

Four Views Of Christ (Part 3)

Matthew

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We are going to begin this sermon at a scripture that we kind of left off with last week.

I John 4:17 Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; because as He is, so are we in this world.

It is the, "As He is, so are we in this world," that I want to go back to and expound on a bit more thoroughly. It bears heavily on the importance of this topic in this series that we are covering.

This topic can be merely something that is interesting—something that we would discuss from time to time maybe with the same weight as we would as if we were discussing the weather. Or, it can be very important in determining what we become. Its value lies in the "we are what we eat" principle.

Proverbs 23:1-8 When you sit down to eat with a ruler, consider carefully what is before you; and put a knife to your throat if you are a man given to appetite. Do not desire his delicacies, for they are deceptive food. Do not overwork to be rich; because of your own understanding, cease! Will you set your eyes on that which is not? For riches certainly make themselves wings; they fly away like an eagle toward heaven. Do not eat the bread of a miser, nor desire his delicacies; for as he thinks in his heart, so is he. "Eat and drink!" he says to you, but his heart is not with you. The morsel you have eaten, you will vomit up, and waste your pleasant words.

These seemingly disconnected proverbs actually have a common thread. Their intent is to warn us to be careful about what we take into our hearts and minds because they will shape what we do with our lives and therefore determine what we become.

On the surface, the series of proverbs concerns being wary of exploitative personalities in general and, especially, exploitative personalities who are sitting in positions of influence and power. Verses 1-3 warn against getting too close to the ruler because he most likely has ulterior motives and he is thinking of using you to further *himself*.

Verses 4 and 5 warn us to check our own motivations and desires, because if there is a strong drive and ambition to accomplish, and in this case accrue wealth, then we are much more likely to fall into the trap of allowing ourselves to be used in an immoral scheme because of our desires.

Verses 6-8 warn us to look beyond what is attractive to our senses and discern what is in the person's heart. It is evil—in this case; in these verses—and you are being set up to be used for his ends all the while he is promising you riches—riches that, in the end, are going to cause you grief.

All of these pieces of wisdom are true in a literal sense, but if one understands the food that is mentioned in the Proverbs to be figurative of what we are feeding our minds, then the Proverbs are warning us that what we take in is going to largely determine what we become.

Perhaps the decisive phrase in these eight verses is, "As he thinks in his heart, so is he." Heart, to the Hebrew Bible writers, meant the same thing to them as *mind* does to us. It is totally illogical to think that one can feed his mind with the literary equivalent of junk food and think that somehow the beauty of holiness is going to result.

Let us go back to the book of Matthew. We are going to look at two scriptures, two very clear statements that show what I am thinking about here.

Matthew 12:33 "Either make the tree good and its fruit good. . .

Can the human 'tree' take in junk food and expect the beauty of holiness to come out? I am talking about *literary* junk food. No, Jesus said you have got to make the tree good. If you make the tree good, then it will produce the right kind of fruit or else make the tree bad and its fruit bad, for a tree is known by its fruit. So is a person.

Matthew 12:34 "Brood of vipers! How can you, being evil, speak good things? [You cannot get good out of literary junk food!] For out of the abundance of the heart [out of the abundance of the mind] the mouth speaks."

The mouth can only speak with what is in the heart.

Matthew 15:18-20 "But those things which proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and they defile a man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts [it is not only words that come out of the heart], murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. These are the things which defile a man, but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile a man."

There are two very clear statements showing that the mind can only work with, and thus produce, from what it is given. So what will result from taking literary junk food into the mind is the moral, ethical, and spiritual equivalent of the vomit of Proverbs 23:8.

What will result if what goes into the heart is bad, is evil, is junk food? What will result will be negative, self-centered attitudes which become offended at the slightest things; foul mouths speaking profanities and gossip; and immoral, unethical conduct. These things are hardly in the image of God. I think that you will agree with that.

Let us go back to Philippians 4 and look at a scripture that I think everyone of us knows. We may not know exactly what it says, but we are familiar with it.

Philippians 4:2 I implore Euodia, and implore Syntyche, to be of the same mind in the Lord.

Obviously they were not of the same mind. Somebody was offended. Maybe both of them were offended.

Philippians 4:8 Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things.

How can you meditate on those things if they are never put into the mind? The mind can only work with what it is given! Now what do you suppose was going into the mind of Euodia and Syntyche about each other? I will tell you, it was not good. They were not of the same mind. Apparently it was upsetting the whole congregation. It was dividing the whole congregation because people in the congregation were taking up sides. The friends of Euodia were on this side. The friends of Syntyche were on the other side. What was feeding the minds of those people who were taking up sides? Was it good, moral, ethical words that they were thinking about?

Philippians 4:9 The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you.

I want you to think about a couple of scriptures here that are important to every one of us. You know them. As soon as I say them you are going to remember them and you are going to remember exactly where they are, at least one of them you will.

"Man shall not live by bread alone, but by *every word* that proceeds out of the mouth of God." Jesus was quoting Deuteronomy 8:3, but it appears in Matthew 4:4 and Luke 4:4. I think God, in causing the Bible to be written, made sure that would be a verse everyone could remember. What could be simpler than to remember Matthew 4:4 and Luke 4:4?

Let us add to this another one that we are a little less familiar with, but I know that you know it. It comes out John 6:63 and it says, "The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life."

Let us put the two of those together and think about it in regard to the beginning of this sermon. Our minds can only work with what they have been given. Is He not saying in Matthew 4:4 that there is a dimension to life that does not in any way, shape, or form depend upon our electro-chemical existence?

We live because of the chemistry and the electricity that God built into the bodies, and because they work according to laws that He continues to sustain. But that dimension to life that makes it really worthwhile, it is not dependent on anything that has to do with a chemical and electrical cause. It has to do with spirit. It has to do with words, but not just any words. It has to do with the words of God, the words of Jesus Christ. They are spirit and they are life.

A life without that source which comes from God and by His Spirit, can be reasonably good. But it is not going to be of the quality that God intends and the quality that man can only have if he is tapped into that source. What God is saying in these verses is that His Word is to be the basis or foundation of our thinking processes, that in turn will determine our conduct and what we eventually become.

Is there anything about God's Word that is not true, noble, just, pure, lovely, things of good report, virtuous, and praiseworthy? These are the qualities that are inherent within these words of God that are going to make life of the quality, of the stature, of the dignity that God wants us to have.

Notice he says in Philippians 4:9 that if we do these things then the God of peace will be with us. You want peace? He is kind of indicating it has a great deal to do with what we take into our mind, is he not? This was a congregation that was not at peace, because these ladies were fighting with one another. They were offended at each other. It was upsetting the whole congregation. What he is telling us in chapter 4 is what was behind the writing of the letter. It is a wonderful book.

Have you ever had an upset stomach? Why was it upset? Why was it in turmoil? Why was it not at peace? Was it not because you had ingested something that did not agree with your makeup and it upset your stomach? In fact, it probably upset your life for a while.

Well, what about when the mind is not at peace; when it is in a bad attitude; when it is offended? Is not the same principle at work, only it is something that has to do with the mind rather than the stomach? That is what is happening. The mind is being made, when it is upset, to work with elements that do not agree with what we were made of or intended to be.

Psalm 119:165 says, "Great peace have those who love Your law, and nothing causes them to stumble." Nothing offends them! It is interesting because the word law in that verse is *torah*. As it is used here it does not mean a code of morals and ethics, but simply instruction—God's instruction.

He is saying that because these people are instructed of God and therefore they have *God's word in them, their mind does not get upset!* Think about that. Because it is being fed the right things, it always tends to have the equilibrium that the mind of God will have, because it will be looking from God's perspective. With God, ***everything*** is always under control. I do not mean that this will take the passion out of life at all. We will have the right kind of passion because the mind is being fed the right things.

The reason these people do not get offended, or are not caused to stumble, is because their mind is strong enough, because it is being fed the Word of God. It enables them to be strong enough to handle the trials of life in a good attitude. They will see those things that happen in life as challenges rather than themselves as being unfortunate and innocent victims of what is going on.

Paul wrote what he did in Philippians because these ladies were not in a good attitude. He was pointing them back to what would strengthen their minds and fill them with the right resolve to be able to solve the problem between them and the congregation.

Connect this with the opening: "As He is, so are we in this world." Because of that, we need not fear condemnation in the judgment. You put these things together and what John is saying in effect is, God will respond to what He sees of Himself in us. He cannot deny Himself. He cannot condemn Himself,

because what He is is totally good. When He sees the Word of God in us, then we are infused, endued, and endowed with boldness and with confidence.

John is saying then that a Christian is Christ's living likeness. "As He is, so are we in this world." Christ is not here, except in us. A Christian is Christ's living likeness, but get this: It is not His likeness as He was as a human, but as He is, now! Do you get the tense that is there in that verse? As He *is*, not as He was! As He is, right now, so are we in the world! We are not being conformed to Jesus the man, we are being conformed to the risen Jesus Christ!

Do you remember Jesus' prayer in John 17? In one point in that prayer He uttered to His Father, "I in You and You in Me that they [meaning you and me] **may be one in Us**." There is His purpose—that we be completely unified, completely conformed to what the Father and the Son are. We are being drawn toward a perfect union with the great God and His Son whose face shines like the sun in all of its glory.

It is the risen Christ who is to be the center of our lives. In the man Jesus, we see but a pale reflection of what He is now, but it is enough to get us jump started in the right direction. Remember the scripture in I Corinthians 15 that, "As we have borne the image of the earthly, we shall bear the image of the heavenly." Even now, brethren, He expects us to be as He is.

This, of course, is relative. The image of Him is in us in varying degrees. There are degrees of His likeness even as there are degrees of skill and degrees of earnestness, as we might see in an artisan. We do not reach that likeness in one leap. His image is not struck on us in one stroke. We have to labor slowly and tentatively like an artist. But some measure, a growing measure, of His image is already in us and the fullness is certain because God does not fail in what He sets out to do.

Brethren, Jesus Christ has entrusted His reputation, His honor, to us. Paul said that we have this treasure in earthen vessels to bear the name of Jesus Christ. If we walk in the light, we will become light. If we abide in Christ we will become like Him. Being like Him, then we ought to be able to live our life without fear of judgment. Then, in the resurrection, the likeness will be

perfected because the fellowship will be complete. "We shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." *That will never happen unless we get His Word in us.*

In each of the four gospels, we get an insight into Christ as He is. We just get a pale reflection that was witnessed to man in the life of Jesus of Nazareth. It is enough to get us started, but it will never be there unless we search it out. Each of the gospels gives us a dominant trait of the image into which we are being formed! That is why we are doing this. We want as much of the image of Christ that we can get through His Word in us because what we think on, that is what we are going to become.

What we think on is pretty much going to determine what we do. What we think on is going to determine what we say. If we are thinking on the right things, God will see Himself in us and a wonderful result will occur. We must get His Word into us if we are going to carry the right image. So then, the relativity of that scripture, "As He is, so are we in this world," will continue to grow and increase.

Let us go back to the book of Matthew and begin to look at this, and see the things that are distinctive about the book of Matthew and why Christ is portrayed as a lion in this book. You remember the characteristics of a lion. We will not go into that. But in chapter 1 of Matthew, notice how the book begins.

Matthew 1:1 The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham.

That verse sets the tone for the entire book. He is immediately introduced as of a kingly line and the heir to its throne, because He is the Son of Abraham through David. It was to Abraham that the promises were made. It was Jesus Christ who confirmed the promises and He is the heir of all things. He is the chosen Seed.

We can throw in other scriptures to reinforce this. The earliest inclination where prophecy is given is Genesis 3:16, but I think that we will turn to one in the New Testament, in the book of Galatians.

Galatians 3:16 Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He does not say, "And to seeds," as of many, but as of one, "And to your Seed," who is Christ.

So the book of Matthew is introduced by showing that the story is going to be about Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham, and the heir of the Kingdom.

There is something interesting here we will not spend a lot of time on. We will just mention it, because there are four women directly mentioned in His genealogy. Three of them are named and one is unnamed, but it is very clear who that unnamed one is. The four ladies are Tamar, in verse 3; Rahab in verse 5; Ruth in verse 5; and the one who is unnamed is in verse 6, Bathsheba. Then in verse 16 we have Mary.

It is interesting to look at that, because from the little bit of information that is in the Bible, the list includes a harlot (Rahab); a mother by incest (Tamar); an adulterer (Bathsheba); a Gentile stranger (Ruth). Why these four? Why not all the ladies who were a part of that line? I do not know, but one thing can be sure. They had profound influence above any other ladies of the lineage of Christ in terms of the subject of this book.

Take Tamar, for instance. From her came the twins, Perez and Zerah. The kingly line, the scepter, went through one. The other sort of faded into the woodwork. If you go back to Genesis 38 and read about the life—it was really mixed up, a mess. We will not go into that, but the line of kings came through Tamar at a very important juncture in history. God worked it out through incest, which is very interesting because the father, Judah, became the father thinking she was a harlot when she was not.

Matthew 2:1-3 Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, saying, "Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East and have come to worship Him." When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him.

This is recorded only in Matthew. Remember I said we are going to look at what is distinctive; that means what is different in the book of Matthew from what the other—Mark, Luke, and John—gospels present. They are all telling basically the same story, but they are telling different aspects of that story. It helps a great deal to understand the book if you understand the dominant theme.

Matthew is describing Jesus as king. He is describing a kingdom. The others will have a little bit of that, but it dominates in Matthew. This, "Who has been born King of the Jews," is only recorded here.

Luke 2:11 "For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, . . .

Same story, different emphasis. Luke's story is on the Savior, it is not on the King.

I want you to reflect back on the genealogies. In Matthew 1 we have an ascending genealogy. It ascends beginning with Abraham and coming up to the King and Heir, Jesus Christ.

In Luke we have a descending genealogy. It begins with Mary and it goes back to Adam. That might be something that would not impress us ordinarily. We might see that there is a difference there. But, this becomes very important in understanding the book of Luke. Why did he take it all the way back to Adam, and why did Matthew begin with Abraham? Because they had a different purpose. Matthew is showing the King coming from a certain line and the fulfillment of a certain number of prophecies. Luke is showing the Savior of the world, not just the Israelites. He goes all the way back to Adam showing that even the Savior had an ancestor in common with everybody, Israelite or Gentile.

They present even their genealogies different. Matthew's genealogy is of Joseph. Luke's genealogy is of Mary. They have a common ancestor in David, but Joseph came through Solomon and Mary came through Nathan, a different son of David. The lines split there, but they have in common that both of them are from David, the model king.

Matthew 1:23 "Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel," which is translated, "God with us."

Only in Matthew is the name Immanuel given. Neither Mark nor Luke says a word about it. Again, it is a subtle witness of power—power that is in addition to and over and above what even an earthly king might possess.

One of the things we can get out of that is this: Though the kingdom may often be in danger of extinction, because He is God as well as being King, He will never fail. Think of that in relation to yourself. I said in my opening that what God sets His hand to do He completes. He has set out to make us in the image of Himself and His Son. Therefore, whenever we die, whenever we reach the end of our course, we are to the place that God wanted to bring us. He has finished His work within us. Though it may not be the same as somebody else because that is relative, nonetheless, enough of the image is in us that God is satisfied.

God will not fail. You can be confident in that. That ought to give you assurance and know that your life is in the hands of the greatest Being there is because He is in us! The Son is in us too, and that ought to be very encouraging.

Matthew 2:3 When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. . . .

Matthew 2:16 Then Herod, when he saw that he was deceived by the wise men, was exceedingly angry; and he sent forth and put to death all the male children who were in Bethlehem and in all its districts, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had determined from the wise men.

After His birth, Matthew then deals with various occurrences of the birth of Jesus Christ. In Matthew, Herod is alarmed. All of Jerusalem is alarmed. But by contrast, the wise men, the Gentiles (if they were Gentiles, they may have been Israelites, but they came from afar), to them it is a matter of joy.

What about in Luke? He mentions none of these things. He does not mention the reaction of Herod. In fact, if we look at it in Luke 2 you will find none of those things. Instead, what is he dealing with?

Luke 2:8 Now there were in the same country shepherds living out in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night.

You see a touch of the common, of the everyday—shepherds. It fits his context to deal with that. Matthew dealt with great men from the east coming to visit a king. Luke deals with local shepherds.

Luke 2:9 And behold, an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were greatly afraid. [The Magi did not seem to be afraid at all.]

Let us flip back to Matthew again.

Matthew 2:11 And when they had come into the house, they saw the young Child with Mary His mother, and fell down and worshiped Him. And when they had opened their treasures, they presented gifts to Him: gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

Again, they bring gifts. When you appear before a king you do not come empty handed. You present him with a gift. Luke does not have a word about that, because he is not dealing with that. He is dealing with the Savior aspect, the Savior of all of mankind. I am sure Luke knew all about those things, but he did not include it in his biography of Christ because the central theme was different.

Let us go to chapter 3. I want you to notice what John preaches there, but before that, let us read one more thing from chapter 2.

Matthew 2:6 But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are not the least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you shall come a Ruler who will shepherd My people Israel.

The Ruler is mentioned. Neither Luke, Mark, nor John mentions that at all. Matthew is the only one who mentions Bethlehem in this context. Again, it is showing rulership.

Matthew 3:1-3 In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, and saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!" For this is he who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah, saying, "The voice of one crying in the wilderness. Prepare the way of the LORD; make His paths straight."

We are going to look at that same situation in Luke 3. You are probably wondering why I am concentrating on Matthew and Luke. It is because Mark has almost nothing about these things. It does not fit what he is writing about or what he is emphasizing.

Luke 3:3 And he went [John the Baptist] into all the region around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.

Did you notice the difference? Matthew said that John preached the Kingdom of God. The same basic message, but Luke does not put that in there at all.

Did you make a comparison of Matthew 3:3—"The voice of one crying in the wilderness. Prepare the way of the LORD. Make his paths straight." He is quoting Isaiah 40:3. Let us look at that in the book of Luke.

Luke 3:4-6 The voice of one crying in the wilderness. Prepare the way of the LORD; make His paths straight. Every valley shall be filled and every mountain and hill brought low; the crooked places shall be made straight and the rough ways smooth; and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.

"Prepare the way of the LORD," compared to all that Luke put in there. Why did Luke put more? Because he wanted to get to verse 6 where it says, "And all flesh shall see the salvation of God." Again remember, Matthew is

concentrating on the King. That King is going to come out of the Israelitish line. What he is giving here, at the beginning, is the fulfillment of prophecies that were made in the Israelite's book. Luke though, is speaking to Gentiles, so he is taking a universal approach and he is showing Jesus Christ as the Savior of all mankind—not just the Messiah for the Israelite people, but He is the Messiah for all mankind. "All flesh shall see the salvation of God." Not just Israelites, but everybody.

Why would Luke do that? Eventually we are going to see that God is creating a new nation—the Kingdom of God, or, as Matthew says, the kingdom of heaven.

Let us turn to Mark 1, where he says, talking about John:

Mark 1:2-3 As it is written in the Prophets: "Behold, I send My messenger before Your face, who will prepare Your way before You. The voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the LORD; make His paths straight.'"

When you put that together with verse 4, you find he is not emphasizing either the Kingdom of God or the Savior aspect. What Mark is going to do is emphasize the humble servant. He begins his book in a way different from the other two.

We are going to look briefly at Jesus' baptism. In order to see this, we have to reflect on what we just talked about. We will see the baptism presented in three different contexts. Matthew one way, Mark another way, and Luke another way. Here we have something that is similar to each one of them. John does not say a thing about Jesus' baptism in the same way that these men do.

In Matthew, what is the context in which His baptism takes place? It takes place within the context of John the Baptist preaching about the kingdom of heaven. The story goes, beginning in chapter 3, verse 1, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!" Then it leads up to verse 13, where John and Jesus had their discussion together, and John baptizes Jesus. It is done within the context of John preaching the kingdom of heaven.

When you look at Mark's presentation of it, it is given in the context of the Worker. We will explain this more when we get into the book of Mark next week. When we look at it in the book of Luke, we find it within the context of Him being Savior of all mankind.

Here they are talking about basically the same thing, but each one puts his own twist on the context so we see it from three different views—one in the Kingdom, one as a Servant, and one in terms of religion and salvation.

What about the temptation of Matthew 4? We lead from the beginning of the preaching of John the Baptist, and then Christ is baptized. All the kingdoms of the world are set before Him. We have Matthew and Luke recording this. Mark does not say anything at all about it, except that He was led out into the wilderness, but he does not have any of the temptations in it.

Matthew records it because the King had to go through this to prove Himself a worthy heir, that He could conquer the king of sin, the king of temptation. He had to be able to defeat the strong man that He refers to later. If you are going to rob a strong man, you have to tie him up. That is what he says later on in the book of Matthew. You have to be able to overcome him.

Jesus then qualified to be the king by overcoming Satan the Devil. But in order to be Savior, He had to be able to withstand sin from the greatest kind of temptation. Luke then presents it from that standpoint. One as Savior; the other as King.

Do you know how many verses Mark presents to us of this? Only two. John gives none, because it was outside of their purpose as a Servant and as God. Both Matthew and Luke show Him overcoming the temptation and then He was prepared to preach the Kingdom of God. The preaching in Matthew and in Luke begins immediately after He successfully overcame the temptation to either worship Satan or to give in to sin. Now He is prepared to preach. Each one approached it from a different point of view. It is the same event, but with a different emphasis.

Let us look at the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5, 6, and 7. The Sermon on the Mount does not even appear in Mark or John. Here is one of the greatest discourses in all the history of man and it does not even appear in those books. It does not because it did not fit their purpose.

When this sermon appears in the book of Luke, it is in an entirely different setting from that which appears in the book of Matthew. In Matthew, the Sermon on the Mount appears immediately after He has qualified to be King and is therefore prepared. Now He begins to establish the authority of His Kingdom and unfold the underlying principles and laws. At the same time, He describes what the subject of that Kingdom will be like. There is progression through the book of Matthew that is very clear once you begin to see it.

First Jesus is introduced, right at the beginning, as a Son of David, as a Son of Abraham, the lawful heir. He is the promised Seed. He is the One who will confirm the promises. Then His birth—He is introduced as a King being born. Then He is introduced to the world by the preaching of John the Baptist, but He is introduced as a King. The Kingdom of God is introduced. He is then baptized in that context. Then He goes out and meets the challenge of His greatest competitor, the one with which war is going to be waged throughout His ministry and through all the time that His church is going to exist. Once He is firmly established as the heir of that throne that Satan now occupies, He then begins to lay down for everybody to see the nature of that Kingdom. That, then, is displayed in the Sermon on the Mount.

When we get to Luke, you will see there is an entirely different flow to the book. That is why the Sermon on the Mount appears in an entirely different context. I have no doubt Jesus preached that sermon several times. The one that God inspired Luke to record was at a different time than the one we see in Matthew.

It does not even appear in Mark. It does not appear in John. In Luke it is in a different setting. In Matthew, immediately with authority, He mentions the Kingdom.

Matthew 5:1-3 And seeing the multitudes, He went up on a mountain, and when He was seated His disciples came to Him. Then He opened His mouth and taught them, saying: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

Notice the authority He assumes (if I can put it that way), in a couple of examples in Matthew 5:22, "But I say to you," and in verse 28, "But I say to you." You know what He is discussing? He is discussing the laws and the principles of what we might call, in a general way, the law of Moses or the Old Covenant.

What He is doing is setting aside the letter of the law. He is saying, for His Kingdom, there is a much higher standard. He is magnifying the law. He is making it honorable, as Isaiah 42 said that He would. He is bringing the law under closer scrutiny so we see more of its detail, so we see God's intention. We begin to see that the principles and laws that are going to govern and guide the people, that are going to be a part of that Kingdom, are so much higher than the letter of the law that there is no comparison. We see that He has the authority to set aside what is in the Old and magnify it into what becomes part of the New.

One of the key words that begin to appear in the book of Matthew begins to appear in the Sermon on the Mount. It is the word 'righteousness.' It appears more times in Matthew than all of the others combined.

Another term is 'kingdom of heaven.' It appears thirty times in the book of Matthew, but not even one time anywhere else in the gospels. He is emphasizing what is distinctive about this kingdom. What is distinctive is its source. It is not of this world; it is of heaven. What is distinctive is that it is going to consist of people who are law-abiding. All you have to do is reflect on the kingdoms of this world and you know that they are not law-abiding. The citizens of the kingdoms of this world are not law-abiding.

The word 'kingdom' appears nine times in the Sermon on the Mount. It appears seventy-five times in the book of Matthew. It appears twenty times in the book of Mark, forty-four in the book of Luke, and five in the book of John, for a total of sixty-nine times in three books, seventy-five times in one.

The word 'righteous' or 'righteousness' appears seventeen times in Matthew, and only one time in the book of Mark, five times in Luke, and four times in John. That is ten times in Mark, Luke, and John, compared to seventeen times in the book of Matthew all by itself. All of this is done, mostly within the context of the Kingdom of God, the King, and the subjects.

You can begin to see why Matthew did this by looking at things from his perspective, as a man who was an official of a kingdom of this earth until he resigned from that job and became a full-time follower of Jesus Christ. But before he resigned, the man was undoubtedly able to observe first-hand, at fairly close scrutiny, the operations of the governments of this world.

He knew what they were like. He knew it was a common practice for people to take bribes. He may have done it himself. He may have, because he was a publican, a tax collector, been in a position to extort money from people. He was in a position to fraudulently charge people more in taxes than they were supposed to pay. He was in a position that caused him to be hated by everyone he came into contact with, because they knew what he was.

So he looked at things through the eyes of a government official. That is what he emphasized in his writing. I am sure God took advantage of this man's background. Matthew sees things from the eyes of a kingdom. What is going to be right for mankind? Nothing is going to be right until everyone is honest and everyone is righteous—from the king on down to the lowliest subject. That is why he concentrates on these things. He knows this is never going to occur until there is a kingdom whose roots are not on the earth and whose people are not human.

Let us look at a couple of these things in Matthew 23, just to give you an example.

Matthew 23:34-35 Therefore, indeed, I send you prophets, wise men, and scribes: some of them you will kill and crucify, and some of them you will scourge in your synagogues and persecute from city to city, that on you [the scribes and Pharisees] may come all the righteous blood shed on the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar.

Do you see that? "Righteous blood . . . righteous Abel." Luke has the same thing. Do you know what he calls Abel? He calls him "Abel." He did not call him "righteous." I could go through in one place after another, and we would compare Matthew with Mark, Luke, and John, and you will find that Matthew consistently calls certain things or certain people "righteous."

Matthew 5:6 Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness.

Do you know what Luke says? "Blessed are you who hunger now." The word righteousness is left out.

Matthew 5:10 Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake.

Do you know what Luke says? "Blessed are you when men hate you."

Matthew 5:20 For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.

Do you know what Luke says? Nothing. This does not make Matthew better than Luke, it is just pointing out they had different purposes for what they wrote.

We could go on. You could write down Matthew 13:43. Luke again says nothing. Matthew 25:37, Luke again says nothing. In Romans 14:17 it says, "The kingdom of God is righteousness and peace."

Let us go to chapter 8 of Matthew where we will pick up a theme.

Matthew 8:1 When He had come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed Him.

After unfolding the principles and laws of the kingdom of heaven and describing its subjects, the King comes down from the mountain—you get the illustration here? Christ is going to come down from heaven, only here He comes down from the mountain, and He brings the kingdom near unto men. What a King and what a Kingdom He presents to mankind!

Matthew 8—12 are all part of one section. What it is showing is the King in His power. Disease flees from before Him. Lepers are cleansed. Do you want authority? In Matthew 8:26 we find nature obeys this King. He calms the sea; He stills the wind.

In Matthew 8:31 demons **plead** with Him to be merciful to them. We find in Matthew 8:17 the nature of the King; in Matthew 9:13 the nature of His rule. Many of these are dealt with in Mark, Luke, and John, but you never see them in the same context.

It is also in this context where a dichotomy begins to appear—something that does not seem to jive, something that is different. It is this: Despite all these wonderful things Christ is doing between Matthew 8 and Matthew 12, the people begin to turn on Him. They begin to reject Him. The King is being rejected, which is astounding. Who else can feed 5,000 at one time? Who else can feed 4,000 at another time? Who else could heal their diseases? And yet, there was growing suspicion, first among the elite, but it began to spread to those underneath their authority and subjection.

The section ends on almost a plaintive note, and that is, in Matthew 11:25-30, He thanks God that God is doing it the way He is doing it. He invites others to become subject to Him. He is assuring them there is peace, and there is a Kingdom which cannot be moved.

Matthew 12:1-3 At that time Jesus went through the grain fields on the Sabbath. And His disciples were hungry, and began to pluck heads of grain and to eat. And when the Pharisees saw it, they said to Him, "Look, Your disciples are doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath!" But He said to them, "Have you not read what David did when he was hungry, he and those who were with him?" [He goes on to explain what David did.]

We see a situation similar to this in John 5:16-17. He does not appeal to what David did, but because of what John is writing about, Jesus said instead, "My Father has been working until now, and I have been working." He refers directly to His Father, God, not to David.

In Matthew 12:5, He mentions the law and the priests. In verse 6, He mentions His authority again and, incidentally, that does not appear in any other account of this. What He is doing, again, is defining the nature of His Kingdom.

Let us go to Matthew 13. Here we have the parables. I want you to notice how each one of them is introduced.

Matthew 13:11 He answered and said to them, "Because it has been given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven". . . .

Matthew 13:19 "When anyone hears the word of the kingdom". . . .

Matthew 13:24 Another parable He put forth to them, saying, "The kingdom of heaven is like a man". . . .

Matthew 13:31 Another parable He put forth to them, saying, "The kingdom of heaven"

Matthew 13:33 Another parable he spoke to them: "The kingdom of heaven is like leaven"

Matthew 13:44 "Again, the kingdom of heaven"

Matthew 13:45 Again, the kingdom of heaven"

Matthew 13:47 "Again, the kingdom of heaven"

Matthew 13:52 Then He said to them, "Therefore every scribe instructed concerning the kingdom of heaven is like a householder. . ."

Mark has only three of these parables and Luke has two of them. You saw how many parables were just in this one chapter. It is not the end of the parables in Matthew, but that is all there are of these in the other two books. But we will see when we get to them that they are in a different context. They are not in the same context that they appear in the book of Matthew, and they are even in a different order because of what they are emphasizing.

Matthew 13:34-35 All these things Jesus spoke to the multitude in parables; and without a parable He did not speak to them, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet saying: "I will open My mouth in parables; I will utter things kept secret from the foundation of the world."

That does not appear in any other book and the reason is because the prophets spoke about the Kingdom.

Let us go to Luke 10, and we will notice the common strain by which Luke introduces parables. In Luke 10:30, "Then Jesus answered and said, 'A certain *man*.'" There it is. You do not see anything about the Kingdom, but a certain man.

In Luke 12:16, "Then He spoke a parable to them, saying, 'The ground of a certain rich *man* . . .'" In Luke 13:6, "He also spoke this parable, 'A certain *man* had a fig tree . . .'" In Luke 14:16, "Then He said to him, 'A certain *man* gave a great supper . . .'" In Luke 20:9, "Then He began to tell the people this parable, 'A certain *man* . . .'"

Matthew almost invariably emphasizes authority in some way—Jesus' power. Luke makes it very general, because he is dealing with a different emphasis. You will find that Matthew is the only one who mentions the church—Matthew 16 and 18. Why? Why is he the only one who mentions the church? Because church members are the only ones who know, recognize, and submit to His authority and understand that eventually those in the church will become part of the Kingdom. It relates to the Kingdom of God.

Let us draw this to a close. We could go on and on, but I think that you have gotten the point. If there are things that I could mention as hooks to hang on as to the theme of Matthew's message in importance, it is this: (1) Jesus is presented as a Son of Abraham through David. This is our assurance that our King is absolutely **the** legitimate heir of the promises of God. In this (this is important to get), He is contrasted to us. We are **not** legitimate heirs *except through* the King. You will find this in Galatians 3:16, 26-29, and Romans 9:7-8. We become the seed through election and adoption by the Father. This is important in regard to our loyalty to Christ and to understand our proper position and what we owe to Him.

(2) The kingdom of heaven issue. It is not of the earth. It is of heaven. That is what he is emphasizing. The others used the term Kingdom of God. That is fine, because it suits their purpose. But Matthew is emphasizing that this Kingdom's origin, its source, and its headquarters are in heaven. It is not here yet and that is important. He makes very clear the Kingdom does not have an earthly center and our loyalty is to it, to the Father and to the Son in heaven, and not to anything that is on earth.

The kingdom of heaven is not a nation. It is not a church of this world. It is not of this time. It has no influence in this world. It is not like Israel of old—a very important distinction.

(3) The emphasis on *righteousness*. Matthew connects the laws of the Kingdom with the laws of the Old Covenant. He makes the connection, but he also makes very clear that we understand that we cannot be *saved* by the law, and our righteousness must exceed what is humanly possible. That only comes through our fellowship with the Father and with the Son.

So, Matthew: the lion; kingly power and authority combined with dignity and righteousness. These are part of the image of Jesus Christ. They have to become a part of us, our image of God. We have to remember that our future is to become kings in the image of the great King; that we have to be righteous, exceeding the righteousness of men and become righteous as the King, Jesus Christ. Our Kingdom is not of this world. Our Kingdom, our obeisance, our loyalty is to God in heaven.