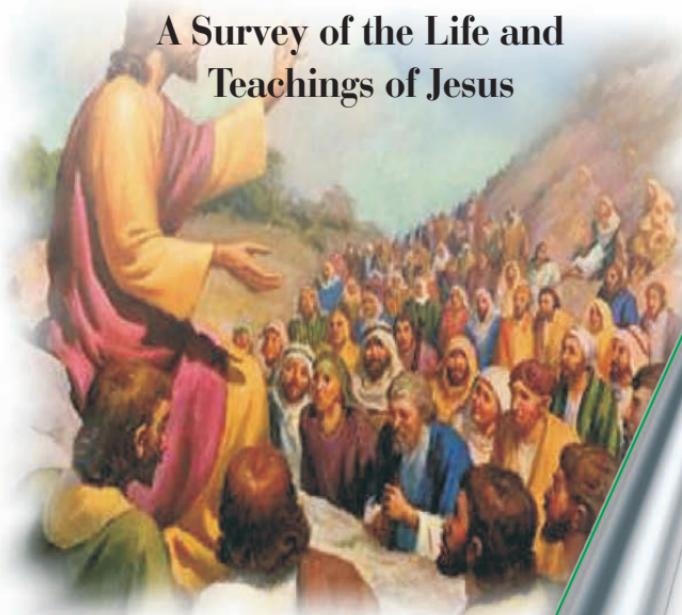


Life of Christ

A Survey of the Life and
Teachings of Jesus



Richard Rogers

SUNSET BIBLE STUDY LIBRARY

Life of Christ

By Richard Rogers

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Dedicated in loving memory of
Richard Rogers
a long-time instructor of
Sunset International Bible Institute.



A companion workbook on the study of the Life of Christ by Richard Rogers is available for purchase through Sunset International Bible Institute External Studies: 1(800) 687-2121.

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Preface to the Sunset Bible Study Library

Since 1962 Sunset International Bible Institute has been a leader in teaching God's Word, training local church leaders and preparing preachers and missionaries for effective ministry. Developed in the laboratory of preacher training and proven in the crucible of practical ministry, the Sunset curriculum has grown to forty core courses used both in our resident school and distance learning applications. In 1989 the Sunset Video Studio was inaugurated to record each course of study in a professional format. Those courses, each with a companion study guide, have been used to teach thousands of individual students and develop a world-wide network of video satellite schools in local congregations and mission fields.

Now in printed form that same library of trusted Bible study material is available through Sunset Institute Press for an even wider circle of Bible students, thanks to a benevolent God, an excellent editorial staff and a number of faithful supporters who believed in the project.

This book is the result of a multi-step process which began with a videotaped course. The voice track of the videotape was first transcribed then formatted and edited from spoken to written style. The goal of the editorial process has been to produce a readable document while protecting the course content and the style and personality of the teacher. We believe the goal has been achieved and that each of the forty books planned for the Sunset Bible Study Library will likewise achieve that goal.

Special gratitude must be expressed to Cline Paden and Truman Scott who began the video course series in 1989, to Bob Martin, who directed Sunset Video Studio, to Virgil Yocham and the staff of Sunset External Studies Division who wrote the study guides, to Steve Lyauty and the staff of Sunset Translation Center who edited the manuscripts and to each faculty member of Sunset

International Bible Institute who took extra time to prepare and present these courses in the studio.

In addition to the English version, this book and its companion volumes are being translated into the major languages of the world to produce a Bible study library which can be used on the mission fields of the world to mature Christians, train church leaders and grow churches that plant other churches.

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Introduction to The Life and Teaching of Christ

Jesus Christ is *the* pivotal figure of all history. The strength of this fact is seen in how mankind dates his very existence. All time is dated from Christ's supposed birthday, which is off between four and six years. Everything is dated either B.C., meaning "Before Christ," or A.D., meaning *Anno Domini* or "in the year of our Lord." Whatever the year, it is a certain amount of years either before or after His birth. The same is true in nations that do not even know of Jesus. They still date their very existence by Christ's birth. For those who believe in Jesus, it is of utmost importance to have a working knowledge of Christ's life and teaching from the very beginning of the Christian journey. In these twenty-four chapters we will provide that starting knowledge of Christ by means of an overview of His life.

Old Testament Prophecies Concerning Jesus

The life of Jesus can actually be studied from the Old Testament. The Old Testament prophecies concerning His life are so detailed that they are just like the gospel accounts. Hundreds of years, and in some cases a thousand years, before Christ walked the earth, His life was described in absolute detail. There are over 1500 prophecies of Jesus in the Old Testament. These Old Testament passages are important to read in order to see their New Testament fulfillment, so that our faith might rest firm, being established and secure in the inspiration of the Bible and in the deity of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Isaiah prophesied 750 years before Christ. In Isaiah 7:14 he said that the Messiah would be born of a virgin. In Micah 5:2, at about the same time that Isaiah was prophesying, Micah prophesied that Jesus would be born in the insignificant town of Bethlehem. Daniel 2:44 says that Jesus would be born in the days of the Roman Empire. Daniel's prophecy was 600 years before the life of Christ. In Malachi 3:2, 400 years before Christ's life, Malachi stated that Christ would be born while the temple stood and that He would come into His temple suddenly, without an explanation, in order to judge it. He did this twice in His life. Isaiah 40:3-4 prophesied that a forerunner, who was John the Baptist, would come into the wilderness preparing the way of the Lord, to make His path straight. In Deuteronomy 18:15-19, over a thousand years before Jesus was born, Moses was told that God would raise up a prophet like him. He would not be a prophet like others, who got their words by vision or dreams, but one with whom God spoke face to face. Acts 3:11-26 says that this was Jesus.

Isaiah 61:1-2 says that Jesus would come to preach the good news to the poor. He would give sight to the blind and release prisoners from their captivity. In Isaiah 6:9-10 we are told that when Christ came to preach, He would be rejected by most of those who heard His word. Isaiah 9:1-2 prophesied that He would do most of His ministry in Galilee of the Gentiles. Isaiah 53:4 prophesied that Jesus would come with a healing ministry. Isaiah 35:5-6 says that He would come to perform miracles. Isaiah prophesied about Christ many times, those prophecies being declared 750 years before Jesus fulfilled them.

In Psalm 69:9 David said that Jesus would come to cleanse the temple, and He did so twice. In Zechariah 9:9 He would enter Jerusalem in triumph on a colt, the foal of a donkey. Isaiah 53:2-3 says that when He came He would be despised and rejected by men. Psalm 2:1-2 prophesied that people and rulers would conspire against Him, and that is exactly what happened when the Jews and the Romans conspired for Christ

to die at Calvary. In Psalm 41:9 it is prophesied that He would be betrayed not by an enemy, but by one who shared His bread at the table. In Zechariah 11:12 it is seen that He would be sold for thirty pieces of silver. The next verse, Zechariah 11:13, says that the silver would buy a potter's field to bury paupers. It is strange that God knew 500 years in advance the exact amount and use of the money that Judas got for betraying Jesus.

In Isaiah 53:7 it is prophesied that when Christ was accused, He would be silent before His accusers. Isaiah 52:14 says that He would be beaten severely, so severely that He would not even be recognizable to His friends. Psalm 22:16 prophesied that Christ's hands and feet would be pierced. Crucifixion was not the normal way that the Romans killed their enemies, but they would do so in Jesus' case. In Psalm 22:18 it is seen that while Jesus was dying, His garments would be divided by those who were crucifying Him. In Psalm 22:7, 8, 12 and 13 He would be reviled and mocked, not only by those crucifying Him, but by all of those looking on. Isaiah 53:12 says that He would die surrounded by criminals, and that is exactly what happened to Jesus as He died with a criminal on either side. Psalm 34:20 says that none of His bones would be broken. On both sides of Him the thieves' bones would be broken, but not His. In Zechariah 12:10 it is stated that His body would be pierced after His death, and Jesus was pierced with a spear in His side. In Isaiah 53:9 it was prophesied that Jesus would be buried with the rich, and He was buried in a rich man's tomb—the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea. In Psalm 16:9-10 it is prophesied that He would be raised from the dead, that death would not be able to hold Him. In Psalm 16:11 and 68:18 He would ascend back into heaven to sit at God's right hand. Psalm 110:7 prophesied that Christ would be exalted at the Father's right hand throughout all time as the priest after the order of Melchizedek.

These alone are thirty separate prophecies of Christ from His birth through His reign and exultation at the Father's right

hand. It is impossible for them to be fulfilled by any way other than the knowledge, fore-ordination, purpose, plan, will and power of God. The Bible is the Word of God, and Jesus is His Son. Jesus Christ is the One the Old Testament spoke of.

Types in the Old Testament - Persons

There is not only providence in prophesies, but persons in the Old Testament who are used as types of Christ. Adam is given as a type of Christ in Romans 5 because he committed one deed with a universal result. David, in Ezekiel 37:24, was given as a type of Christ because he was a faithful and just ruler over all of God's house. Melchizedek, in Psalm 110 and Hebrews 5 and 7, was given as a type of Christ because he came upon the scene biblically as a priest and king, and he left in the same way. His priesthood or kingship is seen as everlasting. Jonah was a type of Christ because he spent three days in the belly of the fish, just as Jesus would be three days in the heart of the earth (Matthew 12). Moses was a type of Christ because he spoke to the Lord face to face (Deuteronomy 18). Joshua, the high priest in Zechariah 3 and 5, was crowned and made typical of the priest-king to come. Zerubbabel, the governor in Haggai 2, was given a signet ring and was said to be a type of the Messiah to come.

Types in the Old Testament - Objects

Objects in the Old Testament are also types. The bronze snake that the Israelites looked at in order to be healed was made to be a type of Christ in John 3. The manna that came from heaven for the Israelites to eat (Exodus 16) was a type of Christ in John 6. The Passover lamb in Exodus 12 was a type of Jesus in 1 Corinthians 5. The rock of Horeb from which the Israelites drank in Exodus 17 was a type of Jesus as living water (John 4). In 1 Corinthians 3-4, the temple veil that separated the people from the presence of God (Exodus 40) was a type of Jesus' body in Hebrews 10. Jacob's ladder (Genesis 28) was a

type of Jesus in John 1. This was because He brought the message of God to man and took the case of man to God. The ark that saved the world from the wickedness of the world in Genesis 7 was a type of Christ's resurrection and our baptism in 1 Peter 3:20-21. Jesus is raised; we are immersed and delivered from this wicked world. The Old Testament prepared the way for Christ in prophecies and in type. He is the Messiah of which the Old Testament spoke.

John the Baptist's Preparation for His Life

John the Baptist was the forerunner. He was the one who prepared the people for the life of Christ, and it is important to see how he did that.

The Announcement of John's Birth

There were many events that surrounded the birth of John the Baptist. An announcement of his birth to come was made in Luke 1:5-25. Luke 1:5-7 says,

In the time of Herod king of Judea there was a priest named Zechariah, who belonged to the priestly division of Abijah; his wife Elizabeth was also a descendant of Aaron. Both of them were upright in the sight of God, observing all the Lord's commandments and regulations blamelessly. But they had no children, because Elizabeth was barren; and they were both well along in years.

Notice their character; they were upright and blameless. Their plight was that they had no children, and Zechariah's priesthood would not be passed on. In Luke 1:8-20 an angel visited Zechariah while he was performing his duties in the Holy Place. The angel told Zechariah in simple language that he would have a son, and that son would bring joy to many people. This son would be great in the sight of God and would be gifted

by the Spirit, even from the womb. Zechariah had trouble believing this because his wife was barren, and they had already tried to have children. The angel said,

And now you will be silent and not able to speak until the day this happens, because you did not believe my words, which will come true at their proper time (Luke 1:20).

In Luke 1:21-22 Zechariah went out and met the people, but when the people tried to talk to him, he could not talk back. They took knowledge of the fact that he had been struck silent while he was in the Holy Place. In 1:23-25 he went back to his wife and communicated with her, in writing perhaps, what the angel had said. She accepted what he said, and they conceived a child. Elizabeth and her husband were blessed by God, not because of their righteousness, but because Jesus' way had to be prepared.

The Announcement of Jesus' Birth

There was more happening in the life of Elizabeth. She had a cousin whose name was Mary. An angel came to Mary (Luke 1:26-38), and told her that she would also have a child. He greeted her and told her that she was highly favored in the sight of God. She was perplexed by that and was fearful. However, her fear was comforted when the angel told her that she would be favored by God. Luke 1:30-38 says,

But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favor with God. You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never

end.” “How will this be,” Mary asked the angel, “since I am a virgin?” The angel answered, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God. Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be barren is in her sixth month. For nothing is impossible with God.” “I am the Lord’s servant,” Mary answered. “May it be to me as you have said.” Then the angel left her.

The angel told Mary that she had found favor with God, and she would have a son who would be three things: the Savior of His people, the Son of God Most High, and the King of Israel. Mary was no longer fearful, but doubtful. She said, “How will this occur, seeing that I do not know a man?” Her doubt was dispelled again by three things that the angel told her. The angel said, “The power is not yours, nor mine, yet it is the Holy Spirit’s.” It was no more of a miracle for her to have a child with no man involved, than it was for Elizabeth to have conceived in her old age. The angel then included the fact that nothing is impossible with God. Mary surrendered in Luke 1:38 with a great statement of faith, *“I am the Lord’s servant,” Mary answered. “May it be to me as you have said.” Then the angel left her.*”

The Visit of Mary to Elizabeth

It was a great blessing to have this child, but Mary had to endure much shame in the city of Nazareth because she was pregnant out of wedlock. In Luke 1:39 Mary went to visit Elizabeth, and as she entered the house and greeted Elizabeth, John responded by leaping in his mother’s womb. As prophesied, he was filled with the Spirit from the time when he was in his mother’s womb. In Luke 1:46-55 Mary sang a beautiful song in which she gave praise to God for coming to

her and her cousin, that they might have these children who were going to be greatly blessed and greatly used by God. Mary's visit to Elizabeth lasted three long months. This might have been because of the shame she would bear in Nazareth, or it could have simply been that they might share in their conversation about God's work in their lives. She didn't have the period with the "friends of the bride" or "virgins of the bride" because she was not thought of as a virgin in the city of Nazareth.

John's Birth

The birth of John the Baptist is recorded in Luke 1:57-80,

When it was time for Elizabeth to have her baby, she gave birth to a son. Her neighbors and relatives heard that the Lord had shown her great mercy, and they shared her joy. On the eighth day they came to circumcise the child, and they were going to name him after his father Zechariah, but his mother spoke up and said, "No! He is to be called John." They said to her, "There is no one among your relatives who has that name." Then they made signs to his father, to find out what he would like to name the child. He asked for a writing tablet, and to everyone's astonishment he wrote, "His name is John." Immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue was loosed, and he began to speak, praising God. The neighbors were all filled with awe, and throughout the hill country of Judea people were talking about all these things. Everyone who heard this wondered about it, asking, "What then is this child going to be?" For the Lord's hand was with him (1:57-66).

Everyone knew from the beginning that this child was going to be unique in the land of Israel. They knew because of the miracles of Zechariah's dumbness and speaking, and because Elizabeth bore a child in her old age.

Zechariah sang a song in Luke 1:67-79. This song has two parts or verses. The first part in 1:67-75 is, "Praise the Lord." He praised the Lord in verses 68 and 70, "*Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel, because he has come and has redeemed his people. . . (as he said through his holy prophets of long ago). . .*"

In 1:72-73 he said that he had come, "*. . . to show mercy to our fathers and to remember his holy covenant, the oath he swore to our father Abraham: . . .*" He said that he praised the Lord because He would redeem and keep covenants. Then he praised the Lord because He brings about fearless service, "*. . . to rescue us from the hand of our enemies, and to enable us to serve him without fear . . .*" (1:74). Praise the Lord, because He redeems us, keeps His covenants, and enables us to serve Him without fear.

In Luke 1:76-79 Zechariah gave a prophecy concerning the Son:

And you, my child, will be called a prophet of the Most High; for you will go on before the Lord to prepare the way for him, to give his people the knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of their sins, because of the tender mercy of our God, by which the rising sun will come to us from heaven to shine on those living in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the path of peace.

Zechariah praised the Lord in front of his son because of what He had done. He wanted John to understand that he would be a prophet. John would not speak anything on his own, but he would speak whatever God put in his mouth about His son,

Jesus Christ. Zechariah then told John that he would be a forerunner. A forerunner was one who went ahead to make sure that all of the obstacles had been removed. He was also the one who made sure the people in the pathway were ready for the coming of the great One. John would clear the path of all of the obstacles that might be in Jesus' way. He would also turn the hearts of the Jewish children and their fathers, that they might be ready to hear Jesus' message of repentance and salvation. Zechariah said that John would be a teacher of salvation. He had come to preach repentance and baptism for the remission of sins. He would preach belief in the coming Messiah. He had come not only to prepare the way for Jesus, but to tell the people that the Messiah and Savior was coming behind him."

Zechariah also said to John, "Son, you will be a bearer of light." Luke 1:78-79 says,

. . . by which the rising sun will come to us from heaven to shine on those living in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the path of peace.

People who live in darkness need one thing: light. They don't need money or food until they have light. John came to give them the one, single thing that is necessary for life, light. In 1:80 John began maturing, "*And the child grew and became strong in spirit; and he lived in the desert until he appeared publicly to Israel.*"

Events Involved In John's Work

John was involved in the life of Christ before Jesus was ever born. There were four things that John did when he began his work (Luke 3). **First**, he preached and baptized. He preached about repentance from sins and about the coming Messiah in whom they were to believe. **Second**, he baptized for the remission of sins (Mark 1 and Luke 3). **Third**, he rebuked

the Pharisees, Sadducees, soldiers and tax collectors, because they were not coming to Jesus as they should. **Fourth**, he explained and prophesied that he was not the Messiah and that after him would come One of whom he was unworthy to unloose the latch of His shoes. This One would not only baptize in water but in the Spirit (saving them) and fire (judging them).

John then confronted Herod about his living with a woman whom he had no right to live with, and was imprisoned. God was not in favor of John being imprisoned, but the imprisonment got him out of the Messiah's way. He had prepared the people for the Messiah, and it was time for him to go on to other things. John's being in prison was not against the will of God either. Sometimes tragedy brings about good results. Next is the beginning of the life of Christ.

Period of Preparation

New Testament Palestine

Geography and history are important in order to put Christ's own personal work on earth in its proper place and setting. Jesus' life was geographically and historically rooted in a place where He would be very successful in His ministry. A map of New Testament Palestine would have five primary provinces on it.

Judea

The southern district on the west side of the Jordan River was Judea, bordered by the Dead Sea, the Jordan River, the Mediterranean Sea, and Samaria. Jerusalem was in Judea, where the heartbeat of Judaism was found.

Samaria

Samaria was on the west side of the Jordan River, north of Judea. The people who lived there were of mixed race and were hated by the Jews. In 2 Chronicles the city of Samaria fell to the Assyrian empire. The Assyrians left a group of their own people there, along with others whom they had previously conquered, and these people mingled and intermarried with the Jews. They came to have a mongrel religion, in which they followed only the Torah (the first five books of the Old Testament). They built for themselves a temple on Mt. Gerazim and no longer went down to the temple in Jerusalem. This is seen in the book of John when the Samaritan woman at the well asked Jesus, "Should we worship in this mountain, (Gerazim) or should we go to Jerusalem?"

Galilee

North of Samaria was the province of Galilee, the northern district. It extended from Mount Carmel to Mt. Lebanon and from the Sea of Galilee to the Mediterranean Sea up to Phoenicia. This is where most of Jesus' work was done. In Galilee was Bethsaida, Chorazin, Capernaum, Cana and Nazareth, where Jesus was raised. This was a more loosely federated state than Judea, and the people were not as closely tied to the Pharisaical religion of the people of Judea. Jesus was born and served in an area that was more "liberal" than the South.

Perea

On the east side of the Jordan, in the south, was Perea. It extended from the Jordan River to the desert and from the Arnon River on the south (which is just above the Dead Sea) to the Pelah River on the north (which is just below the Sea of Galilee). This territory was more liberal and more populated by Gentiles than Galilee and Judea. It was here that Jesus fled to find refuge.

The Decapolis

Parallel to the Sea of Galilee and extending north to Damascus was a territory known as the Decapolis. "Deca" means "ten," and "polis" means "cities." Today these ten cities cannot be located on the map with any exactitude, yet they were mentioned: Beth-shan, Gadara, Gerasa, Raphana, Canatha, Hippos, Dion, Pella, Ramoth, Ammon (which is also called Philadelphia), and Damascus. These cities were basically Gentile in nature. This was where Jesus fed the 5,000 and the 4,000 (Matthew 14:13-21 and 15:29-39). He was received well in these areas, possibly because they were not legalistically minded. They were, in a way, more loyal to Rome than they were to Jerusalem. That is the geographical setting in which Jesus came to do His work.

Political History of Palestine from 5 B.C. to 70 A.D.

The political arena in which Christ found Himself was also very important. Herod the Great was reigning when Jesus was born. He died in 5 B.C. Therefore, Jesus was probably born around 6 B.C. Herod the Great was a very proud and pompous individual. He was, to a large extent, very loyal to the Roman Empire. When the wise men came inquiring where the Messiah was to be born, King Herod was the one who told them to come back and tell him where they had found the King. He told them that He wanted to go worship Him, when in reality he wanted to kill Him. When the wise men didn't return, Herod decreed for all of the innocent babies in Nazareth to be killed. He was a vile, foul man. Joseph (Jesus' father) had to flee with Jesus and Mary into Egypt to wait for Herod to die before they could return to their land.

When Herod died, a tetrarch was established. From 5 B.C. to 41 A.D., Herod's four sons ruled in his place. This was a long time after Jesus had died. Archaelaus, Herod's oldest son, ruled Judea and Samaria, which were the two rich provinces of the area. Antipas, another son, ruled Galilee and Perea, which were middle class people, yet a very good nation to rule. Philip ruled east of the sea of Galilee, in the Decapolis, which was very profitable farm land. Herod's youngest son ruled between Mt. Hermon and Damascus to the end of the territory, an area that came to be called Abilene. This son quickly lost any political clout in that area.

Herod Agrippa, a grandson of Herod the Great, ruled from 41-44 A.D. He was a friend of the emperor Caligula, who was mentally unstable. Caligula gave Herod Agrippa all the land of Palestine. This territory was again united under this man, as it had been under Herod the Great. This is the Herod who had James killed, imprisoned Peter, and died by the judgment of God because he took glory to himself (Acts 12). When he died, there was political turmoil in the land of Israel. Two provinces were created out of all of this land. The Decapolis and Abilene

in the north were given to Herod Agrippa II (who was seventeen years old) by Claudius, who reigned after Caligula. Judea, Samaria, Galilee, and Perea, the heart of the land, and the only place where there was any political clout or financial ability, was ruled for a lengthy time, by procurators. This time frame was from 44 to 70 A.D.

In 70 A.D. Jerusalem was destroyed by the same God who had raised her up. Jerusalem was annexed into the nation of Syria and ceased to exist from that time forward as a nation in God's economy. All of this occurred after the life of Christ because the life of Christ was discussed only under the reign of Herod the Great, Archaelaus, Antipas and a little bit of Philip's life. However, it is important for future study, because of the development of Jesus' life and the life of the church in that political arena.

The Period of Preparation

There are nine divisions used for the life of Christ. The first is the "Period of Preparation," which was the thirty years from His birth to His baptism. This was followed by the "Period of Inauguration" which was the beginning of His ministry. Then there was the "Early Galilean Ministry," in which He went around as an itinerant preacher with very few followers and began to gain a reputation. Then there was the "Later Galilean Ministry" which was when He chose the twelve apostles. They walked around with Him, and observed His teaching and lifestyle. The fifth period was the "Period of Retirement," because He retired into the area of Caesarea Philippi and other Decapolis areas, so that He could teach His men on a one-to-one basis. Then began the "Judean Ministry," in which Jesus prepared to die. He went down to Judea and blatantly challenged the scribes, Pharisees, and Sadducees, bringing trouble to Himself. He fled into the "Perean Ministry," in which He spent time with the apostles to prepare them for His death. The eighth period was the "Period of Passion." This

period lasted one week, when Jesus went back to Jerusalem, and for a solid week there was constant turmoil, except for Wednesday when He was with His friends. That period climaxed at Golgotha. The ninth division of Christ's life is "Victory." Christ was victorious in His resurrection and ascension, and He was victorious in the establishment of the kingdom, the church of the living God. Preparation, Inauguration, Early and Later Galilean Ministry, Retirement, Judean Ministry, Perean Ministry, Passion, and Victory—these were the periods of the life of Christ.

From Birth to Baptism – 30 Years

The "Period of Preparation" lasted thirty years from the birth of Jesus to His baptism. An angel came to talk to Joseph, the legal father of Jesus, in Matthew 1:18-25,

This is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit. Because Joseph her husband was a righteous man and did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly. But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins." All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: "The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel"—which means, "God with us." When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife. But he had no

union with her until she gave birth to a son. And he gave him the name Jesus.

Joseph had a problem because his wife was found to be pregnant. This was a shame to him, yet what a glory to him as well! The angel explained to him that this child was from God, and that he was to bear with Mary the shame of having a child that the community would think was out of wedlock. In Luke 2:1-7 Joseph and Mary, being from David's family, went to the city of Bethlehem to be enrolled for the taxation that was to take place. The inn was full, so they were put where the cows, sheep and horses were kept—in the stable. It smelled of manure and urine; it was filthy. There in all that filth was born the pure Son of God. He was carried out of there as quickly as possible, and was circumcised the eighth day.

In Luke 2:8-20 the angels and shepherds came to give their worship and adoration to Him. Angels and shepherds were told by God to go and make sure that this man and woman realized that the baby born in the filth of the manger was the Master of the entire world.

When the boy was forty days old, according to the law of Moses, He was brought to the temple for the rite of purification. As they entered the temple, a prophet named Simeon met them (Luke 2:25-35). Simeon praised the Lord saying, "I prayed to the Lord that I would be allowed to live until I saw the Lord's anointed, and I have seen him. I declare to you again (proving to Joseph and Mary that what the angel had said was true), this is the Messiah." He is the One of whom the Old Testament spoke. The 1500 prophecies of the Old Testament are fulfilled in Him. He is the One who will bruise the serpent's head. This is the seed of Abraham that is to bring blessing upon all the nations. He is the star of Judah that is the light to all the world. He is the lion of Judah that is to conquer the world. This is David that is to rule the world. He is the fulfillment of all the things of which the Old Testament spoke. Jesus is the Messiah. The prophets declared this to them. While Simeon was

speaking a widow named Anna came to them. She had been a widow for eighty years and had constantly, day by day, served in the temple. She talked to them and prayed for this Messiah in their presence. Her witness was the same as Simeon's. The Lord was establishing this at the mouth of two or three witnesses. Her witness, as Simeon's had been, was that this baby was the Messiah and the King! Jesus was the one they had all been waiting for.

While they were staying in Bethany, wise men came to visit them. The number of wise men is not specified, other than that there were more than one. They brought three kinds of gifts, so the tradition is that there were three wise men. Wise men came from the far east to worship the One born to be King of Israel. They did not bring ordinary gifts, but rather, they brought gold, frankincense and myrrh. The most precious of metals, the most precious of spices and the most precious of foods were offered to this One. The wise men had asked where He would be born and had been guided by a star to this city. They were sure that the king of the land would know where the King-to-be was born, so they went to Herod. The consternation in Herod's heart when he heard that another King had been born in that city was unimaginable. Naturally, he wanted to know about it, so he told the wise men to find Him. They were to tell him where this baby was so that he could go and worship Him. However, Herod didn't want to do that; he wanted to kill Him. God appeared to the wise men and told them to go home by another way, and not to talk to Herod.

Herod's Slaughter of the Babes

Herod, therefore, decreed for all the male children in that city to be destroyed, so God appeared to Joseph, Jesus' legal father, to save His Son. Matthew 2:13 says, “*... take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt.*” He was told to take the child and his mother, and flee into Egypt. They found refuge there until Herod the Great died. Then they came back and

settled in Nazareth where Jesus was taught the trade of His father, that of a carpenter (Matthew 2:19-23).

Jesus' Human Development

The awareness of Jesus, Joseph, and Mary of what was really happening started when Jesus was twelve years old. Luke 2:39-52 says,

When Joseph and Mary had done everything required by the Law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee to their own town of Nazareth. And the child grew and became strong; he was filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was upon him. Every year his parents went to Jerusalem for the Feast of the Passover. When he was twelve years old, they went up to the Feast, according to the custom. After the Feast was over, while his parents were returning home, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but they were unaware of it. Thinking he was in their company, they traveled on for a day. Then they began looking for him among their relatives and friends. When they did not find him, they went back to Jerusalem to look for him. After three days they found him in the temple courts, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. Everyone who heard him was amazed at his understanding and his answers. When his parents saw him, they were astonished. His mother said to him, "Son, why have you treated us like this? Your father and I have been anxiously searching for you." "Why were you searching for me?" he asked. "Didn't you know I had to be in my Father's house?" But they did not understand what he was saying to them. Then he went down to Nazareth with them and was obedient to them. But his mother treasured all these things in her heart.

And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.

This passage is very interesting because it contains the record of Jesus' human development and growth. In Philippians 2:6-7 Paul said that Jesus emptied Himself and took up not only human nature, but human weakness. He was an unusual boy, because He knew what needed to be done for His own individual development. He stayed in Jerusalem showing a bit of independence, yet showing great intellectual ability, being able to sit and be taught while asking and answering questions. He was human and had all the problems, temptations, and troubles that humans have, yet He had them without sin (cf. Hebrews 4:15 and 2 Corinthians 5:21).

By this time, Jesus was old enough to be on His own intellectually, physically, spiritually and socially. Luke 2:52 says, "*And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.*" First of all, He grew intellectually. He grew in wisdom, which cannot be done without growing in knowledge. One can grow in knowledge and not grow in wisdom, but the reverse isn't possible. Jesus was learning more and becoming more wise every day. It is encouraging that Jesus was one who studied, who learned, and who grew in wisdom.

"And Jesus grew . . . in stature, . . ." Jesus also grew physically. He was not a weak person; He was sound in body. Carpenters of that day had to cut down trees and then hew them into logs. Then they would hew the logs into planks and put the planks together to make houses. He was a physically strong person.

Jesus grew in spirituality. Luke said that He grew in favor with God. God holds Him more in favor today than He did yesterday, and He will hold Him more in favor tomorrow than He does today. He won't love Him or like Him more, but He will be more pleased with Him. As a father watches his son grow through all the stages of immaturity to maturity, he doesn't

love him less or more. The favor and the joy of that son or daughter really thrills the father.

Jesus also grew socially. The text says that He grew in favor with man (Luke 2:52). God *thought more* of Him day by day and man *thought better* of Him day by day. This encourages us to get involved in the lives of the people around us and in the community. Our life is not just singing songs and praising God; it is also working among people. Our life is one of sweating with people daily in some physical labor. It is being socially involved, economically involved, politically involved, involved in the neighborhood, involved in the school system, involved in every way of life so that we can grow like Jesus. We can grow in intellect, physical ability, spirituality, and in social contact with people by becoming more and more like God in every way. Pray that God will give us the ability to grow as Jesus grew. We must see Him, imitate Him and follow Him.

Period of Inauguration (1)

The Period of Preparation was the first thirty years of Jesus' life as He prepared for the work He was to do. In the Period of Inauguration Jesus began His ministry at the waters of baptism. Matthew 3:13-17, Mark 1:9-11 and Luke 3:21-22 give the full picture of what occurred. Luke 3:21-22 says,

When all the people were being baptized, Jesus was baptized too. And as he was praying, heaven was opened and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased."

In Matthews account, when Jesus came to be baptized, John said, "*I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?*" Jesus replied, '*Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness*'" (Matthew 3:14-15).

The Baptism of Jesus

Jesus was baptized, but why? In Matthew 3:14 John tried to deter Jesus from being baptized. He said, "I don't understand this. Why are you coming to me to be baptized?" Why did John try to deter Him? To answer this, the purpose of John's baptism must be known. In Mark 1:4-5 John required people to confess their sins, repent of them, and be baptized in water for the forgiveness of their sins. But Christ was sinless. He needed neither to confess nor to repent of His sins, because He had no sins to confess or repent of. Jesus had no sin to be removed by John's baptism, therefore, this baptism was not a specimen of

John's baptism nor an example for others to follow. The one baptizing was the same, but the baptism was not. The water was the same, but the significance was not. Every person who comes to Jesus' age of thirty has sin to be confessed, sin to be repented of and sin to be removed, yet Jesus had none of that. The baptism of Jesus was as distinct from John's baptism as Christian baptism was from John's baptism in Acts chapter nineteen. This was a unique, one-time event to be done by one person and no one else. John decided to baptize Him, but why did he? Some were saying a number of years ago that Jesus was baptized to be inducted into His priestly office. That was not so. If He were a Levitical priest then perhaps some cleansing ceremony would have been necessary. However, He was of the Melchizadekian priesthood, which would begin when He was raised from the dead, and it would be based on His sinless character.

John Decided to Baptize Jesus

The scriptures give at least four reasons why John baptized Jesus. **First**, Jesus said in Matthew 3:15 that it was to fulfill all righteousness. Righteousness is the commandment of God, and this was the only commandment that God had given that Jesus had not yet obeyed. For Him to fulfill every single act of righteousness from God, He had to be baptized by John. **Second**, God told John that the one upon whom he would see the Spirit descend and abide was the Son of God. When Jesus was baptized, the Spirit descended and remained upon Jesus. This identified to John who Jesus was. **Third**, it was to identify Himself with us. 2 Corinthians 5:21 says, "*God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*" **Fourth**, Jesus was baptized to be anointed by the Spirit (Luke 4:1). He was baptized to fulfill every single righteous commandment of God, to identify who He was, to identify with us and to be anointed by the Spirit for His coming work.

Testimony Concerning Jesus

In John 1:29-34, after baptizing Jesus, John the Baptist related the testimony of what he saw and who Jesus was. John 1:29-34 says,

The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, “Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! This is the one I meant when I said, ‘A man who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me.’ I myself did not know him, but the reason I came baptizing with water was that he might be revealed to Israel.’ Then John gave this testimony: “I saw the Spirit come down from heaven as a dove and remain on him. I would not have known him, except that the one who sent me to baptize with water told me, ‘The man on whom you see the Spirit come down and remain is he who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.’ I have seen and I testify that this is the Son of God.”

The testimony that God gave to John when he baptized Jesus was that Jesus was the Lamb of God, the Son of God, and the One who would be baptizing in the Spirit. The testimony God gave to Jesus in Luke 3:22 and Mark 1:11 was, “*You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased.*” God did not say this so that John would know who Jesus was. It was to announce to Jesus that the time for beginning His work as the Son of God on earth had come. It commissioned Him to His work. Even more than that, it was to empower Jesus for the work that He was about to enter into. During the temptations by the devil He was empowered by the Spirit. In Luke 4:18 He was empowered by the Spirit to preach good news to the poor, to heal the broken-hearted, to release those who were in prison by their sin, to open the eyes of those who had been blinded by their sin, and to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord. The witness to the baptism of Jesus was the empowering of the

Spirit in His life. From then on all that Jesus did would be accomplished by the Spirit of God. He would overcome temptation and perform miracles by the Spirit of God. He would preach His gospel and His beautiful messages by the Spirit of God. He would die and be raised by the power of the Spirit of God. He would be glorified throughout the world, and the preaching of the gospel would be by the Spirit of God. The Spirit was working by empowering Jesus Christ.

Temptation of Jesus

After Jesus was baptized, He was immediately led, or driven, by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted. In Matthew chapter four is an account of this temptation. Jesus had to be tempted. He was a man, so this was not the first time He was tempted. He didn't spend the first thirty years of His life in a vacuum without Satan tempting Him in every way. In this climactic act over a period of forty days, the Son of man met the enemy of man in mortal combat. Matthew 4:1-11 says,

Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil. After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. The tempter came to him and said, “If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread.” Jesus answered, “It is written: ‘Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.’ Then the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. “If you are the Son of God,” he said, “throw yourself down. For it is written: ‘He will command his angels concerning you, and they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.’ Jesus answered him, “It is also written: ‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test.’ Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. “All this I

will give you," he said, "if you will bow down and worship me." Jesus said to him, "Away from me, Satan! For it is written: 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.' Then the devil left him, and angels came and attended him.

Lust of the Flesh

This was a climactic act of history. Here the seed of the woman met the serpent himself in the same kind of combat that Adam and Eve had experienced in the Garden of Eden. This time the man won, not the devil. Jesus had answered with Scripture every time, and still the devil came and tempted Him the same way he did before—with the lust of the flesh. His flesh, after forty days without eating, cried out for food. The agony that Jesus had was unimaginable as He saw the possibility of taking those stones and making them bread in order to satisfy His terrible hunger. What the devil was trying to do was to get Jesus to put His own needs above His Father's will, yet Jesus would not do that. That is the same temptation that comes to us—to put our own needs, desires and will above the will of God. However, Jesus would not do that because He would rather die of hunger than violate the will of God for Satan. Jesus did not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeded out of the mouth of God. Without the negatives, Jesus said that man lives by every word that comes out of the mouth of God. The word of God is more necessary for life than our physical food.

Lust of the Eyes

Then the devil went to Jesus with the lust of the eye and showed Him the beauty and power of all the earth's kingdoms. Matthew 4:9 says, "*'All this I will give you,' he said, 'if you will bow down and worship me.'*" It must be understood that the devil could have done that. The devil did it for Nebuchadnezzar; the devil did it for Caesar, and he did it for Napoleon. Satan is the god of this world. He can give rulership

of this world to whomever he wants to, to the righteous or the unrighteous. The devil is the god of this world, but he is not the god of gods. He has a God. He is not the lord of lords. He has a Lord. He is not the king of kings. He has a King. There was a real temptation there for Jesus to short-cut the will of God, and the power of that temptation is not truly appreciated. He did not have to go to the cross to possess all the rulership of all the world. Instead, all He had to do was bow down to the devil. If He were to bow down to the devil, then all that He saw would belong to Him, yet He would not do it. He would not take the short-cut road, and He would not bypass the cross.

Pride of Life

Then the devil attacked Christ with the pride of life.

“If you are the Son of God,” he said, “throw yourself down. For it is written: ‘He will command his angels concerning you, and they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone’” (Matthew 4:6).

It is interesting that when the devil quoted Scripture it came alive. He quoted the right scripture, and applied it to the right Person. The problem was that he didn't harmonize it with the rest of the Word of God. The *sum* of the word is truth (cf. Psalm 119:160), not just one passage. If one passage or text is taken to try to prove something, it very seldom does because the passage, or text, is taken out of context. That is exactly what the devil did. Jesus would not be tempted to show off or put His Father to the test to prove that He was the Son of God.

Three times the devil tempted Jesus with the very same temptation that he has offered to man since the beginning of the world: the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life (cf. 1 John 2:16). Three times Jesus answered him by quoting scripture. The only way the devil would be defeated, then or now, is by the word of God. The enemy first attacked

Jesus in an attempt to ruin Him by appealing to the necessity of His physical nature. He was totally unsuccessful because Jesus recognized the essential fact of human nature—it is spirit. Whenever the necessity for conflict between the needs of the material and the needs of the spiritual occur, the material which is subservient, must minister to the spiritual which is essential. The enemy, defeated once, flung the force of his terrible subtlety against Jesus' spiritual nature, attempting the ruin of the entire man by suggesting that He should take an unwarranted venture on the basis of this trust in God. In seeming desperation the enemy then showed the diabolical desire of his depraved heart. He asked for the homage of perfection. In the decision to only worship God, Jesus demanded the devil's departure. Jesus not only resisted the devil's temptation, but He laid hold of the tempter and defeated him. He would also punish him on the cross for what he did to the first man, Adam. We can do exactly what Jesus did. The incarnate Word quoted the written word and defeated Satan. If we quote the written word to the devil, we too will defeat him.

Witness of the First Disciples

Christ had been baptized and led into the wilderness to be tempted. He then came back to call the first of those who would serve Him throughout His life and their own. In John 1:35-51 are seen the first three human witnesses of Jesus' deity.

The next day John was there again with two of his disciples. When he saw Jesus passing by, he said, "Look, the lamb of God!" When the two disciples heard him say this, they followed Jesus. Turning around, Jesus saw them following and asked, "What do you want?" They said, "Rabbi" (which means Teacher), "where are you staying?" "Come," he replied, "and you will see." So they went and saw where he was staying, and spent that day with him. It was about the tenth hour. Andrew, Simon Peter's

brother, was one of the two who heard what John had said and who had followed Jesus. The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, “We have found the Messiah” (that is, the Christ). And he brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, “You are Simon son of John. You will be called Cephas” (which, when translated, is Peter).

In the Old Testament Simeon was a watery, wavering character. It would not do for one of Jesus' prime disciples to be called watery or wavering, so He called him “Stone” or “Rock.” This vacillating Peter, vacillating Simon, would become a strong stone.

John 1:43-45 says,

The next day Jesus decided to leave for Galilee. Finding Philip, he said to him, “Follow me.” Philip, like Andrew and Peter, was from the town of Bethsaida. Philip found Nathanael and told him, “We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.”

Notice that Andrew first went to get Peter, and as soon as Philip heard, he went to find Nathanael. What was Philip's testimony to Nathanael? He had found the one of whom Moses and the prophets wrote. It was Jesus from the city of Nazareth. Nathanael then responded, “Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?” (John 1:46) He was not really criticizing the city. He was asking, “Where does the law say anything about the Messiah coming out of Nazareth?” He wanted a theological discussion, but Philip was not into theologies. Philip was into Christology, so he responded, “Come and see . . .” These had been the words of

Christ Himself. “‘Come and see,’ said Philip. When Jesus saw Nathanael approaching, he said of him, “Here is a true Israelite, in whom there is nothing false” (John 1:47).

Perhaps Nathanael had been thinking about the time that Jacob was in Bethel, and how he saw a ladder going up into heaven. Jacob had already proven himself to be a very scheming person by stealing his brother’s blessing and birthright, but he had been pronounced by God as being blessed. Nathanael might have been thinking, “How could a fellow with that much guile, with that much falseness in him really be approved by God.” Jesus said, “You’re not like Jacob, Nathanael. There is no guile or anything false in you.” Nathanael knew he was a true man, and he knew there was nothing false in him. “How do you know me?” Nathanael asked. Jesus answered, ‘I saw you while you were still under the fig tree before Philip called you’” (John 1:48). In saying this Jesus showed great insight. More than that, it showed miraculous foresight, because He and Nathaniel had not been in the same place. How did Jesus know what Nathanael was thinking? How did he know where Nathanael was? Nathanael took all of that as proof that Jesus was deity. “Then Nathanael declared, ‘Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the King of Israel’” (John 1:49). What was Nathanael’s testimony to Jesus? He was teacher or Rabbi, which was understandable because many people knew that. However, he said that Jesus was the Son of God, and no one but Jesus knew that. He said that He was the King, not a king. He was the King of Israel, the David that the Old Testament spoke of. He was a righteous King who would rule the land with righteousness and integrity forever.

Jesus said, “You believe because I told you I saw you under the fig tree. You shall see greater things than that.” He then added, “I tell you the truth, you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man” (John 1:50-51).

That statement hints that Nathanael had been thinking about Jacob underneath the tree. Christ was saying, “You’re going to see that I am Jacob’s ladder. You’re going to see that it is not the patriarchs who are the avenue from God to man and from man to God, but rather it is the Son of God. It is the King of Israel. It is the One that you have confessed. You have spoken correctly.”

The Conclusion

Notice the combined witness of this section. These men were the witnesses to Jesus that He was the One who had the right to fulfill the mission of God on earth. What did God say about His Son when He was baptized? He said, *“You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased”* (Mark 1:11). He was increasing in favor with God and man, and then He reached the point when God said, “I am now ready for you to do my work.” “Son” means more than simply “one begotten by.” It means “heir of” or “agent of.” It is the one who continues the work of the Father. The Lord was saying, “Son, I want you to understand that I now trust you to fulfill My work on earth, and I am well pleased with you.” What did John witness about Him, to Him and to others about Him? What did John say that revealed that Jesus was ready to carry on His work? He said, “He is the Lord of Israel, the one greater than I and existing before me. He is the Lamb of God. He is the Savior of the world, and the Baptizer with the Spirit, salvation, fire, and judgment. He is the Son of God.” John’s testimony before he left this earth is very significant and important to see as Jesus began His work. What did the disciples say about Jesus? The Father’s witness was a divine witness. John’s witness was that of a prophet, one in whom the Spirit of God was. These were testimonies from human beings as they observed Him and heard Him teach. What did they conclude Him to be? They said He was Messiah, the long-awaited One. He was the fulfillment of all Old Testament prophecies. He was the Son of God, the King of Israel. Jesus had begun His work, and He did so empowered

by the Spirit. He had begun His work having been witnessed by others as the Son of God. He had begun His work commissioned by the Father, and He would fulfill it, climaxing it on Calvary.

Period of Inauguration (2)

The Period of Inauguration was when Jesus began His ministry. There were three things seen in the previous chapter. **First**, His baptism fulfilled all righteousness and announced the fact that His ministry was to begin. This also identified Him with us as we are baptized in order to enter our work and ministry in the kingdom of Christ. **Second**, Jesus was then tempted, and for forty long days He did not eat. He was in hand to hand combat with the prince of demons; however, the Spirit empowered Him. He quoted the Word of God to meet every temptation that the devil brought, so not only was temptation resisted, but the devil was defeated, and his head was ready to be bruised. **Third**, we saw the first disciples testifying that they believed that Jesus was the Son of God. They did so without any divine inspiration, but simply by the examination of Jesus' work, words and character. They came to believe that He was the Messiah, and that He was the one of whom Moses and the prophets wrote. He was the Son of God, the King of Israel, and the One whom they would live, die for and serve.

Marriage Feast at Cana

The fourth thing that happened during the Period of Inauguration was that Jesus returned to Galilee. In John 2:1-11 is recorded Jesus' first miracle at a marriage feast at Cana. He had performed other miracles in Judea, but this was the first that John recorded.

On the third day a wedding took place at Cana in Galilee. Jesus' mother was there, and Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. When

the wine was gone, Jesus' mother said to him, "They have no more wine." "Dear woman, why do you involve me?" Jesus replied. "My time has not yet come." His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you." Nearby stood six stone water jars, the kind used by the Jews for ceremonial washing, each holding from twenty to thirty gallons. Jesus said to the servants, "Fill the jars with water;" so they filled them to the brim. Then he told them, "Now draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet." They did so, and the master of the banquet tasted the water that had been turned into wine. He did not realize where it had come from, though the servants who had drawn the water knew. Then he called the bridegroom aside and said, "Everyone brings out the choice wine first and then the cheaper wine after the guests have had too much to drink; but you have saved the best till now." This, the first of his miraculous signs, Jesus performed at Cana in Galilee. He thus revealed his glory, and his disciples put their faith in him.

This incident can be divided into three categories. **First**, this feast was holy. A feast was always a beautiful thing, but a wedding feast in the Jewish culture was not just beautiful but holy. It was holy because it was the climax of the wedding procedure. The man had been with his friends for a period of months, and the woman with her virgin friends. Then the two came together at this holy point, an act of being joined together by eating and drinking with their friends and by the vows they made. It was, therefore, a holy feast.

Second, they had run out of wine or drink during the feast. Maybe it had been because they had invited Jesus, and He didn't come alone. He came with a company of people, and so His mother was perhaps thinking that it was His fault, to a degree, that they ran out of wine. So Mary thought that He

needed to provide some wine. He said, “I haven’t come to satisfy the physical desires and physical needs of man. My time has not yet come.” However, she knew that He would do something. It is amazing and interesting that they filled these water jars to the brim so that no one would be able to say, “Some wine has been added to the water.” When they drew the water or the liquid out of the water jars, it seemed as if it was still water. Somewhere between the drawing of the water and the lips of those at the feast, it became the best wine they had ever tasted.

Third is the response in 2:11; the response was belief. In the book of John, after every incident in the life of Christ, a response is noted. Both the belief and disbelief in the people was growing. There was always progress when Jesus worked, either in the belief or the unbelief of the people who were there.

Six Greek Words Concerning Miracles

The next thing to discuss is what miracles are, why John recorded them, and what purpose they served in the first century. There are six different words in the Greek language for what is recorded as “miracles.” One of these words is ***teras***, which is an event that is startling, imposing, amazing and awakening. This word is normally translated “wonder.” Another word, which is prevalent, is ***semeion***, and it is normally translated “sign.” The New International Version of the Bible consistently translates this word as “miraculous sign.” It is found seventeen times in the book of John alone. There is the word ***dunamis*** which emphasizes the power that is revealed in the performance of a miracle. It implies the spiritual energy behind it. Many times this word is translated “power.” ***Thaumasios*** is used to describe awe and wonder. It simply says, “wow,” and is normally translated “a wonderful thing,” as in Matthew 21:15. There is also the word ***endoxos***, and it indicates that the miracles show the glory of God, or the Son of God, shining forth. Another is the word ***paradoxos*** from which we have the word “paradox.” It is normally translated, “a

remarkable thing” or “remarkable things.” This shows that the miracle is something out of the usual order of events.

Miracles were performed as signs of Jesus’ power, and they produced awe, wonder and amazement in the lives of people. John recorded seven signs and then the great sign of the resurrection. Then he made a statement in John 20:30-31,

Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

In the book of John alone, there is a sufficient number of miracles recorded to cause people to believe and to have eternal salvation through that belief. That is the purpose of miracles. The function of the **performed** miracles in the first century is now fulfilled by the **recorded** miracles in the 20th century. The word must be read and believed. Jesus Christ not only changed water to wine, but He changed human life into something beautiful. One day a little boy met a skeptic on the street. The skeptic asked, “Son, where have you been?” The boy responded, “I’ve been to church.” Then the man asked, “You believe in Jesus?” The boy replied, “I believe in Jesus.” The man said, “Son, do you really believe that Jesus changed water to wine?” The boy looked up at the man and said, “I don’t know, but in my home, He changed a drunk to a father, and whisky to furniture.” That is a greater sign of the power of Jesus than the changing of water to wine. He is the one who can change the quality of things to make them effective for the moment.

The First Passover

The First Cleansing of the Temple

In John 2:14-3:21 Jesus went to Jerusalem for the first Passover. Great things happened there. First of all, there was

the cleansing of the temple. In John 2:13-25 Jesus cleansed the temple for the first time. He did it at the beginning of His ministry, and He also did it at the end of His ministry during the last week of His life. John 2:13-14 says,

When it was almost time for the Jewish Passover, Jesus went up to Jerusalem. In the temple courts he found men selling cattle, sheep and doves, and others sitting at tables exchanging money.

The priests were making money in two ways. They were selling animals to the people who would then offer them on the altar. After the offering, the priests got the meat that was left over which in effect meant that the priests were profiting from both the money and the animal portion they received. The temple tax also had to be paid, not in any coins that were brought from wherever one lived, but also in Judean coins. The priests were charging exorbitant rates to exchange the people's money into Judean money. Then they would get that money back through the temple tax. Therefore, the priests were gaining profit on both occasions. These people were turning religion into a marketplace. They were turning God's laws into filthy lucre (riches). That made Jesus angry.

So he made a whip out of cords, and drove all from the temple area, both sheep and cattle; he scattered the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables. To those who sold doves he said, “Get these out of here! How dare you turn my Father’s house into a market!” His disciples remembered that it is written: “Zeal for your house will consume me” (John 2:15-17).

The occasion was the Passover, and the corruption was the double profit that the Jewish priests were getting out of the people. Jesus' indignation was righteous and full. When Jesus

drove those people and their animals out of the temple, it reminded the apostles of Psalm 69:9 where the Messiah was prophesied to come and be filled with zeal for His Father's house. There was going to be opposition to that, because Jesus had challenged the very core of the Jewish religion, the service of the temple. John 2:18-22 says,

Then the Jews demanded of him, “What miraculous sign can you show us to prove your authority to do all this?” Jesus answered them, “Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days.” The Jews replied, “It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and you are going to raise it in three days?” But the temple he had spoken of was his body. After he was raised from the dead, his disciples recalled what he had said. Then they believed the Scripture and the words that Jesus had spoken.

It sounded as though Jesus meant the physical temple. That is what the Jews thought. He said, “I’ll be raised from the dead, and that will prove I have authority to do this.” That was the author’s explanation for what Jesus was saying. The apostles didn’t fully have their belief in Jesus at this time. They believed in Him, but they were not fully convinced that He was the One in total and absolute control. He was, however, not only in control of their discipleship group but of the nation and even the temple.

John 2:23-25 says,

Now while he was in Jerusalem at the Passover Feast, many people saw the miraculous signs he was doing and believed in his name. But Jesus would not entrust himself to them, for he knew all men. He did not need man’s testimony about man, for he knew what was in a man.

There was a response to this action. In the book of John a response was always recorded to every action of Jesus. This was no miraculous event. It was done by the power of Jesus' personal character and strength. They recognized that what they were doing was wrong and responded to Jesus' cleansing with that in mind. Many people believed on Jesus, but they would not confess Him because they feared the Jews. Jesus would not trust them, and they only trusted Him to a degree. He didn't trust them because He knew that their belief was superficial and would not last.

The “New Birth” Conversation With Nicodemus

In John 3:1-21, when Jesus was in Jerusalem on His way back to Galatia, Nazareth and Capernaum, He had a conversation with Nicodemus about a new birth. Nicodemus, a man of the Pharisees and member of the Jewish ruling council (the Sanhedrin), came to Jesus by night. He went to Jesus with a question, but he never got to ask it because Jesus anticipated it. The question was: How do I get into the kingdom? How do I become a part of what these men are a part of? How do I join this discipleship group? Jesus told him that he must be born from above in order to even conceive of entering the kingdom of heaven. He said, *“I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit”* (John 3:5). In order to enter the kingdom, one must be born of the water and of the spirit. It is not known if Nicodemus was really talking about the physical birth, or if he was simply saying that what Jesus was saying was impossible in his case. He was an old dog, and old dogs cannot learn new tricks. Could he really change that much? Could he enter into his mother's womb and be born again? Was not what Jesus was asking impossible? Jesus said that he had to see the kingdom, but had to be born again to see it. He must enter the kingdom, and to do that he had to be born again.

John's discussion in 3:16-21 indicates that this was not based just on the act of believing, but it was also based upon the

love of God. “*For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son . . .*” (3:16a). It required belief in Him, “. . . that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life” (3:16b). It involved obedience (John 3:17ff). Jesus came to be the light that would expel all of the darkness of the world. This man Nicodemus was the teacher of Israel, and he paid attention to what Jesus said. When Jesus died, it was Nicodemus who helped to bury Him in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea. Nicodemus grew in his faith which will be seen as the life of Christ is studied. From this nighttime visit, Nicodemus who was a timid questioner and witness of Christ, would become a bold witness who would come out at Jesus’ death to anoint and bury Him.

Return to Galilee

Jesus Converts a Woman and a City

Jesus then returned to Galilee, and on the way home, He met one of the most interesting women in all of the Bible. In John 4 Jesus converted a woman, and because He converted this woman He converted an entire city. The reason for Jesus leaving Judea was mentioned in 4:1-3. He and His disciples were baptizing and making more disciples than John and his disciples were. It was not yet time for John to be completely out of the picture, and so Jesus went home to Galilee.

On the way home, Jesus went through Samaria, yet that was not merely a geographical expedience. That move was salvation-necessary in order to reach this woman and to reach this city. Jesus was tired, and as He came to Jacob’s well in the city of Sychar, He sat down to rest. It was noonday, and it was hot. A woman, an immoral woman had come out to get water. Jesus saw that this lady was one who could be reached, and who in turn would reach others. Therefore, Jesus made a request of her, “*Will you give me a drink?*” (John 4:7). She answered in disdain, “*You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan*

woman. *How can you ask me for a drink?*" (John 4:9). In John 4:10-14 Jesus ignored the disdain and said,

If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water . . . Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst.

She had been there many times to get water in the hot noonday sun, so she wanted this living water. She said, "Sir, give me this water . . ." (4:15a). Jesus said, "Go, call your husband and come back" (4:16). This was a rebuke, for Jesus knew that she had no husband. Indeed, she had had several, and the man she was living with at that time she was not married to. Therefore, this was a rebuke of her immorality. The woman then responded, "Sir . . . I can see that you are a prophet" (4:19). She immediately retreated and tried to change the subject as to who was right in the way they worshiped, "Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem" (4:20). He then told her of a true religion. He said the way the Jews were doing it was right, and that is the way it needed to be done. She responded, "I know that Messiah (called Christ) is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us" (4:25). Then Jesus fully revealed Himself to her. "I who speak to you am he" (4:26). The woman then went away, and her response would come later.

The disciples had returned and seen Jesus talking to this woman. They understood why He was talking to her, and so they said nothing. They said to Jesus, "Rabbi, eat something" (John 4:31). He responded, "I am not hungry. I have meat to eat that you know nothing of, and don't you say that there are four months and then comes the harvest? You look out there on the field, and they are ripe already for harvest. You are going to reap where you have not sown." When they looked up, they saw

the entire city coming out to meet them. Jesus discoursed with the people, and they believed on Him. “*Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman’s testimony, . . .*” (John 4:39). Her testimony changed lives, and it converted them initially.

They said to the woman, “We no longer believe just because of what you said; now we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this man really is the Savior of the world” (John 4:42).

Jesus then had believers in the half-breed territory of Samaria.

Jesus Heals the Nobleman’s Son

Jesus returned home, and a nobleman came to see Him (John 4:43-54). His son was sick twenty miles away from where he was talking to Jesus. He wanted Jesus to come and heal his son, and Jesus very simply said, “*You may go. Your son will live*” (4:50). That was a challenge to believe. How did he know the child was well? He only had Jesus’ word; that was all. However, the man expressed his faith by turning on his heel and going home. When he got home, his servants came out to meet him saying, “Your boy is well!” The father asked, “At what hour did he get well?”

Then the father realized that this was the exact time at which Jesus had said to him, “Your son will live.” So he and all his household believed (John 4:53).

In the first miracle recorded by John, Jesus changed water into wine. In doing so, He proved Himself to be Master over the quality of our lives. In this passage (John 4:43-54), Jesus showed Himself to be Master over distance. He didn’t need to be present in order for His power to be manifested. He said a word, and twenty miles away His word was fulfilled. What was the result of that? In 4:53-54 the father realized what had

happened, and he and all his household believed. This was the second miraculous sign that Jesus performed, having come from Judea to Galilee. What was the result? The result was a growth in faith. This nobleman showed his faith when he turned on his heel and went home believing what Jesus had said. He and his whole household believed. There was a growth in faith because of this boy.

Jesus Witnessed

Jesus was the Messiah. His work had begun well. He had been witnessed to by John, by the disciples, and by the Father. He had been witnessed to by the miracles that He had performed. Judea, Samaria and Galilee had all seen His powers, and people in all of those areas had turned their faith to Him. May we do the same thing as we see Jesus' word at work; alive, vibrant and active in the world today. May God give us great hope and great comfort in our belief in Jesus, His Son.

Early Galilean Ministry (1)

This chapter begins with the period of the early Galilean ministry and includes four tours, or journeys.

First Tour: Opening of the Ministry

The first tour is called “The Opening of the Ministry.” This tour goes from Cana to Nazareth and then to Capernaum, where Jesus settled in Peter’s house for nearly three years. In Luke chapter four is the rejection at Nazareth and a beginning statement of the power of Jesus’ ministry. Luke 4:14 is chronologically immediately after the temptation where Jesus defeated the devil and his attempt to get Him to compromise His position with God. Luke 4:14-15 says,

Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news about him spread through the whole countryside. He taught in their synagogues, and everyone praised him.

Notice that Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit. He had been led or driven by the Spirit to the wilderness to be tempted. He had been helped by the Spirit to overcome those temptations, and in this passage He returned home to Galilee in the power of the Spirit. He had been traveling throughout Galilee performing miracles and teaching in their synagogues. He then returned home to Nazareth in Luke 4:16-17,

He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. And he stood up to read. The

scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written:"

Rejection at Nazareth

Habit and Privilege

In Jesus' trip back to the synagogue in Nazareth both the habit and the privilege of Jesus were seen. He had a habit of going to the synagogue every Sabbath day. This passage really teaches the necessity for Bible study, because the synagogue was a Bible class. It was Jesus' custom or habit to go there. He came back to Nazareth, not simply as the carpenter's son, but as the young rabbi who had been teaching in all the synagogues of the surrounding cities of Galilee. On this occasion, they chose Him for the privilege of reading the Scripture. At certain times of the year they would read from the Torah, and at other times from the first five books, the Pentateuch. In other times of the year they read from the prophets and/or the writings. This was the period of the year that they were reading from the prophets. Jesus did not get to choose the passage He was to read because they read through the books, Sabbath by Sabbath, week by week. He was to read where the person had ended the preceding Sabbath. Normally one didn't get to read but at most two or three times in a lifetime. Therefore when one was chosen to read, he read for a lengthy period of time.

Jesus opened the Scripture and found the place where the previous reader had marked his stopping place. This was one of those minor miracles. This was the providence of God because the reader of the week before had stopped at just the right place for Jesus to begin in Isaiah. This passage is Isaiah 61:1-2 and also Luke 4:18-19 which says,

The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach the good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners

and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.

The works of Jesus are mentioned here. He read only a verse and a half. The people were probably shocked, because normally a person would read several minutes, or sometimes they would read for an hour. Jesus read a simple verse and a half, but notice what He read. In this passage His work and ministry were outlined.

Passage and Practice

First, He was going to bring resources for the bankrupt, because He came to preach good news to the poor. The poor needed resources, and Jesus said their resources would be found in the gospel or good news. He brought health to the broken-hearted because this passage says He came to heal the broken-hearted. They were broken-hearted because of their sin and their violation of the law of God. They were also broken-hearted because of the lack of concern and care they were getting from the leaders of Israel—the Pharisees, the scribes, the Sadducees, and the teachers of the law. He said that He came to bring freedom for the bound, to set at liberty those who had been in prison. Again they were imprisoned by sin, by law, by their traditions, and by their legalism. He had come to set them free. He had come to bring sight to the blind. As Paul said in 2 Corinthians 3:13-16, they were blind because their understanding of the law lay over their heart and mind, unless they were to hear the gospel and believe it. He said that He came to bring release to the bruised and the oppressed. The word used literally means “the bruised.” They had been beaten and battered by their sin and by those who would bind upon them rules and regulations that the law did not really bind upon them. Those who were binding these rules and regulations upon the people would not impose those same rules and regulations upon themselves. Jesus said, “. . . to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor” (Luke 4:19). That was the year of Jubilee.

The Year of the Lord's Favor – Jubilee

The year of Jubilee was an unusual year. In the Old Testament, God instituted what was called “the sabbatical year.” Every seventh year, the people were not to work their land. Their land was to lay fallow. They could eat what they had planted in the sixth year, but they were not to plant in the seventh. After seven Sabbath years (forty-nine years), the fiftieth was the year of Jubilee. The people did not plant, but had to eat from what the forty-ninth year had brought them. In the year of Jubilee all debts were canceled, all slaves were freed, and the land was redistributed as if they had just crossed the Jordan River and entered the Promised Land. God did not intend for there to always be rich people to oppress those who were poorer. He did not intend for His land to be owned in perpetuity by anybody. They could own the land at most for forty-nine years, at which time it was redistributed. Every person got his rightful portion, so that he could have a house, a fig tree and a grape vineyard. That was all it took for an Israelite to be happy if he was a man of God, having just come out of Egypt.

Therefore, Jesus came to proclaim Jubilee. He came to announce the time of God’s favor for His people. The entering of the Promised Land was to be re-evaluated. As Christians, we observe Jubilee ever since Jesus ended our night of darkness and brought us into His marvelous light of truth.

Fulfillment and Amazement

That was the beginning of Jesus’ ministry and teaching. He made a fabulous statement in Luke 4:20. When He was finished reading, He rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. As soon as one was done reading, he had the right to sit down and teach. Jesus read a verse and a half and sat down. The people were expecting Him to teach rabbinically, with big words and beautifully flowing speech. However, in 4:20b-21,

The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him, and he began by saying to them, “Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.”

In that He said, “I am the one the prophet spoke of. I am the One who has come to give the good news to the poor, to heal the broken hearted, to release those in prison, to give sight to the blind and to release the oppressed. I have come to start Jubilee. I am the one who is to do it.” *“All spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his lips. ‘Isn’t this Joseph’s son?’ they asked”* (Luke 4:22). The people couldn’t see how a person without training or learning would be able to teach like that.

Charge and Rejection

In Luke 4:23 Jesus charged them of not really appreciating or accepting deeply the word of God. He said to them very simply that they were not like Naaman the Syrian, in the fact that they had not accepted the word of God. They were not like the widow that fed Elijah but were more like the people in the Old Testament who consistently and constantly refused to hear the word of God. They were furious at that, and they rushed at Him. They took Him to the brow of the hill upon which the city was built and were about to throw Him to His death. Somehow though, He walked right through the crowd and went on His way (4:30). This was probably not a miracle. God did not wrap a shield around Jesus so that no one could touch Him. Instead, Jesus looked them in the eye and with a firm conviction of purity walked right through them.

Settlement at Capernaum

Jesus could no longer live in Nazareth because they had rejected Him. In Luke 4:31-32 He went to the settlement in Capernaum, a town in Galilee. He went down to Capernaum on

the Sabbath day and began to teach the people. They were amazed at His teaching because His message had authority. Most rabbis taught the way that many people do today. They always leave a back door open through which they can run. If they are pressed, they say, "Well, you really didn't understand me. I didn't mean it the way you heard it." Jesus spoke plainly and simply. Jesus spoke with authority, and the people were amazed at the way He taught.

Cast Out Evil Spirits

In Luke 4:33-37 Jesus cast out some evil spirits. This caused both belief and great amazement.

In the synagogue there was a man possessed by a demon, an evil spirit. He cried out at the top of his voice, "Ha! What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come here to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God!" "Be quiet!" Jesus said sternly. "Come out of him!" Then the demon threw the man down before them all and came out without injuring him. All the people were amazed and said to each other, "What is this teaching? With authority and power he gives orders to evil spirits and they come out!" And the news about him spread throughout the surrounding area.

Jesus is the King over the demons; He is the King over the prince of demons. He is the King of kings. He rules the devil, and He rules all of the devil's forces. The people were amazed at that. They asked three questions: What teaching is this? What authority is this? What power is this? They did not have the answers. They were not yet able to see that this meant that Jesus was the Son of God, but news about Him spread throughout the surrounding area.

Healed Peter's Mother-In-Law and Many Others

In Luke 4:38-41 Jesus healed Peter's mother-in-law and many others. Peter's mother-in-law had a great fever, and He healed the fever instantly. The town heard about it, and so at sundown they came to Jesus. Many were healed of all kinds of diseases, and demons were exorcized. That ended the day, and they were ready for the next day and even greater success in healing and the casting out of demons. At daybreak, before anybody else awoke, Jesus got up and went to a solitary place to pray alone. Luke 4:42-44 says,

At daybreak Jesus went out to a solitary place. The people were looking for him and when they came to where he was, they tried to keep him from leaving them. But he said, "I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns also, because that is why I was sent." And he kept on preaching in the synagogues of Judea.

Why was Jesus sent? Why did He come? What was the purpose of His life? His purpose was to preach the gospel of God.

Call of First Disciples

Luke 5:1-11 marks the end of the first tour with the calling of the first disciples. In the first two verses Jesus was doing a lot of teaching. He was pressed by the crowd until His feet were in the lake of Gennesaret, so He used Peter's boat as a pulpit and preached from the lake. The crowd gathered and listened to Jesus preach.

When Jesus was finished preaching, He fished from Peter's boat. He told Peter to put out into the deep water and let his net down for a catch. A carpenter never told a fisherman, a professional fisherman at that, how or where to fish. Peter objected by saying, "*Master, we've worked hard all night and*

haven't caught anything" (Luke 5:5a). However, Peter was made an apostle because he was willing to do what made absolutely no sense to him simply because Jesus said, "Do it." Peter said, "*But because you say so, I will let down the nets*" (5:5b). Peter had prophesied that they would not be successful, but he was willing to do what the Lord wanted done even if it brought absolutely no success. They put their nets down in the water and caught such a great amount of fish that the nets began to break, and they were afraid the ship would sink. Peter was fearful, and he confessed that he was a sinful man. He was astonished at the great catch they had caught. They brought it to shore with the help of another boat. After they brought the catch to shore, Jesus told these four men, Peter, James, John and Andrew, "*Don't be afraid; from now on you will catch men*" (5:10b). They left their nets unwashed and their boats unprotected, and from that time forward they followed Jesus. With men like that, Jesus would see the world evangelized.

Second Tour: Eastern Galilee

Healed Leper – Drew Multitudes

The second tour was through eastern Galilee. It began in Capernaum and went throughout the whole area of eastern Galilee. The first thing that Jesus did on this journey was to heal the leper, which drew multitudes of people. Jesus, the leper-toucher, was incredible. Lepers were the most outcast of the people of that day; no one touched them. Nobody hugged them nor loved them. When they went through cities, they were commanded to put their hand over their mouth and yell, "Unclean! Unclean!" People would walk across the street to keep from walking in the pathway of a leper, yet this leper came to Jesus. Jesus was attractive enough in His personality, that the untouchable people of the world knew He would touch them. The leper came to Jesus and said in Luke 5:12b-13, "*'Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean.'* Jesus reached out his

hand and touched the man. ‘I am willing, . . .’ This question is asked all over the world: Why did Jesus touch the leper? It was not to heal him, because He said after He touched him, “*Be clean!*” (5:13). With those words the man was clean. Jesus didn’t have to come to him, and He didn’t have to touch him. He could have stood afar off and said, “*Be clean!*” Then, once the man was clean, Jesus could have gone to touch him. Why did He touch him while he was still a leper? He touched him so the leper, in his sin and disease, would know that Jesus reached out and touched him. He made a person of this man before He ever purified him. Jesus said, “*I am willing . . . Be clean!*” The man was instantly clean. He got what *he wanted* after he got what *he needed*. What he *needed* was the touch. What he *wanted* was healing. Jesus then said,

Don’t tell anyone, but go, show yourself to the priest and offer the sacrifices that Moses commanded for your cleansing, as a testimony to them (Luke 5:14).

How could a healed leper not tell people? Tell a bird not to fly, or a fish not to swim, but don’t tell a healed leper not to talk. He had to disobey Jesus. He had to tell people.

Healed Paralytic Let Down Through the Roof

The leper went and spread the word of his healing throughout all the territory. Jesus went down the road and entered a house. People filled the house to hear Him teach and to touch Him so that they might be healed. In Luke 5:17-26, while Jesus was in the house, four men came carrying a paralytic cripple on his pallet. It is not known who these men were, except that maybe they were his friends, brothers or maybe even ex-paralytics who had been healed by Jesus. However, they tried to get into the house, but the people would not let them in because no one wanted to give up his place.

These men would not give up, so they went up on the roof. They broke through the roof, destroying a man's property, in order that this paralytic might be healed. Jesus looked across the rubble that was in front of Him. He couldn't touch the man with His hand as He had the leper, so He touched him with His mouth.

When Jesus saw their faith, he said, "Friend, your sins are forgiven." The Pharisees and the teachers of the law began thinking to themselves, "Who is this fellow who speaks blasphemy? Who can forgive sins but God alone?" Jesus knew what they were thinking and asked, "Why are you thinking these things in your hearts? Which is easier: to say, "Your sins are forgiven," or to say "Get up and walk"? But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins. . . ." He said to the paralyzed man, "I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home" (Luke 5:20-24).

The man took up his bed and walked. The strange thing was that the enemy wanted to kill Him. Jesus was healing the sick, and the enemy wanted to kill Him.

Call of Matthew (Levi), the Tax Collector

Jesus then went outside, walked down the street, and at the corner was a tax collector (Luke 5:27-32). This tax collector was Matthew, or Levi, and Jesus walked by him. He didn't have to heal the man because he was not sick. Jesus wanted the world to know that He would accept the outcast as members of His inner council, His cabinet, or His apostleate. He said to Matthew (Levi), "You come follow me." Matthew left the money on the table for someone else to carry to the chief tax collector. He followed Jesus and became the great apostle who wrote the first gospel account, the gospel of Matthew.

Third Tour: Second Passover

Healed Cripple at the Pool of Bethesda

The third tour was during the time of the second Passover. In John 5:1-15 Jesus healed a cripple by the Pool of Bethesda. This is a very interesting story. The pool of Bethesda was a pool of water in which people were healed when the water was stirred. There was a cripple there who could not make his way down to the water. Jesus came by him and said, “*Do you want to get well?*” (John 5:6b). This man wanted sympathy and money more than he wanted healing. He replied in verse seven, “*I have no one to help me into the pool when the water is stirred.*” Jesus spoke the word, and the man was made whole. Jesus then walked away before the man realized who He was. The people in the synagogue came to this man and said, “*It is the Sabbath; the law forbids you to carry your mat.*” He said, “*The man who made me well said to me, ‘Pick up your mat and walk.’ So they asked him, ‘Who is this fellow who told you to pick it up and walk?’*” (John 5:10-12). However, the man was unable to answer because he did not know who the Man was.

Later Jesus found him at the temple and said to him, “See, you are well again. Stop sinning or something worse may happen to you.” The man went away and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had made him well (John 5:14-15).

Jesus had healed him, and yet this man turned Him over to the authorities. These authorities wanted to kill Jesus, and the man knew it. They would cast out of the synagogue anyone who was on His side. The man knew that, but his popularity with these leaders of the people was more important to him than his association with the One who had healed him.

Asserted His Authority As “Lord of the Sabbath”

In Luke 6:1-5 Jesus asserted His authority as Lord of the Sabbath day. He did this in the context of His disciples taking some grain, rubbing it between their hands and eating it on the Sabbath. The Pharisees counted the law as more important than satisfying the hunger of these men, so they asked Jesus, “*Why are you doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath?*” (Luke 6:2). Jesus answered them in two ways. **First**, He reminded them of what David did when he was hungry. He and his men went into the tabernacle and ate the shewbread that the law said only priests could eat. They were innocent in doing that, so Christ and His disciples were innocent in feeding their stomach with this grain on the Sabbath Day. **Second**, Jesus is the Lord of the Sabbath Day. He was the one who made the Sabbath Day law, and He created it to benefit man. He did not create man to benefit that law.

Healed Man With Shriveled Hand On Sabbath

Jesus illustrated this same point in Luke 6:6-11 by healing a man with a shriveled hand on the Sabbath day. Jesus did a fabulous job of teaching in this context as well. The Pharisees brought this man to Jesus to test Him, to see whether or not He would heal him on the Sabbath day. They had him stand in front of Jesus. Jesus then asked, “*I ask you, which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, to save life or to destroy it?*” (Luke 6:9). The Pharisees would not answer because if they were to say “to do good,” then Jesus would heal the man. Yet if they were to say “to do evil,” then the people would exclaim how crazy it was to do evil on the Sabbath day. In their silence Jesus healed the man whose hand was shriveled, and they began from that time forward to seek an opportunity to kill Jesus. However, Jesus continued to teach on the Sabbath day.

The people who God wants to see saved eternally are more important to Him than the Sabbath. Law is extremely important, but people are more important to God than the law. It needs to be that way with us. All the world is worth the cross of Christ to God. Take comfort in that, and believe it.

Early Galilean Ministry (2)

In the previous chapter we studied three of the four tours in the early Galilean period of Jesus' work. The first tour was the opening of Jesus' ministry, in which He explained His teaching to all of Galilee. Then He took a second tour through eastern Galilee where He began to perform miracles. He also taught in the synagogue in Nazareth. In the third tour, during the second Passover in Jerusalem, Jesus began to do things on the Sabbath day, seemingly on purpose, in order to stir up the people's minds. He wanted them to see that the Sabbath day and the rules and regulations of God are for the benefit of man. They were not eternally significant to God. Only man is eternally significant to Him.

Fourth Tour

From Capernaum to the Sermon Mount

On the fourth tour, Jesus returned to Galilee and went from Capernaum to the south where He preached what is called the Sermon on the Mount. There were three things that occurred on this tour: the opposition of the Pharisees, Jesus praying all night and choosing the twelve, followed by the preaching of the Sermon on the Mount.

The Opposition of the Pharisees

In Mark 3:7-12 the Pharisees opposed Jesus, not just in Judea, but even in His home territory of Galilee. Mark 3:5-12 says,

He looked around at them in anger and, deeply distressed at their stubborn hearts, said to the man, “Stretch our your hand.” He stretched it out, and his hand was completely restored. Then the Pharisees went out and began to plot with the Herodians how they might kill Jesus. Jesus withdrew with his disciples to the lake, and a large crowd from Galilee followed. When they heard all he was doing, many people came to him from Judea, Jerusalem, Idumea, and the regions across the Jordan and around Tyre and Sidon. Because of the crowd he told his disciples to have a small boat ready for him, to keep the people from crowding him. For he had healed many, so that those with diseases were pushing forward to touch him. Whenever the evil spirits saw him, they fell down before him and cried out, “You are the Son of God.” But he gave them strict orders not to tell who he was.

The opposition had forced Jesus to the seashore where He continued His work. He would also find that the Pharisees pursued Him even there.

Jesus Ascended Mountain

In Luke chapter six, the first incident was Jesus' withdrawal to the seashore to teach His disciples because of the opposition of the Pharisees. While there He would ascend the mountain, pray all night and come down to choose twelve apostles. Luke 6:12 says, *“One of those days Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray, and spent the night praying to God.”* It is extremely hard to pray for a long period of time with that much need or faith. However, Jesus was facing the challenge of His lifetime, maybe more challenging than the cross, because He would choose twelve men to whom He would entrust all of Himself, His service and His ministry. He really needed His Father's help in this situation, so He prayed all night long. Luke 6:13 says, *“When morning came,*

he called his disciples to him and chose twelve of them, whom he also designated apostles . . . ”

The word “apostle” literally means “one sent forth,” but the idea is “sent forth with orders or with an assignment.” This is like an ambassador sent from one nation to another with power to operate as if the nation itself were there. These men were chosen to be His personal representatives on earth and to all of the earth. They are named in Luke 6:14-16,

Simon (whom he named Peter), his brother Andrew, James, John, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James son of Alphaeus, Simon who was called the Zealot, Judas son of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor.

There was a movie several years ago called “Jesus.” In the movie, this scene was depicted very graphically. Jesus came down off the mountain to a multitude of people. He walked among them and touched one on the shoulder pulling him aside and then touched another on the shoulder pulling him aside, until He had pulled twelve men out of the crowd. The impressing part of the movie, not stated by Luke, was that there was no look of jealousy in the face of those who weren’t chosen and no look of superiority in the face of those who were. It was, perhaps, not that much of a privilege to be chosen because what they were chosen for was persecution, death and disorder.

Jesus Preached Sermon on the Mount

The most famous teachings of Jesus in the New Testament are in Matthew 5-7. They are what is called “The Sermon on the Mount.” This sermon extends to the rest of the book of Matthew, as Jesus lived the rest of His life discussing and living the principles of this sermon. In Matthew 5-7 are seen the principles of the kingdom of heaven. Some have called this “the constitution of the kingdom of heaven.” It is for disciples only.

This is not a lesson of how the world is going to be, but a lesson of how the kingdom of God will be.

The Source of Our Joy

In Matthew 5:1-12 is what the world has called the Beatitudes. They are the source of our joy.

Now when he saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, and he began to teach them, saying: “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 5:1-3).

The word “blessed” is the source of the word beatitude, and it means “more than happy.” It means “overjoy of, to be congratulated.” Jesus was saying that these are the people who are indestructibly joyful. If one wants a joy that cannot be removed from him, then these are the attitudes he must have. The first of these are the broken in Spirit, and they possess the kingdom.

Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy (Matthew 5:4-7).

These four beatitudes go together. There is a broken spirit and a mournful and broken heart. There is a comforted soul and an insatiable desire to be righteous, to be like God. The promise is that if we are broken in spirit, mournful in heart, meekly surrendered to God and in hunger to be like Jesus, then we have the promise of being filled. But why are we filled? We are to bestow upon others what has been bestowed upon us.

*Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.
Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called
sons of God (Matthew 5:8-9).*

These beatitudes go together as well. We are to be merciful by helping others; pure in heart with no hypocrisy in benevolence; and a peacemaker. The only way peace can be made is by teaching and preaching the gospel of Christ. The promise is that we will have mercy, see God, and be known to be the children of God. That does not, however, make us children of God. We are children of God because we have been immersed into Christ. However, this makes us known to be sons because we are making peace among the world.

The last beatitude seems to be one that has been true throughout the whole journey of being poor in spirit, mournful, meek, hungry, merciful, pure and peacemaking. Throughout the whole journey, it seems as though this one is also true because the promise is the same as for the one who is poor in spirit. Both the poor in spirit and the persecuted possess the kingdom of heaven.

*Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you (Matthew 5:10-12).*

The only thing that is promised to those who would live godly, and the only thing that is certain for those who have the attitude of the beatitudes, is that they are going to be hated by the world. They will possess the kingdom, and they will be comforted. They will possess the earth, and they will be filled with the righteousness of God. They will be shown mercy, and they will see God as He really is. They will be peacemakers and

be known as children of God, but they will not be liked by the world. Jesus said the same thing in John 15:19,

If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you.

The Savior of Our Witness

Jesus then discussed the savor or taste of our witness. He said that we are the light of the world, and the salt of the earth. Salt is that which preserves the thing that it is put into, and light is that which dispels darkness and shows the way. It is not what we say, it is what we are. We do speak the truth, but we are the only light that this world has to lead it out of darkness and into the light. We are the only hope that this world has of being preserved. Ten righteous souls would have saved Sodom (cf. Genesis 18:32). We do not know how many it takes to save this world, but we are still here because the world is still here.

The Sacredness of Our Revelation

In Matthew 5:17-20 Jesus talked about the sacredness of our revelation. The revelation of God to us—the law, the prophets and the gospel is sacred. They are more sacred to God than heaven and earth. The only thing more sacred than the revelation of God, is the people of God. The revelation guards the people of God, and our righteousness in relationship to that revelation is to exceed the righteousness of the scribes and the Pharisees. Their righteousness was external; they were pious from the teeth out. They spoke, sang and prayed a good religion, but inwardly they were full of dead men's bones (Matthew 23:27-28). It is not enough to know, memorize, quote or sing the truth. We must *be* truth. Our righteousness must be that which is true, holy and inward.

The Spirituality of Our Attitude

In Matthew 5:21-48 Jesus spoke of the spirituality of our attitude. He did that with a phrase that is sometimes hard for people to understand. He said it in 5:21, "*You have heard that it was said to the people long ago.*" It appears as if He was contrasting and negating what they had heard by what He presently said. This was not so because when He said, "*You have heard that it was said . . . ,*" He was quoting the law. He inspired Moses in every single statement of law. What He was telling them was very simple: They had not seen the spirituality in the law. All they had heard was the external.

When the law said, "*You shall not murder*" (Exodus 20:13), they thought that anyone who stopped short of murder could not be condemned. When He said, "*You shall not murder.*" He was saying, "Don't be angry with, don't be contentious of, don't treat your brother lightly, because if you do that, you are in danger of judgment." When offering their gift, if they remembered a brother who had anything against them, they were to resolve the matter before offering their gift. If they were having an argument with a man of the world and he was going to take them to court, they were to settle it quickly before they were put in prison.

Jesus said in Matthew 5:27-28,

You have heard that it was said, "Do not commit adultery." But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

Jesus was not telling them that the law of not committing adultery was wrong. He was saying that all they heard was that if they stopped short of committing adultery with a man or a woman, then they were all right and had not disobeyed that law. What they should have heard Him say was that it is purity of heart that He demands. If one were to look upon a woman with

the intent of lustng after her, he already committed adultery with her in his heart.

"It has been said, 'Anyone who divorces his wife must give her a certificate of divorce. '" (Matthew 5:31) God told Moses that law, so the law was not wrong. However, what they had heard was that it was alright to divorce. What Jesus was doing was regulating it, making it hard and even prohibiting divorce by that statement. That should have been seen as a statement of hatred for divorce.

Jesus went on talking about oaths in Matthew 5:33.

Again, you have heard that it was said to the people long ago, "Do not break your oath, but keep the oaths you have made to the Lord."

What Jesus meant was that He wanted genuine and simple truthfulness. *"You have heard that it was said, 'Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth'"* (Matthew 5:38). Jesus did not want justice at all times. He was simply guarding man and man's property, and man needed to treat man properly. Matthew 5:43 says, *"You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy. '"* Jesus never said for them to hate their enemies. He told them to love their neighbor, and they heard Him say to hate their enemy. What they should have heard was to love everybody, and express good to everyone. Our attitude must be that of spirituality that sees behind the deed to the thought.

The Sincerity of Our Motive

In Matthew 6:1-18 Jesus dealt with the sincerity of motive. The motive in what we do must be pure. He used three illustrations. He used the illustration of giving alms to the needy. He said, "What you are doing is getting down on the street corner and blowing your trumpet. You are advertising the fact that you are about to give an alm or a gift to the poor. You don't get any benefit from that." Then Jesus spoke about prayer. He said, "You want to pray publicly. You want to get a big

crowd to hear your method of praying, the great words you use and the great things you pray for so you can receive praise.”

Then Jesus spoke about fasting in Matthew 6:16-18. Verse sixteen says, “*When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show men they are fasting.*” They were fasting to parade or advertise their righteousness. Those motives are wrong. The thought behind the deed is what must be seen.

The Simplicity of Our Possessions

Then, Jesus dealt with the simplicity of possessions (Matthew 6:19-24). He said, “Do not hoard or be overly concerned with worldly possessions.” He said this very simply. Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and we will get the rest.

The Serenity of Our Trust

In Matthew 6:25-34 Jesus dealt with the sincerity of trust. Their problem was trusting in the world’s goods and worrying. Three times in these paragraphs, Jesus said, “Do not worry.” That doesn’t keep anyone from worrying. People can be commanded not to worry, and if they really take it seriously then they go away worrying about the fact that they are worried. It just adds to the burden. We have to have a reason not to worry. Jesus said, “Would you look at the birds? Which one of them worries about what they will eat today? Look at the flowers, the lilies of the field. Which one of them worries about whether or not they will be pretty? The lilies of the field are clothed by God with more glory than Solomon in all of his pomp and splendor. If the birds and the lilies don’t worry, then why are my children worried about whether or not I will care for them? I am concerned with you and with your things. Do not be like the pagans.” That was another reason not to worry. The pagans didn’t have any god to care for them. Their gods and all of their idols did not care for them at all. God is in love with us, and we can trust Him. Jesus concluded again with this phrase,

“But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well” (Matthew 6:33). If we put “*... his kingdom and his righteousness ...*” first in our lives then all the rest of life will be added as well. Since that is true, don’t worry about tomorrow. Tomorrow will take care of itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own. Live one day at a time. That day is today. Live the moment. Seize the moment. Control the moment for God.

The Sanity of Our Judgment

Then in Matthew 7:1-12 Jesus spoke about the sanity of our judgment. He said in 7:1, *“Do not judge, or you too will be judged.”* He was not forbidding us to take careful concern for the future or even for others. He was simply saying, “Know that the judgment that you render to others is exactly the judgment that will be rendered to you.”

The Solemnity of Our Choices

Jesus said in Matthew 7:13-27 that we need to look at the consequences of our choices. One can choose either the narrow way or the broad way. One can choose either to build his house upon the solid rock or upon the sinking and shifting sands of life. Remember that these choices are eternal. The choice made will be the choice that determines where eternity is spent. There are two gates for one to go through. One is narrow, and the other is wide. There are two trees that we can be. One tree bears good fruit, and the other bears bad fruit. Jesus said that the determining factor as to what kind of tree you are is your relationship to Him and to His Word. Matthew 7:21-23 says,

Not everyone who says to me, “Lord, Lord,” will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, “Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?” Then I will tell them

plainly, “I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!”

They chose not to listen to or obey Christ. He said that, along with the two gates and the two trees, that there are two places where one can build his life. It can be built on the shifting sand of not hearing and obeying His Word, or it can be built on the solid bed rock of His Word, the law and the prophets.

The Solid Result

When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were amazed at His teaching because He taught as One who had authority, not as the teachers of the law. The people saw that Jesus was the Teacher, and His teaching was plain. His teaching was simple yet profound. It was based on the revelation that they already had from God, that His teaching would guide them in the future. His teaching would make them right internally and would make their home right. His teaching would make their relationships right—their relationship with their children, with the government and with their neighbors. They would be able to love their enemies. They would be able to care for themselves and their family and be able to feed the poor. Jesus was not concerned with making them so heavenly that they were of no earthly use. The kingdom of God is a practical thing, and that is what this Sermon on the Mount teaches. In the study of the life of Christ, Jesus returned to teach these principles again and again.

Later Galilean Ministry (1)

First Tour: Southern Galilee

The next period of Jesus' life is called the Later Galilean Ministry. This was a period that was primarily centered on miracles and by close personal contact with people. The center of Jesus' life when He lived in Galilee was Capernaum. In the first tour of this journey Jesus went from Capernaum, south to Nain, and then back to Capernaum. While doing so, several incidents occurred in His life.

Healed the Dying Slave of Believing Centurion

In Luke 7:1-10 the first of those events was the healing of a dying slave who belonged to a centurion who had faith. He loved the nation of Israel and even built a synagogue for the people.

When Jesus had finished saying all this in the hearing of the people, he entered Capernaum. There a centurion's servant, whom his master valued highly, was sick and about to die. The centurion heard of Jesus and sent some elders of the Jews to him, asking him to come and heal his servant. When they came to Jesus, they pleaded earnestly with him, "This man deserves to have you do this, because he loves our nation and has built our synagogue." So Jesus went with them. He was not far from the house when the centurion sent friends to say to him: "Lord, don't trouble yourself, for I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. That is why I did not even

consider myself worthy to come to you. But say the word, and my servant will be healed. For I myself am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. I tell this one, ‘Go,’ and he goes; and that one, ‘Come,’ and he comes. I say to my servant, ‘Do this,’ and he does it.’ When Jesus heard this, he was amazed at him, and turning to the crowd following him, he said, “I tell you, I have not found such great faith even in Israel.” Then the men who had been sent returned to the house and found the servant well.

This man's character and need were expressed first. There was no record that he was a believer in God. If so, he would have been worthy to have Jesus come into his life or worthy to go see Jesus himself. This man was one who was at least considering God and considering the fact that God was among the Israelites. He had an urgent need. A valued servant, maybe even the steward of his own house, was sick and about to die. This centurion was a humble man, and even though the Jews thought that he deserved to have this done, he did not think he did. The Jews thought that they were not only worthy of Jesus' coming, but they also expected Jesus to do something for them. The centurion was humble enough to believe that whatever Jesus did, He would do because of His grace and not because of his own worth. Jesus was amazed to find that kind of faith among the Gentiles. He said that He didn't even find that kind of faith among the people of God. He sent the men back home, and when they got there they found the servant healed. Jesus touches the humble. "*Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven*" (Matthew 5:3).

Raised the Widow's Son in Nain

In Luke 7:11-17 is recorded one of the most touching incidents in the life of Christ—when He raised the widow's son. There was a crowd following Jesus. "*Soon afterward, Jesus went to a town called Nain, and his disciples and a large crowd went along with him.*" (7:11) Notice what happened as Jesus approached the town gate; He found a tragic situation. "*As he approached the town gate, a dead person was being carried out—the only son of his mother, and she was a widow. And a large crowd from the town was with her*" (7:12).

That verse says a lot. There was a dead son, and he was also an only son. There was a woman who had no male apart from this son to rule or guide her household, because she was a widow. She was a well-known widow because a large crowd followed with her. This was a tragic situation. The widow's only son was dead, and the large crowd was on the way to bury him. Jesus had much compassion on her, "*When the Lord saw her, his heart went out to her and he said, 'Don't cry.' Then he went up and touched the coffin, . . .*" (7:13-14). Touching the coffin made Jesus defiled because anyone who touched the dead or their coffin was defiled for seven days. However, there was something more important to Jesus than being ceremonially clean—the comfort of this lady.

. . . and those carrying it stood still. He said, "Young man, I say to you, get up!" The dead man sat up and began to talk, and Jesus gave him back to his mother" (7:14-15).

This widow was leaving the city with nothing in her heart, and she went back into the city with her son in her arms. That happened because she met Jesus. What was the result of this miracle? Luke 7:16-17 says,

They were all filled with awe and praised God. “A great prophet has appeared among us,” they said. “God has come to help his people.” This news about Jesus spread throughout Judea and the surrounding country.

Jesus did these things in Galilee, yet the people were hearing of this in Judea because it was such a tremendous act of the grace of God. The result was that crowds were reverently praising God. Jesus was accepted as the prophet, and God was seen to be there as the helper of His people. The news spread not only in Galilee but also in Judea.

Last Word Sent To John the Baptist

In Luke 7:18-35 are recorded the last words that John and Jesus spoke together. They actually didn't speak face to face, but this was the last communication they had with one another. It is not known why John sent this question, but in Luke 7:18ff John sent his disciples to Jesus with a question. The question was simple: *“Are you the one who was to come, or should we expect someone else?”* Are you the Messiah? Are you the One who I declared would come to turn the hearts of the children to the father and the heart of the father to the children? Are you the One who is going to save the world? Are you the One who is going to baptize in the Spirit, or should we look for another? He didn't just answer, “Yes, I am He.” Instead He said, “Go back and tell John what you have seen and heard.” The disciples of John had been there long enough to see what Jesus was doing and what Jesus was saying. If that was not enough to convince them, then there was nothing that would. He wanted them to go tell John that He met whatever needs the people had. Jesus said in Luke 7:22,

Go back and report to John what you have seen and heard: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those

who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor.

He said, “I give everybody exactly what they need. Go tell John that you have seen me perform all these miracles in bringing people to health and physical prosperity. Go tell John that I am telling the poor people that they have riches to come, that they have glory awaiting them in the future. You tell him that I am filling the people’s needs.”

When they left, Jesus gave His estimate of John in case one might think that John was lacking faith, that he made some bad mistake, that he had fallen away or that he was an apostate. Jesus gave the estimate of the man who asked that question. Jesus’ estimate of him was that he was a firm rock, not a reed shaken by any wind. He said that the people didn’t go out to see one clothed in beautiful apparel. John was a true servant unmoved by human or earthly possessions. He was a faithful forerunner of Christ, God’s messenger. He told the people exactly what they needed to hear and know in order to be ready to receive Jesus. Jesus said in Luke 7:28, “*I tell you, among those born of women there is no one greater than John . . .*” John had no human equals and no human superior. He was a firm rock, a true servant, a faithful forerunner, and a man without human superior in all the world.

Luke 7:29-35 shows the Pharisees’ and the scribes’ estimate of John. The people had received him gladly and had accepted John as the prophet of God. They were baptized by him. However, the Pharisees rejected the will and counsel of God for themselves, by not being baptized of John. Jesus said they had rejected the rock and the servant. They had rejected the messenger and the man, and in doing so they had rejected God. Jesus then gave His estimate of the Pharisees and the scribes who had rejected Jesus. He said they were like children playing a game in the marketplace. Children in those days had two

games they liked to play: funerals and weddings. They would say, “*We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we sang a dirge, and you did not cry.*” “We played like we were having a wedding, and you didn’t play the part we wanted you to play. We acted like we were having a funeral, and you didn’t play the part we wanted you to play.” John the Baptist came neither eating nor drinking and the Pharisees said, “This man is crazy.” Jesus came eating and drinking, and they said, “He is a gluttonous man, a friend of wine bibbers and sinners.” Children could not be satisfied, and the Pharisees (the leaders of God’s people) were worldly and game-playing children who could not be satisfied.

Woman Washed His Feet With Her Tears

The next thing that Jesus did on this journey was eat dinner with the Pharisees. While He was eating dinner, a woman came and washed His feet with her tears. It was a beautiful, extravagant act. This happened in a Pharisee’s house, and this sinner woman was not invited there. She came uninvited when they were about to eat. In those days they would recline on the floor and eat resting on one elbow. This woman came in with a beautiful alabaster jar. She broke it and poured this precious ointment on Jesus’ feet. Then she wept and mingled her tears with the ointment and wiped Jesus’ feet with her hair. During this moment the Pharisee was thinking, “*If this man were a prophet, he would know who is touching him and what kind of a woman she is—that she is a sinner*” (Luke 7:39). He did not say this out loud, but he was thinking it. Jesus then turned to the Pharisee and told him a story: “There is a fellow who owes a little bit of money and another who owes a tremendous amount. The man they owed it to forgave them both. Whom do you think would love this man the most? Whom do you think would be the most grateful?” The pharisee replied,

"I suppose the one who had the bigger debt canceled." "You have judged correctly," Jesus said. Then he turned toward the woman and said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I came into your house. You did not give me any water for my feet, but she wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. You did not give me a kiss, but this woman from the time I entered, has not stopped kissing my feet. You did not put oil on my head, but she has poured perfume on my feet. Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven—for she loved much. But he who has been forgiven little loves little" (Luke 7:43-47).

Jesus' Mother and Brothers Come to Take Him Home

While all of this was happening, Jesus' mother and brothers had come to take Him home (Luke 8:19-21). Mark recorded that it was because they thought that Jesus was a little crazy. They didn't believe what He was saying; His brothers didn't because they had come to take their confused brother home. The brethren came in and said to Jesus, "Your mother and your brothers are outside calling for you." Jesus looked around and said, "You want to know who my family is, my mother and my brothers? My family is those who are here with me, those who are hearing my word and following my way." We can be the family of Jesus today by hearing Him and walking in His way. Jesus then returned to Capernaum.

Second Tour: Gadarene Voyage

Spoke Parables by the Seashore

Jesus then began a second tour because He had been very busy in Capernaum. He was going to cross the Sea of Galilee to the Gadarene area. He was going to go to Capernaum to

Gergesa, and then return. However before He left, He went down to the seashore from Capernaum and spoke parables there by the seashore. This is recorded in Matthew chapter thirteen, and there are seven of these parables. There is a single lesson that each parable was intended to teach. That was the way it was with parables. They were intended to teach one lesson. Several lessons may be gained from a parable, but any time a parable was spoken, it was spoken to state one simple truth.

The Sower

First, Jesus told the parable about the sower. The man sowed the seed, and it fell on different kinds of ground that produced different kinds of fruits. The lesson was on taking heed how you hear. At one place the seed didn't bear any fruit, and in another place it didn't bear lasting fruit. In another place it bore lasting fruit because of the way the word of God was heard.

The Weeds

Second, Jesus told the parable of the weeds or the tares, in which there were weeds sown among the grain. The difference couldn't be seen until it was too late. If one tried to get the weeds out, he would also pull up the grain. Jesus said to leave it until the harvest day, and then the wheat would be separated from the weeds. In this parable is the message that the Lord will judge His crop. We need to be careful how we hear the Word, and we must let the Lord be the judge of His crop.

The Mustard Seed and the Leaven

Third was the parable of the mustard seed. The mustard seed is a very little seed that grows up to be a big tree. The kingdom would be a success in spite of its small beginning. Then Jesus told the parable of the leaven. A little yeast is put

in a whole batch of dough, and before long the whole dough is leavened. The kingdom has a pervasive nature.

The Treasure, The, Pearl, The Net, and The Householder

There was a single parable told twice, once as the hidden treasure and then as the pearl of great price. The value of the kingdom is inestimable. Then the parable of the net was told. In that parable the net was thrown out into the sea, and it brought in all kinds of fish and sea life. The gospel calls all kinds, but some will be rejected. Then Jesus told the parable of the householder who brings out of his box treasures both old and new. The kingdom of God has treasures, both new and old.

Stilled a Sudden Storm

In Mark 4:35-41 Jesus wanted to cross the sea, so there was an urgent comment, “Let’s go to the other side.” As soon as they were out in the middle of the Sea of Galilee, a sudden storm came endangering the boat, but Jesus was sleeping peacefully. Jesus knew that He was in the hand of God, so He could sleep in the middle of a storm. The apostles woke him up saying, “*Teacher, don’t you care if we drown?*” (4:38). Jesus said, “Why are you worried? I am in the boat.” “*He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, ‘Quiet! Be still!’*” (4:39). Immediately the raging storm stopped. Jesus turned to His disciples and said, “O, you of little faith! Didn’t you realize that we had a work to do, that we had a mission to accomplish, that all the forces of nature cannot stop us until we finish what my Father has planned for us to do?” “*They were terrified and asked each other, ‘Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!’*” (4:41). Whatever storm there is in our lives, Jesus can still it.

Healed the Gadarene Demoniac

On one side was the uncontrollable sea, and as soon as they landed on the other side, they came across an uncontrollable

man, a demoniac (Mark chapter five). He ran around the tombs naked. The people had tried several times to bind him and chain him, but he would break the bonds. He would even break the chains. This demoniac was untamable and uncontrollable. He came steadily at Jesus. He had so many demons in him that his name was Legion. A legion is literally 6000, so there were thousands of demons in this man, all trying to get at Jesus. Jesus spoke calmly to this demoniac soul, and he sat down and began to talk with Jesus. He was fully clothed and in his right mind. Before Jesus healed him, however, the demons had begged not to be simply cast out. Jesus allowed them to enter into 3,000 pigs who immediately went into the Sea of Galilee. They didn't want to go to waterless places, so they went into pigs who went straight to the water. Those who were keeping the pigs went and told the owners, and the owners came. They were more interested in swine than they were in the man who had been healed, more interested in pigs than in the health of the ex-madman. The people pleaded with Jesus to please leave their area. They were afraid of the consequences of Jesus' presence.

Jesus went down to get into the boat, and the demoniac went with Him. He pleaded with Jesus for the opportunity to go with Him on the boat and become one of His disciples. He wanted to travel along and hear Him teach and serve Him in whatever way He needed to be served. But Jesus had a different commission for this man. He had a different ministry rather than being a part of the discipleship group. He said, "No, you don't get to go with Me. Go back home and tell your family and friends what great things God has done for you and how He has had mercy on your soul." The man went back. A year later, Jesus returned to this very spot where He had healed this man, and 4,000 people came out to hear Him. This man had been a good witness for Christ in the time that He was gone. Regardless of the demons we deal

with, we serve a Man who can make us whole and under control.

Raised the Daughter of Jairus and Healed a Woman with Issue of Blood

In Mark 5:21-43 and Luke 8:40-56 Jesus raised the daughter of Jairus and healed a woman with an issue of blood. This is a very dramatic and graphic section of Scripture in which is seen a miracle within a miracle, an incident within an incident.

Jairus, a ruler of the Jews, a well respected and wealthy man, came to Jesus and pleaded with Him to come and heal his daughter who was twelve years of age. He had had twelve beautiful years with this girl, but she was about to die. Jesus started traveling with Jairus to heal his daughter. There was a woman on the way who for twelve years had an issue of blood. She had spent all of her money on doctors who claimed that they could heal her, yet she had not been healed. Jairus' daughter had lived for twelve years in joy, and this woman had lived for twelve years in pain. She said to herself, "If I can just touch the hem of His garment, I will be healed." Therefore, while the multitude was pressing upon Jesus and He was being pushed and shoved about, the woman went out and with faith touched the hem of His garment. Immediately the blood flow stopped. Jesus turned and said, "Who touched me?" His disciples looked at Him like He was crazy. "What do you mean, who touched you? All of these people are pushing against you." Jesus replied, "Yes, but someone touched me with faith." He kept looking until He saw her. He drew her out for her sake, that she might state her testimony, and for Jairus' sake, that he might see the power of God. This was also for Jesus' sake that He might be known to heal this woman. The woman walked away from the scene, completely healed and a witness for the power of God.

They arrived at Jairus' house and found unbelief there. The people didn't believe that Jesus was able to do any good because they said, "Don't trouble Him anymore. The girl has died." They believed that Jesus might be able to heal the sick, but they didn't believe that He could raise the dead. Jesus looked at Jairus and said, "You only believe, and everything will be all right." What a challenge this was to this man's faith. He had to continue to believe that Jesus could do what was needed—He could raise this girl. They came to Jairus' house, and as they were ready to enter Jesus said, "She is not dead. She is just sleeping." The people laughed at Him. These Jews were experts in death. They had been to many wakes, and they knew what death was. They knew that this girl had died, and they were absolutely right. This girl was dead as could be, but Jesus said to Jairus, "Only believe and everything will be alright." They didn't believe, and they mocked Him and laughed at Him. Jesus went into Jairus' house and touched the little girl and said, "Daughter, get up." The girl got up! He said, "Give her something to eat." Either when one comes back from the dead he is hungry, or Jesus wanted to show them that the girl was alive. It was not a dream nor a vision. This girl was going to eat some food in front of everyone. Then Jesus made that strange command again, one that could not be kept. He said to Jairus, "Don't tell anybody about this." When you see Jesus' manifest and powerful work, you have to tell somebody.

Summary

A storm was stilled, and Jesus showed Himself victorious over danger. A Gadarene was healed, and Jesus showed Himself victorious over demons. An issue of blood was healed, and Jesus showed Himself victorious over disease. A girl was raised, and Jesus showed Himself to be victorious over death. Jesus is the victor of your danger, your demons, your disease and your death. Find comfort in believing that.

Later Galilean Ministry (2)

Third Tour: Central Galilee

This is the second study of the later Galilean ministry of Jesus' life. This period involves four journeys, two of which were seen in the previous chapter. The first tour was in southern Galilee, and the second tour was the Gadarean voyage. The third tour is called the central Galilean tour, which will be studied in this chapter.

Second Rejection In Nazareth

Once again Jesus started in Capernaum. He went to Nazareth, His hometown, and Mark 6:1-6 says that for the second time Jesus was rejected.

Jesus left there and went to his hometown, accompanied by his disciples. When the Sabbath came, he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were amazed. “Where did this man get these things?” they asked. “What’s this wisdom that has been given him, that he even does miracles! Isn’t this the carpenter? Isn’t this Mary’s son and the brother of James, Joseph, Judas and Simon? Aren’t his sisters here with us?” And they took offense at him. Jesus said to them, “Only in his hometown, among his relatives and in his own house is a prophet without honor.” He could not do any miracles there, except lay his hands on a few sick people and heal them. And he was amazed at their lack of faith.

The people were at first amazed at Jesus. He taught and worked in a way that brought amazement into their lives, yet they had to reject Him because of His background. If He had come with credentials from the Sanhedrin or from the big teaching schools and colleges of Jerusalem, they could have accepted Him. If He had a resumé showing that He was a graduate of a rabbinical school, then perhaps they could have accepted Him. However, He was a carpenter, an ordinary laborer in town. Mary, a widow, was His mother, and His brothers and sisters were right there among them. How would they be able to accept Him as having such great wisdom and the ability to perform miracles? It is humorous that they could look at the miracles and deny that Jesus had the ability to perform them. They had seen Him heal the sick, yet they would say, "He can't do that." They saw Him raise the dead, and they still said, "He can't do that." They had seen Him walk on water and still, "He can't do that." He stilled the storm; "He can't do that." They denied the demonstration of the power of God. It was no wonder that Jesus could do no great signs there because they were done in order to show that He was the Son of God. When they looked at the signs and rejected their significance, there was no longer any reason for Jesus to perform them.

The Twelve Sent On Limited Mission

In Matthew chapter ten Jesus sent the twelve apostles out on what is called the "Limited Commission." Matthew 9:35-38 shows the reason why Jesus sent them,

Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful but the

workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.”

Before Jesus ever sent the apostles out, He spoke of the tragic and terrible need for someone to do what they were about to. Matthew 10:1 says, “*He called his twelve disciples to him and gave them authority to drive out evil spirits and to heal every disease and sickness.*” Then Matthew listed again the names of the twelve apostles in 10:2-4.

Their Message and Miracles

First, Jesus gave them the message that He wanted them to proclaim, the miracles that He wanted them to perform and the support that He wanted them to expect. Matthew 10:5-7 says,

These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: “Do not go among the Gentiles or enter any town of the Samaritans. Go rather to the lost sheep of Israel. As you go, preach this message: “The kingdom of heaven is near.”

Their message involved the nearness of the kingdom, the Kingship of Jesus and the coming to earth of God’s rule in the affairs of men.

Second, Jesus told them what they must do to substantiate that message in Matthew 10:8, “*Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received, freely give.*” In Matthew 10:1, Jesus had given the authority to cast out demons and heal all kinds of sickness. Now He was telling them to go do what He had given them the authority to do. They were to speak His message. They were to perform His signs so that people would have faith in Him.

Their Support

Third, financial support was what they needed to do all this. Jesus told them not to take anything with them. He said in Matthew 10:9-10, “*Do not take along any gold or silver or copper in your belts; take no bag for the journey, or extra tunic, or sandals or a staff; for the worker is worth his keep.*” Jesus told them not to take any money with them. They were to expect to be paid for the service that they rendered and to take help from anyone who was willing. Matthew 10:11-15 says,

“Whatever town or village you enter, search for some worthy person there and stay at his house until you leave. As you enter the home, give it your greeting. If the home is deserving, let your peace rest on it; if it is not, let your peace return to you. If anyone will not welcome you or listen to your words, shake the dust off your feet when you leave that home or town. I tell you the truth, it will be more bearable for Sodom and Gomorrah on the day of judgement than for that town.”

Jesus told them very simply to accept help only from those who were willing. If the people were willing and supported them, then their house would be blessed. If they were not willing, and they didn’t support them, then they were to leave that house and go to another. They were to talk to those who wanted to hear. That was Jesus’ message to these preachers.

Trouble Ahead

In Matthew 10:16-31 Jesus told them that all of this was going to bring them trouble. Wherever the gospel went, trouble followed, because the devil didn’t, and still doesn’t, like the gospel. When going against the devil by teaching and living the gospel of Christ, he will stir up trouble. That is what Jesus told His disciples. He told them to expect trouble of every kind and

from every side. He was sending them out like sheep among wolves. Therefore, they were to be as shrewd as snakes but as harmless and innocent as doves. They were to be on their guard against men, because they would hand them over to local counselors and flog them in their synagogues. On Jesus' account they would be brought before governors and kings as witnesses to them and to the Gentiles. Very simply Jesus told them, "You are going to have trouble, and that trouble is going to come from your family. Trouble is going to come from your friends. Trouble is going to come from the town counsel. Trouble is going to come from the Sanhedrin. Trouble is going to come from synagogue rulers. Trouble is going to come from the Gentiles. You can expect trouble when you preach the gospel of Christ."

Jesus also told them to expect help from above. Matthew 10:19-20 says,

"But when they arrest you, do not worry about what to say or how to say it. At that time you will be given what to say, for it will not be you speaking, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you."

While we can expect trouble from all around, we can also expect help from above (Matthew 10:21, 23). Jesus told the twelve that their main enemies would be from their own households. It is fairly easy to move on regardless of trouble from an outsider. However, if one's own immediate family, kinsmen or dear friends were to trouble him and be those who stood to oppose him, then it would be harder to stand firm. Jesus wanted them to know that this trouble that awaited them for being His servants would come from those whom they loved the most. In Matthew 10:24-25, Jesus wanted them to know that their families were only treating them that way because they treated Him that way to start with. A student is not above his teacher nor a servant above his master. It is enough for the

student to be like his teacher and for the servant to be like his master. If the head of the house had been called Beelzebub, how much more the members of the household?

In Matthew 10:26-31 Jesus concluded by saying, “Don’t fear them. They can only kill the body. That’s all they can do. They cannot do anything beyond this life.” Jesus stated a remarkable truth when He said,

“Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell.” (10:28)

There is only One with that power. One day He will even cast the devil into hell. That is our loving Father, who is the only One we have a right to fear. Then in Matthew 10:32-33 Jesus said,

“Whoever acknowledges me before men, I will also acknowledge him before my Father in heaven. But whoever disowns me before men, I will disown him before my Father in heaven.”

Jesus told His disciples in Matthew 10:34-36, that He didn’t want them to think that He had come to bring peace to the earth, but rather that He came to bring peace to the kingdom. He didn’t come to bring peace to the earth, but He came to bring a sword and to set father against son and daughter against mother. Man’s enemies would be those of his own household. Jesus came to put the sword of the word into the heart of the men of the earth, and it would divide people because some would accept and some would reject this message. He said in Matthew 10:37-39 that what they must do was to learn to love Him supremely and without rival. It is interesting that what Jesus demanded is what a father expects of his children—love. It is what a husband expects from his

wife—love. It is what children expect from their father and mother—love. That is what Jesus expects from us—supreme love, even to the point of death in the middle of trouble. He expects an unrivaled love.

Herod's Response to the News of the Apostle's Preaching Jesus

The third event of this journey is recorded in Mark 6:14-30. The news of Jesus' disciples teaching and preaching the gospel came to Herod. His old evil conscience bothered him because of the fact that he had killed John the Baptist. When he heard of the great work the apostles were doing in preaching Christ, his first thought was: John the Baptist has returned from the dead. He never recovered from murdering John the Baptist. Mark recorded how Herod, because of his wife's jealousy and his step-daughter's immorality, sent John the Baptist to his death. Herod didn't particularly like John the Baptist, but he knew that he had no right to kill him.

Fourth Tour: Retirement to Bethsaida

Jesus then went back to Capernaum and spent some time there. He then went on a fourth tour, this one to get away from the crowd. When He went back to Capernaum, there was a huge crowd that wanted to follow Him, and were constantly at His feet. He was unable to get any rest, and more importantly, He was unable to teach the twelve. He went from Capernaum down to Bethsaida for a period of retirement. When He returned from Capernaum He taught and fed five thousand men.

Taught and Fed Five Thousand Men

The feeding of the five thousand is the only miracle recorded by all four gospel writers. It is found in Mark 6, Luke 6, Matthew 14 and John 6, and it is told basically the same no

matter where it is read. Jesus was wanting rest, because He was tired. He was being pressed upon, and He had to have rest. Therefore, He got in Peter's boat and retired to the other side of the sea. When the crowd came to Peter's house and Jesus was not there, they found out that He had gone around the lake. They outran His boat on foot, and when Jesus' boat landed on the other side, the crowd He was trying to avoid was already there. What did He do? Jesus saw this crowd for what it really was.

In Mark six, Jesus saw this crowd as sheep without a shepherd. He had compassion on them, and that is the very reason why they had run around the lake. They were crying out looking for someone to lead them. They wanted to be led to places of security and help. Jesus not only had compassion on them and saw them as sheep without a shepherd, but Jesus taught them. Jesus taught the people that He was trying to avoid!

When the day was over the people were hungry, and the disciples said to Jesus,

"Send the people away so they can go to the surrounding countryside and villages and buy themselves something to eat" (Mark 6:36).

It was time for them to leave because the people were hungry. They needed to find something to eat.

But he answered, "You give them something to eat." They said to him, "That would take eight months of a man's wages! Are we to go and spend that much on bread and give it to them to eat?" "How many loaves do you have?" he asked. "Go and see" (Mark 6:37-38).

The disciples made a search. In John 6:8-10, only one of them found something,

Another of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, spoke up, "Here is a boy with five small barley loaves and two small fish, but how far will they go among so many?" Jesus said, "Have the people sit down."

They organized the people into groups of fifty and a hundred. Jesus took the five loaves and the two fish, and He gave thanks for it and broke it. The disciples then began to feed the people with the bread and fish as it multiplied after Jesus blessed it. When everybody had eaten until they were full, Jesus said, "Now gather up the remains." There were seven basket-fulls left over. They fed five thousand men apart from the women and children (Matthew 14:21). This crowd of ten, twelve or fifteen thousand people had been fed on a little boy's lunch. This boy never expected to feed that many people with his small lunch. Whatever is in our hands, if we give it to Jesus and let Him bless it, it will feed multitudes.

Multitudes Sought to Make Him King

In John 6:15 the people wanted to make Jesus the king. That was understandable because if He could multiply bread, then He could multiply people and swords. Then they could defeat the Romans. However, Jesus didn't intend to be made their king, so He sent the disciples away in a boat and went up to the mountain to pray. He prayed most of the rest of that day and a good part of the night.

Walked on Water and Stilled Storm

The disciples were out on the sea of Galilee and were in the middle of a storm again. Twelve strong men had their full back in the oars doing their best to make progress toward the

shore, yet they couldn't make any progress. They looked up and there came someone walking toward them on top of the water. He was walking into the wind and was overtaking them. These men were scared; they were afraid. However, when they saw Jesus and let Him in the boat, He said, "Peace, be still." The storm was immediately over, and the boat immediately arrived at the other side. Then the disciples said, "We are sorry we didn't understand about the loaves and the fishes." That is what Mark said they thought. They saw the spiritual significance. Jesus was not saying that He was in control of their physical inadequacy. He was saying that He was the one in control of their spiritual inadequacies. He didn't come to feed the body. He came to feed the soul.

Discourse on Bread of Life

The Crowd and the Christ

The people who had been on the other side looked for Jesus the next day, but He was not there. They looked for the boat, and it was not there. They immediately went back around the lake and found Jesus back in Capernaum. In John 6:22-71 they were seeking Christ because they wanted more bread, not because they wanted to hear more of His teaching. They wanted their physical needs met, so they came to Jesus and said, "Why did you leave us? Why didn't you stay around to help us?" Jesus responded, "You don't seek me because you saw signs and believed. You simply seek Me because you want more bread. You need to work for the true food. You need to work for the real bread. You need to do the work of God." The people then wanted to know what this "work of God" was. In John 6:29 Jesus responded to their question saying, "*The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent.*" They needed to quit asking for signs and begin to see what the signs said—that Jesus is the Son of God.

Jesus Sifts the Crowd and the “Jews”

Jesus then sifted the crowd. First, He sifted the whole crowd by claiming, “I am the bread of life. If you look to Me and believe on Me, then you will have eternal life. You will be raised on the last great day.” The crowd shook their heads and said, “We can’t understand this. We thought He was going to give us bread, and He is talking words.” After this most of the crowd left. The Jewish leaders—the priests, the scribes, the Pharisees—they would then be sifted by Jesus. John 6:41 says that they grumbled at what Jesus said. That was because of their natural view. They still wanted the physical bread. Jesus said, “Listen, you must be drawn by the Father. You must listen to Me and learn from Me. You must be taught, and you must come to the Son. I am the living bread, and you must partake of Me.” They argued sharply with that because they were still thinking naturally, and finally Jesus looked them in the eye and said, “You will have no life unless you make Me the reason for your life and unless you eat My flesh and drink My blood.” The Jews then left Him.

Jesus Sifts the Disciples

Then the whole group of disciples came to Jesus. They told Him that what He was saying was hard and that it didn’t fit their theology. Jesus responded, “You must believe that I am from above and that I will return to heaven. You must abide in the word and in the spiritual view of the word if you are going to continue to be My disciples.” There had never been more disciples than on this occasion. Jesus was at the zenith of His popularity, and all He wanted them to do was accept Him and His word. He wanted them to see beyond the physical to the spiritual. The disciples were not able to do that, so they left.

Jesus Challenges the Apostles

Jesus was left with just the twelve. In John 6:67-69 He turned to His twelve:

“You do not want to leave too, do you?” Jesus asked the Twelve. Simon Peter answered him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We believe and know that you are the Holy One of God.”

Peter responded, “Where would we go? There is nowhere to go. You have the words of eternal life.” He looked beyond the bread to the word and said, *“You have the words of eternal life.”* Peter spoke for everyone saying, *“We believe and know that you are the Holy One of God.”* The apostles were going to stay. They were not all they ought to be, and they were going to go up and down like a roller coaster. However, they were going to stay. Their faith would waver, but it would not break. They would think about leaving, but they wouldn’t because they had heard the words and had seen the deeds. They had seen behind the deed to the real person of Jesus. He was not only the Son of God and the One who fed them with bread, but He was *“... the Holy One of God.”* Jesus accepted that from them, and yet He said, “One of you is a devil.” John said that Jesus knew from the beginning who would stay with Him and who would leave Him. He knew who would preach His word and who would betray Him to the people. Regardless, they did not know that yet. John 6 is a beautiful chapter in which Jesus sifted the people and sifted His disciples.

All of this is a lesson we must learn. God wants more than simply our confession. He wants our profession. He doesn’t want just the service of our lips, but He wants the service of our lives. He wants us to see beyond the surface of the teaching to the powerful, spiritual truth found underneath. When we read the Word, we must read it with that intent. Let’s not only ask

what it states, but why it is stated. Let's not only ask that, but also ask what it says about Him. God gives us peace in learning more about Jesus every day.

Period of Retirement

The next period to be studied is called the “Period of Retirement.” In this period, Jesus was doing His best to prepare His twelve apostles for His coming death. It was going to shock and nearly destroy them. Jesus was trying to get private moments with His apostles so He could talk to them about this coming tragedy in a quiet and calm way. However, it was impossible for Jesus to get away. A crowd would gather and follow Him wherever He went because of His healing and marvelous teaching. Jesus’ life in this period is traced through four journeys as He was trying to teach His disciples and still minister to the crowd.

First Tour: To Phoenicia

The first journey in this section started in Capernaum and went to the borders of Tyre and Sidon. There was only one incident recorded in this journey. It occurred near the border of Tyre and Sidon where a Syro-Phoenician woman wanted to have her demoniac daughter healed. This account is in Mark 7:24-30 and is important because it was a case in which Jesus ministered, not to a Jew, Samaritan or half-breed, but to a full-blown Gentile.

Jesus left that place and went to the vicinity of Tyre. He entered a house and did not want anyone to know it; yet he could not keep his presence secret. In fact, as soon as she heard about him, a woman whose little daughter was possessed by an evil spirit came and fell at his feet. The woman was a Greek, born in

Syrian Phoenicia. She begged Jesus to drive the demon out of her daughter. “First let the children eat all they want,” he told her, “for it is not right to take the children’s bread and toss it to their dogs.” “Yes, Lord,” she replied, “but even the dogs under the table eat the children’s crumbs.” Then he told her, “For such a reply, you may go; the demon has left your daughter.” She went home and found her child lying on the bed, and the demon gone.

This was an interesting incident. This was a woman, and she was Greek. Those were two strikes against her. She was a woman with a demon-possessed daughter, which was the third strike. Regardless, she still had the courage to come to Jesus. He couldn’t hide from this strange request. He tried to push it away, but the woman made a brilliant reply. She was shrewd and willing to take a crumb if that’s what would get her daughter cured. She was willing to bear insult for her daughter’s life. She knew that Jesus was able to help, and she was going to stay there until He did. That is the kind of faith and tenacity needed today. We need to plead with Jesus in just that way.

Second Tour: To The Decapolis

Jesus desired to be in a period of retirement to speak just to His disciples, so He was forced to begin the second tour of this period of retirement by leaving the area of Tyre because He was becoming too well-known and too popular. So He traveled from Tyre to the Decapolis, the area of the ten cities.

Healed a Deaf Stammerer

When Jesus reached Gadara where He had healed the Gadarean demoniac, He was met by a deaf man. Mark 7:31-37 says,

Then Jesus left the vicinity of Tyre and went through Sidon, down to the Sea of Galilee and into the region of the Decapolis. There some people brought to him a man who was deaf and could hardly talk, and they begged him to place his hand on the man. After he took him aside, away from the crowd, Jesus put his fingers into the man's ears. Then he spit and touched the man's tongue. He looked up to heaven and with a deep sigh said to him, "Ephphatha!" (which means, "Be opened!"). At this, the man's ears were opened, his tongue was loosened and he began to speak plainly. Jesus commanded them not to tell anyone. But the more he did so, the more they kept talking about it. People were overwhelmed with amazement. "He has done everything well," they said. "He even makes the deaf hear and the mute speak."

Notice that this was a very strange healing. In the first place, this man's infirmity was strange. He was deaf and could speak, but he could not speak very well. Jesus put His fingers in the man's ears, but that was probably not for any healing reason. To heal this man Jesus simply said the words, "Be healed!" By putting His fingers in the man's ears, Jesus was manifesting that He knew what the man's problem was. A demon had cursed him not to be able to hear. Jesus spat, maybe on His finger or on the ground. Then He put His finger on the man's tongue and said, "Be opened," and with those words the healing occurred. Jesus then made the same command that would be disobeyed: "Don't tell anybody about this." The more Jesus told the people not to tell, the more they told because of the magnificence of His work. The crowd responded again in Mark 7:37, and this was of great significance. The people were overwhelmed with amazement. That was their first response—overwhelming amazement. Then they made this

confession, “‘He has done everything well,’ they said. ‘He even makes the deaf hear and the mute speak.’”

Fed Four-thousand Men

A second incident occurred in the Decapolis. This was the very place where Jesus had healed the Gadarean demoniac. He had sent him back home to his family, friends and the community. He told them what had happened and how God had great mercy upon him. Mark 8:1-10 says,

During those days another large crowd gathered. Since they had nothing to eat, Jesus called his disciples to him and said, “I have compassion for these people; they have already been with me three days and have nothing to eat. If I send them home hungry, they will collapse on the way, because some of them have come a long distance.” His disciples answered, “But where in this remote place can anyone get enough bread to feed them?” “How many loaves do you have?” Jesus asked. “Seven,” they replied. He told the crowd to sit down on the ground. When he had taken the seven loaves and given thanks, he broke them and gave them to his disciples to set before the people, and they did so. They had a few small fish as well; he gave thanks for them also and told the disciples to distribute them. The people ate and were satisfied. Afterward the disciples picked up seven basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over. About four thousand men were present. And having sent them away, he got into the boat with his disciples and went to the region of Dalmanutha.

It is interesting to notice that Jesus had compassion upon these people because they had been following Him, being taught and observing His life for three full days. The food they

had brought had run out, and they were famished. Many of them had come from a long distance to hear Jesus, and He could not hide. As much as He wanted to be alone to teach His disciples, He could not be alone. The crowd would find and follow Him. He couldn't send them home because many of them would faint along the way because they were famished. It is also interesting that the amount of food left over after the meal had multiplied. They began with seven small loaves and a few fishes, and they ended with seven baskets full of bread. God always leaves us more than what we bring to Him. There were four thousand men there, yet where had they come from? Some had come with Jesus and some from a long distance. Some were there because the Gadarean ex-demoniac had been testifying in that community and had brought the crowd to hear.

Third Tour: To Caesarea Philippi

The third tour was to Caesarea Philippi. He left the Decapolis and went to Dalmanutha, and from there He went to Bethsaida and on to Caesarea Philippi. Why did Jesus go to so many places? He was trying to be alone, yet it was impossible for Him to do so. The crowd was going to follow Him no matter how much He wanted to escape from them. At the same time He was trying to teach His disciples what they needed to know in order to stand against the day in which He would be crucified and in which they would be emotionally destroyed.

The Leaven of the Pharisees

Their enemy was the Pharisees, and the Pharisees were trying to overcome the teaching of Jesus by their own teachings. In Mark 8:10-21 Jesus warned His disciples against the leaven of the Pharisees. Leaven was normally used as a sign or a symbol of bad things, as it was on this occasion. Occasionally it was good, as the kingdom of God is like leaven.

Leaven is modern-day yeast, and it permeates and contaminates all that it touches.

In Mark chapter eight Jesus traveled to Dalmanutha, and the disciples had forgotten to bring bread. Jesus then warned them in 8:15, “‘Be careful,’ Jesus warned them. ‘Watch out for the yeast of the Pharisees and that of Herod.’” They asked themselves, “Is He saying that because we have brought no bread? Does He not want us to eat bread because the Pharisees would see us?” Jesus said, “Why are you talking about bread? I am talking about leaven. Do you not yet understand? Are your eyes failing to see, and your ears failing to hear? When I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how much did we have left over?” They responded, “Twelve baskets full.” He said, “I fed the four thousand, and how many baskets full did we have left over?” They said, “Seven.” Jesus said, “Do you not yet understand? Don’t you see that I am talking about My spiritual teaching, My spiritual power in contrast to the Pharisees legalism? I am telling you to pursue grace and to avoid legalism.”

A Blind Man Healed

In Mark 8:22-26 Jesus traveled down to Bethsaida where He healed a blind man. Jesus again took the time to minister to one whom no one else would minister to. The crippled and the deformed people in that day were thought to be cursed by God. Jesus went and healed this blind man. After He healed him, He gave him the same commandment He had given again and again. “Don’t tell anyone. Don’t go into the village. Don’t go and spread the word of this.” It was not that Jesus did not want people to believe in Him. He was only trying to get His disciples trained for His death. The more the Pharisees heard, the more the Pharisees hated. Jesus was not interested in stirring the hatred of the enemy at this time. He was interested in confirming the faith of His brethren.

Peter's Confession

Jesus then traveled to Caesarea Philippi, and there Peter made the great confession (Mark 9 and Matthew 16:13-20). In Matthew's account there is a longer discussion of this great incident in the life of Christ. Jesus incited the disciples through Peter, their spokesman, to come out firm in their faith. Jesus asked a question, "Who do men say that I am?" They answered, "Some say John the Baptist, and some say Jeremiah, Elijah or one of the prophets. They have listed you with the very best of all of their heroes of the faith." "But who do you think I am?" Jesus asked. Peter answered for them saying, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." Jesus said, "You didn't learn that from man. You learned that from My Father. Upon that confession, upon the bedrock fact that I am the Son of God, the Messiah, I will build My church. The gates of Hades will not prevail against it. I will give to you the keys of the kingdom. What you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and what you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." There was a confession made and an assignment given.

There are also several words in this great confession that help us to center on spiritual truth today. First of all, Jesus said, "Upon this rock I will build My church." The rock of what? The rock was what Peter had just said, "You are the Christ." That is the same in both the Old and New Testament. In Deuteronomy 32:4 Moses said of Jehovah, "*He is the Rock, his works are perfect, . . .*" In Psalm 18:2 David said of Jehovah, "*The Lord is my rock, my fortress . . .*" In the same Psalm, 18:31, David asked the question, "*And who is the Rock except our God?*" David said that He is the only Rock. In 1 Peter 2:4-5, Jesus is the rock, and we as living stones are built upon that rock. In Acts 4:12 there is no other name under heaven but Jesus, by which men must be saved. In 1 Corinthians 3:11, "*For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ.*" Jesus is the Rock. To build on anything else—to build on someone's view of Christ; to build

on someone's preaching about Christ; to build on someone, something, some doctrine or some cult; to build on anything other than Christ—is to build on the shifting sand. The first wind or the first wave will blow it away.

Jesus said, “*. . . and on this rock I will build my church, . . .*” (Matthew 16:18). The word “church” is found 114 times in the New Testament. Ninety times, it refers to the local church, a local body of people. The other twenty-four times it refers to what is called the church universal, the church within a province or an area. It is always a group of people that Jesus would redeem, the “called out.” Whether the term “called out” is a symbol or not, it is the church of the living God. In the letter to the Ephesians is seen what the church of Jesus Christ is. It is the church built on Him. It is the church that acknowledges His Lordship, receives His grace, makes known His will, lives in His unity, is married to Him and keeps itself pure. It is the church that fights the good fight of faith and that is the glory of God. Upon the Rock of Jesus’ deity, He will establish His people, secure and firm.

Jesus said in Matthew 16:18, “*. . . and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.*” The “gates of Hades” is death. That could have meant that death would not hurt the church, or that death would not keep Jesus from building it. In either case, He and His people would be more powerful than death. To these apostles and to Peter particularly, Jesus was going to give the keys to the kingdom of heaven. Peter used those keys in Acts chapter two, and Jews entered the church. Peter used those keys, and Samaritans entered the kingdom in Acts chapter eight. Peter used those keys, and Gentiles entered the kingdom in Acts 10-11.

In Matthew 16:19 He said, “*. . . whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.*” The original language, according to Greek scholars, reads this way, “Whatever you bind on earth shall have already been bound in heaven, and whatever you

loose on earth shall have already been loosed in heaven.” They were not given the power to make decisions. They were given the power to tell the world heaven’s decisions. That is exactly what Jesus said in John 20:21 when He said to the apostles, “*As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.*” Jesus was sent to speak not His own will, but the will of the Father in heaven. That is exactly what they were told here. They would have the privilege of telling the people what heaven has bound.

Teaching Concerning the Cross

In Mark 8:31-9:1 Jesus spoke concerning the kingdom to Peter and the rest of the apostles. As He did this, He predicted His death and His resurrection. They didn’t understand this, because they didn’t believe that the Messiah could die. They believed the Messiah had to physically live forever. Therefore, Peter rebuked the Lord. He was trying to tell the Lord that He (the Lord) was confused and didn’t really understand what He was going to do. Jesus rebuked Peter saying, “‘*Get behind me, Satan!*’ he said. ‘*You do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men*’” (8:33).

Jesus gathered the crowd together and taught them along with the disciples. He brought the crowd in since the disciples didn’t understand either, and He told them about real life opposed to natural life. He said that if anyone were to seek to gain his life physically, he would lose it. However, if anyone would lose his life for the gospel and the kingdom of God, he would save it. Jesus said, “*I tell you the truth, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the kingdom of God come with power*” (Mark 9:1). He left them there and went up to the mountain to be transfigured before Peter, James and John in Mark 9:2-13. This is also found in Luke 9:28-36 and Matthew 17:1ff.

The Transfiguration

Three of the gospels record the transfiguration. Jesus' face and clothes were transfigured. He shined in awesome glory before them, so much so that Peter spoke before he thought about what he was saying. He said, "Lord, I will build three tabernacles. I will build one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah." Mark said in his gospel that Peter said that because he was afraid and didn't understand what he was saying. When fear is present, one cannot think like he ought to. However in Mark 9:7 a compelling voice came out of heaven and said, "*This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him!*" They were not to listen to Moses anymore, for the law had already had its day. They were not to listen to Elijah anymore, for the prophets had already had their day. They were to listen to His Son, Jesus Christ. The three looked up, and only Jesus was there. They came down off the mountain, and Jesus again gave them the usual command: "Don't tell anybody about this."

Restoration of Demoniac Boy

When Jesus came down off the mountain, He restored a demoniac boy. This is found in Luke 9:37-43 and Mark 9:14-32. They came down off the mountain, and there was a crowd arguing about something. Jesus asked, "What are you arguing about?" The fellow said, "I brought my demoniac boy to your disciples to be healed, and they couldn't do it." Jesus said, "Oh faithless generation, how long am I going to be here to do this? Bring the boy to Me." They brought the boy to Jesus, and He healed him. The devils fought, but Jesus won. Jesus defeated the devil, and the boy was healed. The people thought he was dead, but Jesus picked him up, and he was strengthened. He gave the boy to the father and walked away. The disciples asked Him, "Why weren't we able to do this?" He replied, "This kind comes out only by prayer." In short, the disciples didn't have enough faith. They didn't trust God enough.

Fourth Tour: Last Return to Capernaum

Teaching Concerning True Greatness

The fourth journey was Jesus' last return to Capernaum. As He was on His way from Caesarea Philippi to Capernaum, two things occurred. **First**, in Mark 9:33-37 the disciples came and asked Jesus a question about greatness. "Who is really great in the kingdom?" They were arguing about who was going to be first and who was going to be second. Jesus reached over and laid His hand on a little boy. He brought the little boy into their presence and said, "It is one like this who is going to be the true great one in the kingdom of God. The first one will be last, and the last one will be first." The way to true greatness is through Jesus and His way. He told them again, "I am going to go to the cross, and then I am going to be raised. True greatness is found in the cross."

The Unknown Wonder-worker

Second, in Mark 9:38-50 one of the disciples came to Jesus and said, "... *'we saw a man driving out demons in your name and we told him to stop, because he was not one of us.'*" (9:38) Jesus said, "If a man does a good work in My name, he is not going to curse Me the next moment. Anyone who does anything, even giving only a cup of water in My name, will not lose his reward." Jesus told them not to be jealous because this man was gifted differently than they were. Just because he was not one of them, didn't mean that he wasn't of Jesus. He was casting out these demons in Jesus' name. He had probably heard Jesus preach and had seen Him perform miracles. He couldn't be doing this unless the Spirit of God was enabling him to. We must praise God for all the workers of God and not just those who are part of our congregation or our small group.

As we continue to study more about Jesus, we will see more deeply into His love for all people, even those who are unknown by the greatly known brothers. If you are unknown, take faith in the fact that Jesus recognizes your name.

Period of Judean Ministry

In the “Period of Retirement,” Jesus tried to teach the twelve about His death. The next period is the “Judean Ministry.” In this period Jesus challenged the Pharisees and the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem in very significant ways.

From Galilee to Jerusalem

The Rejected Jesus

The first journey of this period was from Galilee to Jerusalem. Jesus did what was not normally done. He went straight through Samaria. The Jews and the Samaritans were not friends, so normally they either traveled the coastal route, or they crossed the Jordan River and took the Tableland route through Perea. However, Jesus purposely went through Samaria. He wanted to spend some time teaching there, even sending messengers ahead of Him. Luke 9:51-56 says,

As the time approached for him to be taken up to heaven, Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem. And he sent messengers on ahead, who went into a Samaritan village to get things ready for him; but the people there did not welcome him, because he was heading for Jerusalem. When the disciples James and John saw this, they asked, “Lord, do you want us to call fire down from heaven to destroy them?” But Jesus turned and rebuked them, and they went to another village.

The Resolve and Desire of Jesus

Notice several things in this reading. First of all, Jesus was resolved. He set His face straight toward death. He knew what going to Jerusalem meant, yet He resolved to go anyway. He wanted to give these Samaritans, half-breed people both nationally and religiously, one more chance to hear the word. He wanted to spend nights in their villages telling them that He had come to save them too, but the people didn't want to hear it. This wasn't because they rejected His message, but because they were racially prejudiced, and He was headed for Jerusalem. If Jesus had been headed for Galilee, they would have heard Him as they had before (John 4). However, Jesus was now headed for Jerusalem, and they hated the Jews who lived there. They hated those who hated them, so they refused to listen to Jesus in this village. What did Jesus do? He refused to punish them. The disciples wanted to call down fire from heaven to show them what it meant to deny Jesus. However, Jesus said, "I have come to save, not to destroy." He simply went to the next village.

Jesus Healed Ten Lepers

What happened next chronologically is in Luke 17:11-19. (It is out of order in the book of Luke, because Luke writes about other matters in Luke 9:57-17:10.) Jesus healed ten lepers. The only one who thanked Him was a Samaritan. There is a contrast in these passages: a Samaritan village rejected Jesus, and a Samaritan leper thanked Him. This passage is known to be next chronologically because of the statement in Luke 17:11, "*Now on his way to Jerusalem, Jesus traveled along the border between Samaria and Galilee.*" This was next chronologically, although it is out of order in Luke's text. Right after a Samaritan village had rejected Jesus, this is what one Samaritan did. Luke 17:11-14 says,

Now on his way to Jerusalem, Jesus traveled along the border between Samaria and Galilee. As he was going into a village, ten men who had leprosy met him. They stood at a distance and called out in a loud voice, “Jesus, Master, have pity on us!” When he saw them, he said, “Go, show yourselves to the priests.” And as they went, they were cleansed.

Why did Jesus say, “*Go, show yourselves to the priests*”? In the book of Leviticus, if a man was healed for leprosy, he was supposed to go and show himself to the priest. While leprosy was still on their bodies, Jesus pronounced them healed but demanded that they show their faith by heading toward the priest. As soon as they headed toward the priest, they were cleansed. Luke 17:15-19 says,

One of them, when he saw he was healed, came back, praising God in a loud voice. He threw himself at Jesus’ feet and thanked him—and he was a Samaritan. Jesus asked, “Were not all ten cleansed? Where are the other nine? Was no one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?” Then he said to him, “Rise and go; your faith has made you well.”

This is interesting because only one leper returned to thank Jesus, and He was a foreigner. He was not one who would be expected to praise God. He was not one whose doctrine was absolutely right, but he was one who accepted Jesus and thanked Him. This foreigner went away healed.

Jesus Lived With Lazarus, Martha, and Mary: “The Good Part”

In Luke 10:38-42 Jesus went into the house of Martha. Martha, Lazarus and Mary lived in Bethany, a suburb of

Jerusalem. Jesus was going to stay there before He went to the last great feast of the Jews. Luke 10:38-42 states,

As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him. She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet listening to what he said. But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to him and asked, "Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!" "Martha, Martha," the Lord answered, "you are worried and upset about many things, but only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her."

The house belonged to Martha, although Lazarus, her brother, and Mary, her sister, lived there. Mary was always listening to Jesus, because she knew what was important for the moment. Food and keeping house are important, but many things are important. When Jesus is talking, one thing is needed—listening. The rest can be done later. Mary was listening to Christ. Martha was a loving lady. She loved the Lord, and she was anxious to see that His need was met. She was willing to do the work all by herself until it became too much for her. When Martha said, "Bid Mary come help me," it was a compound word that literally meant in the original language, "Bid her to come and stand on the other side with me to lift and carry." As long as it was a one-lady work, Martha was doing her best to get the supper ready. She was anxious that the Lord's meal would not be served because it had come to the point that she needed Mary's help. Jesus said that the point was that eating and having His physical needs met were not most important to Him. What was important was that people listened to and obeyed His word. Mary had chosen the

better part. Martha had a good part, but Mary had chosen the better one. That is what we must do. The only thing that is needed, and lasting, is listening and paying attention to the Lord.

Jesus Had Controversy at the Feast

John 7-10 discuss very important points in the life of Christ. First of all, Jesus went to the Feast of Tabernacles. This was the great Feast that preceded the Feast of Passover, which was the time that Jesus would die. Jesus did not go up immediately on the very first day, but He went after three days of the Feast had already gone by. Jesus didn't go on the very first day because He was avoiding death. It was not yet time for Him to die. When it was time, He would die willingly, but that time had not yet come.

Jesus Goes to the Feast

Jesus' brothers pressed Him to go to Jerusalem. This was because they didn't believe in Him yet. They said, "If you are really going to be the One who saves Israel from their sin and who saves us from the Romans, why don't you get up there and manifest yourself? Why don't you act?" Jesus responded, "*The right time for me has not yet come; for you any time is right. . . You go to the Feast. I am not yet going up to this Feast, because for me the right time has not yet come*" (John 7:6-8). After they had left, Jesus went in secret. He entered the city, looking very common. Jesus was not an uncommon looking person. He could enter the city without the people acknowledging His presence at first, because He was not teaching. He was there when the time was right.

Jesus Teaches at the Feast

In John 7:14-15, on the fourth day of the Feast, Jesus stood up and began to teach,

Not until halfway through the Feast did Jesus go up to the temple courts and begin to teach. The Jews were amazed and asked, “How did this man get such learning without having studied?”

Jesus taught more deeply and spiritually than their rabbis, who had been trained in their great seminaries. Jesus' answer was simple in John 7:16-17,

Jesus answered, “My teaching is not my own. It comes from him who sent me. If anyone chooses to do God’s will, he will find out whether my teaching comes from God or whether I speak on my own.”

In John 7:14-24, **first**, He said that He was speaking from God. If they were of God, then they would hear what He was saying. **Second**, He said that they violated the law. **Third**, they sought to kill Him (7:19). Jesus told them that they were not even keeping the law. They were not doing what Moses told them to, and they were seeking to kill Him. The crowd then accused Him in John 7:20, “*You are demon-possessed,’ the crowd answered. ‘Who is trying to kill you?’*” When one cannot answer a person, they criticize and call names instead. The Jews could not answer what Jesus was saying, so they said, “*You are demon-possessed . . .*”

It is interesting that Jesus then turned and rebuked them. In that rebuke He charged them with exactly what they had charged Him of. He did one miracle on the Sabbath day, and they couldn't get beyond that. Therefore, Jesus told them in John 7:21-24 that they were breaking the Sabbath rules and judging unrighteously. That could not go unanswered, so the crowd responded to His teaching.

The People Respond to the Teaching – Confusion About Jesus' Origin

In John 7:25-52 the people were confused about Jesus' origin and therefore rejected Him. They said that when the Messiah came, surely they wouldn't know where He was from. They knew where Jesus was from, and they knew His father, Joseph. They knew His mother, brothers and sisters. They knew His hometown and His profession as a carpenter. They knew too much about Him to believe what He said.

Jesus simply replied in John 7:28-29 as He had before, "I am sent from God. That is what you don't recognize. I may be from Nazareth, but I am sent from God." He had said very carefully,

"Yes, you know me, and you know where I am from. I am not here on my own, but he who sent me is true. You do not know him, but I know him because I am from him and he sent me."

When Jesus said, ". . . I know him . . . , " He used the Greek word *oida*. He was saying, "I know all there is to know about God. I know God fully; I know God intimately." When He said, "*You do not know him, . . .*" He is saying, "You think you know where I am from! But you don't know where I am from because you don't even know the one who sent me!"

The people then tried to arrest Jesus. They tried to take Him away and kill Him, but they couldn't because the crowd was in confusion. Jesus continued His discussion with them. He said,

"I am with you for only a short time, and then I go to the one who sent me. You will look for me, but you will not find me; and where I am, you cannot come"
(John 7:33-34).

That put the crowd in total confusion. Where was He going to go that they would not be able to find Him? They attempted to arrest Him, but they could not do so.

In John 7:45-52, the unbelief of the Jewish leaders is outlined in graphic detail.

Finally the temple guards went back to the chief priests and Pharisees, who asked them, “Why didn’t you bring him in?” “No one ever spoke the way this man does,” the guards declared. “You mean he has deceived you also?” the Pharisees retorted. “Has any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed in him? No! But this mob that knows nothing of the law—there is a curse on them.” Nicodemus, who had gone to Jesus earlier and who was one of their own number, asked, “Does our law condemn anyone without first hearing him to find out what he is doing?” They replied, “Are you from Galilee, too? Look into it, and you will find that a prophet does not come out of Galilee.”

These guards didn't say that they didn't arrest Jesus because He had too many followers. They said that they listened and heard Him teach things that made it impossible for them to arrest Him. It was simple. They found in Jesus that which they could not deny to be from God. Regardless, they still wanted to kill Him, and they were planning to do so. Nicodemus (the one who came to Jesus by night in John 3) came out in Jesus' defense. Here in John seven, Nicodemus stood up for Jesus before them, still timidly, but none the less standing up for Jesus. He said, “Will our law condemn a man without hearing him?” The leaders of the Sanhedrin rebuked Nicodemus and said, “Are you a Nazarene, too? Are you following this man? Search and see! Search the book and see that a prophet has never come out of Galilee.”

This mob, that did not know the law, was the one to be condemned. The Pharisees and teachers were the ones who didn't know the law. In 2 Kings 14:25, Jeroboam II had a prophet named Jonah who was from Gath-hepher, four miles from the city of Nazareth. There had been a prophet before from Galilee. The teachers were the ones ignorant of their own law.

Mercy for an Adulteress

In John 8:1-11 the people couldn't answer Jesus' teaching, so they were going to try to hang Him on the law. They brought a woman taken in the very act of adultery. If that was true, where was the man? The law said that the man and the woman were to be brought to court, but only the woman was brought here. This was a trumped-up case from the very beginning. They were trying to trap Jesus. Jesus didn't treat this woman as the sinners did—as a thing to be used. He didn't treat this woman as the law would, as a sinner to be stoned. He treated this woman as grace would, as a sinner to be forgiven. He told this woman, "I want you to leave here, and I want you to quit the life of sin that you have been following."

Jesus Teaching about Himself

The controversy began again in John 8:12-15. Jesus had four points to make. Jesus said in this section, "I am light. You are darkness." They tried to seize Him, but they couldn't. Jesus said, "I am life. You live in death." Many put their faith in Him, but some tried to kill Him. Jesus said, "I have come to give you freedom, and you have chosen bondage." He said, "Because of that, you do not belong to God. I have come to receive honor, and you have given me dishonor. I am the Son of God. Before Abraham existed, I was already in existence. I am the eternal one who Abraham served." The people then took up stones and tried to stone Jesus, but He walked through their midst.

Healing a Blind Man

In John 9:1-12 Jesus healed a man who had been born blind. This is one of the most beautiful and touching stories in all the Bible. Jesus came upon this man who had been born blind, and His disciples asked the question: "Who sinned, the parents or this man, that he should be born blind?" Their concept was the fear of retribution. Sin had to be behind every evil thing. He said, "Neither one, but so God's glory might be manifested today." Jesus healed the man and went away without the man seeing who He was. The synagogue leaders immediately brought this man to be tried. They asked, "Were you born blind?" He said, "Yes, I was born blind." "Do you see now?" "Yes, I see now." "How do you see now?" He said, "The man you call Jesus healed me." They said, "You need to give glory to God. Don't give glory to a man like that because that man is a sinner." The man responded, "That is a remarkable thing! I have never known God to use a sinner in opening the eyes of a man who is born blind. But if the man were a follower of God, then perhaps God would hear Him, and He would be able to open the eyes of one like me, who is born blind." The man's parents had already yielded to their pressure. When the parents were told that, they said, "Ask him, for he is of age. Let him tell you how he did it." This man said, "I believe Jesus Christ is a prophet of God." They threw him out, and Jesus came to him and said, "Would you believe on the Son of Man?" He said, "Who is He?" Jesus then said, "I who speak to you am He." The man fell down before His feet and worshiped Him. Jesus then said, "Like this man, many that were blind will see, and like those Pharisees, many that see will remain blind."

Discourse on the Good Shepherd

In John 10:1-21 Jesus called Himself the Good Shepherd. In the first few verses, He called Himself the gate, the one who gives access to the sheep to come into safety and to go out to

pasture. Jesus claimed that He would give security and sustenance. Then He said twice, "*I am the good shepherd.*" He described the qualities of a good shepherd, and said that the Good Shepherd dies for His sheep. He lays down His life, and He doesn't serve the sheep for His own benefit, but for theirs. He said that the Good Shepherd knows His sheep by name, and His sheep know Him. He goes before them and calls their name, and that is why they follow Him. The Good Shepherd also brings other sheep into the flock. He was speaking of the Gentiles being granted access to the kingdom (10:16). Then Jesus said that the Good Shepherd would take up His life again. He would come back to serve the sheep again.

In John 10:23-39 is the final response that the Jews made to Jesus' beautiful teaching of Him being the Shepherd of God. There was an encounter. The people came to Jesus and asked, "Tell us plainly whether or not you are the Messiah." He said, "I have told you, and you haven't believed. If you don't believe what I have said, that I am the Messiah, at least believe the miracles and the works. If you see these miracles are from God, and these works are Mine, then perhaps you can come to believe that I am the Son of God." What did the people do? In 10:39 they tried to seize Him again, but He escaped their grasp. It is amazing that after all the miracles, all the teachings, all the love and all the grace, the people were still trying to arrest Jesus.

John's Influence

Though John the Baptist had been dead for a year or more, his influence was still being felt. John 10:40-42 says,

Then Jesus went back across the Jordan to the place where John had been baptizing in the early days. Here he stayed and many people came to him. They said, "Though John never performed a miraculous

*sign, all that John said about this man was true.”
And in that place many believed in Jesus.*

Because of John's work and influence, his disciples were still strong. They were still remembering what he had told them, and they said, “... *all that John said about this man was true.*” Everything that the Old Testament and John the Baptist had said about the Messiah was being fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth. He was the fulfillment of Scripture, and He was the One of whom John spoke. He is the Son of God. May God give us great peace and joy in believing just that.

Perean Period (1)

The Perean period was the next area of ministry in the life of Jesus. At the end of chapter ten the Feast of Tabernacles was seen as a period of time when Jesus was in bold controversy with the leaders of the city of Jerusalem. There was division in the city, because some people believed in Him and some didn't. Everyone was confused, so Jesus had to leave, or they would have killed Him, and it was not yet time for Him to die. Jesus didn't go all the way back up to Galilee. He had actually been to Galilee for the last time during His earthly life. He went across the Jordan River at Jerusalem to a territory called Perea. Perea was a part of the Jewish empire, but it was more Gentile than it was Jewish. Perhaps Jesus believed that in Perea He could find the retirement and seclusion that He needed to wait for the Passover and the cross. In most chapters there are six, seven, eight or nine incidences in the life of Christ. In this chapter, there are only three: the choosing of the seventy, the raising of Lazarus and the retirement to Ephraim.

From Bethabara to Bethany

New Laborers With a Mission

Jesus went from Bethabara, which was just across the river, to Bethany. In Luke 10:1-24, He chose seventy-two agents to go out and preach. Seventy-two were chosen; seventy-two were sent out; seventy-two preached, and seventy-two returned. There is controversy over whether that ought to read seventy or seventy and two. In the original text, or the original manuscripts, the evidence is about fifty percent both ways. Half of them read seventy, and the other half read seventy-two. It is

not known which it is, but seventy-two is preferred for two reasons: It is divisible by twelve, therefore these apostles were able to each take six. The apostles had already been out on this kind of a journey, and they would be able to be supervisors and guides for those who had not. Also, in the Old Testament, when God selected helpers for Moses, those who would be his fellow judges, He selected seventy-two of them. Seventy were in the tent with Moses, and two of them, Eldad and Medad, were still down in the camp teaching and prophesying. Regardless of the number, there was a larger group of people who were going to go do what the apostles had done. These were not apostles, nor were they called apostles. They were simply agents. They were simply those who Jesus sent out to preach and teach throughout all of Perea, Judea and Galilee.

Reasons for Their Selection

Luke 10:1-12 is the explanation of their mission, and 10:1-2 show why they were selected. Luke 10:1-12 says,

After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them two by two ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go. He told them, “The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field. Go! I am sending you out like lambs among wolves. Do not take a purse or bag or sandals; and do not greet anyone on the road. When you enter a house, first say, ‘Peace to this house.’ If a man of peace is there, your peace will rest on him; if not, it will return to you. Stay in that house, eating and drinking whatever they give you, for the worker deserves his wages. Do not move around from house to house. When you enter a town and are welcomed, eat what is set before you. Heal the sick who are there and tell them, ‘The kingdom of God is near

you.' But when you enter a town and are not welcomed, go into its streets and say, 'Even the dust of your town that sticks to our feet we wipe off against you. Yet be sure of this: The kingdom of God is near. ' I tell you, it will be more bearable on that day for Sodom than for that town."

Notice again the reason for their selection. They were selected to go into all the towns and villages where Jesus was to go, and they were to tell them not only of His coming, but also of the message that He intended to give when He got there.

Instructions for Their Mission

Jesus told them that their mission was **a preparatory mission**. They were to prepare for Him, and He told them in 10:2 that their mission was going **to be fruitful** because the harvest was plentiful.

In Luke 10:2 Jesus also told them that their mission was **to be difficult**. The workers were few. There were only eighty-four or so at that time, but it would not be that way for long. However, Jesus had to die, He had to be raised, and the Spirit had to come before there was going to be a multitude of workers. When we look at the world as it is today with billions of people and just a handful of those who follow Jesus, the harvest is still very plentiful. The laborers are also still very few. They were to ask the Lord of the harvest to send forth laborers into His vineyard. James said in his epistle, "*You do not have, because you do not ask God.*" (James 4:2) Undoubtedly the workers were few because the people had not asked the Lord for more workers.

This was to be a preparatory mission to get the people ready for Jesus' coming. It was to be a fruitful mission, for the harvest was plentiful. It was to be a difficult mission, because the laborers were few. In Luke 10:3 it was to be **a dangerous mission**. Jesus said, "*Go! I am sending you out like lambs*

among wolves." That was going to take wisdom, but it was going to take more courage than wisdom. They were going to realize that their message would be rejected because it was the message of Christ. They themselves would be rejected because they were the people of Christ. They were going to suffer as Jesus suffered, as lambs and innocent people among wolves—sly, crafty, sinful people. This was to be a dangerous mission.

In Luke 10:4 Jesus said it was to be a **faith mission**. He said, "*Do not take a purse or bag or sandals; and do not greet anyone on the road.*" They were to move by faith and not take the things necessary for life. They were to trust God for the sustenance of their life. He said that the laborers were going to be worthy of their hire. If one is working for God, God is obligated to supply the need. In Matthew 6:33, during the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said, "*But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.*" That includes food, clothing and shelter. They were to go out taking no food or clothing and having no shelter. They were to trust in God that all of these things would be provided. There are men and women today who have gone into mission endeavors with just that kind of faith. They have gone without proper support or any promise of it in the future, but they went because the Lord said, "Go!" They expressed their faith, and once their faith was expressed, the blessings of God were showered upon them.

Elijah was like that on the mountain top. He wanted the blessing of God upon his work as he stood in front of 850 false prophets. He was a single man proclaiming the word of God among that rebellious and apostate people. To the prophets, by faith, he literally put himself in jeopardy. It was not just the animal that was on Elijah's altar, but Elijah himself. When the fire came from heaven, there was no prophet on the altar, only fire from heaven. These seventy-two were told that their mission would be a faith mission (Luke 10:4).

In Luke 10:5-7 they were told that their mission would be **a peace-bringing mission**, although at times it would not bring peace. However, their purpose was to bring peace. When they entered a house, the very first thing they were supposed to say was, "*Peace to this house.*" If that peace rested on the people of that house, then they could stay there, eat there and be clothed there, and that house would be blessed as they brought peace to it.

In Luke 10:8-12 it is seen that this was **a kingdom exalting mission**. They were to heal the sick, but they were to say this as they did so: "*The kingdom of God is near you*" (Luke 10:9). Then they were to say it again in Luke 10:11, "*Even the dust of your town that sticks to our feet we wipe off against you. Yet be sure of this: The kingdom of God is near.*" They were to go primarily to say what John the Baptist had said, "*Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near*" (Matthew 3:2). They were to say what Jesus had said, "*Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near*" (Matthew 4:17). They were to say what the twelve had said when they had been sent out on the limited commission, "*The kingdom of heaven is near*" (Matthew 10:7). These seventy-two were to preach that same message. It is still the message to be heard, that God's reign is near. God rules. Man does not rule. Pharisees do not rule. The Sanhedrin does not rule. It is God who rules. This was a kingdom exalting mission of the seventy-two. They were saying this, and right behind them the kingdom came. ". . . *the kingdom of God is near.*" And the kingdom walked into the villages right behind them in the presence and person of Jesus Christ.

Condemnation of the Privileged

What about those who would not hear? In Luke 10:13-16 there was a denunciation of the unbelievers and those who did not hear the message:

“Woe to you, Korazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. But it will be more bearable for Tyre and Sidon at the judgment than for you. And you, Capernaum, will you be lifted up to the skies? No, you will go down to the depths. He who listens to you listens to me; he who rejects you rejects me; but he who rejects me rejects him who sent me.”

There is no record of the seventy-two going, but they went. They did exactly what Jesus told them to. They preached the kingdom's message, and many people rejected it.

Joy Upon Completion

In Luke 10:17-24 they returned, and upon their return the Lord expressed great joy in the completion of their mission. First of all, there was joy that their service has been rendered (10:17-19).

The seventy-two returned with joy and said, “Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name.” He replied, “I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you.”

There was **joy in the service**. He said, “I am rejoicing in the fact that your service brought the devil to defeat.” He said that the more significant **joy was in salvation**. Luke 10:20 states, “*However, do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.*”

Jesus rejoiced in their service and salvation, but even more significantly He **rejoiced in the sovereignty of His Father**. Luke 10:21-24 says,

At that time Jesus, full of joy through the Holy Spirit, said, “I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children. Yes, Father, for this was your good pleasure . . .” Then he turned to his disciples and said privately, “Blessed are the eyes that see what you see. For I tell you that many prophets and kings wanted to see what you see but did not see it, and to hear what you hear but did not hear it.”

The seventy-two represent us. We are sent out just like them to preach the kingdom message. We are to preach the kingdom message by faith and have victory in it. We are to come back joyful that we have been used in service, joyful that we are saved, and most of all, joyful that God's sovereignty has been seen to rule in all the earth.

The Raising of Lazarus

Jesus finished this work in Perea and went back across the Jordan River to the city of Bethany. There He again entered Martha's house, but this time He went at Martha's invitation and at Lazarus' need. This story of the raising of Lazarus from the dead is found in John 11.

The Death of Lazarus

Lazarus, the brother of Martha and Mary, was sick. Martha and Mary sent a message to Jesus in John 11:3, “*Lord, the one you love is sick.*” This was not a request; it was a statement. The request was for Jesus to come quickly and heal their brother, His friend. He didn't have to go. He could have simply

said, “Go back and tell Mary and Martha not to worry. He is well.” Lazarus could have been made well with just a word. One time, while in Cana, Jesus healed someone in Capernaum with just a word. Being in Perea He could heal someone in Bethany with a word, but He didn’t.

Jesus waited three days, and in that time He said to His disciples, “Let’s go up and see our friend Lazarus because he has fallen asleep.” They thought He simply meant ordinary sleep. They said, “If he is sleeping, he is better. We do not need to go there because all men are seeking us. They are seeking to kill you. Let us not go there. There is danger!” Jesus then said, “Lazarus, our friend, is dead. I must go and raise him. I’m glad, for your sake, that I was not there so that you may believe in me.” There was that progress of belief that is always seen in the book of John. The disciples were already believers in Christ, but they didn’t have the kind of belief they needed to withstand His death and be victorious over their unbelief, fear and doubt. He said, “I want your faith to grow.” That is why Jesus didn’t heal Lazarus immediately. He wanted them to see that He was in complete control of that which was absolutely uncontrollable—death itself.

Comfort for the Sisters

Jesus went to the city of Bethany in John 11:17-37, and He gave comfort to the sisters. As He entered the city, Martha quit mourning in the house and went out to see Jesus. She rebuked Jesus. “*Lord,’ Martha said to Jesus, ‘if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask’*” (John 11:21-22). She told Jesus that He should have come; Lazarus was dead. Regardless, her shaking faith was there because she said that whatever Jesus wanted to do, He could. Jesus then said, “*Your brother will rise again.*” He was saying that Lazarus was going to live again. Martha responded in 11:24, “*I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day.*” Luke 11:25-27 says,

Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?” “Yes, Lord,” she told him, “I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who was to come into the world.”

Martha believed even if she didn't know what she believed. She probably didn't know that Lazarus was about to leave the tomb, but she believed.

Martha sent for Mary and told her, “The Master is here.” Mary left her place of mourning and went. When she left, the crowd came with her. They came to Jesus, and Mary, as if it had been a rehearsed speech, also rebuked the Lord saying, “*Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died*” (11:32). Jesus looked at her and at all the weeping, mourning crowd, and He groaned from within and wept. He might have wept over Lazarus' death, but He was about to raise him from the dead. He probably wept over their lack of belief. That was what Jesus normally wept over—the unbelief of people who should have believed. These people had seen great signs, and they should have believed, but they did not.

The Raising of Lazarus

Jesus went to the tomb and said, “I am going to raise your brother from the dead.” They said, “Rabbi, he's been in that tomb for four days. The body has a bad odor.” That would have been true, wouldn't it? The body was decaying in spite of all the spices they put in the garment they wrapped him with. Sometimes they used over a mile of cloth to wrap around the body. All of the cloth was soaked in precious ointment to try to hide the stench of the decaying body because they didn't bury them beneath the soil; they put them in caves.

Jesus went to the cave and said, “Lazarus, come forth!” Why did He say, “Lazarus, come forth”? Why didn't He just

say, “Come forth!” One of these days Jesus is going to say, “Come forth,” and every dead person in all the world will be raised. He had to single out Lazarus on that day. He was not really doing Lazarus a favor, because Lazarus would have chosen not to have been raised. He was coming from Paradise back to this earth. Those who are dead are singing redemption’s song in a better place. They are looking into the face of Jesus.

Jesus said, “Lazarus, come forth!” Lazarus was there. He didn’t walk out, because he was bound head to foot with all kinds of wrapping garments. He couldn’t move. Jesus then said, “Untie him, loose him and let him go.” How he got there is not known because those are the mysteries of the miracles of God. One thing was certain, he could not resist the word of Jesus. Jesus’ word is fulfilled.

A rich man once said of a different Lazarus, “Send Lazarus back and let him talk to my brothers.” Abraham said, “They have Moses and the prophets. Let them hear them.” He said, “No, but they would hear one who has come back from the dead.” Lazarus was back from the dead, but were the Pharisees going to believe in him? No, instead they sought to kill him. Perhaps the people thought that Jesus couldn’t raise him twice. Lazarus was raised. He is found clothed and eating. Lazarus was talking. This man was fully alive. He went back to the grave and probably anticipated it, because if anyone knew what lay beyond the grave, this man did. This man was trusted by Jesus to live and die and be in heaven.

Plot to Kill Jesus

In John 11:45ff Jesus brought Lazarus back from the dead, and the Pharisees were still trying to kill Him. They did not believe, and they would not believe. Caiaphas, the high priest, didn’t know that he was prophesying, but he was when he said, “It is necessary that this One man, Jesus, die so that the whole nation is not destroyed and our place is not taken away by the Roman empire. John 11:53 says, “*So from that day on they*

plotted to take his life." It is strange that the one who fed them, healed them, helped them, raised them and loved them was the One who would die for them. The One they sought to kill would die for them. They didn't understand that He had come simply to help them. Then in John 11:54-57,

Therefore Jesus no longer moved about publicly among the Jews. Instead he withdrew to a region near the desert, to a village called Ephraim, where he stayed with his disciples. When it was almost time for the Jewish Passover, many went up from the country to Jerusalem for their ceremonial cleansing before the Passover.

Retirement to Ephraim

Jesus was still in retirement. He was still waiting for the time to come for Him to die. In a sentence, the time had not yet come. What was He doing? He was living with the disciples. He fellowshipped with the disciples. He taught the disciples about His death, His burial and His resurrection that would come in only a few days. God give you great peace in believing in the One who raises the dead, Jesus Christ.

Perean Period (2)

Journey to Perea

This is the second chapter on what is called the period of the “Perean Ministry.” Jesus journeyed from Bethabara to Bethany to raise Lazarus from the dead; He then retired to Ephraim because of the attempt to put Him to death. In this chapter, Jesus crosses the river again and travels throughout Perea. This was a very busy time of Jesus’ life, and in this chapter we will see the activity of Jesus in preparation for the last and most significant week of His life—the week of Passion.

Two Miracles Performed

In Luke 13:10-17 Jesus healed a woman who had an infirmity, and in Luke 14:1-14 He healed a man suffering from dropsy. Both of these miracles were performed by Jesus on the Sabbath in order to teach the apostles the truth concerning the spiritual nature of the kingdom. This also incited His enemies to think about the fact that He was Lord of the Sabbath. This woman had suffered with this disease for quite a while, and she brought it to Jesus. She had been crippled and stooped over with an infirmity for eighteen years. When Jesus saw her, He said, “Woman, you are free from your infirmity.” Immediately the woman stood straight up and praised the Lord. However, the leaders and the synagogue rulers were indignant that Jesus did this on the Sabbath day. Jesus said to them, “You hypocrites! If you have an ox or a mule stuck in the ditch, would you not get it out of the ditch on the Sabbath day? You are angry because I have set this woman free from that which bound her on the Sabbath day?” When He said that, His

opponents were humiliated, and the people were delighted in the wonderful things He was doing. These men weren't converted nor convinced, but they were humiliated.

In Luke 14:1-14 Jesus healed a man with dropsy, again on the Sabbath day. Dropsy is the same as edema which is the swelling of joints. The joints swell because of water, and it is a very painful and agonizing disease. This man was brought to Jesus by the Pharisees, who were hoping that Jesus would heal him on the Sabbath day, and they would have something to question Him about. Jesus simply asked this question: "Which is lawful to do on the Sabbath day, that which is good or that which is evil? Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath day?" They would not answer, so Jesus took the man, healed him and sent him away. Then He asked them this question: "If you have a son or an ox that falls in the well on the Sabbath day, would you not immediately pull him out? Again they said nothing.

The Teaching of Jesus About Honor

Jesus noticed that as the Pharisees went in to eat at feasts, they would take the places of honor rather than the lower places. Jesus told them, "You have it backwards. If you want to be honored, you need to take the lower place." He said, "When you give a feast, what do you do? You invite those who can invite you back. You don't invite the poor. You ought to invite your friends, but along with your friends you need to invite the poor. You must invite the outcasts, those who cannot invite you back, and then you will have riches and treasures in heaven." Regardless, they did not want to do that because they were materialistic. They were selfish with their religion, and that was seen in how they abused what God had said about the Sabbath day. They sought the places of honor and desired to be surrounded by the men of honor. Jesus was saying that the lowly place was the place to be sought.

How You Can Be Honored at a Feast

In Luke 14-16 is seen the teachings about discipleship. In Luke 14:7-11 Jesus spoke about how to be honored at a feast. He told them to take the lowest place. Then He told them how to give a feast. When they were to give a feast, they were to ask the lowest guest if they wanted to be honored. “Lowest” was the key word. Coming into a feast, they were to take the lowest place, and in giving a feast, they were to invite the lowest people. Then they would be blessed. Jesus then illustrated this with a parable in Luke 14:15. This can be called the parable of the great banquet. When Jesus was telling this, someone standing by said, “Blessed is the man who will eat at the feast in the kingdom of God.” That person had the same wrong concept.

The Parable of the Great Supper

Jesus began to tell a parable in Luke 14:16-20,

Jesus replied: “A certain man was preparing a great banquet and invited many guests. At the time of the banquet he sent his servant to tell those who had been invited, ‘Come, for everything is now ready.’ But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said, ‘I have just bought a field, and I must go and see it. Please excuse me.’ Another said, ‘I have just bought five yoke of oxen, and I’m on my way to try them out. Please excuse me.’ Still another said, ‘I just got married, so I can’t come.’

These people counted their business and their home as more important than this man’s feast. This irritated the man; he was angry.

The servant came back and reported this to his master. Then the owner of the house became angry

and ordered his servant, “Go out quickly into the streets and alleys of the town and bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame” (14:21).

Who lives in the alleys? Street people live on the street and sleep in the alleys. This man told his servant to bring street people to his feast.

“Sir,” the servant said, “what you ordered has been done, but there is still room.” Then the master told his servant, “Go out to the roads and country lanes and make them come in, so that my house will be full. I tell you, not one of those men who were invited will get a taste of my banquet” (14:22-24).

This parable illustrates how to be honored at a feast and how to give a feast. Since the Pharisees, the Sadducees and the rulers of Israel had rejected Jesus, they would not get to sit down at the table. However, the outcast of Israel, the sinners, the publicans, the prostitutes and the hated Gentiles and Samaritans would eat at His table.

The Cost of Discipleship

Luke 14:25-35 illustrates the cost of eating at the feast. This is a discussion about spiritual leadership. This text is the most important text on spiritual leadership in the book. It tells the cost of discipleship. Large crowds were following Jesus wherever He went. Turning to those crowds, Jesus did not praise them nor compliment them. He didn't thank them for following Him. Instead He tried to see if they understood what they were doing. Did they understand the cost of being His disciple? Jesus said,

“If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and

sisters—yes, even his own life—he cannot be my disciple” (Luke 14:26).

The first cost is an **unrivaled love**. We are not to detest anyone, even our enemies. We are to love our enemy.

What Jesus was saying was that He must have a place in our lives that no one else does. His place is one that has no rival. We must love Jesus in a place that we love no one else, and in a way that we love no other. The number one cost of spiritual leadership or eating at the Lord’s table is an unrivaled love. In Luke 14:27 He said, “*And anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple.*” We must die constantly. There is not only an unrivaled love but an **unceasing dying**. If we are going to eat at the Lord’s table and be spiritual leaders, we must die to sin. We have to die to self and to society. Unless a seed falls to the ground and dies, it exists alone, but if it dies it will bear much fruit. Jesus said that there must be an unceasing dying to sin.

Then Jesus said that if a man was going to build a house, he must first count whether or not he had enough to finish the house. If he didn’t have enough, and he started and couldn’t finish, then people would laugh at him. If a man were to go to war without first calculating if he had sufficient men and weapons to win the battle, then he would be defeated. Along with an unrivaled love and an unceasing dying to sin, there must be an **unafraid accounting**. We must really consider what it costs.

In Luke 14:33 Jesus said, “*In the same way, any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple.*” Of what price was the banquet? What was the price of being the leader of God? An unrivaled love, an unceasing dying to sin, an unafraid accounting, or Jesus said, there would be an **unqualified renunciation**. Jesus said there is an **unpleasant alternative**, and that is to be cast out and trodden under the foot of man. People are not forced to go to the feast. Like the

Jews, they can refuse to go by making their own things more important than His. However, a price comes with that, and it is to be trodden underfoot.

The Tragedy of Being Lost

The Lost Sheep and the Rejoicing Shepherd

In Luke 15:1-32 Jesus described the tragedy of being lost. In the telling of this tragedy, Jesus told some parables as well. The background of this parable was the accusation against Jesus for His welcoming, accepting and eating with sinners. Jesus first told the parable of the lost sheep. There were a hundred sheep, ninety-nine sheep safely in the fold and one which was lost. Surely the shepherd could cut his losses and go to sleep. No, not if he was a shepherd. He would go out to find the sheep that was lost, even though it wasn't his fault that it was lost. Regardless, the shepherd went out and found that one sheep. Then he called his friends together and said, "Rejoice with me. I have found that which was lost."

The Lost Coin and the Rejoicing Woman

There was a woman who had ten coins, and each one was worth nearly a year's wage. This woman lost one of those coins. It was most likely her own fault. However, she swept her house and searched until she found that one coin that was lost. When she found it she called all her friends together and said, "Rejoice with me for I have found the coin of mine that was lost."

The Younger Lost Son and the Rejoicing Father

In this parable there was a younger brother who was lost; he is called the prodigal son. The word "prodigal" means wasteful. That was exactly what this son was. He went to his father and said, "*Father, give me the inheritance that is coming to me.*" This is a familiar story. The son took his money and went to a faraway land where he lived with many friends

wasting his inheritance on riotous living with ungodly people and prostitutes. Finally, his money was gone, and when his money was gone he no longer had any friends. He was too proud to go home, and so he sold himself into slavery and began to feed hogs—the most reprehensible task for a Jew. He would have eaten what the hogs were eating, but they wouldn’t even let him eat that.

When he came to his senses, he said, “How many of my father’s hired men have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired men.” So he got up and went to his father (Luke 15:17-20).

The son, therefore, went back. The father was looking for him because the father ran and met him. He put his loving hands around his son’s stinking body.

The son said to him, “Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son” (15:21).

The father’s loving lips kissed his confessing lips to silence. He put a robe on his hog smelling back, a ring on his finger and shoes on his feet. He sat him down at the table and fed him the barbecue of son-ship. It was great, and everybody was rejoicing. God rejoices when a lost sheep or a lost coin is found, and He rejoices when a lost boy comes home.

The Lost Older Son and the Pleading Father

The older son came in and asked, “What is this noise?” The joyful sounds were noise to him. The father said, “Your

brother has come home, and we are rejoicing.” The father then went out and talked to the older son who refused to go in. The older son said, “You never gave me even a kid. You never gave me even a little old goat so that I could feed my friends, and now you’ve taken this fattened animal and have given it to this son of yours who wasted your substance on riotous living.” “Son,” he said, “all I ever had is yours. Come in and eat with your brother.” He didn’t go in, and there was no rejoicing. It would have been better to be the returned prodigal eating the barbecue than the righteous, legalistic, older brother who judged from outside. There is the tragedy of being lost eternally because of pride.

Tragedy in Materialism

The Shrewd Manager

There is also tragedy in materialism, which is taught in Luke 16:1-18 in the parable of the shrewd manager. There was a steward who had the substance of his master at his control. The steward had many debtors of his master before him, and he had misused his master’s goods. Therefore he said very simply to himself,

“My master is taking away my job. I’m not strong enough to dig, and I’m ashamed to beg—I know what I’ll do so that, when I lose my job here, people will welcome me into their houses.” (Luke 16:3-4)

He brought one man in and said, “How much do you owe?” The man replied, “One hundred.” He said, “Write fifty, and I will forgive the rest.” Another one went forward, and again, “How much do you owe?” He said, “I owe a hundred.” The manager replied, “Write eighty, and I will forgive the rest.” Jesus praised him because he used the little bit of time that he had to provide for his future. Jesus said that the children of this

world are wiser in their own generation, than the sons of light. He told us to use the money and the goods that we have to gain for ourselves eternal friends. Follow the law of God. Keep yourself pure and provide for the future.

The Rich Man and Lazarus

There is also a tragedy of indifference. This was the meaning of the story of the rich man and Lazarus in Luke 16:19-31. In life, the rich man had all his needs and all his greed supplied. Lazarus, in life, was a beggar, and was not even able to get from the rich man a few crumbs to fill his empty belly. They both died, and in the afterlife Lazarus was in Abraham's bosom eating the things of Paradise. The rich man was in torment enjoying the fruits of his indifference, and there was no way out. There was no way back and no way up. He was eternally lost. This rich man wanted Lazarus to go back and talk to his brothers. Abraham said that his brothers had the law and the prophets, and they could hear them. The rich man said, "No, but if one were to come back from the dead, they would hear him." Abraham responded, "If they won't hear Moses and the prophets, then they won't hear one who has come back from the dead." If we, today, do not hear the word of God, then we will not hear anything else.

Blessing of Little Children and the Question of the Rich Young Ruler

In Luke 18:15-17 Jesus blessed the little children. They were wanting to go to Jesus, but the disciples said, "Get them out of here!" However, Jesus took those little children on His lap and said, "These have the very nature of people who are a part of my kingdom." Then there was a rich young ruler who had everything going good for himself. In Luke 18:18-30 this young ruler went to Jesus with this question: "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" Jesus answered him, "What do Moses and the prophets say? He said, "Keep the commandments, and

I have done all that.” Jesus then told him, “You lack one thing. Sell what you have, give it to the poor and follow me; and you will have riches in heaven.” That was not a commandment to everyone, but to this one man. Jesus was offering him discipleship, saying, “If you will just get rid of your materialism and follow Me, you will have riches in heaven.”

The Ambition of James and John

In Matthew 20:20-28 James and John came to Jesus wanting to be first and second in the kingdom. They had that problem, because they didn’t understand that in the kingdom last is first and first is last. Jesus said to them, “You do not know what you’re talking about. Are you able to drink this cup I’m going to drink? Are you able to suffer and be baptized with the baptism that I’m going to be baptized with—the cross?” They said, “Yes, we can do that.” “Indeed you can,” Jesus replied, “but to give you first and second in the kingdom is not mine to give. Those belong to those whom the Father has prepared.” Who were the “those” of whom Jesus spoke? He went on to say, “The Gentiles have great ones and kings who rule and lord over them. However, that is not the way it will be with you. Whoever wants to be great in the kingdom of heaven must become the servant of others. The Son of man did not come to be served but to serve and give His life as a ransom for many. To be great in the kingdom requires service, slavery and sacrifice. It requires surrender, and that is not very well understood.”

We do not understand true leadership. We think, as James and John did, that it is a place of pomp and position rather than a place of service, slavery and sacrifice. If one wants to be counted great, he must serve others. If one wants to be counted great, he must become everybody’s slave. If one really wants to be counted great, then he should become who Jesus was—a person who would sacrifice his own life for the benefit and joy of others.

From Jericho to Bethany

Healed Bartimaeus at Jericho's Gate

Next, Jesus went from Jericho to Bethany, and on the way two things occurred. One of these occurred in Bethany. As Jesus approached the city of Jericho, there was a blind man named Bartimaeus at the gate. He was crying out, “Jesus, help me! Jesus, help me!” The disciples and others quieted the man saying, “Be quiet! The Master is busy.” However, this man was insistent and loud, “Jesus, help me! Jesus, help me!” Jesus turned aside and lovingly and cheerfully healed the blind Bartimaeus, and he became a witness for Jesus.

Dinner With Zacchaeus, the Tax Collector

Jesus then went past the gate and into the city, and there was a short tax collector named Zacchaeus. He was a chief tax collector and a very wealthy man. He had climbed a tree in order to see Jesus, and Jesus passed by looking for him. Looking up in the tree, Jesus spoke out, “Zacchaeus, come down! I’m going to eat with you today.” Jesus invited Himself to this man’s home in order to eat with him, and many people followed. The people responded saying, “This man eats with tax collectors and sinners.” However, Zacchaeus responded, “I will give half of all I have to the poor. If I have extorted anything from anybody, I will give it back to him fourfold.” That was a good statement, because the people thought that he was a sinner. What was Jesus’ comment to him? He said, “Today, salvation has come to this house.” For Zacchaeus was a son of Abraham. Jesus was searching for just that kind of man.

Anointed by Mary

Jesus then traveled from Jericho to Bethany, and He went again to the house of Martha, Mary and Lazarus (John 12:1; Mark 14). This was on the Sabbath for the Passover and was

the last occurrence before the last week of the life of Christ. Martha was serving, for that was normal for her. This time Mary was not just at His feet listening, but she was anointing Jesus' feet with precious ointment and wiping them with her hair as the other lady had. John said that the aroma, filled the whole room, and it was a sweet-smelling service. Judas was covetous, and he criticized the act saying, "This is wasteful. We should sell this ointment and give it to the poor." Judas didn't say that because he loved the poor. He said that because he was the treasurer and stole money out of the bag. In the book of Mark, Jesus said, "Leave this lady alone. What she has done will be spoken of throughout all of the world." Jesus blessed this woman's act, and the world was filled with the aroma of her deed. She poured the ointment and served Jesus, and the room smelled sweet because of her act. Jesus blessed this act of sacrificial and loving service; her burial ointment was anointing Jesus before His burial. That aroma filled the whole household. If we give what we have to Jesus, then the room will smell good. Jesus will bless what you give, and the world will smell good.

This is the half-way point of the study of the life of Christ, and there is only one week left in His life. Nearly one-half of the gospel accounts deal with the last week of Jesus' life. That was the climactic week where Jesus would finish the work that God had given Him to do. Remember that true glory is found in lowly service to God. Serve God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength.

Period of Passion (1)

The previous chapter ended with Jesus eating in the house of Martha, Mary and Lazarus. They must have still been rejoicing over the resurrection of Lazarus in the days gone by. Mary anointed Jesus' feet, preparing Him for His burial. The next day was the Sabbath and that was why they were resting in the house. The following day also began the eight days that would change the world. It is called, "The Spirit of Passion."

Introduction to the Period of Passion

This was a time in which Jesus was constantly busy except for Wednesday when He took rest before the long and sleepless Thursday and Friday in which He would die. On Sunday His glory was seen as He entered the city in triumph and visited the temple to see what was there. Monday was a day of power, as He came into the city and cursed a fig tree that had promised that it would bear fruit, but had not. The fig tree was symbolic of Israel. He then cleansed their temple because they had changed the court of the Gentiles into a place of merchandise. Each night Jesus went back to stay in the house of Mary, Martha and Lazarus.

On Tuesday Jesus had a long day of argument. He confronted the Sadducees and the Herodians. He confronted the Pharisees. Finally on Tuesday, He asked the Pharisees a question, and because they could not answer it, from then on they asked Him nothing more. Nothing was recorded for Wednesday. This might have been a day of rest for Himself, but also a day of strengthening for His disciples. Their faith was going to be tested in a way that it had never been tested before. When Jesus would go to the cross they would be seemingly

defeated, and they needed something that would hold them up. Although it was Friday, they needed something that would hold them until Sunday. There is a saying, “ I don’t care what my trouble is. I need to remember that today is Friday, and Sunday is coming.”

On Thursday Jesus went back into the city and had a long period of fellowship with His disciples and a little controversy with the people. On Friday morning, (they would have called it Thursday night) they came out and arrested Jesus in the garden. He then began the series of trials that would end with Him being nailed to the cross, suspended, and hung between heaven and earth, as if rejected by both. When the sun set that day, Jesus was in the tomb, and it appeared as if the sun had forever set. However, that was not true. Saturday was a day of great mourning and concern, and perhaps it was a day of great happiness for the devil. However, on Sunday morning, bright and early, up from the grave He arose! These were fabulous days. Nearly one-third of the gospel account was spent on these eight days. That showed how fabulous God believed these days to be. These were the eight days that changed the world.

Sunday – Glory

Triumphal Entry

Each of these days can be described with one word. Sunday can be described as “glory.” This day, above any of the other days except the last Sunday, manifested the glory of Jesus Christ. Jesus woke up that morning near Bethany at the ascent of the Mount of Olives. He knew that the time had come for Him to die. What would bring about His death the most was His glory revealed. Israel had been waiting over a thousand years for the glory of the long awaited Messiah, King, Anointed One.

Preparation

In Luke chapter nineteen it is seen that there were three parts to Jesus' glorious entry into the city of Jerusalem. The first was preparation. Luke 19:28-31 says,

After Jesus had said this, he went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem. As he approached Bethphage and Bethany at the hill called the Mount of Olives, he sent two of his disciples, saying to them, “Go to the village ahead of you, and as you enter it, you will find a colt tied there, which no one has ever ridden. Untie it and bring it here. If anyone asks you, ‘Why are you untying it?’ tell him, “The Lord needs it.”

Matthew states that this colt was the foal of a donkey. If someone were to ask, “Why do you want this animal?” they were to simply tell them, “The Lord needs it.” It really doesn’t matter who we are as long as the Lord needs us. Luke 19:32-36 states,

Those who were sent ahead went and found it just as he had told them. As they were untying the colt, its owners asked them, “Why are you untying the colt?” They replied, “The Lord needs it.” They brought it to Jesus, threw their cloaks on the colt and put Jesus on it. As he went along, people spread their cloaks on the road.

The multitudes’ cloaks became the pavement on which Jesus walked. That morning they got up and put on their cloaks against the morning cool. During His entry to the city, Jesus was riding on their cloaks, either as a saddle or as a road on which He traveled.

In preparation, two things were necessary. One was the animal upon which Jesus would ride. The second was the

people who would glorify Him, because glory was the theme of this day. The animal was a colt, a foal, a donkey, and no one had ever ridden on this donkey before. This was not a large animal. Jesus did not enter into the city of Jerusalem as a triumphant ruling warrior. If He had wanted to portray that, He would have been riding on a white Arabian stallion that would prance and raise its head high and walk with all the regalness of a general's horse. However, Jesus didn't enter that way. Instead He entered on a humble animal, a colt or donkey.

Jesus was very much like David. David never rode the white steeds that his son Solomon rode. He always rode on a donkey because the law said, "*The king, moreover, must not acquire great numbers of horses for himself . . .*" (Deuteronomy 17:16). His animal had to be the right kind of animal to portray the right kind of glory—common glory. He had to have the glory of ordinary people. Two unnamed disciples provided the saddle upon which He rode. Unnamed people also provided the pavement, their cloaks, upon which the animal tread.

Celebration

The second part, after preparation, was celebration. Luke 19:37 says,

When he came near the place where the road goes down the Mount of Olives, the whole crowd of disciples began joyfully to praise God in loud voices for all the miracles they had seen: . . .

Notice that the whole crowd joyfully praised God in loud voices for what they had seen Jesus do. Surely they also appreciated His teaching, but He was doing things in their midst that only God could do. In Luke 19:38-40 was their song:

. . . “Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!” Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to Jesus, “Teacher, rebuke your disciples!” “I tell you,” he replied, “if they keep quiet, the stones will cry out.”

That was a fabulous statement. Someone had to glorify God that day, and if it wasn’t the disciples, then the stones on the road that the animal was riding upon would be given life, and they would cry out to God. That is how it should always be, because Jesus should always be glorified. It is interesting that the place where He was being glorified started with the Mount of Olives and went all the way down and to the city of Jerusalem. That was seven-eighths of a mile. Nearly one mile of people were lined up, and they were putting their cloaks on the road and throwing palm branches. They were saying, “Save us now, Oh Son of David!” Matthew recorded these things in his gospel. These people were the ones who were His disciples.

Their praise was that Jesus is the King of God and the Peace of God. He was riding upon the animal of peace. He is the Prince of Peace, and they were crying out for peace. However, the proof that He is the King was not in this animal that He was riding. It was not even in the confession that these people were making at the top of their voice. It was in the many miracles that He performed. Somewhere nearby walked a man named Lazarus whom Jesus had raised from the dead after he had been a dead stinking corpse for four days.

Lamentation

Notice how this period of triumph ended. It ended not with the rejoicing of the people, but with the lamentation of Christ. Notice Luke 19:41-44,

As he approached Jerusalem and saw the city, he wept over it and said, “If you, even you, had only

known on this day what would bring you peace—but now it is hidden from your eyes. The days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment against you and encircle you and hem you in on every side. They will dash you to the ground, you and the children within your walls. They will not leave one stone on another, because you did not recognize the time of God's coming to you.”

Many times all of our shouting and all of our worship doesn't even convey what it ought to. The crowd was crying, "Hosanna! Save now!" They were calling Him the Savior. They said, "Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord." They were saying that He was the long-awaited Messiah who would end their enemies' dominion over them and bring them to glory. They were saying that He was the King of Israel, but they didn't recognize what they were saying. They were simply saying what they should have, but they were not feeling what they should have been feeling. They were not thinking what they should have been thinking, nor were they understanding what they were saying.

If Jesus had looked back, He would have seen a shallow nation who had wasted their opportunities and who were ignorant of the time of God's coming and visitation upon them. If He had looked within these people, which He could do, He would have seen spiritual ignorance and blindness in their hearts and minds. If He had looked around them and around Himself, He would have seen religious activity that accomplished nothing. If He had visited the temple, He would have seen a den of thieves who had set out to kill Him. Instead Jesus looked ahead, saw the coming destruction of their city, and wept. In A.D. 70, He wept again when for 433 days Jerusalem was under siege. He wept when 600,000 people were killed and when thousands more were captured. Why? They cried "Hosanna," but they did not understand what they said.

They did not recognize the time of the Lord's coming. We must look around us and see all of the signs of God's anger and repent. We must look around us and see all of the signs of Jesus' glory, take our coat off for Him to walk on and praise His name in honesty and sincerity. The people said that they believed in Jesus, but Jesus did not believe in them. He returned to Bethany for the night, returning in the morning to continue His discussion of these things (Mark 11:11).

Monday - Power

The following morning was Monday. Monday was not a day of glory, although any day about Jesus is a day of glory. However, it was not a day when Jesus was glorified, as Sunday was. Monday was a day when Jesus' power was seen. The disciples and all of Jerusalem acknowledged that He was the Man of power. We need not only the glory of God, but the power of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Cursed the Barren Fig Tree

In Mark 11:12-14 and Matthew 21:18-19 is the story of the cursing of a barren fig tree. Notice Mark 11:12-14:

The next day as they were leaving Bethany, Jesus was hungry. Seeing in the distance a fig tree in leaf, he went to find out if it had any fruit. When he reached it, he found nothing but leaves, because it was not the season for figs. Then he said to the tree, "May no one ever eat fruit from you again." And his disciples heard him say it.

This fig tree was still in full leaf, but it had no fruit. Why did Jesus even think that there would be figs on it if it wasn't the season for figs? Does fruit ever come ahead of time? In Palestine, even today, their fig trees do not bear leaves until there is beginning to be fruit on the tree. When this tree has

leaves, in or out of the season for figs, it is declaring, “There is fruit in me. I have fruit you can eat.” Sometimes the fruit is early, and it should bear fruit every time if there are leaves on it. Jesus left the fruitless, barren fig tree and went on to Jerusalem. The significance of the cursing of this fruitless fig tree is that Israel was doomed for all of its years of unfruitful living.

Cleansed the Temple

Mark 11:15-19 says,

On reaching Jerusalem, Jesus entered the temple area and began driving out those who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves, and would not allow anyone to carry merchandise through the temple courts. And as he taught them, he said, “Is it not written: ‘My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations’? “But you have made it ‘a den of robbers.’ ” The chief priests and the teachers of the law heard this and began looking for a way to kill him, for they feared him, because the whole crowd was amazed at his teaching. When evening came, they went out of the city.”

Court of Gentiles

On Monday, Jesus cleansed the temple and this really infuriated the priests of Israel. He was calling their temple an unholy place. It was built by God’s design and by God’s pattern. It was built by God’s people. However, these people had come and turned into a “den of thieves” what was intended to be a house of prayer for all the nations—for the Gentiles as well as the Israelites. That was why they had a court of the Gentiles. They had made it a “den of robbers,” not just robbers

coming in acting like hypocrites, but the very house of God had become a den of thieves. The significance of the action of Jesus was that He was claiming to be the Judge of Israel. This court of the Gentiles that He was cleansing and that they had corrupted was the place of mission and of evangelism. It was where God-seeking Gentiles could come, and Israel's priests could minister to them across the wall, across the middle wall partition. The Jew could go in, and the Gentile could not. However, the Jew could go and speak to the God-fearing among the nations about Jehovah, about His love, and about the Messiah to come.

What Does God Want in His House?

What did God want to happen in His house? That is what needs to be obtained in this chapter. What does God want to happen in His temple? First of all God wants prayer. His house was to be a house of prayer, not simply among His people but among the world. Paul said in 1 Timothy 2:1-2,

I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone—for kings and all those in authority . . .

God wanted His house to be a house of prayer. But not only did He want prayer in His house, He also wanted people to be helped. They had made it impossible for these Gentiles to go to Him and find the help they needed. In Matthew 21, God also wanted power working in that place, power that would change people. That was the very purpose of the temple for the Jew. As they drew nearer to God, they were to bring their sacrifices that declared their acknowledgment and confession of sin, and that declared their thanksgiving to God for all of His grace and mercy. It declared to all of the other Jews in Israel and to one another that they had fellowship, not only with God by bringing sacrifice, but with one another by each one bringing their own

sacrifice. It was power. Yet, right outside where the Jew would come, the Gentiles could come and those like the Ethiopian eunuch could come to the court of the Gentiles and get as close to God as they could, and therefore, feel and receive His power.

In the Church Today

In the church today, there are five different groups. The first is the community that is not committed to anything. They are just interested or curious. The next is the crowd that is committed to come and listen. The third is the congregation that is committed to attending, at least on a regular basis. The fourth are the committed, those who are committed to serve. Then there is the core that is committed to sacrifice. God had that in His temple court as He brought Israel along step by step. He brought the Gentile, first of all, step by step, closer to Him, and finally when the Gentiles came and said, "We would see Jesus," Jesus told them, "Now I must die."

Jesus' death would take away the wall that said that no Gentile could enter. His cross would take away all the veils, even the veil in the most Holy Place, so that people could draw nearer and nearer to God until they stood in His very presence. God wants a prayer offered, and He wants people helped. He wants power seen, and He wants praise offered. To God be the praise! Hallelujah! Praise the Lord!—Those are the words that Israel sang coming up the mountain toward the temple. They sang the songs of the ascent in the book of Psalms, every one of which was praise to God.

Tuesday – Controversy

The temple had been cleansed again, but there was one more thing that needed to happen. Jesus went back outside the city to the house of Mary and Martha and Lazarus to get a good night's sleep. He and the disciples got up the

following morning to go into the city for the great day of argument, the day of controversy. On the way in they looked over, and there they saw the fig tree that just the previous morning had been full of leaves and fruitless. They looked over at that tree and saw that it was withered as if it had been cursed by the hot eastern wind. There was not a leaf on it, and if there was, it had turned absolutely brown. They were amazed at how quickly that tree had withered. The significance of this incident is seen in Mark 11:20-26:

In the morning, as they went along, they saw the fig tree withered from the roots. Peter remembered and said to Jesus, “Rabbi, look! The fig tree you cursed has withered!” “Have faith in God,” Jesus answered. “I tell you the truth, if anyone says to this mountain, ‘Go, throw yourself into the sea,’ and does not doubt in his heart but believes that what he says will happen, it will be done for him.”

Listen carefully to what Jesus said. He said that faith makes all things possible. In Matthew 9:29 Jesus said that it will be according to faith. It would not be according to ability, nor education, nor money, nor people. It would be according to faith.

There are two lessons to be learned because of this barren fig tree. **First**, it was a lesson of failure. One can look very successful and be absolutely nothing but a failure. One can declare that he has fruit and have nothing at all. There was nothing but leaves on the tree Monday, and on Tuesday it was withered from the root. As the text says, even the root was dead. We must live according to our blessings. **Second**, there was a lesson on faith. We must constantly trust God. We must live with an attitude of trust and reliance upon Jehovah and dependance upon Him. Then, when any mountain or obstacle appears before us, no matter how

strong or immovable it seems, we can say, “Away from here!” That mountain will then be gone. Believe that the power that was manifested through Jesus Christ can be manifested in your life also. Honor Him, obey Him, and serve Him.

Period of Passion (2)

The Day of Controversy

Review

The last week of Jesus' life is called "The Eight Days that Changed the World." This was the "Period of Passion." In the previous chapter Sunday was seen as a great day of glory. It was a day when Jesus' glory was seen as He entered the city in triumph as a lowly King, riding on the foal or the colt of a donkey. He also entered as a powerful King, one who was bringing salvation, redemption and glory to Israel. On Monday Jesus manifested that power by cursing the barren fig tree, and this tree was then found on Tuesday to be totally withered in one day. Jesus also manifested that power by the cleansing of the temple, and in both of those actions He was saying that Israel was bankrupt. They were bankrupt physically because they had no fruit, and they were bankrupt spiritually because they had turned His Father's house into a den of thieves.

In John 12:20-36 the Greeks came seeking Jesus, and He told them that it was time for Him to do what He had come to do. The Jews didn't seek Him because of their pride, yet the Greeks did seek Him because of the confession of their sinfulness. It was then time for Jesus to die. However, before He died, Jesus needed to abundantly manifest the truth that Israel was barren and bankrupt. Therefore, Tuesday was the day of controversy. Sunday was glory. Monday was power; and Tuesday was controversy. Jesus was going to be arguing with the people who claimed to be the leaders of the nation of Israel. If they were proven to be morally and spiritually bankrupt, then Israel was morally and spiritually bankrupt.

Answer Concerning Authority

By What Authority and Who Gave You this Authority?

Most of Tuesday in Jesus' "Week of Passion" was recorded in Matthew 21, although there are parallel passages. On this day Jesus had controversies with the leaders in Israel. First, in Matthew 21:23-22:14 there was a controversy about authority and an answer given to the Sanhedrin. The text says in Matthew 21:23 that the chief priests and the elders of the people went to Jesus and asked, "*By what authority are you doing these things? . . . And who gave you this authority?*" When one used the term "the chief priests and the elders", that meant the Sanhedrin, who were the seventy Jews in the Supreme Court of Israel. This is interesting and important as the Bible is read, because the Sanhedrin was mostly composed of rich Sadducees. The Sadducees were the people who did not believe in miracles or the resurrection of the dead. They didn't believe in any supernatural power. They were the rich materialists of their day; and along with the rich and religious people, they composed the Supreme Court who judged the people. They were the people who had authority, and their authority was questioned and even challenged when Jesus cast out the money changers from the temple. He claimed authority by that act. Therefore, they asked Him, "*By what authority are you doing these things?*" Jesus' reply is in Matthew 21:24-27:

Jesus replied, "I will also ask you one question. If you answer me, I will tell you by what authority I am doing these things. John's baptism—where did it come from? Was it from heaven, or from men?" They discussed it among themselves and said, "If we say, 'From heaven,' he will ask, 'Then why didn't you believe him?' But if we say, 'From men'—we are

afraid of the people, for they all hold that John was a prophet.' So they answered Jesus, 'We don't know. ''

They lied! What they needed to say was, "We are afraid to answer because whatever we say will be used against us." Jesus presented them with a true righteous dilemma. Either answer they could give to the question proved them to be hypocritical. "*Then he said, 'Neither will I tell you by what authority I am doing these things'*" (21:27). There is a very important lesson to be learned from Jesus in this passage: we do not have to answer every question. If we know that a question is being asked simply to ensnare us and involve us in a discussion that will degrade the gospel and degrade God and Christ, then we can simply say that we do not want to answer. We need to learn to ask the question that enables us to escape a tricky question. What really happened was that the Sanhedrin rejected the Father, because they knew very well that Jesus' authority came from God. These people had even sent Nicodemus to Jesus earlier to say, "Rabbi, we, the rulers of Israel, know that you are a teacher come from God, because nobody can do the things you do unless God is with him." They had rejected the Father by rejecting the One whom He sent.

The Parable of the Two Sons

The Probing Question

Jesus then told some parables, and in these He illustrated their lack of sincerity. The first parable, in Matthew 21:28, is of the two sons who would prove that they had rejected the Father. Jesus started by asking, "*What do you think?*" Those kinds of statements from Jesus were good, because He was involving the listeners in a discussion within their own mind. That was a smart move on the part of Jesus. Matthew 21:28-31 says,

“What do you think? There was a man who had two sons. He went to the first and said, ‘Son, go and work today in the vineyard.’ ‘I will not,’ he answered, but later he changed his mind and went. Then the father went to the other son and said the same thing. He answered, ‘I will, sir,’ but he did not go. Which of the two did what his father wanted?” ‘The first,’ they answered.”

“What do you think?” Jesus just asked them what they thought. Their answer was a fairly easy one. They probably didn't want to answer, but they had to. Therefore, they said, “*The first, . . .*” Jesus said, “That is right. The first was the one.” However, Jesus didn't believe that they had the ability to apply that, so He had to apply it for them. They should have seen themselves as the second son who said, “I will do the Father's will! I love the Father's will!” Then they never did the Father's will. They should have seen the Gentiles, the publicans, the sinners and the prostitutes in the first son who said, “I don't want to do the Father's will. It doesn't meet my needs. I don't see any sense in it.” However, they later repented and did it. In the final analysis, only the repentant sinner did God's will, but they weren't able to think that way.

The Condemning Application

Jesus then said to them in Matthew 21:31,

“I tell you the truth, the tax collectors and the prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God ahead of you. For John came to you to show you the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes did. And even after you saw this, you did not repent and believe him.”

Jesus was saying that they did not hear John. In not hearing John, they had rejected the Father. The two people who were

thought of the least and most hated in all of Israel were the national traitors. These were the tax collectors and the immoral women, the prostitutes. He said that the people who shouldn't have heard John—the tax collectors and prostitutes—did hear him. The people who should have heard John—the righteous, religious, and “moral” people—did not. Those who were hated said, “We will not work in the vineyard,” but later they did. Their attitude and their outward manifestation said that they wouldn't work in the vineyard, but they did. The righteous people's outward manifestation and garment said, “I work in the kingdom,” yet they didn't do so. The application for us today is this: The Father says, “Son, go work in my vineyard today.” When He calls us “Son,” family relationship is stated. When He says “go work,” a responsibility is stated. “In the vineyard” states the place, and “today” states the time. If one doesn't want to do all this then he needs to repent, and do it, but if one wants to do it he must be sure to do it. Otherwise, he will be just like the fig tree outside the city—nothing but leaves withered to the root.

The Parable of the Tenants

The parable of the tenants is in Matthew 21:33-46. In this parable the people rejected the son. Matthew 21:33-40 says,

“Listen to another parable: There was a landowner who planted a vineyard. He put a wall around it, dug a winepress in it and built a watchtower. Then he rented the vineyard to some farmers and went away on a journey. When the harvest time approached, he sent his servants to the tenants to collect his fruit. The tenants seized his servants; they beat one, killed another, and stoned a third. Then he sent other servants to them, more than the first time, and the tenants treated them the same way. Last of all, he sent his son to them. ‘They will respect my son,’ he said. But when the tenants saw the son, they said to each

other, ‘This is the heir. Come, let’s kill him and take his inheritance.’ So they took him and threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. Therefore, when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?”

With this question, Jesus got them involved again. He told them a plain story that had probably happened many times. They probably knew of occasions when this had happened. He said to them, “What do you think? You make the judgment. What do you think the owner should do to those tenants?” The landowner was God, and the servants were the prophets. The son was Jesus, and the tenants were the very people He was talking to—the Pharisees, the Sadducees and the chief priests. Jesus asked them, “What do you think the master will do?” They knew the answer to this, for they knew the law. They responded in Matthew 21:41-46,

“He will bring those wretches to a wretched end,” they replied, “and he will rent the vineyard to other tenants, who will give him his share of the crop at harvest time.” Jesus said to them, “Have you never read in the Scriptures: ‘The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone; the Lord has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes’? “Therefore I tell you that the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit. He who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces, but he on whom it falls will be crushed.” When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard Jesus’ parables, they knew he was talking about them. They looked for a way to arrest him, but they were afraid of the crowd because the people held that he was a prophet.

They rejected the Son in this parable. In the first, they rejected the Father, and in this one they rejected the Son.

The Parable of the Wedding Feast

In Matthew 22:1-14 Jesus told the parable of the wedding feast, and in this parable they rejected the Holy Spirit. In three parables, Jesus taught them that they had rejected His Father, Himself and the Holy Spirit. In this parable, a king gave a wedding banquet for his son. He sent his servants to those who had been invited to the banquet to tell them to come, but they didn't want to come. They refused to come, so he sent some more servants. This was very similar to the previous parable. He said in Matthew 22:4-10,

“Tell those who have been invited that I have prepared my dinner: My oxen and fattened cattle have been butchered, and everything is ready. Come to the wedding banquet.” But they paid no attention and went off—one to his field, another to his business. The rest seized his servants, mistreated them and killed them. The king was enraged. He sent his army and destroyed those murderers and burned their city. (This was going to happen, and it happened to their city in the year AD. 70.) Then he said to his servants, “The wedding banquet is ready, but those I invited did not deserve to come. Go to the street corners and invite to the banquet anyone you find.” So the servants went out into the streets and gathered all the people they could find, both good and bad, and the wedding hall was filled with guests.

What is our Father's will? It is that His house be full, that there not be a vacant place at His table. However, it is also His will that we come prepared to honor Him. Matthew 22:11 says, “*But when the king came in to see the guests, he noticed a man*

there who was not wearing wedding clothes.” When one is invited to a wedding, he takes off his work clothes and puts on wedding clothes. If he doesn’t have any, then he takes a bath and puts on the best he has. When he gets there, he would normally be given wedding clothes. Matthew 22:12-14 says,

“Friend,” he asked, “how did you get in here without wedding clothes?” The man was speechless. Then the king told the attendants, “Tie him hand and foot, and throw him outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” For many are invited, but few are chosen.

Everyone is invited to the table. Every single person in the world is invited to the Father’s banquet table, to the wedding of His Son. However, only those who come wearing the wedding clothes are chosen. Galatians 3:27 says, “...for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.” Christ is our wedding garment, and God gives us that wedding garment when we are immersed into Jesus. We then have a right to the table to which we have been invited. Israel rejected the Father. Israel rejected the Son. Israel rejected the Spirit’s call to the Spirit’s Word, so Israel had to be rejected.

Controversy about Tribute and Resurrection

Answer to Pharisees and Herodians About Paying Tribute

In Matthew 22:15-22 Jesus had a controversy with the Herodians and the Pharisees about paying tribute. The Herodians were a political party who were allied with the Herods, whom the Pharisees hated. However, both of them disliked Jesus, and politics and religion sometimes make strange partners. Notice Matthew 22:15-17:

Then the Pharisees went out and laid plans to trap him in his words. They sent their disciples to him along with the Herodians. “Teacher,” they said, “we know you are a man of integrity and that you teach the way of God in accordance with the truth. You aren’t swayed by men, because you pay no attention to who they are. Tell us then, what is your opinion? Is it right to pay taxes to Caesar or not?”

The Pharisees were trying to use Jesus’ words as a weapon. They were not as smart as He was, but they were trying to get Him into a situation or a dilemma. If He had said, “Don’t pay taxes,” then He would have been in trouble with Caesar. If He had said, “Pay taxes,” then He would have been in trouble with the people. However, Jesus gave a wise response. Matthew 22:18-22 says,

But Jesus, knowing their evil intent, said, “You hypocrites, why are you trying to trap me? Show me the coin used for paying the tax.” They brought him a denarius, and he asked them, “Whose portrait is this? And whose inscription?” “Caesar’s,” they replied. Then he said to them, “Give to Caesar what is Caesar’s, and to God what is God’s.” When they heard this, they were amazed. So they left him and went away.

We do live in two worlds. We live in Caesar’s world, and we live in God’s world. Therefore, in Caesar’s world we pay taxes, and in God’s world we do not. In Caesar’s world we are under the control of Caesar. In God’s world we are under the control of God. Jesus said that they must render to Caesar what belonged to Caesar and to God what belonged to God. The significance of that is to serve the Lord. Serve Caesar when necessary, but the ultimate and absolute requirement is to serve

the Lord God. After answering this question from the Pharisees and Herodians about paying taxes, there was not much controversy; Jesus just answered their questions.

Controversy With the Sadducees Concerning the Resurrection

Next, the Sadducees went to Jesus. They didn't believe in the resurrection of the dead, and Jesus had mentioned on many occasions that the dead would be raised. Therefore, in Matthew 22:23-33 there was a controversy with the Sadducees about the resurrection from the dead:

That same day (Tuesday) the Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to him with a question.

"Teacher," they said, "Moses told us that if a man dies without having children, his brother must marry the widow and have children for him. Now there were seven brothers among us. The first one married and died, and since he had no children, he left his wife to his brother. The same thing happened to the second and third brother, right on down to the seventh. Finally, the woman died. Now then, at the resurrection, whose wife will she be of the seven, since all of them were married to her?" (Matthew 22:23-28).

The Perceived Dilemma and the Solution

It is very common among religious people to begin with an impossible situation and to try to put away what a plain scripture says. That was exactly what these Sadducees were doing. They thought that Jesus was in a dilemma. How could this woman have seven husbands at the resurrection? Since she had seven husbands in life, they could not conceive of her having all seven when the eight of them were raised from the dead.

“Jesus replied, ‘You are in error because you do not know the Scriptures or the power of God. (Their ignorance was based on an ignorance of scripture and of God’s power.) At the resurrection people will neither marry nor be given in marriage; they will be like the angels in heaven’” (Matthew 22:29-30).

These men misunderstood the resurrection, and they were ignorant. There is no marriage in heaven. We will be as the angels of heaven are, and the sexual part of us will no longer exist. We want to be like God as much as we can be. He, in and of Himself, possesses all the characteristics of a man and all the characteristics of a woman, and that is what it will be like in the resurrection. Jesus said,

“But about the resurrection of the dead—have you not read what God said to you, ‘I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob’? He is not the God of the dead but of the living.’” When the crowds heard this, they were astonished at his teaching (Matthew 22:31-33).

There are some very interesting points in the question about the resurrection. First of all the Sadducees were reacting to a worldly view of resurrection. Some of the Pharisees who taught the resurrection taught it in the same vein as the Muslim people. They would teach that it was a day of sensuality—a time when all sensual, sexual and worldly pleasures would be met. They taught that man would be raised as the same flesh and blood. He would have the same temptations, desires and sins as the flesh and blood that he lived in. Therefore, these Sadducees were a reaction against wrong teaching. Reactions are nearly always wrong. Jesus said that we need to study the Scripture instead of reacting. The citation of these people was absolutely correct. They spoke of Deuteronomy 25:6, and they did not

misquote the Scripture. They also believed that they had Jesus in a dilemma.

Jesus' answer was two-fold. He said first of all that heaven is different. Heaven is not like earth, and the resurrection from the dead is different than the way of the world. The apostle John saw Jesus die. He was at the foot of the cross with Jesus' mother when Jesus was dying. He saw Jesus die, and he saw Jesus risen from the dead. He walked and talked with Jesus in His resurrected body for forty days, and he watched Him ascend to heaven in that resurrected body. However, in 1 John chapter three he said that we don't know what Jesus is presently like. We know what He was like when He lived. John knew what He was like when He was raised, but He didn't know what He is presently like. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, for we will see Him, even as He is. There is a mystery about what that resurrected person is going to be, and that mystery says that heaven is different. However, while that is true, Jesus also made the argument that the righteous dead are not dead. The righteous dead live with God. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob—he said that all of these lived to God and before God. That is the same way that righteous people are today. Paul said that he desired to go and be with Christ, for that was better by far. Therefore, there is a three-fold area in which we live: Embodied, disembodied, and re-embodied.

The response to this teaching of Jesus was marvelous, because, according to Matthew 22, they were astonished at what Jesus said. They were not only surprised at Him, but it astonished them. They had never thought about where Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were living at that moment. Maybe they believed in soul sleep. They didn't believe that the righteous dead were living at that moment. They gave approval to what He said, saying that it was a very good teaching. However, according to Luke 20:40 the primary thing that this did was to silence the Sadducees. From then on they didn't know what to say about what Jesus taught.

Summary

There was going to be one more attempt by the Pharisees to trick Jesus, and it was done through their best teacher, their lawyer. However, the Herodians, the Sanhedrin and the Sadducees were all finished. They had all had their shot at Jesus, and they couldn't answer Him. He was different than any other person. In the next chapter the living critics of Jesus are forever silenced.

Period of Passion (3)

Preview

This chapter is a continuation of “The Eight Days that Changed the World.” This was the last week of Christ’s life—His death, His burial and His resurrection. The first Sunday Jesus entered the city in great pomp and pageantry, yet riding on a donkey, the foal of a donkey. Glory was the emphasis of that day.

On Monday, Jesus went back into the town, because He had seen the corruption of the temple the day before. He went to cleanse the temple of all of its merchandise and corruption. On the way, He saw a fig tree that advertised that it bore fruit, because it was filled with leaves. In that area of the world, even today, the fig tree bears the fruit before the leaves. It wasn’t time for this tree to have fruit, but it advertised that it did. Jesus went to get fruit from this fig tree and found none there, so He cursed the tree. He said, “From now on, there will be no fruit found upon you.” This tree symbolized the nation of Israel that declared, with all of its law-keeping and all of its good deeds, that it had the fruit of God on its limbs. However, God went and found nothing there but leaves. After cursing the fig tree Jesus proceeded into the temple and cleansed it, driving out the money-changers, the seller of oxen and the seller of doves. He drove everything out of the temple that was not centered in prayer and service to the nations around them.

Tuesday morning Jesus got up knowing it would be a long and difficult day. This day was seen in the two previous chapters, and it will be seen in this chapter as well. On Tuesday, Jesus and the twelve found the fig tree withered to the roots. It was not just a little brown, but even its roots were dead, and in

this God declared that Israel was not only fruitless; it was dead deep-down to the roots. Then some Greeks sought out Jesus, and Jesus told them, “Now it is time for Me to die. For the only way these Gentiles can come to Me is by removing the middle wall or partition. This can be done by taking away the Jewish pride and uniting both Jew and Gentile under the blood of Christ.” This upset Israel and began a long period of controversy.

Christ’s Authority Challenged

The Challenging Question

The leaders argued with Jesus, literally trying to trick Him by presenting to Him some dilemma or trap that would make Him deny either the Mosaic law or the Roman law. Then He would be shown to be a hypocrite or at least a sinner in the eyes of the people.

Jesus answered the Sanhedrin (the Jewish high court) about the authority by which He did things. He claimed to have authority over the temple by casting out all the money changers and the other people. The Sanhedrin was asking, “Who gave you that authority?” If Jesus had answered, “God,” He knew that they would simply take up stones and stone Him. However, it was not yet time for Him to die. Instead He said, “I will answer that question if you will answer mine: The baptism of John—was it from God or from men?” This put the Sanhedrin in a dilemma because if they said, “from God,” then Jesus would say, “Well, why didn’t you believe him?” If they said, “from man,” then they were afraid of the people, because the people thought John to be a prophet of God.

The Conspiracy of the Pharisees and the Herodians

The Pharisees and the Herodians were two implacable enemies, the Pharisees being totally religious and the Herodians being totally political. These two people went to Jesus with a

question about tribute: “Shall we pay taxes or not?” If Jesus said, “Yes,” then He would be in trouble with the people, because they didn’t like taxes. If He said, “No,” then He would be in trouble with the Romans, because they commanded that taxes be paid. Again, Jesus answered in a way that didn’t put Himself on either side of that dilemma. He said, “Hand me a coin,” and they handed Him the denarius. He looked at it and asked, “Whose picture is this? Whose super-inscription is this?” They replied, “Caesar’s.” He said, “Fine, then give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God.” The taxes belonged to Caesar, and the tithes belonged to God. They were to give to Caesar what was his, and to God what was His. That is an important lesson for us today. Many times in our lives we have trouble in making the distinction between what we should do as Christians or as believers in Christ and what we should do as citizens of our nation, no matter what our nation is. Jesus said, “Obey the laws as long as you are able to obey God at the same time. Give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar. Give to God what belongs to God.”

Question Concerning the Resurrection

Jesus’ answer to the Sadducees about the resurrection will be seen again briefly in this chapter. In Luke 20:27- 40 the details of this answer are important because they deal with our hope, and our hope is in being raised one day to eternal life.

The Question Prompted by Unbelief

The Sadducees, as a political party, did not believe in the resurrection (Luke 20:27). Some of the Sadducees who said that there was no resurrection came to Jesus with a question. There are also people in religion today who do not believe in the resurrection. Paul spoke of those people in 1 Corinthians chapter fifteen when some in Corinth said that there was no resurrection from the dead. In all these cases, this disbelief was a reaction to a physical concept of the resurrection. We would

not want to be raised from the dead if we were going to be raised with this same body that gets old and tired and will one day die and decay. However, this body is going to be raised in a changed state, incorruptible and immortal (1 Corinthians 15). Therefore, they were reacting against the idea of this old, decaying, weak and sinful body being raised. Jesus wanted to tell them that the resurrection is different than that. However, they believed that there was no resurrection from the dead. They believed that Jesus was in a dilemma, because He taught that there was a resurrection from the dead. They tried to show Him that it was a good argument. If a person can be shown that his argument leads him to a contradiction of common sense, then his argument is wrong. That was what they were trying to do to Jesus.

The Proof-case Presented by the Sadducees

The Sadducees told the story of a lady who married a man who had six brothers. Her husband died and left her no children. According to Deuteronomy 25:5-6 his brother was supposed to marry the lady and raise up children for his brother, the first husband. She then belonged to the second brother, and he died leaving no children. The third brother left no children either, and so it proceeded until the seventh brother. All seven of the brothers had her as wife, and she still had no children. Then finally the woman died. They then asked Jesus the question, “Whose wife will she be in the resurrection since the seven are married to her?” (Luke 20:33) They probably sat back and thought, “Okay Jesus, answer this one. How are you going to answer this question? We’ve got you trapped now. How are you going to answer?” Yet Jesus answered beautifully.

Jesus’ Response and Answer to the Question

First, Jesus told them that they were ignorant. He said, “Your whole problem is built on your ignorance of two things. You are ignorant of the Bible, and you are ignorant of God’s

power.” Nearly all error and false positions come from ignorance of two things: the word of God and the power of God. They were ignorant of the word of God that had spoken of the resurrection, and they were ignorant of God’s power that could raise this body. He would not raise it like it is, but like Jesus’ body is—immortal, incorruptible and undefiled. He said, “You are ignorant because you don’t know the Scriptures, and you don’t know the power of God.

A Knowledgeable Answer

Then He said, “Heaven is different. In heaven we are like the angels who neither marry nor are given in marriage. In heaven there is no need for the physical, human desires to be fulfilled—the sexual, sensual and pleasurable desires and appetites. Instead we will dwell in the ever pleasurable presence of God, and we will be as the angels in heaven. You are ignorant of that, because after death it is different with you. When you are raised from the dead, it will be different with you because then you will be, not as human beings in need of temporary pleasures, but as the angels of heaven dwelling forever in the place where their every single desire is fulfilled.”

A Profound Revelation

Then Jesus told them that they were ignorant of the righteous dead: Abraham and Isaac and Jacob. He showed them the Scripture that they were ignorant of. He said, “Have you not read the scripture in which God was talking to Moses from the burning bush saying, ‘I am the God of Abraham, of Isaac and of Jacob’? God is not the God of the dead but of the living.” It is interesting that the Bible was so inspired that Jesus would make the argument on the tense of the very moment. He didn’t say, “I was the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.” That would have been correct grammatically, because Abraham, Isaac and Jacob had died physically. However, they were not dead, so God could not say, “I was the God of Abraham, of Isaac and of Jacob.” He

had to say, “I am, *at this present moment*, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.” When He said that in Exodus 3:6, after Abraham, Isaac and Jacob had been dead physically, God was claiming that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob lived. When one dies, he will not be ushered into a fantasy land of sleep, but He will be ushered into something better and more life-filled. He will be more alive after death than in life. For everyone lives for God, for He is the God of all.

Ignorance on Display

How did that handle the Sadducees’ question? If Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were alive, as miraculous as that was, it was no challenge for God to raise their body from the dead. What response did they make to this? In the parallel passage of Matthew 22:23 they were astonished. They didn’t agree with His answer, and they still didn’t believe in the resurrection of the dead. However, they were astonished at the wisdom that turned their unanswerable dilemma into ashes by simply saying, “You are ignorant of the Scripture. Therefore, you are ignorant of the power of God that can make people what they are not and make heaven different than earth is.” Luke 20:39 says, “*Some of the teachers of the law responded, ‘Well said, teacher!’*” There were some Pharisees standing around who said, “Amen! That is absolutely right. Well said, Teacher!” Luke 20:40 says, “*And no one dared to ask him any more questions.*” That is, none of the Sadducees. The Pharisees had to have one more shot through one of their skilled lawyers, but the Sadducees were forever silenced. They were astonished. Approval was given, and they were silenced at the teaching that He gave. A lesson can be learned from this: the final word is always Jesus’. What says the Scripture? What says the Son of Man? If we were to get into a dispute about a religious matter, what will answer it? All the Word of God will answer it, but in particular the Word of Christ, for He is the fullness of all the wisdom and power of

God. This was a great answer, therefore, we anticipate the resurrection from the dead.

The reason that we are sure about the resurrection is not simply because Jesus' tomb is empty, and not simply because the Bible says we are going to be raised. We are certain because of the character of God. God is eternal, and therefore, the people that He creates in His image share in that eternal nature. We will spend eternity either like the angels of heaven or like the angels of hell. However, the argument was not over.

Question About the Greatest Commandment

The Pharisees were listening in, and they immediately began to think that they could not let Jesus continue. They had to find a way to trick Him, so they got together and discussed it. Then they turned it over to one of their experts, to one of their lawyers. In Mark chapter twelve is this argument and perhaps the response to the Pharisees as they sent one of their teachers. Some versions say "lawyer," and others "teachers of the law." Mark 12:28-34 contains perhaps the greatest question ever discussed:

One of the teachers of the law came and heard them debating. Noticing that Jesus had given them a good answer, he asked him, "Of all the commandments, which is the most important?" "The most important one," answered Jesus, "is this: 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' The second is this: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no commandment greater than these." "Well said, teacher," the man replied. "You are right in saying that God is one and there is no other but him. To love him with all your heart, with all your understanding and with all your strength, and to love

your neighbor as yourself is more important than all burnt offerings and sacrifices.” When Jesus saw that he had answered wisely, he said to him, “You are not far from the kingdom of God.” And from then on no one dared ask him any more questions.

This not only silenced the Pharisees, but it silenced all other questioners. This was a good question, and in Matthew 22:34-36 a little background was given. The Pharisees had gathered together, and they had discussed how to trip Jesus up. Then this lawyer came, Matthew said, testing and trying Jesus to see if he could get Him into an argument. There is a movie called *Fiddler on the Roof*. There were many rabbis in that movie, because it was about the Jews in Russia. These rabbis were always arguing about the law. One of their arguments was even over how many angels could sit on the head of a pin. They were always arguing about whether this commandment was greater or that commandment was greater. This lawyer went to Jesus with a very relevant and “to the time” question. He believed that whatever Jesus said, He would get in trouble with someone in Israel. However Jesus, as always, had the answer no one could argue with. He went to the root. He went to the core and said, “The answer to your question is love. That is the greatest commandment.” Jesus said the same thing in John 13:34-35, “*A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.*”

Jesus’ Answer – Love

It is very difficult to define love. Love is one of those words known more in experience than in definition. It has always been thought that love is the deliberate preferring and esteeming of something or someone above all else. Love is the desire to be united and joined to someone. Love is appreciating all the gifts that are given. It is a great desire to please the one

loved and a compulsion to honor the one loved. Love is a willingness to sacrifice for the loved one and is bestowed upon all those who are loved by the loved one. Most of these are from the Bible, and some of them are from love felt toward God, a wife, children or grandchildren. However, love is the word that is above all other words. Faith is a fabulous word. Hope is a fabulous word. Love is greater than those two. Love is greater than faith, and faith is eternal. Love is also greater than hope which is eternal. Love is greater simply because it is the expression of the most godly part of us, and because the Bible says God is love. With this great push, this great desire, this great compulsion, this great willingness to sacrifice and this great honor, we are to give all to God and love Him with all our heart. We have emotions which say love is to be sincere. We are to love God with all of our soul. That is our spirituality, which says love is to be emotional. We are to love God with all of our mind. That's our intellect, and love is to be intelligent and smart. We are to love God with all of our strength, which is our ability. That says love is to be energetic. Our thought, our emotion, our will, our sweat, our endeavor, our toil and all that we are is to be expended in honoring, exalting and serving the Lord God.

Jesus used the same word for our attitude toward others. He said we are to love our neighbor as we do ourselves. Not a different word, not a different spirit, not a different feeling, but the same feeling, the same attitude, the same action that we present to God, we are to present to our neighbor. It is interesting that we are to do it to ourselves too. He says that we are to love our neighbor as we love ourselves. There is a legitimate self-love. If we are not loving ourselves legitimately, seeking our own highest good and wanting ourselves to be benefitted and pleased, then we will never want our neighbor to be loved. He says we are to love our neighbor as we love ourselves. We are the creation of God, created in His image. If there is something about God worth loving, then there is

something about ourselves that is worth loving. “*Love your neighbor as you love yourself*” (Mark 12:31).

The Lawyer’s Response

It would have been interesting to hear the thoughts that were going on in the lawyer’s mind while Jesus was talking about this, because he did say, “You have answered right.” For the first time, probably, in all that lawyer’s search of Scripture, he had seen that was absolutely correct. The whole law and all the prophets are summed up in a single word—love, manifested toward three individuals—God, neighbor and self. Because he answered that way, Jesus said that he was not far from the kingdom of heaven.

Characteristics of the Inquiring Lawyer

What was there about that man and other men like him who were not far from the kingdom? This man and other God-seekers had an honest spirit. They were honest and open as they looked at what Jesus said. Because of that, they had spiritual insight, and they searched and gained knowledge of the Word of God. They had a teachable heart, a sense of need and a horror of wrong, error and sin. They had a high regard for the holy things of God, and they had attention given to the grace of God that was bestowed upon them. All of this went back to their honest spirit and open mind.

The Question No One Dared to Ask

Jesus then wanted to ask them a question. In Matthew chapter twenty-two Jesus asked them this question, and with it, all the argument was forever over. Matthew 22:41-46 says,

While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them, “What do you think about the Christ? Whose son is he?” “The son of David,” they replied. He said to them, “How is it then that David, speaking by the Spirit, calls him ‘Lord?’ For he says, ‘The

Lord said to my Lord: ‘Sit at my right hand until I put your enemies under your feet.’ If then David calls him ‘Lord,’ how can he be his son?’” No one could say a word in reply, and from that day on no one dared to ask him any more questions.

The Pharisees thought the question simple . They had read the Old Law. The Messiah was to come from David's family, so He was David's son. However, Jesus said, “How then, can He precede him?” If He was David's son, how could He exist before David? If He was David's son, how could He be David's Lord? This was the same thing in John 1 when John the Baptist said, “He is before me, (speaking of Jesus) because He existed before me.” John the Baptist was born six months before Christ, so how could Jesus exist before John was born? That was because Jesus is God. Jesus is also man. “*The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.* ” (John 1:14) We beheld His glory as the unique one of the Father, full of grace and truth. Jesus is the God-man. He is the man-God. He is one-hundred percent man, and He is one-hundred percent God. Even Paul did not understand that. In 1 Timothy 3:16 he said, “*Beyond all question, the mystery of godliness is great: He appeared in a body, was vindicated by the Spirit . . .*”

There is absolutely no way, physically and scientifically, for one individual to be both God and man. Jesus claimed to be both. Jesus performed miracles to prove it. God raised Him from the dead to prove it. The Holy Spirit was sent to inspire men to teach it, and the church exists today because of it. He is Immanuel, “God with us.” He is the man of Zechariah, the man whom God said was His equal. Jesus said that He and the Father are one (John 10:30). This is the dilemma that the unbeliever hangs himself on each time. Who is the Christ? What do you think of the Christ? The Bible says that He is perfect Man, and He is perfect God. This discussion will be continued in the next chapter. God bless you and give you all kinds of peace in believing in Jesus.

Period of Passion (4)

Review and Preview

This chapter continues the study of “The Eight Days that Changed the World.” On Sunday, the first of these eight days, Jesus went into the city in triumph, showing His glory. On the second of those days, Monday, Jesus entered the city and cleansed the temple. He also showed His power by cursing a fig tree. On the third day, Jesus entered the city to argue with all those who opposed His teaching. This was a period of controversy which showed His wisdom. He and the disciples also saw the barren fig tree. He argued with the Sanhedrin about His authority. He argued with the Herodians and the Pharisees about paying tribute and with the Sadducees about the resurrection from the dead. He argued with the Pharisees through their lawyer about the greatest commandment. Then Jesus asked them the silencing question, the question of all questions: “What do you think of the Christ? Whose Son is He?” Christianity is not a religion. It is a relationship and a lifestyle. It is a relationship with God and a lifestyle centered and honored in following Christ. That must be understood, and that was why Jesus asked the question: What do you think about the Christ?

Character of Pharisees in General

Jesus was ready to enter the city of Jerusalem for the last time. As He stood on one of the mountains nearby and looked upon all of the people as they sat in their unbelief, as they walked about in their legalism and as they worshiped in their empty style, He wept. Matthew 23:1-12 says,

Then Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples: “The teachers of the law and the Pharisees sit in Moses’ seat. So you must obey them and do everything they tell you. But do not do what they do, for they do not practice what they preach. They tie up heavy loads and put them on men’s shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to lift a finger to move them. Everything they do is done for men to see: They make their phylacteries wide and the tassels on their garments long; they love the place of honor at banquets and the most important seats in the synagogues; they love to be greeted in the marketplaces and to have men call them ‘Rabbi.’ But you are not to be called ‘Rabbi,’ for you have only one Master and you are all brothers. And do not call anyone on earth ‘father,’ for you have one Father, and he is in heaven. Nor are you to be called ‘teacher,’ for you have one Teacher, the Christ. The greatest among you will be your servant. For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted.”

Misunderstanding the Pharisees

After that, Jesus entered into a long set of “woes,” but before that His audience should be studied. He was speaking to a large crowd, most of who were either Pharisees or His disciples. In religion today, the term “Pharisee” is almost always used in a negative voice tone, as if they are bad. Most of the Pharisees were not bad, and not all of them were hypocrites. Just their leaders were hypocrites. They were, for the most part, the middle class businessmen of Israel. Most of them were very sincere in their quest for truth and holiness. In wanting to know right and to be right, they were very honest. The word “Pharisee” means “separate,” and these were the men and women who thought they were to live a life of separateness

from the Gentiles and from the “unclean” Jews—the Publicans, the sinners and the prostitutes. They thought they were to live separate from anyone who opposed the traditions that they had added to the law.

They Were Very Traditional People

The Pharisees were very traditional people. They were not only bound by God’s law, but they were bound by the traditions that they had added to God’s law. Most of them were not hypocritical, but were honest, sincere, hard-working, middle class, middle income, religious and godly people. Nicodemus (John 3) and Joseph of Arimathea (Matthew 27) were like this. They were good Pharisees who were really striving to keep the law.

However, some of these Pharisees were the ones who constantly confronted Jesus. Some Pharisees used their religion to promote themselves and to gain material things. They were after either the honor of men or riches. These were the people whom Jesus spoke of in this chapter. It is understood that there were only about six thousand Pharisees. They were the minority party in Israel, but they were the most religious, the most law-bound and the most tradition-oppressed. Jesus wanted that explained to the crowd before He pronounced woes on these hypocritical Pharisees who would not practice what they taught. He wanted them to know what the problem was with the Pharisees.

The Characteristics of These Hypocritical Pharisees

They Had a False Concept of Righteousness

In Matthew 23:1-12 there were three false concepts that help us to understand why these people were the way they were and why Jesus had to be so severe against them.

Number one, they had a *false concept of righteousness*. They had assumed Moses' seat, and most translations are as this one: "they sit on Moses' seat." This literally meant that they had taken Moses' seat. That not only meant that they had *assumed* authority, but that they had assumed *the position* of authority. Outside each synagogue was a stone chair, and that was where the ruler or the one who was in charge sat as people entered the synagogue. The Pharisees had taken that place; they had assumed Moses' position. The people did not want a board of men sitting over them in that position of authority, for there is one Lord. That was why Jesus said there was one Rabbi, one Teacher, and one Father. No one could assume the position of God. That was what the Pharisees had done. They had sat in the seat that was intended for God, so they had a false concept of righteousness.

The Pharisees' concept of righteousness was the seat in which they sat, the position that they held. They were going to be honored because they were the elders of Israel. It didn't matter that they were not doing what they taught others to do. They would point people toward the right way, but they would not walk in the way they pointed. They taught, by their lifestyle, that righteousness was an outward observance of law rather than an inward belief of reality. Jesus had already answered or handled that just a moment before, when He said that true religion, the greatest commandment, was to love God with all of a man's heart, soul, mind and strength. All of those, except strength, are an inward love, and out of this inward love of mind and heart will come worship in strength and in life. They really thought that they were pleasing to God and should be followed because of where they sat and what they taught.

They Had a False Concept of Ministry

Number two, regardless of the Pharisees' intentions, they were not sufficient, because they had *a false concept of ministry*. Jesus said in Matthew 23:4:

“They tie up heavy loads and put them on men’s shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to lift a finger to move them.”

They were laying heavy burdens on people. They were passing down laws by proclamation as to what people were to do, but they themselves did not bear them. Jesus said in Matthew 11:28-30,

“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”

The people were not to accept the Pharisees’ burden. We should not accept the burden of legalism that people would place upon us. We are to follow those who do what they say. Matthew 23:3 says, *“But do not do what they do, for they do not practice what they preach.”* They talk the talk, but they don’t walk the walk. We cannot follow people that only talk, because they are not going anywhere. They are just talking. Only the people who are walking the pathway of Christ should be followed. That is why the book of Acts says several times that people became obedient to the way, or they maligned the way, or they walked the way. Christianity is not a religion. Christianity is a way. Christianity is a walk. That was the Pharisees’ problem, because they had a false concept of ministry. They commanded, but they did not participate. They were hypocritical dictators, not spiritual leaders.

They Had a False Concept of Greatness

Number three, the third misconception was their *false concept of greatness*. They misunderstood what greatness was (Matthew 23:5-12). They loved to be in the marketplace, and

they loved to stand and have everyone watch them pray. They loved to let everyone watch them put their gift in a box, and they loved to receive the honor of being called “Rabbi,” “Father” or “Master.” Jesus said, “That is not it.” Greatness was not based on praise by men (Matthew 23:5). Greatness was not the position they held (Matthew 23:6). Greatness was not the title bestowed upon them. The world could call them “Rabbi,” yet that did not make them so. The church could call them “Master,” yet that did not make them so. Many people could call them “Father,” yet that didn’t make them one. Religiously, there is one Rabbi and one Teacher, Jesus. There is one Father, God. There is one Master, Christ.

Jesus defined true greatness. He not only left them with the statement that they had a wrong concept of greatness, but He told them that true greatness was found in humble service. Notice Matthew 23:11-12,

“The greatest among you will be your servant. For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted.”

The Pharisees had a false concept of righteousness. They had a false concept of ministry. They had a false concept of greatness. What they needed to be were not lords on a throne, but servants who were serving their fellow man.

Denunciation of Pharisees

Contrast With the Beatitudes

Jesus was ready to denounce the Pharisees, and He did in Matthew 23:13-36. It is amazing that there is an absolute parallel in contrast between the Sermon on the Mount and these Scriptures. In the Sermon on the Mount there were seven things that Jesus said made people blessed, and none of them were found in the Pharisees. The very opposite was true here. Jesus

had to say “Woe,” instead of “blessed.” There are seven “blessed’s” in the beatitudes, and there are seven “woes” in this passage. These men and women were the very opposite of what they needed to be. The Sermon on the Mount says, *“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven”* (Matthew 5:3). He said that these men were shutting the kingdom up and not letting people enter. The beatitude says, *“Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted”* (Matthew 5:4). These people were even destroying widows and devouring their houses. The sermon said, *“Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth”* (Matthew 5:5). Jesus said that these people were proud and were going to be sent to hell. He said that those who were hungry for righteousness were blessed (Matthew 5:6), but in Matthew 23 these people were greedy for gain. He said, *“Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy”* (Matthew 5:7). But these people had rejected the mercy of God for their own life and were refusing it for others. He said that the pure in heart were blessed, but these were defiled in heart. Jesus said that blessed were the persecuted and peacemaking children of God. He called those in Matthew 23:13-36 the persecuting, murdering children of the devil. The only thing that could await them was judgment, with every single sin they had committed to be accounted for.

Woes Upon the Jewish Leaders

Matthew 23:13-14 says,

“Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You shut the kingdom of heaven in men’s faces. You yourselves do not enter, nor will you let those enter who are trying to. Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You travel over land and sea to win a single convert, and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of hell as you are.”

He said, “*Woe to you, blind guides!*” (Matthew 23:16). They were blind men. Matthew 23:23 says,

“Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices—mint, dill and cummin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law—justice, mercy and faithfulness.”

He said in 23:25-27,

“Woe to you, teachers of the law . . . You clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence . . . like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of dead men’s bones and everything unclean.”

He said in 23:29, “*Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You build tombs for the prophets . . .*” Watch Jesus in Matthew 23:33, “*You snakes! You brood of vipers! How will you escape being condemned to hell?*”

They knew what was right, yet they didn’t do what they knew to be right. They knew that they ought to have been helping the poor, and instead they were robbing them. Therefore, Jesus said to them, “There is no hope for you at all. You cannot escape. All the blood of the Old Testament is on you, from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah, the son of Berekiyah. All of that blood was going to come to be judged upon these people because they had rejected God, they had rejected Jesus, and they had rejected the Holy Spirit. They would crucify the Son of God, and Jesus’ blood along with all the blood that had ever been shed in all of Israel would come upon these people. Why was that? It was because they were hypocrites.

“Hypocrite” is an interesting word. It comes from the Greek word *hypokrita*, which means “to play the part.” A hypocrite is an actor—somebody on a stage, wearing a mask, and playing a part that is not really true in their life. It is more or less like some of the movies, TV shows, books or plays often seen and read today. A person is not really being honest when he is acting a part. Jesus said, “You Pharisees are religious in action, but inwardly you are full of dead men’s bones. You don’t enter the kingdom, and you won’t let others enter either. You are destroying widows and devouring their houses. You are proudly winning people to be like you—sons of hell.” All these things were happening simply because they were not living up to the Word that they knew to be true.

Judgment – All of Their Sins to Be Accounted for

Jesus walked away from them. He surely walked away sadly, because earlier He had said that He had come to save. Just a few hours before, on this day, He had taught parables in which servant after servant and prophet after prophet had been sent to them, and they had killed, maligned and persecuted them. Last of all, the Son was coming. They didn’t honor the prophets, therefore, they didn’t honor the Word of God. If one does not hear the word that is from God, He will never accept the Son that comes from God. So Jesus walked away knowing that these people had denied the last chance they would ever have to be children of God.

Lamentation Over Jerusalem

On a mountain just outside Jerusalem, He looked down at the city. In Matthew 23:37-39 He said,

“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing.

Look, your house is left to you desolate. For I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, ‘Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.’”

Those are some of the saddest words in all the Bible. Here was the city that was the apple of God's eye. In the Psalms, on four or five different occasions, God said, “I have chosen Zion. My heart delights in Zion. My habitation will be in Jerusalem, for I have chosen it of all the cities to dwell there. It is the apple of my eye. It is the gem of all gems in my diadem. I love Jerusalem.” God said this again and again. He didn't mean the city with all the bricks, mortar and streets. He meant the people. These were the people whom He had loved throughout the Old Testament. He had wanted to bless them with the blessings of His great benefits, but they always turned a deaf ear toward Him. Therefore, they had to be judged by the nations around them. They had to be judged by the Assyrian, the Egyptian, the Babylonian, the Persian, the Greek, and in the time of Jesus by the control of the Romans. Why? God was doing this, and it was the best that could be done. He was doing His very best to bring them to repentance, but they would not repent. Jesus looked on this city, sleeping in its dull religion and in its legalistic observance of the law, and He wept. From what is recorded, Jesus didn't weep often. He was the man of sorrows, so surely He wept often. However, there are not many records of His weeping. He nearly always wept in the sorrow of unbelief. That was why He wept over Lazarus' tomb. He looked at their unbelief, and then it is recorded that Jesus wept. He wept because the crowd (Jerusalem) did not believe that Lazarus was about to come back from the dead. He wept because this crowd would not come to Him that they might have life.

Jesus said, “. . . *I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing*” (Matthew 23:37). The figure there was one of a rain storm. In West Texas there was such a rain storm. The

rain came, and water started running down the little crevices and gullies in the earth. There were a bunch of little yellow chicks out running around in the yard, and the mother put herself on a high place and spread her wings as far as they would go and began to cluck at the top of her voice. It is not known exactly what she was saying, but imaginably she was calling those chicks by name and begging them to come under the protection of her wings. One of them just wouldn't go, and it refused to hear the hen's cry. Pretty soon, water came down the crevice that the little chick was in and swept it to its death. It refused to come to the protection of the mother's wing. However, the mother did not chase the chick, because if she put her wings down to run and protect this one chick, then all the chicks under her wings would die. God had to let Jerusalem fall for the benefit of the rest of the cities of the world.

"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem . . ." (23:37) God could be calling any city's name saying, "I wanted to gather you under my wing, but you were not willing to do so." Therefore, what did He say? He said, "Pay attention to what I am about to say. Your desolation is near." In this text, who was the hearer? Surely it was Jerusalem. He said, "*O Jerusalem, Jerusalem . . . your house is left to you desolate.*" (23:37) That was the temple. In Matthew chapter twenty-four Jesus discussed the fall of their temple. He said "their temple," yet He probably meant their nation. That was what the temple stood for. It represented the house of Israel, which was God's habitation or God's house, and that house was desolate.

It would be proven to be desolate in A.D. 70 when the Roman Army destroyed the city, the temple and therefore the nation. It would be proven to be desolate, but it was desolate already. Israel's inheritance—Jerusalem, their house—was left to them desolate. He not only said that it was desolate, but that He was the one who was going to do it. He said, "You won't see Me any more until you say, 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord.' I wanted to save you, but you wouldn't come.

Your house has left you desolate. There's nothing I can do about that, and you will see Me coming back to destroy it." It is not surprising in Matthew chapter twenty-four that they wanted to know what the sign of His coming and the sign of the end of the age was. Jesus had already told them that their age was over. He already told them that He was coming to do it. All they wanted to know was when and how. This will be seen in the next chapter.

Lessons to be Learned

What lessons should be gained from this severe, fierce denunciation? The **number one** lesson is that past blessings do not guarantee future blessings. God blessed Israel and Jerusalem with the greatest blessings that any city or nation had ever known, and yet they were going to be destroyed. The fact that God had blessed them in the past doesn't obligate Him to bless them in the present.

Number two, faithfulness is the guarantee of blessedness. If we will just be faithful, walk in the light, be poor in spirit, be mournful, be meek, be hungry, be merciful and be the rest of the things the beatitudes tell us, then we are guaranteed blessings. If we do not, then judgment is at hand.

The **number three** lesson is that when God judges, it is severe. When God brings judgment upon a people, even if they are the people of His own heart and the apple of His own eye, He will bring desolate, absolute and complete destruction. However, most of all we must learn that God is anxious because He is loving. He is anxious to save people. He wants no one to perish, not even hypocritical, legalistic and Pharisaical Jerusalem. He wanted them under His wing. We must leave all of our pride and religion behind, and we must dwell beneath His everlasting arms and serve Him with all our heart, soul, mind and strength.

Period of Passion (5)

Review and Preview

This chapter is a continuation of the study of the eight days that changed and shook the world. This week was from Sunday to Sunday and was the last week of the life of Christ. The power of Jesus has been seen, particularly on Monday as He cleansed the temple. The controversy that He had with Israel has also been studied. This occurred particularly with the Pharisees, Sadducees and lawyers as Jesus confronted for the last time their hypocrisy, traditionalism and legalism as it pertained to the law. Jesus answered their questions about His authority, about marriage and about all the other concerns that they had. Jesus then pronounced woes on the city of Jerusalem. As for the Pharisees, He called them hypocrites, snakes and children of snakes as they perverted the law and harmed the people who were refused the privilege to become the people of God. In the last part of Matthew chapter twenty-three Jesus said that it was time for judgment to come upon them. He said that their house would be left desolate, and they would not see Him again until He came, not as the favorite or the Lamb, but as the Judge. He would come as the warrior who would destroy the entire city and take away their place as a nation and as the people of God.

The Widow at the Treasury

Jesus then discussed Israel's removal as a nation and as the people of God, and He did so in the background of an unusual gift in Mark 12:41-44. This brief study is called "The Widow at the Treasury," or as it is called many times, "The Widow's Mite."

Jesus sat down opposite the place where the offerings were put and watched the crowd putting their money into the temple treasury. Many rich people threw in large amounts. But a poor widow came and put in two very small copper coins, worth only a fraction of a penny. Calling his disciples to him, Jesus said, “I tell you the truth, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others. They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything—all she had to live on.”

The Incident: Giving to the Temple Treasury

Notice the place in which this giving was happening. It was occurring in the temple court, where the women's court ended and the court of the Jews began. There were thirteen money boxes placed there. These were for the building or the remodeling of the temple, and they were called "God's treasury." Any man who passed there was supposed to put in an offering. The woman came there to put in an offering, and it is interesting that the object of that offering was to build the house of God. The temple was constantly being repaired, refurbished and rebuilt. The givers in the crowd were making offerings by putting in their money, and the rich were bringing gifts of large amounts. However, this widow brought two very small copper coins. The text is correct when it says that they were worth less than a penny. Whatever the smallest measure of money is in any place in the world, these two coins were worth less than that. This was all that this widow had. According to Matthew 23:5 the teachers of the law and the Pharisees were doing things in the spirit of being seen—the spirit of receiving honor, praise and glory from men. However, the spirit that this lady came in was a spirit of truth and piety, real godliness, and absolute sacrifice.

It is interesting that Jesus was standing nearby watching the givers. He was watching them as they gave and saw what they put in. He spoke of the givers saying, "*They all gave out of . . .*"

and, "The widow gave all." If we have a handful or pocketful of money, and we give several coins, then we are giving out of our surplus. This widow brought in a small bag, all she had between herself and starvation, between herself and total bankruptcy. This widow bankrupted herself for the temple of the Lord. She bankrupted herself for the work of her Father.

Jesus Judges Our Giving On Three Basis

In this is seen that Jesus judges giving which is a very important subject. If one were to read through the gospels—Matthew, Mark, Luke and John—and mark each time Jesus spoke about giving and money or about man's relationship with material possessions, he would find that approximately twenty-five percent of all that Jesus said dealt with how to properly handle material blessings. Our money and substance are very important subjects. There are three basis upon which Jesus judges giving. He will first of all judge our giving by **the reason we give**. Why do we give? Do we give because it is a duty? Do we give because it is a commandment? Do we give because it is a responsibility or because we are pressured? Do we give for these reasons or to build the house of God? Do we give to spread the word of God, the work of God and the temple of God throughout all the world? What is the spirit of our giving? Do we give to be seen of men and to feel good about the fact we are committed and sacrificial to God? Or do we give to serve Him? Is it an act of worship rendered to Him?

We should be concerned less about **the extent of our giving** and concerned more with **the spirit of our giving**. Many times we judge people by the amount they give, but Jesus judged people by the amount they kept and what they had left over. Sometimes people rebel when they hear about the tithe and giving a tenth to God. They say, "I have to give ten percent of my money to God?" No, they are wrong. We do not have to give ten percent of our money to God. What we get to do is keep

ninety percent of God's money for our benefit. God is gracious and loving. He could have demanded it all. He has the right to demand all that we have. Instead, He simply says, "A tithe belongs to Me." We are to bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, but this widow didn't do that. It is doubtful that the people were doing that. They were giving "out of their riches." They were probably not even giving a tithe. This woman didn't give a tithe. She gave all she had. As we think about our giving, we are going to have to determine if we can justify our expense account. Are we going to be able to justify keeping what we have when there is a lost world and starving people?

The Judgement Upon Jerusalem

The Statement: "Not One Stone Here Left Upon Another"

The people had heard Jesus pronounce all of the woes and prophecies of their fall in Matthew chapter twenty-three, and they had stood beside Jesus as He praised the woman for her gift, and didn't praise the rich for their abundant sacrifices. They walked out of the temple and said, "Lord, this temple, with all of its beautiful stones and precious things surely could not be built on the widow's small gift? Are you really going to destroy it? Are you going to destroy this glorious, physical temple of God?" Then Jesus made a statement that began another point. He passed judgment upon Jerusalem. Mark 13:1-2 says,

As he was leaving the temple, one of his disciples said to him, "Look, Teacher! What massive stones! What magnificent buildings!" "Do you see all these great buildings?" replied Jesus. "Not one stone here will be left on another; every one will be thrown down."

There are three passages that are parallel to this: Matthew 24:1-2, Mark 13:1-2 and Luke 21:5-6. It was exactly the same

speech, and much difficulty revolves around this passage in regard to many people's teaching about the end of time. If all three of these passages are paralleled and the background of the woes is remembered (Matthew 23), then it is seen that this passage is not even talking about the end of time. This is talking about something that will take place in that generation, and it will be upon the city of Jerusalem that it takes place. Mark made it clear that all of this refers to one single event. Jesus has said in Mark 13:2, "*Not one stone here will be left on another . . .*" That had to have the disciples a little perturbed.

The Questions

Mark 13:3-4 says,

As Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter, James, John and Andrew asked him privately, "Tell us, when will these things happen? And what will be the sign that they are all about to be fulfilled."

They asked two questions in Mark 13:3-4 that were in reference to Jerusalem and no stone being left on another. One question concerned time: When shall these things be? The other question was about the sign: What shall be the sign when all these things are about to be fulfilled? In Luke 21:7 these questions were asked in exactly those words. "*'Teacher,' they asked, 'when will these things happen? And what will be the sign that they are about to take place?'*" Both the time and the sign question dealt with one single day—one single period of time in which not one stone would be left upon another in the temple.

Matthew chapter twenty-four recorded these questions as well. We see in Matthew 23:38 that Jesus said, "*Look, your house is left to you desolate.*" Jesus was going to come to make their house desolate, and it was going to happen during that

generation. Therefore, they asked the question in Matthew 24:3, *“As Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately. ‘Tell us,’ they said, ‘when will this happen, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?’”* This question about the sign was worded differently than the others. That was because the background was different. In Matthew chapter twenty-three Jesus talked about coming upon that generation to destroy them. So they wanted to know if there would be a sign of His coming. He talked about their house left to them desolate, which meant that the Jewish age was ended. Therefore they asked, “What will be the end of the age?”

The Answer to the Sign Question

They had asked a question about time and one about the sign. Both of them dealt with the same event. However, Jesus answered the sign question first, and we read in Matthew 24:4-14, Mark 13:5-13 and Luke 21:8-19 that He told them some things that were not the sign. First, He said that the sign was not a false Christ. He said that there would be false Christs who would try to lead people astray, but that was not the sign. He said that the sign was not wars nor rumors of wars. There would be wars and rumors of wars, but the end would not yet come. They wanted to know when the end would be. Jesus said that the end had not yet come at that time. He said that there would be apostasy, but that would not be the sign. People would teach untrue things and lead many people astray, but that was not the sign. False prophets would arise and teach untrue things to draw away disciples, but that was not the sign either. There would be increasing wickedness and decreasing love, and that was not the sign. There would be persecution and betrayal, and fathers would deliver up sons, mothers and daughters. None of these were the sign. There would be world-wide preaching, and the gospel would be preached to all the world before the end was to come. However, that was not the sign either.

What was the sign? Matthew 24:15-22 says, “*So when you see . . .*” That’s what you do when there is a sign—you see it.

“So when you see standing in the holy place ‘the abomination that causes desolation,’ spoken of through the prophet Daniel—let the reader understand—then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. Let no one on the roof of his house go down to take anything out of the house. Let no one in the field go back to get his cloak. How dreadful it will be in those days for pregnant women and nursing mothers! Pray that your flight will not take place in winter or on the Sabbath (when the gates will be closed). For then there will be great distress, unequaled from the beginning of the world until now—and never to be equaled again. If those days had not been cut short, no one would survive, but for the sake of the elect those days will be shortened.”

Jesus was saying, “Here is the sign: the abomination of desolation standing where it shouldn’t be.” What does that mean? Luke chapter twenty-one spells out what the abomination is. It is a parallel text—the exact same conversation. Luke 21:20-21 says:

“When you see Jerusalem being surrounded by armies, you will know that its desolation is near. Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, let those in the city get out, and let those in the country not enter the city.”

This was everything He said in Matthew, but the abomination that made desolate was the army that surrounded Jerusalem. He had already said in Matthew 23 that it was going to be desolate. He said there was going to be an abomination that

was to make it desolate, and the desolation would be the army surrounding it.

The Answer to the Time Question

Then in Luke 21:29-33 Jesus told them a parable.

He told them this parable: “Look at the fig tree and all the trees. When they sprout leaves, you can see for yourselves and know that summer is near. Even so, when you see these things happening, you know that the kingdom of God is near. I tell you the truth, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.”

The General Answer

The sign question was answered, and the time question was next. Jesus said that they would see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, and they would know that her desolation was at hand. The answer to the time question was “this generation.” It was hard to believe, but that was what He said in Luke 21:32-33,

“I tell you the truth, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.”

The word of God is more sure than heaven and earth, and He said “. . . all these things . . .” What were “all of these things” of which Jesus was speaking? He was talking about Jerusalem surrounded with armies and Jerusalem made desolate. Not one stone would be left upon another, and all these things would happen in Jerusalem.

Jesus made these statements about 29 A.D. Forty-one years later, in 70 A.D., Vespasian and his son Titus surrounded the

city of Jerusalem, and in a few months the city was completely destroyed. Vespasian had made a rule. He had said, “I don’t want anybody to touch the temple of God. I don’t want anybody to harm the temple of their God.” In spite of this command to the Roman general who would one day be Caesar, the entire temple was destroyed. There was not one stone left upon another, because the Caesar of caesars, the Lord Jesus Christ, the King of kings and Lord of lords had already prophesied that was the way it would be. What was going to happen? Jerusalem would be surrounded with armies, and that was the sign that her desolation was at hand. This was going to happen in that generation.

The Specific Answer

In Matthew chapter twenty-four Jesus expanded this time question to a specific day and a specific hour, and He made an unusual statement about it in Matthew 24:36: “*No one knows about that day or hour . . .*” Do we today know about the generation of which Jesus spoke? Do we know the day? Do we know the hour? No, we don’t. He said, “*No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.*” However, this would be a certain kind of day. Matthew 24:37-41 says,

“As it was in the days of Noah, so it would be at the coming of the Son of Man. For in the days before the flood, people (Were these righteous or wicked people? They were wicked people.) were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. (Who was taken away by the flood, the righteous or the wicked people? The wicked people were taken away by the flood.) That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. (Who

was going to be taken away by the coming of the Son of Man? The wicked people were.) *Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other left. Two women will be grinding with a hand mill; one will be taken and the other left.*”

Watch for the Sign

This day would be one of surprise—the day when the Son of Man would come to take away the wicked and leave the righteous. This was not as it is taught in many places—that He takes away the righteous and leaves the wicked, because we are told this was as in the days of Noah. This judgment that Jesus was coming to do would take away the wicked and leave the righteous. Therefore, what were they to do? Matthew 24:42 says, “*Therefore keep watch . . .*” What were they to watch for? A sign? They were to watch for Jerusalem being surrounded by armies.

“Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come. But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what time of night the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and would not have let his house be broken into. So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.”

They were to watch for the sign, and when they saw Jerusalem surrounded by armies or even the approaching army that would surround the city, they were to run immediately. There would be no time to go into the house, no time to settle any business, and no time to gather things together. They should put in a bag what they wanted to carry with them, and have it by the door or always with them. When the Roman army came and surrounded the city of Jerusalem, there would not be any time for preparation. It must be understood that this was not speaking

of the end of time. However, Matthew twenty-five does speak of the end of time.

The Encouragement to Faithfulness

Jesus then told three parables that changed the scene from the discussion of physical judgment to the discussion of eternal spiritual judgment. God came in judgment on wicked Israel. Think about what Jesus has said and the background as well. God had chosen Israel (Exodus 4:22). He said, “*. . . Israel is my firstborn son . . .*” God had chosen Israel among all the nations to be His particular people. He had given them special blessings and a special law. He had given them Moses as their great emancipator and all the prophets as great proclaimers of God’s will and character to them. He had preserved them from their enemies when they were righteous. When they became wicked, He even sent enemies upon them to judge them and tell them that they were not doing His will. He put them in captivity in Babylon, teaching them not to be idolaters. They went into Babylon as idolaters, and they came out never to build any idol of wood or stone again. They still bowed down to money perhaps, as all man has from the beginning of time, but they erected no more idols and held no more gods before them except Jehovah.

Then, finally, John the Baptist came to proclaim that the kingdom of God was near. Jesus then came and lived a perfect moral life among them, and He preached to them the will, love, mercy and grace of God. They had rejected all of that and had turned from God. The time had come when they must be destroyed. He had chosen them and had given them great grace. He had preserved them and had delivered them from Egypt. He had given them all the word of God and all the prophets of God. He sent Christ, and they had rejected Him. Judgment had to come or God would not be righteous. Reluctantly, because of the love that He had bestowed upon Israel, God then announced that they must fall.

Malachi, the last prophet of the Old Testament, had told the people of his day that there was a day coming when Elijah would come and prepare the way for the Lord. He said that the Lord would come suddenly to His temple and would purge it with a launderer's soap and with a refiner's fire (cf. Malachi 3:2). He would purify the people of God until all that was left was the righteous remnant. That was why this judgment was coming. It was coming in vengeance upon their wickedness. It was also coming in vindication for the righteous. Malachi, as he closes his book and thus closes the Old Testament, ending any word from God until John cries out in the wilderness, said "I will destroy Israel in days to come." After Elijah comes and when the Lord comes suddenly to His temple, "I will destroy Israel root and branch." He would not come to pick leaves. He would not come to prune the tree. He would not even come to cut a tree off at the ground, in hope that maybe it would sprout again by the sending of water and by the great season. He would come instead to uproot and burn this nation. That was exactly what John the Baptist said when he preached to them. He said that He was going to burn the chaff and the unfruitful trees with unquenchable fire. Not the bad fruit nor the limbs, but He would burn the unfruitful trees. In A.D. 70, when the Roman army surrounded the city of Jerusalem, it was the last act of God's grace to save them. They were being told that they were no longer God's people. From that time, there was no Jew nor Gentile. Israel as a nation ceased in the year A.D. 70. One must seek the Lord Christ to be saved.

The only application left would be that when we see judgment on the earth today, we need to look up and know that God is once again, by His judgment, giving us an opportunity to know that He rules heaven and earth. God bless you in the study of His Word.

Period of Passion (6)

Review and Preview

The end of Tuesday in the last week of Christ is near. This was bound to be a very significant day of the eight days that changed the world. Jesus did eleven different things on this one day. From six o'clock in the morning to six o'clock in the afternoon, He was in constant conversation, conflict and controversy with the Pharisees, the Sadducees and the Herodians.

On Sunday

Sunday was a day of absolute glory. Jesus entered the city riding upon a colt, and the whole city went out to meet Him. They provided their cloaks as pavement on which Jesus rode this animal. They cried "Hosanna! Save now, Son of David!" He rode in triumph through the streets up to the temple courts, and He walked inside the temple. Jesus saw something in the temple that made Him very angry, but He walked back out. It is not known if He rode the animal back, but He went back to the house of Mary, Martha and Lazarus.

On Monday

Jesus got up the following morning to go do something about what He had seen in the temple. He was going to cleanse the temple of all the moneychangers and corruption that was there. On the way into the city, Jesus saw a fig tree with leaves. Although it was not yet time for figs, sometimes they would arrive early. The leaves on the tree declared that it bore fruit. Jesus went to look, but there were no figs. The barren tree was a symbol of Israel. They looked like they ought to have had

fruit, but they had none. They promised that they had fruit, but they had none. Therefore, Jesus cursed the fig tree saying, “Never again will it bear fruit.” The next morning (Tuesday) they found it barren, and Israel too would be barren almost as quickly. Jesus then went inside the city and manifested His power. Sunday was a day of glory. Monday was one of power. He cursed the barren fig tree, showing that He had power over nature. He cleansed the temple, showing that He had power over the law and over the nation of Israel. He then went back to Mary, Martha and Lazarus’ house.

On Tuesday

The next morning Jesus and His disciples got up for the longest day of this week. Of the eight days that changed the world, apart from the time spent on the cross, this was the longest day—not in time, but in the “busy-ness” of Jesus. On the way into town, they found the fig tree barren and marveled that it had so quickly withered away from its roots. The entire tree, from the root up, was withered. Jesus told them, “If you have faith that is the size of a mustard seed, you will not only do this to trees, but you will say to a mountain—mountain of opposition, mountain of trial, mountain of opportunity—‘Be moved under the sea,’ and it will be removed.”

As Jesus entered the city, He began answering people’s arguments and controversies. He answered the Sanhedrin’s question in Matthew 21:23-27:

. . . while he was teaching, the chief priests and the elders of the people came to him. “By what authority are you doing these things?” they asked. “And who gave you this authority?” Jesus replied, “I will also ask you one question. If you answer me, I will tell you by what authority I am doing these things. John’s baptism—where did it come from? Was it from heaven, or from men?” They discussed it among

themselves and said, “If we say, ‘From heaven,’ he will ask, “Then why didn’t you believe him?” “But if we say, ‘From men’—we are afraid of the people, for they all hold that John was a prophet.” So they answered Jesus, “We don’t know.”

Jesus knew they were not being honest, and they knew they were not being honest. So Jesus said, “*Neither will I tell you by what authority I do this.*” He argued with the Sadducees who did not believe in the resurrection of the dead. They did not believe the fact that the dead would be raised nor that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were alive before the throne of God as they spoke. It gives us great comfort today to know that death does not end life for those who are faithful, like Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. It transfers us from one place to another.

Jesus answered the lawyer that the Pharisees sent to ask Him about the great commandment. It was the Pharisees asking Him, but they sent a lawyer to ask the question, “What is the greatest commandment?” Jesus said, “Love is. Love God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength. Love your neighbor as you love yourself. In loving these three, you have fulfilled all the law and all the prophets.” However Jesus then said, “Now let me ask you a question. The Messiah, whose son is He?” The Pharisee replied, “Well, He is the son of David.” Jesus responded, “Then why does David call Him ‘Lord’? He is older than, and superior to, his father. The only way that can be is for the Son of Man to be the Son of God, and the Son of David to be the Son of God.” From that time forward no one asked Jesus a single question.

Jesus then walked out of the city and probably went to the Mount of Olives. He then looked back on the city of Jerusalem and pronounced the tragic woes of Matthew twenty-three. He said that Jerusalem was to fall. Israel had to cease to exist because they were whitened sepulchers. They were full of dead men’s bones. They chased widows to rob them of their homes,

and they bound upon people heavy burdens that they would not even try to lift with their little finger. They taught the law, but they did not do the law because they had killed righteous men and were still trying to kill righteous men as they were seeking to kill Christ. Jesus said that all of the bloodshed, from the blood of Abel in Genesis chapter four to the blood of Zechariah the son of Barechiah in II Chronicles, was to come upon them. Jesus said, “I will come and do it. I will make your house desolate. I will destroy your nation, and it will happen in this generation.”

They wanted to know, “When, Lord? When are you going to do that, and what will be the sign that you are about to come and do that?” His answer was, “I will do it in this generation, and the sign will be Jerusalem surrounded by a Roman army that is about to make it desolate. As to the day or the hour, I don’t know. The angels don’t know. I can’t tell you, but I can tell you what to watch for, and when you see that, it will be time to flee.”

Principles of Judgment

In Matthew twenty-five, Jesus used this statement about Jerusalem’s fall as a springboard to talk about the judgment of all mankind. If Jerusalem was to be judged, if He was going to judge His habitation, for God had chosen to dwell in Zion (Psalm 48:2-3), if He was going to destroy His very own house, the nation that is the apple of His eye, then no nation will escape His judgment. If He was judging these chosen people and if judgment begins at the house of God, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel (1 Peter 4:17)? Matthew chapter twenty-five supplies us with the answer.

The brethren, the disciples and the apostles were thinking of a physical judgment. They were thinking of a physical temple and a physical city that would be destroyed. Jesus had to get them to think about spiritual matters. That is what parables are for. A parable is a spiritual story laid beside a physical one to

teach a spiritual lesson. The word “parable” comes from two Greek words: *para* and *ballo* which when put together mean “to throw beside.” One thing is thrown against another to teach something that cannot be learned without the parable. Jesus was going to take two parables and change their thinking from the physical to the spiritual, and from the temporal to the eternal. This is one of the most important sections of Scripture in all the Bible. Matthew 25:1-30 speaks about the judgment on Israel as a continuation of Matthew twenty-four, but there were some principles that Jesus discussed that would be true in any judgment *in time* and in particular the judgment at the *end of time*.

Judgement on Israel

The Ten Virgins

The first parable, in Matthew 25:1-13, is the parable of the ten virgins:

“At that time the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were foolish and five were wise. The foolish ones took their lamps but did not take any oil with them. The wise, however, took oil in jars along with their lamps. The bridegroom was a long time in coming, and they all became drowsy and fell asleep. At midnight the cry rang out ‘Here’s the bridegroom! Come out to meet him!’ Then all the virgins woke up and trimmed their lamps. The foolish ones said to the wise, ‘Give us some of your oil; our lamps are going out.’ ‘No,’ they replied, ‘there may not be enough for both us and you. Instead, go to those who sell oil and buy some for yourselves.’ But while they were on their way to buy the oil, the bridegroom arrived. The virgins who were ready went in with him to the wedding banquet. And the

door was shut. Later the others also came. ‘Sir! Sir!’ they said. ‘Open the door for us!’ But he replied, ‘I tell you the truth, I don’t know you.’ Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour.”

This is an interesting story. It refers back to Matthew twenty-four and the need to watch for the signs, but it also teaches a principle concerning the judgment to come. Notice the two groups of people that were compared—the wise and the foolish. Both had knowledge of the bridegroom and regard for him. Both desired to honor him by going to meet him, and they both had lamps burning at that moment. Both slept while waiting, but at his coming the difference was seen. Five were ready, and five were not. Five have made preparations knowing that he might be late. They did not take it for granted that he was going to arrive quickly, so they made preparations for his coming.

Character is revealed by crisis. We may look ready and appear prepared, but if all a sudden we are called to attention or called to account, then we will know whether or not we have made preparation for the emergency. We must make preparation for the immediate coming. From this parable is also learned that lost opportunities cannot be recalled. One cannot gather the feathers that have been driven away by the wind. Once an opportunity is past, that opportunity will never come again. They had an opportunity; all ten had the equal opportunity to go into the wedding feast. Only five went in. Why? They were ready for the opportunity. Be prepared. This looks back to a discussion about physical judgment. The Lord Christ may come upon your nation. At any moment we must be ready for His coming.

The Talents

In Matthew 25:14-30 Jesus told the parable of the talents.
“Again, it (the kingdom) will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted his

property to them. To one he gave five talents of money, to another two talents, and to another one talent, each according to his ability. Then he went on his journey. The man who had received the five talents went at once and put his money to work and gained five more. So also, the one with the two talents gained two more. But the man who had received the one talent went off, dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money. After a long time the master of those servants returned and settled accounts with them. The man who had received the five talents brought the other five. 'Master,' he said, 'you entrusted me with five talents. See, I have gained five more.' His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!' The man with the two talents also came. 'Master,' he said, 'you entrusted me with two talents; see, I have gained two more.' His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!' Then the man who had received the one talent came. 'Master,' he said, 'I knew that you are a hard man, harvesting where you have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered seed. So I was afraid and went out and hid your talent in the ground. See, here is what belongs to you.' His master replied, 'You wicked, lazy servant! So you knew that I harvest where I have not sown and gather where I have not scattered seed? Well then, you should have put my money on deposit with the bankers, so that when I returned I would have received it back with interest. Take the talent from him and give it to the one who has the ten

talents. For everyone who has will be given more, and he will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him. And throw that worthless servant outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’ ”

This is another fabulous lesson. It was a tragic story for one man and a beautiful, blessed story for the other two. First of all, a single talent was worth twenty years of work. Therefore, one fellow was given one hundred years' labor worth of money to deal with; another was given forty, and another twenty. The man given the one talent was not given an insignificant thing. He was given twenty years' labor worth of money, so he had a lot to invest. What was the application? The talents were opportunities to be of service to God and opportunities to use one's ability, because these talents were given according to each one's ability. One fellow had the ability to deal with a hundred years' worth of money; another had the ability to deal with forty years' worth and another with twenty years' worth. Each one was given only what he had the ability to use. God gives us opportunities according to the abilities that He has given us. At the end of this story there were only two counts: the faithful count and the unfaithful count. There was a diligent count and a lazy count. Notice that the faithful and diligent two, the five talent man and the two talent man, each received exactly, word for word, the same commendation. They were told, “Well done!” They were told that they were good and faithful servants. They were told to rule over many things and to enjoy the happiness of their master. It didn't matter that one had gained five talents and the other had gained two. The two talent person was not expected to gain five, and the five talent person would not have been faithful to gain only two. They had used their abilities. They had used their opportunities, and they brought

their return to God. We want to meet God having benefitted Him and His cause.

Notice that the unfaithful servant was condemned. He was condemned with the word “wicked.” Normally when a person is thought to be wicked, then there is some evil thing he has done. What had this person done? He had done nothing. He was wicked because he had been given the opportunity to serve, and hadn’t done so. When you know to do good, have the opportunity to do good, and don’t do it, then that is sin (James 4:17); that is wickedness. As surely as adultery, murder and stealing are wickedness, doing nothing when something needs to be done is wickedness. He was called lazy, and he was lazy because he was idle. He was thrown out from his master’s house. He would no longer enjoy fellowship in the master’s house, and the one talent he had hidden in the soil was given to the man with ten talents. Why did this happen? He had proven he would use his opportunities. The talents in the story were money, but the talents in application are opportunities. We must use our opportunities for God.

Lessons From the Parables

There are four lessons to learn from this parable. **Number one:** Each servant was given capital, and nobody was without opportunities. **Number two:** Each servant was given capital according to his ability. Whatever opportunity one has to render service to God, he already has the ability to do it. **Number three:** From this parable of the talents is learned that one must work while he waits. The parable of the virgins said that we must be prepared even as we wait. The parable of the talents says that we must work with the opportunity He gives us. In both cases we need to be ready. **Number four:** The main lesson learned is that it is wicked to be lazy, and it is wicked to be idle. This world will be evangelized, and this world will be told of Jesus Christ. Many or most in the world will be won to Jesus by

one-talent men and women who are using the one talent they've got.

In the last section of each of Paul's epistles, particularly in the letter to the Colossians, he was surrounded by men whose names were not household names. Tychicus, Jesus (called Justus), Aristarchus, Onesiphorus—over and over again Paul called people's names, men and women who were one-talent people and who had dedicated their one talent to God. They were led by this five-talent guy named Paul. An army of one-talent people won the world for Jesus Christ in the first century, and they will do it in this century and in the next as long as centuries are counted.

The Final Judgment

The parable of the virgins taught the need to be ready for judgment; the parable of the talents taught us to be working while waiting for the judgment. Next came something that was not really a parable, but it was a statement about the final judgment of God. It was not just the judgment on Israel that these parables referred to, but it was the final judgment that was prepared for by the principle of these parables, the Son of Man. In Matthew 25:31-46 we read:

"When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited

me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.' Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?' The King will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.' Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.' They also will answer, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?' He will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.' Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life."

What a day that will be! There will be the gathering of all the world before the judgment seat of Christ. It will not just be the nation of Israel that will be doomed because of their rejection of the Messiah, but the whole world will be gathered before Jesus. A separation will be made between those who will enjoy eternal life and those who will endure and suffer eternal hell. What is the basis of that choice? What made the separation in this passage? Was it immorality they had committed? No, it wasn't. Was it war that they raged? No, it was not. Was it the

widows that they had robbed? No, it wasn't. Was it fornication that they had committed? No, it wasn't. What made the separation between the sheep and the goats? The difference was found in how they treated the needy and how they cared for those who were in need. The righteous had people enter their city, and they were invited into their house to stay. The righteous saw people sick and immediately cared for their needs. The righteous saw people in rags, and they put good clothes on them. The righteous saw people hungry, and they shared their food. The righteous saw people thirsty, and they gave them water to drink. The righteous saw people carried away to prison, and they went into the prison to care for them and share with them.

Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world (James 1:27).

These people practiced pure religion. So what does the Lord say? "Come." The Lord wants people around Him who love needy people. The Lord loves needy people, and He only wants people around Him who love them as well. We need to be caring for those around us who are in need. The wicked saw people hungry and went on eating their food, instead of sharing it. They saw people in shabby, ragged clothes and didn't buy them good ones. They let people enter their city and sleep in the streets rather than sleep in their house. They saw people in prison and stayed home and had lessons on how bad it was to be in prison. So what did the Lord say? "Depart!"

Jesus doesn't want people around Him who don't love people. He said, "Depart into eternal fire." Jesus is coming again, and when He comes we will stand before Him. The question will not be about where we lived or what religion we

followed. The question of all questions is this: “How did we deal with the brothers of Christ?” The needy children of God must be cared for.

Period of Passion (7)

Preview and Review

This chapter is a continuation of the study of the last eight days in the life of Christ. They are called the eight days that changed the world. On Sunday, Jesus entered the city in triumph, that being the day that His glory was manifested. On Monday, He cursed a fig tree because it promised that it bore fruit, yet it did not bear any. He also cleansed the temple, because it should have been used for worshiping God but wasn't. That was the day of power. Tuesday was a long day filled with controversy over His authority, over the resurrection of the dead and over the greatest commandment. At the end of that day, Jesus asked a question that ended all controversy. He asked, "Whose Son is the Messiah?" They replied very quickly, "the son of David." He said, "Why, then, does David call Him Lord?" From then on, no one dared ask Him any more questions. When Tuesday was over, He went back to the city of Bethany to the house of Mary, Martha and Lazarus.

Wednesday was spent in seeming silence. As far as scholars can find, not one single thing that occurred on this day was recorded. On the following day, Thursday, He would not sleep until He slept in death on Friday. For forty-eight or more hours He would not sleep. He would be engaged in a struggle with the devil for the victory over the souls of mankind. It was therefore logical that He would need a day of silence, preparation and thought for the coming struggle. Perhaps He spent this day with His friends, Mary, Martha, Lazarus and the Twelve, as they thought, prayed and gave comfort to one another in seclusion. Perhaps, as was often the occasion, Jesus simply went away to a quiet place where no one would be and

communed with the Father in silence as preparation for the great day of challenge to come. Regardless of what happened on that day, Jesus was ready, because Thursday was a day of fellowship with His disciples as He prepared them for His coming death. Wednesday could have possibly been a day of preparation and fellowship with His Father, and Thursday was the apostles' day of preparation in fellowship with Him. Notice the Passover feast in Matthew chapter twenty-six. Notice the preparation for and the eating of the Passover feast. Also notice the pre-figuring of the great feast or Lord's Supper that we partake of every Sunday.

Passover Feast – Prefiguring the Supper

The Prediction of His Death

In Matthew 26:1-2 Jesus predicted His own death, “*When Jesus had finished saying all these things, he said to his disciples, ‘As you know, the Passover is two days away—and the Son of Man will be handed over to be crucified.’*” Jesus said that He would be crucified the day before the Passover. If the Jews had their way, they would have taken Him outside the city, put Him in the valley and thrown huge stones upon Him until He was dead. That was how they treated their hated criminals. However, the Jews did not have their way. It had been predicted that the Son of Man would hang upon a tree, so He must. It was necessary for Him who knew no sin to be made sin and a curse for all mankind. Deuteronomy 21:23 says, “. . . anyone who is hung on a tree is under God’s curse.” Jesus not only predicted the time of His death, but He predicted the nature of His death in contradiction to the way the Jews would normally kill a criminal.

The Plan – To Kill Christ

Matthew 26:3-5 contains the Jews' plot to kill Jesus,

Then the chief priests and the elders of the people assembled in the palace of the high priest, whose

name was Caiaphas, and they plotted to arrest Jesus in some sly way and kill him. “But not during the Feast,” they said, “or there may be a riot among the people.”

Who were these people that were gathered to consider what to do? They were the rulers—the chief priest, the elders and the high priest. The religious and national rulers of Israel gathered to consider what to do with their Messiah. They gathered in the palace of the high priest, a noble and significant place. How were they going to kill Jesus? In the New International Version, Matthew said “... *in some sly way.*” The word that is translated “sly”(Greek - *dolo*) normally meant the trapping of an animal. One would set the snare with bait, and then hide and watch as things unfolded. Sly was a good word, as they slyly prepared for His capture. They were not going to be open in their arresting of Jesus, nor would they be honest. In their own way and in their own words they were not going to be honest in the trial. They were going to trip Him up in some sly way. They said that they were not going to do it on a feast day, because there would be too many people there who might cause a riot. It is humorous that the day of the feast was the very day that they did arrest Jesus. The very day they said they would not do it was the very day God forced them to. They were not in control of this situation, God was.

The Proposal – To Betray

Matthew 26:6-13 is out of order chronologically. It happened earlier, as studied in a previous chapter. It contains the story of the woman who washed Jesus’ feet with precious ointment, and it contains Judas’ condemnation. In John twelve, Judas was named as the one who asked, “Why was this ointment not sold and the money given to the poor? It is wasteful to use this ointment in this fashion.” Of course, Judas said this not because he cared for the poor, but because he was

a thief. The prediction of Judas' betrayal of Christ was at hand, and Matthew 26:14-16 is a preview to that,

Then one of the Twelve—the one called Judas Iscariot—went to the chief priests and asked, ‘What are you willing to give me if I hand him over to you?’ So they counted out for him thirty silver coins. From then on Judas watched for an opportunity to hand him over.

What occurred here is very interesting. One of Jesus' own, one whom He had chosen, one in whom He had invested three and a half years of His life, and one whom He had trusted, not only with the work of being an apostle, but with the treasury, was to betray Him. All the money with which they bought their food and lived from was placed under his control; he was one of the most trusted of the twelve disciples. Regardless, he went and bargained with the chief priests. "How much will you give me if I turn Him over to you?" he asked. He was not only a thief of the treasury, but he wanted to capitalize on Jesus' lack of popularity by profiting from His arrest and death. They gave Judas thirty pieces of silver. That was not a big sum as far as a lifetime was concerned, but it was not a small one either. It was about a month's pay. This fulfilled Zechariah 11:12 in which Zechariah said that they would weigh out thirty pieces of silver for the Messiah. Therefore, Judas was willing for one month's pay, to sell the Lord to His death.

It is interesting that in Exodus 21:32 thirty pieces of silver was the price paid if a person's ox gored the servant of another. The owner of the ox had to pay one month's salary, whatever that might have been, for that slave. In this case it was thirty pieces of silver. Judas was getting one month's pay. He was getting the price that would be paid to a master for the servant who was gored by someone's ox. He was also paid in advance. They gave him the money, and he then began to wait for an

opportunity to turn Jesus over. He was trusted not only by Jesus, but he was trusted by the enemy. They knew Judas would do what he said, because they knew his character and his love for money.

Preparation for the Feast

The preparation for the feast is in Luke chapter twenty-two. There were many things that were necessary for the Passover to be observed, and it was a time for meticulous preparation. Luke 22:7-13 says,

Then came the day of Unleavened Bread on which the Passover lamb had to be sacrificed. Jesus sent Peter and John, saying, “Go and make preparations for us to eat the Passover.” “Where do you want us to prepare for it?” they asked. He replied, “As you enter the city, a man carrying a jar of water will meet you. Follow him to the house that he enters, and say to the owner of the house, ‘The Teacher asks: Where is the guest room, where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?’ He will show you a large upper room, all furnished. Make preparations there.” They left and found things just as Jesus had told them. So they prepared the Passover.

First, in getting ready to eat the Passover a site had to be selected. Jesus had already had that prepared, since it had already been in His mind and in the mind of the Father. He said, “Find the man with the water jar and tell him that the Master has need of a room. He will show you the room.” As soon as the place was found, the house had to be ceremonially prepared. (There are many sources to read about this. A man named Cunningham Geikie wrote a book called *The Life and Works of Jesus*. In the first volume, he discusses the Jewish preparation for the Passover.) The first thing they did was sweep it

absolutely clean and mop it, thus sanitizing the room where it was to be held. Then they searched the whole house to make sure that every single thing that would cause corruption was removed. Then the house was ceremonially blessed, and certain furniture was placed in the room that was being prepared. They then selected the lamb to be offered; it had to be without spot and without blemish. They would then take it to the priest, who would cut a portion of it away and burn another portion. They would leave with a portion of the animal that was prepared for roasting. They would provide the wine that was to be drunk along with the unleavened cakes and bitter herbs that were to be eaten. They made a paste of crushed fruit moistened with vinegar; this was symbolic of the clay from which Israel made the bricks in Egypt. It was a day of hasty activity for Peter and John as they fulfilled their obligation and made certain that all was ready for the Passover.

Passover Observance

In Luke 22:14 the Passover began to be observed. Down in the temple area a silver trumpet was blown to announce the feast time. When that trumpet was blown, Jesus said that He was anxious to eat this Passover with them. Why was He anxious to eat this Passover? **First**, He knew that the lamb they were eating not only looked back and commemorated their deliverance from Egypt, but it also looked forward to the Messianic Lamb Himself who was to die on the tree to deliver them from the bondage to sin. **Second**, He wanted His disciples to know that they were about to take the place of rulership in the kingdom, the church. They were to eat this supper so that the world could participate in the feast that they were eating this day. Every first day of the week, every Lord's Day, men from every tribe and tongue, and people and nation would commemorate, not deliverance from some physical bondage, but deliverance from the bondage of sin.

The bread that we eat on the Lord's Day today commemorates His flesh. It is unleavened and is made without any yeast to indicate or symbolize the freedom from sin of the physical body of Christ, and because of the grace of God, the freedom of sin of the spiritual body of Christ. The red wine that was drunk on that Passover and the red wine that we drink on the Lord's Day, represents His blood that was to be shed for their sins and for the sins of the entire world. Our daily partaking of the bread (body) and wine (blood) is typified by this weekly eating of the bread and the wine (John 6). We participate in the body and the blood of Christ every day we live, and we signify that to the world and remind each other of that as we eat the Lord's Supper on the first day of every week.

Provision of an Example

In John 13, there was on this occasion an example of the kind of sacrifice and love that this feast typified to the church of God. This feast was not just a weekly feast but a daily feast. John thirteen is one of the most intriguing and attractive chapters in all the Bible, as John discussed Jesus' humility, holiness and happiness. First of all, John discussed His humility in John 13:1-5:

It was just before the Passover Feast. Jesus knew that the time had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he now showed them the full extent of his love. The evening meal was being served, and the devil had already prompted Judas Iscariot, son of Simon, to betray Jesus. Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God; so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet,

drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him.

This was an unusual showing of humiliation. God Himself was stooping to drudgery. No one else would do the common courtesy of washing the other's feet, so Jesus Himself had to do so. Notice the things that are read in this text. An intriguing thing in verse 1 is that Jesus knew He had come from God and was going back to God, so He showed His disciples the full extent of His love. When He took off His clothes, put on that towel and washed their feet, He was showing them all of the love He had. The full and total extent of His love was shown in this humble, humiliating deed. He would show the same amount of love the next day on the tree. However, He would show no more love on the cross than He showed here, because He showed the full extent of His love. We will never be able to imitate the cross, will never be able to go to Calvary to purchase people's righteousness and salvation, but we can, on our knees, wash one another's feet. We can take off the robe of honor, put on the towel of service and slavery, and do the task that is needed by the brother. When we do that, we show the full extent of our love. We show the same kind of love that Jesus showed.

Another thing that is interesting is the basis upon which Jesus did this and the reason He was able to do it. In John 13:3 Jesus, knowing that the Father had put all things under His power and that He had come from God and was returning to God, got up, took off His outer garment and put on a towel. He did this because He knew that all He had was the result of God's gift. He was a recipient of the grace of God. God gave His Son the grace to become a humble servant of people who did not deserve the service He was to render. It was by grace that He did it. He did what He did by the grace of God. An interesting thing is that the word for towel in this passage was not just an ordinary word for towel. It expressed the towel that the slave would wear when He was serving. Jesus entered the place that

day with the robe of rabbi, the robe of teacher or the robe of a leader. No one would take the place of a slave and wash feet, so Jesus took off the honored robe of teacher, rabbi and master, put on the apron of a slave, and washed their feet.

When Jesus got to Peter in verse six, Peter objected saying, “What are you doing, Lord? You are not going to wash my feet.” Jesus looked Peter in the eye and said, “Peter, this is the holiest thing I have ever done. If you don’t let Me do this to you, you have no part with Me in the kingdom of heaven.” Peter responded in verse nine, *“Lord . . . not just my feet but my head and my hands as well!”* There was one thing for sure about Peter: he was impetuous. He wanted to go all the way. It was all or nothing with Peter. Jesus said, “Peter, you still don’t understand. It’s not that you are dirty that I am doing this. I am doing this as an example. I’m presenting you the example of the kind of love you need to manifest. You are clean all over. I just need to wash your feet to give you this example.” So He washed his feet, took off the towel, put back on the teacher’s robe and began His lesson. John 13:12-17 says,

When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. “Do you understand what I have done for you?” he asked them. “You call me, ‘Teacher’ and ‘Lord,’ and rightly so, for that is what I am. Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another’s feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. I tell you the truth, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.”

That was a great lesson. In the parallel to this in Luke 22:24ff they had been arguing on the way up to this room about

who was going to be first and second and who was going to be greatest in the kingdom. That was why they refused to wash one another's feet. In spite of the three lessons recorded in the Bible, they still believed that the way to leadership and honor was place, position, pomp and pageantry. Jesus was showing them, not just teaching them this time, but showing them that the way to honor was the way of sacrificial service. Jesus said, "*Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them*" (John 13:17).

Prediction of Judas' Betrayal

Judas' betrayal in the background is taught in John 13:21-29. Jesus made a charge in verse twenty-one saying, "*I tell you the truth, one of you is going to betray me.*" There was utter confusion as the twelve thought, "Is it me? Is it me?" Each one considered the possibility of it being them, yet one of them knew who it was. Jesus says, "The one that I dip this bread in this sop and hand it to, that is the one." He dipped it and handed it to Judas. John, who had asked Him that question, then knew who it was. Jesus told him, "*What you are about to do, do quickly*" (John 13:27). Judas had already planned and had already been paid to do it. Jesus was telling him, "What you have planned to do, what you have purposed to do and what you have been paid to do, please do quickly."

John 13:27-29 says, "*As soon as Judas took the bread, Satan entered into him.*" This was interesting. Satan had prompted him to do certain things up until now, but here he became indwelt by Satan himself. No one knew what was really happening. When Jesus told Judas, "*What you are about to do, do quickly,*" they thought he was going out to buy something they had need of for the feast or that he was going to give something to the poor.

Peter's Denial Foretold

Peter's denial was foretold in Luke chapter twenty-two. Not only was Judas, one of the very trusted, going to betray Jesus, but perhaps the closest to Jesus, Simon himself, was going to betray Him. Luke 22:31-34 says,

"Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers." But he replied, "Lord, I am ready to go with you to prison and death." Jesus answered, "I tell you, Peter, before the rooster crows today, you will deny three times that you know me."

Over and over again, Peter, whose name means "rock," claimed to be the rock that would stand when no one else would. However, Jesus predicted that he would deny the Lord. But Peter was not the only one who would deny Him. Jesus went on to say that all were going to forsake Him. Several things must be remembered about Peter's denial. The Lord knew he was going to deny Him and didn't cast him out of the apostleship. The Lord knew that he would return, and He knew Peter's final state. He knew that in the end Peter would redeem himself and stand as a righteous servant of God. This was a very interesting feast. What it typified was that the Lord Christ was going to be the sacrificial Passover Lamb that would bear the sins of many and redeem them from bondage to sin. These twelve would be participants in this. The Passover was fulfilled, not simply in the death of Christ, but in the constant daily activity of the child of God walking in the wilderness experience toward the Promise Land. That Passover will be fully around the throne of God in an eternal day. It doesn't have yesterday to precede it nor tomorrow to follow it.

Period of Passion (8)

This chapter continues the study of the eight days that changed the world, and it concerns Thursday. On Sunday, Jesus entered the city; Monday, He cleansed the temple, and on Tuesday, He argued with everybody who wanted to argue with Him. Wednesday, in silence, He prepared for the death to come; Thursday was the day of fellowship. Jesus had eaten the Passover with His disciples, and in that time established the Supper when He said in Luke 22:16, “*For I tell you, I will not eat it again until it finds fulfillment in the kingdom of God.*” He said, “This bread symbolizes My flesh. This wine symbolizes My blood. You will partake of this, and it is symbolic of your participation in the body and blood of Christ. You are going to bear the cross also, and so you need this day to prepare for this.”

Last Conversation With the Disciples

The second point that occurred on Thursday is in John 13-16. The first point was the Passover feast and the prediction or establishment of the Lord’s Supper. The second is Jesus’ last conversation with the disciples. If you knew that you were going to leave the world, and there were people you had invested your life in, and they were going to carry on the work that you had begun, you would want to have a long conversation with them. That was what Jesus did in John 13:31-16:13. John 13:31-35 can be called the prologue. It looked back to the washing of the feet, the lesson of humility, but looked forward to the conversation with the disciples that taught about preparation, obligation and responsibility. John 13:31-38 says,

When he was gone, Jesus said, “Now is the Son of Man glorified and God is glorified in him. If God is

glorified in him, God will glorify the Son in himself, and will glorify him at once (This glorification in the first few verses will be discussed in John seventeen at the time of the prayer of Jesus). *My children, I will be with you only a little longer. You will look for me, and just as I told the Jews, so I tell you now: Where I am going, you cannot come. A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.*" Simon Peter asked him, "Lord, where are you going?" Jesus replied, "Where I am going, you cannot follow now, but you will follow later." Peter asked, "Lord, why can't I follow you now? I will lay down my life for you." Then Jesus answered, "Will you really lay down your life for me? I tell you the truth, before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times!"

The Prologue

In this prologue, Jesus first spoke of His glory as He was getting ready for His last conversation with His disciples. He spoke with the disciples of Him glorifying the Father and the Father glorifying Him. In John seventeen, this "glorifying" was accomplished by the completion of the work that God had given Him to do. There is no glory in unfinished work. There is only glory in a finished task, and that was exactly what Jesus was going to do.

Jesus spoke of His departure. He said, "I am going to leave. I am going to go to heaven, and where I am going, you cannot follow now. This is what you must do. I am going to go to the cross to win salvation for the world, and you need to love one another as I have loved you." He said, "You can't go to the cross. I am going to a place that you cannot go, but I am going to leave you to do a task. You must wash one another's feet. You cannot die on the tree for the salvation of the world, but

you can wash one another's feet for the edification, unity and building up of the body of Christ." Washing one another's feet is the badge that we wear to prove that we are disciples. We do not wear a badge on our shirt that says that we are a disciple. It isn't a cross hung around our neck. It's not a bracelet that says, "I am a disciple." The badge of discipleship and the mark of the fact that we are disciples of Christ is that we serve one another with the towel. The towel with which we wash each other's feet is the mark of discipleship, not the cross, for that belongs to Jesus alone.

Problems

The towel belongs to us, but there are some problems with that. Peter saw problems, "Lord, I don't know where you are going. How am I going to know if I can go there or not?" Jesus very simply said, "Where I am going is not a problem. I am going to death, and I am going home. You are not going to be able to really understand that anyway." This proceeds into chapter fourteen, so notice John 14:1-4, (They were troubled about where He was going or what He was going to do.)

"Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. You know the way to the place where I am going."

The question they were asking was: **Where are you going?** Jesus said, "I am going to the cross. I am going home so that I can prepare a place for you to come to, and I am going to come back and take you to be with Me there."

In John 14:5-7 they asked, "**How can we know the way?**"

Thomas said to him, “Lord, we don’t know where you are going, so how can we know the way?” Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you really knew me, you would know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him.”

“Lord, how can we know the way?” He said, “Just learn from Me. If you learn from Me, you will learn the way, and the way is to the Father.”

Who is the Father? Their first problem was where Jesus was going. The second problem was how they were to know the way. The third problem was who the Father was. John 14:8-10 says,

Philip said, “Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us.” Jesus answered: “Don’t you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? Don’t you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you are not just my own. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work.”

The Father was working in Jesus; the Father was hearing Jesus. In John 14:12-14 Jesus made some unusual statements about prayer.

“I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father. And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father. You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it.”

We need to understand and claim the promises that are stated in these verses. Jesus said that if we believe in Him, because He goes to the Father and is the way, the truth and the life, then we will be able to do what He has done. He was not talking about greater things as in miraculous powers, because there was nothing greater than raising Lazarus who had been dead for four days. He was not talking about that. He was saying, “My work has been limited only to the nation of Israel, in getting them ready for the kingdom. Your work will be unlimited to all the nations, and you will dwell in the floodlight of the realized kingdom of God.” Jesus also sent the Spirit. The Spirit was who Jesus talked about in the rest of John 14, 15 and 16. Jesus sent the Spirit to prepare and empower.

They didn’t know where Jesus was going. He said that He was going to His death and then going home to the Father. How? He said, “I am the way.” Who was the Father? He was the One who would hear prayers and hear Jesus’ request, and He would do anything that was asked in His name. We need to find out what the Lord’s will is, and ask for great things according to it. When we do these things, they will be done. The disciples had one more problem. They asked, **“Why us, Lord?”** Of all the people in the world, why was the Lord going to do this for them? John 14:22-24 says,

Then Judas (not Judas Iscariot) said, “But, Lord, why do you intend to show yourself to us and not to the world?” Jesus replied, “If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. He who does not love me will not obey my teaching. These words you hear are not my own; they belong to the Father who sent me.”

The answer to the question, “Why us?” is, “Because God loves you.” It is not because of some marvelous character we

have. It's not because of great works we do. He has chosen to reveal Himself to us because He loves us. Their problems had been answered, so Jesus then made promises to them. Their problem was solved, and they could receive the promises of God.

Three Promises

These promises of God are found in John14:25-31, and they deal with the Holy Spirit of God. There are three promises seen here: full instruction, untroubled hearts, and an understood mission. The first of these promises, **full instruction**, is seen in 14:25-27:

“All this I have spoken while still with you. But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.”

Here Jesus gave them part of the Father's will. He had not taught them everything, which He would explain to them. He said, “So far, these are the words I have spoken to you, and they were all true.” Everything that Jesus had taught them was true all together, but it was not all of the truth. Therefore Jesus said, “I am going home, but I will send the Spirit, and He will teach you more. He will teach you all things and will remind you of everything that I have said.” This was the promise of inspiration. There was the promise of perfect knowledge and inspiration to know it all and even have the ability to speak it. This was full instruction. When the Spirit was finished with the apostles, they would know all of the truth that God intended for all the world to ever know throughout all time.

All of this resulted in **untroubled hearts**. John 14:27-29,

“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid. You heard me say, ‘I am going away and I am coming back to you.’ If you loved me, you would be glad that I am going to the Father, for the Father is greater than I. I have told you now before it happens, so that when it does happen you will believe.”

In this passage Jesus promised untroubled hearts and the gift of unworldly peace. He said, “I am going to give you the kind of peace the world cannot give.” The only kind of peace the world can give is the cessation of conflict. The only way the world knows to have peace is through treaties and through the stopping of fighting. However, we have stopped the fighting in several wars, but the world still doesn’t have peace. The reason for that is that an inner peace has never been given. The only thing we have done is to declare a cease fire, but that is simply waiting for the other side to shoot again for the war to start over. However, Jesus said that He is going to end war by ending it in the heart. Then He said, “I will give you unworldly courage, a courage that the world cannot explain. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.” We cannot be afraid externally until we are afraid internally. We cannot feel courageous internally and not act courageously externally. The reason for that is that as a man thinks in his heart, that’s the way he is (cf. Proverbs 23:7). If we know internally that we are at peace with God, and God is at peace with us, then nothing threatens us. If we have not made peace with God internally, and God has not made peace with us internally, then everything threatens us. The secret of being fearless is having an inward, peaceful covenant with God. He gives unworldly joy. The joy of the world is seen primarily in physical presence. However, Jesus said, “I am going away, and if you knew what that meant, you would be glad in your hearts that I am going away.”

In John 14:30-31 there was **an understood mission**. That mission was that they love the Father, do the Father's will and overcome the devil. Then Jesus said, "*Come now; let us leave.*" So they finally left the upper room and were going to walk through the outskirts of Jerusalem to a garden where He would pray. As they went they passed some vineyards and saw the grapes that were growing there. They saw that some of the grapes had already been harvested. They saw vines that had been pruned. All of that dealt with an illustration, a parable and an allegory of their present experiences. So Jesus gave them instructions in John 15:1-16:4 about their present experiences that dealt with two things.

Instruction About Present Experiences

Fruitfulness

First, in John 15:1-17 Jesus gave them instructions on dealing with fruitfulness. While Jesus was telling this parable, they were walking and their feet were stepping on the branches that had been pruned from the vines on both sides of the pathway through which they walked. Jesus said in John 15:5, "*I am the vine . . .*" This was the sustaining provision necessary for growth. ". . . *you are the branches.*" The disciples were the branches. There was to be continual growth, so they were told, "*Abide in me,*" seven times in four verses. The gardener, the one who prunes the branches, was the Father, and there was faithful discipline as His hand cut off the things that bear no fruit, and that would cause the branches to be more fruitful. Twice He said that they were to bear fruit because they were disciples. The only reason to have a vineyard is fruit. The only reason to prune a vineyard is fruit. A vineyard without fruit is like a fig tree without figs, worthy to be nothing but cursed. However, Jesus said that this vine would bear two kinds of fruit. First of all, it would bear the fruit caused by the disciple abiding in the vine. That is internal fruit. That is growth, not numerical growth, but

personal growth (15:7-8). That personal growth, maturity and that fruit of the Spirit proved them to be disciples of Jesus. Then He said in John 15:16, “*You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit—fruit that will last.*” He left the idea of the vine, for the branch does not go anywhere to bear fruit. It resides in the vine, and that is its individual growth.

Then, Jesus changed the idea to people who were ambassadors. He said, “I have chosen you to go out into the world and bear fruit.” He put it this way in what we call the Great Commission: Go make disciples. Go bear fruit. The fruit beared will be disciples. This is the growth of the body, the church. First of all, there is the growth of the individual. Then there is growth of the church. The church grows internally and the church grows externally. Jesus intended for there to be many in the kingdom of Christ. He intended for us to go and make disciples. That’s the responsibility that He pressed upon His disciples.

Foes

Jesus not only discussed fruitfulness as a present experience, but He discussed foes as a present experience. In John 15:18-16:4 He said very simply that when we suffer it proves our identity with Him. 15:18 says, “*If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first.*” 15:20 says: “*Remember the words I spoke to you: ‘No servant is greater than his master.’ If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also. If they obeyed my teaching, they will obey yours also.*” He said that they needed to understand that their enemies were going to treat them exactly the same way they treated Him. They were going to feel about them exactly as they felt about Him because these people were identified with Him. They were doing what Christ did. In 15:19 Jesus said that they were not identified with the world. “*If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the*

world hates you." It hates them, because they are not of the world. 15:21 says the world lives in ignorance of Jesus and in blindness to the Word. In John 15:22-16:4 the world is dishonest about its own sin. The world refuses the miraculous evidence that says the Word of God is true. It refuses the Spirit-inspired testimony that says they are full of sin. It rejects the authentic messengers of Christ, and in doing so rejects Jesus and His Father as well. In the present they were to remember that they were to bear fruit, but they would be opposed. They would have enemies. That is true today as we bear the fruit of our own spiritual growth and the fruit of winning souls to Christ. The devil and all who are his will be our foe and our enemy.

Instructions Concerning the Future

In John 16:5-33 Jesus gave the disciples instructions about the future. There were three points: He would talk about the ministry of the Holy Spirit; He would talk about the power of the resurrection, and He would draw a conclusion from those two points. The **ministry of the Holy Spirit** as described in John 16:5-15 is that the Spirit has a two-fold witness. He is to convict the world, and He is to witness for Christ. He is to convict the world of the sin of unbelief in Jesus. He is to convict the world of their need which is the righteousness of Christ. He is to convict the world of their destiny, that destiny being the devil's end and the judgment to come. As He witnesses about Christ, He is to finish what Jesus started. In John 16:12 Jesus said, "*I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth.*" When the Spirit came, He would guide them into all truth. Jesus did not finish His testimony, so it was the Spirit who would bring all truth to the apostles' mind.

Jesus then speaks of the result and the **power of His resurrection**. In John 16:16-22 Jesus said that the resurrection will bring them joyful attitudes toward Him. They will be full

of joy because they see Him raised from the dead. The primary thing, however, is that it would give Him unlimited access to the Father. He said, “Up until now, you have asked the Father for things in My name. From now on, you can ask Him directly. You can speak, and the Father will hear. You can ask, and the Father will grant.” That is the greatest privilege of all, to be able to bow our knee or even figuratively bow our knee, and with one word, “Father,” open heaven. We have an audience with the King. He listens to us as His children. In 16:29-33 the disciples said, “Now we understand. We finally see what you are saying.” Jesus just said, “Yes, you see it in a way, but later on . . .” All of our seeing is imperfect. Even if we see it as it really is, our seeing is incomplete. What did Jesus say? He said, “Don’t worry about it. Peace! Have peace in spite of the fact that your knowledge is incomplete. Have peace in spite of the fact that your commitment is not total. Have peace no matter what.” That was the lesson that Jesus left His apostles with. The only thing remaining was His last prayer with them.

Period of Passion (9)

Review and Preview

This is the ninth chapter that deals with the Period of Passion, which has been called “The Eight Days that Changed the World.” What a difference these eight days made! The glory of Jesus was seen as He triumphantly entered the city on Sunday. The power of Jesus was seen as He cursed a barren fig tree which represented Israel. They had promised to bear fruit, yet had bore none. He cleansed a barren temple that was full of people, but not full of the hearts that God would have. The controversial nature of Jesus was seen as He faced the religious and political people, and as He silenced them all with His answers and His questions. The humanity of Jesus was seen as He spent Wednesday alone or simply with His friends, the disciples and His Father. In silence and solitude He got ready for the great day to come, when He was to sacrifice His life for the salvation of the world. On Thursday was seen the fellowship side of Jesus. This thought is continued in this chapter.

Jesus really wanted the men who He had walked with for three and a half years to be the force that they needed to be in the world. He knew that they were going to be strongly tempted to give up on the black Friday when He would die and on bleak and gloomy Saturday when He would be in the tomb. He had to prepare them for the coming trial of Friday and Saturday. Therefore, Jesus had a last conversation with them.

In that last conversation, Jesus dealt with their problems. He made promises and talked about the progress they would have because of the work of the Spirit of God in their lives. The Spirit would not only convict the world and predict the things that were to come, but He would become their Comforter and

Counselor. He would teach them all things, guide them into all truth and remind them of all that Jesus had said. He would become the personal representative of the Father and the Son to dwell in them, to be with them forever and to let them stand against all the trials, troubles and problems that serving Christ would cause. He would allow them to be triumphant in their joy, in their competence, in their glory and in their victory.

He Prayed for Himself

The Nature of His Prayer

Jesus then illustrated that the most powerful thing that one can do is not teach, but pray. There is a long prayer in John 17:1-26 and another in Matthew 26:36-46. These were the last prayers of Jesus, and they, especially the one in John seventeen, might really legitimately be called “The Lord’s Prayer.” What is called “The Lord’s Prayer” is said by some to be the model prayer that Jesus would have the disciples take principles from to learn how to pray. However, this was not a model prayer. This was the agonizing and final prayer of a loving and suffering heart.

The “Glory” to Occur in His Death

Jesus prayed for Himself in John 17:1-5. He prayed to be glorified and to glorify His Father. “Glorify” is the key word.

After Jesus said this, he looked toward heaven and prayed: “Father, the time has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you. For you granted him authority over all people that he might give eternal life to all those you have given him. Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent. I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do. And now, Father, glorify me in

your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began.”

This says two things. **Number one**, the glory that He wanted to have and wanted to give to the Father in return would occur in His death. **Number two**, His death would result in eternal life. Death has brought glory to many people, but death never brought glory to anyone in the way that it did to Christ. Hebrews 2:14-15 says, “*Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil—and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.*” By dying, Jesus brought the devil to zero or absolutely nothing. That is glory for Jesus.

There were six things that made the death of Christ a glorifying act. Don’t look at the cross of Christ and think sad thoughts. That was His finest hour. That was when He bruised the devil’s head. That is when He won the victory of victories, and because of that, we are more than conquerors with Him. Cling to the old rugged cross, and glory in the old rugged cross.

Number one, glory in the cross because in His death Jesus ruled majestically over death and over Satan. Jesus had to die for death to die. Death then had no more dominion, death had no more power over the saints of God. This was not because He was raised, but because He died. **Number two**, the cross brings glory to Jesus and the Father, because it was the object that would draw men to Him throughout all time. He had already said that in John 12:32-33: “*But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself. He said this* (John recorded it later.) *to show the kind of death he was going to die.*” Stoning would not have brought that glory, but the shameful, ignominious death of the cross caused even the hardened centurion, who had seen many men die on many crosses, to exclaim, “*Surely he was the Son of God!*” (Matthew 27:54) Glory be to God because of the cross!

Number three, the cross is glorious to God because it was the completion of His work. That was what He said in this text. He said, “I have finished your work and that brings glory to you.” When we finish our work, God will be glorified. **Number four**, the cross is glorious because it was love’s last act of obedience. Jesus did not say “no” at the cross, but He set His face steadfast toward it. **Number five**, it is glorious because it was climaxed by the resurrection. The cross would contain glory without the floodlight of the resurrection to shed light on what happened on that hill. **Number six**, the cross was the only way for Jesus to get back home. The way of the cross leads home. There is no other way but the way of the cross.

To Result in Eternal Life

The cross brought glory to God because it resulted in eternal life. He showed what was required of man in order to have eternal life. It is in the word “know.” He said, “*Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent*” (John 17:3). The word “know” is beyond head knowledge and is required to know God. The definition of eternal life, according to Jesus, is the life that God possesses and the life that He shares with those who are His people. It is not just endless life in quantity. It is eternal life in quality. It is the highest quality life. Since it is the life that God has, and since God never dies, it is life eternal in intent and extent.

There are privileges that eternal life brings. We have the privilege of possessing eternal life. We have the privilege of entering into the life that God has. We have the privilege of experiencing it here and now—experiencing the peace and the holiness of the life of God. “*Therefore, there is now no condemnation . . .*” (Romans 8:1). Jesus came that we might have life and have it to the full on this earth.

A beautiful privilege of this life that we now possess is that it will continue through one eternal day. Eternity is one of those

thoughts that is hard to get a hold on. It is like trying to hold mercury between two fingers. The best idea of “eternal” is in 2 Peter 3:18. Peter said that he wants us to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ unto the day of eternity. Eternity is a single day. It did not have a yesterday to precede it, nor will it have a tomorrow to follow it. It is always today; eternity is the ever present now. What we now possess, we will always possess. The experience of now will be an eternal experience.

What does it mean to “know”?

The requirement for eternal life is to know God and Jesus. That is why we need to ask the question: What is it to know? There is an element of intellectual knowledge in the word “know.” It answers questions such as: What is God like? What difference does He make in life? Is there only one God, or are there many gods? To know God is to have intellectual answers to those questions. However, there is something else in this word, because the word used for “know,” in this prayer of Jesus, implies a full and intimate knowledge of God. Genesis 4:1 says that Adam *knew* his wife Eve. That was the intimate oneness of sexual intimacy between a man and woman. That was shared with no one else and was shared because of covenant.

To know God is not simply mind knowledge. It is not even simply heart knowledge. It is not intellectualism alone, and it is not feeling alone. To know God is to enter into an intimate and personal relationship with Him. It is to know Him in His character, in His thoughts, and in an intimate, loving, beautiful and sincere way. How do we get to know God that way? We get to know Him by knowing Jesus. We couldn’t know the invisible God, until the invisible became visible. We could not know the God that never was tempted, until He became One that could be tempted. In Jesus Christ the Father is seen, and in having an intimate, personal and marriage relationship with Jesus, we know God. In this knowledge of God, we have eternal life.

He Prayed for the Apostles

Jesus' Work Among them

Jesus then prayed for the apostles, the twelve who had walked with Him, although only eleven of them were still there. He prayed for the eleven apostles, and as He did so He spoke of His work among them in John 17:6-8. Jesus then spoke of His request for them in verses nine through nineteen. His work was one single sentence, "*I have revealed you to those whom you gave me out of the world*" (17:6). His work was to make known God's name. In the Bible "name" signified the total character or nature of a person. It didn't just differentiate one person from another. In Psalm 9, 10, 20:7, 22:2 and Isaiah 52:6, those who know God's character know what He is like. They know that He is holy, just, loving and merciful. Therefore, they gladly put their trust in Him. If you don't know what He is like, start by looking at Jesus and then at the Old Testament passages.

When Jesus said, "*I have revealed you to those whom you gave me out of the world*" (17:6), He may have been referring to the four-letter, holy and special covenant name for God. The way we have it today is YHWH. Sometimes we say "Jehovah" or "Yahweh." Sometimes we say "the Lord." However, it was a special name to the Jews. It became so special to them that they wouldn't pronounce it. God gave them the name so they could pronounce it because they were in covenant with Him, but with misplaced holiness they refused to even speak that most holy name. What Jesus was saying is very beautiful. He said, "I have brought the sacred, covenant name of eternal God so close to you, that even the simplest people can speak to Him as friend to friend. They can call on Him by the covenant name. Abraham was called the friend of God because he used this name. We need to use this name because we are the friends of God."

Calling on the name of God—Jehovah, Yahweh, the Lord Eternal—makes one a disciple. This prayer of Jesus casts a lot of light on the meaning of discipleship. Discipleship is based on

the realization that Jesus came from God, and because of that fact we have a relationship with God. Discipleship deals with obedience. As long as we do what we like, we cannot be disciples. Discipleship demands submission, and that is what Jesus was praying about. Discipleship involves a destiny to serve. There is a ringing confidence in Jesus' thoughts and words about His disciples' future. God has His plan, and God has His dream. God has His destiny for every man, not just for the eleven apostles. Every man's responsibility and response is either to accept or reject God's plan for Him. Jesus' work among them was to make known the Name.

Jesus' request for them was in His prayer of petition in John 17:9-19. **First**, Jesus did not pray that His apostles would escape the battle, but that they would find victory in the battle. Christianity's essential nature is not prayer, meditation and worship. As important as those things are, they are not the central characteristics of the Christian religion. Those characteristics were possessed before the cross and before the resurrection. The essential characteristic of the Christian religion is to remember that at the heart of it all, we are at war. We are war with Satan, and all that he would send against us. We need to remember that our destiny is to be in the world but not of the world. That is perhaps the most important distinction that can ever be made. We are in this world. We are not to abandon the world, but we are to win people from the world into the kingdom of Christ. We are not to try to escape the battle but to find victory in it.

Second, Jesus prayed that the disciples would be unified. An army will not win if it has divided loyalties and plans. **Third**, Jesus prayed that they be protected from the evil one. This is the loving provision of God. He prayed that they would be sanctified, set apart and made holy through the Word. He prayed for His apostles, that they would be victorious, that they would be unified, that they would be protected and that they would be sanctified. He had done that for them as long as He

was with them, but He was leaving them. Therefore, He asked the Father to protect them.

He Prayed for the Church

In John 17: 20-24 Jesus prayed for the church. He said, “*My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, . . .*” That speaks of every one who has heard the apostolic message, obeyed it by faith, repented of their sins, been baptized into Christ and are walking in newness of life. He said, “*. . . that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me.*” He wanted the church to be one church just as He and God were one God. That is not a unity of administration nor organization. It is not in any sense an ecclesiastical unity. It is a unity of personal relationship. Jesus wants every Christian to be personally related to every other Christian as Jesus is personally related to God. If that is true, then a second petition that He had for the church would be easier to answer.

Jesus wants the church to be a testimony of His own relationship with God. As the world looks at us, members of the kingdom of Christ, if they see us wrangling, arguing and disputing, that is what they will think about God. If they see us vacillating and not standing firm, that is what they will think of God. However, if they see us loving one another and standing shoulder to shoulder against all of the enemies of the kingdom of God, then that is what they will think of God. He wants the church to be one. He wants the church to be a witness to the relationship between Him and His Father. He wants the church to live in the love that God has for His Son, not just teach it or sing it, but to live it wishing each other the highest good and honoring each other above self. That was Jesus’ prayer in John chapter seventeen.

He Prayed for the Lost World

In Matthew twenty-six is seen another prayer that Jesus prayed as He finished this one. When He finished this prayer,

He left and went out to a place where He often went to pray. He took with Him the three inner disciples—Peter, John and James—and said to them, “*Sit here while I go over there and pray*” (Matthew 26:36). He expected them to pray while He prayed. He went and prayed the same agonizing prayer three times (Matthew 26:36-46): “*My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me.*” He went to see how the apostles were doing, and they were sleeping. Disappointed, He went back and prayed again, “Father, if there is any way that this cup of Calvary and the suffering around it could not be Mine, let it be that way.” He went again, and they were sleeping. He went a third time and prayed. Still, heaven was silent. Heaven did not answer. He knew that it was not the Father’s will, so He got up from His knees, woke the disciples and said, “Let’s get ready. The prince of this world comes. He has nothing on Me. It is now time for Me to die.”

What is seen in this last prayer of Jesus before the cross? He would pray on the cross, too. However, this was the last recorded prayer of Jesus. First, all of the agony of Jesus was seen. It was a supreme struggle to submit His will to God’s will. It was the struggle of which the outcome would determine the destiny of all the lost world. This was the last struggle of the devil. Would He give in? No, He wouldn’t, because of the way that He ended that prayer. His request and His desire was to be delivered, but His heart stated, “*Yet not as I will, but as you will*” (Matthew 26:39).

The loneliness of Jesus was seen here. Jesus had to fight this one alone, so that lost men could come to Him and never be alone. The trust of Jesus was seen in this prayer in Mark’s account. In Mark 14:36 the word He used for “Father” was *Abba*. That is the childlike, trustful commitment of a little child to his father. Agony, loneliness and trust are seen. However, most and last of all, the courage of Jesus was seen. Jesus faced it. He looked at the cross. He really didn’t want to go there, but who would? He looked at separation from the Father. He really

didn't want to endure that, but who would? Regardless He said, "Not My will but thine be done." That was Jesus' courage. "Rise and let us be going," He said. The time for prayer, sermon and talk was over. It was time for action, which was the cross. Pray, because in prayer man enters heaven that he may face the battles of earth. May God bless you to win and fight in a way that you will win.

Period of Passion (10)

Review and Preview

The climax in the study of the life of Christ is nearing. This is still the Period of Passion or the eight days that changed the world, from Sunday to Sunday. When Jesus went to the city of Jerusalem for His last week of life, He entered the city riding upon a colt or the foal of a donkey. All of Jerusalem went out to see Him. It was a day of glory as all the people shouted, "Hosanna! Save now, Son of David!" The next morning, Monday, Jesus got up early because it was going to be a day of exercising His power. Jesus walked into the city of Jerusalem, and on the way there was a fig tree that testified it had figs because it was bearing leaves. He found no figs, however, so He cursed the tree. This was symbolic of Israel's fruitless life. He then went into the city and cleansed the corrupt temple, the symbol of Israel's corrupt religion, and His power was seen in all the land.

The next day, Tuesday, controversy arose. It was a long day as Jesus argued with the Sanhedrin about authority. He argued with the Sadducees about the resurrection, with the Herodians about His authority, and with the Pharisees about the greatest commandment. Finally Jesus silenced them all with a question as to His origin. He asked, "The Messiah, whose Son is He?" They said, "The son of David." "Then why does David call him Lord?" Jesus replied. From then on, no one dared ask Him further questions.

On Wednesday Jesus prepared for His death with a day of silence and solitude. Nothing at all was recorded about this day. It is suggested that He perhaps spent the time with His friends,

saying farewell, or with His Father, getting ready for the day to come.

On Thursday Jesus had fellowship with His disciples. He ate the Passover with them and established the great feast, the Lord's Supper. He discussed with them the Holy Spirit, His power in their life and how He would lead them in all truth. Jesus prayed for them and prayed for Himself that He might finish the task that God had given Him. He prayed for His apostles, that they might be unified, perfected, protected, and sanctified. He prayed for all the disciples who would come to Christ, through the apostolic word, that they would be one as He and the Father were one, and that they would be a testimony to His power, deity and existence in the world.

The Arrest and Trial of Jesus

Black Friday, the day of days, was the day of the trial and death of Christ. It would end satisfactorily, because Satan would be defeated, but it was the day that Jesus had to endure all the injustices of a Jewish trial, a Gentile trial, and the cross itself. Friday can be divided into two parts, the various trials and the cross.

Arrested in the Garden

It all began in Matthew 26:47 with Jesus' arrest. Jesus had been praying in the garden for His disciples, for the world and for Himself, that He would fulfill the unpleasant task that God had given Him to do. Judas was not there, because he had already been dismissed to go and carry out the foul plot that he had arranged. He would gain financially off the trial, arrest and death of Jesus. Matthew 26:47-54 says,

While he was still speaking, Judas, one of the Twelve, arrived. With him was a large crowd armed with swords and clubs, sent from the chief priests and the elders of the people. Now the betrayer had arranged

a signal with them: “The one I kiss is the man; arrest him.” Going at once to Jesus, Judas said, “Greetings, Rabbi!” and kissed him. Jesus replied, “Friend, do what you came for.” Then the men stepped forward, seized Jesus and arrested him. With that, one of Jesus’ companions reached for his sword, drew it out and struck the servant of the high priest, cutting off his ear. “Put your sword back in its place,” Jesus said to him, “for all who draw the sword will die by the sword. Do you think I cannot call on my Father, and he will at once put at my disposal more than twelve legions (72,000) of angels? But how then would the Scriptures be fulfilled that say it must happen in this way?”

First of all notice Judas' kiss. Judas was one of Jesus' own, one whom Jesus had trusted so much that He had made him treasurer of His money and of the possessions of His group of disciples, and here this man was, betraying Him for money and pretending that he was a friend. He could have at least been honest about what he was doing by saying, "I have come. I have decided that I am no longer a part of your following. I am no longer a part of your men. I have come to betray you." However, even in the midst of all of this treachery, Jesus allowed absolutely no resistance. He was going to go to the cross and voluntarily lay down His life. He had already said in John 10:18 about His life, "*No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again.*" His death would be of His own choosing.

Matthew 26:55-56 states,

At that time Jesus said to the crowd, “Am I leading a rebellion, that you have come out with swords and clubs to capture me? Every day I sat in the temple courts teaching, and you did not arrest me. But this

has all taken place that the writings of the prophets might be fulfilled." Then all the disciples deserted him and fled.

All of the disciples deserted Jesus and fled. Notice that Jesus' death was of His own choosing. He had volunteered to be arrested, and He said that it all took place so that what was spoken by the prophets might be fulfilled. Jesus' death was eternally purposed by God. In this arrest, the courage of Jesus is seen. His authority is seen; Jesus chose to die. His protective love is seen in John eighteen, the parallel passage to Matthew 26:55-56. He would not let His apostles be involved in the arrest, because Jesus had utter obedience to God.

Trial Before Annas

The trial of Jesus began. He was taken, first of all, in what was perhaps an arrangement, before Annas, who had been high priest a few years before and of who four of his sons had been high priests. At this time, Caiaphas, his son-in-law, was serving in the office. Annas was an extremely rich man, and by God's law, the high priesthood was supposed to go to the oldest son of the house of Aaron. That had long since ceased to be. It had become a political office that one gained either by position, by pressure or by money. Annas had all three. He had made his money selling the sacrificial animals in the court of the Gentiles. The previous Monday, Jesus had cleansed the temple from that business, so therefore, He had just put Annas out of business. Annas was sure to be glad to have Jesus standing before him, because He had cost Annas a lot of money. Jesus had cost him his position and his business on two occasions. He had closed him down. At the beginning of the ministry and at the close of the ministry, Jesus had cleansed the temple from all such corruption.

The examination of Jesus before Annas (John 18:12-27) is a mockery of justice. There was no accusation of the man as He

stood before Annas. Annas, the judge, against all law, questioned Him to find out why He had been brought to trial. He didn't question the people who brought Him because he knew that they didn't know why Jesus was there. He was questioning Jesus so he could have something to accuse Him of. It is in this context that Peter began the act of denying the Lord three times. Peter was probably terribly ashamed of what he had done, but perhaps at times we are a little too hard on Peter for denying the Lord, because all of the disciples had already deserted Jesus. All of them had already fled. At least Peter was standing around close enough to deny the Lord; the other disciples were not even close enough to deny Him.

The Parenthesis About Peter

There are four important things to remember about this great man, Peter. **Number one**, all of the others had already fled, but Peter was still standing there. **Number two**, remember how much he loved the Lord. He really did love Jesus. He tried to be there, and he tried to wield a sword to help. He was at least trying to do anything he could to help the Lord. **Number three**, Peter would redeem himself. He would return, and return so strongly that he would preach on Pentecost. He would be the apostle to the Gentiles and would write two books of the New Testament (1 and 2 Peter). This man may have denied the Lord in a moment of trial, temptation and weakness, but he made a tremendous comeback. That is honorable. **Number four**, remember that Jesus knew all along what the final outcome would be. He knew that Judas would go away and stay away, but He knew that Peter would go away and come back. So much so that He said to Peter, "When you are converted, strengthen your brethren." Jesus knew that Peter would be back, and He wanted Peter to be the man of God he was able to be when he did come back. He may have waffled at the trial of Annas, but he was coming back.

Formal Trial Before Caiaphas

The second trial was a formal trial. The one before Annas really had no power at all, because he was not high priest, nor elder, and probably not in the Sanhedrin. However, before his son-in-law Caiaphas, Jesus was formally tried. This trial is recorded in Matthew 26:57-67,

Those who had arrested Jesus took him to Caiaphas, the high priest, where the teachers of the law and the elders had assembled. But Peter followed him at a distance, right up to the courtyard of the high priest. He entered and sat down with the guards to see the outcome. The chief priests and the whole Sanhedrin were looking for false evidence against Jesus so that they could put him to death. But they did not find any, though many false witnesses came forward. Finally two came forward and declared, “This fellow said, ‘I am able to destroy the temple of God and rebuild it in three days.’” Then the high priest stood up and said to Jesus, “Are you not going to answer? What is this testimony that these men are bringing against you?” But Jesus remained silent. The high priest said to him, “I charge you under oath by the living God: Tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God.”

(Jesus had to answer, because the law said that if the high priest were to put you under oath and you did not answer, then you would answer for your crime. It would have been a sin for Jesus not to answer.)

“Yes, it is as you say,” Jesus replied. “But I say to all of you: In the future you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven.” Then the high priest tore his clothes and said, “He has spoken

blasphemy! Why do we need any more witnesses? Look, now you have heard the blasphemy. What do you think?" "He is worthy of death," they answered. Then they spit in his face and struck him with their fists. Others slapped him and said, "Prophesy to us, Christ. Who hit you?"

There is a fabulous point in this passage that must be mentioned. Who was this that He stood before? It was the high priest, Caiaphas, who was the highest religious officer in all of Israel. The teachers of the law were there, that is, the religious experts. The elders, who were the national rulers, the chief priests, who were the noted authorities, and the whole Sanhedrin, which was the Supreme Court with all its judges present, were all there. Jesus could not be tried before anybody else. Everyone who had the right to make any decision in all of Israel's national and religious officials was present for this trial.

However, there was much deceit in this court. They were looking for false evidence so that they could put Jesus to death. They knew that the truth would free Him. They had searched for a single flaw in His life for three and a half years with the microscope of their own prejudice, and they had found absolutely nothing wrong with Him. They did not want the truth. If the truth was presented in this court, they knew Jesus would go free, so they were looking for false evidence.

There was much confusion. Two liars repeated something that Jesus had said, but they knowingly made a totally false application of it. They knew that when He said, "*Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days*" (John 2:19), that He spoke of the temple of His body. However, they were trying to make it appear as if He were a treasonist, one who was against the Jewish order. Finally, the high priest made Him confess. He said, "I put you under oath. Are you the Son of God?" Jesus responded, "Yes, I am the Christ. I am the Son of God, but I want to tell you something you haven't asked Me.

The day is coming when you will see Me again, but on that time you will not see Me as the Christ, the Messiah, the Savior, nor the Son of God, but as the coming Judge who is going to destroy you and all your nations.” Caiaphas was outraged and said, “We don’t have any need of further witnesses.” Everybody present said, “*He is worthy of death, . . .*” (Matthew 26:66). The guards who were guarding Him began to mock and beat Him. The Sanhedrin said, “Guilty!” and they bound Him and handed Him over to the Romans to be tried.

Why didn’t the Jews just take Jesus out and stone Him to death? They had already found Him guilty. This was because God had prophesied that He was going to be crucified (Psalm 22). In addition to this, the Romans, for a short period of time, had taken away the right of the Jews to execute people by means of stoning them to death. They would have that right again in Stephen’s day (Acts 7). Jesus was not to be stoned; He was to be crucified. Therefore, He had to go to the Romans to stand trial.

The First Trial Before Pilate

In John 18:28-38 Jesus was bound and taken before Pilate. They took Him to the royal palace and woke Pilate, but they wouldn’t go into the palace, because then they would be defiled or unclean. If they were unclean, they would not be able to eat the Passover. They had been trying an innocent man all night long, and they knew that, **number one**, trying Him at night was illegal, and **number two**, they were bringing false witnesses before Pilate by telling their lies. They knew this was ungodly, and they were condemning Him without any evidence at all. Pilate came out and said, “What charge do you bring against Him? They did not have one; they had not thought about having a charge. Pilate asked, “What charge do you bring against Him? If He wasn’t guilty, you would not have brought Him here.” Pilate said, “Take Him and try Him according to your law.” Pilate then turned to walk back into the palace, but they

exclaimed, “It is not lawful for us to put a man to death.” Pilate then had to go back and talk to Jesus. This was to fulfill scripture.

Pilate had an interview with Christ, and he asked Him five questions, that last one of which he wasn’t really wanting an answer to. The **first question** he asked Jesus was, “*Are you the king of the Jews?*” (John 18:33) Jesus said, “Do you really want to know, or are you just repeating what you heard outside?” He said, “*Am I a Jew?*” (John 18:35) Your own people have delivered you up to me.” That was the **second question**: “Do you think I am a Jew? Your own people have delivered you up to me.” The **third question** was: “*What is it you have done?*” (John 18:35). Jesus had already answered that. He said, “Those who delivered Me are guilty, but you only have the power, and the only power you have is from God as to whether or not you will deliver Me.” The **fourth question**, “*You are a king, then!*” said Pilate. Jesus answered, ‘*You are right in saying I am a king. In fact, for this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth*’” (John 18:37). The **fifth question**, Pilate then contemptuously asked, “*What is truth?*” (John 18:38). Had he asked honestly, it would have been a long discussion, and he would have been a believer in Jesus before the day was over. However, this contemptuous, time-serving politician went out and spoke to the Jewish mob, and his verdict was, “*I find no basis for a charge against him*” (John 18:38). However, because he wanted to please the Jews, because Herod was in town, and because he was looking for a reputation with Herod, he sent Him over to Herod to be tried.

Trial Before Herod

Herod was anxious to talk to Jesus, because he had heard a rumor that Jesus was John the Baptist come back from the dead. Herod asked him many questions, but Jesus did not answer a single one. That was not out of disrespect to the king. He didn’t answer Herod’s questions for a very simple

reason—Herod had no power to crucify Him. Herod could not condemn Him to death. The worst that Herod could do was to put Him in prison, and that was not why Jesus had come. Therefore, Jesus was totally and absolutely silent before the most powerful king in the land.

Second Trial Before Pilate

In Luke 23:13-25 and John 18:39-19:16, Jesus went back to Pilate. The Jews were desperate. They were trying to find someone who would give them the right to put this Man to death. Pilate had refused to do so the first time. Herod had no power to do so, especially since Jesus did not even open His mouth and give Him anything to charge Him with. Therefore, Jesus went back to Pilate for a second time to be sentenced. Pilate listened to the people who had come from Herod, and he went out to the people and said, “I have searched this case. Herod has searched this case, and neither one of us has found anything deserving of death. However, to appease you, I have two men here. One is a man against whom we have found absolutely no crime. The second is a murderer, a thief and guilty of treason.” His name was Barabbas, and he was guilty of what they accused Jesus of: treason. Pilate asked, “Which do you want me to release to you? Christ or Barabbas?” Pilate most likely thought that they would want Barabbas to be crucified and Jesus delivered, because they had a crook and an innocent man standing before them. However, they cried, “Barabbas! Barabbas! Release Barabbas!” Pilate responded, “What, then, shall I do with Jesus?” They cried, “Crucify Him! Crucify Him!” Pilate pleaded with the crowd. He was, at least, an honest Roman. He pleaded with them, because He didn’t want to deliver an innocent man to them and to death.

Finally, because they kept hollering for Jesus’ death, Pilate called for water and washed his hands saying, “*I am innocent of this man’s blood... It is your responsibility!*” (Matthew 27:24). He then had Jesus flogged and robed in mock royalty. He

brought Him out to the Jews and said, “*Look, I am bringing him out to you to let you know that I find no basis for a charge against him*” (John 19:4). He started to let Him go, but the Jews said, “*Crucify! Crucify! . . . We have a law, and according to that law he must die, because he claimed to be the Son of God*” (John 19:6-7). Pilate went and asked Jesus, “*Where do you come from?*” (John 19:9). He wanted to know if Jesus was the Son of God. Jesus would not answer him, and finally Pilate said, “*Don’t you realize I have power either to free you or to crucify you?*” Jesus answered, “*You would have no power over me if it were not given to you from above*” (19:10b-11a). That was what Paul said in Romans 13:1, “*Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God.*” Caesar got his power from God. Pilate got his power from Caesar. Therefore, he had no power at all, not over Jesus, nor over anything, had he not been given that power from God. Still, Pilate wished to let Him go. He went out to the Jews and said, “I can still find no crime in this Man. I must release Him. I must let Him go.” He probably would have, if they had not made a statement that really made Pilate think. They said, “*If you let this man go, you are no friend of Caesar. Anyone who claims to be a king opposes Caesar*” (John 19:12). At that point, Pilate’s political loyalty was called into question. Would he be the one who was rebelling against Caesar? He could see the petitions going to Rome, signed by thousands of Jews that said, “Pilate let a man go who claimed to be a Caesar, a king and an emperor. What do you think ought to happen to him?” Pilate was already in trouble with Rome, or he would not be consular of the Jews. No one wanted to be consul of the Jews.

Finally he said, “*Shall I crucify your king?*” (John 19:15). They made a statement that at its bottom line was blasphemy to any Jew. They said, “*We have no king but Caesar, . . .*” (John 19:15). Blasphemy? Jesus had not blasphemed by claiming to be

the Son of God, but the Jews had blasphemed by saying God was not their King. Jehovah was not their King. They said, “*We have no king but Caesar, . . .*” (19:15). In spite of the fact Jesus was innocent, in spite of the fact that his wife had dreams about Jesus and had pled with Pilate to let Him go, in spite of the fact that Jesus has presented Pilate with the truth that His power came from God, in spite of the fact that Herod had found no crime with Jesus, in spite of the fact that he had the power to release Him or the power to crucify Him, he finally had to surrender to this mob of Jews. Pilate washed his hands again and handed Jesus over to the Jews. “*I am innocent of this man’s blood,*” he said. “*It is your responsibility!*” All the people answered, “*Let his blood be on us and on our children!*” (Matthew 27:24-25).

In the passages of this chapter are seen many travesties of justice, the foolishness of the Jews, and the hatred and antagonism that the Jews had toward Jesus. All of this brought about His death. Learn from that to bring to the case the honesty of a real seeker of truth and see if the evidence proves that Jesus is the Son of God. If it does, accept Him, follow Him, honor Him, and if necessary, die with Him. The cross was all that awaited Jesus at this point.

Period of Passion (11)

The Cross of Jesus Christ

This chapter in the life of Christ is a story that is tragic but beautiful, the cross of Christ. The last chapter, which dealt with the trials of Jesus was only tragedy, with no bright spot in it anywhere. Every single law and principle of jurisprudence was broken. He was tried at night. He had no defense attorney. He had no right to speak to the court. The judges hired liars to bring their lies to court, and still, none of that could convict Jesus when He stood before the Roman judge who was a time-serving politician, and not an honest sincere man. Pilate wanted to please the Jews, yet he could not find a single reason to accuse Jesus of any crime that would bring about His death. However, he gave in because the Jews kept at him and finally threatened him, saying that Caesar would know if he did not hand this man over to be crucified. In the final analysis, Pilate washed his hands. He said, “I am not going to do anything. You are the ones who are going to stand guilty before the law of killing an innocent man.” He then handed Him over to be crucified.

The Party – Mockery

As soon as anyone was handed over to death, he was immediately put in the hands of the Roman soldiers. These men had been hardened by battle, and they were only too pleased to participate in bloodshed and corruption. They began to mock Jesus (Matthew 27:27-30). They had their time with Jesus; they had been listening to the trial, so they knew that the basic thread of it was that He claimed to be a King. Well, a King needed a robe, so they put a purple robe on Jesus’ back. His back had already been beaten, so it was bloody. The word translated

“robe” is simply the ordinary wrap of a traveler or a sojourner, not a royal robe. This was probably some faded and worn out soldier’s robe, one that no one needed. They were mocking Jesus. They were not trying to honor the King.

The King had to have a crown, so they wove Him a crown of branches from a thorn bush. The thorns on those bushes were one and a half to two inches long, and as they pressed it down on His head, the crown went as far down as those thorns could go. The thorns hit the bone, and blood began to gush out and run down His face. The King also had to have a scepter, so they put a rough staff in His hand which they later used to beat Him on the head. The King was worthy of honor, so they knelt before Him and addressed Him as King of the Jews. Those were words of contempt both for Jesus and for the Jews. In case anyone misunderstood, they then showed their loyalty to Caesar as their only king as they spit in the face of Jesus and took the scepter that they had just given Him and beat Him on the head with it. Jesus was still suffering the tragedy of injustice in the mockery of people whom He loved enough to go for the cross for. He even prayed while He was dying that these people be forgiven for what they were doing. Finally the soldiers were tired of their games. They had done all that they could do to Christ, so they led Him toward the hill.

The Parade – Procession to Calvary

This was called a procession, because it was really a King’s procession. As triumphal an entry as the procession on Sunday was, this march from the Roman barracks to the place of The Skull was as much a procession as any king had ever had in all the history of the world. Jesus was carrying the cross. That might not have been the whole cross, because sometimes they had a whole cross shaped like a “t,” and they would drop that into the hole. Most of the time, however, it was just the horizontal beam that was dropped into a prepared slot in the vertical bar. In either case, it would be a heavy piece of lumber.

Jesus and Simon

Jesus had not slept in about thirty-six hours, and He had not eaten for a long time. He had not had anything to drink, yet He had been whipped and scourged. He had been mocked and had lost a lot of blood. He was tired, beaten and frazzled. He fell. It is assumed that Jesus fell beneath the load of the bar because Simon of Cyrene was compelled to carry the cross for Jesus. Maybe He couldn't make fast enough progress, but for some reason, a man named Simon from the island of Cyrene in Africa had come eight hundred miles as a Jew to serve and worship his God. He was then put to this humiliating task, carrying the cross. To do anything for a Roman was humiliating, but to be compelled by the Roman government to carry this cross out to the hill was a terribly humiliating act. However, it was a saving act. In Mark 15:21 is seen that this Simon was the father of Alexander and Rufus. This indicated that these men were well known to Mark's readers. If Alexander is taken to a concordance, he is mentioned three times as a Christian. If Rufus is taken to a concordance, it is found that he is mentioned in Romans 16:13 as one of the people who Paul knew in the city of Rome. These two men, Alexander and Rufus, sons of Simon of Cyrene, were noted Christians as the New Testament closed.

It is amazing that God uses humiliation to bring about salvation. He may do that more often than not. Simon came to this scene with religion and devotion. He left with reality and salvation. We need to remember that God can use the unexpected, difficult and even humiliating experiences of life to bring people to the Savior. Simon was compelled to be Jesus' helper and then compelled by Jesus to be His disciple.

Jesus and the Women

Jesus and the women are seen in Luke 23:27-31. As Jesus was going to the cross, a large number of women were following along with Him. They were mourning. They were sorrowing over Jesus' pain and condition. That was good; God bless the women. The men were crying, "Crucify! Crucify!" The men were laying all kinds of burden upon Him, but the women of

Israel were weeping, wailing and lamenting His situation. Jesus honored them. He turned to the women and said, “Do not weep for me. You need to weep for yourself and for your children. The day is coming when it would be better to be dead than alive. Cursed are those who are with child and have little children, because they will not be able to run away from that which is to come. The thing you have feared is about to come upon you.”

Judgement was about to fall upon these people. Jesus then said of the Romans, “If they, the Romans, do these things in the green tree (and there was no greener tree in all of Israel than Jesus), then what will they do in the dry, arid, barren and corrupt Israel?” Rome would have a tremendous slaughter. Men would say to the mountains, “fall on us,” and to the caves, “cover us.” They would rather be covered by an avalanche than to stand before the Roman army. A large number of these women were concerned about His present suffering. However, Jesus, in spite of and in the midst of His agony, was more concerned for them than for Himself as He thought of their future judgment.

Jesus’ evaluation of the situation, present and future, was that children would be a curse on the day of Israel’s fall. The wicked would seek refuge under avalanches in that day. If the green tree was being judged, surely the dry would be also. It is interesting that a man found salvation in Jesus’ walk to calvary, and women found consolation in His walk to Calvary. He was not even there yet, and His coming death had already benefitted the people who were honest, sincere and wanting the right thing to be done.

Jesus and the Malefactors

Then, on the way to the cross, was the situation with Jesus and the malefactors, the criminals who would be crucified with Him. Simon had found salvation, and the women had found consolation. These others would be trying company. One of them was going to be a mocker to the end. The other, on the cross, was going to receive a good word from Jesus. However,

they were identified with Jesus, and Jesus was identified with them. He was not ashamed to be found among the sinners.

There were two people going to the hill who deserved to die. There was One going to the hill who did not deserve to die, but He was counted among the criminals. That fulfilled Scripture. There were over 150 Old Testament passages fulfilled in these eight days that changed the world. This particular scripture was Isaiah 53:12 which speaks of the coming death of the Servant of Jehovah. It says that He would be counted among the transgressors. Three were going to the hill. All three of them were counted as transgressors, although one of them was not.

The Passion – Crucifixion

Next was the hill and the cross. They led Jesus to the place called Golgotha, so named because it looked like a skull. There they crucified Him. There are many accounts about this place. The Roman captain would put his hand on the forehead of the criminal and push Him back against the horizontal bar. His hand would be stretched out, and a nail would be placed right where all the nerves of the hand come together. That nail would nail Him not only to the cross, to the horizontal bar, but when suspended, that nail would hang Him. Every nerve in His body would be in extreme pain because right there was where all the nerves of the hand come together. This was a cruel and painful death. Finally, when both hands were nailed, the horizontal bar was raised and dropped into a slot. When it hit, it was as if His body tried to jerk itself off that tree. Then they parted His knees and put His feet together driving a larger spike through both feet and through that vertical bar. He was suspended there between heaven and earth, as if unfit for either and rejected by both. One writer called the cross “the see-saw of hell,” because as He sagged on those arms and hands which had been nailed to the cross, He could breathe in, but He couldn’t breathe out. Before long, He was suffocating, so He rose on His feet, held only by one nail, until His chest was parallel to His arms. He could then

take a few desperate breaths until finally the pain in His feet was so great He had to drop back again. He would drop, not able to breathe, and then rise to pain, drop to suffocation, rise to pain, drop to suffocation, and over and over again until finally, His feet were so painful and the muscles so used up that He could not rise again. He would then suffocate to death. That was the way a person died when he was crucified. That was what they had done to the innocent Man.

The First Three Hours

Jesus was on the cross for six long hours, on the see-saw of hell. Those six hours can be divided into two three-hour periods. The first of those periods is in Matthew 27, Mark 15, Luke 23 and John 19. Read these texts and weep, for it is weeping time. Also remember to rejoice, because these were the acts that would bring Satan's power to nothing.

When Jesus was crucified, naturally, He was not in the finest of company. Fine company was never crucified. He had a thief on either side of Him. Both thieves mocked Jesus at first, but one later asked for mercy. However, both mocked Him at first, and while He was hanging there the guards that were watching it at the foot of the cross were dividing the only thing He had ever owned: the clothes on His back. They were dividing those clothes among themselves. They did not tear His one garment, His robe. Again, that fulfilled Scripture, for Scripture said they would not tear His robes. All this happened, as Mark recorded in Mark fifteen. It was the third hour.

It was now nine o'clock in the morning. The other two men had been tried either the day before or days before. They had come to the cross after maybe a more honest trial than Jesus had. Jesus had been tried all night long, and He had been given no right to answer His accusers. He was then on the cross, and as He looked down, there were all the Jews who had cried all night long, "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" He saw the Roman soldiers who had spit on His face, had beaten His back and had nailed

Him to a cross. They were there gambling for His clothes. He looked at that mob, and one word, “Back off!” would have emptied heaven of angels—twelve legions with 6,000 in each making 72,000 angels—every one of which was capable of killing 185,000 Syrian soldiers in one blow, as they did to Sennacherib’s army. They would have rushed from heaven, and would have delivered Jesus from Calvary. There would have been no Romans and no Jews, and Jesus would have been comfortable back with God. However, Jesus didn’t ask for that. There was no, “Michael, help!” There was only, “*Father, forgive them, . . .*” (Luke 23:34). Those were the first words of Jesus on the cross, “*Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing*” (Luke 23:34). His first thought was of the very people who were crucifying Him.

Above Jesus’ head was a sign. This sign was written in three languages. It read: “Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews.” The Jews did not like that. They said, “Write that He *said* He was King of Jews.” Pilate said, “What I have written, I have written.” He was finally sick to death of the Jews, so He let the sign stand that this Man was their King. The Jews began to mock Him, “*He saved others,’ they said, ‘but he can’t save himself! Let this Christ, this King of Israel, come down now from the cross, that we may see and believe*” (Mark 15:31-32). The Romans also joined in the mockery. Jesus then heard a second cry from the cross. It is not known what convinced this thief. However, the thief on one side of Jesus who had first of all joined in the mockery, finally said, “No, we’re getting what we deserve. This man is not.” He said, “*Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom*” (Luke 23:42). That was a statement of faith. Jesus was a dying Man, but the thief believed that He would come and rule in His kingdom. Jesus said, “*I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise*” (Luke 23:43). There was an extension of mercy from the cross. Jesus was still thinking of others.

Jesus looked down from the cross again, and there was John. The rest were not there. John, the disciple whom He loved, was still at the foot of the cross. There was also Mary, His mother. In John 19:26 He said, “Dear woman, here is your son.” He couldn’t point. With His head He nodded at John. “Dear woman, here is your son. Dear friend, here is your mother.” This was an expression of concern. Jesus was still concerned about other people, and this time for His mother. The first three hours Jesus spoke three times: “Forgive them.” “Today you will be with me in Paradise.” “Here’s your son. Here’s your mother.”

The Second Three Hours

In the second three hours there was a fourth cry. This one came from the darkness. God dropped a cloud of darkness over Jesus’ agony and wouldn’t let people observe it. Finally, out of that darkness, came the cry. *“Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?”* (Matthew 27:46). That was to say, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken Me?” This was a cry of distress. This was a cry of desperation. This was a cry of pain and of humanity. In that same moment, Jesus knew the answer. The Father had to forsake Jesus or us. He chose to forsake Jesus. What love! What concern!

Jesus’ fifth cry was a cry of human need. They gave him the common Roman soldier’s drink of vinegar. The sixth cry was a cry of triumph. *“It is finished!”* (John 19:30) That was not despair; that was victory. He had bruised the devil’s head. He had defeated death. He had purchased salvation. It was finished.

Finally was His last triumphant cry as His head was about to drop on His chest and as He was about to voluntarily die. He said, *“Father . . .”* (Luke 23:46). Earlier He had said, *“Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing”* (Luke 23:34). He said later, *“Father, why have you forsaken me?”* At this moment He said, *“Father, into your hands I commit my spirit”* (Luke 23:46). This was a cry of trust and a word, not of

resignation, but of delegation. Jesus delegated His spirit into the hand of His Father.

Accompanying Signs

There were some accompanying signs with this event as recorded in Matthew 27, Mark 15 and Luke 23. The temple curtain was ripped from top to bottom by an earthquake across the Kedron Valley. It split the rocks in the Valley, went through the gate of the city splitting it, went to the temple causing several stones to fall, and went through to the Holy of Holies ripping from top to bottom the veil that only the high priest could go through and that had long separated Israel from their God.

The writer of Hebrews said that there is a new veil there now(cf. Hebrews 10:20). It is the veil of Jesus' flesh. God said that the age and order of things was put away on that day. There was now a new day, a new King, a new Priest, a new law and a new order of things. The ancient order of things was dead with the death of His Son. When He died, the tombs of many of the brothers or saints were opened, and they were raised from the dead. When Jesus was raised and left the tomb, many of them went into the city and appeared to many people and talked to them. They caused belief in Jesus. What a remarkable thing it would be to hear a knock on the door, and at the door is your uncle whom you buried—put spices on his body, wrapped him in the burial cloth and put him in the tomb. How remarkable to have him standing there as if he had never been away. He wouldn't understand it, but just knew that he was raised to life and had come into the city. The centurion said, "*Surely he was the Son of God!*" (Matthew 27:54). It is stated that the guards believed and the disciples believed, especially the women.

Jesus was dead. It was known that He was dead because the soldier had put a spear in Jesus' side and from the wound had come blood mingled with water. He had been dead long enough that separation had already begun between the blood and

the water. They had to break the legs of the other two men for them to die, but Jesus' scourging and surrender had caused Him to die. He was already dead.

The Burial Of Christ

Joseph, a disciple from Arimathea, and Nicodemus, the man who had come by night in John chapter three, and who had stood up for Jesus in John seven , went to get the body of Christ. Joseph requested that he receive the body, and it was given to him. He and Nicodemus put several pounds of spices on Jesus' body and wound Him with several yards of grave clothes. They then put him in Joseph's own tomb. A lot is said about that tomb. **Number one**, it was said to be Joseph of Arimathea's own tomb located in a private garden. It was not a garden visited by many people. It was said to be a new tomb where no one had ever been buried before. **Number two**, it was said to be cut out of the rock, so it would only have one way in and one way out.

Number three, a stone, a heavy stone, was rolled over, closing the entrance. There was a prepared slot that the stone dropped down into. Two men might have been able to roll the stone over, but it would have taken many men to move the stone back. After Joseph and Nicodemus had anointed the body, they lovingly laid it in the tomb.

The Sealing of the Tomb

The Jews went to the Romans and said, "Look, this man has claimed that He is going to be raised the third day. We don't want His disciples to come and steal the body. Let us seal the tomb." To seal the tomb, they took a piece of robe, put hot wax on the ends and sealed it with a Roman seal. They then attached that to the door of the tomb. It wasn't to make it harder to get out. It was so if that stone was moved at all, it would be known, for that seal would be broken. The Roman seal prevented tampering, and the penalty for tampering with that Roman seal was death.

Saturday – Gloom

It was then Saturday, and Saturday was the day of gloom. The Roman empire guarded the tomb. Pilate believed that he had been freed from the trouble of the Jews. The Jews believed they had been freed from the trouble of Jesus, and the apostles were in utter despair because they thought it was all over for them. It was Saturday and gloom filled the world, but Sunday was coming. On the way was the glorious Sunday of triumph when up from the grave He arose.

Period of Passion (12)

The Resurrection Dawn

This chapter brings us to the end of the study of the life of Christ. The last few chapters have been about the eight days that changed the world. This chapter covers the eighth day. The first day was a Sunday that brought about glory; this last day was a Sunday that brought about triumph. Jesus has been seen in glory, power, controversy, silence, fellowship, the climactic act of dying, the gloom of being buried and now in the triumph of being raised. In this closing chapter the resurrection of Jesus Christ will be seen. The resurrection is what makes Christianity unique. This is what proves that Christ is unique, and this is what enables the church to also be unique.

The Preparation of the Women

In Matthew chapter twenty-eight notice the preparation that the women were unknowingly making for the resurrection of Christ. Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus had anointed and buried Jesus. However, they had not done the job that the women wanted done, because they did not have the time due to the Passover. Matthew 28:1 says, “*After the Sabbath, at dawn on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to look at the tomb.*” In Mark and John’s accounts, the women also went to anoint the body. They wanted to make sure that Jesus was buried with all the honor that their Lord deserved.

The Opening of the Tomb

When the women got there, the tomb was opened. Matthew 28:2-3 states,

There was a violent earthquake, for an angel of the Lord came down from heaven and, going to the tomb, rolled back the stone and sat on it. His appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were white as snow. The guards were so afraid of him that they shook and became like dead men.

These guards were going to be paid to tell a lie. However, the truth was that they could do nothing about the resurrection of Christ. An angel had come, and an earthquake had occurred. They were so frightened by the appearance of this angel that they shook and quaked and could do nothing.

The Visit of the Women

Matthew 28:5-7 continues,

The angel said to the women, “Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell his disciples (Mark added, “tell his disciples and Peter.”): He has risen from the dead and is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him. Now I have told you.”

The women went to the tomb and saw the angel. Mark and Luke recorded that there were two angels, one sitting at the head and the other sitting at the foot of where Jesus had been. However, the angel announced the good news that Jesus had done what He said He would do. He said He would die, and He died. He said He would be buried, and He was buried. He said

He would be raised, and He was raised. The first two are accounted for by human power, but the third one took the power of God to accomplish.

Resurrection and Report

The Report to the Disciples

The women went and reported to the disciples what they had seen. This account is found in John twenty as the Word of God speaks concerning the resurrection of Christ.

Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the entrance. So she came running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus loved, and said, “They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don’t know where they have put him!” So Peter and the other disciple started for the tomb. Both were running, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. He bent over and looked in at the strips of linen lying there but did not go in. Then Simon Peter, who was behind him, arrived and went into the tomb. He saw the strips of linen lying there, as well as the burial cloth that had been around Jesus’ head. The cloth was folded up by itself, separate from the linen. Finally the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went inside. He saw and believed. (They still did not understand from Scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead.) Then the disciples went back to their homes, but Mary stood outside the tomb crying. (John 20:1-11).

What was Mary’s testimony to them? What had she believed? They had taken the Lord away. She wasn’t one of the

women who went and saw the angels and heard what the angel said. The word that the women saw the angels and that the angel said that Jesus had been raised had not yet reached Peter and John. Mary's only testimony was that the tomb was empty, and the only explanation she had was that the Romans or the Jews had stolen the body. That was the lie that was to be told, for the Romans and the Jews would tell the lie that the disciples had stolen the body. She could not believe that He was raised from the dead. The only conclusion she had was that they had stolen the body. Peter and John saw evidence otherwise. Someone stealing the body would not have left the grave clothes. Someone stealing the body would not have very carefully folded up the head piece and put it aside. However, if one were to sit up out of the grave clothes and not be able to see because of the turban-like cloth wrapped around his head, he would have taken it off, folded it up, set it aside and walked out of the tomb. That was exactly what Jesus did, and that was what the evidence was already reporting.

The Appearance to Mary

Next were the appearances of Jesus. In every one of these appearances, Jesus was in human form and was sometimes even mistaken for someone other than who He was. Notice John 20:11-18 as Jesus appeared to Mary Magdalene:

... but Mary stood outside the tomb crying. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb and saw two angels in white, seated where Jesus' body had been, one at the head and the other at the foot. They asked her, "Woman, why are you crying?" "They have taken my Lord away," she said, "and I don't know where they have put him." At this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realize that it was Jesus. "Woman," he said, "why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?" Thinking he was the gardener, she said, "Sir, if you have carried

him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him.” Jesus said to her, “Mary.” She turned toward him and cried out in Aramaic, “Rabboni!” (which means Teacher). Jesus said, “Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet returned to the Father.”

(The idea was not, “Don’t touch me.” Jesus would want to be touched. Mary had to touch Him. He didn’t want her to cling to His legs as if their relationship was dependent upon personal and physical presence.)

“Go instead to my brothers and tell them, ‘I am returning to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’ Mary Magdalene went to the disciples with the news: “I have seen the Lord!” And she told them that he had said these things to her.

This wonderful story can be divided into three parts. **The first** is Mary and the angels, as she learned very little about what had happened except that He was no longer there. **The second** is Mary and the Lord, as she learned that He had not only been raised, but that He could be touched and held. She learned that He had a relationship with her much like the relationship He had when He had left. **The third** is Mary and the brethren, as this woman became the first evangelist of the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

The Report of the Guard

Matthew twenty-eight is the parallel passage, as each of the gospels records these events. These events were too important for them to be recorded by only one or two of the gospel writers. In Matthew twenty-eight the guards made it back to the people who had sent them to guard the tomb. That was an interesting conversation. In Matthew 28:11-15 is found the report of the guards:

While the women were on their way, some of the guards went into the city and reported to the chief priests everything that had happened. When the chief priests had met with the elders and devised a plan, they gave the soldiers a large sum of money, telling them, “You are to say, ‘His disciples came during the night and stole him away while we were asleep.’ If this report gets to the governor, we will satisfy him and keep you out of trouble.” So the soldiers took the money and did as they were instructed. And this story has been widely circulated among the Jews to this very day.

A year's date could also be put on that, “. . . to this very day.” They were bribed to tell the lie that the disciples stole the body. The same lie is told by people throughout the world today free of charge. They don't have to be bribed. They will not believe in the resurrection, because if they believe in the resurrection, then they have to believe in Christ. Free of charge, they are telling the exact same lie that has been told now for two thousand years. Will the world ever learn the significance of the empty tomb?

The Appearance to the Two On the Emmaus Road

In Luke 24:13-32 is recorded the appearance of Jesus to two brethren as they walked along a road. This was the road to Emmaus. Emmaus was a little city about seven miles south from Jerusalem. These two men were going in the wrong direction. Jerusalem was where things were happening. They had heard the women say that Jesus was raised from the dead. For some reason they had not believed, and they were going away from where the true action was going to be. However, they were talking about the right thing, because as they walked along that road, they were talking about Jesus. They were talking about His life and

death, and they were talking about the report that He had been raised from the dead

What they needed was an understanding of the Word of God, so Jesus fell in with them and began walking along with them. Luke said that their eyes were closed so that they could not recognize Jesus. He walked along and said, “What are you two talking about?” They said, “Are you the only person in all the land that doesn’t know what is going on? We are talking about how Jesus died and how He was raised. At least, we heard that He was raised from the dead.” Jesus then opened their minds that they might understand the Scriptures. He taught them, beginning with the prophets, about the things that they were saying about His death, burial and resurrection. Then He walked away from them. They said, “Didn’t our hearts burn while He was saying these things?” Then their eyes were opened and they said, “It was the Lord!” They turned around; there was no more going to Emmaus. There was no more journeying those seven miles. For whatever reason they were going there, it was forgotten, as they hurried back to Jerusalem. They got the brethren and the apostles together and said, “We’ve seen the Lord, and He talked to us and our hearts burned. He really is raised from the dead!” The apostles now had the word of the women, the word of Mary Magdalene and the word of these Emmaus disciples, that Jesus was raised from the dead.

The Appearance to the Ten

In John 20:19-23 is recorded the appearance of Jesus to ten of His disciples. Judas was dead; he had hung himself. Thomas was not there, but the other ten disciples were there.

On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you!” After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were

overjoyed when they saw the Lord. Again Jesus said, “Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.” And with that he breathed on them and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.”

The door was locked. There were the disciples who had heard from three different sources that Jesus was raised from the dead, and they still failed to believe it. If they believed it, they would not have been fearful. Courage would have filled their heart. Anyone who really believes in the resurrection of Christ knows he has nothing at all to fear.

However, the doors were locked for fear of the Jews. Without them going to the door and without the door being opened, Jesus was there. He just appeared in their midst. They were afraid, so Jesus said, “Do not be afraid.” He said, “*Peace be with you!*” (20:21). He offered them evidence that He was not a spirit, but was actually the Man Jesus raised from the dead. He showed them His hands and His side. He even sat down and ate with them, all of which would prove that He was Jesus Christ raised from the dead. He commissioned them. He said, “*As the Father has sent me, I am sending you*” (20:21).

When Thomas returned, the disciples told him, “We have seen the Lord.” He said, “I don’t believe you. I won’t believe the Lord is raised until I see Him with these eyes, I put this finger in the hole in His hands and I put this hand in the hole in His side. Then I will believe.” Do not be too anxious to judge Thomas. He didn’t have any more evidence than they had when they didn’t believe. He just wanted the evidence that they had. He then said, “When I get the evidence that you have, when I’ve touched Him and eaten with Him, then I will believe that He is raised from the dead.” Thomas was a doubter; there’s no doubt about that. However, he was no more a doubter than the other ten up until this time.

The Appearance to the Eleven

In John 20:26, a week later, Jesus met with all eleven of the disciples. When He met with them that time, Thomas was there; and He said to Thomas, “Put your finger right here in My hand. Reach out your hand and touch My side, and stop doubting and believe.” It is not known if Thomas did that or not. He had said that he had to in order to believe. He looked at Jesus and could see the nail print in His hands. He looked and could see where the spear had been in His side. He cried out what would be blasphemy to a Jew if it were not true. Thomas said, “*My Lord and my God!*” (20:28). In Old Testament language, Thomas called Him Jehovah—Eternal Covenant Making God. He called Him *Elohim*—the powerful Creator of the universe. He was saying, “You are the One with whom I wish a covenant. You are the One that created and re-created again and again.”

Jesus’ reply to Thomas is one of the most educating things in all the Bible. “*Then Jesus told him, ‘Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed’*” (John 20:29). Sometimes we sing a song that faith is lost in sight. That is not true. You can trust in someone that you have seen. Thomas had seen the Lord, and Jesus said, “*Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.*” That is us today. We have not seen and yet we believe.

The Appearance to Seven Disciples

In John twenty-one is recorded Jesus’ appearance to seven disciples. They had been out fishing all night, but they had caught nothing. From the shore a Man said to them, “*Throw your net on the right side of the boat and you will find some*” (21:6). They cast on the right side, and they caught a boat-load. The disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, “*It is the Lord!*” (21:7). As soon as Peter heard this, He wrapped his outer garment around him and jumped out of the boat and swam ashore to see Jesus. When they got to shore, Jesus had already

fixed breakfast. They had eaten the Lord's Supper. Here they ate breakfast. He, without any fishing, fixed them fish for the day.

The Commission to the Disciples

Jesus then asked Peter the question, "Peter, do you love Me more than the rest of these love me?" Peter had claimed before that he did. Jesus used a word that is used only for God's kind of love. "Do you love Me like God loves people, more than these other people do?" Peter replied, "I love you with a human love that is beyond expression. I love you as much as a human can love another human." Jesus then said, "Simon, do you love Me with a God-kind of love?" Simon said, "Lord, I love you with a human kind of love." Peter would not make a boast. He said, "I love you the most a human can love." Jesus asked yet again, "Peter, do you love Me like a human loves a human?" That grieved Peter. He had already told Him twice that he loved Him that much. He said, "Lord, you know everything, and you know I love you as much as a human can love a human." The Lord then said, "Feed my sheep. Take care of my little ones. Feed my sheep." He then told Peter, "Peter, when you are old, they are going to do things to you that you don't want done to you, like they did to Me."

Peter turned and saw John. He asked Jesus, "How about this one, Jesus?" He responded, "It's none of your business if he stays until I get back. I've already told you what to do. Follow Me." That was the greatest commission ever given.

Next, Jesus gathered His disciples on a mountain, and He gave them what we call the Great Commission:

Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you

always, to the very end of the age” (Matthew 28:18-20).

They were to intentionally pursue lost people, intentionally evangelize the interested people and intentionally edify the saved people. That was the commission they were to live under.

The Ascension of Christ

Then, very quickly, one day on a hill just outside of Jerusalem, they were talking to Jesus. His feet begin to leave the ground, and they watched Him as He went up and up until finally, they could stand there no longer. They were told to go back into the city. He was going to come back just as He left. They were to go back into the city, where they would get further orders of what they ought to do. He died. He was buried. He was raised. He went home.

The Significance of the Resurrection

There is great significance in the resurrection, and there are several powerful benefits to the resurrection of Christ. **First**, Jesus’ resurrection guarantees ours. In John 11:25-26 Jesus said, “*I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die.*” We will be raised because He will raise the firstfruits of those who will be raised (1 Corinthians 15:21-22). **Second**, the entire gospel system depends upon the resurrection. Paul said in 1 Corinthians 15:15-17 that if the dead are not raised, then his preaching was vain, and our faith is vain. Everything is empty. The gospel is canceled. There is no good news if Jesus is not raised from the dead. **Third**, the resurrection is the proof of Jesus’ deity (Romans 1:4). **Fourth**, the resurrection is a basis for our justification (Romans 4:25). **Fifth**, it is the basis of Christian hope (1 Peter 1:3-4). **Sixth**, it is the center of New Testament preaching. Acts chapter two and all the sermons are centered on the resurrection. **Seventh**, it is the proof

of Jesus' power over His and our enemies (Revelation 1:18). That is the best benefit of all. We are more than conquerors because Jesus was raised. Is the tomb still empty? Yes. Then we have absolutely no reason to fear. The life of Christ did not end in a tomb. He was raised. He is at the Father's right hand. He is coming back. Honor Him. Love Him. Serve Him. Look for Him. He is coming back.

Richard Rogers



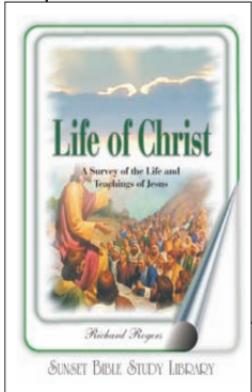
Richard Rogers was born in 1936 in Dallas, Texas. He was educated at Abilene Christian University, and Florida Christian College. He was an avid reader, a diligent student of the Bible, and authored some twenty teaching workbooks and published outlines.

Richard was well known and recognized as a gifted evangelist, teacher, and lectureship speaker. Until his death he was in great demand as a missionary encourager and world evangelist. He taught for more than three decades at Sunset International Bible Institute, assisting in the training of thousands of preachers and missionaries. Richard mentored church planting teams in California, Mexico, Thailand, and the Philippines.

Richard preached for local congregations at Blue Ridge, Azle, Midland, and the Sunset Church of Christ in Lubbock, Texas. Speaking appointments took him to forty states and thirty foreign countries and to many Christian university campuses as a teacher and lecturer. He was also a frequent speaker at soul-winning workshops across the nation.

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Richard and his wife, Barbara, were blessed with four children.



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