

Where did Jesus get his **Wisdom** and **Power?**



Matthew reveals the secret in five stories of rejection, murder, hunger, near drowning and homicidal enemies

*50 Year
Projects*

Jack Rendel

Where Did Jesus Get His Wisdom And Power?

Five stories describe the absolute necessity of
“looking up to heaven”

Jack Rendel

Jaki & Zaki Publications

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For George Verwer who helped us “look up to
heaven”

Versions Of The Bible Quoted

The English Standard Version (ESV) is used unless otherwise stated.

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Preface

I grew up in Nigeria, West Africa. My real name is John but my nickname is Jack and as a child they called me Jackie. In the area in which I lived the people used the Hausa language. In that language Jackie meant donkey. I wasn't very happy with it. The Africans were very merciful and changed my name. They changed the j of Jackie to a z. The resulting word Zackie meant lion in their language. I was very happy with the change!

You'll remember that there was a prophet in the Bible by the name of Balaam who disobeyed God. He was hired by the King of Moab to curse the children of Israel. On his way to meet that king an angel of God appeared in his way with a sword in his hand. The prophet didn't see the angel but his donkey did. God caused the donkey to be able to speak and she spoke to Balaam telling him that he was in danger (Numbers 22:28).

So, this book is written by a donkey, about Jesus, who is the Lion of the Tribe of Judah. You might pray that as you read this book that God will use the words of this donkey to speak to you and bless your heart. If you were wondering this also explains why I have used a donkey and a lion in the emblem for my publications!

I thank the Lord so much for all the brothers and sisters that I have met in Brazil and Portugal over the years. I have just returned from a trip to Brazil in September of

2005. I enjoyed the food, the churrasco, the feijão, the farinha, the coffee and the Guaraná. While in Portugal I've tasted that delicious pork dish, leitão de Bairrada, as well as the dried and salted codfish, bacalhau. Besides the food I have enjoyed wonderful fellowship with many people in Brazil and Portugal and I am beginning to learn a little Portuguese.

On the trip to Brazil in September of 2005 I was able to introduce my messages with a short greeting in Portuguese and talk in very simple conversation with people after the meetings. It was really very enjoyable. Another great blessing has been to work alongside our brothers and sisters in those two countries who are engaged in full time ministry. I appreciate so much those who did so many things for me on my trips. One sister would always bring me a cup of fresh water after I finished preaching at Pastor Humberto Aragão's church, in São José dos Campos. Another sister brought me some coffee after my seminars at the OM Missionary Training Center. Others made meals for me. Pastors invited me to preach in their churches. I hesitate to mention names because I can't mention everyone and yet am thankful for each person and family.

The outline found in this book has been the basis of messages I have preached. The book "fills out" the messages for further meditation and encouragement. May the Lord bless you as you read, meditate, study and share with others.

(Corresponding PowerPoint® presentation: 041_Matthew_DISCIPLING_NATIONS_where_Jesus_wisdom_power_division_4_section_1_presentation.ppsx)

Introduction

There is much talk in our day about resourcing. In businesses, colleges, churches and other Christian ministries there are entire departments of "Human Resources" and "Development", with very sophisticated computers and people who have studied just how to recruit a work force and how to raise funds. In missions we talk about "resourcing" the ministry. We have to think about the *sources* from which the resources come.

Jesus knew the importance of recruiting workers for the spiritual harvest fields. He told his disciples to pray that the Lord of the harvest would send out workers into the harvest fields. One of the great joys of our day is to see Christians from all over the world going out as missionaries to reach the unreached with the Good News of Jesus.

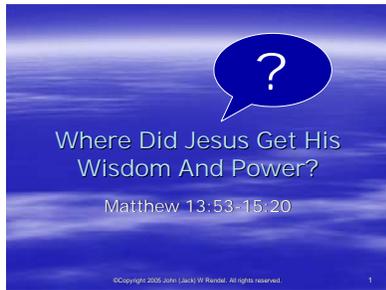
Recently on a trip to Brazil two of the Brazilians who translated for me had worked in Bosnia as missionaries. A third person, who translated had ministered in India, Portugal and Spain. A fourth person who helped me with translation was originally from Argentina, but with his wife are especially interested in the ministry in Azerbaijan, a country nestled amongst other countries and bordering the western shore of the Caspian Sea. It is an unusual land because it is split in two parts by the country of Armenia. To the west lies Turkey and to the south Iran. Russia and Georgia are its northern neighbors.

Workers are being raised up from many lands, places like New Guinea and Mongolia, not just from the “traditional sending countries” like the United Kingdom, Germany, Canada, Norway, Sweden, Finland, Denmark, Switzerland, the USA and others. The Evangelical Church of West Africa has fielded hundreds of African workers, about half of them ministering cross culturally.

While often the resources being referred to are either human or financial there are other things, which are important as well. Wisdom and strength are greatly needed in our world.

While we may turn to a department of “experts” if we need personnel or finance, where do we turn for wisdom and power (strength)? Let’s remember that in business, family life and church or missions we should turn to the Lord first and ask him for all these things. If you are a managing a business, or managing a home, and a believer do you go to the Lord and ask him for help first? That’s right, that’s where all of us should start, people in what we call the business world, or in household management or those who are in Christian ministry. So, where do you go first? Have you put the Lord first in your business, home and ministry?

Where Did Jesus Get His Wisdom And Power? Matthew 13:53-15:20



(PowerPoint, page 1, available on this Web site)

Where Do You Get...?

Sometimes I go grocery shopping but I'm not as familiar with the stores as my wife is. I soon find myself asking someone in the store, "Where do I get...?" I am asking them where a certain item is, in which aisle and on which shelf. I have asked people where I can get things online via the Internet. I have asked people in which kind of store I can get a particular item. Recently I had to get a new passport and a visa to visit the country of Brazil. I had to start asking where I could get a passport and where I could get a visa. Sometimes we're looking for things that are less expensive and so we ask where we can get the same item but for less. Sometimes we're looking for somebody who can do a really good job on something and so we ask where to find somebody who is really capable.

A Question Of Sources

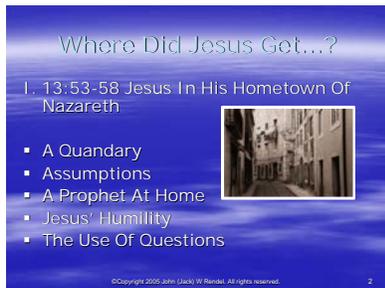
After Jesus had finished giving the parables of chapter thirteen of Matthew he went on from there to his own hometown. At Nazareth he created quite a stir! The people there began to ask the question, "Where did this man get this wisdom and these miraculous powers?" (13:54)

Struggles And Sources

I wonder if you are the kind of person who from time to time or even very often struggles for survival in the Christian life? I know that there are times when I have tremendous struggles and wonder if I can really carry on. I know I need to return to the lord and asking for his strength and for his perseverance. I struggle with sin. I struggle with emotions. I struggle with questions of all kinds. I struggle because I feel weak. I struggle because I feel tired. I desperately need to return to the Lord, seeking his presence, finding his strength and learning to lean on him.

In their humanity the people of Nazareth probably went through many of these kinds of struggles. They had their days when they were up and they had their days when they were down. They also sensed that they were weak. They sinned. They were at times exhausted and tired. There were days when they did not want to carry on. Suddenly there appears a person amongst them who seems to have incredible power and incredible wisdom way beyond anything that they had or had ever seen before!

I. 13:53-58 Jesus In His Hometown Of Nazareth



(PowerPoint, page 2)

Nazareth In A Quandary

Jesus was doing miracles and preaching in the synagogue in Nazareth. The way in which he spoke, and the things that he said, were incredible. They had never seen or heard anything like it before. But almost immediately they faced a problem. The person that was speaking was Jesus, someone who had grown up amongst them and that they knew as a boy and young man. They probably had been impressed with how good a person he was as he grew up amongst them. However, they had never heard him preach in the synagogue or do miracles before. How could they explain all of this? They reassured themselves that Jesus had actually grown up amongst them. They "did a review" of his family. They mentioned his parents. They talked about his brothers and sisters. They were in a quandary as to how to respond to him.

Hometown Assumptions

Because it was obvious that Jesus had not received his wisdom and miraculous powers from them they were offended. You see it was all very well and good that he had these wonderful things and was doing them amongst them but they had no idea where he had gotten them. They

assumed that he had received everything he ever got from them. From where else would he have gotten these things? Hadn't he lived amongst them for over twenty years? Until just a few weeks ago he had lived with them every day. He had not gone off to Jerusalem to university to study but had worked with his father in his business there in Nazareth. He had only been away from Nazareth for a few weeks, when he went down to the Jordan River where John was baptizing, and then spent a few days at the feast in Jerusalem (John 2:13-4:54). That was too short a time for him to have learned all of this wisdom and how to do all these miracles!

A Valid Question?

While the question that they had raised about where Jesus had gotten his wisdom and powers was valid, they really wanted the answer to that question to be they, themselves. They wanted to think that Jesus had received everything he had from them. In a sense they didn't really want to hear an answer that excluded them. They wanted to be the source of all that he had. Maybe we could call this hometown pride!

There is a sense in which all of us think that all the good things anybody can have would come from a lesson from our culture. We are left no centric and carry that over into areas of spirituality. We think that we live in a box and that there's nothing outside that box or at least nothing of any worth. Maybe this is one of the reasons why we find it so hard to pray. We think that anything worthwhile must come from ourselves and our immediate environment and

the people around us. We find it hard to think that we can reach out to God, who is way beyond ourselves, way beyond our culture and even way beyond our planet in order to receive help, guidance and strength. Instead of honestly trying to learn where Jesus had received the good things that he had, they became offended. They really didn't want to hear what he had to say because they felt self-sufficient. I wonder if the same attitude is lurking in me? Am I able to learn from other people around me? Am I willing and able to learn from people in other cultures? Most of all, am I willing and able to learn from God? While sometimes we go on wondering whether there are intelligent beings in other parts of our universe we continue to ignore many of the promises and good things that God, the creator of the universe, has given to us in his Word.

A Prophet At Home

I suppose that if the prophet or Messiah who appeared in Nazareth that day had come from a different part of the country, someone the people in Nazareth did not know ever since his childhood, they might have been much more open to his message and his ministry. They might have assumed that he had received these things in the place that he was from. This is in fact exactly what Jesus said about a prophet not being accepted in his own home country and hometown. Sometimes we give the benefit of the doubt to a person who's from somewhere else or who is a relative stranger. Sometimes we are very demanding of those who live immediately around us, especially our own family.

Jesus' Humility

Jesus could have been of tremendous benefit to the people of his hometown. He could have taught them day after day in the synagogue and they would have learned wonderful things about God. He could have healed many of the people in town with various diseases and cast out demons. He might have raised some folks from the dead. But they wouldn't have it and he was amazed at their unbelief. However, instead of calling fire down from heaven on them he simply accepted their judgment and moved on from there. Jesus truly acted in humility. He could have chastised them very severely but he didn't.

My Response?

If someone were to do the very same thing to us how would we respond? Would we respond in humility and meekness? We notice that he healed a few sick folk. Maybe there were a few in the town who were open to his ministry and he was able to help those. It is amazing that in a midst of all this rejection and offensive attitude that he were to have waited even for a minute to help anybody! But he did find those few who did want his help and he did help them. In the midst of rejection are we sensitive enough to find people that need help and give them some help? It really is a test of our perseverance, our patience and our love and concern for people. I don't know if I would have had the patience or humility to respond the way that Jesus did. When we offer our help to others and they reject it, it is truly a test, which is hard to pass.

The Use Of Questions

The answer to the question that the people of Nazareth asked is given here in the Bible but not within this story. We find the answer a little bit further ahead. In fact somebody else in Galilee is asking a similar question to that question that the people in Nazareth were asking.

But before we get to that let's just make another observation for those of you who are Bible students. One of the ways in which rabbis taught their students was on the basis of question and answer. We find in this part of Matthew from chapter 13:53 to the end of chapter 18, which forms one division of Matthew, that Matthew uses questions to organize his material. The first question we are dealing with right now. Where did this man get this wisdom and these miraculous powers?

The other three questions I will leave for other books that I hope to be writing on this division of Matthew. The Jewish rabbis' use of questions with their students is very similar to the kind of approach that is used in catechisms. Organized under different themes a series of questions with their theological and moral answers is given. In the same way Matthew uses a question to open up this portion of his gospel.

Questions In The Letter To The Romans

Paul used questions in his letter to the Romans to introduce ideas and get people to think. Consider a few of them, Romans 6:1-3, 15-16; and 7:1, 7, and a part of their answers:

1 What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? 2 By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it? 3 Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?

15 What then? Are we to sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means! 16 Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness?

1 Or do you not know, brothers—for I am speaking to those who know the law—that the law is binding on a person only as long as he lives?

7 What then shall we say? That the law is sin? By no means! Yet if it had not been for the law, I would not have known sin. For I would not have known what it is to covet if the law had not said, "You shall not covet."

Let's set aside the attitude that Nazareth displayed and pursue this question and its answer. Just where did Jesus get his wisdom and power? One thing puzzles me, not being able to find the answer to a question within the immediate context. The story of what happened to Jesus in Nazareth doesn't give us the answer to the question about where he got his wisdom and power. It took me many years of Bible study to begin to realize that the answer to

some questions in the stories in the gospel were not within the context of the story itself but somewhere nearby in another story or teaching. We'll find that this is true in this case as well.

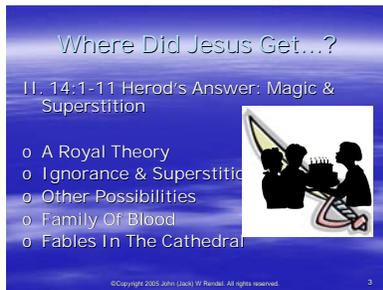
He Got It From The King, Of Course!

Someone might say, "I've got it. I've got the answer! I know where Jesus got his wisdom and power. He got it from the king, king Herod, of course. The king is the highest authority in the land with the greatest resources. He must have gotten it from the king. After all, don't kings rule by divine right?" Ah, but Matthew soon sets us straight on that account. The next story will tell us how.

Questions For Study

1. What is the key question in these five stories? (13:53-58)
2. Who asked the question and why did they ask? What was their response to Jesus and what was his to them? (13:53-58)

II. 14:1-11 Herod's Answer: Magic & Superstition



(PowerPoint, page 3)

A Royal Theory

The author of this gospel transports us from the scene in Nazareth to another one in the palace of Herod who was King over Galilee. You see the people of Nazareth were not the only ones asking where Jesus got his miraculous powers. The King of the country was also asking the same thing. He also had his theory as to what the answer was. He had heard reports about what Jesus was doing and thought he had an answer to why Jesus was displaying so much power. He told his attendants that he thought that Jesus was actually John the Baptist raised from the dead. Having been raised from the dead these powers were at work in him. Jesus and John were being discussed in high places, Herod's court!

Ignorance And Superstition

Herod's answer showed signs of ignorance and superstition. First of all he didn't realize that Jesus and John the Baptist had actually been living at the same time. If they had been living at the same time how could one be the resurrection of the other? Secondly there is no guarantee that if somebody is raised from the dead that they will be able to do miracles. John records in his gospel

that Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead but there is no record that Lazarus ever did miracles after he came back from the dead.

Other Possibilities?

When we ask the question where did Jesus get his wisdom and power what are some of the possible answers? Here is a short list:

1. Jewish leadership and education
2. Roman leadership or education
3. One of the world religions
4. Angelic beings (occult)
5. Magic, maybe through a resurrection? This is what Herod thought
6. Financial, Jesus bought it
7. Intellectual (Greeks and others)
8. Extraterrestrial? Some people today may think this is the answer
9. People today might even ask if it were steroids!

Birthday Of Blood

Another family is described in this story. You'll remember that Jesus' family is mentioned in the first story. But what a contrast between the two families! Everything we know about Jesus' family is that they were God fearing people. The family of Herod is quite a different story! Flavius

Josephus detailed all the ambitious murderous conniving of Herod and his family in his writings. It was quite incredible how they murdered one another (*Thrones of Blood*, Flavius Josephus, Translated by William Whiston, Barbour Publishing, 1998). To anyone reading this story for the first time they might find it shocking that John the Baptist was killed in this way on Herod's birthday, but this was typical of the way that Herod the Great and his children lived and died...and celebrated birthdays!

Fables In The Cathedral

We had the opportunity of taking a "tour" of a cathedral in one of the countries where we were ministering. The guide took us from room to room. In one of them we noticed a head severed from the body lying on a shelf. When we asked what it was, the guide said that it was the head of John the Baptist, the real head of John the Baptist. He surprised us still more when he added that in his country, in four other locations, they had more authentic heads of John the Baptist!

So, of course, we asked the guide about the case of John the Baptist. How did John get his head cut off? He began to tell us the "story". He said that 2000 years ago, in the times of Jesus, there was a king and a prophet. The prophet was John the Baptist. The king and the prophet both fell in love with the same maiden. And because the king wielded more influence and was more powerful, he killed the prophet, and took the woman. For many people it's all the same whether the guide knew the true story or not. For those who know the Bible, they know that guide's

story is not correct. In fact, sometimes you hear fantastic things from people, when it has to do with biblical events. It is evident that the Word of God is not taught to the masses, or that the masses of people do not attend church, or do not listen to the preachers. Those, called Christian leaders, who do not teach the Bible will have to give account to God, for laying aside his precious Word.

The Bible tells us that Herod celebrated his birthday and that the daughter of Herodias, his brother's wife, with whom he lived in adultery, danced before him. She thrilled her audience and Herod promised her up to half his kingdom. She went out and asked her mother what she should request and Herodias demanded the head of John the Baptist. Herod had it in for John because he had preached against his adultery so Herod had put John in prison. He was afraid to kill him because the people believed he was a prophet. But now at his birthday he was embarrassed to refuse the request before all his guests, so ordered John beheaded. The head was brought to the girl on a platter and she carried it to her mother. John's disciples buried his body and then went and told Jesus.

This is the story of how Herod treated John. Someone might ask why Jesus didn't rescue John from Herod? But then we must ask why Jesus was not rescued from an even worse fate on the cross? They both gave their lives for righteousness sake and Jesus for the sins of the world, including sins like those of Herod.

Feasts Unto Death, Feasts Unto Life

We don't find the answer to the question here but we do see that more than one set of people are asking the question, "Where did this man get his wisdom and power?" We have been talking about a feast in which Herod celebrated his birthday, and now we move on to another feast in which Jesus feeds over 5,000 people. Herod's feast, which celebrated his birth, and presumably was sumptuous, ended in death, death for a man of God. This next feast in which Jesus multiplied a few loaves meant life for a multitude of people. Jesus' resources were meager but he increased what there was available. Herod by contrast reduced the blessing of the people of his kingdom by executing John, a prophet of God.

So what is the answer to the question, "Where does this man get his wisdom and power?" It is found in the next story, the third story in our series of five stories.

Questions For Study

1. Who else was keenly interested in where Jesus got his great wisdom and miraculous powers? What was on his conscience if he had one? (14:1-11)
2. What was his theory about Jesus' powers and why could that theory not be true? (14:1-11)

III. 14:13-21 The 5000 Fed – Jesus Looks Up



(PowerPoint, page 4)

Looking Up To Heaven!

The answer is found in verse 19 where we read, *"Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke the loaves."* v.19 There is the answer! Jesus looked up to heaven, gave thanks and then broke the loaves. Jesus' source of wisdom and power was heaven!

Where Am I Looking?

When you or I are in need where do we look? Whether it is our own need or others' needs where can we turn, to our own strength, or to someone else here on earth? My boss? My spouse? My parents? My children? My neighbor? My professor? My friend? My money? My education? My pastor? My extended family? My gifting? Ultimately these sources are all as weak as we are? We can help each other but we are limited. Ultimately we must turn to the Lord. We must lift our eyes to heaven! Where else can we turn? The world, the elements, our sin, other's sins become too big for us and we are overwhelmed.

It could be worse. Maybe we are not even trying to find help or look for help from others, or even for others.

Maybe our eyes are on big bucks (either money or deer!), new houses, flashy cars, sexual entertainment, or what belongs to others.

Thanks For The Meager

There is a beautiful detail here that must not be missed! Jesus also gave thanks, but look at the situation in which he gave thanks! He was not sitting down to a sumptuous feast with just his own family or a few friends. It might be easy to give thanks then. He was giving thanks for just a few pieces of bread and two fish in the heart of a hungry multitude! That is giving thanks out of the comfort zone! He had far too few material resources, and why bother anyway, with all these people, who were relative strangers to him? No, Jesus, in the middle of all that pressure simply gave thanks! He is an example of the exhortation to 'give thanks in all things'.

Starting With Compassion

You see the multitudes had gathered to him and he taught them. As he looked at them he was moved with compassion. His compassion moved him to help them spiritually and eventually to help them physically by feeding them bread and fish. Jesus was involved with the people in his heart. He was moved with compassion.

Standing In The Need

Jesus' feet were involved with the people. He stood in the middle of the need. He did not run away. He didn't drag his followers off to a monastery to keep them sheltered

from the world. He stood where the need was. Are my feet ever in the middle of the need? Am I running away?

Worth Waiting For

You may be someone who has faithfully witnessed to a friend for many years. You have “stood where the need was” ministering to that person you love and care for. Antonia Arbalat, wife of pastor Pedro Arbalat, former OM Spain leader, had shared the Gospel with her neighbor for 19 years but Elia had not made any response. Recently, Antonia went to a weekend conference in Madrid with a church group. She invited Elia, and a relative called Mari, who had occasionally attended church. On the Saturday night, Antonia spoke with these two women until the early hours of the morning. The next day, both women accepted Jesus. They have started to attend church and people in the town are commenting that both of them have changed!

Into Africa

As I write this, in a few days, my wife and I will be going to visit my father in Florida. He is a retired missionary who invested the very best and strongest years of his life caring for the people of northwestern Nigeria. Day after day, he opened the small clinic that he ran and bound up the wounds and gave medicine to the sick, and when the malady was beyond his means, he took them to hospital in Birnin Kebbi. Day after day he shared the good news with the people who came to the clinic.

On certain afternoons he would travel to outlying towns with a “medical box” and a gramophone, to play songs and

messages in Hausa to those who gathered. The gramophone housed a spring inside and you had to wind it up with a crank to make it play. The voices that came out of the box were authentic Hausa speakers the audience could understand easily. At the same time my dad was a very good Hausa speaker. Living and working in the USA his ability with the language would have been lost. The Lord had a very specific place for him in our world with the abilities God gave him. She worked along side him visiting the ladies in our town of Andarai, and joining him on treks for 3 days to towns that were even further from Andarai.

Nigeria has the largest population of any country in Africa. The peoples of Nigeria speak 400 languages, although languages like Ibo, Hausa and Yoruba dominate as trade languages. The church needs prayer. It is easy to look on people from other groups in the country as the Jews looked upon the Samaritans. Maybe it is a little like Catholics and Protestants have looked on each other in Europe and America. Pray that the church will look up, and will love; love each other, and love their neighbors, whoever they may be.

Needy Children

Lest anyone believe all is rosy in the world, and I don't think there are many with that mind set, let's look at what many children in our world face today. The following catalogue of crying needs from various sources should drive us to our knees and then to further action.

1. Over half a billion children are struggling to survive on under \$1 per day.
2. 250,000 children and young people are infected with HIV/AIDS every month.
3. It is estimated that 25 million will have lost one or both parents to AIDS by 2010.
4. 130 million children lack access to education.
5. 246 million children are child laborers.
6. 8.4 million children are trapped in slavery, trafficking, debt, bondage, prostitution, pornography and other illicit activities.
7. 300,000 young people under 18 are exploited as child-soldiers.
8. 30,000 children die every day from preventable diseases.

You might ask, "How can I pray for children in their desperate plight?" Pray like this:

1. Pray for wisdom and resources for OM missionaries to launch effective ministries to help children in need.
2. Pray that the plight of needy and oppressed children comes to the attention of the public, and organizations and individuals step in to help.
3. Pray for the development and growth of ministries that specialize in ministering to HIV/AIDS children. (Prayer Update, OM Canada, October 2005)

Aching Hands

Jesus' hands were involved. He broke the bread. Not for Jesus the attitude referred to in Proverbs 21:25, *The desire of the sluggard kills him, for his hands refuse to labor.* The mind boggles when you begin to think just how tiring it would have been to physically break pieces of bread for a "few" hours as he fed the people. His hands would have started aching before the half hour! Maybe his disciples also were involved in the breaking of the bread? The text says he broke them and gave them to his disciples and they gave them to the people, so apparently the disciples did not break the bread. Jesus was simply involved in some very hard tiring work on behalf of the people.

Thank the Lord for the strength he has given you in your fingers and hands to type those letters for your boss or cook for your family. Thank the Lord for the strength he has put in your hands and fingers to serve food to the street children who come to your church or NGO for food. Praise God for the people you have been able to serve with your hands in the gospel missions, in the "villas", or "favelas", or at a food kitchen after Hurricane Katrina in September 2005, or the Tsunami in south Asia in August of that year, or the earthquake in Pakistan in October of the same year.

We could add to the list many names of both catastrophic events as well the names of those who quietly served others in their time of need. Thank Jesus for the Bibles and tracts you have been able to hand out by the hundreds and thousands with those hands God gave you, tracts,

gospels and leaflets that tell people about the Savior. What about those fingers, that have grasped nails and hammers, to build church buildings where believers could meet and worship the Lord? Praise God from whom all blessings flow, even the blessing of having and using our hands.

Instructions

Jesus told his disciples to bring the food and the crowd to sit down. He had a plan and told them what to do. He also gave thanks. Jesus used his mouth to speak to both God and man, and he did it as he ministered to the needs of the people. There are those who cry out constantly about the mess our world is in and how we need to help people in their need, and they are right. Sadly however, never mention the Lord or ever give him thanks. On the other hand, maybe there are those who constantly talk about the Lord and pray to him but never ever lift a hand to help their fellow human beings. Jesus' gave us the balance between these two extremes. Ever present in his thinking we're the needs of the people and the presence of God.

The Whole Person Ministers

In Jesus case the heart was involved for he had compassion on the people. His head was involved because he thought about their needs and devise a plan to help them. His speech and mouth were involved because he spoke to God and instructed the people as to what they were to do. His feet were involved because instead of running away he stood in the midst of the need. His hands were involved because he took the bread and broke it for them. Finally Jesus' eyes were raised to heaven, which is

the answer to the question that we've been asking! Jesus' resources were in heaven, not here on earth.

Let's consider how we use the various parts of our body. Are you using your heart in a compassionate way? Are you thinking through how you can help others? Are you thinking about the Lord in the midst of the need? Are you sharing and telling other people what they need to know about the lord? Are you standing with your feet in the middle of the need? Are you using your hands to help other people with their needs? And where are your eyes? Are they fixed on heaven?

Lift Up Your Eyes And Enjoy!

Our cousin's farm is about a mile outside of the town where we live. I often take our dog and their dogs for walks in the fields on the farm. It is good exercise for me, as well as for the dogs. More than once I have caught myself trudging along through the fields, with my head down, my eyes on the ground and my mind deep in concentration on some difficulty I am facing. It is then that the thought comes to me that I am missing all the beauty around me. I look up to see the fields of grain, the lush alfalfa, the woods in the distance and the breathtaking sunsets! But to see all that I have to lift my eyes! It reminds me of the need to lift my eyes up to heaven as Jesus did, and give thanks, because ultimately all we have comes from heaven.

Questions For Study

1. How did Jesus involve his whole being in his ministry to the people? Name the parts of his body and how he used

them to glorify God and serve the people. How are we using the parts of our body to glorify the Lord and help others? (14:12-21)

2. In which story do we find the answer to the question, "Where did Jesus get his wisdom and power?" What was that answer? Could there be any other answer? (14:12-21)

IV. 14:22-36 Jesus Prayed



(PowerPoint, page 5)

Communication With Heaven

The answer to our question, "Where did Jesus get his wisdom and power?" was heaven. In the following two stories we will find emphasized the two means by which we can communicate with heaven. These two means our prayer and the word of God. In prayer we speak to God, and he to us by his Word. It's not surprising to find the Jesus after feeding the 5001 up into the mountain to pray

Two Types Of Prayers

After that very busy day Jesus went up into a mountain to pray (v. 23). Jesus combined two aspects of prayer on that day. On the one hand, we see him saying a short prayer of thanks before distributing the lowest to the 5000. On the other hand, we also see him going up into a mountain to spend more time in prayer. Both kinds of prayer are needed. There will be moments when we have only a few seconds to offer a prayer to God. On other occasions we can spend much more time in his presence.

Nehemiah found this true in his own experience. In chapter one of his book, when asked by the King why his

face was sorrowful he sent a quick prayer up to God that he would guide him as he spoke to the King about his concern for the city of Jerusalem. Later on in the book we find him offering prayers to God on various occasions, which would have been longer prayers. We can do the same. Some of us might be quite gifted at the short prayers and find longer periods of prayer a bit more difficult. We're not used to depending upon the Lord. The world around us often does not take him very seriously. They have not seen how God answers prayer. We're so used to depending upon ourselves and if we can't do it, on others. Some people don't like to ask others for help anyway! They wouldn't be asking others for help and they certainly wouldn't be asking God for help!

Turn On The Tap!

When I was a child we lived in Africa where there was no running water. My father built a frame behind the house, which supported two fifty-five gallon drums at roof top level. A pipe ran from the pump at the well in the garden up to the drums. That was how they were filled, by pumping the water up the pipes.

When we opened the taps in the house other pipes brought the water down into the house and in that way we could say we had "running water"! The pressure of gravity forced the water down the pipes and through the taps.

In order to receive the water we simply had to open the tap. The water flowed down and out the tap. In the same way we could say there is much blessing and help available

to us in heaven, ready to flow downwards to us. As we pray it is as though we open the tap and God's blessings and help flow down to us.

O And H₂O

What we have often forgotten is that we receive so many things from God that we take for granted. He created the oxygen that we breathe every. No human being invented oxygen. Many, many centuries after it was created people finally were able to describe its characteristics and give it a name. We could not survive without oxygen, and yet none of us were the source of oxygen. God was the source of oxygen. Stop for a minute, and think about water. Without water our planet would be an empty desert. Without water we have nothing to drink and would die. Even other drinks we enjoy are largely made of water. What would we wash with? About 66% of our body is water. We would shrink to a tiny pile of chemicals if all the water in our bodies suddenly disappeared. As our telescopes scan the universe we find again and again that there is no planet like ours. A large percentage of our planet is actually water. None of us invented water. God created it. So, let's give him thanks for all these wonderful things that he has supplied for us.

Prayer Of Salvation

After feeding them Jesus sent the people away and he went into the mountain to pray alone, but the boat full of disciples was caught in a storm. Jesus made his way out on the sea and approached the boat. When the disciples see him they thought he was a ghost and cried out in fear.

Jesus calmed their fears and told them to take courage. Peter responded by saying, *“Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water”* (14:28b). Jesus told him to come. But as Peter’s eyes began to look at the raging wind he started to sink. It is important where we put our eyes. Remember, Jesus at the point of need, looked up to heaven.

As Peter began to sink he cried out to the Lord to save him. The prayer of salvation is really the very first prayer that the Lord wants to hear from us. We may think that we are powerful and strong enough to handle all of the situations of life but we are not able to. It’s interesting that many people come to the Bible seeking God’s law and try to fulfill it. They say to the Lord that they are prepared to have him give them his commandments and they try to keep them. But like Peter they soon find out that they can’t do it and they sink. They sink in their own sins and inability to keep God’s commands. At that point those who are wise and understanding will call out to the Lord to save them. They know that they cannot save themselves. That’s what Peter did as he began to sink into the waves.

Keep Your Ego And Drown!

Peter might well have said, “I’m not going to cry out as though I were helpless!” Of course, he would have drowned. That’s a decision many of us have to make about Jesus. If Jesus really is the Savior, and if we cannot save ourselves, then we must cry out to him to save us. That is very hard on the ego! We have got to decide; it’s either

ourselves, or our ego. One of the two has to go. We cannot keep our ego and our lives.

Green Day "Walks Alone"

In its "Boulevard of Broken Dreams", the band Green Day "invites" us down their lonely beat. They describe accurately the plight of so many. Someone feels the need for salvation and expresses it in the line, "Sometimes I wish someone out there would find me." (*Boulevard Of Broken Dreams*, Green Day, Reprise Records, 2004.)

Jesus came to seek and to save that which was lost but not everyone is listening You see we each need to be found by someone bigger than anyone on earth!

Prayer In Faith

Jesus immediately reached out his hand and took hold of him, saying to him, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?" (14:31)

When we ask the Lord to give us his commands we must ask in faith, not doubting, that what he wants us to do is the very best thing for us. As we falter and sin we must keep coming back to him in faith. We realize that in ourselves we don't have the strength either to carry out his commands or to save ourselves so we must go to him in faith. The size of faith depends upon the size of its object. Our faith is large when we realize just how great the object of our faith is.

If we realize that the object of our faith is Jesus, who created the heavens and the earth, and who came to this

earth to redeem us, then our faith grows. We might have great faith in an object that is worthless and, consequently, our faith will be worthless. However, Jesus is a worthy of object of our faith. He demonstrated his love, his care, his holiness, and his power to the people of his day. They have reported to us and we have believed their report!

In fact their report builds our faith. The apostle Paul wrote in Romans 10:17, *So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.* So the very word, which commands us, is the same word that strengthens us to perform it. Perfect! Nothing could be more encouraging!

Habakkuk 2:4 declares, *“Behold, his soul is puffed up; it is not upright within him, but the righteous shall live by his faith.”* Humbling ourselves before the Lord’s commands is the right way to go, because his word builds us up.

Most of My Life

Who would have thought I would spend the better part of my life in connection with someone who would help me look up to heaven? For some, all you have to do is mention George Verwer, and they think of the one who inspired us to pray. George has often said that he feels he is a person with many struggles, and he has mentioned openly his sins and failures. Some of those who decided to join the ranks of OM decided to do that because they got time with George and learned that he was not perfect, that he was open about his sin and willing to repent.

Week after week for decades he has gathered people around him, often, small groups, to pray. The team devotionals in Bromley, Kent, UK always included prayer. When George met you after a time away he would pray. Over the phone he would pray. He led and had others lead evenings and nights of prayer. Don't think those long periods of prayer were always idyllic or loaded with passion! Sometimes they were a struggle. Sometimes we went to sleep, but we were not the first ones to do that. Peter and other disciples of Jesus went to sleep while he prayed in Gethsemane.

Anyone who gives the impression that times of prayer will always be "short and sweet" has been fooled. With one side of our mouths we say that prayer is difficult, but then expect any prayer meeting we might attend to be easy and enthusiastic all the time. Let's not forget what Jesus said in Gethsemane after he prayed, in Mark 14:37-38,

37 And he came and found them sleeping, and he said to Peter, "Simon, are you asleep? Could you not watch one hour? 38 Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."

While I have not known personally many of the outstanding leaders of churches and missions I have met enough leaders to know that George's emphasis on prayer is quite unusual. He helped us who focus on the earth to lift our eyes to heaven.

A Visitor

He used to come to the evenings of prayer in Bromley. He was a schoolteacher in Kent, England. Although George Verwer invited people to come, not many “rushed” to the prayer evenings. Maybe some on the team didn’t exactly rush to get there themselves, including me, even though I always sensed a burden to go, struggling as I went.

We enjoyed the visits of Gareth Bolton. He would share prayer requests with us from his own life and work as a schoolteacher. He told us about the students and parents he was witnessing to. Gareth was enthusiastic. Over the years Gareth started preaching and today is a fulltime evangelist and Bible teacher, overseeing a charity that he founded, which is helping people around the world. If you don’t find Gareth preaching in the Philippines, he will be in India, or Austria, preaching and teaching the Good News about Jesus, and looking for ways to help the needy both spiritually and physically.

Faith And Wisdom In James

James 1:5-8, teaches us principles of faith and prayer, *5 If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him. 6 But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind. 7 For that person must not suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; 8 he is a double- minded man, unstable in all his ways.*

James mentions asking for wisdom. Do you remember what our original question was? Where did Jesus get his wisdom and miraculous powers? James exhorts us to ask for wisdom and make sure we do it in faith. If we don't ask in faith we will not receive anything from the Lord because we are double minded. Let's ask in faith! James reminds us that we're asking God for wisdom. God is the one who gives to all generously and without reproach. He is the object of our faith. We can go to him in the confidence that he is able to do all things. So, let's ask in faith!

Prayer And Worship

Jesus immediately reached out his hand and took hold of him, saying to him, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?" And when they got into the boat, the wind ceased. And those in the boat worshiped him, saying, "Truly you are the Son of God!" (14:31-33)

When he answers us and saves us, as he did the disciples in their boat, in that wild storm, we cannot but respond to him in worship. We find that worship involves both attitude and expression. Those disciples, who were overwhelmed by a storm on the sea, saw Jesus calm that storm and in response worshipped him. They couldn't quell the storm. They were in danger of drowning. They witnessed as Jesus rescued Peter from the water. Then they saw him quiet the wind and the sea. This influenced their attitude and so they worshiped him.

At the same time, in their worship they said something very definite. They proclaimed him as the Son of God.

Sometimes God has given us wonderful times of worship as we have called out the various names and expressions of who Jesus is. Here are just few of his titles and names which express who he is, and who he is to those who have trusted him. The Lamb of God; the Messiah, or anointed One; the Lion of the tribe of Judah; the Savior; the King of Kings and Lord of Lords; the good Shepherd; the Way, the Truth, and the Life; the Resurrection and the Life; Redeemer; the Bright and Morningstar; Friend of sinners; the Alpha and the Omega, or the First and the Last; the true and faithful Witness; the Word of God, and of many other titles belong to the Lord Jesus Christ. In worship we declare who Jesus is.

Prayer Requests

The people ran around the lake and found Jesus again and begged him to heal them. The crowds represent to us another aspect of prayer, that of bringing a request to God and asking him to help. Whether we have physical difficulties, spiritual challenges or sinful attitudes, seeking the Lord in prayer is primary to any kind of survival. The people who followed Jesus around the lake from place to place were not dumb. They had learned something very important. Jesus had a source of wisdom and power that they needed, so they came to him.

A Painful Existence?

Do you need to stop all that you're doing and ask the Lord for help in some area right now? Why are you waiting? Do it right now. You may think that your situation is impossible and that there is no answer for the problems or

heart ache that you face. I would like to challenge you to go to Jesus in all of your need and ask him for help. If your situation has gotten way beyond what you can handle, then it is time to turn to the Lord Jesus. Those folks in Galilee who brought their maimed, blind, lame and deaf brought them because they could not do anything for themselves. You may be living an excruciatingly painful existence emotionally, physically or spiritually and it's time to turn to the Lord. Stop right now and get on your knees and ask him to rescue you from your situation. You may need to do more than pray but this is where you must begin.

Often as we begin to pray the Lord begins to clear our minds and our emotions and help us think more clearly about what we're facing. Sometimes the answer to our need maybe staring us in the face and we haven't been able to see it, but the Lord clarifies our thinking and helps us to see the things that we cannot see on our own. He will also help us get beyond our ego and lean a little bit more on him and on others for help. Sometimes our problems aren't quite as big as we think they are. When we face problems our emotions may respond very badly and the bigger problem of the two is our emotions. As we pray and read God's Word he can clarify our thinking and our emotions so that we can approach our problems and difficulties more rationally.

They Closed The Door And Prayed

I have been greatly encouraged and challenged by the prayer life of the Chinese house church. "The religious life

of Christians in the house churches could be said to consist in equal measure in testimony and prayer. Just as meetings were often “witness meetings” so they were also “prayer meetings”. Here complete dependence on God was expressed in the simplest way. When something happened, one testified, they would just close the door and pray. Communist guards once approached an imprisoned woman, because of another particularly difficult female prisoner whom no one could handle. Could she do anything for this person? She began to pray and gradually the other woman began to change; beginning to groom herself and dress normally. When the guards asked what the Christian had done she replied: “I had no strength to help her, and I believed God could change her.” (*Invitation To Cross-Cultural Theology*, William A. Dyrness, p. 56, Zondervan, 1992.)

Do You Have A Mat?

After reading the following I found a small rug and started to kneel in prayer, something I should have done long ago.

“In rural Zhejiang around 1980, it was reported: ‘Every Christian has a straw mat at home. Whenever they run into any difficulty they kneel down and pray. When the brothers and sisters see each other, they seldom talk about how they are and what has happened and so forth (instead) they kneel down and pray. Thus, the might and miracles of God are seen there.’” (*Invitation To Cross-Cultural Theology*, William A. Dyrness, pp. 56, 57, Zondervan, 1992.)

In the Chinese house churches they are moved to look up to heaven.

Questions For Study

1. Describe the various aspects of prayer illustrated by the fourth story.
2. Which of these aspects of prayer are strongest in your life? In the life of your local church? In the life of your mission? Which aspects of prayer could be strengthened? How? (14:22-36)

V. 15:1-20 Tradition Versus The Commands Of God



(PowerPoint, page 6)

Head To Head

As far as I can remember Jesus never grabbed a person and “chewed” him out for murdering somebody. However, he did, get very upset with the Pharisees and other religious leaders because of the burdens that they put on people through their traditions. They taught the people to obey the rules and regulations that God had never given. These were rules and regulations that they and their ancestors who wear religious leaders had placed on their own people. It was just a lot of extra religious baggage!

Washing Hands

The Pharisees attacked Jesus’ disciples for breaking the tradition of the elders, who had taught people to wash their hands in a specific way and for religious reasons before eating. You and I know that it is a good idea to washer hands in order to be clean physically. That is not what the Pharisees were interested in. They were interested in people keeping a series of rights that had nothing to do with physical cleanliness and nothing to do with God’s Word.

First let us sort out what are the true requirements.

3 He answered them, "And why do you break the commandment of God for the sake of your tradition? 6 Thus you nullify the Word of God for the sake of your tradition?" (15:3, 6)

God had revealed his will through his Word, through Moses and the prophets. Tradition was man's revelation. Tradition was simply rules and regulations made up by human beings. Jesus was very angry that they should set aside and break the command of God for the sake of their traditions. They nullified God's Word by doing this.

The Second Means Of Communication With Heaven

We have now come to the second means of communication with heaven, the direction in which Jesus raised his eyes before he broke the bread. The command of God, or the Word of God, is his communication to us. The apostle Paul explained to Timothy the value of the Scriptures and preaching the Word of God, because there would be benefits to his listeners as the result of knowing the Scriptures. In *2 Timothy 3:16-4:2* Paul wrote:

16 All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, 17 that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

1 I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: 2 preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching.

I Could Help Mom And Dad But I'll Give It To God Instead

Jesus condemned the Pharisees when he said, “*And why do you break the command of God for the sake of your tradition? For God said, ‘Honor your father and mother’ and ‘Anyone who curses his father or mother must be put to death.’ But you say that if a man says to his father or mother, ‘Whatever help you might otherwise have received from me as a gift you voted to God,’ he is not to ‘honor his father’ with it. Thus you nullify the Word of God for the sake of your tradition*” (15:3-6 NIV). It is all very well and good to give to God but not if you're stealing from your parents. By doing this, a person would treat his parents shabbily and at the same time think he was gaining “brownie points” with God. God could see through the whole farce. That person was not honoring his parents as God had told him to.

Heart Problem Number One: Hearts Far Away
Jesus quoted Isaiah when he described the people as honoring God with their lips but having hearts, which were far away from him. Jesus “nails” the first heart problem that the religious rulers have. Later he will mention another one.

Blind Leaders Have No Eyes For Heaven

The disciples point out to Jesus that what he said had offended the Pharisees. Jesus makes a very clear statement about the character of the Pharisees. He boldly and clearly tells them the Pharisees are blind guides. I doubt whether there were many physically blind Pharisees, but having no eyes for heaven, they were blind as far as heaven and its resources were concerned, and as far as the Person was concerned who was behind heaven's resources. The Pharisees' eyes were not on heaven; they were on the rules their forefathers had made up to replace the commands of God. They in turn led the people who were blind and their end would be the pit.

Prayer And God's Commands Turn Our Eyes To Heaven

It is no wonder Matthew used these last two stories about prayer and God's commands. We are taught through prayer and God's commands to look towards heaven.

Heart Problem Number Two: Defiled Hearts

Jesus turned to the people and began to teach them that what goes into the mouth did not defile a man but what came out of him. Out of the heart came all kinds of sins and sinful attitudes. Let's not point fingers at this juncture but simply think quietly and soberly about our own sins. Here is the list of seven that Jesus gave:

"For out of the heart come (15:19)

evil thoughts, The people of Nazareth took offense at Jesus (13:57)

murder, Herod's execution of John was a murder (14:10)

adultery, Herod and Herodias lived in adultery (14:4)

sexual immorality, Sexual sin akin to what Herod and Herodias were doing (14:3)

theft, Herod took John's freedom away and then his life (14:3, 10)

false witness, In a sense the Pharisees were false witnesses for God (15:8)

slander ..." The Pharisees accuse the disciples of breaking the traditions of the elders (15:2)

John Adams was ambassador to Great Britain shortly after the American Revolutionary War, and while he was ambassador he wrote to congress about the kind of government he desired to see become a reality in the United States, among other things a government of three branches.

One of the main reasons they needed a government with 'checks and balances' was the struggle they faced with human nature. He had already written *Thoughts on Government*, but now he was to make a special emphasis on the problems faced with human nature. I quote from

David McCullough's book. "He (John Adams) quoted Rousseau's description of 'that hideous sight, the human heart,' and recounted that even Dr. Priestly had said that such were the weaknesses and folly of men, 'that their love of domination, selfishness, and depravity,' that none could be elevated above others without risk of danger." (John Adams, David McCullough, p. 377, Simon & Schuster, 2001)

If politicians can be concerned about the depravity of mankind how much more must we be concerned as believers and ministers of the Gospel. And this concern starts with us, with me, with myself! Oh, how we must return constantly to God's Word to be examined, rebuked, corrected, straightened out and then built back up and encouraged!

Straight

Zerubbabel was the governor of God's people when they returned from captivity in Babylon. He was given a vision through the prophet Zechariah in which God said that there would be rejoicing on the day they saw the plumb line in the hand of Zerubbabel (Zechariah 4: 10). A plumb line is a weight on the end of a piece of string, which is placed next to a wall to see whether that wall is going up perpendicular and whether it is straight.

Zerubbabel was the leader and the person who had to go about the temple making sure the walls were straight. Their enemies had caused the Persian king to cancel the building of the temple and they had stopped building for

about 16 years. Now God exhorts them to return to the building in spite of the decree. It is a moment of fear and tension but Zerubbabel leads the people back to building by picking up his plumb line, his tool, and leading them back to the building site. God's Word is like a plumb line, which is placed next to our lives to see whether we are growing in accordance with God's desires.

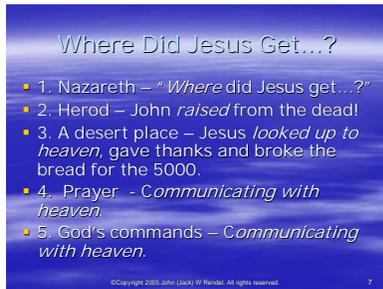
Strong

Further God encouraged his people by saying that the building and completing of the temple would not be by might and not by power but by God's Spirit! The Lord would actually make the king look back through his "computer files" and find the original decree of Cyrus the Great, ordering the Jews to return and giving them material help in the building of God's temple in Jerusalem. The king complied with the original decree and commanded even their enemies to help them in the task of rebuilding God's house! God's Word straightens us out and strengthens us!

Questions For Study

1. How does the fifth story emphasize the importance of God's commands, or God's Word? What was substituted in place of God's commands? (15:1-20)
2. What two heart problems did Jesus point out? How does knowing and obeying God's commands overcome these two problems? What definite steps are you taking to overcome these two heart problems in your life? How are you helping others overcome these two problems of the heart? (15:1-20)

Let's Review



(PowerPoint, page 7)

1. The synagogue in Nazareth – The people there asked, “Where did Jesus get his wisdom and miraculous powers?”

2. Herod’s court – Herod declared his theory, and he said to his servants, “This is John the Baptist. He has been raised from the dead; that is why these miraculous powers are at work in him.” In this account a banqueting hall for Herod’s birthday party led to a dungeon of death for John the Baptist.

3. A desert place where Jesus fed more than 5000 – In response to the need, Jesus *looked up to heaven*, gave thanks and broke the bread for the 5000.

4. Prayer - A means of *communicating with heaven*. Several facets of prayer are illustrated.

5. God’s commands – Another *means of communicating with heaven*. Jesus exhorted everyone to pay attention to what God had said.

Through the stories he has chosen Matthew has described what it is like to look up to heaven for blessing and help,

and has emphasized the two means by which we can communicate with heaven.

In Colossians 3:1-2 the apostle Paul teaches us to pay attention to heaven, to what is above, because that is where Jesus is, our source of salvation and blessing and help.

1 If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. 2 Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth.

This is parallel to what Matthew is illustrating in these five stories. In another book, I hope to go on to the next set of five stories in Matthew chapter 16 and talk about how the question, "Where in this desert place could we find enough bread to feed so many?" was answered. Jesus was the answer to that problem just as he is the answer to our needs, for wisdom and power. The Lord through both Paul's letter and Matthew's gospel teaches us to learn to focus on heaven.

Keep looking up to heaven!

Questions to help you enjoy Matthew 13:53-15:20 (Repeated)

1. What is the key question in these five stories? (13:53-58)
2. Who asked the question and why did they ask? What was their response to Jesus and what was his to them? (13:53-58)
3. Who else was keenly interested in where Jesus got his great wisdom and miraculous powers? What was on his conscience if he had one? (14:1-11)
4. What was his theory about Jesus' powers and why could that theory not be true? (14:1-11)
5. How did Jesus involve his whole being in his ministry to the people? Name the parts of his body and how he used them to glorify God and serve the people. How are we using the parts of our body to glorify the Lord and help others? (14:12-21)
6. In which story do we find the answer to the question, "Where did Jesus get his wisdom and power?" What was that answer? Could there be any other answer? (14:12-21)
7. Describe the various aspects of prayer illustrated by the fourth story. (14:22-36)
8. Which of these aspects of prayer are strongest in your life? In the life of your local church? In the life of your mission? Which aspects of prayer could be strengthened? (14:22-36)
8. How does the fifth story emphasize the importance of God's commands, or God's Word? What was substituted in place of God's commands? (15:1-20)
9. What two heart problems did Jesus point out? How does knowing and obeying God's commands overcome

these two problems? What definite steps are you taking to overcome these two heart problems in your life? How are you helping others overcome these two problems of the heart? (15:1-20)

An Approach To Studying And Preparing Messages

1. Pray as you read and meditate, asking the Lord to enlighten your mind.
2. Read the whole book of the Bible you have chosen for study 4 times over. If you have read the book recently then read it fewer times.
3. Read the chapter or portion of the Bible book you are studying 2 times quickly.
4. Reread the Bible portion using the study questions given at the end of each chapter of this book, and repeated near the end of this book.
5. Read quickly through the chapter of this book 2 times.
6. Go over the outline at the beginning of this book.
7. If there is a corresponding PowerPoint® presentation read through it.
8. Begin to jot down thoughts, quotes, Bible references and stories that come to mind.
9. If a diagram would help people see the point, try to draw it.

10. Begin to accept or discard parts of the chapter in this book and add your own thoughts and stories.

11. Look for significant words that are repeated or words that build progressively a theme throughout the text.

12. Remember that even up to the last seconds before you begin to speak or give your lesson, thoughts will come to you. Some of my best stories came to me minutes before I rose to speak.

13. As you prepare remember to persevere even when you feel dry and uninspired. To see a harvest a farmer must plow, disk, drag and cultivate a field. Dragging the disk up and down the field can get long and boring but is all part of the preparation.

14. Keep asking the Lord to help you and give you wisdom. Ask him to help you think clearly about both the Scripture and your audience, and their needs.

15. Use the questions who? what? where? why? when? and how? to bring out the major themes in the portion.

16. Keep in mind the three steps of 1) observation, 2) interpretation and 3) application.

1) Observation is seeing what is actually *written*.

2) Interpretation for those of that time, as well as for us, is the *meaning*.

3) Application has to do with *living and obeying* the lessons learned.

Matthew Chart For Study

The chart that we give you at the end of this section is meant to help you with your study in the Gospel of Matthew. It shows where the studies that we have presented in this book are found.

You will notice that the chart is divided into four columns. In each column there are five stories or teachings from chapters 13, verse 53, through the teaching in chapter 18 of the Gospel of Matthew. This forms one division of this gospel and tells us about some of the most important teaching Jesus gave his disciples. The five stories in this book are found in that first column.

In the stories of the first column the question as to where he got his wisdom and power is raised. In the stories of the second column the question where would they find enough bread for so many is raised. In the third column are the five stories surrounding the question, "Who do people say that I the Son of Man am?" Finally in the fourth column we have five teachings in answer to the question by the disciples in Matthew 18:1, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?"

We have given you this chart hoping that it will be helpful in your personal Bible study, in you're preaching if you are a pastor, evangelist, teacher, or missionary and in your Bible studies with groups of people in the Sunday school, youth groups and other opportunities. We look forward to producing more books on the stories found in the rest of

this division of Matthew as well as in the rest of the gospel. We also look forward to writing books that will tell the story and outline the message in other books of the Bible in the near future.

We hope that these books and studies will be of great help to you in your personal devotional life. We also hope that Christian leaders and preachers will also be able to take advantage of the outlines offered here to create their own messages in order to feed God's people and to challenge them to the ministry both at home and around the world.

Many of the illustrations given in these books are from different countries and we hope that the missionary vision in Brazil and as well as in Portugal will continue to grow in the coming months and years. On my trip to Brazil in September of 2005 I preached in at least three different missionary conferences in Brazilian churches. Workers are going out from Brazil and we find them in many different countries around the world. There are people from Brazil working in Spain, Russia, North Africa, on the OM ships and in many other places. Praise God for what he is doing! It was so good to meet a young man, by the name of Flavio, who was in the OM Brazil missionary training center several years ago and who, with his wife, is now ministering in North Africa.

I want to encourage you in the study and meditation of the word of God because it has helped me so much over the years. I was somewhat tentative about the study of the Bible when I was younger but with time and experience,

more study, and a greater dependence upon the Holy Spirit God has blessed me through studying his word. I think the study of the Word of God helps us in our own spiritual growth, in our evangelism and in our teaching of the Word of God. May the Lord bless you as you meditate on his Word and I hope that what we have offered in this book might be of help to you in your spiritual life.

One of the tendencies in our postmodern age is to “pretend” that things are random and disconnected. However, you will soon discover that the Bible is very, very well integrated. The stories fit together like pieces of a puzzle. As you piece them together and learn from God you can experience incredible joy. As you study God’s word, if you find that it’s difficult to understand how some of these pieces fit together, be patient, and asked him to show you what he wants you to know. Jeremiah 33:3 is a wonderful verse when it comes to Bible study. In that verse God tells Jeremiah that he is to call upon him and God would answer him and show him great and mighty things! The Lord wants us to call upon him in every area of life including the study of his Word. Pray that he will fill you with the knowledge of his Word, his wisdom, and the ability to apply it to everyday life.

This chart, and other charts that we will share with you in other books, may seem complicated but as you look at them, meditate on them and take in the information little by little, you will see how and why all the stories fit together in such a wonderful way. So be patient, read,

study, meditate, think, and pray that the Lord will fill you with his Word and use you in a powerful way.

Theme: Jesus' Resources

13:53-15:20

Question: Where does this man get this wisdom and these powers? 13:54

Notice the word "heaven"

13:53-58 Nazareth - *Is not this the carpenter's son? Where does he get his wisdom and power?*

13:54-56: The people wondered where he got his wisdom and power since they knew him and his family.

The humility of Jesus: 13:57 They were offended at him. *But Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without honor except in his hometown and in his own household."*

14:1-12 Herod proposed an answer about who Jesus is:

14:1 –2 *At that time Herod the tetrarch heard about the fame of Jesus, and he said to his servants, "This is John the Baptist. He has been raised from the dead; that is why these miraculous powers are at work in him."*

Herod a stumbling block: 14:3-6 Herod had put John in prison for rebuking him for having taken Herodias his brother Philip's wife. He was afraid to kill John because the people thought John a prophet. But at his birthday he gave in to the request of Herodias' daughter who had danced before them. She pleased Herod and he gave her the head of John on a platter.

14:13-21 Bread for 5000, Jesus looked up to heaven: 14:19-20 *Then he ordered the crowds to sit down on the grass, and taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven and said a blessing. Then he broke the loaves and gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the crowds. And they all ate and were satisfied. And they took up twelve baskets full of the broken pieces left over.*

Jesus had compassion and healed. The disciples were not able to feed the people 14:14-17: 14 He got out of the boat and a large multitude gathered. He had compassion and healed them. It was late so his disciples said, Send the people away to get food to eat in the towns. He said there is no need to send them away. You give them something. The disciples said they only had five loaves and two fishes.

14:22-36 The Storm on the sea and prayer (means of communication with heaven): 14:23-24 After sending away the people he went into the mountain to pray alone. But the boat of the disciples was in a storm.

Peter raised from the waters: 14:28-32 When Peter saw Jesus come to them over the waters he asked Jesus to command him to come to Jesus. Jesus said, Come! But when Peter saw the power of the wind and waves he began to sink. He was afraid and began to sink. He called out to Jesus, Lord save me! When they entered the boat the wind died down and they worshipped him, and said, “Truly you are the Son of God!”

They people found them again and begged Jesus to heal them (prayer).

