



Lesson 3

Chapter 7: Putting the Gospel into Practice

Judging Others (7:1-6)

In the Sermon in the Mount Jesus shows us how important it is that we treat others properly. In chapter 7 he warns us that we should not judge others; we need God's mercy and forgiveness ourselves and so must show mercy and forgiveness to others.

SOME REASONS WHY WE SHOULD NOT JUDGE OTHERS

- We may have misunderstood them.
- We probably do not know all the facts.
- Our understanding of what God requires of the person may not be correct.
- We ourselves are often wrong in what we do and say and would not want others judging us.
- Our sins may be far greater than the problem we think the other person has and so we may be like the hypocrites (7:4, 5). If we judge others harshly then God will not show mercy when He judges us (7:2).
- We often excuse ourselves but make no such allowance when others do the same wrong. We are not fair in our judgement!

The Golden Rule (7:7-14)

"Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you."
(Matthew 7:7)

In three different ways (*ask, seek, knock*) we are provided with reassurance that God will provide "good things to those who ask him". So if we genuinely seek to find Bible truth, God will help us.

Matthew 7:12 sums up the attitude a Christian should have towards others – the Golden Rule:

"...whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them."

We should treat people as we ourselves want to be treated and show them more love and understanding. We should help when we see them struggling in life, and forgive them without being asked.

The Apostle Paul told the believers at Rome:

"We who are strong have an obligation to bear with the failings of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let each of us please his neighbour for his good, to build him up."
(Romans 15:1, 2)

Verses 13 and 14 of Matthew 7 remind us that true Christians can expect to be in a minority (a small group). We should not be afraid to be different when loyalty to Jesus demands it; sadly most people still reject the ways of God.

False Claims (7:15-23)

In verse 15 Jesus warns us to beware of false prophets, (or teachers) who appear to be his disciples (or sheep) but they are not what they appear to be. They are described as 'wolves' who will destroy the faith of others. Some people claim to be disciples of Jesus but their actions (their 'fruit' in verses 16-20) do not match their words. We should always compare what they do and what they believe with what the Bible tells. God's Word is the only authority for our lives.

When the Lord Jesus Christ returns he will not accept all those who say that they are his disciples. It is not enough to say we are disciples; we must do what God requires:





“Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.”

(Matthew 7:21)

There are people today who claim to use the Holy Spirit to prophesy or work miracles. Jesus warns us (Matt. 7:22, 23) that such false claims would be made and so we need to be careful that we are not taken in by them:

“... many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?' And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.’”

Those who claim to have Holy Spirit gifts are false and often show this by their wrong beliefs. So, for example, anyone who says a person continues to exist in some form after he has died is teaching error. God would not allow him to use His Holy Spirit power to perform miracles. Similarly a person who does not recognise that Jesus Christ came in human form cannot be working on God's behalf (see 1 John 4:1-6). Holy Spirit gifts do not exist today (see Lesson 21 of the 40 Lesson course).

A Good Foundation (7:24-27)

The Sermon ends with a vivid parable about wise and foolish builders. Both types of builders represent people who hear the words of Jesus. Disaster comes upon the one who builds his faith on uncertain foundations and fails to **do** what Jesus says.

Notice how Jesus' hearers react in verses 28 and 29 and why they did this. Jesus showed the authority he had received from the Lord God.

Which of these houses would you rather live in?





Chapter 8: Jesus the Healer

Healing the Leper (8:1-4)

The Sermon on the Mount was over and Jesus moved on. His meeting with a leper is very significant. Leprosy is incurable, even today it can only be controlled but cannot be cured. In the Bible leprosy refers to serious disease of the skin. It could be spread easily, and so sufferers were forced to keep apart from other people. The man with the leprosy first showed his faith in Jesus; he knew that Jesus could heal him.

No healthy person would touch someone with leprosy. So when Jesus reached out and touched the man, the Jews who were watching would have been surprised and shocked. Jesus knew that he had the power to heal and, filled with compassion, he immediately cured the leper. However, he did not want the man to spread the news of his healing. Jesus wanted people to follow him for his teaching, rather than be attracted by his miracles.

It is only the healing work of Jesus that can save us from death. Therefore, like the man with leprosy we must have faith in the Lord Jesus.

Jesus told the healed leper to go and show himself to the priest. Although Jesus knew that many of the priests failed to honour God, he still told the healed leper to do this because it was what the Law of Moses instructed (Leviticus 13 and 14). It shows that Jesus kept the Law.

Healing the Centurion's Servant (8:5-13)

The Roman centurion was a Gentile and, like the Jewish leper, he also had faith that Jesus could heal. Jesus commended him for his faith; it was greater than any he had found in Israel. The centurion knew that Jesus did not need to go to his house to heal his servant but only needed to speak the words and his servant would be healed.

Other miracles follow in the rest of the chapter. Jesus showed his power over physical illness, over mental disturbance, and over the forces of nature. Verse 17 shows that this part of Jesus' work was in fulfilment of Old Testament prophecy.

Peter's Mother-in-Law (8:14, 15)

When Jesus visited Peter's house, he was asked to heal Peter's mother-in-law:

“And he stood over her and **rebuked** the fever, and it left her, and immediately she rose and began to serve them.” (Luke 4:39)

Notice that Jesus spoke to the fever. Similar language is used about Jesus healing people with demons. In the same way that a fever cannot hear and understand, neither can a demon. There are no spirit beings that cause illness.

These three miracles of healing show us that Jew and Gentile, male and female can have a place in God's Kingdom. This is on the condition that we have faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as the saviour sent by God and that we show our faith in lives of discipleship.

“There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise.” (Galatians 3:28-29).

Casting out Spirits (8:16, 17)

The Gospels often refer to people 'possessed by demons' (or 'possessed of devils'). People at that time thought that some illnesses (those they could not explain and which caused the sufferer to behave strangely - like mental illness, deafness, dumbness and epilepsy) were caused by demons or evil spirits entering a person and influencing them. But there are no such living beings as demons or evil spirits. God does not create spirit beings like this.

Verse 16 records an occasion when Jesus cured people thought to be possessed by demons and evil spirits. Verse 17 explains that when Jesus did this he was fulfilling a prophecy of Isaiah about taking up our





infirmities and **diseases**. So these people were really suffering illnesses and did not have evil spirits who controlled them.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION: DEMONS

The Lord God is the only true and living God (Deuteronomy 4:39; 32:17; Isaiah 45:5). Demons were false gods or idols. Throughout history people have worshipped idols, often of wood or stone, imagining that the spirits of false gods entered and possessed their idols. The Bible warns about the evil of worshipping idols (Deuteronomy 4:15-19; 25-28).

A demon = a false god = an idol

Although these gods or demons were only wrong beliefs and not real beings, people thought they had great influence over their lives.

“They served their idols, which became a snare to them. They sacrificed their sons and their daughters to the demons; they poured out innocent blood, the blood of their sons and daughters, whom they sacrificed to the idols of Canaan, and the land was polluted with blood.”

(Psalm 106:36-38)

When people thought that their condition was caused by a demon Jesus sometimes not only healed them but also showed them that their ‘demon’ was gone.

The Mentally Ill Man (8:28-34)

The incident at the end of Matthew 8 is also recorded in Luke 8, even though Luke only refers to one of the men. Luke 8:35 says that after the demons had been cast out, the man was **in his right mind**. This suggests that before the miracle he had been mentally ill. Luke 8:36 shows that Jesus had performed a **healing** miracle.

People with diseases of the mind have disturbed behaviour and strange thoughts. For example, they may think that they hear voices or that someone is watching them. This man, with his strange thinking, would know he had been healed if he saw the pigs rushing into the sea. He would think his demons had drowned. However Jesus, the great healer, knew exactly how to help this person.

Today medical drugs are used to control mental illnesses like this.

Pig meat can sometimes contain tapeworm larvae; if the meat is not cooked properly, these can enter the body of the person who eats it and can cause a disease called ‘cystercercosis’. This affects the nervous system, sometimes producing confusion and personality changes. This could be the reason these men showed such strange behaviour (see Isaiah 66:17). However big our problems are in this life, Jesus can heal us from our sins and give us life everlasting in God’s kingdom on earth.

Following Jesus (8:18-22)

Scribes were scholars who studied the Old Testament and made new copies by hand. When a scribe wanted to follow Jesus he was warned that it involved self-sacrifice. Another wanted to wait until his father had died before following Jesus. Jesus said, *“Follow me, and leave the dead to bury their own dead.”*

Jesus was not saying that dead people can go to the funerals of other dead people! Rather he was saying that spiritually dead people will put the cares of this life before the call of their discipleship. We should not find excuses that stop us following the true and living way! Jesus is teaching us that it is important that we get our priorities right. We must put God first in our lives. If we do not do this then, although we are physically alive, in God’s sight we are as good as dead.

Chapter 9: Power and Authority

Healing the Paralysed Man (9:1-7)

In chapter 8 we saw how Jesus showed his authority and power to heal, as the centurion recognised (verses 8, 9), and also his authority over the wind and the waves (verse 26).





In chapter 9, he shows his authority to forgive sins – something which the Jews thought only God could do. Jesus had been given this unique authority by his Father. In verses 2-7 Jesus forgives and heals the paralysed man. In verse 8 the people respond by praising God. The fact that Jesus could heal this man (something they could see) was a sign that he could also forgive sins (which they could not see).

The Tax Collectors (9:9-11)

Jesus called Matthew who was one of the hated tax collectors. He offended many people by choosing Matthew as a disciple. However, Jesus chose him because he saw into Matthew's heart, and found him ready to respond to the Gospel.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION: TAX COLLECTORS

In the time of Jesus, the Jewish people were heavily taxed. They had to pay the Jewish authorities to look after the Temple in Jerusalem; they also had to pay very heavy taxes to the hated Roman rulers and this annoyed them very much.

The tax collectors (called 'publicans' in some translations of the Bible) often used their position to become rich themselves by being dishonest. So tax collectors were hated by many people.

Jesus looked on people differently. He did not turn away anyone who repented and came to him in faith – not even a hated tax collector. In fact, some of Jesus' most faithful followers came from classes of people that other Jews despised.

The Pharisees disapproved of Jesus eating with tax collectors and sinners. Because Jesus knows what people think, he knew that some of these despised people wanted to leave their sinful ways and follow him. The Pharisees, by contrast, thought they were righteous and so they thought they did not need the grace of God which Jesus offered.

It is only when we understand what sin is and how often we fall short of the standard set by the Lord Jesus, that we realise our need of God's mercy. He is not interested in those who consider themselves to be righteous. Humility is essential in our approach to the Lord God and His Son.

Mercy not Sacrifice (9:12, 13)

In verse 13 we read that Jesus told the Pharisees *"go and learn what this means, I desire mercy not sacrifice"*.

This is a quotation from Hosea 6:6

"For I desire steadfast love (mercy) and not sacrifice, the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings."

Jesus told the Pharisees, who were teachers of the Law, to *"go and learn"* the meaning of what he was saying and doing. The example they should have known was of God's dealing with His people when He called them out of Egypt.

What Samuel said to King Saul is similar:

"Has the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to listen than the fat of rams." (1 Samuel 15:22)

Unless sacrifices, which included burnt offerings, were offered with the right attitude they did not please God. The Old Testament prophet Micah has a similar message, which is quoted in this box.

The scribes and Pharisees in the time of Jesus wanted to impress others by their observance of the Law of Moses.

"With what shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before God on high? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old?

He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?"

(Micah 6:6-8)





However, God knew their motives – He knew why they were offering the sacrifices – and was not pleased because their hearts were not right. Jesus is telling us that our worship today, our going to church on Sundays for example, will not be accepted by God if our hearts are not right before Him.

Jesus was showing God's love and mercy to the tax collectors and sinners in the same way as his heavenly Father in the past, was merciful to Israel. God wanted them to obey Him in humility and love. We need to remember that He wants us to respond to His love from an honest and open heart. He wants us to love and care for others as He does for us, and not pretend we are more righteous than others.

Three Small Parables (9:14-17)

The disciples of Jesus would not want to fast and mourn while Jesus was with them, but they would when he went to heaven. And today true disciples anxiously wait for the Lord Jesus to return from heaven. But what did Jesus mean when he advised against repairing old clothes with new unshrunk cloth, or putting new wine into old wineskins?

The 'new' represents the teaching of Jesus which was new to the Jews. A disciple of Jesus has to be prepared for a big change in his or her life. The 'new wine' of the Gospel must be poured into 'new wineskins' – lives changed and renewed after the example Jesus himself has set.

More Healing Miracles (9:18 – 31)

The next miracles Jesus performed teach us the importance of faith. It is by faith in the teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ that we can be delivered from death.

Raising the Ruler's Daughter from the dead (9:18-19, 23-26)

A certain ruler came to Jesus seeking help because his daughter had just died. From Mark 5:22 and Luke 8:41 we are given more details. His name was Jairus, he was one of the rulers of the synagogue and his **only** daughter was 12 years old. Jesus described her death as sleep because he was about to awake her from the sleep of death. For those who believe and follow Jesus, death is like a sleep from which Jesus will wake us at his return to the earth.

Woman with a discharge of blood (9:20-22)

The woman had faith in Jesus as her healer and believed that she only need touch the hem of his garment to be healed of the haemorrhage of blood. "*Jesus turned, and seeing her he said, "Take heart, daughter; your faith has made you well." And instantly the woman was made well"*. Again Jesus is teaching us of the importance of seeking him and having faith in the Gospel message.

Two Blind Men (9:27-31)

The blind men cried "*Have mercy on us, Son of David*" (verse 27). They believed from the Scriptures that Jesus was descended from David and was the promised Messiah. Here is a promise God made to David.

"When your days are fulfilled to walk with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, one of your own sons, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for me, and I will establish his throne forever."

(1Chronicles 17:11-12)

The blind men believed that Jesus was able to cure their blindness. Their faith was rewarded and they went away seeing. Without knowledge of God's plan and purpose for mankind we are blind, groping around without hope. It is only through the work of Jesus that our spiritual blindness can be healed.

Healing the Dumb Man (9:32-34)

Jesus healed all kinds of infirmity. The dumb were thought to be possessed in some way by an evil spirit or demon within them. Jesus was able to heal every kind of sickness. When Jesus returns to this earth all sickness, disease and death will be removed for ever.

The need to preach (9:35-38)

The people of Israel in the time of Jesus are described as "*sheep without a shepherd*" because the religious leaders were not helping them to follow God's ways. Jesus travelled throughout Israel preaching the Gospel. He expects his followers to realise the importance of preaching also (9:37, 38).



Name	
Address	
Reference Number	
Tutor	

Answers to most questions can be found in the lessons or Bible passages given. Please write your answers on this question paper and return them in the envelope provided:

Questions on Chapter 7

- 1 What do verses 3 and 4 teach us?
- 2 Which path do most people take – the way to life, or the way to death (verses 13, 14)?
- 3 What sort of things will people say they have done for the Lord? Why will they be rejected? (verses 21-23)
- 4 In the parable at the end of the chapter, what does the rock foundation represent?

Questions on Chapter 8

- 1 Why was Jesus impressed (pleased) with the centurion?
- 3 Verse 17 is a quotation from Isaiah, chapter 53. Look up this chapter; what else does it foretell about Jesus?

- 4 Did the man Jesus healed really have evil spirits or demons inside him that were making him behave strangely?

Questions on Chapter 9

- 1 The bridegroom in verse 15 represents Jesus; what is the verse saying?

- 2 Was the ruler's daughter really dead?

- 3 Why does Jesus say she was sleeping?

Look at verses 10-13. Physician means doctor. The two groups are:

- i. Pharisees
- ii. Tax collectors and sinners

- 4a Which group of people thought they were whole (or well)?

- 4b Which group of people thought they were sick?

- 4c Who do you think most needed to be healed (from their sins)?

- 6 What did Jesus require of people before he performed miracles?

- 7 What two lessons for our lives, can we learn from the miracles (Matthew 9:18-33)?