

## Church Bible School (GBS) and Internet Bible School (IBS)

Gospel of Matthew (Lesson 4)

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### Miscellaneous

The Gospel of Matthew is addressed to the Jews, the Gospel of Mark and Luke is addressed to the Gentiles. His Gospel is deeply rooted in Judaism. You can recognize it by the way he approaches the Jewish customs and opinions without explanation. Also single Hebrew words are not translated. (Matth. 5, 22/ 10, 25/ 27, 6).

The material is divided according to its themes into several text blocks, seven all together. This creates longer speeches of Jesus (Matth. 5-7/ 10/ 13/ 18/ 23/ 24-25), in between he reports about His works.

The image of God in the gospel of Matthew applies to the Old Testament and Judaism. God is the creator of heaven and earth and He is the God of covenant Who walks with His people.

To Matthew the history of Israel had reached its final destination (Matth. 1, 1-17), since Jesus was the prophet Moses promised and prophesied about (Matth. 1, 18 - 2, 23), and therefore also the Son of God, the Immanuel (Matth. 1, 20-23/ 27, 54), and therefore also the perfect image of the true Israel (Matth. 4, 1-11). This way Jesus opened up new ways of life for Israel (Matth. 10, 5/ 15, 24) and for all the other people (Matth. 28, 19). According to Matthew the „Kingdom of heaven“ (Matth. 4, 17/ 21, 43) has come. Therefore to Matthew the Kingdom of heaven is no secret, that was only given to few in opposition of Mark's view of the same (comp. Matth. 13, 10-17/ Mark. 4, 11+21-23). Matthew emphasizes „the righteous works“ (comp. 7, 23-27/ 25, 31-46), and therewith kept the inheritance of Israel.

Even though you can find strong threats of judgment in the gospel of Mark, on the other hand God is introduced as the father (Matth. 5, 16+45+48/ 6, 1+4+6+18), who cares especially about the poor and weak. This theme is made concrete by the proclamation of Jesus' works in the Gospel of Matthew.

#### The proclamation of the Word is very important to Matthew

He highlights especially the Kingdom of heaven (Matth. 4, 17), and its coming, which he describes like a drama. Here the charter of the Kingdom of Heaven is proclaimed to the disciples (The sermon of the Mount) but through this Jesus is also confirmed and underlined (Matth. 8 bis 10).

In the gospel of Matthew Jesus is the „**Son of God**“ (Matth. 3, 17/ 14, 33), the heavenly father (Matth. 7, 21/ 11, 27/ 25, 34+41). Prophetically he proclaims the Last Days in word and deed, by demonstrating that the Royal Reign or the Kingdom of God /Heaven has already begun.

- As our Saviour he bears all of our diseases (Matth. 8, 17/ comp. Is. 53, 4).
- He delivers His people from their sins (Matth. 1, 21).
- He is the promised „Immanuel“ (Matth. 1, 23),
- who stays with His church until „the end of the world“ (Matth. 28, 20).

The church (Ekklesia) is the true Israel in the gospel of Matthew (Matth. 16, 18/ 18, 17), however, not in a disenheritant way for the „old Israel“ but rather as a new construction of the chosen people of God in, and through Jesus. The election that originally applied to Israel (Matth. 10, 5/ 15, 24 ) is now extended to all nations (Matth. 28, 16-20). Jesus is the new teacher of Israel , who does not resolve the Law of Moses, but „fulfills“ it (Matth. 5, 17-19), by revealing its true identity. However, He does not appear as the new „Moses“ but as a proclaimer of the future salvation which will be obtained by following Him and fulfilling the will of God (Matth. 7, 21). The church is supposed to bring forth the fruit of the Kingdom of God (Matth. 21, 43). Matthew reports of the obstacles that the Kingdom of heaven has to overcome during the process (Matth. 11, 1 - 13, 32).

Jesus did not meet the political expectations of His fellow countrymen, He did not chase the Romans nor did He try to sit on the throne of the Israelite Empire. His own people and the principals had denied Him as a tempter and sentenced Him to die like a criminal. How could this be the Messiah? The gospel of Matthew presents a solid report of facts to the doubters.

And then Matthew describes **the beginning of the Kingdom of Heaven** consisting of a small group, with Peter at the top, the firstlings of the church, who adopted Jesus' commands concerning their life style (Matth. 13, 53 - 18, 35). And because the message was neglected by the Jews, and there was a strong opposition among the people, the Master was rejected by His own people and had to leave them. Therefore He must return to finish His work. In the mean time the churches are established. This was not the original plan. The church is just a bridge. Actually Israel was supposed to take the place that the church now has.

Matthew summarizes this announced crisis and describes the way, that prepares the final coming of the Kingdom of Heaven (Matth. 19 -25). The Kingdom of Heaven will be established by suffering and resurrection (Matth. 26 bis 28).

**Matthew is all about the Kingdom of God / Heaven** that is supposed to be established among the people by God. Where God is finally recognized, loved and served as a King.

Matthew tries to explain to his readers, that this Reign was prophesied and prepared according to the will of God in the Old Testament. But the Jews had already rejected God as king very early, when they asked a king from Daniel and wanted to be like the other nations that surrounded them. God says that they did not reject the prophet Samuel, but Him as their God

Matthew wrote among the Jews and for the Jews. He explains to them that Jesus came to fulfill the work and the will of God, like God had originally planned it. In every move he makes he refers to the Old Testament to prove how the Law and the Prophets are fulfilled in Jesus.

As a strong and profound expert of the Scripture, he does not only portray the promises of old, but how they became flesh through Jesus and on top of that were brought to a fullness which fulfills the „Law and the Prophets“ and even rises above that. This way his Jewish readers might understand that Jesus is **„more“** and something **„better“**, than what they could have dared to dream of in Judaism

Matthew uses terms as „Kingdom of Heaven“, „Law“, „The Law and the Prophets“, „The will of God“, „bring forth fruit“, etc.

**The Gospel of Matthew underlines the teachings of Jesus**, whereas the Gospel of Mark, for example, puts more emphasis on His works. In comparison of the gospel of Mark with the narrative sections in Matthew's gospel are generally shorter and more abstract. The teachings of Jesus as the main theme is revealed in 5 long speeches, of which the Sermon of the Mount is the most popular. We can also find many parts, words or speeches of Jesus that cannot be found in the other gospels.

In Matthew we can find a great interest in presenting Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah of the OT prophecies. The OT is quoted more than in any other gospel. Therefore it can be assumed that this gospel is mainly addressed the Jewish Christians. It can also be seen in the use of Aramaic words, many discussions about the Mosaic Law or Pharisee traditions, or because of the fact that the book starts with a genealogy.

Matthew also shows a strong interest in Eschatology. The speeches about the Last Days are more detailed than in the gospel of Mark. The gospel of Matthew also contains some parables with decisive eschatological statements.

Matthew emphasizes and reports in all facets of the humiliation of Jesus and the „almost“ failing of His mission, and how by a miracle of God every thing takes a good turn in the end; like for example not finding a shelter in the beginning, the slaying of the innocent children (Matth. 2, 17) and then the flight to Egypt, etc.

Even though the gospel of Matthew is directed to the Jews, also Matthew shows that Jesus and the church broke with Judaism and the synagogues quite early (Matth. 7, 29/ 9, 35/ 23, 4). According to this gospel the church of Jesus with all its rootage in Judaism, is very cosmopolitan as it was commanded to them according to their mission. (Matth. 28, 18-20).

## Author

The name of the author is not mentioned in the book itself but according to the heading it included in the collection, Matthew is the author, in Greek „Mathaios“ is a Semitic name that probably originated in the Hebrew name „Matthanja“ or „Matthias“, the Old Testament and means “gift of Yahweh”.

Not much is known about the life of Matthew. In the record of the apostles he occurs sometimes 7<sup>th</sup> sometimes 8<sup>th</sup> position. (Matth 10, 3; Mark. 3, 18; Luk. 6, 15; Acts 1, 13). In his gospel he calls himself Matthew (9, 9), in the parallel scriptures of Mark and Luke he is called Levi (Mark. 2, 14; Luk. 5, 27). He was the son of a certain Alphaeus, but probably not the brother of James, son of Alphaeus (Matth. 10, 3), because otherwise one of the gospels would also emphasize this information as with Peter and Andrew, the two sons of Zebedaeus. According to Matth. 9, 9 and 10, 3 **Matthew was the tax collector of Capernaum** which belonged to the territory of Herod Antipas, where he collected the Roman taxes. There he had his first encounter with Jesus whose call he followed immediately (Luk. 5, 27-32; Mark. 2, 13-17; Matth. 9, 9-13). The tradition reports that he preached in Palestine for 15 years and then moved on to evangelize the Gentile nations and died in Ethiopia or Macedonia of a natural death. Some modern interpreters assume that the author was not Matthew, the converted tax collector and eventual apostle, not an eye witness either, but a stranger instead. Their main argument is, that the gospel of Matthew was authored after the gospel of Mark. And an apostle would not have depended upon the gospel of somebody else. This thesis is not supported by many experts of the scripture.

From the heading of Matthew's gospel we understand that within the collection of the New Testament letters, there is no doubt that Matthew, a disciple of Jesus, wrote it. It is also confirmed by some quotations from the first centuries. The ancient church agreed that Matthew wrote the gospel.

## What we learn from the conversion of Matthew

While reading and looking at the gospel of Matthew, we can learn from his story and his message to rise up and follow Jesus immediately! He, once a tax collector and sinner, spontaneously Jesus was presented to him like a gift and he was available to serve Him right away.

First of all, he was mentioned in all of the lists of Jesus chosen Twelve (comp. Matth. 10, 3; Mark. 3, 18; Luk. 6, 15; Act. 1, 13). His Hebrew name is **"gift of God"**. The first canonical gospel that carried his name, introduces him to us in the list of the twelve with a specific profession: "the tax collector" (Matth. 10, 3). This way he was identified to be the man, who sat at the table with Jesus when he was still a tax collector and Jesus still called him to become one of His disciples ( Matth. 9, 9, comp. 2, 13-17, Luk. 5, 27-30). As the tax collector his name was Levi. He must have experienced a miracle before (Matth. 9, 1-8; Mark. 2, 1-12, comp. Mark. 2, 13-14). His tax house was at the lake (Matt. 4. 13), close to the house of Peter, where Jesus was a regular guest. Here he must have already heard much about Jesus.

## Upon the basis of the simple information that can be found in the gospel, we can reflect.

- Jesus accepted into His closest circle a person who was considered a sinner according to the regular opinion at that time
- Matthew did not only deal with money, that was foreign to the people of God and considered unclean; but he was also the collaborator of the despised foreign rulers who haphazardly increased the taxes they had to pay. Therefore the gospels also speak of “tax collectors and sinners” (Matth. 9, 10; Luk. 15, 1) and of “tax collectors and harlots (Matth. 21, 31).
- Furthermore they see an example of fussiness (comp. Matth. 5, 46: „They only love the ones that love them”), and mention one of them; Zacchaeus, as "very rich head tax collector" (Luk. 19, 2), while the population called them “thieves, cheaters and adulterers” (comp. Luk. 8, 11).
- Upon the foundation of those information the first fact is eye catching: Jesus does not reject His friendship to anyone. In the contrary: When he sat with Matthew-Levi, he explains to the ones who think this is scandalous why he deals with bad company “ Not the healthy ones need a physician, but the sick. I came to call the sinners and not the righteous” (Mark. 2, 17).

- This is what the Good Message of the gospel is all about: the grace of God offered to the sinners. In another part, the popular parable of the Pharisee and the tax collectors who climbed up to pray Jesus takes the nameless sinner as a good example of humble trust in Divine mercy. While the Pharisee boasts in his moral perfection the other one does not even dare to lift his eyes to heaven, but beat his chest and prayed “God have mercy upon me, a sinner”. And Jesus comments it by saying: “I am telling you, this one will go justified rather than the other. For the one that exalts himself will be humbled, and the one who humbles himself will be exalted. (Luk. 18, 13-14).

**In the image of Matthew** the gospels face us with a true paradox: Who appears to be far from holiness at first, can turn into a role model of receiving divine mercy and the wonderful working of grace can have an effect upon their life.

**In some reports** the profession is named, that the person concerned was performing. Peter, Andreas and James and John were called while fishing. Matthew while he was collecting taxes. It always dealt with minor jobs. Back in the days (the days of Jesus and the lawful Jews) there was not a more despised job than the one of the **tax collector** and nothing more common than the **fishing**. The call of Jesus reaches people of a low social rank while performing their daily duties.

A further thought, that came from the report of the gospel, is about **Matthew answering to the call of Jesus immediately**: He arose and followed Him. This short sentence emphasizes the readiness of Matthew to answer to His calling. This meant for him, to leave everything behind – especially the thing that secured his unrighteous and dishonoring source of income. Obviously **Matthew understood**, that being with Jesus will not allow to follow after activities that displease God. The application of His presence is easy to understand. Also today it is not right to stick with things that are not in line with Jesus, like it is the case with **dishonest wealth**. Once Jesus said, without holding anything back "If you want to be made perfect, go and sell everything you have and give the money to the poor. Then you will have an eternal treasure in heaven. Then come and follow me" (Matth. 19, 21). This was exactly what characterized Matthew. He rose and followed Him. Rising up can justifiably be interpreted as **the letting go** of a sinful situation and therefore the **conscious agreement** to a new and righteous life in fellowship with God.

We do not own the original gospel of Matthew that he wrote in Hebrew or Aramaic. But in the Greek version that we have we can hear the voice of the tax collector Matthew, who proclaims to us the salvation bringing mercy of God as an apostle. He might have died the death of a martyr in Ethiopia or Macedonia.

## **Recipient**

According to the testimony of the ancient Christianity the gospel in Aramaic, which means in the language of the people. We can already see that the text was for his fellow country men, the Jews. This can clearly be seen from the way Jesus Christ is described: as the Messiah that was promised to the Jews. The gospel assumes the Old Testament as known and acknowledged : Hebrew terms, Jewish customs and geographic names were not explained (comp. Ch. 15, 1-2 to Mark. 7, 3). Also the terminology “that it may be fulfilled” and the numerous quotations prove that Jews must be the recipient.

## **Composition**

Most of the bible experts position the composition of Matthew's gospel in the second half of the 1. century between the years 58 to 65 AD. It was probably written in Palestine but definitely before the destruction of Jerusalem in the year 70 AD, because otherwise the author would have mentioned this powerful event of the Jewish history. How the other evangelists also Matthew does not present a complete biography of Christ. You can find among the events and the already existing collections of Jesus words and deeds that were already spread in the churches. He does this by arranging the great speeches of the Lord and adds to it the historical events. Therefore it makes no sense to look for a chronological sequence in this gospel. When Matthew visited his countrymen who were scattered and mostly spoke Greek, his gospel was translated into Greek to make it available to them. This version became a part of our New Testament.

## **Genuineness**

In the second half of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century Irenaeus, Bishop of Lyoni who died in year 200, wrote:

"Matthew wrote his gospel among the Hebrews in their language, at the time when Peter and Paul preached in Rome and built the church. Therefore the apostle Paul must have been writing this part of the gospel in Palestine around the time of 63 to 64 AD. This was the only time when Paul and Peter could have met in Rome.

Eusebius, bishop of Caesarea,(end of the 3., beginning of the 4. century) wrote:"Because Matthew wanted to reach other Nations and preach to them, after he preached to the Jews, he wrote down his gospel in the language of his forefathers and therewith filled the gap his absence would have left.

Apparently, the apostles left Jerusalem in the years 58 to 60 AD. The last time when Paul visited Jerusalem in the year 59, it already seemed like Paul found James , the brother of Jesus who wasn't an apostle, to be the only leader of the church.

## **Purpose and Goal**

The main goal of the gospel was to prove that Jesus of Nazareth was the promised Messiah. Right in the beginning Matthew calls Jesus Christ the son of David, the son of Abraham (1, 1). As he continues he emphasized the fulfilled prophecies of the Holy Scriptures during Jesus earthly life as the best evidence for His messiahship. Another purpose might have been to disprove the misconception of the Jews about the Messiahking and the Kingdom , trough a truthful description of the biography of Jesus, His personality, His teaching and His efficiency.

**The ambition of the gospel of Matthew** most clearly shows in the "missions assignment" (Matt. 28:16-20). Here all things of importance are summarized. The mention of the "eleven disciples", the retrospective dependence to Galilee (the Galilee of the gentiles, Matth. 4,15) and again the emphasis and the evidence to of the sermon on the Mount, the central teaching of Jesus (and teach them all I have commanded you). To the disciples the sermon on the mount was the way of righteousness at that time (Matth. 21,32).

## **Content and arrangement**

The text of Matthew is rather didactic (purpose to teach) than historic.

The essential elements are the five great speeches of Jesus, that we can title in the following way:

**The new Law.** At this point the sermon on the Mount opens the ministry of Jesus Christ. It declares the new Law of the Kingdom of God and establishes the new principles for the true righteousness, compared to which the righteousness of the Jews fades (Chap. 5 - 7).

**The Apostleship.** The instruction of the twelve apostles into ministry (Chap. 10).

**The Kingdom of Heaven.** A collection of parables, which illuminate the progress, the authority, the expansion and perfection of the Kingdom of Heaven (Chap. 13).

**The speech of punishment towards the Pharisees and the scribes (Chap. 23).**

**Eschtalogical (apocalyptic) speeches.** A sequence of speeches which are connected by the common reflection of judgment. The two most important stages of this judgment are:

1. The fall of Jerusalem and the Jewish nation
2. The end of the current era with a following of world judgment (Chap. 24-25)

## **Classification:**

<b><u>1. The character of the King</u></b>	<b><u>Chap. 1,1- 4,11</u></b>
Genealogy	Chap. 1,1-17
Nativity story	1,18-2,12
The persecution of the newborn	2, 3-13
The pioneer: John	3,1-12
The baptism	3,13-17
The temptation	4,1-11

<b><u>2. The works of the King of Galilee</u></b>	<b><u>Chap. 4,11-13, 58</u></b>
The first disciples	4, 12-25
The Laws	5-7
The wonders/miracles	8, 1-9, 35
The fundamentals	11, 20-12, 50
The parables	13, 1-52
The decision	13, 53-58
<b><u>3. The Kings Ministry on the migration</u></b>	<b><u>14, 1- 20, 34</u></b>
The resistance	14, 1 - 16, 11
The confession of Peter	16, 13-20
The proclamation of suffering	16, 21-28
The transfiguration	17,1-13
The doctrines	17, 14-20, 214
<b><u>4. The Kings ministry in Jerusalem</u></b>	<b><u>Chap. 21-25</u></b>
The entry	21, 1-17
The rejection	21, 18- 22, 14
The judgment of the Pharisees	22, 15 - 23, 39
The prophetic speeches	24-25
<b><u>5. The Kings suffering</u></b>	<b><u>Chap. 26-28</u></b>
The attempted murder	26, 1-5
The anointing	26, 6-13
The last supper	26, 14-29
The warfare in prayer	26, 30-56
The condemnation	26, 57 - 27, 31
The mortal combat	27, 32-66
The triumph	28, 1-20

**Keyword: Royalty**

**Keyverse: " Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you" (6, 33).**

## **Miscellaneous**

The gospel of Matthew serves as a **connection between the Old Testament and the New Testament**. It reveals the indestructible hidden bond, that deeply connects both of them contently.

The terminology "Kingdom of heavens" or " Kingdom of heaven" is only used in this gospel. The other three gospels speak consistently about the "Kingdom of God" (evidence that the gospel was designed for the Jews, because they avoided to use the name of God). The titles of the gospels in the Greek language are: gospel according to Matthew, gospel according to Marc, etc.. Thereby it should be told, that there are not "four good news", but one gospel in different forms shaped given by the author. The term "the gospel" does not a description of a book, but of the content, the whole message of Jesus' mission and His deeds. The first gospels are called synoptic and their authors synoptics because they agree in the subject, in their structure and in their historical process (Synopsis).

## **Reports, only found in the gospel of Matthew:**

### **Historical events**

The royal bloodline of Jesus	1, 1-17
The announcement of the birth of Jesus to Joseph	1, 18-25
The Three wise men	2, 1-12
The escape to Egypt and the child murder	2, 13-23
The change of Peter on the water	14, 28-32
The regret and the end of Judas	27, 3-10
The dream of the woman of Pontius Pilate	27, 19
The resurrection of many Saints	27, 52-53
The guard at the grave	7, 62-66
The lies of the Jews	28, 11-15

### **Healings**

The healing of two blind men	9, 27-30
Healing of the dumb possessed	9, 32-34
The healing of blind and lamed people in the Temple	21,14

## **Parables**

The tares among the wheat	13, 24-30; 36-43
The hidden treasure	13, 44
The precious pearl	13, 45-46
The fisher's net	13, 47-52
The unforgiving servant	18, 23-35
The workers in the vineyard	20, 1-16
The two sons	21, 28-32
The royal wedding	22, 1-14
The faithful and the unfaithful steward	24, 45-51
The ten virgins	25, 1-13
The entrusted talents	25, 14-30

## **Other speeches of Jesus**

Parts of the sermon on the Mount	5, 5+7-9+13-24; 31-37; 6, 1-18; 7, 6
The invitation: Come to me	11, 28-30
the warning of idle words	12, 36-37
Answer to the faith confession of Peter	16, 17-19
Talk with Peter about the taxes	17, 24-27
Jesus' teaching about forgiveness	18, 15-22
A part of the speech against the Pharisees	23, 8-22
Day of judgment	25, 31-46
The last promise of Jesus	28, 20

## **Matth. 1, 1 - 4, 11: The character of the king**

**Matth. 1, 22:** „so that it may be fulfilled what the Lord spoke through the prophets“ - the terms and sayings of Jesus can be found on a continuous basis in Matthew (Matth. 2, 15+17+23/ 12, 17/ 13, 35/ 21, 4/ 26, 54+56/ 27, 9/ comp. Matth. 3, 3/ 11, 10/ 13, 14). To Matthew the Holy Scripture is fulfilled in Jesus, to Matthew they are speaking of him (Matth. 11, 4-6/ Luk. 4, 21/ 18, 31/ 24, 44/ Joh. 5, 39/ 8, 56/ 17, 12). The Old Testament is already the fulfillment of the words of the prophet as a sign of the authenticity of His sending (Deut. 18, 20-22).

In the eyes of Jesus and his disciples, God as announced His counsel by words and deeds, and the faith of the Christians discovers that real intention of God is the word by word fulfillment of the text is in Jesus and the life of the church members (comp. Joh. 2, 22/ 20, 9/ Acts 2, 23/ 2, 31-34/ 3, 24/ Rom. 15, 4/ 1.Cor. 10, 11/ 15, 3+4/ 2.Cor. 1, 20/ 3, 14-16).

## **Matth. 1, 1-17: Genealogy**

The New Testament begins with the genealogy of Jesus Christ. Here the NT (new covenant) connects with the OT (old covenant). It points out, that the promised and sent Saviour and King of Israel, who was one of the promised descendant of Abraham, shall be blessed by all nations of the earth. It also proves that he was a descendant of David and therefore has a right to the throne, and came to establish the broken tabernacle of David.

Jesus' line of ancestors is divided in three times 14 generations

To the evangelists (Matthew and Luke) the genealogy was very important, because before the destruction of Jerusalem and the scattering of the Jews (70 AD) they also destroyed the real certificates. The Jews had kept them carefully and the scribes referred to them for their information. These still existed at the time of creation of the gospels, and they used it to prove to their readers that Jesus originated from the house of David and was the Messiah. If Jews today still still waited for the Messiah, they could no longer present a true evidence that the Messiah belongs to the line of David and is therefore His son.

**The family tree of Jesus** in Matthew is limited to the Israelite origin of Jesus and only a few influences of non-Israelite women (Matth. 1, 3+5+6). Jesus was supposed to come out as the main carrier of the Messianic promise from the house of David and therefore His origin had to be clear. (2.Sam. 7, 1/ Isa. 7, 14).

The family tree of Jesus in the gospel of Luke is more Universalistic and goes back to Adam and the whole humanity. From David to Joseph in both genealogies there are **only two names that are identical**. Those deviations can only be explained by Matthews preference to point out the royal heritage instead of the natural (Lesson 2) Both family trees part after the sons of David (Solomon and Nathan).

That also Mary was a descendant from the house of David can be seen in her conversation with the angel: The unborn Son will be called a son of David (Luk. 1, 32), without reference to her relationship with Joseph.

In this genealogy not all the single members are named, but only the generations that were important to prove **the becoming flesh**. Therefore the tree is divided in different groups.

- He is the son of Abraham, an heir of promise ( Gen.12, 3),
- as Son of Judah Jakob's promise was fulfilled in Him (Gen. 49, 10),
- as Son of David He inherits the eternal Kingdom (2.Sam. 7, 13),
- as Son of the kings of Judah he reminds of the blooming hopes before the Babylonian occupation
- as Son of Serrubabel He is still within the royal line, even if He was born in the lowest lowliness and poverty.

Matthew also likes to use the number **seven** in his gospel, as also in the tree of Jesus. This **seven scheme** forces him to leave out three kings between Joram and Usja and counts the name of Jechonja two times (Matth. 1, 11+12). This is because the name „Jechonias“ translated from the Hebrew into the Greek means „Jojakim“ or „Jojachin“. But both reports (Matth. und Luk.) end with Joseph, who is only the lawful father of Jesus. According to the opinion of the ancient time the succession and impartation of Judaism, as well as the Messianic heritage was over the father. But this does not exclude Mary from the genealogy, but the evangelists do not mention her.

Many don't know what to do with the genealogy and they seem to be of no interest to them.

What three genealogical registers tell us about Jesus:

- **Matthew describes the royal origin of Jesus** and that is what it's all about back to David and Abraham (vers 1). He shows the son of the One through whom all nations of the earth were supposed to be blessed. In the gospel of Matthew Jesus is portrayed as the king of Israel.
- **Lukas depicts Jesus as the son of man** and therefore in his family tree he goes back to Adam.
- John shows the Lord as the Son of God and presents Him as the One who comes from eternity (Joh. 1, 1-3).
- **Mark does not use the family tree**, he presents the Lord as a servant. Because in a life of a servant nobody cares about his genealogy.

Over and over we read the word **“begot”** apart from Joseph, the husband of Mary. Matthew knew that the Lord was not the son of Joseph but the Son of God. A remarkable detail in the family tree of Matthew.

The verses 2 to 16 contain many known and unfamiliar names. Amongst that outstanding names like Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, next to bad ones as Manasse.

**In this long list of sheer names there are also 4 female names mentioned.**

Their names are Tamar, Rahab, Ruth and Bathsheba. It is especially interesting that only those 4 and no others are mentioned. It is almost a shame, that the only pure and holy one, who came down from eternity and was without sin, would have names with such blemishes in His genealogy. Would women like Sarah of Rebecca, or such as the woman in Hebr. 11, 35 would be mentioned along with His name, it would be easier to understand. But perhaps it is supposed to prove where the Lord came from.

Any worldly author would have avoided to use those names in a genealogy, but not the Spirit of the Lord

- **Tamar** (Gen. 38): It is one of the darkest chapters out of Judah's life, that who hardly dare to read it in public. Ethics even claim that such a chapter does not belong in such a holy book as the Bible.
- **Rahab**: In Joshua 2 we read her dark story telling us about her morals and her profession. In addition she was also a Canaanite, and therefore cursed in two ways. Faith (Hebr. 11, 31) brought her into the line of Jesus. Her name is connected with Solomon (1.Sam. 2, 8). Through Solomon she entered the royal line and became the mother of Boas.
- **Ruth**: She was a Moabite. She had the law with all its punishment against her (Deut. 23, 3). According to the law she could never be accepted in the community of Israel, but grace brought her in. Ruth did not only enter among the people of God, but also into the direct line that brought forth Jesus. Already her grand-grand son sat on the throne of Israel. The grace of God supplied this position for her, even though the law would have excluded her down to her 10<sup>th</sup> generation.
- **Bathsheba**: Her name is not mentioned. She is only called the wife of Uriah. Her name is connected with David, the best king Israel ever had, singer and psalmist, but also attached to the name Uriah, the man whom David killed. It presents God's restoring grace and the security of salvation until the end. Out of this back round Jesus came forth.



## **Matth. 1, 18 to 2, 12: Story of birth**

Jesus was received by the creation power of the Holy Spirit, in a supernatural way. Therefore He was without Sin which was transmitted through the generations of humanity (Gen. 3, 7). If Jesus would have been fathered by a man, He would have been a sinner and never been able to redeem us. But because Jesus was born through a virgin He did have the nature of a human, but did not receive the sinful nature of a human. And by this a whole bunch of prophecies were fulfilled (Is. 7, 14/ Numb. 24, 17/ Is. 60, 6/ Ps. 72, 10/ Hos. 11, 1/ Jer. 31, 15/ Exod. 4, 19/ Is. 11, 1).

All of this only confirms Divine claim to be the Messiah.

Matthew does not mention the former residence of His parents in Nazareth or the circumstances of His birth. Luke does that. It is noticeable how little detail is given about the birth of the king, but how much is mentioned about the conditions of the same. Especially the details of the conditions prove the miracle of the incarnation.

### **Five things are the main themes:**

- a) A virgin shall become pregnant (vers 23).
- b) The confusion of Joseph (vers 19).
- c) The testimony of the angel (vers 20)
- d) The alignment of the prophecy with the message of the angel (comp. Is. 7, 14 with vers 22) and
- e) The quiet obedience with faith of Joseph (vers 24).

**The birth of Jesus was a work of the Holy Spirit.** The Holy Spirit was part-taker of the creation of the Son of God. If Jesus would have been begotten by a human seed, He would have had a sinful nature just like us, and would not have been able to deliver us (Joh. 1, 14/ Hebr. 2, 14).

### **The report of Matthew definitely puts Joseph in the spotlight.**

He writes about his pain and his holiness and righteousness, of his restraint and his gentleness towards Mary, and about the Divine revelation and his obedience. Luke, on the opposite, provides for us an insight into the life of Mary, as he wrote of the visitation of the angel Gabriel, her humbleness and her praise, and about all the details about the birth of the Lord.

But let us pay attention to the details about Joseph :

- **He was holy, pure, feared God and was set apart from sin.** The message about Mary's conception caused him pain.
- **He was just.** Being such a man he did not want to expose her to the public. In sleepless nights his tortured soul determines a resolution and he decided to release her in secrecy.

**Mary was engaged with Joseph** (Matth. 1, 18). The Jewish engagement was a very real bondage, so that the fiancées were already called their "husbands" (Matth. 1, 19) and could only be separated by his dismissal. The story we are talking about was happening after a visit of Mary at Elisabeth's house (Luk. 1, 39-56). To Elisabeth the Holy Spirit revealed that Mary was pregnant, and at the same time it was also important for Joseph to receive a direct Divine assurance. The son of God was born by an engaged virgin, so that the mother could escape the heresy and Jesus could be considered Joseph's son. During this whole story of Divine revelation, it is always about **concealing**, so that God could hide from those trying to tempt Him and to reveal Himself to those who truly sought Him.

**The „angel of the Lord“** (Matth. 1, 20). Originally it meant "Yahweh" itself (Gen. 16 7). With the development of the teaching of angels God is separated from angels (spiritual beings, etc.). If it is only **a messenger of God**, then it reads **„AN** angel of the Lord" and not **„THE** angel of the Lord" (Matth. 1, 20+24/ 2, 13+19/ Luk. 1, 11/ 2, 9; also comp. Matt. 28, 2/ Joh. 5, 4/ Act. 5, 19/ 8, 26/ 12, 7+23).

**„You shall call His name Jesus“** (Matth. 1, 21). „Jesus" is the Greek name of the Hebrew „Jeshua", which is an abbreviation of „Jehoshua" oder Joshua, d. h. „Jehova helps" oder „saves". Both of the ridiculous forefathers of the Saviour bore the same name

- the son of Nun, „Moses" the conqueror of the Promised Land
- the son Jozadak, the high priest who delivered the people out of their captivity in Babylon (Esra 2, 2/ Hag. 1, 1).

The Greek also called those two "Jesus. And in this also Jesus became as His brothers in all things and accepted the position as a servant.

**The wise praise Him** (Matth. 2, 1-23). After Matthew introduced Jesus as the son of David and the son of God in the first chapter, the second chapter speaks about the sending of Jesus for the salvation of the nations (the Gentiles), who are supernaturally drawn by the light (star) of God (Math. 2, 1+12).

- Like Jesus drew the fishermen by miracles with fishes (Luk. 5, 1/ Matth. 17, 27/ Joh. 21, 6), also
- the sick were drawn to Him through the healing of their sickness
- the Scribes were drawn to Him through the deep and spirit-filled interpretation of the scripture (Luk10, 26/ Matth. 22, 29+37+43),
- and many listeners were drawn to Him through the exciting parables about their every day life, which they could well understand
- also many magicians (astronomers) found Him by the guidance of a star.  
The sign that the wise men received pointed to the fulfilling of Bileam's prophecy. (Num. 24, 17).

**They were wise**, educated and qualified people (personalities) that were caused by special (heavenly) revelation, to seek the newborn Saviour until the light disappeared and they are referred to the common revelation of the scripture (the bible). They also had to pass a test, by hearing the word of God from unbelieving Scribes who knew everything, but did not believe in it.

**Blessings of the wise men** (Matth. 2, 1-12). They were astronomers or magicians or Scholars. They had nothing to do with today's astrology. They were astronomers. A unique star caught their attention. They came from the East, from where they also called Bileam once. (Numb. 23, 7).

The ancient world used to believe that birth and death of outstanding personalities would be announced by signs in the sky. In the Orient during the era of Christ, the birth of a world ruler was expected. At that time there were still Jews in Babylon, and they knew the prophecy of Bileam (Numb. 24, 17).

Also **Daniel** must have influenced the magicians (Dan. 2, 48/ 4, 6). And the gifts they presented give us a clue that they knew about the ancient prophecies (Gen. 49, 10/ Is. 60, 1/ Ps. 72, 8-10/ 45, 18). Perhaps they came from **Ekbatana**, at that time Persia. The city was located 1900 m high, perfect to observe the sky. In addition the famous silk street led through Ekbatana. It was an important junction from China to the Mediterranean to the Red Sea up to Alexandria in Egypt. From this point the streets toward the East branched out. There you can also find the grave of Daniel and Queen Esther. It was a former colony of Jews and Jewish Scribes.

The "wise" must have known Daniel's prophecies about the 70 year-week (Dan. 7, 24-27) where the coming of a Redeemer is announced (more about it, when we go through the book of Daniel). However, they had the prophecies of the Zarathustra, who lived around 1000 BC and spoke about the victory of Good over evil and of light over darkness, and also mentioned the "star of Jacob".

The wise came to Jerusalem and proclaimed that they saw a star **rising**..

It is awkward, many Divine signs accompanied the birth of Jesus. God informed even the Gentiles that a Saviour was born. God even became low enough to speak to them through a star. The ones walking in the dark, who probably did not even have a bible, knew better and in more detail that the son of God was born, than even the saints in Jerusalem. Instead of the prophets and priests, the "magicians" told the Israelites, that the King of the Jews was born and therewith scared all of Israel.

The "magicians" received the prophetic word through the stars, in the form of an heavenly sign. The magicians received the prophetic word in a different way than the Jews. God spoke to them through stars or signs in heaven. Without the old traditions of the prophecies and without the impact of the star, they would not have started to walk the long distance.

### **What caused the wise to go to Judea?**

- Around the turn of eras between the years 12 and 11 b.C. the „Halleyic comet“ became visible.
- In the years of 4 – 5 b.C (according to Chinese reports) a so-called “Nova” (a star that suddenly lights up and then disappears) became visible.
- In the year 7 b.C. the planets Jupiter and Saturn were located next to each other several times in the zodiac sign of Virgo. According to traditional reports it looked like the sign Virgo was highly pregnant. In addition the Jupiter was considered the planet of the Kings and Saturn stood for Palestine. According to astronomic calculation of the conjunctions during May and September of 7 b.C. it looked most impressing.
- Also: On the 17<sup>th</sup> of June in the year 2 b.C. the two brightest planets, the “evening star” Venus and Jupiter were so close to each other that it seemed like they were touching each other.

**The holy family lived in Bethlehem.** The family did not live in the stable, a grotto or a shelter. In the meantime some time had passed (Matth. 2, 16). In between there was the purification of Mary and the depiction of Jesus in the temple (Gospel of Luke) Then they lived in Bethlehem filled with faith and convinced that the Messiah had to come out of the city of David, where they found joyful acceptance of the shepherds.

### **The “wise men from the East” brought gold, frankincense and myrrh.**

They “fell down before Him “ (Matth. 2, 11). Those were typical presents for a king at that time. About the meaning of the gifts there are several opinions.

**Myrrh** (Semitic „murr“ = **“bitter”**) is the resin of the Commiphora myrrha-tree. The dry, yellow-brown resin was used in Yemen, Ethiopia, Sudan and Somalia for centuries. The wise men from the Eastern World obviously foresaw the suffering of Christ at an early stage, so that besides gold and frankincense they brought him a pain reliever: myrrh. The pain relieving effect that was won out of myrrh bushes was proven by Italian pharmaceutical experts at the University of Florence, wrote the British newspaper “Nature”: According to the biblical story Jesus did not only receive myrrh at His birth , but also at the cross. (sponge dipped into myrrh on a stick).

**Frankincense** which is a white resin from the Boswellia tree. This plant only grows in the most extraordinary regions of this earth, where desert and mountains meet, as int the south of Arabia. Ever since the ancient era this resin was attached to a strong spiritual meaning. But frankincense also has another quality: the smelling smoke keeps away insects. The grainy, dried resin was already used for cultic purposes in ancient Egypt (the mummification of outstanding or wealthy persons) and was used as a disinfecting healing tool on a daily basis among wealthy people. All holy personalities and tools of the OT were anointed with myrrh (Ex. 30, 23). With the help of those gifts the Three wise men confessed Jesus, as their royal priest, sent by God, thus bringing to Him Divine gifts and worshiping Him in His holiness. And at the same time God the Father used those gifts to provide for a poor family which was soon to turn into refugees.

**Gold**, which was necessary to sustain the family in Egypt.

The mention of the three different gifts, can also be interpreted as an indication for the future ministry of the newborn King.

- Myrrh can stand for His ministry as a healing prophet,
- Frankincense could point to His office as a High Priest
- Gold to reflect the glory of a king.

And thus Jesus fulfilled the prophecies of the prophets up to the smallest details (Matth. 1, 22).

God Himself gave heed that all of His requirements were met (Joh. 15, 25).

The kingdom of God, **the will of God always comes step by step** (Hos. 11, 1). The people of Israel is a prototype of His “firstborn Son” (Ex. 4, 22/ Jer. 2, 3), whom He calls out of the land of shelter, which turned into a land of slavery. Everything that happened to the people of Israel also happened to the son of God. God was also able to guide the wise men. They were obedient to the command of God, and went back home on a different way than they came.

**God tells His plans in dreams** (Matth. 2, 12+13+19+ 22/ 27, 19/ Act. 16, 9/ 18, 9/ 23, 11/ 27, 23) or in visions (Act. 9, 10/ 10, 3+11). In the first chapter the evangelist describes the Jewish heritage of the Messiah. In the second chapter he shows the partaking of the Gentiles concerning Jesus, by mentioning the visitation of the Three wise men.

**In this chapter two worlds collide:**

- The evil plan of Herod and the piety simplicity of the magicians.
- The pious Jews have the scripture in Jerusalem and know exactly where the Messiah was supposed to be born, but they have no revelation of it. .
- The magicians have the revelation, they saw a star, but they do not have the knowledge of the scripture and do not have much information.
- This is where the Gentile magicians and the Jewish scribes collide and complement each other.

**Matth. 2, 13-23 – The persecution of the newborn**

Shortly after Jesus was born in the city of David

- the angels proclaimed and celebrated it with songs of praise,
- the shepherds found Him and praised Him everywhere,
- Simeon and Hannah welcomed Him prophetically,
- the Gentile wise men worshiped Him and brought gifts of sacrifice unto Him,
- He had to leave the Jewish country,
- and hide in Egypt (and image of the world).

And all the glorious events seemed to be in vain, and the faith and hope that had just risen, were killed among many believers.

Jesus in the major, was the greatest fear of the unrighteous king Herod. Jesus brought the whole system to stagger. In the **persecution of the child** Jesus by Herod, the whole theme of the old jealousy between Edom (Esau) against Jacob is revived (Ex. 27, 41). Hate is planted and inherited down in the bloodline. **The Edomites**, the offspring of Esau did not let Israel pass through their country. Not even for payment. Haman, an Edomite, wanted to kill the Jews. Herod, also an Edomite, was the one persecutin newborns.

**Egypt** was the only place of shelter for Mary, Joseph and the child at that time.

- It was easy to get there and Herod had no authority there.
- Out of Egypt sprung forth the ancient culture.
- To a certain extent the Roman imperialistic Reign resulted from it.
- The Israelites were delivered from Egypt and became a people in the desert.
- Therefore also the Son of God had to come out of Egypt.

At this point the prophecy about the mother of the tribe of Benjamin who is crying, is supposed to be fulfilled (Gen. 35, 19).

**The visitation of the wise men** caused Jesus and his parents to flee to Egypt into exile. Right from the beginning Jesus had to escape out of the midst of His own people and experience suffering. Actually he goes through the destiny of Israel in all its details. He is the glorious return of the small **“residue”**.

This **„NAZUR“** (Matth. 2, 23). Matthew, John and the book of Acts use the term “Nazarene”, and therefore the description of the city of **„Nazareth“**, an established place of pious Jews who came home from their Babylonian captivity. Later this becomes the place of Jesus' origin (Matth. 26, 69+71), and is also applied for His followers (Act. 24, 5) and later turned into “Christians” (Act. 11, 26). Matthew is probably pointing to the word of the prophet in Judges 13, 5+7 where **„nazir“** or **„nezer“** („branch“ of Is. 11, 1) or **„nazar“** („keep“, of Is. 42, 6/ 49, 8) from which also the word **„rest“ (nazur)** is derived.

In Judg. 13, 5 it says (Samson) **„and he shall begin to deliver Israel”**. That way the connection of **Samson** (the first known **„Nazarene“**) with the judges is justified, but at the same time there is a hidden prophecy that the Philistines will not be defeated by Samson nor Saul, but finally under the reign of David. And in the end even David is not the “Messiah” or the “Redeemer” or the “Saviour“, but only the father of all Judean kings, which serve as guides to the royal line of the Messiah (Matth. 1, 6-16). Everywhere it was only an announcement of an ideal king, who would bring the shine of Yahweh's glory among humanity (Is. 1, 26/ 5, 16), which was completely fulfilled in Jesus.

### **Matth. 3, 1-13 – The forerunner: John.**

Two prophets of the old covenant Isaiah (Is. 40, 1) and Malachi (Mal. 3, 1) prophesied how the Messiah would enter the land and the temple. There would be a messenger or Herald to go before Him and prepare the way the desert. John was the strong preacher of the law. The greatest Anointed one of the old covenant (Matth. 11, 11+13), he purposely performed his ministry in the desert and held his famous sermons on repentance, which lead to the purging of the people (Es. 36, 25/ Zach. 13, 1/ Mal. 3, 2). John was the last one in the line of the Old Testament prophets. Isaiah and Malachi described him as the **“forerunner of the Lord”**. Malachi calls him the **“errant”**, who prepares the way, **“the angel of covenant”**, the leader of God's people after the image of God. Therefore John could clearly discern that He has been before he was (Joh. 1, 27) and that He came from above (Joh. 3, 31), that is why he humbled himself before Him.

The **outward appearance of John** was supposed to represent the misery and pain of the era, and characterize the repentance preacher who shows up with a spirit like Elijah (2.Kin. 1, 8/ Mal. 4, 5/ Luk. 1, 17). Especially as a preacher of the law he had to live above the common conditions of the people and thus present to them the warning, and threatening law before their eyes. Also **the preachings of John** were totally different than the ones of the prophets before him. He does not speak about war, battle and earthly victory, but about heaven, the Kingdom of God and the “infernal punishment”.

### **He calls the Pharisees and Sadducees brood of vipers.**

The Pharisees were „set apart“ and despised the common people by acting super holy on the outside (Joh. 7, 49). The „Sadducees“ were students of a Jewish teacher called „Zaddok“.

Even though the great revival was usually according to the law, and many things soon disappeared, a residue remained from this work. Out of them came the apostles, the 70 disciples of Jesus and the 500 believers (1.Cor. 15, 6), which we encounter with the risen Jesus.

**Matth. 3, 13-17 – The baptism of Jesus.** Jesus took part in the common baptism. He therewith fulfilled all righteousness before God to prepare Himself for His ministry as the “Redeemer”. He was baptized for His own purposes even though He did not need to be cleansed of sin. He dedicated Himself to God. But the baptism is a part of Jesus' personal lowliness, that eventually leads to his exaltation. In the baptism of Jesus we see how the Holy Trinity is united. Jesus (the Son of God) stands in the water, the Holy Spirit comes upon Him in the image of a dove, and the Father in heaven accepts Him as His son. “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. “(Matth. 2, 16-17).

And therefore Jesus was the true “Servant of God” who was prophesied by Isaiah. .

The command of God was, that all Israelites who wanted to enter into the Kingdom of God had to confess their sins and receive the baptism. Since Jesus knew no sin, He could now fulfill the righteousness of God. Even John wants to be baptized and justified by Jesus.

**Matth. 4, 1-11 – The temptation.** After the baptism and the reception of the Holy Spirit the “main battle” began. Matthew describes all the temptations after the period of 40 days of fasting, while Luke describes the whole fasting as a time of temptation. The tempter only approached Jesus after He positioned Himself on the level of a human being through the baptism and identified Himself with the “sinners”. Before that the devil had no access to Him. He was without sin. Through baptism He was as a “sinner”, but still had not committed a sin. With temptations he wanted to bring Jesus to a fall.

The temptations were not only simple faces or visions that happened in the mind of Jesus. The story of His temptation is very concrete. The tempter **came to him** (Matth. 4, 3).

Satan **„took” and “set Him”** (Matth. 4, 5) and **„showed Him”** (Matth. 4, 8). Those are real actions.

The **number 40** in the bible always stands for **a season of trial** that event the servant of God has to submit to (Deut. 8, 2/ Ex. 34, 28/ 1.Kin. 19, 8).

**„Tempter”**, that is a name of the devil in the bible (1.Thes. 3, 5/ 1.Cor. 7, 5). He is the highest of the fallen spirits. To tempt and test people is his main activity here on earth. That he also tempted the Son of God, whom he must have recognized bewildered many. He even asked Jesus: “Are you the Son of God” and the demons always knew that Jesus was the “Son of God”. But the devil must have thought **„since He was hungry”**, that God left Him, and if not He could help Himself by working a miracle. He was supposed to use His Divine gifts with selfish intentions to **escape unnecessary suffering**.

Jesus as our Redeemer became equal with us in all things. Shared our earthly needs with us and does not overcome than with any other means than confidence in faith and the word of God. **Jesus had to let the devil „take Him“**, and could not avoid it to let him bring Him to Jerusalem and set Him on the top of the temple. All of this is part of His lowliness, that He has to go through this battle with no other option than to stand on this rooftop and look down into the abyss. The devil did not tempt Him with this in the desert. There were enough steep mountainsides. But the jump of a mountain would have been of no effect for the devil. He took Him to Jerusalem, where the pious and praying people used to gather. Here in front of those people in a holy place Jesus was supposed to perform a miracle for a show. Years later James, the brother of the Lord Jesus, one of the leaders of the ancient church, was killed by Pharisees who pushed him down.

**„To tempt God“** means in the bible, to test His wisdom, power and grace due to unbelief and mistrust or to rebel against His ordained leadership (Ex. 17, 2+7/ Ps. 95, 9/ 1.Chron. 10, 9).

During the next two temptations Jesus uses the **law as a shield** by saying **„you shall“**. He Himself was under the law and did nothing that displeased God or would have been an abomination.

The **last temptation** was the top. Satan considers Himself the king and god of this world (Joh. 12, 31/ 2.Cor. 4, 4 ) and as the owner of all kingdoms of the world (civilization), and it was, until all kingdoms became again the Kingdom of God (view Rev. 12, 10). The answer of Jesus reflects His firm determination to serve God alone. In the season of the hardest temptations Jesus was quickened by angels since He also humbled Himself under the angels (Luk. 22, 43/ Hebr. 2, 7).

**Matth. 4, 12 bis 13, 58 – The deeds of the King in Galilee.** Because of the wedding in Cana Jesus came back to Galilee and lived in Capernaum (Joh. 2, 12/ Luk. 42, 39). Here in Galilee Jesus was freer and easier than in the conservative Judea where the Pharisees were in charge.

„Capernaum“ means as much as **„village of comfort“** or of **„refreshing“**. There he started to preach about **“The Kingdom of heaven“** (Matth. 4, 17). Jesus appeared in the synagogues (Matth. 4, 23), He appeared as a Rabbi. At that time it did not require much human acknowledgement. There he ministered to the sick and oppressed and emphasized His teaching therewith. It says: **„Who heals needs to be righteous.“** At that time they believed that you could only truly heal if you were particularly holy and committed to the Lord.

Jesus refers to and points to His miracles (Joh. 10, 25).

The miracles of Jesus carry the whole way of His being (in lowliness) with them.

- He did not let fire fall from heaven as Elijah (Luk. 9, 55),
- He did not turn stones into bread,
- but for the despised people He did miracles much greater than these (Matth. 15, 32),
- He did not ask the Father for 12 legions of angels,
- did not come down from the cross.

Many of the miracles of Jesus are signs of restoration, by giving back or calling back the natural, God-given power.

**Matth. 4, 12-25 – The first disciples.** The king of promise built His team, His future leadership. The 123 apostle and the 70 disciples still belonged to the forerunners of Jesus, who performed with the spirit and the power of Elijah. They partly came forth out of the disciples of John the baptist. According to Joh. 1, 40+41 they already encountered Jesus as the Messiah, but they did not follow Him on a regular basis. They even remained in their former professions (as fishermen) until Jesus called them personally (Matth. 19, 27) and they obtained a new job (Ez. 47, 9+10/ Matth. 13, 47/ Luk. 5, 10). Matthew, however, reports of a spontaneous calling ( as in Matth. 9, 9) of the disciples, but long before God had already prepared them thoroughly. It is comparable to the calling of Elisha by Elijah (1.Kin. 19, 19-21). When Jesus called them, they were already mature enough for the discipleship and the apostolic ministry.

**Matth. 5 to 7 – the new law of the Kingdom of God.** The sermon of the Mount is “only” for the disciples of Jesus and is not for all. In the sermon of the Mount the Kingdom of God (new order) here on earth is proclaimed. They all hear it, they are all addressed and drawn to the Kingdom of God. But the Kingdom of God is an internal matter, that starts in the heart of each man.

**Jesus came to fulfill the law of God and the prophets** (Matth. 5, 17).

„Fulfill“ means as much as „adhere to“ or even „to do“ (Rom. 13, 8). Everything that was not fulfilled yet, still had to be fulfilled. Whatever was not fulfilled was still a prophecy waiting for its fulfillment.

Jesus is the end of the Divine law that was given to the people of Israel on the Mount of Sinai (Rom. 10, 4). The law was not given to Israel so that they could get to heaven, but as a disciplinarian, which means to chastise the people. It keeps saying: “You shall not” .

In the sermon of the Mount is about the NT law that still had to be fulfilled by Jesus. According to that the Beatitudes are a prophecy of that which is to come. When the sermon of the Mount was held, there had not yet been a Redemption on Golgotha, no Resurrection and no outpouring of the Holy Spirit. The **Beatitudes** refer only to the scriptures of the OT and remind the listeners of old well known truths (Is. 57, 15/ 61, 1-3/ Ps. 34, 11+19/ 37, 11/ 73, 1/ 1.Sam. 2, 5/ Ps. 51, 19/ Judg. 7, 4).

Jesus shows His disciples that His Kingdom is a „**Kingdom of Blessedness**“ , internal as well as external. The message of Jesus is different than th message of the Pharisees and the scribes of that time. He does not command and threaten, but invites with promises like it was typical in Psalms (Ps. 1, 1. / 32, 1).

The OT already uses similar congratulatory terminologies that praise wisdom, wealth, etc. (Ps. 33, 12/ 127, 5-6/ Spr. 3, 3). In the spirit of the prophets Jesus promises to all that hear His word a partaking in the blessings, while Luke addresses the beatitudes to people (Luk. 6, 20-22), who were regarded unhappy and cursed to bless them with happiness. Matthew rather directs the Beatitudes toward the moral attitude of the people, because only then you can remain under the blessings.

The first **four Beatitudes** are heading to those who are still **“seeking”** and the four last ones are for those who have the right heart to keep what they have found. The first are therefore the „narrow gate“ and the last ones are the narrow road to heaven.

Other Beatitudes of Jesus: Matth. 11, 6/ 13, 16/ 16, 17/ Luk. 11, 27-28 (Luk. 1, 45/ Rev. 1, 3/ 14, 13)

In a pragmatic speech Jesus lays down the basics about His Kingdom in the sermon of the Mount:

- The required disposition of the Sons of His Kingdom (Matth. 5, 3-48),
- the conviction of fulfilling the law and rituals of Judaism (Matth. 6, 1-18),
- the letting go of riches (Matth. 6, 19-34),
- the relationship to your neighbor (Matth. 7, 1-12)
- and the determination to act accordingly, to be able to enter the Kingdom of God (Matth. 7, 13-27).

In the end the sermon of the Mount is a sheer criticism of the Pharisees and their hypocrisy.

It starts by showing the “true deeds” and deals with the wrong doings of the Pharisees. Jesus says that you also have to do what you teach and speak about. Matthew points out that Jesus came to fulfill the law of God. And whoever also strives to do so can become a part of the heavenly Kingdom (Matth. 5, 17-20).

As opposed to the Pharisees, the **disposition of the citizens of the heavenly Kingdom** is in practical actions. For Jesus the pleasing of God and the fellowship with the father is His only purpose of life. Therefore the **„offering“** is a work of quiet, hidden love, **„prayer“** is a heart matter, **fasting** etc are means of correction that are supposed to effect the inner man (Matth. 6, 1-18).

Jesus warns His disciples of **„arrogance“** (which was characteristic of the Pharisees) (Rom. 2, 1) and rebukes them to **act right** towards others and especially to avoid **„self-deception“** (Matth. 7, 1-6+12+15-23).

**Matth. 5, 21 - „you have heard that which was said to those of old...“** A typical saying of Jesus in Matthew, when He criticizes the faith of the Pharisees and scribes. Jesus always adds: **“But I say to you...“** „here he speaks concealed as the personified God, as the eternal author of the law, who was there on the Mount of Sinai when He gave them the law. He also says: “a new law I give to you... “ (Joh. 13, 34). He speaks with Divine authority. And therefore he deepens, internalizes, and spiritualizes the laws of God, His Father, who once gave them to the people at Sinai.

He sets up commands that are applicable for all people and not only for Jews. He speaks of self-love, selfishness, etc. He is requiring the glorification of God and loving your neighbor, yes even to love our enemies. And then the revelation of God and His requirements go into more detail and how to apply it in every day life.

That can be seen in the many realistic examples that Jesus gives such as adultery, divorce, swearing, revenge, loving your enemies, giving alms, begging, and praying etc. (Matth. 5, 27-6, 18).

**Matth. 6, 9-13 – The Lord's prayer:** In Matthew the Lord's prayer consists of 7 requests. It is possible that Matthew added the third and the seventh requests to the Lord's prayer (Luk. 11, 2-4 Matth. 7, 21/ 21, 31/ 26, 42) to reach the number 7 (Matth. 13, 19+38).

**Matthew has a preference for the number “seven”**

- Two times 7 generations in the genealogy (Matth. 1, 17),
- seven Beatitudes (Matth. 5, 7),
- seven parables (Matth. 13, 3),
- forgiveness: not 7 times but 77 times (Matth. 18, 22),
- seven woes over the Pharisees (Matth. 23, 13),
- his gospel contains seven main parts.

**Jesus calls God “my Father”**, he already does that at the age of 12 (Luk. 2, 49), and also teaches us to say “our Father” (Matth. 6, 9) and through the Holy Spirit we can say „Abba, our Father“. After the completed redemption He said: “My Father and your father” (Joh. 20, 17). Therefore „Father“, is the NT name for God, who only revealed Himself in His majesty once in the OT (Ex. 4, 22/ Is. 63, 16/ Jer. 2, 3/ Hos. 11, 1/ Mal. 2, 10/ vgl. Ps. 103, 13). God can only become our Father by our faith in Jesus, His begotten son, when we become His brethren (Joh. 1, 12),

**Matth. 7, 1: Do not judge others so that you will not be judged by God:** (Jam. 4, 12)

In the former chapter Jesus said “**do not worry**” (Matth. 6), this is what the Gentiles do. The disciples of were only supposed to care about the Kingdom of God and the righteousness of God (Rom. 1, 17/ Phil. 3, 9), which is accounted by faith. Jesus literally forbids His disciples to care about the temporary. Their concern should be the eternal things. His disciples were too worried about things as food and clothing. That is why He calls them little of faith.

In Matthew 7 Jesus teaches not to “**judge**” or to “**condemn**” (Luk. 6, 37), which means not to take the position of a judge in other people's lives. To judge is not for people, but only for God. On the other hand **the discernment of the spirits** is a Divine command. Or also to judge about teachings and the message (for the discernment of lie or truth) is a necessity to recognize right from wrong (1. Cor. 5, 12/ 1. Thes. 5, 21/ 1. Joh. 4, 1). To judge people is a right that God kept for Himself. And whoever judges without a command of God is intervening in His work and stealing His honor. Man is allowed and must judge himself, Jesus has nothing against that.

**Matth. 7, 6 – not to defile sacredness.** All things that were brought to the temple of God are sacred. Animals or foods of sacrifice (Ex. 22, 30/ Lev. 22, 14). You should also not bring the precious teachings of Jesus before people who cannot receive it and perhaps misuse it.

**The sacred** is the word of God, by which all things are made holy. **Dogs** are the ones who persecute the word of God (Phil. 3, 2/ Rev. 22, 15), you are not supposed to impose the word of God on them. (Matth. 10, 11-14+23/ Acts 13, 46). “Sows” are the ones who live in their own fleshly lust and disrespect God (2. Petr. 2, 22),

**Matth. 7, 12 – The golden rule.** It was common in the ancient era and also in Judaism but in a negative meaning (Lev. 19, 18/ Rom. 13, 8-10). Not to treat other in a way that you would not like to be treated. Jesus even turned it into a command (Matth. 22, 39).

**Matth. 7, 13-14 – The two ways,** between people have to chose. This was an old and traditional theme of Judaism. Jesus refers to His proclamation (Deut. 30, 15-20/ Ps. 1/ Pro. 4, 18-19/ 15, 24) and teaches the people the the right way of life (Matth. 5, 14-18/ 7, 12-14/ 19, 16-26/ 22, 34-40/ Rom. 12, 16-21/ 13, 8-12).

**Matth. 7, 15 – The false prophets.** They teach lies and seduce people by their apparent piety but only follow after their own will and thoughts (Matth. 24, 4+24).

Jesus calls the Pharisees and scribes “wrong prophets” because the present their teaching as a higher, Divine revelation and pretend that they received in from the unseen world (1. Joh. 4, 1). You always need to make sure that those are empowered by the Spirit of God, and not in reality by the Spirit of the world and the powers of darkness. You can recognize them by their fruit (Matth. 7, 15-20) and their stewardship over their own life (1. Joh. 2, 3-6, 13-14/ 3, 23/ 5, 1).



Whoever loves God, also loves His children. Your love for God can be recognized by your love for your neighbor. To Jesus loving your neighbor is the evidence of your love for God and therefore it is the first command that requires to love God (Joh. 13, 34/ 15, 10-14/ Matth. 22, 36-40/ Rom. 13, 9/ Gal. 5, 14).

The disciples of Jesus were not only supposed to settle for the teaching only. It was very important for Jesus that there was a heart connection between the teaching and the way of life you chose and that everybody who lives ungodly is thus a false prophet and false teacher and does not represent the pure teaching. Because if he does not live in the truth, which means their life is not in alignment with their teaching it is as a curse upon them and they are like rotten trees that will be thrown in the water.

Some of the defenders of the “undefiled teaching”, etc often carry the worst habits with themselves, which you could find if you got to know them in private and personally. They only fight for righteousness and truth for selfish purposes. That is why they conceal their dark side. It is not always easy to recognize and expose them.

The fruit of the “false prophets” are “false teachings” as well as “evil deeds” They appear in the likeness of **sheep** (sheep are an image of the children of God) which means that they act as children of God, pretend to belong to God, etc. and thus **reflect a gleam** of “undefiled teaching” but as soon as the message does not support their purpose they will twist their words and turn it around. Jesus compares them with a frail tree that bears small, shriveled fruits and whose fruits will never become ripe and tasty.

In Mark. 9, 38 you can see that also people who did not walk with Jesus and did not even really believe in Him could work miracles (1.Cor. 13, 2/ Matth. 24, 24/ 2.Thes. 2, 9). Teaching and life always need to go hand in hand. You cannot convert others if you have not converted yourself. The message of Matth. 7 is, that you should live according to your teaching and act in alignment with it.

### **Matth. 8, 1 to 9, 35 – The miraculous Jesus**

Matth. 8, 3: **By His miracles Jesus reveals His power over nature** (Matth. 8, 23-27/ 14, 22-23)

- especially His power over diseases (Matth. 8, 1-4, 5-13, 14-15/ 9, 1-8, 20-22, 27-31/ 9, 1-41)
- His power over death (Matth. 9, 23-26/ Luk. 7, 11-17/ Joh. 11, 1-44)
- and above all His power over demons (Matth. 8, 29).

**The miracles of Jesus** differ from the fantastic miracle stories of the Hellenism and the rabbinic Judaism at that time, by their simplicity and especially by their religious, metaphorical meaning. They are, with an exception of Matth. 21, 18-22 – a metaphorical threat of judgment – utterances of the Messianic era (Matth. 11, 5/ 14, 13-21/ 15, 32-39/ Luk. 5, 4-11/ Joh. 2, 1-11/ 21, 4-14).

- They are symbols of the victorious reign of the Holy Spirit over the kingdom of Satan (Matth. 8, 29),
- and over the power of evil (Matth. 9, 2 )
- and the reign of Jesus over all diseases (Matth. 8, 17 ).

Sometimes He worked the **miracles out of compassion** (Matth. 20, 34/ Mark. 1, 41/ Luk. 7, 13), but all those signs have the purpose to arouse faith and to strengthen faith (Matth. 8, 10 Joh. 2, 11).

Therefore Jesus only works His miracles after He has thoroughly thought over it, and always asks to keep it a secret until the resurrection (Matth. 12, 39-40).

When Jesus sent out His apostles to proclaim the Kingdom of God, He imparts to them His **authority of healing** (Matth. 10, 1+ 8). That is why the sending of the disciples to evangelize had a cycle of ten miracles (Matth. 8 bis 9/ s.a. Matth. 10), like there were 10 plagues that used to come over Egypt (Mark. 16, 17/ Act. 2, 22).

**Matth. 8, 3 - Jesus „touched“ Him.** Jesus „touches“ the sick or does similar things with them (Mark. 7, 33/ Joh. 9, 6). To impart to them the power of the future world that dwells within you. Many times Jesus just worked through His word and spoke life into death (Joh. 4, 50). But many times He works spiritually and physically at the same time (words and actions)

**For the leper of this chapter the touch is very important**, that was a sign of Divine mercy because as a leper he was despised and cast out from among the people. But the loving reception was already a main part of his healing. The touch did not make the clean unclean, but made the unclean clean.

**Matth. 8, 10 – The faith that Jesus requires.** It is a move of trust and dedication, where the people cease to trust in their own thoughts and strength and start to trust in the word and the power of the one they believe in. (Luk. 1, 20+45/ Matth. 21, 25+32).

Jesus always requires faith for His miracles (Matth. 8, 13/ 9, 2+22+28+29/ 15, 28/ Mark. 5, 36/ 10, 52/ Luk. 17, 19). There are only few **acts of compassion** as a sign of His sending, that Jesus performs (Matth. 8, 3/ Joh. 2, 11). He cannot perform the signs of the kingdom of God, if the people who are involved do not believe (Matth. 13, 58/ 12, 38-39/ 16, 1-4). The true **faith** is a **sacrifice of the spirit** and **of the whole human being**, it requires a lot of **humbleness** and a **total breach** with all of the old traditions (Matth. 18, 6), which many rejected in Israel (Matth. 8, 10/ 15, 28/ 27, 42/ Luk. 18, 8) or only did it half heartedly (Mark. 9, 24/ Luk. 8, 13). Even some of His disciples are very slow to believe (Matth. 8, 26/ 14, 31/ 16, 8/ 17, 20). Some of them are still doubting after the resurrection (Matth. 28, 17/ Mark. 16, 11-14/ Luk. 24, 11, 25, 41).

**If the faith is strong:**

- Jesus works a miracle (Matth. 17, 20/ 21, 21/ Mark. 16, 17).
- the one who believes can receive all (Matth. 21, 2/ Mark. 9, 23),
- especially the forgiveness of sins (Matth. 9, 2/ Luk. 7, 50),
- as well as eternal salvation (Luk. 8, 12/ Mark. 16, 16).
- 

Faith is the only thing that Jesus praises about the ones who approach Him. The more you commit yourself to God, the more God reveals Himself to us and the faith, as well as the knowledge of God grow clearer and brighter. **Mark. 8, 11** - Jesus compares **the Kingdom of God with a feast**, because so many prophets also prophesied it (Is. 25, 6/ Matth. 22, 2-14/ 26, 29/ Luk. 14, 15/ Rev. 3, 20/ 19, 9).

**Matth. 8, 17** - Jesus is the servant of God in Is. 53, 5. This verse includes a strong theological message. Jesus as the servant of God, does not only bear our sins but also all the consequences of sin. Therefore He takes not only our sins, but also our suffering and sickness and redeems us from our physical fragility which is a consequence of sin.

**Matth. 8, 18-21 – In the circle of fellowship around Jesus there are different kinds of disciples:**

- Such who are attracted by His word and followed Him without Him choosing them,
- and such whom He chose and sent (Joh. 15, 16)
- His inner circle: such as Peter, John and James
- the 70 disciples
- and such who were only with Him occasionally, as the 5000 He fed, etc. .
- the ones who supported Him in secret: for example Nikodemus and Josef of Arimathaea.

This disciple (Matth. 8, 21) was already a disciple of Jesus who only wanted to bury His father and therefore carry out His human duties. Jesus wanted to get in to the boat and leave to continue His journey, when the disciple hears the message that his father had died. He now had to choose between his dead father or the following Jesus. (Matth. 8, 21).

Jesus uses the opportunity to teach one of His true messages: The **spiritually dead** are all those who have not yet been awakened to new life by Jesus (Eph. 2, 1/ 1.Tim. 5, 6/ Rev. 3, 1). A disciple of Jesus is always a spiritual stranger among his family if they do not believe. You have to understand the meaning and the message of Jesus. Jesus did not ask to be indifferent toward your family and your dear ones, or to deny them because they are now unbelievers to you, this would be trespass against God's commands (for example "You shall honor your mother and father"). Jesus Himself supported His family who did not understand Him and even considered Him lunatic (Luk. 2, 51/ Joh. 19, 27+29). All natural conditions and relationships are nothing but a healing tool of training that will prepare us for the heavenly grace and keep us humble and help us mature in the spirit.

**Matth. 8, 20 - "The Son of man".** This title which does not occur but in the letters of Acts 7, 56 and Rev. 1. 13/ 14, 14 and in the gospels (Joh. 3, 15), is what Jesus called Himself. And He used it to express His lowliness (Matth. 11, 19), especially during His passion this title is used more often (Matth. 17, 22).

- to prove His resurrection (Matth. 17, 9),
- and to proclaim His second coming (Matth. 24, 30) and
- the coming judgment (Matth. 25, 31).

**This title Son of man is Aramaic** – and means “human” (Ez. 2, 1) and points to the low level of being that Jesus chose. At the same time Jesus uses this terminology of the apocalypticism (Dan. 7, 13, Mark. 1. 34/ Matth. 13, 13). During the interrogation of the high council He reveals His messiahship (Matth. 26. 64), and admits that He is the “Lord” (Ps. 110/Matth. 22, 41). He also tells them that Jews will not see Him any differently after He would present Himself to His church (after the resurrection) (Matth. 23, 39/ 24. 30).

**Matth. 8. 29** – until the day of judgment the demons have a certain freedom to rage on earth (Rev. 9. 5) especially that they can take possession of people (Matth. 12, 43-45).

Being possessed often goes along with a disease, which is a consequence of sin (Matth. 9, 5), a different expression of satan's force (Luk. 13, 16), therefore casting out of demons (Matth. 15, 21-28 Mark. 1, 23-28/ Luk. 8, 2) often happen in the form of healing Matth. 32, 34/ / 12, 22-24/ 17, 14-18/ Luk. 13, 10-17).

**By His power over demons Jesus destroys the dominion of satan** (Matth. 12, 28/ Luk. 10, 17-19/ 4, 6/ Joh. 12, 31). By this power and dominion Jesus opens the Messianic Kingdom, where there is a fullness of the Holy Spirit and the Lordship of the Spirit (Is. 11, 2/ Joel 3, 1). If people would still reject God as their Lord (Matth. 12, 34-32), the demons also know and use the opportunity of this vacuum (Mark. 1, 24/ 3, 11/ Luk. 4, 41/ Acts 16, 7/ 19, 15). The power to cast out demons and the power to heal the sick, which is connected to it, are imparted to the disciples at the same time (Matth. 8, 31/ 4, 24/ Luk. 13, 32).

**Matth. 9, 2-8 – Forgiveness of sin as the foundation of healing.** The physical healing is an outward sign of a deeper “becoming whole again”. Within the promise of the forgiveness of sins there is already a promise. In those days **all diseases were considered a result of sin**, either committed by the parents (Matth. 8, 29/ Joh. 5, 14/ 9, 2) or through the influence of demons. At this point Jesus asked: “What is easier, to forgive sins or to heal the sick? **To achieve forgiveness of sins is harder than to heal the body.** The forgiveness of sins cannot be proved on the outside. Healing can. Healing is a clear evidence of forgiveness of sins, a result that forgiveness actually took place.

**From this point the Pharisees** (+ the scribes) start to persecute Jesus, who had started the dispute a long time before that (Matth. 5, 20). In the beginning they are attentive and watch Him closely, but later they even attempt to kill Him and strategically work out a plan to destroy Him. Jesus proclaims the great truth of the gospel which throws a shadow on all scribes and pious people: **the forgiveness of sins through God's grace.**

The Pharisees practiced and taught others to please God by fulfilling the Law. But they were insecure and left people doubting whether they would receive God's forgiveness and told the people they will find out on judgment day. They based this theory upon the OT ritual that there was a **day of atonement** every year again and regularly they had to offer **sacrifices of atonement.** Therefore they argued, that nobody really knows if one would receive forgiveness and redemption. And here comes Jesus and shows them, that God grants forgiveness on earth through Him. Since forgiveness is a new Divine creation within the sinful nature of man, Jesus proves with His miracles (especially through healing) that He is authorized to forgive. That was evident.

People believed that **sickness was a result of sin** (Lev. 26, 14/ Deut. 28, 15/ 2.Chron. 21, 15+18 ), and Jesus also confirmed that. But whoever is aware of the sin and the punishment thereof, but at the same time is humble and trusts Jesus that He would help Him could receive the healing and was made whole (new creation free from sin) if they only turned to Him.

**Matth. 9, 6 - Jesus has the authority to forgive sin on earth.** The earth (this world) is the place where all the sins were committed and it was also the place where they had to be forgiven. God gave one human for the whole humanity: Jesus. He was given all the power and authority by God to forgive the people their sins (Matth. 16, 19/ 18, 18/ Joh. 20, 23)

**Matth. 9, 16-17 - Jesus does not patch.** The old garments, the old wineskins, this is Judaism. It was old and passed away. Jesus clearly states that Judaism cannot bear the the new Christianity. It would tear them apart and they would not be able to stand under the pressure and tension. He warns the disciples of mixing or compromising with traditions and the things of old. Jesus did not come to patch or mend Judaism. He came to create something new out of it. He emphasizes this trend and this tendency without ambiguity.

And He denied the the reconciliation of the old, the tradition and Judaism (Matth. 5, 17). Jesus had come to bring the fullness and the glory of the Lord on earth. This was the plan of God from the beginning. He brought new life (Matth. 1. 22/ Mark. 1, 15). He brought complete righteousness to the people. The law could never provide that (Matth. 13, 52: a hidden self-reflection of Jesus).

The "**new wineskins**" are an image of the nature of the new covenant and the new life. It does not fit the old way of thinking, customs, actions, rituals, etc. that were necessary earlier, but now are without value. Jesus also warns of false or wrong motives that try to defile it. You cannot understand the teaching of Christ with the old fleshly heart, and if you preach it to such people they will only get worse. The liberty of the Spirit does not go along with the legalism of the Pharisees.

**Matth. 9, 18-26 – The raising of the daughter of the synagogue leader.** Among the miracles of Jesus there are three raising from the death (Luk. 7, 11-17/ Joh. 11). This shows that He is the overcomer of death and sin, especially the outward consequences of sin, by restoring life that had already passed away. He did not seat the raised dead in the new and glorified life that He entered after His resurrection, but they come back to mortal life to die again. Jesus calls death "sleep" (Matth. 9, 24/ Joh. 11, 11). His dead are still alive in Him and their sleep is a sleep of restoration by His grace and power.

**Matth. 9, 27-31 – Healing of two blinds.** Blindness was a very widespread malady in the orient. Both of the blind, even though their physical eyes were blind, recognized them with their Spirit as the "**son of David**" which was a Messianic title ( 2.Sam. 7, 1/ Luk. 1, 32/ Acts 2, 30/ Rom. 1, 3/ Mark. 12, 35/ Joh. 7, 42). Matthew highlights this title (Matth. 1, 1/ 12, 23/ 15, 22/ 20, 30/ 21, 9+15). Jesus only accepted this salutation with restraint, because this title was strongly affiliated with a very carnal imagination of the Messiah. ( Matth. 22, 4-46/ Mark. 1, 34). Jesus preferred the title "**Son of Man**" (Matth. 8, 20). This title is also used outside of the gospels in Acts 7, 56 and in Rev. 1, 13/ 14, 14.

### **Matth. 9, 36 bis 11, 19 – The messengers**

In an early stage Jesus already chose several disciples. The Twelve were specially chosen vessels (Luk. 6, 13/ Mark. 3, 1/ Joh. 6, 70). But a solemn appointment as apostles (messengers) happened at this point. The number refers to the twelve tribes of Israel (Matth. 19, 28/ Rev. 21, 12+14). Admittedly there was no sharp differentiation between the twelve tribes anymore, but still Jesus wanted His disciples to represent the twelve tribes of Israel. He did not only understand His assignment for the Jews (tribe of Judah) only, but to all twelve tribes of Israel. They were to become the new patriarchs. With them He wanted to establish His Kingdom on earth, and they were supposed to fulfill the plan of God for the world what Israel was originally called to do. Therefore they were always with Jesus, accompanied Him and thus formed the foundational stone for the new spiritual Israel (the church). Jesus did not only want to proclaim His doctrines but also build a Kingdom. In this sending they only had a preparatory purpose / assignment and were supposed to learn from Jesus first. After the outpouring of the Holy Spirit they were only called apostles and the other Christians were disciples, because from that time they heard and understood the twelve which were supposed to be the teachers of the church. Later the name disciple seemed to disappear. Already within the letters the title is already abandoned and instead they use brother, saints, believers or Christians.

**Matth. 10, 1-16 – The sending of the twelve.** Matthew does not only report the choice of the twelve from a greater group of disciples. He arouses the impression that the circle of disciples around Jesus consisted of only the 12. To him the fellowship of the saints with Jesus is very important (Matth. 28, 18-20). To Him Christ practices His Lordship through them (Matth. 6, 10/ Joh. 17, 2/ Phil. 2, 10/ Rev. 2, 10 ). That is why His disciples were supposed to go to all nations and teach and baptize in His name and unto one body under one King. After the gospel was proclaimed to the Jews, as it was the plan of God, the Divine salvation was supposed to be offered to all people.

In the beginning the apostles were not allowed to go the the Gentile cities or nations. Because they were only purposed for the people of Israel (Acts 13, 46). Israel was chosen to acknowledge Jesus as their king first. The disciples would also have been overwhelmed by this assignment. They had to be prepared and the time had to be right (Matth. 24, 14/ Acts 8, 5).

**Therefore He only choses twelve in the beginning and not more.** For that reason the apostles were not supposed to go to the nations but from door to door in Israel, among the chosen people of God, the people of promise. And they acted accordingly (Acts 13, 5/ 17, 2/ 14, 1/ 16, 13/ 17, 10+17/ 18, 4+19/ 19, 8/ 28, 17+23). The Jews have the privilege of hearing of the gospel first (Acts 3, 26/ 13, 26/ Rom. 1, 16/ 2, 9-10/ Mark. 7, 27). Only if they reject it the apostles turn to minister to the Gentiles (the other nations) (Acts 13, 46/ 18, 6/ 28, 28; Matth. 8, 11/ 21, 41/ 22, 8-10/ 24, 14+30/ 25, 32/ 26, 13).

Among all **miracles** of the disciples the authority over evil spirits is a major theme. Already the 70 disciples report of this authority (Luk. 10, 17). A raising from the dead by the apostles is only mentioned in Acts 8, 18-20. And they were not supposed to accept **any kinds of rewards** for their service and not turn their calling into a trade. (Acts 8, 18-20). **Selflessness** was supposed to be a characteristic of a servant of Christ (1.Tim. 3, 3/ 1.Thes. 2, 5). And they were also not supposed to be deeply affiliated with the world. God, who employs them as His co-workers will provide for their needs. God also want to use the ones they live with, so that they can support the ministers of God. (1. Cor. 9, 7/ 1.Tim. 5, 18). They were also not supposed to stay at the same place for too long, so that they would not be a burden for the host of the house, where they lived.

**Matth. 10, 27 Jesus could only proclaim is message in parables,** because His hearers could not understand it and His work through death and resurrection was not yet fulfilled. Later the disciples were supposed to proclaim everything without fear and become His witnesses. And they would not have anything to conceal (by speaking in mysteries) or to hide (in symbols) as the Pharisees did. They abbreviated the name of God, because they did not even know how to pronounce His name correctly, and did not want to fall into sin in case they would pronounce it wrong.

But Jesus had to hold back the revelation of His messiahship for tactical reasons, because the image of the Messiah among the Jews was also a political one and they only expected a political redeemer who would use physical means to break the yoke of the Romans and restore the kingdom of Israel (Joh. 6, 15 ). But this was not the mind of Jesus (Mark. 5, 19). In addition the Jews were already hardened (Matth. 13, 13/ Matth. 11, 16-9+20-24/ 12, 7+14+24-32+34+39+45). Jesus knew that the stubborn would be blinded even more by the apparent lowliness that conceals the true Messiah. Therefore Jesus spoke in so many parables and metaphors that are almost impossible to understand for an outsider. But the ones who are truly interested and open would keep asking and praying for enlightenment, or wait until the Holy Spirit comes upon them.

Even many prophets and righteous ones have yearned to see it (Matth. 13, 17). But even to them many things were hidden and a great mystery (Matth. 23, 29/ 10, 41). Also Paul speaks of a **“season of Gods silence”**, which wrapped the mystery (Rom. 16, 25). Here the secret was **“the church”** which did not exist until that time. Israel had not yet completely rejected Jesus. Jesus only announced “ I will build my church”. And it was still a long time until it would manifest in the reality. Only after Pentecost and by the Holy Spirit it was called into life. And then step by step established by Jesus and the Holy Ghost, taught and empowered. Paul was the first to whom the mystery of the church became revealed. This mystery (the church, **a pearl of God**) was hidden by God for a long time (until the merchant had sold everything and gained enough money to purchase this one precious pearl, see Matth. 13, 45-46). The Divine mystery was hidden (1.Cor. 2, 7+10, Eph. 3, 4-5/ Col. 1, 26/ 1.Pet. 1, 11-12), until the plan of God's salvation was revealed and fulfilled. And this way the authorities and wise men of the world did not solve the mystery (1.Cor. 2, 8).

**Matth. 10, 34-36 - Jesus is a sign,** which is controversial (Luk. 2, 34). Even if you do not want a separation, the decision for Jesus inevitably brings separation. The Kingdom of Christ is a Kingdom of peace on the inside but on the outside it arouses the cruelest hat in the world and it will remain that way until Jesus has put all of His enemies under His feet (Luk. 12, 51/ Joh. 13, 18/ 1.Pet. 4, 3+4/ Eph. 5, 7+11 / Mic. 7, 6).

**Matth. 11, 1-6 - Jesus is the fulfillment of the prophecies.** John the baptist was in prison at that time. He fulfilled his divine purpose to prepare the way for Jesus. After the raising of the boy of Nain, Matthew says explicitly that John did not hear of “Jesus” work, but of **“Christ”**, the anointed One, the Messiah which was announced by the prophets. Therefore John asked: “are you the one who is coming”, the promised Messiah who fulfills the prophecies of old (Is. 29, 18+19/ Zeph. 3, 12/ Ps. 72, 4, 12+13/ Matth. 8, 22/ Joh. 9, 39-41)? To Jesus John the Baptist was the Elijah who was promised by Malachi (Mal. 4, 5/ Matth. 17, 12+13/ Mark. 9, 12/ Luk. 1, 17/ Joh. 1, 21).

**Matth. 11, 25-27 – To Jesus all was given.** This chapter added out of context in the gospel of Matthew. Jesus speaks of the mysteries of the heavenly Kingdom“ (Matth. 13, 11), which is revealed to the disciples (Matth. 10, 42) and hidden from the “wise” Pharisees and scribes.

At this point Jesus Himself admits that He is the **“Son of God”**. This is a *self-testimony* of Jesus. He identifies Himself, I am only the “Son” related to the Father (Joh. 1, 18/ 3, 11+35/ 6, 46/ 10, 15). Jesus praises His father over all and for everything. And at the same time He is aware that everything He has was submitted to Him by His father. Therefore the Son is the eternal, image of the father, in whom the Father can see the way He Himself is, and therefore no created being can recognize the Son of God if it was not revealed unto them. And in the same way no man can recognize God without a revelation of Jesus. The Christian faith is a “religion of revelation”. To us all things must be given and revealed from “above”. Whatever the people know of the “Father” and the “Son” can only be received through His grace. According to this message of Jesus He is not only the “Son of God” since His incarnation or His resurrection. He existed from eternity (within an eternal relationship to the father. The “son” which could never be recognized always proclaimed and announced His Father through prophecies in the OT, and in the NT he was transfigured more and more by the Holy Spirit (Matth. 16, 17/ Joh. 5, 24). In the same manner people in the NT are exposed to the **“Father God”** of the OT who dwells in darkness (Joh. 1, 1/ 1.Mos. 16, 7) especially by the incarnation of the Son (Hebr. 1, 1+12). Jesus is not yet speaking about the revealing and transfiguring work of the Holy Spirit because its ministry on earth had not yet begun (Joh. 7, 38). The working of the Holy Spirit did not start before Pentecost.

**Matth. 12, 1-8 – The continuation of the strife against the Pharisees and the scribes.** This is the continuation and more intense teaching of the sermon of the Mount and the conflict that started in Matth. 9, 1 between Jesus and the scribes and Pharisees. It happened after the healing of the sick at the lake Bethesda, which took place during a Sabbath (Joh. 5). The Pharisees and scribes are offended by a miracle of love. From that point on they were persecuting Him.

**The plucking of grains at Sabbath day** (Matth. 12, 1-8) was „work“ (Ex. 31, 15), but Priests were also “working” in the temple when they sacrificed the animals and prepared the bread for the Sabbath (Lev. 24, 8). Therefore they also violated the Holiness of the Sabbath while they worked in the tabernacle. The relation of their work to the temple redeems them from guilt (Mal. 3, 1). Since Jesus is greater than the temple, the disciples should be able to do His work without limitations, even if the law does not permit it. In the fellowship and service of Christ, everything is determined by Him. Whatever is done for Him is what really counts. However, sacrifices and rituals are not as important to God as “love” (1.Sam. 15, 22/ Ps. 50, 8-14/ 51, 18/ Hos. 6, 6/ Matth. 9, 13). By ignoring the Jewish law He demonstrates that He is greater than the temple. And in Him (Matth. 12, 5) His disciples are likewise (Gal. 4, 10/ Col. 2, 16). That is why the Christian church did not consider the Sabbath command as a duty they have to adhere. It was also not addressed in the Apostle Council. The Sabbath belonged to the old order, the Old Testament. Christians are delivered from it (1.Cor. 6, 12). The law was only the “teacher pointing to Christ” (**Matth. 3, 24+25**), and the OT and all its practices were only shadows of Christ (Hebr. 10, 1/ 8, 5/ Col. 2, 17). Jesus is the fulfilling of the law and the end of all silhouettes. At this point and when He healed on the Sabbath (Matth. 12, 9-14/ Luk. 13, 10-17/ 14, 1-16/ Joh. 5, 1-18/ 7, 19-24/ 9) Jesus claims that even a divine order like the Sabbath lost its value and has to submit to love. And it proves that Jesus Himself, being the Son of God, has the authority to interpret the Mosaic law and redeem it (Matth. 5, 17/ 15, 1-7/ 19, 1-9). As the Son of man and as the head of the Messianic kingdom (Matth. 9, 6) He has the authority to establish a new order of salvation on earth (Matth. 9, 17), which is superior to the former, because He is greater than the temple.

**Matth. 12, 15-21 - Jesus is the servant of God.** Jesus forbade to speak about Him publicly. The servant of God works in secret, in quietness, in the background. Therefore he also threatened the spirits (demons) and the healed ones, not to proclaim Him as the son of God. He did not need that. As God-Father works in secret, so the work of the Son of God remained concealed. .

**Matth. 12, 46-50 – The true family of Jesus.** (Matth. 13, 55/ Joh. 7, 3/ Acts 1, 14/ 1. Cor. 9, 5/ Gal. 1, 19). Until that point Jesus never called anyone “my brother”. Here He declares His disciples His brothers, because actually He only calls them that after His resurrection (Joh. 20, 17/ Matth. 28, 10) and He will still call them that from the throne of His glory (Matth. 25, 40). Apart from that we find no disciple to be called His brother before or after His resurrection.

James, who was called the “brother of the Lord” by others (Gal. 1, 19), calls himself a servant of God and Jesus Christ (Jam. 1, 1). This passage tells us, that Jesus became equal to us in all things and that the lowliness did in no way harm His Divine nature (Joh. 13, 33/ Matth. 23, 8/ Luk. 22, 32). Jesus is our firstborn brother (vgl. Rom. 8, 29/ Col. 1, 15+18/ Hebr. 1, 6/ 12, 23).

**Matth. 13, 1-52 – Parables.** Matthew tells us about **seven parables**. The number seven is very important to him. In the beginning of His teaching ministry Jesus proclaimed that the Kingdom of God is at hand and drew peoples attention to the nature of this Kingdom and the disposition of its members / citizens. He was even more straight forward and specific during the first Easter celebration in Jerusalem (Joh. 2, 13), and also during the second one (Joh. 5), each time He appeared as a teacher and Messiah by confirming His teaching purposely with miracles. In Matth. 13 there is an important turning point of the teaching ministry of Jesus, because it dawned to Him that the Jewish people rejected Him more and more, and the Pharisees became bolder and more confident to get rid of Him

**Matth. 13, 31-33 – As a mustard seed and the leaven** so is the Kingdom of God. Small in its beginnings but great in its unfolding.

**Matth. 13, 44-46 – The parable of the treasure and the pearl.** Who ever finds the Kingdom of heaven will give everything with a joyful heart to enter into it (Matth. 19, 21/ Luk. 9, 57-62). Jesus wants to emphasize that Christians deny themselves and abandon out of joy and without force to get to the treasure. The hidden treasure is an image of the gospel and the redemption of grace.

**Matth. 13, 53-58 – The decision.** Jesus performs in His hometown Nazareth (Matth. 2, 23). The parable of the sower **“the seed fell”**: It is not the seed's fault that it falls under thorns or on bad or stony ground, etc. Only the hearer himself determines the fruit and the harvest of the seed. “Hearing, understanding and bringing forth fruit” are the three things that need to exist within a believer without separation. In Matth. 13, 13 it speaks about the haphazard stubbornness which leads to a loss of grace and results in bitterness (Matth. 11, 16-19+20-24)/ 12, 7+14+24-32+34+39+45). The stubborn who don't want to acknowledge Jesus in His lowliness turn even more blind (Mark. 1, 34) and remain in the dark like for example demons.

### **Matth. 14, 1 to 20, 34 – The service of the king on the road**

Here the people were on the road to Jerusalem. Jesus and His disciples were there, too. Jesus performs the same or similar miracles as Moses and the prophets before Him did. He fed thousands (Matth. 14, 13-21). He did not perform the miracle because the people would have been starving otherwise. But He wanted to save them costs and effort. He wanted to help His disciples to gain time for quietness and refreshing. It was sign that God always has good plans towards His children and only wants the best for them. This miracle is supposed to deliver evidence to the disciples that all shall be added unto them if they only seed after the kingdom of God. And after He broke and spread the bread there were still left overs. Whenever God is doing something, there will always be some leftovers (2.Kin. 4, 1-7+42-44/ Ex. 16/ Num. 11). God always gives to His family and always outdoes Himself. All of Jesus deeds were prophetic actions. That especially 7 baskets were left over (Mark. 7, 31) was an indication of the the tribes of Canaan (Act. 13, 13) and the Hellenistic deacons (Acts 6, 5/ 21, 8).

**Matth. 14, 1 bis 16, 12 – The resistance. Jesus wants to cross over.** A storm (from the unseen world) resists Him and the disciples and wants to destroy Him. The devil does not want Jesus and His disciples enter this area and performs His ministry. Jesus goes everywhere with His disciples and accompanies them, which shows that He will not leave the one who belong to Him. Even if the have to pass through a storm. To the contrary He works (if necessary) a miracle for His sheep.

**Matth. 14, 22-33 – Peter walks on the water.** Jesus does not rebuke Peter for getting out of the boat, but for not being persistent in his faith.

We see how the **Pharisees and scribes** follow Jesus everywhere, persecute Him, watch Him critically and continuously ask Him questions. After the Pharisees and the scribes (Mark. 8, 11) have no answers anymore in the end of a conversation with Jesus they eventually demand Him to perform a miracle for evidence, a proof, a sign in heaven (Matth. 16, 1-4). But they only receive the **„sign of Jonah“**.

The **leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees** (Matth. 16, 5-12). As a leaven soaks the whole bread (Matth. 13, 33), but can also cause it to decompose (1.Cor. 5, 6/ Gal. 5, 9 ) so also the wrong teaching of the Jewish leadership threatens to affect the whole nation (Matth. 15, 14).

**Matth. 15, 21-27 – The healing of a daughter of a Gentile woman.** The disciples ask Jesus to deliver her from her pain. Another translation says “Dismiss her” or “Get rid of her”. But if you take a closer look they ask Jesus to her away by hearing her request. The same terminology can be found in Matth. 18, 27/ 27, 15.

Jesus says that He needs to turn to the needs of the Jews, the “children of promise “ before He turns to the Gentiles who are only “dogs” in the eyes of the Jews. This story shows what kind of obstacle the faith of this woman had to overcome. She indeed had to move a mountain (Matth. 21, 21).

**Matth. 16, 13-20 – The faith confession of Peter.** Jesus asks His disciples what the people think who He is. Jesus only claims the title of a prophet indirectly and concealed (Matth. 13, 57/ Luk. 13, 33). The people gave Him this title (Matth. 16, 14/ 21, 11+46/ Mark. 6, 15/ Luk. 7, 16, 39/ 24, 19/ Joh. 4, 19/ 9, 17). That is what the people were longing for, because after Malachi the spirit of prophecy had disappeared. Moreover the Messiah was supposed to appear with the authority and the spirit of Elijah (Matth. 17, 10-11), or a general outpouring of the Holy Spirit for the Messianic era was expected according to Joel (Acts 2, 17+18+33). And at the time when Jesus lived many false prophets had risen (Matth. 24, 11+24). John himself also ministered as a prophet (Matth. 11, 9/ 14, 5/ 21, 26/ Luk. 1, 76), but he always called himself the forerunner of Jesus and never claimed His title.

The disciples of Jesus acknowledged Jesus as God-sent prophet (Deut. 18, 15). Even earlier Jesus called Peter “rock” (Joh. 1, 42/ Mark. 6, 26) In the original language “Kepha” itself means “rock”. Also in the oldest known Greek scriptures it reads „**petros**“, or „petra“. This contains the calling of Peter. It says: “I chose you to be a founder, a tool for the establishment of the church”, as we can also read in Eph. 2, 20/ Rev. 21, 14 where the apostles are called the foundation of the church. Therefore Peter already appears as an apostle while Jesus is still alive, and usually speaks in the name of all apostles (Matth. 10, 2/ 14, 28/ 17, 4+25/ 18, 21/ 19, 27/ Joh. 6, 68/ Luk. 22, 31), and also at the Ascension of Jesus (Acts 2, 15), but especially on the occasion of the **foundation of the first church** it is only Peter who stands up and speaks on the behalf of God and the other disciples (Acts 10/ 15, 7). During the Apostle Council Peter is pushed into His calling one last time. It says: “Peter rose up in the spirit” (Acts 15, 7). After He has fulfilled his Divine assignment as a **founder of churches** he completely disappears out of the apostolic screen. Nowhere he appears as a “pope” or “leader” of a church (Gal. 2, 6/ 1.Kor. 15, 9). Peter is simply the stone of foundation.

James, a brother of the Lord Jesus takes over the leadership of the first church (Acts 15, 13/ 12, 17/ 21, 18/ 1.Cor. 15, 7). Already when Paul visits the church in Jerusalem there is only James left as a leader of the church. In Matth. 16 Jesus speaks of church for the first time.

**He Himself builds the church.** She is His body, and He is the head of the church. He has claimed her by His blood (Acts 20, 28). The “laying of the foundation” happened at Pentecost. The members of this church are also called “Saints”. Holiness is also supposed to dominate their life (1.Cor. 5, 13), and they were supposed to care for holiness (Divine order, etc) and restore it: “If your brother trespasses...” (Matth. 16, 15). Jesus shows us how to deal with it as a spiritual man (Matth. 16, 11-14), with love, wisdom, gentleness and respect (Gal. 6, 1/ Ps. 141, 5/ Pro. 25, 12+28+23). Only after you have tried everything else you should go to the last level and tell it the “whole church”.

Jesus gives authority to His disciples to **loose and bind**. Those are two Rabbinic terms that are firstly referred to disciplinary proceedings of excommunication (“to bind” - to excommunicate and “to loose” - to suspend it). Further it is referring to teaching and judgment (“to bind” is to rebuke and to “loose” is to confirm or agree) The disciples of Jesus were supposed to have the authority and be the stewards here upon earth (Is. 22, 22), to admit or reject somebody in the fellowship of the church. And that all that would also be in heaven, which means that all rights and decisions were confirmed by God from above.

- The brotherly rebuke (Matth. 18, 15-18). The emphasis is upon the requirement that a brother **“sinned against you”** (1.Joh. 2, 3-9). Jesus teaches first that only the one you sin against can and has the right to forgive you. If someone sinned against God only God can forgive you. If someone sins against the church only the church can forgive you. And if someone sins against another person only the other person can forgive you (Luk. 17, 3-4). In this example it is dealing with a personal offense. Zacchaeus says (Luk. 19, 2-10): „and if I have betrayed someone, I will restore it 4 times”: That was the requirement of the Jewish law concerning theft (Ex 21, 37). The Roman law required it for every convicted robbery. **But Zacchaeus goes even further**, he freely offers the restoration of all things that he had accomplished or gathered in sin.
- The Bible teaches us as a fruit of repentance **atonement**. This is what also John the baptist preached (Mark. 1, 4-5/ Matth. 3, 6). Only acknowledged and confessed sins can be forgiven to you (1.Joh. 1, 8-10). Also the Holy Spirit convicts you of your sin and reveals it to you.



- Therefore also hidden sin or a stubborn sinner should be brought before the church to restore the fellowship and the Christian unity. If the relationship among each other is restored, then it is also restored with God, because every Saint is made in the image of God. That is the only way Christ remained in God and God in Him (1.Joh. 2, 5+6+24+27/ 3, 6+24/ 4, 12+13+15+16). The unity with God is revealed by the faith and the love of the brethren (1.Joh. 1, 7).
- True repentance (turn around) always leads to personal restoration, otherwise repentance is not real.

**Matth. 16, 18** - Jesus said to His disciples, that „the gates of hell” cannot conquer His church. It actually says “Hades” which means “Kingdom of death” will not overcome the church (Matth. 11, 23/ Is. 38, 10/ Job 38, 17/ Ps. 9, 14/ Songs. 8, 6). Jesus promises to His disciples that the church will not go down, even if the apostles would die (also as martyrs). This is a very strong affirmation of Jesus to His disciples, that even powers of darkness, which are the personified powers of evil. But they will not be able to hinder, destroy or kill the work of His disciples.

This also implies the image of “binding” and “loosing” a bondage or a yoke. This assignment was not only given to Peter but to all of the apostles (Joh. 20, 23/ Matth. 18, 18). This authority is primarily referring to the proclamation of the gospel and especially the “forgiveness of sin” (Matth. 9, 8), or the opposite of the same: the keeping of sin if somebody does not accept the rebuke Matth. 18, 15-18. If someone will not repent (Deut. 19, 15), is subsequently to be considered as a tax collector.(1. Cor. 5, 11), as „unclean“ as a leper. You were not supposed to fellowship with such people (Matth. 5, 46). The apostles only had the authority over the ones who were “in Christ”, the spiritual ones, who were filled with the Holy Spirit (Joh. 20, 22+23), otherwise they would have been obligated to keep Judas Iscariot . They were not allowed to judge him or condemn him, they only had to leave him in the hands of God. They simply called another one into his ministry (and again Peter plays a major role in the fellowship of the disciples). Judas Iscariot did not belong to the ones who were renewed by the Holy Spirit (Acts 1, 15-20/ Matth. 27, 3-10).

Into this category also belongs the “cleansing of the lepers” who were excommunicated and afterwards reintegrated into the fellowship of the saints, the children of God. What God has cleansed (whatever is renewed by God's Spirit) shall not be called unclean (Acts 10, 15). The laying on of hands is a sign for the reception.

**Matth. 16, 21-28 – The announcement of suffering.** It says: “and from then on...” the disciples are at a turning point. For the first time they express their faith in Jesus as the Messiah. And at this point for the first time, Jesus announces His Passion for the first time. The . The glorious transfiguration is followed by a command to silence and prophecies of His death (Matth. 17, 1-12). This way Jesus prepares their faith for the coming crisis of His death and His resurrection.

**Matth. 17, 1-13 – The transfiguration.** With this configuration the third phase of the gospel begins: the service of Jesus on earth, His suffering and His death. He took His disciples upon a mountain (most likely the mount „Tabor“). There the forefathers and co-founders of the OT Kingdom (Moses, Elijah, Deut. 34, 6/ 2.Kin. 2, 11). Through the baptism Jesus as a human entered into the Kingdom of God on earth, which He Himself established. During the transfiguration the “completion” of the Kingdom began by a confirmation of His ancient relatives (2.Petr. 1, 16-18). The transfiguration connected the OT with the NT. Here Jesus was sanctified for His coming ministry.

This encounter and appearance had to take place because the prophecy of Mal. 4, 5 can be fulfilled: the prophet Elijah would reappear in person. It was not sufficient that John the baptist performed “in the Spirit and in the power” of Elijah (Luk. 1, 17). This transfiguration was the greatest glorification of Jesus here on earth, shortly before the human suffering came upon the Son of God. At this point we find the breaking in of the heavenly into the earthly. It is comparable with the appearances of Ex. 19, 16/ 33, 30/ Is. 65. When Moses came down from the Mount of Sinai.

The **three disciples**, who were with Him on the Mount of Configuration were also supposed to become the witnesses of His most serious battle of Gethsemane (Matth. 26, 37). Before all others they were allowed to know about the resurrection and that underneath His appearance of a servant He carried the glory of His Father.

**Peter, John and James.** These three disciples seemed to be favored by the Lord. Later the scriptures call them "**pillars**" (Gal. 2, 9). The Lord can turn weak people into pillars (Rev. 3, 12). **Peter seemed almost confused** in the midst of the company, because he makes a thoughtless suggestion. He wanted to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles and totally forgot that they had to celebrate Passover first (sacrifice of the lamb). And **Peter was also wrong**, when he wanted to put Moses and Elijah on the same level. Jesus is the Lord, but Moses and Elijah are servants of the Lord.

Peter did not want the Lord to go to Jerusalem so that He could escape death. He had 6 days to reflect on the proclamation of the Passion. Then Moses and Elijah came up to talk to Jesus about the same matter, His death. Those heavenly Saints had insight into God's plan of salvation for the people. They knew that Jesus was the Lamb slain "**before the foundation of the world**" (Rev. 13, 8). **The cross** is the center of all of God's thoughts. It is the power and wisdom of God (1.Cor. 1, 18-19). From the first promise in Gen 3, 15 until Revelation where the **Lamb** of heaven is praised, the cross is in the center of attention. The disciples had not yet understanding for it. But just when Moses and Elijah speak about the cross the disciples were **asleep** (Luk. 9, 23; Mark. 14, 37).

The apostles did not understand the proclamation of Jesus. At first He suffered and then He received the glory. We would like to have it Peter's way: This is good, let us build a tabernacle in this place!

Matth. 16, 28. already belongs to Chapter 17: that **they** did not taste death until **they** saw the Son coming from His Kingdom. This speaks of Peter, James and John who went up the Mount with Jesus and were allowed to **see Him in His royal glory**. They were allowed to be with Jesus on the mount of Transfiguration. This was the fulfillment of Matth. 16, 28. "They" was speaking of the three (2.Petr. 1, 16). The Transfiguration was a small image of the coming power and glory of Christ on earth (Dan. 7, 13-14).

**Matth. 17, 14-20, 21 – The doctrine.** At this point Jesus is very specific. People do not only live from Transfigurations. Jesus explains how life continues in the practical. While Jesus comes down from the Mount of Transfiguration again He was confronted with the powers of darkness, unbelief and the natural influences of the world. From the mountain into the valley (Matth. 17, 9-13). Out of this overwhelming vision, the voice of God out of the clouds, the wonderful experience and revelation lead to "reality", and the command to remain "silence" (Mark. 9, 10) and lead to even more questions than answers.

Even though the Lord spoke about "**His passion**" only a few days before, again He speaks about His "end" in Jerusalem. We can see how the disciples have no understanding for Jesus' passion and death.

The "**epileptic boy**" is only an example. His disease is determined by the shape of the moon. The moon reflects the light of the sun, it has no light or shine of its own. It is depending upon its position to the sun. Jesus wants to show His disciples that authority is depending on the position and attitude toward God. This also proves the doctrine that He gave to His disciples. (Matth. 17, 20). This kind of demon can only be cast out by prayer and fasting (Mark. 9, 29). Many modern Bible versions leave out the part about prayer and fasting, because it requires a fleshly sacrifice. Therefore many many saints have no authority as it was among the disciples.

In Matth. 18 he teaches,

- **humility** (Matth. 18, 1-4). He takes children as a role model. Children are simple, natural, small, weak and in need of help. The teaching of the birds and the lilies has the same message (Matth. 6, 26). Jesus regards especially those who believe in Him as children (Matth. 18, 6), and it is an indication of the small and simple with little faith (Mark. 9, 38+39). Whoever leads such a child of God into sin and away from faith, commits a heavy sin. Because then he is a servant of Satan (4, 1-10).
- Jesus warns His disciples of temptation (Matth. 18, 6-10), especially growing cold of love, bitterness, etc. It speaks of the tempting of the little ones. The weak need a special protection of God and they also receive it through the angels of God, if there is no other way. Those angels of God are the servants of God (priests of God) who need to carry them, protect them, stand before and receive them.
- The Father does not want to lose a single one of His sheep (Matth. 18, 12-14). And again it speaks of the "small ones"

**There are 4 great “keepers” (watchmen) of the low and small ones.**

Jesus mentions that all who care about the least and receive them.

- **They are the angels** (Matth. 18, 10), they are the keepers of His possession (Hebr. 1, 14). They shall see the face of God, mortal beings cannot see the face of God. Ex 33, 20 reports about the burdens and cares that come along with the keeping. But woe to those who cause them to be burdened (Ps. 11, 7). The angels are always before the countenance of God.
- As well as the **“servants of God”** (Ps. 15. 1/ 16, 11/ 17, 15/ 24, 6/ 27, 8/ Job 3, 26/ Is. 38, 11)
- Especially the **shepherd** himself (Matth. 18, 11-12). Jesus who is the good shepherd, is especially concerned about the little and lost sheep.
- And finally **the Father**(Matth. 18, 14). He also is most concerned about the little ones. Nobody is allowed to touch or upset those who are under God's covering without the revenge of the Lord upon them.

**Matth. 18, 21-22** – After the image of God and Jesus, Christians are supposed to practice forgiveness among each other (Matth. 5, 39/ 6, 12/ 7, 2/ 2.Cor. 2, 7/ Eph. 4, 32/ Col. 3, 13). The saint should even go one step further and repay evil with good. (Matth. 5, 44-45/ Rom. 12, 17-21/ 1.Thess. 5, 15/ 1.Petr. 3, 9). In Ex. 21, 25/ Ps. 5, 11 is the law of revenge, but Jesus replaces it by the Law of grace, love, forgiveness and restoration. This is the only way to break the evil cycle of unrighteousness and a multitude of sins (Jam. 5, 20/ 1.Petr. 4, 8). In the next parable Jesus explains what happens to us if we do not forgive. (Matth. 18, 23-35).

**Because the greatest act of love is forgiveness** (Eph. 1, 7). In the public speeches of Jesus and His conversations with His disciples “forgiveness” is often the main theme.

**Matth. 19 – the Kingdom of heaven is at hand.**

Jesus teaches that the kingdom of heaven is about being of one mind. Jesus prayed for being of the same mind (Joh. 17). Because only then God can be glorified and revealed. Until that day the revelation of God was only possible through the Mosaic law. But from then on Jesus comes to us and delivers to us the love of God in a kind of glory (Joh. 17, 5), which has been before the foundation of the world. In the OT this glory was a terrible light, that no living being could stand to see (Ex. 33, 20). And now this glory of God in Christ, who became flesh, comes to light everywhere through the supernatural. This glory was poured out over all Christians. The first Christians were of the same heart and the same mind (Acts 4, 32-34).

With the entrance into the Kingdom of God the Saints receive the Divine Law, which is totally different from the human law, or the earthly law. Paul said: “Spiritual things need to be judged in the Spirit”. This is what people were already afraid of, also the Pharisees and scribes. Therefore they added things to the law, but it was not sufficient to accomplish Divine righteousness.

**Jesus compares marriage as an illustration** with a well known institution which is only for life on this earth. In heaven there is no marriage anymore (Mark. 12, 18-27/ Matth. 22, 23-33/ Luk. 20, 27-40). The Saducees asked Jesus to whom that woman would be married after the resurrection. Jesus informs them that there will be no such thing after the resurrection. The Kingdom of heaven has a different order than the present world. The marriage is only necessary for the present order of the world where death rules, so that the people would not perish. But angels are immortal and live according to a different order where a marital relationship and multiplication is no longer necessary. Their life is based on a different kind of fellowship with God. And in this manner also the people will live in this kind of relationship with God.

We as Christians should not be conformed to the world, but should already live according to the new order of God (Rom. 12, 1-2). In Christ we are already a new creation (Rom. 8, 1-12), set in heavenly places and the Kingdom of God. We are no longer slaves of sin but under the law of the Spirit. The Mosaic law was **“powerless”**, and therefore it provided no salvation (Rom. 8, 3/ 7, 5-6), and could not destroy the sin within us. Only Christ and His spirit can renew and change us (Rom. 8, 1+14-16/ Gal. 4, 6). The Spirit of the Lord brings order into the life of a Saint and is not as a document of divorce. It also speaks about the hardness of heart (Matth. 19, 8/ Deut. 24, 1-4).

The interlude to Ch. 20 can be found in Matth. 19, 28. Peter asks Jesus the question about the reward. Jesus says: **In the regeneration...**, this means the completion at the end of the earth. The beginning of the reign of Jesus. It means "time of restoration" (Acts 3, 21). The time when God renews the whole creation and yet to come promises will be fulfilled in Jesus Second Coming (Rom. 8, 19/ 1.Cor. 15, 24-25). This will be the time when the curse of sin will finally be taken away from the whole creation. There will be no perishing, no mortality, no slavery and no decomposing. Where the spirit will be delivered from material. This also applies to the whole world of angels. Also here the order will be put back in place by the revelation of the children of God. (Col. 1, 20/ Eph. 1, 10/ 2.Petr. 3, 13/ Offb. 21, 1-5). God wants to restore all things He created and that fell out of Divine order due to sin (killed and destroyed). All things shall be as they were from the beginning (2.Cor. 5, 15/ Col. 1, 15-20/ Gal. 6, 15/ 2.Petr. 3, 13/ Rev. 21, 1/ Eph. 2, 15). Through Jesus the renewing of the man is the crown of creation (Rom. 6, 4/ Eph. 2, 10/ 4, 24/ Col. 3, 10).

**Matth. 19, 16-26 – the rich boy.** Here he calls Jesus "**good Master**". (Mar. 10, 17-31/ Luk. 18, 18). Jesus had made a big impression upon Him. On the outside he wants to learn from Jesus and tells him that God alone is good, so to say: the works of God within us. The young man asks Jesus about „**more**“, because he realized that his good works are not sufficient. He wants to do something special to receive something from Him. Jesus did not deny his request. He refers the young man to His Father because Jesus wants no honor for Himself. He gives **all** the honor to his Father and highlights that only He is good. In this moment only God Father is without sin. Jesus had positioned Himself under the law and under sin through the baptism. And therefore He was made sin (1.Petr. 2, 22-24), to redeem us from sin.

In the eyes of God **possession** is not only a gift from God, but also a danger for us. It hinders our inner man to put all our trust in God. Therefore the entrance into heaven is hard for people who have a lot of material wealth and their heart might be full of or dependent on it. Before the Fall of Man, man had no possession. All belonged to God and man lived from all that belonged to God in the Garden of Eden. But then man started to become a collector and started to treasure up. Then the love of money turned into the root of all evil (1.Thes. 4, 6/ 1.Cor. 5, 10/ Rom. 1, 29/ Col. 3, 5/ Eph. 4, 19/ 5, 3+5/ 1.Tim. 6, 17/ Hebr. 13, 5 ). Then there were rich ones, poor ones, lords and servants (slaves) etc. and according to Matth. 6, 24 and Luk. 16, 9+11+13 you can only serve God OR mammon. In the NT the Reign of God began, and that is why the disciples of Jesus freely chose to leave behind all of their treasures and possessions (Matth. 8, 20/ 10, 9/ Luk. 9, 3+58/ 10, 4), and this characterized the 1<sup>st</sup> Christians (Mark. 1, 16-20/ 10, 21/ Luk. 9, 57-62/ 14, 33). According to Jesus statements wealth hinders the discipleship (Mark. 10, 17-22) and the alignment with a life focused on God (Mark. 4, 19/ 8, 36/ 10, 25/ Matth. 6, 24). The ancient Christians abandoned everything they had. They sold all and used it to advance the coming Kingdom of God (Acts 2, 42-47, 32-35) and used it to bring about a balance between the rich and the poor (Acts 11, 29-30/ Gal. 2, 10/ 1.Cor. 16, 1/ 2.Cor. 8, 13).

**Matth. 19, 21 – Do you want to be perfect?** Jesus is addressing a group of "perfect" people who were superior to the common religious people. When He speaks of the perfect ones, He is speaking of the new order of salvation, which is above the traditional Jewish order that was determined by commands. It applies to the 7<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> command. The one "**without possession**" fully belonged to God and is like the man in the beginning, after creation and before the Fall of Man. He no longer needs possessions, because God Himself is his Father and gives and provides for him all he needs. Therefore Jesus commands that His disciples would not take anything with them but the most necessary they had on (Luk. 22, 35/ 10, 4). Through Jesus and by the new order (2.Cor. 5, 17) all things concerning the old Law and creation were supposed to be fulfilled. This is how the old statutes were supposed to reach the inner man to the hidden desires and motives (Matth. 12, 12+34/ 23, 25-28). Through the same Jesus all things were made in the beginning (Joh. 1, 3) and all things that fell out of Divine order according to the Fall of Man would be restored and created anew in Christ (Col. 1, 15-20). Thus the **new creation** is the main issue of the new order of salvation (the perfect completion) which even affects all of the universe (Col. 1, 19/ 2.Petr. 3, 13/ Rev. 21, 1). It starts with the "**new man**", who will be awakened in Christ and born again in Divine righteousness and holiness (Rom. 6, 4/ Eph. 2, 10/ 4, 24/ Col. 3, 10).

**Matth. 20, 1-16 - In the parable of the workers in the vineyard** Jesus rejects any **claim of wages**, and promises to all a real reward. Jesus call all people into the service of His Kingdom, He needs co-workers. There is still much work to do. The harvest is plenty and if someone does not want to be a co-worker it can turn into „**sin of omission**“ (Luk. 19, 13-28, God wants us to be generous with our gifts) We are God's stewards. Jesus also calls the co-workers “friends” (Matth. 20, 13). Actually we have no rightful claim of wages, but there is a promise of reward. This should be sufficient. Nobody serves and works for God in vain. All co-workers received 1 Denarius, the same wage, the same amount. A picture of God's grace and mercy, because we are all made righteous out of His grace and not out of our own deeds.

The land owner was very merciful to all of them. Already the first ones only had to start **at 9 o'clock** instead of **6 o'clock** in the morning. Still they received the wages of a full day. Also the ones who came in very late. In this world you must work longer and harder to receive more money and have a better position. God abolishes unrighteousness and disparity in this world and treats every one the same. The king as the landowner, the beggar as a billionaire, the Jew as the Gentile. With Him all are sinners and lost, they have nothing and don't know their way. All people, without exceptions, have the same purpose in God (Tim. 2, 4). All things will have to submit to Christ (1.Cor. 15, 25-28, Col. 1, 15-17; Eph. 1, 9+10+20-23, Phil. 3, 21), "so that every knee must bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" Phil. 2, 11/ Is. 45, 23-24/ 1.Cor. 12, 3/ 1.Tim. 4, 10; 1.Tim. 2, 4 and 2.Petr. 3, 9). Why? Because God gave His only Son for all of us (Joh. 3, 16), and we all could only be saved through Him. Ever since there is no additional way to salvation than Jesus, not even for the Jews (Acts. 4, 12). And so even the first has to be satisfied with the reward (an image for the Jews who had always worked for their salvation). Even those who came at the 11<sup>th</sup> hour got the same wage. In the evening they all received the same. And before they all were unemployed, nobody needed them and nobody wanted to occupy them. The vineyard is the **Kingdom of God** (Is. 5, 1/ Matth. 21, 28+33). At first they called the Jews and then later also the Gentiles. But when the day was over they all received the same wages of mercy, one Denarius.

**The “Denarius”** the main currency of the whole ancient world during the era of Jesus. Denarius was a Roman silver coin that was introduced 180 b.C. It was a common and popular key currency. Perhaps even one of the most successful currencies of the world. The NT mentions the Denarius several times (Matth. 18, 28/ Matth. 22, 19/ Mark. 6, 37/ Luk. 7, 41/ Luk. 10, 35/ Rev. 6, 6).

Examples of prices, loans and wages: half to 1 Denarius applies to the daily wage of a simple worker (Matth. 20, 2+9+10+13) and therefore met the existential needs of a small family for housing and food a day.

**Just to get an imagination of the worth of 1 Denarius, here a couple of examples:**

- A simple **Legionnaire**, received a yearly income of 225 Denarius.
- The yearly income of a **Centurion** was up to 30500 Denarius, a **Procurator** earned even 50 000 Denarius a year
- A **small room** in the first floor of a house in Rome could be rented for about 3 Denarius a month.
- For half a liter of **good wine** you had to pay half up to 1 Denarius,
- For a couple **of shoes** you paid 3-4 Denarius
- A **slave** could be bought for 500 Denarius

This helps us to conclude a measure of wealth for the **anointing oil of Mary** (Joh. 12, 5), which Judas would have liked to sell for **300 Denarius**. It also points out that **200 Denarius** are not enough to buy bread for a huge crowd of people like Jesus and His disciples were facing (Joh. 6, 7).

### **Matth. 21 bis 23 – The ministry of the king in Jerusalem**

**Matth. 21, 1-17- The entry.** The obedience of the disciples is amazing (Matth. 21, 2). The King sent tow of His disciples. Without complaining they follow their king and His wisdom by believing that what He said about the donkey was the truth. The Lord knows all things, also where the donkey could be found. To Him all must be available as unto a rightful king.

The word **"the Lord needs it"** was sufficient

**The Lord needed:**

- the donkey,
- the disciple to get it for Him,
- soon the praise of the children, and
- at the same night the hospitality of His friends at Bethany.

According to Zach. 9, 9 the Messiah was supposed to enter into His reign in peace and humility (in the form of a servant and in lowliness) In the beginning Jesus preferred to work secretly and even forbid His disciples to publicly proclaim Him as the Messiah and even silenced the demons who called Him the Son of God (Matth. 8, 4), and drew away from the crowd when they wanted to crown Him king (Joh. 6, 15). But then He saw His purpose of service and teaching fulfilled and His hour had come to go enter Jerusalem as a king in front of all people watching (Joh. 12, 12).

**Matth. 21, 12-13 - Jesus cleanses the temple.** Jesus is opposing something that would have been holy unto the people. He does not want to hurt religious feelings, but rather restore hurt religious feelings back into Divine order. He even uses physical violence (against His habits) to rebuke things that have nothing to do with godly revelation or foreign elements of religion and culture that were integrated into the Jewish tradition. He was against the misuse and the immorality in the house of God. He cleanses the place of worship from all profitable work. The zeal of Jesus was provoked because the temple guards tolerated the defilement and misappropriation of the tabernacle. Jesus did not have the formal right to cleanse the temple and therefore uses physical violence. This material right was given to Him by the love of God and His love for His people. Out of this total love for God he defies modesty, right, order and His conscience to stop the misuse. Jesus was also prepared to suffer for this action and bear the consequences. He repeats the same action that He already dared once in the beginning of His ministry and cleanses the front court of the temple. The same Lord that entered Jerusalem on a donkey, could also take radical actions with authority against the merchants. Only the one who understands both sides of Him can fully understand Jesus.

**Zeal for God** but not being ready to bear the consequences is not enough. The resurrection of Jesus is the Divine confirmation, the Divine seal and the justification for every single action that sprung forth out of His zeal (Matth. 10, 32/ 1.Kin. 19, 19).

Because Jesus was so determined nobody could resist or rebuke Him, especially because He referred Himself to the word of God. And only after the cleansing the sick could come and receive a healing (Matth. 21, 14-15). By this zeal and His fanatic commitment for the temple (the house of God) Jesus proves His relationship of the Son to His Father. Courageous He takes a stand for God's honor, even if He would have to suffer and die for it. In the temple He is in His Father's house, therefore nobody can touch Him there.

**Matth. 21, 18 bis 22, 14 – The rejection of Jesus and Israel (Judaism)**

**The effect of Jesus in Jerusalem** is characterized by the arguments between Jesus and His opponents in Jerusalem

- It starts with His provocative entry into Jerusalem, the cleansing of the temple and His Messianic claim (Matth. 21, 1-17). This part is full of OT quotations.
- To His disciples Jesus emphasizes the power of faith (Matth. 21, 18-22).
- The representatives of the people ask Him about His authority (Matth. 21, 23).
- He describes the attitude of Israel toward Him and His mission in the parable of the evil vinedressers and of the royal wedding feast. Where Israel symbolically rejects the offer of God: "Therefore I tell you that the Kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a people who bear its fruits (Matth. 21, 43).

**Israel was supposed to be the witness to the world** a set apart, holy people – but instead they became the slaves of the world (Assyria, Babylon)

In Mark. 12, 3-5 it speaks about three periods where God sends out His servants to collect the fruits of the harvest: It seems to be an image of important seasons of Israel's history

- the walking in the desert,
- the time in the country of Canaan until their captivity,
- the time after the return.

In all these times God sent mighty witnesses, but He had to complain about their treatment. Just read Neh. 9, 26/ 1.Kg. 19, 10/ Rom. 11, 2-3/ Acts 7, 52. The servants had all been killed and only one remained "The Son". He did not send His Son to punish put to collect the harvest. The eldest of the people also called Him the one who came from God (Joh. 3, 2); because His words were mighty (Matth. 7, 28-29), and convincing His great miracles (Acts 2, 22). Who can describe the love of this Son, whom was sent from God, who was touched to tears, wanted to lead to repentance, but Israel resisted Him. What was Israel's crime? Which kind of entrance did they give to the heir? **"Let us kill Him"** was their resolution.

**The disputes in the temple show Jesus as an outstanding teacher.** When He was asked about the Highest command, Matthew gives a summary of the Law with a double command to love in the foreground, as a standard for all human actions (Matth. 22, 40/ 7, 12).

**Matth. 23. 1-39 – this is a typical anti-Pharisee speech of Jesus.** This speech is assembled by the author. In Verse 12 He addresses the crowd and the disciples. From Verse 13 on the scribes and the Pharisees. To Jesus those people were "hypocrites" (Matth. 6, 2), false "Saints" who turn their piety into a spectacular performance (15, 7/ 22, 18). They sit upon the throne of Moses (Matth. 23, 2), which means that they sit in the seat of honor in the synagogue, where actually the patriarchs were sitting while they interpreted the scripture. This seat was a symbol of their authority to teach but they used it to proclaim their own opinion (Matth. 15, 1-20/ 16, 6/ 19, 3-9).

**Because the Jews rejected Jesus, God also rejected the Jews.** Jesus demonstrates this rejection with the fig tree (Matth. 21, 18-22). Jesus only worked such a miracle of judgment (punishment) once, and that was shortly before His death. It was definitely a prophetic action (Jer. 1, 8) toward Israel and is to be understood as a symbol. Israel, the priests and the scribes do not bear any fruits. Mark interprets the parable by saying that Jesus was cursing Israel who did not open up her temple for Jesus who came to open it up to all nations.

**Matth. 23, 13-36 – Eight terrible "Woe to you" of the King.** In the previous verses the Lord warned His disciples and the crowd of the evil practices of the Pharisees and at the same time showed them their own attitude. At this moment He turned directly to the Pharisees and speaks His judgment over them. The breach with the Pharisees was very decisive, because in their hearts they had already planned to kill Jesus. In **the 8 woes** that the Lord speaks over them, there is a great contradiction to the 8 **Beatitudes** of Matth. 5. It is also interesting to notice how the Lord starts His speeches with the 8-fold "Blessed are you..." and finishes with a 8-fold "Woe to you..."

**Let us look at these contrasts:**

- The first woe (Matth. 23, 13): The first Beatitude is "Blessed are the poor in Spirit, because theirs is the Kingdom of God. The first woe is against the rich in spirit, against those who exalt themselves, who used the key of knowledge only to lock the door for all others and keep them from entering. (Joh. 9, 24).
- The second woe (Matth. 23, 14): It contrasts the second Beatitude: "Blessed are the sad widows in verse 13. (they are the image of mourning ones) who are in desperate need of the word. But instead their homes were taken over by the Pharisees for the cause of their piety.
- The third woe (Matth. 23, 15): As the opponent we read: "Blessed are the humble." The Pharisees were zealous, but for what cause? Only for their own sect. They lost their light because they rejected Jesus the Light of the world. Instead of being humble and teaching humility they went through the country to draw Proselytes, even to turn them into sons of hell. So they did not want the Proselytes to inherit the land, but to serve and do the work of the Pharisees.
- The fourth woe (Matth. 23, 16-22): The fourth Beatitude says. "blessed are the ones who hunger for righteousness." The fourth woe is distressing. The Pharisees are servants of the altar but not of the Lord. Their hunger for Legalism shows as they burden the people with heavy loads and do not meet their needs, but cause them to hunger even more.
- The fifth woe (Matth. 23, 23+24): In the fifth Beatitude the Lord declares the merciful blessed. But in the fifth woe He must complain that the Pharisees ignore faith and mercy. Instead of practicing mercy they raised tithes on the most simple herbs. Those hypocrites examined everything so that they would never defile themselves with small things, but did not recognize how they defiled themselves in other areas. Jesus called such teachers hypocrites or "the blind leading the blind".

- The sixth woe (Matth. 23, 25+26): How clearly this woe contrasts the sixth Beatitude of “Blessed are those pure in heart” The Pharisees did not purge their hearts. It was full of malice and bitterness. They washed jars, hands and cups but they never washed the main thing: their heart. “Cleanse the inner man”, is the command of the Lord (Joh. 13, 8/ Hebr. 12, 14). There is scarcely anything as deceptive as religious things. You only value the outward appearance but not what is on the inside.
- The seventh woe (Matth. 23, 29+36): The seventh Beatitude praises “blessed are the peaceful.” But the Pharisees praised foul peace. They were whitewashed graves, beautiful on the outside but full of decay and nasty smell (Ez. 13, 10).
- The eighth woe (Matth. 23, 29-36): This woe contrasts the double Beatitude of the persecuted ones (Matth. 5, 10-12). The Lord's words at the end are very serious. He shows that this spirit of hatred against Him and His saints had been within them from the beginning. Later Stephen complains: “Which prophet did your forefathers not persecute?” (Acts 7, 52). In addition to all that there was the cardinal sin, which was the murder of the son. The Lord had to face them with the revenge as Jeremiah did in his lamentations. He saw how the blood of the martyrs and the son would come upon them.

The **fig tree** pictures Israel, that does not bring forth fruit and therefore also loses the privilege of being God's people. Therefore to God Israel is spiritually dead and unfruitful.

The story about the fig tree is only a “symbolic event”, that displays the spiritual dryness of Israel. It gives a clue about Israel's fall and the end of their history. The fig tree, the olive tree and the vine are the most important trees of Israel. **The fig tree is also the only tree in the garden of Eden that was mentioned by name** (Gen. 3, 7). When Adam and Eve had sinned they realized that they were naked. They were scared and ashamed after they had eaten the forbidden fruit and covered themselves with the leaves of the tree where they were standing, which was a fig tree. Thus it might have been the fig tree bearing the fruit they had tasted, because there they stood or hid. The fig tree must have been the tree of which God said: “Of all trees you may eat but not of the tree **of the knowledge of good and evil**”. (Gen 16-17). For this reason Israel was given the Law “ know good and evil” and the way of blessing or curse was laid out before them.

- The fig tree belonged to the **7 blessings** of the land of Israel (Deut. 8, 8) and
- His cutting down announces the beginning of summer (Matth. 24, 32).
- To live underneath the fig tree is a symbol of a peaceful and safe life in Israel (Micah 4, 4).
- At last the fig tree is also an image of the Jewish people themselves (Hosea 9, 10/ Joel 1, 7).
- And because Israel (the possession of God) rejected Jesus (the Son of God) God chose a totally different way of salvation and revelation (the NT and the church).

**The fig tree died to its roots.** And Jesus added: ***and their house shall be forever desolate***, which means that they (the Jews) will not dwell in it and it would not be their home (Luk. 13, 35-35). All interpreters of the scriptures agree that “your house” refers to Jerusalem and the temple. Jerusalem and the temple would be desolated and remain this way. Jesus spoke these words on His way to the Mount of Olives where He spoke about the Last Days (Matth. 24) to explain the parable.

The Jewish had to suffer duplicate judgment due to their rejection of Jesus as the Messiah: **the spiritual hardness of heart and the scattering among the nations**. It began like Jesus prophesied (Luk. 21, 20-24), in the year 70 AD with the conquest of Jerusalem by the Roman army and the destruction of the temple, their religious center.

Without knowledge of this back round (because the curse was a prophetic and symbolic action) Jesus would leave the impression that Jesus is only awkward, short-tempered and moody. Just like the **curse of the fig tree** also the **cleansing of the temple** is a prophetic, symbolic action.



The rejection of Israel had been announced by the prophets of the Old Testament through words or symbols.

- Mi. 7, 1: Woe is me! For I am like those who gather the summer fruits, like those who glean vintage grapes. There is no cluster to eat of the first ripe fruit which my soul desires.
- Jer. 8, 13: I will surely consume them, says the Lord. "No grapes shall be on the vine, nor figs on the fig tree, and the leaf shall fade; and the kings that I have given them shall pass away from them.
- Joel 1, 7: He has laid waste my vine, and ruined my fig tree. He has stripped it bare and thrown it away; its branches are made white.
- Hos. 9, 10+16f.: I found Israel like grapes in the wilderness. I saw your fathers as the first fruits of the fig tree in its first season. But they went to Baal-Peor and separated themselves to that shame. They became as abominable as the one they loved. Ephraim is stricken, their root is dried up, they shall bear no fruit.

While the people called „**Hosanna**“ and God for help, the Jewish spiritual leadership planned to kill Him. „**Hosanna**“ means: „Help (him) You who dwells in the Most High“ (heaven) (Is. 57, 15). According to Ps. 118, 25 „**Hosanna**“ is a „**cry for help**“ a prayer to God that ends with rejoicing. It is a „Hallel Psalm“ and to be sung during the entrance into the temple or celebrations (Feast of Tabernacle).

### **Matth. 24 bis 25 – The prophecies.**

**Parables of the heavenly Kingdom.** Matthew reports and establishes in several mysterious parables the mystery of the “Kingdom of heaven” (Matth. 13, 24-25/ 13, 47-48/ 25, 1-2). At this point also the sending of Jesus and His Kingdom (Kingdom of God on earth) is pictured.

- The Kingdom of heaven is **proclaimed**.
- It was proclaimed by the prophets of the OT, and then **again** by John the baptist (Matth. 3, 2).
- The Kingdom of God was **publicly offered** to Israel, until the complacent Pharisees and Sadducees came to be baptised and he called them “brood of vipers” (Matth. 3, 7). Those hypocrites were not interested in changing their ways to prepare for the coming of the Messiah.

### **And then we see...**

- The Kingdom of heaven got **rejected** (an image of Judaism).
- The Kingdom of heaven **at that moment**, and how it would develop (at the time of Jesus, the apostles and the early church)
- The wheat and the tares, **it has to grow** (an image of the whole church history).
- The good and the foul fish, **there is a separation** (an image of the denominations of the church)
- The wise and the foolish virgins (an image of the inner and spiritual growth of the Saints)

### **All of those parables expressly describe the Kingdom of heaven.**

In all the prophecies and promises of the OT that are concerning the Kingdom of God, there is no chapter that says that evil things as tares, foul fish, and foolish virgins would be tolerated in the Kingdom of the Messiah. According to Jesus' statements the Kingdom of God started to exist with His first coming and will be finished with His second coming. That way the time period of the Kingdom of heaven is stretched out between the first and the second coming of the Lord, when He will return in power and glory. This time includes and encompasses all of the **Eras of God's Kingdom**, such as the foundation of the church, the mission and finally the Last Days as described in the Apocalypse. The three parables that Jesus mentions are with regard to the Last Days and the separation between the faithful Saints and the ones who only call themselves Christians. The image of the tares does not describe the **unfaithful** Saints but the **unbelievers** (sons of evil Matth. 13, 38).

The parable about **the good and the bad fish** the Kingdom of heaven is compared to a big net, that is thrown out into the sea of the world. It is an image of the missions and the evangelizing (building churches, etc) both good and bad fish are caught alike (an image of the church / congregation) The selecting of the fishes like the grains and the tares, will happen at the very end of the Era. There are two selections that happen at the same time: one by the fishermen and one by the angels. One selection is rather human and visible, the other is spiritual and invisible. One selection happens here on earth by the people (the fishermen) and the other one happens in the Everafter by the angels of God.

The parable of the **wise and the foolish virgins** in Matthew 25 is also especially referring to the Kingdom of heaven. This parable speaks off all the time in between of the two comings of Jesus. In Matthew 25, 10 we see that the bridegroom arrives and the wise virgins go to the wedding with Him.

### **„Virginity” is an image of the bible:**

- All ten went to see the bridegroom, and they were “**virgins**” (an image of the required life-long chastity, or the pure (undefiled) service unto the Lord).
- For ritual and spiritual purity. They were all motivated by their faith and expected the bridegroom
- **further treads:** They were surrendered to God. They were engaged / married to God (God was their “husband”, they were set apart for God).
- As virgins they lived a life pleasing to God (Deut. 22, 21).
- They took the disgrace and shame of faith for God (Judg. 11, 37/ Is. 4, 1)
- They brought sacrifices for the life with God (1. Cor. 7, 6-9).
- Jesus was borne by a virgin (Matth. 1, 18-25/ Luk. 1, 26-38)

But five of them did not care for reserve oil. They did not consider it necessary. They did not want to be burdened with needless weight. The question is not if we know the Lord, the question is if He knows us. (Matth. 25, 12). Those **five foolish virgins** are those who erroneously confessed to have faith, but they were excluded from the Kingdom because they were unbelievers. Notice that in the parable of the wheat and the tares the foolish virgins do not display unfaithful believers who miss the reward of the Kingdom. They are unbelievers because they have a spiritual life inside of them. Jesus would never say to a true believer: “I do not know you”, no matter how unfaithful the believer might have been. The fact that they say “Lord, Lord” emphasizes the fact that they confess to believe. They belong to the same people Jesus is referring to in Matthew 7, 21-23. Even though those people say “Lord, Lord” and their service makes them look like true believers, they are revealed as false professors of Christianity. The Lord says: “I do not know you” – something He would never say to a true believer.

- **Who are the mongers?** They are the servants of God.
- What is the midnight hour? It is the time when people usually sleep and are not awake (1.Thess. 1, 10). The hour of midnight is the time of the great tribulations. Falsity and lies are revealed.

### **The chapters 24 and 25 of the gospel of Matthew belong to the most misunderstood chapters.**

Well intentioned interpreters drew the wrong conclusions, if the only referred ch. 24 to the destruction of Jerusalem. Others applied this chapter to the church and saw the great affliction. But the whole shows that neither one can be correct.

- **Ch. 24 is only addressing Israel and mainly displays Israel in great affliction.**
- In Ch. 23 that Jesus spoke His terrible prophecies over the people the city and the temple.
- Ch. 24 shows how He leaves the temple. This has a deep symbolic meaning. It was not just leaving, but breaking up with Israel. The builders had rejected the Chief cornerstone. And since the temple of Christ's body was supposed to be broken, the same happened to the temple of Israel.
- The King wanted to give the Kingdom to Israel but they rejected it. Therefore the establishment of the Millennium was delayed.
- But in the mean time the Lord started to build the church mentioned in Matth. 16, which happened at Pentecost. As soon as the number of the heathens is full the Lord will return and take this church into His Father's house (1.Cor. 15, 51-57/ 1.Thess. 4, 13-18). After the rapture the Lord will reconcile with Israel and establish His Kingdom.

The same procedure can be seen in Revelation. In Rev. 3 is the promise of His coming. In Rev. 4 we see the Ascension of John into the heaven as a rolemodel of the rapture of the church. In Rev. 4 and 5 the throne of God stands – and His church is gathered there. In Rev. 6 the seal judgments start, which are followed by the judgment of the trumpets and the scales until Ch. 19 where we can see the sudden appearance of the King. There He comes with all who belong to Him to establish His Kingdom on earth. But let us not confuse the two different comings. The first coming happens before the affliction to take His church home, and the second one after the great affliction to become manifested before Israel. The first coming is invisible and the second one in great power and glory because all eyes will see Him. Matthew 24 is therefore only dealing with Israel.

**Matth. 24, 22 – Because of the chosen ones the time will be “shortened”.** This speaks of the ie “hardship”, the ominous horrors (see Matth. 24, 21/ Ex. 10, 14/ 11, 6/ Jer. 30, 7/Joel 2, 2/ Dan. 12, 1/ Rev.. 16, 18).

The “chosen ones” are the ones who have found their faith in Jesus. They will not go down in the common affliction (in the likeness of Lot in Sodom, Gen. 18, 23-33).

**The speech of the Last Days** in Matthew ties the proclamation of the destruction of Jerusalem to the proclamation of the end of the world. Therefore the speech of Jesus about the destruction of Jerusalem in Luke was amended by the “day of the Son of Man” (Luk. 17, 22-37), and the issue “arrival” (end of the world) (Matth. 24, 3+27+37+39), which cannot be found in any other gospel (compare Matth. 13, 39+40+49), as well as the signs of the Son of Man which concerns all nations of the earth (Matth. 24, 30/ 13, 39+40+49). At the end of this sermon Matthew also adds some parables of Jesus regarding “watchfulness2.

### **Matth. 26 to 28 – The suffering of the King**

Jesus had just finished speaking of the Last Days and then starts to fulfill what Moses and the prophets has prophesied about Him. He was anointed in Bethany (Matth. 26, 1-13). This was the only act of anointing Jesus. It had a great impact upon Jesus and His surrounding. He said “She did it unto me” and therefore it also influenced the disciples. Especially Judas Ischariot who criticized the anointing (Joh. 12, 5). He was a servant of mammon (servant of money) and could not take what she did for Jesus. The oil could have been sold for more than 300 Denarius. This was more than the yearly wage of a worker (Matth. 20, 2).

**Matth. 26, 14-19 – The last Passover celebration.** Jesus is the Passover lamb that was supposed to be slain. The Passover was “the feast” among all the feasts. Whenever Israel celebrated it, it happened to the remembrance of God that one night in Egypt, when they were delivered, the killing of the firstborns and how the “lamb” became their salvation.

The lamb had to be without flaw, male and one year old. It was supposed to be the “departure of the land and house of Ham (curse and damnation).

- In that night the the firstborn stands in the gap for His siblings to carry away their sins and to redeem and deliver His nations from the power of satan.
- In this night God submitted all brothers under the covering and outpouring of the blood (1.Petr. 1, 2).
- The last supper (communion) was the **death meal** of Jesus (Matth. 26, 20-30). He was the true Passover lamb (Jesus was soon to be slain).
- Now the Lord established a new meal, much more important and meaningful than the Passover meal. As we have seen the Passover meal of the Israelites we now want to see the Lord's supper of the true Christians. Let us pay attention to the simplicity of the celebration. The Passover was over. And we was alone with His disciples. Then He took the bread and the wine, gave thanks and distributed it to the discipels. Then He told them what those mean symbolically and how the represent His blood and His body.
- Just like Israel once celebrated her departure from Egypt we now celebrate our deliverance from guilt and the power of sin. We have redemption by His blood (Eph. 1, 7). The body of the Lord was given and His blood shed, for this reason. Unto us the “Lord's supper”, a “feast of redemption”, a “feast of remembrance” (Luk. 22, 19/ 1.Cor. 11, 24).
- It is a meal of fellowship with each other. Just as the Israelites celebrated Passover together and needed a Redeemer (Numb. 9, 13), so is the Lord's supper a corporate meal where the single participant is invisibly dealing with the presence of the Lord. It is the image of unity of the body. This also shows that only members of the body of Christ should participate.
- It is a meal of obedience. Jesus commands: “This do...” (Joh. 14, 25).

**Matth. 26, 30-56 – The combat of prayer.** “Gethsemane” means oil press. And this term already summarizes the following. Jesus chose three of His confidantes who went with Him, but they fell asleep. Once they were witnesses of His glory (Matth. 17), now they were supposed to be witnesses of His pain (Lament. 1, 12). The Lord had to tread the winepress by Himself. He prayed but the disciples were asleep (Ps. 134). He fell upon His face. The prophecy says that He was a worm and not a man (Ps. 22, 6). His whole outward appearance gives insight into His deepest feelings.

Ps. 102 is the Gethsemane-Psalm. He prayed the same words three times. He prayed with endurance. He prayed in submission “Not my will but Yours be done” and it was fulfilled: to redeem mankind and therefore fulfill the purpose of His coming and His ministry (incarnation). Over and over again satan tried to keep Jesus from His way and ministry. Gethsemane was his last attempt.

**Matth. 26, 47-54 – The taking of Christ.** The war of Gethsemane was over. Jesus had made a decision. He was strengthened for the great work He was supposed to fulfill and went outside to face His enemies.

When they tried to make Him King He fled, but when it came to walking to the cross He went freely. The Lord went to the sleeping disciples first, who were of no use and said to them: “sleep now”. He wants to tell them that He does not need their help anymore because He was strengthened and encouraged to face His enemies. He had wrestled with Himself and chose the cup. Once again He tells them that He will be delivered into the hands of His enemies and tells them to move on.

**Judas Ischariot** was a very **talented organisor**. And the betrayer came with a huge group: High Priests, eldest, soldiers, judges and the crowd (Joh. 18, 8). It was a conscious action (2.Sam. 15, 5/ 20, 9/ Pro. 27, 6). The kiss was chosen as the sign to reveal the identity of Christ to avoid that they would arrest the wrong one. Jesus also admitted that He was the one they were looking for (Joh. 18, 6).

**More thoughts about Judas Ischariot** (Matth. 27, 1-14). He was called by Jesus to be an apostle (Matth. 10, 4), his start was very promising, he was surely talented and diligent (Jesus entrusted him the finances) He was a witness of great miracles, signs and teachings of Jesus. He had been with Jesus for three years. He himself ministered as an apostle of Jesus, healed the sick, cast out demons and filled several offices etc (Matth. 7, 22/ Mark. 6, 7/ Joh. 13, 29). But he loved the money (1.Tim. 6, 9/ Joh. 12, 6). Jesus rebuked him, but it did not change anything. He determined to betray Jesus (Matth. 26, 15). This way he became a tool of satan (Acts 1, 29). His repentance was only in pretence.

### **Matth. 26, 57 bis 27, 31 – The judgment.**

**Matth. 26, 55-58 - Jesus before His judges.** The great Deliverer is now a captive of His enemies. It all happened so that **the scripture may be fulfilled** (Matth. 26, 24+31+54+56). The scripture was always a major topic for Jesus. Only upon this foundation He could bear what happened to Him. The Holy One of God was treated like a criminal and the Prince of Peace was sentenced to death. The decision was already concluded before they arrested Him (Matth. 26, 3-5/ Joh. 11, 47-54/ Ps. 2, 2). They only admitted wrong witnesses to the court (Mark. 14, 56+59). Friends such as Nicodemus or Joseph of Arimathea were of no use. “He is guilty of death” was the judgment of Caiaphas. “He blasphemed”, **we do not need any further witnesses**. But by his denial he revealed his own wickedness and became guilty of blasphemy himself.

**Matth. 26, 63 – Jesus remained silence.** Not one of Jesus' long sermons were as mighty as His silence. This attitude also applied to His whole teaching. Silence is often the loudest accusation. Why did He not speak? He was burdened with all of our sin and accepted the judgment of the same. The judgment was righteous because the sin of the world was upon His shoulders (Hebr. 3, 1/ 12, 3).

**Matth. 27, 27-30 – The last physical sufferings of Jesus.** The interrogation was over, the judgment spoken, the terrible scourging was finished and the cruel crucifixion was supposed to follow. Matthew names **the 7 abasements of Jesus**.

- They took His clothes
- They gave Him a crimson mantle
- They placed a crown of thorns on His head
- They gave Him a stick.
- They pretended to bow down before Him
- They spit Him in the face
- With the stick they beat Him on the head

**Matth. 27, 31-44 – The crucifixion of Jesus.** After the terrible mocking the last act of suffering followed: Also 7 happenings in the description of the crucifixion.

- Simon of Cyrene was forced to carry Jesus' cross.
- Jesus was crucified outside of the city (Joh. 19, 20/ Lev. 16, 27/ Hebr. 13, 12-13/ Gal. 3, 13/ Hebr. 9, 27).
- They offered Him a narcotic drink, but He rejected it (Ps. 22, 69/ Is. 53).
- They took His clothes (Ps. 22, 18).
- The heading of the cross: **King of the Jews** (abbreviation: **JAHWE**). The Jews crucified their God (Mark. 15, 26/ Luk. 23, 38/ Joh. 19, 19/ compare Zach. 12, 10/ Acts 15, 14-17/ Rev. 11, 15/ 17, 14). And it was also written in the languages Latin, Greek and Hebrew – the languages of politics, science and religion.
- Jesus died of a broken heart, the scolding and mocking broke His heart (Ps. 69, 21)

### **5 different groups mocked Him:**

The crowd (2.Kin. 19, 21/ Ps. 22, 7) and cursed Him (Matth. 26, 61/ Joh. 2, 19-22).

The 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> were the high priests, the eldest and the scribes

The 5<sup>th</sup> group were the other criminals (Jesus' fellow sufferers). Though He was counted a criminal (Matth. 27, 44/ Jes. 53, 12).

**Jesus suffered 6 hours on the cross** (Matth. 27, 45-54), from 9am-3pm.

- During the first 3 hours it was bright like any day,
- but during the last 3 hours there was darkness covering the whole land like it was when Israel was delivered out of Egypt.
- The Pharisees had asked Jesus for a sign in heaven (Matth. 16, 1) Now they were supposed to see their "real signs" that would happen at Golgotha.
  1. There was His power to save. "others He saved!" This was how they scorned Him, without realizing that they were actually speaking the truth and that paradise was open (to one of the criminals He opened the door to paradise)
  2. Darkness came upon the earth in the middle of the day. This darkness lasted three full hours – in the middle of the day! A regular solar eclipse lasts about 8 minutes. This was not a regular solar eclipse. It was full moon at the same time.
  3. The veil of the temple was torn (Matth. 27, 51).

This was only the work of God. Because this was how He opened up a new way (Hebr. 10, 19-22). This must have been the reason why so many priests converted later (Acts 6, 7). It must have been terrifying for the priests who were walking in this office when the veil tore and the way to the Holiest of Holies was open but they did not die (Lev 16, 1-13). This was a sign that the law of ceremony was overcome because it was fulfilled. The sacrifice of Christ was accepted by God. **The veil itself.** According to God's order the veil had to separate the Saint and the Holiest of Holies. The veil was made of purple and scarlet thread (Ex 26, 31) and depicted the Lord in His Godhead and humanity as mediator. It was located between the Saint and the Holiest of Holies. Only once a year on the great day of atonement the high priest was allowed to go beyond the veil into the Holiest of Holies. But this could only take place by the offering of a sacrifice. If the priest had to go in, the veil had to be moved. And this is what happened at Golgotha. Through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ the way and entrance to the sanctuary was opened (Hebr. 10, 19). Moreover the veil was a piece of art work with woven cherubim (Ex 26, 31). This kind of glory can be compared with the glory of the Transfiguration (Matth. 17).

This Divine act has a great symbolic character (Hebr. 9, 1 to 10, 19).
  4. The next thing that happens is an earthquake. Everything was shaking but the cross. When the Law was delivered Sinai was shaking. And as the Giver of the Law fulfilled it through His death the earth was shaking again. This scared the killers and all eyes were on God's Son.
  5. Then this gospel mentions the confession of the centurion who recognized Jesus as the Son of God by the signs and wonders.
  6. The graves opened. They proclaimed Jesus' victory over death (Hebr. 2, 5-18).

**Matth. 27, 55-66 – The burial of the King.** The great sacrifice of Redemption was accomplished. Some women stayed there. They waited to find out what was supposed to happen to His body. God Himself made sure that He was given into loving hands. Also here the scripture had to be fulfilled that no leg would be broken (Joh. 19, 33/ Ps. 34, 20). Usually you would leave the bodies on the cross for the birds to eat them up. But with Jesus it happened according to the prophecies (Ps. 16, 10).

**The eleven disciples had failed. They all fled.** But their failure did not embarrass God; because all of a sudden two other (secret) disciples – Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus – show up. Both were members of the high council. Especially Joseph stands out. He was a rich man, a councilman, who did not agree with the judgment (Mark. 15, 43/ Luk. 23, 51). Full of courage he approached Pilate and asked him for the body of the Lord. It was like another accusation of Pilate who had Jesus scourged and killed Jesus, when he saw how Joseph honored the crucified even after His death. Pilate asked the centurion if Jesus was indeed dead (Mark. 15, 44). The watching women followed the two disciples to take the body down from the cross (Joh. 19, 38). With their love they paid their last honor to the King. Joseph had bought canvas and Nicodemus 100 pounds of ointment. Both had received courage by the death of Christ. They did not pay attention to the hostility of others but openly confessed the Lord.

The grave of the King. It was a royal grave, new and carved into a rock. Jesus was supposed to be with the rich after His death (Is. 53, 9). The grave itself was in a garden. The first Adam sinned in a garden (Paradise) and defiled it, but the second Adam was lying in it as a result of sin. That He was buried in the garden caused the reconciliation and opened Paradise to the sinner. He was buried according to the scriptures (1. Cor. 15, 4). The grave himself bore witness that Jesus was dead.

**The story of crucifixion gives us a lot of evidences, that the Lord did not only seem to be dead, but really had died.** Therefore His resurrection is a fact. The soldiers normally broke the legs of the weak, but as they came to Jesus they refrained it because they so he had already died. (Joh. 19, 32+37).

The terrible intention of the Jews , to kill the Lord, was successful. Now their intentions were to prevent the resurrection. To hinder the disciples to steal the dead body, the enemies asked Pilate for a guard **to keep the grave**. Also the grave and the guard testified that he was truly dead. His enemies remembered the words of Jesus about His resurrection. That's why they went to Pilate and desired a strong guard, so that no one could enter the grave. For this purpose they sealed the grave. **With this grave-seal** they truly sealed His teachings. All of their fear were rooted in their guilty conscience about the past crime. Because neither the disciples could have stolen Him nor the women could have removed the stone. In all they did it did not cross their mind that they therewith provided one of the greatest evidences of the resurrection and the great triumph for the Lord, through these precautions.

**The third day had begun**, and according to the written testimony and the Lord Himself, He was supposed to resurrect on this day. And so it took place. God raised Him from the dead (Acts. 2, 32). The **sign of Jona was fulfilled** that day. The resurrection didn't happen because of the help of angels to free the Lord from the grave. No never! The angel who removed the stone in front of the women, invited them to examine the grave. No eye saw the resurrection, for the grave was sealed and guarded. The soldiers did not get afraid by the resurrection, but by the sight of the angel. Often we see angels in connection with the Lord. They glorified His birth (Luk. 2, 9-14/ Matth. 1, 20/ 2, 19). Angels served Him after the temptation (Matth. 4, 11). One angel strengthened Him in Gethsemane and one angel guarded His dead body. They formed the life guards of the great King. This way the greatest victory was first seen and proclaimed by angels, in the same manner as it happened when He was born.

**Matth. 28, 1 ff. - The resurrection of the King.** Among the different reports about the resurrection of the Lord, Matthews is the shortest one. He only delivers the facts as they are . But if this report would be missing, everything preceding would be worthless. Utterly we miss the **Ascension of Christ**. But that is reasonable, if we consider that Matthew illustrates the Lord as the King of Israel in His Kingdom on earth.

This beautiful Book concludes with three objects:

1. With the the short report about the resurrection.
2. With the lying report of the Jews.
3. With the mission command unto the assembled disciples.

**The triumph of the King had to be proclaimed as soon as possible.** The matter of the King was in urgency (1.Sam. 21, 9). The angel had been coming down in a flash and the soldiers were scared to death (Matth. 28, 4). In a moment he removed the stone from the tomb, which was the obstacle of the women. And he showed them the grave. What a victory! Corruption was impossible at this point, therefore Jesus was risen and alive. When the angel appeared suddenly a great earthquake took place.

**The resurrection of Jesus is:**

1. An evidence, that He is the Son of God (Rom. 1, 4).
2. An evidence, that Satan is conquered (Hebr. 2, 14).
3. An evidence, that the salvation is accomplished (Rom. 4, 25).
4. An evidence, for our own resurrection (1.Cor. 15, 20-22).
5. An evidence, that we possess life on our own (Rom. 6, 4+13).
6. An evidence, that He's going to come for Judgment (Acts 17, 31).
7. An evidence, that He is Lord over all (Acts 2, 36/ Eph. 1, 19+23/ Phil. 2, 9).

**What doctrines do we drag from the grave of Jesus?**

**This site was:**

1. A place of love. "They came very early in the morning" (Vers 1).
2. A place of Life. "He is not here" (Vers 6).
3. A place of Hope. "He is risen" (Vers 6).
4. A place of Joy. "They left with great joy" (Vers 8).
5. A place of comfort. "Do not be afraid" (Vers 10).
6. A place of worship. "They prostrated" (Vers 9).
7. A place of service. "Proclaim to my Brothers" (Vers 11).

**The risen One is the “Lord” now.** The angel speaks about Him as the Lord. Although He came in shape of servant, lower than the angels and degraded by man in the most abusive way, He is and remains the Lord. Also Peter calls him Lord (Acts 2, 36/ 10, 36). Paul calls him the Lord of heaven, the Lord lifted up above all heavens (1.Cor. 2, 8/ 15, 47/ Rom. 10, 12). John praises Him as the Lord of Lords (Rev. 17, 14). Prophets and Kings beheld in Him the most desirable (Luk. 2, 30/ 10, 24/ Joh. 8, 56/ Eph. 3, 5/ Hebr. 11, 13). The Father honored Him in a special way, He enthroned Him to the right hand of the majesty (Ps. 110/ Hebr. 1, 8-12).

**Thoughts about the „empty tomb“.** The tomb of the Lord was not supposed to be a permanent place (Ps. 16, 10/ Acts 2, 27). Through the resurrection of Christ our grave becomes a transitory place too (1.Thess. 4, 16).

- The empty tomb was the place of greatest encouragement. That's what the hopeless disciples of Emmaus testify, who's hearts flared up when they saw the resurrected One (Luk. 24, 32).
- The empty tomb was the place of fulfillment of the prophecy (Ps. 16, 10/ Isa. 53, 9).
- The empty tomb brought rigorous shame unto the adversary, and not only the guards who layed down on the floor and fled out of fear. But also to all those who rejected the King and crucified Him. Pilate and the leaders in Israel must have been shaking together with the guards when the latter announced the resurrection of the Lord.
- The **empty tomb was a mighty place of revelation of the glory of God**. Here we see angels, heavenly beings, attired in great power and in connection with many risen ones that appeared to those in Jerusalem..

**He confronts us with accomplished facts.**

- The ransom, the atonement is achieved (1.Cor. 6, 20/ Hebr. 7, 22/ 1.Pet. 1, 18-21).
- Our salvation is totally ensured (Rom. 4, 25).
- God approved the works that Christ did for us (Eph. 1, 6-7+14).
- Now the sinner can always come with boldness to receive his salvation (Hebr. 7, 25).
- Every doubter is allowed to go into the tomb to convince himself of the truth (Joh. 20, 28).

**The great and last self testimony of Jesus.**

***"To me all authority/power is given, in heaven and on earth. "***

- To him is given all authority above all flesh (Joh. 17, 2).
- Authority over principalities and powers (Col. 1, 16).
- Authority, to keep those who belong to him (1.Pet. 1, 5/ Jud. 24).

**Test:**

1. Where in Matthew is a hidden “self account” of Jesus (in Matth.)?
2. What is very important to the evangelist Matthew?
3. What is an important requirement for Jesus to heal the sick in the gospel of Matthew?
4. What kind of main characteristics should a servant of Christ possess?
5. How does Luther translate the „Denarius“?
6. Who are the overseers of the “small” and “low ones”?
7. Where and when does Jesus speak about the church for the first time?
8. Which psalm is the “Psalm of Gethsemane”?
9. What were the seven woes of Jesus?
10. What is the evidence of the resurrection of Jesus?

Please send the answers to: [pastor@matutis.de](mailto:pastor@matutis.de)

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