



## OHBC MEMORY VERSE – WEEK #41

THIS WEEK'S VERSE: MARK 16:15

“And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.”

Why Mark 16:15?

Because in terms of God's TOP priority and BOTTOM line, it dovetails beautifully with last week's memory verses!

Last week we memorized the “Great Commandment.” This week we will memorize Mark's concisement of what Christians commonly refer to as the “Great Commission.” (Note this is a different context than Matt. 28:18-20, but certainly the same responsibility.) We call this commission “great” for several reasons:

1. It is great in terms of Who SPOKE it. The commission was given to us by none other than our “great” Saviour (Luke 1:32), the Lord Jesus Christ. “And HE said unto them...”
2. It is great in terms of its SCOPE. “Go ye into all the world.” God wants us to understand that our responsibility reaches to the farthest reaches of this entire globe! In other words, He wants us to feel the responsibility of getting His message to every person that He loves — “For God so loved the world” (John 3:16). When we received the glorious gift of salvation and God changed our eternal destiny, He also gave each of us a destiny in world missions! He knows we cannot do everything, but everyone is called to do something! Something that will impact the eternal destiny of the people our Lord so desperately loves.
3. It is great in terms of its PRIVILEGE. Yes, it is certainly a responsibility that God wants every believer to feel. But it is so much more than a mere responsibility! If anybody every felt the weight of responsibility for the gospel, and sought to use his life to take it into “all the world” and “to every creature” it was the Apostle Paul. But listen to his own testimony of why he was so effective in carrying out the “great” commission: “But as we were ALLOWED of God to be put in TRUST with the gospel, even so we speak” (I Thess. 2:4). Yes, Paul understood that carrying the message of the gospel was an entrustment that made him very responsible and accountable. In other words, he saw the gospel as a stewardship and himself as a steward (i.e. one who has been “put in trust”). But that was only half of what he said made him so mightily used of God. The other half, Paul said, was the fact that he also understood the “great” privilege that was his to have been entrusted with something as “great” as the gospel! He writes, “But as we were ALLOWED of God to be put in trust with the gospel!” If the responsibility of Mark 16:15 is something that weighs you down or is burdensome to you, it is only because you have never understood the glorious privilege you have received that the God of gods, the King of kings, and the Lord of lords wants YOU to be His ambassador to the entire world (II Cor. 5:17-20), carrying His glorious gospel.
4. It is great in terms of its POWER. The gospel that each of us has been entrusted and privileged to preach is the very power God uses to impart salvation to “every creature”! Imagine that! You have been privileged to carry the most powerful message in the entire world. Again, Paul's understanding was what made him so tremendously effective and mightily used of God. In Romans 1:16 he said, “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the POWER of God unto SALVATION to every one that believeth.” Paul understood that that message, when delivered to the lost people of this planet had the power “to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive the forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith” (Acts 26:18). That is “great” power!

As we hide Mark 16:15 in our hearts, remember that the platform from which we carry out the Great Commission is the Great Commandment!

DAY 201

TODAY'S READING: MATTHEW 5-7

OVERVIEW:

The Constitution of the King and His Kingdom (chapters 5-7).

HIGHLIGHTS & INSIGHTS:

As we make our way through the Gospel of Matthew, there are several things you want to keep in the forefront of your thinking that will help to keep you between the white lines.

Understand that Matthew is not written from a chronological standpoint, as are Mark and Luke. I like the way John Phillips explains Matthew's approach. "He tends to group his material in order to produce a cumulative effect for the point he is making that Jesus is the Messiah of the Jews. For example, beginning in chapter 5 (today's reading), we have the Sermon on the Mount – what Jesus TAUGHT. This is followed by a series of miracles in chapters 8 to 9, by no means in the order of occurrence, but which show what Jesus WROUGHT. These miracles are followed in turn by a series of reactions to Jesus, illustrating what people THOUGHT. It seems clear that Matthew's material is arranged so that it can be easily remembered and certainly the contents of his gospel are more easily remembered than the contents of the other synoptics."

Also keep in mind the specific Jewish nature of this Gospel. The Book of Proverbs talks about the importance of identifying landmarks. Proverbs 22:28 says, "Remove not the ancient landmark, which thy fathers have set." Proverbs 23:10 adds, "Remove not the old landmark; and enter not into the fields of the fatherless." Obviously, from an historical standpoint, this has to do with the importance of identifying the land boundaries, and the importance of allowing them to remain intact. To apply the principle to the Bible itself, however, from a devotional standpoint, we could say that the "ancient landmark" of the Bible that you never want to lose sight of or remove is the Jew! Once you lose sight of the Jew in terms of interpreting the Bible, you will find yourself in "the fields of the fatherless." For example, there are four Books of the Bible where people allow themselves to get doctrinally discombobulated. Matthew is the first, Acts is the second, Hebrews is the third, and James is the fourth. Every doctrinal controversy and division in the Body of Christ is going to come out of a verse, passage, or chapter in one of those four Books. Coincidentally enough, all four of them have something in common. They are all related specifically to the Jew!

Once you lose the ancient landmark of the Jew in these Books, you might well end up in "the field of the fatherless" believing in works for salvation; that baptism is a requirement for salvation; that you can lose your salvation; that tongues and healing are for today, and on and on, and on. All of those false doctrines are propagated today because somebody lost sight of the Jew in these Books!

That is very important to recognize as we come into today's reading in Matthew 5, 6 and 7, which is Matthew's record of the first sermon Jesus ever preached, what we call "The Sermon on the Mount." You must understand that all the way through the Old Testament, God has been promising the Jews a kingdom. They understood that kingdom to be a literal earthly kingdom where God's ruler (His "anointed" – Hebrew; His "messiah" – Greek) would sit on the throne of David. That kingdom is what the Book of Matthew is all about. It is referred to as the "kingdom of heaven," and Matthew's Gospel is the only Gospel in which the phrase appears, where it is found some 32 times!

Matthew's Gospel presents Christ as King of the "kingdom of heaven," the kingdom promised to the Jews in the Old Testament, and referred to as the "kingdom of Israel" (Acts 1:6). In yesterday's reading, the King appears (chapter 2), in chapter 3 He is heralded, and in today's reading (chapter 5 and verse 1), He sits, and delivers the constitution for the kingdom! But recognize the subject of His sermon isn't "heaven," but the "kingdom of heaven"! (Note 5:3, 10, 19, 20; 7:21) And the sermon isn't directed to the Gentiles, or the church of God, but to Jews! You say, "But it's in the New Testament!" Sure it is, but the context of the Book, much less the sermon, is strictly Jewish! (And do recognize that you don't really enter into the New Testament, according to the Bible's definition, until the death of Christ, which in Matthew's Gospel isn't until chapter 27! Hebrews 9:16-17 says, "For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. For a testament is of force AFTER MEN ARE DEAD: otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth." That means that in the strictest sense of the word, we don't

actually enter the New Testament until the very end of each of the Gospels. More will be said about this tomorrow.)

As you read the Sermon on the Mount today, recognize that our Lord's audience is Old Testament Hebrews who at that time were still under the law. His sermon is designed to present the real intent of the law, and to present the principles of the millennial kingdom (i.e. the "kingdom of heaven"). Yes, there are truths that we as Gentiles in the Church of God can apply devotionally to our lives, but it has no application whatsoever to how we are saved.

DAY 202

TODAY'S READING: MATTHEW 8-10

OVERVIEW:

Christ presents Himself as Israel's King by fulfilling the signs and wonders prophesied of the Messiah in the Old Testament (chapters 8 and 9); the twelve are "sent forth" to preach the Gospel of the "Kingdom" (chapter 10).

HIGHLIGHTS & INSIGHTS:

There are several overarching errors Christians tend to make that pretty well insure that their biblical interpretation and application will not be correct. One of the most critical (and often made!) mistakes is thinking that the Bible is a Christian Book that has primarily to do with us. You say, "Oh my, that must have been a terrible typographical error, or Pastor Joe had one incredible brain cramp, because that last sentence actually said that it is a mistake to think that the Bible is a Christian Book that has primarily to do with us." No. You read it right. That came out exactly as it was intended.

The fact is, if we're ever really going to "get it" in terms of understanding the Bible, we must face the fact that the Bible is a Jewish book that has to do with their King, and a kingdom that has been promised to them! How very stereotypical of Laodiceans (i.e. believers in the last days – Rev. 3:14-22, whose chief characteristic is that they are "lovers of their own selves" – II Tim. 3:1-2) to think that the Bible is all about "us," that its theme is "salvation" (which, of course, is first and foremost about "us" and for "us"), and how nice, and thoughtful, and unbelievably gracious of God to allow the poor Jews to have a part in it all! No, no, no! A thousand times, no! No wonder we get messed up!

The fact is, the Bible is predominantly about a 7000 year period of time in which we are merely a 2000 year parenthesis! It is certainly a glorious parenthesis, and most definitely benefits us, and obviously, was planned before the foundation of the world (Eph. 1:4), but to view the "parenthesis" as the theme or main subject, or to interpret the Old Testament, and even more specifically, the Gospel of Matthew, through "Christian" glasses, is a grave error that will take the most sincere student of the Bible down a zillion rabbit trails, not to mention, down the path of false doctrine!

Always keep in mind that at least 95% of false doctrine is really nothing more than true Bible doctrine being applied to the wrong group of people and/or the wrong period of time (i.e. dispensation). And thus, yesterday's comments about the Jew, in a devotional sense, being the "ancient landmark" in the Bible, and when that distinction is moved or removed, will cause us to make a beeline right into "the fields of the fatherless" doctrinally (Prov. 22:28; 23:10).

Much of the problem, particularly in Matthew's Gospel, is that Christians fail to recognize that this Gospel is written to the Jews, to present Christ as their Messiah-King, over the kingdom promised to them in the Old Testament. Just about every commentator you will read, however, will teach that very thing! The problem, however, is that after talking about the Jewish nature of this Gospel, they will go right from making that observation, to trying to apply the teaching of the Book to Christians living in the Church Age, when the Gospel of Matthew doesn't actually have anything to do with the Church Age from a doctrinal standpoint, at least until the death of the Testator (after Matthew 27). You must keep in the forefront of your thinking that this Gospel is all about the "Kingdom of Heaven." It is called that because it is about a kingdom promised to the Jews, and that is why Matthew's Gospel is the only Gospel that uses the phrase (32 times). Contrary to what most commentators say, it is not the same as the "Kingdom of God" (found repeatedly in the other three Gospels), and the two phrases are not used interchangeably in the New Testament. (More will be said about the "Kingdom of Heaven" vs. the "Kingdom of God" in tomorrow's comments.) Be sure as we make our way through Matthew that you understand that the things contained in this Gospel have to do specifically with God's intention to establish a literal kingdom in Israel over

which His Son will preside, and rule the whole world from a literal throne in the literal rebuilt Temple in the literal earthly Jerusalem. To apply the vast majority of the teaching found in Matthew to the parenthesis we call the Church Age is poor hermeneutics, not to mention, an invitation to false doctrine. (A great case in point in today's reading is in chapter 8 and verse 12. If you lose sight of the fact that the subject is the "kingdom of heaven," you might end up believing something as biblically ludicrous and ridiculous that someone who at one time was a born again child of God could end up in hell!)

A few pithy comments about some of the verses in today's reading:

8:12 – Without factoring in the "kingdom of heaven," so much for eternal security!

8:14 – The so-called first "Pope" had a wife!

8:16 – Nobody in Jesus' healing line went away "unhealed" because of their "lack of faith."

8:21 – Circle the word "Lord" and "me first." They are mutually exclusive, yet characterize the church in the last days (II Tim. 2:1-2)!

8:26 -27 –The wind and the sea recognize the voice of the One who spoke them into existence!

8:29 – Demons make an identification the religious leaders of Jesus' day (Scribes and Pharisees) were never able to make: Jesus is the Son of God!

8:34 – The people were more freaked out by Jesus in their midst than by those who were demon possessed in their midst!

9:2 – Great practical lesson here about doing whatever we can to bring lost to Jesus!

9:11 – Hallelujah! Jesus has time for sinful people like me!

9:27 – Even blind people could "see" what the Pharisees couldn't – Jesus is the promised Messiah!

9:35 – The "gospel of the kingdom" is not the same gospel Paul talked about in I Cor. 15:3-4!

9:37-38 – Though we are in a different dispensation these verses are extremely true!

10:1 – To this point, the "twelve" are referred to as "disciples." As they are "sent forth" in this passage (10:5), they receive the title "apostles" (see 10:2). The word "apostle" means "sent one." The word apostle in Latin is the word "missio" from which we get our word "missionary" to refer to ones who are "sent forth."

10:5-6 – How about this for the Jewishness of this gospel?!

10:22 – This is a doctrinal back-breaker unless you keep it in the context of the "kingdom of heaven"!

DAY 203

TODAY'S READING: MATTHEW 11-13

OVERVIEW:

The refusal of the King and the "Kingdom of Heaven" (chapter 11); the official rejection of the King by the leaders of the Nation of Israel (chapter 12); the Kingdom is hidden in the form of parables (chapter 13).

HIGHLIGHTS & INSIGHTS:

As we continue to pursue getting our doctrinal bearings in the New Testament and particularly the Gospel of Matthew, as has already been stated, keeping your eye on the Jew and Jewish audience is of utmost importance. Regardless of popular Laodicean teaching, the church has not replaced Israel. The Book of Revelation has some pretty strong things to say about "them which say they are Jews, and are not" (see Rev. 2:9b and 3:9a)! Remember, we are the parenthesis! Daniel had a prophecy, you'll remember, of 70 weeks of years (70x7=490 years). The way that the prophecy has unfolded is that the Jews "cut off" (i.e. crucified) their Messiah who had come to bring in the Kingdom that had been promised to them after 69

of those weeks of years (483) had been completed. That means there is one more week of years (7 years) remaining in Daniel's prophecy. We now refer to that week of years as the Tribulation Period. The parenthesis began after the stoning of Stephen, and will close at the Rapture of the church. Once the parenthesis that we live in (i.e. church) has been removed, the final week of years will kick back in, and God will in fact, fulfill all of His promises to the Jews and the Nation of Israel in the Old Testament regarding the "kingdom of heaven." Again, we are the "parenthesis," certainly not the replacement of Israel.

Now concerning this thing of the "kingdom of heaven" that is strictly found in the Gospel written to the Jews (Matthew). (Note that it is also called the kingdom of Israel in Acts 1:6.) As mentioned yesterday, by in large, almost every commentator you will find will say that the "kingdom of heaven" is the same as the "kingdom of God." Nothing could be further from the truth! This is where it is important not to leave the Bible in forming our definitions. Running to the Greek for our definition of these "kingdoms" is a sure way of insuring we will never really understand them biblically. If we just let the Bible be the Bible and provide its own definitions, there is a kingdom that was promised to the Nation of Israel. It is a literal, physical, governmental, Davidic, Messianic kingdom on the EARTH. It is this kingdom to which Matthew is emphasizing and to which he specifically identifies as the "kingdom of heaven." Many people get confused by the title, "Kingdom of HEAVEN" when it is referring to a literal, physical kingdom on the EARTH, until they recognize that from God's vintage point; the earth is actually the capitol of His heavens, and the place from which His plan for the universe is enacted.

By biblical definition, the "kingdom of God," on the other hand, is something all together different. Observe the biblical composite of this kingdom:

Romans 14:17 – It is not meat and drink, but righteousness, peace, and joy.

Luke 17:20-21 – It comes "not with observation" (i.e. you can't say, "Lo, here" it is or "Lo, there" it is – it is "within you.")

I Cor. 4:20 – It is not in word, but in power.

I Cor. 15:50 – Flesh and blood cannot inherit it.

John 3:3 – You enter it by a spiritual birth.

In other words, the "kingdom of God" is a SPIRITUAL kingdom, and the "kingdom of heaven" is a PHYSICAL kingdom. Again, more confusion concerning these kingdoms is caused by the fact that many of the parallel accounts in the other gospels contain the phrase "kingdom of God" where Matthew uses "kingdom of heaven." Rather than presumptuously conclude that they are the same thing, however, simply recognize the fact that Jesus Christ is the embodiment of both kingdoms, and while He was on the earth, both kingdoms were present at the same time.

We preach a "kingdom of God" message today (Acts 8:12), because the "kingdom of heaven: was put on hold after Stephen's final offer to the Nation of Israel in chapter 7. It will be a different message with different ramifications and promises during Daniel's 70th week, (the Tribulation Period), once we have been removed (i.e. believers will need to endure to the end to be saved – meaning, not taking the mark of the beast). (For a more detailed study, refer to "Church History" series, tapes 5-9.)

A few pithy comments about some of the verses in today's reading:

11:5 – This lets us know why Matthew recorded the healing ministry of Jesus in chapters 8 & 9. These things were how Israel was told they would be able to recognize their Messiah-King (see Isa. 53:5,6;61:1).

11:14 – Malachi 4:5 prophesied that Elijah would come before the establishment of the Day of Lord (i.e. the "kingdom of heaven"). Had Israel received her King, the parenthesis (Church Age) would have been non-existent, (That's why the church was in a "mystery" form in the Old Testament), and John the Baptist would have fulfilled the prophecy concerning the coming of Elijah. (Note, all other Old Testament prophecies concerning the Day of the Lord could have and would have been fulfilled.) As it stands, Elijah himself will return during the Tribulation Period along with Moses (Moses = the Law, Elijah = the Prophets).

12:23 – The people recognize Jesus is the Messiah (i.e. “the son of David”)!

12:24 – The Pharisees (religious leaders) don’t! They attribute the power through which He performed His miracles to Satan!

12:31-32 –Note some things about the so-called “unpardonable sin”:

There are four criteria to committing it:

1. You must be a Jew.
2. Jesus Christ must be publicly manifest in bodily form, performing signs & wonders.
3. You, as a Jew, are an eyewitness of the events in #2.
4. Your mind becomes so spiritually disoriented and perverted, and your heart becomes as hardened that you attribute the Person and works of Christ to Satan.

Note the phrases in verse 32, “in this world” and “in the world to come.” There are only two times that all four criteria can be fulfilled. The first was during the earthly ministry of Jesus from 30 to 33 A.D. The second is during the millennium (“the kingdom of heaven”). Don’t worry, you haven’t, won’t and can’t commit it!

13:1 – This is identifying a major shift in Jesus’ ministry. The “house” = Israel. The “sea” = Gentiles. The “kingdom of heaven” now goes into a parable state. Contrary to popular Laodicean teaching, a parable is NOT an earthly story that REVEALS a heavenly truth. It is a heavenly truth wrapped in an earthly story for the purpose of HIDING the truth from those who don’t really want it anyway (see 13:11-17).

13:55-56 – So much for Mary’s perpetual virginity!

DAY 204

TODAY’S READING: MATTHEW 14-16

OVERVIEW:

The feeding of the five thousand (chapter 14); the condemnation of false prophets (chapter 15); the great confession (chapter 16).

HIGHLIGHTS & INSIGHTS:

Because of the particular peculiarities of Matthew’s Gospel, each of the past four days we have sought to lay down some foundational understandings to keep us between the white lines in the New Testament. Most of our discussion has surrounded the importance of identifying the Jew, and distinguishing between the kingdom of heaven and the kingdom of God. Because it has been coming in pieces, let’s take a few moments to make sure we see how all of the pieces fit together to form the big picture.

The theme of the Bible revolves around a kingdom. The Bible begins with a struggle over a throne (Isaiah 14:13)...it ends with someone sitting on a throne (Revelation 11:15)...and everything between is really nothing more than God moving to put His Son on that throne, and the devil doing everything within his power not only to stop Him, but to put himself on that throne (II Thess. 2:4).

The kingdom, as it is described and defined in Scripture, has two distinct dimensions. These two dimensions are delineated in the Word of God through the descriptive phrases the “Kingdom of God” and the “Kingdom of Heaven”. Understanding what and where these kingdoms are as history unfolds through the Bible is the difference between sound doctrine and false doctrine.

The Kingdom of Heaven, sometimes referred to as the “Kingdom of Israel” (Hosea 1:4, Acts 1:6), is a literal, physical kingdom on the earth, where a literal king, is sitting on a literal throne in literal Jerusalem, ruling and reigning governmentally over the entire earth. This is the kingdom Isaiah prophesied would be established by the Promised Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ (Isaiah 9:6-7). It is interesting to note that the only time the Kingdom of Heaven is mentioned by name in the entire New Testament is in the gospel written specifically to the Jews, the Gospel of Matthew, where it appears 33 times! That it is found exclusively in the Gospel of Matthew must arrest our attention to the Jewish scope of its fulfillment!

(Note: This literal earthly kingdom is referred to as the Kingdom of Heaven because from heaven's vantage point, God chose the earth as the capitol of the universe.)

The Kingdom of God, on the other hand, is not a physical kingdom. The Word of God says that it is not meat and drink (Romans 14:17), it is not flesh and blood (I Corinthians 15:50), it does not come with observation (Luke 17:20), you cannot say "here it is" or "there it is" (Luke 17:21), and it is not even something you say in word (I Corinthians 4:20). Rather, this kingdom is a spiritual kingdom that is entered by a spiritual birth (John 3:3-5), and is placed within you (Luke 17:21).

Distinguishing between the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of Heaven is paramount, because as Jesus sent forth the Apostles in Matthew 10 to "preach that the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand", (Matthew 10:7) the message they were preaching was intended specifically for the Jews (i.e., the Nation of Israel)! In fact, they were specifically instructed NOT to carry this message to the Samaritans (half Jew/half Gentile), nor to the Gentiles (Matthew 10:5).

Interestingly, after the Nation of Israel received their final offer of the Kingdom of Heaven through Stephen's incredible discourse to the ruling council of Israel in Acts 7, in the very next chapter, Philip is led by the Spirit to the Samaritans, but the message he preached was not concerning the literal, physical, earthly, governmental kingdom, (the Kingdom of Heaven), but the spiritual kingdom, (the Kingdom of God!)(Acts 8:5, 12)

We must be very careful not to proclaim a Kingdom of Heaven message in this dispensation, lest we commit the blasphemy Jesus warned about in Revelation 2:9. Likewise, we must be careful not to pattern our methods in this dispensation as we proclaim the Kingdom of God, after those who went proclaiming the Kingdom of Heaven. In this dispensation, we do not follow the model of the Twelve, the Seventy, nor the church in Jerusalem; we follow the model of the church at Antioch. The church at Antioch sent out missionaries, proclaimed the Kingdom of God (the spiritual kingdom), and established local churches, because the local church is the vehicle in this dispensation through which our Lord is carrying out His plan to bring worshippers into His Kingdom.

A few comments about some of the verses in today's reading:

14:1 – Herod, like many in positions of power and authority, fears everything he SHOULDN'T and nothing he SHOULD. He fears John (14:4), the multitude (14:5), embarrassment, (14:9). One thing he doesn't fear is God!

14:6-7 – This is probably why so many Baptists are so against dancing. When someone asked the Baptist preacher why Baptists are so against premarital sex, he responded, "Because it might lead to dancing!"

14:8 – It can also cause you to lose your head!

14:14 – May the sin-sick multitudes likewise move us with compassion.

14:24-25 – The storms of life that threaten to overwhelm us, consume us, and destroy us are no problem for Jesus. In the context of the story, maybe we could say, "What threatens to be over your head, is under Jesus' feet!"

15:66 – Sometimes the people who are the most zealous for the truth of God, are actually the people who do the most to undermine it! Two quick examples: First, most people who believe the Bible they hold in their hand (as opposed to a Bible that is somewhere out there in "original manuscripts" that no one has ever seen) is the inspired, infallible, inerrant Word of God are guilty of possessing such a cocky, mean-spirited, pompous attitude, people can't hear or don't even want to hear the "truth" they're speaking. Second, so many Bible teachers who zealously want people to know the truth of God as it was revealed in the so-called "original manuscripts," by the time they have "championed the cause for truth" have very subtly taken the Bible right out of the hands of the common man, making them dependent upon a new kind of "priest class" to tell them what God said. A new sort of "dark ages," wrapped in the guise of giving people the truth. Wow! What a jungle! It's almost as if there is some kind of warfare going on concerning the Word of God!!!

16:15-19 –And ain't this a controversial doozy! I think it's a lot of rabbit trails to get into the whole "petra/petros" thing. I go with the fact that the church of Jesus Christ (yet future in this passage) is built upon THE Rock, the Lord Jesus Christ. Notice in light of our "kingdom of heaven" discussions, it was the keys to that kingdom to which Peter was given (i.e. the Apostle to the Jews). While that is the message that is being preached in the Book of Acts, Peter is the prominent voice. Once the final offer was made in Acts 7, and God transitions to the half Jew/half Gentile Samaritans in chapter 8, calls out the Apostle to the Gentiles (Paul) in chapter 9, and begins working with Gentiles in chapter 10 and following, the prominent voice changes to Paul. Note also that because of a misunderstanding of the keys he received, so many jokes begin the line, "So a guy goes to heaven, and Peter meets him at the gate."

DAY 205

TODAY'S READING: MATTHEW 17-20

OVERVIEW:

The King's glory (chapter 17); the King's rebuke (chapter 18); the King's instructions (chapter 19 verses 1-15); the King's demands (chapters 19:16-20:34).

HIGHLIGHTS & INSIGHTS:

Much discussion has already been made about the importance of keeping your eye on the Jew when dealing with the New Testament. This often confuses people, because they have assumed that since "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness," that it all applies directly to them. We could say it this way, "Though all of the Bible is FOR you, not all of the Bible is TO you." I like the illustration Jeff Adams uses to make this point. If I let you read the letter my grandfather wrote to me, offering his wisdom and insight gleaned through his life on the earth, and you come to the part where he talks about leaving me \$100,000 and you ask me about when WE collect OUR money, I'll be very quick to tell you that the letter was addressed and intended for me, I was simply allowing you to glean from the things my grandfather was seeking to teach me! In keeping with the illustration, when dealing with the Old Testament, and some New Testament Books, we as Gentiles living in the "parenthesis" we call the "church age" must be careful to keep in mind that we are reading someone else's mail! We are the church, so we go to the Bible to get our doctrine from the Books which are addressed specifically to the church, or those who hold positions of leadership in the church. That doesn't mean that we can't get anything from Books like Matthew (written to the Jews to present a Jewish king over a kingdom promised to Jews), or Hebrews (take a wild stab at who you think the Book of Hebrews is addressed to? "That's right, Johnny, Hebrews! Tell 'em what they've won!"), or James (you can't get past the first verse without being faced with the fact that you're reading someone else's mail! It is specifically addressed "to the twelve tribes.") Again, that is not to say that we can't get anything out of these Books. It simply means we must make certain that we have "rightly divided the Word of truth." It doesn't mean that there are not things that apply spiritually to our lives in a devotional sense; it just means we have to be extremely careful! We must keep in mind that Matthew, Mark, Luke, John and Acts (at least up to chapter 7), provide us an historical perspective of the first coming of Christ from the standpoint of the Nation of Israel. Once the Nation of Israel makes their final rejection of their King and His kingdom in Acts 7, a transition takes place in the Book of Acts:

- From an OLD TESTAMENT structure to a NEW TESTAMENT structure.
- From God dealing with the NATION OF ISRAEL, to dealing with the CHURCH.
- From God working primarily with the JEW, to God working primarily with the GENTILE.
- From the ministry of PETER, the apostle to the Jews (Acts 1-12), to the ministry of PAUL, the apostle to the Gentiles (Acts 13-28). •From God's base of operation being in JERUSALEM, to His base in ANTIOCH.

By the time you get to the end of the Book of Acts, the church is firmly established, and you move right into the letters written by Paul, to the church. In those Books you are safe. It is laying out doctrine intended specifically for those living in this dispensation. Because of who Paul is, the Apostle to the Gentiles, and because of the recipients of his letters, churches and pastors of churches, we want to be sure that anything we are applying to us is something that lines up with what God penned through Paul. It was this very principle that caused our brothers and sisters at times in church history to be referred to as "Paulicians." They understood the importance of "rightly dividing the Word of truth," and not applying to us, something God promised or intended for the Jews or the Nation of Israel.

Keeping these things in mind in today's reading will be helpful. See if you can make the distinction between those things that are specifically related to the Jews and the Nation of Israel, and those that also apply directly to us because they are repeated in the Pauline epistles.

Allow me to just mention a few things about the "Transfiguration" in 17:1-8 –

17:1 – Note that Peter, James, and John are the fulfillment of the strange statement the Lord made at the end of chapter 16, that there were some of the people that were listening to Him there who would be eyewitnesses of the Second Coming.

17:2 – Note the word "transfigured." In other words, Christ's "figure" was "transformed." When He came to this earth, He couldn't be anything other than what He was— the very glory of the Father (John 1:16). That glory, however, was veiled in a body of flesh. At the "transfiguration," Christ rolled back His flesh revealing the "glory of His Father" (16:27) that will be His when He returns to the earth at His second coming. See Peter's comments about this in his incredible statement in II Peter 1:16-18.

17:3 – This is the first time Moses stepped foot in the Promised Land. What a buzz this whole thing must have been for him!

17:1 – Back to verse one. Notice when this "second coming" pre-fulfillment (Matt. 16:27-28; II Peter 1:16-18) took place! "After six days"! Plug that into the equation God laid out in II Peter 3:8, and it lets you know that the second coming will be after 6000 years of human history. For the really astute folk, they will balk at such reasoning, citing that Luke's account of the transfiguration says that it was "about eight days" (Luke 9:28). I'm not the sharpest knife in the drawer, but I think that the number that is "after six" and "about eight" just might be seven!!! Just like Genesis 2:1-3 laid it out! See comments on Week #1's memory verse.)

17:1-5 – Notice also that in this "perfect" and "complete" picture of the second coming that there are seven in attendance: Jesus, Peter, James, John, Moses, Elijah, and God the Father.