



# BOOKS OF THE BIBLE STUDY QUESTIONS

by WAYNE PALMER

## MATTHEW



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## **INTRODUCTION**

The Book of Matthew presents the works and teachings of Jesus of Nazareth, which show that Jesus is the promised Christ, the Son of God, who came to usher in God's kingdom and save sinners from death and hell.

## **AUTHORSHIP**

The Gospel of Matthew was written by the apostle and tax collector Matthew, also named Levi. Jesus hand-selected him to be one of the twelve apostles.

## **PURPOSE**

Matthew wrote his Gospel to show that Jesus of Nazareth, God's Son and David's promised heir, is the King of Israel, who brought God's kingdom into the world and into the hearts of believers.

## **OUTLINE**

For the purposes of this study, Matthew will be divided into the following sections:

- 1.** The Person of Jesus Christ (1:1–4:16)
- 2.** The Proclamation and Ministry of Jesus Christ to Israel (4:17–16:20)
- 3.** The Suffering, Death, and Resurrection of Jesus Christ for Israel and All People (16:21–28:20)

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## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

# THE PERSON OF JESUS CHRIST (1:1—4:16)

Matthew presents Jesus of Nazareth to his readers.

### THE GENEALOGY, BIRTH, AND CHILDHOOD OF JESUS CHRIST

Matthew sets out to show that God fulfilled His promises to Abraham and his offspring by sending Jesus. The Gospel begins as Matthew traces Abraham's descendants down through the generations to Jesus.

**Read 1:1–17.**

**Q 1: What is notable about the women who are named in Jesus' genealogy?**

A 1: Their inclusion in the list shows that Jesus did not come from a spotless heritage. These women were not typical Israelites; some were involved in scandal. Tamar became pregnant by Judah, her father-in-law (Genesis 38). Rahab was a Canaanite prostitute from Jericho, a Gentile who hid two Israelite spies (Joshua 2:1–21). Ruth was a Moabite woman (a descendant of Abraham's nephew Lot) who married an Israelite from Bethlehem (Book of Ruth).

God reveals the true identity of Mary's son to her betrothed husband, Joseph.

**Read 1:18–25.**

**Q 2: What can we learn from Joseph?**

A 2: Joseph is a wonderful example for believers. He feared God and could not condone Mary being pregnant before their marriage feast. To honor God, he planned to divorce Mary. But he was also a merciful man who decided he would shield her by divorcing her quietly, that is, without making a public scandal to show he was in the right. Then when God revealed the truth that Jesus was God's Son, miraculously conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit, Joseph believed. He obeyed God, took Mary as his wife, and cared for Jesus as his foster son.

God guides Gentile Wise Men to Jesus by a star.

**Read 2:1–12.**

**Q 3: Who were the Wise Men?**

A 3: These Wise Men, also called the Magi, were not kings, but well-educated advisors to kings. We see wise men frequently in the Book of Daniel; in fact, Daniel and his three friends were educated to be wise men themselves (Daniel 1). In time, Daniel became a ruler over the wise men in Persia (Daniel 6:1–3), and it would not be surprising if these wise men knew of the birth of the King of the Jews through Daniel's writings.

In a dream, God warns Joseph to flee Herod's murderous plot.

**Read 2:13–15.**

**Q 4: What confidence can we have about God because of this dream He gave Joseph?**

A 4: God knew Herod's cunning plot to murder this rival King, but Joseph was completely unaware of Herod's intentions—as were the Wise Men. Knowing that no human could forewarn Joseph, God stepped in and gave that warning Himself. We can be confident God knows the plots and plans of our enemies, and knows how to protect and deliver us.

In paranoid rage, Herod orders the killing of Bethlehem's baby boys.

**Read 2:16–18.**

**Q 5: Why did God let Herod know about Christ's birth if He knew it would result in the death of the young babies of Bethlehem?**

A 5: God presented the Gospel promise to Herod because He loved him and wanted to save him through Jesus Christ. The fact that Herod responded in unbelief is completely Herod's fault, not God's fault in any way.

Joseph and Mary return to Israel and raise Jesus in Nazareth.

**Read 2:19–23.**

**Q 6: Why did Joseph move his family to Nazareth in the north rather than return to Bethlehem?**

A 6: God directed him to avoid Bethlehem because it was being ruled by Archelaus, Herod's son. Archelaus was a brutal tyrant who was deposed by Rome and sent into exile within ten years of beginning his rule. Archelaus was replaced by a series of Roman governors, one of which would be Pontius Pilate.

## THE MINISTRY OF JOHN THE BAPTIST AND OF JESUS

John the Baptist prepares the way for Jesus.

**Read 3:1–12.**

**Q 7: What does the phrase “repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (v. 2) mean?**

A 7: To repent means to radically transform our lives, completely change direction from selfish unbelief to humble, sincere faith that recognizes our sins condemn us and looks to God’s Son, Jesus Christ, as our only Savior. The kingdom of heaven (or God) means the gracious rule of God in our lives, and that rule was at hand because Jesus Christ had come and soon would make the atoning sacrifice on the cross.

John baptizes Jesus.

**Read 3:13–17.**

**Q 8: What righteousness did Jesus’ Baptism fulfill?**

A 8: Jesus had to take our sin and guilt upon Himself—becoming a “sinner,” so that He could be punished on the cross in our place, and we could be granted His righteousness and purity through our Baptism. It is as though we come to the waters of Baptism covered with sin and leave spotless. Jesus entered the water spotless and came out carrying the sins of the world.

Jesus is tempted by Satan in the wilderness.

**Read 4:1–11.**

**Q 9: Why did the Holy Spirit guide Jesus to the wilderness to be tempted?**

A 9: God’s plan for our salvation included Jesus conquering sin and temptation by enduring and conquering that temptation Himself. He fasted forty days so He could feel the true pull of temptation, yet submit to God’s will so He could be a spotless sacrifice and offer Himself on the cross for us.

Jesus begins His ministry in Galilee.

**Read 4:12–16.**

**Q 10: Why did Jesus begin His ministry in Galilee instead of the center of Judaism in the city of Jerusalem or the region of Judea?**

A 10: God directed Him north to Galilee to fulfill Isaiah’s prophecy. Jesus faced less intense persecution in Galilee, allowing Him to preach more freely.

# THE PROCLAMATION AND MINISTRY OF JESUS CHRIST TO ISRAEL (4:17—16:20)

Jesus officially begins His public ministry, sharing the good news of God's love for all people.

## **JESUS BEGINS MINISTRY TO ISRAEL**

The news spreads about Jesus, and large crowds begin to gather around Him.

**Read 4:17–25.**

**Q 11: Why did Jesus' miracles draw the crowds?**

A 11: Just as today, there were many suffering from a variety of diseases, injuries, and illnesses in Jesus' day. But unlike today, medicine had little to offer. Jesus was healing all sorts of diseases and restoring people to health. These miracles remind us just how badly sin has infected our world, but when Christ comes to restore His creation, He will make all things right and illness and death will be no more.

## **FIRST DISCOURSE: THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT**

Jesus begins the first of five extended sermons or discourses recorded by Matthew with glorious promises about our future life with Him in heaven.

**Read 5:1–12.**

**Q 12: What does the word "blessed" at the beginning of each of these passages represent?**

A 12: Jesus opens His sermon with wonderful Gospel promises. Each is a case of reverse—that is, things that we might normally equate with suffering are actually great blessings in disguise. These attitudes and actions reveal our repentance for our sins and our faith in Jesus, our Savior. Because of these, Jesus promises to fill us with joy and happiness in His kingdom, both here on earth and especially in the fullness of His kingdom after Judgment Day. These blessings or beatitudes come at the beginning of the sermon because only when we repent of our sins and are assured of God's forgiveness can we begin to live the godly life God wants us to live in this world.

Jesus calls His followers light and salt, showing they should witness to Him in both words and deeds.

**Read 5:13–16.**

**Q 13: What is the goal of our kind deeds and gracious words?**

A 13: Not to receive praise and commendation or draw the attention of others to ourselves, but to glorify God, who has forgiven and empowered us to live these new lives of joy, patience, and kindness—especially when we befriend those who are not treating us kindly.

Jesus came not to abolish God’s Law, but to fulfill it for all of us.

**Read 5:17–20.**

**Q 14: What does Jesus mean that our righteousness must exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees?**

A 14: These Jewish leaders prided themselves in rigorously observing the human traditions developed by Jewish rabbis. They convinced themselves they were ultra-holy and God was well pleased with them. Jesus points out that human righteousness is only a cover over sin that condemns us before God. Only Jesus’ righteousness, which we receive by faith, makes us holy in God’s eyes.

Jesus explains the Fifth Commandment: Do not murder.

**Read 5:21–26.**

**Q 15: What kinds of relationships does Jesus command to exist among believers?**

A 15: Jesus wants us to forgive one another as God forgives us, and to live peaceably with one another. When we are hurt, offended, or angry at another person, Jesus commands us to quickly reconcile and forgive—with forgiveness based on His forgiveness of our sins.

Jesus explains the Sixth Commandment: Do not commit adultery.

**Read 5:27–30.**

**Q 16: Why does Jesus warn against looking at a woman (or man) with lustful intent?**

A 16: All sin springs up from our sinful heart. Harboring lustful thoughts in our hearts leads to sexual sins that devastate personal relationships. Jesus shows how serious this is by telling us we would be better off gouging out our eye or cutting off our hand.

Jesus teaches about divorce.

**Read 5:31–32.**

**Q 17: Why would Jesus say that marrying a divorced woman causes her to commit adultery?**

A 17: In Jesus’ day, husbands were permitted to divorce their wives for nearly any reason. But in God’s eyes, the only valid reason for divorce is marital unfaithfulness. Thus, to Him, the two are still married even if they consider themselves divorced.

Jesus teaches about oaths.



**Read 5:33–37.**

**Q 18: Why did the Jews swear by heaven, the earth, or Jerusalem?**

A 18: Some felt that by swearing by these lesser objects, they had less responsibility to keep the oaths they had sworn. Jesus was making it clear that God holds us to the vows we make. Though Jesus permits taking oaths in serious matters (e.g., marriage vows, testifying in court), He encourages us to carefully maintain a reputation for truthfulness so that we won't feel we need to add an oath to convince someone to trust us.

Jesus teaches about revenge.

**Read 5:38–42.**

**Q 19: Was Jesus contradicting God's Old Testament law?**

A 19: No. The Old Testament law of equal retribution was not aimed at individuals who could take revenge for the wrongs they suffered. It was the judicial guideline for punishments Israelite judges could pass down on wrongdoers. Jesus encourages us to let God take vengeance for the wrongs others do to us. Hopefully, God will lead them to repentance, restoration, and forgiveness. If not, He will know how to punish them more completely than we ever could.

Jesus teaches how we should treat our enemies.

**Read 5:43–48.**

**Q 20: How can you love someone who mistreats you terribly?**

A 20: Jesus is not speaking of conjuring a feeling in our heart, but controlling the kinds of actions we do to others. Instead of treating them in kind—that is, treating them the same way they treated us—we are to treat them with undeserved kindness because that is how God treated us in our sinfulness. Often that will be enough to break the escalating cycle of hatred and mistreatment we usually see when one takes revenge on another. It may even result in a deep friendship.

Jesus teaches how to glorify God in our giving.

**Read 6:1–4.**

**Q 21: What does Jesus mean by saying, “do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing” (v. 3)?**

A 21: Jesus wants our attention to be on the people we are helping and on the Lord who generously provides us the means to offer this help. When we keep our focus on the needy instead of ourselves (by waiting to be recognized for the sacrifices we are making), the Lord will reveal many opportunities to help, which we miss out on when our focus is on ourselves.

Jesus teaches us to pray and gives us His own prayer.

**Read 6:5–15.**

**Q 22: Why should we pray if our Father knows our needs before we even ask Him?**

A 22: Praying keeps us mindful of God’s work in our lives, humbles us, and builds our trust in God. When we thank Him for the needs He has met and prayers He has answered, it strengthens our faith and trust that He will faithfully keep us all through the future.

Jesus teaches how to fast properly.

**Read 6:16–18.**

**Q 23: What is the benefit of fasting when it is done for God’s glory?**

A 23: The increasing urges and cravings of our bodies reminds us how much we need God’s tender care and provision for our earthly lives. It can teach us gratitude and trust, while also strengthening our mental resolve to withstand temptations of the flesh with God’s help.

Jesus teaches us to have a right attitude toward our possessions.

**Read 6:19–24.**

**Q 24: What does it mean to store up treasures in heaven?**

A 24: Actually, we can’t earn the treasures of heaven. Jesus has earned them for us and freely gives them to us. Jesus is teaching us to value and treasure the things awaiting us in heaven and the new earth that we will inherit on Judgment Day far more than we value or treasure the possessions God entrusts to us during this earthly life.

Jesus teaches us how to live without constant worry.

**Read 6:25–34.**

**Q 25: What does it mean to “seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness” (v. 33)?**

A 25: Jesus reminds us of the Lord’s Prayer. By the grace of God through Jesus Christ, we enjoy a place in the kingdom of God. When we attend worship regularly, when we read His Word and receive His Sacraments, God fills us with faith and trust so that we are confident that our gracious, loving Creator will provide all our needs in this life and the next.

Jesus teaches us how to approach another Christian who has caused offense.

**Read 7:1–6.**

**Q 26: When Jesus says “judge not,” does He mean we should never judge another person’s actions?**

A 26: Jesus is warning us against reaching conclusions about the motives behind another person’s actions because we can’t read his or her thoughts. We may have taken offense when none was intended. Instead, we should humbly assume he or she had a good motive and

reason behind the actions or words. There is only one person we are qualified to judge, one person whose motives and desires are known to us—that is ourselves. We should judge ourselves according to God’s Law, and repenting of our sin, turn to Christ for salvation.

**Q 27: What does Jesus mean by saying we should “first take the log out of your own eye” (v. 5)?**

A 27: He is teaching us to examine ourselves before we approach someone who is doing wrong. If we recognize we have sinned and deserved God’s wrath, but instead received His merciful forgiveness, we will approach him or her with Jesus’ mercy, love, and humility rather than our selfish pride and arrogance.

Jesus directs us to pray boldly and with confidence.

**Read 7:7–11.**

**Q 28: What promises does Jesus give to encourage us to pray boldly?**

A 28: Being light and salt to the world and showing love, compassion, humility, and patience with others is beyond our own abilities. Jesus uses three action words that imply desire and effort on our part, especially seeking and knocking on doors. But He boldly promises that when we ask, the things for which we ask will be given to us. When we seek, we will find, and when we knock the door will be opened. That is why we can trust our heavenly Father.

Jesus lays out two paths in life—one leads to heaven, the other to hell.

**Read 7:12–14.**

**Q 29: How does the Golden Rule sum up the Law and the Prophets?**

A 29: We would all like to be treated with love, kindness, and respect. That is precisely how God’s Law commands us to treat others.

**Q 30: Why does Jesus say the way is hard that leads to heaven if eternal life is His free gift to us?**

A 30: Receiving the gift of salvation and eternal life is easy (though it was a difficult, narrow road for Jesus and ran through the cross), but our life as Christians in this world can be difficult because of the persecution and hostility we will receive from the sinners around us who oppose God’s Law and Gospel.

Just as there are two paths in life, there are two kinds of prophets.

**Read 7:15–20.**

**Q 31: What are the “fruits” of preachers that we should judge?**

A 31: Not their works, but the message they preach. True prophets proclaim faith in Jesus Christ as the only way to the Father. False prophets direct a person to their own works and effort.

Jesus will judge the false prophets.

**Read 7:21–23.**

**Q 32: In judging the false prophets, Jesus will say, “I never knew you” (v. 23). What does it require for Jesus to know us?**

A 32: The false prophets will call attention to their works—the things they taught, the miracles they performed, the demons they drove out. But our works cannot save us; only faith in Jesus and His works can save us. When we confess our sins and trust in Jesus Christ, He knows us.

Jesus lays out the fate of those who put His words into practice and those who do not.

**Read 7:24–27.**

**Q 33: What is the house that believers build?**

A 33: It is the life of faith, the relationship with God that is strengthened through Word and Sacraments.

The crowds are astonished at the authority of Jesus’ teachings.

**Read 7:28–29.**

**Q 34: What does it mean to say Jesus’ teaching had authority, but the teaching of the scribes did not?**

A 34: Jesus’ words rang true to those who listened and did not refuse the work of the Holy Spirit strengthening or creating faith in them. But the scribes taught self-righteousness, which rings hollow to those who realize they can never please God by their works.

## **THE DEEDS OF JESUS CHRIST**

Jesus heals a leper.

**Read 8:1–4.**

**Q 35: Why did Jesus command the healed man not to tell anyone what He had done?**

A 35: Jesus has the authority to decide how quickly His popularity spreads. He apparently preferred to enter towns and speak with individuals without huge crowds following Him and forcing Him out to wide open spaces. He also frequently gave this command in Galilee and Judea, where the people were expecting the coming Messiah to establish an earthly kingdom. Meanwhile, Jewish leaders in authority opposed Him—perhaps slowing the spread of His miracles would slow the fear and hatred building within them. When He was outside the jurisdiction of these religious leaders from Judea and Galilee, He permitted those He healed to spread the news.

A Gentile centurion shows his faith.

**Read 8:5–13.**

**Q 36: What did the centurion mean when he spoke about the commands he received from his superiors and those he gave to his soldiers?**

A 36: Because of the authority given him as a centurion, he knew he only needed to speak a word and the soldiers under him would obey his command and do whatever he wished. He was convinced Jesus had far greater authority, over creation and over his servant's illness.

Jesus heals Peter's mother-in-law and a great multitude.

**Read 8:14–17.**

**Q 37: What is indicated by the phrase, "He cast out the spirits with a word" (v. 16)?**

A 37: The mighty Son of God only needed to speak His will and it was done—the same as in Genesis 1 when He commanded, "Let there be light" and there was light. This is the power of God's Word.

Two would-be disciples ask to follow Jesus.

**Read 8:18–22.**

**Q 38: Why does it look like Jesus was discouraging these two from following Him?**

A 38: Jesus wanted them to follow Him, but first they had to count the cost, that is, to recognize how their lives would change and recognize if they felt the things Jesus had to offer were worth changing their lives. It always is when we recognize the forgiveness, peace, hope, strength, and eternal life He offers.

Jesus shows His power over a stormy sea.

**Read 8:23–27.**

**Q 39: How does the fear of the disciples reveal the ferocity of this storm?**

A 39: A large number of Jesus' twelve disciples grew up fishing on this very lake. They had certainly seen strong storms blow up before. Had this not been an extraordinarily fierce storm, they would not have been afraid. So when Jesus is able to still this killing storm with a word of rebuke, they are completely astonished.

Jesus casts out two demons with a word.

**Read 8:28–34.**

**Q 40: Why did the people of this Gentile city ask Jesus to leave?**

A 40: Certainly the destruction of an entire herd of pigs was worrisome, but they probably were also terrified of a man strong enough to drive out the demons who terrorized their neighborhood and barred their way to the tombs.

Jesus heals a paralyzed man.

**Read 9:1–8.**

**Q 41: How does this passage reflect Jesus' claim to be the Son of God?**

A 41: If Jesus were a mere man, even a great prophet, He never would have dared to forgive this man's sins on His own authority. The response of the scribes claiming that Jesus was blaspheming makes that very clear. And Jesus underlined His authority as God's Son to forgive sins by healing the man, again with just a mere word.

Jesus calls Matthew to be one of His Twelve.

**Read 9:9–13.**

**Q 42: How scandalous was it for Jesus to choose a tax collector to be one of His Twelve?**

A 42: Tax collectors were seen as traitors who worked against their own people in collaboration with the Roman government. For Jesus to associate with one and choose him as one of the Twelve was certainly popular with the tax collectors and other social outcasts, but not with the Jewish crowds at large.

John the Baptist's disciples question Jesus about fasting.

**Read 9:14–17.**

**Q 43: Why were John's disciples troubled by Jesus' feasting with His disciples and believers?**

A 43: They were caught up in John's preparatory mission, which called on people to repent of their sins in preparation for the coming Messiah. But the Messiah was among them, and He was making everything new. He was calling people to repent as John did, but the kingdom of heaven was now among them, and that called for a new practice—great rejoicing and celebration!

Jesus heals a woman and restores a girl to life.

**Read 9:18–26.**

**Q 44: What is remarkable about the woman's faith?**

A 44: She is too ashamed to speak directly to Jesus, but she is confident in His healing power. That is why Jesus goes out of His way to find her—so He can speak to her and assure her that He cares about her deeply and personally.

**Q 45: Why did Jesus say the girl was sleeping when she was clearly dead?**

A 45: Jesus is indicating His intention to raise her from the dead. He also shows His power over death, robbing its power over us by teaching us to think of it as a mere sleep from which God will awaken each of us on the Last Day.

Jesus restores sight to two blind men.

**Read 9:27–31.**

**Q 46: What did Jesus mean when He said, “According to your faith be it done for you” (v. 29)?**

A 46: It was Jesus’ power that gave these men healing, not the strength of their faith. But we receive the benefits of Jesus’ loving work for us—especially His suffering and death—through faith. Perhaps Jesus was also trying to send a message to the Pharisees, who did not believe Him, that they, too, could receive great benefits from Him if they only believed.

Jesus drives out a demon that left a man unable to speak.

**Read 9:32–34.**

**Q 47: How could the Pharisees and the crowds have such opposite reactions to Jesus’ work?**

A 47: The crowds believed that Jesus received His authority from God, while the Pharisees thought it came from Satan. Jesus will soon show how ridiculous that notion is.

Matthew summarizes Jesus’ ministry in the cities and villages of Galilee.

**Read 9:35–38.**

**Q 48: What prompted Jesus to encourage His disciples (and us) to pray for God to raise up more workers for His harvest?**

A 48: Jesus has been accomplishing much work, but He knows how much more work remains to be done. As each new generation comes and the old ones go, there is fresh new work to be done by the Christian Church. We do well to pray for God to keep raising up new workers and keep our eyes open for young people who love God and His Word and could serve in His Church as pastors, teachers, or other vocations.

## **SECOND DISCOURSE: THE MISSIONARY DISCOURSE**

Jesus prepares His twelve disciples for a missionary trip to the villages and towns of Galilee.

**Read 10:1–4.**

**Q 49: What was the purpose of this mission?**

A 49: Jesus was giving them hands-on preparation and experience for their life’s work as apostles after His ascension. In the process, He was also able to multiply His ministry in Galilee from one (Himself) to seven preaching teams (Himself and six teams of two disciples).

Jesus explains the scope of this mission trip and how God will provide their needs through believers.

**Read 10:5–15.**

**Q 50: Why did Jesus limit their ministry to Jews alone at that time?**

A 50: God the Father sent Jesus to focus on the Jews first. Through His own tour through Galilee, He saw how the Jews were lost, “like sheep without a shepherd” (Matthew 9:36), misguided by the false teachings of the scribes. He gave the disciples authority to perform miracles and drive out demons so the Jews would have evidence that Jesus was the Christ, the King of Israel, and that His kingdom was among them. After His death, resurrection, and ascension, He sent them to Samaria and all the world.

Jesus warns the Twelve of the stiff persecution and opposition they will face.

**Read 10:16–25.**

**Q 51: When did this persecution begin?**

A 51: Mild opposition from the Jewish religious leadership was already beginning at that time, and Jesus’ enemies were growing more and more frustrated and felt more and more threatened by Him. But after His death, the enemy opposition would grow far more intense, including beatings, floggings, imprisonment, and martyrdom. Jesus kept the disciples in mind of their goal—eternal life—and promised to provide the Holy Spirit, who would speak through them to offer repentance and salvation to their enemies.

Do not fear the enemy; trust Christ for protection.

**Read 10:26–33.**

**Q 52: Whom did Jesus direct His disciples to fear instead of their enemies?**

A 52: They were to fear God. The worst their earthly enemies could do was kill their bodies; their spirits were safe in God’s hands. But if they turned away from faith to escape the wrath of their earthly enemies, they risked God’s much harsher and permanent wrath—the death of their spirit and body in hell. Just as God the Father watches over the smallest, least important bird, we can be confident He who values us much more highly will guard and protect us from earthly enemies who hate us for Jesus’ sake.

Families will be divided over Christ.

**Read 10:34–39.**

**Q 53: What would it mean to love father, mother, son, or daughter more than Jesus?**

A 53: It doesn’t mean that we abandon our family members, but if they make us choose, we side with Jesus, knowing that only He can give us eternal life. We pray our family members will remain open to our influence, but if they disown us we have no choice but to remain with Jesus. Jesus distanced Himself from His family when they did not believe in Him (Mark 3:31–35).



Jesus promises rich blessings for those who receive the apostles and other Christians as Christ's ambassadors.

**Read 10:40–42.**

**Q 54: Why did Jesus end His sermon to the disciples with these words?**

A 54: Jesus has discussed the difficulty of ministry and the rejection and opposition they will face, even from family members at times. But He assures them that there will be believers who accept the Gospel with joyful hearts and treat them with love and respect. This will be their true family through time and eternity.

## **JESUS' MINISTRY MEETS WITH OPPOSITION AND PROMPTS DIVISION**

John the Baptist sends messengers to Jesus.

**Read 11:1–19.**

**Q 55: Why would John have doubts about Jesus being the Messiah?**

A 55: John had preached both the salvation and the judgment of Jesus. He was hearing all kinds of stories about Jesus' healings and Gospel proclamation, but the guilty were still going unpunished—especially people like Herod Antipas, who still held him in prison. It is likely John didn't realize that the judgment he prophesied would only happen when Jesus returned to judge the earth on the Last Day. Jesus encourages John to focus on the prophecies He is fulfilling and put his trust in Jesus.

Jesus goes on to talk about the violence that gripped John, violence He Himself would soon suffer on the cross, and the sufferings His disciples would suffer after He ascended into heaven.

Jesus pronounces woes upon the cities that witnessed His miracles and preaching, yet refused to believe.

**Read 11:20–24.**

**Q 56: What warning does this passage give to us if we attend church frequently but refuse to really repent and believe?**

A 56: The Holy Spirit is working through Word and Sacraments to create repentance and faith within us. But we can resist His work, harden our hearts, and refuse to repent or believe. If we do that, a very harsh judgment awaits us.

Jesus rejoices that God the Father does not require human wisdom for a person to be able to know God's Son and believe through Him.

**Read 11:25–30.**

**Q 57: What is the yoke Jesus is talking about?**

A 57: A yoke was a harness that fit over the necks and shoulders of two work animals. The animals pushed against the yoke and moved whatever implements were attached to it (e.g., plows or wagons). Here Jesus offers us a place at His side, yoked to Him. Being God, He has the power to push the entire load all by Himself; all we need to do is humbly walk alongside Him.

The Pharisees charge Jesus' disciples with breaking the Sabbath laws.

**Read 12:1–8.**

**Q 58: What were the Pharisees getting wrong about the Sabbath?**

A 58: Their focus was wrong. They saw this day of rest as a day for humans to cease working in order to avoid punishment from God, so they built all kinds of rules around the commandment that defined what was work and what was not. Jesus taught that the Sabbath was a day when humans rested so God could work in their hearts and souls through His Word and Sacrament.

The Pharisees look for a way to accuse Jesus of violating the Sabbath.

**Read 12:9–14.**

**Q 59: What lesson did Jesus teach through His hypothetical question about a Pharisee's sheep?**

A 59: The Pharisees' interpretation of the Sabbath was overly strict, going far beyond God's intention for His people to rest from their daily chores so He could work in their hearts through Word and Sacrament. Instead of learning the truth from Jesus' answer, the Pharisees were furious and sought a way to put Jesus to death.

Rather than continue confronting the Pharisees, Jesus withdraws and continues His teaching and healing ministry.

**Read 12:15–21.**

**Q 60: Looking back at Jesus' answers to the Pharisees in verses 1–8, how did Jesus avoid quarreling or crying out in anger?**

A 60: Jesus' answers were respectful, carefully considered, and avoided directly humiliating the Pharisees. When He felt the tension rising, He withdrew rather than letting an argument escalate. By doing this, He kept the Pharisees from dominating all His time and hijacking His ministry.

Jesus is accused of driving out demons by the power of Satan.

**Read 12:22–32.**

**Q 61: What is the sin against the Holy Spirit?**

A 61: It is continually resisting the work of the Holy Spirit, who is working to bring repentance and create faith in each person

when they hear the Gospel. Anyone who fears he or she might have sinned against the Holy Spirit has not committed this sin. It includes having a continuously hard heart and either indifference or outright hostility toward God.

Our words reveal the condition of our hearts.

**Read 12:33–37.**

**Q 62: Who was Jesus addressing in these verses, and why did He call them a “brood of vipers”?**

A 62: Jesus is speaking to the Pharisees who tried to discredit His words and work by accusing Him of doing His miraculous works by the power of Satan. “Brood of vipers” means offspring of snakes—that is, baby snakes whose parent is the ancient serpent in the Garden of Eden: Satan. They were letting Satan blind them to Jesus’ true identity as God’s Son, their rightful High Priest, King, and Savior and trying to turn the people against Him. But Jesus’ words are also warnings for us to watch carefully what we say, lest we lead others astray by thoughtless, hasty words.

The scribes and Pharisees demand a grand, miraculous sign.

**Read 12:38–42.**

**Q 63: What is the sign of Jonah Jesus spoke of?**

A 63: The prophet Jonah was thrown into the Mediterranean Sea, where he was swallowed by a great fish and remained in the belly of that fish for three days and three nights until the fish threw him up on dry ground. When Jesus died on the cross, He would be buried in the belly of the earth for three days and three nights, and then come out alive because of His resurrection. Whenever we look for proof of Jesus’ identity outside of His death and resurrection, we are missing the boat.

Jesus warns against relapsing into Satan’s power.

**Read 12:43–45.**

**Q 64: What is Jesus describing as He talks about a demon returning to a person from whom it was driven?**

A 64: Jesus has come and loosened Satan’s hold on God’s people. But unless they permit Christ to take possession of their hearts and lives, Satan will return and their condition will be worse than it was before—and their punishment in hell far more severe. Likewise, we need to be sure to attend to the Word and Sacraments so Christ can possess us, lest Satan return and reclaim us.

Jesus considers believers to be His true family.

**Read 12:46–50.**

**Q 65: Wasn't Jesus sinning against His mother and family when He rejected them for His hearers?**

A 65: No. This same account is recorded in Mark 3:20–35. Verses 20–21 of Mark's passage give us an important understanding of what His family was doing there. "Then He went home, and the crowd gathered again, so that they could not even eat. And when His family heard it, they went out to seize Him, for they were saying, 'He is out of His mind.'" At this point in time, some of Jesus' brothers did not believe in Him, so He distanced Himself from them for this time, and embraced those who believed. Later, many of these brothers became leaders in the Church. James was a leader of the Church in Jerusalem (Acts 15:12–21) and wrote the New Testament letter called James. Jesus' brother Judas wrote the letter called Jude.

### **THIRD DISCOURSE: THE PARABLE DISCOURSE**

Having faced rejection from the scribes and Pharisees, Jesus begins His third discourse, a series of parables that describe how the kingdom of God works in the world.

**Read 13:1–9.**

**Q 66: What is the point of this agricultural parable?**

A 66: In the face of the persistent rejection and growing hostility of the scribes and Pharisees, Jesus uses this to explain to His disciples why the Gospel is effective in some people, but not in others. This way they won't get discouraged and give up when it seems like their preaching the Gospel is having no effect.

Jesus explains His use of parables to His disciples.

**Read 13:10–17.**

**Q 67: Why did Jesus speak in parables instead of speaking plainly?**

A 67: Those who rejected Jesus and made themselves His enemies refused to believe His clear, straightforward words and miracles. Knowing they would not listen to more clear teaching, He used parables so they would try to figure out the meaning He was concealing. Hopefully, in the process, they would be brought to repentance and faith by the Holy Spirit.

Jesus explains the parable of the sower to His disciples.

**Read 13:18–23.**

**Q 68: How did the people hearing Jesus reflect these four different types of ground?**

A 68: The scribes and Pharisees were like the paths—they heard Jesus' words and immediately rejected Him. Many in the crowd were like

the rocky ground—they were happy to hear Jesus’ words, but when they learned He was not the kind of Messiah they were waiting for, they left Him. Others were like the thorns—they were hoping Jesus would make their earthly lives prosperous and glorious, so they rejected Him because that was not the reason He came. Other disciples, whom Jesus previously called “little children” (Matthew 11:25), were given repentance and faith by the Holy Spirit to accept Jesus as He was and treasured His Word.

Jesus gives the parable of the weeds.

**Read 13:24–30.**

**Q 69: What question does this parable answer?**

A 69: Why does God allow evildoers to live alongside and among His people? Since faith is a matter in the heart, we cannot recognize those who believe from those who don’t. Also, a person can resist the Spirit for years, then finally come to repentance and faith. God is patient to permit that time.

Jesus teaches parables about mustard seeds and leaven.

**Read 13:31–33.**

**Q 70: What is the point of the mustard and leaven parables?**

A 70: The kingdom of God starts with humble beginnings, but invisibly grows large and powerful.

Matthew explains why Jesus spoke in parables.

**Read 13:34–35.**

**Q 71: What was Jesus speaking about in these parables?**

A 71: Jesus was speaking about important things—the nature of God’s kingdom and His acts to save sinners, but concealing them in parables so that only those to whom He explained them would understand.

Jesus explains the parable of the weeds.

**Read 13:36–43.**

**Q 72: What was the parable of the weeds speaking about?**

A 72: Since all of us are born with a sinful nature, we are all “weeds” planted by Satan. God permits evildoers to remain on earth so that by His Gospel He can transform some of those weeds into believers. Then at Judgment Day, Jesus will send His angels to separate the unbelievers from the believers. Unbelievers will suffer eternally in hell; believers will shine in glory with Jesus and the Father.

Jesus gives the parables of the hidden treasure and the pearl of great value.

**Read 13:44–46.**

**Q 73: What is the hidden treasure or the pearl of great value?**

A 73: People have interpreted these parables differently. It could refer to the hidden treasure or pearl being the Gospel. Believers find its true value and are willing to lose everything for the sake of having eternal life. It could also be speaking of Christ on His saving mission. In this case, the lost sinner is the hidden treasure or pearl, and Christ Jesus is the man who left heaven to come down and save us.

Jesus teaches His disciples the parable of the net.

**Read 13:47–50.**

**Q 74: What is Jesus speaking about in the parable of the net?**

A 74: Similar to the parable of the weeds, Jesus is teaching about the separation of believers and unbelievers on Judgment Day. But in this parable, Jesus focuses on the suddenness of the judgment rather than the patience of God.

Jesus gives a parable about new and old treasures.

**Read 13:51–52.**

**Q 75: What is Jesus talking about in the parable of old and new treasures?**

A 75: Jesus compares His disciples to homeowners who bring food and drink out to feed their families and guests. Christians who have been enlightened by the Holy Spirit can make disciples by sharing the Law and Gospel from both the Old Testament and the New Testament.

## **CONTINUING OPPOSITION AND JESUS' IDENTITY**

Jesus returns to preach in His hometown of Nazareth.

**Read 13:53–58.**

**Q 76: Why did the neighbors among whom Jesus grew up reject Him?**

A 76: At first, they marveled at His words and felt He spoke well, but then their familiarity with Him and His family caused them to dismiss Him, grow bitter, reject Him, and finally try to kill Him. Pray that the Holy Spirit will keep your Lord's Word fresh to your ears so you never treat it with contempt.

Matthew flashes back to events that led Herod to execute John the Baptist.

**Read 14:1–12.**

**Q 77: Why did Herod think that Jesus was John the Baptist raised from the dead?**

A 77: John had never performed miracles, so when Herod heard that Jesus was, he thought John must have been raised from the dead. This could indicate that Herod was preoccupied with John the Baptist, his guilty conscience bothering him because he knew he had killed an innocent man.

Jesus feeds five thousand men besides women and children.

**Read 14:13–21.**

**Q 78: What lesson was Jesus teaching His disciples by this miracle?**

A 78: When Jesus first told them to feed the crowd, His disciples knew their resources were far too small. When Jesus multiplied those meager resources and satisfied the entire crowd, the disciples could see that Jesus had the power to provide for all their needs, even when they had no clue what to do. In their future ministries, they could count on Jesus to provide all they needed.

Jesus walks on the water.

**Read 14:22–33.**

**Q 79: How does this event show the disciples were growing in faith and understanding?**

A 79: Even though he later faltered, Peter did have faith in Jesus to step out onto the water and begin walking across it to Him. At a previous time when Jesus calmed the sea, the disciples wondered what sort of man He was (Matthew 8:27), but this time they worshiped Him as the Son of God.

Jesus comes ashore and heals many sick people.

**Read 14:34–36.**

**Q 80: What is significant about Jesus healing people who touched the fringe of His clothing?**

A 80: That act is a demonstration of great faith and confidence on the part of the sick who requested that. It also reflects the generosity and kindness of Jesus, who cared enough about the sick to not neglect them or seek to avoid them.

Jesus teaches scribes and Pharisees the difference between traditions and commandments.

**Read 15:1–9.**

**Q 81: What is the danger of focusing our attention on traditions?**

A 81: Traditions can be good ways to deal with one another, but they must never take precedence over God's commandments. Our relationship with God is the basis for right relationships with other humans.

Jesus teaches the crowd about true defilement.

**Read 15:10–20.**

**Q 82: Why did Jesus want the crowds to hear His teaching as well as the scribes and Pharisees?**

A 82: Because the crowds were being misled to put their confidence and reliance in rituals, which did not make them clean. Jesus exposed that the source of our uncleanness is the sinful nature that lives in the human heart. Ritual purity from washing only symbolized the true washing we need deep down in our hearts. The only way to be forgiven from evil is through repentance, Baptism, and the shed blood of Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God.

A Canaanite woman shows great faith and persistence.

**Read 15:21–28.**

**Q 83: What lesson can we learn from this woman about our prayer life?**

A 83: Too often we ask hesitantly, fail to pray with determination, or give up too easily when we must wait for our prayer to be answered. This woman teaches us never to give up, and to bring up Jesus' promises in our prayers.

Jesus heals many people on a mountain by the Sea of Galilee.

**Read 15:29–31.**

**Q 84: What lesson can we take from the sheer number of people Jesus healed on this mountain?**

A 84: Jesus reminds us of His concern for our physical well-being as well as our spiritual health. Jesus came to redeem both body and spirit. The multitude of healings reminds us that when Christ returns He will instantly heal and transform the bodies of all believers and restore His creation to true perfection.

Jesus feeds a crowd of four thousand men, besides women and children.

**Read 15:32–39.**

**Q 85: Why did Jesus miraculously feed this large crowd in addition to feeding the larger crowd earlier?**

A 85: Clearly the disciples had forgotten the first feeding since they asked where they could get enough bread to feed the crowds in such a desolate place—even though they had some bread just as they had before. We too easily forget God's gracious daily giving of our food, clothing, and the means to provide our physical needs in life. We should receive His gifts with great thanksgiving, praise, and confidence that He delights to care for our bodies when we entrust our needs to His fatherly care.

The Pharisees and Sadducees demand powerful signs of Jesus.

**Read 16:1–4.**



**Q 86: Why did Jesus' enemies demand these spectacular signs when He was healing great multitudes of people right before their eyes?**

A 86: They were driven by unbelief. They refused to see the miracles all around them. Instead, they demanded to see a spectacular sign in the heavens. But miracles don't create faith. The only sign Jesus would show them would be His cross and resurrection. Still many of them would refuse to believe when that great, spectacular miracle took place.

Jesus warns His disciples to beware of the subtle influence of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

**Read 16:5–12.**

**Q 87: What was the subtle influence Jesus was warning against?**

A 87: The Jewish leaders were skeptical about Jesus. That skepticism colored everything they did. They demanded signs of Jesus, yet missed thousands of signs God was showing them in the miracles Jesus was performing. The Messiah was here bringing the kingdom of God, yet they were entirely missing it because of their stiff-necked, narrow-minded, skeptical attitude.

Jesus asks His disciples who they think He is.

**Read 16:13–20.**

**Q 88: Why is this moment of Peter's confession a high point and pivotal moment in Jesus' ministry?**

A 88: All of Jesus' miracles up to this point—healings, miraculous catches of fish, stilling storms, multiplying bread and fish, driving out demons, raising the dead—all of these were for the purpose of convincing the Twelve that He is the promised Messiah. Now that the Holy Spirit has led them to make this confession, Jesus can teach them why He came—the great mission of salvation He was undertaking.

# THE SUFFERING, DEATH, AND RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST FOR ISRAEL AND ALL PEOPLE (16:21–28:20)

Now that Peter has confessed Jesus' true identity on behalf of the Twelve, Jesus turns to the cross.

## **JESUS APPROACHES JERUSALEM, WHERE HE WILL SUFFER, DIE, AND BE RAISED**

Jesus first announces His coming suffering, death, and resurrection to His Twelve.

**Read 16:21–23.**

**Q 89: Why was Jesus so harsh to call Peter “Satan”?**

A 89: Jewish thoughts and hopes about the Messiah certainly did not include suffering and death. Jesus could have gently corrected Peter, but among the Twelve those mistaken notions of the Messiah setting up an earthly kingdom ran deep, and stood in the way of understanding His mission and theirs. Jesus felt it was necessary to stop that thought in its tracks.

Jesus calls His followers to take up their crosses and follow Him to everlasting life.

**Read 16:24–28.**

**Q 90: Why does taking up our cross and following Jesus require denying ourselves?**

A 90: None of us wants to willingly face insults, opposition, persecution, and disgrace. If our entire focus is our self—protecting our reputation, impressing others, having millions of “likes”—we will not be able to follow where Jesus is leading and be a fruitful disciple. If we choose ourself over Christ, we not only risk Jesus' stern judgment and the sentence of eternal hell; we also risk losing the glorious eternal life with Him that makes this earthly life pale in comparison.

Jesus is transfigured.

**Read 17:1–13.**

**Q 91: What happened on that mountain?**

A 91: Jesus revealed His identity as the Son of God by letting His divine glory shine through His human body. He spoke with Moses and

Elijah because He was about to fulfill all the promises of the Old Testament, including His death and resurrection. God the Father's voice was heard out of the cloud declaring Jesus' true identity, stating that Jesus perfectly satisfied God's will, and commanding that they listen to what Jesus taught them, especially about His coming death and resurrection.

Jesus' disciples are unable to heal a demon-possessed boy.

**Read 17:14–20.**

**Q 92: Why had Jesus' disciples been unable to heal the boy?**

A 92: They still had the authority from Jesus to do so (see 10:1). But this was a particularly tough case, and the disciples were not successful driving the spirit out right away. They grew discouraged and didn't believe they would be able to heal him. Their focus was on the wrong place. They were focused on themselves when they should have focused on God through prayer.

Jesus foretells His suffering, death, and resurrection again.

**Read 17:22–23.**

**Q 93: How does the reaction of Jesus' disciples show that they understood what He was saying to them?**

A 93: They were greatly distressed to hear His prediction. If they thought He meant something less severe than the shameful sufferings He would face, they would not have been so greatly distressed.

Jesus is asked about paying the temple tax.

**Read 17:24–27.**

**Q 94: Why did Jesus pay the temple tax when He was exempt because He was God's Son?**

A 94: Jesus wanted to avoid causing offense to those who did not know He was God's Son, so He went ahead and paid the temple tax, but He did so in a miraculous way. This is important because Jesus wants nothing to stand in the way of people finding salvation through faith in Him.

## **THE FOURTH DISCOURSE: THE CHURCH IS FOUNDED ON THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS**

Jesus begins His fourth long discourse dealing with how Christians should treat one another.

**Read 18:1–6.**

**Q 95: How do Christians "turn and become like children" (v. 3)?**

A 95: Jesus points to the trust and dependence young children have in their parents and teachers. We often value our self-reliance as adults, but to be great in God's eyes requires humble, childlike

faith and trust in Christ alone. This humility before God is the foundation for being believers who confess our sinfulness and unworthiness, trust in Jesus Christ alone for salvation, and interact with others from that place of humility.

Jesus addresses temptations to sin—and how we must watch ourselves carefully so we do not lead others into temptation.

**Read 18:7–9.**

**Q 96: What is Jesus emphasizing with His talk of cutting off our hand or foot and tearing out our eye?**

A 96: He is making us aware of how serious sins are—especially the sins we commit in front of others. We tend to downplay the influence of our sins, but we must not do that—especially in front of children, who often model their future adult lives off of what they see in us.

God cares about each believer, especially those who stray from faith.

**Read 18:10–14.**

**Q 97: Why is it important to recognize God’s concern about each and every believer no matter how little?**

A 97: Christ wants each of us to hold that same love and concern for our fellow brothers and sisters in Christ, that we may pay attention to one another and go in search of lost sheep as well.

Jesus teaches us how to reconcile with a fellow Christian who sins against us.

**Read 18:15–20.**

**Q 98: Why does Jesus want us to drive unrepentant sinners out of the congregation?**

A 98: Our Lord’s goal and ours must not be to cast away sinners, but to humbly break through their unrepentance and save them. That is why He urges us to start one on one—with the hopes that the sinning brother or sister will listen to us, repent, and be reconciled. If they do not, we are to bring along a couple of witnesses so as not to overwhelm the sinner, but to impress the seriousness of this issue and our desire for their salvation. The congregation is brought in when the sinner refuses to repent. This shows that by their unrepentance, they are excluding themselves from heaven. The goal, as always, is to bring them to repentance so God can restore them. This can only be done with the humility of a little child.

Peter asks how many times we should forgive someone who sins against us.

**Read 18:21–35.**

**Q 99: What does Jesus’ parable of the unforgiving servant mean?**

A 99: The king is God the Father, and each of us is the first servant who owes God a debt we cannot possibly ever hope to repay (that is the reason hell is eternal punishment—no amount of our suffering is

enough to pay for all our sins). But in mercy, God forgives it all. He now expects us in humility and gratitude to forgive the much smaller debt of sins others sin against us. If we refuse, our Father will not forgive us, and we will spend eternity in hell.

## **JESUS CONTINUES TOWARD JERUSALEM IN THE FACE OF OPPOSITION**

Pharisees question Jesus about divorce.

**Read 19:1–12.**

**Q 100: Is Jesus forbidding divorced Christians from remarrying?**

A 100: No. Jesus is addressing the lax attitude people of His day had toward marriage and divorce. He emphasizes that God’s design for marriage is to be a lifelong, monogamous marriage between one man and one woman. That is the relationship in which marriage and sexuality conveys its greatest blessing. Divorce and subsequent remarriage is permissible in the case of sexual immorality, but clearly it would be best for all if sexual immorality never took place. But even in cases where the divorce was not appropriate, God is prepared to bless Christians who repent of their role in their divorce and seek God’s forgiveness in Jesus Christ.

The disciples try to prevent parents from bringing their little children to Jesus for blessings.

**Read 19:13–15.**

**Q 101: What did Jesus mean when He said, “To such belongs the kingdom of heaven” (v. 14)?**

A 101: Unless we have humble trust and dependence on God like a little child does, we will not enter heaven. We must despair of our own ability to please God through our good works, strength, and wisdom; repent of our sins; and trust only in Jesus Christ’s righteousness and His sacrifice for our sins.

A rich young man asks what he must do to inherit heaven.

**Read 19:16–30.**

**Q 102: Why does Jesus direct the young man to his own works for salvation?**

A 102: He doesn’t really direct him to focus on his works, but on God’s requirement. Jesus asks His question this way so the young man will measure Himself against the Commandments, realize he has failed miserably, and be brought to confess his sin and unworthiness and cling to Jesus’ good works and His innocent suffering and death.

Jesus teaches the parable of the laborers in the vineyard.

**Read 20:1–16.**

**Q 103: Do you find yourself siding with the laborers hired first or the master of the house?**

A 103: Many of us side with the laborers, thinking of how unfair it is for them to be paid the same as those who only worked one hour. But the master treated those employees fairly. He didn't have to hire them in the first place, and he did pay what they had agreed upon. The money to pay the workers belonged to him as well. Jesus is teaching us that our work in the kingdom of God is a privilege and we need to stop comparing our work to that of other Christians and focus on God first. He chose us; we did not choose Him. He gave His Son to save us from our sins; we are the ones whose sins required that deadly sacrifice. So we should side with the master of the house and thank God for giving us the privilege of serving in His kingdom—even more so if we have enjoyed that privilege for our entire life.

Jesus predicts His death a third and final time.

**Read 20:17–19.**

**Q 104: What is different between this prediction and Jesus' earlier predictions (16:21; 17:22–23)?**

A 104: The first prediction gave general information—He would suffer many things from the Jewish religious leaders, be killed, and be raised again on the third day. The second prediction added specific detail to those “many things”: He would be handed over or betrayed to men. This third time, He gets more specific about the betrayal—He hints at Judas's betrayal by saying, “the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and scribes” (v. 18). He adds that the Jewish high court will condemn Him to death and deliver or betray Him to the Gentiles—a veiled prediction of Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor who will order Jesus' execution on the cross. And once again, He predicts that He will be raised on the third day. Jesus also shows that He underwent His suffering and death voluntarily. Since He knew what was going to happen, He could have stopped it quite easily.

The mother of James and John makes a request of Jesus.

**Read 20:20–28.**

**Q 105: What is Jesus' cup that James and John claimed they could drink?**

A 105: The disciples all expected Jesus would establish a glorious earthly kingdom, so they thought they would enjoy fame, power, and glory on earth. But Jesus' cup was suffering, persecution, and death for the sins of the world. James and John would drink of Jesus' cup when they suffered opposition, persecution, death (for James, see Acts 12:1–2), and exile (for John, see Revelation 1:9) for Christ's

sake. The truly great Christian life on earth is one of humility and service, considering others better and more important than ourselves.

Two blind men beg Jesus to heal them.

**Read 20:29–34.**

**Q 106: Why would the crowd rebuke the two and tell them to be silent?**

A 106: In Jesus' day (and sometimes our own), people feel that those with handicapping conditions are not as important as healthy, "normal" people are. These crowds were caught up in great joy and excitement as they traveled with Jesus to Jerusalem, perhaps hoping this was the time when Jesus would take the throne of His father David. Jesus Himself could have been lost in His own thoughts of His coming suffering and death, but He did not miss their cries for mercy.

## **JESUS' MINISTRY IN JERUSALEM, WHERE HE MEETS CONFRONTATION AND REJECTION**

Jesus rides into Jerusalem as the Messiah.

**Read 21:1–11.**

**Q 107: What was the meaning of the word "hosanna" that the crowds shouted to Jesus?**

A 107: The Hebrew word "hosanna" means "save [us] now." The crowds were proclaiming Jesus the promised Messiah, and they were asking Him to save them. Of course, that is exactly what He was there to do—to go to the cross to save the world from our sins. But the crowds were thinking of an earthly kingdom—that Jesus would save Judah from the Romans. This might explain in part why the crowd was so pro-Jesus on Sunday, but by Good Friday were jeering Him as He hung from the cross.

Jesus cleanses the temple.

**Read 21:12–17.**

**Q 108: Why did Jesus use so much force and anger when He cleansed the temple?**

A 108: Jesus entered Jerusalem as God's appointed Messiah, and He would spend the last days of His public ministry preaching and teaching in the temple courts. But His first task was to cleanse the temple and restore it to God's appointed purpose. The sacrificial animals and money-changers were necessary since the Jews and converts to Judaism traveled long distances across the Roman Empire to attend the Passover in Jerusalem. But these should have been located outside the temple courts—perhaps at the open market

not far from the temple. The Jewish religious leaders should have recognized with shame that they had shirked their responsibility; instead, they were indignant and plotted to kill Him.

Jesus curses a fig tree.

**Read 21:18–22.**

**Q 109: Why would Jesus do something so harsh in the early spring?**

A 109: Though the full harvest of figs doesn't come ripe until later in the season, there should have been unripe figs growing on the tree that Jesus could have eaten. He found only leaves. With no unripe figs growing, this tree would bear no ripe figs at harvest time. Since it was not fulfilling the purpose for which God created it, Jesus cursed the tree. Jesus used this fig tree as an object lesson for the disciples. The Jewish religious leaders and Jews who rejected Him were as fruitless and faithless as this tree. The city and the temple would be condemned by God for rejecting Jesus and would be destroyed by the Romans in AD 70. But the disciples and all who were given faith in Jesus would be fruitful for God's glory, and in the coming centuries the Church of God would spread throughout the world.

The Jewish religious leaders challenge Jesus' authority.

**Read 21:23–27.**

**Q 110: Why didn't Jesus directly answer their question?**

A 110: Jesus was concerned with their salvation, wanting to work repentance and faith in them. He asked them the same question about John the Baptist that they had asked of Him. Instead of searching their hearts and seeking the truth, they refused to answer because they were concerned only with how they would look to the crowds. But saying "we don't know" was an embarrassment to them because it was their responsibility as chief priests to know whether John and Jesus were from God or from men.

Jesus gives the parable of the two sons.

**Read 21:28–32.**

**Q 111: What was Jesus teaching through this parable?**

A 111: It may have looked like Jesus left the chief priests' question about His authority unanswered, but Jesus actually teaches this parable and the next to answer the question. First, in this parable, He shows that John's authority was from heaven—that is, God sent him to baptize. But Jesus exposed the disobedience of the Jewish leaders to God's will (the second son in the parable) by showing their refusal to repent and receive John's Baptism. By comparing the first son—who was ultimately repentant and obedient—to the hated tax collectors and prostitutes, Jesus really shone the Jewish leaders in a bad light.



Jesus teaches the parable of the tenants.

**Read 21:33–46.**

**Q 112: What is the meaning of this parable?**

A 112: Jesus is answering the Jewish leaders' questions about the source of His authority. He is the son the master of the house sent to get his fruit from the tenants, who are the religious authorities. Not only do they withhold the owner's rightful portion, but they also mistreat the messengers sent to them. Then they plot to kill the son. The chief priests understood Jesus was using this parable to declare He received His authority from God.

Jesus teaches the parable of the wedding feast.

**Read 22:1–14.**

**Q 113: What is Jesus trying to teach through this parable?**

A 113: God the Father earnestly wants all people to be in heaven through faith in Christ. But some resist being brought to faith by the Holy Spirit. Jesus is highlighting His divine Sonship, Israel's persistent rejection of the prophets God sent to it, and the inclusion of Gentiles in God's kingdom.

The Pharisees plot to trap Jesus.

**Read 22:15–22.**

**Q 114: What answer were the Pharisees hoping Jesus would give?**

A 114: This was like their version of Jesus' question about the source of John the Baptist's authority. They thought no matter what answer Jesus gave—yes or no—it would go badly for Him. If He said, "Yes, we should pay taxes to Caesar" they thought the crowds would turn against Him. But if He said, "No, we should not pay taxes," they would have reported Him to Pontius Pilate. Instead of answering with one of these, Jesus reminded them that God has a place for legitimate government, and though the kingdom of God is more important, legitimate earthly government plays an important role in God's plan: the work of the Church would be greatly hindered in the chaos of an anarchist society.

The Sadducees try to make Jesus look ridiculous for teaching the resurrection.

**Read 22:23–33.**

**Q 115: Why were the Sadducees rejecting the resurrection of the dead?**

A 115: To them, it seemed an absurd idea. Besides, they only believed Moses' books (Genesis–Deuteronomy) were genuine Scripture, and Moses doesn't directly speak about God raising people from the dead—though it is directly taught in many other Old Testament books, which is why most Israelites believed in it. Jesus' answer pointed out that they didn't even know the books of Moses like

they thought they did. Jesus shows that even Moses implied a resurrection as God identified Himself to Moses at the burning bush by saying, “I *am* the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.” If there was no life after death, He would have had to say “I *was* the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.”

The Pharisees gather together for one more go at Jesus.

**Read 22:34–40.**

**Q 116: What was the trap here?**

A 116: The Pharisees hoped Jesus would promote a lesser matter of the Law so they could contradict Him and say that He was teaching falsely. Instead, Jesus went to the heart of the Law—the summary of the Ten Commandments.

Jesus turns the table and asks the Pharisees a question.

**Read 22:41–46.**

**Q 117: Why were the Jewish scribes unable to answer Jesus’ question?**

A 117: They didn’t understand the Scriptures revealed that the Messiah would be God (David’s Lord) and man (David’s son or descendant) at the same time. Jesus silences them with this question about Himself.

Jesus condemns the stubborn obstinance of the Pharisees to the crowds.

**Read 23:1–36.**

**Q 118: Why did Jesus speak so harshly against the Pharisees and the scribes? Was He just finally fed up with them?**

A 118: They had stubbornly refused to listen to His more gentle correction before. Now He makes the judgment standing against them clear—still mercifully trying to bring them to repentance while at the same time warning His followers not to be impressed by them or try to follow them.

Jesus now turns to the city of Jerusalem to express His sorrow at their refusal to repent and believe in Him.

**Read 23:37–39.**

**Q 119: What does Jesus show us about His heart toward His people who rejected Him?**

A 119: Jesus truly grieves their stubborn refusal to believe. He knows the heartache and agony they are bringing on themselves as they continue in unrepentance. He still loves them, though they reject Him.

## **FIFTH DISCOURSE: THE ESCHATOLOGICAL DISCOURSE**

Jesus begins the final discourse in Matthew, teaching His disciples about the end times.

**Read 24:1–2.**

**Q 120: Why were the disciples so impressed by the temple buildings?**

A 120: King Herod the Great (who met the Wise Men) had improved the temple built by the exiles who returned from Babylon. He used huge stone blocks (some measured 37 feet long, 18 feet wide, and 12 feet high) decorated with gold. The temple gleamed in the sun. So you can imagine their astonishment when Jesus told them not one stone would remain on another.

**Q 121: What was Jesus impressing on the disciples and us?**

A 121: Nothing in this world is permanent, no matter how well it is constructed. Remembering everything and everyone is temporal, we should set our hearts on eternal things and the new heavens and new earth, which Jesus is preparing for us.

Jesus starts by answering the disciples' question about the signs that will indicate His return on Judgment Day and the end of this world.

**Read 24:3–14.**

**Q 122: What should we think about the various signs (earthquakes, famines, wars) when they have been going on for centuries and may keep going on for many centuries forward?**

A 122: Each time we hear or see one of these signs, we would do well to remember how temporary this life is—and realize that Judgment Day could come at any minute. That will drive us to repentance and faith in Christ.

Jesus now answers the disciples' first question about when the temple will be destroyed so that one stone will not remain upon another.

**Read 24:15–28.**

**Q 123: What is the “abomination of desolation” (v. 15)?**

A 123: Gentiles standing in the temple courts—that is, the Roman army forcing its way into the temple courts and destroying the temple. Jesus warns Christians to flee Jerusalem when they see the Roman legions marching in—and church historians tell us that many Christians remembered Jesus' warning and quickly fled the city when they saw the advance of the Romans. In that desperate hour, many false christs will rise up to deceive people. But Christ's return from the sky will be unmistakable.

Returning to the disciples' second question about His coming, Jesus describes the manner of His return—though not the time.

**Read 24:29–31.**

**Q 124: What will Jesus' return be like?**

A 124: Jesus will not return quietly. His coming on the clouds will be bright and glorious as His angels go out to gather believers. It will be seen all around the world.

Jesus teaches His signs of the end times are as dependable as the indications a fig tree gives that summer is near.

**Read 24:32–35.**

**Q 125: Was Jesus wrong when He said, “this generation will not pass away until all these things take place” (v. 34)?**

A 125: No. He was not speaking of a generation in the sense of all those born during a certain span of years (in the sense of baby boomers, millennials, and so on). He is speaking of a group of people through the years who will be just like the Jews who demanded signs, rejected Jesus, and refused to recognize Him as the Savior and Son of God.

Jesus impresses upon His disciples that they must always be ready and watchful for His return on Judgment Day because they cannot know when it will be.

**Read 24:36–51.**

**Q 126: How can Jesus say He does not know the day or hour of His return if He is the Son of God?**

A 126: Jesus is omniscient, that is, He knows all things because He is the Son of God. But during His earthly life, He laid aside His heavenly glory—including His divine knowledge, and thus at the moment He spoke this passage, He did not know when that day would be. Also notice that Jesus speaks of Noah and the flood as actual history, so we should reject the idea that the flood was a myth, allegory, or fairy tale. If Jesus said it occurred, we can be confident it really occurred.

**Q 127: Do verses 40 and 41 speak of the rapture?**

A 127: No. The rapture is a misunderstanding of Jesus' teaching that pulls verses out of their context. In this whole passage, Jesus is speaking of what will happen the hour He returns to judge the world—not a separate event that will happen before that day. He already told us in verse 31 that His angels will gather the elect from the four winds. Here He is describing what it will look like in various places when the angels separate believers from unbelievers as Jesus returns.

Jesus gives a parable of ten virgins to remind us to be watching and ready for His return.

**Read 25:1–13.**

**Q 128: What are the “extra flasks of oil” Christians should have as we await Christ’s return?**

A 128: The Word and Sacraments keep the lamp of faith alive and strong, shining in our hearts as we await Christ’s return. It is important not to neglect weekly worship for this reason.

Jesus gives another parable, this time about servants using their master’s talents before He returns.

**Read 25:14–30.**

**Q 129: What is Jesus teaching us about our talents and possessions?**

A 129: Everything we are and have belong to Christ and have been entrusted to us to use for the benefit of His kingdom. When the Holy Spirit empowers us to faithfully use our powers to serve our families and our neighbors, especially sharing the Gospel, we can look forward to sharing Christ’s reign in the new heavens and the new earth after He returns.

Jesus describes the public judgment on Judgment Day.

**Read 25:31–46.**

**Q 130: Is Jesus teaching that we are saved by our works instead of faith?**

A 130: No. The purpose of this public judgment is to reveal the faith that empowered believers to do good works for others. The works themselves reveal that faith—just as the lack of good works for others exhibits the lack of faith in Christ, because without faith, any good work we do is done for ourselves, not for Christ. Without faith, it is impossible to please God.

## **JESUS’ PASSION**

While Jesus announces His coming death by crucifixion, the chief priests plot His death.

**Read 26:1–5.**

**Q 131: Why weren’t the Jewish religious leaders planning to kill Jesus on Good Friday at the Passover?**

A 131: They feared the crowds with which Jesus was so popular. Many of these crowds were Jews who had journeyed to Jerusalem for the Passover. The priests thought they would be easier able to kill Jesus after the feast.

The disciples criticize a woman’s extravagant love.

**Read 26:6–13.**

**Q 132: Why didn’t Jesus see the woman’s action as wasteful?**

A 132: He knew that she had anointed Him out of faith and love. It was an extravagant sacrifice to prepare for the even more extravagant sacrifice He would make in a few days.

Judas offers to betray Jesus.

**Read 26:14–16.**

**Q 133: What is significant about the price of thirty pieces of silver that the high priests offered Judas?**

A 133: Zechariah had prophesied this exact sum of money for Jesus' betrayal (see Zechariah 11:11–13), and it was the exact value Moses set on a dead slave.

**Q 134: What was the opportunity Judas was looking for?**

A 134: A time when Jesus was away from the crowds and defenseless.

Jesus predicts Judas's betrayal at the Last Supper.

**Read 26:17–25.**

**Q 135: Why did Jesus say it would have been better for Judas not to have been born?**

A 135: Jesus was trying to open Judas's eyes to see beyond the greed that motivated this betrayal. He wanted to warn Judas of the intense guilt that would strike and overwhelm him, robbing him of hope that Jesus could forgive him.

Jesus institutes Holy Communion for His believers.

**Read 26:26–29.**

**Q 136: How does Holy Communion work?**

A 136: Similar to the Old Testament sacrifice called the peace offering, God lets us eat the very body and drink the very blood of the sacrifice—the Lamb of God—to assure us that our sins are completely forgiven because in this very body and blood Jesus paid the price of our sins by suffering and dying on the cross.

Jesus predicts His disciples will flee and Peter will deny Him three times.

**Read 26:30–35.**

**Q 137: What was wrong with the zeal of Peter and the other disciples?**

A 137: Their confidence was completely in their own power and determination to remain loyal to Jesus. When they saw the very real danger facing them, their courage vaporized and they fled in terror. The correct response to Jesus' prediction would have been humble repentance, turning to Christ for strength rather than relying on their own.

Jesus prays in the Garden of Gethsemane.

**Read 26:36–46.**

**Q 138: Was it wrong for Jesus to ask the Father to take the cup (cross) away?**

A 138: No. Jesus was fully human, He was not eager to suffer the cruel, torturous death awaiting Him. Nor was He anxious to feel the wrath of God strike Him. But Jesus' goal in His prayer was for His Father to mold Jesus' will to match the Father's. It took three hours of praying for Jesus to be ready for what He must suffer for all of us. Jesus gives us a model of persistent prayer, exposing how weak we often are in our prayers as we struggle with problems that depress us and drive us to extreme fatigue and sleepiness like the disciples.

Judas betrays Jesus, and the Jewish chief priests and elders arrest Him.

**Read 26:47–56.**

**Q 139: What was the danger of Peter's rash attack on those arresting Jesus?**

A 139: The guards outnumbered the disciples, and much bloodshed could have resulted as they put down the rebellion. Jesus stepped in to prevent the tension from escalating and to defuse the situation. Luke 22:51 tells us Jesus even healed the servant's ear so no charges could be leveled against Peter.

Jesus' trial before Caiaphas and the Jewish religious leaders.

**Read 26:57–68.**

**Q 140: What charge was the basis for the Jewish court's conviction of Jesus?**

A 140: Jesus was charged for blasphemy in claiming to be the Son of God. It was fitting that He would not be convicted of a false charge from lying witnesses, but convicted for claiming the truth, that He was the Christ, the Son of God. Notice that the Jewish leaders did not challenge the notion that God had a Son, but that Jesus of Nazareth claimed to be that Son of God.

Peter denies Jesus three times.

**Read 26:69–75.**

**Q 141: What is ironic about the first accuser of Peter being a servant girl?**

A 141: In that day, a woman's testimony would not be accepted in court, yet Peter's courage and bravado crumbled when she accused him of being with Jesus. After that, Peter sought to escape the courtyard, and ended up denying Jesus two more times.

The Jewish court condemns Jesus, then hands Him over to Pilate.

**Read 27:1–2.**

**Q 142: Why did the Jewish leaders hand Jesus over to Pilate instead of executing Him themselves?**

A 142: The Romans had taken away the Jewish high court's right to executions. That meant Jesus would be crucified. The high court would have stoned Him to death if they still had that privilege.

Judas hangs himself.

**Read 27:3–10.**

**Q 143: What led Judas to hang himself?**

A 143: He felt deep regret when he realized Jesus was condemned to die. Though he approached the chief priests, they did not lead him to God for forgiveness. They washed their hands of him. Overwhelmed by his guilt and grief, and convinced that God could not forgive his monstrous sin, Judas hanged himself.

In truth, Judas's sin was no worse than Peter's. If he had only held out until Jesus' resurrection, he could have been restored.

Jesus appears before Pontius Pilate.

**Read 27:11–14.**

**Q 144: Why did Jesus answer Pilate indirectly and remain silent at the accusations of the Jewish leaders?**

A 144: Jesus admitted the truth that He was the King of the Jews, but He knew Pilate would not understand the kind of Kingship He held, so He answered it indirectly. He could have easily won acquittal if He had spoken up, but His intention was to suffer and die to save us from our sins, so He remained silent to the false accusations of the Jewish leaders.

Pilate offers the crowd the choice of freeing Jesus or a notorious prisoner named Barabbas.

**Read 27:15–23.**

**Q 145: Why did Pilate offer the choice of Barabbas or Jesus rather than simply set Jesus free?**

A 145: Pilate believed Jesus was not guilty of a crime deserving death, but he was too nervous to go against the Jewish leaders by setting Him free. Barabbas was a true revolutionary leader who had led insurgents against Romans and killed some. He was a definite threat to the stability of the Roman-Jewish relations upon which the chief priests relied. Pilate thought the Jewish leaders would see Barabbas was a far greater threat to their future than Jesus was. But he underestimated how deeply the Jewish leaders hated Jesus.

Pilate yields to pressure from the crowd and delivers Jesus to be crucified.



**Read 27:24–26.**

**Q 146: Why did Pilate wash his hands?**

A 146: He felt the crowds had pressured him to condemn an innocent man—something he did not like to do. By washing his hands, he tried to shift the blame to the crowd and make them responsible for Jesus’ death. The crowd, which was likely made up of temple servants and workers, were all too happy to take the blame upon themselves. We shouldn’t hold the whole Jewish nation responsible for Jesus’ death—and Jesus Himself prayed, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do” (Luke 23:34). But Pilate couldn’t just wash his guilt away. Only Jesus’ blood could do that.

Pilate’s Roman soldiers mock Jesus.

**Read 27:27–31.**

**Q 147: Why did the Roman soldiers use objects to mock Jesus?**

A 147: They wanted to make sport of Jesus. Since kings wore robes and crowns and held scepters in their hands, they dressed Jesus in poor imitations, then knelt in mockery and spat upon Him.

Jesus is crucified.

**Read 27:32–44.**

**Q 148: How does the mocking of the chief priests, scribes, and elders show they did not understand the Scriptures?**

A 148: The Old Testament prophesied many times that the Christ would suffer and die, bearing the punishment we sinners deserve, so that God may forgive us and free us from the punishment for our sins. Jesus couldn’t save Himself from the cross because He was saving us from our sins.

Jesus cries in agony and dies.

**Read 27:45–56.**

**Q 149: What does it mean that Jesus was forsaken by God?**

A 149: God the Father abandoned Jesus as He suffered for our sins on the cross. Jesus experienced His Father’s wrath and fury, not His love and mercy. Jesus suffered the same thing on the cross that unbelievers will experience eternally in hell. God will abandon them, and they will suffer His unending wrath without any comfort or hope. But for believers, since Jesus was forsaken in our place, we will never be alone, for He promised, “Behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:20).

Jesus’ body is buried.

**Read 27:57–61.**

**Q 150: What is unusual about Joseph burying Jesus’ body?**

A 150: In other parts of the Roman Empire, the bodies of crucified criminals were left to rot on the cross. In Judah, they were taken down so they would not defile the land (Deuteronomy 21:22–23), but buried in a common grave for criminals. Joseph, a wealthy member of the Jewish high court (Mark 15:43) gave Jesus an honorable burial in his own tomb, thus fulfilling Isaiah’s prophecy, “And they made His grave with the wicked and with a rich man in His death” (Isaiah 53:9).

Pilate sets a guard at the tomb.

**Read 27:62–66.**

**Q 151: Why did the Jews demand a guard be set on Jesus’ tomb?**

A 151: They remembered Jesus’ prophecy that He would rise from the grave on the third day. They didn’t really think Jesus would rise again, but they feared His disciples might steal His body and start saying that Jesus had risen again. By setting a guard and sealing the stone, the Jews guaranteed that Jesus’ resurrection was legitimate. His disciples didn’t come and remove His body; instead, He rose from the dead as He had said.

## **JESUS RISES FROM THE DEAD AND SENDS THE ELEVEN**

Jesus rises from the dead and sends an angel to share the good news.

**Read 28:1–10.**

**Q 152: What is the purpose of the angel’s appearance?**

A 152: First, to roll the stone away to reveal the evidence that Jesus had risen from the dead. Second, to reveal to the women disciples the good news that Jesus had risen. If they only had the evidence of the empty tomb and the empty grave cloths without the angel’s message, they would not know that Jesus had arisen. They more likely would have suspected that enemies had stolen Jesus’ body (see John 20:2).

The guards report to the chief priests.

**Read 28:11–15.**

**Q 153: What are the shortcomings of the lie the chief priests concocted—that Jesus’ disciples stole His body while the guards slept?**

A 153: The disciples were despondent, their dreams shattered. They weren’t even thinking about Jesus’ prophecies of rising from the dead and how they might be able to steal His body and tell people He had risen. Likewise, they were overcome with fear, hiding behind locked doors. None of them had the courage to take such a risk. If the guards were asleep, how did they know it was Jesus’ disciples who stole His body? How could the disciples have moved

that massive stone without waking up the guards? Finally, why would they have risked taking the time to unwrap Jesus' body and leave the cloths behind instead of simply taking the body with the wrappings and all?

**Q 154: Why did many Jews believe that lie?**

A 154: Unbelief is not logical. The people who rejected Jesus were happy to believe any argument that fit their viewpoint.

Jesus appears to His apostles and gives them the Great Commission.

**Read 28:16–20.**

**Q 155: What is the mission Christ gave His Church through the apostles?**

A 155: The Church is to make disciples, followers, of Jesus by baptizing and teaching—through Baptism and the Word of God. We are sent to all people of all nations.

**Q 156: What does Jesus' promise, "I am with you always, to the end of the age" mean for our day-to-day lives?**

A 156: No matter where we are or what we are going through, Jesus is right there with us to provide our needs, defend us from all evil, hear our prayers, and accomplish His will through us.