

THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST

SPREADING THE SOUL-SAVING MESSAGE OF JESUS

MATTHEW LESSON 7 (Chapters 21-25)

Introduction by narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:

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

“Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest” (Mt. 21:9). Welcome to our study of the Book of Matthew as we discuss the life and teaching of Jesus in Matthew 21-25. Here, we are introduced to Jesus the King as He rides into Jerusalem in His triumphal entry. In Matthew 21:1-11, we see that triumphal entry. Jesus tells His disciples to go into the city, where they will find a donkey and a colt tied up. They are to retrieve them, telling anyone who asks, “The Lord has need of them.” The disciples go into the city, find the donkey and its colt, and bring them back to Jesus, Who then rides into the city of Jerusalem on this donkey. Here we see the King coming in on a donkey. The people are so elated that they spread their clothes on the road and cut down branches from trees and spread them on the road. The people cry out, “Hosanna in the highest.” It seems as if the people in this context are ready to make Jesus their King. The triumphal entry of Christ is important for several reasons. First, it verifies Jesus as King. Jesus enters the city, just as prophecy had promised. He is riding in a triumphal entry, and is ready to be crowned. Revelation 19:16 verifies that Jesus truly is “King of kings and Lord of lords.” In 1 Timothy 6, we see Him depicted as the great King and Potentate. **He** is the One Who reigns in the kingdom of God. But, second, not only does the triumphal entry verify Christ as King and Messiah, but it also is a fulfillment of prophecy. In Matthew 21:4-5, Matthew says, “All this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying...,” and he then quotes Zechariah 9:9 and Psalm 118:26 (in Matthew 21:9). Thus, the triumphal entry was verification that Jesus had once again fulfilled prophecy, and that everything that the prophets had said about Christ, He had fulfilled. From Luke 24:27 we learn that all that was written by Moses and the Prophets, Jesus fulfilled. Thus, it shows us that Jesus truly is King.

But there is something else interesting within this text. In Matthew 21:8-11, the people are so elated that Jesus is arriving in Jerusalem that they spread their clothes on the road and cut down branches from the trees and spread them on the road, crying “Hosanna in the highest.” What is so interesting is that these people are so very, very fickle! Just a few verses later we see the religious leaders questioning Jesus, and some are ready to get rid of Him. Then, in just a few short chapters, the people are crying, not “Hosanna in the highest,” but “Crucify Him! Crucify Him!” These fickle folks, who were at one time ready to make Jesus their King, had, in just a few short chapters, come to a point where they were urging the Romans to crucify their King. We need to understand that we must always put our faith in God. We need not waver back and forth. James described such a person in James 1: 5-8 as similar to a wave that is tossed to a fro by the sea. We need to put our faith in God and remain faithful to Him. We must not give up on Jesus Christ as some of these people did. Some of the people may have been offended by the way that Jesus came into Jerusalem. Jesus did not come into the city riding on a white stallion. Jesus came in riding on a coat—the foal of a donkey. This would be like the president of the United States riding in a Volkswagen Beetle. What would people think of that today? Here comes the King

—and He is riding on a donkey? Some people may not have been ready for that because they were looking for grander and greater things. Thus, they might have despised Jesus then, even as He made His triumphal entry.

In Matthew 21:12-17, we see Jesus fulfilling more prophecy by cleansing the temple. Here, Jesus goes into the temple and sees that certain people are making merchandise of the temple. They were selling doves, changing money for profit, and making God's house a den of thieves. Jesus therefore takes a whip and drives those people out of the temple—in accordance with Scripture ("Has this house, which is called by My name, become a den of thieves in your eyes?"—Jeremiah 7:11). These lessons are so practical because so many today are trying to make Christianity a "merchandise business." Think about all the people who get on the radio or television and ask for money. "If you will just pray this prayer, or if you will just send in this much money, we will do this for you." Those are hoaxes and lies. Those people are not going to do anything for you because God is the giver of all blessings. These people just want your money. There are a lot of people who are turning the whole idea of religion and Christianity into a money-making business. There are denominations popping up—and someone is getting rich as a result. Too many people today are making God's house a den of thieves, and are trying to make money out of a soul-saving effort. We must be careful that our hearts and our motives are correct.

After Jesus had entered Jerusalem on a donkey during the triumphal entry, and after He had cleansed the temple, He piqued the religious leaders' interest. In Matthew 21:23-27, they questioned Jesus. They asked, "By what authority and power are You doing these things?" Jesus said in return, "I'm going to ask you a question, and if you answer it, then I will tell you by what authority I am doing these things." Jesus then asked, "The baptism of John—was it from God or from men?" You could almost see the smirks drop from the religious leaders' faces. They realized that they were "between a rock and a hard place." They thought to themselves, "If we say that John's baptism was from God, then Jesus will say, 'Why didn't you obey it?' But if we say that John's baptism was from men, we fear the people because they all hold up John as a prophet." So the religious leaders basically said, "We don't know." Jesus then said, in essence, "**You know**. So I am not going to tell you by what power and authority I do these things." Here, Jesus teaches us that there are only two places whence authority comes—from Heaven or from men. In essence, Jesus answered their question. In reality, there is only place when authority can be derived—from Heaven. Human authority cannot be divine. It is often fickle, and it is always fallible. It often is based on our priorities and our self-interests. But authority from Heaven is perfect. Hebrews 6:18 says that God cannot lie. He will not change His will. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever (Heb. 13:7). In Malachi 3:6, God says, "I am God; I change not." We need to put our trust in the authority of Jesus Christ. Do you know what some of Jesus' last words were to His disciples? Let me turn your attention to Matthew 28:18. Notice what Jesus says in this text. "And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, 'All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.'" **Jesus** is the only true source of authority for us today, and His authority comes from Heaven. God placed His stamp of approval upon Him. We need to be like Mary, the mother of Jesus. At the wedding in Cana of Galilee, she turned to the servants and said, "Whatever He says to you, do it" (Jn. 2:5). We need to have the attitude of Paul as expressed in Colossians 3:17—"Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him." There is a proper place for authority, and it is in Jesus Christ.

Now we turn our attention to Matthew 22:36-40, where Jesus is asked a penetrating question by a lawyer that perhaps was intended to test Him. This lawyer was a scribe, and one of the religious elite. Notice what Jesus says to him in verses 37-39: "You shall love

the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.” This was essentially the sum of God’s law. If there was a single commandment on which everything else was built, it was, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.” Mark 12:30-31 teaches us this as well. In John 14:15, Jesus said, “If you love Me, keep My commandments.” If we love God, it means that we will serve and obey Him, and that we will give our lives to Him. The second great commandment was, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” This is the idea from Galatians 6:10, where we are told to “do good unto all men, and especially those of the household of faith.” This teaching is exemplified in James 1:27—“Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world.” We are to take care of those who do not have the things in life with which we are blessed. You remember the story in Luke 10 of the Good Samaritan. A man was lying in the road injured because he had been beaten by robbers. A Levite comes near, but passes by on the other side. A priest comes by, but does not help the man. Then a Samaritan (whom the Jews would consider a half breed) stops, helps him, pays for his help at the inn, and makes sure that the man is well taken care of. Jesus then asked, “Which of these was a neighbor?” The man who helped him was the neighbor. Who is our neighbor? It is anyone who is in need. Anybody who is in need is our neighbor today. We must love God, and we must help those who are in need. These are the greatest of the commandments. Are we really fulfilling these commands? Do we really love God? And do we really treat our neighbors as we would ourselves? To do that, we must follow what God said, and we must help others learn the teaching of Christ.

Another penetrating question is asked in Matthew 22:41-42, where we read: “While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them, saying, ‘What do you think about the Christ? Whose Son is He?’ They said to Him, ‘The Son of David.’” The people realized that the coming Messiah was to be the Son of David (2 Sam. 7:12-14). But the question also is applicable for us today. What do **we** think of Christ? What do **you** think about Jesus? What does He mean to you? Who is Jesus in your life? There have basically been four different views held through the years about Christ. First, some people say that Jesus was a liar, a shyster, a charlatan, and a trickster. What He said and did were really not true. Second, some people suggest that Christ was a lunatic and a madman. He said things like “Eat My flesh and drink My blood.” He claimed to do miracles, which He could not do. Third, there are those who say that Jesus was a great leader like Moses, Joshua, or others in the Old Testament. Fourth, there is a view that the Scriptures support, suggesting that Jesus is not a liar, a lunatic, or a great leader, but that He is Lord. That is the scriptural view of Christ. Do you see Christ in your life as Lord? One of the main problems that we will see in Matthew 23:3 is that the religious people of the day recognized that they needed to be looking for the Messiah, yet they were hypocritical. One of the things that Jesus condemned in Matthew 23:3 is those who “say, but do not.” There may have been a lot of people who were looking for the Messiah, but how many of those followed up what they said with a proper lifestyle? One of the greatest problems in Christianity today is people who claim to love the Lord—and then live like the devil. Nothing will do more harm to the cause of Christ than for people to be known in their communities as Christians, but to then go out and live like the devil. It is sad, but it happens. It ought not to. It is not God’s will. Jesus condemned this in Matthew 23:3. But it does happen today. Being a Christian means that we not only **claim** His name, but that we also follow up that claim by living the way we ought to. In Matthew 7:21, Jesus said, “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.” Jesus once

asked the religious leaders, "Why do you call Me 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do the things which I say?" (Lk. 6:46). For one to be pleasing to God, according to Matthew 23:3, he or she must both **say** and **do**. That was the main problem with these hypocrites.

We learn another practical lesson from Matthew 23:9. In the context of dealing with these hypocrites, and in pronouncing "woes" upon these religious leaders, Jesus said, "Do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven." The King James Version says, "Call no man father...." The idea here is that there is one God and one Father. He is in Heaven. Therefore, we should call no man on Earth "Father." There is a practical point here that has been overlooked by many within the religious world. There are many who are of the Catholic persuasion who look up to a "priest" and call him "Father." How can a person do such a thing, yet be in accordance with what Jesus was teaching in Matthew 23:9? Can a person go to a religious leader and say, "Father so-and-so....," and be in accord with Jesus' teaching? Jesus meant what He said. Thus, there are many in the religious world today who are in direct violation of the teaching of Christ. There is no place in the Lord's church for anyone with a name such as Father, Reverend, or Pastor. "Father" and "Reverend" are titles that, in the Scriptures, refer to God. "Pastor" refers to an elder. Anyone who claims to wear those titles in any other way is in violation of Jesus' teaching. This is not what the Bible teaches, and to do it would be a violation of the will of God.

One of the most-misunderstood texts in the life and teaching of Christ is Matthew 24. Here we enter into the context in which the disciples have asked Jesus three questions. In Matthew 24:1-4, Jesus had spoken about the temple being destroyed, and how there would not be one stone left on top of another. They asked Jesus when this would happen, and when the temple would be destroyed. They also asked what the signs of Jesus' coming would be—the signs of the destruction of Jerusalem and the Jewish nation. And, they asked when the end of the world would occur. Three questions were asked: (1) When will the temple be destroyed?; (2) What will be the sign of your coming in destruction upon the Jewish nation?; and (3) When will the end of the world occur? Many people take the events of Matthew 24:1-33 and try to apply them to our times **today**. They may suggest that we see the war in Iraq or some fearsome leader causing trouble around the world. But to understand the Bible, we need to allow the Bible to be its own best commentary. There is a verse that will help us understand Matthew 24, if we will simply use it as it was intended. Look at Matthew 24:34—"Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place." What "things" is Jesus discussing? He is talking about the shedding of blood, wars, rumors of wars, false prophets, and the anti-Christ. Jesus spoke of "this generation." What did that mean? It referred to the people to whom He was speaking **then**. "This generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place." What does that imply? It implies that the people to whom Jesus spoke saw the things of which Jesus spoke. Those things were fulfilled during their lifetimes. They were not intended for us. Jesus was speaking about the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. His discussion was not about some "future Armageddon"—some future battle between God and men. That is not what Jesus was discussing. Jesus said that the things He was discussing would take place during the lifetimes of the people to whom He spoke. At that time, everything would be fulfilled. So, if we will use the Bible—and especially the text of Matthew 24:34 in its own context—we will understand that this was the answer to the first two questions: "When are you going to destroy the temple and the Jewish nation?" Matthew 24:1-34 answers that. Jerusalem and the Jewish nation would be destroyed by Rome in A.D. 70.

Now turn your attention to Matthew 24:35. One of the main problems that we have today is understanding that although many things may be destroyed, the Word of God is always

going to last. Look at what Jesus said. After saying, "This generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place," Jesus then said, "Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away." One thing that will stand the test of time for sure is the Word of God. How do we know that the Word of God will withstand the test of time, even when Heaven and Earth pass away? This should not surprise us, since this is exactly what Jesus had already said. In John 12:48, Jesus remarked, "He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him—**the word that I have spoken** will judge him in the last day." The Word of God is going to be what judges us on the Judgment Day. The Word of God is going to last forever. In 1 Peter 1:25 we read, "The word of the Lord endures forever." The grass withers and the flowers fades, but the Word of the Lord will last forever (Is. 40:8).

There is another important key in Matthew 24:36, where Jesus answers the question about the timing of His Second Coming. Look at what Jesus says: "But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only." There are so many people today who are trying to teach that we **can** know when Jesus' Second Coming is going to occur. They take Matthew 24:1-33 and say, "Look at these signs, which point to the Second Coming of Christ." That is not true. All of those things were fulfilled in the time of that generation. So many today want to point their finger at the Bible and say, "Jesus must be coming back." But here is a plain and simple truth that you can take home with you today. No one has known, or ever will know, when Jesus is coming back. That is something that has not been revealed to us, and that will not be revealed. We must trust that God, in His wisdom, knows when the best time for that is. We simply need to be ready. The text of 1 Thessalonians 5:1:ff. says that Jesus' coming will be "like a thief in the night." A thief does not call you at 1:50 in the morning and say, "Get ready. I'm about to come rob you!" The idea is that a thief comes when you are **not** expecting him—**suddenly!** That is how the Second Coming of Christ will be. No one in the religious world knows when it will occur. Those of us who are members of the Lord's church should not try to teach when Christ's Second Coming is going to be—either by word or by song. Some of the songs in our songbooks express false doctrine in this regard. For example, one song says, "Jesus **is** coming soon." How do we know that? Do we know even more than God has revealed to angels? Do we know more than what we have revealed to us in the Bible? Who told us that Jesus is coming soon? The Bible certainly did not. Jesus' coming will be **sudden**, as the Book of Revelation explains. But "soon" is an adverb of time—and a short time at that. Jesus might come "soon," or He might not. We simply do not know, and we should not leave the wrong impression with people by the songs that we sing.

Another important lesson that we learn from Matthew 25:14-30 is that we must use our talents wisely if we are going to please God. In Matthew 25:14-30 we have the account of three men to whom certain talents were given. In this parable, there are three men. Each man is given a certain amount of money. One man is given one talent; another is given two talents; and the third is given five talents. Each man has been given some money, and is supposed to make the money grow and prosper. The five-talent man turns his talents into ten. The two-talent man's money grows well, too. But the one-talent man is a foolish man who says to his master, "I knew that you were a hard man, so I took the money you gave me and buried it in the ground. Here, then, is your one talent." Look at what Jesus said about this man in Matthew 25:30. Of the one-talent man, Jesus said, "Cast the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." What do we learn from this one-talent man being condemned for not making the most of what he had been given? We learn that we must use whatever God has given us and make it grow. We are responsible for what we have been given. With blessings come responsibilities. If we have been given money, then we need to use it in a proper way. If we have a

physical ability or special talent, then we need to use it in the Lord's service. If we have some other gift, we must not be like an ostrich and bury it in the ground. Instead, we must take our gift and use it to the glory of God. That is the principle here. We must take our talents and abilities—whether they are financial abilities, teaching abilities, or the ability to encourage others—and instead of burying those due to pride or shame, we must use those to the glory of God. Here is the warning: "To whom much has been given, much is required." That is Christ's teaching. God expects us to use properly what He has given us. We cannot expect to be pleasing to God if we have a talent or ability, yet we never do anything with it. Too many people are expecting excuses to help them get to Heaven. "Excuses" is what the foolish man offers. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth for those who use excuses for not serving God.

There is one final lesson from Matthew 25:46, where we see a scene of separation. We see sheep (the righteous) and the goats (the unrighteous). To the goats, Jesus says, "Cast them into outer darkness." But the sheep—those who have done God's will—are taken into the fold of God. They are blessed, and get to go to Heaven. Here we see that on the last day, there is going to be a great separation. Matthew 25:46 says, "And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life." When this life ends, there will indeed be a great day coming for some people. It is going to be wonderful beyond measure—for those who have obeyed the Gospel. For those who have been faithful, it will be the best day ever. They will see the Lord coming as they come up out of their graves. What a wonderful occasion that will be!

But there is a sad day coming for those who do not know God and who have not obeyed the Gospel. In 2 Thessalonians 1:7-10, we read that the Lord will come "inflaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ." They will be cast away, and sent to everlasting destruction. On the Day of Judgment, we are going to have to give account for how we have lived our lives. We are going to have to give an account for how we have lived this life. In 2 Corinthians 5:10 we read that "each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad." Here is a very important lesson. The Day of Judgment does not have to be a bad day for you. The Day of Judgment can be a wonderful day for you. But there is only one way that can happen. There is only one way that day can be a day of rejoicing. If you are not a child of God, you desperately need to become one. We do not know when Jesus is coming. It could be at any moment—even before you finish this lesson. You therefore need to be sure that you are right with God. Jesus told His disciples in Mark 13:35 that since they did not know when He would return, they needed to watch and be ready. The only way to **be** ready is to **get** ready. Are you ready? Have you obeyed the Gospel? Have you believed in Jesus? Have you repented of your sins? Have you confessed His name before men? Have you been immersed in water for the forgiveness of your sins? If so, then you must remain faithful. But if you have not, why not? Why are you waiting? Life is too short. The time of the Second Coming of Christ is too uncertain. Why not make sure that you are right with God. Let me encourage you today to conform your life to the teaching of Jesus so that you can know you are right with God.

Narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:

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STUDY QUESTIONS FOR MATTHEW LESSON 7 (CHAPTERS 21-25)

1. To whom does the text of Matthew 21:9 (“Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest”) refer?
2. On what significant occasion was the statement, “Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest,” made?
3. What two phrases does Revelation 19:16 apply to Christ?
4. In Matthew 21:8-11, what actions did the people take who saw Christ entering Jerusalem?
5. What does Matthew 21:12-17 depict Christ as doing?
6. What prophecy is contained in Jeremiah 7:11 that pertains to the actions Christ took in Matthew 21:12-17?
7. In Matthew 21:23, what question did the chief priests and elders ask Jesus?
8. How did Jesus answer the question He was asked in Matthew 21:23?
9. What important trait of God is discussed in Malachi 3:6?
10. In Matthew 22:36, what question did a Jewish lawyer ask Christ?
11. How did Jesus answer the lawyer’s question in Matthew 22:36?
12. In Matthew 23:2-3, what did Jesus urge the people of His day **not** to do?
13. What significance does Christ’s teaching in Matthew 23:9 have for many in the religious world today?
14. What important question did Christ ask in Luke 6:46?
15. What three questions had Jesus been asked by His disciples in Matthew 24:1-4?
16. What critically important point is contained in Matthew 24:35 regarding Jesus’ response to the questions He was asked by His disciples?
17. According to the teaching contained in Matthew 24:36, when will Jesus’ Second Coming occur?
18. According to 1 Thessalonians 5:2, how will Jesus’ Second Coming occur?
19. What is depicted in Matthew 25:46?
20. What important principle is taught in the parable of the talents (Matthew 25:14-30)?