

How would you like to take a journey? Have you ever wanted to get a birds-eye view of the story of Jesus' life? Do you feel you want some guidance to make this happen? Heading into spring with Easter approaching this year, I realized I did not have a focused study ready to go. I have been reading through the Psalms to begin my morning quiet time and then a deep-dive into Hebrews this year. Wrapping up my notes from Hebrews 1 along with all of the cross-references and commentary I had dug through, I found myself sitting quietly in awe of how profound the Gospel declaration is in just that 1 simple chapter.

As much as I am enjoying Hebrews, I really wanted to walk through one of the Gospels as Easter draws near. Not just read about thoughts on Jesus' life as the Epistles offer [granted, ALL Biblical thought/Words are God's and none are inferior in any way – no matter who wrote them or when], rather, watch Him walk, hear Him talk, and witness the events which brought us to such profound hope in eternity.

My go-to for this perspective has always been the book of John, it is my favorite Gospel. Yet, I felt Drawn to Matthew's narrative of the events surrounding Christ. In my opinion, Matthew feels like the more stern of the 4 Gospel accounts and I gravitate towards light-hearted, but I could not escape its draw. I knew it was written to an audience of Jews (like Hebrews) and it shows Jesus' Kingship/Messiah stature (also like Hebrews). The more I thought on this Leading, the more I felt it to be True and so the call to "journey to the foot of the cross" was born!

Don't get me wrong – you can do this study no matter what time of year. After all, we are meant to look to the Cross 365 days of the year (+1 in a leap year!)... not just for the Easter occasion. Also, I am aware that the book of Matthew contains only 28 chapters. However, the study I am sharing also includes Day 1's introduction and Day 30's reflection. After all, if we do not pause to consider the audience and context of what we are reading, we may miss the deeper meanings in events told.... Just as if we do not pause to reflect on all we have taken in, we may miss the application and power of the Message for us today.

This study is loosely guided and mostly intended as a chapter-a-day quick read-thru. However, I wanted to leave plenty of room for each person to stretch as far as they want! Some people will have all morning to read and dig... while others may barely be able to squeek out 5 minutes. Still, others may find themselves in a combination of those scenarios throughout the course of a month. I tend to be part of that latter group!

I plan to read 1 chapter a day, Monday – Friday so the true nature of "30-days" will actually be drawn out in this way! In the same regard, if you are someone who likes to camp out on scripture, don't be afraid to take more than a day per chapter and simply move along as you finish each one. 30 Days to the Cross is not meant to be a race – rather, it is intended to inspire us to see Jesus' life walked out through the course of

reading Matthew... to know Him better through this journey and arrive at our destination whenever we get there!

This study pack begins with an introduction to the book of Matthew on day 1 and a passage to look into and reflect on. Continuing through days 2-29, you will find basic pages with simple guided sections to reflect on the day's reading. *Additional space is provided for those who like the extra-deep dig!* You may even opt to 3-hole punch these pages and place in a binder with notebook paper for added notes. If you want to try a deep-dive (inductive) study of Matthew but don't know how, I am sharing my "S.W.A.P." method on the next pages. My S.W.A.P. tips in whole or in part, can be helpful for dipping deeper than the surface of any Bible reading!

The outline for each day is merely a guideline to help you in a direction. *If you are only comfortable with one-line answers to each prompt... that is OK!* If you find you need extra notebook paper for a ton more notes, that is fine too! If you decide to go deep on this study but find some days you are not be able to finish... don't worry. Simply pick up where you left off when you get to it next. Nobody is timing you or grading your progress.

If you have any questions, as always, please feel free to email me or DM on Instagram. You can send messages on Facebook as well but I do not always check that account. If you are doing this study and share about it on social media, please @ me, I would love to see how your read-through is coming along and even re-share to encourage others!!

May God guide and bless your time in His Word ♥

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## **How to deep-dive (inductive) into your Bible (and other intro info!)**

I call my Bible study method “S.W.A.P.”. It was developed in the two-thousand-teens for a Thanksgiving Bible Study I wrote on *How to be Thankful*. This method was inspired by other acronym-based study guides yet mine differed in that I felt many others were more focused on self in Bible study and predispositions causing students to glaze over what was deeper... focusing on God and what was actually being said in Scripture regardless of self and preconceived notions.

A *good* Bible study should open our eyes to what is *really there*. Not what we *want* to find there or as a result of our own opinion, bias or emotion. Rather, we *swap* what we have always assumed we know or take for granted in God’s Word for what God’s Word *actually says*. As a result, we are transformed by Truth. This Truth is at the very heart of how a *good* Bible study is critical to growing and becoming more like Christ.

This method is versatile and can be applied to any scripture you are studying whether it be one simple passage or an entire book of the Bible. Simply grab a piece of paper, notebook, or journal and follow the S.W.A.P prompts as you work through a passage.

So what does SWAP stand for/mean?.....

### **Simply Put, The SWAP method works like this:**

**Scripture** – what passage of scripture is being studied

**What *exactly*** is being said

After you have explored what exactly is being said, you can also consider

**What** stands out to you and **Why**

(this section is NOT personal application, it is fact-based, looking at the words on the page, what they say, what they mean... we will unpack this more)

**Apply** – NOW you can make it personal! After we have considered the scripture in its context, we can begin to see how it applies to us now and internalize what has just been studied

**Pray** – to plant God’s message for you deep inside. Pray *about* it and pray *the scripture*.

***Don’t be intimidated.*** It sounds much more complicated than it is. It is actually a summed-up simplified version of Inductive Bible study, seeking to investigate and draw out the core of each passage so we can better absorb what is actually said. I do strongly recommend trying hard to avoid bringing in what we *want* a passage to say or what we *think* it says or how it makes us *feel* (this is how mis-interpretation occurs). Instead we look at *what is there* (at times referring to surrounding text and the whole of scripture for clarity) and allow the Holy Spirit to speak truth to us as we explore.

### **Need a bigger challenge?**

If you feel like the basic outline for SWAP above *isn’t* challenging enough, or, perhaps you have some extra time to study and want more to sink your teeth into, then read on!

#1 - Try considering the following under “W” more deeply:

**Who** is speaking and **Who** are they speaking to (this is so important to understanding context)

Also, alongside **What exactly** is being said you can consider, **Why** is the author saying it (clues are usually found in surrounding Scripture or you can reference a good study Bible, commentary and even sites like BibleHub.com or BlueLetterBible.com)

#2 - Do a word study:

Look up words you don't understand, or that seem to stand-out, in a dictionary or, better still, in a concordance. Blue Letter and Bible Hub referenced above are excellent resources for word studies since they have the option to view the passages in their original language (Greek for the NT) saving a lot of guesswork (for example, did you know there are at least FOUR different words for “love” in the original Greek/Latin our New Testament was written in and that each one carries a much different intended meaning?)

### **Still, how do I make sense of it all??**

NO MATTER YOUR LEVEL OF STUDY, sometimes words and understanding just jump off the page... Other times, we can find ourselves stumped trying to really SEE what God is trying to say through a given passage. If you would like even more help in that area, consider these ideas to assist in unlocking deeper comprehension:

Look for transition and condition words like:

|         |           |
|---------|-----------|
| but     | if        |
| however | so that   |
| and     | therefore |

Consider quantities like “ALL” or “none” and others.

Watch for...

- action words
- commands or absolutes... especially when they come with contingencies.
- repetition (God must really want you to notice something if he is repeating it directly or indirectly through a theme or idea)
- themes (overall in a paragraph or section)
- lists

Cross Reference passages using the footnotes in your Bible to see what other passages carry the same message. Looking up the same passage in other translations can help as well (biblehub.com is a GREAT resource for this, you can line up multiple translations of one verse all at the same time.)

**If you do nothing else** for a deep-dig except “Cross Reference”, you are already on a path to gain deeper understanding of the passage you are studying!

## Are you longing for an Example of how to do this S.W.A.P. thing?

Here is some idea of what one Bible Study session might look like:

- 📖 **S** – Write out a verse from the day’s reading which seems to encompass the theme of the passage. If you aren’t sure, simply write out one that stands out to you.
- 📖 **W** - Once you are done with writing out the passage in whole or in part, you can then answer the “W” questions. First look at what *exactly* it says, reading a few verses before and after if you need more clarity. Consider the various other tips I have included above for the **W** section, looking for repetition, transition words and other statements. Jot down what you see and learn.
  - **W** should consume the bulk of your study time. Once you feel you have exhausted all of the **W** options, you can begin transitioning to **Application** by considering what you have learned.
- 📖 **A** - After reading/writing/considering... you can write out an application. This should be considered *in light of* what you learned and what the Character of God/Jesus is as reflected by the passage. It may be an action you feel convicted to take, or an encouragement and inspiration you found as you studied. Yes, you can bring emotion in here if you want.... *But* be sure any emotional response is anchored in the truths you have just studied and not in personal desires you may want to force upon the passage. Whatever the Text prompts you to react on is good to log under “Application”. **CAUTION:** at times it may be tempting to only see these lessons as they pertain to someone else in your life you think it applies to... but **FIRST YOU** have to *internalize it for yourself*, lest you become a hypocrite or log-in-eye type! God *will* open the door for you to share truth with others *as long as* you are humbly daily striving to walk His truths out yourself. (Interestingly; internalizing first can grow you in grace for others you know are needing the message as well!)
- 📖 **P** - Finally, pray! Whether you bow your head and pray or write it out. Talk to God about what the day’s study has put on your heart. Writing out prayers can be encouraging to reflect on when you look back later. You will be able to see how God has worked in your heart and life through answered prayers. It is also good to pray the scripture as well. For example, Psalm 119:2 says...

*Blessed are those who keep his testimonies who seek him with their whole heart.*

A prayer which could be written with this passage might go something like this:

*Lord, I thank you for your Word today. Please help me to keep your testimonies,  
to seek you with my whole heart, not just part of it,  
that I might feel the blessing of your presence as a result.  
In Jesus’ Name, Amen.*

## Don’t Complicate the Process!

All this information may be a bit overwhelming at the moment. Please don’t let it confound you. I find it helpful to give A LOT of information in hopes I might cover any concerns or questions (I also get a bit over-enthusiastic when it comes to sharing Bible Study approaches!!) In the end, however, it really is meant to be simple... to be taken at whatever pace you feel ready for.

## A final note...

At the end of each lesson in any study you do, remember to ask yourself:

- Has this study broadened a certain perspective on this topic?
- Have you found new ways to walk out the topic in your own life as a result?
- In general, how has God used this study to speak to you on specific areas of your own life?
- How has this study grown you?
- **But most importantly:** What have I learned about God in this section of study? He is revealing Himself to us in so many ways. Diving into His Word is meant to be for the purpose of knowing Him better. As we know Him better, we understand all the life applications He has for us even more.

Every time we complete a study of God's Word it is so important to ask the above questions as a way to reflect on what we have learned and prepare to walk it out daily. James wrote:

*But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like. But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing.*

*James 1:22-25 (ESV)*

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**Remember:** the deep-dive/S.W.A.P. method may not be for everyone right now and that is OK. What matters most is jumping into the word of God, even if all you feel you can do is read one verse, one paragraph, or one chapter a day.

Ready to get started?



The book of Matthew is one of the earliest Gospels, dating back as far as 50 A.D. While each gospel is about the life of Jesus, all four vary in who their intended audience was and, therefore, what the overall understanding and significance of shared events becomes. I find the chart below to be helpful when I am working through any of the Gospels:

THE GOSPELS, SIDE-BY-SIDE\*

| Book           | Author is:                        | Written to:          | Purpose → Shows               |             | Jesus seen as       | What he... | Starts with genealogy...                              | 1 <sup>st</sup> Miracle                    | Ending                | Style                                    |
|----------------|-----------------------------------|----------------------|-------------------------------|-------------|---------------------|------------|---|--|-----------------------|--|
| <b>Matthew</b> | Jew/Levite                        | Jews                 | Presents promise what is here | Credentials | Messiah (also/King) | Said       | of Abraham  | Leper cleansed (Jewish thing)              | Resurrection          | Groupings                                |
| <b>Mark</b>    | Scribe for Peter                  | Roman Gentiles       | This is how he works          | Power       | Suffering Servant   | Did        | No genealogy b/c people don't care of servant's genes | Demons expelled                            | Ascension             | Snapshots                                |
| <b>Luke</b>    | Doctor, companion to Paul         | Greco Roman Gentiles | This is what he was like      | Nature      | Son of Man          | Felt       | Of Adam b/c son of man                                | Demons expelled                            | Ascension (→ Acts)    | Read carefully, chronicles and narrative |
| <b>John</b>    | The Disciple (that Jesus loved!♥) | Church               | This is who he really was     | Godship     | Son of God          | Was        | From pre-existence                                    | Water to wine (i.e. water purified temple) | Return (→ Revelation) | mystical                                 |

\*Adapted from Chuck Missler, *Read the Bible in 24 Hours* audio commentary

As we read through the book of Matthew, it is a beautiful thing to remember how important it was to God that these Words find their way TO the Jewish converts (and ultimately to us all). Matthew spoke in terms they would have quickly understood, pointing out how Christ fulfilled prophecy *more than* 60 times using passages they would have known is just the beginning!! He also references Jewish customs without explanation (because they would have been understood by the original reader – no explanation necessary).

Many scholars also believe Matthew did not write about events chronologically, rather, he gathered the events of Jesus' life into 5 major discourses:

- The Sermon on the Mount
- The commissioning of the Apostles
- Parables about the Kingdom
- The childlikeness of believers
- The second coming

... and each discourse ends with a variation of, "...when Jesus had ended these sayings..." [MacArthur]

A great website for referencing Scripture and asking questions of the Bible is [GotQuestions.com](http://GotQuestions.com). When I used them as an additional source to explore the context of Matthew, they suggested it as "an excellent introduction to the core teachings of Christianity", and added that some interesting points to keep in mind as the Gospel is read is how the Jews wanted a Messiah on their own terms... and how often do we seek God on our own terms? Additionally, we should not be like the Pharisees who Jesus frequently corrected/rebuked throughout all of the Gospels; they created God in their own image. Let this read-through/study be a challenge to really SEE God as He *is*, with Christ created in HIS image, and how we can follow and magnify that more clearly ♥

**Some ardent students of Inductive Study suggest Matthew 1:21 as the theme verse for the entirety of this Gospel. Take a moment to look it up and, if you have time, copy below:**

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**Additional thoughts:**

**Pray:** \_\_\_\_\_

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*Share what you have learned with others, not only is this another way to make the message stick with you...*





Scripture passage what stood out to you?

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What do we learn about Jesus and/or the Character of God in this chapter?

Any additional thoughts or notes?





Scripture passage what stood out to you?

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Scripture passage what stood out to you?

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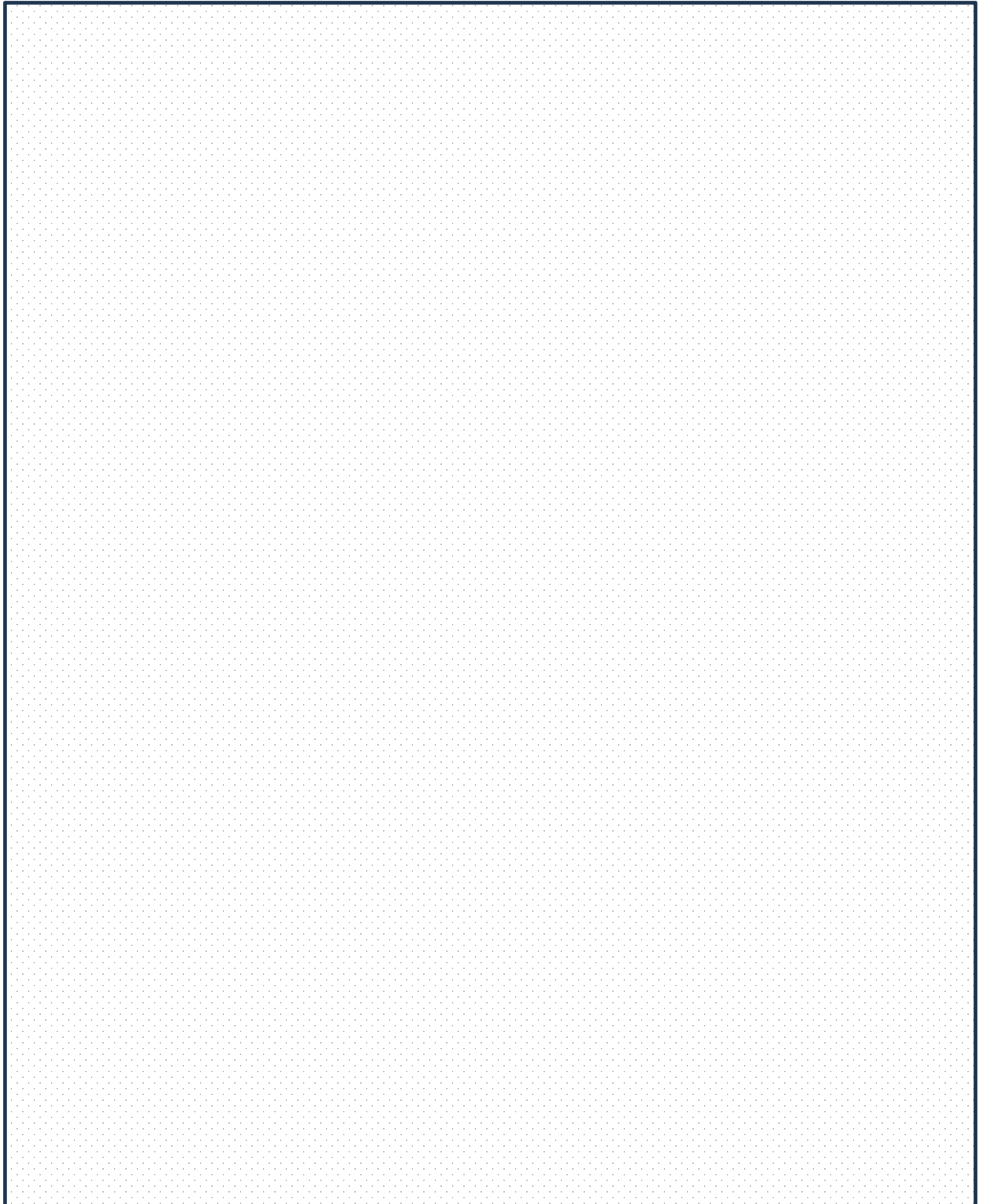
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What do we learn about Jesus and/or the Character of God in this chapter?

What were the 3 temptations of Jesus? What was His response to each?

Did you notice: Jesus counters Satan using scripture! If you have time today, look up where these are referenced from. Most Bibles have a superscript notation like this<sup>h</sup> which corresponds to notes in your Bible's margin to cross-reference Scripture. If not, online Bibles like BibleGateway.com have the superscript references in text.

Any additional thoughts or notes?









Scripture passage what stood out to you?

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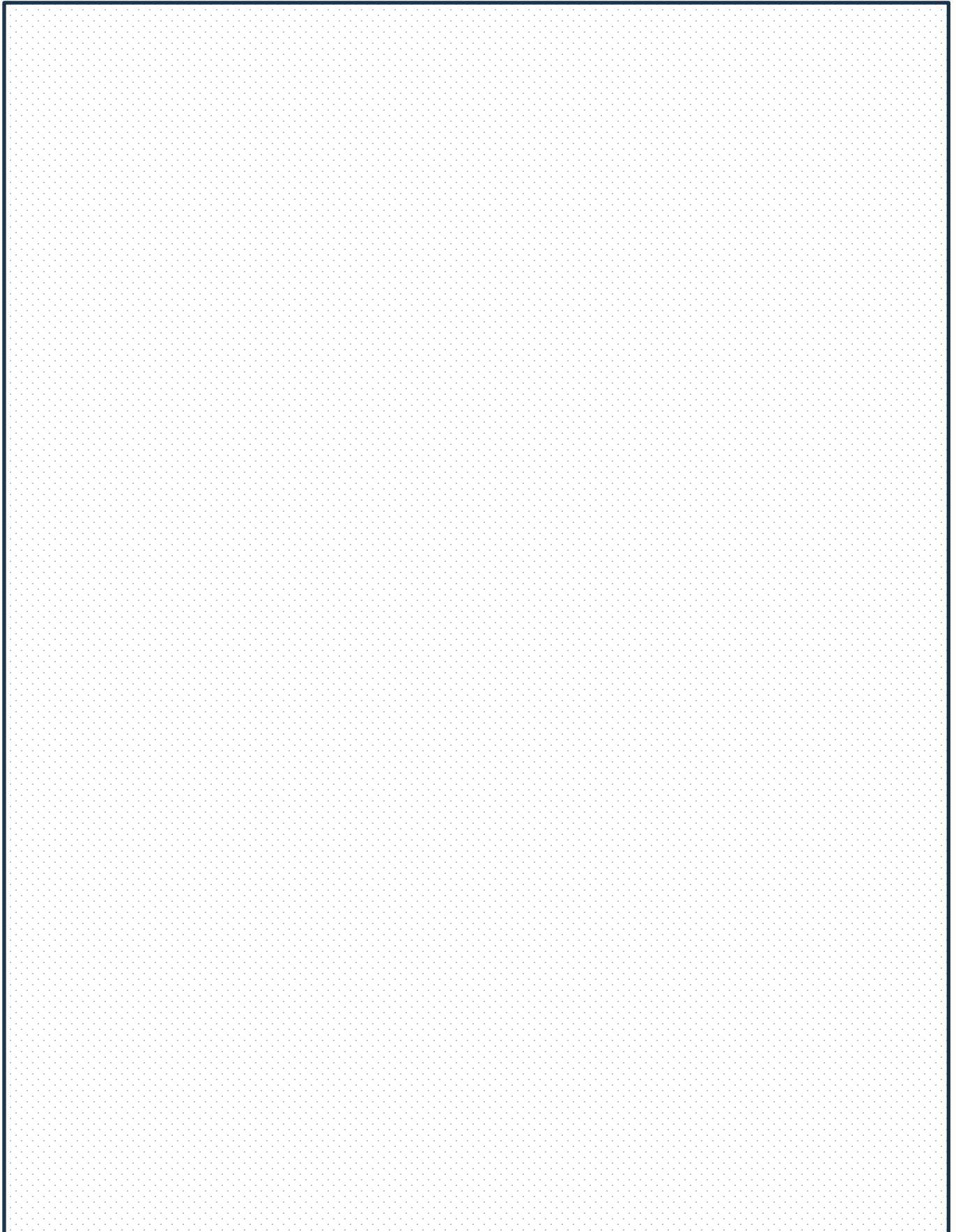
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What do we learn about Jesus and/or the Character of God in this chapter?

If you have time, list the Beatitudes and what their corresponding 'rewards' are:

Jesus' sermon on the mount actually extends from Chapter 5 all the way through Chapter 7. As for *this* chapter, other than the Beatitudes, he seems to cover about 8 additional points. Most Bibles have these listed as paragraph headings. For additional study, you can list each topic and key points He makes about them.







Scripture passage what stood out to you?

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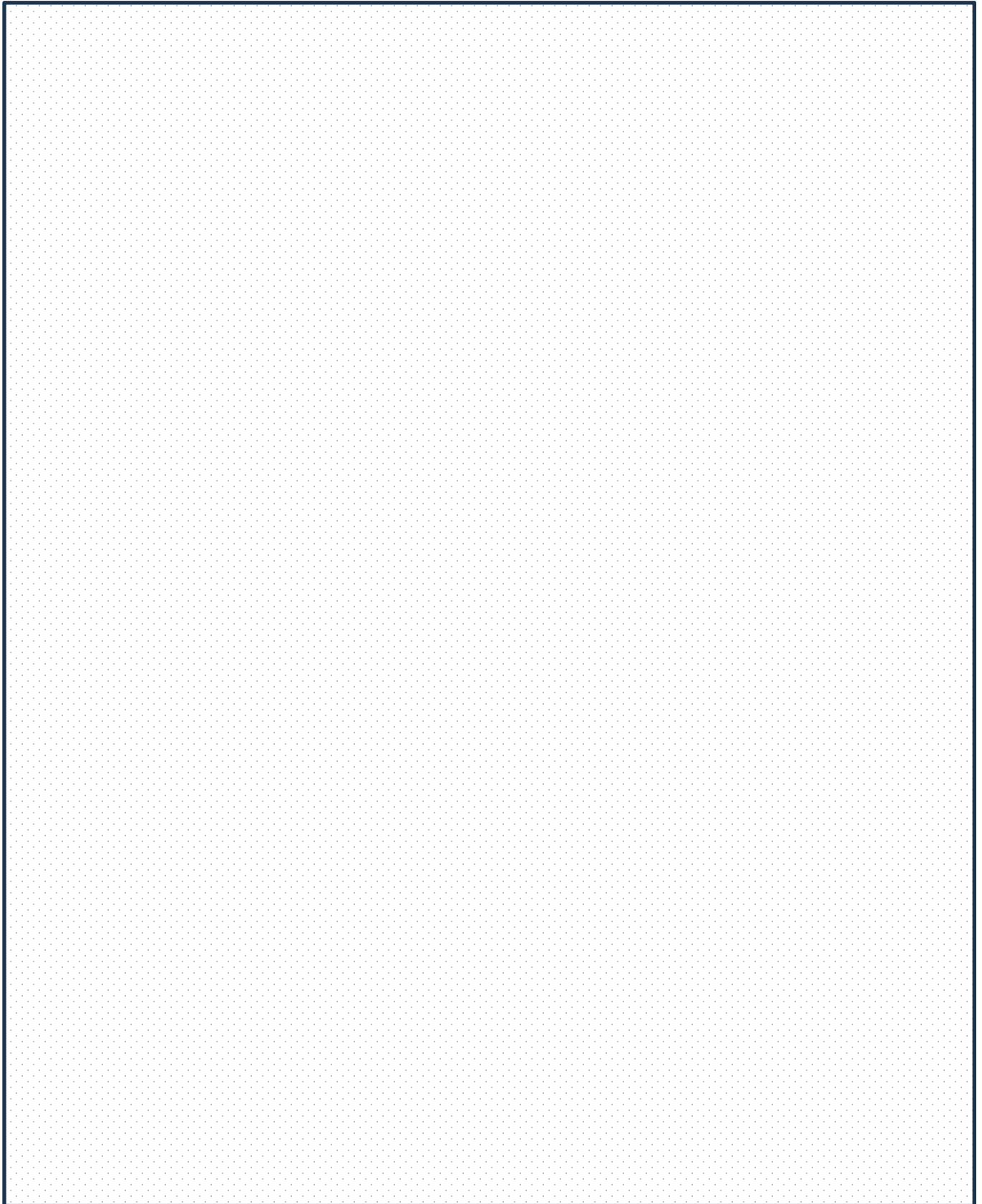
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What do we learn about Jesus and/or the Character of God in this chapter?

Any additional thoughts or notes?

“The Lord’s Prayer” was never intended to be the only way, word-for-word, that we pray. By all means, we can use it word-for-word, however, its original intent was as a model of how to prayer. Begin with praise, acknowledgement, and a willingness to submit to God. Then request, seek repentance, and ask His guidance. If you have time today, write out this prayer and then write or pray it in your own words, with your own personal acknowledgements and requests...



As the Beatitudes continue, about 5 more topics are presented. For additional study, you can list each topic and key points He makes about them.

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Scripture passage what stood out to you?

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What do we learn about Jesus and/or the Character of God in this chapter?

Any additional thoughts or notes?

The last of the Beatitudes, he seems to wrap up with about 6 final topics. For additional study, you can list each topic and key points He makes about them.

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Scripture passage what stood out to you?

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What do we learn about Jesus and/or the Character of God in this chapter?

Any additional thoughts or notes?





Scripture passage what stood out to you?

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What do we learn about Jesus and/or the Character of God in this chapter?

Any additional thoughts or notes?





Scripture passage what stood out to you?

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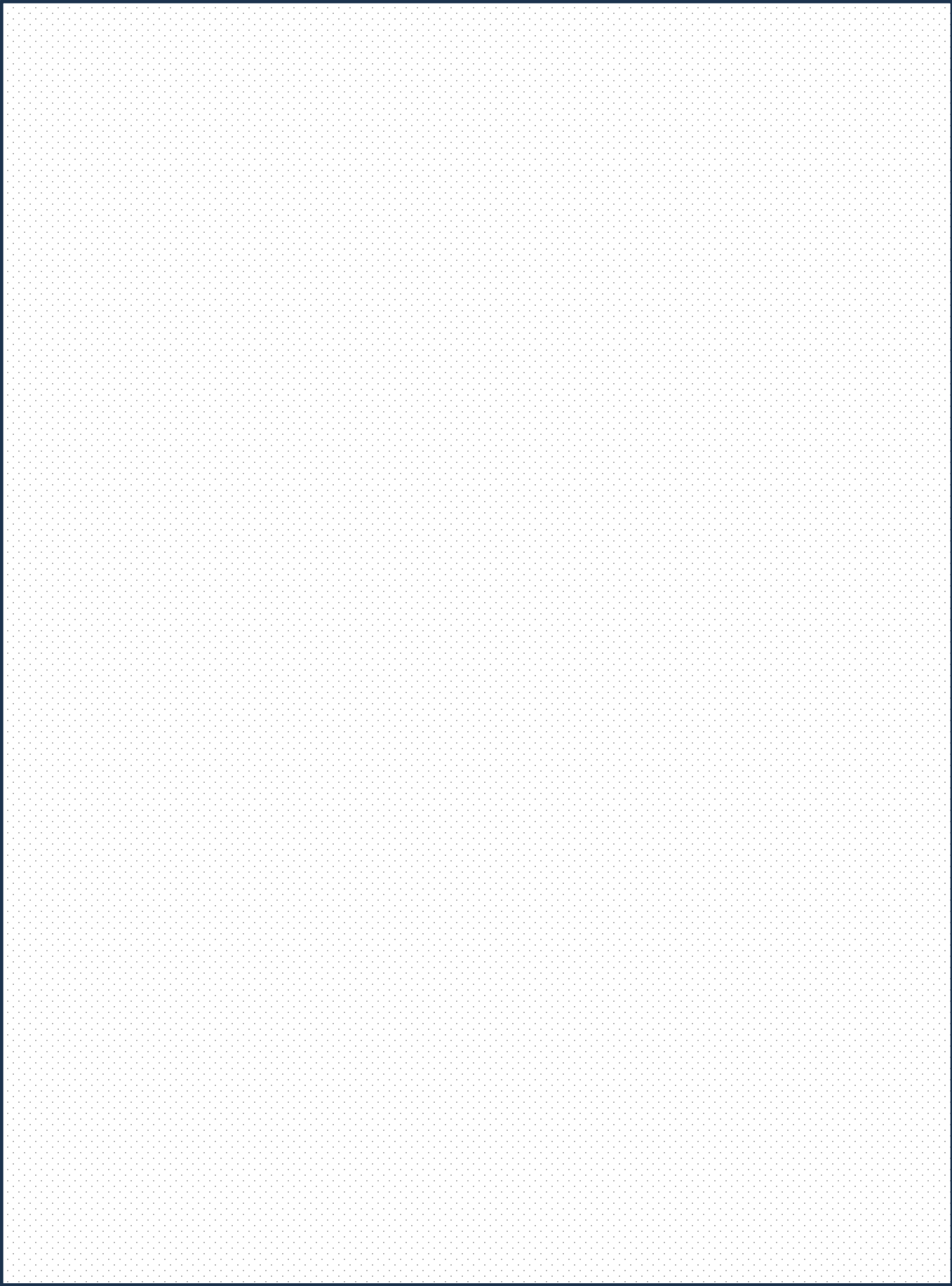
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What do we learn about Jesus and/or the Character of God in this chapter?

Chapter 10 begins with a concise list of the Apostles, list them out here along with defining characteristics:



Any additional thoughts or notes?







Scripture passage what stood out to you?

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What do we learn about Jesus and/or the Character of God in this chapter?

Any additional thoughts or notes?





Scripture passage what stood out to you?

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Any additional thoughts or notes?





Scripture passage what stood out to you?

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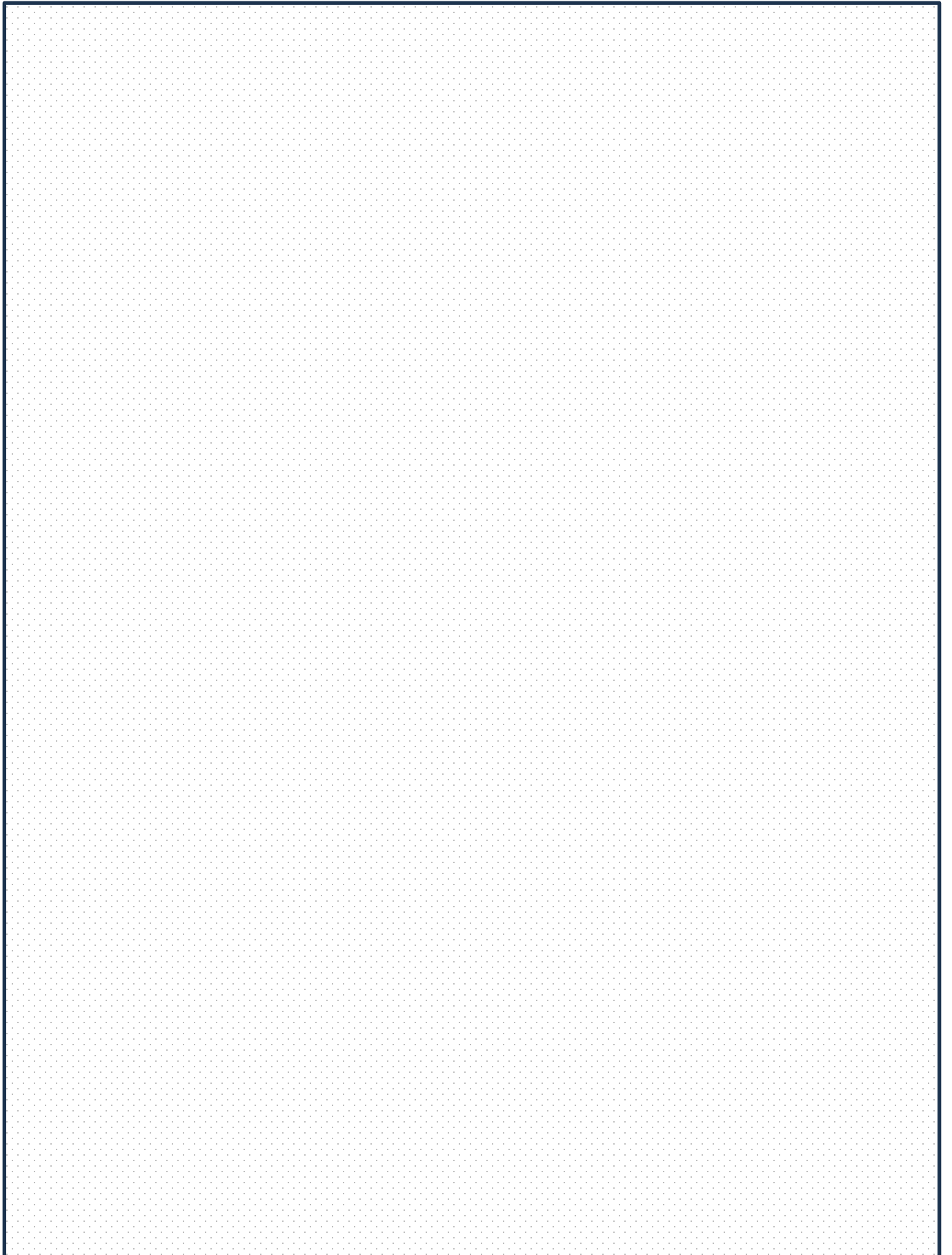
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What do we learn about Jesus and/or the Character of God in this chapter?

Any additional thoughts or notes?

Chapter 13 is known for containing the “Parabolic Discourse”, multiple parables of Jesus. If you have time today, list out each parable from this chapter and what its key teaching theme is:









Scripture passage what stood out to you?

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What do we learn about Jesus and/or the Character of God in this chapter?

Any additional thoughts or notes?





Scripture passage what stood out to you?

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What do we learn about Jesus and/or the Character of God in this chapter?

Any additional thoughts or notes?





Scripture passage what stood out to you?

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What do we learn about Jesus and/or the Character of God in this chapter?

Any additional thoughts or notes?





Scripture passage what stood out to you?

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What do we learn about Jesus and/or the Character of God in this chapter?

Any additional thoughts or notes?







Scripture passage what stood out to you?

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What do we learn about Jesus and/or the Character of God in this chapter?

Any additional thoughts or notes?





Scripture passage what stood out to you?

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What do we learn about Jesus and/or the Character of God in this chapter?

Any additional thoughts or notes?





Scripture passage what stood out to you?

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Any additional thoughts or notes?





Scripture passage what stood out to you?

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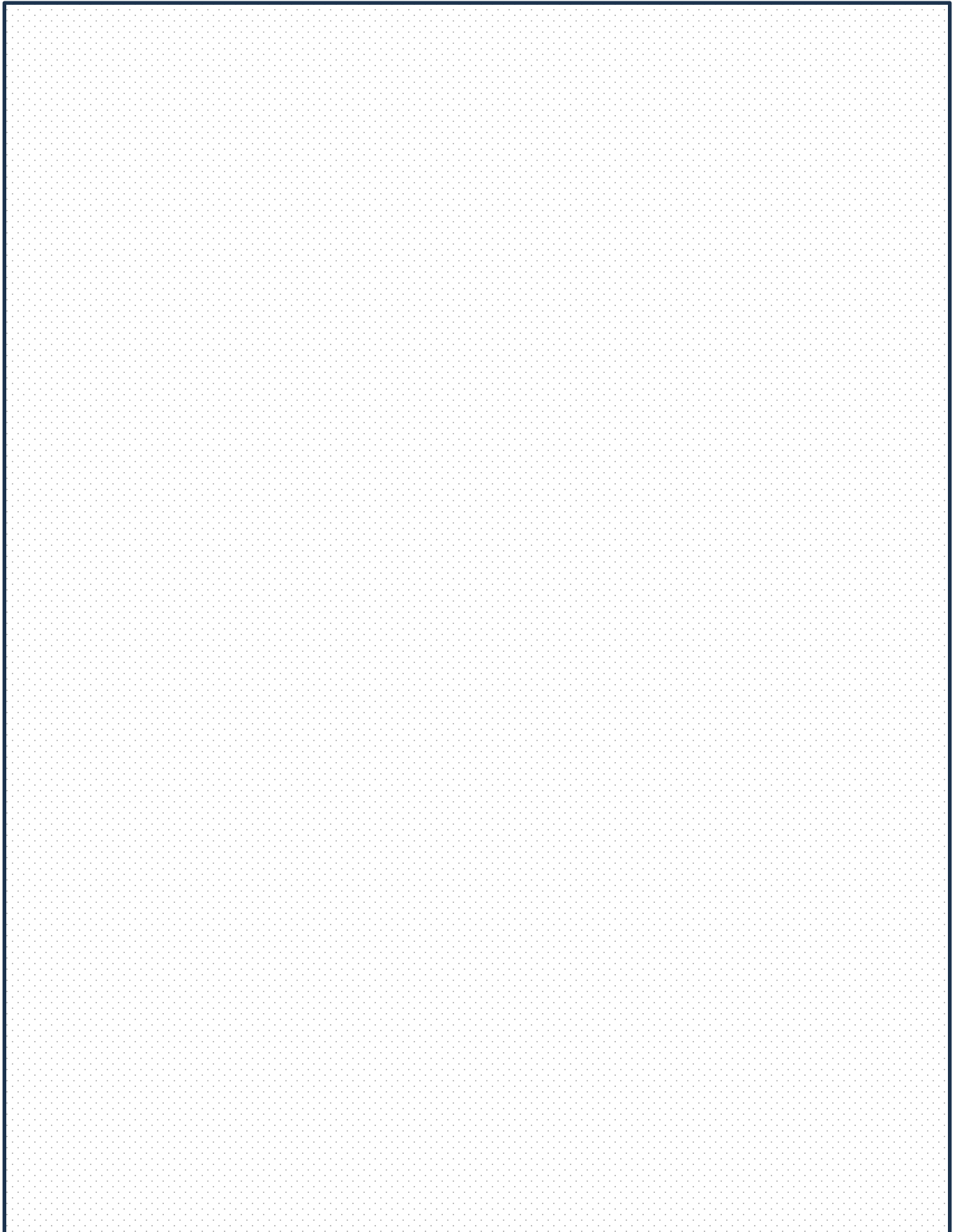
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What do we learn about Jesus and/or the Character of God in this chapter?

Any additional thoughts or notes?



Chapter 21 shares Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem, what we now celebrate as Palm Sunday. This begins the trek to 'The Last Supper' and all the events of Resurrection weekend. A lot happens in this chapter's kick-off to this period, extra space is provided below for any additional notes and research you may want to do:







Scripture passage what stood out to you?

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What do we learn about Jesus and/or the Character of God in this chapter?

What is the "Great Commandment"? What is the second "great" commandment? Why is that important? (v.34-40)

Any additional thoughts or notes?

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Scripture passage what stood out to you?

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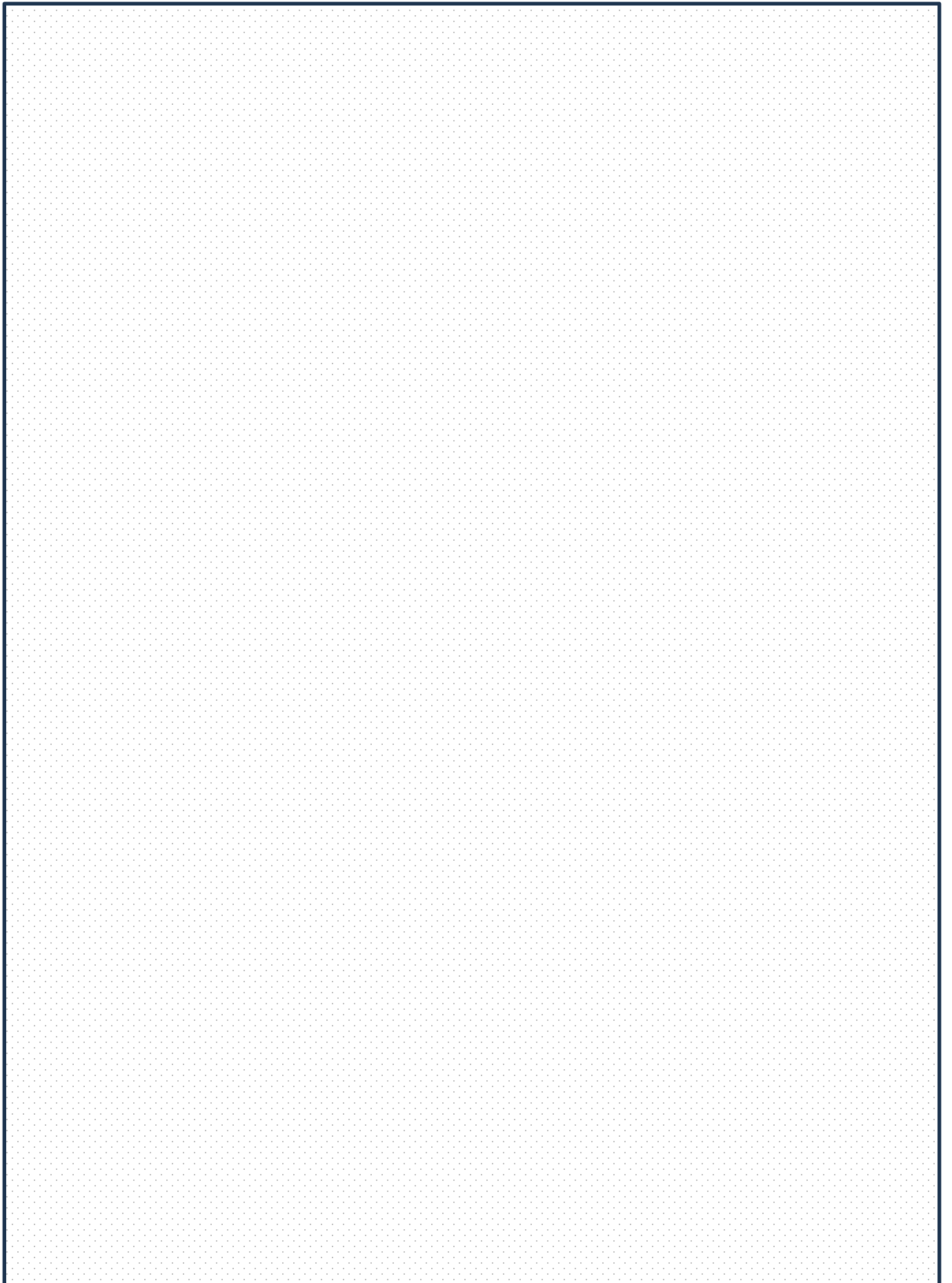
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What do we learn about Jesus and/or the Character of God in this chapter?

Any additional thoughts or notes?

What are the “Seven Woes” Jesus details to the Scribes and Pharisees?









Scripture passage what stood out to you?

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What do we learn about Jesus and/or the Character of God in this chapter?

Any additional thoughts or notes?





Scripture passage what stood out to you?

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What do we learn about Jesus and/or the Character of God in this chapter?

Any additional thoughts or notes?





Scripture passage what stood out to you?

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What do we learn about Jesus and/or the Character of God in this chapter?

Any additional thoughts or notes?

A LOT takes place in this chapter, additional space is provided for any notes you may want to continue taking:

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Scripture passage what stood out to you?

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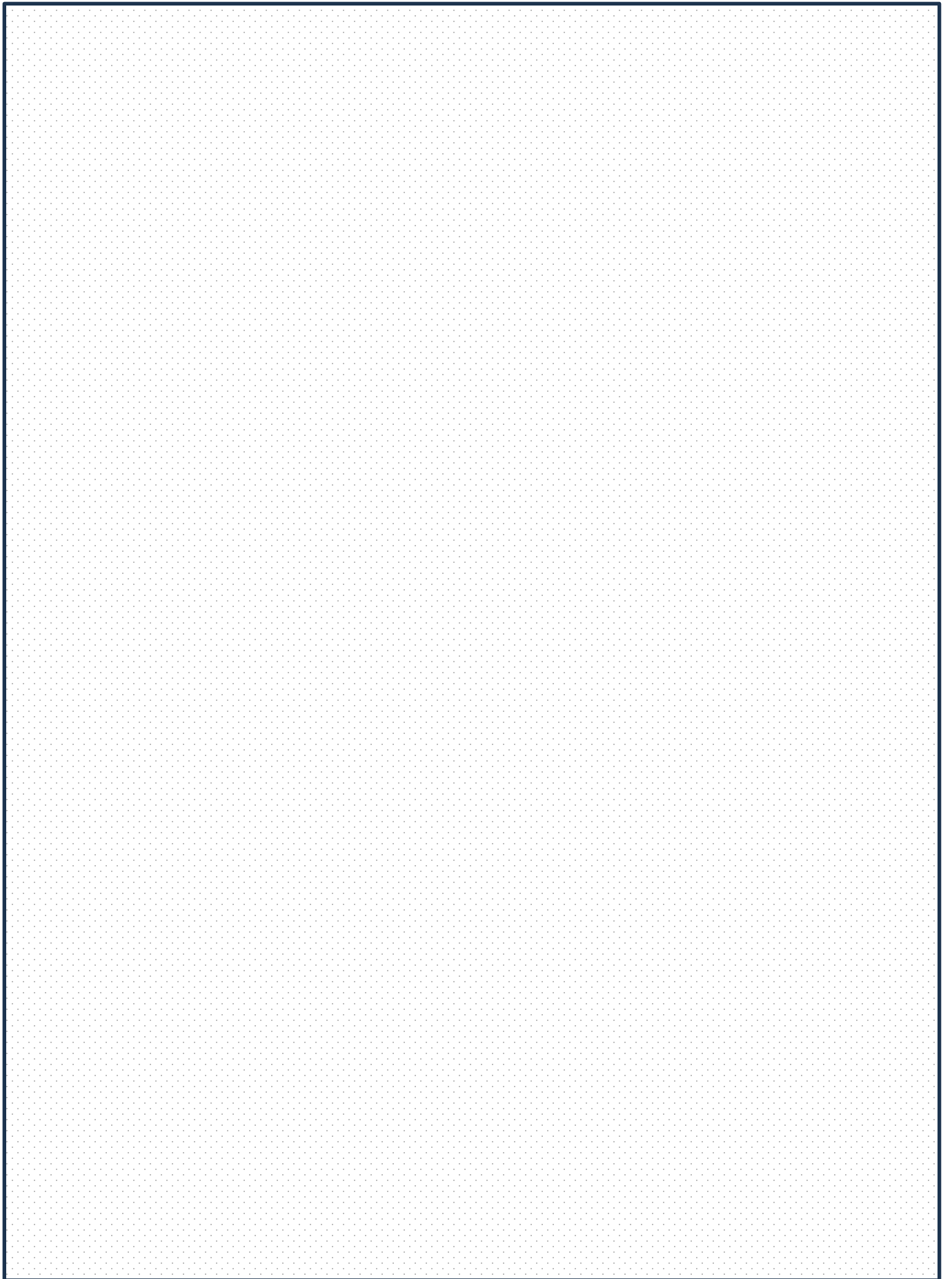
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What do we learn about Jesus and/or the Character of God in this chapter?

Any additional thoughts or notes?



Again, A LOT happens in this chapter! Here is additional note space:







Scripture passage what stood out to you?

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What do we learn about Jesus and/or the Character of God in this chapter?

After victory over death, Jesus visits with the Apostles and gives them what is known as “The Great Commission”. It is truly a call for us all, but it was first issued to the 11. What is “The Great Commission”? (hint: v19-20) By who’s authority and how is this accomplished? (hint: v18)

Any additional thoughts or notes?

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