

Matthew Lesson 20

Today, He will begin to focus the ever growing number of disciples on some very practical principles that will affect our lives as we are now those who will establish His kingdom on earth.

Matthew 18:1 At that time the disciples came to Jesus, saying, "Who then is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?"

Imagine that Yeshua has done all these miracles, He's just handed Peter money from the mouth of a fish and **at that moment** the biggest question on the minds of the disciples is: "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?"

And so, Yeshua does what He is so good at - He does the unexpected:

Matthew 18:2-5 Then Jesus called a little child to Him, set him in the midst of them and said, *Assuredly, I say to you unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever humbles himself as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Whoever receives one little child like this in My name receives Me.*

Have you ever seen a little child called up in front of a crowd of adults?

They are shy; they really just want to go back to their mom where the environment is predictable and safe. But Yeshua uses this little child to teach them that **humility** - a change in attitude - not a fight for position and power - but humility is what makes you great in G-d's kingdom.

What is humility? It's not saying the "right thing" when you want to impress, and then turning around and being unkind to people.

Humility is so much more than words.

Humility is putting down pride and arrogance and power. Humility is leading by being the living example of the attitude you want others to have by having that attitude. Humility is not puffed up and arrogant.

Humility is dying to self - Humility is putting others first.

Humility is loving people the way Yeshua did.

So we are to have faith as little children.

How did Yeshua display humility?

Matthew 18:6 But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to sin, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were drowned in the depth of the sea.

A millstone around someone's neck is a very vivid picture and would have been a shocking analogy for the audience. A millstone was a huge stone between 48-72 inches in diameter. In **Deuteronomy 24:6**, the Law forbade taking someone's millstone in pledge, because the millstone was meant to sustain life - it was needed to make bread and to crush the oil out of olives.

Yeshua now takes this well-known stone related to life and flips it to say if anyone takes someone's childlike faith, or takes a little child and causes them to sin, then you might as well take this stone that is met for life and use it to put an end to the one's life who caused the sin.

This shocking statement is meant to show the importance of protecting faith and protecting little ones from those who would prey on them or teach them lies.



And Yeshua continues to point out the importance of children in His Kingdom.

Matthew 18:7 Woe to the world for the causes of sin. These stumbling blocks must come, but woe to the man through whom they come!

Romans 9:33 Behold, I lay in Zion a stumbling stone and rock of offense,
And whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame.

Matthew 13:41, 42 The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that **offend**, and those who practice lawlessness, and will cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth."

Yeshua will continue this strong warning using body parts when He says:

Matthew 18:8,9 If your hand or your foot causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life crippled or lame than to have two hands and two feet and be thrown into the eternal fire. And if your eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into the fire of hell.

Yeshua is comparing the foot, hands or eyes as things that could be traps. These traps bring such calamity, it would be better to go through life without them than to allow them to be stumbling blocks to anyone's faith.

Matthew 18:10-14 See that you do not despise one of these little ones. For I tell you that their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father in heaven. What do you think? If a man owns a hundred sheep, and one of them wanders away, will he not leave the ninety-nine on the hills and go to look for the one that wandered off? And if he finds it, truly I tell you, he is happier about that one sheep than about the ninety-nine that did not wander off. In the same way your Father in heaven is not willing that any of these little ones should perish.

Yeshua cares about each one of us individually - this is a kingdom principle.

We must care about each one individually.



Is it difficult to look at each person and care for them individually?
How does this concept of finding just one lost sheep relate to humility?

Matthew 18:15-17 Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother. But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that 'by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector.

Notice how Yeshua moves to this teaching while you still have children in mind. That is so that we will relate to one another on this level, having a childlike attitude with imperfect people.

Leviticus 9:23 Moses and Aaron then entered the Tent of Meeting. When they came out, they blessed the people, and the glory of the LORD appeared to all the people.

Proverbs 10:12 Hatred stirs up strife, But love covers all sins.

Romans 3:23 For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.

The point is we all sin. The problem comes when someone sins against us!

The steps in the process are clear. First go privately to the person, then take 2 - 3 people with you. If there is still no resolution, go before the congregation. Now if the guilty party refuses to repent, they are to be put out of the congregation.

This was done to protect the remaining congregation from the leaven that would be spread from this party.

Now the Lord punctuates the Jewishness of this procedure with the following verses...:

Matthew 18:18-20 Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. "Again, truly I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything they ask for, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them.

These verses like all of our studies, need to be taken in context, and the context of what Yeshua is explaining is in relation to judging our brothers to come to a right conclusion in a matter.

Has Yeshua been talking about prayer prior to this statement in the above verses?

Has Yeshua been talking about spiritual warfare in the above verses?

He is talking about judging our fellow man.

This is a very serious issue.

Deuteronomy 1:15a So I took the leaders of your tribes, wise and respected men, and appointed them as leaders over you.

Deuteronomy 1:16 Then I commanded your judges at that time, saying, 'Hear the cases between your brethren, and judge righteously between a man and his brother or the stranger who is with him.'

Yeshua has just explained the process of judging that was basically laid out in Moses' day. As history unfolded, the judges who ruled these cases were called a Beit Din and consisted of 2-3 men.

In modern day vocabulary these men were to have the following qualification: They were to be wise, humble, G-d fearing, money loathing, truth loving, beloved and reputable. If they had these qualifications, they were to be given authority to rule.

When these cases came before those who were judging, they would gather to seek G-d's will.

They operated from the perspective of what is stated in the Talmud:

"If two sit together and words of Torah pass between them, the Sh'khinah (Holy Spirit) abides between them." (Tractate Avot 3:2)

Their entire purpose was to go to the Torah, find the law in question, and in unity, find G-d's will in how it is to be lived out (in Hebrew this is called "halakah").

This decision is to be based on the Law of G-d, not the will of man.

It is a legal decision and these men are calling on G-d for His will.

These scriptures tell us that

If something is **forbidden in heaven**, it should **be forbidden (bound) on earth** (asur).

If something is permitted (loosed) in heaven it should be permitted (mutar) on earth.

Consequently, they are binding (forbidding-asur) and loosing (permitting-mutar) G-d's will in this legal matter as a group with the authority of the court.



Peter fully understood what Yeshua was teaching as the very next thing recorded is Peter asking how many times he had to forgive someone.

Peter is taking this from the legal to the personal level.

Peter shows his understanding that this whole teaching theme revolves around forgiveness and restoration.

Matthew 18:21,22 Then Peter came to Him and said, Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Up to seven times?

Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven."

You may remember Lamech's unlimited vengeance - forgiveness was not part of his character.

Genesis 4:23,24 Then Lamech said to his wives: "Adah and Zillah, hear my voice; wives of Lamech, listen to my speech. For I have slain a man for wounding me, a young man for striking me. If Cain is avenged sevenfold, then Lamech seventy times seven.

Yeshua is reversing this attitude of vengeance and unforgiveness. He is telling us to stop counting, and give forgiveness freely as you have been forgiven freely.

We are following the Lord's Prayer -Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. (Matthew 18:32-35)

Matthew 19:1 Now it came to pass, when Jesus had finished these sayings, that He departed from Galilee and came to the region of Judea along the Jordan. While on this journey, Yeshua has a personal encounter with children.

Matthew 19:16,17 Now behold, one came and said to Him, Good Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life? So He said to him, "Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is God. But if you want to enter into life, keep the commandments."

The young man had an honest question about eternal life which was addressed often by rabbis in the first century.

Maimonides talked of the resurrection and the future life which is summed up in the Talmud with these words: "This world is like a vestibule before the World to Come; prepare yourself in the vestibule that you may enter into the hall" (Tractate Avot iv.21)

Another famous Jewish writing says:

"In the hour of man's departure from the world, neither silver, nor gold, nor precious stones, nor pearls accompany him, but only Torah and good works." (iv.9 Tractate Avot)

We know that people are made in the image of G-d, and therefore, should reflect G-d's nature. But this truth was not being discussed until the days of the 2nd temple.

This idea began to stir up new ways of humans relating to both G-d and to others, as it began to be discussed.

This conversation began to point to a 3-sided relationship, G-d with man and man with others.

Matthew 7:1,2 Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: And with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you.

There are 3 sides to the relationship described in this verse.

James 2:13 Let him without sin cast the first stone.

Another way of saying this is:

Let him who has no need of mercy judge without mercy.

We need the mercy of G-d; we are made in His image, therefore; we must be like Him and show mercy to our fellow man.

Leviticus 19:18 Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: I am the Lord.

Again, we see the three-sided relationship we are to have, showing the attributes of the Lord in whose image we are made.

Matthew 19:18-20 He said to Him, Which ones? Jesus said, *You shall not murder, You shall not commit adultery, You shall not steal, You shall not bear false witness. Honor your father and your mother, and You shall love your neighbor as yourself.*

The young man said to Him, All these things I have kept from my youth. What do I still lack?

This young man is very perceptive. He senses there is something more. There is a heart issue.

Matthew 19:21-22 *If you want to be perfect go sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven and come follow Me.* But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.

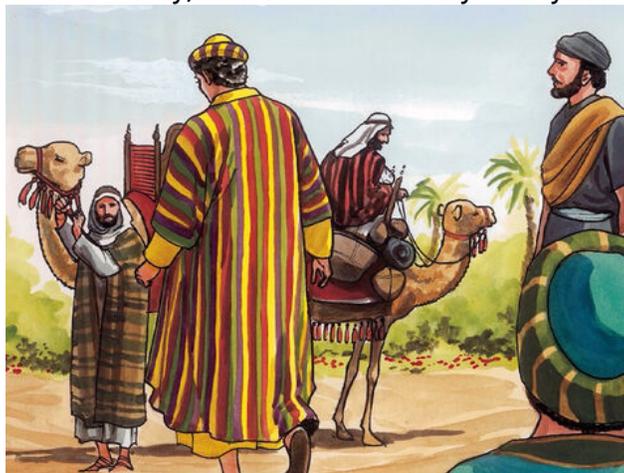
Wealth does not always have to be the god that would keep someone from totally following G-d.

What could be other things that could sneak in and take the place of G-d?

Matthew 19:25-26 When His disciples heard it, they were greatly astonished, saying, Who then can be saved? *But Jesus looked at them and said to them, "With men this is impossible, **but with God all things are possible.**"*

Our hope is in G-d who also said:

Micah 6:8 He has shown you, O man, what *is* good; And what does the LORD require of you? But to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?



This thought of humility takes us right back to the first verses in Matthew 18 when Yeshua says Whoever humbles himself as this little child will be the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

Why do you think humility is so critical to being great in G-d's kingdom?