

Text: Matthew 13:54-16:12

Section 1

54He came to His hometown and began teaching them in their synagogue, so that they were astonished, and said, "Where did this man get this wisdom and these miraculous powers? 55"Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not His mother called Mary, and His brothers, James and Joseph and Simon and Judas? 56"And His sisters, are they not all with us? Where then did this man get all these things?" 57And they took offense at Him But Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without honor except in his hometown and in his own household." 58And He did not do many miracles there because of their unbelief. (Matthew 13:54-58)

As Jesus taught in His hometown and among His kin, He was met with rejection. The people acknowledged that He possessed wisdom and miraculous powers, yet they could not accept that One from among them might actually be Messiah. They truly had no excuse, as the Scriptures plainly stated that Messiah would speak God's words, and be a healer of the sick. God declared that those who ignored His words would be judged for doing so.

18'I will raise up a prophet from among their countrymen like you, and I will put My words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him. 19'It shall come about that whoever will not listen to My words which he shall speak in My name, I Myself will require it of him. (Deuteronomy 18:18-19)

**4Surely our griefs He Himself bore,
And our sorrows He carried;
Yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken,
Smitten of God, and afflicted. (Isaiah 53:4)**

He did few miracles there *because of their unbelief*. This is not to say that unbelief in itself limits the power of God to heal or to do any other miracles. For example, the demon-possessed men we are told about in Matthew Chapter 8 did not possess faith in Christ, nor did those around them, who implored Jesus to leave the area. Yet, Jesus healed them. Moreover, we know from Ephesians Chapter 2 that faith is a gift of God, which He can freely bestow. Yet, in this case, the people persisted in their unbelief, and Jesus did few miracles. This is, to my understanding, a limitation which Christ imposed on Himself, and which is in keeping with His command to us in Matthew Chapter 7:

6"Do not give what is holy to dogs, and do not throw your pearls before swine, or they will trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you to pieces. (Matthew 7:6)

As Jesus did, so are we to do. We are not to persist in ministering to those that vehemently reject and persecute us. This does not mean that we are to turn and run at the first hint of rejection—Jesus did NOT do this—but it does mean that we would be wise to seek more fertile ground when those to whom we seek to minister become “abusive and blasphemous,” in the words of John MacArthur.

Section 2

1At that time Herod the tetrarch heard the news about Jesus, 2and said to his servants, "This is John the Baptist; he has risen from the dead, and that is why miraculous powers are at work in him." 3For when Herod had John arrested, he bound him and put him in prison because of Herodias, the wife of his brother Philip. 4For John had been saying to him, "It is not lawful for you to have her." 5Although Herod wanted to put him to death, he feared the crowd, because they regarded John as a prophet. 6But when Herod's birthday came, the daughter of Herodias danced before them and pleased Herod, 7so much that he promised with an oath to give her whatever she asked. 8Having been prompted by her mother, she said, "Give me here on a platter the head of John the Baptist." 9Although he was grieved, the king commanded it to be given because of his oaths, and because of his dinner guests. 10He sent and had John beheaded in the prison. 11And his head was brought on a platter and given to the girl, and she brought it to her mother. 12His disciples came and took away the body and buried it; and they went and reported to Jesus. (Matthew 14:1-12)

For this passage, I wish to first deal with Herod's oath. How careless this man was with his word, and loose with his morals, that upon being aroused by the dancing of his niece/stepdaughter (unlawful marriages can create such bizarre relationships) he swore to give her whatever she asked. This, of course, violated the Biblical injunction against adultery as explained by Jesus. It also demonstrated the foolishness of swearing oaths, and the wisdom of Jesus in warning that we should avoid doing so. In this case, Herod found himself bound by his word to kill a righteous man that he wished to save alive.

27" You have heard that it was said, 'YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT ADULTERY'; 28but I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart. (Matthew 5:27-28)

33" Again, you have heard that the ancients were told, 'YOU SHALL NOT MAKE FALSE VOWS, BUT SHALL FULFILL YOUR VOWS TO THE LORD.' 34" But I say to you, make no oath at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God, 35or by the earth, for it is the footstool of His feet, or by Jerusalem, for it is THE CITY OF THE GREAT KING. 36" Nor shall you make an oath by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black. 37" But let your statement be, 'Yes, yes' or 'No, no'; anything beyond these is of evil. (Matthew 5:33-37)

Next, let's deal with Herod's "grief." He had no qualms about putting John the Baptist in prison. Those that wish to persist in sin do not want to abide those that point out that sin.

19" This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil. 20" For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. (John 3:19-20)

"But wait," you might say. "Does the passage not also say that Herod was 'sorry' when he found himself bound to behead John?" Sorry? Yes. Remorseful? Maybe. Repentant? No. Judas was sorry too, as you may recall, but he did not experience repentance and faith leading to salvation.

3 Then when Judas, who had betrayed Him, saw that He had been condemned, he felt remorse and returned the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, 4saying, "I have sinned by betraying innocent blood." But they said, "What is that to us? See to that yourself!" 5And he threw the pieces of silver into the temple sanctuary and departed; and he went away and hanged himself. (Matthew 27:3-5)

12" While I was with them, I was keeping them in Your name which You have given Me; and I guarded them and not one of them perished but the son of perdition, so that the Scripture would be fulfilled. (John 17:12)

Remorse, ladies and gentlemen, is not repentance unto life. One can recognize that he has sinned and still not be saved. He can even feel sorrow for having done wrong, as if he is feeling sorry for *himself*, but not be truly repentant before God. No, the kind of sorrow and repentance that leads to salvation is when we realize that our sin, even the smallest, most insignificant (to us) sinful act makes us so dirty and loathsome in the sight of a holy and perfect God that we can justly expect nothing but to be cast into Hell forever with the Devil and his angels. We experience regret not because we deserve punishment, but because our actions have deeply offended the holiness of God Himself, the Creator and Supreme Ruler of the Universe.

The Good News is that God offers mercy to those that call on His name. Cry to God for mercy and repent of sin, confessing Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, believing that He is the risen Lord and King of all Creation. We have the promise of God, Who cannot lie, that He will extend such mercy to all that repent and believe.

9that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; 10for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation. 11For the Scripture says, "WHOEVER BELIEVES IN HIM WILL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED." 12For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, abounding in riches for all who call on Him; 13for "WHOEVER WILL CALL ON THE NAME OF THE LORD WILL BE SAVED." (Romans 10:9-13)

Section 3

13Now when Jesus heard about John, He withdrew from there in a boat to a secluded place by Himself; and when the people heard of this, they followed Him on foot from the cities. 14When He went ashore, He saw a large crowd, and felt compassion for them and healed their sick. 15When it was evening, the disciples came to Him and said, "This place is desolate and the hour is already late; so send the crowds away, that they may go into the villages and buy food for themselves." 16But Jesus said to them, "They do not need to go away; you give them something to eat!" 17They said to Him, "We have here only five loaves and two fish." 18And He said, "Bring them here to Me." 19Ordering the people to sit down on the grass, He took the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up toward heaven, He blessed the food, and breaking the loaves He gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the crowds, 20and they all ate and were satisfied. They picked up what was left over of the broken pieces, twelve full baskets. 21There were about five thousand men who ate, besides women and children. (Matthew 14:13-21)

34When they had crossed over, they came to land at Gennesaret. 35And when the men of that place recognized Him, they sent word into all that surrounding district and brought to Him all who were sick; 36and they implored Him that they might just touch the fringe of His cloak; and as many as touched it were cured. (Matthew 14:34-36)

29Departing from there, Jesus went along by the Sea of Galilee, and having gone up on the mountain, He was sitting there. 30And large crowds came to Him, bringing with them those who were lame, crippled, blind, mute, and many others, and they laid them down at His feet; and He healed them. 31So the crowd marveled as they saw the mute speaking, the crippled restored, and the lame walking, and the blind seeing; and they glorified the God of Israel. 32And Jesus called His disciples to Him, and said, "I feel compassion for the people, because they have remained with Me now three days and have nothing to eat; and I do not want to send them away hungry, for they might faint on the way." 33The disciples said to Him, "Where would we get so many loaves in this desolate place to satisfy such a large crowd?" 34And Jesus said to them, "How many loaves do you have?" And they said, "Seven, and a few small fish." 35And He directed the people to sit down on the ground; 36and He took the seven loaves and the fish; and giving thanks, He broke them and started giving them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the people. 37And they all ate and were satisfied, and they picked up what was left over of the broken pieces, seven large baskets full. 38And those who ate were four thousand men, besides women and children. 39And sending away the crowds, Jesus got into the boat and came to the region of Magadan. (Matthew 15:29-39)

As I have stated many times during our study of Matthew, Jesus' ability to heal is one of the marks of His office as Messiah, and He demonstrated that ability in these passages, as well. Isaiah 53:4, which we read earlier, is one prophetic passage that indicates the healing power of Messiah. I would like to further reference the Book of Isaiah to show that Jesus used the two "feedings" to demonstrate His power even more dramatically.

**6For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us;
And the government will rest on His shoulders;
And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. (Isaiah 9:6)**

Isaiah prophesied that the coming Messiah would be none other than God Himself, born in human flesh. John also spoke about Jesus being God:

1In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2He was in the beginning with God. 3All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being. (John 1:1-3)

All things came into being through Him. Isaiah said Jesus would be God; John said that Jesus was indeed God, the creator of the universe. How did God create the universe? (He spoke it into existence—see Genesis 1.) With what did He create the universe? (Nothing.) These "feedings" were nothing less than creation *ex nihilo*—creation "out of nothing," just as He did when creating the universe. Jesus here demonstrated a power belonging only to God.

Before leaving these passages, let me also note that Jesus, besides demonstrating His being Messiah and God, also followed a principle here that we are to remember: do not attempt to preach the Gospel to those that have physical or other needs until you meet those needs. A hungry man doesn't know he needs a Bible—he only knows He needs food. The man on the side of the road asking for food or money or work will likely not want to sit and pray with you. Your server at the restaurant making \$2 an hour plus tips will not take well to a Gospel tract being given in lieu of a tip (though they can be left along with a generous tip).

14What use is it, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but he has no works? Can that faith save him? 15If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, 16and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and be filled," and yet you do not give them what is necessary for their body, what use is that? 17Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself. (James 2:14-17)

Section 4

22Immediately He made the disciples get into the boat and go ahead of Him to the other side, while He sent the crowds away. 23After He had sent the crowds away, He went up on the mountain by Himself to pray; and when it was evening, He was there alone. 24But the boat was already a long distance from the land, battered by the waves; for the wind was contrary. 25And in the fourth watch of the night He came to them, walking on the sea. 26When the disciples saw Him walking on the sea, they were terrified, and said, "It is a ghost!" And they cried out in fear. 27But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, "Take courage, it is I; do not be afraid." 28Peter said to Him, "Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water." 29And He said, "Come!" And Peter got out of the boat, and walked on the water and came toward Jesus. 30But seeing the wind, he became frightened, and beginning to sink, he cried out, "Lord, save me!" 31Immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and took hold of him, and said to him, "You of little faith, why did you doubt?" 32When they got into the boat, the wind stopped. 33And those who were in the boat worshiped Him, saying, "You are certainly God's Son!" (Matthew 14:22-33)

Jesus demonstrated power not only to create, but to act contrary to physical laws when it suited His purposes to do so. The disciples acknowledged this as a demonstration of His deity when they said *You are certainly God's Son!*

Jesus granted power unto His followers to perform miraculous acts in proportion to their faith *in Him*. When Peter stepped out of the boat in faith he was enabled to walk on water; when he lost focus on Jesus and focused on the wind instead, he sank. Likewise, if we have even a small, but firm faith *in Him* (and the Object of faith is important—we don't just have "faith in faith") we will be able to do great things for His Kingdom. (Note: Faith in Him will not enable us to act not in accordance with His will, and especially not in a sinful manner!)

18And Jesus rebuked him, and the demon came out of him, and the boy was cured at once. **19**Then the disciples came to Jesus privately and said, "Why could we not drive it out?" **20**And He said to them, "Because of the littleness of your faith; for truly I say to you, if you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move; and nothing will be impossible to you. (Matthew 17:18-20)

13I can do all things through Him who strengthens me. (Philippians 4:13)

14This is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. **15**And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him. (1 John 5:14-15)

Section 5

*21*Jesus went away from there, and withdrew into the district of Tyre and Sidon. *22*And a Canaanite woman from that region came out and began to cry out, saying, "Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David; my daughter is cruelly demon-possessed." *23*But He did not answer her a word. And His disciples came and implored Him, saying, "Send her away, because she keeps shouting at us." *24*But He answered and said, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." *25*But she came and began to bow down before Him, saying, "Lord, help me!" *26*And He answered and said, "It is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs." *27*But she said, "Yes, Lord; but even the dogs feed on the crumbs which fall from their masters' table." *28*Then Jesus said to her, "O woman, your faith is great; it shall be done for you as you wish." And her daughter was healed at once. (Matthew 15:21-28)

Please don't think Jesus was being cruel here. Granted, He was under no obligation to help this woman—remember, none of us deserves anything from God but an eternity in Hell! And, He was correct in saying that the Gospel was offered to the Jews before it was offered to the rest of us.

16For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. (Romans 1:16)

However, Jesus' primary purpose in speaking so harshly to the woman appears to have been to test her faith, and to demonstrate it to us. Her faith, one that was not proud or demanding, is the type that we must have. We come to Him, recognizing that we have virtually no standing before God, but trusting that He will grant mercy unto those that ask. Although I have referred to it often, the parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector is relevant:

9And He also told this parable to some people who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and viewed others with contempt: **10**"Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. **11**"The Pharisee stood and was praying this to himself: 'God, I thank You that I am not like other people: swindlers, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. **12**'I fast twice a week; I pay tithes of all that I get.' **13**"But the tax collector, standing some distance away, was even unwilling to lift up his eyes to heaven, but was beating his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, the sinner!' **14**"I tell you, this man went to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted." (Luke 18:9-14)

Section 6

*1*The Pharisees and Sadducees came up, and testing Jesus, they asked Him to show them a sign from heaven. *2*But He replied to them, "When it is evening, you say, 'It will be fair weather, for the sky is red.' *3*"And in the morning, 'There will be a storm today, for the sky is red and threatening.' Do you know how to discern the appearance of the sky, but cannot discern the signs of the times? *4*"An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign; and a sign will not be given it, except the sign of Jonah." And He left them and went away. *5*And the disciples came to the other side of the sea, but they had forgotten to bring any bread. *6*And Jesus said to them, "Watch out and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees." *7*They began to discuss this among themselves, saying, "He said that because we did not bring any bread." *8*But Jesus, aware of this, said, "You men of little faith, why do you discuss among yourselves that you have no bread? *9*"Do you not yet understand or remember the five loaves of the five thousand, and how many baskets full you picked up? *10*"Or the seven loaves of the four thousand, and how many large baskets full you picked up? *11*"How is it that you do not understand that I did not speak to you concerning bread? But beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees." *12*Then they understood that He did not say to beware of the leaven of bread, but of the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees. (Matthew 16:1-12)

Jesus mentioned the *sign of Jonah* previously, and expounded upon it. This sign was none other than Jesus being dead and buried, and rising again on the third day.

39But He answered and said to them, "An evil and adulterous generation craves for a sign; and yet no sign will be given to it but the sign of Jonah the prophet; **40**for just as JONAH WAS THREE DAYS AND THREE NIGHTS IN THE BELLY OF THE SEA MONSTER, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. (Matthew 12:39-40)

The Pharisees and Sadducees were experts in the Old Testament, yet they were so blinded by their traditions and self-righteousness that they failed to see the Fulfillment of the Law right before their eyes. Jesus warned His followers to beware of their teachings, and to stay away from them.

This is a fine admonition even for us today. I don't think most Christians are in danger of following the teachings of the Pharisees and Sadducees, but we must always be on the lookout for false teachers, which the Bible warns are among us, and will increase in number and popularity as we near the end.

28"Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. **29**"I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; **30**and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them. **31**"Therefore be on the alert, remembering that night and day for a period of three years I did not cease to admonish each one with tears. **32**"And now I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified. (Acts 20:28-32)

3For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires, **4**and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths. (2 Timothy 4:3-4)

Like the teachings of the Pharisees and the Sadducees, many of today's false teachings pervert Christianity into a religion of doing for ourselves, rather than one in which Christ paid the penalty for our sins, and even grants us the faith we exercise to be saved. Whether it's Joel Osteen's heretical self-help message, or the works gospel of the Jehovah's Witnesses, human perversions of Christianity refuse to admit that we are broken and helpless apart from God's grace. No amount of good works or service to God will save—only faith in Jesus as Savior and Lord will save, and that is the Good News!

8For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; **9**not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. (Ephesians 2:8-9)