

# GOOD NEWS

*Unlimited*



October 2004

## The Gospel of Matthew - From Synagogue to Church

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# EDITORIAL . . .

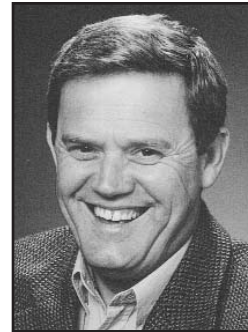
Although Jesus' ministry took place almost entirely among Jews during his lifetime, Matthew observes in Jesus a consistent mindfulness of the people living outside of Israel. In this, Jesus was echoing and expanding the best of Judaism in the Old Testament. Isaiah taught that Israel—as the Servant of the Lord—was meant to be a light to the Gentiles (Isaiah 42:1-4); that it should look for the day when the nations would flock to Mt. Zion.

According to Matthew, Jesus assumes the vocation of the Servant of the Lord. Therefore his mission is first to the Jews, but also to the Gentiles. And there is much in the book that points to their inclusion in the good news of the kingdom of heaven. Gentile women are named among Jesus' ancestors (1:5). Astronomers from the nations beyond Israel's borders came to worship the baby Jesus (2:1-12). Jesus begins his ministry in Galilee of the Gentiles (4:15). A gentile Centurion is commended for his faith above that of any other in Israel (8:10), and a Canaanite woman is commended for her faith above that of Israel's leaders (chapter 15). Lastly, at the giving

of the Great Commission, Jesus' disciples are instructed to make disciples of all nations (28:18-20).

As none of the other three evangelists have done, Matthew succeeds in showing how thoroughly steeped in the Jewish tradition Jesus is; while at the same time demonstrating the universal outlook of the Kingdom of Heaven which he came to establish. Jesus is thereby seen as sifting from provisional Judaism, all that is eternally true; integrating it; sharpening and polishing it within himself, in such a way as to shed light on the ancient faith; charging it with new meaning.

This month GNU begins to consider Matthew's Jesus. May his faith enhance your own; drawing you closer to the King who welcomes all comers. 



Ron Allen

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## GOOD NEWS *Unlimited*

Good News Unlimited magazine is published every month by Good News Unlimited, P.O. Box 6687, Auburn, CA, USA 95604-6687.

Good News Unlimited is an interdenominational Christian organization proclaiming the good news about Jesus Christ and his kingdom of grace. Special emphasis is placed on the message of salvation by grace through faith in Christ's righteousness alone. GNU also links the gospel to the needs of the whole person, to life-style, and preventive medicine.

Good News Unlimited magazine also seeks to keep readers up-to-date on all aspects of GNU's ministries. This includes news on national and international radio broadcasts; public seminars, congresses, and Bible schools within the USA (as well as public meetings

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Good News Unlimited is a nonprofit religious corporation supported solely by donations from those who believe in its ministries. Gifts are tax deductible in the USA, Canada, and New Zealand. An annual review of GNU's accounts is made by an external auditor. All regular donors to GNU may receive a financial statement on request.

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This magazine is free upon request.

October, 2004  
Vol. 24, No. 10

Published by Good News Unlimited  
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# The Gospel of The King -1

## Matthew's Presentation of Jesus

by Ron Allen

### Matthew's Influence

The author of the first of the four New Testament gospels ranks along with the Apostle Paul and John the evangelist, as one of history's most influential people. Matthew has given us the fullest and most systematic account of the birth, life, death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth. Scenes and stories that have been the staple fare of Sunday school classes and evangelistic preaching for centuries, would be unknown to us had Matthew not written.

The Christmas story would not have had the Eastern star and the wise men who came from afar to find the king of the Jews. Many sayings of Jesus that are proverbial in our language are traceable to Matthew. When turning away from thankless people in disgust, we mutter about not "*casting our pearls before swine*,"—we are quoting from Matthew. If we think to discover who is genuine and who is not, and thereby "*separate the sheep from the goats*,"—we repeat Matthew's Jesus. If we "*burn the midnight oil*," "*stick to the straight and narrow*," or "*wash our hands*" of some responsibility—we are bearing witness to the enormous impact of Matthew's efforts to preserve in writing the life and work of Jesus.

### Writing with Purpose

Matthew belongs to an ancient and respected form of literature, known to scholarship as *Laudatory Biography*. This name should not lead anyone to assume that the gospels are biographies in that word's normal sense. *Laudatory biography* was an author's attempt to make a literary assessment of a significant person, with a view to creating such an impression of this person as might produce in readers a response of belief and loyalty; and the translation of the values of the significant individual into normal life.

To this end, Matthew collected information about Jesus from a number of sources (Mark was one), and arranged the material in a way that lent maximum impact to his purpose. In reading Matthew then, it will help us understand if we accept that he was not attempting to set down a record of Jesus that would answer to the meticulous standards of detail that we expect from modern biographers. Matthew was presenting a person, not a history; not a chronology.

### Matthew's Readers

The author of Matthew (it is by no means certain that he was the Matthew Levi mentioned in this gospel) was well educated

and Jewish. He had come to believe that Jesus of Nazareth was Israel's long-awaited Messiah. He belonged to a community of mostly Jewish Christians, who were already welcoming Gentiles into their fellowship.


Matthew's community would have seemed like any other Synagogue. The Scriptures in use were the Hebrew Scriptures—the Law, the Prophets and the Psalms. But unlike other synagogues, this one believed that the Scriptures had met their fulfillment in Jesus.

At least fifteen times, Matthew uses the words, "*this happened that it might be fulfilled*" (1:22, 23; 2:14, 15). With this formula Matthew teaches that Jews, having believed in Jesus, have not thereby betrayed their ancient faith. Instead, they have consummated it.

Jewish Christians had to deal with criticism and opposition from their fellow Jews who had not believed in Jesus. They were accused of apostasy. It was Matthew's task to show that Jewish believers were more true to the faith of their fathers than their unbelieving compatriots.

Matthew displays a 'Christian use' of the Old Testament.

This grew out of the conviction that Jesus was the incarnation of the Law, and therefore a greater and more authoritative revealer of God's will than anything that had happened, been written about, or spoken of in the past. For this reason the teachings of Jesus were learned, remembered, repeated and discussed in the Christian synagogues. Gentiles were drawn to these teachings, and they were permitted fellowship without having to adopt many patterns of behavior that had been hallowed for centuries in Judaism. When this happened, Jews in other communions were outraged. Increasingly, Christian Jews found themselves in collision with Israel's teachers of the law and with other synagogues.

Matthew speaks to this mass of currents and tensions within the early church of his day. He positions Jesus deep within the bosom of Israel's national consciousness, but not without showing that Jesus is true to the best of Judaism in his welcoming of non-Jews. Furthermore, Jesus has more authority than the teachers of the law—"One greater than the temple is here" (Matthew 12:6). He is greater than the prophets—"One greater than Jonah is here" (Matthew 12:41). He is wiser than the wisest of the ancient kings—"One greater than Solomon is here" (Matthew 12:42). 

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# The Gospel of The King -2

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### Something Unexpected

If it is Matthew's purpose to show that Jesus is continuous with Israel's history, it is no less his aim to show that Jesus transcends that history. Chapter four sees the beginning of Jesus' public work. But where does he begin? Not at Jerusalem, the nation's spiritual home, as some might have expected. He commences rather, in the North Country, in a region beside the sea of Galilee. This fertile area with at least nine big cities (Naphtali and Zebulon among them), was for hundreds of years prior to Christ, under the influence of the Greek language and pagan customs. Jews who lived there were seen as less observant of their religion than those in the South.

Matthew sees significance in Christ's commencement of his work in this place. He says it happened to fulfill what Isaiah the prophet had said: *"land of Zebulon, land of Naphtali... Galilee of the Gentiles. The people living in darkness have seen a great light"* (Matthew 4:15, 16; compare Isaiah 9:1, 2). On the large population of less than orthodox Hebrews living around the northern shores of Galilee and surrounded by Gentiles, the light of God was dawning.

Here is a God who shocks the civilized by visiting the uncouth. What kind of Messiah would bypass Israel's religious elite and make Galilee of the Gentiles his port of call? The God of Israel, no less! It seems he is not as predictable as was supposed; his interests are broader than some would have thought.

### Faith Appears in Strange Quarters

In chapter eight, a foreigner appeals to Jesus for help. This gentile was as gentile as it was possible for one to be. He was a Roman—a soldier and a centurion; a national enemy. This soldier believed that Jesus could heal his sick servant. In Jesus, he detects someone like himself—someone with authority. He is confident enough in Jesus' authority to bid him just speak the word. *"I don't deserve to have you come under my roof"* (8:8). Jesus heals the servant and then comments: *"I have not seen such great faith, not even in Israel."* He goes on to say, *"Many will come from the east and the west, and will take their places at the feast with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. But the subjects of the kingdom will be thrown outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth"* (8:10-12).

This incident provides Matthew with a strong encouragement for the non-Jews in his fellowship. Placed on a pedestal, as a prime example of the kind of human response God looks for, is none other than a hated, despised, Roman centurion! Further, Jesus teaches that this man is only one of many more like him who will be guests at God's table in the

Messianic age. They will sit down alongside those Jewish icons—Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

As if that were not saying enough, Jesus presses forward to assert that people of the centurion's ilk will replace many of the biological children of Abraham, who will be thrown out into the gloom of God's displeasure. God will have guests at his banquet; he will have his people. But they will be a people of faith. Blood and heredity will count for nothing. With these words, the first cracks begin to appear between Jewish orthodoxy and those who put their trust in Jesus of Nazareth.

### Jesus Begins to Withdraw

In Chapter twelve, Jesus is condemned for what is seen as his loose attitude toward the Sabbath. But Jesus shows that Jewish scruples about Sabbath-keeping were born of selfishness, rather than reverence for God. They would not hesitate to retrieve an animal from a pit on the Sabbath, but were far less ready to help a human being (verses 11+12). At this, the Pharisees began a plot to assassinate Jesus (verse 14). Matthew then informs us that Jesus withdrew from them (verse 15)—the first of several such withdrawals; but then he adds, *"many followed him."* While a rift is widening between Jesus and the nation's leaders, many side with Jesus. A new community is born. It consists of Jews and non-Jews, and that which binds them is faith in Jesus.

Matthew sees meaning in this. He thinks it fulfills Isaiah 42:1-4. He recalls the prophet's words. *"Here is my servant whom I have chosen, the one I love, in whom I delight; I will put my Spirit on him, and he will proclaim justice to the nations.... In his name the nations will put their hope."* Jesus is withdrawing from those who can do nothing but critique him. He comes to his own, and though they do not all receive him, many do; and they follow him.

Chapter fourteen has Jesus feeding the five thousand. This is followed in the next chapter by another mass feeding—the feeding of the four thousand. This second catering miracle takes place outside Israel's borders; across Jordan in the region of the ten Greek cities. Matthew alone hints at the mainly Gentile nature of the crowd: *"They praised the God of Israel"* (Matthew 15:31).

Just as God fed Israel in the wilderness of old, so now the bread of life is set before the nations. Jesus has not come just to bless the blessed; those who hoard God's gifts. The bread of life is for the hungry, no matter who or where they are.

Chapter fifteen (21-28) also records another of Jesus' withdrawals from his own people, to a foreign region; this time Tyre and Sidon. He is met by a native woman who appeals for →

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healing for her daughter. Though she is very insistent, Jesus' disciples ask him to send her away. At first, Jesus seems to share the attitude of the disciples to this woman. "I was sent only to Israel," he says. Not to be so easily put off, she continues her petition. And Jesus, continuing to represent the thinking of his disciples, and of Israel says, "It is not right to give the children's bread to the dogs." Even after having been called a dog, the woman is not ready to give up. She presses her appeal: "Yes, Lord, but even the dogs are permitted to lick the crumbs that fall from the table." To which Jesus replied, "You have great faith." Then he healed the woman's daughter.

This incident is used by Matthew to study the mounting tension between Judaism and the community of faith gathering around Jesus. The disciples themselves reflect the worst of Israel's spirituality of the time. A spirituality that thinks: "God is love, but he only loves us." Jesus resolves the tension in a shocking way. He commends the unclean pagan for her faith. A new people of God is being born; a people not defined by nationality.

### Another Solemn Withdrawal

A watershed moment occurs in chapter sixteen. The unbelief of the national leadership reaches a critical point. After all that they have seen of his work, they confront Jesus, demanding that he give them a sign verifying his authority. "A wicked and adulterous generation looks for a sign" (verse 4), Jesus says. And having thus spoken, he "left them and went away."

Having once more withdrawn from Israel's clergy, Jesus turns to his disciples and warns them against listening to their teachings (16:8-12). This is the first time that Jesus draws a clear line between his own teaching and that of the other teachers.

In challenging his followers to make a clear choice between these two authorities, Jesus asks: "Who do you say that I the son of man am?" (16:15). "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God," says Peter. Whereupon Jesus begins to spell out what it will mean for him to be the Christ. Unbelief will harden until Priest, scribe and people will unite in putting him to death. The nation's guardians of truth and conscience will murder Truth.

The disciples must now separate themselves from the teachings of the Pharisees and teachers of the law. They must side with Jesus. In doing so they will share his destiny. They will also be rejected. They will be called to carry their own cross.

### A House Left Desolate

Chapter twenty-one sees the chasm between Jesus and Judaism widen to become a great gulf. A feast is to be celebrated; a feast memorializing the re-dedication of the temple (164 BC) after its desecration by the Greek King Antiochus Epiphanes. He had spilled pig's blood on the altar, and turned some of the rooms of the temple into brothels. Under Maccabean leadership, Israel had fought

bravely and at great cost to rid itself of this abomination.

At the temple's re-dedication, crowds had thronged the streets; waving palm branches and singing Hosanna. It was a feast reverberating with nationalist sentiment.

On the occasion of this feast, Jesus entered Jerusalem; riding on an ass. People waved their palms and cried Hosanna; blessed is he that comes in the name of the Lord. The scene awakened messianic hope. It seemed as if the Lord was coming to his temple.

Matthew's next scene gives us just that. Jesus appears in the temple precincts; interrupting and despatching the shameless racketeering that was being conducted there. Referring to Isaiah 56:7, Jesus indicates that the temple has become a stranger to its purpose. "My house shall be a house of prayer for all people." They had made it a den of robbers.

Writings in circulation at that time—the Psalms of Solomon—spoke expectantly of the Messiah coming to his temple, and cleansing it of Gentile defilement. But here is Jesus; entering Israel's very inner sanctum, and cleansing it—not from Gentile—but from Jewish defilement.


Further in chapter twenty-one, Jesus relates his parable of the tenants. Both Luke and Mark carry the same story, but only Matthew has this at the end: "The kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit" (Matthew 21:43). The stewardship of God's truth was being re-allocated. A transition from synagogue to church was in full cry. Israel was losing its role as custodian of the good news of God's grace. It was being transferred to a people who valued it.

In the same context, Jesus quotes Psalm 118:2, "The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone." In the Psalm, Israel, whom the nations have rejected, is to be restored and honored. But in Matthew, Jesus is the stone rejected by Israel. And, implicit in their rejection of Jesus, is their rejection of the nations; their rejection of grace by which the nations also are gathered to God.

The destiny of persons, peoples, institutions, religions and nations hinges upon their response to what God has revealed of himself to them. In the end, nothing that resists the Spirit of God will be able to continue in God's universe.

In Matthew, the all-important question for everyone is: Who is Jesus of Nazareth? Is he the Son of God, or is he not? Even at his trial, not what he has done, but who he is, remains the vital question. "Tell us who you are!" Caiaphas roars.

Is God the god popularly perceived as God of Israel? Or is God the God of Jesus Christ? Is God the god of a few, or the many? Is he the god of the well-informed, or of the ignorant as well? Is God the establishment god; the god of the like-minded, or is he the god of the outsiders? Is he the god of the Scribes, or of the weary and heavy laden? Is he the god of the synagogue or of the church?

The last few verses of Matthew rehearse the answer to these questions. "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. . . . Go and make disciples of **all nations** . . ." (Matthew 28:18+19). 

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# As One Who Had Authority

by Alexander Maclaren

*“For he taught them as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law” (Matthew 7:29).*

It appears from these words, that the first impression made on the masses by the Sermon on the Mount was not so much an appreciation of its high morality, as a feeling of the personal authority with which Christ spoke. Had the scribes then no authority? They ruled the whole life of the nation with tyrannical power. They sat in Moses’ seat, and claimed all manner of control. And yet, when people listened to Jesus they heard something ringing in his voice that they missed in the Rabbi’s. They only set themselves up, in their highest claims, as being commentators upon, and expositors of the law. Their language was ‘Moses commanded.’ But the crowd deduced no authority in Jesus but his own. He stood forth as a legislator, not a commentator. He commanded, prohibited, repealed, and promised on his own bare word. That is characteristic of all Christ’s teaching. And as we see from the first auditors, it was deeply stamped on the Sermon on the Mount.

The Sermon on the Mount claims for Jesus Christ the authority of supremacy above all former revelations and revealers. *“Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them, but to fulfill them” (Matthew 5:17).* Observe that remarkable form of speech. *‘I have come.’* It implies that he existed before birth, and that his appearance among men was the result of his own act.

Why was it that Jesus Christ felt himself bound to disclaim any intention of destroying the Law or the Prophets? Must not the people have begun to feel that there was something revolutionary and novel about his teaching, and that it was threatening to disturb what had been consecrated by ages? Strange for a divine messenger, if he simply stood in the line and sequence of divine revelation, to begin his work by saying, *‘Now, I do not mean to annihilate all that is left behind me.’* The question arises how anybody should have supposed that he did, and why he felt it needful to say that he did not.

*“I have not come to abolish them, but to fulfill them.”* The words imply that Jesus was a complete embodiment of God’s law. Here is a man who begins his ministry with the assertion that he had come to do everything which God demanded, and to set forth before the world a living pattern of the whole obedience of human nature to the whole law of God. Who is he that said that? And how do we account for the fact that twenty centuries have passed, and except in the case of a bitter foe here and there, no lip has claimed that he ventured too much for himself when he said I have come to fulfill the law.

Still further, here our Lord claims specifically to fulfill not only Law, but Prophets. He sets himself forth as the Reality which has filled the imaginations and the hearts of a whole nation for centuries; as the living Reality, meant by all those lofty words of the prophets in the past. He declares that all those forecastings; all those dim anticipations and triumphant promises, were not left to swing about in a vacuum. Rather, he stood as the realization of

them all. In him, wrapped up as in a seed, the kingdom of heaven was among men.

Still further, he claims not only personal purity and completeness, but also the power to mould, expand, interpret and in some cases, brush aside laws which he and they alike knew to be the laws of God. Consider the formula with which our Lord introduces each of his references to the law. *‘You have heard that it was said to the people long ago... but I tell you.’*

Then he follows with a deepening or a modification, or a repeal of statutes acknowledged by him and his hearers to be divine. He certainly claims to speak with higher authority than Moses did, for Moses never professed to give any precepts of his own. He was not The Lawgiver, only the messenger of the Lawgiver. But Christ is himself the fountain of the laws of his kingdom. He puts himself without apology or explanation in front of Moses.


One supposition alone accounts for Christ’s attitude to law and prophets in this sermon, and that is that the Eternal Wisdom and Personal Word of God, which has spoken to the old world through Moses, had come at last, in human form to earth, and spoken to men. The same voice that breathed through the prophets of old, spoke through the lips of Jesus of Nazareth.

We have in this discourse the authority of One who is absolute Lord and Master over men. *“Everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on a rock” (Matthew 7:24).* Here, Jesus comes before the whole human race and claims an absolute submission. His word is to control with authoritative scrutiny and power, every aim of our lives, and every action. In his name we may be strong; in his name cast out devils; in his name do many wonderful works. If we build on him, we build on a rock. If we build anywhere else, we build on sand.

*‘Everyone who hears my words and puts them into practice.’* He who spoke these words must be either a good deal more, or a good deal less than a perfect man. If he is only *that*, he is not *that*. If he is only *that*, he has no business to tell me to obey him. Christ’s claim to absolute obedience rests on his divine nature and his redeeming work. He has given himself for us, and therefore he has a right to say, *‘Give yourself to me.’*

In the Sermon on the Mount, our Lord has the authority of One who is to be the judge of the world. *“Many will say to me on that day... Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me you evildoers’” (Matthew 7:22+23).*

He, the meek and the humble, who desired only that men should know him for what he was, declares that the whole world is to be judged by him. He declares that he has such knowledge of men as will pierce beneath the surface of professions, and be undazzled by the most stupendous miracles. And beneath the eloquent words of many a preacher and the works of so many so-called Christian philanthropists, he will see the hidden rottenness.

That is no human function. That is no work that belongs to a mere teacher, sage or saint. That is a divine work. He has a right to command because he is going to judge; and the lips that declare the law are the lips that will read the sentence. 

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# Jesus Builds His Church

by Elton Trueblood

*“You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again?” (Matthew 5:13)*

## A Small Congregation

The greatest sermon in the world was given to one of the smallest companies. *“Now when he saw the crowds he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, and he began to teach them” (Matthew 5:1).* We have no way of knowing that all of the material now grouped together in the fifth, sixth and seventh chapters of Matthew was ever combined in one single address, but the beginning was clearly preached to a small group. It is reasonable to suppose that Christ said similar things, with variations, on different occasions, and certainly there were other references to salt (Mark 9:49, 50; Luke 14:34, 35), but the reference in the Sermon on the Mount is unique in its identification of the Christian community with the saving salt.

## Goodness Requires Effort

The statement of Christ which follows immediately after the Beatitudes is really amazing. What Jesus says is that there is a special way in which the world can be kept from decay, and that the world is to be saved by a particular kind of penetration. In the days of Christ, the only way to preserve meat was by the use of salt. By this practice meat could be kept for a long time. Christ began with the recognition that human civilization is always in danger of decay. It can go to pieces very easily. In fact, the natural movement of the world is often a movement of decline. Standards of human conduct go down unless laborious efforts are made to maintain them. It is easy to lose any excellence, whether academic, religious, scientific, or political. Civilization continues only when it is the object of vigilant solicitude.

## An Absurdity

What was amazing was Christ's calm assertion that the tiny group of disciples on the mountainside were the ones who could preserve the world. Superficially, this was absurd. It was laughable because it appeared that these people had nothing on their side. Christ's disciples were in a remote part of the Roman Empire, having no standing, no money, no prestige, no worldly power and no education. Consequently, from a human point of view, the chance of their enduring was very slight, while the idea that they could redeem or save the civilization of the world was obviously fantastic.

In spite of all such considerations, Jesus made his tremendous prediction. His statement was paradoxical, but what is far more paradoxical is the fact. Nearly all of the rest of the things on which men depended did actually decay. The Roman Empire did come to an end; Plato's Academy finally closed; the great library at Alexandria was finally burned; the legions were scattered; the schools of the Stoics and the Epicureans faded out. But the little redemptive society which Christ instituted as the divine preservative went on. It entrenched itself in the Greco-Roman world; it penetrated Caesar's household; it carried men through the Dark Ages; it survived the Renaissance, the Reformation, the

Enlightenment, and the Industrial Revolution as it is now surviving the Atomic Revolution.

## The Church Greater than the Sum of its Parts


Apparently, Jesus had a perfectly clear understanding of the means of redemption. He knew that his body would be destroyed. He knew that he would rise again. He also knew that the time would come when his earthly existence would be no more. How then would the work go on? He must have toyed with the idea of writing a book, but he did not write. He did not leave a book; he did not leave an army; he did not leave an organization. What he left instead was a little redemptive fellowship made up of extremely common people whose total impact was miraculous. Though the members were individually unworthy, the fellowship which they came to share was so far superior to the sum of its parts that it was not only able to survive and endure, but finally to dominate and to save.

It is hard for us to visualize what early Christianity was like. It was very different from the Christianity known today. There were no fine buildings. There was no hierarchy; there were no theological seminaries; no Christian colleges; no Sunday Schools. Only small groups of believers—small fellowships. In the beginning there wasn't even a New Testament. The New Testament was not so much a cause of these fellowships as a result of them. Thus, the first books of the New Testament were letters written to the little fellowships, partly because of their difficulties, dangers and temptations. All that they had was the fellowship; nothing else; no standing; no prestige; no honor. It was actually true, and not mere rhetoric to say, *“Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth” (1 Corinthians 1:26).*

Sometimes in the preaching mission we are discouraged because nearly all of those who attend are already dedicated to the promotion of Christ's kingdom. But the deepening of the already dedicated, in the light of Christ's method, is a matter of great importance. It is through the dedicated ones—as they become more loving, and more infectious—that the world is to be changed. The world is what we seek to influence. But the truth of the gospel is that it is the concentrated *little* which affects the diffused *big*. The gospel conquers the world by the establishment of small 'strong points.'

What occurred in the ancient civilization was the organic development of the fellowship, but never a mere individual Christianity. That would not have been able to survive. The fellowship was the only thing that could win. The early Christians came together to strengthen one another and to encourage one another in their humble gatherings. This was the method; this was the victory, and this is why we are here as Christians two thousand years later.

What is the contemporary relevance of the original Christian story? It appears in the recognition that the paganism of our time is not likely to be countered in any other way, than in the way by which the paganism of the ancient world was countered. Christ's method is still our method; it is still our hope. The task before Christians is the re-enactment of the fundamental miracle.

—Elton Trueblood. *The Yoke of Christ*, pp. 22-30. 



# The Greatest Teacher

by Albert D. Belden

## The Living Word

The first unique feature of Christ as teacher is the way in which his life fulfills, illustrates and confirms his teaching. He speaks the holy ethic that he practices; his life and love corroborate his words. Did he teach 'love your enemies?' He, himself loved his enemies. Did he teach that a man's life does not consist in abundance of possessions? He, himself practiced a severe, yet happy self-denial.

## His Originality

Jesus did say many things, never said before. Nevertheless, many a pious soul has been troubled to discover anticipations, in pre-Christian teaching, of some of the sayings of our Lord. A case in point is the famous Confucian anticipation of the Golden Rule, which reads: "Do not unto others what you would not have them do to you."

This anxiety misses the Christian insistence upon the status of Christ. We believe he is the eternal Christ, out of whose truth all pre-Christian statements of truth must have come. St. Paul expresses this conception clearly. Speaking of the spiritual resource that Israel enjoyed during its wilderness wanderings he says: "That spiritual rock was Christ" (1 Corinthians 10:4). We should not be surprised to find Jesus repeating his own truth, uttered by others of other times. We should rather seek his originality in the consistently high level of his thought and an adequacy for life about his teaching, which is quite convincing.

## The Supreme Element

What makes the teaching of Jesus supreme in all the world is its revelation of God; the consistency of its claim that the nature of the diviner being is wholly love. Christ's word for God, "father," has incalculable value. Notice how consistently he uses it. Again, it is true that the term 'father' is used for God in pre-Christian thought, but only here and there, over against a level of human fatherhood which contained large elements of pagan cruelty. It was not merely that Christ used the term 'father,' but that he breathed into the word such a spirit of love that he cleansed it from all the domestic tyranny that disfigured fatherhood, even in Israel.

In the famous Sermon on the Mount, which culminates in the challenge, "Pray for them who despitefully use you," he concentrates all his thought into a supreme reason for adopting such a morality—"That you may be sons of your father in heaven." He thus clothes the character of God in the garments he has been prescribing for God's children. In this way Jesus binds together, in one consistent whole, his conception of God and man.

## Four Vital Features


**Authority.** The people were impressed that Jesus did not follow

the customary method of the Scribes in their teaching. Their efforts were floated upon a mass of traditional statement and previous opinion, and the longer the authority had been dead the more weighty was deemed the corroboration. But Jesus spoke directly from his own conscience and intuition.

**Paradox.** One indication of both an alluring and satisfying profoundness in Jesus, is the fact that his teaching is filled with paradox. This blends with the universe itself, which seems to be built on paradox. If the universe appears stable to us, it is only because of a most delicate equilibrium of opposing forces. The scientist and the philosopher, therefore, if he were looking for a teaching adequate to the universe, would expect to find that teaching shot through and through with paradox. That is what is found in the teaching of our Lord.

**Humanity.** "Without a parable, he spoke not unto them." Revealed in this sentence is a consideration on Jesus' part, for the average man. It is the height of genius to be able to 'enter in at a lowly door.' The unforgettable stories that Jesus told severed him sharply from the 'highbrows' who rejoiced in mysteries withheld from the 'lowbrows,' revealing his love for humanity, and the simplicities of life.

**Timelessness.** The teaching of Jesus does not date. It is as fresh today as when he first uttered it. It escapes those changes in the scientific outlook of the universe, which have impacted our civilization. For example, the tremendous swing-over from the earth as the focal center of the solar system with the sun and stars moving around it, to the sun as the center of the solar system with the earth revolving around it. A consequence of this has been the loss of direction for such conceptions as heaven and hell, and the destruction of the idea of 'up,' as opposed to 'down,' in reference to our position in the system. These changes are entirely without effect on the teaching of our Lord, whose ideas ride so high and plow so deep as to escape such a profound change of world view.

-Albert Belden. *The Paradoxes of Jesus*, pp. 11-20. 

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(Lamentations 3:22+23).



# The Exalted King in *The Apocalypse*

by W. Francis Gibbons

The note of triumph which sounds all through the New Testament reaches its magnificent climax at the close. The Book of Revelation sets forth Jesus Christ in all the glory of his kingship. He is the “*ruler of the kings of the earth*” (Revelation 1:5). The “*King of Kings and Lord of Lords*” (Revelation 19:16).

## A Message for Tough Times

There was of course, good reason for that emphasis. At the time when this last book of the Bible was being written, the kingdom of Christ was being challenged by a totalitarian state. The fierce tyranny of Nationalism is not a product of the twentieth century; it existed in the first. Indeed, it engaged the church of the first three centuries in a life and death struggle. The Roman Emperors, especially Nero and Domitian, made violent and repeated attempts to exterminate the Christians, subjecting them to the most ruthless persecution. Rome was drunk with the blood of the saints. Those who would not worship Caesar were cruelly cut down. Sometimes the glare from their burning bodies gave an added enjoyment to the Emperors profligacies; while later on, Christians were flung to the wild beasts in order to amuse the pagan populace. It was in view of that situation, and as an answer to it, that the book of Revelation was written. It was a tract for the bad times; a message of hope and comfort for the persecuted church.

## A Center of Authority

In the fourth and fifth chapters of the book, there are sublime visions of creative and redemptive majesty. The writer has been shown eternal realities, in dependence upon which the hidden book of human history is to be unrolled. Over and over again he refers to the throne of God. Indeed, the word *throne* is used more than thirty times in Revelation. But in chapter four the emphasis is most marked. The word occurs twelve times in less than as many verses. It beats through the chapter like a compelling refrain. The author is reminding the church; suffering so much at the hands of earthly rulers, that God's throne is unshakable; that his kingdom cannot be moved; that at the heart of the universe, there is an ultimate moral and spiritual authority. “*Behold, a throne was set in heaven, and One sat on the throne*” (Revelation 4:2).

## A Faith for Now

How much we need this faith today, when contemporary conditions so strangely match those of the first century. Once again, the true followers of Jesus Christ have in many lands been persecuted for their loyalty to him. Once again, hell has been let loose in the world and there are many who have come out of great tribulation.

## A City—With Foundations

But God's reign over all human affairs can be illustrated by

glancing at what has happened during different periods of history. Think, for example of what took place at the beginning of the fifth century. There stood imperial Rome; the center of the known world; the impregnable bulwark (so men thought) against all savagery. That Rome could ever collapse seemed inconceivable. And yet Rome fell! In AD 410, along came Alaric with his hordes from Western Europe; and to the alarm of both Church and State, Rome was overthrown. Then Augustine wrote his famous classic, *The City of God*. In it he surveyed all history in the light of God's power and purpose. “*Though Rome has fallen,*” he declared, “*the city of God remains.*”

Or recall what took place in the Middle Ages when darkness covered the earth, and gross darkness the people. Never had the light of Christian witness grown so dim. The Church was a mass of corruption. But see what happened! New light broke upon the world with the Renaissance, and new light swept into the church with the Reformation. Once again God vindicated himself.

Or look at the period of history which touches us more closely. Are we not seeing this same truth of God's rule unfolded before our very eyes? Surely we can take comfort and courage from this fact, which the Bible so emphatically proclaims, that there is a throne, God's throne, against which no foe can finally triumph. For on it sits One who is invincible. “*Thou art the King of Glory, O Christ.*”

-Francis Gibbons. *The Heart of Religion*, pp. 108-111. 

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# Passion Week & The End of the World (1)

by Desmond Ford

Various Scriptures speak of Christ's first advent as the end of the world. See for example, Hebrews 1:1 and 9:26. Calvary, with our Lord lifted up separating the lost from the saved amid earthquake and darkness, portrays the Last Judgment (see John 12:31). Also, on the third day, he and many others ascended to glory from the grave as the first fruits of the final resurrection (Matthew 27:52-53).

## The Gospel Like Quicksilver

Why then, the two thousand years delay? The only condition the New Testament gives for the end of the world is the proclamation of the gospel to all people (Matthew 24:14). But the church has ever found the gospel to be like quicksilver—easy to receive, and easy to lose.

There has never been a time when the mass of the church embraced the gospel of the New Testament—the historic, objective message of free grace and undying love. As Romans 9:28 affirms, the time will come when God himself will finish the work, having demonstrated to the universe the complete impotence of humanity, even religious humanity, unless it leans fully upon him (1 Corinthians 4:9; Ephesians 3:9-11; Revelation 15:3+4).

## Final Scenario

The scenario for Passion Week is the scenario for the end of the world. Here are the elements.

- A final, triumphant proclamation of the gospel (typified in the Triumphal Entry of Christ into Jerusalem).
- The polarization of the earth's multitudes for or against that message.
- The union of disparate religious groups (such as the Pharisees and the Sadducees) with each other, and then with the state in order to squelch the nonconformists.
- A little time of trouble (like Gethsemane).
- The great trouble (Calvary).
- The climactic resurrection and ascension.

## Vignettes on the Last Times

The gospel narratives shed light on the last times. See Mark 15:7 for the group of political terrorists that image those of the last generation. Judas, the professed follower of Christ, but also his betrayer, is a type of the final manifestation of Antichrist. Only he and Mary Magdalene are recorded kissing Christ; but this kiss in Gethsemane was a sign of hypocrisy and betrayal. The word used for worship in Revelation 13 (the Antichrist chapter), comes from a root meaning "to kiss."

The word translated "moved" in Matthew 21:10, signifies an

earthquake upheaval. Such was the impact of that first Palm Sunday. Shortly before, Lazarus had been raised from the dead, and the word of that event spread among the worshipers present at the capital for the Passover. It was partly because of Lazarus that multitudes streamed out from the metropolis to join the crowds coming from divergent points beyond the city. Thus, it is symbolizing the time when Christ's true believers at the end of time, being anointed by the Holy Spirit, will give the final proclamation.

## First Day of Passion Week

Let us now consider the Triumphal Entry, occupying the first whole day of Passion Week (Luke 19:29-44). This event has a significance—both vast and manifold. It is first of all a dim foreshadowing of Christ's return in glory when all of creation, men and animals, will be subject to him; when all sorrow will be swallowed up in joy.

## Setting a Powder Trail

This is the first time in his ministry that Christ embraced publicity. This occasion, and the subsequent cleansing of the temple, act like a match to a barrel of gunpowder. He is setting a powder trail that will lead to the ultimate explosion. This is done in order to draw attention to the prophecies regarding his coming atonement.

It is the very day when the Passover lamb for each family had to be selected and set aside for its slaughter later in the week. That slaughter, by law, could only take place in Jerusalem. So Christ, the antitypical lamb, has come to the place of slaughter where so many prophets had been massacred in earlier times.

## The God-Man Paradox

The person of Christ here revealed is shown to be an embodiment of paradoxes. He is omnipotent and omniscient as shown by his forecast about the place where the colt would be found, and the willingness of the owners to release it. The sentence he speaks: "The Lord has need of him," is itself a study in contrast—he, the Lord God, has need.

Before us is one man who is both God and man; who manifests meekness and majesty. Who, despite a forty day fast, is the bread of life; who, despite his crying on the cross, "I thirst," is the creator of the oceans and is the water of life. He is the one who prays and yet hears prayers; he is baptized yet, he washes away sins. He is often weary, but promises rest to all who come to him. He is charged with having a devil, but he casts out devils. He is stigmatized →

as a Samaritan, but tells the story of the Good Samaritan. He is sold for thirty pieces of silver, but he ransoms the world at an infinite price. He weeps, but he wipes away tears.

### Christ Ennobles a Donkey

Fulfilling the prophecy of Zechariah 9:9, 10, he rides—not in a golden chariot led by prancing stallions—but on a colt that has never been broken in. Who would wish to approach a powerful warhorse impeding its way? But a donkey, any and all can approach. Here is a picture of Christ's present kingdom, which is characterized by meekness and gentleness. He invites but never compels; he is the Prince of Peace.

### Tears for Others

Only twice in the gospels are we told that Jesus wept. During his sufferings there is no record of a groan or a single trickling tear. All his laments are for others—for us. So as the procession reached the brow of the hill and Jerusalem came into view, the King, instead of exulting, wept. What a scene!

Right at the time when the carping leaders demand that Jesus silence the cheering crowds, he breaks into cries of grief and words of sorrow. Here Christ shows the heart of

God and the essence of his gospel—love for the lost. We can trust a weeping Savior. His tears should banish our fears. Soon, his whole body will be enveloped in a bloody sweat because of the weight of our sins upon him. This is the only weeping God known to man. He is the only wounded deity.

### Rejected like King David

Observe now, scenes from a thousand years before, scenes associated with another one who had been born in Bethlehem; to be a good shepherd, and ultimately, the rejected king of his people.

*Then said the king to Zadok, "Take the ark of God back into the city. If I find favor in the Lord's eyes, he will bring me back and let me see it and his dwelling place again. But if he says, 'I am not pleased with you,' then I am ready; let him do to me whatever seems good to him..."*

*But David continued up the Mount of Olives, weeping as he went; his head was covered, and he was barefoot. All the people with him covered their heads too, and were weeping as they went up. Now David had been told, "Ahithophel is among the conspirators with Absalom." So David prayed, "O Lord, turn Ahithophel's counsel into foolishness" (2 Samuel 15:25, 30, 31).*

A few days after the triumphant entry of our Lord, rejected by his own, he passed over the brook Kidron to enter Gethsemane at the foot of the Mount of Olives. Part of his burden was the knowledge that his own familiar friend had now denied him by his betrayal. Like David, a small, faithful group accompanied him.

### The Daughter of Saul

Even more significant is the record of 2 Samuel 6:12-23.

*Now King David was told, "The Lord has blessed the household of Obed-Edom and everything he has, because of the ark of God." So David went down and brought up the ark of God from the house of Obed-Edom to the City of David with rejoicing. When those who were carrying the ark of the Lord had taken six steps, he sacrificed a bull and a fattened calf. David, wearing a linen ephod, danced before the Lord with all his might, while he and the entire house of Israel brought up the ark of the Lord with shouts and the sound of trumpets.*

*As the ark of the Lord was entering the City of David, Michal, daughter, of Saul watched from a window. And when she saw King David leaping and dancing before the Lord, she despised him in her heart.*

*They brought the ark of the Lord and set it in its place inside the tent that David had pitched for it, and David sacrificed burnt offerings and fellowship offerings before the Lord. After he had finished sacrificing the burnt offerings and the fellowship offerings, he blessed the people*

*Continued on next page*

## Can you assist with this Project?

GNU readers worldwide have been exposed to one of this era's great teachers of the gospel—**Dr. Desmond Ford**. His rare insight into the things of God, and his rhetorical skills have been used by God to bring faith, hope and comfort into innumerable lives.

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If some of Dr. Ford's pithy statements linger in your mind, write them down and email them to Brian Patterson:

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This minor effort on your part may help someone else.

# Ice Cream is Good For the Soul

Recently I took my children to a restaurant. My six-year-old son asked if he could say grace. As we bowed our heads he said, “God is good God is great; thank you for the food, and we would even thank you more if Mom gets us ice cream for dessert. And liberty and justice for all! Amen!”

Along with the laughter from other customers nearby, I heard one woman remark: “That’s what’s wrong with this country. Kids don’t even know how to pray. Asking God for ice cream! Why, I never!”

Hearing this, my son burst into tears and asked, “Did I do wrong? Is God mad at me?” I assured him he had done a terrific job, and God was certainly not mad at him. An elderly gentleman approached the table. He winked at my son and said, “I happen to

know that God thought that was a great prayer.” “Really?” My son asked.

“Cross my heart,” the man replied. Then in a theatrical whisper he added (indicating the woman whose remark had started this whole thing), “Too bad she never asks God for ice cream. A little ice cream is good for the soul sometimes.”

Naturally, I bought my kids ice cream at the end of the meal. My son stared at his for a moment, and then did something I will remember for the rest of my life. He picked up his sundae, and without a word, walked over and placed it in front of the woman. With a big smile he told her, “Here, this is for you. Ice cream is good for the soul sometimes, and my soul is good already!”

*-From Medford Christian Journal.*

*Continued from previous page*

*in the name of the Lord almighty. Then he gave a loaf of bread, a cake of dates and a cake of raisins to each person in the whole crowd of Israelites, both men and women. And all the people went to their homes.*

*When David returned home to bless his household, Michal, daughter of Saul, came out to meet him and said, “How the king of Israel has distinguished himself today, disrobing in the sight of the slave girls of his servants, as any vulgar fellow would!”*

*David said to Michal, “It was before the Lord, who chose me rather than your father or anyone from his house when he appointed me ruler over the Lord’s people Israel... I will be humiliated in my own eyes. But by these slave girls you spoke of, I will be held in honor.”*

*And Michal, daughter of Saul, had no children to the day of her death.*

See David’s joy of heart in the promotion of the true worship of his God. In the lowly garb of a Levite, rather than his kingly garments, he rejoices with his faithful people. He dances in holy ecstasy, and exhorts the people constantly, “Sing unto the Lord; shout his praises.” It is the happiest day of his life. A spectator would have said, “Here is the happiest and the most honored of men; monarch of God’s chosen people, flushed with health, intelligence and power, and beloved by his people as he engages in the most holy of all courses—the promotion of divine worship.”


Then, tragedy! The day of holy festivity and exultant song is climaxed by the action of the one David loves most on earth—for whom he has been prepared to forgo his crown (2 Samuel 3:12-14).

## Scorning and Scolding

It is significant that this woman here is not called David’s wife, but the daughter of Saul. She typifies the “daughter of Zion” spoke of in Zechariah 9:9. Her attitude is identical with that of Israel’s leaders a millennium later, when they scorn the enthusiasm of Christ’s supporters on the great day of entry into the capital.

Like a bucket of water thrown in his face is the scorn, the scolding and the sarcasm of the one he loves. She has no enthusiasm for true religion. Where David might have expected companionable unity with him in his holy work, instead he finds rejection and hatred.

David, we are told, had come to bless his family after having blessed his people. But his wife will have none of it. She does not care for the Holy Ark he has been bearing to its resting place. She has no reverence for the sacred law within it. David, under guidance from God, pronounces that henceforth he will have no more physical union with Michal, for the sexual union is but a travesty if there is not a prior union of heart and mind. And Michal is to be childless forever.

The antitype of this incident we find in the gospels, which record how Christ’s first act after entry into the city was to curse the fruitless fig tree and declare its eternal barrenness. The fig tree symbolized the graceless Jewish nation (Luke 13:6-9). When the unholy city had first come into view on the Olivet procession, Christ had declared his brokenhearted alienation from the rebel nation. The judgment of eternal barrenness was but the result of this, as Michal’s barrenness was the result of David’s verdict on his wife. 

# NEWS BITS . . .

## Amish on Reality TV

A new television program has aired which focuses on the potential cultural clash of five Amish young people coming to live in Los Angeles with housemates more attuned to US popular culture. The show has angered some politicians who fear the television series patronizes and exploits the Amish, a Protestant religious group who live in 22 US states, and in Ontario, Canada, and are intentionally isolated from contemporary life, including television. -ENI.

## Iraqi Christians Flee Their Country

Iraqi Christians are moving to Syria to escape the threats and violence of Islamic extremists. Christians number about 750,000 among Iraqi total population of 25 million. Islamic militants have told Christian owners of liquor stores to close down their businesses, and they have threatened Christians who run beauty salons, and shops selling fashionable clothes. -BNN.

## Protestant Majority a Thing of the Past

A long-standing feature of US religious life—a protestant majority—may become a thing of the past, a new survey has concluded. The transition will occur as early as this year, according to the National Opinion Research Center, based at the University of Chicago.

## Europe a Mission Field

Europe, which in the 19th century sent missionaries to spread Christianity around the world, is now becoming one of the new “mission fields” where people do not even know basic information about the faith, says the general secretary of the world council of churches, the Reverend Sam Kobia. -ENI.

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## Latin American Apostles

Evangelical Christians in Latin America are at loggerheads over the tendency of some spiritual leaders to call themselves “apostles,” thereby suggesting they have received a direct mandate from God. Many Latin American Protestant leaders find the idea of someone calling themselves an “apostle” contrary to the doctrine of the Reformation, believing that only the disciples of Jesus should be called apostles. -ENI.

## Good Samaritan Police Officer Suspended

“My position in life is to treat people like I want to be treated. That’s what Jesus taught. That’s what I teach my children.” So spoke New York City Police Officer Eduardo Delacruz, who was suspended for refusing to obey an order to arrest homeless people. Delacruz faces a departmental trial where he could be fired.

## Church Signs

Here are some of the signs posted in front of churches around the country.


“Don’t wait for the hearse to take you to church.”

“A clear conscience makes a soft pillow.”

“To belittle is to be little.”

“Don’t give up. Moses was once a basket case.”

## The Wall

One of the most disappointing aspects of the Mid-East conflict has been the influence of Christian Zionists on US foreign policy. Israel can do no wrong, and that includes the building of a barrier or wall.... Good Evangelical Christians should be concerned that Palestinian families are being separated, children are not able to get to schools, farmers cannot get to their farmland with ease, and the sick cannot get medical care. 

## FORMAT UPDATE FOR TAPE OF THE MONTH

**GNU Tape of the Month** will soon be available in CD format.

Many newer sound recording and playing devices use Compact Discs instead of the long-serving audio cassette tapes. Most new motor vehicles no longer come equipped with a cassette tape player.

To meet this new reality, GNU will begin using both formats. The **GNU Tape of the Month** will now be renamed **Message of the Month**. Those who wish to receive this service on CD, and those who want the taped version, will need to indicate their preference by contacting Good News Unlimited.

# TO and FRO with the Editor

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## Question:

Is it okay for Christians to be cremated?  
J.B.

## Answer:

The Bible teaches that the physical bodies of human beings are made from the elements present in the earth's crust. As the human form is deconstructed back into the soil, it ceases to be a home for the soul.

*"The dust returns to the ground it came from, and the spirit unto God who gave it" (Ecclesiastes 12:7).*

The only difference between cremation and burial is that in one of them, the process of disintegration is accelerated. Yes, it is okay for Christians to be cremated or buried. God will never forget the person, no matter how their remains are disposed of.

## Question:

Several Christian sources list some 100 to 200, even as many as 300 plus prophecies that are supposedly fulfilled by Jesus. Is this really the case, or is it a deliberate inflation to make Jesus appear larger than life?  
S.K.

## Answer:

Early Christians, almost all of them Jews, were convinced that the revealing of God that Jesus brought, was continuous with the divine self-revelation that had begun with Abraham, and continued throughout Israel's history. Armed with this conviction, the first Christians reasoned that there must be hints of him in their Scriptures which were a record of God's dealings with them.

Lists of these 'hints', or prophetic allusions to Christ began to circulate early in Christian history. What may seem to us as 'far-fetched' prophecies of Jesus, were accepted without question by the fledgling church. For example: Matthew (2:15) says that Jesus, taken to Egypt by his fleeing parents, was a fulfillment of Hosea 11:1, which says, *"Out of Egypt have I called my Son."* This, even though Hosea was not thinking about Jesus and Joseph and Mary when he wrote. He was speaking about Israel.

For those who find this troubling, I would say that the New Testament writers were working from the vantage point of their faith in Jesus. He was their starting place. Having come to faith in him, the ancient writings came to life with new meaning for them. For those who rejected Jesus, those same Scriptures remained lifeless. *"You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me."* (John 5:39)

## Question:

Do you believe in the doctrine of 'soul-sleep' as the intermediate state between death and the resurrection?  
T.D.

## Answer:

Yes, I believe in 'conditional immortality,' which means that I do believe in what you call 'soul-sleep.' However, it is not the only thing the Bible has to say about death. Just as useful an idea—and perhaps even more comforting—is the thought that even in death, a believer's relationship with God is still intact. Paul can speak of his own dying as the very threshold of final fellowship with Christ (Philippians 1:21-23). He can also place the very same reunion with Christ at the resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:50-55). In addition, the same writer says (Romans 8:38), that nothing can separate us from the love of God—not even death! You will agree that these verses say nothing of 'soul-sleep,' or a time lapse between death and resurrection. The emphasis is directed to the sheer impossibility of the dead being cut off from God. I think the Bible discusses death in a number of ways, and all of them have something to strengthen our hope in God.

## Question:

What are your thoughts on Universalism (the belief that all will be saved)?  
M.L.

## Answer:

The religious outlook of Scripture makes much of the sovereignty of God—and much of human freedom! The two conceptions may seem irreconcilable, but inspired writers, simply affirm both and leave us to wrestle with the apparent contradiction. The fact that human beings were able to resist God to the extent of crucifying his chief representative speaks volumes about the lengths the sovereign God was prepared to go to grant human sovereignty! The love revealed thereby is awesome. It is a love with such depths, that it refuses to take people into the kingdom of God unless that is their dearest wish.

The love of God is formidable, even insuperable. But so that it might have its way in everything, it does not force allegiance. For this reason, I think that Scripture acknowledges the bleak prospect, that ultimately there will be some who will not be included in God's heaven, simply because they did not want it. God will give them the desire of their heart. See Romans 1:24-26 : *"God gave them over."*

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### WILL YOU WILL?

Nearly two million people die in the USA every year without leaving a will. Approximately 600,000 of these are evangelical Christians. In the majority of cases, they were good Christian stewards in life. But they made no provision to continue their stewardship after death. They left their lifetime savings for court distribution. While alive, they would never have sanctioned the decisions on distribution made by the court.

None of us will die any sooner for making legal provision for the final allocation of our goods. These are goods God has loaned us. Legal provision should not be delayed for even a day, especially now, when the making of a will can be both simple and inexpensive.

If you have not already done so, will you pray and act on this matter of a will, or a living trust? Will you remember the work of the gospel, that others may come to share the eternal life in which you now rejoice? It is within your power to make provision that some find the treasure to which our Lord referred (Matthew 13:44). That gospel treasure illuminates the shadows of death, points to the everlasting gates of pearl, and reveals a welcoming savior (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18).

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Save us money by increasing our audience (more listeners per dollar spent).

# KING AND KINGDOM

## *The Christ of Matthew's Gospel*

*Fall 2004 Bible Seminar*

Matthew's account of Jesus considered in three parts.

*by Ron Allen*

### **1. From Synagogue to Church**

*"The Kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit" (Matthew 21:43).* How the Gospel finds validation from the past—Israel and the Old Testament—and looks to a future that embraces all nations.

### **2. The Kingdom On Trial**

*The Gospel of Christ's Temptations.*

### **3. A Tale of Two Lawgivers**

*The Good News of Moses II.*

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