



MATTHEW • DISTILLED : establish the instruction (1Co 9:1-10, 10:1-11; Rom 15:4)

CHAPTER: 9 (PART 2)

Chapter eight's theme/title/topic of **Submission To God** provided the perfect follow-up to Jesus' corrective sermons on the Law, holy habits and the gospel (in chapters 5 thru 7) since this (submission to God) is the key to applying and accomplishing those things. Submission to God is also what produces ministers and ministry appointed by God. However, the actions of such ministry can look strange (even wrong!) to the (biblically) untrained eye. This was the case with Jesus. Though clearly a minister appointed by God His actions (in this chapter) are repeatedly questioned or condemned (9:3, 11, 14, 24, 34). It is for this reason then, that Matthew records the events and teachings of chapter 9: to help us identify these rarely recognized and often questioned actions thru the ministry of Jesus.

The Rarely Recognized (And Often Questioned) Actions Of Ministers And Ministries Appointed By God

1. Claiming The Authority To Forgive Sins (1-8).

As a means of demonstrating Himself to be a minister appointed by God, Jesus' claims the very unpopular position of possessing the authority to forgive sin. This same authority has now been given to those churches (and her leaders) established by Christ (Joh 20:21-23; Mat 18:15-20). What then identifies churches (ministers/ministry) appointed by God/est'd by Christ is the practice of the sacraments (Baptism/LT) and church discipline/restoration as the means to extending forgiveness and binding/loosing sin.

Why many Evangelical Christians (like the Pharisees) reject such authority = b/c it means admitting that their salvation – or understanding of what is acceptable before God (including what is the right interpretation of Scripture or the right gospel message), is not something they can do on their own. Rather they need God's established covenant community and those appointed by Him to determine those things and hold them accountable (Joh 20:21-23 w/Act 15:22,28; e.g. re: gtgr - Gal 2:2; Consider also Lev 6:7 and **Col 2:15 w/Fn**)¹. Does this mean that all churches who claim such authority are therefore appointed by God? No (e.g. Roman Catholicism), but it does mean that if a church, other ministry or ministers, deny such authority exists "on earth" - or teach that people can "save themselves" by receiving such forgiveness w/o this kind of church, or by going to God on their own (thru faith), they are clearly not appointed by God. Such ministries and ministers have more in common w/the Pharisees who opposed Jesus.

Question we sb asking churches (to determine if they have been appointed by God/est'd by Christ) = How often is discipline/restoration taking place in your church? Are you practicing the sacraments (Baptism/LT) given for the purpose of extending forgiveness?

2. Spending Large Amounts Of Time W/Those Covenant People Most In Need Of Discipline and Discipleship (9-13).

Though likewise challenged/questioned by the existing religious establishment, Jesus demonstrates this to also be the actions of a minister (and ministry) appointed by God. What then also identifies churches (ministers/ministry) appointed by God/est'd by Christ is spending lots of time w/those in the covenant community who are constantly "sick" or struggling w/their sin and seeking the help of those trained as "spiritual doctors" to disciple/discipline them to recovery – to becoming the kinds of consistent righteous practicing people who know the abundant blessings associated w/God mercy (Col 1:28-29; 2Ti 2:24-26, 4:2; 1Th 5:14; Jam 5:19-20).

Why the Pharisees and scribes questioned this action = b/c they (like many pastors/churches listening to the world's advice today), felt that it was a waste of time versus realizing this is at the heart of God (Hos 6:6 w/2:19-23 = The work of God's ministers is to bring people back to their obligation of faithfulness – so that God can extend His promise of "mercy"; Amo 5:21-25).

Question we sb asking churches (to determine if they have been appointed by God/est'd by Christ) = How much time do your pastors spend counseling those members struggling w/sin and seeking help?

3. Changing When The Situation/Circumstances And Scripture Require It.

Jesus understood that different situations/circumstances could (per God's Word) require different action or behavior. Therefore, as a minister appointed – and in full submission to God, Jesus made the necessary changes when such situations/circumstances occurred – actions questioned by even the sincerest of God's people.

(14) = As discussed from Matthew 6:15-18, fasting is (and has been) the expected daily practice of those in submission to God (i.e. His followers/Christians). That both "**the disciples of John**" (meaning John the Baptist) and "**the Pharisees**" were aware of this (i.e. the expected practice of daily fasting) and questioning why Jesus' disciples were not, lends additional support to this truth. Consider: 1) Their observations of Jesus' disciples could not have been that long. Compiling the evidence necessary to substantiate their claim (two-three witnesses) would require the frequency of the commitment in question be something happening often in a short period of time – such as daily. 2) The Greek manuscripts include a word indicating that the kind of fasting in question is daily (See Fn; πολλά = Numerous or many. When in re: to practice, often refers to something that is daily – e.g. Luk 8:29 w/Mar 5:5 = "many a time" = "night and day" = everyday), 3) Though the Pharisees were guilty of equating human traditions w/God's prescriptions (Mat 15:1-9), that was not the case w/John's disciples. They were sincere followers of God. Some of the apostles were originally disciples of John (Joh 1:35-40, John and Andrew). Their observance of fasting therefore meant this was originally a part of God's prescribed tradition in regard to daily habits (OC). Additionally, though Jesus forgoes its practice for the present, He does confirm its necessity in the future **(15)** = The question Jesus poses is rhetorical – or meant to assert what it insinuates. In this case, the prescribed behavior of "**wedding guests**" at the time of the wedding (or, when "**the bridegroom is with them**"). Such is a time of celebration - and therefore a time to feast, rather than (a time) to "**fast**" (Mat 22:1ff). According to tradition, feasting continued for the number of days the bride and groom remained in celebration w/the wedding guests – usually a week (Gen 29:22-27).

¹ Examples of Evangelicalism's rejection of Jesus passing this mantle of authority to His church abound. Consider the following comments in re: to Joh 20:23: "This statement, about loosing and retaining sins, has been appealed to in terms of the authorization of a magisterial office in the church with the direct authority to forgive or retain sins. That implication appears unjustified when the context is taken seriously. The 'loosing' and 'binding' are the effect of preaching of the gospel in the world, when we go forth in the name and with the authority of the risen Lord. There is no doubt from the context that the reference is to forgiving sins, or withholding forgiveness. But though this sound stern and harsh, it is simply the result of preaching of the gospel which either brings people to repent or leaves them unresponsive to the offer of forgiveness which is the gospel, and so they are left in their sins." – Bruce Milne (*The Message Of John*, The Bible Speaks Today Commentary, p.299-300); "This verse (Joh 20:23) does not give authority to Christians to forgive sins. Jesus was saying that the believer can boldly declare the certainty of a sinner's forgiveness, if that sinner has repented and believed the gospel. The believer, with certainty, can also tell those who do not respond to the message of God's forgiveness through faith in Christ that their sins, as a result, are forgiven." – John MacArthur (MacArthur Study Bible note on verse 23 of John 20).

Jesus is alluding to Himself (as the bridegroom), which means His disciples (or church) represent the “bride” (Eph 5:22-33; Rev 19:7). And His earthly ministry among them was to be viewed as the beginning of their marriage (i.e. the betrothal [2Co 11:2] - which wb celebrated similar to the actual wedding). There was (however) coming a time, when He (the bridegroom) would leave (or be “**taken away from them**”) – no doubt referring to His ascension back to heaven (to prepare a home for His new wife, per tradition – Joh 14:1-2). At that time, the normal daily habits of fasting would return (“**then they will fast**”) – most specifically as an expression of their lamenting (“**mourning**”) His departure and longing for His return². Hence the reason we today - as those Christians living in the time between His ascension and advent, observe daily fasting. The situation/circumstances of His prior physical presence among His people (or the “bridegroom w/the bride”) is no more. So as before, the new (or different) situation/circumstance demands a new (or different) obligation (no fasting to again, fasting). Change is required (per God’s Word). Verses 16 and 17 reveal this principle (versus the issue of fasting) to be the real concern of Jesus (16-17) = The two analogies presented by Jesus are meant to fortify the aforementioned principle by demonstrating what happens when it is not followed – or if its antithesis is followed instead: new (or different) situations/circumstances are handled the same as every other situation/circumstance. What this looks like in the first analogy, is a “**piece of unshrunk cloth**” being placed “**on an old garment**” and in the second, “**new wine put into old wineskins.**”. The net effect of both scenarios is negative. Because of the shrinkage that will inevitable take place w/the new “**patch**”, it not only “**tears away from the garment**”, but a “**worse tear is made.**” In respect to the wine, because it will inevitably expand, the lack of elasticity in the old wineskins cause them to “**burst and the wine is spilled and the skins are destroyed.**” New (or different) situations/circumstances that were treated no different than the old, had disastrous results. The remedy? New (or different situations) receiving new (or different) treatment – or according to Jesus’ final analogy, “**new wine put into...fresh wineskins.**”

The Point (then) Not To Miss = This is how God wants us to deal w/new (or different) situations/circumstances that (according to His Word) require a new (or different approach). We are to change accordingly. What is to be “**preserved**” is what God’s Word requires - not traditions, comfort-zones, personal preferences – or even public opinion (Jesus was accused of being a glutton b/c of His lack of fasting – 11:19). Our loyalty must be to God’s way – which often includes change, versus being stuck (like many) in old ways – believing that if it were good enough in the past, the same wb true for the present (“what’s good for the goose is good for the gander”). This was the case w/the Pharisees and John’s disciples. Though they followed very different paths, their philosophy of ministry was the same. Both suffered from an inability to discern – or unwillingness to accept, this principle of change. And the consequence of such inability/unwillingness? Questioning - rather than recognizing such change as the kind of action associated w/those ministers/ministries appointed by God. Why people can be resistant to change = b/c they view happiness/stability (even consistency and progress) as dependent on them having control. And change prompted by God means they are not in control – He is (which is where true happiness, stability, consistency, progress, etc. is found – in God having control – not us). Sign that you may be that kind of person = You stress out whenever change (especially big change) happens – even if it is necessary (or good). The danger of not changing/being resistant to change = Idolatry (Col 3:5). Examples of what change (prompted by God and circumstance) can look like in the church today: 1) ministers deciding to re-adopt/adopt preaching robes as a means to promoting the authority of ordained pastors/office (Tit 1:15) in a culture that has become anti-authority, 2) ministries/churches changing their name to better reflect/communicate their message and the gospel in a culture filled w/massive ecclesiastical baggage (in regard to certain words in a church’s name) and confusion regarding the gospel.

4. Casting out demons

Though questioned (even condemned), Jesus’ actions as a minister appointed by God included the exorcising of demons. (32-33) = This is not the first time Matthew records a specific case of demon oppression/possession (Mat 8:28-32). There are also several general references to such activity (4:24, 8:16). Exorcisms – or freeing people from demonic oppression/possession was a big part of Jesus’ earthly ministry³. That being said, the reason this “**demon-oppressed man**” is “**brought to Him**” is not b/c of the demon oppression/possession itself, but rather the physical malady such oppression/possession was causing: inability to speak (he was “**mute**”). Matthew records numerous examples of people seeking Jesus whose sickness is due to demon-oppression/possession (Mat 12:22, 17:14-18). As w/other cases, no further attention (medical or otherwise) is needed once the demon is cast out. Healing is immediate upon the demon’s departure (“**And when the demon had been cast out, the mute man spoke**”). This however does not make it any less miraculous. Given the reaction of the crowds, exorcism-induced-healing was unheard of (“**The crowds marveled, saying, ‘Never was anything like this seen in Israel!’**”). Though Jesus was not the first to perform exorcisms (see Mat 12:27), He was the first to do so – while at the same time, miraculously healing them⁴. The Pharisees (as usual) are not pleased. Their disdain/condemnation/questioning is not in relation to the healing, but the exorcism. According to their analysis, Jesus’ power to perform exorcisms revealed His satanic appointment (34). Such accusations included the claim that Jesus was possessed by a demon or the devil himself (Mar 3:30; Mat 10:25). Their opinion in this respect, remains the same throughout Jesus’ ministry (Mar 3:22; Mat 12:24; Luk 11:15). As before, the irony of these accusations/claims, is that they *did* reveal Jesus’ appointment. Not by Satan, but God (Mat 12:28). It is for this reason the Pharisees become guilty of the unforgivable sin/the eternal sin/blasphemy of the Holy Spirit: b/c they refused to recognize such actions as coming from God; that Jesus was appointed by Him (Mar 3:29; Mat 12:32). The Point (then) Not To Miss = Those ministers/ministries appointed by God will cast out demons (b/c they are still roaming the earth and oppressing/possessing people!)⁵. Legitimate exorcisms are therefore a sign associated w/legitimate ministers/ministries. Does that mean that all who perform exorcisms are legitimate? No. But (like before) it does mean that any minister/ministry unable to perform them is *not*. What legitimate exorcisms/casting out demons looks like: 1) Preaching the gospel unto restoration/conversion (9:35) – “proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom” = This is how Matthew summarizes Jesus’ prior actions (in vv 1-34) not related to healing (for similar see 4:23). This (then) is what must be plugged back into verses 2 and 33. This is the means (and reason) Jesus can proclaim each of these individuals loosed from their prior sinful/unclean states – they have heard/been affected by the power of the gospel and responded accordingly. 2) People (as a result of such exorcisms) becoming legitimate Christians/followers of God. Every legitimate exorcism produces a legitimate Christian. IOW: legitimate exorcisms do more than just free them from the demon. This then is not only what distinguishes them from healing (since not all who were healed were converted/restored), but also those exorcists not appointed by God (Mat 12:43-45 = What made Jesus/His ministers’ exorcisms different from the followers of the Pharisees – 27).

² Following the same paradigm, at Jesus’ return, we (as God’s people) will again be in feast mode. This time (however) it will never end.

³ Though the ESV chooses the word “demon-oppressed” (ESV), the Greek compound could also be translated “demon-possessed” (e.g. NAS). Both are accurate and assume the other. The person who is possessed is oppressed and oppression always signals possession. Never should a distinction be made where someone is one w/o the other (e.g. a person is demon-oppressed but not possessed). Such distinctions are the invention of individuals not understanding the Scriptures.

⁴ If those performing exorcisms were also healing their patients, then the statement made by the crowds wb false. The distinction between what Jesus was able to accomplish versus others is important since (at the very least) it tells us that exorcism may not be enough to remedy a person’s problems. The medical conditions resulting in a demon’s residence in the host body may remain after its departure.

⁵ Though in this dispensation of the indwelling Spirit, it is impossible for a covenant member to be oppressed/possessed, the excommunicated open themselves up to this possibility. In this ministry (and my opinion), we have witnessed both legitimate deliverance (unto salvation) and re-possession (to a greater degree – Mat 12:43-45) unto apostasy in the same person, based on the additional signs of demon oppression/possession presented in Scripture.