important event occurred in Ezra 9 and 10?
21. In Matthew 20, the kingdom is likened to something. What is that "something"?