

## THE BOOK OF MATTHEW

### Lesson 32, Chapter 9 Continued

The subject that we'll focus on to begin today's lesson is a dispute between John the Baptist's disciples and Yeshua's disciples, ostensibly over the subject of fasting; this is what Matthew 9:14 - 17 revolves around. We'll go forward today in bite-sized chunks as there is so much to take from these passages. Open your Bibles to Matthew 9.

#### **RE-READ 9:14 - 17**

The context is this; Yeshua is still in the fishing village in the Galilee where He is currently residing: Capernaum. He was dining with some tax collectors and with a class of people known among the Jews as "sinners". Do not take the term "sinners" to mean as Christianity thinks of it today. That is, in Christendom a sinner is either a person who does NOT profess the Savior Jesus, or is a fallen Christian who is not living out his or her faith in a biblically moral way. However in Christ's day a sinner was a Jew who had either openly renounced the Law of Moses (something pretty rare), or much more often showed no outward intent of following it. Typically these were poor Jews, uneducated, probably not attending a synagogue with any regularity, and therefore they were considered (especially by the Pharisees) as those who were so ignorant and uninformed that it was impossible for them to properly observe the Traditions of the Elders, let alone the biblical Laws of Moses.

While Yeshua was at the table, some of John the Baptist's disciples spoke to some of Yeshua's disciples and asked them why they did not fast frequently as the Baptist's did, and instead didn't fast at all? Notice two things: 1) John the Baptist was Master over his own flock of followers who felt no allegiance to

Jesus. And 2), the only reason these disciples would have fasted regularly is because they were doing what their Master, John, had taught them as a doctrine. It is ironic that despite John being the chosen one to announce the arrival of Christ and the Kingdom of Heaven, nonetheless there is little evidence in the New Testament that he ever fully understood the nature and mission of Jesus. Further that his own disciples never felt a real attachment to the ways of Christ, but rather chose to follow the ways and teachings of John. And clearly those two sets of doctrines didn't always agree.

Yeshua overheard John's disciples confronting His own disciples and so He jumped into the fray to correct them. What He said was not a hard put down (as it seems it was to the young man who wanted to follow Christ only after his father passed away and was buried). Rather Yeshua's response was merely instructional, and He used a few metaphors and illustrations to make His point.

The first illustration He used was to compare the circumstances of a wedding process versus the wedding being interrupted and thereby causing sadness. He used terms, and a metaphor, that were known not only to every common Jewish person, but even to the outcasts of society. The subject of the metaphor was a bridegroom. I said last week that Christ was not saying He was a bridegroom; I want to take that a bit further. In His brief analogy He certainly meant that within His story that He was presenting Himself in the role or the character of bridegroom. But that is not to say that in real life that He was thinking of Himself as an actual bridegroom of sorts. One might argue that I'm making a distinction without a difference; however I respond that there is a definite difference between characterizing oneself as a bridegroom versus comparing oneself to a Bridegroom as an analogy to make a point. We must be terribly careful when we find metaphors, illustrations and analogies used in the Bible that we don't take them beyond their intent. The point of the case that Christ is making is that there is a time for joy and there is a time for mourning, but those two things are generally not compatible and so don't happen at the same time. Since marriage is one of the happiest occasions in the Bible and within Jewish society, then it contrasts well with mourning, the saddest of occasions. Thus to express such happiness a bridegroom, by custom, was always responsible to throw a big party with a lavish feast complete with plenty of wine as its focal point. Mourning, on the other hand, was to be accompanied with fasting. Please notice; this illustration of joy and mourning, and what happens with a bridegroom, is only approximate and not precise. We can find several examples in the Prophets where joy and mourning DO happen simultaneously. Here is one of the best

known:

<sup>CJB</sup> **Revelation 18:10 -11** <sup>10</sup> *Standing at a distance, for fear of her torment, they will say, "Oh no! The great city! Bavel, the mighty city! In a single hour your judgment has come!"* <sup>11</sup> *The world's businessmen weep and mourn over her, because no one is buying their merchandise any more-*

Moving down to verse 17.....

<sup>17</sup> *Such great wealth- in a single hour, ruined!" All the ship masters, passengers, sailors and everyone making his living from the sea stood at a distance* <sup>18</sup> *and cried out when they saw the smoke as she burned, "What city was like the great city?"* <sup>19</sup> *And they threw dust on their heads as they wept and mourned, saying, "Oh no! The great city! The abundance of her wealth made all the ship owners rich! In a single hour she is ruined!"* <sup>20</sup> *Rejoice over her, heaven! Rejoice, people of God, emissaries and prophets! For in judging her, God has vindicated you.*

The point being that while joy and mourning, feasting and fasting, don't usually occur at the same time, they can in some circumstances. In the same way we must not take the bridegroom metaphor... or any metaphor in the Bible.... as more than a simple, but not rigid or exact, mental picture that humans can better grasp. So the **P'shat** sense of Yeshua's illustration with the bridegroom is what we've already discussed; Yeshua has taught His disciples not to fast for the time being (this would be about voluntary fasts, not biblically commanded ones) even though John's disciples have been taught to fast regularly. However the **Remez** sense, the hint.... the deeper underlying meaning... is that as a result of the advent of Yeshua, some things have become incompatible. It is a teaching with a warning attached.

Here Jesus also drops a hint that while He is here with His disciples for now, in time He will be gone. And when He is taken from them that will be the proper time for mourning. I can't imagine that any of the attendees understood the depth of what He was telling them; so much of what He has said, and would say, are comprehensible only in hindsight. Nevertheless Christ was implying that while He was living and ministering, it was to be taken as a time of great joy (after all, the prophesied Messiah has come; the One who can heal and forgive sins!), so He wasn't about to have His disciples fast as representative of a time for mourning. Naturally He did not mean it in the sense of disobeying any of the laws of Moses

where fasting was required (such as on Yom Kippur).

As we move on to verse 16 Yeshua uses another illustration to make His point about mourning and fasting. Or better, about the deeper, underlying meaning of it: the incompatibilities that are a result of His, and the Kingdom of Heaven's, arrival. The illustration concerns the patching of an old garment with a piece of not-yet shrunk cloth. This was another analogy chosen because the mechanics of patching garments was common knowledge among the common people of all nations, and not just the Jews. Everyone knew that if you patched a hole in a cloth garment using a new piece of cloth that has not been previously washed (and thus shrunk as was the natural thing that happens to linen or cotton cloth as it gets immersed the first few times) then the first time the newly patched garment is washed clean the previously unshrunk piece of cloth patch will contract (shrink), while the old garment will not because it has already shrunk as far as it ever will. The result is that the new cloth patch pulls away from the stitching and a hole reopens. But what, exactly, can Christ mean by this?

The standard meaning within the institutional Church is that the old garment represents the Old Testament (or perhaps only the Law of Moses), and the new cloth patch represents the New Testament (or perhaps only the coming of the Messiah). Therefore one was not to try to patch the Old with the New; rather the old can only be discarded in favor of the new. That is certainly an appealing interpretation for an anti-Law of Moses, anti-Jewish, gentiles-only Church; but it doesn't fit the context of the passage very well. And it also doesn't fit well with Christ's central theme in the Sermon on the Mount that happened but days earlier when He said that He did NOT come to abolish the Law (the old thing) but rather to complete it. Further He forthright stated that all of His followers were to continue to obey the Law down to the last detail. But, they were do so in a new spirit; a spirit of obeying the command not just outwardly and behaviorally, but also inwardly in motive and intent.

**CJB Matthew 5:17-19 <sup>17</sup> "Don't think that I have come to abolish the Torah or the Prophets. I have come not to abolish but to complete. <sup>18</sup> Yes indeed! I tell you that until heaven and earth pass away, not so much as a yud or a stroke will pass from the Torah- not until everything that must happen has happened. <sup>19</sup> So whoever disobeys the least of these mitzvot and teaches others to do so will be called the least in the Kingdom of Heaven. But whoever obeys them and so teaches will be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven.**

Applying the reality that all analogies and illustrations in the Bible are approximate and general, not exact and universal, then we need to understand this from a 1st century Jewish mindset AND in the context we find it in this passage. The underlying issue is not replacing one thing with another, but rather it concerns incompatibilities in light of the arrival of Christ and the Kingdom of Heaven. So for people of that era, what is the problem issue about sewing a patch onto an older garment of cloth? It is that while the existing garment has been cleansed by immersion, the newer patch has not. So before applying a patch, it must first be immersed in water sufficiently until it can match the same level of shrinkage with the older garment; otherwise the two are incompatible. There is no hint (and it would never have occurred to a Jewish reader) that the old garment was to be discarded in favor of a new one. I'll repeat: the issue is addressing incompatibility. Thus while the old garment needs a patch, it in no way has lost its usefulness. Conversely, the only thing wrong with the patch being used in Christ's story is that it has not yet been immersed and washed clean (and therefore it shrinks), so it won't work well with the garment that is being patched. This is the **P'shat**, the plain, literal, simple sense of it. But the **Remez** sense goes a bit deeper.

In the **Remez** the unshrunk patch, the cloth that is yet to be immersed and cleansed, is NOT to be applied until it has been properly washed so that it can serve the purpose for which it is intended. By definition a cloth patch is far smaller than the garment it is being sewn onto. The patch doesn't replace the garment, or used instead of it, nor is the patch the main feature of the garment; it only completes the garment so it can be used as originally intended. However a patch not used properly either doesn't make the garment whole again or it can make it even worse than it was. What did Christ say in His analogy? **"Because the patch tears away from the coat (the garment) and leaves a WORSE hole."**

Here's what we are to take from this. Christ's teachings (a sort of reformation) about the Torah were indeed to be applied to what the people thought they knew about the Torah. But compared to the Torah, His teachings were but a proper patch placed upon it; not a whole new garment. And why did the old garment (the Torah) have need of a patch? Because, in context of the passage, God's people had misused it just as John's disciples misused fasting. Going back to the bridegroom analogy: Christ was in no way abolishing fasting as biblically prescribed. He was also in no way abolishing mourning. But He was saying that the extra rules about when to fast and when to mourn that Judaism (or better

Pharisee-ism), Tradition, had added to the Jewish religion while not necessarily a bad thing, were incompatible with the current circumstances of His divine presence and of the establishment of the Kingdom of Heaven on earth.

The garment needed the addition of a patch because the wearer tore a hole in it. The Torah needed a "patch" (Christ's instructions about restoring its true meaning) not because the Torah was defective but because the wearer of it had torn a hole in it. The wearers (God's Hebrew worshippers) had, in Yeshua's era and long before, turned to Tradition and other manmade doctrines about the Torah and thus had (metaphorically) torn a hole in it. And while Christ's teaching needed to be applied as the new patch, it had to be done carefully, thoughtfully, prayerfully and only when the one attempting to apply the patch (a worshipper of Christ) had properly understood it (had been washed and immersed in His teachings) so that when applied to the garment (to the Torah) it didn't rip it back open, making it even worse. This interpretation fits the context of how to make the new cloth compatible with the old garment (not the other way around), and it fits with the common knowledge and understanding among the people of that day about applying a patch to an otherwise perfectly good garment.

Keeping that context in mind, let's move on to another well known saying of Jesus about not putting new wine into old wineskins. In verse 17 Christ uses another commonly known procedure as another illustration of incompatibilities; that of wine-making. Just as with not putting a new (unshrunk) patch onto a used garment, one wouldn't put new wine into a well used wine skin because the wineskin (the container) might burst. The term "new wine" indicated a couple of things in that era. First, it could mean filtered grape juice ready to begin the fermenting process that would turn it into wine. Second, it could also mean a lightly fermented grape juice that had a very low alcohol content because the fermenting process had either just barely begun, or it was intentionally interrupted. A natural byproduct of fermentation is the production of gases: ethanol and carbon dioxide. Since the fermentation process necessarily must occur inside a sealed container (in our case, wine skins), then the pressure of those gases builds up and the wine skins must be able to contain that pressure or they will burst and the wine will be lost. Therefore, older wine skins are best not used in the fermentation process, because after a few uses they will have lost their elasticity and could burst instead of merely stretching in the same way a balloon works. Even so, the older wineskins remain valuable and useful as storage containers for wine that has already completed the fermentation process and it is now ready for distribution and consumption.

The standard Christian doctrine on the interpretation of this is that since we should not put new wine into old wineskins, then the old wineskins have become obsolete and are to be discarded; thrown into the trash heap. And as with the garment and the patch, the old wineskins are said by the Church to represent the Old Testament, and the new wine that goes into new wineskins represents Jesus and the New Testament. Therefore the conclusion is that the Old Testament is no longer useful, and in fact some of it had become defective, and so is to be replaced with the New Testament. Again, this interpretation not only takes the passage out of context and separates it away from its theme of incompatibilities, it completely ignores the 2nd half of this verse, which is: **"No, they pour new wine into freshly prepared wine skins, and in this way BOTH (old and new wineskins) are preserved"**. Some in the Church say this means **both** the new wine and the new wineskins are preserved. But the story is about not ruining the old wineskins and so by putting new wine into new wineskins and not disturbing the contents of the old wineskins, then both the old and new wineskins are preserved (just as being careful that a new patch on a garment doesn't ruin the old garment). We find in some corners of Christianity that this is taken to mean that it is OK for Jews to keep the Torah (the old wineskins) and worship the God of the Old Testament for themselves (as a possible means of salvation), while gentile followers of Christ adopt Him and the New Testament (as the new wineskins) and this is their means of salvation.

It is important to notice that Yeshua says that both new and old are meant to be preserved. That is, in the first half of this verse one of the concerns is that the old wineskins could become ruined if improperly used: **".....the wine spills and the wineskins are ruined"**. Who cares if the old wineskins are ruined if they're only good for throwing away since Christ's advent? The story reflects a deep concern on not ruining either the old or new wineskins, and therefore not losing the old or new wine. Rather they are each to be used in such a way as to make them compatible. The difference between the old and new wineskins is not their value or relevance, but rather their purpose. One was for the fermentation process; the other for long term storage. Yeshua's purpose was to save and to inaugurate the Kingdom of God on earth; that is what was new. However that doesn't mean that what the older vessel was meant to do had become obsolete. The older vessel (the Torah) was never meant to contain the fermentation of salvation. Yet both vessels are relevant and needed and their usefulness is compatible when properly used together. It's an issue of compatibility; not of superiority or replacement. To be clear: like all biblical analogies, no matter who is making them, we are to take them as a generality and not try to draw precise one to one

comparisons to the various objects used in the analogy.

Let's read a little more.

### **RE-READ MATTHEW 9:18 - 31**

These verses return us to Yeshua doing miracle healings. He was still at the table dining with men of several walks and beliefs, when a person suddenly entered the scene and interrupted it by kneeling down in front of Him. This person's position in society is important to the story. He is listed in Matthew as simply an official. However this account is also told in Mark and in Luke and there we get some additional and pertinent information about what kind of official he was; even who he was.

<sup>CJB</sup> **Luke 8:41** *Then there came a man named Ya'ir who was president of the synagogue. Falling at Yeshua's feet, he pleaded with him to come to his house;*

<sup>CJB</sup> **Mark 5:22** *There came to him a synagogue official, Ya'ir by name, who fell at his feet*

Although two different Greek words are used to explain the exact title or position of this man, both essentially tell us that he is a ruler of the synagogue; usually called the President of the Synagogue. This is the man who is assigned with the synagogue's daily administration. He is not the same as the Scribe who is the teacher/preacher at the synagogue. No doubt this must be the man who presides over the synagogue located there in Capernaum that Jesus Himself attended; so the man was known to Christ. This explains why the man felt he could interrupt and why Yeshua didn't admonish him for it.

What did the official want? He wanted the miracle healer, the **Tzadik**, to come to his home and resurrect his daughter who had died. We must not take this belief that Jesus might be able to reanimate his daughter from death as trust in Him as Messiah or God on earth. So far we haven't witnessed anything that we can call a "conversion". The man told Christ that if He would come to his home, he just knew that by Yeshua laying His hands on her, the little girl would be raised from the dead. All the Gospels agree that immediately Yeshua along with some of His disciples went with the synagogue official. But on the way there (probably no more than a few hundred feet) His walk was interrupted by a woman who had a



serious problem that had been with her for a long time.

This woman had a hemorrhage that had plagued her for 12 years. By hemorrhage this means she had a continuing issue of blood as with a never ending menstrual cycle. The immediate problem with this was less a matter of her physical health (obviously it was not so severe as to incapacitate or kill her, since she had lived with it for 12 years) but rather it was the ritual condition that resulted from it. This flow of blood rendered her ritually unclean according to the Torah, and this made her an outcast.

<sup>CJB</sup> **Leviticus 15:25** *"If a woman has a discharge of blood for many days not during her period, or if her discharge lasts beyond the normal end of her period, then throughout the time she is having an unclean discharge she will be as when she is in niddah- she is unclean.*

This is a huge problem for her. She cannot associate with anyone; she cannot even enter someone's home. If she was married (and this is not stated) she couldn't have shared a bed or even a chair with her husband because this would have transferred her uncleanness to him. It is interesting that biblically, ritual impurity could infect another simply through touch. Yet sin did nothing of the kind. Sin was to be eradicated because bad behavior was too often mimicked. And also because sin could be harmful to another person (a violent person could injure or murder, for example). So while there is a definite relationship between sin and uncleanness, they are not the same things and they each have their own effects, consequences and cures. Her problem was ritual uncleanness and not sin.

We are told that the woman literally sneaked up behind Christ and touched His robe. Or better the hem of his garment. Or best, His **Tzitzit**. Peasant Jews did not usually have the bottom of their garments hemmed; this was something that the more wealthy did. A fine hem was part of the mark of an expensive garment. And these Jews certainly didn't have some type of fringe as an ornamentation that circled the skirt of their outer garment. But, Jewish men did wear tassels.... **Tzitzit** in Hebrew. These **Tzitzit** were religious in nature and actually commanded by the Law of Moses.

<sup>CJB</sup> **Numbers 15:37-41** <sup>37</sup> **ADONAI said to Moshe,** <sup>38</sup> **"Speak to the people of Isra'el, instructing them to make, through all their generations, tzitziyot on the corners of their garments, and to put with the Tzitzit on each corner a**

*blue thread.* <sup>39</sup> *It is to be a Tzitzit for you to look at and thereby remember all of ADONAI's mitzvot and obey them, so that you won't go around wherever your own heart and eyes lead you to prostitute yourselves;* <sup>40</sup> *but it will help you remember and obey all my mitzvot and be holy for your God.* <sup>41</sup> *I am ADONAI your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt in order to be your God. I am ADONAI your God."*

Naturally Yeshua would have worn them or been in violation of the Law of Moses. What else stands out is that the woman with the hemorrhage didn't merely touch His garment, she touched the most holy part of His garment; the **Tzitzit**. No doubt she snuck up from behind because no Jew would have allowed her anywhere near him for fear of contracting ritual impurity. But a strange thing happened when she touched Him. Not only did He instantly sense her presence, but her uncleanness did not render Him unclean (which it should have). The matter of transmitting uncleanness was a one way street. An unclean person touching a clean person could only infect the ritually pure person; the cleanness could not flow to the unclean. But in this case, it did! Instantly the woman was healed. Why? Because that's what **Tzadikkim** do. Yet..... I have not read of a **Tzadik** that was said to have healed through removing the ritual uncleanness from a person. This seems to be something that no one had ever been able to do prior to Christ. In fact, it really wasn't even thought to be a possibility. Yet, this woman (like the Centurion) held a kind of faith and trust that accepted, without doubt, that what Yeshua did was real, that He was able to do it, and that He did more than any faith healer had ever done, even though neither one of them thought of Yeshua as any more than a Holy Man par excellence who had the greatest compassion on all who came to Him. Perhaps it was the outward, although imperfect, display of unequivocal trust that Yeshua wanted the disciples and the crowds to notice and learn from, even though it certainly was not a saving kind of trust that would affect their eternity.

Beginning in verse 23, the interrupted story of the synagogue official whose daughter had died, resumes. Yeshua arrives at his house (just a couple of minutes away) and immediately notices the flute players (flutes are also called clarinets) accompanied with the agitation of a number of people who are there. This well reflects Jewish mourning practices in those days, especially for those who were reasonably well off financially. Josephus, the Jewish-Roman historian, who was born not long after Christ was crucified, makes a comment on this matter; something he was quite familiar with.

In his book called Jewish Wars he wrote concerning death and mourning: "**.....for 30 days the lamentations never ceased in the city, and many of the mourners hired clarinet (flute) players to accompany their funeral dirges**". Some years later in the Mishnah, Rabbi Judah was recording as saying: "**Even the poorest in Israel should hire no less than two clarinets (flutes) and one wailing woman**". So it's not unlike funerals elsewhere in the world that certain local burial and grieving customs, regardless of cost, had to be observed otherwise it was considered rude and uncaring. Surprisingly, Yeshua's response was to immediately order everyone to leave the house. His reason? He says she's not dead, she's only sleeping. What He really wanted was privacy and an end to the mourning.

This statement has caused no end to the debates over this passage. That is, some say Yeshua was about to resurrect the little girl from the dead; others say she may have only been ill, perhaps in some kind of catatonic state, but certainly alive. The first thing I would say about this is that if she wasn't really dead that would be surprising because it's not like people in every age didn't know what a dead person looked like and felt like, and even smelled like. The girl was dead; she was a corpse when Christ arrived.

The use of the word "sleep" and other terms associated with "sleeping" are regularly used in the Bible when speaking of death. This seems to be a kinder, gentler way of saying it, but also it indicates that the condition of death is, in some strange way, not necessarily permanent. And further, especially for those considered to have lived righteously before the Lord, there is a hope of a pleasant afterlife. Even in Christ's day death and the possibility of an afterlife was in no way agreed upon within Judaism. Death and what happens afterwards was mostly a terrifying prospect such that the one thing people then could agree on was that it was always better to be alive than dead!

Daniel spoke of death and an afterlife but framed it in the "sleeping" sense.

<sup>CJB</sup> **Daniel 12:2 <sup>2</sup> Many of those sleeping in the dust of the earth will awaken, some to everlasting life and some to everlasting shame and abhorrence**

So here Daniel likens death to "sleeping", and says there will be an "awakening" and the results won't be the same for everyone. But clearly, whatever everlasting life after death looks like, others will experience the condition of shame. In Psalms we read:

CJB **Psalms 49:15-16** <sup>15</sup> *Like sheep, they are destined for Sh'ol; death will be their shepherd. The upright will rule them in the morning; and their forms will waste away in Sh'ol, until they need no dwelling.* <sup>16</sup> *But God will redeem me from Sh'ol's control, because he will receive me. (Selah)*

Then in the Book of John Christ says:

CJB **John 11:11-15** <sup>11</sup> *Yeshua said these things, and afterwards he said to the talmidim, "Our friend El'azar has gone to sleep; but I am going in order to wake him up."* <sup>12</sup> *The talmidim said to him, "Lord, if he has gone to sleep, he will get better."* <sup>13</sup> *Now Yeshua had used the phrase to speak about El'azar's death, but they thought he had been talking literally about sleep.* <sup>14</sup> *So Yeshua told them in plain language, "El'azar has died. 15 And for your sakes, I am glad that I wasn't there, so that you may come to trust. But let's go to him."*

The point being that death and sleep were associated words so the matter wasn't that some ignorant people at this synagogue President's house wrongly assumed that his daughter was dead, and then some time even passed..... enough time for the word to get out and for the girl's father to hire professional mourners and flute players..... before Jesus was asked to come and reverse the death of the little girl. It also was not that Yeshua looked at her and more or less said: quit mourning; you're all wrong about this; the little girl never died at all! In fact, the professional mourners and others were pretty offended by Yeshua's statement that she wasn't dead, but rather only asleep, implying that they were sort of stupid. Nonetheless He took her hand and she came awake (He made her alive from her death). So later when Christ, Himself, was also risen from the dead, He wasn't the first instance of this.

But let's also not bypass an important element to this story. The absolute highest degree of ritual impurity that a Jew could acquire was to touch a dead body. So understand the ramifications of this act that Matthew's Jewish readers would instantly have picked up on. First Yeshua allows an unclean woman to touch the holiest part of his garment, His **Tzitzit**, and now He enters the home of a dead person and He intentionally touches her corpse! In both cases however, He is not affected; rather He affects those who were unclean and afflicted.... even unto death! Unheard of. It's no wonder people flocked to Him, did anything to get before Him, and equally why the Pharisees and then the High Priest were afraid of Him and wanted to discredit Him. They couldn't fathom anyone doing what He

did; and they had no way of competing. His miracles were too many, too public, and too spectacular to deny. Thus we hear these words of verse 26: **"News of this spread through all the region"**. So the public frenzy about Him was only going to increase.

Verse 27 has Yeshua healing two blind men. This story doesn't appear in Luke or Mark. Why Matthew's inclusion of the story about healing the blind? Likely because the Jewish Tradition at that time was that of all afflictions, blindness was most closely associated to having been caused by sin. So blind people received less sympathy and mercy than those with other severe disabilities and, if the blindness was caused by a sin that an animal sacrifice couldn't cure, then there was no hope for them. This is highlighted in this passage from John's Gospel:

<sup>CJB</sup> **John 9:1-3** *As Yeshua passed along, he saw a man blind from birth. <sup>2</sup> His talmidim asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned- this man or his parents- to cause him to be born blind?" <sup>3</sup> Yeshua answered, "His blindness is due neither to his sin nor to that of his parents; it happened so that God's power might be seen at work in him.*

Notice how Yeshua's disciples took it as a given that either the sin of the victim or the sin of his parents was the cause of his blindness. So here in Matthew, Yeshua going to these two blind men to heal them wouldn't have been all that popular or applauded by the onlookers. And if sin was the cause, then forgiveness was the only remedy. But no man could forgive sins. Very interestingly, these blind men shouted out and addressed Him as "Son of David". Strange. Where did they get that from, and what did it mean? Perhaps they were aware of Yeshua's family lineage as being a true descendant of David. But then again so were hundreds of other Jews living at that time descendants of David. It is puzzling and has puzzled scholars for centuries. Some say it is written here because Matthew wanted to find a way to connect Jesus to David (to validate the genealogy he opened his Gospel with) and did it by inserting this exclamation from the 2 blind men. In other words, these scholars are saying those words "Son of David" were never actually uttered; Matthew just added them from his own mind to make a connection. I think Davies and Allison have come up with a possible reason for their exclamation that at least has some good foundation and is plausible. And that is what we'll begin our lesson with next week.