

Ron J. Bigalke, Ph.D.

PO Box 7, Flowery Branch, GA 30542-0001

(912) 659-4212

ron.bigalke@capitolcom.org

Two Alternatives

Members' Bible Fellowship

TUESDAYS @ 7:00AM IN 107 CAP
(IN-PERSON AND MEMBERS ONLY)

Capitol Commission Bible Study

TUESDAYS @ 12 NOON in 318 CLOB (& ZOOM)
(IN-PERSON AND ZOOM)

☞ LUNCH PROVIDED FOR THOSE ATTENDING ☜

The current Bible study continues the exposition in the Gospel of Matthew (chapter-by-chapter, verse-by-verse). Capitol Commission provides an open-to-all Bible study *every Tuesday* during the legislative session from **12:00-12:45pm**. We have an in-person Bible study (*with lunch provided*) in 318 CLOB *and* also use Zoom.

The members' only Bible Fellowship will be held every **Tuesday** (unless communicated otherwise) from **7:00-7:50am** in the Governor's Conference Room (107 CAP). *The Capitol Commission Bible study and the Members' Bible Fellowship are both nonpartisan and non-denominational.*

For archives of past Bible studies (dating from 2010), please visit <http://www.capitolcom.org/georgia/studies>. **Capitol Commission's prayer is that this study will be edifying to you.** The sole intent of this ministry is to serve you, as a resource for pastoral attention, counsel, and prayer. **The present Bible study is just one aspect of that desire.**

– Dr. Ron J. Bigalke, Georgia State Minister, Capitol Commission

Capitol Commission Bible Study

is
Tuesday, 24 January 2023

Matthew 7:13—8:22 – “Two Alternatives”

A number of antitheses conclude the Sermon on the Mount (Matt 5—7). The arrangement is most certainly for simply clarifying the essential choices that followers of Jesus need to make. Vital decisions need to be made by those who are to be citizens of the Lord's kingdom. Each of the alternatives serves as a warning, as they all focus upon a future judgment for poor decision in relation to the coming kingdom. The choices are stated in a series of twos:

Two gates: narrow (small) and wide;
Two ways: broad and narrow;
Two classes: many and few;
Two destinations: destruction and life;
Two trees: good and bad
(one of which is cut down and thrown into the fire);
Two fruits: good and bad;
Two houses;
Two foundations: rock and sand;
Two builders: wise and foolish;
Two storms; and,
Two results: one did not fall, while the other did.

Jesus concluded his sermon with a series of challenges for making wise choices and being personally acquainted with God. He did not introduce a new ethic; rather, he challenged his followers to obey what had already been revealed. The conclusion of Jesus' discourse reveals how his mind was focused upon the end of the age and the inauguration of his kingdom.

CHOICE AND PROPER CONVICTIONS

(Matt 7:13-29) Psalm 1 contrasts the life of the righteous and unrighteous, and compels every person to ask the soul-searching question, “What life am I living?” One leads to blessedness and permanence and the other to ruin. Psalm 1 is not the only chapter in the Old Testament that challenges a person to choose between two walks of life and one of two destinations.

Two of the most sobering chapters in the Old Testament are Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28, which state the blessings for obedience to God and the curses resulting from waywardness. Jesus' concluding words to his sermon (Matt 7:13-27) are equivalent to those passages. There is also a poignant correspondence to Moses' parting challenge: “I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, the blessing and the curse. So choose life in order that you may live, you and your descendants, by loving the LORD your God, by obeying His voice, and by holding fast to Him” (Deut 30:19-20a).

Jesus made it evident that there is only one of two gates that people enter to obtain eternal life: that which is small (Matt 7:13). “The gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life” (v. 14), particularly in the Lord's kingdom (cf. vv. 21-22). “The gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction,” namely death and hell. Jesus appealed to his listeners to pursue the narrow, restrictive gate, though it may involve difficulty (i.e. “small” is *tethlimmenē* and is closely related to the Greek word *thlipsis* meaning “tribulation”) for they will be rewarded in the end. The true gate is both difficult and narrow. Be on guard of the well-traveled path leading to a gate that is wide. The way to life is believing the good news of God's grace received by grace through faith in Jesus Christ.



Members' Bible Fellowship
Tuesday (24th of January) @ 7:00am – 7:50am, 107 CAP
Capitol Commission Bible Study
Tuesday (24th of January) @ 12 Noon – 12:45pm, 318 CLOB (& Zoom)
(ministry sponsorship by Lee Lemke, Georgia Mining Association)



Enhancing Trust

Following the exhortation to pursue the path that leads to life and warning of a way leading to destruction, Jesus informed his followers to “beware of the false prophets” whose nature is to deceive and hide their true character. They often deceive themselves, believing they are sheep yet they are “ravenous wolves” (v. 15). Truth can be violated, and those opposed to it will often hide their hostility by appearing to be individuals who are faithful.

The basic flaw of the false prophet is self-interest, either for personal gain or prestige, or the desire to promote one’s own ideas as opposed to what God has given. Jesus said, “You will know them by their fruits” (v. 16), which means paying attention to a person’s life and teaching (vv. 17-20; 1 Tim 4:16). If one heeds the Bible, false prophets should be easy to avoid; false followers (vv. 21-23), however, may be identifiable only to the Lord. One can be religious yet live hypocritically because they are not personally acquainted with God; they are “tares” among wheat” (cf. 13:24-30). Note that Jesus claimed all people will stand before Him on the day of judgment, and thus He is rightly called Lord.

And as to the pursuits which you so eagerly follow, and which now appear so important to you that they engross the whole of your thoughts, and arouse all your faculties and energies, are they worthy of all this effort? Will they seem to be so “in that day”?

What is the chief object of your life? Will you think as much of it “in that day” as you do now? Will you then count yourself wise to have so earnestly pursued it? You fancy that you can defend it now, but will you be able to defend it then, when all things of earth and time will have melted into nothingness? [Charles Haddon Spurgeon, “The Disowned,” 22 April 1877]

The false followers professed faith yet did not live in accordance with it (7:21-23); they heard Jesus’ words but did not order their lives by them (cf. vv. 24-27). The wise person is a hearer and doer (cf. Jas 1:22-24). The day of judgment will expose the true convictions of both false followers and fake prophets. Jesus is the foundation rock, and one’s relationship to Him determines whether one enters the coming kingdom. The test of authentic faith is obedience to the revealed will of God in Scripture, the Holy Bible.

James 1:22 – But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves.

What astonished those who heard Jesus’ sermon was that He taught “as *one* having authority (vv. 28-29). Jesus’ teaching included his content and delivery. His authority was essentially different in that He is the Messiah. A person today will have authority to speak on behalf of God only so long as he or she accurately speaks the Lord’s message and expounds his words (as given in Scripture).

CHOICE AND PROPER DEVOTION

(*Matt 8:1-22*) Jesus had just demonstrated his authority through his teaching of the Sermon on the Mount. He would prove next that his authority extended to more than his teaching. Indeed, He will prove himself to be the supreme authority (the Lord Almighty) through his demonstration of the very power of God. Jesus proclaimed “the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (4:17), and taught the ethics associated with that domain (chs. 5–7), and now in his miracles, He proves that He has the credentials of the King.

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Large crowds followed Jesus in response to his teaching (8:1). Jesus exercised his authority by healing a man who had what was considered an incurable disease. The man came boldly and humbly to Jesus (v. 2), and the Lord’s willingness to touch the leper was a visual expression of his compassion for struggling individuals (v. 3). Not only did Jesus seek to avoid unnecessary attention but also He proved his conformity to the Mosaic Law (v. 4).

THE LORD’S ABILITY TO RESOLVE SPIRITUAL PROBLEMS TODAY IS STILL JUST AS SIMPLE.

The next healing was the servant of a centurion, which also demonstrated the authority and power of Jesus (vv. 5-13). His power was evident in that He could heal from a distance (v. 13) simply because the centurion evidenced a humble belief (vv. 8-10). The Lord’s ability to resolve spiritual problems today is still just as simple. Jesus proved himself the Messiah under divine authority.

More suffering people were healed, beginning with Peter’s mother-in-law (vv. 14-16). In fulfillment of prophecy (Isa 53:4; cf. 33:24; 57:19), Jesus delivered many from demonic possession and sickness (vv. 16-17). As opposed to following a chronological order, Matthew seems to have arranged the miracles to illustrate the progress of the gospel message. Jesus first ministered to the Jews, yet the religious authorities rejected his testimony. He, therefore, directed his attention to the Gentiles, who manifested “great faith” in Him. He, then, returned to the Jews by healing the mother-in-law to the Apostle of the Jews, in addition to many who came to Him (which would be an indication of the restoration of the Jews and all nations being blessed as a result).

Jesus was able to demand exclusive loyalty from his followers as Messiah-King (vv. 18-22). His claims were given in the context of his miracles to prove his right to make those demands. Jesus still expects undivided loyalty to his lordship. Discerning the authority and compassion of Jesus is certainly worth seeking in one’s own life, and to follow his example in action and attitude toward others.

Thank you for the privilege in providing you with the Capitol Commission Bible study. If we can serve you in any manner, please talk with us, or contact by email or phone.

About Capitol Commission

Capitol Commission is a charitable and religious nonprofit corporation under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. Capitol Commission is supported by the generous gifts of businesses, churches, and individuals. Capitol Commission is not state funded; rather, those with a heart for the Capitol community fund it.

Capitol Commission exists to minister gospel hope and spiritual strength to legislators, staff, lobbyists, and all who constitute the Capitol community. The focus of our ministry is people as opposed to politics, and thus to be a spiritual resource to the legislature. Our ministry strategy is expressed by pastoral *presence*, the *proclamation* of the Bible, and fervent *prayer* for every legislator.

As the Lord Jesus said, “look on the fields, that they are white for harvest” (John 4:35). If you would like to partner with Capitol Commission, Georgia with your talents, time, or treasure, please contact us by email, mail, or phone; or, visit online at <http://capitolcom.org/georgia/donate>.

Please join us in this ministry!

NEXT CAPITOL COMMISSION BIBLE STUDY:
Tuesday, 31st of January @ 12 Noon