

THE FLORAL HEIGHTS INFORMER

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In This Issue:

**A Struggle for the Souls of
Men 1-2**
Local News 2
Sermon Outline 3
Clips from Psalms 4

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A Struggle for the Souls of Men

As one studies the life of Christ a foe immerses from the shadows of humanity. The scribes, Pharisees, Sadducees, chief priests, and elders (i.e., the Jewish Sanhedrin Council) were opposed to the Lord from the beginning of his ministry and Jesus knew it (see Matt. 5:20). These men loved the praise of others and Jesus took this from them (cf. Matt. 21:15-16; Jn. 12:43). Like two modern day politicians who vie for the popular vote of humanity so Jesus and the Jewish council members seemed to be in such a race. The victor of this race would not receive a government office but rather the souls of men. Jesus said that the Pharisees and Jewish council members, “*compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves*” (Matt. 23:15).

The Lord’s Popularity

Jesus’ popularity was gained due to his exercising authority over the physical elements of the earth (Matt. 8:23-27; 14:24-25; 17:27; 21:20), sickness and disease (Matt. 4:24; 8:5ff; 9:27-29), the devil (Matt. 4:10), demons (Matt. 8:16-17), life and death (Matt. 9:23-25), and even sin (Matt. 9:2-8). These miraculous acts caused the multitudes to follow him from many regions around Palestine (cf. Matt. 4:24-25). When following the life of Christ one notes the fame (Matt. 9:26, 31) the Lord gained as he astonished the multitudes with his preaching and miracles (Matt. 9:33; 12:23; 22:33). As word of Jesus’ miracles and preaching went abroad people were motivated to travel great distances to hear and see him (Matt. 13:1ff). Every where the Lord went the multitudes followed him hoping to be healed, fed, and to hear him preach (Matt. 14:13-14). After the multitude witnessed Jesus’ miracles they proclaimed him deity; i.e., the longed for Messiah (Matt. 14:17-21 compared to Jn. 6:14). The multitudes continue to follow Jesus every where he goes (i.e., to Galilee / Matt. 15:29ff; to the mount of transfiguration / Matt. 17:14; Lk. 9:43; to Judea near the Jordan / Matt. 19:1 and up to his final entrance into Jerusalem).

When Jesus entered into the city of Jerusalem, during the last week of his life, the throngs of people publicly proclaim their faith in His deity saying, “*Hosanna to the son of David: Blessed is he that comes in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest...*” (Matt. 21:9). Even as far as two days before Jesus is killed on the cross his popularity remained in tact (cf. Matt. 26:1-5). A sharp decline in the Lord’s popularity among the Jews occurs;

Local News:

Welcome to all our visitors. We pray that you will be edified by our service and that you will ask questions if things are not as you are accustomed to seeing. Please come back at your every opportunity.

Clifford Duty, Tolene Witherspoon's brother, passed away last week. His funeral was here in Wichita Falls. Our prayers and offers of any assistance goes out to the Witherspoon family.

Keep **Nina Gray** in your prayers too. Nina has been confined to her bed so that the swelling in her knees can go down.

Don Schaatt, Kasey Robertson's dad, passed away last Saturday. His funeral will be held in Houston tomorrow. John Robertson will be preaching the service.

Continue to pray for our shut-ins:

Stella Davidson
696-1030 (Home)

Calvin York
692-0489 (Home).

Bessie Murphy
4600 Taft Blvd, Apt. 538

however, from Matthew 26:5 and 26:47. Within a few hour time frame the multitudes' hearts were turned from confessing his deity to demanding Jesus' death. What happened? What caused a change of heart among the multitudes? The answer to this question appears to be found at Matthew 27:20, "*Now the chief priests and the elders persuaded the multitudes that they should ask for Barabbas, and destroy Jesus.*" The powerful and persuasive speech of the Jews was contagiously accepted. Jesus was apprehended as a common criminal (Matt. 26:47ff). The Lord was then taken to Caiaphas for trial and further persuasion by the council. The high priests said to Jesus, "*I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou art the Christ, the Son of God*" (26:63). The silence of Jesus only annoyed Caiaphas. The high priest forces Jesus to speak in an attempt to incite the crowd to his level of anger and seems to have succeeded. Here is the true matter as to their arrest and gathering against Jesus this night. His claims to be the Christ prophesied of in the OT was unacceptable to the high priest, elders, and chief priests. The Lord's miracles and good standing with the people displeased them (cf. Matt. 21:15). His stern rebukes against their wayward lives affronted them (Matt. 21:45-46). They were altogether offended by Jesus (cf. Matt. 15:12). The pride of the high priest and Sanhedrin council is depicted here. Those who disagreed with their manner of life, even if sinful, would not be tolerated. Like the prophets of old who exposed the people's sins were killed even so would it be with the Christ (cf. I Kings 19:10; Amos 2:12; Isa. 30:10; Matt. 23:31; Acts 7:52; Rev. 18:24). The multitudes are now completely opposed to Jesus (Matt. 27:22ff).

The Powerful and Leavening Effects of the Pharisees' False Teaching (cf. Matt. 16:12-13)

One may ask how people's minds can change so quickly. The events of the final days of the life of Christ ought to teach us the danger of false teachers and the importance of exposing them. Jesus never tolerated the error of the Jews. The Lord thereby warns his disciples and the multitudes to "*beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees. Then understood they that he bade them not beware of the leaven of bread, but of the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees*" (Matt. 16:11-12). The Pharisees saw Jesus as a challenge to their authority among the people. Their focus was to expose Jesus as one who opposed the Mosaic Law and falsely set himself forth as the Christ. The Jewish council members repeatedly challenge Jesus before the multitude in hopes of causing him to be rejected (Matt. 16:1; 19:3; 21:23; 22:25; 26:3). While the Pharisees tried to trip up Jesus the Lord continued to pointedly expose them as wicked husbandmen (Matt. 21:33ff) and hypocrites (Matt. 23 all). Interestingly, even the Pharisees marveled at the answers Jesus gave them to their deviant questions (cf. Matt. 22:22). Many today seem to want to protect false teachers rather than exposing not only their doctrines but their person. Let all see from the life of Christ the dangers involved in letting false teachers work go unchallenged. It took only a matter of hours for the multitudes faith to be overthrown by the Jewish council. There is today, as in the days of Christ, a struggle for the souls of men.

John C. Robertson

The Book of Matthew

Matthew 1:1 sets forth the theme of this study, “*The book of the generation (birth) of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.*” The caption in the American Standard Version Bible reads, “The Gospel: according to Matthew.” The word gospel is equated to “good news.” Jesus represents good news because He came into the world to save sinners from the condemnation of sin (Matt. 1:21). The apostle Paul writes, “*Faithful in the saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.*” (I Tim. 1:15). The apostle John writes, “*For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ*” (Jn. 1:17). Grace is identified in the New Testament as the forgiveness of sins (cf. Eph. 1:7; Rom. 5:1-2). Paul tells the Romans, “*being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus:*” (Rom. 3:24). Man’s eternal existence in heaven is contingent upon whether or not forgiveness is obtained. Considering the magnitude of the subject of grace and forgiveness it is entirely appropriate that “accounts” of the life of the one responsible for such attainment be given utmost attention.

The Author:

The caption records Matthew as the individual giving the “account” of the gospel message. Matthew was a tax collector (“*publican*”) before his conversion (cf. Matt. 9:9). Matthew is referred to as “*Levi the son of Alphaeus*” at Mark 2:14. Interestingly, as an apostle of Jesus Christ, he is not mentioned again in the NT after the events of Pentecost (Acts 2). In fact, outside of the gospels his name is only mentioned at Acts 1:13.

Date of Matthew:

Other than Matthew making mention of the coming destruction of Jerusalem there is no other real evidences of time. History reveals Titus to march on Jerusalem at 70 AD. It appears that Matthew speaks prophetic words regarding this as an event to come in the future (cf. Matt. 24:2ff). If we consider that Jesus was crucified at approximately 35 AD we can safely say that the book of Matthew was written sometime between 35 and 70 AD.

Contents of Book

The book of Matthew records the rise of Christ to popularity, his death by crucifixion, his resurrection and glorification. Jesus arose to popularity among the Jews from the region of Galilee. Jesus maintained his popularity during the early, middle, and latter stages of the Lord’s short preaching time. Multitudes of people literally mangled upon one another for an opportunity to see or touch Jesus (see Lk. 5:1). The more signs the Lord performed the greater his following (cf. Jn. 2:23). Matthew depicts this rise to popularity in the midst of a great struggle against the Jewish councilmen (i.e., the chief priests, elders, Pharisees, and Sadducees). Jesus would never let any man or council stand in the way of a soul’s salvation. Matthew records the Lord’s public exposure of these Jewish unbelievers (cf. Matt. 5:20; 7:15ff; 16:11-12; 23:1-4, 33). The public exposure of the Jewish leaders’ error eventually would lead to the death of Christ upon the cross (see Matt. 15:12). Jesus knew that this would occur (cf. Matt. 26:61). The time was thereby short for Jesus. He spent his time teaching and exercising compassion upon the people so that they might believe (cf. Jn. 20:30). Jesus’ message was the “gospel of the kingdom” (Matt. 4:23). Matthew spends a considerable amount of time identifying what the kingdom of God is and who would have entrance into it. The book as a whole is a letter that depicts the victorious life of Christ over sin and death. Matthew is a book that encourages Christians today to walk and hope in Christ.