

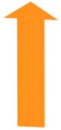
SEVEN ARROWS



What does this passage say?



What did this passage mean to its original audience?



What does this passage tell us about God?



What does this passage tell us about man?



What does this passage demand of me?



How does this passage change the way I relate to people?



What does this passage prompt me to pray to God?

MATTHEW 5:1-12



Matthew recorded an extended passage of Jesus' teaching, commonly known as the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus began this sermon by pointing His hearers to the blessings of God, a common theme in the Old Testament. Starting with Abraham, God Said His people would receive the blessing of God and would in turn serve as a blessing to others. Jesus provided a description of the type of people who were blessed, including those who mourn, those who seek peace, and those who are persecuted. It is clear that the blessing of God does not necessarily mean wealth, power, or fame. The blessings God offers are ultimately forgiveness of sins and a restored relationship with Him. This is true blessedness. The people who understand that God's blessing comes through faith are able to face sufferings, unrest, pain and loss knowing that they've received God's blessings in Christ, and nothing the world can take that blessing away.

MATTHEW 5:17-20



Throughout the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus did something interesting with the Old Testament law. He did not throw it out, but instead He intensified it. He said the issue isn't just that people commit murder, but that their hearts rage with anger. It isn't simply that couples commit adultery, it's that their hearts burn with lust. They don't just break promises, but they lie and deceive. There's no way people can ever clean up their sinful hearts on their own, which is why Jesus's statement in this passage is so important-He is the fulfillment of the law. He came to obey God perfectly. He never became sinfully angry, much less murdered. He never sinned through His actions, or even in His thoughts or motives. Jesus is perfect, and He accomplished what Adam, Israel and we today could never do. As a gift of grace, God gives those who trust in Jesus perfect standing before God. God sees those who have faith in Jesus as if they had kept the law perfectly, because Jesus fulfilled the law on their behalf.

MARK 4:1-20



A common way Jesus taught others about who He is and what He came to do was through parables, which are short stories designed to communicate one central point. Jesus used the parable of the sower to illustrate the message He and the disciples would communicate about the kingdom of God. They would sow the seed widely, but only a small percentage of people would respond in faith. This parable reminds Jesus' disciples that the work we do is not in vain. God faithfully uses the few who respond in faith to produce an abundant harvest of godly fruit. The disciples themselves would demonstrate this reality. Beginning with a small band of disciples who followed Him by faith, Jesus would transform the world. This parable provides hope for all who share the good news of Jesus with others. Though many will reject His message of salvation, some will hear the message of Jesus and trust in His work. We can depend on God to bring salvation as we are faithful to scatter the seed.

MARK 6:1-6



Among those who did not respond in faith are many of the Jews, or descendants of the ancient Israelites. You'd think that the Jewish people would have been the first to trust in Jesus. They'd seen the benefit of the promises of God, the Word of God, and the sacrificial system. The prophets pointed them to the day Jesus would come, the time when God would fulfill His promises by sending the Savior. Jesus simply did not fit their perception of what this Savior would do. He was, after all, just a carpenter from the obscure village of Nazareth. Even those in His hometown didn't believe He was who He said He was. The people who had the most exposure to Him and His message were the ones who failed to have faith. Too often, the same is true in our day. Many have access to Bibles, churches on every corner, and friends who talk to them about good news. Some believe they are saved simply because they've heard about Jesus all their lives. But like the Jews, these people often fail to know Jesus by placing their faith in Him.

GALATIANS 2:15-3:14



Paul expressed his anger at the church in Galatia. At the heart of his frustration was the fact that the Christians in the church were slowly falling back into their old pattern of life. They based their standing before God in the ability to keep the law. It was becoming common in the church for people to believe they had to be circumcised or keep certain dietary laws in order to be saved. Paul reminded them that this was not the good news of Jesus. The gospel message declared that Jesus fulfilled the law on behalf of sinners, and faith in His work is what makes someone right with God. No one can earn God's favor by keeping the law. Paul said the church was in danger of undermining the very nature of grace through their actions. Grace is God's favor given to those He saves, even though they do nothing to earn His kindness. By striving to keep the law in order to be saved, they were indicating that they believed their salvation was based, at least in part, on their actions. Paul reminds us that Jesus did everything so we can rest in His grace.