

# Fulfilled Prophecies

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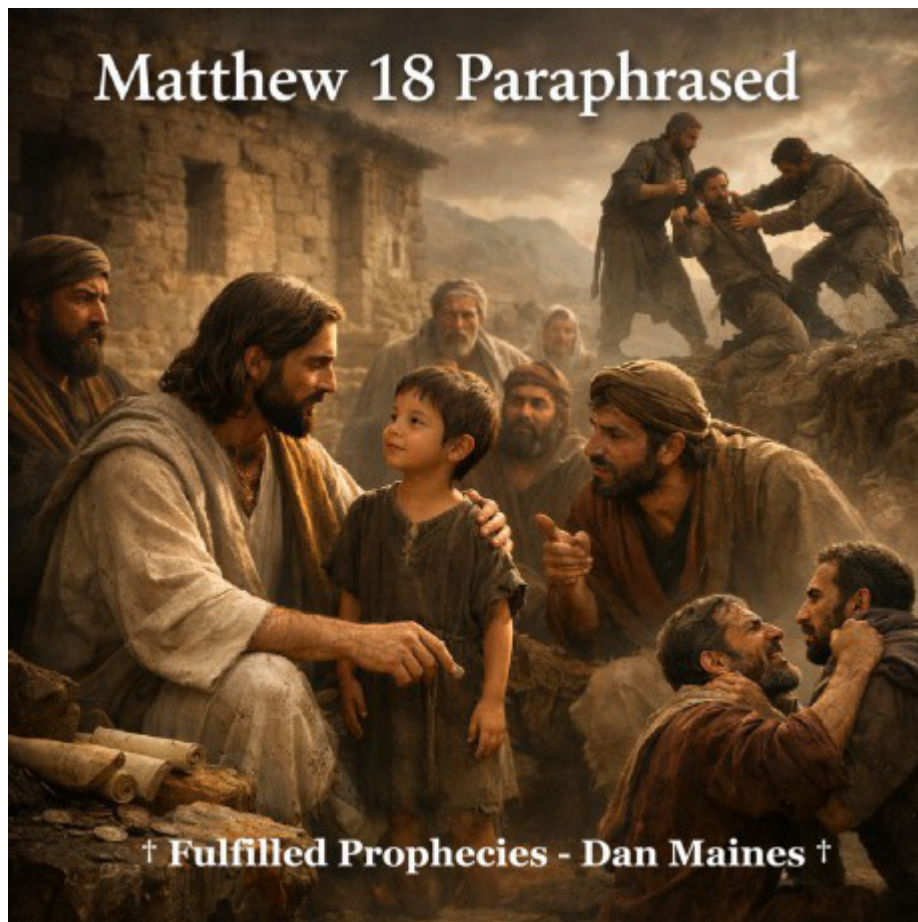
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## Matthew 18 Paraphrased



By Dan Maines

## Matthew 18 Paraphrased

### Introduction

† Jesus answers the disciples' question about greatness by teaching humility, responsibility toward other believers, and the importance of forgiveness (Matthew 18:1-4).

† The disciples were still thinking about rank and authority in a visible kingdom, but Jesus redirects their thinking toward humility and childlike faith (Matthew 20:25-27).

† This chapter lays out how the covenant community was to function as the kingdom message spread before the judgment

that came upon Jerusalem in their generation (Matthew 23:34-36).

### **Matthew 18:1**

At that time the disciples came to Jesus and said, Who then is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

† The disciples still expected positions of rank inside the kingdom (Matthew 20:20-21).

† Jesus corrects this mindset by showing that humility is the true measure of greatness (Luke 14:11).

† Pride was one of the primary reasons many in Israel rejected Christ (John 5:44).

### **Matthew 18:2**

And He called a child to Himself and set him before them.

† Jesus used a real child as a living example to illustrate His teaching (Mark 9:36).

† In Jewish society children had little social status, making the example powerful (Matthew 19:13-14).

† Christ often used simple everyday examples to reveal deeper truth (Matthew 13:34).

### **Matthew 18:3**

and said, Truly I say to you, unless you change and become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.

† The call to change refers to repentance and humility (Acts 3:19).

† Entrance into the kingdom required humility rather than religious pride (Matthew 5:3).

† Many leaders in Israel refused this humility and rejected Christ (John 7:48).

### **Matthew 18:4**

Whoever then humbles himself as this child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

† The kingdom reverses worldly standards of greatness (Luke 22:26).

† Leadership in God's kingdom is measured by humility and service (Matthew 23:11-12).

† The apostles later taught this same principle to the early churches (1 Peter 5:5).

### **Matthew 18:5**

And whoever receives one such child in My name receives Me.

† Receiving humble believers is equal to receiving Christ Himself (Matthew 25:40).

† Jesus closely identifies Himself with His followers (Acts 9:4).

† The kingdom values those the world ignores (James 2:5).

### **Matthew 18:6**

but whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble, it would be better for him to have a heavy millstone hung around his neck, and to be drowned in the depth of the sea.

† Jesus warns strongly against leading believers into sin (Luke 17:1-2).

† The image of a millstone shows the seriousness of the offense (Matthew 23:15).

† Those who influence others spiritually carry great responsibility (James 3:1).

### **Matthew 18:7**

Woe to the world because of its stumbling blocks. For it is inevitable that stumbling blocks come, but woe to that man through whom the stumbling block comes.

† Sin exists in the world, but individuals are responsible for causing others to fall (Romans 14:13).

† This warning applied especially to corrupt religious leaders (Matthew 23:13).

† Accountability before God remains certain.

### **Matthew 18:8**

If your hand or your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it from you. It is better for you to enter life crippled or

lame, than to have two hands or two feet and be cast into the eternal fire.

† Jesus uses strong imagery to emphasize removing sin from one's life (Matthew 5:29-30).

† Radical repentance requires decisive action (Colossians 3:5).

† Eternal consequences make obedience urgent.

### **Matthew 18:9**

If your eye causes you to stumble, tear it out and throw it from you. It is better for you to enter life with one eye, than to have two eyes and be cast into the fiery hell.

† Christ continues emphasizing the seriousness of sin (Romans 8:13).

† Eternal life must be valued above temporary desires (Matthew 16:26).

† Judgment awaits those who refuse repentance (Hebrews 10:26-27).

### **Matthew 18:10**

See that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I say to you that their angels in heaven continually see the face of My Father who is in heaven.

† God places high value on humble believers (Luke 15:7).

† Angels are described as serving and protecting God's people (Psalm 34:7).

† Even the least respected on earth are valued by God.

### **Matthew 18:11**

For the Son of Man has come to save that which was lost.

† This statement summarizes Christ's mission (Luke 19:10).

† Jesus came to restore those separated from God (John 3:17).

† His ministry focused especially on the lost sheep of Israel (Matthew 15:24).

### **Matthew 18:12**

What do you think. If any man has a hundred sheep, and one of them has gone astray, does he not leave the ninety nine on the

mountains and go and search for the one that is straying.

† Shepherd imagery was common in Israel and understood by the audience (Psalm 23:1).

† God seeks those who wander from Him (Ezekiel 34:11).

† Every individual matters to God.

### **Matthew 18:13**

If it turns out that he finds it, truly I say to you, he rejoices over it more than over the ninety nine which have not gone astray.

† Heaven rejoices when someone returns to God (Luke 15:7).

† Restoration produces joy rather than condemnation (Micah 7:18).

† God's mercy is central to the gospel.

### **Matthew 18:14**

So it is not the will of your Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones perish.

† God desires salvation and preservation of His people (John 6:39).

† Christ's mission is rooted in redemption (Isaiah 53:6).

† The kingdom seeks restoration of the lost.

### **Matthew 18:15**

If your brother sins, go and show him his fault in private. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother.

† Jesus establishes the first step of reconciliation (Galatians 6:1).

† The goal is restoration, not humiliation (James 5:19-20).

† Unity must be preserved within the covenant community (Ephesians 4:3).

### **Matthew 18:16**

But if he does not listen to you, take one or two more with you, so that by the mouth of two or three witnesses every fact may be confirmed.

† This follows the legal principle established in the Law of Moses (Deuteronomy 19:15).

† Witnesses provide fairness and accountability (2 Corinthians 13:1).

† Truth and justice remain central in resolving conflict.

### **Matthew 18:17**

If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church, and if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.

† Persistent rebellion leads to separation from the community (1 Corinthians 5:11-13).

† The goal remains repentance and restoration (2 Thessalonians 3:14-15).

† Christ establishes authority within the gathered body.

### **Matthew 18:18**

Truly I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven.

† This language refers to decisions of discipline and forgiveness within the community (Matthew 16:19).

† The apostles exercised this authority in the early church (John 20:23).

† Heaven affirms decisions made according to Christ's teaching.

### **Matthew 18:19**

Again I say to you, that if two of you agree on earth about anything that they may ask, it shall be done for them by My Father who is in heaven.

† The context is unity and reconciliation (Matthew 5:24).

† Agreement among believers reflects harmony in the body of Christ (Philippians 2:2).

† God answers prayer aligned with His will (1 John 5:14).

### **Matthew 18:20**

For where two or three have gathered together in My name, I am there in their midst.

† Christ promises His presence among believers gathered in His name (John 14:23).

† Even small gatherings have authority and significance (Matthew 28:20).

† The focus is unity under Christ's authority.

### **Matthew 18:21**

Then Peter came and said to Him, Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him. Up to seven times.

† Jewish tradition often suggested forgiving three times, so Peter thought seven was generous (Amos 1:3).

† Peter still viewed forgiveness as limited.

† Jesus responds by removing limits entirely.

### **Matthew 18:22**

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

† Jesus teaches unlimited forgiveness (Colossians 3:13).

† The number symbolizes continual mercy rather than literal counting.

† Believers forgive because they have been forgiven.

### **Matthew 18:23**

For this reason the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his slaves.

† Jesus introduces a parable to illustrate forgiveness (Matthew 13:34).

† Settling accounts reflects divine judgment and mercy.

† Parables reveal spiritual truth through familiar stories.

### **Matthew 18:24**

When he had begun to settle them, one who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him.

† Ten thousand talents represents an enormous impossible debt.

† The figure symbolizes the magnitude of human sin (Romans 3:23).

† The audience would immediately recognize the impossibility of repayment.

### **Matthew 18:25**

But since he did not have the means to repay, his lord commanded him to be sold, along with his wife and children and all that he had, and repayment to be made.

† Debt slavery existed in the ancient world.

† The servant's situation reflects the hopelessness of sin's debt.

† Humanity cannot repay its debt apart from God's mercy (Ephesians 2:8-9).

### **Matthew 18:26**

So the slave fell to the ground and prostrated himself before him, saying, Have patience with me and I will repay you everything.

† The servant begs for mercy.

† Repayment is actually impossible.

† This mirrors humanity's need for divine grace.

### **Matthew 18:27**

And the lord of that slave felt compassion and released him and forgave him the debt.

† The king's compassion reflects God's mercy (Micah 7:18).

† Forgiveness cancels the impossible debt.

† Christ's sacrifice ultimately made that forgiveness possible (Colossians 2:13-14).

### **Matthew 18:28**

But that slave went out and found one of his fellow slaves who owed him one hundred denarii, and he seized him and began to choke him, saying, Pay back what you owe.

† The second debt is extremely small by comparison.

† The servant's behavior reveals a lack of gratitude.

† Jesus exposes hypocrisy.

### **Matthew 18:29**

So his fellow slave fell to the ground and began to plead with him, saying, Have patience with me and I will repay you.

- † The same plea for mercy is repeated.
- † The situation mirrors the earlier scene.
- † The servant now has the opportunity to show mercy.

### **Matthew 18:30**

But he was unwilling and went and threw him in prison until he should pay back what was owed.

- † Unforgiveness exposes a hardened heart.
- † Mercy received must produce mercy given (Ephesians 4:32).
- † Jesus warns against hypocrisy among believers.

### **Matthew 18:31**

So when his fellow slaves saw what had happened, they were deeply grieved and came and reported to their lord all that had happened.

- † The community recognized the injustice.
- † Unforgiveness disrupts fellowship.
- † Accountability exists within the covenant community.

### **Matthew 18:32**

Then summoning him, his lord said to him, You wicked slave, I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me.

- † The king exposes the servant's hypocrisy.
- † God's mercy should transform how believers treat others.
- † Refusing mercy contradicts the grace received.

### **Matthew 18:33**

Should you not also have had mercy on your fellow slave, in the same way that I had mercy on you.

- † Forgiven people must forgive others.
- † Mercy must be extended just as it was received (Luke 6:36).
- † This reflects the character of God.

## **Matthew 18:34**

And his lord moved with anger handed him over to the torturers until he should repay all that was owed him.

† Judgment follows persistent unforgiveness.

† The parable emphasizes the seriousness of rejecting mercy.

† God's justice remains certain.

## **Matthew 18:35**

My heavenly Father will also do the same to you, if each of you does not forgive his brother from your heart.

† Jesus ends with a direct warning.

† True forgiveness must come from the heart (Mark 11:25).

† The kingdom community must reflect God's mercy.

## **Historical References**

† Josephus described severe debt laws and punishments in the first century, illustrating the realism of Jesus' parable.

† Tertullian wrote that Christ's teaching on forgiveness distinguished Christians from surrounding cultures.

† Clement of Alexandria emphasized humility and forgiveness as defining marks of Christian character.

## **How It Applies To Us Today**

† Humility remains the foundation of the believer's life.

† Sin must be addressed with the goal of restoration.

† Forgiveness is essential because we have received mercy from God.

## **Q & A Appendix**

**Q** Why did Jesus use a child as the example of greatness.

**A** Because humility and dependence on God define greatness in the kingdom (Matthew 18:3-4).

**Q** Why did Jesus teach unlimited forgiveness.

**A** Because believers are called to reflect the mercy they have

received from God (Matthew 18:22).

**Q** What is the purpose of confronting sin privately first.

**A** The goal is restoration and unity within the covenant community (Matthew 18:15).

**Q** Why did the disciples ask who was greatest in the kingdom.

**A** They were still thinking about rank and authority in a physical kingdom, but Jesus redirected them to humility as the true measure of greatness (Matthew 18:1-4; Matthew 20:25-27).

**Q** What does becoming like a child mean in the kingdom of heaven.

**A** It means humility, dependence on God, and a willingness to submit to His authority rather than seeking personal status (Matthew 18:3-4; James 4:10).

**Q** What are stumbling blocks in Matthew 18.

**A** Stumbling blocks are actions or teachings that lead believers into sin or away from faithfulness to God (Matthew 18:6-7; Romans 14:13).

**Q** Did Jesus literally mean to cut off a hand or tear out an eye.

**A** No, He used strong imagery to show that removing sin from our lives must be treated with extreme seriousness (Matthew 18:8-9; Matthew 5:29-30).

**Q** What does the parable of the lost sheep teach in this chapter.

**A** It shows that God values every believer and seeks restoration when someone strays (Matthew 18:12-14; Luke 15:4-7).

**Q** Why did Jesus give instructions about confronting a brother who sins.

**A** He was establishing a process that protects unity while seeking restoration of the one who has sinned (Matthew 18:15-17; Galatians 6:1).

**Q** What does binding and loosing refer to in Matthew 18:18.

**A** It refers to decisions regarding forgiveness, discipline, and restoration within the covenant community according to Christ's teaching (Matthew 18:18; Matthew 16:19).

**Q** What does Jesus mean when He says where two or three gather in His name He is there.

**A** Christ promises His presence and authority among believers who gather together in unity under His authority (Matthew 18:20; John 14:23).

**Q** Why did Peter suggest forgiving seven times.

**A** Jewish tradition often suggested forgiving three times, so Peter believed seven times would be generous (Matthew 18:21; Amos 1:3).

**Q** What is the main lesson of the unforgiving servant parable.

**A** Those who receive mercy from God must extend that same mercy to others (Matthew 18:23-35; Colossians 3:13).

**† This is the fulfilled perspective we proclaim at Fulfilled Prophecies †**

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## **Source Index**

† Matthew 18:1-35

† Josephus Antiquities of the Jews, Tertullian Apology, Clement of Alexandria Stromata

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