



~ Thought For The Day ~

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Prayer

Prayer.....

God Father; I ask it in Jesus' name, I ask that You fill each person with wisdom, knowledge, intelligence, understanding as we start this study of Your Son's birth, life and ministry. Let Your Word go into our hearts as we meditate on it. I ask that the Word comes alive for those reading and as they study. Give each person peace, and bless and keep them, in Jesus' name. Amen....

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Matthew 24:36 (AMP)

36 But of that [exact] day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.

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Matthew 1:1-25 (AMP)

1 THE BOOK of the ancestry (genealogy) of Jesus Christ (the Messiah, the Anointed), the son (descendant) of David, the son (descendant) of Abraham. 2 Abraham was the father of Isaac, Isaac the father of Jacob, Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers, 3 Judah the father of Perez and Zerah, whose mother was Tamar, Perez the father of Hezron, Hezron the father of Aram, 4 Aram the father of Aminadab, Aminadab the father of Nahshon, Nahshon the father of Salmon, 5 Salmon the father of Boaz, whose mother was Rahab, Boaz the father of Obed, whose mother was Ruth, Obed the father of Jesse, 6 Jesse the father of King David, King David the father of Solomon, whose mother had been the wife of Uriah, 7 Solomon the father of Rehoboam, Rehoboam the father of Abijah, Abijah the father of Asa, 8 Asa the father of Jehoshaphat, Jehoshaphat the father of Joram [Jehoram], Joram the father of Uzziah, 9 Uzziah the father of Jotham, Jotham the father of Ahaz, Ahaz the father of Hezekiah, 10 Hezekiah the father of Manasseh, Manasseh the father of Amon, Amon the father of Josiah, 11 And Josiah became the father of Jeconiah [also called Coniah and Jehoiachin] and his brothers about the time of the removal (deportation) to Babylon. 12 After the exile to Babylon, Jeconiah became the father of Shealtiel [Salathiel], Shealtiel the father of Zerubbabel, 13 Zerubbabel the father of Abiud, Abiud the father of Eliakim, Eliakim the father of Azor, 14 Azor the father of Sadoc, Sadoc the father of Achim, Achim the father of Eliud, 15 Eliud the father of Eleazar, Eleazar the father of Matthan, Matthan the father of Jacob, 16 Jacob the father of Joseph, the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, Who is called the Christ. (the Messiah, the Anointed) 17 So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen, from David to the Babylonian exile (deportation) fourteen generations, from the Babylonian exile to the Christ fourteen generations. 18 Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place under these circumstances: When His mother Mary had been promised in marriage to Joseph, before they came together, she was found to be pregnant [through the power] of the Holy Spirit. 19 And her [promised] husband Joseph, being a just and upright man and not willing to expose her publicly and to shame and disgrace her, decided to repudiate and dismiss (divorce) her quietly and secretly. 20 But as he was thinking this over, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, Joseph, descendant of David, do not be afraid to take Mary [as] your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of (from, out of) the Holy Spirit. 21 She will bear a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus [the Greek form of the Hebrew Joshua, which means Savior], for He will save His people from their sins [that is, prevent them from failing and missing the true end and scope of life, which is God]. 22 All this took place that it might be fulfilled which the Lord had spoken through the prophet, 23 Behold, the virgin shall become pregnant and give birth to a Son, and they shall call His name Emmanuel—which, when translated, means, God with us. 24 Then Joseph, being aroused from his sleep, did as the angel of the Lord had commanded him: he took [her to his side as] his wife. 25 But he had no union with her as her husband until she had borne her firstborn Son; and he called His name Jesus.

Matthew

Jesus the Messiah

"You are the light of the world.... Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven."

Matthew 5:14, 16

"But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well." Matthew 6:33

Matthew's Emphasis: Jesus Is the Promised Messiah

The special emphasis of Matthew is that Jesus is the Messiah foretold by the Old Testament prophets. He quotes from and refers to the Old Testament more often than any other New Testament author and seems to have had particularly Jewish readers in mind. The term "kingdom" or "kingdom of heaven" occurs so often (43 times) that this Gospel is often called the Gospel of the Kingdom. Matthew presents his material overall in chronological order, but within that order he often groups his material by subject matter. He gives Jesus' discourses quite fully, especially the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7) and Jesus' discourse about the coming end of the world (chaps. 24-25).

Matthew

This Gospel does not name its author, but it has been accepted as the work of Matthew ever since the early church fathers, beginning with Papias, who was a student of the apostle John. We know almost nothing of Matthew, who is also called Levi. He is mentioned in the four lists of the Twelve: Matthew 10:3 ; Mark 3:18 ; Luke 6:15 ; Acts 1:13 (see Disciples). The only other mention is his call to follow Jesus (Matthew 9:9-13 ; Mark 2:14-17 ; Luke 5:27-32). The only thing Matthew says about himself is that he was a tax collector for the Romans. These tax collectors had to be rather well off, since they had to prepay each year's taxes and then were allowed to recover the amount, with interest, from the people. Although the interest charges were in theory limited to a fair amount, the reality was that often the tax collectors charged more than they should. But the real problem was that the Law of Moses strictly prohibited charging fellow Jews any interest at all (Leviticus 25:36 ; Deuteronomy 23:19-20 ; the kjv uses the archaic word "usury" instead of "interest," which is misleading). Thus, the tax collectors ordinarily were viewed as people who did not care about the Law of Moses and were generally despised. As a tax collector, Matthew was used to keeping records, and he was a personal companion of Jesus through most of Jesus' public ministry. Luke tells us that Matthew made a great feast for Jesus and gave up all to follow Him. But Matthew does not even give himself credit for that. He loses sight of himself in his efforts to tell the story of his Master. We love him for his self-effacing humility, and we marvel at the grace of God in choosing such a man to be the author of what is said to be the most widely read book in all the world, the first book in the New Testament. Tradition says that Matthew preached in Palestine for some years and then traveled to foreign countries. It is thought that he wrote his Gospel originally in Hebrew and that some years later, probably around a.d. 60, he issued a more complete edition in Greek.

Matthew 1–5

Matthew 1:1–17. Genealogy of Jesus

Matthew and Luke both give a genealogy of Jesus (Luke 3:23–38). The coming of Christ to the earth had been anticipated from the beginning. In the early days of human history God had chosen one family, that of Abraham, and later on a family within the larger Abrahamic family, that of David, to be the family through which His Son would make entrance into the world. The genealogy in Matthew is abridged. Some names are omitted, as was frequently done in genealogies, without invalidating the line of descent. The 42 generations, in three groups of 14 each, cover 2000 years (the first group, 1000 years; the second group, 400 years; the third group, 600 years). The third group, however, names only 13 generations, the 14th spot evidently being intended for Mary. The genealogy as given in Luke is somewhat different. Matthew goes back to Abraham, Luke to Adam. Matthew starts at the beginning (Abraham was the father of Isaac, etc.), Luke at the end (Joseph was the son of Heli, etc.; Luke 3:23). From David to Jesus they present separate lines of descent, touching in Shealtiel and Zerubbabel. The commonly accepted view is that Matthew gives Joseph's line, showing Jesus to be legal heir to the promises given to Abraham and David, and that Luke gives Mary's line, showing Jesus' blood descent: "who as to his human nature was a descendant of David" (Romans 1:3). Mary's genealogy, in accordance with Jewish usage, was in her husband's name. Joseph was the son of Heli (Luke 3:23)—that is, Heli's son-in-law. Jacob was Joseph's father (Matthew 1:16). These genealogies are given more fully in 1 Chronicles 1–9 ; they form the framework of Old Testament history. Carefully guarded through long centuries of change and upheaval, they contain a family line through which a promise was transmitted for 4000 years, a fact unparalleled in history.

Matthew 1:18–25. The Birth of Jesus

Only Matthew and Luke tell of the birth and childhood of Jesus, and each tells different incidents.

Mary, for the first three months after the visit of the heavenly messenger, was away at the home of Elizabeth (Luke 1:36). When she returned to Nazareth and Joseph learned of her condition, it must have filled him with perplexity as to what he should do. But he was a good man, and he wanted to protect Mary from what he supposed would be public disgrace or worse.

Then the angel appeared to him and explained what was happening. To avoid scandal, he still had to keep the family secret, for nobody would have believed Mary's story. Only later, when Jesus' divine nature was authenticated by His miracles and His resurrection from the dead, could Mary speak freely of her heavenly secret and the supernatural conception of her child. (For a note on the Virgin Birth, see on Luke 1:26–38 .)

Joseph

Very little is told of Joseph. He went with Mary to Bethlehem and was with her when Jesus was born (Luke 2: 4, 16). He was with Mary when Jesus was presented in the temple (Luke 2: 33). He took them to Egypt and brought them back to Nazareth (Matthew 2: 13, 19–23). He also took the 12-year-old Jesus to Jerusalem (Luke 2: 43, 51). The only further reference to him is that he was a carpenter and the head of a family of at least seven children (Matthew 13: 55–56). He surely must have been a good and exemplary man to have been thus chosen of God to be the foster-father of God's own Son. He may have died before Jesus began his public ministry, though the language of Matthew 13: 55 and John 6: 42 may imply that he was still alive. He must have died before Jesus' crucifixion, otherwise why did Jesus commit the care of his mother to John (John 19: 26–27)?

Mary

After the stories of the birth of Jesus and His visit to Jerusalem at the age of 12, very little is said of Mary. According to Matthew 13: 55–56, she was the mother of at least six children besides Jesus. At her suggestion, Jesus turned water into wine at Cana, His first miracle (John 2: 1–11). Later, she is mentioned as trying to get to Him in the crowd; Jesus' words on that occasion plainly indicate that her family relation to Him gave her no special spiritual advantage (Matthew 12: 46; Mark 3: 31; Luke 8: 19). She was present at the crucifixion and was committed by Jesus to the care of John (John 19: 25–27). There is no record of Jesus appearing to her after His resurrection, although the fact that there is no record does not mean that it did not happen. The last mention of Mary is in Acts 1: 14, where she was with the disciples in prayer. This is all the Scripture has to say about Mary. One can, however, envision Mary as a quiet, meditative, devoted, wise woman, one who has shared the cares common to motherhood. We admire her, honor her, and love her because she was the mother of our Savior. We can only imagine the impact on Mary's life of being chosen by God to supernaturally bring forth the Savior of the world. What a blessed woman she was! Who were the brothers and sisters of Jesus mentioned in Matthew 13: 55–56 and Mark 6: 3? The plain, simple, natural meaning of these passages is that they were Mary and Joseph's own children. This is the opinion commonly held among Bible commentators.

Mary Magdalene, a follower of Jesus, is also mentioned several times in the New Testament (Matthew 27:56 , 61 ; 28:1 ; Mark 15:40 , 47 ; 16:9 ; Luke 8:2 ; 24:10 ; John 19:25 ; 20:1–18 ; Luke 8:1–3).

Matthew 2:1–12. Visit of the Wise Men

This must have occurred in the period when Jesus was between 40 days and two years old (2:16 ; Luke 2:22 , 39). It would have taken the Magi (or Wise Men) some time to get to Jerusalem after they first saw the star (Matthew 2:7), although probably quite a bit less than two years. And it took some time before Herod realized that the Magi weren't coming back. So Herod, in order to be sure, took the outside limit. We know that the child was no longer in the manger, as is sometimes pictured, but in the house (v. 11 ; see on Luke 2:6–7). These Wise Men belonged to the learned class, those who were the advisers of the kings. They came from Babylon or the

country beyond, the land where the human race had its origin, the land of Abraham, the land of the Jewish captivity (the Babylonian exile, see *The Babylonian Exile and the Return from Exile*), where many Jews still lived. They were perhaps familiar with the Jewish Scriptures and knew of the expectation of a coming Messianic King. It was the land of Daniel, and they may have known of Daniel's prophecies. They were men of high standing, for they had access to Herod. We usually speak of the three Wise Men or Magi, but Scripture does not say how many there were—probably more. They certainly would have traveled with an entourage of perhaps dozens, for it would not be safe for a small group to travel 1000 miles over terrain infested with bandits. Their arrival in Jerusalem was with a sufficient show of importance to stir the whole city. The Magi symbolized the homage of the nations to the newborn King, who one day would be worshiped by all nations. One of the objects of their visit, which they themselves did not know, was to supply money for the child's flight to Egypt. The parents were poor, and if it had not been for the gold and other expensive gifts brought by the Wise Men, escape from Herod might not have been possible. The gifts of the Magi can also be interpreted as foreshadowing Jesus' life and death. The gold, representing royalty, foretells Jesus as King. The incense, symbolic of the prayers of the high priests rising up to heaven, foretells Jesus as High Priest. The myrrh, often used as a burial oil, foretells Jesus' death. The return of the Wise Men to their home countries may have paved the way for the later preaching of the Gospel.

The Star of the Wise Men

The star that guided the Wise Men to Bethlehem has been the subject of much speculation. Several possible explanations have been suggested:

- A supernova or new star. This involves a very distant star in which an explosion takes place so that for a time the star becomes many times brighter than usual—sometimes so bright that it can be seen during the daytime. But there is no record of a supernova around the time of Jesus' birth.
- A comet. The best-known of these is Halley's comet, which actually was visible in 12–11 b.c. But this is rather too long before the actual date of Jesus' birth in 6 or 5 b.c.
- A conjunction of planets. In 7–6 b.c., three planets appeared close together: Jupiter, Saturn, and Mars. This is a rare triple conjunction known as the *conjunctio magna*, or great conjunction. This conjunction took place in the zodiacal constellation Pisces, which was sometimes associated with the last days and with the Hebrews, while Saturn was considered the star of the Syria-Palestine region and Jupiter was associated with the world ruler. But what matters in the end is that God, either by supernatural means or by the supernatural use of a natural event, guided the Wise Men, as representatives of the Gentiles, to worship the King of the Jews who will one day be King of all.

Matthew 2:13–15. The Flight to Egypt

Even this incident did not escape God's unfailing eye in the long line of prophecies that looked forward to the Messiah (v. 15 ; Hosea 11:1). The angel (Matthew 2:13) who directed their flight to Egypt probably was Gabriel, to whom God had entrusted the care of the infant Child (see on Luke 2:8–20). The stay in Egypt was short, probably only a year or two, for Herod soon died and it was safe to return. (See the chronology of Jesus' childhood *Jesus' Birth and Youth* .)

Matthew 2:16–18. The Children of Bethlehem Killed by Herod

It is strange that someone who believed in the coming of the Christ (2:4) could have been conceited (and stupid) enough to think that he could thwart His coming!

Matthew 2:19–23. Return from Egypt

This, too, was directed by the angel. It seems from v. 22 that Joseph was planning to return to Bethlehem in Judea, the ancestral city of David, to make it their permanent home as the proper place in which to rear the child Messiah. But God planned differently and sent them back to their home in Galilee in a town called Nazareth. Luke tells us that this was the home of Mary and Joseph before Jesus' birth (Luke 2:4). What Matthew points out especially is that it was in fulfillment of prophecy: "He will be called a Nazarene." These exact words are not found in the Old Testament but probably refer to Old Testament predictions that the prophet would be despised (Psalm 22:6 ; Isaiah 53:3). Another common opinion is that Matthew is referring to Jesus "the Nazarene," or Jesus the Branch, because the Hebrew word for "branch" is *naser*. The prophecy Matthew refers to here is thought to be Isaiah 11:1 ; Jeremiah 23:5 ; and Zechariah 3:8 , where the Messiah is spoken of as the Branch.

Old Testament Prophecies of Christ Quoted in the Gospels

Matthew uses Old Testament quotations in abundance. He wants to show that the incidents of Christ's life are fulfillments of the prophetic predictions of the Old Testament. What follows is a list of Old Testament prophecies that are quoted in the four Gospels, particularly in Matthew, as having been fulfilled in Christ. Most of them quite clearly refer to the Messiah. A few of them are not so obvious, but they are quoted by the inspired New Testament writers as messianic prophecies.

- He was to be of David's family (Matthew 22: 44; Mark 12: 36; Luke 1: 69, 70; 20: 42–44; John 7: 42 2 Samuel 7: 12–16; Psalms 89: 3–4; 110: 1; 132: 11; Isaiah 9: 6–7; 11: 1).
- He would be born of a virgin (Matthew 1: 23 Isaiah 7: 14).

- He would be born in Bethlehem (Matthew 2: 6; John 7: 42 Micah 5: 2).
- He would stay in Egypt for a while (Matthew 2: 15 Hosea 11: 1).
- He would live in Galilee (Matthew 4: 15 Isaiah 9: 1–2).
- He would live in Nazareth (Matthew 2: 23 Isaiah 11: 1).
- His coming would be announced by an Elijah-like herald (Matthew 3: 3; 11: 10–14; Mark 1: 2–3; Luke 3: 4–6; 7: 27; John 1: 23 Isaiah 40: 3–5; Malachi 3: 1; 4: 5).
- His coming would lead to the murder of Bethlehem’s children (Matthew 2: 18 Genesis 35: 19–20; 48: 7; Jeremiah 31: 15).
- He would proclaim a jubilee to the world (Luke 4: 18–19 Isaiah 58: 6; 61: 1; for an explanation of Jubilee, see p. 163).
- His mission would include Gentiles (Matthew 12: 18–21 Isaiah 42: 1–4).
- His ministry would be one of healing (Matthew 8: 17 Isaiah 53: 4).
- He would teach by means of parables (Matthew 13: 14–15, 35 Isaiah 6: 9–10; Psalm 78: 2).
- He would be disbelieved and rejected by the rulers (Matthew 15: 8–9; 21: 42; Mark 7: 6–7; 12: 10–11; Luke 20: 17; John 12: 38–40; 15: 25 Psalms 69: 4; 118: 22; Isaiah 6: 10; 29: 13; 53: 1).
- He would make a triumphal entry into Jerusalem (Matthew 21: 5; John 12: 13–15 Isaiah 62: 11; Zechariah 9: 9; Psalm 118: 26).
- He would be like a shepherd who is struck down (Matthew 26: 31; Mark 14: 27 Zechariah 13: 7).
- He would be betrayed by a friend for 30 pieces of silver (Matthew 27: 9–10; John 13: 18 Zechariah 11: 12–13; Psalm 41: 9).
- He would die with criminals (Luke 22: 37 Isaiah 53: 9, 12).
- He would be buried by a rich man (Isaiah 53: 9 Matthew 27: 57–60; fact stated, prophecy not quoted).
- He would be given vinegar and gall (Matthew 27: 34; John 19: 29 Psalm 69: 21).
- They would cast lots for His garments (John 19: 24 Psalm 22: 18).
- Even His dying words were foretold (Matthew 27: 46; Mark 15: 34; Luke 23: 46 Psalms 22: 1; 31: 5).
- Not one of His bones would be broken (John 19: 36 Exodus 12: 46; Numbers 9: 12; Psalm 34: 20).
- His side would be pierced (John 19: 37 Zechariah 12: 10; Psalm 22: 16).
- He would rise from the dead on the third day (Matthew 12: 40; Luke 24: 46; no particular passage from the Old Testament is quoted for this, but Acts 2: 25–32 and 13: 33–35 quote from Psalm 16: 10–11 as predicting that He would rise from the dead). Jesus said it was written that He would rise on the third day (Luke 24: 46). He must have had in mind Hosea 6: 2 and Jonah 1: 7 as well as the fact that Isaac was released from death on the third day (Genesis 22: 4).
- His rejection would be followed by the destruction of Jerusalem and great tribulation (Matthew 24: 15; Mark 13: 14; Luke 21: 20 Daniel 9: 27; 11: 31; 12: 1, 11).

Matthew

Told also in Mark 1:1–11 and Luke 3:1–22. (For note on John the Baptist, see Luke 3:1–20). In all three accounts, and in John 1:31–33, the two things specifically mentioned are the descent of the Holy Spirit and the voice from heaven. John 1:31–33 gives the impression that John did not know Jesus, but Matthew 3:14 implies that he did know Him. Undoubtedly Jesus and John had known each other as boys, for their families were related (Luke 1:36), and their mothers were together for three months just before their births (Luke 1:39, 56). It seems certain that the boys must have been told by their parents of the heavenly announcements concerning their respective missions. But from the time when John withdrew to become a hermit of the desert (Luke 1:80), he may not have seen Jesus again until the day of His baptism. Then, with direct heavenly endorsement, Jesus was publicly anointed as the Son of God, the nation’s Messiah, and the Savior of the world. Jesus’ baptism marked the beginning of His earthly ministry. There appear to be several important reasons for Jesus’ baptism. The first reason was to “fulfill all righteousness.” The baptism represented Jesus’ being consecrated to God and publicly approved by Him (Matthew 3:17). All God’s righteous requirements for the Messiah were fulfilled in Jesus. The second reason for the baptism was the public announcement by John the Baptist of the arrival of the Messiah that he had been preaching about. And finally, the baptism allowed Jesus to fully identify with man’s sin and failure (even though Jesus had no sin), becoming our substitute (2 Corinthians 5:21). In this scene we clearly see the manifestation of the holy Trinity. God the Father speaks from heaven (Matthew 3:17). The Holy Spirit descends like a dove and rests on Jesus, the Son of God (v. 16). (Halley’s Bible Handbook; Henry Halley; Zondervan; 2000; Bible History and Commentaries; pages 578-586)

Let's get into the Gospel According To Matthew.

Matthew was a tax collector in Capernaum before he was called by Jesus Christ to be a disciple. He was also called Levi. And he opens his gospel by giving to us the genealogy of Jesus Christ back to Abraham, as he said in chapter one, verse one,

The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham (Mat 1:1).

Now the Lord had promised to Abraham, "through thy seed shall all of the nations of the earth be blessed"(Genesis 22:18). By that was understood that from Abraham's seed the Messiah would come, the one who would be a blessing to all of the nations of the earth. So anyone who would seek to lay claim as the Messiah, would first of all have to be able to prove that he was a descendant of Abraham because God had made that special promise to Abraham.

Later on God promised to David that He would build David's house and that his seed would sit upon the throne forever (2 Samuel 7:12). And from that promise, David understood that God was promising that the Messiah should come through his line, through his genealogy. And after David, there were many prophecies that referred to the Messiah as, "the branch out of the root of Jesse," and, of course, He is referred to as, "Sitting upon the throne of David." So it would be necessary for one who would seek to lay claim to being the Messiah to be able to prove that he is a descendent both of Abraham and also of David.

Now it is interesting to me that no longer do the Jews have any accurate genealogical records; so that there is not a Jew in the world today who can actually prove by the genealogical records that he is a descendent of David. They have lost all their books of generations, but no problem because the Messiah has already come. And Matthew points out here that He does fulfill both of the requirements, being a son of Abraham and a son of David, and so he seeks to trace Jesus back to David and to Abraham.

You say but wait a minute; is not this the genealogy of Joseph? And if Jesus was virgin-born, then why would it be necessary to trace Joseph's genealogy? And it is true when we get to verse sixteen, "And Jacob begat Joseph, the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called the Christ". Notice that it does not say that Joseph was the father of Jesus, but he was "the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ".

Now you are familiar with the fact that in the New Testament we have another line of genealogy that traces the genealogy of Christ back to Adam. And as you read the genealogies in Matthew and in Luke, you'll find that there are differences in the genealogies. In Matthew's genealogy we are tracing the line of Jesus back to David through Solomon, but as you read Luke's genealogy you'll find that it traces the genealogy, actually not of Joseph but of Mary. She also goes back to David and to Abraham, but she comes through the son Nathan, of David. So that Mary also was of the tribe of Judah and a descendant of David, but not through Solomon and his line, but through David's other son Nathan and his line.

But in Matthew's gospel, Joseph is actually a descendant of David through the kingly line. And as you read the kings of Judah, you find that they are listed in the descendants of Joseph, and actually he was of the royal seed of David, and as such, an heir to the throne in Israel. However, there is a real problem to Joseph being king in Israel because his line goes back through the kings of Israel, which includes Joconiah, of whom the Lord cursed through Jeremiah the prophet, saying that "none of his seed would sit upon the throne of Israel forever" (Jeremiah 22:30). So that kingly line that came through Solomon was disallowed from sitting on the throne because of Joconiah's sin there in Jeremiah 22:30. So that Jesus, being the son of Mary, still has a claim to the throne of David, but not through Joconiah who was cursed as not being able to rule, or any of his descendants to rule upon the throne.

So if Jesus were the son of Joseph, He could not reign upon the throne of David because of that curse in Jeremiah 22. But being the son of David through Nathan, and through a different line, He has the right to the throne, coming from Mary. And yet, as far as the Jewish nation would be concerned, they would recognize Joseph as the kingly line, and thus the eldest son of Joseph, considered to be the eldest son of Joseph, though He was born of the Holy Spirit, would then have a right to the throne. So the Lord put the two things together and it's quite fascinating the way it happened.

Now there are some interesting things, and I told you, you can skip the first seventeen verses because reading these names can become laborious to a person who is not familiar with the names, and you spend your whole time just trying to pronounce them and they become rather meaningless. But rarely were women named in the genealogical lines, but in tracing Joseph back, there are four women that are mentioned. And it is interesting to me the four women that are mentioned, because they were not, with the exception of one, really virtuous kind of women.

The first woman that is mentioned is Tamar. And in verse three,

And Judah begat Phares and Zara of Tamar (Mat 1:3);

Now Judah had a son who married Tamar, but his son died before he had any children. So his brother did what was the accepted thing in that culture; he took her as his wife. But he also died before he had any children.

Now Judah had another son. And it was the obligation of the other son to marry her and to raise up a seed, a descendent. But Judah having had two sons die as a result, I don't know if it was a result of her cooking, but I mean he was suspicious anyhow, was not willing to let the third son marry her and he kept stalling her. He said, Oh, he is too young, he's too immature, and he kept on stalling her off until it became quite obvious to her that Judah had no intention of allowing his third son to marry her.

So she put on the attire of a prostitute and sat in the path. And when Judah came by he propositioned her, which she accepted. And she

said, What will you give me? He said, I'll give you a goat out of my flock. She said, Well, you don't have it with you. He said, Well, I'll give you my ring as a guarantee and I'll send the goat back. And so he went in unto her. She had a veil on; he didn't recognize her and she became pregnant by Judah.

Now when word came out to Judah, Tamar, your daughter-in-law is pregnant, he said, put her to death. So she sent his ring. The next day the servant came back with the goat and the gal was gone. And so he said to the people around there, Where is the prostitute that was sitting here? They said, There's no prostitute here. So the fella came back to Judah and said, Hey, I couldn't find her; I've still got the goat. Judah said, Oh well, let it go. Well, when he found out Tamar was pregnant and ordered her to be put to death, then Tamar sent the ring and she said, The man who owns this ring is the one responsible for me being pregnant. And so Judah was trapped. But isn't it interesting that Tamar appears in the lineage of the royal seed of David, that God has chosen Tamar with these untoward circumstances?

The second is Rahab. Now when the children of Israel were ready to come into the land that God had promised them, the first city that they came to was Jericho. And they sent spies into Jericho to take a look at the defenses and all. And when the people of Jericho realized that there were spies within their city from the Israelites, they sought to find them to put them to death. But Rahab who was a prostitute, hid them under some sheaves on her roof. And then she let them down over the wall saying, Please, when you take the city, spare my family and myself. And so they said, You let this scarlet cord hang down, and when we take the city everyone that's in your house will be saved. So the city of Jericho was taken, but they respected Rahab who had sheltered the spies, and those that were within her house were not killed, they were spared (Joshua 2:1-15).

Rahab then married Booz, what we know as Boaz; who was, of course, the one who married Ruth, the Moabitess. And Ruth is the third one that is mentioned. Now Rahab did not come from the line of Israel, but she was of Jericho, a Canaanitess, a prostitute, that the Lord also put in the line.

The next one mentioned is that of Ruth, who was a Moabitess, who were under an eternal curse of God. A Moabite could not come into the temple of the Lord to the tenth generation, or forever, as God had placed a curse on Moab. And yet by the grace of God, Ruth became the wife of Boaz; whose son was Obed, whose son was Jesse, whose son was King David. And so God brought Ruth the Moabitess into the line.

And then, the fourth woman that is mentioned is that one, and it doesn't name her, but we know who she is. who was wife of Urias (Mat 1:6);

So Bathsheba is the fourth woman that is brought into the record. And she is the one who had the illegitimate relationship with David, whose husband was subsequently put to death by a conspiracy of David, and then became David's wife. And from her was born Solomon, who became the king over Israel, and the line comes through Solomon.

So the Lord has put into the genealogy of the line of Joseph these four women, in order to display the grace of God, in order that any of us, through our failures, can still identify with God's plan of grace and love for men. None of us are excluded. God has already included in His program people who had made a mess out of their lives, people who had had great personal failures in their lives, people who had immoral stains in their lives and still God used them in His total plan. And thus, it encourages us who also have stains, who also have failures, that God can still use us in His plan. And so to me it's exciting to see the inclusion that God makes in this line coming to Christ.

Now Matthew divides the generations.

fourteen from Abraham to David, fourteen from David to the carrying away into Babylonian captivity, and fourteen from the Babylonian captivity unto the time of Christ (Mat 1:17).

However, it is quite obvious that Matthew has left out some of the names so that, it is in order that he might, to set them in couplets of seven, three couplets of seven, but deliberately leaving out some of the names. And some of the names that are left out, which are quite obvious, in verse eight, Ahaziah. If you go back in the record in Chronicles you'll find that Ahaziah, Joash, and Amaziah are left out.

Who were Ahaziah, Joash, and Amaziah? They were the sons of Athaliah, who was the daughter of Jezebel and Ahab; that wicked king and queen of the Northern Kingdom, whose sin actually sealed the fate of the Northern Kingdom. And Athaliah had sought to kill all the royal seed of David, but one of the children escaped and, of course, later became king. But the descendants of Athaliah are left out of this record and I am certain deliberately so by Matthew.

There are other omissions, but the purpose of Matthew was to set it up in fourteen generations, and surely it was deliberate. I cannot believe that Matthew just made a mistake, but it was a deliberate omission on Matthew's part in writing the genealogies, because he has the same records that we have of the Old Testament. And He knows good and well these other names fit in there but he deliberately omitted them. And if you want to make a study of the omissions and those persons omitted, I'm sure that you can find the reasons why Matthew chose to omit those names.

Now we get in verse sixteen,

And Jacob begat Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ (Mat 1:16).

So this is the little transition verse. It's a necessary transition verse, because he is giving the genealogy to Abraham, to show that He comes from Abraham and from David. But yet, Jesus Christ was not born of Joseph, and he is going to explain that in just a moment.

Verse eighteen,

Now the birth of Jesus Christ happened like this: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, [that is, before they had had physical intercourse,] she was found to be with child of the Holy Spirit (Mat 1:18).

Now Luke's gospel gives to us a little further enlightenment of how that the angel Gabriel came to Mary and informed her of the process when she said, "How can these things be, seeing I've not had relations with a man?" (Luke 1:34) The angel told her the process by which the child would be born, and we'll study that when we get to the Gospel of Luke.

It is necessary that we understand that in that culture there were three relationships that a couple had: first of all, the engagement; secondly, the espousal; and thirdly, the betrothal.

Now the engagement could take place at any time in that child's life, because marriage was by arrangement. And if your parents had friends, and they had a little daughter born about the same time that their son was born, and they were close friends, they could say, well, let's have your daughter marry our son. And they would strike an arrangement whereby your daughter would marry my son. Now your daughter may be two years old and my son is three years old, and because we made this arrangement that would constitute engagement. And so the little girl two, and the little boy three would be engaged to be married. So you'd go to kindergarten and you'd say, who's your girlfriend, oh, I'm engaged to her. So the engagement could come very early in life because marriage was by the arrangement of the parents.

But when they had come to that point of maturity where they could then get married, and usually it was in the early teens, fifteen, sixteen, when a girl was married; they would go through a year of espousal, when they were really separated to each other as far as relationship is concerned. And it is more like what we call engagement today, where they accept the arrangement of the parents, they accept each other, and they set themselves apart for each other for a year of preparation and planning for the marriage.

After the year of espousal, now during the time of espousal you were considered, in a sense, as being married; that is, to break an espousal actually took a writ of divorcement. You were considered to be married, but it was a year in which you were dedicated to each other without physical relationship, the espousal period. And that could not be broken, except by divorce.

After the year's espousal, then there would be the betrothal, the marriage itself. And on the wedding night the father would take the signs of his daughter's virginity and keep them in case there was ever any question of her being a virgin. You see, if later on the fellow said, Well, she wasn't a virgin when I married her, and sought to divorce her, then the father could bring the tokens of her virginity, and this louse of a husband could be prosecuted for falsely accusing his wife. So it was something that the father kept for the protection of his daughter, the tokens of her virginity, on the wedding night after the betrothal and the whole wedding ceremony and all, he would keep these tokens of her virginity.

So there was first of all, the engagement; secondly, the espousal; thirdly, the betrothal. And so it was during this period that Joseph and Mary were espoused, they were committed to each other, without the physical relationship, that suddenly this very difficult problem developed when Mary became pregnant.

Now under the Jewish law, this constituted infidelity, adultery, because they were in the period of the espousal. And under Jewish law she could be stoned to death for her betrayal of Joseph. And so this is the problem that Joseph faced when Mary, who no doubt was an extremely beautiful person, not necessarily physically, but spiritually. A young girl who was so pure, so righteous, that God chose her above all others to be the vessel through which His Son should be brought forth into the earth. Gave her such a high honor that from that time on, all people would call her "blessed". And so we refer to "the blessed mother of Jesus."

And the depth of her spirituality is reflected in the gospel of Luke when she met her cousin Elizabeth. And as they shared their experiences with the Lord and their two sons, John was in Elizabeth's womb, and Jesus was in Mary's womb. As they began to share the experiences of their pregnancies and all, and those miracles surrounding them, that Mary burst forth into the glorious Magnificat recorded in Luke's gospel, "My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit doth rejoice. For he hath regarded the low estate of his maiden" (Luke 1:46). And she goes on, in this glorious outburst of praise unto God, which expresses really a depth of relationship that Mary had had with the Lord, beautiful in spirit, chosen by God for this high honor.

But Joseph was in a turmoil. He loved her. He didn't know what to do about it. He really could not in his mind stand the thought of publicly disgracing her by declaring that he was not responsible for the child. And to see her stoned by the angry mobs he could not bring himself to do that and so he was thinking, Well, maybe I can just ship her off someplace, put her away privately and she at least can be spared. And Joseph while he was going over these things in his heart and in his mind, notice that it says,

Joseph, being a just man (Mat 1:19),

Many times Joseph is pictured as sort of an oaf, but he was a man in contact with God also and the Lord spoke to him. Evidently Joseph died rather early in the life of Jesus. Because after their return from Egypt, the only reference is John 6:42, "Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, the carpenter?" And no doubt he was there in Nazareth for a time, but by the time Jesus began His public ministry, Joseph has already departed the scene.

Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not willing to make her a public example, was minded to put her away privately. But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David (Mat 1:19-20), We have already seen that he is a descendant of David. Fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife (Mat 1:20):

Because of their espousal she was considered his wife, though they had not yet been betrothed.

for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Yehshua JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins (Mat 1:20-21).

That is the interpretation of Yehshua. It means Yahweh is salvation. It is the Hebrew word for what we call Joshua, which is Yehshua and it is Jehovah, or Yahweh, is salvation. Thus, call His name Joshua, because He will save His people from their sins. So his name implies His mission that of the Savior.

Now all this was done, in order that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying (Mat 1:22),

Notice that Matthew accepts that the words of the prophets were actually inspired by God. One thing the New Testament recognizes all the way through and that is the divine inspiration of Scriptures. As we read, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God" (2 Timothy 3:16).

Peter in referring to the writings of David said, "And David by the mouth of the Holy Spirit spake saying" (Acts 1:16). The New Testament teaches and recognizes that God was behind the writing of the Scriptures, that God is actually the divine author of the Word. So here again is another confirmation that it might be fulfilled, that which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet. As Paul the Apostle said, "That which I have received from the Lord I also delivered unto you." The prophet Isaiah declared in Chapter seven, "Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and shall call his name Immanuel" (Isaiah 7:14), which being interpreted is, "God with us."

Now as we were talking about modern translations and all, and my difficulty with the modern translations, which seek to do away with the deity of Jesus Christ, this is one of those areas where I distrust and despise the Revised Version of the Bible. For when you go back to this prophecy in Isaiah where Isaiah prophesies, "The Lord said to the king Jehosaphat, Ask a sign and I will give it to you." And Jehosaphat said, "I will not ask a sign." And the prophet said, "Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel" (Isaiah 7:14), which being interpreted is God with us. There, the Lord was promising that the Messiah would be born of a virgin.

However, there is a scholar recognized by those biblical authorities, those men at least who establish themselves as such, who are much like the Pharisees, who established themselves as the biblical authorities that no one could understand or interpret Scriptures except for the Scribes and the Pharisees. And Jesus had much to say about them. We have our modern day Scribes and Pharisees, who sit in their little intellectual circles, looking down upon all of us poor ignorant folk. One of their scholars, Jansenius, who has written this dictionary and so forth, translated that Hebrew word, "alma," as "young maiden." And so these translators, of course, wanting to water things down, pick up Jansenius' "young maiden". They translate this, "Behold the Lord will give you a sign, a young maiden will conceive and bear a son, and shall call His name Immanuel."

First of all, tell me what kind of a sign is it when a young girl gets pregnant. That's no sign; that happens all the time. There is nothing unusual or unique about that. It was obvious that the Holy Spirit intended the translation to be "virgin," and every other use of "alma" in the Old Testament is referring to a "virgin." But you know this scholar's reason for translating it "young maiden," instead of "virgin", now this is scholarship. He declared, "I do not believe in miracles, and for a young virgin to have a child would be a miracle, thus I reject it." And thus he translated it, "young maiden" instead of a "virgin." That's the kind of scholarship that I have absolutely no respect for, because it has already taken a presupposition that God doesn't really exist. That God isn't able to transcend the natural laws that He has established in the Universe. I thoroughly, totally reject such stupidity, and I don't have to accept it, thank God.

Now some two hundred years before Jesus was born, there were seventy scholars who felt that the people should have Scriptures in a language they could understand, because the Hebrew language was pretty much lost during the Babylonian captivity. And after they had returned from Babylon, the majority of the people did not speak Hebrew. It was a language then that was only for the biblical scholars in those days. The people had to depend upon the scholars to teach them the Scriptures, because they did not have them in their own language any longer.

And because of Alexander the Great's influence and the Grecian influence through that territory when Alexander the Great conquered, these men decided to translate the Hebrew Bible, Old Testament, into Greek, in order that the people might be able to read their own Scriptures. Because there were seventy scholars who gave themselves to this task of translation, they called the translation the Septuagint, for the seventy scholars. Thus, when you read of the Septuagint, it is a Greek translation made approximately two hundred years before the birth of Christ, in order that the people might have their Scriptures again in a language that they could read and understand for themselves.

So it is interesting that when these Greek scholars, two hundred years before Mary had this experience of bearing the child Jesus as a virgin, that these Greek and Hebrew scholars, understanding the prophecy of Isaiah when translating that Hebrew word "alma" into Greek, used then a Greek word that is only used of "a virgin". And of course, Matthew copies here in his Greek their translation from the Septuagint. And inasmuch as the New Testament is recognizing that the Old Testament is inspired of the Lord, and Isaiah, when he said this, was inspired of the Lord and it translates it "virgin"; it's really tampering with the Scriptures and blasphemous for man to take upon himself to translate that passage in Isaiah "a young maiden" by translating the passage, "a young maiden will conceive."

That's just one of my cases, of which I have hundreds, against the modern translations. That's why I am so glad that the Lord has finally provided us a new translation which sticks to the Majority Text and to the fundamental truths that God has declared. So that is just a little aside, but it is something that I am rejoicing in.

Then Joseph when he awoke from his sleep did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took Mary as his wife: And he did not know her until she had brought forth her firstborn son: and he called his name [Yehshua] (Mat 1:24-25).

The dogma that was developed in the Catholic Church of the perpetual virginity of Mary, is sheer poppycock. It is the invention of man who have sought to elevate Mary to the status of deity. The obvious is here, "And did not know her until," but obviously afterwards he did have the normal husband-wife relationships with Mary, or else the other sons that were born of Mary and the daughters were also virgin-born, and that throws the whole story in disarray. For Mark's gospel names the brothers of Jesus: James, Joses, Simon, and his sisters. So to declare perpetual virginity of Mary is not a scriptural truth. It is a dogma developed by the church without scriptural foundation, as is so much dogma. Beware of dogma. Jesus said, Beware of the dogs.

Matthew 2:1-23 (AMP)

1 NOW WHEN Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men [astrologers] from the east came to Jerusalem, asking, 2 Where is He Who has been born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the east at its rising and have come to worship Him. 3 When Herod the king heard this, he was disturbed and troubled, and the whole of Jerusalem with him. 4 So he called together all the chief priests and learned men (scribes) of the people and anxiously asked them where the Christ was to be born. 5 They replied to him, In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it is written by the prophet: 6 And you Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, you are not in any way least or insignificant among the chief cities of Judah; for from you shall come a Ruler (Leader) Who will govern and shepherd My people Israel. 7 Then Herod sent for the wise men [astrologers] secretly, and accurately to the last point ascertained from them the time of the appearing of the star [that is, how long the star had made itself visible since its rising in the east]. 8 Then he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, Go and search for the Child carefully and diligently, and when you have found Him, bring me word, that I too may come and worship Him. 9 When they had listened to the king, they went their way, and behold, the star which had been seen in the east in its rising went before them until it came and stood over the place where the young Child was. 10 When they saw the star, they were thrilled with ecstatic joy. 11 And on going into the house, they saw the Child with Mary His mother, and they fell down and worshiped Him. Then opening their treasure bags, they presented to Him gifts—gold and frankincense and myrrh. 12 And receiving an answer to their asking, they were divinely instructed and warned in a dream not to go back to Herod; so they departed to their own country by a different way. 13 Now after they had gone, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, Get up! [Tenderly] take unto you the young Child and His mother and flee to Egypt; and remain there till I tell you [otherwise], for Herod intends to search for the Child in order to destroy Him. 14 And having risen, he took the Child and His mother by night and withdrew to Egypt 15 And remained there until Herod's death. This was to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet, Out of Egypt have I called My Son. 16 Then Herod, when he realized that he had been misled by the wise men, was furiously enraged, and he sent and put to death all the male children in Bethlehem and in all that territory who were two years old and under, reckoning according to the date which he had investigated diligently and had learned exactly from the wise men. 17 Then was fulfilled what was spoken by the prophet Jeremiah: 18 A voice was heard in Ramah, wailing and loud lamentation, Rachel weeping for her children; she refused to be comforted, because they were no more. 19 But when Herod died, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt 20 And said, Rise, [tenderly] take unto you the Child and His mother and go to the land of Israel, for those who sought the Child's life are dead. 21 Then he awoke and arose and [tenderly] took the Child and His mother and came into the land of Israel. 22 But because he heard that Archelaus was ruling over Judea in the place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. And being divinely warned in a dream, he withdrew to the region of Galilee. 23 He went and dwelt in a town called Nazareth, so that what was spoken through the prophets might be fulfilled: He shall be called a Nazarene [Branch, Separated One].

Chapter Two

Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king (Mat 2:1),

This is Herod the Great, that little short monster. He was a little over four feet tall, and as really short little guys probably suffered a tremendous ego problem. And thus significantly everything he did was big. I mean, he built great fortresses out of great rocks. I stood next to a rock that is along the Western Wall in Jerusalem that Herod had built as a retaining wall, to build up the temple mount to place the temple on top. Back underneath where tourists can't go, I stood by a rock that was forty-seven feet long, ten feet high, and ten feet wide. It is estimated to weigh one hundred and seventy tons. This little Herod had that rock put there.

He was a genius at building. He built, of course, the Herodian. He built Masada. He built another fortress similar to the Herodian that has not yet really been excavated, the Alexandrian. He built, of course, the great temple in Jerusalem. He built the temple mount area. He built Caesarea, and tremendous building projects by this little genius; built the pools over near Bethlehem, and the whole water system for Jerusalem. Today you can still look at many of the building projects of Herod and stand in absolute amazement at the building genius of this little fellow.

He also was horribly cruel and paranoid. He thought that his sons and his wife, Miriam, were plotting against him, so he had them all put to death. Then he began to miss Miriam, so he built a big monument to Miriam because he missed her after he had killed her. They used to say, "It's safer to be Herod's pig than to be his son," because he was always paranoid that his sons were trying to take over his throne. So he was having them killed all the time and wiped out most of his sons because of his paranoia. He was a very insecure little fellow and that is why these big fortresses that he built, and would seek refuge in the fortresses.

Now in time, he realized that as the result of his own cruelty and meanness, no one would weep when he died. And he couldn't stand the thought of no one weeping when he died, so he gave orders that when he died all of his top officials were to be killed, executed, because he wanted people to mourn when he was dead. And he knew they wouldn't mourn for him, so in order that there would be mourning when he died, he ordered all these popular officials to be put to death when he died. Fortunately, when he died, they had

enough sense to realize, well, why should we obey his order; he's dead? And the other officials were not executed and thus he went unmourned.

Now in those days when Herod was king, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, and they said, Where is he that is born the King of the Jews? (Mat 2:1-2). Can't you imagine what that would do to this little insecure Herod? These guys are asking. I'm the King of the Jews. What do you mean, "Where is he that is born King of the Jews?" He was so threatened in his position that when these men came from the east to inquire of the birth of the King of the Jews, he really got shook. They said, for we have seen his star in the east, and we are come to worship Him (Mat 2:2). Now there is an awful lot that has been written about the star of Bethlehem. They have said it was a conjunction of planets, and they have come up with many different speculations as to what astronomically constituted the star of Bethlehem. In the Griffith Observatory in December, they oftentimes have as that monthly lecture, the star of Bethlehem. And of course with that in the Planetarium there, they can adjust the lights in the ceiling to represent the skies in any period of history. They can take you back through the years to the time of the birth of Christ and show you the constellations, planet alignments, and so forth. They have a very interesting lecture on the star of Bethlehem. But just exactly what did take place that constituted this special sign in the sky is a matter of many men's speculations. But that, at the present time, as valid as it is, it is the speculation of man, and we do not know for sure. And God did not call me to speculate. So we will just let that go.

we have seen his star in the East, and we have come to worship him (Mat 2:2). If they were in the East and saw the star, then it evidently led them westward. So it was some kind of perhaps special and supernatural sign, as I'll point out in a moment. When Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled, and all of Jerusalem with him (Mat 2:3).

Because when Herod is troubled, everybody is troubled.

And when he had gathered all the chief priests and the scribes of the people together, he demanded [not he inquired] of them where Christ should be born. And they said unto him, [look these fellows know their Scriptures] in Bethlehem of Judaea: for thus it is written by the prophet [the prophet Micah], And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel (Mat 2:4-6). They didn't finish the prophecy. But you go back to Micah and you read, "whose going forth is from everlasting" (Micah 5:2). And he speaks about His sitting upon the throne and reigning. So Bethlehem's pinpointed as the birthplace. So when Herod had privately called the wise men, he inquired of them diligently when they first saw the star (Mat 2:7). So they told him when they first saw the star and began their journey. So And he sent them to Bethlehem, and said, Go and search diligently for the young child; and when you have found him, bring me word again, that I may come and worship him also (Mat 2:8).

Herod had a very perverted sense of worship.

When they had heard the king [that is king Herod], they departed; and, lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was (Mat 2:9). It is hard to really explain then this star by some kind of a natural phenomenon, in that they saw it in the East. It led them west, but now it is leading them back east, because Bethlehem is actually south and east of Jerusalem.

"It stood", notice, "over where the young child was." Notice it didn't stand over the manger. It didn't stand over where the baby was, but it stood over where the "young child was". Here is where our Christmas cards and our Christmas pageants throw us off, because it makes such a glorious climax to the Christmas pageantry to have the wise men coming to the manger on their camels, and laying down their gifts before the baby in the manger, while the shepherds are peering on wild-eyed. It's something typical of Christmas cards, or of the Christmas pageantry, but the wise men were latecomers. By the time that they had arrived, Joseph and Mary had moved out of the manger and had moved into a house in Bethlehem. The wise men, I am sorry, did not come to the manger, but actually arrived later on, perhaps a year or as much as two years later. When the wise men finally arrived and they found the young child, by this time Jesus was probably walking around and saying a few words. And when they were come into the house, [not into the manger, but into the house] they saw the young child with Mary His mother, and fell down, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto Him gifts; gold [befitting the king], and frankincense, and myrrh (Mat 2:11). Myrrh was a spice for burial--quite significant that it would be given to "the young child." Now being warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way (Mat 2:12). They didn't bother to go back to Jerusalem because God warned them not to. And when they were departed, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph (Mat 2:13), Now again, Joseph is really in contact with the Lord and the Spirit. and the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and stay there until I bring you word: for Herod is going to seek the young child to destroy him. When he arose, he took the young child and his mother by night, and departed into Egypt: And there he was until the death of Herod: [in order] that it might be fulfilled (Mat 2:13-15),

Notice how Matthew over and over is showing that these aspects of the life of Christ were in reality a fulfillment of prophecy,

which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Out of Egypt have I called my Son. Then Herod, when he saw that he was mocked by the wise men, was exceedingly angry, he sent forth, and killed all of the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the area around, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently inquired of the wise men (Mat 2:15-16).

Remember, they said, "when did you first see the star?" So they told him when they first saw the star and that's why he killed the children two years old and under, because they had first seen the star some two years earlier, which again shows Christ was not a baby in a manger when the wise men arrived.

Then Herod when he killed all the children,

Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet, saying, In Rama was there a voice heard, of lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, as Rachel was weeping for her children (Mat 2:17-18),

Now of course, it's significant that Rachel actually died there just on the outskirts of Bethlehem and her tomb is there at Bethlehem. She died in childbirth at the birth of Benjamin. You remember she called his name Benoni, because of the grief. And so the prophecy of Rachel who had died there in Bethlehem. The people, of course, around Bethlehem revere the place of her burial, her tomb there. "Rachel weeping for her children and would not be comforted because they are not," because they have been killed.

But when Herod was dead,[he died shortly thereafter], behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, Saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and go into the land of Israel: for they are dead which sought the young child's life. And he arose, and took the young child and his mother, and they came into the land of Israel. But when he heard that Archelaus did reign in Judaea in the place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there: notwithstanding, he was warned by God in a dream, he turned aside into the area of Galilee (Mat 2:19-22):

He went back up into the area where he originated from, actually in Galilee where Mary had first received the word from Gabriel that she was to become the mother of the Christ child.

And they came and they dwelt in a city called Nazareth: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene (Mat 2:23).

All the way through, Matthew is showing you that Christ is the fulfillment of prophecy. Matthew is a prophecy buff.



Matthew 3:1-17 (AMP)

1 IN THOSE days there appeared John the Baptist, preaching in the Wilderness (Desert) of Judea 2 And saying, Repent (think differently; change your mind, regretting your sins and changing your conduct), for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. 3 This is he who was mentioned by the prophet Isaiah when he said, The voice of one crying in the wilderness (shouting in the desert), Prepare the road for the Lord, make His highways straight (level, direct). 4 This same John's garments were made of camel's hair, and he wore a leather girdle about his waist; and his food was locusts and wild honey. 5 Then Jerusalem and all Judea and all the country round about the Jordan went out to him; 6 And they were baptized in the Jordan by him, confessing their sins. 7 But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism, he said to them, You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee and escape from the wrath and indignation [of God against disobedience] that is coming? 8 Bring forth fruit that is consistent with repentance [let your lives prove your change of heart]; 9 And do not presume to say to yourselves, We have Abraham for our forefather; for I tell you, God is able to raise up descendants for Abraham from these stones! 10 And already the ax is lying at the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. 11 I indeed baptize you in (with) water because of repentance [that is, because of your changing your minds for the better, heartily amending your ways, with abhorrence of your past sins]. But He Who is coming after me is mightier than I, Whose sandals I am not worthy or fit to take off or carry; He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire. 12 His winnowing fan (shovel, fork) is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clear out and clean His threshing floor and gather and store His wheat in His barn, but the chaff He will burn up with fire that cannot be put out. 13 Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to John to be baptized by him. 14 But John protested strenuously, having in mind to prevent Him, saying, It is I who have need to be baptized by You, and do You come to me? 15 But Jesus replied to him, Permit it just now; for this is the fitting way for [both of] us to fulfill all righteousness [that is, to perform completely whatever is right]. Then he permitted Him. 16 And when Jesus was baptized, He went up at once out of the water; and behold, the heavens were opened, and he [John] saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on Him. 17 And behold, a voice from heaven said, This is My Son, My Beloved, in Whom I delight!

Chapter Three

In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea (Mat 3:1).

Now we have the silent years of Christ. We are jumping now from the return to Nazareth to the beginning of His public ministry. There are some twenty-eight to twenty-nine years that nothing is recorded. Now in the Apocrypha, there are books in the Apocrypha that report to have the stories of the early life and the boyhood of Jesus: the healing of little birds with broken wings and fanciful stories. The Lord has seen fit to just leave that portion of His life in silence, and where the Scriptures are silent it's best that we remain silent. So we jump those years. Now one little gospel gives us one little insight when he was twelve years old, but that is the only glimpse that we have of the boyhood of Jesus. And at twelve years he seemed to be a very unusual young man, as we will find in another of the gospels.

So we are jumping now to John the Baptist who was preaching in the wilderness of Judaea and he was saying,

Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. For this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah, [that is John the Baptist is the one that Isaiah spoke of] saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. And the same John has his raiment of camel's hair, and a leather girdle about his loins; and his meat was locusts and wild honey (Mat 2:2-4).

Whether the locust be that insect of the grasshopper family or the carob tree fruit is really not sure. Some say it's that carob long bean, kind of a fruit that grows there on the carob trees. They call it Joshua's bread. Some say that is what the locust were. Others say it was that insect of the grasshopper family, which some people do consider a delicacy like they do escargot and other things. To every man his own taste, I guess. They tell me they're good, but I can't bear to eat them. I just as soon get my calories some other way.

Then went out to John the Baptist people from Jerusalem, and all Judaea, and from the region round about Jordan, and they were baptized by him in Jordan, confessing their sins. But when he saw many of the Pharisees and the Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers (Mat 3:5-7),

Now this is John's opinion of the religious scholars,

O, generation of vipers who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits that meet repentance (Mat 3:7-8):

Bring forth fruit in your life that really shows repentance. There are a lot of people who claim, oh I repent, but there is no fruit of repentance in their life. You don't see any really signs of repentance. Now repentance means really to change, and if a person doesn't really make real changes in his life, then there is reason to doubt the sincerity of that person's repentance.

And so John is laying into these Pharisees and Scribes, calling them a generation of vipers. And he said, let's see you bring forth some fruit to show that you've really repented. You see the other people were repenting and being baptized, turning away from their sin. These fellows came along too and he said, oh no, I'm not going to baptize you. Let's see some fruit of your repentance.

I've had people tell me that they were sorry for what they have done, but they didn't change. I had a man rip me off of several thousands of dollars. He came and said, oh, forgive me, I am so sorry, but he didn't return a cent. And I felt like John the Baptist, well, let's see some fruit of your repentance. If you're really sorry, let's see some fruit. If you want me to, really let's see some fruit of your repentance. Bring forth fruit that is in agreement, that's meet, or in agreement with your repentance, conformation.

And don't think to say within yourselves, Well we're the sons of Abraham (Mat 3:9).

And that was their great boast, well, we're the sons of Abraham. They thought that that naturally constituted salvation. Just like so many people in the United States think that to be an American is to be a Christian, but it naturally constitutes well, are you saved? Well, of course. I am an American. I pledge allegiance to the flag. And in that don't we say, under God? Do you think I'm a pagan or something? And so the Jew had that same attitude, I am a son of Abraham. He said don't think that is any big deal, "God can turn these stones into sons of Abraham".

And now also the axe is laid to the root of the trees: therefore every tree that does not bring forth good fruit is going to be cut down, and cast into the fire (Mat 3:10).

Now Jesus in the fifteenth chapter of John talks about the vine and the branches. "Every branch in me that does not bring forth fruit shall be cut off and men gather them and throw them into the fire and they are burned. The time has come." Jesus said, "By their fruit ye shall know them." (Matthew 7:16) John says, "Bring forth fruit."

Now Jesus, you remember, when He was with His disciples, was hungry, saw a fig tree, they came to it and there was no fruit. He cursed the fig tree, and the next day as they were coming back to the Mount of Olives along the path there, the disciples looked at the tree that Jesus had cursed the day before, and the thing had withered and died overnight. They said, Lord, look at that tree that you cursed yesterday. Man, the thing is withered and dead already. The fig tree was a symbol of the nation of Israel. The Lord was looking that the nation Israel would bring forth fruit. Here John the Baptist is saying, "the time the axe is going to be laid to the root", that is to Israel itself. The tree that doesn't bring forth good fruit is going to be cut down.

Paul the apostle tells us in Romans 11, that God cut off the natural branches, that He might graft in the branches contrary to nature; the Gentile believers that they might partake of the fatness and all of the tree. So the nation of Israel rejected because of their rejection. God gave them their Messiah. He gave them their opportunity; they rejected it. And so the gospel brought to the Gentiles and the Jew alike, so that no matter who you are Gentile or Jew, there is only one way and that's through Jesus Christ.

John said,

I indeed do baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that comes after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to untie: he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit, and with fire (Mat 3:11):

The forerunner, not bearing witness of himself, but bearing witness of the one who was to follow him; even Jesus Christ. The voice in the wilderness saying, "Prepare ye the way of the Lord, the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matthew 3:3). He was preparing the hearts of the people for the coming of Jesus Christ; that was his ministry. John's gospel amplifies the ministry of John the Baptist. So when we get into John's gospel we will get a further insight into this interesting person, John the Baptist.

Now speaking of Jesus he declares,

Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, [cleanse it] and gather his wheat into the garner (Mat 3:12); You come into the threshing floor with a fan and you fan the threshing floor to blow out all the chaff, in order that just the wheat might remain there on the floor. So they would come in with these fans and just whip the fans across the threshing floors to blow out the chaff. So the picture is, the fan in His hand, and He will thoroughly cleanse His threshing floor, and will gather His wheat into the garner, but he will burn the chaff with unquenchable fire. Then came Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized by him. But John forbid Him, and he said, I have need to be baptized by you, and your coming to me? And Jesus answered and said unto him, Allow it to be now: for it becomes us to fulfill all righteousness. So he allowed him and he baptized him (Mat 3:12-15).

John objected, but Jesus set aside his objections, declaring that it was necessary that He set an example.

Now Peter said, "For Christ has set an example for us, that we should follow in His steps" (1 Peter 2:21). Because He had nothing to repent, John hesitated, but Jesus was doing it actually as an example to set before us that example and it declares. What does baptism declare? Remember I told you a couple of weeks ago. Baptism declares the superiority of the spiritual over the material: The life of the Spirit over the life of the flesh. That's the proclamation that Jesus had to make and that's why the world got angry with Him, because they were living after the flesh and after the desires of the flesh, but Jesus was declaring that the spiritual life is superior to the fleshly life. That is the message of the Word of God all the way through: the superiority of the spiritual life over the fleshly life.

That is what baptism does represent; the death of the fleshly life, the old life, the old nature, the old ambitions, the old desires: dead, buried. And the new life coming up out of the water, the life of the Spirit. It is superior to the life of the flesh.

So when Jesus was baptized, he came up out of the water: the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him (Mat 3:16):

As He came up out of the waters that Holy Spirit coming upon and anointing His life.

And a voice from heaven declared, This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased (Mat 3:17).

The proud Father couldn't hold back His delight in His Son and spoke saying, "This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." Jesus said, "I do always those things that please the Father." (John 8:29). Thus He lived the perfect life, a life of total fulfillment. In Revelation 4:11, as the elders are ascribing glory to God there before the throne of God, as the Cherubim are declaring, verse eight, "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty, which is, which was, and which is to come:", the four and twenty elders take their little golden vials full of odors, cast them before the crystal sea and fall on their faces and declare, "Thou art worthy to receive glory and honor: for thou hast created all things, and for thy good pleasure they are and were created." There is the explanation why God created you: for His good pleasure.

You say, "I don't like that." That's tough. You can't change it. That is the way it is. And if you fight it, you're just going to live a life of frustration. If you become obedient and in harmony to it, you're going to live a life of glorious fulfillment. When a person can say as Jesus, "I do always those things that please the Father," I will tell you, you have got the perfect life.

So God is testifying,

This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased (Mat 3:17). Notice, Jesus is being baptized, the Holy Spirit descends upon Him and the voice of the Father speaks from heaven saying, "This is My beloved Son." There you have the Trinity: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.



Matthew 4:1-25 (AMP)

1 THEN JESUS was led (guided) by the [Holy] Spirit into the wilderness (desert) to be tempted (tested and tried) by the devil. 2 And He went without food for forty days and forty nights, and later He was hungry. 3 And the tempter came and said to Him, If You are God's Son, command these stones to be made [loaves of] bread. 4 But He replied, It has been written, Man shall not live and be upheld and sustained by bread alone, but by every word that comes forth from the mouth of God. 5 Then the devil took Him into the holy city and placed Him on a turret (pinnacle, gable) of the temple sanctuary. 6 And he said to Him, If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down; for it is written, He will give His angels charge over you, and they will bear you up on their hands, lest you strike your foot against a stone. 7 Jesus said to him, On the other hand, it is written also, You shall not tempt, test thoroughly, or try exceedingly the Lord your God. 8 Again, the devil took Him up on a very high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and the glory (the splendor, magnificence, preeminence, and excellence) of them. 9 And he said to Him, These things, all taken together, I will give You, if You will prostrate Yourself before me and do homage and worship me. 10 Then Jesus said to him, Begone, Satan! For it has been written, You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him alone shall you serve. 11 Then the devil departed from Him, and behold, angels came and ministered to Him. 12 Now when Jesus heard that John had been arrested and put in prison, He withdrew into Galilee. 13 And leaving Nazareth, He went and dwelt in Capernaum by the sea, in the country of Zebulun and Naphtali— 14 That what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be brought to pass: 15 The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, in the way to the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles [of the peoples who are not of Israel]— 16 The people who sat (dwelt enveloped) in darkness have seen a great Light, and for those who sat in the land and shadow of death Light has dawned. 17 From that time Jesus began to preach, crying out, Repent (change your mind for the better, heartily amend your ways, with abhorrence of your past sins), for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. 18 As He was walking by the Sea of Galilee, He noticed two brothers, Simon who is called Peter and Andrew his brother, throwing a dragnet into the sea, for they were fishermen. 19 And He said to them, Come after Me [as disciples—letting Me be your Guide], follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men! 20 At once they left their nets and became His disciples [sided with His party and followed Him]. 21 And going on further from there He noticed two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John, in the boat with their father Zebedee, mending their nets and putting them right; and He called them. 22 At once they left the boat and their father and joined Jesus as disciples [sided with His party and followed Him]. 23 And He went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and preaching the good news (Gospel) of the kingdom, and healing every disease and every weakness and infirmity among the people. 24 So the report of Him spread throughout all Syria, and they brought Him all who were sick, those afflicted with various diseases and torments, those under the power of demons, and epileptics, and paralyzed people, and He healed them. 25 And great crowds joined and accompanied Him about, coming from Galilee and Decapolis [the district of the ten cities east of the Sea of Galilee] and Jerusalem and Judea and from the other [the east] side of the Jordan.

Chapter Four

Then was Jesus led of the Spirit into the wilderness (Mat 4:1)

Immediately, He is now being led by the Spirit, walking after the Spirit. The New Testament has so much to say to us concerning the life of the Spirit and walking in the Spirit. There are so many people that put the emphasis upon the baptism of the Holy Spirit; where in reality, the emphasis should be upon the walk of the Spirit, not the gifts, not the phenomenon, not the excitement, not the manifestations. But the real Christian emphasis should be the walk in the Spirit and being led by the Spirit, because Paul tells us in Romans (Rom 8), "And as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God."

I don't care how excited you get, and how high you jump under the anointing of the Spirit. What I am interested in is how straight you walk when you land. I have known too many people jumping that are not walking straight, and to me it is invalid. The excitement that you may have in the manifestation of spiritual gifts is not as important as your walking after the Spirit. Your walk in the Spirit, that is what is vital and what is important. And that is what God is looking for, for you to walk in the Spirit, not just to have spiritual excitement because of spiritual phenomenon, but to be walking in the Spirit.

Now I'm not opposed to the spiritual excitement and spiritual phenomenon, but I am opposed to walking a crooked line in the flesh. And I think that is where our emphasis needs to be laid. And when we lay the emphasis just upon the spiritual phenomenon, but not upon the walk in the Spirit, then we get into all kinds of difficulty.

So Jesus was led of the Spirit into the wilderness [for what purpose?] to be tempted of the devil [to be tested]. And when he had fasted for forty days and forty nights, he was afterward hungered (Mat 4:1-2).

It is interesting. Dr. Wilder-Smith, who was with us, was talking about sensual deprivation and I found that extremely interesting. Our minds are so busy interpreting to us all the stimuli around us; the sight, the hearing, the tasting, the feeling. And these sensory receptors that we have are constantly sending their little messages to the brain, the olfactory and the smelling and all; so are constantly interpreting all of this sensual data and the brain is processing it.

It is saying, man, this seat is getting hard. I wonder how much longer he's going to go? It's saying, why don't you move your position just a little bit, distribute the weight in a little different place, get a little more comfortable. At the same time your eyes are sending these little photographs at eighteen frames per second into your brain, that is interpreting these vibrations into the color and the forms and so forth. At the same time your ears are picking up the sound vibrations, and the little bones in there, the incus and the stapes, and so forth are tuning onto these vibrations and sending the vibrations in your brain. And it is unscrambling these vibrations into words. At the same time you may be perspiring, and maybe you've put a piece of mint into your mouth, and so something, so all of these sensory things are coming into your brain, and your brain is unscrambling, and interpreting for you all of this stimuli. And as a result our brains are glutted with information.

It is interesting when Dr. Wilder-Smith said that as they began to put the astronauts into the, what they call sensual deprivation, by putting them into dark rooms, into a weightless situation in the water, floating in water, so you get this sense of weightlessness, in warm water, body temperature water so you are not interpreting hot or cold and by taking away so many of the darkness of the room, the quietness that is in the room, the sterility of the room without any smells or anything within it. As they were in this position of sensual deprivation, that is the brain was not having to deal with all of the messages that were being sent by the various sensory perceptive parts of the body; that the astronauts began to have visions and spiritual experiences as God began to communicate through the sixth sense. The sixth sense that we usually do not pick up upon because the brain is glutted with all of the information from the five senses. And I found that extremely fascinating.

In fasting, your brain is being deprived of one of the normal senses, that is the taste sense. So your going through a period of time where the brain is not having to interpret the taste: sweet, bitter, flat, salty or whatever. The brain is freed from the interpreting of the senses from the taste buds. So you are giving an empty circuit in the brain, opening a line, so to speak, that that sixth sense might begin to get some messages through.

They say that after five days you lose the sense of hunger when you go on a prolonged fast. And that you do not experience hunger again until you actually start to starve to death. That usually comes between the thirty-fifth and the fortieth day that you start getting hungry. And they say that when you start getting hungry again, it's vitally important that you eat, because now you are starving to death and if you don't get some nutrition you will soon die.

It is significant that Jesus fasted for forty days and forty nights and afterwards was hungry (Matthew 4:2). It would indicate that He was not hungry during the period of the forty days and forty nights, but after that, He was hungry. Satan taking advantage of that hunger and that starving condition came to Him and said,

If you are the Son of God (Mat 4:3),

This is not "If" in the indicative, but "If" in the subjunctive, which is translated more properly, "since you are the Son of God."

There was no doubt in Satan's mind who He was. The demon said, "We know who thou art; the Holy One of God." And Jesus said, "Be quiet. It's not time yet." (Luke 4:34-35)

Satan is not saying, "If" indicative: "If you are the Son of God." He is saying, Since you are the Son of God, why don't you use your divine powers to satisfy your own fleshly needs? That is something that Satan is often tempting people with who have received gifts of the Spirit. Why don't you use your divine powers in order to satisfy your own sensual needs; your own hunger, your own appetite, your own desires? Why don't you turn these stones into bread? You've got the power to do it. You're God. You're hungry. Why don't you perform a miracle to satisfy your own desire?

Jesus answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God (Mat 4:4).

He answered the temptation of Satan with the Word of God. "Thy word", the Scripture say, "have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against you." (Psalm 119:11)

The Word of God is our strength and our power against temptation. If you want to be strong against the temptation of the enemy, then you must get into the Word, and you must study the Word of God and hide it away in your heart.

John wrote in his first epistle, "I have written unto you, young men, because you are strong and have overcome the evil one" (1 John 2:13). And then he said, "I have written unto you, young men, because you have overcome, because the Word of God abides in you" (1 John 2:14). That's how they overcame, by the Word of God. That is how Jesus overcame the temptations, by the Word of God. It is so important that we hide the Word of God in our hearts.

Then the devil took him to the holy city, and set him there on the pinnacle of the temple (Mat 4:5),

Tradition says it is the corner of the temple mount, which at that time was some two hundred feet down from the corner.

And he said unto him, Since you are the Son of God, jump: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge over thee concerning thee: and they shall bear thee up in their hands, lest at any time you dash your foot against a stone (Mat 4:6).

Jesus said, "It is written," answered Satan with the Word. So what does Satan do? He comes right back to Him, perverting the Word. He says, "Why don't you jump? Because it is written, He will give His angels charge over thee to keep thee in all thy ways. They'll bear thee up lest you dash your foot against a stone". You won't hurt down there. The angels will bear you up. Jesus said, and it's so important to compare Scripture with Scripture,

It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God (Mat 4:7).

There are a couple of interesting Scriptures in Mark concerning the signs following those that believe. It says, "They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them" (Mark 16:18).

There was a pastor back in the hills of Kentucky who took cyanide around to his members and made them drink to prove their faith. Two of them died and he was charged with manslaughter. They had doubts. There are those snake handlers. They get out the rattlesnakes and pass them around the circle. Every once in awhile we're reading of someone who is bitten by the snake and who dies. But they are doing it on the basis of Mark's gospel, chapter sixteen. But again, if they would only compare Scripture with Scripture.

Basically, this is what Satan is suggesting to Jesus, that He put Himself in personal jeopardy to prove the Scriptures. Jump, prove it, He'll give His angels. That is what it says. But Jesus was wise enough to compare Scripture with Scripture. He said, "It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt." You are not to put ourselves deliberately, purposefully in jeopardy to prove the Scriptures. Thus these people down in Kentucky are absolutely wrong. In fact, there is a sect of them over in Long Beach. There are not all of them back there in the hills of Kentucky. They have been doing that over in Long Beach. But it is wrong to put yourself deliberately, purposefully in jeopardy just to prove the Scriptures.

Again, the devil took him up into an exceeding high mountain, and showed him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them (Mat 4:8);

We'll deal with this more completely when we get to Luke's gospel.

And He said unto him, All of these things will I give you, if thou wilt bow down and worship me. And Jesus said, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve (Mat 4:9-10).

So the three temptations, each one answered by Jesus with the Word of God.

And the devil left him, and, behold, the angels came and ministered unto him. Now when Jesus had heard that John was cast into prison, he departed to Galilee; and leaving Nazareth, he came and he lived in Capernaum (Mat 4:11-13),

Capernaum is one of my favorite places there in the Holy Land, because the majority of the ministry of Jesus was accomplished there in Capernaum. And I just love that beautiful spot next to the Sea of Galilee; it's always so peaceful and so restful. There's just a good vibe all over the place, except for the priest that keeps the thing and he is sort of a bore. He got after us for filming because we didn't write in advance and get permission, and all that kind of stuff. It was absolutely stupid. He had to show his authority.

So leaving Nazareth, they came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is upon the sea coast, in the borders of Zabulon and Nephtholim (Mat 4:15).

That is the area where the two tribes were apportioned, the land Zebulun and Naphtali. Naphtali had the area just north of that, so you are on the borders of Zebulun and Naphtali.

by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, the Galilee of the Gentiles; [So you are Decapolis, cities up there in the north.] The people which sat in darkness saw a great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up. From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand (Mat 4:15-17).

The same message that John the Baptist was declaring is now echoed by Jesus. The kingdom of heaven is at hand; the Messiah will soon be revealed; the kingdom has the potential of being set up, but of course, they rejected the Messiah.

And Jesus, walking by the sea of Galilee, saw two brothers, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, and they were casting the net into the sea: for they were fishers. And he said unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men. And immediately left their nets, and followed him (Mat 4:18-20).

This was not their first encounter with Jesus, as we will find from the other gospels. But this is when Jesus came and called them to discipleship.

And going from there, he saw two other brothers, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in a ship with Zebedee their father, and they were mending their nets; and he called them. And they immediately left their ship and their father, and followed him (Mat 4:21-22).

"No man has left father, mother, brothers, sisters, homes, families, for my sake, and the gospel's, but what they will not receive in this world a hundredfold; and in the world to come life eternal." (Mark 10:29-30)

And Jesus went about all of Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and he was healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people. And his fame went throughout all of Syria [clear on up north beyond the Golan into Damascus]: and they brought unto him all of the sick people that were taken with many types of diseases and torments, and those which were possessed with devils, and those which were lunatic, and those which had the palsy; and he healed them. And there followed him great multitudes of people from Galilee, and from Decapolis, [wherever He would go people from the area of Galilee, Decapolis, those ten cities in the northern Galilee region] and from Jerusalem, and Judaea, and from beyond Jordan (Mat 4:23-25).

A vast multitude of people were being drawn by the miracles that Jesus was performing.

(Through The Bible c 2000 Series; Chuck Smith; Bible commentaries,1979-1986)

The Lord bless you and watch, guard, and keep you;

The Lord make His face to shine upon and enlighten you and be gracious to you;

The Lord lift up His {approving} countenance upon you and give you peace. Amen.

Numbers 6:24-26

(Amplified Bible; Joyce Meyers; 2006; Faith Words; Scripture; Commentaries; pages 1399-1402)

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