



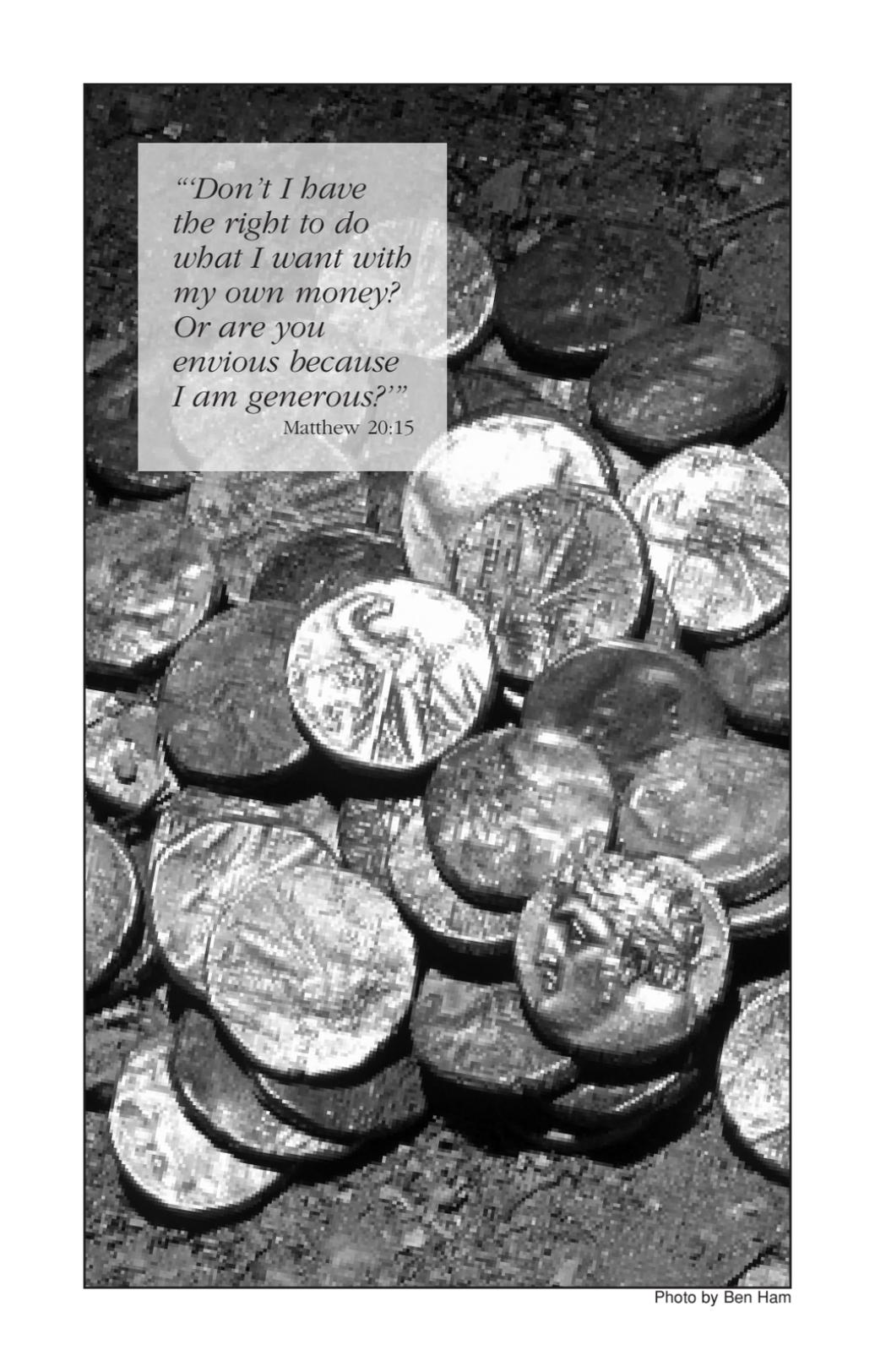
CHRISTIANITY WITHOUT THE RELIGION

BIBLE SURVEY

THE UN-DEVOTIONAL

MATTHEW

Week 4



*“Don’t I have
the right to do
what I want with
my own money?
Or are you
envious because
I am generous?”*

Matthew 20:15

Success At Last!

DAY 22

Matthew 20:1-34

By what definition of *success* do you measure yourself?

1. In the parable of the workers paid equally (20:1-16), how did equality seem unjust? Fair? Generous? Is God's idea of fairness as expressed here different from your own? How?

2. What does this parable tell you about God's grace?

3. What clue tells you that these disciples still didn't get what Jesus meant by the necessity of his suffering and death (vs. 17-28; see also 16:21; 17:22-23)?

4. How did the mother's request for her sons compare with Jesus' teaching about greatness or success?

1. What does Jesus want us to learn from the healing of the blind man?

2. When has God's grace amazed you? Are you as willing to receive God's grace as you are to see others experience it?

3. By God's measure, do you consider yourself successful? In what ways?

If you have them available, read verses 2-6 in a literal translation (KJV, NASB, or RSV), a dynamic equivalent translation (NRSV, NIV, NEB) and a freer paraphrase (JB Phillips, Living Bible, or The Message or the New Living Translation). What interpretive help on wages and times of day do you note in the various versions?

OPENING

up to the Word

DIGGING

into the Word

LIVING

out the Word

WINDOW

on the Word

Grand Entrance and Great Expectations

DAY 23

Matthew 21:1-46

Have you ever seen a huge parade? Who or what was the parade honoring?

1. Why the donkey (vs. 2-7; see 1Ki 1:33; Zec 9:9)? Was this a show of royal force, helpful hospitality, obedient stewardship or messianic fulfilment?

2. How did the crowd react to the parade and why (vs. 8-9, 14-15)?

3. How and why did Jesus cleanse the temple (vs. 12-13, 23-27)?

4. Why did Jesus curse the fig tree (vs. 18-22)?

5. What is the point of healing the blind and the lame at the *temple* (vs. 14-15; see Lev 21:18)?

6. What's the question behind the question of Jesus' authority?

7. Who do the two sons (vs. 28-32) and the tenant farmers (vs. 33-44) represent historically?

8. Why were tax collectors and prostitutes (vs. 31-32) and the other tenants (vs. 41-43) honored? Who is disinherited and why?

1. What house-cleaning is needed where you worship? Does religion need to be swept away?

2. What mountain would you like God to move right now?

3. Which son are you most like? Why?

4. What vineyard work is God calling you to and where?

***Parables** were told with real-life cultural or historical events in mind: Tax collectors and prostitutes were the disenfranchised groups of their day. The Roman Empire was controlled by wealthy absentee landlords. Israel martyred many of its prophets. Money changers provided a service for temple visitors to buy temple currency to purchase animals for sacrifice. With their exhorbitant fees and procedures, they had turned temple worship into the big business of religion.*

OPENING

up to the Word

DIGGING

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Party-Poopers

Matthew 22:1-45

OPENING
up to the Word

DIGGING
into the Word

Have you ever refused a wedding invitation? If so, what excuse did you offer?

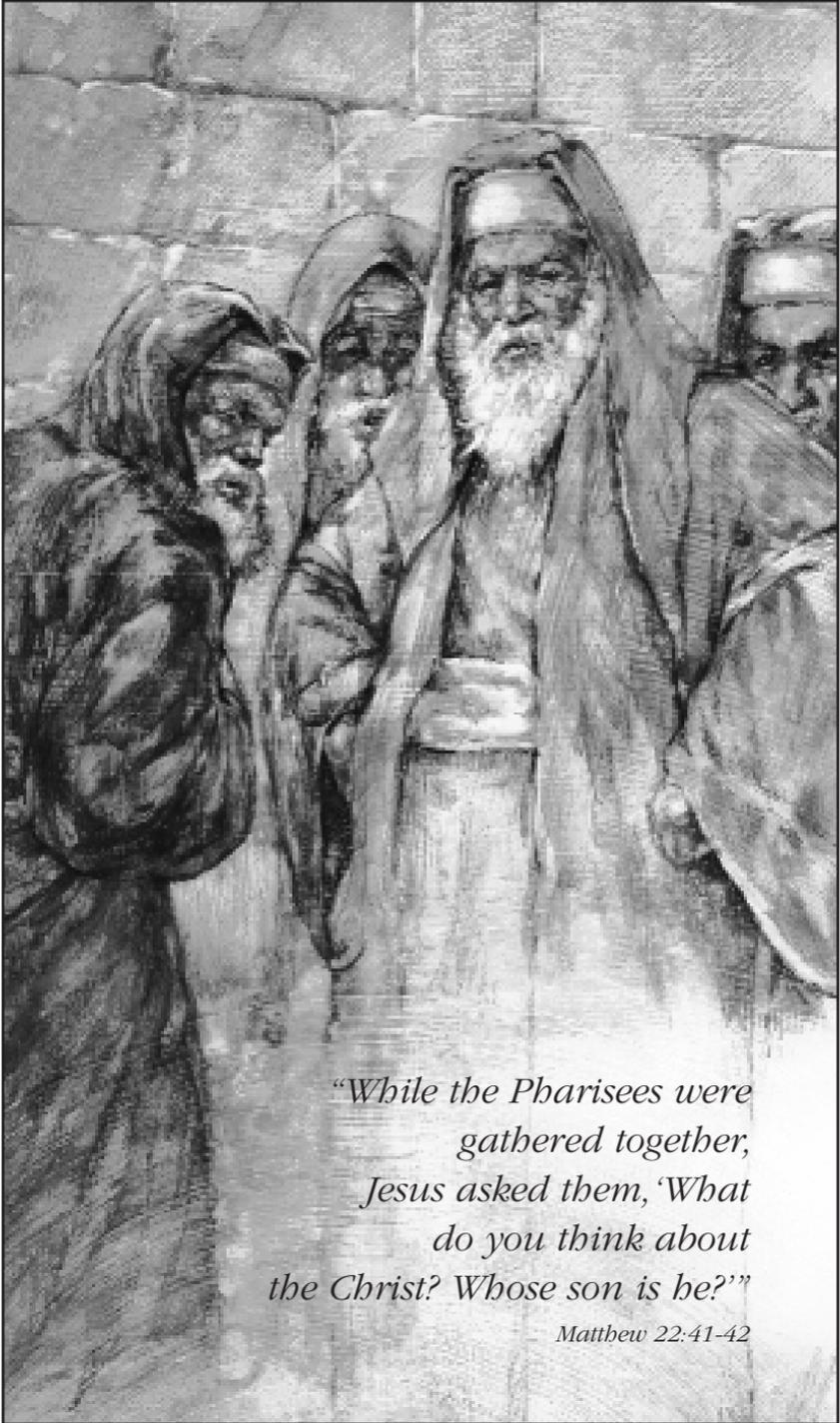
1. In the wedding banquet story, who is the king? The son? Servant-messengers? Special guests? Undeserving street-corner types?
2. Why be a party-pooper (vs. 5-6)?
3. Why reject the poor guest for improper dress (vs. 9-14)?
4. If Jesus had answered the trick question either way, what could the Pharisees or Herodians have done to him?
5. How did Jesus refute the Sadducees' denial of the resurrection (vs. 29-32)?
6. How is it possible for us to keep the greatest commandment and its corollary?
7. How did Jesus turn the tables (vs. 41-45)? With what effect (v. 46)?

LIVING
out the Word

1. How do you know you've been invited and chosen to attend God's party in heaven?
2. How are you rendering to Caesar and to God?
3. What prospects does heaven hold for you?
4. What big question, such as those from this chapter, would you put to Jesus?

WINDOW
on the Word

Wedding clothes (v. 11), were customarily provided by the host. Not wearing what had been offered insulted the host, just as refusing the initial invitation did. In this parable, the wedding garments refer to the righteousness that God both offers and demands, by his grace. **The Pharisees** (vs. 15, 34) were ardent nationalists (anti-Rome) and legal scholars (counting 613 statutes in the Law). **The Herodians** (v. 16) were loyal to the Herods of Rome. Each political party had opposing views on taxes, so their collaboration on this issue was unusual. **The Sadducees** (v. 23) held opposing doctrinal views to the Pharisees, especially about the resurrection and which Jewish holy books were authoritative Scripture.



“While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them, ‘What do you think about the Christ? Whose son is he?’”

Matthew 22:41-42

DAY 25

Give 'em Hell, Harry!

Matthew 23:1-39

OPENING
up to the Word

American President Harry Truman was famous for telling people off. Have you ever done that?

DIGGING
into the Word

1. What bothers Jesus most about what the Jewish leaders were doing or not doing?

2. What is wrong with putting religious burdens on others (v. 4)? With wearing religious symbols or Scripture memory devices (v. 5)? With religious titles that confer honor (vs. 8-12)? With raising the standards for heaven (v. 13)? With being a zealous evangelist (v. 15)?

3. Does Jesus value minutia of the law (vs. 16-24)? Why or why not?

4. Why follow external religious rules if, on the inside, one's heart is arrogant, selfish and corrupt (vs. 25-28)? Is this a victimless crime or is something else at stake here?

5. Which is easier—to point out faults and pass the blame to others, to idealize and idolize a religious heritage or to accept the fact that human religious performance is meaningless (vs. 29-32)?

6. How will the Pharisees come to share in the history of martyrdom (vs. 33-36)? Whose death is Jesus foretelling?

LIVING
out the Word

1. For which of these many *woes* are you guilty?

2. If you were guilty of hypocrisy in any of these areas, how would you want it pointed out to you?

3. How have you responded to Jesus' warnings about religious legalism?

WINDOW
on the Word

Phylacteries (v. 5) are little boxes of Scripture verses (Ex 13:1-10; 13:11-16; Dt 6:4-9; 11:13-21) worn on the forehead and arm. **From... Abel to... Zechariah** (v. 35; Ge 4:8; 2Ch 24:20-22) summarizes the history ("from A to Z") of martyrdom in the OT.

But the Sky Is Falling!

DAY 26

Matthew 24:1-51

Suppose you were Chicken Little, who, like false prophets, felt he needed to convince people that the sky was falling. How would you do it?

1. What in this story do you find most alarming? Least alarming?
2. What signs mark the beginning of the end (vs. 4-14)? What signs mark Jerusalem's destruction (vs. 15-22)? Were these prophecies fulfilled with Jerusalem's fall—witnessed by that generation?
3. What's the difference between *watch out* (v. 4) and *keep watch* (v. 42; also 25:13)?
4. Jesus said to his disciples "this generation" would not "pass away" until all the things he prophesied happened (v. 34). What does that statement mean for the "end times" preaching that explains our day is the "time of the end"?
5. Who knows when Jesus will return (v. 44)?

1. What persecution have you experienced because of your faith? How have you responded?
2. Can you be motivated by Jesus' Second Coming even though you don't know when it will come?

The abomination that causes desolation (v. 15; see Dan 9:27; 11:31; 12:11) refers to the Antichrist desecrating the Jerusalem temple, causing believers to flee and leave it "desolate." Immediate historical precedent and fulfillment for this abomination were the events of 168 B.C., when Antiochus IV Epiphanes set up a Greek idol for worship and the events of A.D. 66-70, when the Romans destroyed Jerusalem and carried their standard into the burning temple. Jerusalem's destruction was nearly one generation (v. 34), or forty years, from when Jesus was speaking.

OPENING

up to the Word

DIGGING

into the Word

LIVING

out the Word

WINDOW

on the Word

Are We There Yet?

Matthew 25:1-46

OPENING
up to the Word

Have you prepared for an unexpected event, such as a house on fire? An earthquake? A tornado? A job layoff? Your death?

DIGGING
into the Word

1. What made some virgins foolish, others wise? What was wrong with sharing the oil (v. 9)?
2. In the parable of the talents, what must one do or be to earn the master's commendation?
3. Both the righteous "sheep" and neglectful "goats" didn't completely understand. What was it they failed to understand?
4. When will this judgment take place (vs. 31-34, 41, 46)?
5. From Matthew 25 (all three parables), how can anyone be assured of their reception into God's kingdom? Does God's grace have anything to do with that?

LIVING
out the Word

1. Which virgins do you identify with?
2. Which of the talent-laden people do you identify with?
3. What special talents (spiritual gifts or natural abilities) have you been given?
4. If you knew that Jesus would return next month, what preparation and service would you do this week?

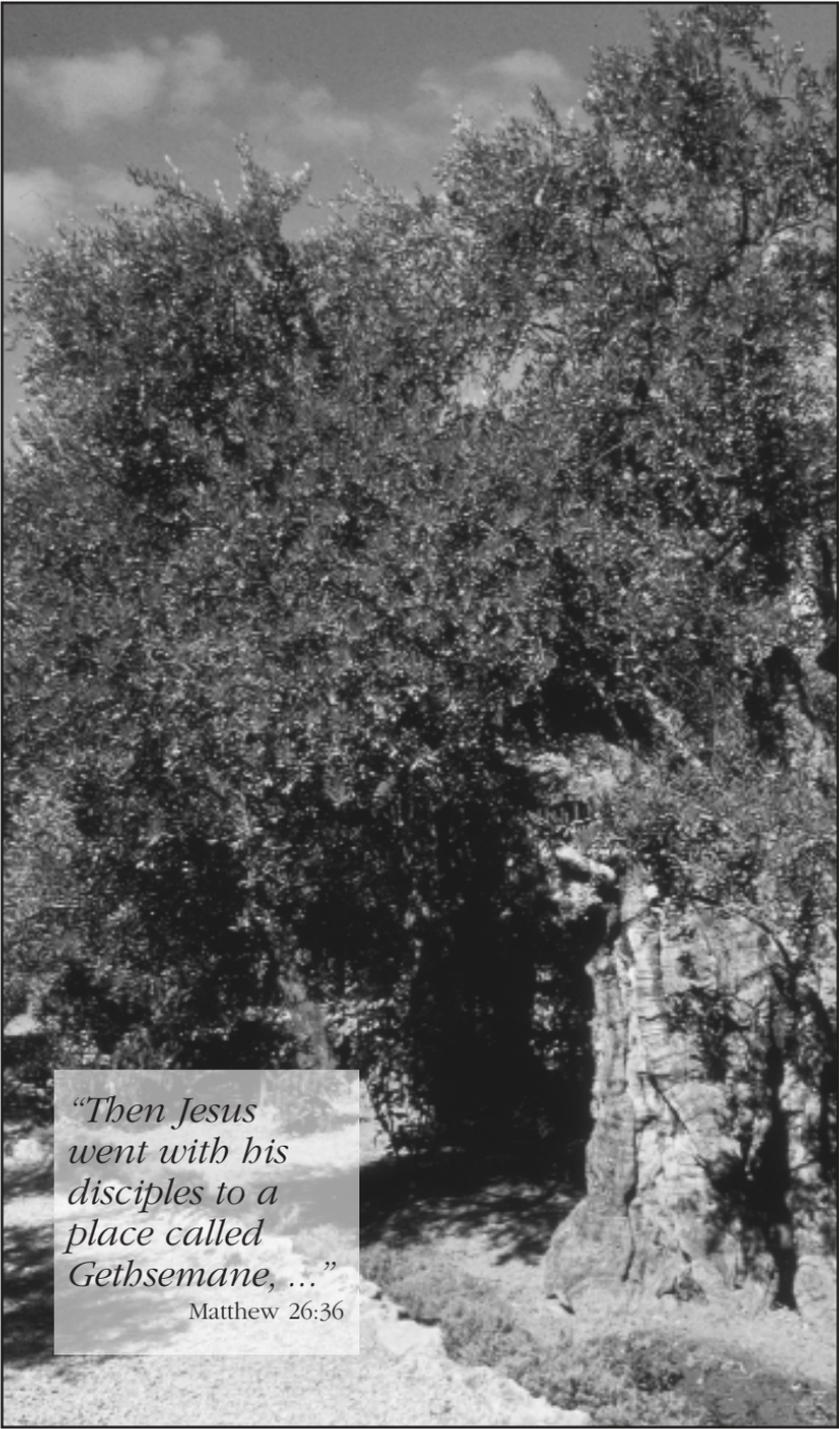
WINDOW
on the Word

Virgins (v. 1), or honored bridesmaids, prepared the bride for the groom. **Lamps** (v. 1) were torches with long rag wicks soaked in olive oil that had to be replenished every 15 minutes. **Talents** (v. 15) were once a unit of weight (about 75 pounds), also coinage, worth perhaps 10,000 denarii (denarius = a day's wage, at that time); in modern usage, a gift or ability.

*“...the kingdom of heaven
will be like ten
virgins who took their
lamps and went to
meet the bridegroom.
Five of them were
foolish and five were wise.”*

Matthew 25:1-2





*“Then Jesus
went with his
disciples to a
place called
Gethsemane, ...”*

Matthew 26:36

That's No Way to Die!

DAY 28

Matthew 26:1-56

At about what age do you suppose you will die? Do you think it will be of old age or illness? Sudden or gradual? With your boots on, or your slippers?

1. Try to make sense of the woman's gift, Jesus' acceptance of it, the disciples' anger and their treasurer's (Judas) attempt to stop Jesus (vs. 7-16). Why did each do what they did?
2. In what sense do the events surrounding the Lord's Supper seem inevitable and predetermined (vs. 18, 24, 31, 34, 42, 45, 54, 56)? Incredible and hard to imagine? Unintended and regrettable? Universal and applicable to all?
3. How does Jesus transform the old covenant Passover ritual (vs. 26-29; Ex 12:2-14)?
4. Who is sad and why (vs. 22, 37-38)? Where do you sense good news mixed with bad (vs. 29, 32, 39, 42)?
5. Is Peter boastful or foolish? Bold or cowardly? Loyal or disloyal? (Compare vs. 33-35 with vs. 69-75; vs. 37-41; also vs. 51-54 with Jn 18:10.)
6. In Gethsemane, how does Jesus show his humanity? What does Jesus ask of his Father? Why three times?
7. Is *falling away*—like Judas or Peter did—possible with any true disciple? Why or why not?

1. What character-shaping moments, both good and bad, have affected your walk with Jesus?
2. What is your present relationship with Jesus like? (a) asleep, (b) taking him for granted, (c) ready for assignment, (d) ready to die, (e) running away, (f) willing to splurge a year's wages as a response to God's lavish grace?

*The woman's **expensive perfume** (v. 7) would have cost a common laborer one year's wages. To **fall away** (v. 31) meant here, to "flee in terror" (vs. 56, vs. 69-75), not to lose one's salvation. **Jesus' cup** (v. 39) was filled with sorrow and suffering, pointing to the cross, from which would come resurrection glory and joy (Heb 12:2).*

OPENING

up to the Word

DIGGING

into the Word

LIVING

out the Word

WINDOW

on the Word

To Tell the Truth

Matthew 26:57–27:44

OPENING
up to the Word

Were you ever caught between a rock and a hard place?

DIGGING
into the Word

1. Why did Peter follow at a distance?
2. When convicted of the truth (and their own failure), how did Peter and Judas respond (vs. 75; 27:3-5)? Why did Judas commit suicide, but not Peter?
3. How did Pilate get caught between a rock and a hard place (vs. 14-24)?
4. How and why did the soldiers abuse and humiliate Jesus? Who else joined in?
5. How did Jesus typically respond here (vs. 62-64; 27:11-14)? Why not exercise other options (see vs. 53-54; 27:42-43)?

LIVING
out the Word

1. Have you been the victim of rumors, malicious charges, physical abuse or public humiliation? If so, did God use this ill treatment of you for good?
2. Have you ever failed to keep a promise or a vow to the Lord? How did you handle that failure? How did God meet you in that situation?
3. Many believe in the “penal substitutionary” idea of Jesus’ death—that is, the Father was so offended and disgraced that he insisted that someone pay so he could be satisfied. But the gospel speaks of Jesus’ cross as a supreme demonstration of God’s love. What do you think?

WINDOW
on the Word

Most scholars believe that Roman law did not allow the Jewish Sanhedrin to execute any of its own people. This would explain why Pontius Pilate (27:2), Roman governor of Judea, A.D. 26-36, was the proper venue for a criminal accused of a capital offense. Blasphemy was not punishable by Rome, but treason was. Jesus was accused of claiming to be King, an office that only the Emperor had the right to confer under Roman law.

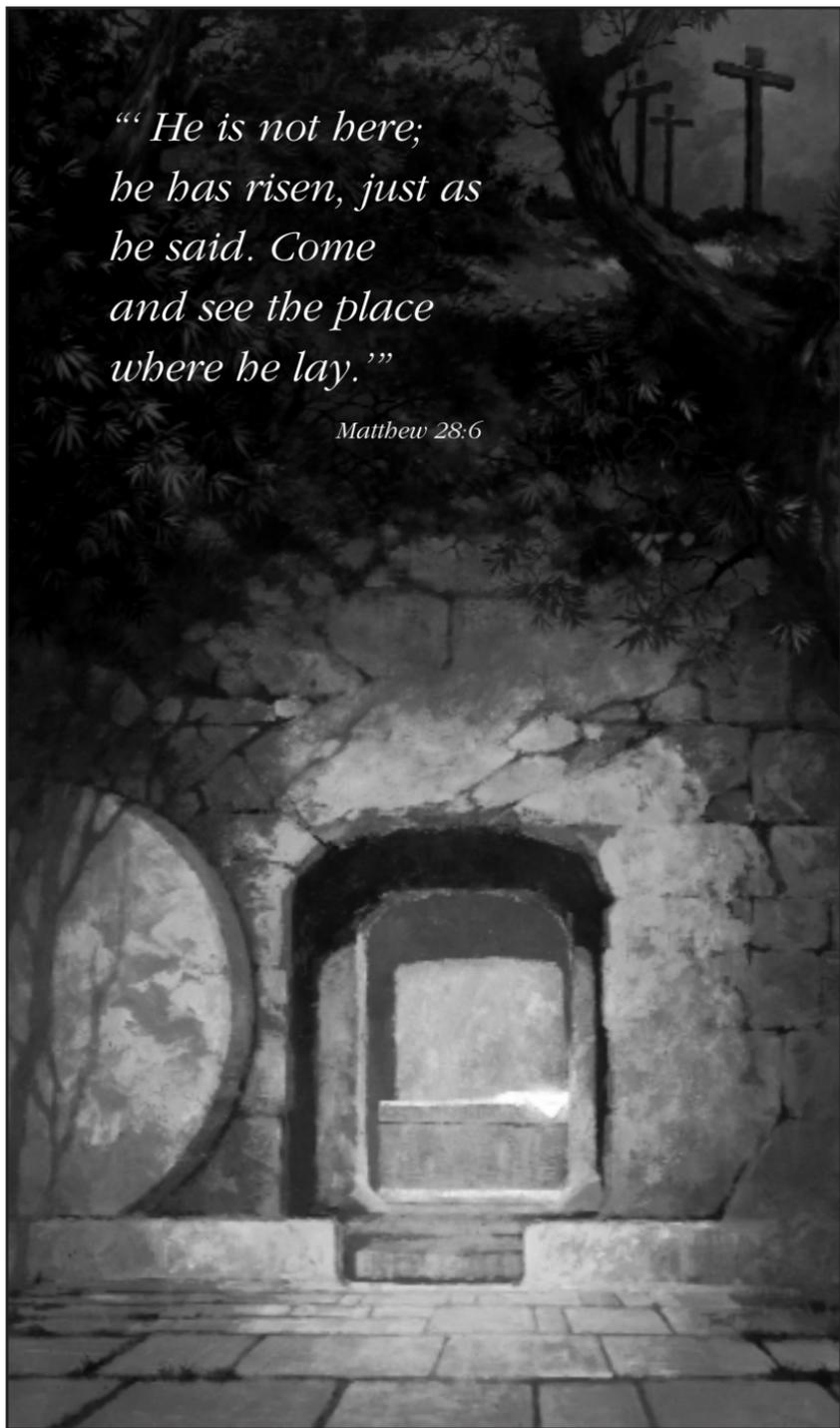
*“What shall I do,
then, with Jesus who
is called Christ?”
Pilate asked. They
all answered,
‘Crucify him!’”*

Matthew 27:22



*“ He is not here;
he has risen, just as
he said. Come
and see the place
where he lay.”*

Matthew 28:6



Resurrected, Reunited and Reproducing

DAY 30

Matthew 27:45–28:20

Does death scare you? Any specific fears? What would you like done with your body after you die?

1. What “special effects” accompanied Jesus’ death? What is the deeper meaning of the torn curtain? Of the raised bodies? Of the earthquake?
2. What friends came to Jesus’ tomb? How did they show their respect?
3. Even though Jesus was dead, what precautions did the chief priests and Pharisees take and why?
4. How did the women react to Jesus’ resurrection? How about the guards or chief priests? The disciples?
5. What story did the Jewish leaders buy? What other plausible explanations might account for the empty tomb?
6. What was there about the risen Lord Jesus that would give rise to both worship and doubt (28:17)?
7. Dissect the Great Commission (28:18-20) phrase by phrase, word by word. What do the verbs tell you? The objects of each verb? The subject? What is meant by “therefore”?
8. Jesus told his disciples to baptize “in the name” (not names) “of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (v. 19). Isn’t this a clear reference to the triune God taught in the New Testament—one name, three separate, distinct, divine Persons?

1. What myths or misconceptions keep modern people from believing the Resurrection story?
2. In the conclusion to your study of Matthew, what have you learned about the gospel of the Kingdom?

*The **witness of women** was considered unreliable, even worthless, in ancient Middle Eastern cultures. So, their testimony to the Resurrection could hardly be the invention of the early church, but was actually more of an embarrassment to the male disciples.*

OPENING

up to the Word

DIGGING

into the Word

LIVING

out the Word

WINDOW

on the Word