**Survey of New Testament**

**Matthew 18:1-11 Lessons on Greatness**

1. The disciples knew there would be a kingdom and that they would be in it. But it is not spiritual to be seeking for position and greatness. A child is Christ’s illustration of greatness. Honor comes from humility; we must go down before God will lift us up (1 Peter 5:5–6). All great saints have been humble saints. Children are teachable, simple in their wants, and depend on their fathers to meet their needs. Of course, the only way we can become children is to be born again (John 3).
2. By “these little ones” (v. 10) Jesus means not only children, but the children of God. It is tragic when we cause another believer to stumble (Rom. 14:1–23; 1 Cor. 8:1–13).
3. Christ is not speaking literally when He commands us to “cut off” (v. 8) the members of the body that cause us to sin, for sin comes from the heart. He is telling us to deal with our sins drastically and completely, the way a surgeon deals with a cancerous growth. We must not “play with” sin or delay getting rid of it. We must face our sins honestly, confess and forsake.  This entire passage warns us not to offend children. It is a dangerous thing for parents (or other adults) to cause children to stumble and miss the way of salvation.

**Matthew 18:12-14 Parable of the Lost Sheep**

1. This parable reveals Christ’s care as a Shepherd. He doesn’t want any to perish. Christ will go after every sheep that strays.

**Matthew 18:15-35 Lessons on Forgiveness**

1. Christ deals now with sin in the church. The pattern is clear: first a private meeting, then bring two or three witnesses, then take it to the church. Note the purpose: “You have gained a brother” (v. 15, NKJV). The motive for church discipline is love: we are seeking to help a sinning brother. Since Christ is in the midst of the church (v. 20), it is also important that the church be obedient and pure.
2. Verse 18 indicates that the “binding and loosing” ministry has to do with applying the Word of God in matters of discipline. Paul “bound” the offending brother in 1 Cor. 5 and “loosed him” after he had confessed (2 Cor. 2). Verse 19 suggests that prayer is an important factor in church discipline.
3. Peter thought he was “extra-spiritual” for offering to forgive seven times, because the Jewish rabbis said that three times was enough. Jesus put no limit on forgiveness, for true forgiveness comes from a heart of love, and love keeps no record of wrongs (1 Cor. 13:5). The lesson of the parable is obvious: if the king could forgive the servant’s debt of $12,000,000, certainly the servant could forgive his friend’s debt of about $15! We forgive others because Christ has forgiven us (Eph. 4:32; Col. 3:13).

**Matthew 19:1–16 Marriage and Divorce**

1. The Pharisees asked the question about marriage because it was one of the “burning issues” of that day. God instituted marriage in Eden, long before the Mosaic Law. God’s original purpose was that one man should marry one woman, and only death should break that union. The marriage union is even stronger than family ties, for a man is to leave father and mother and cleave to his wife. It is a sacred union, for Jesus said that God joins a man and woman together.
2. Sinners are always looking for excuses, and the Pharisees appealed to Deut. 24:1, trying to show that Christ and Moses were in conflict. It is important that we realize why Moses gave this law and what the law really stated. Moses did not command divorce; Christ said that God permitted it, “because of the hardness of your hearts” (v. 8). Moses did command that the divorced woman be given a bill of divorcement, to protect her and to make it more difficult for the man to divorce her in the heat of anger. The woman was forbidden to return to her first husband, but she could marry another man.
3. Christ clearly states that divorce is permitted for only one cause, fornication. This is a sin against the body (1 Cor. 6:15–18) and thus a sin against the marriage union, which is a physical union.
4. The response of the disciples (vv. 10–12) indicates they didn’t understand God’s will regarding marriage. The Bible does recognize that not everybody is supposed to be married. Paul indicates this in 1 Cor. 7:7. Paul himself refrained from marriage that he might better serve God, but this is not the will of God for all His servants. A person must find God’s will for his life and be sure to marry “in the Lord” (1 Cor. 7:39).

**Matthew 19:16-30 Riches and Salvation**

These passages revolve around five questions and the answers Christ gave.

1. “What good thing shall I do?” (vv. 16–17) We must admire the rich ruler for his courtesy, earnestness, and desire for spiritual truth. Christ’s reply was intended to emphasize His own deity. “Either I am good, or I am not God,” is what He implied. He wanted the young man to realize he was dealing with God and not a mere human teacher of the Law.
2. “Which commandments?” (vv. 18–19) Christ told him to keep the Law, not because the Law saves, but because we must be convicted by the Law before we feel the need to be saved by grace. This young man knew the Law, and the Law had served as a schoolmaster to bring him to Christ (Gal. 3:24). Now the Law was serving as a mirror (James 1:22–25) to show the young man his real need.
3. “What lack I yet?” (vv. 20–22) As he faced the perfect Law of God, he should have thought of the one that said, “You shall not covet” (Ex. 20:17, NKJV) “You shall have no other gods before Me” (Ex. 20:3, NKJV). His wealth was his god, but he would not admit it. Why did Jesus tell him to sell all and give to the poor? This commandment pointed out his real problem: he was covetous. Sad to say, the young ruler would not confess his sin. He went away sad.
4. “Who can be saved?” (vv. 23–26) The disciples were amazed: if a rich man can’t be saved, then who can be saved? Mark 10:24 indicates that the rich have a hard time being saved because they trust in their riches.
5. “What shall we have?” (vv. 27–30) Peter was quick to contrast himself with the rich ruler and point to his own self-sacrifice. Jesus tenderly assured His own that they will get their rewards in the kingdom age. However, he cautions them not to make themselves “first” because the first shall be last. He illustrated this with the parable in the next chapter and shows that motive for service is most important.

**Matthew 20:1-16 The Parable of the Vineyard**

1. The parable is Christ’s explanation of His statement about the first and the last. If you connect 20:10 with Peter’s remarks in 19:27, you will get the lesson. “When the first came, they supposed that they should have received more.” Isn’t this what Peter was doing? “We have left all,” he said. “What will we get?” He was thinking of himself.
2. Christ teaches him that God has a right to do what He pleases with His servants, and that to have a wrong motive (“eye evil” in v. 15) is sinful. Note also that the 6 A.M. workers demanded a contract; they wanted to know what they would get!
3. Christ has summoned us to labor for Him. We must watch our motives for Christian service. The right work done with the wrong motive dishonors God and robs us of the blessing. We cannot judge motives (7:1–3), but we can judge our own hearts.

**Matthew 20:17-28 The Prayer for Glory**

1. This is Christ’s third announcement of the cross to His disciples (see Matt. 16:21; 17:22–23). They didn’t understand the cross of Christ. How slow we are to grasp the message of the Cross!
2. James and John’s mother’s faith in Christ must be admired; also her trust in His promise of the kingdom (19:28). But her motive was not right, since she was asking not for God’s glory but for her own.
3. Jesus speaks to James and John and not to the mother. Of course, they were ignorant of what He meant by the “cup” and the “baptism,” both of which pointed to His suffering and death on Calvary (see 26:39–42 and Luke 12:50).
4. Jesus promised that they would indeed taste of His cup and baptism. James was the first disciple martyred (Acts 12), and John suffered greatly, exiled on the Isle of Patmos (Rev. 1).
5. “How great a forest a little fire kindles” (James 3:5, NKJV). Selfishness on the part of one believer can cause trouble in the lives of others. Jesus used this opportunity to teach the disciples a lesson on humility.
6. The truly great person is one who serves others. Christ Himself is the example of this. To “exercise lordship” as the people of the world do is foreign to the spirit of the Christian life.

**The Miracle of Healing (20:29–34)**

1. Mark 10:46–52 indicates only one blind man, but Matthew states there were two. This miracle is a picture of salvation.
2. The two men were blind, and every lost sinner is blind (2 Cor. 4:1–6). They were poor beggars, and the lost sinner is poverty stricken apart from Christ (Luke 7:40–50). They cried out to Jesus, who alone can open men’s eyes.
3. The crowd tried to stop them, and the world today tries to keep sinners from coming to Christ. The touch of Christ healed them, and they proved that their lives had changed by following Him.

**Matthew 21**

You will note that chapter 21 begins with three definite signs to the nation of Israel; these are followed by three parables (including 22:1–14).

**Matthew 21:1–22 Three Signs Concerning Israel**

1. **Presentation of the King** (vv. 1–11). This was in fulfillment of Zech. 9:9. The crowd quoted Ps. 118:26 in its praises; later (v. 42) Christ would quote from that same psalm to refute the leaders. Note in v. 11 that the city called Him “the prophet” but not the King! Unfortunately, the Jews “did not know the time of your visitation” (Luke 19:41–44, NKJV) and rejected their King.
2. **Purifying of the temple** (vv. 12–16). Israel’s inward corruption is seen by the way the temple had become a house of merchandise. The first cleansing at the start of Christ’s ministry (John 2) did not last, for the leaders’ hearts were not changed. Christ quoted Isa. 56:7 and called the temple “My house” (v. 13), thus claiming to be God.
3. **Cursing the fig tree** (vv. 17–22). Matthew 24:32–33 and Luke 13:6–10 suggest that the fig tree pictures Israel. This tree had leaves but not fruit, picturing Israel with its outward “show of religion” but its fruitlessness. Luke 13:6–10 indicates that God gave Israel three years in which to bring forth fruit, but the nation failed.

In these three signs, Christ reveals Israel’s spiritual blindness, her inward corruption, and her outward fruitlessness.

**Matthew 21:23–22:14 Three Parables Concerning Israel**

From 21:23 to 23:39, Christ is in the temple contending with leaders. In 24:1 He departs from the temple and never again entered it! Of course, the Jews questioned His authority, and He took them back to the ministry of John the Baptist. Jesus told three parables concerning the nation of Israel.

1. **The two sons** (vv. 28–32). Here we see Israel as a son disobedient to his Father. The vineyard speaks of Israel (Isa. 5:1–7; Ps. 80:8–16). By rejecting John the Baptist, the Jews disobeyed the Father who sent him. The sinners, however, heeded John and entered into the kingdom of God!
2. **The vineyard and husbandmen** (vv. 33–46). God did much for Israel, expecting the nation to bear fruit for His glory, but the nation rebelled. God sent many prophets and other servants to deal with them, but Israel mistreated and even killed them. Then God sent His Son—and they killed Him! They even “cast Him out of the vineyard”. The Jews themselves spoke their own sentence in v. 41, and God took their spiritual privileges away, destroyed Jerusalem, and gave their blessings to the Gentiles. Christ quoted Ps. 118:22–23, calling Himself “the stone which the builders rejected” (v. 42; see Isa. 28:16). The sinner who “falls on the stone” in humility will be broken but saved, but the rebel who resists Christ will be crushed by the stone in judgment.
3. **The marriage feast** (vv. 1–14). The Father invited the guests (Israel) to enjoy blessings because of His Son. However, the nation ignored the invitations given. The closing verses of the parable (11–14) emphasize the fact that the guests must receive a change of clothing from the King to be accepted. The King called “both bad and good” (v. 10), but provided a garment to make them acceptable. This speaks of the gift of righteousness that God provides through Christ for all who believe.

These three parables show the spiritual history of Israel. She was chosen of God to be fruitful and she failed to bear fruit. She disobeyed the Father (Parable of the Two Sons), crucified the Son (Parable of the Vineyard), and resisted the Spirit (Parable of the Marriage Feast). She is today set aside and the blessings of Christ have been given to the church until the fullness of the Gentiles comes in (Rom. 11:25).