

## Episode #834 Matthew 18 Part 4-Seveny Times Seven

I. The purpose of the gospel of Matthew is to present Jesus as the Christ, the King of Israel. It is another grand treatise like John to prove to Israel Who Jesus really is. It is the book of being “in Israel,” in contrast to believers today who are “in Christ.”

II. The Lord had instructed His disciples how to deal with a brother who sins against you: first speak to him one-on-one, then take one or two with you to speak with him, and finally tell the church, Greek ekklesia. We discussed that these were instructions to the disciples for dealing with each other, and this shows in Christ’s next statement.

III. The Sinning Brother. Matthew 18:15-18.

A. Verse 18. “Assuredly” is “amen I say to you,” the Lord’s solemn assertion for emphasis. This was spoken to His twelve disciples (ye), as in 16:19 it had been spoken singularly (thee) to Peter. There is no congregation, no official board, no church, no man, no pope, no priest, nor cardinal who can bind a thing on earth and it is bound in heaven today. If they could, they would be mediators between God and man, and there is one great characteristic of the dispensation of grace, one Mediator, I Timothy 2:5. This was truth for the Acts period and for the future kingdom, and these disciples would be apostles and God’s representatives and mediators on earth. “Bind” could refer to binding commands, or to binding sins (and thus their punishment). In Acts 5, they bound the sins of Ananias and Sapphira on them. “Loosed” means exempting from a command, as Paul exempted people from being circumcised, and from the penalty of sins, as Tabitha was loosed from death in Acts 12.

IV. If Two or Three Agree. Matthew 18:19-20.

A. Verse 19. “Two of you” means of the disciples. We think much of ourselves when we take the “you” spoken to the Lord’s chosen disciples and make it to mean “me”! “Anything” refers to any question, matter, or affair. This was spoken to men who had a position out of Jesus Christ and were in authority. You might get two people or ten people to agree, but that does not mean you have done this. This is applied to prayer, and a group of people pray for a thing and think it should happen. When it doesn’t they have a lingering disappointment thinking that the Word of God is not good!

B. Verse 20. Schofield says these “two or three” are the simplest form of the local church! But we might ask, what does it mean to gather together in His name? That which is in someone’s name is in His character, and often those who gather as a “church” show little of the character of Jesus Christ. It also means with someone’s authority, like when I pick up an order in my brother’s name. These men were under the Lord’s authority, and so could gather in His name. There are no two or three who can gather this way today. The gathering together was for a particular intended purpose: wheat is gathered for the harvest, fish are gathered by fishermen for selling, a crowd gathers to hear the Lord speak, the religious leaders gather to decide a matter. The settled purpose here is to act in His name. It is not just to perform some religious service or ritual. He means that He will join the gathering through His Spirit, and see to it that its purpose is correct, its decisions just and right, and its conclusions binding.

V. Parable of the Unforgiving Servant. Matthew 18:21-35.

A. Verse 21. “Came” is again *proserchomai* or “approached,” so much more common in Matthew than in the rest of the gospels. Peter thought seven times would seem very

generous. He understood forgiveness, and knew he had been forgiven himself. He no doubt thought this a magnanimous spirit of forgiveness.

- B. Verse 22. Not that one should literally count 490 cases of forgiveness, but that one should be willing to forgive endlessly. Think how many times we sin against God, and He still forgives us! It is surely more than 490, if we count every least sin.
- C. Verse 23. “The kingdom of heaven is like” introduces another parable that is a likeness of the government of the heavens. This is the same phrase used in the parable of the wheat and the tares. As we said regarding that, this is one aspect of that government that is here illustrated. “Wanted” is *thelo*, desired to. “Servants” is the Greek *doulos*, meaning slaves, for they would be totally subject to the king.
- D. Verse 24. No doubt the most significant debt is dealt with first as chief among the unsettled accounts. A *talenton* was a unit of weight, yet was commonly applied to a weight of precious metal or money. With inflation it seems futile to give a possible amount for this, but we can say that a talent was a typical years’ wages, so this would be what an average servant would earn in ten thousand years! A rather ludicrous twist, for what master would loan his slave such a sum? These ludicrous elements of parables are to give punch to the illustration. Think, for example, of those who were culpable in the unjust crucifixion of our Lord, yet He offered them free forgiveness!
- E. Verse 25. Instead of being a cushy household slave, he would be sold for whatever menial labor he could perform. This was mentioned in the law, as Bullinger points out, in Exodus 22:3 and Leviticus 25:39, 47, though not under these exact circumstances. Greek has no word for “wife,” so this reads “his woman.” This selling would be to recoup as much of the debt as he could. Of course, none of this selling would come close to ten thousand talents, but it would be the most he could ever get.

VI. Conclusion: The Lord gave His disciples power to bind on earth and it would be bound in heaven (with God). If any two or three of them agreed on earth, it would be done of His Father, establishing a quorum of disciples. Peter asked the Lord about forgiveness, and the Lord told him he should forgive endlessly. Do we realize just how much our God has forgiven us?