

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

BIBLE STUDY TEXTBOOK SERIES

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

by

Paul T. Butler

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This volume is dedicated to

Paul Maynard Jordan

God did not give me a brother in the flesh,
but He gave me Paul, my precious
brother in the faith, and he has blessed
my life and ministry with
encouragement and example. . . .

with special thanks to Mrs. Elizabeth Johnston and
Mrs. Penny Skaggs without whose help this volume
would have been impossible

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Chapter One (1:1-80)

THE GOSPEL OF THE SON OF MAN

IDEAS TO INVESTIGATE:

1. If others had already been compiling narratives of the life of Jesus, why did Luke feel it necessary for him to do so too (1:1-4)?
2. Why did God need to precede the birth of the Messiah with a "forerunner" (1:17)?
3. Why was Mary upset with the announcement from the angel about Jesus' birth (1:29)?
4. Should Mary be venerated in some special way because she was the mother of our Lord (1:42)?
5. Why was it so important to name the "forerunner" John (1:60)?
6. Who are the "enemies" the Messiah's people are to be saved from (1:71)?
7. Isn't it rather strange to let the child John grow up all by himself in "the wilderness" (1:80)?

SECTION 1

The Precise Record (1:1-4)

Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile a narrative
1 of the things which have been accomplished among us, ²just
as they were delivered to us by those who from the beginning
were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word, ³it seemed good to
me also, having followed all things closely for some time past, to
write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, ⁴that
you may know the truth concerning the things of which you have
been informed.

1:1-4 The Author: The author of this historical record of the life of Jesus was Luke (also the author of Acts of the Apostles) "the beloved physician" (Col. 4:14) and traveling companion of the apostle Paul. He was a Greek by race and the only Gentile writer in the New Testament. He was probably one of Paul's converts and tradition says his home was in Syria in the city of Antioch. Being a physician, he would be thoroughly trained and highly motivated toward skillful scientific research. Most doctors of that day were respected, well-paid practitioners. Historical records

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indicate physicians of that era were more skilled than we sometimes think. Amputations, surgery on the skull, surgery for "stones" (gall and kidney), suturing of blood vessels and tracheotomies were performed. Surgical instruments were so well designed that it has hardly been possible to improve on some of them even at the present day. There were probes, cauterizers, scalpels, needles for suturing, clamps, forceps, elevators for lifting up depressed portions of the skull (much like those used today), catheters, scissors, throat spatulas and other complicated instruments for dilating passages in the body and internal examinations.

Paul picked up Luke at Troas on his second missionary journey (Acts 16:10; note, "we") and then left Luke at Philippi (about 51 A.D.). Six years later Luke was in Paul's missionary troupe again sailing back to Troas (about 58 A.D.) (note "we" used again in Acts 20:1-6). Luke probably accompanied Paul from then on through the third missionary journey, the return to Jerusalem, two years imprisonment at Caesarea (58-60 A.D.), and finally, the trip to Rome and Paul's imprisonment there (60-63 A.D.).

Luke's travels with the apostle Paul, especially the two or three years spent in Palestine, gave him ample opportunity to complete his detailed research and interrogation of "eyewitnesses" and write his gospel record. Most scholars date the writing of Luke's gospel about 58-60 A.D., coincidental with Paul's incarceration at Caesarea. External evidence abundantly testifies to the early existence and use of Luke's gospel. Justin Martyr (100-165 A.D.); a student of Polycarp (who was in turn, a student of the apostle John), quotes from Luke's gospel; Hegesippus (110-180) quotes from it; Tatian's *Diatessaron* (120 A.D.) quotes it; The Muratorian Fragment (170 A.D.) cites it as Luke's gospel; the Syriac manuscripts (some of the oldest mss. of the N.T.) (100-200 A.D.) contain the gospel according to Luke.

Although Luke was not an apostle (like Matthew and John), he was a co-laborer and long-time companion of the apostle Paul. Paul had the power to lay his hands on his co-laborers and impart to them special, miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit (2 Tim. 1:6). We believe Paul must have imparted to Luke the miraculous gift of the Holy Spirit to guide him in producing an inerrant record of the life of Jesus (and Acts of the Apostles). In other words, we believe Luke's gospel is "inspired" by the Holy Spirit as surely as Matthew's or John's. His gospel has been received as canonical by the church from the end of the first century until now.

Luke's gospel has often been characterized as "the gospel with the Gentile world in mind." Beginning in 1:68, Luke emphasizes the *redemptive* work of Jesus. Thiessen, in his *Introduction to The New Testament*, points out the following peculiarities of Luke's account:

1. This is the Gospel of the perfect humanity of Christ. Our Lord is seen as having the development, feelings, sympathies and powers of a man. Luke gives us the fullest account of the birth, childhood, growth, domestic and social life of Jesus.
2. Luke makes much of Prayer. Christ is represented as praying 15 times in the four Gospels, 11 of which are found in Luke's Gospel, 3 in Matthew's, and 4 in both Mark and John. Luke has a good deal of teaching on prayer not found in the other Gospels, 11:5-13; 18:1-8; 21:36; cf. 18:11-13.
3. The Third Gospel also makes much of Praise and Thanksgiving. It begins and ends with worship in the temple (1:9; 24:52). He alone gives us the words of the great hymns which have since been set to music; The Ave Maria (1:28); the Magnificat (1:46-56); the Benedictus (1:68-79); the Gloria in Excelsis (2:14); and the Nunc Dimitis (2:29-32).
4. Women and children are prominent in this Gospel; Elizabeth and Mary; Anna; the widow of Nain; woman bound by Satan; women who ministered to Jesus; sinner woman; widow appealing to unrighteous judge; Martha and Mary; infants (18:15); Jairus' daughter, etc.
5. The Gospel of Luke is the most literary and beautiful of the gospels. Its introduction is classic and its vocabulary is that of an educated man.
6. He uses many medical terms and shows special interest in sickness and in the sick. He shows the compassion of Jesus.
7. Luke records 20 miracles of Christ, of which 6 are peculiar to him, and 23 parables, of which 18 are peculiar to him.
8. He traces Christ's genealogy back to Adam, showing Christ's kinship with all of mankind in His work of redemption.

SECTION 2

1:1-4 The Authentication: The tenses of the Greek verbs in Luke's "prologue" indicate he wrote his introduction *after* he had completed the body of the account itself. William Barclay says, "Luke's introduction is unique . . . It is the best bit of Greek in the New Testament." The physician-historian uses the classic form of introduction which the great Greek historians all used. He wants to assure those who read his account of the life of Jesus that it is the product of the most careful and accurate research. An example of Luke's diligence for historical accuracy is that he dates it by reference to no fewer

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than six contemporary political personages: "Now in the fifteenth year of Tiberius Caesar (1); Pontius Pilate being governor of Judaea (2); Herod being tetrarch of Galilee (3); and his brother Philip being tetrarch of Ituraea and of the regions of Trachonitis (4); and Lysanias the tetrarch of Abilene (5); Annas and Caiaphas being the high priests (6); the word of God came to John (the Baptist)." (Luke 3:1-2)

The Greek word *anataxasthai* (Lk. 1:1) is translated *compile* and was really a military term referring to the lining up of soldiers in orderly rank and file. There were thousands of people who had seen and heard the miracles and sermons of Jesus. The Greek word referring to these things is *peplerophoremenon* and is in the perfect tense, meaning, "things having been accomplished with a continuing result." Jesus was God Incarnate. He had died as a final and complete atonement for man's sins. He had conquered death and the grave and promised eternal life to all who believed and obeyed Him. The good news was sweeping through the Roman empire like wildfire. Churches were being formed and were wanting desperately an orderly, detailed account of Christ's life in permanent written form. Evidently, there were many Christians attempting to gather the oral and written fragments of the Jesus-story into one complete, orderly account. None of these suited Luke's purpose, so he set about to write his own account.

It is not that these earlier attempts were inaccurate or spurious for they were from "eyewitnesses." The Greek word for *eyewitnesses* here is *autoptai* from which we get the English word *autopsy*. It is a Greek medical term. Physicians perform an *autopsy* so they may see with their own eyes conditions which may have caused death. The word means literally, "seeing for oneself." Luke's sources for his gospel account were *eyewitnesses*. As a scientist-physician and historian, he would never be satisfied with hearsay material. The student should be impressed with the fact that the gospel accounts (and especially Luke's) are pure *history*. They make no attempts to interpret meanings—they are records of what Jesus said and did, purely and simply, and modern-day news reporters would do well to follow their example. The Gospel writers had confidence that honest, clear-thinking men and women who read their historical accounts of Jesus could form their own conclusions about who Jesus is and what they should do about their conclusions. (See John 20:30-31)

It is inconceivable that a man of Luke's training could be satisfied with only fragmentary and disconnected portions of the life of Jesus. He would be challenged to make a scientific investigation of every bit of true historical information he could gather. A.T. Robertson reminds us that Luke was the first "critic" of the life of Christ whose criticism has been preserved for posterity. With his training and sources it is

unlikely that he would be fooled. He had nothing to gain by misrepresenting the facts. He got his facts first hand from eyewitnesses. Shouldn't honest-minded people today give more credence to Luke than modern-day critics, almost 2000 years away from the events, who are trying to impugn their accuracy?

Luke evidently does not mean to say that each one of his sources had been with Jesus during every event of His life. No doubt Luke received his account of the birth narratives from Mary, mother of Jesus. He tells much about Mary's part in the history of Christ that others leave out. During his stay in Palestine for two years it is altogether possible that he talked with a number of the first apostles of Christ. Paul told of 500 brethren, most of whom were alive when he wrote I Corinthians, who were eyewitnesses. Luke probably interviewed a number of these people. He definitely met James and "all the elders" at Jerusalem with Paul (Acts 21:18). Nowhere does Luke claim to have written everything Jesus said and did, but his account is the most complete and orderly account of all four gospel accounts.

Graphically, Luke describes the work he put into his gospel record. The Greek word *parekolouthekoti* is translated *having followed* and means, literally, *to follow alongside* a thing which one has in mind, or *to trace* a thing carefully. Galen, famous Greek physician, used this word for the tracing-out of medical symptoms. Luke applies the exact science of his medical training to the careful investigation of events surrounding Jesus' life. He traced every account for accuracy and order. The word *closely* in the English text is *akribos* in Greek and means *minutely*. Nor was he satisfied until he had traced all things to their source. The Greek word is *anthen* and means, *source* or *beginning*. The translation, "for some time past," in RSV is not a good translation. Luke's method of scientific-historical research is in no way inferior to any method used today.

Luke is not only an expert researcher, he is also an expert communicator. He is not satisfied just to trace every bit of material on the life of Jesus which comes his way to its source with minute accuracy, he must also put it in logical order. The Greek word is *kathexes*. G. Campbell Morgan says the word is that of the artist. Luke gathered his material, established its accuracy and then gave it artistic order so that his friend, Theophilus, would get the whole "picture" of Jesus. Hobbes notes, Luke's "historical genius expresses itself in the words *inquiry, accuracy, and order.*"

Theophilus is a Greek name meaning, "one who loves God." Luke addresses him as "most excellent" or "your excellency." He uses the same Greek word *kratiste* which is used twice in Acts to address important government officials (cf. Acts 23:26; 24:3). Many ancient writers were supported by "patrons" or men of wealth who wished to benefit by the research done by these experts. Luke also mentions Theophilus in

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his introduction to Acts. Theophilus was probably an important government official of considerable wealth, a convert to Christianity, who wished to know as many details about Jesus' life as possible and have them written down in orderly, permanent form so that he could establish himself and others more firmly in the faith. Theophilus had been taught the good news about Christ. In fact, the Greek word translated informed is *katechethes* and is the word from which we get *catechism* in English. The Greek word *asphaleian* is translated *truth (certainty in KJV)*. It means "without tottering or falling." Plummer comments that "Theophilus shall know that the faith which he has embraced has an impregnable historical foundation."

Through the work of modern archaeologists and historians like Sir William Ramsay, Luke's Gospel (and Acts) has been thoroughly authenticated as to its historical accuracy. Herschel H. Hobbs summarizes it beautifully:

The fires of criticism have burned about the whole of the Bible. Yet it has stood the test. And central in this test has been the Gospel of Luke. It is really no wonder that this Gospel stands triumphant in the field of battle. It has stood the stern test of scientific analysis where science is qualified to speak. And where it cannot speak with authority this Gospel itself can. For before this scientist-historian allowed any single item to be honored with a place in his account, he first subjected it to the most critical analysis in every detail. This man of science who possessed a keen appreciation for history surrendered his personality and powers to the Holy Spirit. The result is not only the world's most beautiful story, but one which gives to us the full knowledge of "the certainty of those things, wherein thou hast been instructed."

And for this dual reason we are indebted to Luke beyond measure, a debt which the faithful can never repay.

from *An Exposition of The Gospel of Luke*, by H.H. Hobbs, pg. 23,
pub. Baker

STUDY STIMULATORS:

1. Some have led us to believe that physicians of 2000 years ago were little more than ignorant, superstitious witchdoctors—what about Luke?
2. Does the academic and social position of Luke and the political status of Theophilus tell you anything about the cutting-edge of the Gospel as it penetrated all strata of first century society? Can you

name other people of position and erudition converted by the Gospel?

3. Since Jesus never promised Luke the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, nor does Luke claim it in his own statements, do you have any difficulty accepting Luke's Gospel as an authentic part of the Bible?
4. Did you know that some modern religious leaders claim most of what is recorded of Jesus in the gospel accounts is mythological—that is, made-up stories like fairy-tales? How does that compare with Luke's claim to historical accuracy?
5. Since Jesus was crucified about 34 A.D. and Luke was interviewing eyewitnesses in Palestine about 58-60 A.D., what famous persons might have been alive then for Luke to interview about Jesus' life?
6. Why do you think the Holy Spirit guided the gospel writers to refrain from making interpretations of the meaning of the events they recorded? Does this give any indication about right and wrong in the "psychology" of the proclamation of the Gospel? In other words, should we try to push people into responding by manipulative methods, or simply proclaim the gospel story with conviction and compassion and leave men as free as possible to make their own choice?
7. Is it important to you that Luke has emphasized his goal of minute and orderly accuracy?
8. Are you convinced that Luke's historical account can stand the test of modern scientific and historical investigation?
9. Do you think an honest-minded unbeliever could be converted by studying Luke's gospel? Or would it take something else?

SECTION 3

Preparing for the Redeemer (1:5-25)

5 In the days of Herod, king of Judea, there was a priest named Zechariah, of the division of Abijah; and he had a wife of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. 6 And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless. 7 But they had no child, because Elizabeth was barren, and both were advanced in years.

8 Now while he was serving as priest before God when his division was on duty, ⁹according to the custom of the priesthood, it fell to him by lot to enter the temple of the Lord and burn incense. ¹⁰And the whole multitude of the people were praying outside at the hour of incense. ¹¹And there appeared to him an angel of

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the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense. ¹²And Zechariah was troubled when he saw him, and fear fell upon him.

¹³But the angel said to him, "Do not be afraid, Zechariah, for your prayer is heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John.

¹⁴And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth;

¹⁵for he will be great before the Lord, and he shall drink no wine nor strong drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb.

¹⁶And he will turn many of the sons of Israel to the Lord their God,

¹⁷and he will go before him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn

the hearts of the fathers to the children,

and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready for

the Lord a people prepared."

¹⁸And Zechariah said to the angel, "How shall I know this? For I am an old man, and my wife is advanced in years." ¹⁹And the angel answered him, "I am Gabriel, who stand in the presence of God; and I was sent to speak to you, and to bring you this good news.

²⁰And behold, you will be silent and unable to speak until the day that these things come to pass, because you did not believe my words, which will be fulfilled in their time." ²¹And the people were waiting for Zechariah, and they wondered at his delay in the temple.

²²And when he came out, he could not speak to them, and they perceived that he had seen a vision in the temple; and he made signs to them and remained dumb. ²³And when his time of service was ended, he went to his home.

24 After these days his wife Elizabeth conceived, and for five months she hid herself, saying, ²⁵"Thus the Lord has done to me in the days when he looked on me, to take away my reproach among men."

1:5-12 Persons: God chose the days of Herod (the Great) to send the Redeemer of mankind to the world. Herod was made "king of the Jews" by the Roman emperor. He was not a Jew but an Idumean (Edomite) a descendant of Esau. Ethnically he was what we would think of today as an Arabian. The Roman conquest of Palestine was repugnant to most Jews to begin with. But their bitterness was even more agitated when the Romans appointed an Arab to rule over them. Herod was an able administrator, promoter of extravagant public building projects (which required exorbitant taxation), and a crafty politician. He was also cruel, sadistic and suspicious. He had ten wives and many children. He nearly succeeded in obliterating the Jewish royal family (Hasmoneans) through assassinations and executions. He ordered the execution of the wife

he loved most, Mariamne (a Hasmonean princess). Then he had her two sons slain along with five sons of his by various other wives. He heard rumors they were trying to wrest his throne from him. The Roman emperor Augustus (Octavian) said, "It is better to be Herod's pig than his son." He was joking that Herod would have more scruples against violating Jewish tradition than murdering his relatives! When Herod was about to die, he ordered that all the most important men of the kingdom be executed to insure that there would be mourning during his funeral. He was the Herod who ordered the slaughter of the babies of Bethlehem (Mt. 2:16-23). He reigned from 37 B.C. to 4 B.C.

Herod was the personification of the condition of the world when God began to make preparations for His Redeemer to be sent. Herod's world was cruel, materialistic, hateful, exploitative, cynical and filled with despair. The Jewish people suffered much at the hands of their rulers. When Herod and the Romans were not oppressing them, their own religious leaders were. The religious life of the Jews (an integral part of their social and political life) had lost its vitality and helpfulness. The Pharisees had made their traditions a burden almost impossible to bear; the Sadducees were using religion to amass personal fortunes.

The prophets of the Old Testament had spoken concerning an age of glorious righteousness and abundant spirituality for the Jewish people. But the last prophet had spoken 400 years earlier and Jehovah had not said anything to His people since then. The days of Herod were most unlikely days for God to begin preparations for the Redeemer! Modern man with his "Madison Avenue" techniques would not have planned it so. But God's ways are higher than men's. It is all the more significant that in such a condition and time God chose to act in history for the accomplishment of His eternal redemptive purpose. God was ready to demonstrate His sovereignty. The "time" (Gal. 4:4) had come! And despite a people and a religion saturated with materialism, cynicism and despair, there was still a faithful remnant, a few godly, obedient, believing people Jehovah could use to be the instruments of His will.

An aged priest and his wife were chosen by Jehovah to become parents of a son who would later be called the greatest of all those born of woman (Mt. 11:11), and he would be the Way-Preparer for the Messiah. Zechariah means, "Jehovah remembers," and Elizabeth means, "the oath of God." God had solemnly promised to send the Redeemer, and He remembered His oath. Zechariah was a priest and his wife, Elizabeth, was a daughter of a priest.

There were twenty-four "courses" (shifts) of priests, that of Abijah was the eighth "shift." There were some twenty thousand priests altogether taking turns at officiating at the temple in Jerusalem. This would mean there were about 900 priests in each shift. Each shift served

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for a week twice a year burning incense, sacrificing, caring for the show-bread and scores of other duties. Not all the priests lived in Jerusalem. Some lived in villages and cities scattered throughout Judea and came to Jerusalem only when they were "on duty." The various duties were rotated among the shifts and on Sabbaths the whole shift served. During the three great feasts, Passover, Pentecost and Tabernacles, all 24 shifts served.

Zechariah and Elizabeth had taken the law of the Lord seriously all their lives. They loved it and obeyed it. Undoubtedly they had been reared in godly homes. The Greek word for *blameless* is *amemptoi* and literally means, "unblamed ones." It is the same word the apostle Paul used of himself in Phil. 3:6. There is another word translated *unblemished* and that is *amomos*, used in Eph. 5:27. Of course, these two were not sinless. Any man who says he is without sin (Romans 3:23; I John 1:10) contradicts the Word of God. But this good man and his wife believed the sweet singer of Israel (Psa. 119) and delighted to walk in the law of the Lord. Yet in spite of their superlative spiritual qualifications, how will God be able to use them as His instruments for the birth of the Way-Preparer? Elizabeth was barren and they were both beyond the normal age for child-bearing. The Greek word for barren is *steira* from which the English word *sterile* comes. Elizabeth's sterility cannot thwart the Lord God Almighty. God has two willing, obedient people and He can carry out His will through them. He is sovereign Lord of all that is. The Bible is a historical record of Jehovah's countless supernatural interventions in His creation to carry on redemption's work. The whole Jewish nation came into being when God gave Abraham and the barren Sarah a child.

It was Zechariah's turn to burn incense. The inside of the Temple-building was exactly like the inside of the Tabernacle. The Holy Place contained the Table of Showbread, the Menora (candelabra), and the Altar of Incense. Outside the Temple-building was the Altar of Burnt Offering and the Laver. Inside the Holy of Holies was where the Ark of the Covenant was supposed to be. Only the High Priest could enter there and only once a year on the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur). Incense was burned on this altar (which stood just in front of the veil which separated the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies) every morning and every evening so that it was literally, perpetual (cf. Ex. 30:8). It was customary for the Jews to stop whatever they were doing each day at these times of burning the incense in the temple and pray. Many made a special trip to the Temple courts to pray at those hours. It was one of the greatest experiences in the life of an ordinary priest of the Jews to be chosen to burn the incense. But this day was going to be much greater than Zechariah expected.

Suddenly there appeared to him an angel of the Lord, standing at the right side of the altar. Zechariah's reaction was trouble and fear (*phobos*, in Greek). What would you do if an angel appeared to you? Daniel fainted (Dan. 10:8-9). God used angels many times in ages past to assist Him in His redemptive work. Sometimes they appeared as men (Gen. 18). God is able to make His angels wind and fire (Heb. 1:7), and sends them forth as "ministering spirits to serve for the sake of those who are to obtain salvation (Heb. 1:14). Angels do not necessarily have to take human form to do God's service. Some, entertaining strangers, have entertained angels unawares (cf. Heb. 13:2). Perhaps God still sends angels occasionally to protect or serve His saints. The book of Revelation seems to indicate angels were active in the service of God to bring about the downfall of the Roman empire (the "great harlot, Babylon"). Luke, cautious, discriminating and diligent scientist-historian was convinced of the reality of angels. There is no valid reason for us to dispute Luke's research. Thus the scene is set for God's first announcement concerning the Redeemer since the days of Malachi the prophet, 400 years ago.

1:13-17 Pronouncement: Zechariah may have feared the angel was to signal some judgment from God. But the angel had news that would bring great joy to Zechariah and his wife—their prayers for a child were to be answered with a Yes! Their child would be no ordinary child. His whole life was to be totally dedicated to God's service. First, they were to give the child a name already selected in heaven. *John* means "gift of God," or "God's grace." This child was the gift of God's grace to more people than Zechariah and Elizabeth. He would cause "many" to "rejoice at his birth." The ministry of John the Baptist was cause for great excitement in the Jewish nation (cf. Mt. 3:5; Mk. 1:5; Lk. 3:15; Jn. 1:19-28). He was fearless in his attacks upon ungodliness in places both high and low. He preached with authority and eloquence. He lived a life of righteous austerity quite unlike the indulgent, self-serving living common among the religious leaders of that day. But more important, he heralded the coming of the Messiah! He was "filled with the Holy Spirit," from the day of his birth. It is interesting that John the Baptist, so far as the inspired record goes, worked no miracles. He healed no one's illnesses, he spoke in no foreign language (tongues), he raised no one from the dead, and worked no miracles upon nature, yet he was "filled" with the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit "filled" John to give him divine guidance in identifying and testifying to the work of the Messiah (cf. Jn. 1:6; 1:29-42). God distributed His miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His will (cf. Heb. 2; I Cor. 12:4-6). And John the Baptist proves conclusively that being filled with the Spirit does not necessitate speaking in tongues!

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This child to be born of these aged, godly people would begin the fulfillment of Malachi's prophecies (cf. Mal. 3:1-5; 4:5). Malachi predicted both the Messiah (Messenger of the Covenant) and the Way-Preparer (Elijah). The prophecies of Malachi (and Isaiah 40:1-8) should be read in connection with this lesson. John's mission was much broader than merely reuniting families. He would aim at reuniting the whole nation of Israel with the doctrines and practices of its godly forefathers (Abraham, Moses, David, the prophets). The prophecy of Luke 1:17 must be understood in this sense. Godet says, "It will be John's mission . . . to reconstitute the moral unity of the people by restoring the broken relation between the patriarchs and their degenerate descendants." G. Campbell Morgan states it, "In other words, he will come to restore primal ideals . . . to turn these renegade people back to the patriarchs . . . and to the things for which they stood." The "heart" of Abraham, "friend" of God (Rom. 4:1-25; Jas. 2:21-26), the "heart" of Moses, in fact, the "heart" of all the faithful (Heb. 11:1-40) is what John would try to put within the children of Israel. The Greek word *epistrepsai* is translated *turn* and is sometimes translated *converted*. It means literally, "to turn toward, to turn oneself around, to return." Another interesting word in the Greek text is *kateskeuasmenon*, translated *prepared*. It is a perfect tense verb meaning, *already having been prepared*. In other words, John is to prepare a people who have already been prepared to some extent. Their entire history was that of preparation for one great event—the producing of the world's Savior. The birth of one "in the spirit and power of Elijah" signals that event is imminent! An aged priest and his barren wife from a little village of the hills of Judea are announced as the instruments of Jehovah to give birth to "Elijah"!

1:18-25 Phenomenon: Zechariah cannot believe all this. A son, perhaps, but the "Elijah" predicted by Malachi—that is too much! Hobbs notes, "And it has ever been thus when men look at God through their problems rather than to view their problems through the power of God." If we have seed-like faith (living, germinating faith) no obstacle is too overpowering to keep us from doing the will of God. It is not quantity but quality of faith that Jesus seeks (Mt. 17:20; 21:20-22). After all, the power is not in us or even in our faith, but in the object of our faith, Almighty God.

G. Campbell Morgan does not believe the angel intended to punish Zechariah in making him deaf and dumb for a season, but merely gave him the "sign" he asked for. Gabriel is one of two angels named in the Bible (cf. Lk. 1:26; Dan. 8:16; 9:21), the other is Michael (Jude 9; Rev. 12:7; Dan. 10:13, 21; 12:1). There appears to be some rebuke in the words, ". . . because you did not believe my words, which will be fulfilled in their time," so we believe Zechariah was being chastened, at least, while also being given proof that this messenger is declaring the word

of God and what he says will indeed come to pass! The affliction of Zechariah was also a "sign" to the worshipping crowd that he had "seen a vision." Zechariah had been in the temple longer than usual. The Talmud says that even the high priest did not tarry long in the Holy of Holies on the Day of Atonement. The people customarily waited in the outer court for the priest burning incense to come out and dismiss them with a blessing. Zechariah apparently signaled the blessing with his hands only or indicated that the blessing would not be said that day. Zechariah continued ministering in the temple until his "shift" was over unable to hear or speak, then he and Elizabeth returned to their village in the hills of Judea.

Shortly after their trip home, Elizabeth conceived. Zechariah probably found some way to communicate to Elizabeth what had happened to him in the temple. While the conception took place by natural means and was quite different than Mary's conception by the Holy Spirit, Elizabeth's was still supernatural in the contravening of her sterility. Elizabeth "hid" herself from the public (known to Mary, of course) until time for the birth of her son. Some think her reticence was due to embarrassment over pregnancy at her advanced age. Others think she wanted solitude due to the sanctity of the entire experience. Still others think she was afraid to let it be known until she was sure she could "prove" it. We don't really know why she hid herself.

Morgan summarizes, "Human failure everywhere, but the Divine victory is clearly seen . . . in the midst of human failure, God needed, and He found, loyal souls as His vantage ground . . . all members of an elect remnant, living in the remembrance and truth of the past. There God found vantage ground, set down His foot, and marched on toward the great event; the coming into human life in the Person of His Son, and all that followed thereupon."

STUDY STIMULATORS:

1. Is it important to know the historical background of cultural, political and social events and persons surrounding the birth of John the Baptist and Jesus? What were they?
2. Do you think it was coincidence or providence that Zechariah was chosen to burn incense during his "course" at the temple?
3. Why didn't God choose a younger priest whose wife was not sterile to give birth to the Way-Preparer for the Messiah?
4. Did Zechariah really see an angel? How can we be sure?
5. What is so unique about John the Baptist's being filled with the Holy Spirit?

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6. How is John to "turn the hearts of the fathers to the children"? Did he do it? How many and what kind of people gave attention to John's preaching?
7. Did Zechariah believe the angel? How did the angel help him believe? How much faith does one need to overcome and be powerful?
8. What do you think Luke's purpose was in tracing the gospel all the way back to this experience of Zechariah and Elizabeth?

SECTION 4

Predictions of the Redeemer (1:26-56)

26 In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth,²⁷to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary.²⁸And he came to her and said, "Hail, O favored one, the Lord is with you!"²⁹But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and considered in her mind what sort of greeting this might be.³⁰And the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God.³¹And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus.

³²He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David,³³and he will reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there will be no end."

³⁴And Mary said to the angel, "How shall this be, since I have no husband?"

³⁵And the angel said to her,

"The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God.³⁶And behold, your kinswoman Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren.³⁷For with God nothing will be impossible."³⁸And Mary said, "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word." And the angel departed from her.

³⁹In those days Mary arose and went with haste into the hill country, to a city of Judah,⁴⁰and she entered the house of Zechariah, and greeted Elizabeth.⁴¹And when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit⁴²and she exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb!⁴³And why is

this granted me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?

⁴⁴For behold, when the voice of your greeting came to my ears, the babe in my womb leaped for joy. ⁴⁵And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfilment of what was spoken to her from the Lord."

⁴⁶And Mary said,

"My soul magnifies the Lord,

⁴⁷and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,

⁴⁸for he has regarded the low estate of his handmaiden.

For behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed;

⁴⁹for he who is mighty has done great things for me,
and holy is his name.

⁵⁰And his mercy is on those who fear him
from generation to generation.

⁵¹He has shown strength with his arm, he has scattered the proud
in the imagination of their hearts,

⁵²he has put down the mighty from their thrones,
and exalted those of low degree;

⁵³he has filled the hungry with good things,
and the rich he has sent empty away.

⁵⁴He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy,

⁵⁵as he spoke to our fathers,

to Abraham and to his posterity for ever."

⁵⁶And Mary remained with her about three months, and returned
to her home.

1:26-38 Mother: In the days of Herod the land of the Jews was divided into about six regions (Judea, Samaria, Galilee, Idumea, Decapolis and Perea) each with their own cultural, racial and religious distinctives. The word Galilee means, "circuit of the Gentiles." It was more Gentile in character and culture than Judea, and as a result Galilean Jews were considered "less holy" by their Judean countrymen. The village of Nazareth was in the hill country of Galilee, sheltered in a little valley all its own, about 20 miles from the plain of Esdralon. Although an important Roman road ran near the ancient village making it a widely known place, its people had established a rather poor reputation. Nathaniel questioned, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" as if its reputation were proverbial (cf. Jn. 1:46). Again, viewed from the human perspective, this would be a most unlikely place to find a woman God might use to bear His precious, sinless Son into the world.

But the Lord knew there was a godly young woman, a virgin, betrothed to a godly man, upon whom He could depend for his momentous, spectacular mission. Hebrew betrothals were much more serious than

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modern engagements. A betrothed woman suspected of unfaithfulness could be divorced and even put to death (cf. Mt. 1:18-20); she could not be divorced without a "bill" of divorce; if her fiance died she was counted as a widow; and a child born during the betrothal was held to be legitimate. In Matthew 1:19, Joseph is called Mary's "husband" while still in the betrothal stage of their relationship (that is, before he "knew" her as a wife). But, in the light of the binding requirements of betrothal it is not unusual for Joseph to be called her husband before the consummation of the marriage. Most Jewish girls were betrothed when very young. Few of them spent much time at formal education. One rabbi wrote in the Talmud that "teaching a girl was the same as starting her upon the road to moral depravation." However the Talmud also says, "Every man is required to teach his daughter the Torah." Mary knew the Scriptures; for her Magnificat (Lk. 1:46-55) contains at least 30 words or phrases echoed from the Old Testament.

Mary was a virgin. Her marriage had not been consummated with sexual intercourse. Therefore, she was "greatly troubled" when the angel announced she would conceive and bear a child. It was beyond her comprehension as to how this could take place (1:34). There was nothing supernatural in the fact that Mary could give birth. Medical history has noted a few cases of conception in women where the virginal-hymen was intact after intercourse with a man. However, history has never recorded the conception of a woman without the implantation of male sperm within her womb. The miracle is technically not a "virgin birth" but *conception without* the implantation of *male sperm* in her womb. Mary was a virgin; she was betrothed and old enough to give birth. But she had "not known a man." The Greek word *ginosko* is used often for mental knowledge, but in this verse (34) means sexual intercourse (as in Gen. 4:1, etc.).

The fact that Luke was highly trained in medicine and research and that his accuracy in recording history is unimpeachable lends importance to this account beyond measure. Everything in Luke's training would lead him to be highly skeptical of such a claim. To record it for the world of his day to read would subject him to criticism by his colleagues, ridicule by the general public, mockery by the pagan myth-religions which were built on bizarre tales of parthenogenesis by their gods, and the animosity of the Jewish world of his day. But Luke traced all things accurately and was so convinced of its truth he boldly and beautifully recorded it.

Luke is not recording parthenogenesis. Parthenogenesis involves "the development of eggs from virgin females without fertilization by spermatozoa . . . it occurs chiefly in certain insects, crustaceans, and worms." History has never recorded such a thing of the human race. But Luke

records the angel's statement that the conception of Jesus would take place through the direct action of the Holy Spirit of God in the womb of Mary. Science cannot legitimately speak for or against the Biblical teaching of the virgin conception. The conception of Christ in Mary's womb was a biological miracle. A modern scientist may say that *he* has never observed a virgin conception but just because he has never observed one does not mean one did not occur. Harold Fowler writes in, *The Gospel of Matthew, Vol. I*, pg. 46, College Press, "The question of the virgin birth, then, remains, will we accept the testimony of the eye-witnesses and the universal acknowledgment of the early Church as recorded in the documents of the Church, or, rejecting this, will we adhere to a mistaken view of natural law, a view which decides *a priori* that all miraculous events are impossible?"

Some theologians today say it is not important to our Christian faith that we believe in the virgin conception. But the fundamental integrity of both Matthew and Luke as historians is impugned if we do not. How can we believe anything else they recorded if we do not believe the accuracy and historicity of this event? The honesty of God is brought into question if we do not believe it, for He directed His prophet Isaiah to predict the event (Isa. 7:14). The virgin conception is, "the keystone which supports the arch of logical connection between the incarnation of God and the Messiah's necessary identification with humanity . . ." (Fowler, *ibid*, pg. 45).

And so the godly young maiden from Nazareth, Mary, continued to "cast about" (*dielogizeto*, in Gr.) for answers to these astounding things she was being told by the angel. This child to be conceived in her womb by the miraculous power of God's Spirit was to be called Jesus, or *Yeshua* (Joshua) in Hebrew, which means, *Jehovah-is-salvation*.

While Mary was still trying to figure out how she could conceive without "knowing" a husband, the angel gave Mary further proof that it would come to pass. The angel told Mary of the conception of her barren cousin, Elizabeth. If God could accomplish this, why could He not cause Mary to conceive without "knowing" a man. Mary did not need the proof. She immediately surrendered to the will of the Lord as announced by the angel. The word for handmaid is *doule*. It is the same word the apostle Paul uses to call himself a *bond slave* of Jesus Christ. Mary willingly acknowledged herself as a female slave of Jehovah, surrendering to what she undoubtedly knew would cause consternation in her fiance Joseph, jeopardize her social status in Nazareth should any neighbors find out, and endanger her very life should she be accused of infidelity to Joseph.

Although Mary was only a mortal and not to be elevated above another, and surely not to be given the title "Queen of Heaven," yet the

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glory of all motherhood was her lot. Among all women she was afforded the greatest privilege—to give birth to the Savior of the world. The beautiful song *Ave Maria* was written under the inspiration of these verses. The first two parts of the hymn are purely biblical and date from earliest times. The third portion was added around the fifteenth century and is not at all biblical. Surely Mary was highly favored because of her faith and godliness. Her submission to the revealed will of God is a great example and challenge to all who would be used of God in His work of redeeming the world.

1:39-56 Magnificat: Two women, chosen by God to be instruments of His in the divine redemption of mankind, burst forth in rapturous praise and thanksgiving to Him. Within a few short hours of the visit of the angel, Mary went to visit her cousin Elizabeth. Elizabeth lived in the hill country of Judea (probably south of Jerusalem) so Mary's trip took at least four days. What a spectacular thing was going to happen to Mary! The miracle of the conception was nothing compared to the identity of the Child to be conceived! He would be the Messiah; the Savior and the Son of David whom the Jewish people had longed for for centuries. Nearly every act of their religious and civil life was in typical anticipation of this Messiah. Great and famous women of the nation had lived and died hoping they would give birth to *the* Son of David. God chose a Galilean peasant girl, the fiance of a lowly carpenter, to be that mother. In addition, Mary's cousin Elizabeth was going to be blessed with a baby after all these years of praying for one. Mary could not stay in Nazareth! She had to go visit her cousin and share with her in the good news that had come to both of them. It is nothing short of amazing that Mary could restrain herself from telling everyone she knew. Perhaps the circumstances we mentioned earlier caused her to be cautious. Perhaps Mary already had a mother's intuition of the jeopardy she might place her future Child in should she make too much publicity of the angel's announcement. Whatever the case, Mary had to tell someone so she went "with haste" to Elizabeth's home.

Two more miracles occurred when Mary arrived at her cousin's house. Elizabeth's baby "leaped" in her womb. Hobbs says, "The intended forerunner responded to the prenatal presence of Him whom he should proclaim." At that moment, Elizabeth was "filled with the Holy Spirit" and began to pronounce a blessing upon Mary and Mary's child. The Holy Spirit did not leave the identity of Mary's Child up to Elizabeth's human knowledge. Elizabeth could not have known who this Child was. Deity taking human flesh, being born as a baby and conceived by a virgin is completely outside human experience and therefore, outside human comprehension. The Holy Spirit *revealed* to Elizabeth the identity of Mary's Child—He is her Lord! Elizabeth also proclaims the blessing

that Mary is to have because she believed and surrendered herself to become the handmaiden of God. While Elizabeth praises Mary, she does so because Mary is going to give birth to Christ, the Savior and Lord, not because there was any inherent divinity in Mary. Certainly Elizabeth was not worshipping Mary—nor should anyone else. The Bible expressly forbids man to worship anyone except God (Ex. 34:14; 20:4-5; Dt. 6:13-14; Isa. 45:20; Rev. 22:8-9). Mary cannot be a “mediatrix” between God and man for there is only One Mediator (I Tim. 2:5).

The word *magnificat* is Latin for “doth magnify.” The Greek word Luke used is *megalunei* which means “to amplify, exalt, extol and enlarge.” Mary was moved deeply, emotionally and spiritually to praise the Lord with words of Scripture she had learned and stored in her heart. Her prayer of thanksgiving is very similar to that of Hannah (I Sam. 2:1-10). We think Mary was guided by the Holy Spirit in the selection (perhaps some from Psalms) and utterance of the words of this great pean of praise. She makes some statements concerning herself and her Child that she could not make with human knowledge alone. Mary first rejoices in her own experience (v. 46-49). She prophesies that all generations will henceforth call her blessed. Then she rejoices in the blessings that are coming to the world as a result of her experience (v. 50-55). She predicts that her Child will fulfill all the redemptive events of the long history of God’s dealings with men. Mary is not simply reviewing God’s actions in the past, but she is announcing that the Child to be borne of her comes to consummate all those promises God made to Abraham and his “posterity” (*spermati* in Greek which means *seed*). Mary is using what is called “predictive present” tense in her statement. The Lord “baring His arm” is a messianic figure of speech (see Isa. 40:10; 51:4-5; 52:7-10; 53:1). The Messiah is coming to give mercy to those who fear Him, defeat to those who arrogantly rebel against Him, exalt those of low degree, fill the hungry with good things, send the self-satisfied away empty, and fulfill His promise to the children of Abraham, forever. These phrases are echoes of the prophets of Israel. They remind us that most of what the Old Testament prophets predicted of the glorious messianic age in agricultural, physical terminology, was intended to be fulfilled in Jesus Christ and His spiritual kingdom.

Mary remained with Elizabeth about three months. She arrived for her visit in the sixth month of Elizabeth’s pregnancy. Did Mary remain until after the birth of John the Baptist? Plummer reminds us that “cousins” in Luke 1:58 could include Mary. Luke does record Mary’s return to Nazareth immediately before he records John’s birth, but he may have simply been completing one story before beginning another. It is strange to think, in view of the long and difficult journey she made

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to get to Elizabeth's and the significance of the child to be born to Elizabeth, that she would leave when the baby was just about to be born.

At any rate, Mary returned to her home in Nazareth. It was probably at this point Joseph learned of her condition (see Mt. 1:18-25). Luke's account tells us nothing about Mary for six more months. Matthew infers that Joseph, after the message to him from the angel, protected her from the shame and social confrontations that might have come her way if he had not kept her secret.

STUDY STIMULATORS:

1. What would the fact that Jesus was born of a young woman of Nazareth do to His reputation? Does it make any difference to you where His mother was from?
2. Why would Joseph's first reaction to Mary's pregnancy be to "divorce" her? What would your reaction have been if you had known only what Joseph knew?
3. Can we really believe Luke that a virgin could conceive without the implantation of male sperm in her womb?
4. Wouldn't it be more accurate to explain it by the phenomenon of parthenogenesis?
5. What differences are there between Luke's account of Mary's virgin-conception and both ancient and modern occult stories of supernatural conceptions?
6. Are those who pray to Mary as a "mediatrix" right or wrong?
7. Why did Mary make the long, dangerous, difficult trip from Nazareth to the hill country of Judea to visit Elizabeth?
8. What purpose is served by the preservation of Elizabeth's and Mary's "songs of praise"? What good do they do for your Christian life? What would you think of Mary and Elizabeth if these songs weren't recorded?

SECTION 5

Paean of Redemption (1:57-80)

57 Now the time came for Elizabeth to be delivered, and she gave birth to a son.⁵⁸ And her neighbors and kinsfolk heard that the Lord had shown great mercy to her, and they rejoiced with her.⁵⁹ And on the eighth day they came to circumcise the child; and they would have named him Zechariah after his father,⁶⁰ but his mother said,

"Not so; he shall be called John," ⁶¹And they said to her, "None of your kindred is called by this name." ⁶²And they made signs to his father, inquiring what he would have him called. ⁶³And he asked for a writing tablet, and wrote, "His name is John." And they all marveled. ⁶⁴And immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue loosed, and he spoke, blessing God. ⁶⁵And fear came on all their neighbors. And all these things were talked about through all the hill country of Judea; ⁶⁶and all who heard them laid them up in their hearts, saying, "What then will this child be?" For the hand of the Lord was with him.

67 And his father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit, and prophesied, saying,

⁶⁸"Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has visited and redeemed his people,

⁶⁹and has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David,

⁷⁰as he spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets from of old,

⁷¹that we should be saved from our enemies,
and from the hand of all who hate us;

⁷²to perform the mercy promised to our fathers,
and to remember his holy covenant,

⁷³the oath which he swore to our father Abraham, ⁷⁴to grant us
that we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies,
might serve him without fear,

⁷⁵in holiness and righteousness before him all the days of our life.

⁷⁶And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High;
for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways,

⁷⁷to give knowledge of salvation to his people
in the forgiveness of their sins,

⁷⁸through the tender mercy of our God, when the day shall dawn
upon us from on high

⁷⁹to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death,
to guide our feet into the way of peace."

⁸⁰And the child grew and became strong in spirit, and he was in the wilderness till the day of his manifestation to Israel.

1:57-66 Birth of the Forerunner: Not much excitement ever came to break the monotony of daily routine in the little town where Zechariah and Elizabeth lived. But when Elizabeth gave birth to a baby boy the whole town was excited. Neighbors and relatives came to help them celebrate. At last Elizabeth and Zechariah knew the fulfillment of parenthood. Now they would have someone upon whom they might shower parental love.

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On the eighth day after his birth, friends and kinfolk came to the child's circumcision. Circumcision of male children (Gen. 17:12; Lev. 12:3; Ex. 4:25) and keeping the Sabbath were the two most distinguishing practices that set the Hebrew people off from all the other people of the earth. They were the two most important signs of covenant relationship to Jehovah. Originally the father performed the circumcision (*peritemein* in Greek, meaning literally, "a cutting round."). In exceptional cases any adult could perform the rite, even a woman (Ex. 4:25). The child was named at the time of the circumcision ceremony. It made the Hebrew male-child an official member of the covenant and ideally guaranteed him (and his wife and family) his portion of the material blessings Jehovah promised the nation. Old Testament prophets often reminded the Israelites that the outward rite, to have any real efficacy with God, must be accompanied by a "circumcision of the heart" (meaning faith in God and obedience to His commandments; see Dt. 30:6; Lev. 26:41; Ezek. 44:7; Jer. 9:25-26).

Some of the kinfolk were just about to officially declare the baby's name Zechariah in honor of its godly father, but the Lord had already told the parents the name was to be *Yokhanan* (Hebrew) or *Ioannes* (Greek) or *John* (English). The name has been a favorite of all languages (Jean, Fr.; Juan, Sp.; Ivan, Russian; Giovanni, It.). It means "God has given; God is gracious." Elizabeth stopped the well-meaning kinfolk and insisted the baby must be named John. Not taking her word for it, they made signs to the mute father who confirmed his wife's instructions by writing on a tablet (probably of wax or clay), "His name is *Yokhanan*." There was no doubt in the father's mind that he had better follow God's instructions about this child, for it was now evident to him that the direct hand of the Almighty was involved in every aspect of the baby's birth (cf. Lk. 1:18ff). So Zechariah's written instruction proved that he now believed God could do the impossible. Immediately Zechariah's speech was restored and he began blessing God. The mysterious, miraculous happenings struck awe into the hearts of the kinfolk and neighbors gathered. Is God so rigid that when He tells a father and mother exactly what name to give their child, He expects implicit obedience? Indeed, He is! Man may not always understand God's explicit commands (and God probably does not want man to understand), but God expects man to trust Him enough to obey to the letter. Man certainly has enough recorded evidence that God's rigid commands are all for man's good. Of course, God has not told all parents what to name their children, but He has told all parents how to *rear* their children!

The miracles surrounding the birth of John were talked about through all the hill country of Judea. Those who witnessed the miracles agreed,

"... the hand of the Lord was with him." No doubt there were many who remembered these testimonies when John began preaching 30 years later and repeated them to the younger generation so that great multitudes (Mt. 3:5) went out into the uninhabited Jordan river valley to hear him. After all, there had not been a *bona fide* prophet of God among the Hebrew people for over 400 years.

1:67-80 Benediction of the Father: A benediction is a solemn blessing and dedication to God. This is what Zechariah, inspired by the Holy Spirit, pronounced upon his son, John. This beautiful benediction furnishes one of the most significant keys in the New Testament to understand that much of the messianic language of the Old Testament is "times-coloring." In other words, Zechariah shows that when an Old Testament prophet predicted the Israelites would be "saved from their enemies" in the distant future, the prophet was probably referring to the days of the Messiah (whose forerunner was Zechariah's son).

The Lord "visiting" His people to redeem them is messianic language (cf. Isa. 29:6; Zeph. 2:7; Psa. 8:4-6; Heb. 2:6; Acts 15:14). The "horn of salvation" is messianic (cf. Psa. 132:17; 148:14; Ezek. 29:21); horn is symbolic of power, so the Lamb is pictured with seven horns in Revelation 5:6. Of course, "the house of David" is messianic (cf. Amos 9:11; Acts 15:15-18; etc.). It is interesting to tabulate the figurative phrases which according to Zechariah are to be fulfilled in a spiritual way in the Messiah and His kingdom:

- a. "visited and redeemed his people . . ."
- b. "raised up a horn of salvation for us . . ."
- c. "we should be saved from our enemies, . . . and the hand of all who hate us . . ."
- d. "perform the mercy promised to our fathers . . ."
- e. "remember his holy covenant . . . which he swore to our father Abraham . . ."
- f. "being delivered from . . . our enemies . . . we might serve him without fear and righteousness . . ."

Now note especially that Zechariah's son is to be the "prophet of the Most High" in order to prepare the way of the Lord (Messiah) who will come and accomplish all the above. Whereas the above promises in the Old Testament appear to be future physical blessings, Zechariah makes it plain they will actually be spiritual blessings such as, (a) knowledge of salvation; (b) forgiveness of sins; (c) mercy of God; (d) light; (e) peace. Peter made it plain that the blessings to come through the Messiah predicted by the O.T. prophets found fulfillment in "turning every one of you from your wickedness" (Acts 3:17-26), and not in physical battles,

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enemies, warfare, crops, lands and temples. Alfred Plummer notes that as the Magnificat of Mary (Lk. 1:46-55) was modelled on the psalms, so the Benedictus of Zechariah was modelled on the prophecies.

The Greek aorist *epeskepsato* translated "visited" is from the verb *episkeptomai* and is the word from which we get the English, *episcopacy*, which means literally, "over-sight, government, rule." The same Greek word, *episkopos*, (Acts 20:28; Phil. 1:1; I Tim. 3:2; Tit. 1:7; I Pet. 2:25) is translated "overseer, bishop, elder." The word is used by Zechariah again in 1:78 and might be literally translated, ". . . by the passionate mercies of our God, there will visit (*episkepsetai*) us a Dayspring (or Branch) from the height . . ." The Greek word *anatole* means literally, "a rising up of the sun or stars" or "east" (Mt. 2:1). The Greek *anatole* word is used in the Septuagint for the Hebrew word *Tzemach* and is translated *Branch* or *Shoot* (see Jer. 23:5; Zech. 3:8; 6:12). Zechariah is definitely predicting that his son, John, is to be the prophet and way-preparer for The Branch (the Messiah) who is coming to deliver His people from their enemy, set up His kingdom, fulfill Jehovah's covenant, and rule. Furthermore, the Holy Spirit speaking through this aged Hebrew priest, predicts that the dawning of this messianic age will bring "light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death" which is undoubtedly a paraphrased quotation of Isaiah 9:1-7 (cf. Mt. 4:12-15). Zechariah's prophecy goes beyond the provincial confines of the Jewish people and includes the Gentiles. All men who are prisoners of the enemy (Satan) and who walk in darkness are going to be given a Ruler (Micah 5:2) who will deliver them and guide them into the way of peace. Isaiah said this Ruler was to be the Prince of Peace (Isa. 9:6). Isaiah also said people of his day did not know the way of peace (Isa. 59:8; see comments, *Isaiah*, Vol. 3, Butler, College Press). *Peace* in the Hebrew language (*shalom*) means *wholeness, prosperity, usefulness, soundness, harmony*. It probably has the same meaning in Greek (*eirene*) (see the connection between *eirene* and *wholeness* in I Thess. 5:23). In the Septuagint *shalom* is often translated *soteria (salvation)* (Gen. 26:31; 41:16, etc.). The "peace-offering" of the Old Testament is often called the "salvation-offering." So the son of Zechariah, John the Baptizer, was born to be the prophet and way-preparer to the Visitor from Heaven, the Ruler-Prince of Peace. No wonder Jesus said, "Truly, I say to you, among those born of women there has risen no one greater than John the Baptist," (Mt. 11:11).

John the Baptist lived in the "wilderness" until the day of his "manifestation" to Israel. He began his ministry about 26 A.D. in the 15th year of Tiberius Caesar (cf. Lk. 3:1-3). The Greek word *eremois* ("deserts") is like the Hebrew word *midhbar* which means "a place for the driving

of cattle." The wilderness of Judea is not totally arid. The area in John's day was simply uncultivated and mostly uninhabited, yet suitable for pasturage. John's parents probably died when he was a youngster and from then on he lived a very solitary life. Evidently he had little contact with other people until he was over 30 years of age. He lived an austere and ascetic life, eating locusts and wild honey, drinking no wine or strong drink, and wearing a garment of camel's hair with a leather girdle (Lk. 1:14-17; Mt. 3:1-6). He was descended from Aaron, but there is no evidence that he ever practiced priestly duties. Some think he belonged to the sect of the Essenes, an ascetic, communal group of Jews who lived in the Qumran community just west of the Dead Sea. There is no evidence for that whatsoever. As Hobbs says, "Other than his ascetic life and his opposition to the *status quo* of Judaism there is no resemblance between them. Indeed, in many ways they were quite the opposite of one another. Plummer notes two vital differences: John preached the kingdom of God; the Essenes preached isolation. The Essenes abandoned society; John the Baptist sought to reform it." Luke infers that John lived and roamed through these uninhabited hills from "childhood" and there he kept on growing stronger and stronger in both physique and spirit. It is *not* said of John, like Jesus, that he grew in favor with man! John did have "disciples," however the picture we get of John (Mt. 3:1-6; Lk. 3:1-3; Mk. 1:1-8; Jn. 1:6-8; 1:19-36; 3:22-26; Mt. 11:2-19; Lk. 7:18-35; Mt. 14:1-12; Mk. 6:14-20; Lk. 9:7-9) is of a tough, austere, hermit-like, fiery-tempermented, booming-voiced, righteously-indignant preacher, with no close friends. People were awed by his demeanor and swayed by his preaching. Many followed him trying to learn (disciples) all they could from him. His light burned brightly and penetratingly, but only for a moment. It quickly faded in favor of the Sun of Righteousness (Mal. 4:1-6) and was then extinguished by the wicked Herodias. This child born to Zechariah and Elizabeth was a true child of destiny!

STUDY STIMULATORS:

1. Why were Elizabeth and Zechariah so insistent that their child should be named "John"? What difference would it have made if they had called him "Zechariah"?
2. Does God really intend that men follow His directions minutely when He specifies details?
3. Would the miracles surrounding John's birth be of benefit to anyone other than his aged parents?

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4. Does the figurative language of Zechariah's Benedictus help you understand the way Old Testament prophets used figurative language? It should!
5. How do you know that the "visit" of the Lord to man is more than a social thing?
6. Do "clothes make the man"? Would John the Baptist be turned down by most modern pulpit committees because he tended to be a "loner" and had no out-going personality? Is his behavior and personality really the pattern for preachers? (See Mt. 11:16-19.)

Chapter Two (2:1-52)

THE BIRTH OF THE SON OF MAN

IDEAS TO INVESTIGATE:

1. Is there really a need to tell which Roman Caesar and which Syrian governor was ruling when Jesus was born (2:1-2)?
2. How could Jesus be of the lineage of David since Joseph was not His real father (2:4)?
3. Did the angels really "sing" at Jesus' birth (2:13)?
4. Why did Mary keep to herself all the miraculous things about her baby's birth (2:19)?
5. How could an old Jewish man acknowledge that the birth of Jesus was a light for revelation to the "Gentiles" (2:32)?
6. Wouldn't it be precocious and disobedient for Jesus to stay behind at Jerusalem when his parents left for Nazareth (2:43)?
7. How is it possible that the Divine Son of God could "increase" in wisdom and in favor with God and man (2:52)?

SECTION 1

Portents (2:1-21)

In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all **2** the world should be enrolled. **3**This was the first enrollment, when Quirinius was governor of Syria. **4**And all went to be enrolled, each to his own city. **4**And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the city of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, **5**to be enrolled with Mary his betrothed, who was with child. **6**And while they were there, the time came for her to be delivered. **7**And she gave birth to her first-born son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

8 And in that region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. **9**And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with fear. **10**And the angel said to them, "Be not afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of a great joy which will come to all the people; **11**for to you is born this day in the city of David

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a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. ¹²And this will be a sign for you: you will find a babe wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger." ¹³And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of heavenly host praising God and saying,

¹⁴"Glory to God in the highest,

and on earth peace among men with whom he is pleased!"

¹⁵When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us."

¹⁶And they went with haste, and found Mary and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger. ¹⁷And when they saw it they made known the saying which had been told them concerning this child; ¹⁸and all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them. ¹⁹But Mary kept all these things, pondering them in her heart. ²⁰And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

21 And at the end of eight days, when he was circumcised, he was called Jesus, the name given by the angel before he was conceived in the womb.

2:1-7 Swaddling Cloths: A little under six months passes between chapters 1 and 2 of Luke's record. Mary returned to her home in Nazareth after visiting with Elizabeth about 3 months (1:56). About six months later Mary's time for delivering her first born arrives. Micah the prophet (5:2) had predicted the Messiah's birth would be in Bethlehem of Judea, but Mary was at her home in Nazareth of Galilee—80 or 90 miles apart. God works in mysterious ways, His wonders to perform. Caesar Augustus, emperor of the Roman Empire, made a decree for a world-wide census to be taken. This census evidently required Jews to travel to the hometown of their tribal ancestors; probably because genealogical records and property titles were kept there. Bethlehem was the city of Joseph's ancestors since he was from the lineage of David, (see Ruth 1:10; 2:4; I Sam. 16:1-4; 17:58, etc.).

Caesar Augustus (born Gaius Octavius, Sept. 23, 63 B.C.) had been adopted by his great-uncle, Julius Caesar, as his heir. Octavian's grandmother, Julia, was the younger sister of Julius Caesar. When his uncle Julius was assassinated, March 15, 44 B.C., Octavian was a young man of 19. By skillful political manipulation of friends and family in high places he was able to become one of the three most powerful men in the empire. At the battle of Actium, Sept. 2, 31 B.C., Octavian defeated Mark Antony his only remaining rival to complete political control of the empire. Octavian pretended at first that he wished the republican form of government to be restored. He kept certain formalities of the

republic outwardly and at first declined the titles *rex* (king) and *dictator*. By adoption he had the famous name "Caesar" and after his victory over Antony the Roman Senate declared him "Augustus." He soon consolidated all the power of rule into his hands and became in fact, Emperor. He reigned until his death in A.D. 14. Augustus married Livia Drusilla in 38 B.C. She had previously been married to her cousin Tiberius Claudius Nero but Augustus compelled her to divorce her husband and marry him. She and Augustus had no children but Livia had a son, Tiberius, by her first husband. Livia was noted for her beauty and powerful political influence—even over Augustus. Some historians believe Livia poisoned her emperor-husband so that her son, Tiberius, could become emperor.

The reign of Augustus, and especially the *census* mentioned by Luke is one of the critical points relating to the historical accuracy of this Gospel. If Luke is inaccurate about this census in the reign of Augustus, then his entire record is suspect. For a long time enemies of the Bible pointed to this "enrollment" as an example of its inaccuracies, for there were no Roman records to substantiate Luke's claim that a worldwide census took place in the days of Augustus. However, Sir William Ramsay (and others) investigated and found that Clement of Alexandria (200-300 A.D.) made reference to such a system of enrollment in the Roman empire. Recent archaeological discoveries have remarkably confirmed and illuminated Luke's record, attesting his reliability *in detail*: (1) a number of papyrus documents have been discovered showing that a census was made every 14 years and also pointing back to one taken about 9-6 B.C. Josephus shows that these "enrollments" (one in 6 A.D. specifically) often caused rebellious uprisings in Palestine and that Jewish rulers often delayed carrying out these orders of Rome as long as they could in order to placate the people. The census ordered 9-6 B.C. in Syria was undoubtedly delayed by Herod in Palestine until 5-4 B.C. and so Luke's accuracy is verified, (2) early historical records seemed to show that Quirinius (Cyrenius) was governor of Syria in 6 A.D., 10 years too late for the birth of Christ. However, an inscription was found in Rome in 1828 by archaeologists indicating that Quirinius was also governor in Syria in 10-7 B.C. Ramsay found a monument in Asia Minor which confirmed the discovery in Rome, so Quirinius was twice governor in Syria and he was occupying this office when Augustus ordered the first enrollment, which is exactly what Luke says, (3) and last, historians found an edict made in 104 A.D. by the governor of Egypt (which was under the Roman rule just like Palestine) which showed that at the time of the census people were to return to their ancestral homes. Luke's gospel record is accurate in minute detail! The critics are wrong!

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G. Campbell Morgan focuses on the apparent insignificance of these two peasants, Joseph and Mary, down in a remote and despised corner of the Roman Empire bending their necks to the decree of the great and powerful Augustus. Two individuals amid the massed millions of the Roman world, as unknown to Caesar as you and I to the rich, powerful and famous today. But things are oftentimes not what they seem. Look at this scene from God's perspective through Luke's record. Look at Mary—her womb is the residence of the Son of God as she travels. Look at the edict of Augustus—was it really the only sovereign edict being fulfilled? Almost 700 years before Augustus, the sovereign Creator decreed that His Son would be born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2). Morgan writes, "When I read that (prophecy), uttered six hundred and fifty years before these events, I see that the really insignificant person in the drama is the little puppet in the city on the seven hills, called Caesar Augustus; and the significant personalities are the woman in whose womb tabernacles the Son of God, and the man who is guarding her."

While in Bethlehem, Mary delivered the Child conceived in her womb by the Holy Spirit and she wrapped Him in swaddling cloths. *Swaddling* is from the Hebrew word *chethullah* and the Greek word *spanganoo*. These are bands of cloth in which new born babies were wrapped (cf. Ezek. 16:4; Job 38:9; Ezek. 30:21—bandages). The child was placed diagonally on a square piece of cloth which was folded over the infant's feet and sides. Around this bundle swaddling bands were wound. The idea that the word *spanganoo* means "rags" is without foundation.

The Greek word for *hotel* (as we think of it) is *pandocheion*, but that is not the word Luke uses for *inn*. That word is *kataluma* which was merely an enclosure, just walls into which travellers might drive their cattle for the night, and in which sometimes there were apartments where the travellers themselves might rest; but no traveller could obtain food there. There was water, always water, but no food, no host, no entertainment. *There was no room even there* for Mary and Joseph. So Jesus was literally born in some shed or lean-to where only cattle were tethered. His crib was a *phatne* (manger), a feeding-trough for animals. What humiliating pathos! The Lord of All That Is, born in a smelly, insect-infested barn!

Someone has observed that most of us have inherited a Christmas story purged of some of its "uglies" and transformed and beautified by the Christian *traditions* surrounding it rather than having seen it according to the facts. Note the following:

- a. A poor, pregnant, unmarried (virgin) woman of Nazareth
- b. rode and/or walked 60-70 miles from Nazareth to Bethlehem while in the last stages of pregnancy;

- c. had her baby delivered in a smelly, unsanitary barn
- d. without doctors, anesthesia, nurses or midwives; in fact, with only her husband present.
- e. There was no baked-turkey and dressing, carols, tinsel, or family reunion at this first "Christmas."
- f. First visitors were rough, smelly shepherds who had been out in the fields for weeks with their flocks.
- g. Forty days later an old man in the Temple predicted dark, ominous words about the baby.

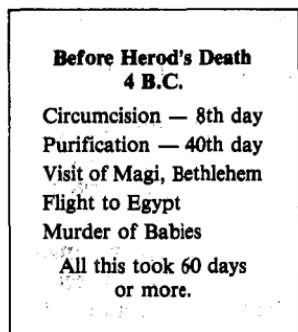
Our tendency at Christmas time is to take away all these "uglies" so believing in Christmas becomes the easiest thing in the world. All that is asked is that we accept a beautiful and touching story as it is presented in carols, nativity dolls, and pageants. It is easy for most of the world to get misty-eyed over a sweet little baby surrounded by so much glitter. Everyone sees himself as a believer at Christmas time. Perhaps the real Christmas event was filled with "uglies" just so serious-minded men would have to "grapple with it and agonize over it—and in the very process of that grappling have their faith tested, exercised, strung taut, and made strong."

The question always arises, "When was Jesus born—what day is really Christmas?" In the first place, Christmas (the birth of Christ) apparently was not celebrated by the first century church. There is no record in the N.T. of Christians making the birth of Christ a special day of worship or celebration. About the earliest Christian celebration of Christmas is the order of Bishop Liberius of Rome in 354 A.D. that December 25th should be celebrated as Christ's birthday. It is, of course, impossible to determine the precise day of Jesus' birth. The exact date is not essential to any man's salvation. (See Rom. 14:1-23; Col. 2:16-23.) However, with all the data available, it may be said with historical accuracy that Jesus was born sometime between December, 5 B.C. and January, 4 B.C. The birth dates of some moderns cannot be determined as accurately! The chart on the next page summarizes the cumulative historical data upon which we base our conclusion. "But when the time had fully come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons," (Gal. 4:4-5).

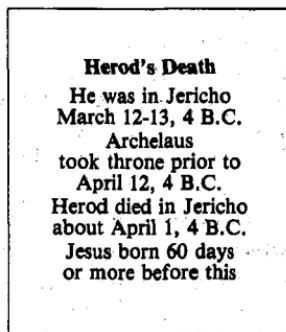
2:8-14 Seraphim: Actually the Hebrew word *seraphim* is found only once in the Bible (Isa. 6:2ff). The Greek word used by Luke here is *angelos*, transliterated *angel*, meaning literally, *messenger*. Angels are created beings, essentially spiritual and invisible, given powers that transcend the natural order of creation, and sometimes they are sent by the Creator in forms visible to men to carry the Creator's messages. Angels have intellectual and moral capacities. Some chose at one time or another to

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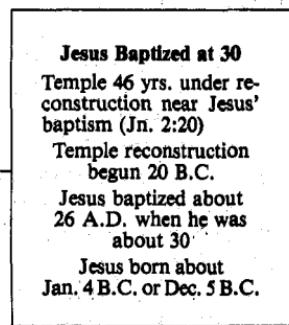


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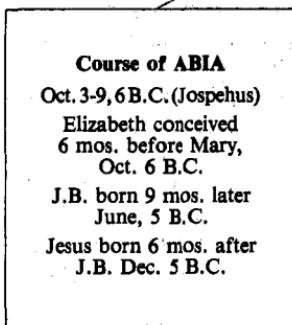


**JESUS
BIRTH
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4 B.C.**

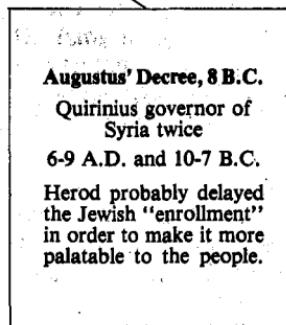
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2



1



disobey their Creator's will and were cast out of His presence (cf. II Pet. 2:4; Jude 6). Although angels are said to continue to "minister" to the saved (Heb. 1:4), God does *not* now speak to men through angels (Gal. 1:8-12; Heb. 1:1-4; Acts 9:5) as to what to do to be saved. (See the author's Special Study on angels in *Daniel*, pg. 386-403, pub. College Press.)

An angel prophesied the conception and birth of Christ; an angel named Him, Jesus; angels heralded His birth to shepherds; angels directed Joseph about the Child's safety; angels ministered to Christ after His temptation; an angel strengthened Christ after His agony in Gethsemane; angels were witnesses and messengers of His resurrection; angels attended Him at His ascension; and angels will attend Him at His Second Coming.

After the angel's message was delivered to the shepherds, there appeared suddenly a *plethos stratis ouraniou*, that is, "a multitudinous army from heaven." The Greek word *stratis* is translated *host* and is related to the word *stratiotes* which is translated *soldier* in Mt. 8:9; 27:27, etc. The Hebrew for *heavenly host* is *tzeva hashamayim* and denotes sometimes *stars* (Dt. 4:19; 17:3, etc.) and sometimes *angels* (I Kings 22:19; II Chron. 18:18; Neh. 9:6; Psa. 103:21, etc.). God's word does not tell us how many angels exist. Jesus said he could call for more than twelve "legions" to aid Him (Mt. 26:53) and a Roman army legion contained approximately 6000 men. John saw (*muriades muriadon*) "myriads of myriads" of angels and other beings around the throne of God (Rev. 5:11). We do not know how many heavenly beings appeared with the angel to the shepherds. Luke uses the word *plethos* which simply means a multitude.

The glory (*doxa*) of the Creator, in one degree or another, usually accompanied angels when they appeared to men. This glory often caused men to be overcome with fear (cf. Isa. 6:1ff; Dan. 10:2-21; Rev. 22:8-9). When the glory of the Lord surrounded these shepherds they "feared a great fear" (*ephobethesan phobon megan*). This glorious creature from heaven did not hover over the shepherds, but came near and stood right by them (*epeste autois*). God announced other births by angelic messengers but only the birth of His Son was praised by the angelic army. The point of the angelic appearance to the shepherds does not have to do with the glory or the number of the angels themselves, but the glory of the One whose birth they announce and praise. "Glory" in Hebrew means "heavy," or "abundance."

Angels were sometimes messengers of bad news and sometimes messengers of good news. This angel had a message (*euaggelizomai*) of *good news*; the same Greek word is also translated *evangelize*. To *evangelize* is simply to announce with compassion and persuasion the *good news* concerning Christ and let men decide their own response. The angel's announcement is the gospel in miniature: (1) to man is born

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the Anointed Savior (atonement); (2) He is Lord (incarnation); (3) joy to all people (reconciliation).

Why did God send His messenger to shepherds? Why not tell the theologians and politicians first about the birth of the Messiah? Most of the theologians and politicians would be emotionally, intellectually and morally opposed to such a Messiah. No amount of supernatural signs and angelic announcements would bring Herod or the Pharisees to a cattle-shed to *worship* a baby whose crib was a cattle-trough! These shepherds had learned from the hard and humble life they lived to guard against the pride and arrogance that causes men to deny reality. When they were visited by an angel and an army of heavenly beings, they were honest-minded enough to realize God had spoken and they should respond with obedience to the divine message.

The shepherds were told how to recognize the Anointed Baby—He would be newly-born (wrapped in swaddling), His birthplace would be an animal-stall and His crib a manger. This would be unique! How many newly-born babies in Bethlehem would be lying in an animal feed-trough? This sign was not to convince the shepherds of the deity of the Baby—it was simply a sign by which they might find the one baby out of all the others that might be in Bethlehem that night. The appearance of the angel and the acclamation of the heavenly host proved the supernatural character of the Child.

The heavenly host praised God. The Greek phrase is, *ainounton ton teon kai legonton*. The verb *ainounton* is related to the noun *ainos* which means primarily a *tale, narration, spoken praise*. The word *legonton* is from *lego* which means, *to speak, to say*. We usually think of the heavenly host singing praise to God here, but this was definitely a “verse choir.” There are three Greek words which mean to praise God through singing (*ado, psallo, humano*) but none of these words are used by Luke here. Perhaps, as with so much modern “church music,” the impact of the message the host spoke might have been lost had it been submited to the tune and the rhythm, so the heavenly “host” was really a “verse choir.” A dramatic technique known as “choral speaking” was employed by the Greeks hundreds of years before Christ. It is sometimes referred to as “choric reading” or “verse choir” and when such a group stood and spoke as one compelling voice, with shades of meaning and color that not even music commanded, its audience was totally captured!

The host said: “Glory in the highest places to God, and upon earth, peace in men of good will.” The KJV translates, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.” The earliest and best Greek manuscripts indicate the former rendering to be more accurate. The peace of God is promised to men through their good-willed response to The Savior. Robertson translates the phrase, “among men in whom

He is well pleased." The will of man must be good in its relationship to God's will if man expects to have true peace. The angelic message has been saturated with a mushy humanism proclaimed profusely once a year in Christmas cards and songs: "If there is good will among men on earth, there will be peace." Humanism refuses to accept the truth that there can be true good will from man to man *only* when men are first good-willed toward God.

2:15-21 Shepherds: The angel and the host returned to heaven. The shepherds decided among themselves to go to Bethlehem to verify the announcement of the angels. *Bethlehem*, the town where the Bread of Life came to earth, is a Hebrew name meaning "House of bread." The English versions represent the shepherds as saying, "Let us go see the *thing* . . ." The word translated *thing* is *rhema* in Greek and literally means, *word*. The shepherds said, "Let us go see the *word* . . ." All they had so far was the angel's *word* that a Savior had been born. They quickly decided they would all go *see* if these words had really happened! They hurried (*speusantes*, hastening) to Bethlehem and found Mary and Joseph and the baby wrapped in swaddling lying in a feed-trough, just as the angel had said. They told Mary and Joseph about the angel standing by their side, the message he gave them about the Child, the message of the heavenly "verse choir" and their hurried and excited trip to Bethlehem to find them. These shepherds were so impressed with the literal, physical encounter they had with the supernatural and with its meaning concerning the Child in Bethlehem, they told everyone they met about it all. Those who heard the story of the shepherds marvelled (*ethaumasan*) but apparently were not interested enough themselves to go to the inn and see the Child. At least Luke does not record any other visitors to the Bethlehem cattle-shed. Perhaps the shepherd's story seemed rather far-fetched to everyone who heard it. After all—a Savior and Lord born in a cattle-shed?!

Mary did not go about telling all the wonderful, supernatural things she knew about her baby boy. She hid them in her heart (*suneterei* means an intense, protective keeping), and set each event and thing she knew about Him side by side in her mind so she could compare (*sumballousa*, ponder) one with the other. While a number of people were given momentary glimpses of the wonderful nature of the Child, Mary gathered *all* the glimpses comparing them and keeping her thoughts about them all to herself. Any other course of action would most certainly have endangered the life of Jesus long before the time God had appointed for Him to begin His public ministry. Apparently, Mary was also aware of the danger to her baby boy should she make a determined effort to publicize all the things she knew about Him.

The shepherds returned to their flocks speaking praises (*ainountes*)

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to God for the supernatural, heavenly things they had seen and heard. Eight days later, Mary and Joseph performed the God-ordained rite of circumcision on the baby Jesus (see comments on Lk. 1:59). Circumcision took place in the home where the baby was born. It was at this time the Hebrew child was given a name. Mary's Child had already been given a name from heaven (Mt. 1:21), Jesus, or *Yeshua* in Hebrew, which means, "The Lord Saves."

STUDY STIMULATORS:

1. What was the most significant event that occurred in the reign of Caesar Augustus? Are there things happening right now known only by Christians which are more important than "headline" news events? What are they?
2. Can Luke's historical accuracy be verified or must we accept the accusations of destructive critics that "we can now know almost nothing concerning the life and personality of Jesus"?
3. What do you think and feel when you learn that the Lord of Glory was born in a barn?
4. Do you think all the importance placed on Christmas coincides with what the N.T. teaches about observing it? What does the N.T. teach about it?
5. Can you suggest ways Christians might enter more into the "spirit" of Christmas than is currently done?
6. When was Christ born? Does it make any difference?
7. What is an angel? Would you know one if you saw it?
8. God's choice of shepherds to receive the angel and the heavenly host is not the way man would have announced to the world the birth of God in the flesh. How would man have done it? Why didn't God do it that way?
9. Why doesn't the Christmas cliche, "Peace on earth, good will toward men," carry through in other seasons of the year?
10. Would you have "kept" all these wonderful things about the baby Jesus secretly in your heart as Mary did, had you been Mary or Joseph?

SECTION 2

Prophecies (2:22-38)

22 And when the time came for their purification according to the law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him

to the Lord ²³(as it is written in the law of the Lord, "Every male that opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord") ²⁴and to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in the law of the Lord, "a pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons." ²⁵Now there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon, and this man was righteous and devout, looking for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. ²⁶And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he should not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. ²⁷And inspired by the Spirit he came into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him according to the custom of the law, ²⁸he took him up in his arms and blessed God and said, ²⁹"Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word;

³⁰for mine eyes have seen thy salvation

³¹which thou hast prepared in the presence of all peoples,

³²a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to thy people Israel."

33 And his father and his mother marveled at what was said about him; ³⁴and Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother,

"Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is spoken against

³⁵(and a sword will pierce through your own soul also), that thoughts out of many hearts may be revealed."

36 And there was a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher; she was of a great age, having lived with her husband seven years from her virginity, ³⁷and as a widow till she was eighty-four. She did not depart from the temple, worshiping with fasting and prayer night and day. ³⁸And coming up at that very hour she gave thanks to God, and spoke of him to all who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem.

2:22-24 Homage: For forty days after childbirth, a Hebrew mother was considered ceremonially unclean by the Law of Moses (Lev. 12:1-8). The regulation was for hygienic reasons to start with. If the mother and child are isolated from everyone else (as those who were ceremonially unclean must be) for forty days the chances for survival are greatly increased. This regulation had nothing to do with making the mother sinful because she had given birth. The really fundamental purpose of all the Levitical laws of ceremonial purification was to develop the sensitivity of the human being to his sinfulness and God's holiness and to also develop the habit of obedience to the laws of God whether man understood them or agreed with them or not. When a Hebrew became ceremonially unclean he was unable to worship God or have

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fellowship with God's covenant people until he purified himself according to the rituals of the Law. This emphasized to him the necessity for the grace of God in providing a way for him to be restored to covenant relationship. For Mary to be declared ceremonially clean again, she was required to offer to the priest for sacrifice a lamb and a young pigeon. If she were poor she could offer two pigeons or two turtledoves (costing about sixteen cents). So, about the first week in February, Mary, with her husband Joseph, traveled the five or six miles from Bethlehem to Jerusalem and presented herself with two turtledoves to receive cleansing from the priest.

The Law of Moses also required that each first-born male, animal or child, must be "set apart" or "called holy" to the Lord. The Hebrew word 'avar (Ex. 13:12) means literally, "to pass over." The first-born were also to be "Redeemed" (Heb. *padah*), that is, a "ransom" payment had to be made to the temple of five shekels (about \$5.00 now) (Num. 18:15-16). "Redeeming the firstborn" was (1) a memorial to Israel's redemption from Egypt; (2) and a *response* and repayment to God for sparing the firstborn of Israel in Egypt (see comments by Wilbur Fields, *Exodus*, pgs. 277-284, College Press). Christians are all called "first-born" in Hebrews 12:23, thus all Christians are redeemed and set apart unto the Lord.

The word "homage" means to "honor with submission and obedience." This is exactly what Mary and Joseph were doing when they took the baby Jesus to the temple in Jerusalem to observe these two laws of the Old Testament. They were devout and God-fearing people. Besides, this Child was *special*. They both knew He had some kind of uniquely divine mission. He must be set apart unto the Lord according to the Lord's revealed will. They would do all in their power to dedicate Him to Jehovah's service. It was predicted that the Messiah would be obedient to the Law of Jehovah (cf. Psa. 45:6-7; Heb. 1:8-9; Isa. 50:4-9; Phil. 2:5-7; Gal. 4:4). Although the Messiah was the Incarnate God and the One who was the Lawgiver Himself, He humbly observed His own law (cf. Mt. 17:24-27; Heb. 5:7-9).

2:25-35 Heraldry: Simeon, or *Shime'on* in Hebrew, is from the word *shama'* which means "to hear, to obey." He was righteous and devout, filled with faith and hope that he would see the Messiah because the Holy Spirit had revealed to him that before he died he would see the "consolation of Israel." Consolation in Greek is *paraklesin* from the word which may also be translated comforter. *Comfort, consolation* in Hebrew is *menuchach* (from the root *nacham*) from which also the proper names *Nahum*, *Menahem*, and *Menachem* are formed. This is the Hebrew word used in many messianic passages of the Old Testament (cf. Isa. 40:1; 49:13; 51:3; 52:9; 54:11; 61:2; 66:13; Jer. 31:13). Simeon, the obedient,

was obeying the prophecies of God's Old Testament and the revelation he had from the Holy Spirit. He was eagerly looking (every day) for the Christ (*kristos*, "anointed") of the Lord. The Messiah is called *mashiach*, "anointed" in Daniel 9:26. The aged Simeon was directed by the Holy Spirit to go to the Temple and when Mary and Joseph and the baby Jesus arrived there, he was guided by the Spirit to take Mary's baby into his arms and pronounce what is called the *Nunc Dimittis* (Latin for, "Now dismiss . . .").

Simeon's righteous and devout character is manifested by his attitude toward the Lord. His salutation, "Lord," is *despota* in Greek and is the word from which we get *despot* in English; he accepted the Lord as the *absolute sovereign* of his life. Simeon referred to himself as *doulon*, or slave, absolute servant. Simeon had been promised by the Holy Spirit that when he saw the Anointed One (the Messiah), he would be "loosed from" (*apolueis*, Greek) this life. Simeon had been told that he would be the Lord's bond-slave in this life until the coming of the Anointed One. This Christ, whom Simeon would live to see with his own eyes, would be not only the Consoler of Israel, He would also be the Light to those who sat in darkness (the Gentiles). This Christ would bring salvation to the whole world. Now Simeon is ready to be released from this life, apparently looking forward to "peace" and "glory" in the next life because God's Anointed One has come. Simeon's phraseology echos the prophecy of Isaiah 61:1-2 (cf. Lk. 4:16-19). There the Messiah is predicted as coming to usher in the Jubilee of God when all the slaves will be set free (see our comments, *Isaiah, Vol. III*, pgs. 410-411, College Press). Simeon has come to his own Jubilee and now asks permission from his Master to be set free. Paul was anxious to leave this life and be with the Lord in the next life (cf. Phil. 1:19-26; II Cor. 5:1-10), and so should we. But we must also be ready and willing to serve the Lord here in this world so long as He provides us the life to do so. If we do so devoutly, obediently and faithfully, we will someday be released and hear the trumpet signal our own Jubilee. Simeon announced that the Babe in his arms was Savior of the whole world. He was the Revelation (*apokalupsin* in Greek; the word from which we get the English, *apocalypse*) to the Gentiles. The Gentiles had tried to discover God in their philosophies and other cultural disciplines (cf. I Cor. 1:18-31), but man cannot discover God—God reveals Himself to man, in order that no man should boast! That is just as true today as it was then. God has chosen to reveal Himself in Nature and in His Word (for the purpose of salvation, in His Son alone). If any man wishes to know God in a saving relationship, he must know His Son through the agency of His Spirit, in the Bible!

Simeon was a herald of bad news too. While Joseph and Mary were

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caught up in a reverie contemplating the marvelous things said about this Baby, the old man brought a sudden chill upon the mother's heart with a prediction of the dark clouds of persecution and suffering that would characterize this Child's life. It would all end in a soul-piercing tragedy for the mother. The shadow of the cross fell across the life of this Child even before He was born. Isaiah the prophet indicated in no uncertain terms that the Messiah-Servant of God would suffer and die (and be raised from the dead) (cf. Isa. 52:13—53:12). Daniel, too, had predicted that the Anointed Prince of God would be "cut off" (cf. Dan. 9:24-27).

The Temple courts were always crowded with worshipers, sight-seers and priests. How many were within hearing of the aged Simeon we are not told. Those who would have believed his predictions about the Baby Jesus would have been very few, if any! Most Jews (even including Jesus' apostles) stumbled over any prediction that their Messiah would be of such humble origins or suffer such an ignominious death. Mary could hardly be expected to comprehend the full impact of these words then. But the day would come (33 years later) when the terrible reality of Simeon's predictions would stab her heart as she saw her first-born nailed to a cross.

The phrase ". . . set for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is spoken against. . ." echoes the prophecies of the Psalmist and Isaiah concerning the despising and rejection of the Messiah (Isa. 53:1-12; Psa. 22:1-18, etc.). It was also predicted that the Messiah would become a stumbling block over which many in Israel would fall (cf. Isa. 8:14; Psa. 118:22; Lk. 20:18; Rom. 9:32-33; I Cor. 1:23; I Pet. 2:8, etc.), and The Cornerstone upon which many *true* Israelites (Christians) would build (Isa. 28:16; I Pet. 2:5; I Cor. 3:11, etc.). All of the "good and bad" to come to and through this Child was in order ". . . that thoughts out of many hearts may be revealed." The Incarnation (God coming in flesh in Christ), the Atoning Death and the Resurrection was witnessed historically by some, believed by many, and has brought millions to a mental and emotional confrontation with the reality of God. It has caused multitudes to repent and come into saving, regenerating fellowship with God through the completed work of Christ. What people think of Christ reveals the true thoughts of their hearts! Men in rebellion against the Creator take a relativistic, self-centered attitude toward everything. Once men are confronted with the historical Christ and His Absolute Deity, they are compelled to make a decision. They must either deny His historicity and lordship (which would reveal intellectual and moral dishonesty of heart) or they must accept both (which is repentance and salvation). Confronted with the truth of Christ, men cannot hide from God, from themselves or from others.

2:36-38 Hope: Another aged Israelite who had maintained hope that God would send His Messiah as He promised was Anna daughter of Phanuel (which means "face of God"), a prophetess. After a marriage of seven years she had lived in widowhood eighty-four years. If she married at 15 she would have been 106 years old and born about 110 B.C. Julius Caesar was born about 100 B.C. Anna had lived through the declining years of the Maccabean rule of Israel which brought relative freedom for the Jews for the first time in over 200 years since the days of Ezra and Nehemiah; she grew up in the days when Alexander Jannaeus (once pelted by his own people with rotten fruit and vegetables) was king and high priest; she lived when a woman, Alexandra, the widow of Alexander Jannaeus, ruled Palestine; she would have been about 40 years old when the illustrious Roman general, Pompey, conquered the mid-East for the Roman empire; she saw the Romans appoint the hated Idumeans (Edomites) of the Herodian family rulers of Palestine; during all this she saw the development of two strong religious factions (Pharisees and Sadducees) and two antagonistic political parties (Herodians and Zealots) within her own people. These factions with their legalisms on one hand and libertinisms on the other plus political compromise versus political fanaticism caused many of the common people, oppressed by heavy taxation and religious legalism, to wish for messianic redemption. It appears that this aged saint never missed a service in the Temple night and day! Coming into the Temple at the very time Simeon was heralding the birth of the Messiah, she gave thanks to God and *kept on speaking* (*elalei*, Greek imperfect tense) to all who were looking for the redemption of Israel.

After these experiences in the Temple in early February, Mary and Joseph returned to Bethlehem with the Baby. They were lodging in a "house" when the wise men from the East came and presented their gifts and worshiped Him (Mt. 2:1-12). The wise men had stopped in Jerusalem to ask about the birth of the "king of the Jews." The cruel and crafty Herod sent them to Bethlehem hoping they would find Jesus so he might kill Him. The wise men returned to their homes in the East without reporting to Herod the whereabouts of the Child. Immediately, an angel appeared to Joseph and directed him to flee with the Child to Egypt (Mt. 2:13-23). The trip to Egypt would be about 100 miles but Mary and Joseph fled there with Jesus. Back in Bethlehem Herod was having every baby two years old and under slain, hoping to eliminate this announced "king of the Jews" as a threat to his throne. When Herod died, an angel of the Lord spoke again to Joseph telling him it was safe to return to Israel, so they began their return. Hearing that a son of Herod (Archelaus) reigned over Judea, they did not return to Bethlehem or Jerusalem but went directly to Nazareth in Galilee their original home.

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Herod the Great died at the end of March or during the first few days of April, 4 B.C. Jesus was, therefore, about three or four months old when He was brought back to live in Nazareth.

STUDY STIMULATORS:

1. Why were women declared "unclean" for 40 days after childbirth?
2. What is involved in the "dedication" of the Hebrew child after 40 days?
3. How does that Hebrew ritual relate typically to the Christian experience?
4. What did Simeon mean by calling the baby Jesus, "the consolation of Israel"?
5. What did Simeon mean by calling God, "despot"?
6. If man cannot discover God, how is man to know God?
7. Why did Simeon tell Mary a sword would pierce her heart?
8. How does Christ reveal the thoughts of man's hearts to them?
9. What had the aged prophetess Anna lived through in history that would cause her to wish for a Messiah?
10. After their presentation of Jesus in the Temple, where did Mary and Joseph reside with the Child?

SECTION 3

Puzzles (2:39-52)

39 And when they had performed everything according to the law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee, to their own city, Nazareth.
40 And the child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom; and the favor of God was upon him.

41 Now his parents went to Jerusalem every year at the feast of the Passover. 42 And when he was twelve years old, they went up according to custom; 43 and when the feast was ended, as they were returning, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem. His parents did not know it, 44 but supposing him to be in the company they went a day's journey, and they sought him among their kinsfolk and acquaintances; 45 and when they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem, seeking him. 46 After three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions; 47 and all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers. 48 And when they saw him they were

astonished; and his mother said to him, "Son, why have you treated us so? Behold, your father and I have been looking for you anxiously."

⁴⁹And he said to them, "How is it that you sought me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" ⁵⁰And they did not understand the saying which he spoke to them. ⁵¹And he went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them; and his mother kept all these things in her heart.

52 And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature, and in favor with God and man.

2:39-40 Progress: Luke omits the trip to Egypt, since Matthew had duly recorded it, and follows the progress of the Divine Infant from His presentation in the Temple directly to His boyhood home in Nazareth. It was more important to Luke's purpose to record certain information about the Baby's boyhood. He uses some interesting Greek grammar to describe the first twelve years of Jesus' boyhood. The verbs "grew" and "became strong" are both in the imperfect tense which indicates continued development, or, action in progress. As a youngster Jesus grew gradually but continuously in physique and strength. The present passive participle *pleroumenon* (filled) may be translated literally, "And the child . . . was being filled with wisdom." In other words, His learning was concurrent with His physical development. Hobbs aptly says, "We should not be shocked by these statements about Jesus. They do not in any sense detract from His deity. Rather they emphasize His complete humanity. Apart from sin, He completely identified Himself with man. He grew, gained strength, and learned as did any other child. It is just as great an error to deny Jesus' humanity as to deny his deity."

Nazareth of Galilee was about 15 miles west and slightly south of the Sea of Galilee. Sepphoris, capital of Herod Antipas and the strongest military center in Galilee, was only five miles to the northwest. Many traders, soldiers, and emissaries of the Roman government were to be found in the stream of travelers going back and forth on this road. It was about fifteen miles to Tiberias, the city named in honor of the Roman emperor the "Riviera" of Palestine, and about as heathen as its namesake. Nazareth was nestled on the side of a Galilean hill in an area known for its fertility and beauty. It is estimated that some three million people lived in the surrounding cities and villages. The more learned and orthodox Jews of Jerusalem were contemptuous of Galileans considering them to be *am-ha-eretz* (Hebrew for "people of the land") or "ignorant hillbillies" because of their colloquialisms, lack of formal education, cultural crudities, and questionable genealogical background. Most of the Galileans were, in fact, a genetic mixture of Jew and Gentile (a result of the importation of Gentiles into Galilee at the captivity of the Ten Northern Tribes by Assyria, see II Kings 17:24). They

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were a vigorous, homely, hard-working people, however, and Jesus grew up in their midst. Jesus' hometown was located at the cross-roads of commerce and politics. At the foot of Mt. Tabor (across the valley and only about 5 miles east of Nazareth) passed the Roman road, "the Way of the Sea," connecting Damascus (capital of Syria) with Palestine's sea-ports. Another road near Nazareth ran southward to Egypt. Circling round the eastern base of Mt. Tabor was the caravan route to Jerusalem. Perhaps Jesus spent some of His boyhood hours watching the travelers on these roads, maybe even talking to them. From such observations and daily experiences He later drew illustrations for His divine message. Jesus did not isolate Himself from life as it was lived by man when He was an adult and we may assume He did not do so in His youth.

2:41-50 Precociousness: The word *precocious* is from Latin, *prae* and *coquere* which means to "ripen beforehand" or "exceptionally early in development." Jesus astounded the adult scholars in the temple and His mother and step-father later with His *precocity*.

In verse 40 Luke calls Jesus *pайдion*, "little child"; in verse 43 he calls Him *pais*, "boy" or "lad." Jesus is now twelve years of age. At that age all Jewish male children became *barmitzvahs* (*bar* means "son" and *mitzvah* means "commandment"). They were declared "men" and required to know the law and keep it, learn a trade, and attend the greatest of the Jewish festivals (Passover, Pentecost and Tabernacles). This was probably Jesus' first visit to Jerusalem since being taken there as a baby for "presentation."

What an exciting experience for a lad of twelve. The journey from Nazareth to Jerusalem would take about three or four days. They would come in large groups or caravans of Jewish pilgrims from all over the Roman empire headed toward the holy city. Jerusalem would be jammed with almost two million people, laughing, talking, buying, selling; sleeping on the flat roof-tops of the houses, in the alleys, in the animal shelters or anywhere safe lodging might be found. There would be the sights and smells of the temple court where thousands of animals poured out rivers of blood at sacrifice and the smell of burning flesh as the columns of black smoke floated to the sky. Family reunions with heated conversations of politics, economics and religion would permeate the city. We can imagine the wonder of it all to Jesus as He gathered with His family and listened as Joseph told the story of the Passover observance and the history of Israel. He would experience for the first time the roasted lamb and the bitter herbs (see comments on Luke 22:1ff for more details on the Passover feast). As impressive as all this might have been to Him, Jesus was deeply interested in another aspect of the goings on in Jerusalem—the *didaskalon* ("teachers").

After seven days the feast ended and Mary and Joseph began the journey back to Nazareth. At the end of the first day's journey, when they stopped for the night, they realized Jesus was not with the caravan. How could they have missed Him all day? In such caravans the men and women usually traveled separately. A boy who has become *barmitzvah* should be capable of caring for himself during a day's travel. Mary probably presumed He was with Joseph and Joseph thought He was with Mary. But Jesus, fascinated by the aged scribes and teachers of the Law, and so immersed in listening and questioning about God's Word, chose to "be about His Father's business" rather than leave Jerusalem at that particular time. It is doubtful that Jesus forgot or made a mistake about the time of departure, for when chided by His mother, He indicated His actions were deliberately chosen and exercised. One day traveling from Jerusalem; one day traveling back; and one day looking throughout the city for Him; after three days absence they found Him in the temple courts (*kathezomenon*) "sitting down" at the feet of the teachers. The twelve-year-old Jesus was *hearing, questioning* and answering the teachers. The word *eperotonta* is an intensified form of a Greek word (*questioning*) suggesting that the one asking is on a footing of equality with the person whom he is questioning. It is the word used of a king in making request from another king, (Lk. 14:32). Jesus always uses this word in making request to His Father. The usual reaction of learned men toward a precocious lad would be at best amusement, if not scorn. Here they cannot conceal their amazement. Luke uses the Greek word *sunesei* to describe His "understanding" answers to the questions of the teachers. The word means "to join the skills of perception to that which is perceived." At twelve Jesus had a grasp and comprehension beyond anything these teachers had ever seen. Mary and Joseph were also astonished when they found Him amazing the scholars.

Mary uses tenderness to rebuke Jesus. *Teknon* is a Greek word for "child" but it is different from the word *huios* ("son") in that *teknon* emphasizes the special mother-child relationship of birth. Mothers always think of their children as their "babies." Yet, there was probably a chiding note in Mary's voice too. Literally translated, Mary said, "Child, why did you do thus?" She also reminded Him of the sorrow (*odunomenio* "pain") He had caused them when they thought they had lost Him.

Jesus' reply shows surprise that His parents did not understand His uniqueness. He implies they knew or should have known He had a special mission; that His life was not going to be that of an ordinary person of His age. He was surprised they were surprised that He would be more interested in discussing God's Law than in returning to Nazareth. They already had many signs about Him. Jesus expected the Jews to recognize in Him a uniqueness not to be found in other people and was disturbed when they did not (cf. for example, Lk. 24:25ff).

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The first recorded words from the lips of Jesus are these: "Why is it that you sought me? Do you not know that in the things (affairs) of my Father it is necessary for me to be?" The word "house" is not in the Greek text. For a twelve-year-old boy to say, "I *must* be involved in the affairs of My Father" is unique among all twelve-year-old boys. And, further, Jesus used here, as He always did, the definite article when speaking of God as His Father. He never used the definite article when speaking of God as the Father of anyone else. The Sonship of Jesus is uniquely different than that of any one else. John calls Jesus the *monogenes* (Jn. 1:14, 18; 3:16). *Monogenes* is translated "only begotten" but means more precisely, "*only unique*" Son of God. We may *become* sons by being born again; He *is* Son from eternity.

Did Jesus disobey His parents when He stayed behind to question the teachers? Hobbs makes it plain that He did not: "In the first place, there is no evidence that either Mary or Joseph had told Him not to remain behind in Jerusalem. . . . In the second place, the record does not show that they had told Him to come with them. . . . In the third place, as a 'Son of the law' Jesus was responsible within Himself for His religious obligations. . . . If there was any error here, it was that of Mary and Joseph, not that of Jesus." The Bible makes it plain that children are to obey their parents "in the Lord." In other words, submission to parental authority can never mean a child must *disobey* the Lord. The will of God, when plainly revealed, is sovereign in every human life. There is no higher authority than that, and every human being capable of making moral choices rejects it at the peril of eternal damnation.

2:51 Pliancy: Jesus returned to His village home with Mary and Joseph in Nazareth of Galilee. There He lived in obedience to them until He began His ministry at about the age of 30. The Greek word translated *obedience* is *hypotassomenos* and is usually translated *subjection* (Eph. 5:21; Col. 3:18). *Hypotasso* was primarily a military term meaning, "to rank under; to subordinate." It is a term which stresses the "chain of command relationship." G. Campbell Morgan says, ". . . the perfect response of the Boy to the will of God meant for Him natural correspondence to ordinary conditions." Although Jesus was uniquely the Son of God, He was also son of Mary. It was God's will that The Son should experience the full gamut of human subordination (cf. Heb. 2:14-18; 4:14-16; 5:7-9; Phil. 2:5-11). In obedience to the will of God, He subordinated His life to the authority of the home. As we pointed out before, His obedience to the home was qualified by His obedience to God's authority whenever it was clearly revealed that it was proper to do so. This is evident also from two other parental confrontations (cf. Jn. 2:4; Mt. 12:46-50; Mk. 3:31-35; Lk. 8:19-21).

2:52 Perfection: The word *increased* is the Greek word *proekopten* and

means literally, "a striking or cutting forward, like a pioneer cutting his way through brush." Thayer says the word "means to lengthen out by hammering as a smith forges metals." The word means to go forward chopping one's way by struggle or strenuous activity. It certainly does not infer a passive development. Jesus' young manhood was a daily hammering out of His human life in the crucible of God's will. Each day He chopped through the jungle of human experience, the divine Way, Truth and Life so that all who follow might find God. Jesus "hacked out" of the wilderness of human sinfulness a life of perfect sinlessness and walked completely in the will of God. He did so in boyhood, young manhood and adulthood. He did so mentally, physically and spiritually. He mastered all of life as He pioneered the Way in human flesh. The Greek preposition *para* (translated "with") means, "along side." Jesus did not start as a youngster with less favor and, growing up, become more and more a favorite with God and man. The preposition *para* indicates that as He "cut his way forward" each day He was constantly "along side" dwelling in the favor ("grace") of God and man. The development of Jesus from Boyhood to Manhood was constantly "along side" or within the will of God and in proper relationship to man. This is manhood as God intends it for all men! Jesus demonstrated it is possible to live life in the flesh as God intended it. He suffered and experienced obedience to the will of God to bring us to the same glorious ideal manhood (cf. Heb. 2:10-18; 5:7-10). He is the "pioneer" and "author" of our salvation. Incidentally, the phrase "and being made perfect," in Hebrews 5:9 does not mean Jesus was less than perfect in the area of obedience to God. He was sinless in His relationship to God and man always. The word *teleiotheis* ("perfect") means in His case, that at His crucifixion and resurrection He "brought to completion" the will of God as far as His temporary human experience was concerned. In His human experience Jesus progressed or advanced in a forward manner toward a God-appointed goal. He was born as a baby, developed as a child, "cut forward" along side the grace of God as a young man, and completed the goal for which God sent Him at the cross and the empty tomb. Thus He "perfected" His incarnation.

STUDY STIMULATORS:

1. Do you think God had any specific purpose in Jesus' living His young manhood (about 30 years) in the village of Nazareth in Galilee?
2. What is a "barmitzvah"?
3. Should we expect children of 12 or 13 years of age today to be held accountable for obeying the commands of the N.T. about becoming a Christian and living the Christian life?

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4. Did Jesus get lost in Jerusalem from childish inattention, or did He plan to stay and question the teachers in the temple?
5. Did He disobey His parents in staying in Jerusalem?
6. Did Jesus always do everything His parents thought He should do?
7. Was Jesus a little less than He should have been in relation to God and men as He grew up?
8. How did Jesus *increase* and become *perfected*?

Chapter Three (3:1-38)

THE FORERUNNER OF THE SON OF MAN

IDEAS TO INVESTIGATE:

1. To what history are we alerted by the listing of the Roman and Jewish rulers (3:1-2)?
2. How could there be a baptism for the forgiveness of sins before Pentecost (3:3)?
3. Did John get his idea to immerse people in water from Isaiah (3:4-6)?
4. Why did the Jews put so much emphasis on their descent from Abraham (3:7-9)?
5. What is the baptism of the Holy Spirit (3:16)? Is it for all believers?
6. If Jesus was perfect, why was He baptized by John the Baptist (3:21-22)?
7. Why trace Jesus' ancestry back to Adam (3:38)?

The Baptizer's Mission (3:1-6)

In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene,² in the high-priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John the son of Zechariah in the wilderness; ³and he went into all the region about the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.⁴ As it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet,

"The voice of one crying in the wilderness:

Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.

⁵Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low,

and the crooked shall be made straight,

and the rough ways shall be made smooth;

⁶and all flesh shall see the salvation of God."

3:1-2 Context: Tiberius (cf. Lesson 1, sec. 3) was joint emperor with his step-father Augustus (Octavian) from 11 A.D. until 14 A.D. when Augustus died and he became emperor alone. He was an able administrator but cruel and suspicious. He conducted countless treason trials

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and executed scores of people he considered dangerous to his power. He died in senile debauchery on the island of Capri, March 16, A.D. 37. He was the reigning emperor at the time of Christ's death.

A number of political changes had taken place in Judea since Luke's first historical references to Herod, king of Judea (1:5) and Caesar Augustus (2:1). Those men had ruled thirty years ago. Since that time, Herod the Great had died and his kingdom had been divided between his three sons; Herod Antipas, *tetrarch* of Galilee; Herod Philip, tetrarch of Ituraea and Trachonitis; Archelaus, tetrarch of Judea. Archelaus had been deposed of his throne in Judea in A.D. 6 by the Roman emperor for mismanagement (at the request of the Jews). The Roman emperor had placed Judea under the rule of a Roman Procurator. Pontius Pilate, whom tradition says was the son of famous army general and married to the granddaughter of Augustus, was the fifth procurator, having been appointed in 26 A.D. Annas, Jewish high priest appointed by Quirinius the legate of Syria in A.D. 6, had been deposed by Gratus, the first Roman procurator of Judea, in A.D. 15, and now Caiaphas, Annas' son-in-law was High Priest. Luke does not mention all these changes because he is not writing a history of the Roman empire or of Judea, but a biography of Jesus Christ. And so far as Luke is concerned, the real significance of these "great" people (7 of them) is that the beginning of Jesus' ministry (and that of John the Baptist) dates from this time in their lives.

3:3-6 Content: The region of John's ministry was the area around the Jordan valley known as the "wilderness of Judea" (cf. Mt. 3:1; Mk. 1:4). It was a barren, uninhabited, insect-infested, sultry-hot region from the Dead Sea area on the south to Succoth on the north (cf. II Chron. 4:17). Most of his ministry was spent along the western banks of the river Jordan, but John notes (10:40) that he also preached on the eastern side. He did all his preaching near water since response to his message required immersion (baptism).

He preached an immersion of "repentance for the forgiveness of sins." John the Immerser was a unique, supernaturally-commissioned, God-sent *link* between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant. John's ministry was to announce the imminent abrogation of the Law and the Prophets because the "kingdom of God" which they symbolized and predicted had arrived (in the person of the King). "The law and the prophets were until John. . ." (Lk. 16:16). What John preached was authoritative; it was from God. He was sent to prepare the people of Israel to turn *away* from the Old system *to* the New Kingdom. He intended that they not only repent of their ethics but also of their theology. They would have to turn *from* the "type and shadow" system by which no flesh could be justified, to justification by faith in a Person, The Son of God! Those who did prepare themselves for the imminent coming of

the New Kingdom by repenting as John preached were immersed for the remission of their sins. In that state they awaited the establishment of the New Kingdom. John's immersion was performed under the authority of God and was valid until God transferred that authority to the Son. After Christ ascended to the right hand of the Father in heaven authority in the area of covenant terms was assumed by Him. He subsequently poured out His Spirit on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2) and announced that immersion must be in His name (Jesus Christ) that is, in recognition of His Lordship over all. Because the lines of communication in the first century A.D. were not as well coordinated and established as they are in our day, it took some time for everyone who had been immersed with John's immersion to get the inspired word that John's immersion was no longer authoritative (cf. Acts 18:24, 25; 19:4).

But from the day of John's preaching until the day of Pentecost, John's immersion was valid. Those who believed and were immersed by John and died before the day of Pentecost would as surely be saved as Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and all the other Old Testament saints who, having put their trust in the promises of God, were "justified by their faith" (cf. Rom. 1:ff; Gal. 3:1ff). No man today could say he is in proper covenant relationship to God if he knows what the New Testament says about immersion into Christ and refuses to obey it, any more than those who heard John's message and refused it could be said to be right with God (cf. Lk. 7:29-30). The believer's trust must be in Jesus Christ. The believer surrenders in obedience to immersion because Jesus commanded it, not because the ritual itself has some magic in it. Those who submitted to John's immersion did so because they "justified" God (Lk. 7:29); that is, they put God in the right place; they made Him sovereign, they believed John spoke by the authority of God. Their faith was in God, not in immersion *per se*. Those Pharisees whose faith was in their own traditions and self-righteousness, "rejected the purpose of God for themselves, and would not be immersed by John because they believed they had no need of repentance and immersion in the muddy Jordan River. Many religious people who profess faith in God today refuse to be immersed in water for the remission of sins for the same fundamental reason—they have put their faith in a church's tradition and not in the sovereign Word of Christ.

Some Bible students have taught that John's baptism was not really a unique practice of his age. Some have said that his baptism had its roots in Jewish "proselyte baptism" while others imply that he was copying the rites of the Essenes. John's baptism did not come from Jewish "proselyte baptism" for the following reasons:

- a. History has no record of Jewish "proselyte baptism" prior to John the Baptist—in fact not until the 3rd century A.D.

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- b. The Old Testament has only one word that would resemble New Testament immersion (*baptizo*) and that is the Hebrew word *taval*. All other Hebrew words (*kavas*, *rachatz*, *shataph*, *duach*) mean "to wash or bathe for religious purposes."
- c. The Hebrew word *taval* is the only specific word meaning, "immerse, dip, plunge." The Septuagint (Greek version of the Hebrew text translated about 300 B.C.) uses the Greek word *baptizo* only once for the Hebrew word *taval* and that is in II Kings 5:14. The word *baptizo* appears in only one other place in the Septuagint (Isa. 21:4) and there it is a translation of the Hebrew word *ba'ath* which means to "overwhelm." Everywhere else the Hebrew word *taval* is used in the Septuagint, the word *bapto* or a derivative is used.
- d. The Greek word *baptizo* appears only twice in the Hebrew Apocrypha (in the LXX), Judith 12:7; Sirach 34:25; in neither case does it appear in connection with any "proselyte baptism."
- e. Proselyte baptism (immersion) is not mentioned anywhere in the Old Testament, the Jewish Apocrypha, the New Testament, Josephus, Philo, Jewish Targums or the Mishna.
- f. None of the early Christian writers such as Barnabas, Justin Martyr or Tertullian, all of whom discussed both Jews and Christian baptism, mention Jewish proselyte baptism.

John's baptism could not have come from the Essenes (Qumranians) for the following reasons:

- a. The "water of impurity" used by the Qumranians (1QS 3:4-9) was not an initiatory rite but was reserved for the practice of "cleansing" those already in the "covenant."
- b. There really is no textual proof (from the Dead Sea Scrolls) that these Essene "washings" were by immersion.
- c. Josephus in his, *Wars*, II:8:5, writes about the Essenes, ". . . they assemble themselves together . . . into one place, and when they have clothed themselves in white veils, they then bathe their bodies in cold water . . ." No mention of immersion, specifically.

The scriptures say John's immersion came directly from God by revelation (cf. Lk. 1:13-17; 1:76-79; Jn. 1:33). The multitudes believed his ministry came from God (Mt. 21:23-27). The Jewish rulers considered it something different than anything then being practiced religiously, and something that only Elijah or the Messiah would have the authority to institute (Jn. 1:24-28). Even Jesus, through His disciples, practiced the pre-Christian baptism of John (cf. Jn. 3:26-27; 4:1-2). John's immersion came from God; it was efficacious as an expression of repentance and for the remission of sins until Jesus commanded all men to be immersed in His (Jesus') name.

John's ministry was no accident! It was foreknown and foretold some 700 years before by Isaiah (cf. Isa. 40:3-4). John's ministry was second in importance only to the ministry of the Messiah Himself. Jesus would later say that of all those born of human parentage not one would be greater than John the Baptist (cf. Mt. 11:11). For four hundred years (since the days of Malachi) God had been silent. There had been no revelation from God about that "kingdom" and that "King" He had foretold by the prophets. Suddenly John the Baptizer burst upon the scene. Many recognized that John had been sent from God—he was a prophet! He was a "voice" from God. When an Oriental monarch was preparing to visit an area of his kingdom, he usually sent a herald ahead of him, announcing his coming and commanding his subjects to prepare a roadway over which he might pass free of all obstacles, smooth, level and straight. So John was the "herald" commanding the subjects of the King of kings to make an obstacle-free, smooth, level and straight road into their hearts where He wishes to travel and abide.

SECTION 2

The Baptizer's Message (3:7-14)

7 He said therefore to the multitudes that came out to be baptized by him, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? 8Bear fruits that befit repentance, and do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father'; for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. 9Even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire."

10 And the multitudes asked him, "What then shall we do?" 11And he answered them, "He who has two coats, let him share with him who has none; and he who has food, let him do likewise." 12Tax collectors also came to be baptized, and said to him, "Teacher, what shall we do?" 13And he said to them, "Collect no more than is appointed you." 14Soldiers also asked him, "And we, what shall we do?" And he said to them, "Rob no one by violence or by false accusation, and be content with your wages."

3:7-9 Admonition: Matthew and Mark (Mt. 3:5-6; Mk. 1:5) indicate that thousands of people came out from the cities and villages and farms of Judea and were immersed by John. The word *baptizo* in Greek means *immerse*; it can only mean immerse. There is a Greek word for sprinkle, *rantizo*; there is a Greek word for pour, *cheo*. Neither of these

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words are used in the Greek text for the action of baptism—only the word *baptizo*. All Greek lexicons, ancient and modern, give the definition of *baptizo* to be, “dip, plunge, immerse.” The practice of sprinkling for baptism was not officially sanctioned by Christendom until the fourteenth century! To make changes in the mode of baptism is nowhere sanctioned in the Bible!

Among the thousands coming out to where John was immersing were some of the Pharisees and Sadducees. Matthew uses the Greek preposition *epi* which could be translated, “. . . many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to (or toward) baptism . . .” The preposition may also be translated “for” baptism. Were they really coming *for* baptism (cf. Lk. 7:29-30)? Harold Fowler suggests, “they may have feared the loss of their leadership of the people if they did not join it (John’s baptism) . . .” (cf. *Matthew, Vol. I*, by Harold Fowler, College Press, pgs. 98-104). John did not mince words. He addressed his remarks to the multitudes, but more specifically (as Matthew points out, Mt. 3:7) to the Pharisees and Sadducees, calling them “offspring of poisonous snakes.” It was a title well placed for their teachings and their hypocrisy had poisoned the spiritual life of the covenant people (cf. Mt. 16:6, 12; 23:1-39). Jesus also called them “offspring of poisonous snakes” (Mt. 12:34). John’s question, “Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?” was probably couched in irony and sarcasm in an attempt to expose the sham and hypocrisy of their hearts so they might be brought to true repentance.

The Greek word for repentance, *metanao*, means literally, “change of mind; change of direction.” It was a military term used in drilling soldiers and meant, “about face, to the rear march.” True repentance is inward and is a state of thinking and being—it is the nature of a person who is going in the direction of the will of God. But true repentance must express itself in actions and deeds—in all the issues of life. There must be “fruits that befit true repentance,” (cf. Acts 17:30-31; 26:20). True repentance involves confessing our sin (Prov. 28:13; Psa. 32:5-6; Jer. 2:35; 3:13); restitution of the damage of our sin (insofar as possible) (cf. Nu. 5:6-7); resolution that we shall not willingly sin again, (cf. Heb. 10:26-27; I Jn. 3:9).

John’s next admonition is that genetic or biological relationships, racial or national heritages and family ties have nothing fundamentally to do with our relationship to God. God is interested in character, not color of skin or cultural circumstances. All these things may have some bearing on the formation of our character, but they count for nothing in themselves concerning our future life. The Jews believed that inasmuch as God once chose Abraham and blessed him, they automatically, by reason of physical descent, must stand in the exact same favor with God as Abraham had. If God wanted only physical descendants from

Abraham, He could multiply them from stones of the ground. After all, God made the original man from the dust of the earth. But God cannot and will not overwhelm the autonomous will and spirit of man to make him a child of faith. God wants children of Abraham by *faith* (cf. Rom. 4:1ff; 9:6-7; 11:13-24; Gal. 4:21-31), and good works (Jas. 2:18-26). God is not partial for any nationality or culture; He is partial toward anyone anywhere who believes and obeys His Word (cf. Acts 10:34-35). God saves individuals, not nations or races. God takes repenting, obedient individuals from every nation and tribe and tongue and makes them a kingdom of His own (cf. Rev. 7:9). Jewish apocryphal traditions taught that Abraham had accumulated more merit with God than was necessary for his own salvation. All Jews in good standing with the *torah* and the traditions could draw on this excess merit for their salvation.

The final admonition of John was that the axe of God's judgment was already laid to the root of the trees (the people of the Jewish nation). John himself had come in partial fulfillment of that great prediction of judgment upon the nation in Malachi 3:1-5. Jesus' coming to judge was the other part of that prophecy (cf. Jn. 9:39-41; 3:19, 36; 5:22, 27; 12:40). The question is, when was the axe to cut down the trees? John may be warning of the imminent destruction of the Jewish system, as Jesus often did (cf. Mt. 21:33-43; 22:1-14; 23:37-39; 24:1-35; Lk. 19:41-44, etc.). The book of Hebrews warns of judgment to come upon the Jewish system (cf. Heb. 8:13; 10:25; 12:25-29). The Jewish system was ready to be done away with—it had served its purpose (cf. Jer. 3:15). All who did not repent and prepare to meet God on a new basis would be cast off. John is warning of the danger of being hewn down and thrown "into the fire" of eternal damnation. Even now, with the coming of Jesus Christ, the axe of judgment falls. Without acceptance of the Messiah there is nothing left but inevitable judgment. The Messiah is God's last message of grace and salvation to the world (Heb. 1:1-3). The One whom John is to introduce to the world is man's *only* hope. In effect, the good news becomes bad news. It is good news to the humble who surrender in faith and repentance—but it is bad news to the proud, self-righteous and impenitent. Christ is God's final touchstone of judgment—henceforward God will categorize and separate all men as to their eternal destinies according to their response to Christ's covenant. Thus, even at the beginning of John's preaching, the axe of judgment was poised, ready to fall upon mankind.

3:10-14 Application: John the Baptist has his method in the correct order to bring about the proper result. People must first repent of improper theology. Man must first obey the revealed covenant terms and come into right relationship to God. Then he acts according to God's revelation concerning right relationships toward other men. Those who repented

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and were immersed with John's baptism, having redirected their attitudes with respect to God's coming kingdom, asked how this new attitude was to affect their daily lives.

True repentance will manifest itself in sharing one's worldly goods with others less fortunate and in need. John does not qualify the necessity of sharing by asking why the one is without a coat or without food. Need is all the motivation a New Kingdom person requires. Right relationship to needy humanity is necessary in order to be in right relationship to God (cf. I Jn. 3:16-18; 4:20; James 1:27; 2:14-17; Heb. 13:16; Mt. 25:31ff). Tax-collectors (publicans) were told they should not cheat or be dishonest and take more taxes than allowed. Soldiers were told they were not to use their power and influence to extort or defraud others and to be content with their wages. G. Campbell Morgan says, ". . . the height of morality is the love-mastered life . . ." The New Kingdom person does not live his life or do his job for mercenary reasons. He keeps his life free from *love* of money (cf. Heb. 13:5; I Tim. 6:6-8). He does not have to give up a perfectly normal and socially useful vocation to come into right relationship to God—he just has to let God's revealed will give sovereign direction to whatever vocation or avocation he chooses in life. Tax-collectors did not have to quit their jobs, soldiers did not have to be discharged from the army—they simply had to do their jobs according to God's guidance. These words from John the Baptist are both timely and timeless. The apostle Paul's advice is, "Whatever your task, work heartily, as serving the Lord and not man, Knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward . . ." (Col. 3:23-24; Eph. 6:5-9, etc.). Craftsmen, professional men, housewives, even children doing "chores" should remember God's ideal is that we do our tasks with excellence, not haphazardly, and not for mercenary purposes. Anyone who does otherwise cannot please God!

SECTION 3

The Baptizer's Meekness (3:15-20)

15 As the people were in expectation, and all men questioned in their hearts concerning John, whether perhaps he were the Christ,
16 John answered them all, "I baptize you with water; but he who is mightier than I is coming, the thong of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie; he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.
17 His winnowing fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing floor, and to gather the wheat into his granary, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire."

18 So, with many other exhortations, he preached good news to the people. ¹⁹But Herod the tetrarch, who had been reproved by him for Herodias, his brother's wife, and for all the evil things that Herod had done, ²⁰added this to them all, that he shut up John in prison.

3:15-17 Subordination: The fervor and frankness of John's preaching excited the multitudes of Judea. No religious teacher for hundreds of years had so effectively stirred individual consciences and so thoroughly exposed religious hypocrisy. John stirred up a revival! He was saying things and doing things (immersing for the forgiveness of sins) that only "Elijah" or the "Messiah" would have authority to do (cf. Jn. 1:24-28). John the Baptizer might have been tempted to bask in the limelight of fame and popularity, but he overcame it and subordinated himself to the One Coming after him, the Messiah. One of the things that made John the Baptist such a *great* man was his unfeigned humility. He was great because he was a servant. John answers the expectations of the multitudes that no matter how important his preparatory works may seem, they are very much subordinate to the ultimate work of the One Coming—the Messiah. The Messiah will immerse some in the Holy Spirit and some in fire. This statement of John does not mean that all believers are to be immersed in the Holy Spirit, for the following reasons:

- a. The context does not demand such an interpretation. We do not know who the "you" is in either the case of the Holy Spirit or fire. It is altogether possible that he simply means "some" of you. Peter and John were very early disciples of John the Baptist and were probably standing there at that moment.
- b. John's primary purpose in this statement is to make a contrast between himself and the Messiah in importance of ministries.
- c. There are only four distinct references to the "baptism of the Holy Spirit" in the N.T.

John's first prediction (with parallels); Mt. 3:11; Mk. 1:8; Lk. 3:16
John's second prediction, Jn. 1:33

Jesus' promise, Acts 1:5 (Acts 2:1-21 is the stated fulfillment of this).

The experience of Cornelius and his household, Acts 11:15-17. This lone event upon Gentiles seems to indicate the phrase "all flesh" of Joel 2:28 and Acts 2:17 was intended as *representative* or *general*, (i.e., the baptism of the Holy Spirit upon some Jews and some Gentiles signified God was opening the kingdom to the whole world).

- d. *Baptizo* means "immerse, overwhelm." The supernatural powers exercised by the apostles (cast out demons, raise the dead, punish some with judgments) were never exercised by any others.

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(This has caused some to think Cornelius did not receive the "baptism of the Holy Spirit," but only a miraculous "gift" momentarily in order to signify something—not to empower him—certainly not to save him.)

If we are going to call Bible things by Bible names, it is readily apparent that John's announcement that the Messiah would immerse in the Holy Spirit did not infer that all believers were to receive the "baptism in the Holy Spirit."

The "immersion with fire" is very evidently (from v. 17) the eternal judgment since it is an "unquenchable fire." As *Fowler* points out in *Matthew, Vol. I*, pg. 107, John has done here what many Old Testament prophets do; he views great, widely-separated events in the scheme of God's redemptive program without giving any of the historical details between such events. John the Baptist predicts the immersion in the Holy Spirit (the day of Pentecost) and the immersion in unquenchable fire (the final judgment) without regard to the great time interval between these events, (see our comments, *Minor Prophets*, Butler, College Press, pg. 32, and 184-188).

3:18-20 Suffering: It is clear from v. 18 that we do not have all the words or sermons preached by John the Baptist recorded for us. There are a few typical exhortations preserved in the gospel records. Verses 19 and 20 are Luke's brief account of the results of some of John's preaching. Luke disgresses here from chronological order. Matthew and Mark give account in more detail and in chronological order (Mk. 6:17ff; Mt. 14:3ff). Some of John's exhortations had to do with the adulterous living of Herod Antipas and Herodias. John the Baptist "condemned all the evils Herod had done." And they were many! Herod imprisoned him. Josephus says that Herod imprisoned John the Baptist because of his popularity with the multitudes. The very fact that Josephus records the event serves to give historical confirmation to the accuracy and authenticity of the gospel records.

SECTION 4

The Baptizer's Master (3:21-38)

21 Now when all the people were baptized, and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heaven was opened, ²²and the Holy Spirit descended upon him in bodily form, as a dove, and a voice came from heaven, "Thou art my beloved Son; with thee I am well pleased."

23 Jesus, when he began his ministry, was about thirty years of

age, being the son (as was supposed) of Joseph, the son of Heli,²⁴ the son of Mathat, the son of Levi, the son of Melchi, the son of Jannai, the son of Joseph,²⁵ the son of Mattathias, the son of Amos, the son of Nahum, the son of Esli, the son of Naggai,²⁶ the son of Maath, the son of Mattathias, the son of Semein, the son of Josech, the son of Joda,²⁷ the son of Joanan, the son of Rhesa, the son of Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel, the son of Neri,²⁸ the son of Melchi, the son of Addi, the son of Cosam, the son of Elmadam, the son of Er,²⁹ the son of Joshua, the son of Eliezer, the son of Jorim, the son of Mathat, the son of Levi,³⁰ the son of Simeon, the son of Judah, the son of Joseph, the son of Jonam, the son of Eliakim,³¹ the son of Melea, the son of Menna, the son of Mattaha, the son of Nathan, the son of David,³² the son of Jesse, the son of Obed, the son of Boaz, the son of Sala, the son of Nahshon,³³ the son of Amminadab, the son of Hezron, the son of Perez, the son of Judah,³⁴ the son of Jacob, the son of Isaac, the son of Abraham, the son of Terah, the son of Nahor,³⁵ the son of Serug, the son of Reu, the son of Peleg, the son of Eber, the son of Shelah,³⁶ the son of Cainan, the son of Arphaxad, the son of Shem, the son of Noah, the son of Lamech,³⁷ the son of Methuselah, the son of Enoch, the son of Jared, the son of Mahalaleel, the son of Cainan,³⁸ the son of Enos, the son of Seth, the son of Adam, the son of God.

3:21-22 Goodness: Jesus came when he was about 30 years of age to submit to John's immersion. The date would have been approximately December, 26 A.D. or January, 27 A.D. It was more than 40 days before He went to the Passover recorded in John 2:13-22. He was led of the Spirit into the wilderness immediately after His baptism to be tempted by the devil. After His temptation He was pointed out by John the Baptist to some of his disciples, He traveled to Canaan of Galilee for a wedding feast, spent a few days in Capernaum (Jn. 1:19—2:12) and then went to the Passover. The place He was baptized was probably "Bethany beyond the Jordan" (Jn. 1:28) also known as Bethabara ("house of the ford").

John objected; Jesus insisted. It would be a natural reaction for John to insist that he was unworthy to baptize the Messiah. John had already declared that the One Coming was so much greater than he. It is a clear doctrine of the New Testament that Jesus Christ was without sin. Why then did He need to be immersed with John's baptism? We suggest the following reasons:

a. Acquiescence: The message God gave John the Baptist was that anyone who wished to be of the true Israel of God must acquiesce to a righteousness from an obedient

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heart. Matthew states that Jesus said, ". . . it is fitting . . ." (Mt. 3:15). The Greek word *prepon* might be translated, "proper." It was *proper* for Jesus to acquiesce to any revealed commandment of the Father and fulfill righteousness from an obedient heart.

b. Association:

Jesus, to serve as our "pathfinder," "redeemer," and "faithful High Priest," tested and tried in all points as we are tried, must "be made like His brethren in every respect" (Heb. 2:14-18). Jesus in His flesh, has traveled every road we have traveled, been tried in every way we have been tried, and submitted to every command we have been commanded.

c. Authentication:

God's initial signal that this Person was His Son and the Messiah was at Jesus' baptism. It was here Jesus was anointed by the Holy Spirit (Jn. 1:33-34) and approved by the verbal, audible announcement of the Father (Mt. 3:17).

Jesus acquiesced to John's immersion to demonstrate that the man who wishes to be acclaimed "good" by God must have an obedient heart. Even the Son, who condescended to an incarnate experience, felt it was necessary to obey the Father's will no matter who the messenger might be (cf. Mt. 17:24-27; Mt. 23:1-2; Heb. 5:7-9). If the sinless Son of God felt the necessity of walking 60-70 miles to submit in obedience to the Father's revealed will to be immersed in the Jordan River, how can any believer today feel that it is *not* necessary to be immersed in obedience to the Son's command?

3:23-38 Genealogy: Genealogies are "family trees." The ancient Jews were very zealous to keep genealogical records (cf. Ezek. 13:9; Ezra 2:59, 62). These records were necessary for adjudicating inheritances of tribal lands and for succession of royal and priestly families. They were legal documents. Matthew's genealogy traced Jesus' lineage through Joseph because it was only through Joseph as His "father-of-record" that He had claim to David's throne. Luke, probably not primarily interested in Jesus' legal heritage, gives the parenthetical ("as was supposed, the son of Joseph") explanation as he traces Jesus' lineage back to Adam and God. Luke was more interested for the sake of his Gentile readers to trace Jesus' ancestry to the original man Adam and thence to God. Luke's genealogy would be a documented rebuttal to the mythological genealogies of the pagan gods. Joseph is distinctly declared by Matthew to be from David through Solomon, back to Abraham (Mt. 1:1-17; see also Mt. 1:20;

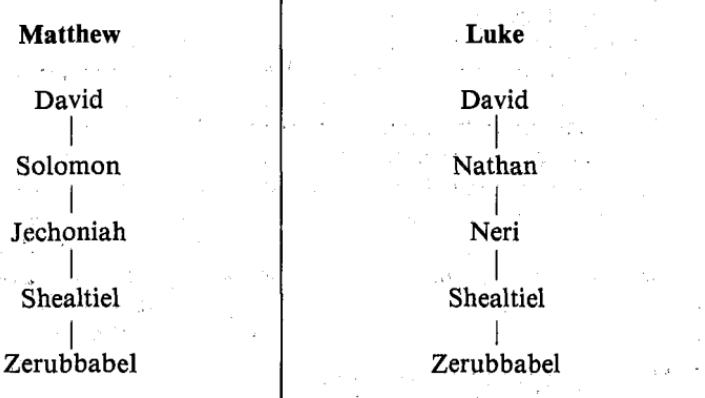
Lk. 2:4). But Joseph was connected to two lines of descent if you compare Luke's list with Matthew's. How could Joseph be the son of both Jacob (in Matthew) and Heli (in Luke)? As sometimes happened a man and his wife could not produce male heirs to their tribal heritage. God provided in the Old Testament economy what came to be known as the Levirate Law (Gen. 38:8ff; Deut. 25:5-10) whereby a deceased man's brother or nearest male kin was required to marry his brother's widow and raise up seed in his brother's name. Ruth's marriage to Boaz recognized this law (Ruth 4:1-17). This ancient custom was also applied in the practice of adoption. Orphaned children were often adopted (Esther 2:7) and thus became legal heirs through kinsmen. It is altogether possible that Heli was Joseph's first father and, upon his death, Joseph was adopted by Jacob and became legal heir to Jacob's heritage.

A comparison of Luke's genealogical record of Jesus' ancestry with that of Matthew will show Zerubbabel as the son of Shealtiel. But according to I Chronicles 3:19 Zerubbabel is the *nephew* of Shealtiel and the son of Pedaiah. Zerubbabel is at one and the same time heir, and, legally son of two men. In Matthew's list Shealtiel is the son of Jechoniah, and in Luke he is the son of Neri. How do we resolve this problem? According to Jeremiah 22:30, Jechoniah was to have no children to succeed him in a legal sense on the throne (he was to be "prophetically" childless). Shealtiel became legal heir through his father's cousin Neri (see chart, pg. 62). The only place Neri is mentioned is in Luke's list. We assume then that Neri had no sons but when Jechoniah died, Shealtiel, the blood son of Jechoniah, was adopted by Neri (son of David through Nathan). What is true of Shealtiel is also true of Zerubbabel. He became the heir through Shealtiel because Shealtiel had no sons (Pediah and his other brothers had probably died) so Zerubbabel was adopted by Shealtiel who was already legal heir through the Leverite Law. Thus God's prophecy concerning Jechoniah (legally childless) and the David lineage were both preserved.

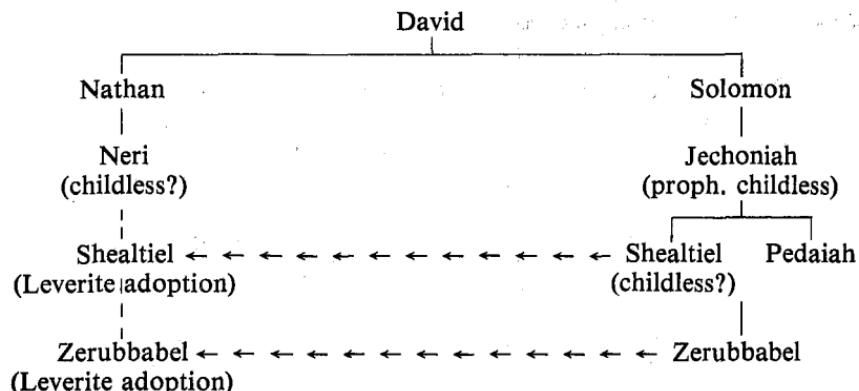
The main aspect of the genealogical record of Christ's ancestry is to establish God's faithfulness, wisdom, and power to carry out His redemptive plan through the Divine-Man in spite of all obstacles and enemies. Imagine the difficulties that would arise if we did not possess proof that Jesus was the descendant of David! But even more importantly, the genealogies tracing Jesus' ancestry back to the original man, Adam, prove that God's plan was to save man by a Man. Man's redeemer must be a man; it was necessary that the power of the devil (the fear of death, Heb. 2:14-15) be conquered in the flesh. Man's sacrifice must be a man; a sinless, perfect man (cf. Heb. 10:4-10). Man's mediator must be a man (cf. I Tim. 2:5; Heb. 2:17-18). Jesus was The Man who redeemed man

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(cf. Gal. 4:4-5). Furthermore, God's power and faithfulness to overcome all obstacles is revealed in the genealogies of Jesus. God kept His word to preserve a family and a nation through whom He delivered to the world its Savior. In spite of dungeon, fire and sword, He preserved a specific family. In spite of bondage, captivities, and resistance by this chosen nation itself, God preserved a throne. In spite of sinful men and women (David, Bathsheba, Rahab, etc.) in the lineage of Jesus, God produced a believing, humble peasant girl and her fiance through whom to deliver the Messiah to mankind. God's providential power is evident in the genealogies of Jesus.



Possible Explanation



STUDY STIMULATORS:

1. What do you think of the historical context in which John the Baptist carried out his mission? Would you be able to maintain an optimistic attitude if you were called to serve God in a similar historical context?
2. How did John the Baptist serve as a "link" between the Old and New covenants? What was the response God expected from all who heard his message?
3. Were people's sins forgiven when they submitted to John's immersion?
4. Why is it incorrect to state that John's baptism originated in "Jewish proselyte baptism"?
5. Why is it incorrect to state that John's baptism originated in the practice of Essene (Qumranian) washings?
6. Where did John's immersion originate? How did Jesus verify that?
7. What is the correct New Testament mode of baptism?
8. Has the Bible given any man or group of men sanction to change the mode of baptism?
9. Why did John call the Pharisees and Sadducees "a brood of vipers"? Would this same categorization apply to any contemporary religious teachers?
10. What is repentance? Is it to be accomplished only once in our lives?
11. Why is it necessary to repent of erroneous theology before repentance in ethics?
12. May one continue to be a soldier and please God?
13. Are all believers to be immersed in the Holy Spirit?
14. Why did Jesus insist on being baptized by John?
15. Why is it important that the genealogical record of Jesus' ancestry be a part of the gospel record?

Chapter Four (4:1-44)

TESTING THE SON OF MAN

IDEAS TO INVESTIGATE:

1. What was the point in Jesus going forty days and nights without food (4:1-2)?
2. Since Jesus was Divine, perhaps temptation was not really a problem for Him (4:1-13)?
3. Isn't it too simplistic to deal with temptation by only quoting scripture (4:1-13)?
4. Why did the people of Nazareth become enraged enough to kill Jesus over a couple of stories about old prophets (4:16-30)?
5. How did Jesus get away from this enraged mob (4:30)?
6. Isn't it possible that "demon possession" was just mental illness (4:31-43)?
7. Why didn't Jesus let the demons continue to say who He was (4:41)?

SECTION 1

Victory of the Son of Man over Temptation (4:1-13)

And Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan,
4 and was led by the Spirit ²for forty days in the wilderness, tempted by the devil. And he ate nothing in those days; and when they were ended, he was hungry. ³The devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread." ⁴And Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone.'" ⁵And the devil took him up, and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time, ⁶and said to him, "To you I will give all this authority and their glory; for it has been delivered to me, and I give it to whom I will. ⁷If you, then, will worship me, it shall all be yours." ⁸And Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God, and him only shall you serve.' " ⁹And he took him to Jerusalem, and set him on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here; ¹⁰for it is written,
'He will give his angels charge of you, to guard you.'

¹¹and

‘On their hands they will bear you up,
lest you strike your foot against a stone.’”

¹²And Jesus answered him, “It is said, ‘You shall not tempt the Lord your God.’” ¹³And when the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from him until an opportune time.

4:1-8 Over Appetite and Ambition: The Son of Man came to defeat the devil. He came to do so in a fleshly body, subject to the tests and trials all men know. He not only defeated the devil in the flesh, He also established forever the strategy that will enable mankind to defeat the devil. First, one must realize the devil is a real being. The devil is not a creation of man’s imagination. We must trust only what the Bible says about the devil. To trust any other data about him is to risk being deceived by the very one we are trying to escape:

- a. He fell from heaven (Lk. 10:18).
- b. He pretends to rule the world (II Cor. 4:4).
- c. He rules a kingdom of rebellious demons (II Pet. 2:4; Jude 6).
- d. He is called tempter, adversary, accuser.
- e. He may fashion himself into an angel of light (II Cor. 11:14).
- f. He is able to work lying signs and wonders through human helpers (II Thess. 2:9; Rev. 13:13-14).
- g. He is bound to some limitations by God and Christ (Job 1:12; 2:6; Mt. 12:29).
- h. He is feared by angels of God (Jude 6).
- i. He seeks to destroy the church of Christ (Rev. 12:13-17).
- j. Pride was his snare (I Tim. 3:6).
- k. He is the father of liars and murderers (Jn. 8:44).
- l. He prowls around like a roaring lion seeking those who will stray so that he may devour them (I Pet. 5:8).

This is some of the biblical data which keeps us from being “ignorant of his devices” (II Cor. 2:11). Here in the temptations of Jesus we have an exposé of the devil’s basic strategems. There are three fundamental vulnerabilities of man which Satan attacks. Man was created by God to have these vulnerabilities. If man had no vulnerability between right and wrong, he could not believe, love, enjoy or be in the image of his Creator. The first of these is human appetite. All men need food, clothing, shelter, sex, rest, work, life and health. Satan takes advantage of these needs and tries to get men to make these human needs first in priority.

Jesus had a human body. His body needed food. He had fasted for forty days and nights. Fasting was not dieting—it was for the specific purpose of clearing the mind and concentrating it wholly on spiritual

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matters. Jesus had His priorities right. Food was secondary to His communion with the Father. But the devil attacked the physical part of Him which undoubtedly cried out for satisfaction after forty days of deprivation. But Jesus trusted in the Father's word: "Man shall not live by bread alone." In other words, a man's life does not consist in the things he possesses (cf. Lk. 12:15). There is a food which perishes (cf. Jn. 6:27); those who trust God are to labor for the food which does not perish. Jesus was tempted to distrust the Father's promise to provide everything necessary. Jesus had the power to provide for Himself. Why didn't He? Had He done so He would have provided no way for victory for us—we do not have such power. We may think we do, but we don't. We *must* trust God. It is through trust in His very great promises that we escape the corruption in the world because of passion, and become partakers of the divine nature (II Pet. 1:4). There is no other escape than to *trust* God's Word; which means to put it to practice in our daily living. Temptations must come (Mt. 18:7; Lk. 17:1); they come through man's own desires (James 1:14); God will not allow any man to be tested beyond his strength to overcome (I Cor. 10:13); God provides the way of escape (I Cor. 10:13; II Pet. 2:9); self-control helps guard against temptation (I Cor. 7:5) and so does prayer (Mt. 6:13; 26:41; Mk. 14:38; Lk. 11:4; 22:40, 46). Remember, the next time you are tempted to satisfy a God-given physical appetite above and beyond the guidelines of the Scriptures that you do not have to. God's Word has given man principles and precepts within which he may satisfy his physical nature to its greatest potential and most profitable use. The body is a means to an end. Man should use it to glorify God for in glorifying God man *lives!* Jesus proved the flesh did not have to have first priority! Jesus proved there was something higher. Jesus proved that by trusting God's Word, the flesh need not be vulnerable to Satan's attempts to control it. The life of the Christian does not consist in making provisions to gratify the desires of the flesh (Romans 13:14).

The next attack of the devil was upon ambition or the vulnerability of the human ego. Now human ego is God-given but it is intended to be held in check. Man needs an ego to give the initiative, creativity, correct amounts of ambition and the drive to find satisfaction in a job well done. Without the drive to do and be man would be a listless, lethargic drifter—totally passive. The crucial issue is whether man will surrender that God-given ego or ambition to divinely revealed goals. God has a purpose for all the drives and aspirations of the human ego. That purpose is to aspire to goodness, righteousness, truth, faithfulness and love. God's great ambition for all men is that they be conformed to the image of His Son (cf. Rom. 8:28-30; II Cor. 3:18; Phil. 3:8-16). He wants us to have the drive and ambition to seek after that. But the devil will attack us

at this point and try to convince us that our ambitions should be for ourselves and not for God. The devil will tempt us with human fame and human power to get us to direct our loyalty toward him and away from God. The devil will try to convince us that we can be "kings" of certain areas or portions of that which God created. He tempts us into believing that we can actually usurp God's sovereignty in some areas where we seem to have special expertise or charisma. What the devil really means is that he will help us deceive ourselves that we can be "kings" if we will follow his way and do obeisance to him. Of course, it was a great temptation to Jesus. He knew He was a king, but He knew most of His subjects would not acknowledge His kingship because they were looking for a king of power, fame and political-mindedness. The devil was tempting Jesus to establish God's kingdom on the same basis as worldly kingdoms. The enticement was to conduct God's business like the world conducts its business. This is still a strong temptation for leaders in the church today. The way of God's kingdom is servanthood, suffering and persuasion—not in being served in ease and comfort and worldly fame. Once again, Jesus overcame the temptation by trusting in God's Word. The greatest of all must be servant of all. If we are faithful and suffer with Him, we shall reign with Him. For the glory that was set before Him, Jesus endured defamation, persecutions, misunderstanding and the cross. There is nothing physical, incomprehensible, emotional, esoteric or impossible in Jesus' parry of the devil's thrust. He simply said, "It is written, . . ." Only total commitment to God's Word will furnish the power to survive the deceitful power of the devil.

4:9-13 Over Audacity: The devil's final attack was upon the tendency of man to be audacious. Audacity is a daring that shows contempt for restraints of common sense and law; it is effrontery. It is the tendency to be proud and arrogant. The devil took Jesus to the "pinnacle" of the temple and dared Him to throw Himself down. The devil even quoted Scripture to Jesus (see Psa. 91:11). Satan is urging Jesus to do what seems to be the quickest, most spectacular way to accomplish His purpose. Jesus wants to be recognized as the Messiah. Jewish tradition said the Messiah would come "suddenly" in a spectacular way, to the temple. This would seem to be a plausible (at least spectacular) way to get the attention of the masses. Furthermore, says the devil, God's word says, ". . . He shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone" (Psa. 91:11-12). But Satan *misquoted* Scripture by omitting one very important phrase, ". . . to keep thee in *all thy ways*." Jesus' way was God's way. To have done what Satan suggested would have put Him out of the *Messiah's* way into the devil's way. The Messiah's way was the humble, serving, slow, painstaking way. For Jesus to have cast Himself down from the temple would

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have been to show contempt for the will of God concerning His mission. This was the old "end justifies the means" temptation. To do as Satan suggested would have been to audaciously go beyond the guidelines of God's way and put Him on trial. The way of the Messiah was to be suffering (Isa. 53).

Human beings are still vulnerable to such a suggestion by the devil today. Man is constantly enticed with the idea that he can fulfill God's purpose in his life by doing it his own way. Men still do not want the humble, serving, painstakingly slow way of God. Jesus warned that His kingdom must be built slowly and gradually like the planting of a seed and bringing it painstakingly to fruition first through the "blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear" (Mk. 4:28). The devil tempted Jesus to audaciously circumvent the way of the Cross and take matters into His own hands and gain His following by the quick, spectacular, showy way. Followers of Christ are vulnerable to the same temptation. The only defense against it is to know what God has revealed about His way, trust God that His way is the only way to life, and walk in it. To walk any other way is to go beyond the patience of God. Luke quotes Jesus' reply to the devil and uses the Greek word *ekpeiraseis* which literally means, "overtempt." This is the same Greek word used in the Septuagint version of Deut. 6:16. God wants us to trust His goodness, but He does not want us to "overtempt" Him and go beyond His goodness. God's patience is not inexhaustible (cf. I Cor. 10:6-13; Heb. 3:7-19, etc.). Because God is patient and long-suffering, not wishing that any should perish (II Pet. 3:9), man grows audacious and arrogant. Jesus, in the flesh, tempted strongly to dare God's way, resisted. We can resist that temptation too!

Jesus' temptations were strong. They were stronger than any other human will know. A shrewd man once said: "The man who has no problems with temptations is the man who always yields!" Temptation in the Lord's case was strengthened from the very fact that He possessed the supernatural powers the devil tried to get Him to misuse. Having failed to seduce Jesus into sinning against God, the devil left Him. Luke notes that the devil's intention was to resume his attack. The Greek word *kairou* means literally "season" but is translated in the RSV, "an opportune time." "In season" means "opportune time." Jesus was constantly tempted throughout His human existence. One of the most crucial hours of temptation came in the Garden of Gethsemane (cf. Mt. 26:39; Mk. 14:35; Lk. 22:41). His own disciples became channels through which the devil tempted Him (cf. Mt. 16:23).

The devil is malicious, hateful, evil and murderous. He will use our emotions, our physical nature, our friends, even our sub-consciousness to tempt us to disobey or distrust God. The only protection we have is

to deeply engrave the word of God on our thresholds (our conscious minds), so that he cannot slip inside our houses (our hearts, our subconscious minds) and rob us of our souls.

SECTION 2

Visitation of the Son of Man in Time (4:14-30)

¹⁴ And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee, and a report concerning him went out through all the surrounding country.

¹⁵ And he taught in their synagogues, being glorified by all.

¹⁶ And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up; and he went to the synagogue, as his custom was, on the sabbath day. And he stood up to read; ¹⁷ and there was given to him the book of the prophet Isaiah. He opened the book and found the place where it was written,

¹⁸ "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor.

He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives
and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who
are oppressed,

¹⁹ to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord."

²⁰ And he closed the book, and gave it back to the attendant, and sat down; and the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him.

²¹ And he began to say to them, "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." ²² And all spoke well of him, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth; and they said, "Is not this Joseph's son?" ²³ And he said to them, "Doubtless you will quote to me this proverb, 'Physician, heal yourself; what we have heard you did at Capernaum, do here also in your own country.' "

²⁴ And he said, "Truly, I say to you, no prophet is acceptable in his own country. ²⁵ But in truth, I tell you, there were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when there came a great famine over all the land; ²⁶ and Elijah was sent to none of them but only to Zarephath, in the land of Sidon, to a woman who was a widow. ²⁷ And there were many lepers in Israel in the time of the prophet Elisha; and none of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian." ²⁸ When they heard this, all in the synagogue were filled with wrath. ²⁹ And they rose up and put him out of the city, and led him to the brow of the hill on which their city was built, that they might throw him down headlong. ³⁰ But passing through the midst of them he went away.

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4:14-20 Text: The victory Jesus won over the flesh and the devil gave Him great spiritual power. He left Judea and returned to Galilee where He went from village to village teaching in the synagogues. His wisdom and holiness were recognized by all who heard and observed Him and He became increasingly famous throughout Galilee. His name was on the lips of people wherever they gathered.

The Jewish Synagogue probably originated during the Babylonian Exile (606-536 B.C.). It was never really intended as a substitute for their Temple, but it did provide every Jewish community in exile a place to meet, hear their scriptures read, and pray. The Synagogue remains today as the strongest factor in the preservation of Jewish culture and religion. Synagogues could be found in Jesus' day in every city of the world where there were enough Jews to support them. The chief purpose of the synagogue was not public worship but instruction in the scriptures and the regulation of Jewish social and civil life (insofar as the country in which they lived might allow civil control by the synagogue). In Jesus' day the Temple in Jerusalem was the chief place of worship. The Pharisees and the Scribes controlled the synagogues in the first century A.D. Each synagogue was ruled by the elders of the community but they usually appointed a "president" or chief ruler in each one who was responsible for its properties and services, and presided at its meetings. A "minister" or "attendant" was also appointed to carry out the rulings of the "president" and acted as his subordinate. The "attendant" handled the scrolls, instructed the children, administered the scourgings, sounded the trumpet on Sabbath, etc.

Services were held every Sabbath. The congregation filed in and the men seated themselves on one side of the building while the women took seats on the other side. Prominent members of the community, especially the elders, took seats at the front of the building facing the audience. Jesus characterized the Pharisees as hypocrites who competed with one another for the best seats in the synagogues in order to be seen of men (Mt. 23:6). The best historical information available indicates the synagogue service probably went as follows:

- a. Service began with a congregational recitation of the "Shema" (*shema* means, "hear" or "obey") which was the Jewish confession of faith quoted from Deut. 6:4-5.
- b. This was followed by a congregational prayer called the Tefillah.
- c. A scripture lesson from the Law (the Pentateuch) was read. (Any member or visitor could be called upon, even a lad of 12 or more, to read the Law.)
- d. Next a scripture lesson from the Prophets was read (again any Jewish male could be asked to do so). The lesson from the Prophets was always restricted to less verses than the one from the Law.

- e. A sermon was preached on the scriptures read. Again any adult Jewish male could give the sermon although that was usually reserved for the elders, rabbis or rulers of the synagogue. Visiting rabbis were often invited to preach.
- f. A blessing was pronounced or a prayer was recited and the service was concluded.
- g. The congregation gave alms for the poor as they filed out of the meeting house.

Attendance at synagogue was not legislated in the Law of Moses. It was custom and tradition. It was a good custom and Jesus made it His "custom" to attend synagogue on the Sabbath. It afforded Jesus (and later the apostles) ready audiences assembled for the very purpose of religious pursuits. Jesus observed the customary ritual of the synagogue in standing to read and sitting down to preach.

Jesus took the scroll of Isaiah from the "attendant" and began to read. His text was Isaiah 61:1-2. He rolled up the scroll and returned it to the "attendant" and sat down. To understand why there was such expectation and anticipation by the audience as they stared at Jesus, one should read the entire 61st chapter of Isaiah. Undoubtedly most of the adult men present knew the whole context from which Jesus had read only two verses. The whole 61st chapter of Isaiah is gloriously messianic. It predicts the messianic era as one of freedom, fortune and fame for the messianic people (cf. comments in Isaiah, Vol. III, by Butler, College Press). The intent of Isaiah 61 is *spiritual*, as Jesus plainly indicates, but it is replete with highly figurative language describing the victorious vengeance, superfluity of wealth, subjugation of "aliens," and national renown God's messianic people are to have. For centuries Jewish rabbis in their apocryphal writings and traditions had been interpreting the messianic prophecies literally and physically. This Sabbath-day audience anticipated some such literal and materialistic rendering from Jesus, the widely acclaimed hometown boy.

4:21-30 Teaching: They heard more than they expected. Rather than give the usual rabbinical interpretation of this passage, Jesus made a startling claim, "This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears." The Greek text makes it emphatic—*this day, this scripture*. The Greek word *peplerotai*, translated "fulfilled," is in the perfect tense. Greek perfect tense denotes an action accomplished with a continuing result. A good translation would be, "This day this scripture *stands fulfilled* in your presence."

Jesus was the Servant of Jehovah (Isa. 61) anointed by the Holy Spirit to proclaim liberty to the captives and release to those bound. The Hebrew word used in Isaiah 61 for liberty is *deror* and is also used in

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connection with the Year of Jubilee (Lev. 25:10; Ezek. 46:17) when bond-slaves were set free and land taken in payment for debts was returned to its original owners. The Mosaic Year of Jubilee was intended to typify the messianic liberation. Christ came to bind our jailor (the devil) and free us (cf. Mt. 12:25-30; Heb. 2:14-15; I Jn. 3:8-9; Rev. 20:1-6).

Jesus was also anointed to bring recovery of sight to the blind. He did physically heal a few blind people, but that was not the ultimate fulfillment of this prophecy from Isaiah. He came to give all who believe in Him the recovery of spiritual sight! (cf. Jn. 9:39-41).

He came to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord. In Isaiah 61, the Hebrew word *ratzah* is translated *favorable* or *acceptable*. It means literally, delightful, pleasurable, gracious. The Servant (Jesus) came to announce the precise time God chose in His divine schedule of redemption to accomplish His *graciousness* toward man. God, through Jesus Christ, summoned all men to His pleasurable, conciliating time. The messianic age is the age of God's grace. Now is the acceptable time, today is the day of salvation (cf. II Cor. 6:1-2). (See our comments, *Isaiah, Vol. III*, College Press, pgs. 409-413).

The Jews in this synagogue at Nazareth expected Jesus to interpret Isaiah 61 physically and materially. When Jesus talked of "food" the Jews wanted bread and fish; when He talked of "wholeness" (peace) they wanted limbs restored; when He talked of "freedom" they wanted foreign rulers driven from their land. But physical circumstances are not what constitute the kingdom of God—it is character which does (Rom. 13:14; 14:17). Jesus intended the prophecy to be understood as having a spiritual fulfillment. His audience was momentarily caught up in dreams and reveries of a physical fulfillment. They all complimented Jesus on His masterful exposition of the prophet Isaiah. He aroused the feelings of national pride and eagerness for the messianic age in their hearts. Emotion welled up inside the listeners. Suddenly someone said, "Is not this Joseph's son?" Abruptly it dawned on them they had known this young man for thirty years as he grew up in Nazareth and he had not done one great thing there.

Jesus anticipated their reasoning. He knew they wanted to shout at him the proverbial, "Physician, heal yourself." They were reasoning, "If this son of Joseph is the Messiah, charity begins at home!" He speaks eloquently to us, they thought, but he does his great beneficent miracles in other places; his own home town folks should come first. Their reaction graphically exposes the unbelief of their hearts. Jesus was offering them Himself; they clamored for things! They also betray themselves as greedy, jealous and prejudiced. They should have rejoiced that Jesus had done miracles and helped needy people in other places, but they were envious.

The Lord had a proverb of His own. It is a truth proven by history that one generation persecutes and slays its prophets, and the next builds monuments to them. Their forefathers killed the prophets of old and these people of Nazareth adorned their tombs (cf. Mt. 23:29-36). It is the tragedy of one generation after another that so many wilfully reject opportunities to know God through His messengers. Now these faithless people are rejecting the One of whom all the other prophets spoke. They do not see and would not see even if a miracle were worked in their midst.

Thank God, there are those who will receive God's messengers and trust their word in spite of unpleasant circumstances. Jesus cites two cases from the sacred history of Israel itself to bring the people of Nazareth to their senses. Israel rejected Elijah, but a woman of Sidon who suffered through the same three and one-half years of drought, and was about to starve, believed the prophet, took him in and fed him and received a great blessing (cf. I Kings 17:9ff). The lepers of Israel did not believe Elisha, but a Syrian army captain named Naaman did and was cleansed (cf. II Kings 5:1ff).

Jesus got His point across. God is no respecter of persons, but men and women of every race, culture, generation or social level who trust God and receive His messengers will, in turn, receive His approval. But the people of Nazareth would have none of this doctrine! Jewish apocryphal traditions held that God had created the Gentiles to be "fuel for the fires of hell." Here this son of Joseph, a local boy who does nothing for his own home town, spouting messianic promises and claiming their fulfillment in Him, has the audacity to infer that God might favor Gentiles above Jews. Their reaction simply proves the people did not believe the prophet Isaiah either. Isaiah predicts in many places in his writings that God is going to bless men of all nations in the messianic age. In addition to the doctrine of the cross, the doctrine of the universality of the gospel was a stumbling-block to the Jews.

The people became violent. They rose up as one mob and took Jesus bodily and put Him out of the town. Outside the village they took Him to the brow of a steep hill upon which Nazareth was built and there tried to push Him off a cliff to His death. Jesus escaped. We are not told exactly how this was accomplished. John records similar escapes in Jerusalem (cf. Jn. 7:30; 10:39). Some think He simply walked through the crowd by the very power of His righteous personality. Others think something miraculous happened to allow Him to escape. Whatever the case, it was not His hour to die. He had full control of His destiny. He would lay down His life at the precise time appointed by God and He would take it up again—none would take it from Him!

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SECTION 3

Validation of the Son of Man's Authority (4:31-44)

31 And he went down to Capernaum, a city of Galilee. And he was teaching them on the sabbath; ³² and they were astonished at his teaching, for his word was with authority. ³³ And in the synagogue there was a man who had the spirit of an unclean demon; and he cried out with a loud voice, ³⁴“Ah! What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are, the Holy One of God.” ³⁵ But Jesus rebuked him, saying, “Be silent, and come out of him!” And when the demon had thrown him down in the midst, he came out of him, having done him no harm. ³⁶ And they were all amazed and said to one another, “What is this word? For with authority and power he commands the unclean spirits, and they come out.” ³⁷ And reports of him went out into every place in the surrounding region.

38 And he arose and left the synagogue, and entered Simon's house. Now Simon's mother-in-law was ill with a high fever, and they besought him for her. ³⁹ And he stood over her and rebuked the fever, and it left her; and immediately she rose and served them.

40 Now when the sun was setting all those who had any that were sick with various diseases brought them to him; and he laid his hands on every one of them and healed them. ⁴¹ And demons also came out of many, crying, “You are the Son of God!” But he rebuked them, and would not allow them to speak, because they knew that he was the Christ.

42 And when it was day he departed and went into a lonely place. And the people sought him and came to him, and would have kept him from leaving them; ⁴³ but he said to them, “I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other cities also; for I was sent for this purpose.” ⁴⁴ And he was preaching in the synagogues of Judea.

4:31 Pronouncements: Luke has a different chronology of this early Galilean ministry than that of Matthew and Mark. Matthew and Mark list the healing of the demoniac, Peter's mother-in-law, and the masses *after* the miracle of the fishes and the call to discipleship of the fishermen (cf. Mt. 4:13-22; Mk. 1:14-20). Luke places the healing ministry *before* the call of the fishermen (cf. Lk. 5:1-11). We believe Luke had some reason for varying from the chronological order. Perhaps Luke did so to offer an explanation for the basis of such ready acceptance of Jesus' call by the fishermen. Whatever the case, after leaving the unbelieving,

murderous mob at the hills of Nazareth Jesus went down to the coast of the Sea of Galilee and the city of Capernaum. Jesus followed His custom of going to synagogue services on the Sabbath and finding opportunities there to teach. People were astounded at His teaching. The Greek participle *exeplessonto* is from the verb *plesso* which means "to be struck." The people were exceedingly mentally stricken with His teaching!

In both manner and content Jesus continually astounded people by His teaching (cf. Lk. 2:48; Jn. 4:29; 7:14-15; 7:46; Mt. 7:29). Mark 1:21, parallel to Luke 4:31, adds, ". . . for he taught them as one who had authority, and not as the scribes." Prophets said, "Thus saith the Lord." Rabbis and scribes said, "Thus saith the Rabbis and the traditions." Jesus said, "I say unto you!" The endless human traditions and officious pronouncements of the rabbis, which they elevated above the Scripture (cf. Mt. 15:1-20; Mk. 7:1-23), were monotonously and wearily repeated. But rather than bring men the mercy and forgiveness of God such teaching bound on them a burden they were unable to bear. The practical heart-searching words of Jesus were in direct contrast with the pointless minutiae and hair-splitting arguments of the rabbis. When men listened to Jesus, they said: Yes, He is right, that is so! The truth Jesus uttered was authoritative and men knew it. This is still true! Even though this period of the ministry of Jesus is marked by the working of many miracles, it does not seem that His *ordinary* preaching and teaching needed any such supernatural testimony to enable it to stand on its own merits as being authoritative. Today, take any teaching of Jesus and proclaim it anywhere in the world, and the common consciousness of humanity knows the teaching is true. That is because the teachings of Jesus are absolute truth.

4:32-41 Powers: This is the first confrontation of Jesus and demons in the record of Luke. There are interesting things to learn from this event. First, it is significant that Luke, the physician, does not question the reality of demon possession. Next, we observe some interesting things about the demon: (a) he was attending synagogue service; (b) he was called an *akathartou* ("unclean") demon which means religiously unclean or unholy—demons are beings who wish to have nothing to do with holiness, purity, goodness or righteousness but whose sole desire is evil and hurtfulness; (c) he was compelled to acknowledge the fact that Jesus was God's "Holy One"; (d) he was terrified of Jesus—the Greek expletive *ea* ("Ah!") is an oath or shreik of fear; (e) he convulsed the man he possessed—Greek, *rhipto*, meaning, "throw with a sudden jerking motion" (Mark 1:26, Gr. has *sparaxan*, from which we get the English words spasm and spastic); (f) the demon obeyed Jesus immediately.

Jesus' actions toward the demon manifest His complete sovereignty over evil spiritual beings: (a) Jesus charged (Gr. *epetimesen*, meaning

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literally, exercised His "honorship" upon) the demon to come out of the man; (b) Jesus forced the demon to be silent (Gr. *phimotheti*, "be muzzled"); (c) The people testified that with authority (*exousia*) and power (*dunamei*) Jesus commanded (*epitassei*—the same Greek word which may also be translated, subjected or subordinated) the evil spirit; Mark (1:27) adds testimony that the evil spirit *obeyed* Jesus. Reports (Greek, *echos*) of Jesus' fame echoed throughout all the surrounding region. The people said, This is a new teaching! (Mk. 1:27). Jesus' absolute authority over demons was so superior to the ineffectual superstitions of the exorcists it was totally unique.

Exorcists of that day believed the air was populated by evil spirits, and that on certain occasions they entered into men through food and drink. The Egyptians held that there were thirty-six parts of the human body, any of which might be entered and controlled by evil spirits. Some of the rabbis believed that since demons were invisible if one put sifted ashes on the threshold of the house, their footprints might be seen in the morning, prints like those that a chicken might leave. One rabbi, in order to protect himself against demons, always took a lamb with him every time he went to the bathroom since they attacked animals as well as human beings. Such superstitions are used by modern critics to attack the credibility of the biblical record of demon possession. They say Jesus was a victim of these superstitions of His day.

One of the following conclusions must be true concerning the reality of demons as mentioned in the Gospel accounts. No other possibilities exist, and only one of these may be true: Either,

- a. Jesus did cast out real demons as the texts represent, or,
- b. Jesus did no such thing and the accounts are entirely false, or,
- c. Jesus did go through the motions and the pretense of casting demons out, while He knew there were no real demons—He was a charlatan, or;
- d. Jesus was as ignorant and superstitious on this subject as the people and honestly thought He cast out spirits in healing sicknesses.

Which of these views fits the facts and the testimony? Jesus never made a statement in connection with demons which has been discredited by the progress of human knowledge. Modern thought is now not so certain that demon-possession is a mere superstition. There is no apparent organic reason for many illnesses (as attested by psychiatry and psychosomatic medicine). We know far too little about the relationship between the spiritual and physical realms to arbitrarily deny the historicity of the Gospel accounts of demon possession.

The New Testament discusses demons under the following headings:

(a) Demons are Satan's messengers (angels), Mt. 25:41; I Cor. 6:3; II Cor. 12:7;

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II Pet. 2:4; Jude 6; Rev. 9:11; 12:7; (b) Demons are "unclean spirits" Mt. 8:16; Mt. 8:28; 12:45; 10:1; Mk. 5:1, 2, 13; Mk. 1:23-28; 3:11-30; 6:7; 7:25; 9:14-20; Lk. 8:27-30; 4:33-36; 10:17-20; Mk. 9:17-25 (dumb spirit); Acts 16:16 (spirit of divination). Demons have these personality traits:

- a. They are knowledgeable; Mt. 8:29; Mk. 1:34; Jas. 2:19.
- b. They can speak; Lk. 4:33-41; Mk. 3:11-12; 5:7.
- c. They are fierce; Mt. 8:28; Mt. 17:14-21; Mk. 9:14-29; Lk. 9:37-43.
- d. They did great harm to people; Mt. 12:27ff; Mt. 9:32; Mk. 9:14-29.
- e. They did no good at all; Jn. 10:21.
- f. They need a body to inhabit; Mt. 8:28ff; Mt. 17:14-21; Mk. 9:14-29; Lk. 9:37-43.
- g. They may be many in number; Mk. 5:9.
- h. They fear Christ; Mk. 1:24; Lk. 4:34; Mt. 8:28-33; Mk. 5:1-20; Lk. 8:26-39.
- i. They often lead men to indulge in speculations about demons and inspire division within Christianity; I Tim. 4:1; Jas. 3:13-18; I Jn. 4:1-3; I Cor. 10:19-22; Rev. 16:14, etc.

We know from the divine record that demons abide:

- a. In heavenly places (Eph. 6:12).
- b. In the air (Eph. 2:2).
- c. In the earth (Job 1:7).
- d. In the sea (Mt. 8:32).
- e. In bodies of men (Mt. 12:43; Eph. 2:2).
- f. In kings and potentates of the world (Dan. 10:13-20; Rev. 16:14).
- g. In bodies of animals (Mk. 5:13).
- h. In waterless places (Lk. 11:24).
- i. Reserved in chains under darkness (II Pet. 2:4; Jude 6).
- j. In the abyss (Lk. 8:31).

Where does the Christian stand in relation to demons? First, Satan and his demons have been conquered by Christ (Lk. 10:18; Jn. 12:31; 16:11; Col. 2:15; Heb. 2:14; I Jn. 3:8; Mt. 12:29). Satan and his angels have been bound and limited by Christ who brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. But, like an insane army general who is defeated but will not quit until he is slain, Satan and his messengers are still active in the lives of men who love darkness (Acts 10:38; Eph. 4:27; 6:11, II Tim. 2:26; Jas. 4:7; I Pet. 5:8; I Jn. 3:8; 2:13-16; I Cor. 7:5; II Cor. 4:4; I Tim. 5:15; I Jn. 4:1; I Tim. 4:1; Jas. 3:15; Acts 5:16; 8:7; 16:16; Rom. 8:15; II Tim. 1:7; I Cor. 2:12; Eph. 6:12; 3:10; Rom. 8:38). Demons do exist! They cannot live in Christians because the *Holy Spirit* dwells in them. Christians are engaged in a cosmic struggle with the hosts of wickedness and the kingdom of darkness from which they have been transferred. Christians need

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the whole armor of God (Eph. 6:10ff; II Cor. 10:3-5). Greater is He that is in Christians than he that is in the world (I Jn. 4:4; 5:18-19; 2:14).

The New Testament is quite clear—demon possession was a reality. Ignorance on this matter is not in the mind of God or Christ but in ours.

Immediately after the incident with the demon-possessed man Jesus left the synagogue and went to Peter's home in Capernaum. Peter's mother-in-law lay sick with a "great fever" (Greek, *megalο pureto*—*pureto* is the word from which we have the English, pyre or pyrotechnic, and means "fire"). Ancient physicians (including Galen, 130 A.D.) divided fevers into two classes—little and great. Considering the total lack of insecticides and poor hygienic methods, becoming infected with some "great" fever (such as malaria, typhus, pneumonia, etc.) was an every day possibility. Luke's use of the imperfect Greek verb *sunechomene* (lit., "was being seized with") may indicate that her fever had seized her for a long time—perhaps a chronic malady. Doctor Luke watches Jesus through the eyes of a physician and describes Jesus as going in, standing over the patient and taking her by the hand. But there the normal "bedside manner" ends. Jesus "rebukes" the fever. He "charged" the fever (*epetimesen*, as with the demon) exercising His "honorship" upon the fever and it left her. Immediately (with no time necessary to recuperate or regain strength) she arose and began to serve the house guests of her son-in-law. It was a miraculous healing.

That evening, as the sun began to set toward the Mediterranean Sea, literally hundreds of people (so many it appeared to be the whole city of Capernaum) gathered outside the door of Peter's house with people ill from all kinds of diseases and those possessed of demons. They wanted Jesus to heal them. Luke uses the Greek adjective *hekasto* ("each") to qualify the noun *hen* ("one"). He means to say that Jesus healed *each and every single one* there who had an illness or was demon-possessed. Christ's healings contrasted with modern pseudo-healers reveals the following:

- a. Jesus did not heal for notoriety; Mt. 8:1-4; 9:27-31; Mk. 3:7-12; 7:31-37; 8:22-26, etc.
- b. Jesus healed all sorts of afflictions. One so-called "faith-healer" is known to have selected through screening only forty out of seven hundred who came to him for "healing."
- c. Jesus never indicated healing was to be universal. Four times He healed "many"; once He healed ten; three times He healed two at once; twenty-three times He healed one person; often He healed only one of many present who were ill.

- d. Jesus did not use auto-suggestion or hypnotism in His cures.
- e. Jesus did not indicate healing was to be appropriated by all who appropriate the atonement provided by His death.
- f. Jesus healed only Jews with two possible exceptions (Mt. 15:21-28; Jn. 4:46-54).
- g. Jesus never discouraged the use of physicians and medicines.
- h. There was never a question about the affliction of anyone Jesus healed.
- i. There was never any question, even from enemies of Jesus, whether the afflicted were healed or not.
- j. There was never a case of relapse when Jesus healed a person.
- k. Jesus performed no "partial" healings.
- l. Jesus did not make faith a uniform condition for healing.
- m. There were never any failures by Jesus to heal anyone He intended to heal.
- n. Jesus specialized in extreme cases (even death).
- o. No one ever found Jesus guilty of fraud in His healings.
- p. Jesus never asked patients to ignore their symptoms.
- q. Jesus never failed to heal all in a group when He proposed to heal a group.
- r. Christ's healings were invariably instantaneous.
- s. Compassion was not the ruling motive with the Lord.

Jesus refused to let the demons cry out that He was the Son of God. He did not want and did not need verification from demons that He was God's Holy Son. The Greek text portrays Jesus being very emphatic in silencing the demons. All too soon the enemies of Jesus would be accusing Him of working miracles by the power of the devil.

4:42-44 Purposes: Mark tells us that after the crowds dwindled away from Peter's door, Jesus slipped away in the very early morning hours (while it was still dark) (Mk. 1:35) to a lonely place to pray. He is probably driven to seek solitude and prayer to resist the temptations that would come with such popularity. The crowds kept on seeking (*epezetoun*, Greek imperfect tense) and kept on trying to detain Him (*kateichon*, imperfect). It is evident that attending to people's physical necessities made Jesus extremely popular. He could have been crowned king had He exploited His miraculous power for this end (cf. Jn. 6:14-15). But Christ's primary purpose is not to heal and feed physical bodies which are ultimately doomed to dissolution and death. The primary purpose of His ministry and kingdom is the regeneration of the spiritual man. He makes that plain when He says, "I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other cities also; for I was sent for this purpose."

Luke's note, "And he was preaching in the synagogues of Judea," (4:44) seems to disagree with Matthew (4:23) and Mark (1:39) who say

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Jesus "went throughout Galilee." This disagreement may be due to scribal error. While the Sinaiticus, Vaticanus, Ephraemi and Old Syriac manuscripts have "Judea," the Alexandrinus, Bezae, Vulgate, and Peshitto Syriac (and others) have "Galilee," for Luke 4:44.

STUDY STIMULATORS:

1. Do you think of the devil as a real person? What do you think of the powers he is said to possess? How much time do you think we should devote to studying about him?
2. Why did God create the human body with certain vulnerabilities?
3. What was the first vulnerability the devil attacked in Jesus? How did Jesus overcome the temptation? May we overcome the same way?
4. What human vulnerability did the devil attack next in Jesus? Are you subject to the same vulnerability? Have you ever been tempted in this? How did you overcome?
5. What human vulnerability did the devil attack last? Have you ever succumbed to the philosophy that "the end justifies the means"?
6. Why did Jesus seek out synagogues to proclaim His mission and message? What kind of service would be conducted in a synagogue?
7. How did Jesus interpret Isaiah 61:1-2 to the people of Nazareth? What kind of interpretation did they expect?
8. What did Jesus mean by the proverb, "Physician, heal yourself."
9. How is Jesus' authority demonstrated in His teaching?
10. Do you believe demons are real? Why?
11. Why can't demons possess Christians?
12. What are some significant differences between the miraculous healings performed by Jesus and those of pseudo "faith-healers" today?
13. Was Jesus' primary purpose that of compassion in His healings? If not, why did He heal?

Chapter Five (5:1-39)

THE SON OF MAN CATCHING MEN

IDEAS TO INVESTIGATE:

1. If the fishermen had fished all night and caught nothing, why did they try their nets where Jesus suggested (5:5)?
2. Why did Peter want Jesus to depart from him (5:8)?
3. What is leprosy (5:12)?
4. Why did Jesus send the cleansed leper to the priest (5:14)?
5. What is a "Pharisee" (5:17)?
6. Why did Jesus say first to the paralyzed man, "Your sins are forgiven (5:20)?"
7. What is Jesus illustrating with the "new garment" and "new wine" (5:33-39)?

SECTION 1

Challenging Men (5:1-11)

While the people pressed upon him to hear the word of God, **5** he was standing by the lake of Gennesaret. **2** And he saw two boats by the lake; but the fishermen had gone out of them and were washing their nets. **3** Getting into one of the boats, which was Simon's, he asked him to put out a little from the land. And he sat down and taught the people from the boat. **4** And when he had ceased speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch." **5** And Simon answered, "Master, we toiled all night and took nothing! But at your word I will let down the nets." **6** And when they had done this, they enclosed a great shoal of fish; and as their nets were breaking, **7** they beckoned to their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both the boats, so that they began to sink. **8** But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." **9** For he was astonished, and all that were with him, at the catch of fish which they had taken; **10** and so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. And Jesus

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said to Simon, "Do not be afraid; henceforth you will be catching men." "And when they had brought their boats to land, they left everything and followed him.

5:1-3 Teaching: The great popularity of Jesus made people continually "hound" Him for healing or some other great miracle. Luke notes that crowds followed Jesus down to the shore of the lake of Gennesaret and there "pressed upon Him."

Gennesaret is a Hebrew name meaning, "princely garden." It is also the name of a very fertile plain three miles long and one-half mile wide on the northwestern shore of the lake. Luke very accurately calls it a "lake." It is also known as the "Sea of Galilee," the "Sea of Tiberias," and in the Old Testament as the "Sea of Chinnereth," (meaning, harp-shaped). It is a fresh-water lake resting 680 feet below sea level surrounded by mountains so that it resembles a huge bowl. The lake swarmed with fish of many different varieties. Barclay notes that in it were found shoals of fish covering as much as an acre. The lake is about 13 miles long and 9 miles wide at its widest point. In Christ's day nine cities of 15,000 or more stood on its shores. It was the scene of much of Jesus' Galilean ministries. It is noted for its sudden and violent storms caused by cold air sweeping down from the vast northern plateaus and converging with the tropical humidity of the lake 680 feet below sea level.

The crowds pushing and pressing made it impossible for Jesus to find a place to stand where all could see and hear Him. He saw two empty fishing boats. The fishermen were out on the shore washing their nets after a long night of fishing and catching nothing. Jesus stepped into one of the boats; it belonged to Simon Peter (the other boat probably belonged to John and James). This is not the first time Jesus met these Galilean fishermen.

He asked Peter to push the boat out into the lake a little way. Then Jesus sat down and began to teach. The Greek imperfect verb *edidasken* means Jesus kept on teaching the people. Luke does not record what Jesus said. But apparently what He taught had some connection to the great miracle which followed immediately. He must have taught things which pointed to His identity as the Messiah, for when He ceased speaking words He began teaching by sign and portent what He wanted to communicate: He is Lord! He desires that men leave all and follow Him!

5:4-7 Testing: Luke, the world traveler, notes that Jesus used the word *epanagage* a definite Greek nautical term meaning, "put to sea, set sail, launch forth," (cf. Lk. 8:22; Acts 13:13; 16:11; 18:21, etc.). Jesus instructed the fishermen to row out to the deep (Gr. *bathos*) part of the lake which could be as much as 150 ft. deep and let down their nets. Here is a land-lubber telling experienced fishermen how to fish!

Fishing was one of the three major industries of Galilee (along with agriculture and sheep-herding). Fishermen had an honorable place in society. They had a reputation of being seriously religious. There had been fishermen in Israel beyond the memory of man. Job, Amos, Isaiah, Jeremiah and Habakkuk all speak of fishermen and their work. The tools of their trade, the back-breaking toil and the many fruitless hours, demanded strong, rough, tough, fearless, patient men. The daily experiences of fishermen taught them to be hard-headed realists. These character traits coupled with a lack of formal higher education would make them unlikely candidates for positions of leadership in the estimation of most people. Yet these are the very men Jesus chose to be apostles! The humble heart of a servant is fundamentally more significant to Jesus than all the erudition and charm in the world. The Israelites chose their first king on the basis of charm and not character (I Sam. 8-9) and the results were tragic!

It was, therefore, a real test of their character when Jesus commanded, ". . . let down your nets for a catch." Peter answered, "Master (Gr. *epistata*, meaning "one who has the right to command," or "captain") we toiled all night and took nothing!" Peter uses the Greek word *kopiasantes* which means to "labor strenuously until one is weary and sore." Peter was tired. But Peter acknowledged the authority of Jesus to demand his trust even in the face of what seemed impossible, and at the word of Jesus let down the net once more that day.

How had Peter arrived at this relationship with Jesus? Peter and Andrew, James and John had been directed to Jesus by John the Baptist a year (or more) previous to this encounter (Jn. 1:35ff). From that first encounter near the time of Jesus' baptism (December 26 A.D.), they followed Him, heard His teaching and saw many of His miracles for about a year. These fishermen saw Him make water into wine (Jn. 2) and cleanse the Temple; do many miracles in Judea (Jn. 3:2); preach to Nicodemus and the woman at the well (Jn. 3 and 4); and perhaps they witnessed the healing of the Capernaum nobleman's son (Jn. 4). After that they apparently returned to their fishing businesses on the Sea of Galilee while Jesus conducted His early Galilean ministry (Lk. 4). Peter's acknowledgement of Jesus' "captaincy" was not an emotional, spur-of-the-moment whim—it was based on solid evidence which he had witnessed with his own eyes and ears.

Obedience to the word of Jesus brought into their nets such a huge quantity of fish the nets began to tear and come apart (Gr. *dierreseto*). They had to motion (Gr. *kateneusan*, nodding the head vigorously) to their partners to come help. Galilean fishermen had to form partnerships to have the capital to buy equipment and to carry out the extremely difficult labor. In speaking of such teamwork Luke uses two words,

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metochois ("partners" 5:7) and *koinonoi* ("sharers" 5:10); literally the words would be "have with" and "participate with" respectively. The boats were filled so full they were sinking. In verse six the literal description of the catch is, "they enclosed a multitude of fishes, a much . . ."

5:8-11 Turning: Although Peter had undoubtedly witnessed miracles by Jesus before (see above), this miracle on his own home grounds, involving his own vocation, his own boat and his own close associates, had profound impact on the deepest recesses of his personality. Here was One who had demonstrated supernatural sovereignty over matters which touched the most intimate aspects of Peter's life. Surely He was *Lord!* Peter was a realist, but he was also a man of deep feeling and religious devotion. Recognizing Jesus as Lord implicated Peter as a sinful man in the presence of Deity! Peter knew what Isaiah knew (Isa. 6:1ff)—God is absolutely holy, man is unholy and in need of forgiveness. This was a turning point in Peter's life! Jesus had never before challenged anyone to leave all and follow Him, but He was about to do so.

Matthew and Mark record that Jesus said, "Follow me, and I will make you become fishers of men." Luke adds these words of Jesus, "Do not be afraid; henceforth you will be catching men." Jesus used the Greek word *zogron* which means literally, "capturing alive." The word is used in reference to the devil's capturing people (II Tim. 2:26). Apparently the emphasis is on securing and saving the lives of men for one purpose or another. Jesus wants men captured alive for Him that He may give them eternal blessedness. The devil wants to trap men alive to take them with him to eternal torment (Rev. 20:10). These fishermen added up all the evidence they had of who Jesus was and made the most momentous decision of their lives. They left everything else in second place and made Him and His will first in their lives. They went with Him to assist Him in His divine mission. They turned from being fishermen to become fishers of men.

The great Fisherman, Christ; His disciples, fishers; the world of men pictured as fish; these were favorite images of Christian artists and writers of the first centuries of the church. One of the earliest extant Christian hymns written by Clement of Alexandria (155-215 A.D.) dwells on such images:

"Fisher of men, the blest,
Out of the world's unrest,
Out of sin's troubled sea,
Taking us, Lord, to thee;
Out of the waves of strife
With bait of blissful life;
Drawing thy nets to shore,
With choicest fish, good store."

The picture of the fish carved on so many tombs in the catacombs of Rome preserves this image until this very day.

SECTION 2

Cleansing Men (5:12-26)

12 While he was in one of the cities, there came a man full of leprosy; and when he saw Jesus, he fell on his face and besought him, "Lord, if you will, you can make me clean." ¹³ And he stretched out his hand, and touched him, saying, "I will; be clean." And immediately the leprosy left him. ¹⁴ And he charged him to tell no one; but "go and show yourself to the priest, and make an offering for your cleansing, as Moses commanded, for a proof to the people," ¹⁵ But so much the more the report went abroad concerning him; and great multitudes gathered to hear and to be healed of their infirmities. ¹⁶ But he withdrew to the wilderness and prayed.

17 On one of those days, as he was teaching, there were Pharisees, and teachers of the law sitting by, who had come from every village of Galilee and Judea and from Jerusalem; and the power of the Lord was with him to heal. ¹⁸ And behold, men were bringing on a bed a man who was paralyzed, and they sought to bring him in and lay him before Jesus; ¹⁹ but finding no way to bring him in, because of the crowd, they went up on the roof and let him down with his bed through the tiles into the midst before Jesus. ²⁰ And when he saw their faith he said, "Man, your sins are forgiven you." ²¹ And the scribes and the Pharisees began to question, saying, "Who is this that speaks blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God only?" ²² When Jesus perceived their questionings, he answered them, "Why do you question in your hearts? ²³ Which is easier, to say, 'Your sins are forgiven you,' or to say, 'Rise and walk'?" ²⁴ But that you may know that the Son of man has authority on earth to forgive sins"—he said to the man who was paralyzed—"I say to you, rise, take up your bed and go home." ²⁵ And immediately he rose before them, and took up that on which he lay, and went home, glorifying God. ²⁶ And amazement seized them all, and they glorified God and were filled with awe, saying, "We have seen strange things today."

5:12-16 The Defiled: ". . . there came to him a man full of leprosy . . ." Lepers were some of the most pathetic people of that era. It was not the physical but the social consequences of their malady that made their situation so extreme. Leviticus chapters 13 and 14 give scrupulous directions for the ostracism of lepers. They were cast out of towns and villages and had to live far away from healthy people. Often they lived in caves or tombs. They were not allowed to come within one hundred feet of a well person. When anyone approached, the leper was required

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to cry out concerning himself, "Unclean, unclean!" Often people who were well threw stones at lepers (even rabbis). No one was allowed to touch a leper. Lepers were deprived of all religious contact. They were considered outcasts from the "camp of Israel." They were forbidden access to the Temple and its services. It was the social, religious and psychological deprivation that made the lepers such pitiful cases then.

Note the desperation in the leper's plea: "he fell on his face and besought him, Lord if you will, you can make me clean." The Greek word translated "besought" might more literally be translated, "begged." It is interesting that the leper asked for cleansing (Gr. *katharisaí*) and not healing. The leper expressed humility, absolute faith in Jesus' ability, and acquiescence to whatever Jesus willed to do. This is the kind of attitude Jesus always honors (cf. I Jn. 5:14-15). With this kind of total commitment, Jesus was able to do the impossible. He could do for this defiled "untouchable" what no one else could do—He could cleanse! It is the Lord's will to cleanse the defiled. So, Luke records, He touched the leper and said, "I am willing, be cleansed (Gr. *katharistheti*)."

No one was supposed to touch a leper lest they too be defiled. Jesus' act declares: (a) I have authority to fulfill and supercede the Law—I am the Lawgiver; (b) I have power to take away the penalty that keeps man from God; (c) Love fulfills the Law! Jesus did not fulfill the Law and take away the penalty in fact, however, until He died on the cross and rose from the dead. This incident was simply a typical prediction of what He was going to do. Although Jesus fulfilled and superceded certain aspects of the Mosaic Law in order to show their true meaning, He never ignored the authority of that Law so long as it was in effect. Therefore, He ordered the leper to go to the priest, make the required sacrifices, and receive official cleansing before re-entering society.

To keep from enlarging the great throngs seeking Him merely for healing and to keep from increasing the agitation against Him already at work among the Jewish religious leaders, Jesus told the man to say nothing to anyone about his healing. Mark tells us that the man went out and began to spread the news so widely that Jesus could no longer openly enter a town because of the great multitudes which gathered to be healed of their infirmities, (Mk. 1:45), so Jesus had to stay out in the country. Luke notes that He withdrew into the "wilderness" (uninhabited areas) to pray. If these multitudes had sought Jesus to learn of the will of God for their spiritual lives and to commit themselves to Him for atonement and regeneration, He would not have withdrawn. Their primary concern, however, appears to have been physical and not spiritual.

A Brief Study of Biblical Leprosy:

1. The word *lepra* in pre-biblical Greek meant "psoriasis" or "scaly." Translators of the Latin Vulgate took this Greek word and rendered

it into the Latin as *leprosus*, and it was from the Latin that our first English transliteration (not translation) *leprosy* came! Had the Greek word been *translated* it would have appeared as "scaly." Even the Latin *leprosus* means a scaling or peeling condition and the Latin word *liber* (book or parchment or leaves) is of the same derivation as *leprosus*.

2. The Hebrew word *tzara'ath* is from a root word meaning "to cast down, to defile." In Leviticus 13 and 14, even garments and walls of houses could have *tzara'ath*. This Hebrew word is translated in the English Bible as "leprosy."
3. Priests of the Old Testament were given only a few days to diagnose *tzara'ath*. It is medically impossible to diagnose modern Hansen's disease (modern leprosy) in such a short time. This suggests that the "leprosy" of the Bible was not the Hansen's disease (leprosy) we know today.
4. The Hebrew *tzara'ath* and the Greek *lepra*, *lepros* apparently denoted numerous skin conditions which were pronounced "unclean" for religious and social reasons but which were curable. These skin conditions served the same purpose as other conditions which incurred defilement—to show the absoluteness of man's estrangement from God because of sin.
5. It is significant that the only leper *healed* in the New Testament was one of the 10 Samaritan lepers. All other lepers were *cleansed*. Apparently the Samaritan was simply *healed* since he could not be sent to a Jewish priest to be *cleansed*.
6. It is also significant that there is no mention of leprosy (defilement) after the death and resurrection of Christ. The Law was nailed to the cross and fulfilled; there was no more ceremonial defilement. So, while the apostles healed the sick, cast out demons, raised the dead, caused the blind to see, the lame to walk, the deaf to hear, the dumb to speak, *they never cleansed a leper!*
7. Modern doctors have shown that the symptoms related in Leviticus chapter 13 have no connection with the disease we call leprosy (*mycobacterium leprae*) which is really Hansen's disease. Hansen's disease is an incurable disease mainly affecting the nervous system.

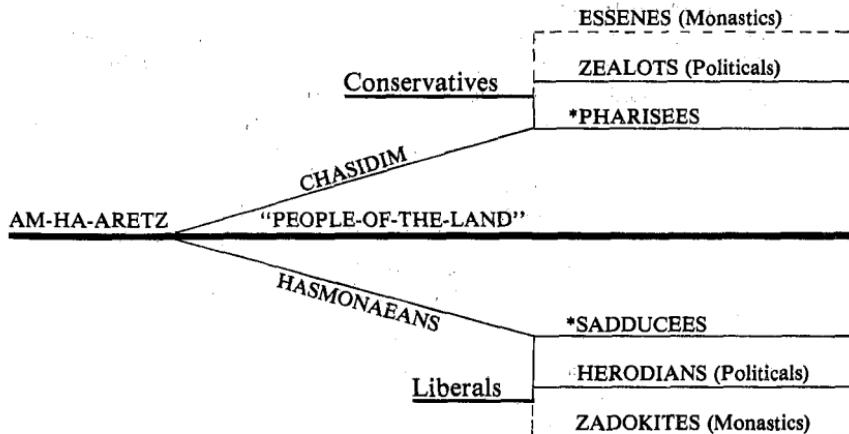
5:16-26 The Defeated: Luke mentions for the first time in his gospel the presence of Pharisees. The religious sect known as the Pharisees probably originated in the days of the Seleucid-Jewish struggles from a group of Jews who called themselves "the chasidim." The Hebrew word *chasidim* means, "the pious ones" and they resisted to the death any encroachments of Hellenistic paganism upon their Jewish culture. This took place about 300-200 B.C. This group gained the favor of the

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majority of the common people and were able, by the time of Jesus, to exert tremendous influence upon society.

The Hebrew word *pharashim* (Pharisee) means, "distinctly divided or separated" and the Pharisees were extreme separatists. They were promoters of a traditional, exclusivistic Judaism. They numbered about 6000 in Jesus' time. They were contemptuous of all who did not follow their traditions. The fundamental feature of Pharisaism was extreme legalism. In their zeal for the preservation of Jewish culture they devised thousands of traditions and rules about the Scriptures in order to protect the Law from being violated. They cared more for their rules than they did either the Law or men (cf. Mt. 12:1-8; Mk. 2:23-28; Lk. 6:1-5; Mt. 15:1-20; Mk. 7:1-13, etc.). They did believe in divine providence, the free will of man, resurrection from the dead and final judgment, and a coming Messiah. They placed great store in history and the traditional culture of the Jewish race but were interested in politics only when politics interfered with their cultural and religious traditions. They were outwardly, very religious, and were the recognized (even by Jesus, Mt. 23:1) repositories of religious instruction. They were, however, for the most part hypocritical in their relationship toward God (cf. Mt. 23:1ff). See the following chart, The Religious/Political Frame of First Century Judaism, for the origins of Jewish sects.

THE RELIGIOUS / POLITICAL FRAME OF FIRST CENTURY JUDAISM



* Not all priests were Sadducees.

* Not all rabbis were Pharisees.

The Pharisees, charged with the responsibility of maintaining the purity of Judaism, were here in Galilee investigating the sudden popularity of the itinerant Galilean rabbi, Jesus. Very little was officially known about Jesus. He had not gone to rabbinical schools; He apparently had little respect for Judea (had not spent much time there) which was the capital of conservative Judaism; it was being rumored that He took a very liberal view toward the traditions of the Pharisees. Jesus was teaching and preaching the word (cf. Mk. 2:1-2) and they wanted to know where He stood doctrinally. They were concerned as to whether Jesus of Nazareth based His teaching on traditional rabbinical authority or not. They soon found out!

Four friends with a frantic faith brought a man afflicted with paralysis to be healed by Jesus. The Greek word for bed is *klines* and denotes a couch for reclining at meals, in distinction from a *krabbatos* which in Greek would mean, "pallet or mattress." They could not get this *couch* through the door since people were jammed into the house and out around the door (cf. Mk. 2:1-2). They carried the couch to the roof-top of the house, took away some of the tiles of the roof, and let the man and his couch down through the roof into the room. The Greek word describing the man's affliction is *paralelumenos*. It is a perfect participle which means he had been paralyzed in the past and continued to be so. The word literally means, "loosed from something that is consistently fixed." Part of the man's body had been loosed from its normal consistency to the rest of the body. We know today that paralysis has something to do with the malfunction of the nerves of portions of the body in their connections to the brain. Brain damage (through stroke or accident) is usually what causes paralysis. Paralysis is almost totally uncurable by medical technology.

Jesus surprised everyone with His first action toward the man. He said, "Man, your sins are forgiven you!" Matthew (9:2) notes Jesus said, "Be of good cheer . . . your sins are forgiven." Why did Jesus say this first and leave the more serious problem of the man's paralysis for later? Because the paralysis was *not* the "more serious" problem! Jesus is forcing the more serious issues first: (a) the man needs forgiveness even if he never receives healing; (b) most serious of all, the issue of His deity—His divine authority—must be declared in uncertain terms. The Pharisees recognized immediately the seriousness of Jesus' initial statement. They recognized that such a claim (to be able to forgive sins) was, if false, blasphemy. What they reasoned within themselves was true! Only God can forgive sins! The problem was the Pharisees refused to accept the idea (taught in the Old Testament, Isa. 7:14; Micah 5:2) that God could reside in a human body (become incarnate).

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Jesus, by supernatural knowledge, knew what they were reasoning within their minds. He proceeds to present incontrovertible proof of His authority. They cannot test the invisible power to forgive sins, but they can test His visible power to heal a paralytic. The healing proves the other. God would not grant such power to a liar and fraud. It is easy to say, "Your sins are forgiven you," and no external evidence will be available to verify its factuality. But to say to a paralyzed man, "Rise, take up your bed and go home" is not easy for it can be subjected to external verification! The following chart, somewhat appropriated from *The Gospel of Matthew, Vol. II*, pgs. 139-142, by Harold Fowler, pub. College Press, demonstrates the logical defense Jesus made against the charge of blasphemy.

THE REASONING OF THE PHARISEES

False premise really a conclusion	<p>Major Premise: "No man can forgive sins but God alone."</p> <p>Minor Premise: "But this one is not God in any sense."</p> <p>Conclusion: "Therefore, this one is blaspheming God in arrogating to himself authority to forgive sins, a prerogative which is God's alone."</p>
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THE LOGIC OF JESUS' ARGUMENT

	<p>Major Premise: "No man but God can heal paralysis with a word of power."</p> <p>Minor Premise: "But I have power on earth to heal paralysis with a word of power (as demonstrated)."</p> <p>Conclusion: "I possess on earth the authority of God to heal paralysis." (This conclusion becomes the minor premise of further argument).</p>
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2	<p>Major Premise: "None can forgive sins but one with God's authority and attributes."</p> <p>Minor Premise: "I have shown that I possess God's authority and God's attributes."</p> <p>Conclusion: "Therefore, I have power on earth to forgive sins."</p>
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3	<p>Major Premise: "Only those who pretend to divine prerogative without right or authority are guilty of blasphemy."</p> <p>Minor Premise: "I have demonstrated by this miracle that I do possess the proper right or authority to exercise divine prerogatives."</p> <p>Conclusion: "Therefore, I am not guilty of blasphemy."</p>
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Notice, Jesus did not say, "By the power of God, rise . . ." but, "I say to you, rise . . ." Eventually the Jews crucified Jesus on the charge of blasphemy. Jesus was not guilty of blasphemy because He proved that He possessed the absolute power of God and thus rightfully claimed the prerogatives of Almighty God.

The reactions of the multitudes are interesting: (a) they were afraid (Mt. 9:8; Lk. 5:26) (Gr. *ephobethesan* from *phobia*); (b) they were amazed (Mk. 2:12; Lk. 5:26) (Gr. *ekstasis*; they were *ecstatic*); (c) they glorified God (Mt. 9:8; Mk. 2:12; Lk. 5:26)—the word glorified in the O.T. comes from *kavod* which means *weight* and apparently derives from the idea of a person's wealth or worth; (d) they said, "We have seen strange (Gr. *paradoxa* from which we get *paradoxical*) things"—the word paradox means, "that which is contrary to the norm." They certainly did see strange and wonderful things from Jesus. No one had ever manifested such divine power—no one in their right mind had ever made such astounding claims. But perhaps the most paradoxical thing they saw that day was the refusal of the Pharisees to accept what they had seen with their own eyes verified to be true!

SECTION 3

Converting Men (5:27-39)

27 After this he went out, and saw a tax collector, named Levi, sitting at the tax office; and he said to him, "Follow me." 28 And he left everything, and rose and followed him.

29 And Levi made him a great feast in his house; and there was a large company of tax collectors and others sitting at table with them. 30 And the Pharisees and their scribes murmured against his disciples, saying, "Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?" 31 And Jesus answered them, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick; 32 I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."

33 And they said to him, "The disciples of John fast often and offer prayers, and so do the disciples of the Pharisees, but yours eat and drink." 34 And Jesus said to them, "Can you make wedding guests fast while the bridegroom is with them? 35 The days will come, when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast in those days." 36 He told them a parable also: "No one tears a piece from an old garment; if he does, he will tear the new, and the piece from the new will not match the old. 37 And no one puts new wine into old wineskins; if he does, the new wine will burst the skins and it will be spilled, and the skins will be destroyed. 38 But new wine must be put into fresh wineskins. 39 And no one after drinking old wine desires new; for he says, 'The old is good.' "

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5:27-28 From Secondary Pursuits: Mark indicates Jesus went out from the inner city to a place "beside the sea" (Mk. 2:13) and taught the people gathered about Him. As Jesus passed on along the busy boat docks of the city He saw a man called Levi (which means, "companion"). His other name was Matthew (which means, "gift"). This Levi was a tax-collector (Gr. *telones* from *telos*, meaning toll, custom or tax); tax-collectors were called "publicans" from Latin *publicanus*. We know the following things about Levi: (a) His father's name was Alphaeus; (b) he was undoubtedly skilled in writing and keeping records; (c) he was apparently well versed in the Old Testament for he quotes more from it than any other gospel writer; (d) he left a lucrative position to follow Jesus; (e) he must have been a man of deep spiritual convictions to have such concern for his former colleagues.

The typical publican of that day may be characterized as: (a) self-centered, Mt. 5:46-47; (b) heathenish, Mt. 18:17; 11:19; 21:31; (c) mercenary, Lk. 19:2, 8; (d) yet, more able to repent than the Pharisees, Lk. 7:29-30; 18:9-14; 19:8. Levi probably did not fit this picture in all its aspects. He does not seem to be self-centered or mercenary. Most publicans were hated by all the Jews because they collected taxes for the despised Roman conquerors. Furthermore, the Romans had a system of "farming-out" taxes. Rome stipulated a fixed amount of taxes they wished to receive from conquered provinces. The collectors were to insure that amount; all they could collect above that amount they could keep as salary. Many tax-collectors became adept at fraud, extortion and manipulation, and some became very rich. The Jews considered them as traitors and heathen; not fit to be included in the covenant with Jehovah, and classed with the worst of sinners.

The Lord called Levi to change his occupation to the highest of all callings—an evangelist of the gospel of Jesus Christ. While it is not stated, we may assume that Levi had prior knowledge of Jesus: (a) no one followed Jesus blindly; (b) Jesus had conducted an extensive ministry of teaching and working miracles in the city of Capernaum prior to His call to Levi; (c) Levi may have already had business contacts with the fishermen-apostles who would have told him about Jesus. The Lord had a special mission for this man who had special training. Levi, skilled and experienced at record-keeping, gave the world its most influential and enduring place of historical record—a biography of the life of the Incarnate God, Jesus Christ. Levi was converted. He immediately left all, put his trust in Jesus and followed Him. Levi committed himself to the proposition of Jesus, "Seek first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness, and all these (necessities) things will be added to you."

5:29-32 From Sin: This was a turning point in Levi's life. He felt satisfied he had found Someone who could lead him to Life with a capital "L."

He believed he had found the Messiah who would fill his empty life with truth, love and holy comradeship which his forefathers and the prophets had so longed for. Now Levi wanted his associates and friends to know this Jesus also. Ultimately, this is the only real way to follow Jesus!

Levi was a man of considerable financial means, so he held a huge "reception" (*megale*, Gr. for great; *douche*—from *dechomai*, to receive) for Jesus in his own home. There was a huge crowd (Gr. *ochlos*, multitude; *polus*, much) of tax-collectors and other people at Levi's for this reception-supper. They were all reclining (Gr. *katakeimenoī*), probably on the Roman "triclinium" type couches. The triclinium was wide enough for three people. They rested their head on their left hand (the left elbow resting on the couch) and fed themselves with their right hand. Eating utensils such as we know today were possessed only by the well-to-do and rich. There were no forks; only knives, spoons, drinking goblets or cups and an individual dish for each diner. In the homes of the common people diners took a piece of flat Jewish bread and dipped it into the food in their individual dishes, or, in some cases where there were no individual dishes, the diners, one at a time, dipped a morsel of bread into the one main dish of food on the table. No one ever ate standing up. Jewish tradition says, "Eating or drinking upright upsets a man's whole body." In ordinary meals it was permissible to put one's hand into the common dish, but never to put it in at the same time as another guest—that would be extremely rude according to the apocryphal book Ecclesiasticus. An ordinary meal, in a moderately well-to-do home, would have consisted of fish or kid, vegetables (particularly onions), and cakes, with local wine to wash it all down. We do not know what Levi had served. It may have been more sumptuous than that. Whatever the meal, the real purpose of Levi was to introduce his friends to this miracle-working Teacher who spoke with the authority of God.

There were Pharisees and scribes there. We do not know they were in Levi's house when they "grumbled" at the disciples of Jesus. They could have been. It is doubtful that Levi had invited them. But in Palestine then, it was customary for spectators to gather, uninvited inside the larger homes just to watch the "goings-on" at one of the huge feasts of the well-to-do. It was a form of entertainment. More likely, however, the Pharisees heard about the feast and attacked Jesus' disciples after the feast was over somewhere other than in Levi's house. No self-respecting Pharisee would ever defile himself by entering a "publican's" house. This was the main point of their attack upon Jesus and His disciples. To the Pharisees a publican was no better than a Gentile or a Samaritan. In those days to dine indicated not simply hospitality and friendship, but brotherhood. When a person was invited to dine and did so, people

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assumed that the host and guest were in agreement religiously, politically and socially (cf. II Jn. 9-11, etc.). Pharisees considered tax-collectors and sinners anathema (cf. Lk. 18:11; Mt. 18:17). Thus the Pharisees assumed Jesus was condoning sin and had defiled Himself by such intimate association with Levi. Jesus ate with a publican—Jesus had joined in brotherhood with a publican. Rabbis only associated with righteous people. To the Pharisees it was not a question of the needs of the publican to know the truth and be brought to repentance; their highest priority was themselves—the keeping of themselves *traditionally* pure by not associating with sinners. There were no such instructions in the Law of Moses. To bring a sinner to a knowledge of God's revealed will so that sinner will repent, is the highest form of love—and love is the fulfillment of the law.

The Pharisees murmured. The Greek word is *egonguzon* which means to "grumble, mumble, or murmur indignantly in a low tone." It is onomatopoetic; i.e., when the word is pronounced it sounds like the thing it is describing. It is like the English word *gong*. Jesus' answer is a masterpiece. It is subtle enough not to enrage while at the same time it contains enough sarcasm that it cannot be shrugged off without having felt the sting of rebuke. Pharisees considered themselves learned teachers of the Law and publicans as unlearned heathen. Pharisees and rabbis looked upon the Law as medicine for the soul and themselves as blameless before the Law; therefore, in need of no repentance. Publicans were, to Pharisees, spiritually ill—in fact, terminally ill. Jesus said, Those who are well do not need a doctor; those who are ill do! Where else would you expect to find a physician than among the ill? Those who do not believe themselves to be ill will not seek a physician. Jesus came to save or "heal" those who recognize they are ill and need His healing. Publicans know they are sinners and want help (Lk. 18:13; 7:29); Pharisees do not acknowledge they are sinners (although they are) and do not want help (Lk. 18:11-12; 7:30; Jn. 9:39-41). That is why Jesus ate with publicans and sinners! If we are to bring people to Jesus for salvation, we must find those who will acknowledge they are sinners. Those who think they can be saved by themselves or someone other than Jesus are like the Pharisees. There is only one way to find sinners—befriend them, associate with them, and introduce them to Jesus. Befriending sinners does not mean we condone their sin. Eating with sinners and associating with them in certain situations does not mean we will be defiled. The apostle Paul knew Christians would be forced in certain situations of everyday life to associate with sinners (I Cor. 5:9-10), otherwise Christians would have to leave this world altogether. Thousands of sinners want to know Jesus. If Christians withdraw into little monastic clubs and mingle only with one another, how shall these thousands ever be introduced to Jesus?

5:33-39 From Self-Righteousness: A monastic attitude tends to produce self-righteousness. Self-righteousness feeds on legalism. This is the point of the next encounter between Jesus and the Pharisees. And it is all connected to the graciousness of Jesus toward Levi as contrasted with the self-righteous bigotry of the Pharisees toward publicans. This is not really a renunciation of the law of God; it is a disavowal of legalism and Pharisaic traditions. Jesus never renounced the Law; He came not to destroy it but to fulfill it.

Both Matthew and Mark indicate that John the Baptist's disciples joined the Pharisees in carping at Jesus in this instance. John the Baptist was probably already in prison by Herod's decree. These disciples of John were apparently part of the crowd of uninvited spectators at Levi's house or had been seduced by the Pharisees to join in attacking Jesus because of His innovative religious behavior. Had John been free he would not even have attended such an affair. He lived the life of an ascetic for the purpose of God, not to promote his own self-righteousness in the legalistic way of the Pharisees. The Pharisees, on the other hand, lived outwardly austere and ascetic to justify themselves in their legalism. The Pharisees fasted often and prayed often—publicly. They withdrew into a modified form of monasticism so they would appear to be righteous, unable to tolerate "sinners."

Where did the idea of fasting originate? Its origin is spiritual, not dietary. The commandment of the Law was that the Hebrew worshiper should '*innah* (Hebrew for "afflict") the soul (Lev. 16:29-34; 23:26-32; Num. 29:7, etc.). There was really no specific instruction concerning abstinence in the original commandment. The Hebrew word *tzum* is translated "fast," but this word is *not* used in the first 6 books of the Old Testament. Apparently the instruction in the Pentateuch "to afflict the soul" came to be *interpreted* to mean abstain from food and other things. The instructors in the Pentateuch said the Hebrew was to "afflict his soul" only on the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur) which occurred once a year in October. The Pharisees fasted *twice each week*, on Mondays and Thursdays, as well as on other special occasions. The Pharisees made a point to do their "fasting" publicly going to great lengths to exhibit penitence. They put dust and ashes on their heads; they wore sackcloth next to their skin; they allowed their hair and beards to go unkempt; Jesus says in the Sermon on the Mount (Mt. 6:16) they disfigured their faces (Gr. *aphanizousin*) with gloom (Gr. *skuthropos*, "sadness, sullenness, moroseness"); and, of course, they abstained from food. Jesus' answer is not intended to preclude fasting altogether. Jesus fasted (Mt. 4:2). Jesus also said, "When you fast. . ." (Mt. 6:17), indicating there would be times when a Christian might wish to fast. Fasting (or, afflicting the soul) might be in order in times of spiritual depression,

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penitence or mourning. But it should be a spontaneous expression, not faked or pretended. And it cannot be legalistically and arbitrarily regulated by human traditions. These are the two main points of Jesus' answer. There is a time for fasting and there is a time for feasting; a wedding is a place to feast, not fast! The Messiah had come—it was a time to rejoice and come to God's feast (as the O.T. Prophets predicted, Isa. 25:6ff; 55:1ff; 61:1ff). John the Baptist himself had confirmed that Jesus was The Bridegroom. The "children of the bridechamber" certainly should not fast or mourn while the Bridegroom was with them. When the Bridegroom was slain would be the time for mourning; and that would come soon enough. But even that mourning would last only a short time for the Bridegroom would be raised from the dead and then joy would return to the disciples.

But the Pharisees refused to acknowledge that the Messiah had come. They refused to accept the announcement that God's promises of salvation by grace were present in Jesus. They preferred to continue seeking justification through their legalistic traditions. This is the point of the parables Jesus uses here. Obviously, the new garment and the new wine is the Christian revelation of salvation by grace and the old garment and old wineskins represent the old system to which the Jews were clinging for salvation; the Law of Moses, especially as it was traditionally interpreted and practiced for the purposes of self-justification. The promise of God for salvation was never intended to be limited in its appropriation to a set of rules and traditions. God's salvation has always been by grace, through faith (Rom. 5:2). The promise, made to Abraham when he was a Gentile, was to be appropriated through faith, and the Law which came 430 years later did not annul the promise or the means of appropriation. The Law was *not* against salvation by grace through faith. In fact, the Law was given to intensify man's realization that his only hope of salvation was by grace through faith. This is more precisely taught in Romans, chapters 3 through 8, and Galatians, chapters 3 through 5. It was *not* the Law itself that condemned man. Man was condemned by his perversion of the Law. Man took God's Law and arrogantly declared that he needed no grace from God, no faith in God, for he could, by adding his own interpretations and traditions to it, keep it in such an absolute and perfect way, God would owe him salvation. Man perverted the Law into a system of self-justification. His faith was in himself and his system—not in the Lawgiver, God.

Jesus came to fulfill the old system; He did not come to patch it up. To make the "new" a patch on the "old" would never work. Cloth in Jesus' day was not "sanforized." A patch of new cloth on old, when washed, would shrink and tear itself away from the old. New, unfermented

wine put in old, brittle and dried out wineskins, would form gases as it fermented and would soon burst the old skins. The proper thing to do is put new wine in new skins; when the new wine forms gases, the new skins stretch to meet the situation.

The new era of grace ushered in by Christ and His fulfillment of the old cannot be contained in the forms of the old Law and especially in the traditions of the Pharisees. Systems of Law and Tradition must, by their very nature, be constructed to fit times and cultures. Salvation by grace through faith fits all times and cultures. The Christian dispensation of God's grace calls for new and expanding ways to express itself. It must be able to transcend human cultures. It must divorce the spirit of man from its tendency to cling to the seen and direct it to the unseen. It must be able to strip the spirit of man of its tendency to arrogance and self-justification through a system and direct it to trust the absolute faithfulness of a Person. Man must be freed from the penalty of guilt in failing to perfectly obey the Law of God and his own perversions of that Law, so he can enter a covenant relationship with the God of grace by faith. That is what Jesus accomplished for man! That is why Christianity is not simply a "patch-up-job" on legalism; that is why Christianity cannot be restricted into some humanly legalistic "wineskin." Once a man believes in Christ, accepts His new covenant terms and is immersed in water, he is justified by the grace of God and he is forgiven all penalties and is free to grow in his expression of faith and love toward God as he allows himself to be motivated and guided by the Spirit of God through the New Covenant scriptures. Such a person is born again—a citizen of the kingdom of God. Never again does he need to seek to justify himself before God; never again can anyone else bind him to a system of legalism. Only the individual through distrust in God and His word, enslaves himself again to legalism.

Now this is the point of Jesus' last illustration here (Lk. 5:39). Jesus ends this discussion of conversion on a sad note. It will be very difficult for most men to *give up* the old way of self-justification and accept the new justification by grace through faith. Pride, the mother of all sins, is not easy to surrender. Pharisees (those of Jesus' day and those of all ages) satisfy themselves with "old wine" (self-righteousness through human legalism). The old is pleasant, so why even try the new? Human legalism is a form of idolatry. The Pharisees made *void* the word of God by their traditions and legalism and thus these became their god. The man who makes his own god can manipulate it. Human legalism can be manipulated to serve man's pride and other fleshly lusts. It is not easy to surrender in faith to the Personal God who *cannot* be manipulated. Jesus found it easier to convert Levi, who had probably not been too concerned with self-justification, than to convert the Pharisees

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whose self-righteousness closed their hearts to the grace of Christ. As one man has said, "How often does the good become the enemy of the best!" The idea of self-justification is intoxicating and exhilarating to the proud heart of man.

Keeping the commandments of Christ because we believe, trust and love Him is not legalism. Legalism is an attitude, not an action. Legalism is the proud heart of man thinking he can keep the law of God perfectly and not incur guilt and so earn his salvation by self-righteousness. Legalism does not depend upon the imputed righteousness of Christ but upon self-attained merit. Trying to obey the commandments of Christ because one believes and accepts His salvation as a gift is not legalism, but love.

STUDY STIMULATORS:

1. How would you characterize the "lake of Gennesaret"? What part did it have to play in Jesus' ministry?
2. What do you think of Jesus selecting fishermen to become apostles? How do men usually go about choosing their leaders (cf. I Sam. 8:5, 19, 20; 9:1-2)?
3. Did Jesus expect these fishermen to follow Him on some immediate, emotional whim? Does Jesus ever expect anyone to follow Him on that basis? How do you know?
4. Why was the miracle of the great catch of fish so impressive to Peter?
5. Describe the social circumstances of having "leprosy" in Jesus' day.
6. What was "leprosy"? What religious function did it have?
7. What did Jesus signify when He cleansed this leper?
8. What is a Pharisee? Where did they come from? Why were they following Jesus?
9. What was "paralysis" according to Dr. Luke? Why did they let the paralyzed man down through the roof into the house where Jesus was?
10. Why did Jesus *first* tell the paralyzed man his sins were forgiven?
11. What did the Pharisees say about Jesus forgiving the man's sins?
12. How did Jesus prove He could forgive the man's sins?
13. Who was Levi and what did he do for a living?
14. Why would Jesus call Levi to be an apostle?
15. How did Levi introduce Jesus to his friends?
16. Why did Jesus eat with "publicans and sinners"?
17. Why did the Pharisees and John's disciples attack Jesus for not fasting?
18. What is "fasting"? When should Christians fast?
19. What did Jesus mean by saying, "You cannot put new patches on old cloth . . ." and "You cannot put new wine into old wineskins"?
20. Why do men not desire the new "wine" after having drunk the "old"?
21. What is legalism? What is it *not*?

Chapter Six (6:1-49)

THE SON OF MAN EXPLAINING THE NATURE OF HIS KINGDOM

IDEAS TO INVESTIGATE:

1. What is unlawful about plucking a few ears of grain on the sabbath (6:1-2)?
2. Why would the Pharisees get so enraged at Jesus for healing a man on the sabbath (6:11)?
3. Is being poor a prerequisite to citizenship in God's kingdom (6:20)?
4. Are Christians literally to turn the other cheek every time they are assaulted on the one (6:29)?
5. If we are not to judge one another, how can churches take it upon themselves to "excommunicate" certain members (6:37)?
6. Are there certain people intrinsically "good" and others intrinsically "evil" (6:43-45)?
7. Does the mouth of man always speak what is in the heart, or is a man able to hide what is in his heart (6:45)?

SECTION 1

Mercy (6:1-11)

On a sabbath, while he was going through the grainfields, his **6** disciples plucked and ate some heads of grain, rubbing them in their hands. **2**But some of the Pharisees said, "Why are you doing what is not lawful to do on the sabbath?" **3**And Jesus answered, "Have you not read what David did when he was hungry, he and those who were with him: **4**how he entered the house of God, and took and ate the bread of the Presence, which it is not lawful for any but the priests to eat, and also gave it to those with him?" **5**And he said to them, "The Son of man is lord of the sabbath."

6 On another sabbath, when he entered the synagogue and taught, a man was there whose right hand was withered. **7**And the scribes and the Pharisees watched him, to see whether he would heal on the sabbath, so that they might find an accusation against him. **8**But he knew their thoughts, and he said to the man who had the withered hand, "Come and stand here," And he rose and stood there. **9**And Jesus said to them, "I ask you, is it lawful on the sabbath

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to do good or to do harm, to save life or to destroy it?" ¹⁰ And he looked around on them all, and said to him, "Stretch out your hand." And he did so, and his hand was restored. ¹¹ But they were filled with fury and discussed with one another what they might do to Jesus.

6:1-5 The Perfection of the Law: Actually the controversy over Sabbath traditions and Jesus' approach to them came to a head just before this incident. Jesus had gone to Jerusalem to Passover, just prior to this. The student should read chapter 5 of John's Gospel for that confrontation. Apparently Luke is recording an incident in a grain field as Jesus was returning to Galilee with His disciples. Perhaps the Pharisees were travelling along—or they may have been local residents.

The Sabbath was the most unique aspect of Judaism. Practically all other religions (even pagan) had sacrifices, priests and temples, but only Judaism made one day out of each week so emphatically significant in religion. First century Judaism had literally hundreds and hundreds of minute traditions concerning Sabbath observance. The law concerning the Sabbath is really quite simple (Ex. 20:8-11); no work is permitted on that day. Exodus 34:21 specifies that no harvesting is allowed on the Sabbath. But the Israelite traveler going into his neighbor's standing grain was permitted to pluck grain by hand and eat as much as he wished (Deut. 23:24-25). Such action was not considered "harvesting." God would not contradict Himself. As Fowler points out (*Matthew, Vol. II*, College Press), the Pharisees presumed to be able to state God's will more clearly with their myriads of traditions than He was able to state it Himself. The Sabbath law was not complicated. God intended the Sabbath to be a day of rest and worship. The Pharisees had legislated practically every movement of the human body on the Sabbath day. This made void the word of God and defeated God's purpose for the Sabbath. No man could have rested or worshiped under such conditions.

The disciples did not violate the law of Moses: (a) Jesus did not rebuke the disciples—had they broken God's law He would have chastened them; (b) actually, the Mosaic law permits plucking grain (Deut. 23:24-25) without distinction as to the day; (c) Jesus pointed out that mercy for hungry human beings would not be a violation of the law, even if a specific law were contravened. Jesus referred to an illustrious case in their own history. God did not strike David dead when he entered the Tabernacle and took "show-bread" (the law specifically stated only priests were to eat this bread, Lev. 24:9) and fed his starving army (I Sam. 21:1-6). Human need takes precedence over any ritual—even over a specific law of God. How can that be? Because the very spirit and essence of the law of God for mankind is to supply the highest good for the

individual. God's highest good to man is mercy. Man's highest good to a fellow-man is mercy. Whatever is *truly* merciful is the fulfillment of the law (cf. Rom. 13:8-10; I Jn. 4:20-21). Jesus proved that with God, human need comes even before divinely sanctioned ceremonies! If this be true, how much more did hungry disciples come before the *human traditions* of the Pharisees? Christians must guard against their opinions or traditions coming before mercy and human need lest they be found standing with the Pharisees of old.

With masterful finesse and subtlety Jesus stakes out His claim to deity here. He declares the Son of Man controls the Sabbath instead of being controlled by it. And who has just given an authoritative statement on Sabbath priorities—He has! Matthew mentions that He gave them an even stronger clue about Himself when He reminded them that on the Sabbath the priests in the *temple* profane the Sabbath (by circumcising infants, etc.), and are guiltless; and *One greater* than the temple was in their midst! (Mt. 12:1-8). Mark adds this interesting statement of Jesus, “The sabbath was made for man, not man for the sabbath,” (Mk. 2:27). The sabbath does not precede human need.

6:6-11 The Protection of Life: God intended man to use the sabbath to sustain life, both physical and spiritual. He did *not* intend man to be destroyed by the sabbath. To worship God and glorify His name by ministering to the needs of others is life-sustaining. It sustains the physical life of others (and perhaps even their spiritual life), while enriching and edifying the spiritual life of the one ministering.

On another sabbath, in Galilee, Jesus went to a synagogue crowded with worshipers. As He began to teach, He noticed a man present who had a “withered” right hand. Dr. Luke notes it was the *right* hand. This would incapacitate the man from earning a living. If Jesus were to heal the man He would be “saving the man’s life.” The scribes and Pharisees glued their eyes on Jesus to see if He would heal on the Sabbath. The Greek word translated “watched” is *pareterounto*, a compound word—*para* means, *near* and *tero* means, *keep watch or guard*.

The Pharisees were plotting to put Jesus on the spot in this crowded place by asking Him, “Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath?” Jesus anticipated their plot and, calling the man with the withered hand to the front of the auditorium, said, “I ask you, Is it lawful on the sabbath to do good or to harm, to save life or to destroy it?” Matthew reports Jesus reminded the audience that the Pharisees and their traditions were more considerate of an animal than of a man since their tradition permitted them to rescue one of their sheep on the sabbath if it had fallen into a pit. It is at this moment, as Mark notes, Jesus looked around at these

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hypocrites with *anger* (Gr. *orges*). The one time we are told Jesus was *angry* it is in connection with hypocrisy—a sin of the spirit, not one of fleshly passion. Of course, Christ never approves of any sin, but it does appear that He is more disturbed over the unique obtuseness of the sins of pride and self-righteous hypocrisy than those of fleshly indulgence; probably because of the almost total lack of compassion in the self-righteous hypocrite.

Jesus then demonstrated the divine answer to His question by healing the man's withered hand. The Greek word translated *restored* is *apekatestathe*. It is a word commonly used in the everyday language of the stone-mason to explain that when a workman accidentally broke a stone, he made good the breakage by substituting a new stone in place of the broken one. Matthew (12:13) says the man's withered hand was "restored, whole like the other." Jesus gave the man back his livelihood. But the Pharisees were filled with *fury*. And here the Greek word is *anoias* which literally means, "out of their minds." Their rage was senseless, mindless, blind fury. They were so bereft of reason in their passionate hatred of Jesus at this moment they rushed out and teamed up with the Herodians (Mk. 3:6), some of their bitterest political enemies, how they might do away with Jesus. It is rather awesome and frightening how pride, self-righteousness and hypocrisy will, in order to justify itself, blind itself to compassion and goodness in mindless rage. Pride is a monster, whipped into a devouring passion by the devil himself (Gen. 3:4-5).

SECTION 2

Ministering (6:12-19)

12 In these days he went out to the mountain to pray; and all night he continued in prayer to God. ¹³ And when it was day, he called his disciples, and chose from them twelve, whom he named apostles; ¹⁴ Simon, whom he named Peter, and Andrew his brother, and James and John, and Philip, and Bartholomew, ¹⁵ and Matthew, and Thomas, and James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon who was called the Zealot, ¹⁶ and Judas the son of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor.

17 And he came down with them and stood on a level place, with a great crowd of his disciples and a great multitude of people from all Judea and Jerusalem and the seacoast of Tyre and Sidon, who

came to hear him and to be healed of their diseases;¹⁸ and those who were troubled with unclean spirits were cured.¹⁹ And all the crowd sought to touch him, for power came forth from him and healed them all.

6:12-16 Helpers called: Jesus reached a critical point in His earthly ministry. His popularity was at its peak. Multitudes pressed upon Him wherever He went. The number of disciples (Gr. *mathetas*, "learners") had increased. He was not physically able to perform all the ministering that needed to be done. He was ready to commission a small group to become special helpers for His present ministry and train them for a world-encompassing ministry of their own when He would leave their physical presence to return to Heaven. Mark's parallel passage states that Jesus chose the twelve for three reasons: (a) "to be with him"—He needed their companionship and they needed His training; (b) "to be sent out to preach"—His message needed wider verbalization than He alone could give it; (c) "and have authority to cast out demons"—evidence that they were spokesmen for God. Mark says Jesus "made" the twelve (Gr. *epoiesen*); Luke says He "chose" from all the disciples, twelve. The Greek word *eklexamenos* is translated "chose" and is the word from which we get the English word *eclectic*.

This was such a momentous decision, one which would affect all men for all time and eternity, Jesus went aside from the multitudes and prayed all night before His selection of the twelve men. The following morning He chose the men and gave them the title, "apostle" (Gr. *apostello*) which means "one sent forth." The Greek word is similar to the Latin word *missio* from which we get the English word, "missionary."

Evaluated by the world's standards, these men would never have been selected for such a crucial and demanding task. None of them possessed any unique "charisma" for leadership, not one of them had any "formal" training or family background to recommend them as potential influences on society or history. Four of them at least were common laborers in the fishing industry; one of them was a hated tax-collector; another was a right-wing political terrorist (Simon the Zealot). None were, as far as the record goes, of the "intelligentsia," or of the ruling classes. But then it was the *message* these men delivered, not the men themselves, which had such a history-changing impact upon the world. Of course, they were men of character (all but one, Judas Iscariot) or they would not have been faithful and courageous messengers. Still, when all is said and done, it is the gospel which saves, not the gospel messenger. Perhaps the following chart will help the student combine in one glance the different listings of the apostles made in the New Testament:

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JESUS CHOSE TWELVE DISCIPLES, AND MADE THEM APOSTLES

* 1. Simon Peter (Bar-Jonah)	2. Andrew, Peter's brother	3. James, John's brother	4. John, (Bar-Zebedee)	5. Philip	6. Nathanael (Bar-Tholomew or Bar-Tolmai)	7. Thomas Didymus ("Twin")	8. Matthew, Levi, (Bar-Alphaeus)	9. James (Bar-Alphaeus—not above)	10. Judas Thaddaeus, of James	11. Simon, Cananean, Zealot	12. Judas Iscariot (Bar-Simon)
** Mt. 10:2-4	Mk. 3:13-19				Lk. 6:12-16					Acts 1:13	
Simon Peter	Simon Peter				Simon Peter	Peter					
Andrew his brother	James of Zebedee				Andrew his bro.	John					
James of Zebedee	John his bro.				James	James					
John his bro.	Andrew				John		Andrew				
Philip	Philip				Philip	Philip					
Bartholomew	Bartholomew				Bartholomew	Thomas					
Thomas	Matthew				Matthew	Bartholomew					
Matthew, publican	Thomas				Thomas	Matthew					
James of Alphaeus	James of Alph.				James of Alph.	James of Alph.					
Thaddaeus	Thaddaeus				Simon Zealot	Simon Zealot					
Simon Cananaean	Simon Can.				Judas of James	Judas of James					
Judas Iscariot	Judas Iscariot				Judas Iscariot						

* Follows Matthew's list

** As they are specifically listed by the writers of the New Testament.

Jesus must have seen in each of these men some qualities which would have been especially useful in His kingdom. Eleven of them were helpful in fulfilling the nature of the Kingdom of God by ministering the gospel to the world. One of them was a betrayer, Judas Iscariot. Jesus knew Judas' heart before the deed was committed (Jn. 6:70). Then why was he chosen? We like the answer of Hobbs, "Certainly it was not for the express purpose of betrayal. God does not deal with men as puppets. All that we can say is that Jesus offered him his chance, and he did not take it. It will forever remain a mystery. But it serves as a warning to all."

6:17-19 Healing certified: What appears to be a discrepancy when one attempts to harmonize Matthew and Mark with Luke at this juncture is not a discrepancy at all. Close examination of the three accounts shows the following order: (a) Jesus aware of the great crowds following Him after healing the man with the withered hand, withdrew to the sea of Galilee (Mt. 12:15; Mk. 3:7); (b) a great multitude from all over the land of Palestine followed Him and His disciples to the sea, many in that area having been healed (Mt. 4:24-25; Mk. 3:7-12), and Jesus ordered them not to make His presence known; (c) Matthew quotes an O.T. prophecy (Isa. 42:1ff) to show that Jesus is fulfilling the Messianic character of the kingdom—ministry of spiritual healing; (d) Jesus withdraws from the multitudes by the sea and goes up on a mountain where he prays all night (Mt. 5:1; Mk. 3:13; Lk. 6:12-13); (e) Jesus chooses twelve disciples and names the apostles (Mt. 10:2-4; Mk. 3:14-19; Lk. 6:13-16); (f) Jesus comes down from the mountain to a "level place" and a great multitude from all over Palestine is once again thronging after Him to be healed and He healed them all (Lk. 6:17-20). And this is where we take up our comments on the Gospel of Luke again. Matthew skips around chronologically in his record because his purpose was to record the life of Jesus by subject matter, not by chronological order. This is done frequently by modern biographers without the issue of inaccuracy ever being raised. Why should it be raised against Matthew when his accuracy is verified by the three other biographers of Jesus?

There may have been a number of Gentiles in the crowds who came to "hear" and "be healed" since people were there from the "seacoast of Tyre and Sidon." The interesting notation of Luke is that they came to "hear," as well as be healed. We noted above that Matthew used Isaiah's prophecy of the Lord's "Servant" to characterize the Messiah's ministry as one of spiritual healing. We have already dealt with the relationship of physical healing to the spiritual goal of Jesus' ministry in our comments on Luke 4:32-44. It is interesting to note in Isaiah's prophecy the emphasis on the Messiah's ministry to "gentiles" since some of the people here are from Tyre and Sidon. Jesus' earthly ministry was primarily to the Jewish people, calling them to their messianic destiny (Mt. 15:24) but whenever a Gentile came to Him in faith He was pleased, and honored their faith with grace and mercy. This multitude came to hear—Jesus lifted up His eyes and began to preach. And what a sermon it was! It has never been duplicated for simplicity and profundity. It is absolutely matchless! It marks clearly, concisely and conclusively that the nature of the Son of Man's kingdom is a society of godliness and moral character lived out in the lives of individuals.

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SECTION 3

Moral (6:20-26)

20 And he lifted up his eyes on his disciples, and said:

"Blessed are you poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.

21 "Blessed are you that hunger now, for you shall be satisfied.

"Blessed are you that weep now, for you shall laugh.

22 "Blessed are you when men hate you, and when they exclude you and revile you, and cast out your name as evil, on account of the Son of man! 23 Rejoice in that day, and leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in heaven; for so their fathers did to the prophets.

24 "But woe to you that are rich, for you have received your consolation.

25 "Woe to you that are full now, for you shall hunger.

"Woe to you that laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep.

26 "Woe to you, when all men speak well of you, for so their fathers did to the false prophets.

6:20-23 Weal: "Weal" means blessing. Jesus pronounced certain blessings on citizens of His messianic kingdom. But before we deal with the beatitudes of this sermon we must briefly look at reasons for assuming this is the *same* sermon recorded in Matthew, chapters 5, 6 and 7, called "The Sermon on the Mount." The student will immediately recognize there are both similarities and differences in the two records. Note the following:

- a. They begin and end the same way following the same general order in the rest of the sermon.
- b. It is altogether feasible that they are chronologically in the same time slot (see comments above on 6:17-19).
- c. Matthew, writing for Jews, would naturally stress certain elements of the Mosaic law in relation to the nature of the messianic kingdom, but such matters would be of little interest to Luke's gentile patron, Theophilus, so he omits this.
- d. It is possible that Matthew, gifted at recording data, and an eyewitness to the Sermon, made a verbatim account while Luke, depending on eyewitnesses years after the fact (see Introduction) got only a summarization.
- e. While Matthew says Jesus went up on a mountain and indicates the Sermon was delivered there, Luke says He came down to a level place and preached it. The "level place" of Luke could be some plateau or natural amphitheater part of the way down the mountain.

- f. If it be urged that Matthew places the Sermon earlier in time, we reply it is evident that Matthew is not so much concerned with chronology as with topical arrangement. He has probably done so with this Sermon, placing it in an early part of his document as an example of Jesus' matchless preaching and as the keynote sermon of His messianic ministry. Luke has the chronological arrangement.

The four beatitudes summarize what a citizen of the kingdom of Christ *is*. They deal with character and being, because Christianity is fundamentally *being* before it is *doing*. What a man *is* must precede what he *does* in order to please God. That which motivates and controls a man determines whether what a man does is acceptable to God or not. Fasting, praying and giving alms to the poor are good in the eyes of God only if they are motivated from godly purpose.

- a. Blessed are you poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. Both Jew and Gentile considered wealth as a sign of God's approval. Jesus and the apostles taught differently. Poverty within itself is no virtue just as wealth is not necessarily a vice. But poverty may prove to be a blessing in that it may strip a man of self-reliance and make him totally dependent upon God. Matthew says, "poor in spirit," but Matthew and Luke are ultimately picturing the same kind of moral character.
- b. Blessed are you that hunger now, for you shall be satisfied. Those who are poor, of both this world's goods and of spirit, will be satisfied if they rely on God. Matthew puts it, "hungering and thirsting after righteousness." Those simply hungering for more material things will never be satisfied! Hunger or poverty without faith may lead to stealing (cf. Prov. 30:9). But any kind of hunger that creates a need for God will be satisfied, if not here, in heaven.
- c. Blessed are you that weep now, for you shall laugh. The same focus applies here too, since there is a sorrow that leads unto death (II Cor. 7:10). Those who are poor, hungry and in sorrow, if they believe and do not faint, shall have power to laugh (rejoice) even in the midst of oppressive circumstances because of their hope that in heaven circumstances will be different! Hope for a better life in perfect circumstances after this life is over is the unique heritage of the Christian. It has a motivating power for godliness in this life (I Jn. 3:1-3).
- d. Blessed are you when men hate you . . . on account of the Son of man! The poor are usually oppressed simply because they are poor and powerless. But Jesus offers oppression for His sake as a blessing! There is not much blessedness in being oppressed for any other

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reason. The Greek word *aphorisosin* is translated "exclude" and is from two Greek words, *apo*, meaning "from" and *horizo*, meaning "to determine" (the latter word in English is *horizon*) thus the compound word means, "to mark off by boundaries." Poor followers of Christ may be cut off from social fellowship, civil rights and privileges others may enjoy. It is possible that affluent Christians might even be guilty of this toward poor Christians (cf. I Tim. 6:17-19; James 2:1-7). The poor are also slandered ("cast out your name as evil"). The Greek word *ekballo* ("cast out") was often used by Greek writers for hissing an actor off the stage. But where is the blessedness in being hated for the sake of Christ? Peter, the apostle, who suffered much for Christ's sake, tells us in his first epistle:

- (1) If any man suffer as a Christian, it proves he has ceased from sinning, so as to live, by the will of God, I Peter 4:1-11.
- (2) If any man suffer as a Christian he is blessed because he knows that God is not doing something strange, that if we share Christ's sufferings we will share His glory and that the spirit of glory and the power of God rests upon him because Christ was glorified by suffering for the will of the Father, I Peter 4:12-19.
- (3) If any man suffer as a Christian he is safe because it proves he has trusted his soul to a faithful Creator, who cares for him, I Peter 4:19—5:11.

Therefore, Jesus said, "if you are persecuted for My sake, *leap* for joy." Luke uses the Greek word *skirtesate* for "leap" and Matthew uses *agalliaasthe* for "exceeding glad" and both of these words describe the joyous leaping of a Greek athlete upon winning a victory.

It should be quite clear that we are dealing with principles and practices of living to which only a converted person might surrender. To accede that these ways are profitable and joyous would involve a revolution of one's values! They take the accepted standards of the world and turn them upside down and inside out! Barclay observes, "The people whom Jesus called happy the world would call wretched; the people Jesus called wretched the world would call happy. Just imagine anyone saying, 'Happy are the poor, and, Woe to the rich!' To talk like that is to put an end to the world's values altogether."

6:24-26 Woe: There is another side; what of those who reject citizenship in the Messiah's kingdom and its godly morality? What is their future? What shall be their reward?

- a. Woe to you that are rich. The Greek word *apechete* is translated "received." It was used constantly in the first century as a technical expression in drawing up a receipt. Jesus means to say that those who devote all their energies and talents to earning this world's riches, may get them, but that is all the "consolation" (Gr. *paraklesin*, "comfort") they shall have. Their wealth will be all the help, comfort and encouragement they shall get. When a man of the world gets the riches of the world he has pursued, God marks his account, "paid in full." If that is all they have, their future prospect is woe because this world's riches are transferrable to the next world only if used for the glory of God and the help of others in this world (cf. Lk. 16:1-9).
- b. Woe to you that are full now. Woe to those who are satisfied with the fulness of this present world. This world will perish but they will not. If they have only the perishable to satisfy them, they will hunger in the next. If it is not truth, goodness, purity, peace, love and God that satisfies them here, they will hunger in the next world.
- c. Woe to you that laugh now. Applebury says, "The laughter of the wicked will become the cries of the lost." Although the New Testament does not prohibit Christian fun and laughter, neither does it condone frivolity and foolishness—much less the sick and foul humor of the centuries at which most of mankind has laughed. The wealthy and powerful who devote themselves to enjoyment of this world and give not the slightest consideration or compassion to the poor and oppressed are not fit for Christ's kingdom. They may laugh now, but when His kingdom is consummated and time is changed into eternity, they will have nothing but woe.
- d. Woe to you, when all men speak well of you. Of course, Christians are to strive for a good reputation among their contemporaries, (Rom. 12:17; I Tim. 3:2, etc.). What Jesus is talking about here is false flattery. *True* prophets of old were slandered because they told the truth while *false* prophets were flattered and praised by those who sought their favor. The Christian will get no flattery or testimonials from those who hate Christ and seek to ruin His church unless the Christian agrees to compromise his integrity and faithfulness.

The New Testament plainly states that the joy of heaven will more than compensate for the trouble of this earth. In fact, it says Christians will receive a glory beyond *all* comparison (II Cor. 4:16-18). The question is: who will believe that promise and so live in this earth as to prepare himself for the next?

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SECTION 4

Magnanimous (6:27-45)

27 "But I say to you that hear, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, ²⁸bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. ²⁹To him who strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also; and from him who takes away your coat do not withhold even your shirt. ³⁰Give to every one who begs from you; and of him who takes away your goods do not ask them again. ³¹And as you wish that men would do to you, do so to them.

32 "If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. ³³And if you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. ³⁴And if you lend to those from whom you hope to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, to receive as much again. ³⁵But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High; for he is kind to the ungrateful and the selfish. ³⁶Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful.

37 "Judge not, and you will not be judged; condemn not, and you will not be condemned; forgive, and you will be forgiven; ³⁸give, and it will be given to you; good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For the measure you give will be the measure you get back."

39 He also told them a parable: "Can a blind man lead a blind man? Will they not both fall into a pit? ⁴⁰A disciple is not above his teacher, but every one when he is fully taught will be like his teacher. ⁴¹Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? ⁴²Or how can you say to your brother, 'Brother, let me take out the speck that is in your eye,' when you yourself do not see the log that is in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take out the speck that is in your brother's eye.

43 "For no good tree bears bad fruit, nor again does a bad tree bear good fruit; ⁴⁴for each tree is known by its own fruit. For figs are not gathered from thorns, nor are grapes picked from a bramble bush. ⁴⁵The good man out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil man out of his evil treasure produces evil; for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.

6:27-36 Toward the Hateful: Magnanimous means, noble, liberal and self-sacrificing. And Jesus characterizes the citizens of His kingdom as magnanimous toward those who hate them. How may Christians be

expected to love those who persecute them and hate them and exploit them? Because God loves them! The Greek word for *love* here is *agape*. *Agape* is a love of the *will* and not necessarily of the emotions. We cannot have the same feelings toward those who hate us as toward our relatives and friends. That would be unnatural and really impossible. But we *can* decide that no matter how a man acts toward us we will always act toward him for his highest good. *Agape*-love is the kind of action that can be commanded (Jn. 15:12ff), because it is not dependent upon how we feel. It is something that we *must* do in spite of how we feel. A man's mind and will *can* overrule his feelings.

Jesus is calling for more than stoicism here. The Christian is more than merely passive toward his enemies and those who may exploit him. The citizen of Christ's kingdom "goes the second mile" (cf. Mt. 5:39-41). Jesus is illustrating the fundamental principle of non-retaliation for personal injury and insult. Christians are not by nature, vengeful, spiteful nor retaliatory. They leave ultimate justice up to the Lord (cf. Rom. 12:14-21). But "turning the other cheek" does not mean that we should be unconcerned about the defense of law and order and human rights. To turn the other cheek, or give up the coat does not mean that it does not matter at all about civil rights and civil justice. The devil is the author of anarchy; he has as his goal a society where evil rules. God has ordained human governments for the purpose of maintaining civil liberties and order. Human magistrates are God's ministers to execute His justice upon criminals (cf. Rom. 13:1-7). Human government is ordained to maintain an orderly execution of justice! Without law and order, man's first impulse when struck or robbed is to strike back or retaliate. A society where each man is a law unto himself, executing justice on a personal basis, would be anarchistic. The whole point of Jesus' instructions here is that the Christian is governed by a higher law than human government—he does not even need human government to keep him under control. The Christian goes beyond the law against retaliation. He not only does not retaliate—he shows love toward his enemies. Jesus never intended His statements here to be rigidly codified into some literal behavior. He did not offer His cheek to be struck a second time (Jn. 18:22-23); nor did Paul (Acts 23:3). It would hardly be the highest good to a criminal to allow him to strike a man until he killed him, or rob and extort without any restraint. Someone must call upon civil authorities to put a stop to such action—for the victim's sake, for society's sake and for the criminal's sake! But the Christian cannot take the law into his own hands—he must go the second mile if necessary.

"Give to everyone who begs of you . . ." is not a mandate to foster professional begging. Jesus is not encouraging Christians to help frauds,

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drunkards, the lazy, or professional beggars. The drunkard who begs money is not in need; neither is the man who is too lazy to work if he is able (cf. II Thess. 3:6-15). What Jesus is telling the Christian here is that he must not be self-centered, greedy and miserly. If *any* man is in *real* need, it is the nature of the Christian to help again, and again if he is able to do so. But the Christian must make evaluations and judgments because to give to a professional beggar who might otherwise earn a living would not be helpful. The Christian must "please his neighbor for his good, to edify him" (cf. Rom. 15:1-2). When we give we must not seek a return. Love gives for the sake of giving with no thought of return.

The primary motive for the Christian ethic is, of course, the love of God. We love, because He first loved us (I Jn. 4:7-19). But a secondary motive for the Christian to go "the second mile" is that he treats others as he would wish to be treated. The "Golden Rule," as Luke 6:31 is called, is uniquely positive. It is not like any other philosophy of ethics in all mankind. Barclay says it so well: "The Christian ethic is *positive*. It does not consist in *not doing* things but in *doing* them. Jesus gave us the Golden Rule which bids us do to others as we would have them do to us. That rule exists in many writers of many creeds in its *negative* form. Hillel, one of the great Jewish Rabbis, was asked by a man to teach him the whole law while he stood on one leg. He answered, 'What is hateful to thee, do not to another. That is the whole law and all else is explanation.' " The Stoics put it this way, "What you do not wish to be done to yourself, do not you do to any other." A citizen of the kingdom of God does not just not do bad things—he busies himself in doing good things.

The Christian is one who goes beyond the expected or the norm in doing good. There is a worldly standard of doing good. Those of the world do good to those who do good to them first; "even sinners love those who love them." If one does good to those who have done good to him, he is no different than the rest of the world. It is of interest that Luke used the Greek word *charis* which is translated "credit" in the RSV. It is as if Jesus said, "What special *grace* is in that kind of action?" It will do no good for the Christian to claim he is just as good as his neighbors; he must be better—he must go beyond his neighbor in doing good. The Macedonians gave "*beyond* their means, of their own free will" to the Judeans (II Cor. 8:3-4).

Jesus challenges His followers to go beyond the world's norm because He wants His followers to have the blessedness of being like God. The behavior of the "sinner" is too low for the Christian to aim—he should aim for the highest. God goes beyond the worldly norm; He actively loves and does good to those who hate Him. God sends His rain upon the just and the unjust alike (Mt. 5:44-45). God is kind to the ungrateful

and the selfish. If Christian children would imitate their Father (Eph. 5:1-2) this is how they will act.

In all this discussion about lending is Jesus forbidding the Christian to put his money in banks to earn interest or from borrowing money and paying interest? A fact often overlooked is that in ancient Israel commercial loans were practically unknown. Among the heathen it was a different thing. The Old Testament legislates against *usury* (Ex. 22:25; Lev. 25:36ff; Deut. 23:19ff). Nehemiah (5:3-10) condemned wealthy Jews for charging interest to their less fortunate brothers. The Israelites could charge interest to foreigners (Deut. 23:19-21). Wilbur Fields says in *Exodus*, College Press, pg. 494, "In modern times money is usually loaned for commercial purposes, to increase a man's capital, increase his business, or enhance his comfort. It is proper that a reasonable interest or payment be collected for this service. Thus Exodus 22:25 does not mean we should demand that our banks stop charging interest. Jesus himself approved the taking of interest from a bank (Mt. 25:27; Lk. 19:23). But this is quite a different thing from making gain out of a neighbor's need or being callous to the needs of a brother in the Lord. If a brother is in *need* and a personal loan may be given, there should be no interest charged by the brother offering the help." As a matter of fact, the whole point of Jesus here seems not to be in the area of "lending" but in "giving." Christ is telling his followers to *give* help to one another, expecting no return at all.

6:37-45 Toward the Heterodox: "Judge not, and you will not be judged . . ." Has Jesus forbidden all judgment here? Of course not! As a matter of fact, Jesus commanded judgment at least twice (Lk. 12:57; Jn. 7:24). The very fact that God has created us with the ability to choose compels us to make judgments or evaluations. We could never protect ourselves against wrong if we did not judge; we could never help others if we did not evaluate their needs. The apostle Paul told the Corinthian church it would have to judge and excommunicate an immoral member (I Cor. 5:1ff). He also told the brethren they should make righteous judgments between one another when disputes arose and not take their disputes to heathen judges (I Cor. 6:1ff). Jesus warns in this very Sermon (Mt. 7:6; 7:15-20) that the citizen of His Kingdom will have to judge who the "dogs and swine" are in order not to cast one's pearls and bread before them; the citizen will have to judge "fruit" of false and true prophets.

What Jesus is forbidding here is the hyper-critical attitude. He is telling us to be magnanimous toward those whose behavior, though not really sinful, may be different than ours. There must be liberty and charity among citizens of Christ's kingdom in the realm of opinion. Where there are no specific commandments or clear principles stated in the New Testament, Christian brethren must allow one another the

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freedom to choose and act as their consciences permit them to do so. The New Testament has a great deal to say about this (Romans 14:1—15:33; I Corinthians, chapters 8, 9 and 10; Galatians 5:1-26).

Jesus is advising us that we should not have a judgmental attitude. The less judging (especially of people) we do, the better off we shall be. The time will come when we shall be forced to form opinions about people, but we must be very careful not to form prejudicial opinions. We must not prejudge without sufficient evidence; we must not condemn as a sin something that is not a sin; we must not allow our opinions to be formed out of motives of envy, jealousy or our own guilty consciences. We must be very careful not to judge the motives of others for we do not know their hearts—only their actions. We must be sure our opinions of others are formed according to divine standards (the Bible) and not some worldly standards.

Jesus offers a series of mini-parables as cautions against hyper-active and hasty judgments:

- a. "... give and it will be given to you . . . for the measure you give will be the measure you get back." If you give censorious judgment that is what you will get back; if you give good without measure out of a pure motive, you will receive without measure from both God and man. Whatever a man sows, he eventually reaps (Gal. 6:7-10).
- b. "Can a blind man lead a blind man?" No! they will both fall into the pit. We all have blind areas about our own faults—thus we are not clear-sighted enough to really lead others to the light about themselves. It is hypocritical for us to criticize the blindnesses in others without admitting our own blindnesses. We are *all* still followers—Jesus is the Master (Teacher). Were we ever able to be as honest and wise as He, we might be critical of others—but until then, we must let Him lead us all!
- c. "... first take the log out of your own eye . . ." Jesus clearly infers that if we successfully remove the huge impairments which keep us from judging our own spiritual faults, then we might be prepared to help our brother judge his faults. It is interesting that Jesus sees the "log" in our eye and the "speck" in our brother's eye—we usually see it the other way! Again we are struck with the emphasis Jesus puts on man's tendency to be self-centered. Self-centered people cannot judge fairly or rightly!
- d. "... no good tree bears bad fruit . . ." A hyper-critical attitude betrays a fundamentally evil heart. ". . . for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks." That which comes from our mouths reveals what is in our hearts! If we mouth prejudicial judgment it betrays a heart harboring hate. We do not have to compromise truth to put to death slander, gossip, non-factual opinions. There are three other options:

- (1) keep silent about the person
- (2) offer an informal prayer for the person
- (3) utter some known good about the person

The nature of the Lord's kingdom is magnanimity. Because the Lord is that way, He wishes His subjects to be that way. He wishes it for them so they may have the blessedness of holiness and righteousness. If you will treat a man as he is, he will continue to be what he is. If you treat him as he ought to be and can be, then he will more readily become what he ought to be and can be! That is what this Sermon is about; that is how God treats us!

SECTION 5

Mainstay (6:46-49)

46 "Why do you call me 'Lord, Lord,' and not do what I tell you? 47 Every one who comes to me and hears my words and does them, I will show you what he is like: 48 he is like a man building a house, who dug deep, and laid the foundation upon rock; and when a flood arose, the stream broke against that house, and could not shake it, because it had been well built. 49 But he who hears and does not do them is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation; against which the stream broke, and immediately it fell, and the ruin of that house was great."

6:46-48 Rock: Jesus concludes this great Sermon with a claim for authority which must have startled His audience. It still startles men today! For it is exceedingly presumptuous if there is no evidence upon which to base the claim. He is claiming that a man's life will stand or fall according to whether he hears and does His teachings or not. He is elevating Himself as Lord over mankind. The Sermon on the Mount has as its authority, the deity of Jesus. Because Jesus is Lord, His words are the mainstay of life. The man who hears and does what Jesus teaches will not be ruined by the storms of life. Poverty, sickness, war, persecution and failing human relationships will not destroy the person who trusts Jesus Christ because he knows there is a perfect world to come and these storms are from God to build character and a desire for that other world. The man who hears and keeps the words of this Sermon is building the character and longings that will make him happy and fit for that next world.

6:49 Ruin: One man has said, "Storms will come. Most any shanty will stand in the sunshine. But what about the storm?" To build one's

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life in opposition to the teachings of this Sermon is to build on "sand." To trust in this world only is to trust in that which is doomed to perish. To live out of harmony with this Sermon is to develop a character of greed, selfishness, superficiality, vengefulness, and criticism. That does not bring happiness in this life nor fit one to live in the presence of God forever in the next. Trust Jesus! He knows the way to Life! Become a citizen of His kingdom! The careful student should study the comments of Harold Fowler, *Matthew, Vol. I*, College Press, pages 184-442, on this unique Sermon on the Mount.

STUDY STIMULATORS:

1. Jesus was challenged about His Sabbath actions before Luke 6—Where? Why?
2. Why were the Jews so emphatic about the Sabbath?
3. What does the O.T. law say about plucking grain? about working on the Sabbath?
4. What does Jewish tradition say about working on the Sabbath?
5. Why did Jesus bring up David's eating of the "showbread"?
6. What does Jesus teach in this about the nature of God's kingdom?
7. What relationship did Jesus claim toward the Sabbath for Himself?
8. What does the Sabbath have to do with saving life?
9. Name three reasons Jesus selected 12 special disciples to become apostles?
10. Why would these 12 disciples not fit modern prospectives for leadership?
11. Can you name the 12 apostles? 12 American sports celebrities? 12 TV stars?
12. Is the Sermon of Jesus in Luke 6:20-49 the same as the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5, 6, and 7?
13. What do you think about this Sermon—is it some kind of Christian law? Is it possible to live it? What is we fail?
14. Does Jesus really intend for us to jump with joy when we are persecuted for His sake? Why?
15. Does Jesus really intend for us to be pacifists and protest police work and war and when invaded by a foreign power to "turn the other cheek"?
16. What is the Christian's best attitude toward "judging"?
17. Does Jesus really offer the teachings of this Sermon as answers to life's problems?

Chapter Seven (7:1-50)

THE SON OF MAN VISITING MEN

IDEAS TO INVESTIGATE:

1. Why would a centurion care so much about a slave (7:1-2)?
2. What was behind the unusual conduct of the centurion toward Jesus (7:3-10)?
3. Why were the people seized with fear when Jesus brought the widow's son back from the dead (7:16)?
4. Since John the Baptist had already called Jesus "the Lamb of God" why is he now asking Jesus if He "is the one" (7:18-23)?
5. How is John the Baptist "more" than a prophet (7:26)?
6. What is the meaning of "wisdom is justified by all her children" (7:35)?
7. Why was this woman in this Pharisee's house washing Jesus' feet with her tears (7:36-50)?

SECTION 1

The Sick (7:1-10)

After he had ended all his sayings in the hearing of the people ⁷ he entered Capernaum. ²Now a centurion had a slave who was dear to him, who was sick and at the point of death. ³When he heard of Jesus, he sent to him elders of the Jews, asking him to come and heal his slave. ⁴And when they came to Jesus, they besought him earnestly, saying, "He is worthy to have you do this for him, ⁵for he loves our nation, and he built us our synagogue." ⁶And Jesus went with them. When he was not far from the house, the centurion sent friends to him, saying to him, "Lord, do not trouble yourself, for I am not worthy to have you come under my roof; ⁷therefore I did not presume to come to you. But say the word, and let my servant be healed. ⁸For I am a man set under authority, with soldiers under me: and I say to one, 'Go,' and he goes; and to another, 'Come,' and he comes; and to my slave, 'Do this,' and he does it." ⁹When Jesus heard this he marveled at him, and turned and said to the multitude that followed him, "I tell you, not even in Israel have I found such

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faith.”¹⁰ And when those who had been sent returned to the house, they found the slave well.

7:1-5 A Benevolent Conqueror: After the Sermon on the Mount, somewhere in Galilee, Jesus entered the city of Capernaum on the shore of the Sea of Galilee. A Roman army commander (a centurion, commanding 100 men) lived there and he had a servant who was “dear” to him; the Greek word is *entimos* and literally means, “very valuable.” Polybius, an ancient historian, says that the best man in the army held the position of centurion. Every centurion mentioned in the New Testament appears to be a “good” man (cf. Mt. 27:54ff; Lk. 23:47ff; Acts 10:1ff; 27:43; etc.). Most Romans were contemptuous of those they conquered and exploited the vanquished unmercifully. But this centurion was extraordinarily upstanding and good.

He had a slave (Gr. *doulos*) who was “at the point of death” (Gr. lit. reads, *emellen teleutan*, or “about finished.”). The word *entimos* might signify the slave was considered simply a valuable piece of property, but the complete picture of the centurion’s character shows a relationship to the slave much more humane and compassionate than that of “property-owner.” When the centurion heard of Jesus’ presence in Capernaum, he sent Jewish elders to find Him. (Matthew 8:5 says the centurion came for Jesus; this is no contradiction since the elders were his personal emissaries and it could understandably be said “he” came to Jesus). The centurion must have heard of Jesus’ healing power at some earlier date. Perhaps the centurion had first hand knowledge of the healing Jesus had done in the synagogue built by the centurion himself! The Jewish elders acclaimed the centurion worthy of Jesus’ help for they said he had built them a synagogue. The Greek idiom read, “. . . the synagogue he, even he, built for us . . .” This may indicate that the centurion paid for its building. The centurion loved (Gr. *agape*) their nation. He was not merely friendly and brotherly (*phileo*), but he had the concern of the Jewish people on his heart and mind. He willingly cared for them. This was even more unusual—a Roman concerned about the whole Jewish nation!

7:6-10 A Believing Commander: More of the excellency of this centurion’s character is now exhibited. He was a humble man. When Jesus started for his home, he sent messengers saying, “. . . do not trouble yourself, for I am not worthy to have you come under my roof; and the very reason I did not come to you personally was that I did not consider myself worthy.” Humility such as this was unheard of among Romans! He was a man of reason. He had testimony or evidence from some source that Jesus had healed sick people. He used his reasoning powers to decide what he had heard was true. Thus he believed Jesus could heal his dying slave without even coming into his home. Alexander

Campbell once said, "Reason deciding that the testimony is true, is believing; reason deciding that the testimony is false, is disbelieving; reason unable to decide, is skepticism." Faith or belief is built by the use of reasoning processes. Faith comes in this order: Fact-Testimony-Faith-Feeling. Many people try to reverse that order and build their faith from feeling, but feeling is the result of faith, not the foundation of faith. Facts testified to and believed on the basis of reasonable verification of the testimony is Biblical "faith." Faith is only as good as its Object; the Object is only as trustworthy as it evinces itself to be. Christian faith is in an objective Person—Jesus Christ. He has demonstrated His trustworthiness through historical facts which have been testified to by trustworthy historians. When our reason accepts the testimony, we then have evidence to believe Jesus *is* who these historians say He is. This is the same process of reasoning the centurion used to call upon Jesus for help in this life and death situation. The centurion was also a man who understood that faith and obedience are inseparable. He knew that trusting someone meant you committed your life to that person in obedience. He himself was a man who obeyed his superiors because he trusted them and he expected trustful obedience from those committed to his leadership. He was convinced of Jesus' authority so he believed that whatever Jesus said should and would be obeyed.

Jesus marvelled at him (Gr. *ethaumasen*). Only twice in the gospel records is Jesus said to have marvelled—once at unbelief (Mk. 6:6) and once, here, at belief (Lk. 7:9; Mt. 8:10). Jesus marvelled not because He was unaware that such a faith could exist, but because He was aware of how vibrant and alive the centurion's faith was. Compare this Gentile's faith with that of most of the Jews Jesus spoke to and you will see why He marvelled. The Jews had centuries of divine revelation and providence to prepare them to believe the Messiah when He came, but most of them rejected Him. This Gentile had *no* "oracles of God" (cf. Rom. 3:1-2; 9:1-5) such as the Jews had and no centuries of preparation, yet he believed. Faith is measurable, but the Lord measures by quality, not by quantity. The statement of Jesus about "faith as a grain of mustard seed" has nothing to do with quantity; it refers to the vitality or life-force that is in the seed. Faith is not a question of how much, but what kind. This centurion had no quantitative measurement of faith but what little he knew of Jesus gave him a powerful faith because it was active, alive and obedient. Jesus was thrilled by it! Jesus was also pleased by the character of the man. Normally, when a slave was unable to work, he was thrown out to die by his Roman lord. Normally, Romans hated Jews and considered them filthy, ignorant and untrustworthy. But this Roman was different! He was compassionate, benevolent and loved the Jews. He may have been a Jewish proselyte although the text does not say so.

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Matthew records (8:11-12) that Jesus gave a glorious prediction of the salvation of many of the Gentiles as well as a chilling prediction of the doom of the unbelieving Jews. Isaiah, the prophet, had made similar predictions in connection with the coming of the Messiah. Jesus honors living, obedient faith wherever it is found. There are no racial, cultural, social or economic prerequisites required by Jesus.

Matthew also records the tender words of Jesus, "Go; be it done for you as you have believed." And the servant was healed in that very moment. Luke records that the elders and friends first sent by the centurion became witnesses to the fact that the miracle had taken place. It is interesting to note that Jesus did not go to the centurion's home, did not lay hands on the slave, did not even meet the centurion himself; and there is no record that the slave had any faith in Jesus. This healing greatly contrasts to the requirements of the pseudo faith-healers of modern times.

We should learn from this incident:

- a. Do not be hasty to classify men. We usually think of all Romans as in the same category with the Caesars or Pilates of that day. But here is a Roman very much different! There may have been many more.
- b. Obedience is the only reasonable and proper response of a confession of faith. Faith and obedience are inseparable. When the authority of Jesus is recognized and acknowledged, just a word from Him should be sufficient to produce action from us.
- c. Jesus is Savior of all men. There are no special people for Him. Wherever He finds faith, He honors it. He expects to find faith in all men. Those who do not believe in Him are doomed to an eternity of torments.
- d. We can demonstrate the quality of our faith in Jesus by helping others. The Son of Man is willing and able to visit the sick through those who have an obedient, living faith like the centurion's.

SECTION 2

The Sorrowing (7:11-17)

11 Soon afterward he went to a city called Nain, and his disciples and a great crowd went with him. ¹² As he drew near to the gate of the city, behold, a man who had died was being carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow; and a large crowd from the city was with her. ¹³ And when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her and said to her, "Do not weep." ¹⁴ And he came and

touched the bier, and the bearers stood still. And he said, "Young man, I say to you, arise." ¹⁵And the dead man sat up, and began to speak. And he gave him to his mother. ¹⁶Fear seized them all; and they glorified God, saying, "A great prophet has arisen among us!" and "God has visited his people!" ¹⁷And this report concerning him spread through the whole of Judea and all the surrounding country.

7:11-13 Compassion: Nain is about 20 miles southwest of Capernaum; a good day's walking distance. It is about 2 miles west of Endor—a place famous for a temporary resurrection from the dead (Samuel) in the days of King Saul. As Jesus drew near to the gate of this village He came upon a funeral procession. A young man had died and left his widowed mother without any visible means of support. This woman was in great sorrow not only because she had lost both husband and son and was now without the companionship of those nearest and dearest on earth, but also because she would be frantic to know where to turn for physical help and sustenance. A job market for women whereby they might earn a living was unheard of in those days. Women were expected to marry and keep house. Jesus had compassion on this heart-broken, weeping widow and said, "Do not weep." Then He touched the bier.

The Hebrew word for coffin is *mittah* (II Sam. 3:31); the Greek word is *sorou* (Lk. 7:14) and is translated here *bier*. Closed coffins as we know them were unknown among the Hebrews. The bier was an open, flat, wooden frame on which the corpse was carried from the house to the grave. Burial was usually very soon after the death of a person (less than 10 hours) because of hygienic reasons. Anyone who touched a dead body or anything which a dead body might contact, was declared by Old Testament law, unclean for seven days (Numbers 19). Jewish funeral processions were highly emotional and demonstrative. The corpse was usually dressed in clothes worn normally, stretched out on a bier with a cloth thrown over it (Acts 5:6). Sometimes burial spices were added to the body. The poor were buried in earthen graves; the rich in rock-hewn tombs. Lack of proper burial was regarded as a great indignity and a judgment of God. The funeral procession from the home to the grave was accompanied on foot by friends and relatives of the deceased, weeping, wailing and casting dust and ashes on their heads. Sometimes mourners tore their clothing near the neck of their garments as a sign of grief. Usually every funeral was attended by hired mourners paid by the family of the deceased. When the funeral procession started toward the burial place, the women would go first because, the rabbis said, "as Eve, a woman brought death into the world, women should lead death's victims to the grave." Funeral processions were always noisy with graphic demonstrations of mourning (whether there was much

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sorrow or not). The Hebrews considered it very improper not to have loud wailing and mourning at a funeral. Flutists, playing sad music on their instruments, also accompanied these processions. When the sad rites were finished at the grave, the family would gather for a funeral meal, to eat "the bread of mourning." Mourning lasted for 30 days; for the first three days, no work was done at all, and no greeting answered in the street.

The Greek word used to describe Jesus' *compassion* is *esplagchnisthe*. There are other Greek words translated compassion, but this word connotes the feeling of psychosomatic emotions. It is the word translated "bowels" in the KJV. The "bowels" or intestines were regarded by Greeks and Hebrews as the seat of passion and affection. What Jesus felt for this widow and the mourners was intense and deeply emotional. While Jesus had compassion for the weeping widow, at the same time He commanded her (*klaie*, Gr. imperative mood), "Weep not!" A godly person knows when and what to weep about. Stoicism is no Christian virtue. Jesus wept—more than once (Jn. 11:35; Lk. 19:41; Heb. 5:7). But believers are not to grieve as those who have no hope (I Thess. 4:13). Perhaps Jesus is encouraging this widow and these mourners to refrain from excessive grief and to look to Him as Lord of life. Life is to be found by looking beyond death through trust in Christ. Penitence for the *sin* that brings death is the proper expression of mourning. This is what Jesus wept about! "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted."

7:14-17 Celebration: Jesus raised the widow's son from the dead. This incident is one of at least three resurrections from the dead performed by Jesus recorded in the gospels (Jairus' daughter, Lk. 8:49ff; and Lazarus, Jn. 11). Luke alone tells of the widow's son, but his credibility is unassailable. A physician would hardly record such a story without checking out all details. The fact that Luke alone records this incident merely confirms the statement in John's gospel (Jn. 20:30-31) that there were many miracles, teachings and events in Jesus' life not recorded at all. He might have raised more than three!

Jesus could have raised this young man from the dead at a distance as He had healed the dying slave of the centurion; He could have walked alongside the funeral procession and brought the lad back to life without a word or a touch, but He chose to touch the bier. His objective was not merely to bring a dead man back to life but to bring the comfort of salvation to any who would believe in Him as Lord, so He must show that the power of Life resides in Him. For a Jew to touch a dead body or anything a dead body had defiled made the Jew ceremonially unclean for seven days (cf. Num. 19:11ff). Death is the result of sin (Gen. 2:17). When a man died, he was a symbol of sin, and his body a source of defilement to the living. Jesus was not defiled because He was without

sin. He demonstrated vividly by touching the bier of the dead that He is the Lord of death and life—He is the solution, the cure for sin and its results. Those who trust Him will conquer death because He has conquered it for them.

Jesus spoke to the dead man. Jesus expected the dead man to hear him and respond by sitting up. Either Jesus was who He claimed or a complete maniac. Any man who would go out into a street today, stop a funeral procession, command the mourners to stop weeping, touch the casket and say to the dead person, "I say to you, arise," would be called a lunatic and probably incarcerated.

The dead man sat up and began to speak. And He gave him to his mother. Unbelievers try to destroy the historicity of this event by declaring it to be a "myth."

- a. Such declarations are arbitrary. No *evidence* is offered to prove it is a myth. Where is the testimony from the first century that what Jesus did was mythological?
- b. Such a declaration is contrary to the authenticity and credibility of the record of Luke the physician. And there *is* evidence from the first century to establish Luke's veracity.
- c. Such a declaration impugns the character of Jesus. The gospels portray Him as honest, trustworthy, compassionate and a doer of good. How could He be guilty of such dissimulation if He only pretended to raise a dead man.
- d. It is incredible to suppose every time Jesus sought to raise someone from the dead that He could chance upon someone only apparently dead or in a coma.
- e. Those eyewitnesses to this resurrection did not react as if it were mythological or allegorical. They were seized (Gr. *elaben*, "taken") with fear. Something unnatural, extraordinary and amazing happened.

Moments before this whole company of people had been possessed with mourning, bitter wailing, grief and sadness. Now it is turned into a celebration of happy praise for God. Those who witnessed this awesome event testified, "A great prophet has arisen among us! . . . God has visited His people!" The idea that God would "visit" His people is a Messianic expression of both the Old and New Testaments. It is particularly expressed in Isaiah 7:14 in the term "Emmanuel" which means "God with us" (see also, Mt. 1:23; Zeph. 2:7; Isa. 29:6; Lk. 1:68, 78; Lk. 19:44; Psa. 8:4; Heb. 2:6). The report of this miracle spread throughout the land of the Jews, reaching even down into Judea. We wonder how many believed in Jesus as a result of the report. One thing is certain, it is proof that Jesus means what He says about some day calling all the dead from their tombs (Jn. 5:28-29, etc.), some to eternal life, others to eternal damnation.

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SECTION 3

The Suffering (7:18-23)

18 The disciples of John told him of all these things. ¹⁹ And John, calling to him two of his disciples, sent them to the Lord, saying, "Are you he who is to come, or shall we look for another?" ²⁰ And when the men had come to him, they said, "John the Baptist has sent us to you, saying, 'Are you he who is to come, or shall we look for another?'" ²¹ In that hour he cured many of diseases and plagues and evil spirits, and on many that were blind he bestowed sight. ²² And he answered them, "Go and tell John what you have seen and heard: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, the poor have good news preached to them. ²³ And blessed is he who takes no offense at me."

7:18-20 Confusion: Some of the disciples of John the Baptist reported to the imprisoned John all the great miracles of compassion and the words of encouragement and hope Jesus was teaching during this great Galilean campaign. John the Baptist had been arrested and imprisoned about a year earlier near the middle of Jesus' first year of public ministry. Josephus records that John had been incarcerated in Machaerus, a fortress built in 90 B.C. by Alexander Janneus in the desolate wilderness east of the Dead Sea. It was the second most important fortress in Palestine, had been refortified by Herod the Great, and used as a winter residence. John was only about 33 years old when he was put in the dungeon at Machaerus.

John the Baptist had preached emphatically that the Anointed of the Lord, the Messiah, was to come shortly and lay the axe to the root of the tree and hew down every tree that did not produce the fruit of repentance (see comments, Lk. 3). He had been imprisoned for insisting that Herod Antipas repent of an adulterous marriage to his brother's wife. Matthew says (Mt. 11:2) John was in "a place of bonds and fetters" (Gr. *desmoterion*) when he heard of Jesus' ministry of compassion. The scriptures indicate Herod had many conversations with John when he was imprisoned—perhaps some badgering of John that his predictions of an avenging Messiah were, after all, wasted. So, when John heard that Jesus was healing people instead of judging them, bringing people back to life instead of slaying them, preaching good news of forgiveness instead of the wrath of God, he sent two of his disciples to question Jesus.

John's problem with Jesus was not whether He was the Messiah or

not but whether He was conducting the messianic program as He should. Jesus' program was not conforming to the vivid announcements John had made in the wilderness. So John asked, "Are you he who is to come, or shall we look for another?" While Luke used the Greek word *allon* for "another" (which generically means, "another of the same kind"), Matthew used the word *heteron* (which means, "one of another kind"). John's problem was not doubt, it was impatience. Many of Jesus' own disciples were impatient with the way Jesus conducted His messianic program. Hobbs says, "It was not a question born out of doubt but of perplexity. He expected the two pictures (judgment and salvation) to be fulfilled simultaneously. Both pictures are true, but they are fulfilled within God's will and according to His purpose." Foster writes, "John was too anxious to see the Messiah coming on the clouds of heaven in flaming fire to bring destruction upon the wicked and to bring succor to the noble. He had not been willing to tarry with the Messianic predictions of humble service, mighty miracles, and sufferings and death for the sins of the world."

7:21-23 Clarification: Jesus sent word back through John's disciples to John clarifying the essential nature of the earthly ministry of the Messiah. Contrary to popular Jewish opinion (apocryphal) the Messiah's ministry was to be one of hope and healing. Hope that the next life would be blessed and free of sin and sickness through the power of faith in Christ to heal both body and soul; this was what the Messiah came to announce. The essence of the Messianic ministry had long ago been prophesied (cf. Isa. 29:18-19; 35:5-7; 61:1-3). When John wrote his gospel record (some 60 years after Jesus' crucifixion) he reminded his readers, "For God sent the Son into the world, not to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him" (Jn. 3:17). Impatient men have continually cried out for God to judge the world, but God is long-suffering not wishing that any should perish so He is giving the world a message of hope and healing. The time will come, in God's divine plan, for judgment. Presently, however, it is time for hope and healing. Blessed is the man who imitates the longsuffering of God and does not "stumble" at God's patience through the Messianic ministry. Jesus chastened John the Baptist but He did so tenderly. The Greek word *skandalizomai* means, "offended, stumbled, tripped-up, trapped"; we get the English word, "scandalized," from it. Jesus does not want his ministry to become a stumblingblock to John the Baptist, but John must clearly understand Jesus' ministry will be conducted in God's way and God's own good time, and He will not alter His ministry to suit John's human misconception. Suffering humanity continues to cry out, "How long, O Lord . . ." (cf. Rev. 6:10), and the Lord continues to say, "In a little while . . ."

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SECTION 4

The Superficial (7:24-35)

24 When the messengers of John had gone, he began to speak to the crowds concerning John: "What did you go out into the wilderness to behold? A reed shaken by the wind? 25 What then did you go out to see? A man clothed in soft clothing? Behold, those who are gorgeously appareled and live in luxury are in kings' courts. 26 What then did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. 27 This is he of whom it is written, 'Behold, I send my messenger before thy face,
who shall prepare thy way before thee.'

28 I tell you, among those born of women none is greater than John; yet he who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he."

29 (When they heard this all the people and the tax collectors justified God, having been baptized with the baptism of John; 30 but the Pharisees and the lawyers rejected the purpose of God for themselves, not having been baptized by him.)

31 "To what then shall I compare the men of this generation, and what are they like? 32 They are like children sitting in the market place and calling to one another,

'We piped to you, and you did not dance;
we wailed, and you did not weep.'

33 For John the Baptist has come eating no bread and drinking no wine; and you say, 'He has a demon.' 34 The Son of man has come eating and drinking; and you say, 'Behold, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!' 35 Yet wisdom is justified by all her children."

7:24-30 Perversity: John the Baptist had been a "fire-eating" prophet of the judgment of God upon his own nation so filled with materialism and hypocrisy. Many people had initially heard John's preaching with excitement (Lk. 3:15), but the penetrating righteousness of the truth he preached soon began to work on their consciences and they began to denounce him. Jesus takes this most opportune situation (John's asking about His ministry) to vindicate John's faithfulness in his ministry and his message as the revelation of God.

Jesus challenges their motives for first going out to hear John. What did they expect or want when they went to John—a fickle, unstable, vacillating "good-old-boy" who would bend with the ebb and flow of human opinion like a reed bends in the wind? Did they expect or want a preacher who was self-indulgent, fawning after those in positions of human power like those of Herod's court or like Herod himself fawning

after the Romans? Jesus' rhetorical question implies that this is indeed what many of them wanted. That is why they turned away from John the Baptist. He was certainly no vacillating, self-indulgent pawn of human tyrants. He was in prison because he dared to condemn a king's conduct. He was a prophet—and more than a prophet! He was the forerunner of the Messiah predicted by the prophets (esp. Malachi 3:1). He held a special place of service in God's redemptive program afforded no other prophet. Jesus added this epitaph, to which a literal Greek translation adds idiomatic emphasis: "I tell you, greater among those born of women than John, no one is!" This applies not only to John's position as forerunner, but to John's personal character. Jesus said John was the greatest man in the human race. That statement of Jesus minimizes much of what the world calls "greatness" in human beings. John had none of the trappings of worldly power, worldly wealth, sophistication, travel, education, longevity and yet among those born of women, not a greater has ever lived.

Then Jesus utters a very interesting and paradoxical statement, ". . . yet he who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he." Hobbs puts it this way, "He (John) stood on the shoulders of all foregoing prophets as the one forerunner of Him whom they foresaw. But those coming thereafter stand on John's shoulders. . . . He saw only one picture of the Christ. But those who have come after him see the whole: death, resurrection, promised return and coming judgment. We see the end from the beginning." Jesus means that those who have become Christians have their covenant enacted upon better promises (cf. Heb. 8:6). Those who believe in Christ after the cross and resurrection and the ministry of the Holy Spirit have seen God as John the Baptist could never have seen Him. As great as John's position and character was, those who believe in the Christ after him have a much greater privilege. Do we not also have greater responsibility? Only the perverse would reject the message John preached. What he proclaimed was so transparently true only the calloused hypocrite would object to it. When Jesus announced that John was God's forerunner of the Messiah and that he was the greatest, in God's scheme of things, among all the prophets, many sinners "justified" (Gr. *edikaiosan*) God, by submitting to John's baptism. The word "justified" means they declared God to be right (as He spoke through John) that they needed to repent and be baptized by John. So they did! "Justifying" God means to put God in His rightful place, Absolute Sovereign in one's life. But the Pharisees and lawyers, hypocrites who pretended to worship God, rejected the "purpose" (Gr. *boulen*, "will, counsel, deliberate design") of God for themselves (which was forgiveness and repentance) refusing to be baptized in John's baptism. These hypocrites, no matter how much they pretended, would

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not put God in his rightful place—Sovereign over their lives. Why? Because, as Jesus would soon reveal (Lk. 7:43ff), they did not think they needed forgiveness or repentance!

7:31-35 Petulance: Those who wish only a superficial relationship to God and truth will find every excuse possible to have it. The Pharisees and other hypocrites of that age were like petulant children of the streets. They did not want to play God's game at all. When John the Baptist came, they said John's concepts are too austere. John is all doom and gloom and judgment. John demands too rigid a life—he is too ascetic. So they would not accept John's concepts. When Jesus came, they said His concepts were too liberated, too normal, too cheerful. Jesus is a wine-bibber and a glutton. So they would not accept Jesus' concepts. They condemned in Jesus what they implied John should have manifested, and condemned in John what they implied Jesus should have manifested. They simply were not going to play God-games unless they could dictate the rules. They really did not want to play at all so they said neither John or Jesus was playing the right game.

But Jesus' reply was, "Wisdom is justified by all her children." In other words, the rightness of both John's ministry and His is vindicated by what those ministries were producing—repentance and faith and changed lives! As seen by superficial people, who really did not want to see, the ministries of John and Jesus might have appeared to be in conflict. But that was because the hypocrites, Pharisees and others, judged them by human standards. Their concept of the "kingdom game" was human power, exploitation of the poor and ignorant, manipulation through human traditions and violent wresting of the kingdom from God's hands into their own (cf. the parallel to this incident in Mt. 11:7-19). So they said neither John nor Jesus knew anything about the "kingdom game" at all. Jesus said, Wait and see—what John the Baptist and I both say about the kingdom will be proven to be true! There are still worldly-minded people with superficial views of the kingdom of God, acting like spoiled brats, unwilling to accept Christ's mind on the kingdom. They do not want to play by God's "rules" so they either try to destroy the game for others or do not get in the game at all!

SECTION 5

The Self-Satisfied (7:36-50)

36 One of the Pharisees asked him to eat with him, and he went into the Pharisee's house, and took his place at table.³⁷ And behold, a woman of the city, who was a sinner, when she learned that he was

at table in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster flask of ointment,³⁸ and standing behind him at his feet, weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears, and wiped them with the hair of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment.³⁹ Now when the Pharisee who had invited him saw it, he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet, he would have known who and what sort of woman this is who is touching him, for she is a sinner."⁴⁰ And Jesus answering said to him, "Simon, I have something to say to you." And he answered, "What is it, Teacher?"⁴¹ A certain creditor had two debtors; one owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty.⁴² When they could not pay, he forgave them both. Now which of them will love him more?"⁴³ Simon answered, "The one I suppose, to whom he forgave more." And he said to him, "You have judged rightly."⁴⁴ Then turning toward the woman he said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I entered your house, you gave me no water for my feet, but she has wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair.⁴⁵ You gave me no kiss, but from the time I came in she has not ceased to kiss my feet.⁴⁶ You did not anoint my head with oil, but she has anointed my feet with ointment.⁴⁷ Therefore I tell you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much; but he who is forgiven little, loves little."⁴⁸ And he said to her, "Your sins are forgiven."⁴⁹ Then those who were at table with him began to say among themselves, "Who is this, who even forgives sins?"⁵⁰ And he said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace."

7:36-39 Condemning: Although Jesus despised the attitudes of most of the Pharisees, He never refused an opportunity to try to convert one. While He was in Capernaum, a Pharisee of that city invited Jesus to dine with him. Along with making a great show about their religious practices (Mt. 6:1-18) the Pharisees enjoyed making a great show of their wealth and position by inviting certain "select" famous and popular people to dine with them. They would never invite the poor, starving, *am-haretz* ("people of the land") whom they classified as "sinners" who did not know anything (see Jn. 7:48-49). Often men of such attitudes would allow the poor and common people to stand off at a distance in the court-yard of their homes and like spectators, "entertain" themselves watching the rich and mighty dine.

As Jesus was reclining (Gr. *kateklithe*) (see comments on Lk. 5:29ff) at dinner (probably evening meal), "behold" (surprise), a woman who was in the city, a sinner came and anointed His feet. The Greek idiom places emphasis on the fact that this woman had a reputation for being a "city sinner." This usually meant prostitution. We do not know exactly

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what her sin was. The silence of the scripture probably is a caution to us that the precise nature of her sin should not be as important to us as the example of her grateful attitude. Jesus later indicates that the *amount* of one's debt, though significant in man's estimation, is not so in God's since the debtors were both forgiven, regardless of the amount.

The woman's actions, the context, and the use of the Greek perfect tense verb *sesoken* in v. 50 (has saved and is continuing to save you) indicates that Jesus may have encountered the woman before this incident and forgave her sins. That is why, when she heard Jesus was in Simon's house, she came expressing in a highly emotional way her gratitude for having been forgiven by Jesus. She brought with her an *alabaster* (plaster of paris) jar (usually very beautifully decorated, expensive and delicate) filled with ointment (Gr. *murou*) myrrh—imported and expensive. She stood at the foot of the couch weeping, and her tears fell on Jesus' feet and made them wet. Quickly she knelt and kept wiping off (Gr. *exemassen*, imperfect) the tear drops with her long hair. It was a shame for a Jewish woman to let down her hair in public. That was only a custom of tradition and this woman would not let her gratitude to Jesus be hindered by the traditions of men. She began to kiss or embrace the feet of Jesus profusely (Gr. *katephilei*) and to rub the very expensive perfume from her alabaster jar on His feet. This woman gladly did the most humiliating, servile deed to Jesus that could customarily be done in that era while at the same time gladly rubbed on His feet the most expensive and precious thing she possessed.

All this made no impression on Simon, the Pharisee. His only concern was that Jesus was allowing the woman to touch Him at all. Simon thought to himself, "If this fellow (not even the courtesy to use Jesus' name in his thoughts) were a prophet (some ancient manuscripts have "the" prophet), he would have known who and what *sort* (Gr. *potape*, originally a word meaning "of what country," thus Simon had already categorized her as "alien" to his own social class and not to be associated with) of woman this is who is touching him, because she is a sinner." Why did Simon think such condemning things about this woman (and Jesus)? Because, as we shall see, he was self-righteous. He did not consider himself a sinner—he owed no debt to God—felt no need for grace and therefore had no gratitude in his heart.

7:40-50 Condemned: Jesus answered the thought of Simon's heart. Jesus did not have to wait for men to express what they thought—He could know supernaturally what men thought (cf. Jn. 2:23-25). Jesus used a favorite teaching vehicle, the parable, to try to expose to Simon the evil of his heart toward both Himself and the woman. Jesus' parables were always true to life. He never told a parable that was divorced

from reality. What He parabolized was always true whether of this life or the next (cf. Lk. 16:19ff). He may have had two specific (but unnamed) debtors known to Him personally in mind as He told this parabolic account.

We are not certain about the modern worth of a *denarius*. Most commentators believe it was worth a day's wages in Jesus' time. Whatever the case, the real point of this true-to-life story is the graciousness of the creditor, and the attitude of the debtors. The disparity between the amounts owed is not really significant for neither could pay their debt. The one who loved the forgiving creditor the most was the one who realized how totally unable to pay he had been and how totally forgiven he was. The sheer power of the logic in Jesus' parable forced Simon to give the correct answer or appear to be a fool. But Simon's ego was not in touch with his mind for what he was forced to answer by logic he refused to answer in his heart. Simon had looked upon the woman as a "great" sinner and upon himself as no sinner. The woman knew she had been much in debt to God and when Jesus forgave her she loved much—was deeply grateful, and showed it. Simon showed no gratefulness to Jesus because in his own estimation he had received no graciousness from God. Simon did not think he needed any grace! This attitude is *extremely crucial*. The apostle Paul makes *ingratitude* (Rom. 1:21) the fundamental source or reason behind the Gentile rejection of God and the terrible sinfulness of mankind described in subsequent verses. *Ingratitude* is the immediate child of pride and self-righteousness.

Although Simon answered with indifference, perhaps even flippancy, he answered correctly. He pronounced his own condemnation, whether he realized it or not. Jesus, turning toward the woman, but talking to Simon, said, "Do you see this woman?" Now Simon had seen the woman for he judged Jesus on the basis of having seen what the woman was doing. But Simon had seen the woman through his self-righteous perspective and not according to the truth which logic had just forced him to conclude. That is why Jesus so often referred to the Pharisees as "blind" (cf. Mt. 15:14; Mt. 23:16; Jn. 9:39-41). Simon's self-righteousness not only blinded him to the woman's motives, and to Jesus' character, it also blinded him to the need to express the commonest courtesies toward a guest as Jesus graphically points out.

Simon, and many of his fellow Pharisees, fell into the ageless trap of the devil of "measuring themselves by one another, and comparing themselves with one another," and being bereft of understanding which the apostle Paul outlines to the Corinthian church (II Cor. 10:7-12). When we measure ourselves by other human beings we usually select those who "are not as good as we are" so we make ourselves look better. When we measure ourselves by one another we are always using imperfect standards and, always able to find ourselves "better" than our standards, we justify ourselves and declare ourselves able to stand on our

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own merits without need of the grace of God. Simon compared himself to the woman and he should have compared himself to God. We should all compare ourselves to Jesus and learn that we need His forgiving grace.

The perfect tense of the Greek verb *apheontai* ("are forgiven") like the perfect tense of the verb *sesoken* ("has saved" v. 50) indicates that this had already occurred at some time past and that the fact remained true at the time Jesus spoke. As Applebury points out, "her faith had saved her at some point in the past and the fact remained at the moment when He was speaking to her. Her faith, not her love was the cause of her being forgiven. Love follows forgiveness, just as in the story of the debtors." Actually, our love is in response to God's—our love is a "rebounded" love (cf. I Jn. 4:19). Faith (trust) comes by hearing the Word of God (Rom. 10:17) and then comes love. Feeling does not precede reason. Fact, testimony, faith, feeling—in that order. When the testimony that God has forgiven our sins in Christ is believed, then we begin to have feelings of gratitude and love and adoration. As Alexander Campbell once put it, "No one ever shed a tear over the crucified Christ where it was never heard!"

Jesus' statement, ". . . go in peace" was more than a mere dismissal. For a Hebrew the word *peace* (*Shalom*) means "wholeness, integrity, well-being, goodness." He was admonishing her to continue in wholeness and integrity.

Although Simon the Pharisee had condemned the woman and questioned Jesus' character for associating with her, he actually condemned himself. Whether he had a change of heart or not, we do not know. God does! Some Pharisees did! It is not impossible for a Pharisee to renounce self-righteousness and be forgiven (cf. Phil. 3:4-16), and thus be saved.

STUDY STIMULATORS:

1. What is a "centurion" and how does the one of Luke 7 compare with others?
2. How did the centurion's experience as a soldier help him relate to Jesus?
3. What was so unique about the centurion's faith that Jesus would marvel at it?
4. Since Jesus had compassion on the widow of Nain, why did He command her to cease weeping?
5. Is this resurrection from the dead a myth or a real event? Prove it!
6. Why do you think John the Baptist wanted to know if Jesus were "the One"?
7. Why did Jesus consider it necessary to defend the ministry of John the Baptist?
8. Why did the "sinner" woman weep upon Jesus' feet and wipe them with her hair?
9. What is the real point of the "parable of the two debtors" Jesus told Simon?

Chapter Eight (8:1-56)

THE SON OF MAN EXERCISING DIVINE AUTHORITY

IDEAS TO INVESTIGATE:

1. How would women have "means" by which to contribute to Jesus' needs (8:1-3)?
2. Why would the sower let most of his seed fall on unproductive ground (8:4-8)?
3. How can the word of God be the "seed" (8:11)?
4. If the disciples had seen Jesus raise the dead, how could they be afraid in the storm if He was in the boat (8:22-25)?
5. Why would Jesus allow demons to go into pigs and destroy them (8:26-33)?
6. Why didn't Jesus let the healed man accompany Him (8:38-39)?
7. If Jesus was going to raise Jairus' daughter from the dead, why didn't he want a big crowd to witness it (8:51)?

SECTION 1

In Educating The Ego (8:1-21)

8 Soon afterward he went on through cities and villages, preaching and bringing the good news of the kingdom of God. And the twelve were with him, ²and also some women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities: Mary, called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out, ³and Joanna, the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others, who provided for them out of their means.

4 And when a great crowd came together and people from town after town came to him, he said in a parable: ⁵"A sower went out to sow his seed; and as he sowed, some fell along the path, and was trodden under foot, and the birds of the air devoured it. ⁶And some fell on the rock; and as it grew up, it withered away, because it had no moisture. ⁷And some fell among thorns; and the thorns grew with it and choked it. ⁸And some fell into good soil and grew, and yielded a hundredfold." As he said this, he called out, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear."

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9 And when his disciples asked him what this parable meant,¹⁰ he said, "To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of God; but for others they are in parables, so that seeing they may not understand.¹¹ Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. ¹²The ones along the path are those who have heard; then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, that they may not believe and be saved. ¹³And the ones on the rock are those who, when they hear the word, receive it with joy; but these have no root, they believe for a while and in time of temptation fall away. ¹⁴And as for what fell among the thorns, they are those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by the cares and riches and pleasures of life, and their fruit does not mature. ¹⁵And as for that in the good soil, they are those who, hearing the word, hold it fast in an honest and good heart, and bring forth fruit with patience.

16 "No one after lighting a lamp covers it with a vessel, or puts it under a bed, but puts it on a stand, that those who enter may see the light. ¹⁷For nothing is hid that shall not be made manifest, nor anything secret that shall not be known and come to light. ¹⁸Take heed then how you hear; for to him who has will more be given, and from him who has not, even what he thinks that he has will be taken away."

19 Then his mother and his brothers came to him, but they could not reach him for the crowd. ²⁰And he was told, "Your mother and your brothers are standing outside, desiring to see you."²¹ But he said to them, "My mother and my brothers are those who hear the word of God and do it."

8:1-3 Dogma: Jesus went about from one city and village to another (Gr. *kata polin kai komen*) making proclamation (Gr. *kerussson*) and delivering a message (*euangelizomenos*) or evangelizing. The message was: "the kingdom of God" has come! This is the essential dogma for the education of the human ego or soul. God is Sovereign! He has never and will never be dethroned. That is good news! G. Campbell Morgan suggests a slight change in translation of the Greek phrase, *ten basileian tou Theou*, to read "the kingdom of God." There is no grammatical reason for objection to such a change. Actually, "kingship" is the primary meaning of the word *basileian*, (see Arndt & Gingrich, Greek lexicon, page 134). Territory is the secondary meaning of the word. The fact that God rules and He has made a way for rebellious man to be reconciled and receive citizenship in His kingdom, is what Jesus proclaimed. This is the Gospel—the "good news." God is in charge—history will ultimately be consummated under His sovereignty, and man has an opportunity

to harmonize himself to that absolute dogma and become the recipient of its consequences. No human mind or heart has been educated until it has heard the Gospel and no human being can be a citizen of the kingdom of God without surrendering to the kingship of Christ.

In the ministry of the women to Jesus and the twelve we have an example of the kingship of Christ taking root in the human heart. These women lovingly expressed their citizenship by participating in heralding the good news through their financial support of Christ's evangelizing. The Greek imperfect verb *diekonoun* indicates "they kept on deaconessing, or ministering" (RSV "providing") for Jesus and the twelve out of their own belongings. Supernaturally speaking, Jesus did not have to depend on anyone for physical subsistence. He could change water to wine and multiply bread and fish. He had the power to create or destroy. But if He is to capture the hearts of men and women for God He must, by humble grace, allow them to *share* in the work (kingdom) of God. G. Campbell Morgan writes, "I always see here for myself the grace of Christ, that He was content to be supported in that way, while He carried on His work. It is more blessed to give than receive, and it takes more grace to receive than it does to give. He was content to live on charity, while He carried on His mighty ministry."

Mary is from the Hebrew name Miriam (which means, "rebel") called Magdalene, out of whom Jesus had cast seven demons; Joanna (means, "dove") the wife of Herod's steward (Gr. *epitropos*, "one who looks after the king's financial affairs"); and Susanna (means, "lily"), who had also been healed of some infirmity. Barclay notes the significance that in this group of women are united such diverse backgrounds—Mary, with the dark past and Joanna, a lady of the king's court in one company. He says, "There is nothing which the Church needs more than to learn how to yoke in common harness the diverse temperaments and qualities of different people. If we are failing it is our own fault, for, in Christ, it can be done—it has been done."

It is also significant that the only mention of how Jesus was supported in His ministry tells of women leading out. Womanhood is glorified as it serves God:

- a. Jesus, the Messiah, was born of woman.
- b. Women supported His ministry. Lk. 8:1-3.
- c. Women stayed with Him in His agony at the cross, Jn. 19:25.
- d. Women were first to the tomb, Lk. 23:55.
- e. Women were prominent in service in the early church, Acts 1:14; 12:12; 16:13-15.
- f. Many women served in the church at Rome, Rom. 16:3-23.
- g. Women supported the apostle Paul's ministry, Phil. 4:3.

The glory of womanhood is in helping others serve Christ!

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8:4-15 Dynamic: The dynamic, the germinating power in the education of the human ego is the Word of God. Jesus makes this dramatically clear in His "parable of the sower." Actually, it is a parable of the soils. The word parable in Greek is *parabole* and literally means, "that which is cast alongside," or something deliberately placed parallel. Someone has graphically described a parable as "an earthly story with a heavenly meaning." The essential rule in interpreting parables is to find the one central truth which the parable intends to teach. Parables are mainly illustrative and many of the details in a parable are "window dressing" and have nothing to do with doctrine. Doctrine does not "lean on" parables; parables "lean on doctrine." In other words, parables do not constitute or give rise to the formation of doctrines—they simply explain and help apply doctrines already constituted.

At this very crucial point in Jesus' public ministry, it is apparent that He begins to make much more use of parables. This may be due to a number of circumstances:

- a. There is a growing opposition from the religious and political authorities toward His teaching (cf. Mt. 12:22-45, etc.).
- b. His own family and twelve disciples are expressing anxieties about His welfare (cf. Mt. 12:46-50; Lk. 8:19-21).
- c. Great multitudes are following Him but their minds are so enthralled with the materialistic aspects of the "kingdom of God" He is having difficulty penetrating that with any spiritual concepts (cf. Mt. 13:10-13, 34, 35).
- e. His own select group of twelve disciples have also manifested a need to have some truths concerning the kingdom more graphically imprinted on their minds.

Parables are enigmatic enough and require just enough self-honesty and effort to know the truth that they will conceal the truth from those who would oppose the truth and only use it for violent purposes. Parables have a way of stripping the human mind bare of all bias and rationalization and laying it open to reality so that those who hate the truth have their opposition intensified. Jesus now tells a parable to explain this about parables:

- a. the "way" (Gr. *hodos*) is more than a path (Gr. *tribos*). *Hodos* is translated "highway" in Mt. 22:10; Lk. 14:23 and means the hard, packed-down roadway. It is impenetrable. Some seed falls on such "soil" and because it cannot take root it never produces. It is vulnerable. Birds come and take the seed away.
- b. the "rock" (Gr. *petran*) is the ground which is underlaid with limestone. It is very shallow soil on top of hard rock which will not retain moisture. Seed sown on such soil may sprout but the young plant withers almost immediately.

- c. the "thorns" (Gr. *akanthon*) may be a generic term for the many thorns and thistles and prickly weeds which grow in Palestine. Seed falling in soil not thoroughly plowed and weeded will find thorns and thistles growing up with the young plants. The weeds are more prolific and harder and will soon choke out the domestic plants. Soil must be constantly plowed and cultivated so the plants will grow.
- d. the "good" soil (Gr. *agathev*) is that which is prepared. It is "broken" up, plowed, fertile, retains moisture and is cleared of weeds and other hindrances.

Jesus concluded the parable with an admonition to "hear." In the Hebrew language the word *shema* means "hear and obey"; to the Hebrew mind to hear was to obey. The same is true of the Greek word *hupakouo* "obey" which comes from the root *akouw* which means "hear, hearken." The person who really "hears" the teaching of Jesus will obey it. Jesus came to accomplish man's salvation by His death and resurrection, but man must "hear and obey" to receive that salvation. When the Gospel is taught people are held responsible by God as to how they "hear." Those who teach the gospel have responsibilities to be faithful in proclamation, but those who are *taught* also have awesome responsibilities in hearing and obeying!

The disciples asked Jesus what this parable meant. He replied it was to teach the truth that proclaiming the kingship of God would not be easy. In effect, Jesus is explaining why He has suddenly intensified His use of the parabolic method of preaching. The truth of God's sovereignty may be widely disseminated but it will have limited reception—not because the truth has no germinating power nor because the proclaimer is inept but because the hearts of men refuse to receive it. This parable was to show the difference between His disciples who heard His proclamation that the kingdom of God had come and left all and followed Him and the self-righteous religious leaders and materialistic multitudes who heard but did not produce the fruit of repentance in their lives. Most of the time Jesus could speak plainly to His disciples and they understood. Of course, there were times when they did not understand because of their finite limitations, but they were good men and His teaching did not motivate them to want to kill Him as it did the rulers. The Greek word *musteria* ("mysteries," KJV) is translated "secrets" in the RSV. The word in Biblical context means "revelation." It is not mysterious in that it *cannot* be known but in the sense that it is unknown until it is revealed. What Jesus is actually saying is He could *reveal* the things concerning the kingdom of God plainly to His disciples most of the time without fear of being misunderstood and opposed but for the rest of the people then He must speak of the kingdom in parables. So Jesus explained the parable to His disciples:

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- a. the “seed” is the word of God. The Greek is, *ho logos tou theou*. Jesus is the Logos in John 1:1-18 and Rev. 19:13. The word of Jesus is Life (cf. Jn. 6:63). The gospel of Christ is the seed by which men are “born again” (I Pet. 1:22-24) and it must be “obeyed” to produce the new life. This is of primary importance. The dynamic for eternal life is not religious systems or human traditions but faith in a Person, Jesus Christ, which is expressed by obedience to His commandments.
- b. the “wayside” soil represents people with hardened hearts. The word of God cannot bear fruit there because they do not love the truth but take pleasure in unrighteousness (II Thess. 2:9-12) and the devil is allowed to come and take the truth away and replace it with delusion and falsehood. This is the mind that has become calloused with continued rejection of truth (cf. Rom. 1:18-32; Heb. 3:7-13; II Pet. 3:5; Prov. 21:29; 28:14, etc.). This represents the coldly indifferent, close-minded, arrogant, self-righteous person, obstinately impervious to the historical reality of scripture because of the moral implications for his life-style. The disciple of Jesus who goes proclaiming the kingship of God will find that the Word can be absolutely resisted, that there is a real devil who will take away any word of God when a person does not want it, and, all who sow the “seed” of the kingdom will meet with some “hard” hearts.
- c. the “rocky” or shallow soil represents those who respond quickly and emotionally to the Word, but superficially. This person never really thinks about the hard historical realities of discipleship, stewardship, persecution, and self-control—they just “feel.” These have no endurance when the “heat” of worldly opposition comes to their life because they have not allowed the Word of God to have root in their character. Their relationship to the Word is emotional but not mental and practical. The disciple of Jesus who sows the seed of the Gospel must understand that if the Word is to produce any lasting fruit it must be sown in minds characterized by stability, reality, endurance and depth.
- d. the “thorny” soil represents those who “want the best of both worlds” at the same time. It is the heart with potential (for if it will grow thorns, it will grow wheat) but it allows the weeds of worldliness to grow alongside the wheat of the Word. The desires and cares of this world, if allowed to go unchecked, will choke out desires and cares for the next world. If Jesus ever emphasized anything it was that Christian discipleship is impossible with divided loyalties. We must “set our minds on things above . . . not on things on the earth” (Col. 3:2). The “rich young ruler” and “Demas” are examples of thorny soil.

- e. the "good" soil represents people with "honest and good" (Gr. *kale, agathe*) hearts. They are fair-minded, know what is right when it is proclaimed and practiced, and desire the truth even though it may involve suffering in the flesh. They hold on to all the truth they know and are loyal to it because they recognize its value. They have patience (Gr. *hupomone*, "endurance"). They are not fickle, but steadfast. They are not shallow but deep. The seed of the gospel sown in their hearts grows automatically (Gr. *automate*, Mk. 4:28), or, of its own accord. No manipulation is necessary, it grows according to its own schedule.

Jesus revealed in this parable that the kingdom of God (God's rule in the hearts of men) is produced by the Word of God preached to men. Those who proclaim the Word must be warned that it will fall on four different types of hearts. The Word will produce the fruit of salvation in *only one* kind of heart, honest and good; in all others it will not produce. Thus, by implication, Jesus is also teaching that sowing requires caring, training, work, persuasiveness, honesty, humility, patience, and faith. The student should definitely study Matthew 13:1-53 and Mark 4:1-34 in conjunction with Luke 8:4-18. We also recommend the very fine comments of Harold Fowler in, *The Gospel of Matthew, Vol. III*, pages 14-172, pub. College Press.

8:16-18 Development: If the sower sows and the seed has automatic life in itself, then the ultimate responsibility for producing fruit lies with the "soil." Hearing is the ultimate responsibility! The disciples may have wondered about Jesus' statement, "but for others they (the revelations of the kingdom) are in parables, so that seeing they may not see, and hearing they may not understand." Jesus' answer to their perplexity: Lamps are made for lighting and light may be seen unless one is "blind." Jesus is not going to refuse to reveal the kingdom to anyone. He will preach the kingdom to everyone He possibly can. He is not going to conceal the light of the gospel—He is going to let it shine. The light of truth, so far as it depends on Him and His disciples, will be made available to all who are willing to see it. But truth is perceived only to the degree of honesty, and desire which the mind has toward it. Truth will not be forced upon anyone. Jesus is using parabolic form to present truth simply because for those who refuse to let God tell them anything, the door to the kingdom of God must be closed. Take heed then how you hear (obey)! The truth about the kingdom has all been revealed in Jesus and the apostolic writings. Nothing is hid that shall not be made manifest, nor anything secret that shall not be known and come to light. God has no more revelation about the kingdom than what the New Testament reveals. The Light is there! It is up to man to see it! Those who put the most faith in Jesus' words will understand them and profit from them

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most. Those who do not believe Jesus, even what little truth they have will soon become meaningless and lost. What a man does not use he will lose!

8:19-21 Disposition: Matthew and Mark (Mt. 12:46-50; Mk. 3:31-35) place this incident in a different position in their accounts. Most commentators think the incident should chronologically come before the sermon in parables and that Luke has placed it according to literary usage. Whatever the case, it is a classic example of the Son of Man exercising authority in the realm of the human ego. It also exemplifies the very thing Jesus warned against in the parable of the soils (the "thorny soil") that the word of the kingdom may be choked out by worldly-mindedness. Jesus' mother and brothers may have been altogether sincere in trying to call Him aside from the intensity of His present situation. Jesus had been so busy He had not even taken time to eat (cf. Mk. 3:20); the Pharisees were openly intensifying their attacks upon Him (Mt. 12:24) and saying He was demon possessed; they probably thought Jesus was so carried away with His cause that He had become oblivious to the dangers all about Him and they must take things in hand and give corrective guidance. At first, Jesus' answer seems flippant. But Jesus is not being frivolous toward family love at all—He is simply putting it in its proper place. Family relationships must come behind our spiritual relationship with the Heavenly Father. The true man of God is loyal to God and His work first. The old adage that "blood is thicker than water" (originally intended to advocate that family ties are stronger than the ties of baptism into the spiritual family of God) is wrong! The mother and brothers of Jesus needed to understand that they had no right to use their family relationship to hinder His spiritual mission. They were, in fact, dangerously close to becoming "thorny soil" by their worldly attitude toward His work. The ultimate criterion of our relationship to Jesus is not human family ties, or any other circumstance of human birth, but spiritual rebirth. As Jesus put it, our relationship to Him depends entirely upon whether we are doing the will of God or not. That is the kingdom disposition; Jesus wishes to exercise His authority through His word upon the human ego to produce that disposition.

SECTION 2

In The Elements (8:22-25)

22 One day he got into a boat with his disciples, and he said to them, "Let us go across to the other side of the lake." So they set out,²³ and as they sailed he fell asleep. And a storm of wind came down on the lake, and they were filling with water, and were in danger.²⁴ And they went and woke him saying, "Master, Master,

we are perishing!" And he awoke and rebuked the wind and the raging waves; and they ceased, and there was a calm. ²⁵He said to them, "Where is your faith?" And they were afraid, and they marveled, saying to one another, "Who then is this, that he commands even wind and water, and they obey him?"

8:22-23 Peril: The beautiful Sea of Galilee is 685 feet below sea level. It is surrounded by hills rising 2000 feet high which make the area resemble a huge "cup." Jesus apparently decided to go "across" the sea, away from Capernaum, in order to bring some moderation to the intense popularity of His ministry. The opposition to His popularity was becoming vicious and murderous. Jesus wished very much that the people would not seek Him simply for the physical things such as healing and "bread and fish" (cf. Jn. 6:26ff). So He went away from Capernaum to let that attitude cool. He also knew it was not His time to die at the hands of His enemies so His retirement to the region of the Gerasenes (v. 26) was to temporarily postpone that crisis.

As they were out on the sea, a storm of wind came "down" on the lake. Luke's use of the word "down" is minutely accurate! Storms to this day come "down" upon the Sea of Galilee because of its unique topography. Matthew, describing this same storm, uses the Greek words *seismos megas*, meaning "great shaking" (we get the English prefix "mega" and the noun, "seismograph" from these Greek words). Seismographs register the intensity of earthquakes. This must have been an awesome storm. Mark and Luke use the Greek words, *lailapsi megale anemou*, meaning literally, "a hurricane of great driving wind." Any-one who has ever been in a storm at sea in a large ship knows how utterly awesome and terrifying an experience it is. Jesus and his disciples were in a small fishing boat which could hold twelve men but not a "large" catch of fish. These boats were wide and solid, but not very fast—not much larger than a life-boat on modern sea-going vessels. The waves were already swamping the boat and it was dangerously close to sinking with all aboard. Luke indicates Jesus went to sleep almost immediately after they set sail, and He slept on while the storm raged. He was at perfect peace with His Father and had no fear whatever. But the disciples were terrified. Mark records that they woke Jesus and said to him, "Teacher, do you not care if we perish?" Luke tells us the disciples addressed Jesus, "Master, Master . . ." (Gr. *epistata, epistata*, means, "commander, commander,"). How could they doubt Jesus' concern? How could they doubt their eternal safety with Him as their commander? It is easy to believe in one's safety as long as one is safe! The test of faith comes when one faces death and all human power is useless. Of course Jesus cared! He had demonstrated His care for fearful, suffering,

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dying humanity many times over already. He demonstrated His power to do whatever He wished about any human predicament. So, as Matthew records, when Jesus was awakened He said, "Why are you afraid, O men of little faith?" Matthew uses the Greek word *oligopistoi* for "little faith." It could be more accurately translated "brief faith." Faith is not measured so much by quantity as by quality. The faith that pleases God is steadfast, enduring and stable. Faith that is here today and gone tomorrow or that vacillates with circumstances, "emotionally up" one day and "emotionally gone" the next day is unacceptable to God.

8:24-25 Power: All three of the synoptic gospel writers used the Greek word *epitimao* to express Jesus' action in "rebuking" the wind and the sea. *Epitimao* means "to lay honor upon." In other words, Jesus laid His honor (power and authority) upon nature and it obeyed Him immediately. As co-Creator (Jn. 1:1-18; Col. 1:16) and co-Sustainer (Col. 1:17; Heb. 1:3) He exercises His sovereign authority over the elements and they do His will. Jesus was not "scolding" nature: He was simply ordering it to do His will. Luke, like Matthew, indicates Jesus wondered where the faith of the disciples had gone, for he reports Jesus asking, "Where is your faith?"

Whereas before they were afraid at the raging of the storm, now they were awe-stricken with the power of Jesus over the elements. With simply a word He gave orders and was obeyed immediately. There is no possibility that this was a hoax. These men were fishermen by occupation. They had sailed this sea hundreds of times. They knew what storms were like. This was no ordinary storm—and it was real. The storm was stopped suddenly (not gradually) and at its apex. So these men said, "Who is this, that he commands even wind and water and they obey him?" Who is He indeed! He is Lord of all creation! What have you decided about Jesus? If we stand in awe before the almost unbelievable powers of nature (even of atomic power) how much more must we bow our wills to the absolute authority of His word!

SECTION 3

In Evil Spirits (8:26-39)

26 Then they arrived at the country of the Gerasenes, which is opposite Galilee. 27 And as he stepped out on land, there met him a man from the city who had demons; for a long time he had worn no clothes, and he lived not in a house but among the tombs. 28 When he saw Jesus, he cried out and fell down before him, and said with a loud voice, "What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beseech you, do not torment me." 29 For he had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. (For many a

time it had seized him; he was kept under guard, and bound with chains and fetters, but he broke the bonds and was driven by the demon into the desert.) ³⁰Jesus then asked him, "What is your name?" And he said, "Legion"; for many demons had entered him. ³¹And they begged him not to command them to depart into the abyss. ³²Now a large herd of swine was feeding there on the hill-side; and they begged him to let them enter these. So he gave them leave. ³³Then the demons came out of the man and entered the swine, and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and were drowned.

34 When the herdsmen saw what had happened, they fled, and told it in the city and in the country. ³⁵Then people went out to see what had happened, and they came to Jesus, and found the man from whom the demons had gone, sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in his right mind; and they were afraid. ³⁶And those who had seen it told them how he who had been possessed with demons was healed. ³⁷Then all the people of the surrounding country of the Gerasenes asked him to depart from them; for they were seized with great fear; so he got into the boat and returned. ³⁸The man from whom the demons had gone begged that he might be with him; but he sent him away, saying, ³⁹"Return to your home, and declare how much God has done for you." And he went away, proclaiming throughout the whole city how much Jesus had done for him.

8:26-33 Emancipation: Matthew says Jesus arrived across the Sea of Galilee at the "country of the Gadarenes." Both Mark and Luke make the place of arrival "the country of the Gerasenes." The Greek manuscripts vary here probably due to the fact that Matthew, writing mostly for a Jewish audience, used the name of the city Gadara (about 5 miles southeast of the seashore), which would be more likely used by the Jews, as a generalization for the whole area. Mark and Luke, writing mostly for a Gentile audience used the name of a city 50 miles south of the Sea of Galilee, Gerasa (the Roman capital of the whole region) as a synonym for the whole area. Both Gadara and Gerasa were cities of the Decapolis mentioned in the New Testament. Some ancient Greek texts read "Geresa" which may be a scribal emendation (attempting to correct what was thought to be an error in an earlier manuscript) since there apparently was a city on the eastern side of the Sea of Galilee closer to the seashore than Gadara.

Matthew says there were two men possessed of demons. Mark says there was a man with an unclean spirit. Luke says Jesus met a man from the city who had demons.

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- a. Matthew, Mark and Luke are all correct. They are inspired. Our removal from the situation by 2000 years is the problem.
- b. Probably Mark and Luke were interested in recording the more dominant one (the more spectacular one) possessed of many demons.
- c. Mark confirms in his account that the man was possessed of more than one demon (Mk. 5:14-20).
- d. Modern-day news reporters vary in accounts just as these men did and no one accuses them of historical errors.
- e. There is no contradiction unless Mark says "there was *only* one demon-possessed man."

Luke records that when Jesus stepped out of the boat onto the land there met Him a man from the city (Gadara) who had demons. For an extensive discussion of demon possession in the New Testament see our comments on Luke 4:32-41. Modern archaeologists have excavated the cliffs around Gadara (today called, Um Keis) and found tombs measuring 20 feet square, with side recesses for bodies. Like the demoniacs, people still dwell in them today. Nearby there is a field of several acres strewn with stone coffins and their lids. Every demon possessed person Jesus met received compassion and pity from Him. This was an exceptionally pitiful case.

- a. The man had been naked for a long time.
- b. He lived in tombs among dead bodies.
- c. He was seized with fits of violence many times by the demons.
- d. He was kept under guard and bound with chains and leg irons by the people of the area.
- e. But he broke the chains and irons and the demons drove him into the uninhabited wild places of the area.

When the man saw Jesus, he prostrated himself on the ground before Jesus and (the demons, or one specific demon among many) cried out, "What have you do to with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beseech you, do not torment me." Demons recognize their true sovereign! Jesus is Lord of *all*, and the demons know it. They know they have nothing in common with Jesus except that He is ultimately set to punish them in torments. When asked his name, the man said, "Legion." A Roman "legion" of soldiers numbered 6000, thus the word *legion* came to signify *many*. The word *abyssos* in classical Greek meant "bottomless," and was used to describe the ancient Greek cosmogony of a deep, limitless universe or space beyond this world. In the N.T. it is used to describe the "nether" world or the place of torments where the disobedient spirits are bound. It is translated "bottomless pit" in Rev. 9:1; 2, 11; 11:7; 17:8; 20:1-3. The demons feared this "bottomless pit" more than anything else.

The demons begged Jesus to allow them to inhabit a herd of swine feeding near the tombs. Mark says there were approximately 2000 swine in the herd. There were strict prohibitions in Judaism against Jews eating, raising or touching swine. However, the Jews who lived east of the Jordan River often accommodated themselves to the culture of the Gentile majority and paid little attention to religious custom, especially if it involved economics. We do not really know if the herdsmen were Jews or Gentiles. The demons knew Jesus would not allow them to inhabit human beings—He cast them out at every opportunity. They knew they were doomed to return to the abyss if they had no physical body in this world to inhabit. Perhaps they also knew that since the swine had no will by which they could control them, they could destroy the swine and Jesus would be blamed by the populace and the demons would have some temporary victory over Him. The malicious, destructive rebellion of the devil and his cohorts is graphically illustrated here. They will grasp at any straw to destroy anything God has made!

They did not fool Jesus! He knew all along the outcome of this incident. He was not being merciful to the demons. He knew this would shock the materialistic-minded people of this country (which they proved to be, 8:37) out of their indifference later when the man who had been emancipated from this demonic enslavement testified among them how much God had done for him. Many people of this area later became followers of Christ and some of the earliest Christian churches were formed in this area. Anyone who finds occasion to denounce Jesus for allowing swine to be destroyed is as spiritually blind as the people of Gadara were. They see neither the salvation of the one pitiful demon-possessed man nor the subsequent discipleship of the whole area as important as the loss of private property. Foster comments, "How often this is the main thing which men consider—material loss—and not the rescue of human beings! . . . The perverted estimate of the value of material things and of a human soul must needs be corrected." The issue was really: which is more important, hogs or men?

8:34-39 Effects: This spectacular demonstration of divine authority over demons and the material creation resulted in a number of exciting consequences:

- a. When the herdsmen saw what happened, they fled, and told it in the city and country. Spontaneous evangelism!
- b. Then people went out to see what had happened. No one could remain indifferent to such stories—they had to see for themselves.
- c. The multitudes saw the man clothed and in his right mind and were afraid.
- d. When the story was told again of how the demons were cast out of the man and the swine ran down into the sea and drowned, the

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people were seized (Gr. *suneichonto*, grasped, gripped in, laid hold of) by great fear (Gr. *phobos*).

The impact of what Jesus had done, and Who He must be paralyzed them with fear at what He might yet do.

e. The people of the area entreated Jesus to leave their area. They may have been concerned that more private property might be destroyed by this mysteriously powerful Galilean. More probably, they were afraid of Him because of their sinful guilt. Even Peter had earlier cried, "Depart from me, O Lord, for I am a sinful man" (Lk. 5:8).

Guilty, unforgiven sinners, in the presence of divine holiness and power are slain and destroyed with fear!

f. The man kept on begging Jesus that he might go with Him:

- (1) His love and gratitude would make him ready to serve Jesus with his very life.
- (2) He could be sure of staying rid of demon possession if he remained at Jesus' side.
- (3) Everyone in this area knew him and would forever associate him with the loss of 2000 hogs.

But Jesus had a work for him to do right in the most difficult place on earth to live for Christ—one's own home area.

The emancipated man proclaimed throughout the whole region what Jesus had done for him. The record of this great demonstration of divine power had been proclaimed now for almost 2000 years and millions have believed Jesus is who He claimed to be and have been freed from an enslavement worse than 2000 demons.

SECTION 4

In Enfeebling Sickness (8:40-48)

40 Now when Jesus returned, the crowd welcomed him, for they were all waiting for him. ⁴¹And there came a man named Jairus, who was a ruler of the synagogue; and falling at Jesus' feet he besought him to come to his house, ⁴²for he had an only daughter, about twelve years of age, and she was dying.

As he went, the people pressed round him. ⁴³And a woman who had had a flow of blood for twelve years and could not be healed by any one, ⁴⁴came up behind him, and touched the fringe of his garment; and immediately her flow of blood ceased. ⁴⁵And Jesus said, "Who was it that touched me?" When all denied it, Peter said, "Master, the multitudes surround you and press upon you!" ⁴⁶But

Jesus said, "Some one touched me; for I perceive that power has gone forth from me." ⁴⁷ And when the woman saw that she was not hidden, she came trembling, and falling down before him declared in the presence of all the people why she had touched him, and how she had been immediately healed. ⁴⁸ And he said to her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace."

8:40-42 The Seeking: Jesus left the eastern side of the Sea of Galilee and sailed in a boat (Mt. 9:1; Mk. 5:21) back to Capernaum. The multitudes received Him back with gladness (Gr. *apedexato*) or "welcomed" Him. Mark tells us that the multitudes thronged about Him at the sea-shore (Mk. 5:21) and they continued to gather and press in upon Him until it became almost impossible for Him to move. Everyone was trying to touch Him (cf. Mk. 5:30-31 with Lk. 8:45). Luke informs us the multitudes had been waiting (Gr. *prosdokontes*, expecting, anticipating with eagerness) for Him to return. This was about the middle of the second year of Jesus' public ministry. It was the year of great popularity—conducted mostly in Galilee. Crowds followed Him wherever He went surrounding Him, begging Him to heal them or do some miracle for them to improve their physical and material situation. The scenes out in the streets and highways of Galilee would resemble the scenes of modern American cities when America's President walks their streets, except that Jesus had no bodyguards or roped-off areas to keep the crowds at a distance. In this teeming, pushing, chattering throng, there was a "ruler" of one of the synagogues by the name of Jairus. Matthew and Mark record that Jairus spoke to Jesus, saying, "My little daughter is at the point of death. Come and lay your hands on her, so that she may be made well and live." Luke, always the precise physician, notes that she was his only daughter and she was twelve years of age. Jesus had apparently sat down and was teaching this clamoring crowd, for Matthew indicates Jesus "rose" and followed Jairus with His disciples. The great multitude went right along toward Jairus' house, continuing to press in upon Jesus and His disciples as they walked.

8:43-48 The Saved: On the way to the home of Jairus, in the midst of the clamoring crowd was a woman who had a "flow of blood" (hemorrhage) for twelve years. Mark records the woman "had suffered much under many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was no better but rather grew worse." Some ancient manuscripts of Luke's gospel also note that the woman "had spent all her living upon physicians." Her infirmity was incurable by the physicians of that day (perhaps even by physicians of today). She must have been very emaciated and weak. The "fringe" of the garment is called *tzitzith* in Hebrew and *kraspedou* in Greek. It consisted of tassels of twisted cords fastened to the outer

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garments as borders on cloaks or coats to remind Israelites of their obligations to be loyal to Jehovah (cf. Nu. 15:38-39; Deut. 22:12). Later such "fringes" became distinct badges of Judaism and many of the Pharisees lengthened theirs to make a public show that they considered themselves more "righteous" than the common people.

Why did the woman want only to touch the fringe of His garment? (Mt. 9:21; Mk. 5:28). She was probably ashamed to approach Jesus face to face since her hemorrhage made her "unclean" ceremonially (Lev. 15:19-31). As a result she was banned from the public, banned from the temple worship services, and should she touch anyone else she would make them "unclean" (cf. Num. 19:22). Considering the woman's helpless, hopeless and shameful plight it is to her credit that she had not become bitter. She had heard the reports about Jesus (Mk. 5:27) and believed He could heal her even if all she could do was touch the fringe of His garment. Her faith was not based on mysticism or on her own feelings—but on reports from eyewitnesses to former healings by Jesus. Our faith that Jesus is who He claims to be and will do what He says is based on the very same kind of evidence—eyewitness testimony. Her faith in Jesus was, to some extent, born of desperation. This is the case with all of us. Ultimately none of us will trust in Jesus until we are convinced there is nothing else that can save us. We must all finally come to the point where we despair even of life itself before we learn to rely on God (cf. II Cor. 1:8-9). When we have come to that place, then the testimony of who Jesus is (historical evidence) and that He is able to save, is there in the Bible for us to believe and act (obey) upon.

Luke records precisely that when she touched Jesus her flow (Gr. *hrusis*) of blood ceased. Mark uses a less precise and more figurative description, literally, "and immediately was dried up the fountain of the blood of her . . ." (Mk. 5:29). The healing was instantaneous—not gradual. No need for her to return to Jesus for more healing sessions. We feel sure that Jesus not only knew someone had touched Him, but that He also knew who. Why then did he ask? Probably to (a) publicly prove the woman's cure so that she might return to worship in the temple and social fraternization; (b) to make sure she knew that the power to heal was with Jesus, not His cloak; (c) to give the woman an opportunity to express her gratitude and become a witness to those in that crowd of who Jesus was. When Jesus asked who had touched Him, all in the crowd denied it (probably afraid He was upset about it). Peter and His other disciples thought it rather odd that Jesus would suddenly become aware someone had touched Him when the crowd had been pressing in upon Him, undoubtedly jostling and bumping and touching Him all the way from the seashore. But Jesus was talking about an unique touch—a touch of faith. Jesus perceived (Gr. *epignous*, "knowing") that power

had gone forth from Him. The Greek word *ginosko* is *not* used to describe physical sensations but mental comprehensions. Jesus had no particular sensation that power had gone from Him, but he *knew* it. Even the woman's "feeling" in her body that she was healed (Mk. 5:29) is described by the Greek word *ginosko* and means she *knew* it mentally—not emotionally. It actually happened to her—she didn't just "feel" like it had happened.

The woman saw that she could not remain anonymous (ashamed because of her "unclean" condition). If Jesus had the power to heal her in such a miraculous way, He would surely know who had touched His garment. She came trembling (Gr. *tremousa*) and prostrated herself down before Jesus in the presence of that pushing, shoving crowd and declared (Gr. *apengeilen*, from *apangello*, meaning, "to declare precisely, plainly and clearly") why she had touched Him and how she had been immediately cured. But Jesus spoke tenderly to her (she was probably expecting some rebuke from this great rabbi because she had touched Him when she was "unclean") and said, "Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace." All three gospel writers use the Greek word *sesoken* (from *sodzo*, meaning primarily, "saved") which has been translated in the RSV, "well." The woman had been delivered and saved from her physical infirmity and thus made well. And then He told her to "go in peace." *Peace* in Hebrew is *shalom* and means, "well-being, integrated wholeness, goodness." Jesus meant for the woman to go her way also in spiritual well-being for her faith in Him had delivered her from her "uncleanness." She was restored to communion with God. She could now return to the temple to offer sacrifices and worship. This was the greatest aspect of her healing! Some day, she would become ill again and die, physically, but she had been restored to fellowship with God and that was what made her "well" in the ultimate sense. Jesus demonstrated His power over the ultimate disease—sin.

SECTION 5

In Eternity (8:49-56)

49 While he was still speaking, a man from the ruler's house came and said, "Your daughter is dead; do not trouble the Teacher any more." ⁵⁰But Jesus on hearing this answered him, "Do not fear; only believe, and she shall be well." ⁵¹And when he came to the house, he permitted no one to enter with him, except Peter and John and James, and the father and mother of the child. ⁵²And all were weeping and bewailing her; but he said, "Do not weep; for she is not dead but sleeping." ⁵³And they laughed at him, knowing that she was dead. ⁵⁴But taking her by the hand he called, saying, "Child, arise."

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⁵⁵And her spirit returned, and she got up at once; and he directed that something should be given her to eat. ⁵⁶And her parents were amazed; but he charged them to tell no one what had happened.

8:49-53 Only Believe: Jairus had been following Jesus closely all the time. No doubt Jairus was growing more anxious for his daughter's life moment by moment. While Jesus was still speaking to the woman healed of her "issue of blood" Jairus was standing next to Jesus in the pushing, pressing multitude. Suddenly, pushing through the crowd, came someone from Jairus' house (he was the ruler of a synagogue in Capernaum and a very important man of the community) blurting out the shocking news, "Your little daughter is dead, do not vex the teacher any longer." There was no doubt on the part of the messenger that the little girl was dead for he used the Greek word *tethneken*, a perfect tense verb which indicates the child had died before he left the house and was even now dead. Jairus must have been "pestering" Jesus constantly to hurry up to this house for the Greek word *skulle* ("trouble") literally means "to flay off the skin of someone" and so in a figurative way means to "agitate, vex, annoy, distress."

Jesus, hearing the shocking announcement, spoke directly to Jairus (Gr. *apekrithe*, "answered him"), rather tersely, "Do not fear, only believe and she will be saved." The Greek word translated "well," is *sothsetai*, the future tense of *sodzo*, meaning, "to save, to make whole." It is the same word Jesus used with the woman with an issue of blood. Jesus did not explain how the child would be "saved" or who would do the saving—He implied that Jairus was simply to trust Him and all would be well. Arriving at Jairus' house, Jesus entered the house with only Peter, John and James, and Jairus and his wife (cf. Mk. 5:37). Inside the house was pandemonium; flute players (Mt. 9:23), a tumult (Mk. 5:38), and a crowd of people weeping and bewailing the child loudly (the Greek word, *thorubon*, translated "tumult" in Mk. 5:38-39, literally means, "loud, deafening noise, confusion"). Confusion, loud wailing, flutes playing funeral dirges, and rooms packed with curiosity-minded people was in no way conducive to the majestic, yet privately tender thing Jesus was about to do, so He "put them all outside" (Mk. 5:40), He commanded them (Gr. *anachoreite*, imperative mood), "You all withdraw" (Mt. 9:24) "for she is not dead but is sleeping."

Jesus knew He was going to clear the house of all the confusion and noise by ordering the mourners outside. What he was going to do needed to be done, for the sake of the parents and the girl, as privately as possible. This was no time for even more confusion and uproar, well-intentioned though it might be. At the same time, Jesus wanted eyewitnesses to the event whose personal involvement might not later be challenged as

it might if the father and mother themselves were the only witnesses. These three disciples would be impersonal and objective in their observance. Furthermore, it is evident from verse 56 that Jesus wanted as little publicity of this miracle as possible because it would simply attract more and more multitudes seeking *only* healing, and intensify official opposition, (cf. also Mt. 9:26). If people wanted to believe and trust Jesus for forgiveness and salvation, He had already done enough miracles. Jesus did not have to heal every single sick person in the world to establish His power and faithfulness to keep His promise to forgive. As a matter of fact, the more physical healing that took place, the more people tended to seek it and neglect the cleansing of their souls unto salvation.

Why would Jesus say the child was "sleeping" when it was plain to everyone present she was dead? As G. Campbell Morgan puts it, "From Christ's viewpoint that is not death which we call death. When the spirit has left the body, that is not death. Death is a deeper thing than that." Physical death is merely the separation of the spirit from the body. Jairus' daughter still lived, somewhere, in another existence, absent from the body of flesh. Jesus wants everyone to know that the child is very much alive somewhere else, and that He has the power to bring her back from there to her fleshy body if He wishes. For Jesus, "death" is separation from God. Sin brings death in all its terrible reality. Death is *separation* from goodness, truth, purity, loveliness, wholeness and guiltlessness. Separation from God is by choice. Men may choose death or life. Life is by faith in God and His son. This little girl was not "dead"—she evidently believed in God and was still alive somewhere else. So Jesus simply used a figure of speech to describe the state of her present existence as one of rest (cf. Rev. 14:13)—not unconsciousness. When He spoke to her, she heard and obeyed. Jesus has the power to speak to invisible spirits. But when Jesus said, "She is sleeping" the people laughed at Him. The Greek word is *kategelon*, literally, "laughed-down"—in other words, they scorned Him or ridiculed Him.

8:54-56 Overwhelmingly Blessed: This miracle, as recorded by the gospel writers, demands an absolute decision about Jesus one way or another. Either He did raise this little girl from the dead or He is the world's biggest fraud. The account precludes any possibility of mythology or figurative language. Taking the girl by the hand, in the presence of her parents and three disciples, Jesus said (in Aramaic, Mk. 5:41), "Talitha cumi," which means, "Little girl, I say to you, arise." Surely her parents knew whether she was dead or not. If Jesus simply pretended to raise her from the dead and did not, what a cruel trick He tried to play upon the bereaved parents. If she was not dead, what a cruel trick Jesus has played upon millions of believers (including His own contemporaries).

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If either of these propositions be true Jesus should not be considered a teacher worthy of following no matter how eloquent His doctrines. But Jesus is no fraud! He actually raised the girl from the dead.

The gospel writers record that the little girl got up immediately and walked and Jesus directed that she be given food to eat. All this proves beyond any doubt that it was a real resurrection and not a symbolic one. This was no spiritist seance—Jairus' daughter was no ghost! The parents were “amazed” with great astonishment (Mk. 5:42). The Greek word *exestesan* is translated “amazed” but literally means, “stand out from.” In other words, the girl's parents were “beside themselves” with astonishment at what Jesus had done.

Why would Jesus enjoin the parents to tell no one what had happened? We have already discussed the probable reasons above. Matthew notes that “the report of this miracle went through all that district” (Mt. 9:26) so someone told. In the very next chapter of Luke's gospel we see that Jesus' great popularity as a miracle-worker precipitates an official inquiry by the murderous Herod Antipas (Lk. 9:7-9) and poses problems for the further conduct of a public ministry by Jesus (Lk. 9:11-17; Mk. 6:31-44; Mt. 14:13-21). These are the fundamental reasons Jesus wanted to “keep a low profile” as a miracle-worker.

STUDY STIMULATORS:

1. What is the “seed” in the parable “of the sower”?
2. What is Jesus saying generally about evangelism or proclamation of the gospel in the parable of “the sower”?
3. How is the attempt of Jesus' mother and brothers to see Him an illustration of the parable of the “sower”?
4. How did Jesus evaluate the faith of His disciples during the storm at sea?
5. How many demon-possessed men came to meet Jesus on the other side of the sea?
6. Do you see a problem in the ethics of Jesus in allowing the demons to destroy a herd of swine? Why?
7. In such a clamoring, pushing multitude in Capernaum, why was Jesus concerned that someone had touched Him?
8. What implications, other than physical, did the woman's hemorrhaging have upon her life?
9. Why did Jesus command the mourners to leave the house of Jairus?
10. Why did Jesus say the little girl was asleep when she was dead?
11. Why did Jesus tell the parents to tell no one what had happened?

IS THERE DEMON POSSESSION TODAY AS THERE WAS DURING THE TIME OF CHRIST'S INCARNATE MINISTRY?

By Paul T. Butler

It is my opinion that there is no demon possession of human beings today in the precise manner such as manifested in the phenomenal way it was during Christ's incarnate ministry (and perhaps as it was during the remainder of the ascendancy of the Roman empire).

It is my opinion that the "binding of Satan" in Rev. 20:1-6 was initiated and resulted from the redemptive work of Christ in His Incarnation. It was completed when the "beast" of the 4th universal empire (as Daniel predicted), Rome, fell. At that time, it is my opinion, demon possession, as manifested in the Gospels and Acts apparently was to cease. All binding of Satan is relative. He has always been "bound" to some degree or other due to the fact that God is Almighty. God is the only being who is Almighty. It is my opinion a part of Satan's binding has to do with the restriction imposed by God that Satan's demons are no longer able to "possess" human bodies as they were during the time of Christ's incarnation.

1. To have this opinion does not mean I deny the power of Satan to deceive the minds of people today who deliberately choose to believe falsehood perpetrated by "lying signs and wonders." If the definition of demon possession means simply that Satan has captured the minds of men by unbelief, I would agree.
"Satan entered into Judas . . ." (Lk. 22:3 and Jn. 13:27) but he was not what other scriptures describe as "demon possessed."
2. Do the alleged demons possessing people today ever enter into animals? (See Mt. 8:28-34; Lk. 8:26-36; Mk. 5:1-16.)
3. Do the alleged demons possessing people today ever testify to the identity and deity of Christ or the messengers of Christ and what their work is? (See Acts 16:17; 19:15; Mt. 8:29; Mk. 1:24 and above references.)
4. Do the alleged demons possessing people today ever speak out as recognizable separate individuals—definitively separate from the human whose body they possess?
5. How may demons (alleged) today be exorcised? Is the exorcism always miraculous and always instantaneous? If not, is it simply a matter of conversion by the power of the gospel regenerating the mind through preaching and teaching? When there is an unsuccessful exorcism, or casting out, are those possessed by alleged demons doomed to suffer such possession until they die?
6. Only Jesus could give power to exorcise demons. That was a direct gift and a supernatural power. It apparently did not require being a "born again" believer to receive this power—Judas apparently was given this power—he was one of the twelve (cf. Mt. 10:1, 8).
7. On the other hand, many pseudo-faith-healers today, and "ministers" from all differing theological and doctrinal positions, claim they have

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cast out or exorcised demons. Whom are we to believe? Who has that power today among all who claim it? What are we to conclude from their claims? Who is to decide which are "real" demons and "real" exorcists? By what criteria?

8. Demons in the scripture were not "ecto-plasm"—they were (and still are, in the abyss) real persons!
9. The psychic powers of the human mind over matter have been well documented. What some think is demon possession could very well be such psycho-somatic phenomena. Voodooism, etc., may be classified under this heading.
10. The most destructive power of the devil is not possession of a human body but a mind or soul (cf. Mt. 10:28). It appears that while demons possessed bodies of some humans during Christ's incarnation—the mind or soul of that person was not possessed. Demons merely "troubled" humans (Lk. 6:18); they "drove" people to do, physically, what they did (Lk. 8:29).
11. Of all the miraculous gifts the Corinthian Christians were given, exorcism of demon possessed was not among them (I Cor. ch. 12-14).
12. How do we know when someone is demon possessed? What is the criteria by which distinction is made between demon possession and epilepsy, mental illness, perverted maliciousness and crazed murderousness (e.g. Hitler, de Sade, etc.)?
13. Is it not possible that all the mania for the occult and the practice of it is being used by the devil to get people to think he has powers which he does not really have (Rev. 13:13-15)?
14. If demon possession could only come to those who were willing—was the "little daughter" of the Syro-Phoenician woman a "willing" victim? In other words, demon possession had nothing to do with the willingness of the possessed. Therefore, exorcism was not done by "conversion" but by the exercise of divine authority in a miraculous way.
15. It seems apparent that only Jesus and the apostles, or specially endowed disciples (Lk. 10) could exorcise demons. This they did, not by "conversion" but by miracle. There is no evidence from the scriptures that this miraculous power could be given by any other than Christ Himself and that while He was in His incarnate ministry.
16. If miracles of healing, speaking in foreign languages, prophecy, including "discernment of spirits" (I Cor. 12:10), etc., ceased with the end of the New Testament era and the death of the apostles (or the ones to whom the apostles imparted these gifts), so that we can only be certain of the documented miracles of Scripture, then the same principle ought to be applied, for the same reason, to demon possession and exorcism.

IS THERE DEMON POSSESSION TODAY?

Otherwise, we are in a quandry to decide about modern claims of demon possession and exorcism among religious groups from one end of the doctrinal spectrum to the other. There are also pagan exorcists making claims.

17. There really is not any documentation of demon possession in the Old Testament such as occurred during the Incarnation (with an exception or two, e.g. King Saul).
18. It appears, then, that demon possession in the precise manner in which it occurred during Christ's incarnate ministry was uniquely for the purpose of affording historical evidence that Christ (and His apostles) possessed the Sovereign Spirit of God—that their message was one of victory and power over Satan and all of hell.
19. A recent case in point, excerpts from article in Joplin, Mo., *Globe*, 3-8-81:

Catholic priests were "attempting" to rid an 11 year old boy in Brookfield, Conn. of "demons." (The boy's name is unknown.)

A 19 year old friend was watching these sessions, challenged the demons "to take me on. Control me. Leave this boy alone," acc. to tape recordings of the sessions. Arne Johnson was the friend.

Johnson allegedly stabbed to death a co-worker (Alan Bono) after Bono had quarrelled at Bono's apartment.

Johnson is now pleading that "he is not responsible for his acts" because of "demonic possession."

Ed and Lorraine Warren, who worked on the Amityville Horror case were asked to help the boy who "appeared to be possessed" (the 11 year old boy). The Warrens said they found "movement of objects and frightening manifestations" in the house. The Warrens said "the boy was indeed possessed," and he seemed to be possessed "off and on, 24 hours a day," said one family member. Tape recordings the Warrens made of some of the sessions have the boy making gutteral and hissing sounds, cursing his mother, and threatening to stab and kill those present in the room.

Photographs of the sessions show family members attempting to restrain the boy, who the Warrens said seemed to have superhuman strength.

A priest named Virgulak was called to investigate the case; he has made several reports to the bishop of the diocese, but no public reports. He has "declined to discuss the reports but said no formal exorcism has ever been requested or performed on the boy."

There were "prayer sessions" called "a deliverance" which is supposed to be "a lesser form of exorcism that does not require approval of the bishop."

The Warrens say Johnson's attempts to help the boy were amateurish

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because "the only way to order demons out of a person is by using the name of Jesus Christ."

Mrs. Warren said, ". . . (Johnson) he challenged what was within the child to take him on—and none of us ever do that, not even priests."

Problems with this account:

- a. Based on a number of "begging the question" statements such as, "appeared to be . . .," "seemed to be . . .," "seemed to have . . .," "no public reports . . .," "supposed to be . . .," "approval of the bishop. . . ."
- b. "In the name of Jesus" means in the Bible, "by the authority of Jesus." Does Roman Catholicism have the "authority of Jesus" to exorcise? The "name of Jesus" is to be used in exorcism by only those authorized to use it (cf. Acts 19:13-16). Whom are we to believe now has that authorization? What credentials do they present for it? Do such exorcists agree doctrinally with the Word of the Holy Spirit in the Bible? If not, are we to believe they have the power of the Spirit?
20. There are two Old Testament prophecies, clearly Messianic, which predict the cessation of "sorceries and soothsayers" (Micah 5:12-13), and "unclean spirits" or demon-possession (Zech. 13:2). Homer Hailey, in his book, *A Commentary on the Minor Prophets*, pub. Baker, sums up Zechariah 13:1-6 in these words, "A fountain for sin and uncleanness will be opened for all the people. At that time the falsehood of idols will cease, prophesying will be discontinued, and the unclean spirits will pass out of the land." Mr. Hailey contends that Zechariah 13:1-9 is entirely Messianic and says, "Once the foundation was laid and the new revelation was complete, the need for prophets would cease. Daniel indicates the same in a strong Messianic prophecy, when he said of the anointed one, the prince, that He would bring in everlasting righteousness, and seal up vision and prophecy. Likewise, unclean spirits, the antithesis of the prophets, would cease. In the conquest of Christ over Satan and his forces, unclean spirits have ceased to control men as they did in the time of the ministry of Christ and the apostles."
21. Of course, these prophecies from Micah and Zechariah do not preclude the *attempts* of human beings and Satan to try *to deceive* the world that demon possession and sorceries are still supernaturally viable. We believe the Bible clearly indicates what is alleged today to be supernatural demon possession is no longer a possibility. *Lying* wonders and *deceiving* signs remain very much a possibility so long as men and women refuse to believe and love the truth and prefer to believe what is false (see II Thess. 2:10-12; II Tim. 4:3-4, etc.).
21. The crucial and ultimate question about modern (alleged) demon possession is: *Whose testimony is reliable?* Whose testimony is inerrantly, infallibly reliable besides the testimony of the Scriptures? None! Any man today, without the inerrancy and infallibility of the Holy Spirit to verify his experience and accredit his testimony may be either deceived or a deceiver.

Chapter Nine (9:1-62)

THE SON OF MAN ANTICIPATING HIS EXODUS

IDEAS TO INVESTIGATE:

1. Are the instructions to the twelve disciples about evangelism applicable to all Christians (9:1-6)?
2. Why did Jesus tell the twelve disciples to give the thousands of hungry people something to eat (9:13)?
3. If Jesus wanted to know what people thought of Him, why did He tell the disciples to tell no one who He was (9:18-22)?
4. Who would not taste death until they should see the kingdom of God (9:27)?
5. To what extent was Jesus' appearance altered on the high mountain (9:28-36)?
6. How could Jesus' deliverance into the hands of wicked men be concealed from His disciples if He had already predicted it to them (9:45)?
7. Why wouldn't the Samaritans let Jesus and His disciples stay over in their country (9:51-56)?

SECTION 1

Training The Twelve (9:1-9)

9 And he called the twelve together and gave them power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases, ²and he sent them out to preach the kingdom of God and to heal. ³And he said to them, "Take nothing for your journey, no staff, nor bag, nor bread, nor money; and do not have two tunics, ⁴And whatever house you enter, stay there, and from there depart. ⁵And wherever they do not receive you, when you leave that town shake off the dust from your feet as a testimony against them." ⁶And they departed and went through the villages, preaching the gospel and healing everywhere.

⁷Now Herod the tetrarch heard of all that was done, and he was perplexed, because it was said by some that John had been raised from the dead, ⁸by some that Elijah had appeared, and by others that one of the old prophets had risen. ⁹Herod said, "John I beheaded; but who is this about whom I hear such things?" And he sought to see him.

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9:1-6 Exciting Mission: The great year of popularity was drawing to a close. Even in Galilee the storm clouds of opposition were gathering on the horizon. A "crash course" in evangelism was in order for the Twelve. For two years the disciples have been soaking up the "class-room" lectures—now they are to have their first "field-trip" all on their own. Now they are to put to practice, without the Teacher's close supervision, the principles they have been taught. There is no way to learn to do evangelism but to do it! Methods are fine but no one method will suit every circumstance or personality.

The more detailed account of this event in Matthew 10:5-42 must be studied along with Luke's account here. Someone has outlined the event (as detailed in all three gospels) thus: Jesus conferred upon the Twelve (a) His mission, (b) His message, (c) His miracles, (d) His miseries, (e) His mastery. His purpose for sending them out was at least three-fold: (a) to multiply the effect of His mission to proclaim the kingdom of God, (b) to provide them with empirical evidence of His miraculous power when they should later become the only eyewitnesses to His death and resurrection, (c) to let them learn evangelism by doing. Matthew records that in addition to their power over unclean spirits and every disease, they were also given power to raise the dead. Their main objective was, of course, to preach the coming of the kingdom of God—miracles were merely to validate their message as the truth.

Due to the increasing opposition and disenchantment with Jesus (soon thousands of disciples will turn away from Him, Jn. 6:66), this mission of the Twelve was to be an intense and extensive mission. Jesus fully expected to join them later "before they had gone through *all the towns of Israel*" (Mt. 10:23). Their message was "the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Mt. 10:7). There is no indication that they proclaimed Jesus to be The Christ. In fact, afterward at Caesarea Philippi, Jesus forbade the disciples from making such a public declaration. Matthew records that Jesus told the disciples not to go "among the Gentiles . . . or Samaritans." That did not mean they should not preach the kingdom to Gentiles and Samaritans should some of them be found in the cities and villages of Israel. It simply meant that the time was not yet available or opportune for an extensive ministry in Gentile and Samaritan cities outside the confines of Israel's borders.

Because of the intensity and rapidity necessary for their work (if they are to cover all the towns of Israel) Jesus placed limitations upon their physical and financial preparations. According to Matthew, Jesus told them, "You received without pay, give without pay." That does not mean that they were not to receive any financial or logistical support whatever in their ministry. In fact, Jesus concludes by instructing them to receive graciously and courteously any "room and board" offered

to them during this evangelistic tour, (cf. Mt. 10:11-14; Mk. 6:10-11; Lk. 9:4-5). The N.T. is clear that those who preach the gospel should have their livelihood supplied by those who receive the preaching (cf. I Cor. 9:1-14; Gal. 6:6; Phil. 4:15-17, etc.). Preaching and teaching the Word of God is work and the laborer is worthy of his hire! On the other hand, the preacher or teacher is not to be a mercenary—a hireling—preaching *only* for financial gain. The preacher should not approach his work like the worldly-minded man—“how much am I going to get out of it.” He should “put on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provisions for the flesh” (Rom. 13:14). That is exactly what Jesus is trying to teach the Twelve by His limitations here. They are not to devote their energies to making elaborate and unnecessary material preparations. Luke and Matthew say, “take no staff” while Mark says, take nothing “except a staff.” Apparently the one staff (walking stick, also used to protect against highway robbers) every Palestinian traveler carried would suffice—they were not to make provisions for another one, an extra one. They were to carry no “duffel-bag” since they were to carry nothing extra; neither food or clothing, shoes or money. Jesus is instructing the Twelve to *put to practice* the Sermon on the Mount—“do not be anxious, what you shall eat or what you shall wear . . . seek first the kingdom of God . . . and all these things shall be added unto you” (Mt. 6:25-34).

Jesus also instructs these beginners that the evangelist must make wise use of time. The gospel message is a deposit from God to men over which they must exercise good stewardship. Notice the method Jesus gave the Twelve. First, they were to survey the city or village and find a home hospitable to their mission and to them (Mt. 10:11). They were to make that their headquarters (Mt. 10:11; Mk. 6:10; Lk. 9:4) and stay there until they had done their work and were ready to move on. While there, they were to be courteous and hospitable themselves, saluting the house and letting their “peace” come upon their hosts. Peace in Hebrew is *shalom* and means, “I pray for and will contribute all I can to God blessing you with well-being, both physical and spiritual.” What Jesus is really saying is that the Twelve should make expressions of their gratitude to their hosts, both verbal and physical. God does not wish to have ingrates and tactless men in His service. Thankfulness is probably the most beautiful characteristic of a man’s life—ingratitude is the most heinous sin (cf. Rom. 1:21). Third, if they were totally rejected in a city or village, or when they found no further hospitality to their mission in a place, they were to warn those opposing them that their blood was on their head as they rejected God’s message and His messengers (Mt. 10:14-15; Mk. 6:11; Lk. 9:5) and “shake the dust of that town from their feet.” Shaking the dust from one’s feet was used by Jews to

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symbolize disassociation from that which would incur guilt. Pharisees did this when they re-entered Judea from pagan territory.

Jesus is also giving the Twelve their first realistic experience of the tension between God's kingdom in the hearts of men and the mind of the flesh. There must be no further sheltering of these men from the antagonism of unbelief. They must not be nurtured on any illusions that discipleship to Christ would be tolerated by the worldly-minded. They must learn first hand that they were to be engaged in a life and death struggle and the disciple is not above his Master. But this is not the only world there is, so the Twelve were encouraged not to fear the battle or the enemy of God. He promised that if they would endure to the end of their lives they would receive their reward in heaven. If they feared God and loved Him more than life itself they would find eternal life (cf. Mt. 10:17-42).

9:7-9 Evil Machination: While the Twelve were rapidly covering as many cities and villages of Israel as they could with the message of the coming kingdom of God, Jesus was also circulating among the cities and villages preaching the same message. The "kingdom fever" was reaching astounding proportions. In just a few weeks thousands of people will attempt to take Jesus and force Him to be king (Jn. 6:15). When some of the dissolute, guilt-ridden, half-pagan politicians of Galilee (including Herod Antipas himself) heard all the accounts of miracles and "kingdom fever" circulating in Galilee they became superstitiously terrified that John the Baptist had come back to life. All kinds of conjectures were made. Some said it was Elijah returned from the dead or one of the old prophets. It presented Herod Antipas with a paralyzing problem. The Greek word translated "perplexed" is *dieporei* which means literally, "no way out." Herod thought he had gotten rid of any threat to his throne when he beheaded John the Baptist. Josephus states Herod gave as his public excuse for executing him that John was about to cause a revolution. Matthew and Mark tell the real reason Herod executed John. Any time Herod's position as ruler was threatened (whatever the approach such a threat took) all Herod could think to do was eliminate that threat by murder.

The Greek verb *ezetei* (translated, "sought") is in the imperfect tense and means, "he kept on seeking" to see Jesus. Herod had just killed John the Baptist because of his great popularity with the people and because he had threatened Herod's continued influence over the people by denouncing Herod's immoral union with Herodias. And now Herod turns his suspicions on Jesus. Jesus has been carrying on a campaign in every city and village of Galilee proclaiming the kingdom of God which has stirred up political excitement. Therefore it is abundantly evident why Herod wants Jesus found and brought to see him. But Jesus, when He heard all this, withdrew to a lonely place (cf. Mt. 14:13; Mk. 6:31; Lk. 9:10-11; Jn. 6:1).

SECTION 2

Teaching The Throng (9:10-17)

10 On their return the apostles told him what they had done. And he took them and withdrew apart to a city called Bethsaida. 11 When the crowds learned it, they followed him; and he welcomed them and spoke to them of the kingdom of God, and cured those who had need of healing. 12 Now the day began to wear away; and the twelve came and said to him, "Send the crowd away, to go into the villages and country round about, to lodge and get provisions; for we are here in a lonely place." 13 But he said to them, "You give them something to eat." They said, "We have no more than five loaves and two fish—unless we are to go and buy food for all these people." 14 For there were about five thousand men. And he said to his disciples, "Make them sit down in companies, about fifty each." 15 And they did so, and made them all sit down. 16 And taking the five loaves and the two fish he looked up to heaven, and blessed and broke them, and gave them to the disciples to set before the crowd. 17 And all ate and were satisfied. And they took up what was left over, twelve baskets of broken pieces.

9:10-12 Desperation: This is one year before Jesus is to die the horrible death of crucifixion, accused of blasphemy and sedition. The disciples are definitely not prepared for this. Their hopes are centered in an earthly kingdom. So Jesus will spend the next six months (from Passover to Tabernacles) withdrawing from the hostility of His enemies and, at the same time, trying to isolate Himself from the fanatical multitudes. He wants to prepare the Twelve for the crucial climax of His earthly ministry. It is instructive that even Jesus recognized the need for His disciples to take a rest occasionally (see Mark 6:31; Greek *anapausasthe*, from which we get the English word, *pause*).

When we compare all four gospel accounts of this incident (Mt. 14; Mk. 6; Lk. 9; Jn. 6) we understand that the main reason for Jesus' withdrawal with the Twelve was the desperate, clamoring fanatical multitudes. Everywhere Jesus and the Twelve went the multitudes pressed upon them, crying out, demanding miracles be done for them. The poor, hungry, oppressed multitudes of Jesus' day, for the most part, had lost all hope in the promises of the prophets. All they could anticipate was continued oppression under the hated Herods, plus theological bigotry and hypocrisy under the Pharisees. They did not know where to turn for truth, compassion and, their deepest need, righteousness. It was at this moment Jesus "had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd" (Mark 6:34). When these desperate,

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hopeless thousands found out where Jesus was taking His Twelve on a "retreat" (to the eastern side of the Sea of Galilee), they ran there on foot (from the cities and villages of Galilee) ahead of Him (cf. Mt. 14:13; Mk. 6:33). Jesus went across the northern tip of the sea in a boat (from Capernaum to Bethsaida, see Mt. 14:13) and the multitude, gathered in Capernaum (Jesus' headquarters) from the recent preaching tour of Jesus and the Twelve, ran around the northern tip of the sea (some 2-3 miles) on foot. This great miracle-worker would not be allowed to get away. These poor down-trodden multitudes had at last been given a glimmer of hope. At last someone had come not to exploit them and oppress them, but to heal and excite them with the promise of the "kingdom of God." They had their hearts set on making Him king (Jn. 6:15).

Jesus had compassion on these throngs not only for their economic and political desperation but also because of their spiritual darkness. They were completely obsessed with the idea that the kingdom of God was some humanly-structured organization which would solve all their earthly distress. John's Gospel specifically states they "followed him because they saw the signs which he did. . ." (Jn. 6:2). Why, then, did Jesus "welcome" this clamoring multitude when He was trying to get away from this very kind of superficiality; and why did He eventually work one of His greatest miracles for the very people who were putting such emphasis upon miracles? The fundamental purpose behind the enigmatic action of Jesus here is plainly seen when one connects the miraculous feeding of these thousands with His great sermon on The Bread of Life a day later in a synagogue at Capernaum (Jn. 6:22-71). The student *must* study this great sermon, recorded only by John, to understand the miracle of the loaves and fish. It is in this sermon that the compassion of Jesus for their spiritual darkness is really manifested. He pours out His heart in this discourse explaining that the real "bread" is His word (Jn. 6:63) and unless men "eat" and "drink" His word they are not really alive.

Jesus also took this unwanted circumstance (the hungry thousands) to teach the Twelve an important lesson. This multitude (numbering about five thousand men plus thousands of women and children) had probably left Capernaum and other villages early that morning to walk around the shore of the Sea of Galilee to a hillside near Bethsaida Julius. It was now late in the evening, and few of them had foresight to bring enough food with them. Perhaps most of them did not have enough at home to bring any with them. Whatever the case there was nothing to feed this vast multitude out there on the hillside so the Twelve became anxious. Their's also was a desperation of doubt. They really did not ask Jesus what could be done, they came and gave Him an order to (Gr. *apoluson*, imperative, "Dismiss") send the crowd away into the cities

nearby to find food and lodging. They also missed the point that what this multitude needed more than anything else was to realize Who Jesus Is. The Twelve thought the most urgent need of the crowd was earthly bread, and they knew they could not supply it, or did not want to. Perhaps they were also betraying a selfish indifference when they directed Jesus to send the crowd away to find food for themselves. They had retreated to this area specifically to "rest."

9:14-17 Demonstration: John tells us that Jesus knew what He was going to do about the situation but to test the faith and compassion of the Twelve, He said to them, "How are we to buy bread so that these people may eat?" (Jn. 6:5). The apostles had no answer except to send the people away to fend for themselves. So Jesus said to the apostles, "You give them something to eat!" In the Greek His statement reads literally, "Give (*dote*, imperative) to them to eat, you." This is an idiomatic way of putting the emphasis on "you." They complained that 200 day's wages (denarii) would not buy enough bread for this multitude. Andrew reported that the only vestige of food they had found among this great throng was five loaves and two fish a little boy had with him. Jesus said, "Bring them here to me" (Mt. 14:18). Then Jesus directed the apostles to have the thousands sit down upon the green grass of the hillside (it was early Spring, around Passover time) in groups of about hundreds or fifties (cf. Mk. 6:39-40). Mark uses the Greek words *sumposia sumposia* "companies upon companies" which literally refers to groups of party-goers or picnickers. Mark is describing the festive air about this great event.

Taking the five loaves and two fish Jesus looked up to heaven and blessed and broke the loaves and divided the fish, gave to the Twelve and they distributed among the thousands. All the thousands ate and were satisfied and the Twelve gathered up twelve baskets of left-over fragments. All four gospel writers record this astounding fact. Where did the miracle take place? Was it when Jesus broke and divided—or was it when the apostles went among the thousands making distribution? It really isn't indicated in the records, nor does it really matter. The point is it was an empirical demonstration of Jesus' supernatural power to create. This miracle and the one immediately following (Jesus' walking on the Sea) are two of the most indisputable miracles recorded of Jesus. The feeding of this vast multitude of people had so many witnesses there was no possibility of fraud. Foster points out, "A magician can fool a great crowd because his hands can move faster than the eyes of the people who watch. But here was a miracle in which everyone of the thousands present had a part. They all shared the feast." No magician or hypnotist could fool that many thousands of people. When these four gospel writers published their accounts near the middle of the first century A.D. there would have been plenty of people still alive who had

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attended that great feast on the hillside. If the gospel writers were liars someone would have been quick to publish evidence to discredit them about such an astounding fraud.

Although this miracle did not have much impact on the multitudes in its relationship to Jesus' spiritual mission (many of them followed Him no more, Jn. 6:66) it did have tremendous impact on the Twelve. They acknowledged Him as the Holy One of God and the only One to whom they might cling (Jn. 6:68-69). It is worthy of notice that even though Jesus had the power to create as much bread and fish as He wished, He would not tolerate waste. Twelve *large* (Gr. *kophinoi*, coffins) basketfuls were gathered up of the leftovers.

SECTION 3

Testing The Twelve (9:18-27)

18 Now it happened that as he was praying alone the disciples were with him; and he asked them, "Who do the people say that I am?" 19 And they answered, "John the Baptist; but others say, Elijah; and others, that one of the old prophets has risen." 20 And he said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" And Peter answered, "The Christ of God." 21 But he charged and commanded them to tell this to no one, 22 saying, "The Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised."

23 And he said to all, "If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. 24 For whoever would save his life will lose it; and whoever loses his life for my sake, he will save it. 25 For what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses or forfeits himself? 26 For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words, of him will the Son of man be ashamed when he comes in his glory and the glory of the Father and of the holy angels. 27 But I tell you truly, there are some standing here who will not taste death before they see the kingdom of God."

9:18-21 Crystallization of Confession: Although Jesus wished to withdraw from the multitudes that His disciples might rest and He might concentrate on their personal training, He conducted an extensive ministry between the feeding of the thousands and the confrontation of the Twelve at Caesarea Philippi. The following events, not recorded by Luke, transpired between Luke 9:17 and Luke 9:18:

1. Walking on the Water, Mt. 14; Mk. 6; Jn. 6
2. Miracles at Gennesaret, Mt. 14; Mk. 6
3. Sermon on Bread of Life at Capernaum, Jn. 6
4. Controversy with Pharisees about traditions, Mt. 15; Mk. 7
5. Healing Syro-Phoenician woman's daughter, Mt. 15; Mk. 7
6. Healing deaf stammerer, Feeding 4000, Decapolis, Mt. 15; Mk. 7
7. Pharisees & Sadducees demand sign at Magadan, Mt. 16; Mk. 8
8. Warns disciples against leaven of Pharisees on Sea of Galilee, Mt. 16; Mk. 8
9. Healing of blind man at Bethsaida, Mk. 8

It may have appeared to the Twelve as if Jesus were retreating. He had refused the crown from the five thousand; He had not yet shown the characteristics expected by the populace in their Messiah; at Magadan it appears as if the Pharisees and Sadducees have him in retreat. The religious leaders have demanded a sign from heaven (a sign of military or political power) but Jesus refused to give such a sign since sufficient evidence for His claims had already been given. Jesus walks away from this confrontation, gets into a boat and heads across the Sea of Galilee toward the northeast. What are the disciples to think? Popular opinion circulating the countryside is confused, trying to find some great prophet with which to compare Him (Jeremiah or Elijah). Jesus seems to have given up the struggle with His opponents.

The Lord knew that this was a critical point in His whole earthly mission. So He proceeds to take the disciples apart from the confused, clamoring multitudes to a place of privacy for questioning and teaching. Jesus knows He must crystallize their convictions concerning His identity and His mission in anticipation of the very dark hours ahead. The only solution to the hopelessness and despair of mankind in rebellion against God is to convince, confirm and commit these twelve disciples to the knowledge of His deity and then to commission them to introduce Him as Savior and Lord to the world.

The city of Caesarea Philippi was typical of the predicament of man in sin (then and now). In earlier times it was called Panium because it was a center of worship for the Greek god, Pan (god of all nature). It was destroyed but rebuilt by the Romans and named after the Roman emperor, Caesar, and eventually became a center of worship to Caesar Augustus. In 31 B.C. the Battle of Actium brought an end to 100 years of civil war in the Roman empire. Men were sick of war and thought they had brought an end to human misery. But 25 years later in the days of Jesus, men were as disillusioned as ever. Injustice, immorality and inveterate hatred between cultures and races was as deeply ingrained in men's hearts as it had ever been. Mankind desperately needed the

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Anointed One of God, The Christ. Whether mankind came to know its *only* Savior or not depended upon whether Jesus could crystallize the firm, but immature, convictions the Twelve had about Him.

Jesus called the Twelve to confess (Gr. *homologeo*, "say the same as") Him. He called them to commit themselves to a Person, Himself, and not a cause. It is important to contemplate the questions Jesus did *not* ask the disciples here. He did *not* ask them what they thought of the political situation, the religious status quo or the economic circumstances. He did *not* say to Peter, "Who are you, Peter?" He did not indicate, as much modern psychology does today, that man's fundamental problem is a "self-identity crisis"—that man needs above all else to find out who he is. Contrary to the world's way of thinking, Jesus knew man's problem was his confusion about God's identity. So Jesus demanded these men (upon whom the program of the world's redemption would soon fall) solidify their convictions about His identity.

What we possess we profess, and what we profess we propagate. If the conviction of the disciples about Jesus' identity was really deeply possessed they would profess it. It is also axiomatic that the more a person professes someone or something, the more he possesses it. It is in repeated confession or profession that decision is confirmed and the will is set. Jesus, in asking the disciples who they had decided He was, was aiming for a decision. Jesus Christ always cuts through the jungle of muddled human confusion and speculation and aims at man's logic. Our minds must be made up about His identity. Only he who is convinced will commit himself. C.S. Lewis says, "Every time you make a choice, you are turning the central part of you that chooses into something a little different from what it was before. And taking your life as a whole with all your innumerable choices, all your life long you are slowly turning this central thing either into a heavenly creature or into a hellish creature." The N.T. has a great deal to say about *confession* (cf. Rom. 10:9-10; I Jn. 2:23; I Jn. 4:15, etc.).

9:22 Call to Conform: It was the will of God that the Christ should suffer and die and be raised from the dead on the third day. The suffering of the Messiah was predicted in many places in the Old Testament (i.e., Isa. 53; Psa. 22, etc.). Few of the Jews ever recognized this. Most of Jesus' disciples would not consider it a possibility (cf. Lk. 24:13-27). Therefore, at this most opportune time and place, Jesus focuses all His power of persuasion on the Twelve in an attempt to convert their Jewish preconceptions about the Messiah to the revealed will of God. After Peter's emotionally charged confession of Jesus' identity, and Jesus' characterization of His church (Mt. 16:17-19), the Lord abruptly made the shocking prediction about His death. It wasn't that the disciples were naive and didn't know all the hostility Jesus had aroused in the

religious leaders of the day. They expected some crisis sooner or later, but they believed (probably from Jewish tradition) that the Messiah would fight and conquer His enemies and they were prepared to fight to the death for Him (Mt. 26:35; Mk. 14:31). But they were not willing to accept a Messiah who would become "a lamb led to the slaughter"—they refused to think in these terms. Matthew and Mark record that Peter "rebuked" Jesus for His prediction of a passive death (Mt. 16:22; Mk. 8:32).

Immediately, the Lord rebuked Peter (Mt. 16:23; Mk. 8:33). Peter had, in fact, become the adversary (Satan) of Christ! Peter stood opposed to the will of God. He was a stumbling-block (Gr. *skandalon*, "scandal") in the path of Christ because He was "minding" the things of worldly-minded man rather than "minding" the things of God. Jesus intended that His followers conform their minds to the revealed mind of God in everything. God's revealed mind about the Messiah was that He should die a vicarious death to atone for the sins of all the world.

Most men applaud someone who dies for a cause. The world admires martyrdom (as long as I am not the martyr). Millions have sacrificed their lives for political ideologies and they are national heroes. But Jesus' death was different than all of this. He died for man's *justification* before God! Man has absolutely no moral merit by which he can stand before God except trusting in the atoning death of Christ in his place. A man may sacrifice his life to preserve my physical life and I may admire him and be thankful. But to believe there is nothing good in me that would cause God to accept me without Jesus' death means death to my human pride. That is what makes the doctrine of the cross "foolishness to the Greeks and a stumbling-block to the Jews," (cf. I Cor. 1:23). Think of it this way: If you should die right now and appear before God and He should ask, "Why should I let you into My heaven?" what would be your answer? The only answer acceptable to God would be, "Because I convenanted with Christ to accept His death for my sins and He promised to give me His life." The self-righteous egotism of the human heart adamantly resists vicarious justification. Some few men claim they do not want to go to heaven after death—they want nothing to do with God, truth, holiness, or everlasting goodness. Most other men who do propose to go to heaven after they die aim to do so because they have done enough good deeds to balance out their bad deeds and thus feel they deserve to go there. Let us illustrate: A prominent theologian once wrote, "We hear much of the substitutionary theory of the atonement. This theory to me is immoral. If Jesus paid it all, or if He is the substitute for me, or if He is the sacrifice for all sin of the world, then why discuss forgiveness? The books are closed. Another has paid the debt, borne the penalty. I owe nothing. I am absolved.

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I cannot see forgiveness as predicated upon the act of someone else. It is my sin. I must atone." Thus reasons self-righteous man. This is the way the world thinks, but it is *not* the way God thinks! God has revealed His will concerning man's justification. Man, therefore, has only two options: (1) reject the revealed mind of God in scripture and, assuming he is more powerful than God, try to justify himself apart from Christ's vicarious atonement; or, (2) believe the revealed mind of God, Christ's death in his place, and accept it by entering into covenant relationship on Christ's revealed terms. Man must "mind" the things of God—man must conform to the will of God, executed in the death and resurrection of Christ, communicated in the N.T. scriptures.

9:23-27 Challenge to Commitment: The acceptance by faith of Jesus' death in man's place is precisely what these verses are teaching. To "deny himself" means to literally do what Peter did later to Christ! The Greek word *aparnesastho* means, "to disown, to contradict, to deny utterly any connection." It does not mean to abstain from certain pleasures and indulgences; *it means to deny, disown self*. It means to admit Self is dead. It means to acknowledge that I have no claims or rights for Self anymore because I "am bought with a price" (I Cor. 6:19-20) and I am not my own! *I am dead in Christ!* "One died for all, therefore all have died," (II Cor. 5:14). He died our death, we live His life! Paul said it very succinctly in Galatians, "I have been crucified with Christ (when Christ died); it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. . . ." (Gal. 2:20).

The struggle to believe and accept and practice this occurs *daily*. Every day we must "take up the cross" and accept the death of Self. Dying to Self may only be done by faith—not by feeling or by good works, because the death of Self occurred at a point in ancient history—at the crucifixion of Christ. The death of Self is, of course, accepted and applied to each person at the point in time when that person enters the New Covenant by confession and immersion in water according to the covenant terms. Good works are the fruit of death to Self by faith, but they are not the cause of that death—Jesus is the cause!

One of the great paradoxes of the Christian faith is that men must die to live. Jesus states it, "For whoever would save his life will lose it; but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it." What does Jesus mean? He gives us a clue in the following phrase, "For what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses or forfeits himself?" The Greek word *heauton* is more emphatic ("himself") than the word *psuchen* ("soul") which is in the parallel passages (Mt. 16:26; Mk. 8:35). *Life is identity*; life is being, personality, character. *Life is purpose*. If there is no purpose there is really no life. God made man for a purpose. That purpose was to be conformed to the image of His Son (cf. Rom. 8:29). God made us to be truthful, faithful, pure, good, loving and thankful.

In this we find our true identity. When we accept the death of Self in the death of Christ and let Him live His life in us, we become children of God, joint heirs with Christ. God adopts us as His children and gives us His name. That is the only identity which will last forever. If Christ is ashamed of us (Lk. 9:26) and does not confess us before the Father, we have no identity. Those who search for life apart from union with Christ will hear Christ say, "Depart from me, you who work iniquity, I never knew you." To be separated from Christ is death—eternal death. Apparently in the place of eternal death (Hell) there will be consciousness but no "life." If there is no life there is no purpose, no identity. The man with no godly purpose or character in this life will have none in Hell. Hell will be an eternal purposelessness, eternal falseness, eternal insecurity, anguish, disorientation and non-identity.

What has a man gained if he forfeits his birthright to be identified as a child of God and has all the power, fame and riches the world offers? He loses himself! So now we see why Jesus considered it so crucial that His disciples confess His identity. The only way men find out who they really are is to confess and commit themselves to the true identity of Jesus as Christ—Lord!

Having mentioned that He would come for final judgment "in his glory and the glory of the Father and of the holy angels" (v. 26), Jesus did not want His disciples to confuse the Second Coming with other events which will manifest the power of His kingdom (such as the destruction of Jerusalem). Therefore Jesus states (v. 27) that some of the disciples standing there with Him would not die before they saw the kingdom of God come ("with power" Mk. 9:1). The popular Jewish concept was that when the Messiah came "in his glory . . . with the holy angels" it would be the "end of the world." What event was Jesus talking about in v. 27 (Mt. 16:28 and Mk. 9:1 also)? Apocalyptic language in both the O.T. and N.T. often describes any great intervention of God in history as the "coming of God" in judgment or redemption. There was only one of the Twelve dead before the establishment of the Church on Pentecost —Judas. The language of Jesus seems to imply that more than one would "taste of death" prior to the event described here. We think He was speaking of the destruction of Jerusalem. Later, He speaks of the destruction of Jerusalem in the same apocalyptic style (cf. Lk. 21:25-28; Mt. 24:29-31; Mk. 13:24-26, see also Mt. 26:64). Many of the apostles died before the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. John, and perhaps a few others, lived beyond that event. The destruction of Jerusalem also destroyed the Jewish State and its religious power. Christianity was rescued from apparent obliteration. No longer would it be considered an illegal Jewish sect. It went forth to establish firm "beachheads"

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in the world of paganism and cause the Roman empire to tremble at its power. In this sense those who lived beyond the destruction of Jerusalem truly saw "the kingdom of God come with power."

SECTION 4

Transfiguration (9:28-36)

28 Now about eight days after these sayings he took with him Peter and John and James, and went up on the mountain to pray. 29 And as he was praying, the appearance of his countenance was altered, and his raiment became dazzling white. 30 And behold, two men talked with him, Moses and Elijah, 31 who appeared in glory and spoke of his departure, which he was to accomplish at Jerusalem. 32 Now Peter and those who were with him were heavy with sleep, and when they wakened they saw his glory and the two men who stood with him. 33 And as the men were parting from him, Peter said to Jesus, "Master, it is well that we are here; let us make three booths, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah"—not knowing what he said. 34 As he said this, a cloud came and overshadowed them; and they were afraid as they entered the cloud. 35 And a voice came out of the cloud, saying, "This is my Son, my Chosen, listen to him!" 36 And when the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone. And they kept silence and told no one in those days anything of what they had seen.

9:28-32 Exodus: A week after the critical confrontation with the Twelve concerning His identity and Peter's carnal-minded rejection of His destiny of death, Jesus took the Twelve up on a high mountain to pray. This must have been Mount Hermon, a huge mountain, reaching 9232 feet above sea level at its peak. Caesarea Philippi was at the foot of this mountain. The mountain so dominated the entire land of Palestine it could be seen on a clear day from as far south as the Dead Sea. The Arabs named it, *Jebel esh Sheikh*, "the great mountain." It is doubtful that Jesus took the Twelve to the peak. They probably ascended to a secluded spot somewhere up the side of the mountain where they could find privacy. Both Matthew and Mark indicate the Lord took them "apart" for the purpose of privacy (Mt. 17:1; Mk. 9:2). While He was praying, the appearance of His face became *different* (Gr. *heteron*), and His clothing became gleaming white. Matthew and Mark say He was transfigured (Gr. *metemorphothe*; the word from which we get the English word *metamorphosis*). In Philippians 2:6-7 Paul writes that Christ having had the *morphe* (form) of *theou* (God) willingly assumed the *morphe*

(form) of *doulou* (a slave). Here on Mount Hermon the man *metamorphosed* (changed form) back into God the Son of glory. W. E. Vine says, Luke avoids the term *metemorphote*, which might have suggested to Gentile readers the metamorphoses of heathen gods, and uses the term, "became different." This was no phenomenon which could be explained by nature. It was not something externally happening to Jesus; it was emanating from within His very nature. Hobbs says, "It was His deity from within flashing forth in resplendent glory. The deity, which had been like a wick turned down low, suddenly was turned up to its brilliant brightness." Here was physical, scientific evidence that Jesus was the Incarnate God. The disciples had been in the presence of God and hardly realized it. Peter later testified of this event (II Pet. 1:16-21) to prove that what he preached about the deity of Jesus Christ was no myth. Peter was an eyewitness to Christ's majesty.

Suddenly, another spectacular phenomenon took place. Appearing with the metamorphosed Jesus were Moses and Elijah. The sleep-dazed disciples came wide awake! Moses and Elijah had been dead for some thousand years. But those who have departed this world still live in the constant presence of Almighty God and He has the power to make them appear at any time and place suitable to His purpose (cf. I Sam. 28:1ff.). Moses and Elijah, symbolizing all the Law and the Prophets, talked with Jesus about His "departure" (Gr. *exodon*; English, *exodus*). They were discussing Jesus' impending crucifixion and resurrection. Why did God choose this particular point in time for this great meeting between Heaven and earth? Because Jesus had reached the "watershed" of His earthly ministry. From this point onward popularity will be replaced by rejection and opposition. His ministry, viewed from human perspectives, will appear to be a tragic failure. It is at this point God will affirm unequivocally that is not so.

- a. It would encourage Jesus, Himself. It was predicted (Isa. 49:4ff.) that the Messiah would be discouraged but would be able to overcome it. Jesus was Man, very man, tempted in all points as we are tempted. It was only by the glory that was set before Him that He was able to endure the cross (cf. Heb. 2:10ff.; 5:7-9; 12:1-2; Lk. 22:42). Even His own disciples had become "stumbling blocks" to Him in their rejection of His mission. Fowler (*Matthew, Vol. III*, College Press, pg. 588) points out that the Father's affirmation of His pleasure in His Son would warm Jesus' heart "and encourage Him in His lonely mission among unsympathetic men." Fowler compares it to "the encouragement felt by an expert pilot flying through a storm-tossed night with no visible landmarks, when suddenly a voice comes over the radio, saying, 'We've picked you up on radar, friend, and you're right on course!'"

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- b. It would arrest the creeping carnality of the disciples. There must be a direct and drastic correction to their obstinately cherished worldly view of the Messiah and His kingdom. The appearance of Moses and Elijah discussing with Jesus His "exodus" would confirm that the Messiah's death was in complete harmony with all the Old Testament revelation (cf. Lk. 24:44-46). Jesus' "exodus" was symbolized by the Exodus from Egypt and the Exodus from Captivity. All the redemptive symbols of the O.T., the sacrificial lamb, the Passover, the victories over their enemies, find their fulfillment in Jesus' "exodus"!
- c. It was also to demonstrate that the death of the Messiah was no accident. It was in the plan of God all along. It would show that God was forever in control—men cannot wrest control of the universe and the goal of history from God's hands. God can intervene in history at any moment with supernatural power. He knows the beginning from the end and predicts it for man's salvation. It proved to Peter, and all who trust him as an eyewitness, that no prophecy about Jesus ever originated from man. The Transfiguration made the prophetic word "more surely" from God. All men will do well to pay attention to this as to a lamp shining in a dark place (II Pet. 1:19ff.).

9:33-36 Exclamation: Peter, impetuous Peter, so quick to speak and so often missing the mark, suggested they make three "booths" (Gr. *skēnas*, "tabernacle, tent"—same word used in Hebrews 9:2, etc.), one for Jesus, one for Moses and one for Elijah. The two great representatives of Israel's destiny of the glorious past, Moses and Elijah, were departing. It had been predicted that at the outset of the messianic age a prophet like unto Moses would be raised up (Deut. 18:18ff.) and Elijah would come (Mal. 4:5). Both Luke and Mark comment that Peter did not know what he was talking about. Apparently he had seriously misinterpreted the significance of this sublime moment when Heaven came so close to earth.

- a. When Peter said, "It is good for us to be here. . . ." he may have been suggesting that Jesus should take this Transfiguration as a sign from Heaven cancelling out His prediction of imminent death. Perhaps Peter supposes, "Heaven is on Your side, Master, You are not going to die; surely our religious leaders will not go against Moses and Elijah if they know about this, so let us build three shelters and keep them here with us until this is made known down in Jerusalem."

- b. Peter said, ". . . let us make three booths . . ." He was completely enthralled by the supernatural event he had just witnessed. Still thinking of the kingdom of God in terms of the popular materialistic concept, Peter envisioned this as the fulfillment of Zechariah 14:16-19. Rabbinical and apocryphal interpretation of Zechariah's prophecy concerning the Feast of Tabernacles (Booths) literalized the return of Elijah, conquest of the nations by the Jews, reinstitution of the Jewish theocracy, and the remnant of the Gentiles coming to Jerusalem to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles. Peter was ready to be one of the first to celebrate Tabernacles in the new age of Israel.
- c. When Peter said, ". . . one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah . . ." it was evident he still did not understand that Jesus was different than other great human leaders. He did not fully comprehend that Jesus was God in the flesh or that Jesus had authority to abrogate and fulfill all Moses and Elijah had revealed. Hebrew Christians had a very difficult time accepting the superiority of Jesus over the Old Testament and that is why the book of Hebrews was necessary.

No wonder, then, that Luke editorializes, "Peter did not know what he was saying." Peter was wrong on all three suggestions. The Heavenly Father quickly corrected that by engulfing them in a supernatural cloud and speaking audibly, in their language, "This is my Son, my Chosen (Gr. *eklelegmenos*, perfect tense verb, meaning, "one having been elected or chosen out from among others in the past and continuing to be chosen"); listen to him!" The phrase, "listen to him!" is in the Greek imperative mood and means it was a command! The disciples were to hear and accept the fact that the Messiah was destined to die at Jerusalem; that what the Messiah had been saying about His kingdom being a spiritual kingdom was correct; that the Messiah had come to fulfill and take out of the way the Law of Moses and the Prophets. The Law and the Prophets would not be destroyed (cf. Mt. 5:17f.) but wherever they stood in the way of man's complete reconciliation to God, Jesus would bring about their completion.

When God finished speaking, Matthew notes the disciples fell on their faces with awe and fear, but Jesus came and touched them, saying, "Rise, and have no fear." Then, when they looked up Moses and Elijah were gone, so was the enveloping cloud and Jesus was there alone. Matthew and Mark note that as they were descending from the mountain side Jesus "commanded" them not to tell anyone what they had seen until the Son of man was raised from the dead. And, amazingly, they did not! Would men have believed them if they had? It is doubtful.

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Today men who do not accept the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ as an historical fact discredit the transfiguration of Jesus as either a myth or some subjective, emotional religious experience of the disciples themselves. But Peter was an eyewitness. And he emphatically declares it was no myth (II Pet. 1:16-21). The credibility and authenticity of Peter's testimony is unimpeachable. This event really happened just as the three Synoptics say it did.

SECTION 5

Tenderness Amid Tragedy (9:37-45)

37 On the next day, when they had come down from the mountain, a great crowd met him. ³⁸And behold, a man from the crowd cried, "Teacher, I beg you to look upon my son, for he is my only child; ³⁹and behold, a spirit seizes him, and he suddenly cries out; it convulses him till he foams, and shatters him, and will hardly leave him. ⁴⁰And I begged your disciples to cast it out, but they could not." ⁴¹Jesus answered, "O faithless and perverse generation, how long am I to be with you and bear with you? Bring your son here." ⁴²While he was coming, the demon tore him and convulsed him. But Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit, and healed the boy, and gave him back to his father. ⁴³And all were astonished at the majesty of God.

But while they were all marveling at everything he did, he said to his disciples, ⁴⁴"Let these words sink into your ears; for the Son of man is to be delivered into the hands of men." ⁴⁵But they did not understand this saying, and it was concealed from them, that they should not perceive it; and they were afraid to ask him about this saying.

9:37-43 Failing Faith: The next day after the Transfiguration, Jesus came down from the mountain with Peter, James and John. There was a great crowd of people gathered around the other nine apostles (who had been left at the foot of the mountain during the Transfiguration). The crowd was involved in an argument with some Jewish scholars (scribes). Seeing Jesus approaching, the crowd ran to greet Him. Jesus asked the crowd what they were discussing with the scribes. The reader should study this incident from a harmony of the Gospels in order to get the full impact of it.

A man from the crowd came to Jesus kneeling (Mt. 17:14) and bellowed (Gr. *eboesen*, from *boao* which is the word used to describe John the Baptist's crying loudly, or bellowing forth in the wilderness), "Teacher, I plead with you, direct your attention to my son, because he is my only

son and, see, a spirit takes him and suddenly he screams out as he is convulsed with spasms." Matthew records that the father of the boy said he was "moonstruck" (Gr. *seleniazetai*, translated, "epileptic," Mt. 17:15). Doctor Luke uses the Greek word, *sparssei*, from which we get the English word, *spastic*. The boy was demon-possessed (9:42). The demon tortured the boy by causing him to fall into fires, into water, foaming at the mouth, grinding his teeth, dashing him down upon the ground and "bruising" (Gr. *suntribo*, "to shatter, to smash, to crush, to break") him.

Then the boy's father cast a lightening bolt into the situation. He said, "I plead with your disciples to cast the demon out of my boy but they were not able." Jesus' immediate reaction was to accuse His own disciples of being part of a "faithless and perverse" generation and to ask exasperatedly, "how long must I bear with you?" Was Jesus justified in speaking so severely to these disciples? Indeed! Why should He be partial toward any person? Any display of unbelief, especially in people who have been given so many extra-ordinary opportunities to know the truth and such miraculous confirmations of it, deserves quick and firm correction. Jesus minced no words with the two disciples on the way to Emmaus (Lk. 24:25-27) for their unbelief. Jesus rather bluntly corrected His own mother (Jn. 2:4; Lk. 8:19-21).

Jesus cast out the demon commanding it, "Come out of him, and never enter him again" (Mk. 9:25). He gave the boy back to his father and all the multitude was astonished at the very apparent demonstration of the majesty of Almighty God.

9:44-45 Fearful Forecast: The proper relationship to Jesus does not consist in marveling over the miraculous but in faith in the face of the fearful. While this particular crowd stood around subjectively soaking up the great privilege they had enjoyed by their close proximity to a real miracle, Jesus turned to His disciples with a fearsome forecast of His messianic fate. Jesus took the twelve aside and resumed His journey south through Galilee (see Mt. 17:22; Mk. 9:30) for He had something of utmost importance to say for their ears only. So He prefaced His remarks with this command, "Let these words sink into your ears. . ." The Greek verb *thesthe* is in the imperative mood (a command) and is from *tithemi* which means, "put in, deposit, establish." What Jesus is about to say to them is not just to make conversation. It is imperative that what He is about to say be deposited in their minds so that it may become a part of their thinking processes. And what were these all-important words? ". . . The Son of man is to be delivered into the hands of men." Their Master, their Lord, the One they recently confessed to be "the Holy One of God" (Jn. 6:69), is going to be killed and raised again after three days (cf. Mt. 17:22-23; Mk. 9:31-32). It is important for them to believe this because it is the will of God for the Son of man

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(the Messiah). Jesus must emphasize it and stress it because of the worldly-minded view of the Messiah held by most of the Jews (see our comments on Luke 9:18-27).

But the disciples did not understand what Jesus said to them. How could grown men not understand a statement as straightforward, un-mysterious, plain and brief as, "The Son of man is to be delivered into the hands of men and they will kill him; and when he is killed, after three days he will rise"? The fact of death, even violent death at the hands of enemies is a common experience to mankind. Resurrection from the dead is not! This may be the reason they could not understand it. But Luke goes on to say that what Jesus said was "concealed" from them and they could not perceive it. The Greek word *parakekalummenon* means "to cover with a veil." The Greek verb is in the perfect tense indicating that the veiling had taken place previous to this statement and was continuing to veil their thinking. This same Greek word is used in II Corinthians 3:12-18 and 4:3 where it is talking about the veiled revelation concerning the messianic age in the Old Testament and that the devil uses this, along with man's unbelief, to hide the gospel. It was not God who concealed from the minds of the apostles the understanding about the Messiah's death and resurrection, for the Prophets predicted it (Isa. 53, etc.). It was not Jesus who concealed His death and resurrection from the Twelve, for He predicted it very plainly four times (Lk. 9:22; Lk. 9:44; Mt. 20:17-19; Mt. 26:1-2). It was the apostles themselves, choosing not to believe Jesus about His death, who were concealing the meaning of His teaching, (see Mt. 16:21-23; Mk. 8:31-33). What the Lord says is perceived only if man is willing to let His word find a place in his heart (cf. Jn. 7:17; 8:37; 8:45, etc.). The parable of the soils illustrates this (see our comments on Luke 8:1ff.). The disciples deliberately resisted any thinking about this subject (the death of the Messiah) because it "distressed" them (Mt. 17:23) and it was a subject about which they were "afraid" (Mk. 9:32; Lk. 9:45) to seek any more information. Let all followers of Jesus of all ages take warning from the spiritual failure of the Twelve here. It is a betrayal of Christian discipleship to reject any teaching of the New Testament with the *a priori* that it does not conform to human experience. What Jesus commands and promises is accepted by faith in Who He Is!

SECTION 6

Taming Temperaments (9:46-62)

46 And an argument arose among them as to which of them was the greatest. ⁴⁷ But when Jesus perceived the thought of their hearts,

he took a child and put him by his side, ⁴⁸and said to them, "Whoever receives this child in my name receives me, and whoever receives me receives him who sent me; for he who is least among you all is the one who is great."

49 John answered, "Master, we saw a man casting out demons in your name, and we forbade him, because he does not follow with us." ⁵⁰But Jesus said to him, "Do not forbid him; for he that is not against you is for you."

51 When the days drew near for him to be received up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem. ⁵²And he sent messengers ahead of him, who went and entered a village of the Samaritans, to make ready for him; ⁵³but the people would not receive him, because his face was set toward Jerusalem. ⁵⁴And when his disciples James and John saw it, they said, "Lord, do you want us to bid fire come down from heaven and consume them?" ⁵⁵But he turned and rebuked them. ⁵⁶And they went on to another village.

57 As they were going along the road, a man said to him, "I will follow you wherever you go." ⁵⁸And Jesus said to him, "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man has nowhere to lay his head." ⁵⁹To another he said, "Follow me." But he said, "Lord, let me first go and bury my father." ⁶⁰But he said to him, "Leave the dead to bury their own dead; but as for you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God." ⁶¹Another said, "I will follow you, Lord; but let me first say farewell to those at my home." ⁶²Jesus said to him, "No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God."

9:46-48 Ambition: Jesus knew the Twelve had been having an argument (Gr. *dialogismos*, dialogue) as to which of them was the greatest. The transfiguration, the miracles, the warning about His impending confrontation with the political authorities and the explanation to Peter about His paying the Temple tax (Mt. 17:24-27) out of expediency only, convinced the Twelve that His kingdom was imminent. Since they still conceived of His kingdom as an earthly organization their first reaction was to begin "jockeying for position." The temperament for ambition is, of course, a part of the nature created in man by his Maker. Otherwise, man would have no drive to "subdue the world . . . and have dominion" over it (Gen. 1:28). But, that temperament for ambition must be held in check under the revealed will of its Creator. When human ambition is not under the direction of its Creator's will, it perverts, exploits and destroys. Thinking about the coming kingdom of God, the disciples were allowing visions of human grandeur to dance in their heads. They were all envisioning themselves in positions of power and human influence

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and already counting the personal accolades and wealth that would come their way. The disciples persisted in their efforts to gain favored positions until near the very end of Jesus' earthly life (Mt. 20:20-28; Mk. 10:35-45; Lk. 22:24-26). Apparently the materialistic concept of the new messianic kingdom was deeply ingrained in the Jewish mentality.

Jesus wanted to make a vivid illustration of the true standard of greatness in God's kingdom, so He called a child to His side. He said, "Whoever receives this child . . . receives me." The Greek word *dechomai* means a warm, hospitable, embracing reception. The disciples thought in terms of ruling great masses of people. Jesus spoke of serving children. One's political ambitions cannot be advanced by ministering to children. Hobbs puts it this way, "Working with little children is a totally unselfish task. For it involves not what you can get from them, but what you can give to them. . . . It requires more grace and skill to guide a little child than to serve as chairman of the Board. . . ." or, we might add, even as the ruler of a nation. The significance of all this is that Jesus seems to be saying that men may test their own spirituality and fitness for citizenship in His kingdom by their relation to children. The spirit of humility (lowliness of mind) that will serve a child is the spirit that will not cause anyone to stumble. To "receive" a child in Jesus' name is, in essence, to become like a child (cf. Mt. 18:1-22; Mk. 9:33-50). Children are not concerned with human power and grandeur. Children know they are weak and gladly look to others for help and sustenance. Children are submissive and malleable. There are no false facades or veneers with them, they have to learn hypocrisy from adults. Most of all, children know how to love and be loved. They love to please others with actions of friendliness and loyalty. This is true greatness from God's perspective. Most of the world would not see greatness in those terms. But Jesus said, ". . . he who is least among you all is the one who is great . . ." or, ". . . whoever would be great among you must be your servant . . ." (Mt. 20:26-27; Mt. 23:11; Lk. 22:26; Jn. 13:16; 15:20).

9:49-50 Arbitrariness: Suffering embarrassment from this gentle but mistakable rebuke for their selfish ambition, the apostles became silent. Suddenly John remembered something he thought might please Jesus and put them back in His good graces. The apostles had observed a man casting out demons in the name of Jesus and they told him to stop because he was not one of the Twelve. Apparently, Jesus gave power to do miracles to other than the Twelve. Just three months after this He sends seventy disciples out two by two (Lk. 10:1ff.) to evangelize and do miracles. In the first place, it was blatant presumption on their part to forbid someone working miracles in the name of Jesus. Jesus had never given them the authority for such action. In the second place, it betrays an attitude of loveless, hypocritical sectarianism to assume

that no one can do anything in Jesus' name unless he is one of the Twelve. This attitude, unchanged, would have forbidden John the Baptist, or Paul, or Silas, or Timothy from doing anything in the name of Jesus.

To do something in the "name" of Jesus is to acquiesce to Jesus' authority and word, to do it according to His purpose or revealed will, and to acclaim His glory. When this is done it is not only approved but welcomed by Jesus, no matter who does it or in what cultural setting. Jesus told them they were wrong. Jesus must tame this temper of arbitrariness in those He will send into all the world to preach His gospel. They must surrender to the truth that whoever does the Lord's will is to be received and not hindered from continuing to do His will even though they may not "be with us" socially, ethnically, culturally and methodologically. No greater cultural and methodological difference ever faced the followers of Christ than that of the first century Jewish-Gentile confrontation. That these apostles needed preparation for that confrontation is evident from Peter's later problems documented in Acts 10-11 and Galatians 1-2. He who works in the name of Jesus cannot be an enemy of the Lord, and he who is truly great in the kingdom will recognize that and live by it.

9:51-56 Anger: Luke indicates that Jesus knew His major work in Galilee had come to an end. Jesus will return temporarily to the borders of Galilee for a brief ministry, but now the days are drawing near "for Him to be received up" (crucified and raised from the dead). He "sets his face" to go to Jerusalem. It is the time of the Feast of Tabernacles (Succoth), one of the three major feasts of the Jews. For many months He has avoided Judea, the center of opposition to His messianic claims. The time has now arrived for Him to throw out the clear, unequivocal, absolute claim to Messiahship. There would be no better place or time than Jerusalem, at the Feast of Tabernacles. Apparently Jesus was giving so much intense concentration to His goal in Jerusalem it registered on His face and the Samaritans of the village where He wished to find lodging were offended by it. The Samaritans seemed to be hospitable to Jews traveling through their land from Judea to Galilee (cf. Jn. 4), but they were offended when Jews seemed to be traveling through their land simply as a short-cut from Galilee to Jerusalem to observe Jewish holy days! John 7:2-9 notes that Jesus' unbelieving half-brothers had sarcastically suggested He should go with them to the feast and make a public play for support for His messiahship, if He was really what He claimed. Jesus refused, but went later as non-publicly as He could. The usual, public route to the Jewish feasts from Galilee to Jerusalem was down the eastern side of the Jordan river basin, crossing the Jordan at Jericho and up the Jericho road to Jerusalem. Jesus went, instead, on a more direct route, through Samaria. The hostility of Samaritans toward Jews and vice versa was centuries old, dating back to the

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days of Nehemiah or earlier. So any Jew, evidently hurrying through their land to a Jewish feast, was *persona non grata*.

The Feast of Sukkoth (Tabernacles) takes place about mid-October, five days after Yom Kippur (The Day of Atonement). According to Jewish law and tradition all male Jews were to go to Jerusalem to observe this feast. The people were to dwell in temporary (lean-to) dwelling places made of olive, pine, myrtle or palm branches (no cloth). They must take their meals in these booths and sleep in them. The lean-to must have one open side, not be more than 20 cubits high (30 ft.) and be open to the stars at night. Every morning the high priest, followed by a procession of the multitudes of worshipers, went to fetch water in a golden pitcher from the Pool of Siloam. Then they returned, singing the great Hallel, to pour the water and a wine offering on the altar of burnt offering in the Temple court. More offerings and sacrifices were offered during this feast than any other except Passover. In addition to all the sacrifices the Jews made on their own behalf, seventy bulls were sacrificed for the seventy nations of the world, in token of the "messianic ingathering of the nations" at which time the Jews anticipated (traditionally) they would rule the world. As a matter of fact, Sukkoth probably was intended by God to symbolize the messianic ingathering of the nations—into the spiritual kingdom (the church). Jesus indicates this in John 10:16. Every evening extraordinary festivities took place at the Court of Women in the Temple. The four great lampstands were lighted; Levite musicians with lutes and cymbals stood on the fifteen steps that led to the Court of Men of Israel. At the sound of the *shophar* (ram's horn) a torch dance was begun and people sang and danced for hours. This is the most festive of all the celebrations of the Jewish year. It is the one at which the "messianic fever" would rise to its highest pitch. It is understandable why Samaritans would be offended at Jews using their country as a short-cut to attend such a festive gathering in Jerusalem.

The people of the village where Jesus wanted to stay overnight refused to accommodate Him. When James and John ("Sons of Thunder") saw this, they were filled with anger and were ready to retaliate with fire from heaven to consume this village. They asked the Lord if that was what He wanted too. Jesus' reply was a rebuke! A few ancient Greek texts of Luke's gospel (not the earliest texts), add, ". . . and he said, You do not know what manner of spirit you are of; for the Son of man came not to destroy man's lives but to save them." Whatever Jesus might have said, He displayed the spirit He wished to cultivate in the apostles, for He went on to another village in hopes of finding lodging. Jesus wants all His disciples to control their temperament to anger. There are times when controlled anger is needful (cf. Ex. 32:19; Num. 16:15; I Sam. 11:6; 20:34; Neh. 5:6; Psa. 97:10; Prov. 8:13; Amos 5:15; Mark 3:1-5;

Heb. 1:9; Rom. 12:9; Eph. 4:26; Rev. 2:6). But the Lord has specifically prohibited the Christian from personal retaliation or vengeance against his enemies (cf. Rom. 12:14-21; Mt. 5:38-42, etc.). That does not prohibit the Christian from calling upon properly constituted civil authority for protection and judgment against the lawless and wicked. However, the individual Christian or citizen is not to take the law into his own hands to act as judge, jury and enforcer. Our anger must be controlled within the revealed will of God.

9:57-62 Audacity and Afrontery: These verses are parallel to Matthew's account (Mt. 8:18-22). Either Matthew or Luke (or perhaps both) recorded these conversations out of chronological order. Matthew 8:18-22 is considered by most harmonists as chronologically following Matthew 13:53. Matthew probably inserted the incident where he did (8:18-22) to provide a cumulative documentation of Jesus' teachings on discipleship. Luke may have inserted it where he did (9:57-62) because it fits into the teachings of Jesus on "taming temperaments." If these discussions of Jesus with impulsive and irreverent volunteers should be placed immediately after the sermon in parables (Mt. 13:53), then Luke should have chronologically placed them right after the same sermon (Lk. 8:18). Whatever the case, they are authentic words of Jesus and demand serious study and application to His divine revelation about true discipleship.

The first would-be disciple came to Jesus and said, "I will follow you wherever you go." He was audacious, rash, hasty, over-confident and ignorant of the personal cost involved in discipleship to Jesus. Jesus never "smooth-talked" people into discipleship. He always insisted that those who wished to follow His way should count the cost (see Lk. 14:25-35). Jesus never pressured, "psyched," or "politicked" anyone into following Him. He preached the truth with compassion and persuasive logic, but He never manipulated people with emotionalism. The other two men answered His call to discipleship with excuses they deemed of higher priority than immediate and total commitment to Him. What they wished to do first seems innocent enough (go to a father's funeral, and say farewell to family). Seeing to the burial of dead bodies is of second priority, at least, to the saving of souls. There are always plenty of people who show no interest in following Jesus—let them take care of secondary issues. Nothing and no one is to come before obedience to clear, implicit commands from the word of Christ. Clinging to human ties or earthly associations or looking back and longing for them until they become more important than immediate obedience to Jesus makes a man unfit for discipleship. Those who wish citizenship in the kingdom of God must count the cost of discipleship and learn to live with the fact of Jesus' Lordship (cf. Mt. 7:21; Lk. 6:46). They must

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surrender all—thoughts (II Cor. 10:3-5), bodies, families, possessions—to His command. Impulsive discipleship based on emotionalism is uncontrolled audacity. Putting anything or anyone on a higher priority than immediate obedience to Jesus is irreverence. Jesus will have none of it! Why? Because divided loyalty saves no man's soul. Salvation is afforded only to those who trust completely in Christ.

God made man with these temperaments. They serve useful purposes (see our notes on Lk. 4:1-13). But Jesus knows these temperaments must be under the control of the will of God or the devil will deceitfully seduce man into perverting them to his own self-destruction. Jesus knows that if these temperaments are tamed to conform to the will of God they will produce the image of God in man—they will produce perfected man. Jesus demonstrated Perfected Man controlling these temperaments within the will of God all through His life.

STUDY STIMULATORS:

1. Is the evangelistic tour of the Twelve apostles to be emulated by Christians today? In what way?
2. What effect did the "kingdom fever" have on the politicians of Jesus' day? Does real Christianity still antagonize human rulers? Why? Can there ever be unity of Christianity and State?
3. Why did Jesus have compassion on the multitudes? Should we have compassion on the worldly-minded today?
4. Why did Jesus feed the five thousand?
5. Why did Jesus want to know what the Twelve thought about Him?
6. Just how much did Peter believe about Jesus when he made the good confession?
7. What did Peter *refuse* to confess about Jesus? Do men still refuse?
8. How does man really find himself—find real identity?
9. What does the transfiguration of Jesus mean in *your* relationship to Him?
10. Do you believe it is possible to tame your temperament as Jesus indicated about ambition, anger, audacity and affrontery? How?

GIFTS, MIRACLES

(Heb. 2:3-4)

By Paul T. Butler — OBC Convention, Feb. 1977

Introduction

I. DEFINITION OF MIRACLE

- A. "An event occurring in the natural world, observed by the senses, produced by divine power, without any adequate human or natural cause, the purpose of which is to reveal the will of God and do good to man." (McCartney, in *Twelve Great Questions About Christ*)
 1. Hume once argued: there is more evidence for regularity in nature than for irregularity; therefore, regularity and not irregularity must be the truth of the matter.
 2. Certainly there is more evidence for the regular occurrence of nature than for any supernatural occurrence. If there weren't we could not talk of miracles.
 3. The argument of miracle rests on the regularity of nature generally.
 4. Only if all the historical evidence available to man could show there is no being outside nature who can in any way alter it can there be an argument against the possibility of miracles. This evidence does not do—indeed cannot do!
- B. In our text four different words are used:
 1. *semeiois* = signs
 2. *terasin* = wonders
 3. *dunamesin* = powerful deeds
 4. *merismois* = distributions (of the Holy Spirit)
 5. Milligan (Hebrews) says these words classify miracles as:
 - a. to their design (signs)
 - b. to their nature (wonders)
 - c. to their origin (supernatural power)
 - d. to their Christian aspect (distributions of the Holy Spirit)

II. THE FACT OF MIRACLES RESTS ON THE HISTORICITY OF OUR NEW TESTAMENT TEXT

- A. Were these writers eyewitnesses?
- B. Are they credible
- C. Are the documents authentic?
- D. This is another subject—but it is the fundamental subject.

I. PURPOSE OF MIRACLES

- A. As our text points out, the primary purpose of miracles was to "bear witness" that the message from Jesus and that Jesus Himself was from God. Jn. 10:25, 37, 38; 14:10-11; Mt. 9:1-8

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The miracles do not prove Jesus to be the Son of God—many men worked miracles—but they prove Him to be a truthful messenger, and this truthful messenger says that He is God. Christ may have wrought miracles and not have been God; but He could not have wrought miracles and said that He was God without being God.

- B. To demonstrate the mercifulness of God in the case of individual men. Miracles illustrate and explain the teaching of Jesus on the love and mercy of God.
- C. To demonstrate God's wrath upon sin and rebellious sinners Mt. 21:18-19 (cursed fig tree), Acts 13:11 (blinding of Elymas) Acts 5:5-10 (Ananias and Sapphira). Bible miracles taught not only God's love and goodness but also His power and authority, and sometimes His righteous and fearful judgments.
- D. Miracles of the Bible demonstrate clearly that miracles were never intended to be universal:
 - 1. In extent: for they were always limited to few and special cases.
Never have they been used to relieve suffering or prolong life here for all of God's people universally.
 - a. Some received no miraculous deliverance here (Heb. 11:35-40)
 - b. John the Immerser, greatest born of women, worked no miracles, nor was he delivered miraculously (Mt. 11:7-11; Jn. 10:41).
 - c. Jesus could have healed all or raised all from dead but He didn't.
 - d. Paul healed many, but did not heal Trophimus and Timothy (II Tim. 4:20; I Tim. 5:23).
 - 2. In result: All who were delivered from sickness had at other times to suffer again and die. All who were raised from the dead had to die again. Peter was delivered twice, but not a third time (God was no less compassionate and Peter no less believing).

II. PASSING OF MIRACLES (AS SUCH)

- A. It would take some convincing to persuade me that God does not work providentially in history today. I believe He answers when we pray (sometimes yes, sometimes no, sometimes without acting at all).
 - 1. I teach Life of Christ, Old Testament Prophets and Revelation. You cannot study and teach those books and believe them for 20 years without believing God is active in the affairs of men and nations.
 - 2. I do not deny that God could reinstitute an age of miracles such as we read in the Old Testament and New Testament if it suited His purpose.

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3. It is just that I believe He will not because He has no further need of such miracles and signs. Here is why I believe that:
- B. "When that which is perfect is come, that which is in part shall be done away . . ." I Cor. 13:10.
1. The reason for the election of the Jews in Christ (Eph. 1) was for "a plan in the *fulness of time*, to unite all things in him. . . ." (not for heaven, but for earth). Thus the plan was to unite both Jew and Gentile, slave and free, man and woman, into one body, the church. This is why the spiritual miraculous gifts were given in Eph. 4:11f., for this ministry of unifying. These miraculous gifts were to last until the *teleios* "man" was formed (Eph. 4:13).
2. The identical context, outline, illustrations, and terminology in I Cor. 12—14 lead us to conclude that such is also the meaning of *teleios* there . . . to perfect both Jew and Gentile in the one body.
3. It is unquestionably apparent that the problem in both Ephesians and Corinthians was the immaturity and schismatic tendencies of the early church. In light of the frequent association of love with perfection (maturity)—and in light of the fact that the entire epistle of I Cor. deals with the grand theme of divine love in the context of the childish immaturity of so many Christians at Corinth, it seems best to define "the perfect" in terms of the ultimate goal, aim, and end which Paul seeks to accomplish in bringing God's people to the fulness of spiritual growth and maturity in Christ.
4. Paul's description of the carnal immaturity of Christians at Corinth serves to underscore his emphasis on the ultimate goal which he sets for them in chapter 13. Chapter 13 must be read in the context of the whole book and may not be interpreted apart from his charge in 14:1—"Make love your aim," and in 14:20 "Do not be children in your thinking; in malice be babes, but in thinking be perfect."
5. When the "perfect" comes, says Paul, the tongues, etc. would cease. These miraculous gifts were not proofs of spiritual maturity. Paul does not say that these will cease when Jesus comes again, nor when the Corinthians get to heaven. Rather, that in time, during their life on earth, the miraculous demonstrations will cease.
6. I do not think "perfect" means just the completed canon of New Testament books; it also has to do with a "perfected" church.
 - a. The canon's formation was by uninspired men (so far as we know). I believe every book in the New Testament is inspired

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and apostolic. But what if another scroll of antiquity is found with the same credentials as the books we now have? We would not have a "perfect—complete" New Testament!

b. The "perfect law of liberty" was already at work when James wrote of it in James 1:25. This perfect law was in action before the completion of our 27 books of the New Testament were formed in a New Testament. One could look into this law then and be blessed in obedience to it. It was the perfect law of freedom because it accomplished what the incomplete Law of Moses could not do. It is significant in this context that James also speaks of the children of God as being perfect and complete in the church (James 1:4-5).

C. The end for which miracles were wrought, to attest to the veracity of Christ and His claims, to bring the church to maturity, and to bring about faith through which we may partake of the divine nature (II Pet 1:3-4)—this is the ultimate goal of God's work with us. MIRACLES CAN NEVER BE AN ACCEPTABLE SUBSTITUTE FOR THIS INDWELLING (I Tim. 1:5; II Pet. 1:3-11; I Jn. 1:5-8; 3:1-6; I Cor. 12:31—14:1; II Cor. 3:18). (See "A Study of the Work of the Holy Spirit in Christians," by Seth Wilson, mimeo, OBC bookstore.)

1. Miracles are signs or works of the Holy Spirit, not the Holy Spirit Himself. They are the effects of which He is the cause. Miracles have been found where the personal indwelling of the Holy Spirit did not occur. (Mt. 10; Lk. 10, apostles and 70 disciples worked miracles months before Jesus said the Holy Spirit had not come yet, Jn. 7:38). King Saul on his way to murder God's anointed was made to prophesy by the Spirit of God (I Sam. 19:18-24). Balaam's ass (Num. 22:25-30). Cornelius (Acts 10:44-48).
2. It is evident that some men whom Christ called "workers of iniquity" claimed to have worked many miracles in His name. If they speak that boldly to His face, at judgment, does it not appear that they will be sincerely convinced that they have actually wrought such mighty works by His power here?
3. It does not appear that miraculous demonstrations are necessary effects whenever or wherever the Holy Spirit dwells in men. I Cor. 12:3, the man who honestly says Jesus is Lord manifests he has the Holy Spirit. I Cor. 12:29-30 shows that not all in the New Testament church had the gifts of miraculous works.
4. The word of God has the power to regenerate and to sanctify through faith which allows the Spirit of God to dwell in us Eph. 3:16-19; I Tim. 1:5; Gal. 5:22-25; II Pet. 1:3-4; II Cor. 3:18.

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5. Miraculous deeds did not guarantee a spiritual church. The Corinthian church "came behind in no gift" and was enriched "in all utterance and in all knowledge" (I Cor. 1:5-7); yet that church was notorious for errors in doctrine and evils in practice.
6. Are such wonders and signs always caused exclusively by the Holy Spirit? May some of the experience and utterances be caused by the workings of the subconscious mind, by something like hypnotic influences? (See *The Psychology of Speaking in Tongues*, by John P. Kildahl, Harper & Row.)
Scriptures warn of the possibility (at least in the first century) of "lying wonders" (Mt. 24:24; 7:22; II Thess. 2:9; I Jn. 4:1-6; Rev. 13:14; 16:14; 19:20). Even the Old Testament warned against false prophets with signs (Dt. 13:1-5; 18:22; Isa. 8:20).
7. Isolated wonders do not necessarily prove a divine revelation from God. Bible miracles were part of a coherent combination of many miracles and messages to which they were significantly related. The extent and quality of Bible miracles and revelations is different from the many alleged miracles and prophecies of today or any century since apostles. Philip's miracles and those of Simon Magus were different. Even Pharaoh could see (or should have) the difference between Moses' miracles and those of his magicians. (Gal. 1:6-9) Even a gospel by angels, if different than Paul's would be condemned.
8. I Jn. 4:6 says it is not the Holy Spirit if men show they do not hear (heed and keep) the word of the apostles.

James 3:13-18 shows that the Spirit of God does not cause men to be jealous and factious—divisive.

WHEN THERE ARE SO MANY DENOMINATIONAL FACTIONS, ALLEGING TO HAVE THESE MIRACULOUS SIGNS AND WONDERS, YET STRIVING TO MAINTAIN THEIR DENOMINATIONAL DIFFERENCES EVEN IN THE FACE OF PLAIN SCRIPTURAL TEACHINGS?! What are we to conclude about their claims?

III. FUNCTIONAL GIFTS (Rom. 12:1-13)

- A. I believe all men and women have gifts from their Creator.
 1. All may not have the same gifts or latent potentialities.
 2. Some may have many more potentialities than others.
 3. BUT THEY ARE ALL NEEDED AS FUNCTIONS IN THE BODY OF CHRIST. This is the important point: No gifts, capacities, talents, abilities (all given by the grace of God) are more important FUNCTIONALLY, than others.
 4. The whole context here indicates Paul is talking *not* about miraculous gifts given by God for the same purposes as those of

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- I Cor. 12-14; but of functional gifts, one of which at least every member of the body has ("... I bid every one among you....").
- B. I like the way Carl Ketcherside explains it in *Mission Messenger*, Vol. 36, No. 10, Oct. 1974, "Functioning Gifts."
1. Any gift freely bestowed by God is a gift of the Spirit, regardless of how it is communicated to the recipient. That is why I object to designating any period of time a charismatic age. There is no such thing as a charismatic age, for the simple reason that there is no non-charismatic age. There has never been a time when the will of God was not enhanced and promoted by gifts of grace. A gift is not charismatic because of its nature, method of reception, or effect, but because of its origin. It is charismatic because it is a gift of *charis*, grace.
 2. The man who has the enviable gift of understanding and relieving the needy is "charismatic" as surely as one who has the gift of prophecy. The one who can give cheerfully and freely as his contribution to the work of the saints is "charismatic." In view of this, I am not turned on by such expressions as "The Spirit is working again in our time." The Spirit has never ceased working.
 3. The gifts of God are varied. Paul wrote to a congregation which came behind in no gift and told them that the ability to restrain sexual passion, making marriage unnecessary was a *charisma* of God. But he also implied that the gift of sexual need which could be gratified in marriage was a *charisma*. "I would that everybody lived as I do; but each of us has his own special gift from God—one in one direction and one in another" (I Cor. 7:7). It is quite evident that Paul's gift was in a different direction than that of the majority.
- C. Eph. 4:7 "But grace was given to each of us according to the measure of Christ's gift."
1. Do not the parables teach that men are *given* (how else, but by the grace of God) "talents" and "pounds" according to different measures, and each one is expected to *use* (none are non-functional) and be rewarded according, not to what he does not have, but according to how he uses what he does have?
 2. Now if we will follow the leading of the Spirit in His revealed will and make sure instead of worrying about "having the Spirit" that the "Spirit has all of us," we will "use" our *praxin* (function, or action) *charismata* (gifts) for the benefit of the one body. Actually, if we simply let ourselves be "transformed" by "the renewing of our minds . . ." (Rom. 12:1-2) we will use our gifts of grace for the upbuilding of the body in love.

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Even unconverted men and women have *charismatic gifts!* *functional gifts*—whatever they have in potentialities they have by the grace of God but they are not allowing the Spirit to use them for the upbuilding of Christ's body.

- D. Does all this mean that the special *supernatural* gifts should also be continued by the Holy Spirit in the church today? No.
1. They were for special needs. The functional gifts will always be needed.
 2. I do not need to see a miracle performed by anyone else, nor have one performed upon me, to produce faith in the revealed Word of God.
 3. The original envoys of Jesus who gave the message were thoroughly accredited and their message was confirmed by miracles, wonders and signs. There is no sense in having miracles to confirm miracles, and once truth is confirmed it never needs to be confirmed again.
 4. The spectacular, *supernatural*, signs and wonders were to cease (there is no doubt about that), but the functional gifts through which every member of the body may *love* man and God will abide!
 5. AFTER ALL, THE GRACE OF GOD HAS GIVEN EACH OF US GIFTS FOR FUNCTIONING IN THE CHURCH AND WE USE THEM ACCORDING TO THE MEASURE OF OUR FAITH.

The miraculous, supernatural gifts could be given and made to function regardless of the measure of the faith of the person.

CONCLUSION

Accepting the possibility of miracles is a matter of morality. C. S. Lewis wrote, ". . . the question whether miracles occur can never be answered simply by experience. Every event which might claim to be a miracle is, in the last resort something presented to our senses, something seen, heard, touched, . . . etc. and our senses are not infallible. If anything extraordinary seems to have happened, we can always say that we have been the victims of an illusion. If we hold a philosophy that excludes the supernatural, this is what we shall always say."

What we learn from experience depends on our philosophy of epistemology (theory of how one learns) and that ultimately rests on our moral honesty. Many people think one can decide whether a miracle occurred in the past by examining the evidence according to the ordinary rules of historical inquiry. But the ordinary rules cannot be worked *until* we have

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decided whether miracles are possible, and if so, how probable they are. So, we are back to whether we are being honest or not.

Man's ability to think and reason gives evidence that something beyond nature exists. The Naturalist cannot deny the thinking-reasoning process without thinking and reasoning! It is obvious that the thinking process is not just a natural event composed of cells, electric impulses, etc. Therefore, something other than nature exists.

Morality is another undeniable evidence of the possibility of that which is beyond nature. Even the great determinist Karl Marx held there was "good" behavior and "bad" behavior and subjected what he determined to be "bad" behavior to withering moral scorn. He could justify this only with the presupposition that there is a moral responsibility—something beyond natural reflex.

Why does liberal theology exclude miracles? Because it excludes the "living God" of Christianity and believes instead in a kind of God who obviously would not do miracles, or indeed anything else outside of nature.

Men are reluctant to face up to the fact of a *living God*. They much prefer an abstract "Idea" to a Person. An idea does nothing, demands nothing. It is there for a person to change, manipulate or obliterate as the whim calls for. But a living, supernatural, all-sovereign Person is something else! It is shocking to discover there is a Person, a feeling, thinking, moral Person who is Creator and Sustainer of life, alive and active in our everyday affairs. It is even more alarming to think this Person has the right to demand mental and moral control of our lives. C. S. Lewis puts it thus: "You have had a shock like that before, in connection with smaller matters—when the fishing line pulls at your hand, when something breathes beside you in the darkness. So here; the shock comes at the precise moment when the thrill of life is communicated to us along the clue we have been following. It is always shocking to meet life where we thought we were alone. 'Look out,' we cry, 'it's alive!'"

An impersonal God—well and good. A subjective God of beauty, truth and goodness, inside our own heads—better still. A formless life-force surging through us, a vast power which we can tap—best of all. But God Himself, alive, pulling at the other end of the cord, perhaps approaching at an infinite speed, the hunter, king, husband, that is quite another matter.

There comes a moment when the children who have been playing at cops and robbers hush suddenly: was that a *real* footstep in the hall? There comes a moment when people who have been dabbling in religion (called, "man's search for God") suddenly draw back. Supposing we really found Him? Supposing He has worked miracles over and above and outside the natural order of things? We never meant it to come to *that!* Worse still, supposing He has found us?

Chapter Ten (10:1-42)

THE SON OF MAN EVANGELIZING AND EDIFYING

IDEAS TO INVESTIGATE:

1. If Jesus had twelve disciples helping Him, why did He need seventy more (10:1-12)?
2. How could the compassionate Jesus condemn whole cities (10:13-15)?
3. When did Satan "fall" and what did it involve (10:18)?
4. What has God hidden from the "wise and understanding" (10:21-22)?
5. Does the Old Testament Law really command the Jew to love his neighbor as he loves himself (10:25-28)?
6. Is being like the Good Samaritan all there is to inheriting eternal life (10:29-37)?
7. What is the "one thing" that was needful (10:38-42)?

SECTION 1

Preaching the Kingdom (10:1-24)

After this the Lord appointed seventy others, and sent them **10** on ahead of him, two by two, into every town and place where he himself was about to come. ²And he said to them, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; pray therefore the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest. ³Go your way; behold, I send you out as lambs in the midst of wolves. ⁴Carry no purse, no bag, no sandals; and salute no one on the road. ⁵Whatever house you enter, first say, 'Peace be to this house!' ⁶And if a son of peace is there, your peace shall rest upon him; but if not, it shall return to you. ⁷And remain in the same house, eating and drinking what they provide, for the laborer deserves his wages; do not go from house to house. ⁸Whenever you enter a town and they receive you, eat what is set before you; ⁹heal the sick in it and say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you.' ¹⁰But whenever you enter a town and they do not receive you, go into its streets and say, ¹¹'Even the dust of your town that clings to our feet, we wipe

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off against you; nevertheless know this, that the kingdom of God has come near.' ¹²I tell you, it shall be more tolerable on that day for Sodom than for that town.

13 "Woe to you, Chorazin! woe to you, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. ¹⁴But it shall be more tolerable in the judgment for Tyre and Sidon than for you. ¹⁵And you, Capernaum, will you be exalted to heaven? You shall be brought down to Hades.

16 "He who hears you hears me, and he who rejects you rejects me, and he who rejects me rejects him who sent me."

17 The seventy returned with joy, saying, "Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name!" ¹⁸And he said to them, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. ¹⁹Behold, I have given you authority to tread upon serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy; and nothing shall hurt you. ²⁰Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you; but rejoice that your names are written in heaven."

21 In that same hour he rejoiced in the Holy Spirit and said, "I thank thee, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to babes; yea, Father, for such was thy gracious will. ²²All things have been delivered to me by my Father; and no one knows who the Son is except the Father, or who the Father is except the Son and any one to whom the Son chooses to reveal him."

23 Then turning to the disciples he said privately, "Blessed are the eyes which see what you see! ²⁴For I tell you that many prophets and kings desired to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it."

10:1-20 Repentance: Jesus had followers other than the Twelve who were fully capable of evangelizing or preaching the kingdom of God. This text documents an evangelistic campaign involving seventy "others." It is not to be confused with the campaign in Galilee (recorded in Mt. 10:1-42, Mk. 6:1-13 and Lk. 9:1-9). The campaign in Galilee preceded the Feast of Tabernacles (see notes in Lk. 9:51-59). The preaching tour of the seventy followed Tabernacles and was in Judea. Jesus' attendance at the Feast of Tabernacles is recorded only by John's Gospel (ch. 7:1—10:21). The Feast of Tabernacles is to be inserted, chronologically, between Luke 9:62 and Luke 10:1.

The fact that Jesus should conduct two evangelistic campaigns prescribing the same methods in practically the same words should not be confusing. It is certainly no basis for claiming that Luke copied from

Matthew. They are different incidents, involving different people, at different times, and geographically in different locales.

For notes on Jesus' methodology in evangelism study comments on the tour of the Twelve, Luke 9:1-9. We will not make comments here since His instructions in both cases are practically the same. The one striking difference between the two tours is that in Galilee Jesus told the Twelve to "go nowhere among the Gentiles and enter no town of the Samaritans . . ." (Mt. 10:5). He would not have to give that instruction in Judea since there were not many Gentiles living there.

Almost a year prior to this time the Lord had pronounced divine condemnation upon three cities in Galilee: Chorazin, Bethsaida and Capernaum. That was about the middle of His second year of public ministry, (see Mt. 11:20-24). Now, about the middle of the third year, He repeats the judgment. It is first, a warning to the seventy that as He was scorned and rejected by these cities in Galilee, they would probably suffer the same treatment in Judea. It was second, an encouragement that Christ was aware of all hypocrisy and unbelief and God's judgment would ultimately vindicate their faithfulness in the face of rejection. We will make extensive comments on the condemnation of the three cities because there are very important lessons to be learned.

Chorazin was about 2 miles north of Capernaum. It was probably an important city being at the northern most end of the land of Palestine of the first century. Trade routes and military garrisons were probably there. It ceased to be inhabited by the time of Eusebius (250 A.D.). Only a few of its carved stones remain today. Bethsaida (Julius) was east of the Jordan, near the river's entry into the Sea of Galilee. The tetrarch Philip raised it to the rank of "city" and called it Julius in honor of the daughter of Augustus Caesar, Julia. Some think there was another Bethsaida—a suburb of Capernaum. Whatever the case, neither can be found today except for a few ruins of a Roman road. It was apparently a place of great activity in the fishing business; the word Bethsaida means, "house of fishing." Capernaum was a customs station, the residence of a high officer of the tetrarch of Galilee (Herod) (see Mt. 9:9; Jn. 4:46) and was occupied by a detachment of Roman soldiers whose commander built the Jews a synagogue at his own expense. By the time of Josephus (50 years after Jesus) Capernaum was of such small significance, Josephus called it a "village." These cities apparently "exalted" themselves and considered themselves too sophisticated, wise and well-off to need the likes of the itinerant rabbi from Nazareth to tell them what to do. They flocked after Him for miracles of healing, but scorned His message of repentance.

Jesus had walked the streets of these cities, especially Capernaum, and so did His apostles. He had his home in Capernaum. There he had

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healed a nobleman's son, a man let down through a roof, given the apostles a miraculous catch of fish, healed many of all kinds of diseases, cast out demons, healed Peter's mother-in-law, and, when the "whole city" came to Him at His door, he healed many more people. Finally, He healed the centurion's servant. Later in His ministry He healed Jairus' daughter at Capernaum, the woman with the flow of blood, two blind men, and a dumb demoniac.

Some of the Lord's greatest sermons were delivered in this immediate area. The Sermon on the Mount could have been close enough that many citizens of these cities attended. His sermon on the Bread of Life was in a synagogue in Capernaum; His sermon on human traditions was in Capernaum, as well as His sermon on childlikeness (Mt. 18).

Jesus condemned more often than most people like to admit. Most people want to think of Jesus as always positive, always encouraging, always forgiving, never condemning, and even indulging those who do not agree with Him. But check these scriptures: Mt. 7:21-23; Mt. 23:1ff.; Mt. 12:22-42; Jn. 3:36; 8:42-47; 9:35-41; 12:31. Practically every parable Jesus told ended with a condemnation or warning. The letters of the apostles in the New Testament contain much condemnation. Paul's instruction for fulfilling the ministry is to "reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering."

God cannot be reduced to a vacillating, flaccid, spineless compromiser. If God doesn't condemn unbelief and unrighteousness, He cannot praise and reward faith and holiness. If He does not hate and judge evil, He cannot love and preserve truth and goodness. That goes for God's Son, for God's propositional word, the Bible, and for the messengers and preachers of His word. The Jews of the prophet's days would not accept this. They refused to believe that God would condemn their paganism and unbelief. They wanted Him to condemn and destroy their enemies, but to indulge them in their unbelief (see Jer. 5:12; 23:17). We cannot afford such ignorance of God's real nature. J.B. Phillips in his book, *Your God Is Too Small*, says some people's concept of the "meek and mild" Jesus makes their God to small. Of all the ideas about Jesus, he says, this one that Jesus never spoke a harsh word or never condemned wrong is the "least appropriate." It pictures Jesus as someone afraid to take a stand or give His hand against evil. A god that compromises truth in the face of falsehood or surrenders to injustice without challenging and condemning it, is a "god too small." He would be, in fact, a cruel god. Indifference to evil is more insidious than evil itself. The Son of God was not indifferent to impenitence and unbelief. He condemned it in order to bring about repentance. In anger and condemnation against evil lies true compassion.

Jesus' condemnation of these three cities is a result of their misappropriation of opportunities and privileges—the most evil form of

unbelief. He never condemned anyone for failing to use an opportunity they never had. He never condemned anyone for using an opportunity and falling short, if they recognized their shortcomings and asked for forgiveness. But He certainly had His severest judgment upon those who had opportunities and privileges and deliberately chose not to use them! These three cities had opportunity after opportunity to put His word to practice in their lives. They saw Him in action time after time. His word was validated as supernatural, powerful, and life-giving by the many miracles He wrought among them. They had clear, understandable, motivating sermons, one after another. They had a multitude of opportunites that Sodom, Tyre, and Sidon never had, and still they did not repent. These Jews to whom Jesus preached considered the Sodomites, Tyrainians and Sidonians incorrigible, worthless and unsavable. But Jesus knew that if they had had the opportunities afforded Chorazin, Bethsaida and Capernaum, they would have repented! "To whom soever much is given, of him shall much be required" (Lk. 12:48). Daniel Webster, scholar, statesman, Bible-believer was once asked, "What is the most sobering, searching thought that ever entered your mind?" Without a moment's hesitation, the great orator and educator replied, "My personal accountability to God!"

The seventy returned from their evangelistic tour of the cities and villages of Judea bubbling with excitement, feeling they had been especially blessed (Gr. *charas*, "graced") because the demons obeyed them in the name of Jesus. Jesus said He saw in this the forecast of Satan's defeat by the coming of the kingdom of God which they had been preaching. What appears as Satan's power to thwart the purpose of God for man is about to be defeated. Satan's assault on the heavenly sovereignty of God is about to be repulsed (Rev. 12:1-17) and the devil will be cast down. The devil's power, the fear of death (Heb. 2:14-15), is about to be destroyed and he will be "bound" when Jesus makes atonement for man's sin and conquers death in His resurrection. All this is foreshadowed by Jesus' power over demons.

Jesus' authority to the seventy to tread upon serpents . . . and that nothing should hurt them, was never intended for all believers of all ages any more than His power to cast out demons and raise the dead given the Twelve was. If He had intended His power to the seventy to be perpetuated why aren't these "seventy" still alive? He gave them authority "over all the power of the enemy"; they could have kept themselves alive forever. The apostles had the power to raise the dead—why didn't they raise themselves from the dead? Clearly, miraculous power granted from Christ to certain people was intended to have a cessation. Miraculous power serves only one purpose—to validate the message to be from God. Once that purpose is sufficiently served,

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miracles are no longer needed. Miracles do not produce salvation or holiness—the *message* confirmed by the miracles does.

This is exactly the Lord's point in cooling the enthusiasm of the seventy. Their salvation is by the grace of God, not in their working of miracles. Some miracle-workers will be lost (Mt. 7:21-23)! Nothing man does earns him salvation—not even working miracles. Our salvation was earned by The Perfect Man (Heb. 2:5-18) and offered to us through His grace. We have access into that grace by faith (Rom. 5:2), obedient faith (Rom. 6:1-23). Our faith is expressed by accepting God's salvation, obeying the terms of His New Covenant (being immersed in water for the forgiveness of our sins, Acts 2:38, 22:16, etc.). What we must understand clearly is that although outward acts of piety should be the natural expressions of a heart and mind humbly surrendered to the Lord's will, they do not guarantee it (Mt. 6:1ff.). The Corinthian church, although it came behind no church in miraculous gifts, was one of the most carnal-minded churches of the first century! Jesus told the seventy that their enthusiasm was focused on the wrong aspect of their discipleship. Let them not rejoice in their power over demons; that was none of their doing and not by their choice, but by Christ's. They may rejoice, however, that by their choice to trust Christ God has graciously written their names in heaven. It is through choosing the will of Christ for our lives that we are saved, not by the exercise of relative amounts of piety. The essence of the kingdom of God is repentance. When Jesus sent the seventy to preach the kingdom of God, they were preaching that people should repent. They did not need to try to get people to be more religious—to go through more rituals, and add more temple services to their lives. Repentance means to accept the mind of God—to believe what God says about His kingdom instead of what men think it should be. Before man can accept what God says, God must say what He wants man to accept. God must *reveal* His will, and man must recognize and receive it in precisely the way which God chooses to reveal it. That leads into Jesus' next admonition to the seventy.

10:21-24 Revelation: God reveals His will in order to save man by correcting man's mind-set. Mind-set equals allegiance. Perspective determines values. Through Jesus Christ God has distinguished between the temporal and the eternal from a divine and infallible perspective. If man recognizes and receives Jesus' divine perspective he is able to focus his mind on truest and highest values. Thus man is saved from eternal deception and lostness. Without fully trusting in the divine perspective, man is left to be condemned to the human perspective. The human perspective cannot go beyond the human experience which is separated from the divine goal of the Creator for His creatures by an unbridgeable gulf of supernaturalism. Jesus pauses here, reminded

by the impenitence of these cities, to thank the Father that that unbridgeable gulf is bridged by the revelation of the Father in the Son. He had failed to win over those cities in which He had done mighty works, and yet He gives thanks! He uses the Greek word *exomologoumai* which means, literally, "I acknowledge what has happened and give you praise for it." Jesus acknowledges that the refusal of these proud and arrogant cities to accept His humble cross-bearing discipleship is evidence that God's plan for saving the teachable was working. The way of the cross is spurned by the worldly-minded (I Cor. 1:17-31). But that simply proves that the foolishness of God is wiser than man's wisdom. So Jesus praises the Father. It is the Father's gracious will that only those who are childlike will accept His Son and His salvation. Jesus just finished teaching (Mt. 18; Lk. 9) that the unequivocal condition of kingdom citizenship is childlikeness. The tendency of faithless man in a situation where large masses reject the truth is to get discouraged, begin to doubt the power of the word of God, start to compromise by omitting part of the gospel message or by using unethical, shallow and pagan methods to manipulate people. The messenger of God who does his best, who is faithful to preach the whole counsel of God, and who still sees little visible result should rejoice, like Jesus, acknowledging it is evidence that God's plan for saving the teachable is working. Temporary setbacks, however heartbreaking, cannot defeat God. Rejoice that God is interested in *quality* as well as quantity.

The issue of revelation is crucial. It is the fundamental issue. What men are willing to have told to them by God is imperative—as opposed to what men think they already know and refuse to let God tell them. If men believe they already know all there is to know that is significant about life here and hereafter, then they will reject the Book that claims to be a revelation from God. When revelation is rejected, regeneration is impossible. Only God has the authority and power to re-create humanity. Regeneration is not determined by what men think or how men feel, but whether men believe and obey God's revelation or not! The people in the area of these three cities wanted Jesus to heal them and make their bodies feel good—to feed them and make their stomachs feel good—to entertain them with miracles and charge up their emotions, but they did not want to surrender their minds and wills to His teachings, or accept His vicarious death for their sins.

Whatever God wanted man to know for the here and the hereafter, He chose to reveal finally and fully, once and for all, in Jesus Christ. Jesus is the Way, the Truth and Life—no one comes to the Father but by Him (Jn. 14:6). Whoever does not honor the Son, does not honor the Father (Jn. 5:23). God does not fully and completely reveal Himself or His salvation in any other Person or religion. As a matter of fact, there

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is absolutely no access to the Father except through Jesus. God will not honor, recognize or accept any effort to repent toward Him except through Jesus (Heb. 5:11—6:8). Now that Christ has come, even an attempt to please God through Judaism is an abomination to God—He calls it apostasy (Heb. 6:6). Jesus is exclusive and inclusive in revealing God. Everything outside Jesus does not reveal God; everything in Jesus does reveal Him. In Jesus dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily (Col. 2:9).

To whom does Jesus choose to reveal the Father? To all who are childlike! To whomsoever will come to Him, He will reveal the Father. He will not coerce, force or manipulate men. Men must be left free to make their own choices. Jesus allowed these cities to choose, even against His divine wisdom and supernatural power. He did not force them to accept Him. The realistic picture of the Bible is that "many are called but few are chosen." The majority of humanity will not be saved, because they do not choose to be saved. Even the Son of God apparently failed where He did his most extensive works. But, in the end, it is not miracles or evidence of miracles which saves man—it is man's choice to surrender to the will of Him of whom the miracles testify, "He is God." The success of Jesus' ministry was measured by the Father's standards—not by men's standards. Jesus was anything but beaten and defeated. He did not cry out in ego-deflation; His image did not suffer; He did not quit the ministry because of Chorazin, Bethsaida and Capernaum. Jesus was realistic, acknowledging that the gospel of God will only be accepted by the childlike. Jesus taught others to count the cost—He knew how to count the cost too!

Jesus was aware of the magnitude of His mission and ministry. He wanted the Twelve and the seventy to be aware of it also in order that they might experience a blessing in the face of rejections and persecutions to come. The coming of the kingdom of God and the coming of God's King was what many prophets and kings of history longed to see (cf. I Pet. 1:10-12). Those disciples who were privileged to join the Son of God in His earthly visit and those who have joined Him in His return in the Spirit should praise God for their blessing.

SECTION 2

Promoting Kindness (10:25-37)

25 And behold, a lawyer stood up to put him to the test, saying, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" 26 He said to him, "What is written in the law? How do you read?" 27 And he answered, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with

all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself.”²⁸ And he said to him, “You have answered right; do this, and you will live.”

29 But he, desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?”³⁰ Jesus replied, “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he fell among robbers, who stripped him and beat him, and departed, leaving him half dead.³¹ Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him he passed by on the other side.³² So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side.³³ But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was; and when he saw him, he had compassion,³⁴ and went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine; then he set him on his own beast and brought him to an inn, and took care of him.³⁵ And the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, ‘Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, I will repay you when I come back.’³⁶ Which of these three, do you think, proved neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?”³⁷ He said, “The one who showed mercy on him.” And Jesus said to him, “Go and do likewise.”

10:25-28 Love the Lord: A lawyer had been sitting among the crowds listening to Jesus teach. Lawyer (Gr. *nomikos*) was a term applied to an elite class of Jewish men trained in the Scriptural law and in the oral traditions (which had the force of law). His duty was to settle questions and disputes arising about matters of the Law in everyday Jewish life and to perpetuate the office of lawyer by teaching all young Jewish men who would come to him to learn. The term *lawyer* is synonymous with *scribe*. They are often found in association with the Pharisees but are distinguished from them in that Pharisees were a religious party while the lawyers-scribes held an office. Undoubtedly the majority of the lawyers-scribes belonged to the party of the Pharisees (cf. Mt. 5:20; 9:3; 12:38; 15:1; 23:2, 13; Mk. 2:16; 3:22; 9:14; 12:38-39; Lk. 5:21, 30; 6:7; 7:30; 10:25; 11:45; 15:2; 19:39; Jn. 8:3, etc.). Lawyers and scribes were revered and feared by the people; called *rabbi* (meaning, master); demanded an honor surpassing that due to parents. Proudly they claimed the positions of first rank, and dressed in long robes like the nobility. Along with the Pharisees, they were thought to be, and thought themselves to be, the most pious of all mankind. Because Jesus refused to be bound by scribal traditions, they fiercely opposed Him.

The foregoing characterization of lawyers and scribes makes this confrontation rather amazing. Luke says the lawyer’s question, “Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?” was asked in order to put Jesus “to the test.” Some commentators think the lawyer had some wicked

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motive for the "test." Perhaps he hoped to trap Jesus in some statement that would appear to be anti-rabbinical. Whatever the motive, Jesus put the onus back on the lawyer by asking, "What is written in the law? How do you read?" The answer of the lawyer is very impressive in view of his rabbinical background. One would expect a lawyer to have answered with a long list of rabbinical traditions one should "do" to inherit eternal life. But he said, "You shall love the Lord your God . . . and your neighbor as yourself." Jesus told him he had spoken correctly.

It would take an uncommonly spiritually-minded Jewish rabbi to make a statement such as this lawyer made. The popular theology of the Jews (going all the way back to the days of the prophets; cf. Isa. 1:11ff.; Jer. 7:21-26; Micah 6:6-8) was that the sacrificial ritual was the heart and core of their covenant relationship to God. But it wasn't! God made covenant with their father, Abraham, long before the Mosaic sacrifices, based on Abraham's loving God with all his being. Eternal life is in a Person—not a religion. Of course, man must have some systematic way of expressing his devotion to his Loving Father so God ordains certain rituals and deeds acceptable to Him for such expression. Man was created in the image of His Creator; man *must* love. What, or whom, he loves determines his character (cf. Hosea 9:10). It is not just the "doing" of religious rituals or deeds of piety, but the motive for doing that makes what is done godly or not, (cf. Mt. 6:1-24). How does one love God? By loving his neighbor! There is no possibility of loving God without loving one's neighbor, (I Jn. 4:20-21).

Another lawyer asked Jesus practically the same question in the last week of His ministry (Mt. 22:34-40). Jesus gave the same answer, and added, "On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." In other words, the essence of the law of God and the teaching of the prophets was to reveal God's nature (faithfulness, justice, mercy, love, purity, etc.) so that men would trust Him, love Him and obey Him. Since the law of God reveals Him as loving all men, the essential core of man's relationship to God is that he love his fellow man just as God loves him. When God's law to Moses required the Jew to be separate from the heathen, it was not meant to kill the love of man for man. It was intended to keep the Jew separate from the heathen wickedness which was spiritually destructive. The commandment to love the Lord is from the Hebrew *shema* ("hear, obey") in Deuteronomy 6:4-6. The commandment to love one's neighbor is found in Leviticus 19:18. There are many more commandments in the Old Testament urging the Jew to be kind and merciful to his fellow man, even to "aliens and sojourners," (cf. Lev. 25:35-38; 16:29; 25:6; Num. 15:15-16; 35:15; especially, Lev. 19:33-34 and Ex. 22:21). Jesus makes it very plain in other teachings that if one loves God and His Son, he will keep Christ's commandments (Jn. 14:15; 14:21; 14:23-24; 15:10; 15:12, etc.).

10:29-37 Minister to Man: Theologically and theoretically, the lawyer knew the essence of God's will for man. He was honest-hearted enough to see that the ritual observance of sacrifice and ceremony was not the core of man's relationship to God. He had seen from God's revelation that surrender of the total man, heart-soul-strength-mind, to God and love of one's neighbor was the key to eternal life. But when it came to putting what he knew to practice, he was apparently not ready to give complete surrender. He wanted to reserve the right to be selective as to whom he should love among mankind. Knowing that he had loved some men, he sought to justify his own selectivity by asking Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" Perhaps he expected Jesus (considered to be a Rabbi, since He had disciples) would define "neighbor" in the classical rabbinical exclusiveness as being, "one of my fellow scribes." Jewish society in Jesus' day was regimented within a strict caste system. There was first of all the religious fanatics (Pharisees, scribes, lawyers); then there were the pragmatic, vacillating politicians (Sadducees, Herodians); then there were the *am-ha-aretz* ("the people of the land,"), most of whom were poor and oppressed. Scribes were hated! Rabbi Akiba said to his disciples, "Before I became a scribe myself, I thought, 'Ah, if only I had one in my grasp, I would bite him like an ass.'" One of his disciples replied, "Master, would it not have been enough to bite him like a dog?" Akiba replied, "No, like an ass, for an ass bites better: he crushes the very bones." Pharisees and scribes considered all *am-ha-aretz* as ignorant of the law and therefore "accursed" (cf. Jn. 7:49). One Pharisee was shocked that the rabbi Jesus would allow a "sinner-woman" to touch Him (Lk. 7:39). If a Jewish scribe had difficulty considering a lower-class Jew his "neighbor" to love as himself, what would he think of neighborliness to a Gentile? So this Jewish scribe or lawyer was hoping Jesus would follow the traditional definition of "neighbor." He could thus justify himself for he had probably acted quite neighborly to his fellow lawyers.

When Jesus told His story of the Samaritan who had helped the robbed and beaten Jew on the road to Jericho, this lawyer and many others standing near must have gasped in utter shock! There was a violent hatred between most Jews and Samaritans in that age. "Samaritan" was one of the vilest epithets a Jew could use against any man (cf. Jn. 8:48). The animosity between Judeans and the people of the north of Jerusalem probably began with the division of the Solomonic empire when the ten northern tribes withdrew and formed the nation of Israel (about 935 B.C.). The two remaining tribes formed the southern kingdom, Judah. Israel formed its own religion, government, priesthood and army. Upon Israel's captivity by the Assyrians in 722 B.C., most of the able-bodied Israelites were deported to Mesopotamia and heathen

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peoples were immigrated into that territory. The heathen immigrants intermarried with the Hebrews who had been left behind and this formed a "half-breed" Jewish population known as Samaritans. Judah was taken captive in 606-586 B.C. and its people deported to Babylon. Seventy years later, 536 B.C., fifty thousand Judeans were allowed to return to their homeland by Cyrus, king of Persia. The Judeans reoccupied their farms and villages and this dispossessed many "Samaritans" who had moved into the southern part of Palestine when the Judeans had been carried off to Babylon. That added fuel to the fires of animosity between these two peoples. The Samaritans wanted to help the Judeans rebuild their Temple and their cities (cf. Ezra 4:1ff.), but were told bluntly and unceremoniously their help was not wanted! From that point on, the hatred intensified. Rabbinic tradition soon declared the Samaritans "excommunicated" from the Hebrew covenant (*Talmud, Tanahim* 17:4). About 333 B.C., Manasseh, grandson of the Judean high priest, but also son-in-law of Sanballat the governor of Samaria, persuaded Cyrus, king of Persia, to allow him to build a temple to Jehovah on Mt. Gerizim that would be a rival to the temple in Jerusalem. He made himself the high priest, convinced some priests from Jerusalem to join him there, and allowed them to marry heathen women, (cf. Josephus, *Antiquities*, 11:8). John Hyrcanus, Hasmonean king of Judea, destroyed the Samaritan temple on Gerizim along with the city of Samaria. Herod the Great rebuilt Samaria and called it Sebaste (Greek for "Augustus") in honor of the Roman emperor. Herod also built the Samaritans another temple in the city of Sebaste, but the Samaritans refused to use it, preferring to continue their worship at the ruins on top of Mt. Gerizim (cf. Jn. 4:20-21). Conflict and invective continued between Jew and Samaritan for centuries. Around A.D. 6-9, according to annual custom, the gates of the temple in Jerusalem were opened at midnight, whereupon some Samaritans who had secreted themselves nearby, polluted the Jewish temple by scattering human bones in its porches. Samaritans were thereafter excluded from the services (Josephus, *Antiquities* 18:2:2). In 52 A.D., Samaritans attacked some Jewish pilgrims travelling south to one of their annual feasts. The Jews counterattacked and the struggle became so fierce the Roman legate of Syria had to send in troops. These troops crucified a number of Jews as punishment for the riot. The Samaritans were cursed by the Jewish people. One Talmudic proverb says, "A piece of bread given by a Samaritan is more unclean than swine's flesh." Remember, Samaritans refused lodging for Jesus and His disciples as they were on their way to Tabernacles (cf. Lk. 9:51-56). But apparently not all Samaritans were like this. Jesus here relates that one Samaritan knew better than Jewish priests and Levites what

mercy and neighborliness was. Another time (Lk. 17:12ff.) a Samaritan was the only one of ten who knew how to express gratitude for being healed of leprosy. A Samaritan woman changed her life as a result of Jesus' preaching and evangelized a whole city (Jn. 4). Multitudes of Samaritans became Christians at the preaching of Philip (cf. Acts 8:4-8).

Jesus began His parable, "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he fell among robbers." The road from Jerusalem to Jericho was called *Adummim* (Josh. 15:7; 18:17) which means, "The Pass of Blood." It was a notoriously thief-infested, steep, long road, crowded along its sides with caves and hiding places. Josephus records that Herod had dismissed 40,000 workmen from the Temple shortly before Jesus told this parable and a large part of them became vicious highway robbers. The Jewish traveler of the Lord's parable was set upon by such thieves and robbed, stripped, beaten and left half-dead. A priest and a Levite came upon this man as they traveled the road, but they passed by on the other side. The Greek word *antiparelthen* is very expressive. It is a triple compounded word: *anti*, against; *para*, alongside; *erchomai*, come, go. These two Jewish "holy-men" came upon the victim, one of their own people, but quickly crossed over to the other side of the road. We really don't know why they crossed over to the other side of the road. Perhaps fear of ceremonial pollution from touching a dead body (as far as they could see he was dead); perhaps they were afraid to get involved lest the robbers might still be around. Whatever, Jesus doesn't give their reasons, because no reason they could give would be justifiable. But a Samaritan came along—and incredibly, unexpectedly, inexplicably stopped and helped the victim. Jesus said the Samaritan had compassion on the victim. The Greek word is *esplagchnisthe* and describes a "gut-feeling" type of compassion; one that describes literally hurting because someone else hurts. *Splagchnon* is a word often translated "inward parts, bowels or tender mercies" in the KJV. The Samaritan bound the man's wounds, put medicine on them, took him to an inn, cared for him, and paid the bill in full.

Now the point of this parable is not who is my neighbor, but—be sure you are always a neighbor when someone needs one! Neighborliness has nothing to do with geographical boundaries, but it has everything to do with need, anywhere one finds it. It was not the victim but the Samaritan who was the neighbor!

The Samaritan was a true neighbor. He could see need above other less important matters. He could have thought of just as many excuses that he shouldn't help the victim as the priest and Levite, but his conscience would not let him justify himself as had the others. There is only one justifiable way to love God and that is through helping people in need (I Jn. 4:20-21). We may do many other things and say we love

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God, but if we do not help those in need our profession is hypocritical. Mercifulness is the Christian way of life—"Blessed are the merciful . . ." (Mt. 5:7). The Samaritan got personal. We like to organize our goodness through benevolent organizations. If we hire others to do benevolence we don't have to get our hands dirty, smell unpleasant odors, lose sleep and get involved. We want to institutionalize goodness so we can spend our own time searching for our own happiness. And we never find happiness that way because it is found in doing good personally (Acts 20:35; Jn. 13:16). The Samaritan didn't turn the man over to anyone else until he was sure he had personally done everything he could for the man. He didn't give the victim money and tell him to go find an inn and a doctor. The Samaritan got down on his knees in the dirt—exposed himself to danger—got his hands dirty, and helped. The Samaritan was flexible. The priest and Levite probably rushed on past because they were on very important missions with tight schedules and just didn't have time to stop. The Samaritan didn't do his goodness on a schedule—he did it when the need arose, no matter what his schedule was. The Samaritan was brave. There is always an element of danger in every effort to help someone; danger to one's reputation, to one's safety; to one's possessions. Helping others puts one in a position of vulnerability to be rejected, ridiculed and misunderstood. One must be brave to be good.

Finally, the Samaritan was realistic. He did not try to do more than he could. We are not commanded to be a miracle-worker or a slave to everyone we help. Not every cry for help will be a permanent assignment. The Samaritan did not take the victim home with him and adopt him into the family. He did what he could and departed. Some have to take over the victim's life and manage it or dominate everyone they help. There are subtle pitfalls in too much helpfulness. Some want to help in order to put those they help forever in debt to them in order to hear the constant "thank yous" which build ego and identify and earn merit. The Samaritan did *all* he could, the *best* he could, and let it go at that. It is not even recorded that the victim thanked the Samaritan!

When asked, "which of these three, do you think, proved neighbor to the man," the lawyer apparently gagged on the word "Samaritan" and so he said, "The one doing the mercy to him . . ." The Lord's reply, as recorded by Luke in Greek is, *poreuou kai su poiei homoios*. The word "Go" is in the imperative mood. Jesus is not suggesting this, He is commanding it! Literally translated, Jesus said, "Go! and you keep on doing likewise."

SECTION 3

Prescribing Knowledge (10:38-42)

38 Now as they went on their way, he entered a village; and a woman named Martha received him into her house.³⁹ And she had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to his teaching.⁴⁰ But Martha was distracted with much serving; and she went to him and said, "Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Tell her then to help me."⁴¹ But the Lord answered her, "Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things;⁴² one thing is needful. Mary has chosen the good portion, which shall not be taken away from her."

10:38-40 Listening Prudently: Sometime during this later Judean ministry of three months (between Tabernacles and Dedication), Jesus visited in the home of Martha and Mary, special friends of His. We know from John's Gospel (ch. 11-12) that their home was in the village of Bethany, about two and one-half miles southeast of Jerusalem, just over the crest of the Mount of Olives. Martha *received* (Gr. *hupedexato*, a word denoting warm hospitality, see Mt. 10:40-41) Jesus into her house. Jesus probably had a standing invitation to visit them anytime He was in that vicinity. During Jesus' last week in Jerusalem, He went in and out of the big city almost every night. He probably stayed in this home at night. Martha had a sister named Mary, and a brother named Lazarus (Jn. 12:1ff.). Martha seems to have been the oldest of the family. Most commentators assume the house belonged to Martha since she seems always to be "taking charge." Some suppose she may have been a widow; some think her husband might have been Simon the leper (cf. Mk. 14:3 with Jn. 12:2ff.). Every opportunity Jesus had, He taught. Upon entering the home of His friends in Bethany, He sat down and began to teach (probably concerning the kingdom of God). Mary sat "beside Him at His feet" in the customary place of a pupil. The Greek says Mary "also" sat listening to Jesus teach. Perhaps some of His disciples or other friends of Martha and Mary were present. The "also" may indicate Martha too had at first listened to Jesus teach but quit and busied herself with serving.

While Mary was not helping, Martha became distracted with "much" serving. The Greek word translated distracted is *periespato* which means, "to agitate, to wheel about, to twist and convulse." Martha was running around in circles, agitated and distracted. So Martha exploded and interrupted the Lord (the Greek word *epistasa* means, "to come suddenly upon, to press upon, to assault," cf. Acts 6:12; 17:5), saying, "Lord, doesn't it matter to you that my sister has left me all alone to do

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all the serving?" Then Martha directed the Lord to order Mary to help her. Martha's direction in Greek is *sunantilabetai*, literally, "take hold over against," meaning, "Tell Mary to carry her end of the load around here and help me."

10:41-42 Learning Priorities: Jesus reacted tenderly to the scolding from Martha. The double use of her name, "Martha, Martha . . ." indicates His patience with her. Jesus said, ". . . you are anxious (Gr. *merimnas*, split-minded) and troubled about many things; one thing is needful." The most ancient and best manuscripts (Sinaiticus, Vaticanus and Ephraemi) have the answer of Jesus, ". . . you are anxious and troubled about many things; there is need of just a few things, or one." Either way, what Jesus is emphasizing is that just a simple meal was all that Martha needed to be concerned about. Jesus did not rebuke Martha for her hospitality; He did not say her service was wrong. The "one thing" is not even something spiritual, but "one" or two simple dishes as compared to the "many" dishes Martha was fretting about. Jesus was chiding Martha for involving herself in so many unnecessary things. All she need do, as far as He was concerned, was make a simple meal and then come join Mary in the best part of the whole visit—listening to His teaching. He took this occasion to remind Martha that spiritual things are the only abiding things. Martha was not wrong in serving the meal, she simply made that the first priority. Mary chose that which should really be first priority—opportunity to learn from Jesus. That should always come *before* food or drink or any other thing. If the choice must be made between a meal or an opportunity to learn from Jesus, the latter must have first priority, because that will never be diminished or lost.

Luke alone records this intimate scene. There is much to be learned from it. It contrasts beautifully with the parable of the Good Samaritan which emphasized service to humanity. This incident shows that earthly things are not ultimate. Mary knew the secret that love cannot finally express itself in physical things. Love must ultimately cling to the things of the spirit—that which abides eternally in the next world. What Martha must learn was that in discipleship to Jesus you must not learn to give, but also to receive from Him, especially learn from Him. Martha was trying to express love totally in physical service. It caused a reaction; a sad reaction. She got so totally engrossed in the doing and so agitated at the apparent indifference of those being served she rushed in and scolded both Mary and Jesus.

Jesus recognized the need for hospitality, but He corrected Martha for her fretfulness and fussiness. Hospitality that gets in the way of making spiritual things first in priority is superfluous. If there is an opportunity to learn from Jesus, the only hospitality that is needed is just

enough to make the first thing possible. Jesus wants Martha to understand that the principal thing is what He has to say to mankind. His words are spirit and life; His word is the bread of life (cf. Jn. 6:63). His food is to do the will of the Father (Jn. 4:34). Man lives, not by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God (Mt. 4:4). It was not Martha's kindness Jesus rebuked, it was her order of priorities, her anxiety and her burst of jealousy. The kingdom of God is not food and drink, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit (Rom. 14:17). The primary mission of the church—the preaching of the word of God—must never be second to ministering to the body (Acts 6:2). It is a false benevolence that feeds a man's stomach and starves his soul! The rebirth of the spirit, the sustenance of the soul is of first priority. All other things will perish. The physical order of all creation will soon die. All we can gain physically we must leave. But the spirit of man lives forever—either in the presence of God or banished from Him. What is needful is to listen to Jesus!

STUDY STIMULATORS:

1. What does it indicate to you about the progress of Jesus' ministry to learn that He had seventy other disciples He could send out to evangelize besides the twelve apostles?
2. What do you think of Jesus as a "condemner" of great masses of people?
3. Why is indifference the most evil form of unbelief?
4. Why did the casting out of demons by the seventy disciples cause Jesus to speak of the fall of Satan?
5. Is there still available for believers today the power to tread upon serpents? Why?
6. Why did Jesus tell the seventy to put a check on their enthusiasm? Is the same admonition needed in Christendom today?
7. Why is the idea of God revealing Himself to man so fundamental? Why is the issue of God's revelation a continuing issue for Christians?
8. What do you think was behind the lawyer's question to Jesus about eternal life?
9. Do you really believe that the two commandments the lawyer quoted will give eternal life? Why?
10. Does Jesus' teaching in the parable of the Good Samaritan apply in our lives? How far should we go to help someone? Should we help any stranger who appears to need help?
11. Is it possible for a Christian to be overly hospitable? Are you ever too busy with hospitality to learn Jesus' teachings?

THE CONDEMNATION, CHALLENGE AND COMPASSION OF THE KING

(Matthew 11:20-30)

By Paul T. Butler — OBC Chapel, 10-24-78

INTRODUCTION

I. POINT IN TIME OF JESUS' MINISTRY

- A. Some time after the Second Passover (2nd year of ministry)
 - 1. He has returned to Galilee
 - 2. He has healed many
 - 3. Named the 12 apostles
 - 4. Delivered the sermon on the mount
 - 5. Raised widow's son from the dead
 - B. Question from John Baptist probably precipitated His focusing on the refusal of these cities to recognize Him as the Messiah.
 - 1. Jesus is now in Capernaum
 - 2. Chorazin was about 2 miles north of Capernaum (which was on the coast of Galilee [Sea]). It is mentioned only here in Jesus' condemnation (and in Luke 10—another time of condemnation). It was probably an important city being at the northern most end of the land of Palestine of the 1st century. Trade routes and military garrisons were probably there. It ceased to be inhabited by the time of Eusebius (250 A.D.). It lasted only about 200 years after Jesus' condemnation of it. Only a few carved stones remain today.
 - 3. Bethsaida (Julius); east of the Jordan, near the river's entry into the Sea of Galilee. The tetrarch Philip raised it to the rank of "city" and called it Julius in honor of the daughter of Augustus Caesar, Julia. (If there is only one Bethsaida, instead of two, this is the one.) Some think there was another Bethsaida—a suburb, as it were, of Capernaum. Whatever the case, neither can be found except for a few ruins of a road. Probably a place of much activity in the fishing business (the name means: "house of fishing").
 - 4. Capernaum: It was a customs station; the residence of a high officer of the king (Mt. 9:9; Jn. 4:46); occupied by a detachment of Roman soldiers, whose commander built the Jews a synagogue at his own expense. By the time of Josephus (40 or 50 years after Jesus) Capernaum was of such small significance, J. called it a village.
- Capernaum seems to have exalted itself and this became the cause of its rejection of Jesus.

CONDEMNATION, CHALLENGE AND COMPASSION OF KING DISCUSSION

I. CONDEMNATION (11:20-24)

A. Jesus walked the streets of these cities, esp. Capernaum, and so did His disciples.

1. He had His ministerial headquarters there
2. He had healed a nobleman's son (by remote control from Cana)
3. He had healed a man let down through a roof and forgave his sins
4. He had given the disciples a miraculous catch of fish and called the four fishermen
5. He healed many of all kinds of ills
6. Cast out a demon from a man on the sabbath in a synagogue
7. Healed Peter's mother-in-law
8. The whole city came to the door that evening for healing and He healed many again.
9. Healed the centurion's servant.

Later, He:

10. Stilled the tempest near the city of Capernaum
11. Raised Jairus' daughter
12. Healed woman with flow of blood
13. Healed two blind men and a dumb demoniac

Some of Jesus' greatest sermons were delivered in this area:

1. Sermon on the Mount could have had some of their citizens attending
2. Sermon on the Bread of Life
3. Sermon on Human Traditions (Mt. 15)
4. Sermon on True Greatness; Stumbling-blocks, Mistreatment and Forgiveness

B. Would Jesus condemn?

1. *Oneidizein* means to *blame, charge, accuse, rebuke, justifiably*.
2. Jesus condemned more often than some want to acknowledge.
Most want to think of Jesus as always positive—always encouraging—always forgiving, even indulging those who do not agree with Him.
3. Jesus condemned: Mt. 7:21-23; (here in Mt. 11); Mt. 23:1ff.; Mt. 12:22-42; Jn. 3:36; 8:42-47; 9:35-41; 12:31, etc.
4. It was predicted by the Old Testament prophets that the Messiah would come to condemn and judge (Isa. 11:1-9, esp. v. 4; Mal. 3:1f.; Dan. 2, 7, 11; Micah 5; Zech. 9:9f.).
5. Practically every parable Jesus told has a condemnation at the end.
6. By the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the letters of the apostles contain much condemnation.

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7. Paul even told Timothy, to "reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering."

THIS KIND OF JESUS WOULD NOT BE RECOGNIZED IN THE CITIES AND FARMS OF AMERICA TODAY!

AND THIS IS EXACTLY WHY HE WAS NOT RECOGNIZED IN THE CITIES AND VILLAGES OF THAT DAY!

WHO WANTS A MESSIAH THAT DEMANDS RIGHTEOUSNESS AND CONDEMN'S YOU IF YOU DON'T PRODUCE IT!

A CHRIST WHO DEMANDS NOTHING, CONDEMN'S NOTHING AND SAVES NO ONE.

C. Revelation teaches it and reason demands it.

1. God cannot be reduced to a vacillating, flaccid, spineless compromiser.
2. If your God doesn't condemn unbelief and unrighteousness, He cannot praise and reward faith and holiness. If God does not hate and judge evil, He cannot love and preserve truth and goodness.

THAT GOES FOR HIS SON, JESUS, FOR HIS PROPOSITIONAL WORD, THE BIBLE, AND FOR THE MESSENGERS AND PREACHERS OF HIS WORD!

3. This is what the Hebrew people could not and would not accept—this absolute faithfulness of Jehovah to act according to His nature.

THEY WANTED GOD TO CONDEMN AND JUDGE THEIR ENEMIES . . . BUT TO INDULGE THEM IN THEIR PAGANISM.

4. Where do you stand in your concept of Jesus? Have you accepted Him as an indulgent, compromising Savior?

Is this the cause for the lack of commitment and holy living in the church today? Why have so many Christians compromised their confession by their public lives today—because they have reduced Jesus to a non-condemning, never-judging Savior.

5. J. B. Phillips, in, *Your God Is Too Small*, says some people's concept of the "meek and mild" Jesus makes their God too small.

"Of the epithets that could be applied to Christ this seems one of the least appropriate . . . it conjures up to our minds a picture of someone who wouldn't say 'boo' to the proverbial goose; someone who would let sleeping dogs lie and avoid trouble wherever possible . . ."

"Christ might well be called meek . . . but mild, never!"

"We hear, or read, of someone who was a real saint: he never saw any harm in anyone and never spoke a word against

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anyone all his life. If this really is Christian saintliness then Jesus Christ was not saint. It is true that He taught men not to sit in judgment upon one another, but He never suggested that they should turn a blind eye to evil or pretend that other people were faultless."

People who have such a "totally sentimental" concept of Jesus meek and mild find their actions, and even their thoughts, inhibited by a false consideration of what is loving.

They can neither use their critical faculties nor speak the plain truth nor meet their fellow man naturally for fear they sin against the meek and mild god. The love they attempt to exhibit toward others is all too often a pathetic travesty of the real thing.

For, like other sentimentalists, the meek and mild god is in reality cruel.

I like the way Abraham Heschel says it in his book, *The Prophets*, pp. 64-66: "Indifference to evil is more insidious than evil itself . . . all prophecy is one great exclamation: God is not indifferent to evil! . . . There is no divine anger for anger's sake. Its meaning is . . . to bring about repentance . . . so that beyond justice and anger lies the mystery of compassion."

D. The condemnation is very simply directed toward misappropriation of opportunities and privileges, the most evil form of unbelief.

1. Jesus never condemned anyone for failing to use an opportunity they never had.
2. But He certainly had His severest judgment upon those who had opportunities and privileges and deliberately chose not to use them for the kingdom.
3. Jesus wrote 7 letters to 7 specific churches. Most of them were condemned for failing privileges and opportunities.

HE DIDN'T CONDEMN THEM BECAUSE THEY WERE NOT POWERFUL, RICH, LARGE, FAMOUS.

HE CONDEMNED THEM BECAUSE THEY DID NOT LIVE ACCORDING TO THE TRUTH THEY KNEW!

4. If Jesus walked in San Francisco, and New York, and Dallas today, would He condemn them?

If He walked in Joplin, or your home town today, would He condemn it?

If He walked in the halls of Dennis, Boatman, or your dorm would He condemn it?

ARE YOU LIVING ACCORDING TO THE OPPORTUNITIES AND PRIVILEGES YOU HAVE? WOULD OTHERS, LIVING IN YOUR PRIVILEGES, HAVE REPENTED LONG AGO?

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5. The one time Jesus is said to have been angry (Mk. 3:5) it was because men failed to see the Sabbath as an opportunity to use for mercy and good works. God made the Sabbath as an opportunity . . . they preserved it. God has made this place (OBC) as an opportunity for you . . . what are you doing? Really studying to learn or just to get credits and a degree? THAT IS A PERVERSION OF OPPORTUNITY JUST AS SURELY AS THE PHARISEES!

Daniel Webster, scholar, statesman, Bible-believer was once asked, "What is the most sobering, searching thought that ever entered your mind?" Without a moment's hesitation, the great orator and educator said, "My personal accountability to God!"

II. CHALLENGE (or CONVERSION . . . but conversion is really a correction of our allegiance and thought processes)

A. To Realism (11:25-27)

1. Men must be left free to make their own choices. Jesus allowed these cities to choose, even against His divine wisdom and supernatural power.
2. He did not force them to accept Him; He did not psyche them into acting against reason and will.
(Jesus and the Rich Young Ruler: Jesus would not even so much as appear before Herod when summoned; and when He was taken by force, answered Herod not a word!)
3. The realistic picture of the Bible is that many are called out but few are chosen; the majority of men will not be saved!
4. Even the Son of God apparently failed where He did His most extensive works.
5. But the success of His ministry is measured by the Father's standards—not by man's.

JESUS IS ANYTHING BUT BEATEN AND DEFEATED. He does not cry out in ego-deflation; His image does not suffer; He does not quit the ministry, because of Chorazin, Bethsaida and Capernaum!

JESUS WAS REALISTIC . . . YOU MUST BE TOO! JESUS TAUGHT OTHERS TO COUNT THE COST OF DISCIPLESHIP . . . YOU MUST TOO! DON'T PROMISE EASE AND INDULGENCE WHERE CHRIST HAS DEMANDED HARDSHIP AND REALISM!

IF YOU ARE LIVING IN A WORLD OF MAKE-BELIEVE, FANTASY, "PSYCHE" ABOUT LIFE AND CHRISTIANITY . . . YOU'D BETTER CORRECT!

B. To Rejoice

1. The Lord had failed to win over those cities wherein most of His labor had been expended, and yet He gives thanks!

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2. It is not the expression of stoicism or resignation
3. The word in 11:25 is *exomologoumai* primarily means, "I acknowledge" and its secondary meaning is "to praise." Jesus is really saying, "I make acknowledgement with praise."
4. Jesus is acknowledging and praising the Father that the refusal of these cities to accept His discipleship gives evidence, God's plan for saving the teachable was working.

SOME OF US, WHEN GREAT MASSES DO NOT RESPOND TO THE TRUTH, GET DISCOURAGED, BEGIN TO DOUBT THE POWER OF THE WORD, START TO COMPROMISE BY USING UNETHICAL, SHALLOW AND PAGAN METHODS AND MESSAGES TO COMPENSATE.

5. Harold Fowler, *Matthew, Vol. II*, pg. 556, says, "The things which caused the Lord Jesus to rejoice and give thanks, should give us reason to reflect upon what pleases us. His strange thanksgiving challenges us to inquire into our easy satisfaction with those irrelevant, superficial symbols of success.

IF YOU DO YOUR BEST, IF YOU ARE FAITHFUL TO PREACH THE WHOLE COUNSEL OF GOD IN YOUR MINISTRY, AND THE VISIBLE RESULTS ARE LIKE THOSE OF JESUS, REJOICE, GOD IS STILL YOUR FATHER AS HE WAS HIS.

TEMPORARY SET BACKS, HOWEVER HEARTBREAKING CANNOT DEFEAT GOD!

Rejoice that God's plan of salvation leaves man autonomous and does not turn man into an unthinking, unfeeling, unwilling robot or thing.

Rejoice that God is interested in quality as well as quantity . . . not just quantity without regard to quality.

WHAT DO YOU REJOICE ABOUT? WHEN DO YOU REJOICE? ONLY WHEN THINGS WORK THE WAY MEN HAVE CATEGORIZED AND STANDARDIZED? YOU'D BETTER CORRECT THAT!

C. To Recreation

1. Jesus' response to the rejection of the cities is a challenge to childlikeness.
2. It is the Father's gracious will that only those who are "babes" will accept His Son and His salvation.
3. Jesus will make it unequivocally a condition of kingdom citizenship later (Matt. 18). ". . . unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven."
4. Harold Fowler's characterization of "babe"
 - a. honest enough to admit he does not know everything
 - b. openness and willingness to learn from anyone
 - c. able to distinguish truth from error, the precious from the worthless

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- d. those who evaluate by the evidence and do not distort the evidence to suit their own preconceptions and rationalizations.
 - e. acknowledge that their lives are unmanageable without a Father's guidance.
5. *Reveal* is the crucial issue in recreation or regeneration. What men are willing to have *told* to them by God is the issue; as opposed to what men think they already know and refuse to let anyone tell them.

If men believe they already know all there is to know that is significant about life here and hereafter, then revelation to them is impossible.

Regeneration or recreation is not determined by how you feel—it is determined by whether you believe and obey God's revelation or not! Feeling may be a consequence of regeneration, but it does not prove regeneration. Surrender of the mind and will to the *revelation* of God produces regeneration.

The people in the area of these three cities wanted Jesus to heal them and make their bodies feel good—to feed them and make their stomachs feel good—to entertain them with miracles and charge up their emotions, but they did not want to surrender to His teachings in their everyday living, or accept His vicarious death for their sins.

HAVE YOU REALLY ACCEPTED THE REVELATION THAT JESUS DIED FOR YOUR SINS . . . OR ARE YOU TRYING TO WORK YOUR WAY INTO HEAVEN?!

HAVE YOU ACCEPTED THE REVELATION OF GOD FOR YOUR RELATIONSHIPS TO YOUR FELLOW MAN . . . TOWARD HUMAN INSTITUTIONS . . . FOR YOUR MARRIAGE?

WHAT ARE YOU DOING ABOUT THE REVEALED WILL OF GOD ABOUT YOUR LIFE AS A DISCIPLE (LEARNER), A MINISTER OF THE GOSPEL, A MISSIONARY . . . ? I mean what it says in the Bible!

You don't have to wait for a call . . . you are called by the gospel.

You don't have to wait for a vision of the lost . . . that vision is in the Bible. You don't have to wait for a challenge or a commission . . . they are in the Bible.

ARE YOU LETTING GOD TELL YOU . . . OR DO YOU THINK YOU KNOW EVERYTHING THERE IS TO KNOW ABOUT WHAT YOU OUGHT TO DO WITH YOUR LIFE AND HOW IT SHOULD BE RUN?

If you are waiting for another revelation . . . if you think somehow Christ should come back from above or below or wherever He is and say something else . . . THEN YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT ROMANS 10 says.

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THE WORD OF FAITH . . . THE REVELATION OF GOD . . . ALL THERE IS UNTO SALVATION . . . IS NEAR YOU . . . IN YOUR VERY PRESENCE . . . IN THE APOSTOLIC MESSAGE! JUST AS SURELY AS JESUS WALKED IN THE PRESENCE OF THOSE CITIES, HIS SPIRIT IS HERE, ALL AROUND YOU, IN YOU, THROUGH HIS WORD.

III. COMPASSION (11:28-30)

A. First, look at who offers rest.

1. Have you noticed all through this text the audaciousness of this itinerant Hebrew rabbi? He claims the authority to pronounce judgment on whole cities! He claims the exclusive right and power to reveal God to whomever He chooses and however He chooses!
2. Now, He claims the power to give to anyone who wants, rest for troubled, burdened and weary psyches.
 - a. He will give what Solomon and millions like him could not find in pleasure, wisdom, possessions, great works, entertainment (see Eccl. 2:23 . . . his mind did not *rest*).
 - b. He claims to do what psychiatry, philosophy, governments of all kinds, science, and religion has not been able to do. MONEY, POWER, INDULGENCE, MYSTICISM, STOICISM, ASCETICISM HAVE ALL BEEN TRIED AND FOUND WANTING . . . TRIED OVER AND OVER AND OVER, IN ALL CIRCUMSTANCES AND ALL TIMES . . . STILL WANTING.

And this Hebrew teacher offers it! What audacity—to claim to provide the most sought after and unattained goal known to the human race!

EITHER HE IS GOD, OR THE WORLD'S MOST PREPOSTEROUS CHARLATAN.

B. What is it He offers?

1. Rest! *Vines, Expos. Dict.* says, "Christ's rest is not a rest from work, but in work . . . not the rest of inactivity but of the harmonious working of all the faculties and affections . . . because each has found in God the ideal sphere for its satisfaction and development."
2. It is the rest the Old Testament prophets predicted would be found in the Messiah and His kingdom.
3. It is the rest the writer of Hebrews says the Hebrew Christians were then entering into (Heb. 3-4). (And they weren't exactly sitting back relaxing in their rocking chairs!)
4. It is a rest of yoked discipleship that refreshes the soul . . . actually it is a new birth! a regeneration!

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5. THERE IS NO REAL REST WITHOUT THE WORK OF CHRIST . . . CHRIST CANNOT GIVE YOU HIS DIVINE COMPASSION UNLESS YOU TAKE HIS YOKE UPON YOU.

IF YOU THINK YOUR RELATIONSHIP TO CHRIST MEANS EASY LIVING . . . SELF-INDULGENCE, CESSION OF STRUGGLE, OR HAVING EVERYTHING DONE FOR YOU . . . YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT REST IS!

THERE IS NO REAL COMPASSION WITHOUT WORK. YOU CANNOT BE COMPASSIONATE TOWARD SOMEONE BY TAKING AWAY ALL THEIR LABOR. YOU MAY HELP, ENCOURAGE, BUT TO TAKE AWAY WORK TAKES AWAY DIGNITY, PURPOSE, SATISFACTION, FULFILLMENT, IDENTITY!

THIS IS WHERE THE SOCIALISTIC, BIG-BROTHER, GOVERNMENT FAILS! WELFARE, TRUE WELFARE INVOLVES WORK!

EVEN THE HOLY SPIRIT IS A STRENGTHENER . . . NOT A SUPERNATURAL GENIE TO WORK YOU A MIRACLE EVERY TIME YOU COME UP AGAINST A STRUGGLE, OR AN UNPLEASANT TASK IN YOUR DISCIPLESHIP!

THE ONLY WAY YOU ARE GOING TO FIND REST IS IN DOING THE WORK OF GOD . . . YOU MIGHT AS WELL MARK THAT DOWN IN YOUR LITTLE BLACK BOOK AND BOW YOUR BACK AND GET WITH IT!

WE TALK ABOUT SOCIAL UNREST, POLITICAL UNREST, RESTLESS PEOPLE. . . . IT ISN'T THAT THEY AREN'T TRYING TO FIND REST AND PEACE . . . BUT THEY ARE NOT DOING THE WORK OF GOD!

THEY ARE NOT YOKED TO CHRIST . . . JESUS CHRIST WAS THE MOST RESTED, PEACEFUL BEING EVER TO WALK THIS EARTH . . . AND HE WAS THE MOST PERFECTLY YOKED TO GOD PERSON WHO EVER WALKED HERE TOO!

HIS REST IS HIS YOKE, AND HIS YOKE IS *CHRESTOS*, (TRANSLATED GENTLE) MEANS PRIMARILY, FIT FOR USE, GOOD, PURPOSEFUL. . . .

O.K., SO YOU HAVE BEEN HERE, HOW LONG IS IT NOW? A MONTH, A YEAR, TWO YEARS, THREE . . . AND YOU STILL HAVEN'T FOUND REST AND PEACE FOR YOUR SOUL!

HAVE YOU FOUND THE YOKE OF CHRIST'S PURPOSE FOR YOUR LIFE? DO YOU HAVE HIS AIMS AND GOALS FOR LIVING? HAVE YOU MADE A FIRM DECISION TO SURRENDER TO BEING YOKED TO HIS PURPOSE?

WHAT IS HIS PURPOSE? "GO AND MAKE DISCIPLES OF ALL THE NATIONS. . . ."

THAT IS WHY HE DIED! THAT IS WHY HE ROSE AGAIN! THAT IS WHY HE INSTITUTED THE CHURCH! THAT IS WHY HE REVEALED THE NEW TESTAMENT AND CAUSED IT TO BE RECORDED AND PRESERVED! THAT IS WHY HE MADE THE MESSAGE AVAILABLE TO YOU SO YOU MIGHT BECOME A DISCIPLE!

THAT IS WHY HE HAS SUSTAINED OZARK BIBLE COLLEGE FOR 36 YEARS . . . THAT IS WHY WE ARE HERE AT THIS VERY MOMENT . . . THERE IS NO OTHER REASON FOR US TO BE HERE!

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CONCLUSION

I. THE CONDEMNATION OF THE KING IS SURE AND CERTAIN UPON ALL WHO WILFULLY REJECT AND SPURN OPPORTUNITIES.

"This is the judgment, that the light has come into the world and men loved darkness rather than light"

- A. "Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the whole of man"
- B. The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom.
- C. Yes, perfect love casts out fear. . . . THE FEAR OF PUNISHMENT, BUT NOT THE FEAR OF GOD!
- D. Even the New Testament has much to insist about the fear of God.
 - 1. ". . . rather fear Him who can destroy both soul and body in Hell"
 - 2. Christian slaves were to serve their masters in the fear of the Lord (Col. 3:22).
 - 3. Paul wrote, "knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade men" (II Cor. 5:11).
 - 4. He also wrote, "work out your salvation with fear and trembling. . . ." (Phil. 2:12).
 - 5. Even the perfect Son, was "heard for His godly fear" (Heb. 5:7).
 - 6. Part of the "eternal gospel" is to "fear God and give Him glory" (Rev. 14:7).

IN COMPARING OUR OPPORTUNITIES AND PRIVILEGES WITH THOSE OF THESE GALILEAN CITIES . . . WE HAD BETTER HAVE SOME GODLY FEAR. THE MEN AND WOMEN OF MOSCOW OR PEKING . . . OR THE VILLAGES OF RHODESIA AND INDIA MAY STAND IN THE JUDGMENT AND CONDEMN' US!

The world has had too much of the indulgent grandfather in the sky God and the willy-nilly, weak kneed Jesus preached. Even the church has forgotten Jesus' threat to make war against her if she does not repent (Rev. 2:16).

II. THE KING'S CHALLENGE IS INFINITELY HIGH, DEEP, WIDE!

A. His challenge is rebirth

- 1. See things and people as God sees them realistically.
- 2. Rejoice in the way God has chosen to make Himself known to man . . . rejoice that the kingdom of God and the revelation of God cannot be usurped and manipulated by the sophisticated, self-made, independent-of-God wisemen.
- 3. Surrender to a child-like relationship with Christ . . . let His revealed Word be your only rule of faith and practice.

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B. His challenge is that you allow His Word in you to conform you to the image of His Son.

HIS CHALLENGE IS THAT OF BUILDING CHARACTER . . . HOLY, TRUE, HONEST, INDUSTRIOUS, SERVING, LOVING CHARACTER.

THE CHALLENGE IS NOT TO DISCOVER A CURE FOR CANCER, SIT IN THE OVAL OFFICE, HIT 850 HOME RUNS IN A YEAR, OR BECOME GREATER THAN ELVIS. . .

NO, THE CHALLENGE IS MUCH GREATER, MUCH HIGHER . . . AND IT IS YOURS AND MINE. . . IT IS TO BE A PARTICIPANT IN THE REDEMPTIVE WORK OF ALMIGHTY GOD WHICH HE DETERMINED BEFORE THE DAWN OF TIME AND WILL CONTINUE THROUGHOUT ETERNITY!

III. THE COMPASSION OF THE KING IS PERFECT!

A. He offers what all men and women seek. He promises what most never find . . . REST, REAL REST!

B. HE PROMISES PURPOSE, FUFILLMENT, SATISFACTION, WHOLENESS.

THEN WHY ARE SO MANY CHRISTIANS SO RESTLESS, FRUSTRATED, FRAGMENTED?

BECAUSE THEY HAVEN'T PUT THEIR NECK TO THE YOKE OF CHRIST. . . THEY HAVE BEEN LOOKING FOR A HEAVENLY BOSOM, AS PHILLIPS SAYS, INSTEAD OF A HEAVENLY YOKE!

Phillips says, "His (Christ's) understanding and sympathy were always at the disposal of those who needed Him, yet the general impression of his personality in the Gospels is of One who was leading men on to fuller understanding and maturity. So far from encouraging them to escape life He came to bring, in His own words, 'life more abundant,' and in the end He left His followers to carry out a task that might have daunted the stoutest heart. Original Christianity had certainly no taint of escapism."

The little orphaned, son-of-a-slave, George Washington Carver was teaching at Iowa State University when he got a letter from Booker T. Washington, president of a struggling Negro college.

"I cannot offer you money, position, or fame, . . . the first two you have. The last, from the place you now occupy, you will no doubt achieve. These things I now ask you to give up. I offer you in their place work—hard, hard work—the task of bringing a people from degradation, poverty, and waste to full manhood."

Of course, Mr. Carver took Booker T's offer, and the rest is history.

During the years Mr. Carver worked so long and hard and made so many great scientific discoveries he was offered what would now be millions of dollars in salaries to work for Thomas Edison, Henry Ford and many, many others. But Carver, chose to live in the South, living in relative poverty, wearing the same suit for forty years, forgetting to cash salary

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checks, forgetting everything but his complete dedication to helping his people.

Many people argued with him that he could help his people if he had all that money Edison and Ford offered him. He always answered, "If I had all that money I might forget about my people."

And on his tombstone were carved fitting words: "He could have added fortune to fame, but caring for neither, he found happiness and honor in being helpful to the world."

What are you doing with your opportunities. Jesus invites: Take my yoke upon you and learn of me . . . and you will find rest (purpose) for your soul.

Chapter Eleven (11:1-54)

THE SON OF MAN DEALING WITH HOSTILITY

IDEAS TO INVESTIGATE:

1. Is there something people need to be taught before they can pray (11:1)?
2. Will God answer our prayers if we keep on knocking like the friend at midnight (11:5-13)?
3. Who is the "strong man" whom Jesus overcame (11:21-23)?
4. How did Jonah become a "sign" to the men of Nineveh (11:30)?
5. Wasn't it impolite as well as unhygienic for Jesus to eat without washing His hands (11:38)?
6. Wasn't it impolite for Jesus to call Pharisees, "fools," as He sat and ate at the table of a Pharisee (11:40ff.)?
7. How could that one generation be guilty of all the bloodshed from Abel to Zechariah (11:50)?

SECTION 1

Puerility (11:1-13)

He was praying in a certain place, and when he ceased, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples." And he said to them, "When you pray, say: 'Father, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Give us each day our daily bread; and forgive every one who is indebted to us; and lead us not into temptation.'

And he said to them, "Which of you who has a friend will go to him at midnight and say to him, 'Friend, lend me three loaves; for a friend of mine has arrived on a journey, and I have nothing to set before him'; and he will answer from within, 'Do not bother me; the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot get up and give you anything'? I tell you, though he will not get up and give him anything because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will rise and give him whatever he needs. And I tell you, Ask, and it will be given you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For every one who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. What

father among you, if his son asks for a fish, will instead of a fish give him a serpent; ¹²or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion?

¹³If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"

11:1-4 Request for Form: On the surface, the request of these disciples does not appear puerile and childish. However, they apparently asked out of some sense of jealousy or feeling of having been cheated. It was a usual practice among the more famous rabbis to give prayer-formulas to their pupils. We have no record of John the Baptist's teaching on prayer. This statement indicates John's teaching was distinctive enough that these disciples of Jesus wanted their Master to teach them some form of prayer so they might be recognized as His disciples.

Saying prayer was a very significant part of Jewish life. It was highly formalized among the rabbis of the first century A.D. Jesus dealt with this tendency to formalize and ritualize prayer (Mt. 6:5-14) "heaping up vain words and repetitious phrases." It seems that in general there were three times daily when the Jews of the first century made formal prayers (cf. Acts 10:9). It was customary then that the Jew must wear his *tallith* (prayer-shawl) and his *tephillin* (phylactery). The Jew always turned toward Jerusalem to pray; if he were in Jerusalem and in the Temple, he turned toward the Holy of Holies to pray. Generally speaking he did not kneel but bowed his head as low as possible while lifting up his hands toward heaven, (cf. Lk. 18:9-14). There were a number of other formalities observed during certain prayers such as beating one's breast, tearing one's clothes or casting dust or ashes into the air or upon one's head. The gospel records indicate Jesus' prayers to be uniquely non-traditional and unritualistic. This is probably what seemed so shocking to these disciples. They were not really hostile toward Jesus, just spiritually immature. They still thought of the essence of prayer as something that had to be formally taught by a rabbi, rather than something originating from faith and best expressed without public ritual.

Prayer is essentially an attitude. Jesus deals with attitudes, not form, in His answer.

- a. *Father, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come.* The attitude sought here is adoration, worship, surrender to His Lordship and placing His kingdom as first priority in one's life.
- b. *Give us each day our daily bread;* What Jesus wants is an attitude of complete, daily trust for physical sustenance and an attitude of thankfulness which recognizes one's blessings as gifts from God.

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- c. *and forgive us our sins, for we ourselves forgive everyone who is indebted to us;* We must live in God's presence every day with an attitude of repentance, acknowledging that we sin and seeking God's forgiveness on the basis of our faith in the blood of Jesus. Our faith in His blood leads us to let His life be lived out in us so that we forgive like He forgave.
- d. *and lead us not into temptation.* This is the expression of one's desire to have God's help in resisting sin. With that attitude, we will daily long for His guidance (which may be found in His word) through life's temptations and trials.

God is interested in what we pray about, because the content of our prayers manifests the attitude of our hearts. But there may be times when we do not even know how to pray or what to pray for as we should (cf. Rom. 8:26-27). It may be there will be times when all we can do is "groan" in our hearts. If our attitude is right, our motives pure and our faith strong, God's Spirit will make intercession on our behalf with words which we are unable to find. What a loving Father—able to anticipate and even articulate prayers for us which we cannot, with our limitations, make.

11:5-13 Reply Concerning Faith: This is *not* a lesson that persistence will change God's mind. It is a lesson that faith in the goodness of God will drive us to "knock on His door" at any time we need His help to do His will. This is a story about a man who had unexpected company very late at night. His cupboard was bare. In those days and in that culture any act of inhospitality was a serious social offense. A host was expected to always offer something to eat just before bedtime. This nervous host ran next door to a neighbor's house and banged on his door to borrow bread. The irritated, sleepy-eyed neighbor at first yelled, "Go away and quit bothering me." But the unprepared host, continuing to call out to his sleepy neighbor, finally received what he needed. It might have seemed to the importuning host that his grouchy, sleepy-headed neighbor was never going to answer his knock—but he finally did. It may seem to us that God is never going to answer prayer—but He will. How eagerly a good God awaits our slightest knock so He may supply our greatest needs out of His vast storehouse! If fallible and weak human fathers are concerned enough to give the best they are able to their sons, have faith that your heavenly Father will give "good and perfect" gifts to His children. Before you give up on God and lose your faith in Him, remind yourself of what mothers and fathers go through to give the best they have for their boys and girls.

Persistence in prayer is not to change God's mind. He has always wanted to give man everything good and withhold from man everything bad. Faith, expressed through persistence, puts man in the right

attitude to receive what God has to give with thanksgiving and to put what God gives to its intended use. Faith causes man to use God's answers according to God's will. Persistence, or faith, in prayer is imperative for:

- a. It shows who God is. If our answer does not come immediately, this does not prove God's indifference or His impotence. It proves His power! He is our Faither—not a slave or genie to be manipulated at our convenience. God's delays are our education in humility and dependence. The lesson that God always knows best and we do not takes us a long time to learn.
- b. God desires that we really know what we are praying about. God may want persistence in prayer to give us time to see that some things we are praying for are wrong. Hindsight may reveal to us that we should be grateful God did not give us some things we prayed for.
- c. Praying with endurance is God's way of crystallizing our commitments. God wants us to "ask, seek and knock" with dedication. He wants us to be single-minded and passionate-hearted to seek His will and His blessings. A flippant, half-hearted relationship is unacceptable to God. God does not wish to hear that which we do not care whether He hears or not.

The true focus of prayer is not our will, but God and His will. The true aim of prayer is not to make God change His will, but to lead us to change our will. In this position we let God work in us, for us and through us. He cannot do that until we are fully yielded to Him. Consider the following analysis of prayer:

1. God wants to bless all men. This is what we should pray for!
2. God answering prayer involves at least three agencies:
 - a. His propositionally revealed (written) word.
 - b. His providential actions upon things and creatures.
 - c. Through the free actions of free men, created with free wills and freedom to act as they choose. God often blesses mankind through this agency (even though the actions of men are sometimes evil—God can use that evil to bless others).
3. HOW God blesses in His Word, we know, or can know if we read it and appropriate it through faith and obedience.
4. HOW God blesses through the actions of free men depends upon the actions of free men and how we interpret the record of God's use of such actions in the past.
5. HOW God blesses through His own actions, providentially, upon things and creatures—WE DO NOT KNOW. How He does this is according to His sovereign will.

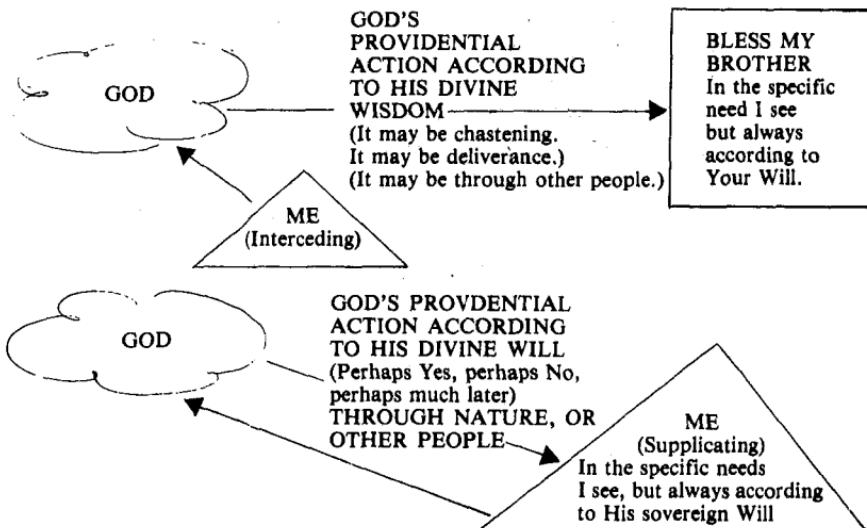
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If, in His divine wisdom, blessing comes through death or healing we cannot know. Our only recourse is to pray that He *will* bless and then leave it with Him—not doubting that He will bless. But He certainly acts when we pray. After all, He is a Father who knows, loves, wills, and does. We must always be surrendered to His sovereignty.

His ways are sometimes difficult for us to understand, or to accept. Often, His ways hurt, temporarily. One thing we must trust in—He will act when we call. We do not know how He will always act, but we do know He will act in our best interests, for our salvation and growth.

This is what Jesus is teaching His disciples. R.C. Trench said, "Prayer is not overcoming God's reluctance, but laying hold of His highest willingness." Prayer is no cure-all. It is not an escape. Sickness will still visit the members of a praying family. Hardship (even untimely death) will not pass their door. Temptation and trial will still beat a path to their house. Paul prayed three times for his "thorn" to be removed; each time God answered, "No!" (II Cor. 12:1-10)

Prayer and praying must be for strength (even if that strength and endurance must be acquired through more trial) so we may be adequate in overcoming temptation. Christ prayed—and was tempted—and suffered. Pray not that we be exempted from trial. God is able to do for us and through us more than we can imagine or think (Eph. 3:20). Our faith is in God, not in prayer.



There have been many attempts to circumvent the very plain statement of Jesus in verse 13. Some had said Luke is using the figure of speech known as metonymy in reporting what Jesus said there. A metonymy is when the name of someone or something is used for the action of the person or thing. In Matthew 7:11 Jesus said the Father gives "good things" to those who ask Him. Since it is the Holy Spirit through whom God gives "good things" what Luke is doing here, so the argument goes, is using the name, Holy Spirit, as a metonymy for "good things." Others insist Jesus is using "predictive present" in this promise that the Holy Spirit will be given to those who ask from God. Their argument is that John wrote, ". . . for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified," (Jn. 7:39), therefore, Jesus' promise in Luke 11:13 had to wait for its fulfillment until after the day of Pentecost in Acts 2:1ff. However, there seems to be good reason to believe God's Holy Spirit dwelt in obedient saints in the Old Testament (cf. Isa. 63:11, our comments there, *Isaiah, Vol. III*, College Press, pg. 450-453). David did pray that God not take His Holy Spirit from him (Psa. 51:11; 143:10). It is necessary that the Spirit of God be in anyone who is to be resurrected from the dead (Rom. 8:9-17). Surely God will raise Abraham, Isaac and Jacob from the dead.

We prefer to take the words of Jesus here recorded in Luke 11:13 at face value, in context. To everyone who has the attitude of believing prayer, as described by Jesus, God will give His Holy Spirit. Christ or God dwells in us through faith and obedience (Jn. 14:21-23; 15:1-11; Acts 5:32; Eph. 3:17; I Jn. 2:24; 3:24, etc.). We believe it is proper to conclude that God's Spirit dwelt in any saint who, by faith and obedience to God's covenant terms, asked God's Spirit to dwell in him, in whatever dispensation of God's grace one lived. God's promise has always been appropriated by faith and obedience to the covenant terms of one's particular dispensation.

SECTION 2

Perverseness (11:14-28)

14 Now he was casting out a demon that was dumb; when the demon had gone out, the dumb man spoke, and the people marveled.
15 But some of them said, "He casts out demons by Beelzebul, the prince of demons"; 16 while others, to test him, sought from him a sign from heaven. 17 But he, knowing their thoughts, said to them, "Every kingdom divided against itself is laid waste, and a divided household falls. 18 And if Satan also is divided against himself, how

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will his kingdom stand? For you say that I cast out demons by Beelzebul. ¹⁹And if I cast out demons by Beelzebul, by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore they shall be your judges. ²⁰But if it is by the finger of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you. ²¹When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own palace, his goods are in peace; ²²but when one stronger than he assails him and overcomes him, he takes away his armor in which he trusted, and divides his spoil. ²³He who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me scatters.

24 "When the unclean spirit has gone out of a man, he passes through waterless places seeking rest; and finding none he says, 'I will return to my house from which I came.' ²⁵And when he comes he finds it swept and put in order. ²⁶Then he goes and brings seven other spirits more evil than himself, and they enter and dwell there; and the last state of that man becomes worse than the first."

27 As he said this, a woman in the crowd, raised her voice and said to him, "Blessed is the womb that bore you, and the breasts that you sucked!" ²⁸But he said, "Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it!"

11:14-23 Wisdom: The last specific place we may locate Jesus is in the home of Martha and Mary at Bethany, near Jerusalem. Then He is said to be praying "in a certain place" which may have been Gethsemane on the Mt. of Olives (Judas knew to look for Him there at a place where He would be praying). Now we are told that "he was casting out a demon that was dumb." Perhaps this took place in Jerusalem, but more likely in one of the small villages of Judea. He would not wish to stir up the animosity of the rulers as He had at the Feast of Tabernacles earlier (see Jn. 7:1—10:21), so He probably stayed clear of the city of Jerusalem. So far as we know He visited Jerusalem only once between Tabernacles and His Triumphal Entry and that visit was at the Feast of Dedication (Jn. 10:22ff.) around December 25th, also known as Hanukkah.

About a year earlier than this Jesus faced the very same accusation of casting out demons by the power of Satan. That was in Galilee and it is recorded in Matthew 12:22-45 and Mark 3:22-30. There, Jesus was at His "home" (Capernaum) when He healed a different "blind and dumb demoniac." There it was specifically stated that the Pharisees attacked Him. There, in Galilee, He warned them about the sin against the Holy Spirit; here, in Judea, He does not give that warning. They are separate events. It is not unusual for Jesus to be accused twice of being in league with Satan. Actually, His enemies accused Him of this many times (cf. Jn. 7:20; 8:48; 9:24; 10:19). It is a demonstration of His divine wisdom that He dealt with each such accusation logically, reasonably and lovingly.

The demon possessing this man was "dumb" (Gr. *kophos*, from a root word which means, "to cut"). Neither the demon or the man was ignorant. *Dumb* in this sense means unable to speak. It was a common practice in those days to take prisoners of war or slaves and "cut" one of the muscles or the flesh of the mouth which kept the tongue from functioning. When that was done the victim could not talk—thus he was "dumb." The Greek word *kophos* is sometimes translated "blunted, dulled." Whatever the man's physical condition, it was the demon who was blunting the man's ability to speak; his power to talk had been cut off by the demon. When Jesus threw (Gr. *ekbalron*) the demon out of the man, most of the people marvelled. Honest-minded people who witnessed Jesus' miracles never failed to be impressed that His power was from God. But some, in spite of the very evident manifestation of deity, motivated by evil, perverted the good deeds of Jesus by attributing His supernatural power to the devil. It is significant that Jesus' enemies did not deny the fact that a miracle had occurred (see also Acts 8:15-17). They could not deny what had happened before their very eyes. But they could slanderously concoct an explanation out of prejudiced hatred for Him to try to undermine the goodness and the importance of His deed.

We will not comment on the origin or nature of demons here. The student should refer to comments on Luke 4:31-44 and 8:26-39 for notes on demons. Their hypothesis that Christ's miracles might be lying signs and wonders was not altogether impossible (see Mt. 24:24; II Thess. 2:9; Rev. 13:13). The devil and his helpers would be able to do *false* miracles. But there would be evidence of their unmistakable falseness—not the least of which would be the false teaching accompanying the false miracles. This could not be said of Jesus' teaching—it always conformed exactly to the Old Testament.

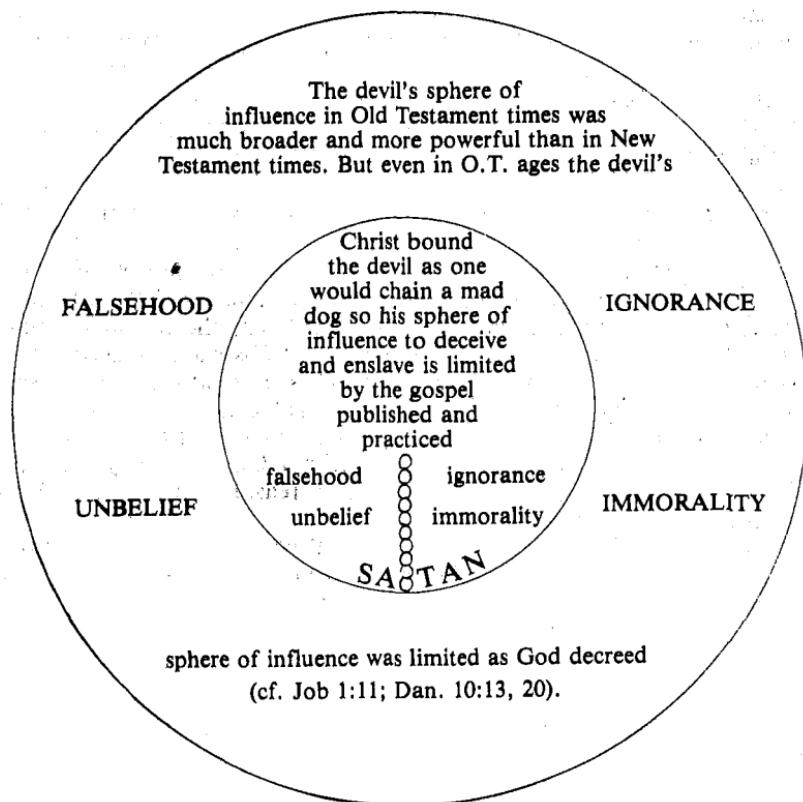
Jesus was the Master Logician. His rebuttal is a classic demonstration of the power of logic to defeat falsehood. Most people would have responded to the allegations of these enemies with emotion and perhaps physical assault. Some might have walked away in silence. But Jesus could not let such a deliberate and damaging falsehood go unexposed. His first rebuttal is devastating. With one simple, logical statement, He destroys their evil accusation. He simply says, "Every kingdom divided against itself is laid waste . . ." In other words, it is illogical and irrational to think that Satan would try to defeat himself. Satan would not join Jesus in trying to do good for men by casting demons out of men and sending them back to the abyss where they came from. That would be like "cutting off one's nose to spite one's face." It doesn't make sense! It is contrary to all accepted structures of right thinking. Satan would not work against himself.

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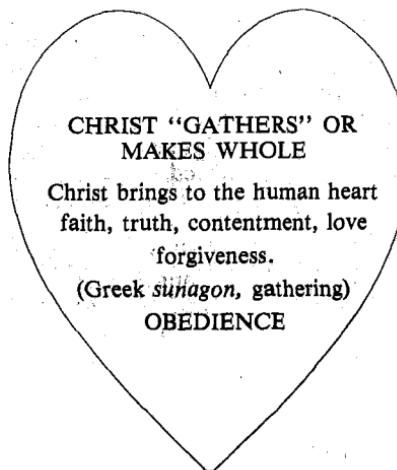
Jesus' second rebuttal was what is called in logic, *ad hominem*, that is, His argument focused on their personal claims and practices in exorcism as an exposé of their faulty logic. He said, "If I cast out demons by Beelzebul, by whom do your sons cast them out?" "Sons" in this phrase probably means the Jews who were exorcists. *Beelzebul* seems to be a Greek transliteration of the Hebrew word *Baalzevuv* which means, "lord of the flies," or "lord of filth." *Baalzevuv* was the name under which Baal was worshiped by the Philistines (II Kings 1:2-16). Apparently this was the name given in the first century to the "prince of demons," (cf. also Mt. 10:25; 12:25, 26; Mk. 3:22). Of course, Jewish exorcists claimed their powers were from God. Jesus' challenge is, if the Jewish exorcists claim to cast out demons at all they are judging themselves as also being in league with Satan. Since they cannot demonstrate that their powers of exorcism are from God any more surely than Jesus can demonstrate His, then their powers must also be from Satan! They judge themselves by judging Jesus. Since their claims (Jesus' and theirs) were demonstrably the same, then the source of power should be the same. It is pretty apparent that the Jewish exorcists were only "claiming" to cast out demons but really had no success at it. Only Jesus, so far as any credible record is available, had the power to really command demons and exercise divine authority over them (plus those select few disciples to whom He gave His power). Since the Jewish exorcists claimed casting out demons was by the power of God and since Jesus was the only One who really demonstrated the power to do it, they should have quickly acknowledged that the messianic kingdom of God had come upon them. Jesus has cast His enemies upon the horns of a dilemma. Either He casts out demons by God's power or Satan's; Jesus has shown that it is logically impossible for Satan to be fighting against himself; His enemies are left with only the first possibility—He is God's Messiah! He is doing the work of God and they are standing in rebellion against it by going against all reason and calling it the work of the devil.

The Lord's third rebuttal is the logical conclusion to a series of brilliantly logical arguments. "When a strong man (Satan), fully armed, guards his own palace, his goods are in peace; but when one stronger than he (Jesus) assails him and overcomes him, he takes away his armor in which he trusted, and divides his spoil (casts out demons)." To overcome Satan one must be stronger than he is. By conquering temptation, casting out demons, winning sinners to the will of God, Jesus proved He was *Master* of Satan—not Satan's servant. In the Galilean confrontation, Jesus indicated that He had, in some sense, at His first coming, "bound" Satan (cf. Mt. 12:29). We believe the rest of the N.T. indicates that to some degree and in some manner, Jesus "bound" the devil by His earthly death and resurrection.

At His first coming into the world, the Son of God "entered the strong man's house (the devil's pretended kingdom), plundered his goods and bound him" (Mt. 12:29). Notice how Jesus' "binding" of Satan is described in the following: (a) destroyed the devil's works (I Jn. 3:8); (b) triumphed over the devil's evil (Col. 2:15); (c) destroyed the devil's power (Heb. 2:14-15); (d) cast the pretended ruler of this world out and judged him (Jn. 12:31; 16:11); (e) makes the devil flee (Jas. 4:7); (f) saw the devil fallen from heaven (Lk. 10:18); (g) and He binds the devil for 1000 years (Rev. 20:6). We believe these are all one and the same. The thousand-years binding of Satan in Revelation 20:6 is the *limitation of the devil's sphere of influence* accomplished by Christ's atonement and continues until Christ's second coming. See chart below:



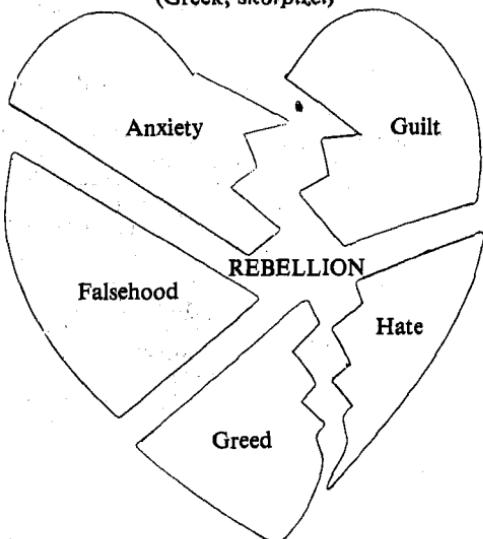
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Christ's logic was unassailable. The truth He spoke was irrefutable. His enemies might deny His deity as a matter of prejudice and deliberate wilfulness, but they could not disprove it. Jesus turned the tables on them. He showed that it was really His enemies who were on the side of Satan.

Jesus precludes any possibility of neutrality between Him and Satan. All men are on one side or the other. All humanity may be classed as either being gathered or made whole by Christ, or being scattered and fractured by the devil.

SATAN "SCATTERS" OR FRACTURES (Greek, *skorpizei*)



In God's word human beings are either saved or lost; wise or foolish; sheep or goats; marked by God or marked by the beast; sons of light or sons of darkness; on the side of God or on the side of the devil—THERE IS NO NEUTRALITY!

11:24-26 Warnings: To warn those who had just exhibited a twisted and perverse mentality by accusing Him of being in league with Satan, Jesus told a short parable about unclean spirits. Practice of exorcism and superstition were deeply rooted in the Judaism of Jesus' day. They believed demons were ordinarily invisible, but if one put sifted ashes on

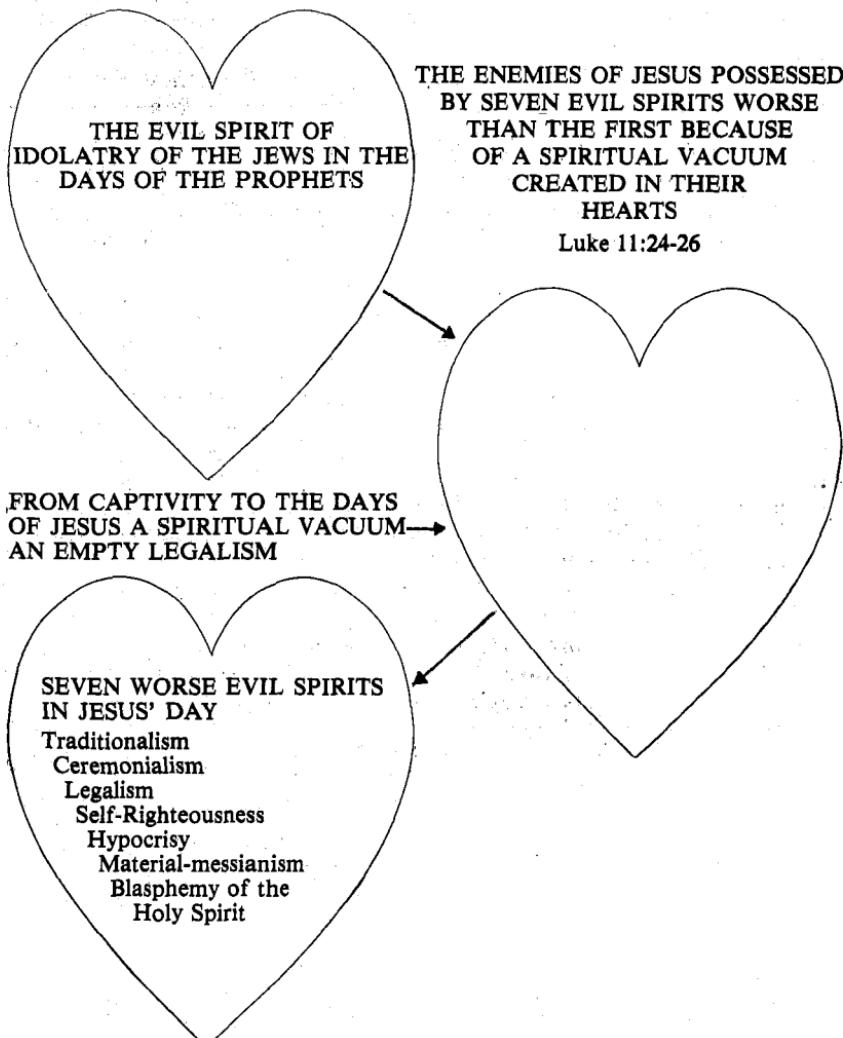
the threshold of the house, their footprints might be seen in the morning, prints like those of a chicken. Demons were to be found everywhere, but especially in deserted and empty houses, marshes, the shade of certain trees, and in toilets. One rabbi, in order to protect himself against them, always took a lamb with him everytime he went to the bathroom. Jews believed evil spirits attacked animals as well as human beings; and among the humans those whom they most frequently attacked were chronic invalids, engaged girls and the best man, or groomsman at a wedding. It was exceedingly unwise for a man to sleep all alone in a house: he would be the victim of Lilith, the she-devil, and anything at all might happen to him. Jews believed that God had provided guardian angels to protect all who were careful to keep the traditions of the rabbis. But they also believed that men had to help protect themselves from evil spirits. This they did by prayers: "The person who recites the *Shema Israel* in getting into bed has as it were a double-edged sword against the demons of the night." The careful Jew would also put on his phylactery as soon as he thought there was danger of an evil spirit's presence.

Jesus did not believe human superstitions. But what He said about evil spirits returning seven times worse than the first was a distinct historical possibility. Mary Magdalene had seven demons at once in her (Mk. 16:9; Lk. 8:2) and Jesus cast them out; the man who lived in the tombs was possessed of "legions" of demons (Lk. 8:30). But there is an even more important focus for Jesus' parable in this context. These enemies of His had just manifested an attitude or spirit of especial maliciousness in attributing the godly work of Jesus to the devil. In calling what was undeniably from God a work of the devil, these people were exhibiting a spirit seven times more Satanic than the spirit of idolatry which had characterized their ancestors of the days of the O.T. prophets. God took their ancestors and drove them into captivity to "clean" their house of idolatry. The drastic measure produced the desired result; the Jewish "house" was never again possessed with idolatry—it was thoroughly cleansed. But upon the return of the Jews to their land in 536 B.C. it did not take long for a spiritual vacuum to be created in their "house." Many of the returned Jews became enamored of the sensual and indulgent life of the Greek culture of that era. A small party of extremely religious and patriotic Jews formed a party called *Hasidim* as a resistance movement against the Hellenization of their ancestral culture. Instead of turning to the Old Testament scriptures, this party gradually built for itself a multitude of traditions, customs, ceremonies and rituals, hoping thereby to protect the Law itself against the encroachments of unbelief. God's word does not need man's protection. What the *hasidim* did with their traditions was build around themselves a false facade of self-righteousness through their legalism and hypocrisy.

By the time Jesus the Messiah had come, the heart of Judaism swept clean of idolatry had allowed the spiritual vacuum there to be inhabited

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by "seven evil spirits worse than the first" plus the old evil spirit that had been "wandering through waterless places." Judaism of Jesus' day had become a rotten carcass over which the vultures (Roman empire) were poised (Mt. 24:28). It was a "house" left forsaken and desolate; a despicable abomination unto the Lord, (Mt. 23:38). Upon them was laid all the righteous blood shed on earth from Abel to Zechariah (Mt. 23:34-36). See the chart below:



11:27-28 Witnessing: There is a rather perverse attitude throughout the history of man that puts more emphasis on physical proximity to holy people and places than on spiritual kinship. We find this attitude cropping up constantly in regard to the physical presence of Jesus (cf. Lk. 4:22-23; Mt. 12:46-50; Mk. 3:31-35; Lk. 8:19-21; Lk. 9:33, etc.). The Jews of the days of the Prophets tended to associate their relationship to God according to the enshrinement of "holy" places, things and persons (cf. Jer. 15:1; Ezek. 14:20; Jer. 7:4; Mt. 23:29-30, etc.). Apparently that same attitude had captivated some woman in the crowds here in Judea. This woman was, sincerely perhaps, impressed with greatness that must accrue to the physical mother of this wise, compassionate and miracle-working Galilean, Jesus. The woman reasoned that since Jesus was unquestionably in right relationship to Jehovah, then His mother must be also.

Now in the realm of sinful mankind that might be a valid line of reasoning (although not always). When there is a godly son, there is usually a godly mother whose righteousness has been instrumental in producing it in her son. The mother, however, was only the instrument; the godliness is produced from the seed-word of God. In fact, some sons are godly in spite of ungodly parents. The godliness of a son does not necessarily guarantee the blessedness of the parents. Righteousness before God ultimately depends on personal choices and attitudes.

Mary, mother of Jesus, was honored by God to give human birth to the Savior of the world (Lk. 1:28-35; 1:42-55). Mary was an excellent example of obedience to the will of God (Lk. 1:38; Jn. 2:4-5). But it was really her spiritual relationship to God that made her special—not her physical relationship to Jesus. That is the point of Jesus in His reply to this woman: "Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it!" The Greek word for "keep it" here is *phulassontes*. It is a present participle meaning continuing to keep it. It is not the usual word for "keep it" in the sense of obey; it is a word associated with "imprison, guard, hold onto." Jesus is saying what David said in Psa. 119:11, the word of God must be laid up in, or imprisoned in, man's heart.

Spiritual ties to Jesus are the ultimate and only lasting ties. Genetic descent is irrelevant to the kingdom of God. God has no special blessings to bestow on anyone because of their physical lineage. Water (baptism) into spiritual covenant relationship with Christ) is thicker than blood (physical family relationship). Jesus is not denying the necessity or usefulness of family relationships but He is saying that even the most fundamental of all human relationships become secondary to spiritual brotherhood. No human nation or race of people has any claims on Jesus unless they come to Him individually by way of God's will revealed in the Bible (cf. Rom. 8:29; Heb. 2:11-18; Gal. 3:23—4:7; 6:10; 6:15-16;

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Jas. 1:22ff.; Eph. 2:19, etc.). We do not please God because of any proximity to holy shrines, national origins, or traditional family religions, but whether we have the unadulterated word of God locked into our hearts and lives.

SECTION 3

Phenomenalism (11:29-36)

29 When the crowds were increasing, he began to say, "This generation is an evil generation; it seeks a sign, but no sign shall be given to it except the sign of Jonah.³⁰ For as Jonah became a sign to the men of Nineveh, so will the Son of man be to this generation.³¹ The queen of the South will arise at the judgment with the men of this generation and condemn them; for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and behold, something greater than Solomon is here.³² The men of Nineveh will arise at the judgment with this generation and condemn it; for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and behold, something greater than Jonah is here.

33 "No one after lighting a lamp puts it in a cellar or under a bushel, but on a stand, that those who enter may see the light.³⁴ Your eye is the lamp of your body; when your eye is sound, your whole body is full of light; but when it is not sound, your body is full of darkness.³⁵ Therefore be careful lest the light in you be darkness.³⁶ If then your whole body is full of light, having no part dark, it will be wholly bright, as when a lamp with its rays gives you light."

11:29-32 Disbelief: We have to go back to 11:16 for the reason behind the request for a "sign from heaven." Their motive as stated there was to "test" Jesus. They were unsatisfied with His messianic claims because He was not backing them with the "signs" they had already decided were messianic. They may have been attempting to trap Jesus into some further display of compassion or teaching which would be in opposition to the traditions of the rabbis. Rabbinical tradition characterized the advent of the Jewish Messiah as a time of great warfare upon the Gentiles and great material prosperity for the Jews. The Apocalypse of Baruch says that the time of the Messiah would usher in an inexhaustible supply of manna to feed the Jews until the end of time. The Psalms of Solomon say the Messiah will "purge Jerusalem of the heathen . . . break the pride of sinners like so many pots . . . and gather the holy nation and lead it with justice, in peace and equality." Jesus was not showing signs of being a Messiah-Avenger or Messiah-Provider (except for the feeding

of the 5000), so the request for "a sign from heaven" was born out of hostility for Jesus' failure to meet their materialistic expectations. Jesus had given numerous signs of His deity already, but they were not concerned with deity. Jesus tried to persuade them that He was the exact fulfillment of their own Prophets as to the Messiah, but they were not interested in God's word. Their demand for "a sign from heaven" in the face of all the other signs which Jesus had already given was graphic proof that they were attempting to dictate to God the basis upon which they would accept Jesus as their Messiah. This is why Jesus called them "an evil and adulterous generation." God gives plenty of evidence to substantiate His word. When man demands more than God has decreed is necessary, it is a sin that "provokes" the wrath of God (cf. Ex. 17:7; Num. 14:11; Deut. 18:18-22; Mt. 16:3; I Cor 10:9; Heb. 3:10). It is rebellion against God to ask for more signs than God has declared sufficient. Jesus did many more signs than those recorded in the gospel records (Jn. 20:30-31), but enough are recorded that any man who wants to believe may have sufficient evidence to substantiate Christ's claims. The clamor for miraculous gifts was what Paul tried to correct in the Corinthian church. Christ had given the Corinthian church sufficient miraculous gifts and the people were sinning in clamoring for more.

The "sign of Jonah" was Jonah's miraculous preservation from death in the belly of the great fish. This was the *evidence* by which Jonah's message was authenticated and the basis upon which Nineveh believed and repented. Jonah became a "sign" to the men of Nineveh that (a) the God of Israel is the God of all men; (b) Jehovah's will must be obeyed; (c) Jehovah wants all men to be saved; (d) Jehovah will deliver all who will repent. The one great "sign" Jesus will give to that generation (and to the whole world) is His miraculous resurrection from death itself. Jesus will not be merely preserved from death; He will be brought back to life again after dying.

Some, by dogmatically wresting the scriptures, have divided believers over the question whether Jesus was literally three days and three nights in the tomb before His resurrection or not (cf. Mt. 12:40). We do not believe it is necessary to insist that Jesus was literally three days and three nights in the tomb for the following reasons: (a) if Jesus was to be in the tomb 72 full hours He should have predicted His resurrection on the fourth day, but He never did; (b) it is good Hebrew idiom to say "day" when only a *part* of a day is meant (cf. Gen. 42:17-18; Esther 4:15-17; 5:1; I Kings 12:5, 12, etc.); (c) *prophetic signs* are to be interpreted in the light of their actual fulfillment when at all possible; (d) His enemies understood Him to mean less than 72 hours (cf. Mt. 27:62-64); (e) Luke names the days involved in His interment—"Preparation" (Friday), "Sabbath" (Saturday), "First day" (Sunday) (cf. Lk. 23:54—24:1). Jesus' prophecy

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that He would be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth was fulfilled since He was there part of Friday, all day Saturday, and part of Sunday. That was the way His disciples would understand it then and that is the way we are to understand it now.

The "queen of the South" was undoubtedly the Queen of Sheba from the southern-most tip of the Arabian peninsula. She visited Palestine in the days of Solomon (cf. I Kings 10:1ff.; II Chron. 9:1ff.) because she had heard of the wisdom of Solomon but did not believe it. When she put him to the test she became convinced and paid homage to his wisdom. Whether she became a believer in Jehovah or not we do not know, but her homage to Solomon was tacit admission that the king's wisdom came from his God. Jesus points out that One greater than Solomon is in the midst of these people—namely, the Messiah, and they do not acknowledge His wisdom. Therefore, the queen of the South will arise in the judgment and condemn the evil generation of Jesus.

The men of Ninevah will also arise at the judgment with that generation and condemn it. They repented at the preaching of Jonah while One greater than Jonah preached to that generation. The moral axiom Jesus posits is this: According to the light against which you have sinned, you will be judged! What is even more significant, that generation will soon have the ultimate, final and most powerful "sign" God is ever going to give the world to produce repentance—Jesus' resurrection from the dead. That "sign" will be God's perfect call to repent, (Acts 17:30-31) and if they do not heed that there is only perfect wrath to be received. What Jesus said to that generation applies even more emphatically to each succeeding generation. We have, in addition to His teachings, His deeds and His resurrection, all the centuries of history in which millions of people have validated Christ's claims by the power of His Spirit living in them. This is why unbelief is evil!

11:33-36 Darkness: There are two different "lamps" in this text. The first "lamp" is Jesus' deity (confirmed by His miracles and later by His resurrection). Jesus who casts out demons is the Light of the World. Yet that generation wanted to accuse Him of doing works of darkness (being in league with Satan). Jesus had just proved logically that He was fighting and defeating darkness. When His resurrection occurred it would prove empirically that He was light. He brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. Jesus pleads with them to search their own souls, recognized their own immoral thinking, because no one lights a lamp in order to put it under a bushel. They keep asking for a "sign" (light) from Him; He is giving the most brilliant light (signs) possible—He is certainly not spreading darkness. The darkness is in them.

The second "lamp" is man's moral perceptiveness—men's capacity to know and distinguish truth from falsehood, light from darkness. The

writer of Proverbs said, "The spirit of man is the lamp of the Lord, searching all his innermost parts" (Prov. 20:27). Just like the physical eye lets in light to guide the body, so the spirit and mind of man lets in truth to guide the inner man, (cf. also I Cor. 2:11). The Greek word *haplous* is translated "sound" in 11:34. In some versions it is translated "single" or "clear" in the NASV. The fundamental meaning of *haplous* seems to be "sincerity, simplicity, clarity." The "sound" eye is one that focuses totally and sharply on a single object—it does not give double vision nor does it divide its focus. This is true of the spirit of man—the mind of man. The inner man will be what he focuses his mind on. And if his focus is double or divided, he will be a divided man. If the "eye" of the soul focuses on falsehood and darkness then the whole inner man will be dark. Those clamoring for signs from Jesus had their hearts and minds focused on a materialistic kingdom. When Jesus declared that was not the essence of God's kingdom, they would not let the light of His truth illuminate their inner being because their "eye" had let in the darkness.

The reality of the Christian experience does not consist in outward, spectacular fleshly things which the worldly-minded evaluate as real. Signs and things which excite the emotions and satisfy the carnal cravings of pride and ambition have nothing to do with the kingdom of God. His kingdom is not of this world; it consists of things that have to do with inner being—faith, love, truth, righteousness. But alas, even our own generation still seeks after "signs."

SECTION 4

Pharisaism (11:37-54)

37 While he was speaking, a Pharisee asked him to dine with him; so he went in and sat at table. ³⁸The Pharisee was astonished to see that he did not first wash before dinner. ³⁹And the Lord said to him, "Now you Pharisees cleanse the outside of the cup and of the dish, but inside you are full of extortion and wickedness. ⁴⁰You fools! Did not he who made the outside make the inside also? ⁴¹But give for alms those things which are within; and behold, everything is clean for you.

42 "But woe to you Pharisees! for you tithe mint and rue and every herb, and neglect justice and the love of God; these you ought to have done, without neglecting the others. ⁴³Woe to you Pharisees! for you love the best seat in the synagogues and salutations in the market places. ⁴⁴Woe to you; for you are not seen, and men walk over them without knowing it."

45 One of the lawyers answered him, "Teacher, in saying this

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you reproach us also.’’⁴⁶ And he said, ‘‘Woe to you lawyers also! for you load men with burdens hard to bear, and you yourselves do not touch the burdens with one of your fingers.⁴⁷ Woe to you! for you build the tombs of the prophets whom your fathers killed.⁴⁸ So you are witnesses and consent to the deeds of your fathers; for they killed them, and you build their tombs.⁴⁹ Therefore also the Wisdom of God said, ‘I will send them prophets and apostles, some of whom they will kill and persecute,’⁵⁰ that the blood of all the prophets, shed from the foundation of the world, may be required of this generation,⁵¹ from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah, who perished between the altar and the sanctuary. Yes, I tell you, it shall be required of this generation.⁵² Woe to you lawyers! for you have taken away the key of knowledge; you did not enter yourselves, and you hindered those who were entering.’’

53 As he went away from there, the scribes and the Pharisees began to press him hard, and to provoke him to speak of many things,⁵⁴ lying in wait for him, to catch at something he might say.

11:37-44 Hypocrisy: Jesus was invited to “dine” with a Pharisee while He was confronting His enemies. The extraordinary wisdom Jesus displayed in completely defeating the accusations against Him intrigued this Pharisee, so he wanted to see and listen to the Sage of Galilee first-hand. This Pharisee was totally unprepared for what he heard from the lips of Jesus. The Greek word *aristese* means “break your fast” or “breakfast” (see Jn. 21:12, 15) and originally referred to the first meal of the day. But it came to mean in the days of Jesus a sort of “brunch” or the meal eaten after morning prayers in the synagogue, at mid-morning. Jesus entered the Pharisee’s house and went immediately to the couch and *reclined* (Gr. *anepesen*), without performing the traditional “washing” of the hands before the meal. The Hebrew language has three words most often used in the O.T. for ceremonial washing: *kavas*, *rachatz*, and *taval*. *Taval* means, “to dip or immerse.” The Greek word used in Luke 11:38 is *ebaptisthe* which means, “to dip or immerse.” Modern Hebrew has focused on the word *taval* to categorize all ceremonial ablutions (see Judaica Encyclopedia, Vol. 2, 82-86).

There were all kinds of purifications practiced in the Gospels: There were washings for lepers (Lk. 17:12; Lev. 13:45ff.); washings after birth (Lk. 2:22) and before wedding feasts (Jn. 2:6). A Jew argued with John the Baptist’s disciples about purification (Jn. 3:25-30); Peter was always careful to observe laws of purification (Acts 10:14); Pharisees were meticulous about purification (Mt. 23:25; Lk. 7:39; Jn. 18:28); regulations about ablutions were a characteristic part of Judaism (Heb. 9:9-10).

God made scores of laws demanding ceremonial washing in the O.T. (cf. Lev. 5:2ff.; 7:19-21; 11:23-25; 15:11; 17:15ff.; 18:1ff.; 19:31; 21:4ff.; 22:1-9; Num. 5:3; 6:9; 9:6ff.; 19:13-22; Deut. 21:22ff.; 14:3-21; 23:10-14). All these had to do with ritual uncleanness. In many instances there was nothing physically or hygienically unclean involved. Everything created by God is good when properly used. God gave the commands to teach man that perfect spiritual cleanliness by works of the Law was impossible, because man was unable to even keep the ceremonial aspect of the Law perfectly.

But Jesus did not violate Mosaic Law when He failed to "baptize" His hands before eating. Nowhere in the Law of Moses are Jews commanded to wash their hands before eating. The washing of hands is mentioned only once in the Torah (Lev. 15:11) and that has nothing to do with meals. Washing of hands is rabbinical tradition pure and simple. According to the rabbis, washing of hands to be cleansed of impurity before meals was instituted by King Solomon; some think the tradition was instituted by the disciples of Hillel and Shammai. The washing of hands is either by immersion up to the wrist or by pouring about one-half a pint of water over both hands from a receptacle with a wide mouth, the lip of which must be undamaged. The water should be poured over the whole hand up to the wrist, but is acceptable as long as the fingers are washed up to the second joint. The hands must be clean and without anything adhering to them; rings must be removed so that the water can reach the entire surface area. The water should not be hot or discolored and it is customary to perform the act by pouring water over each hand three times. Superstition and racial prejudices were both in the background of this tradition. The Talmud refers at length to the tradition supposing that demons sat on unwashed hands just waiting to get into the person's body through the mouth. The Talmud also mentions that Rabbi Akibba, although personally opposed to the tradition, nevertheless used the limited water allowed him in prison for this ablution rather than for drinking and so died of thirst.

The word *Pharisee* comes from the Hebrew word *pharashim* which means "separated ones." It was a Jewish sect which was originally known as the *Chasidim*, a Hebrew word meaning, "pious ones." The *Chasidim* was formed from a group of "old fashioned" Jews who dedicated themselves to resist the paganization of their culture during the Seleucid (Greco-Syrian) domination of Palestine (350-175 B.C.). They denounced everything of Gentile practice, insisted on the absolute supremacy of the Torah, and often resisted to the death any attempt to Greekize their land and people. The tendency of the Hasmoneans (Jewish royal and priestly family descending from the Maccabees) to compromise with certain aspects of paganism brought about an intense sectarian division

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in Judaism that lasted down into the days of Jesus in the sects of the Pharisees and Sadducees (see chart on Religious-Political Frame of First Century Judaism, pg. 88).

The Pharisees were the most prominent and influential sect of Jesus' day. Josephus says there were about 6000 Pharisees in the first century A.D. They were contemptuous of all who did not follow their traditions and violently opposed to anyone who would threaten their religious traditions whether Gentile or Jew. The fundamental feature of the sect was extreme legalism. They believed in Divine providence, the free will of man, resurrection of the dead and judgment. They lived moderately (although many of them were rich), placed great store in history and ethnic culture of the Jewish race. They eagerly anticipated the Golden Age of the Messiah (as they interpreted it). Rabbinical tradition was something about which the Pharisees were deadly serious. Rabbinical interpretations of the Torah were designed to "protect the Law." To keep the unlearned and common people from ignorantly disobeying the Law, the rabbis (with all their expertise) deemed it necessary to write out in minute detail every possible human action that might violate a commandment of the Torah. Soon after Malachi, the last prophet of God (400 B.C.), there arose in rabbinic Judaism the concept called, *Bath Kol*. These two Hebrew words mean, literally, "Daughter of the Voice." The rabbinical meaning of the words is, "The Divine Voice." According to this concept God "whispered" all the rabbinic traditions (interpretations) to Moses at the same time He gave Moses the Torah. Moses wrote the Torah down, but passed on the interpretations orally. These oral traditions were passed on from generation to generation through the rabbis until around 132-200 A.D. when they were produced in written form in the Mishnah, the Haggadah, the Halakah, and the Talmud (300-400 A.D.).

It is not difficult to understand now why the Pharisee was "astonished" (Gr. *Ethaumasen*, shocked) to see that Jesus did not first "wash" before He ate. The Pharisee considered Jesus' action a violation of "The Divine Voice." It is interesting that this Pharisee, living in Judea the hotbed of Pharisaic legalism, would invite Jesus to dine with him considering the attitudes of the Pharisees toward Jesus:

- a. They considered Jesus' claim to forgive sins blasphemy (Mt. 9:3ff.; Mk. 6:2ff.; Lk. 5:21)
- b. They rankled at His social associations with publicans and sinners (Mt. 9:11; Mk. 2:16; Lk. 5:30; 15:1)
- c. They accused His disciples of non-observance of required feasts (Lk. 5:33).
- d. They tried to prove Jesus was in league with Satan (Mt. 9:34; 11:19; 12:24ff.; Mk. 3:22; Lk. 11:14).

- e. They attacked Him for violating Sabbath traditions (Mt. 12:2, 10; Mk. 2:23; 3:2; Lk. 6:5-7; 13:14ff.; Jn. 5:10-18; 9:13).
- f. They compromised their convictions to join with the Herodians to kill Jesus (Mk. 3:6).
- g. They also joined with the hated Sadducees to trap Him (Mt. 15:1; 22:1ff.), and kill Him (Mt. 27:62; Jn. 18:3).
- h. They accused Him of planning to destroy the Temple (Jn. 2:19; Mt. 26:59-61; 27:39-40).
- i. They accused Him of being a deceiver (Jn. 7:12; Mt. 27:62ff.).
- j. They ridiculed Him (Jn. 7:48) and tried to slander Him by calling Him a Samaritan (Jn. 8:48) and demon possessed.
- k. They charged Him with sedition against the Roman empire (Lk. 23:1-2).
- l. They mocked Him in His death on the cross (Mt. 27:41ff.).

Evidently the Pharisee said something to Jesus about violation of rabbinic tradition for Jesus replied with a lengthy and scathing rebuke of Pharisaic hypocrisy. What He said here, Jesus repeated about a year later in greater detail in the midst of His last week on earth (Mt. 23:1ff.).

The Lord's first admonition to the Pharisees is that they clean up the inner man. They were very orthodox on the outside. They kept all the ceremonies and rituals. They attended all the feasts and fasts without fail. They appeared to be very pious. But inwardly they were full of extortion and wickedness. They even made religious traditions by which they could circumvent moral and financial responsibility to their aged parents (Mt. 15:3-6) and all the while appear to be very pious by declaring their money "Corban" (devoted to God). But God looks on the heart and not on the outward appearance. No man can fool God—He looks at motives. Alms-giving is an abomination before God if it is done with a resentful or unwilling heart. The Sermon on the Mount (Mt. 6:1-18) plainly teaches that *why* we do any religious deed is more important than the deed itself! Doing one's piety before men, to be seen of them, indicates an unclean heart, no matter how right the deed may be. If the Pharisees would clean up their hearts and give those to the world, they would be giving the kind of "alms" God wants the world to have. More than coins given out of self-righteous, and resentful hypocrisy, the world needs love, purity, truth and kindness. While love can only be expressed by giving, and giving material things to the poor can come from a pure heart (Jas. 1:27; 2:14-17; I Jn. 3:16-18), giving alms does not necessarily equal piety. It is only when the heart is right with God that everything then becomes "clean" (cf. Mt. 15:10-11; Mk. 7:14-23; I Tim. 4:1-5).

Jesus next points out the Pharisaic tendency to major in minors. The Pharisees meticulously counted every dill seed, setting aside every tenth

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one, to insure legal correctness. The Talmud even suggests that the pious Jew ought to cut up every dill-plant stalk into ten parts and give one-tenth to the Temple. While they were unimpeachably precise in these outward regulations and spent most of their time trying to make others so, they were unconcerned about fairness, the rights of others and love of God. Jesus called these latter things "the weightier matters of the law" in Matthew 23:23. Jesus does not say they should quit tithing to the Lord as the Law of Moses required, but He insists that scrupulousness in setting aside every tenth dill seed is not the essence of God's law. The real purpose behind every Law, even of the tithe, is grace, mercifulness and redemption for the soul of man. A man may be very accurate in religious ritual and doctrine but if he has no sensitivity to justice for his fellow man nor love for God he has a perverted sense of values and his orthodoxy is probably motivated by a hope in self-righteousness. Financial support for the work of God's kingdom must have the right motives (cf. II Cor. 9:5-8).

Ego-tripping was another favorite endeavor of the Pharisees. They "loved" the best seat in the synagogues and salutations in the market places. The Greek word *protokathedrian* is a compound of *proto* ("first" or "chief") and *kathedra* ("throne" or "seat"); *kathedra* is the word from which the English word "cathedral" comes. *Kathedra* is sometimes used in classical Greek to mean "a teacher's seat," or "a judge's seat." Jesus denounced them later for loving to be called "rabbi" ("teacher" or "master") (cf. Mt. 23:7-8). This mania still persists in religious circles today where men not only love but insist on being called, "Doctor," "Pastor," "Reverend," "Father" or some other title. "Bigshotism" corrupts! The inordinate self-seeking egotism that feeds on competitiveness is Pharisaic! The urge to constantly class or compare ourselves with some of those who commend themselves and measure ourselves by one another (II Cor. 10:12) leads to a complacent and destructive superiority. Beware of the intoxication of erudition—never think you have learned all there is to know. Beware of flattering compliments (II Pet. 2:18; Jude 16)—never seriously believe you are as great as others say you are! "Bigshots" are like graves; full of corruption themselves and dangerous to others who associate with them because people are fooled by their outward appearances. Hanging around self-proclaimed "bigshots" will corrupt you like the uncleanness the Jews incurred by walking over a grave.

11:45-54 Hate: There is an old adage which says, if you throw a stone at a pack of dogs the one that is hit will yelp. One of the *lawyers* (Gr. *nomikoi*; also called *grammateis* or "scribes") yelped! What Jesus had been saying about the hypocrisy of the Pharisees reproached the scribes or lawyers also. Lawyers and scribes were the "data processors" of the Jewish religion. They were closely associated with the Pharisees. Their

origins go even farther back in the history of Judaism than that of the Pharisees—back to pre-exilic days. They were the public recorders, governmental secretaries, legal experts, charged with passing on the rabbinical teachings in writing. They also taught and interpreted the traditions. All public education of the Jewish populace was in their control. They were charged with making civil judgments; they were members of the Sanhedrin, loved the title of “rabbi,” wore long robes, and sought public adoration. They were the most watchful and determined opponents of Jesus (cf. Mk. 2:16; Lk. 5:30; 15:2).

Jesus' first denouncement of the lawyers was that they were totally insensitive to other men's burdens. In fact, Jesus accused them of “loading men with burdens hard to bear” and then refusing to help at all in relieving the burdens. These burdens they placed on men were their unbiblical (and in some cases, antibiblical) traditions. Here are some of them:

- a. A Jew was forbidden by scribal tradition from eating eggs on the Sabbath because the hen had to work to lay the egg and that breaks the Sabbath tradition.
- b. It was forbidden to slaughter animals on the Sabbath *unless* it was a louse. (Conservative rabbis forbade even that while liberal ones allowed people to pull the legs off a louse on the Sabbath).
- c. If a wheat-offering portion had been stored in a granary, no other wheat could be stored there unless the Jew swept the granary with a certain number of broom strokes.
- d. It was questionable whether a Nazarite, with a vow to abstain from mashed food was permitted to eat an onion crushed accidentally.

Volume after volume of scribal traditions were forced upon the common people, until life was almost unbearably regimented and stifled. But Pharisees and scribes made sure they freed themselves of such burdens by adding traditions that only they were privy to:

- a. The tradition of Corban (already mentioned, 11:37-44).
- b. The tradition of “Fictitious Domicile” where a scribe, if he had “an important rabbinical journey” to make could pretend he had a domicile every 7/8ths of a mile and travel that far, pretend to take up lodging for a few moments and then travel on another 7/8ths of a mile.
- c. The tradition called “Prosbol” which was a document designed (much like Corban) to circumvent cancellation of debts.
- d. The tradition about swearing by the altar vs. swearing by the gift on the altar (cf. Mt. 23:16-22).

This is the way the lawyers of Jesus' day kept themselves aloof from the

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burdensome traditions they demanded of everyone else. Most societies, including our own, have an elite group of law-makers who burden the masses with an unbearable multitude of statutes while they find ways to keep themselves above the laws. Lawyers, judges, legislators and religious teachers should practice what they preach!

Next Jesus took occasion to expose the murderous hatefulness in the hearts of some of these lawyers. Outwardly the lawyers and scribes built fancy and ornate tombs for the old prophets (cf. Mt. 23:29-36), but inwardly they hated and wanted to murder The Prophet, Jesus. Outwardly they gave the impression they revered God's prophets, but in their open hatred of Jesus they showed a wicked heart that would have, like their forefathers, killed the prophets had they lived in that ancient generation. Outwardly they pretended to hold life sacred; inwardly they were the worst killers of all time for they killed the Son of God! The "Wisdom of God" (11:49) is apparently a Messianic title Jesus applies to Himself since in the passage in Matthew 23:34, the later, similar denunciation of the Pharisees, Jesus says, "Therefore I send you prophets..." "Wisdom" is personified in the book of Proverbs (8:1ff.) which may be a Messianic prophecy in itself.

Because these lawyers wanted to (and did) succeed in murdering the innocent Son of God, they will be held responsible for all the murdering of God's prophets and messengers in the Old Testament. The blood of Abel was the first to be shed because of the truth of God (Gen. 4:10); the blood of Zechariah (II Chron. 24:22) was the last. But the death of The Prophet, The Messiah, will be the ultimate murder, the crowning act of all such hatred against God's sovereignty. Daniel, the prophet, predicted that near the end of the 490 years ("70 weeks of years"), which would begin with the restoration of the Jewish commonwealth, the Jewish people would fill the cup of their rebellion to the brim and "cut off the Prince," (cf. Daniel 9:24-27; see comments in *Daniel*, by Butler, College Press, pgs. 344-353 and 363-366). (See also Matt. 23:32-36; I Thess. 2:15-16; Matt. 21:33-43; Jn. 15:22-27; Acts 2:22-23; 3:13-15; 7:51-53; 4:25-28). The killing of God's Son was the ultimate sin; it was what Daniel called, "finish the transgression" (Dan. 9:24). The murder of God's Son resulted in God's destruction of the Jewish commonwealth in 70 A.D. (cf. Lk. 19:41-44; Mt. 22:1-10; I Thess. 2:16; Dan. 9:26b-27).

Finally, Jesus accused the scribes and lawyers of taking away from men the key of knowledge. These lawyers pretended to be guardians and proclaimers of the knowledge of God, but in reality they were destroyers. Instead of teaching the people the will of God as God revealed it in the Old Testament, they cluttered and obscured and hid under a blanket of human traditions the real revelation of God. They opposed Christ and poisoned the minds of the people against Him in the very

face of His miracles and goodness and purity. They threatened harm to anyone who made any effort to follow Jesus and learn of God from Him. Christ was the Word of God incarnate. He is the key to all wisdom (cf. Col. 2:3, 17; Jn. 14:6). He attempted to cut through the veneer of scribal tradition and teach the people the true revelation of God. That is why the lawyers opposed Him so vehemently. *Deinos* is a Greek adverb meaning "terribly, fearfully, hatefully"; *enechein* means, "to hold in, to entangle, to entrap." These lawyers and Pharisees were consumed with their hatred and desire to entangle Jesus. They were going to try to *apostomatizein* ("provoke" or, literally, "draw out of Jesus' mouth") many things from Jesus and trap Him in some error. The phrase "that they might accuse him" in the KJV is not found in the best manuscripts (such as Sinaiticus, Vaticanus, Codex Regius Parisiensis, the Syriac Curetonian, the Boharic), but that is what is certainly inferred. They certainly were not lying in wait to learn some truth from Jesus they could put to practice in their lives. They kept badgering Him like vicious dogs barking at their prey hoping to catch Him off-guard so they could rush in for the kill.

Jesus met every hostile attack and subtle deception with truth and devastating logic. He did not do it to wound His attackers and destroy any hope of their salvation—He did it to arrest their self-destroying plunges into vicious falsehood and hatred. Some went wilfully on in their hatred, intensifying their efforts to kill Him; others undoubtedly were rescued. There were a few Pharisees and influential Jewish leaders who did become disciples (e.g. Nicodemus, Joseph of Arimathea, and others). The world is still filled with Pharisees and lawyers, pretending to love God but all the while studying His word only to try to destroy it.

STUDY STIMULATORS:

1. What do you think about formal prayers? Should people read prayers from manuscripts? Did Jesus advocate a certain form of prayer? Is it all right to repeat the "Lord's Prayer" in unison?
2. Can we get God to change His mind by praying long enough for the same thing? If not, why did Jesus talk about the friend at midnight who was heard for his persistence?
3. Is the Holy Spirit given when all one does is pray? When was the Holy Spirit given to men?
4. Do you think Christians should try to be logical in their presentation of the Gospel? Didn't the apostle Paul go into Jewish synagogues and "reason" with Jews from the scriptures about the Christ?
5. When was the devil bound?

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6. Is the whole world of mankind actually divided into only two segments—saved and lost? Who are the saved? Who are the lost?
7. How did the Jews let seven demons worse than the first inhabit their “swept-clean” house? Is their plight a possibility for believers today?
8. Why did the woman think the mother of Jesus was so blessed? What do you think of Jesus’ answer?
9. When is it wrong to ask the Lord for signs? Is it ever right? Are religious people today wrong in clamoring for miraculous signs?
10. From the study of Jesus’ exposure of the Pharisees and lawyers, do you see any parallels of hypocrisy in the modern church?

BLESSING OF BEING SEALED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT

(Ephesians 1:13-14)

By Paul T. Butler — OBC Chapel, 10-23-73

INTRODUCTION

I. CONTEXTUALLY

- A. These two verses combine to form one of the great "spiritual blessings" God has blessed us with in Christ.
 - 1. Paul lays two huge sentences on the Ephesian church in chapter one.
 - 2. The first sentence 1:3-14 is a catalog of all the ways in which God has blessed Christians in Christ.
 - 3. The second sentence 1:15-23 is Paul's prayer that these Christians may know (understand and experience) those blessings.
- B. Paul did not place all this "breathtaking" stress upon spiritual blessings without reason.
 - 1. Spiritual blessings are not contingent upon favorable physical circumstances and are available to all believers alike.
 - 2. Spiritual blessings thus have to do with the abiding realities, not the temporary trappings of the flesh.
 - 3. Spiritual blessings supply man's most desperate need—to be remade into the person God intended him to be—this will be the thrust of these two verses.

II. EXEGETICALLY

- A. Reading these two verses in the Greek text is an interesting experience.
 - 1. Literally it would read something like this:
"In Him also, you, the ones having heard the word, that one of the truth, the gospel of your salvation, in Him also, you, the ones having believed, were sealed (passive) with Spirit, the promised one, the holy one, who is the down-payment of our inheritance until the redemption which will give complete possession unto the praise of His glory."
 - 2. The Berkeley Version is also interesting here:
"In Him you also, after listening to the message of the truth, the Gospel of our salvation, have as believers in Him been stamp marked with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the pledge-deposit of our legacy for the releasing of our deed of purchase, and all to the praise of His glory."

III. ETYMOLOGICALLY

- A. Seal - literal sense: "A device bearing a design, a name or some other words so made that it can impart an impression in relief upon a soft substance like clay or wax. When the clay or wax hardens, it permanently bears the impression of the seal."

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1. Archaeologists find them being used 4000 B.C.
2. Originally they took the form of a cylinder, gradually superseded by the scarab (beetle-shaped)
3. Some carried on cords around neck like necklace; some cone-shaped in boxes; most in form of finger-rings

B. Seal - uses:

1. As an authentication
2. As a mark of ratification of a covenant
3. As a means of protecting documents to seal against tampering
4. As a deputation of authority
5. As an official mark of ownership

IV. APPLICABILITY - Three areas of blessing for the Christian in having been sealed with the promised Holy Spirit.

- A. He Etches the Image of God and His Son Upon our Being
- B. He Gives Us the Earnest-Payment of Our Inheritance
- C. He Empowers Us As Emissaries of our Great God

DISCUSSION

I. ETCHE THE IMAGE OF GOD UPON OUR BEING

A. Authenticates our genuineness as belonging to Him

1. "The Spirit himself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are children of God. . . ." (Rom. 8:16).
2. Does not say that the Holy Spirit bears witness *to* our spirit but *with* our spirit—*summaturei*; the Holy Spirit bears witness—and our own spirit bears witness.
3. If my spirit says I am a child of God, and the testimony of the Holy Spirit shows that I am not a child of God, then I am not a child no matter what my spirit says. The two witnesses must agree. My spirit must agree with the testimony of the Holy Spirit.
4. This co-witness of the Spirit of God with our spirit, whereby we are assured that we are children of God, is a very important and blessed reality. BUT IT HAS BEEN SO OFTEN MISUNDERSTOOD AND MISINTERPRETED.
5. How does the Spirit bear witness with our spirit? A still small voice? A feeling? emotion? impulse? The Bible nowhere affirms such leadings! All people and religious denominations who claim such subjective witness of the Holy Spirit not only contradict one another—they contradict the Bible. The Bible claims to be the witness of the Spirit. The Spirit of God does not contradict Himself.

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6. Since there are no inspired men living today—and those who claim to be such contradict the word of God in what is His witness about who are the children of God—the only witness which we have of the Spirit to us is found in His written Word. *No one knows the Spirit's will on any subject unless he has learned it from the written Word.* Anything that claims to be the Holy Spirit's teaching must not contradict this!
 7. The Spirit of God lays down the terms by which we become a child of God, and when we believe and obey these terms then both the Holy Spirit and our own spirits testify that we are the sons of God.
 8. WHAT A BLESSING TO HAVE SUCH A SEAL PUT UPON OUR MINDS AND HEARTS. . . . WE DON'T HAVE TO DEPEND UPON FICKLE AND VACILLATING EMOTIONS AND FEELINGS . . . NOR UPON THE WHIMS AND OPINIONS OF MEN. OUR SALVATION IS AUTHENTICATED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT HIMSELF IN HIS UNCHANGING, ONCE-FOR-ALL WORD . . . NO GUESSING, NO ANXIETY.
 9. "These things have I written unto you, that ye may know that ye have eternal life, even unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God" (I Jn. 5:13). THIS IS THE EMPHATIC WORD OF JOHN'S WRITINGS. . . . "THAT YE MAY KNOW. . . ."
- B. Glorifies (The Holy Spirit transfers some of the glory of God to our nature.)
1. "But we all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord the Spirit" (II Cor. 3:18).
 2. Alexander Campbell said it this way in his *Christian System*, "The word of redemption is a system of works, or deeds, on the part of God, which constitutes the most splendid series of moral facts men or angel ever saw. . . . When these facts are understood or brought into immediate contact with the mind of man, as a moral seal, they delineate the image of God upon the human soul. All the means of grace are, therefore, only the means of impressing this seal upon the heart, of bringing these moral facts to make their full impression on the soul of man. The testimony of the Holy Spirit through the apostles and the faith of those who believe and obey this testimony are the channel through which these facts, or the hand of God, draws the image on the heart and character of man." He went on to say . . . "all the moral facts which can form moral character after the divine model, or which can effect a moral or religious change in man, are found in the testimony of God."

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3. What is this image of God . . . this glory of God which is impressed or sealed upon our being? The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness and self-control.
4. I submit these as characteristics of God which we can enjoy as blessings if we will allow the Holy Spirit to impress them upon our natures: honesty; goodness; creativeness; humor; appreciativeness; enjoyment; giving-ness.
5. Carol King has a phrase in her song, *Way Over Yonder*, "And the sweet-tasting good life is so easily found . . . way over yonder, that's where I'm bound." Let's appropriate that here. THE SWEET-TASTING GOOD LIFE OF GOD IS SO EASILY FOUND. . . . IF WE JUST LET THE SPIRIT ETCH IT UPON OUR BEING BY KNOWING AND DOING WHERE THE SPIRIT LEADS IN THE SPIRIT'S WORD.
6. You see, this is the work of the Spirit. God the Father is the creative source of blessing; the Son is the revealer of the possibility of such blessedness and obtainer of it in the flesh; the Holy Spirit is the agent by which this blessing may be impressed or sealed upon the nature of man!

HOW MIND STAGGERING! GOD CREATES THE BLESSING, THE SON WINS IT FOR US, THE HOLY SPIRIT TRANSFERS AND SEALS IT UPON THOSE WHO WILL ACCEPT IT BY FAITH!

- C. Secures and protects us against being defrauded by the thief of souls.

1. When we are sealed by the Holy Spirit we can live confidently that there is no power in this world or the other capable of robbing us of our souls, our life, our being.
2. "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me; and I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish, and no one shall snatch them out of my hand" (Jn. 10:27-28).
3. "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears my word and believes him who sent me, has eternal life; he does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life" (Jn. 5:24).
4. "Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hid with Christ in God" (Col. 3:2-3).
5. "Little children, you are of God, and have overcome them; for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world" (I Jn. 4:4).
6. "We know that any one born of God does not sin, but He who was born of God keeps him, and the evil one does not touch him" (I Jn. 5:18).

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7. The book of Revelation pictorializes a great host which no man can number sealed by God—protected from the dragon and the beasts not able to be overcome by the great spiritual battle that rages between God and His enemies.
8. WHAT A TREMENDOUS BLESSING TO KNOW THAT WE HAVE HAD THE SEAL OF GOD PUT UPON US. NO MATTER THE WORLD WANTS TO ERADICATE US. . . . NO MATTER THAT IT MAY APPEAR AS IF THE FORCES OF UNGODLINESS WILL WIN THE STRUGGLE . . . GOD KNOWS WHO HIS ARE, HE HAS THEM MARKED AND SEALED, AND THEY ARE SECURE!

II. HE GIVES US AN EARNEST OF OUR INHERITANCE

A. Holiness

1. What is the legacy left us by that Son of man who came to earth, born in a stable, who had not where to lay his head?
2. He brought us word from our Father that holiness is our legacy. The most needful, most enjoyable treasure God could will to us is holiness.
3. What is the deepest longing of the human soul? To be clean, to be good, to be pure, to be true, to be a beautiful-person.
4. This is what I want when I get to God. Bags full or banks full of gold and diamonds are not what my soul cries out for. Ivory palaces and mansions are not what I want for my eternal inheritance. I WANT, I NEED, I MUST HAVE HOLINESS!
5. "I know that nothing good dwells within me, that is, in my flesh. I can will what is right but I cannot do it. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do. . . . Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? . . . There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 7:18—8:1).
6. Now God has taken care of my problem. He has provided me a cleansing, a goodness, a purity, a freedom from guilt, a holiness by the death of His Son. And when He comes for us this is what our great inheritance shall be—we shall be like Him.
7. But when we are sealed by the Holy Spirit—when His spirit bears witness with our spirit that we are a child of God, we have a down payment on this holiness already. WE CAN NOW ENJOY GOODNESS, FREEDOM FROM GUILT, PURITY, HOLINESS—A TASTE OF WHAT THE FULL INHERITANCE WILL BE!

B. Rest

1. Another aspect of the legacy left to us is rest. Jesus came and said, "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest" (Mt. 11:28).

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2. What makes work into labor? The frustration of seeing the fruits of one's work dissipated—the agony of knowing that one has spent himself laboring in something whose fruits are only temporary and ultimately useless. THIS IS WHAT MAKES WORK INTO TIRING, FRUSTRATING, DEADENING LABOR!
3. If the results of our work could find completion or perfection—if we could have confirmed to us that our work was eternally useful and abiding, that it wouldn't just disappear with time—we could find perfect rest. REST IS NOT JUST THE ABSENCE OF WORK!
4. God has laid up for us an inheritance of rest. "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord henceforth, says the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow them" (Rev. 14:13).
5. But those sealed by the Holy Spirit may now have a down-payment, a taste of that rest. Paul wrote the Hebrew Christians and said, "For we who are believing, are entering that rest . . ." (Heb. 4:3).
6. Jesus said, "Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life, which the Son of man will give to you; for on him has God the Father set his seal" (Jn. 6:27).
7. Paul wrote the Corinthians, "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain" (I Cor. 15:58).
8. Friend, if you're sealed by the Holy Spirit, you'll never get weary. Bone-tired and muscle-weak; yes—but soul-tired and spirit-weary, never!

C. Dominion

1. Man was made to have dominion. "Then God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth" (Gen. 1:26).
2. God has promised that one day His saints shall reign with His Christ forever and ever (Rev. 22:5, etc.).
3. But the blessing of being sealed by the Holy Spirit is that we may now enjoy a taste of that dominion.
4. The exciting second chapter of Hebrews asks, "What is man that thou art mindful of him?" and answers by showing that while man was created to have dominion, because of sin he does not now have it, but Christ came in flesh and blood and

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won back man's dominion for him. HE DEFEATED THE INVADER, SATAN!

5. Christ, if we believe and trust Him, has set us free from being dominated by circumstances, by earthly things, by ego, by fears, by falsehoods, by others, by even Satan. IN FACT, IN CHRIST, WE HAVE DOMINION OVER CIRCUMSTANCES, OVER THINGS, OVER EVERYTHING AND MAY ENJOY AND USE EVERYTHING TO GLORIFY GOD! Mind you, I did not say we can selfishly take anything we want and use it in a way to bring shame upon God.
6. Whatever circumstances God sees fit to give us here, whatever talents, whatever worldly things, whatever associations, WE ARE RULERS-OVER TO GLORIFY GOD AND REJOICE IN. . .
7. "For all things are yours, whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or the present or the future, all are yours; and you are Christ's; and Christ is God's" (I Cor. 3:21-22).
8. ". . . in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us" (Rom. 8:37).

ALL THINGS ARE YOURS—MORE THAN CONQUERORS! What blessedness—what happiness—what glory. Friend, if you've been sealed with the imprint of God's Holy Spirit, you have been certified and authorized to be a joint heir with His Son, and to have dominion with Him.

III. EMPOWERS US AS EMISSARIES OF OUR GREAT GOD

A. Certifies us as authentic representatives of Almighty God

1. When the Spirit of the Holy God is etched upon our hearts . . . when we are sealed with the Spirit of Christ . . . it is an announcement to the world that we are on business for the King.
2. "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another" (Jn. 13:34-35).
3. J. B. Phillips on II Cor. 3:3 "You are an open letter (epistle) about Christ which we ourselves have written, not with pen and ink but with the Spirit of the living God. Our message has been engraved not in stone, but in living men and women."
4. Many false prophets have gone out into the world (I Jn. 4:1-6). The world desperately needs some authenticating mark upon the true prophets. That mark is the seal of the Holy Spirit, one who preaches the true apostolic message and one who lives the true apostolic message.

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5. "If you abide in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine" (Jn. 8:31). IF YOU ARE SEALED BY HIS SPIRIT THROUGH HIS WORD, THEN YOU ARE A CERTIFIED DISCIPLE OF HIS, AND THE WHOLE WORLD WILL KNOW. . . . YOU WILL BE HAPPY AND BLESSED AND SO WILL OTHERS!

B. Certifies the authority of our message

1. When the image of God is stamped upon us by the Holy Spirit, we will proclaim and live the truth and the power of His truth preached and lived will be vindicated in the world.
2. The work of the Holy Spirit is to convince the world of sin, righteousness and the judgment. The only agency by which the Spirit works in doing this is the written, preached and lived Word of God.
3. But in the midst of all the failures and inadequacies of men's philosophical, political and ethical systems, THOSE SEALED BY THE SPIRIT ARE CONDUCTORS OF THE GREATEST POWER IN THE UNIVERSE.
4. The power to convert men and change their eternal destinies is more awesome than the power to create this universe!
5. "His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, that through these you may escape from the corruption that is in the world because of passion, and become partakers of the divine nature" (II Pet. 1:3-4).
6. "For though we live in the world we are not carrying on a worldly war, for the weapons of our warfare are not worldly but have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments and every proud obstacle to the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ. . . ." (II Cor. 10:3-5).

WHAT A BLESSING TO KNOW THAT WE ARE SEALED BY HIS SPIRIT TO BECOME CHANNELS THROUGH WHICH THE AWESOME POWER OF HIS WORD WORKS. . . . AND IT SHALL NEVER RETURN UNTO HIM VOID!

C. Certifies the power of His divine providence on our behalf

1. When the nature of God is etched upon our minds through the Holy Spirit's agent, the Word of God, we know God as our beneficent, loving, acting, Father who is ready to use all His creation on our behalf.
2. "We know that God works everything for good for those who love him, and are called according to his purpose" (Rom. 8:28).
3. "Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us . . ." (Eph. 3:20).

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4. "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory . . ." (II Cor. 4:17).
5. Even angels "are ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation" (Heb. 1:14).
6. The Old Testament gives us a vivid account of God's providential power being used for those with His mark upon them. Ezekiel chapter 9 pictures God's faithful ones being marked with His seal upon them. Then the book of Daniel shows God using kings, kingdoms, circumstances and creation to provide exactly and abundantly what those marked by Him must have to fulfill His purpose in their lives.
7. He is the same God today to those with His seal upon them.
THE BOOK OF REVELATION IS HIS MESSAGE THAT HE IS EVEN NOW USING KINGS AND KINGDOMS, CIRCUMSTANCES AND CREATION TO SERVE HIS SEALED ONES! WHAT POWER AND WHAT POWERS ARE OURS!

CONCLUSION

- I. SO THE BLESSING OF BEING SEALED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT
 - A. Etches the Image of God Upon Our Being
 - B. Gives Us the Earnest-Payment of Our Inheritance
 - C. Empowers Us as Emissaries of our Great God

II. A WARNING

- A. You are either sealed by the Holy Spirit or marked with the mark of the beast.
 1. The great division of mankind in the book of Revelation is between only two kinds of humanity . . . those with the mark of God upon their foreheads, and those with the mark of the beast.
 2. Satan puts his mark upon all those not sealed by the Holy Spirit.
 3. Jesus told the Jews in John 8 who wanted to kill Him because He told them the truth, "You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires."
 4. The seal or mark of Satan is the "mark of the beast" in Revelation and is given to those who worship the beast, political and military power; those who worship the false prophet, false religion and doctrine; those who worship the harlot, worldliness, carnal-mindedness.

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- B. Satan can even counterfeit the seal of the Holy Spirit
 - 1. The beast and the false prophet are able to work signs (false signs) that will deceive men and women if they do not know what the true sealing of the Holy Spirit is.
 - 2. Satan is able to change himself into an angel of light to deceive the ignorant.
 - 3. He will try to deceive us into thinking that the immature, temporary miracles of the Holy Spirit are the seal of God.
 - 4. He will try to deceive us into thinking that Pharisaic attitudes toward works and self-righteousness are the seal of God.

III. BUT WHAT IS THE SEAL?

- A. How do we know we are sealed by the Holy Spirit?
- B. How do we know others are sealed by the Holy Spirit?
- C. As we said at the beginning, When the Holy Spirit bears witness *with our spirits*
- D. But *what* does the Holy Spirit witness?
- E. Very simply, He bears witness in His Word that those Believing, Repenting and Obeying God are sealed by God as His B.R.O.

IV. NOW WILL YOU JOIN ME IN THIS SONG AS A PRAYER TO GOD FOR HIS SEALING

"O to be like Thee! blessed Redeemer:
This is my constant longing and prayer;
Gladly I'll forfeit all of earth's treasures,
Jesus, Thy perfect likeness to wear.
O to be like Thee! O to be like Thee!
Blessed Redeemer, pure as Thou art;
Come in Thy sweetness, come in Thy fullness;
Stamp Thine own image deep on my heart.

Chapter Twelve (12:1-59)

THE SON OF MAN ADMONISHING SPIRITUAL ALERTNESS

IDEAS TO INVESTIGATE:

1. Why did Jesus liken the hypocrisy of the Pharisees to "leaven" (12:1)?
2. How can anyone who speaks a word against the Son of man be forgiven (12:10)?
3. What is the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit (12:10)?
4. Is it wrong to lay up treasure for oneself (12:21)?
5. Does Jesus mean we should not care whether we have anything to eat or wear or a house to live in (12:22-34)?
6. If the Son of man is coming at an hour you do not expect, why are there so many modern-day prophets who say they know when He is coming (12:40)?
7. Are there to be degrees of reward and punishment (12:48)?

SECTION 1

Arguments for Alertness (12:1-12)

12 In the meantime, when so many thousands of the multitude had gathered together that they trod upon one another, he began to say to his disciples first, "Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. ²Nothing is covered up that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known. ³Therefore whatever you have said in the dark shall be heard in the light, and what you have whispered in private rooms shall be proclaimed upon the housetops.

⁴ "I tell you, my friends, do not fear those who kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. ⁵But I will warn you whom to fear: fear him who, after he has killed, has power to cast into hell; yes, I tell you, fear him! ⁶Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? And not one of them is forgotten before God. ⁷Why, even the hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not; you are of more value than many sparrows.

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8 "And I tell you, every one who acknowledges me before men, the Son of man also will acknowledge before the angels of God; 9but he who denies me before men will be denied before the angels of God. 10And every one who speaks a word against the Son of man will be forgiven; but he who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven. 11And when they bring you before the synagogues and the rulers and the authorities, do not be anxious how or what you are to answer or what you are to say; 12for the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say."

12:1-3 Deceptions: Having faced down the hostile opposition of many enemies, Jesus takes occasion to warn His disciples that they must be alert since they will face the same attacks upon their spirituality. Having just denounced the hypocrisy of the Pharisees and lawyers, He warns His own disciples to beware of the "leaven" of the Pharisees. Months earlier He had warned of the same thing (cf. Mt. 16:4-12; Mk. 8:13-21). The Pharisaic way of life was especially deceptive. The seductive unbelief which appears outwardly to be religious, while hiding inner rebellion and wickedness is the "leaven" Jesus was talking about. Hypocritical self-deception is the most insidious form of evil. It works like leaven—unseen by the one upon whom it is working, but permeating the "whole lump" (cf. I Cor. 5:6-8). Even disciples of Jesus may be "leavened" with hypocrisy if they do not remain spiritually alert!

Jesus warns the day would come when everyone would see that His evaluation of the Pharisees was correct. The day did come when the hidden hypocrisy of the Pharisaic religion was exposed. The judgment upon their way as false was plainly confirmed in the death and resurrection of Jesus. Furthermore, it was the fanatical hypocrisy of the Pharisees which agitated the Jewish rebellion against Rome and resulted in the destruction of Pharisaic Judaism. The whole world saw that happen and knew their hypocrisy caused it. On the other hand, what the disciples of Jesus had to learn from Him in the "dark" ("whispered" secretly in privacy) would be common knowledge (proclaimed upon housetops) throughout the world. Two thousand years of history since Jesus made this warning have confirmed His predictions time and again. Hypocrisy like that of the Pharisees continues to be exposed over and over (I Cor. 1:20 . . . "where is the scribe?"). No man can long "play-act" at religion until he is found out. Truth cannot long be forced into hiding—it will always have to come out into the open and be acknowledged. Truth will always win out! So, let the disciple of Jesus be spiritually alert and always on the side of truth.

12:4-7 Dangers: The call to spiritual alertness is a serious matter. Jesus warns that the time will come when His disciples will be declaring the

truth "from the housetops" and they will be threatened with death. The truth of Christ's way forever exposes the hypocritical way of self-righteousness. This is precisely what happened to Christ's disciples in the first century (cf. Acts 4:5-22; 5:27-41, et al). Jesus warns His followers that even when they are threatened with their lives (as they shall surely be in every generation) they had better not *pretend* something they are not. No pressure is great enough that the Christian should cave in to fear and play the part of a hypocrite.

Enemies of the truth may kill human bodies, but they cannot kill the soul, the eternal person. So, be spiritually alert and remember that only God has the power to punish with eternal death. If the Christian is to fear, let him fear God! To fear God is spiritual watchfulness! The Greek word *geennan* is translated *hell* in the RSV, but it is really the name of a valley to the south of the city of Jerusalem (the Valley of Hinnom). It was in this valley the ancient Jews practiced the worship of Moloch (which involved human sacrifice). King Josiah expressed his abhorrence of idolatry by throwing corpses of dead idolaters into this valley. The valley also became a city "dump" (cf. II Kings 23:4ff) where pagan idols and other paraphernalia were burned along with the bodies of dead people. It became such a good illustration of "hell" in the minds of the Jews that rabbinical tradition used it to symbolize the place of eternal punishment. Hobbs says, "In Jesus' day this valley was the garbage dump of the city. Into it were thrown the dead bodies of animals and of executed criminals whose bodies were unclaimed. Maggots worked ceaselessly in the garbage. To consume it, fires burned day and night. At night wild dogs snarled and gnashed their teeth as they ate edible portions of the garbage." Eternal hell will be infinitely worse than the valley of Hinnom, for there the "smoke" of man's torment will go up forever and ever (Rev. 14:9-11).

The persecuted disciple of Jesus might be tempted to think that the God who created such a vast universe would hardly have time to notice should he die a martyr's death. Furthermore a weak faith might see the soon-coming holocaust of paganism upon Christianity as evidence that God was unaware or indifferent. What is the death of one single Christian to a God who must be extremely busy running this infinitely huge and complicated universe? Christians were a minority religious group, swallowed up in a vast, powerful Roman empire where the major concern was politics. Temptation for Christians to view the Roman empire ("the beast") as invincible was strong (Rev. 13:4). Some might anticipate obliteration of the church. But the Heavenly Father knows their danger; He is aware. Believers are to trust their souls to His care (I Pet. 2:25; 4:19). Jesus illustrates: While five sparrows are worth only two pennies in the eyes of man, God does not forget a one of them. In fact, God probably has each sparrow named, just as He does the stars (Psa. 147:4). Now if God

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is so intimately related to each sparrow, how much more intimately will He guard the crown of His creation—man (cf. Mt. 6:26; 12:12)! God is interested and involved in every minute detail of man's existence. He has every hair of every human head numbered (cf. I Sam. 14:45; II Sam. 14:11; Lk. 21:18). The Greek word for numbered is *arithmeo* from which we get the English word, *arithmetic*. Jesus used an interesting Greek word for *value* here: the normal word for value is *time*, but Jesus used *diapherete* which literally means, “carry through.” God does more than simply place a price-tag on man—He takes man up into His bosom to “carry” as a precious son, (cf. Isa. 46:3-4; 49:14-18; Hosea 11:3, 4, etc.). So, when danger comes, let the believer give reverence to God and not man.

12:8-12 Denials: Another argument Jesus has for spiritual alertness is the temptation to deny the historical fact of the incarnation of God in Jesus Christ. Everyone who acknowledges Jesus as the incarnate God before men, the Son of man will acknowledge in the presence of God. The Greek word translated *acknowledge* is *homologese* which literally means, “say the same as . . .” Everyone who *says the same as* God and Jesus say about Jesus, will have Jesus *say the same as* the Father and Son say about believers. To *say the same as* God says about Jesus is to say He is the Messiah, the Son of God, God in the flesh and Lord of all. To say that Jesus is not God in the flesh is to be anti-Christ (cf. I Jn. 2:22-25; 3:2-3). The Greek word for *deny* is *arnesamenos*, and means, “to contradict, disown, renounce.” Whoever *contradicts* what Jesus has said about Himself, or what the Word of God says about Him, will be *disowned* by Jesus in the presence of God and His angels.

Why does Jesus interject what appears to be such an ambiguous statement (12:10) in the midst of this exhortation? Why would He warn against denying Him and then promise forgiveness to everyone who speaks a word against the Son of man? The earlier teaching of Jesus on this point must be studied here (cf. Mt. 12:22-32 and Mk. 3:22-30). Earlier Jesus said, “. . . every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven.” Apparently Jesus means to warn that the time would soon come when God's redemptive plan would be so unquestionably validated and the deity of His Son so unequivocally confirmed, that to deliberately refuse Him would be to commit the unpardonable sin. While Jesus walked the earth in a human body the completed revelation of His deity had not been fully and undeniably demonstrated. That demonstration waited upon His resurrection. Before the resurrection, men might say a word against the Son of man and stumble at the idea of God dwelling in flesh. They might continue to have doubts about Jesus that would even lead many of them to crucify Him in their ignorance and unbelief (cf. Acts 3:17; Lk. 23:34; Acts 13:27; 17:30). This would be forgiven if, after the Holy Spirit came in His ministry of validating testimony, they should believe

and repent. But to sin against the Holy Spirit's complete, final, unquestionable testimony is the sin that cannot be forgiven.

To sin against God's Spirit is apparently a deliberate, willful, intentional perversion of truth. It is calling good evil and evil good (cf. Isa. 5:20). The Pharisees were apparently involving themselves in such calculated malice aforethought when they accused Jesus of casting out demons by the power of the devil. To say that something which is unquestionably good and righteous is evil is to blaspheme the Spirit of Truth. Perverse, reckless, malicious rejection of the truth makes the intellectual and moral nature of a person entirely incapable of dealing honestly with any truth (cf. Isa. 30:9-11; Jer. 6:16). Men may intentionally and deliberately reject truth and choose to believe a lie (cf. Micah 2:11; II Thess. 2:9-12; Rom. 1:22-28; Jn. 8:45; II Pet. 3:5, etc.). Men may choose to reject the blood atonement of Christ in favor of another hope, but the Bible says that makes it impossible for them to repent (Heb. 6:1-8; 10:19-31) because God accepts repentance *only* through faith in Christ. To seek justification before God through any religious system other than New Testament Christianity is to call evil what God has demonstrated is the only good. It takes an unforgivably wicked heart to ascribe evil to the One whose work and teaching stand only on the side of righteousness and merciful helpfulness to sinful, suffering humanity. To reject the perfect goodness and righteousness God has offered in Christ, now that it is finally demonstrated in the Cross and the Resurrection, is to sin against the ultimate best the Holy Spirit of God offers to the world. This is the "eternal" sin (Mk. 3:29) and the "sin unto death" (I Jn. 5:16). To have stumbled at the Incarnation while the Son was still in the flesh was forgivable, but to contradict and deny the complete and perfect testimony of the Holy Spirit is unforgivable. Wm. Barclay wrote, "If a man for long enough shuts his eyes and ears to God's way . . . and takes his own way . . . He comes to a stage when his own evil seems good . . . and God's good seems to him evil." Neither in this world (Jewish dispensation) nor in that to come (Christian dispensation) will that be forgiven (cf. Lk. 16:26; Heb. 3:13; Heb. 9:27; Gal. 6:7). Even Moses' law distinguished between unintentional sin and deliberate ("high-handed") sin (Num. 15:22-30; I Sam. 2:25; 3:14; Isa. 22:14). Paul told Timothy that in the Christian age some would turn away from listening to the truth and . . . never be able to come to a knowledge of the truth (II Tim. 3:7; 4:3-4). Fowler writes of the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit: "It becomes a deliberate insult to God for men to claim to be unable to distinguish His work from that vileness and rottenness produced by that vile, unclean spirit-being who is the antithesis of all that God stands for . . ." (*Matthew, Vol. II*, College Press, pg. 681). Examples of such blasphemy are contemporary. Bertrand Russell, late philosopher and mathematician wrote in his book, *Why I Am Not A Christian*, pg. 24, speaking of religion and Christianity, "I regard it as a disease born of fear and as a source of untold misery

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to the human race.” A contemporary, self-appointed female leader of atheism in the United States said of God: “A crutch like LSD, alcohol or marijuana”; of the church of Christ: “It has never contributed anything to anybody, and place, at any time”; of the Bible: “The . . . inconsistencies, wretched history, sordid sex, sadism in it . . . shocked me profoundly.” This woman said in an interview on one of America’s campuses, “I’d rather go to hell!”

Just as Jesus had been threatened and blasphemed by His evil opposers so His disciples would be brought before wicked rulers and threatened and hear the name of their Lord blasphemed. They may stand against these threats, however, and they will have the assistance of the Holy Spirit to do so. They need not fear; they must not deny Him. The Holy Spirit was promised as a *miraculous* Guide for the Apostles (Jn. 16:13-14; 20:30-31), but not for every believer. The Holy Spirit guided the Apostles infallibly into all the truth God wished man to know for salvation and the Apostles left this complete truth in a written record. Any believer now who faces falsehood, unbelief, temptations, and persecutions may know the truth and speak the truth by knowing and speaking what the New Testament says. Jesus’ promise (12:11-12) was fulfilled a number of times in the first century (cf. Acts 4:8, 13, 19, 20).

SECTION 2

Astuteness in Alertness (12:13-34)

13 One of the multitude said to him, “Teacher, bid my brother divide the inheritance with me.” 14But he said to him, “Man, who made me a judge or divider over you?” 15And he said to them, “Take heed, and beware of all covetousness; for a man’s life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.” 16And he told them a parable, saying, “The land of a rich man brought forth plentifully; 17and he thought to himself, ‘What shall I do, for I have nowhere to store my crops?’ 18And he said, ‘I will do this: I will pull down my barns, and build larger ones; and there I will store all my grain and my goods. 19And I will say to my soul, Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; take your ease, eat, drink, be merry.’ 20But God said to him, ‘Fool! This night your soul is required of you; and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?’ 21So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.”

22 And he said to his disciples, “Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you shall eat, nor about your body, what you shall put on. 23For this life is more than food, and the body

more than clothing. ²⁴Consider the ravens: they neither sow nor reap, they have neither storehouse nor barn, and yet God feeds them. Of how much more value are you than the birds! ²⁵And which of you by being anxious can add a cubit to his span of life? ²⁶If then you are not able to do as small a thing as that, why are you anxious about the rest? ²⁷Consider the lilies, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin; yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. ²⁸But if God so clothes the grass which is alive in the field today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, how much more will he clothe you, O men of little faith! ²⁹And do not seek what you are to eat and what you are to drink, nor be of anxious mind. ³⁰For all the nations of the world seek these things; and your Father knows that you need them. ³¹Instead, seek his kingdom, and these things shall be yours as well.

32 "Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. ³³Sell your possessions, and give alms; provide yourselves with purses that do not grow old, with a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches and no moth destroys. ³⁴For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

12:13-21 Foolishness: One of the multitude was very alert. He caught quickly the authoritative manner of Jesus. Jesus had spoken with the presence of a rabbi—as one who honestly and clearly stood for truth and fairness. When He paused, a man in the crowd ordered Jesus (Gr. *eipe*, imperative mood verb, *Tell!*) bid his brother to divide the inheritance with him. The Greek word *kleronomia* means literally, “to portion by lots” and is translated, “inheritance” (cf. Mt. 21:38; Mk. 12:7; Lk. 20:14) or “birthright” (cf. Gal. 4:30; Heb. 1:4; 12:17). This man may have been a younger brother, dissatisfied with the handling of his father’s estate (cf. Lk. 15:11-32). Oftentimes an elder brother, according to Jewish custom, was given a double portion (cf. Deut. 21:15-17). Perhaps this man was being cheated in the division of the family estate. Whatever his complaint, he recognized in Jesus a “teacher” who would judge fairly. In Jesus’ day it was Jewish practice to have rabbis make civil and judicial decisions. Moses appointed leading men to help him make such judgments at the founding of the nation of Israel (cf. Ex. 18:13-27; Deut. 16:18ff.). This authority probably passed to the “scribes” as early as the days of Ezra (cf. Ezra 7:1-28). In orthodox Judaism today a few similar judgments are still made by rabbis.

But this Rabbi will not be drawn into the man’s family dispute. Why did Jesus refuse, almost curtly, this opportunity to rectify an apparent injustice? Actually, Jesus provided the only real solution to the man’s

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problem with His subsequent admonition. Jesus refused to make a judgment because:

- a. His primary mission on earth was not to personally judge in social things. He was no social activist. His primary mission was to save, to regenerate the hearts of men.
- b. He refused to make a moral judgment or force a moral action that the individual should make for himself. To do so would violate freedom of the human will and preclude the possibility of moral development of the individual.
- c. He has already spoken about the most important "inheritance"—the eternal inheritance. Men were neglecting that. Had they given that first priority, they could easily settle all earthly disputes about material things.
- d. He will speak of the heavenly treasure more explicitly. If men will only become true members of the kingdom of God they will treat all men as God intended they should be treated (cf. Mt. 7:12; Col. 3:16, etc.).

Jesus went right to the heart of the man's problem—covetousness. The Greek text translated literally would have Jesus command the crowds, "Be continually on the lookout and guard yourselves from all desires to have more." The Greek word *pleonexia* is from *pleion* (more) and *echo* (to have), and is translated *covetousness*. Covetousness is the all-consuming desire to have more of something. It is the urge to acquire gone mad, unrestrained, unconcerned with the will of God. It is the attitude that material possessions will satisfy all human needs. Covetousness is called idolatry (Col. 3:5) because the covetous person worships (depends on) things—not the Person, God. One out of every six verses of the Gospels has to do with man and his possessions! That is because acquisition of wealth is the chief ambition of the majority of men. Wealth impresses men with its pseudo-power. Covetousness is probably the chief barrier to man's acceptance of the Lord's philosophy of what life is all about. The Lord's truth about life is this: There is more to life than a material inheritance. Life does not consist (hold-together) in the abundance of material possessions. This life and this world is temporary; the eternal treasure is infinitely more to be desired (cf. II Cor. 4:16-18). To illustrate His truth, Jesus told a parable about a farmer God called a fool.

The man Jesus told about was rich but he was a fool. The Greek word translated *fool* is *aphron* and means literally, "without mind." Someone has defined the word as "the lack of commonsense perception of the reality of things natural and spiritual—or the imprudent ordering of one's life in regard to salvation." The farmer certainly made serious mental and moral misjudgment about the priorities of life.

- a. His life centered in himself. Twelve times in five verses, "I," "My" and "Mine" appear in this tiny tragedy. The Greek text translated literally would stress his self-centered ego even more.
- b. He thought to feed his soul on things. He exchanged truth, generosity, conscience, love and helpfulness for things. He made earth and its riches his business so completely, heaven and spirituality would have bored him.
- c. In seeking a way to deal with his prosperity he reasoned with his natural inclinations and did not seek God's word on the subject. Even the Old Testament could have given him divine guidance in proper use of his wealth.

Someone has rightly observed, "This parable shows an honest man in the act of being executed by his own estate." It was where he thought it came from and what he did with it that made him forfeit his life for it. Jesus did not say that the possession of wealth was wrong; it was the wrong use of it that He condemned. It is all right for a man to possess things—but not right for things to possess a man.

Covetousness is the desire for the wrong things. Men are not to covet their neighbor's possessions (Ex. 20:17). Christians are to seek and to rejoice at the gain of a neighbor like we would at our own gain (Rom. 12:15; 15:2; I Cor. 10:24, 33; II Cor. 12:15). Men are not to desire worldly possessions for their own sake to the neglect of higher things. Men are not to desire worldly possessions for their own use only, for ". . . those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and hurtful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction . . ." (I Tim. 6:9). "The love of money is the root of all evils . . ." (I Tim. 6:10):

- a. It caused Judas to betray Christ, lose his life, his self-respect and his eternal soul (Jn. 12:4-6; Mt. 26:14-16).
- b. It caused Ananias and Sapphira to lie to God and receive sudden death (Acts 5:1-11).
- c. It caused Achan to steal at Jericho and all Israel to be defeated at Ai, and for it he and his family were destroyed (Josh. 7:1ff.).
- d. It caused a young man to reject Christ and to go away sorrowful (Mk. 10:17-22).
- e. It caused some to teach things they ought not (Tit. 1:11; II Pet. 2:1-3).
- f. It caused some to turn God's house into a house of merchandise (Jn. 2:14-15) and a den of robbers (Mt. 21:12-13).
- g. It caused Elisha's servant to lie, and to be made a leper (II Kings 5:22-27).
- h. It caused Saul to disobey God who gave him victory in war (I Sam. 15:9-23), and for it Saul was rejected.

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- i. It is the root of all kinds of evil (I Tim. 6:10); including murder (Ezek. 22:12), and many foolish and hurtful lusts (I Tim. 6:9).
- j. It is the cause of domestic troubles (Prov. 15:27).
- k. It causes some to be led astray from the faith (I Tim. 6:10).
- l. It causes some to be pierced through with many sorrows (I Tim. 6:10).

"There is great gain in godliness with contentment" (I Tim. 6:6). The man of God (every Christian) must shun all covetousness (I Tim. 6:11), because covetousness:

- a. Chokes the word of God in many hearts and causes the life to be unfruitful (Mt. 13:22; Mk. 4:19).
- b. Robs God (Mal. 3:7-10).
- c. Neglects the needy (I Jn. 3:17).
- d. Leaves many unevangelized, to die without God and without hope; it defies the great commission.
- e. Will drive the love of God out of our hearts (Lk. 16:13).
- f. Makes a man unfit to be an overseer in the church (I Tim. 3:3; Titus 1:7).
- g. Is not to be tolerated and overlooked in one that is named a brother, but to be rebuked and corrected (I Cor. 5:10-13).
- h. It is mentioned in the N.T. as among the worst of sins (Eph. 5:3; II Tim. 3:2).
- i. Is idolatry (Col. 3:5).
- j. Will damn the soul (I Cor. 6:10; Lk. 16:19-31).
- k. Is certainly unnecessary and unfitting for a follower of Christ (Mt. 6:33; Heb. 13:5-6; Phil. 4:11-19).
- l. Consider: Balaam (Num. 22:24; 31:16; Rev. 2:14; Jude 11); and Ahab (II Kings 21).

"As for the rich in this world, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on uncertain riches but on God . . ." (I Tim. 6:17). Covetousness or the desire to be rich with this world's goods is foolishness in the light of eternity. Every man and woman faces the certainty of death. Of course, if there is no life after death, then we should "eat and drink, for tomorrow we die . . ." (I Cor. 15:32). However, the certainty of life after death has been established historically and empirically by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Therefore, we ought to come to our right mind and sin no more (I Cor. 15:34), realizing that sooner or later, our soul will be required of us. We brought nothing into this world, neither can we carry anything out of this world (I Tim. 6:7). What then is the point in devoting all our time, energy and capabilities to accumulating "things" of this world? This world's goods certainly are not an end in themselves. The only reason for worldly possessions is that through them a man might

serve the Lord by serving his fellow man! To accumulate worldly possessions for any other reason is foolishness!

We may even covet (be greedy for more) time. Christians must use *time* wisely (Eph. 5:15-16; Col. 4:5; Jn. 9:4). We are not to covet the past (Lk. 9:62); we are not to covet the future (Mt. 6:34); *now* is the time with which we are to be concerned (II Cor. 6:2). How we invest our time in the bank of eternity will determine the dividends of the future. Every person has the same twenty-four hours. Time comes indiscriminately and simultaneously to every inhabitant of earth. We may covet time by spending it mostly on ourselves, or we may be rich toward God with it by spending it in His service by serving others. Time is a possession—time is a stewardship!

Being rich is never condemned by the Lord—nor even growing richer. Poverty does not necessarily insure righteousness. The man is a fool who is not rich toward God whatever his financial situation in this life may be. How is one to conquer covetousness and be rich toward God?

- a. Believe that what God's word says about it is right and to be obeyed!
- b. Pray that you enter not into temptation.
- c. Give generously, cheerfully and systematically to the Lord's church (II Cor. 8-9; I Chron. 29:6-19; I Cor. 16:1-4, etc.).
- d. Invest your time and money in people by helping their needs (Lk. 16:9; James 1:27; 2:1-26; I Jn. 4:7-21; Heb. 13:1-6).
- e. Be content with what you have (Lk. 3:14; Phil. 4:11ff.; I Tim. 6:7; Heb. 13:5).

12:22-34 Faithfulness: The Greek word for *anxious* is *merimna* and is probably connected with *merizo* which means, "to draw in different directions, to be distracted." The anxious person is one who is mentally tossed to and fro like a leaf in the wind. The anxious person is one who rides an emotional roller-coaster—up and down, up and down. Anxiety is a result of divided loyalty. Covetousness is really at the bottom of all avarice and anxiety. The covetous rich man is filled with avarice; the covetous poor man is overcome with anxiety. It is only a matter of circumstances whether covetousness shows itself as greed or worry. A survey taken in a national periodical found that seventy percent of all our worries are about money! A Gallup poll indicated that most people believe they would have no more financial worries if they could increase their income by only ten percent. Some physicians believe that anxiety causes or contributes to a myriad of physical illnesses such as ulcers, colitis, asthma, migraine, stroke, paralysis, arthritis, fatigue, hypertension, diabetes. Researchers have stated that more than half our hospital beds are occupied by anxiety-ridden patients. Doctors think that one out of every twenty Americans now living will spend part of his life in an institution for the mentally-ill because of anxiety.

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Covetousness, greed, and anxiety are causes for much of our social evil such as theft, embezzlement, robbery, murder, suicide, marital problems, even war (James 4:1-3).

When Jesus says, "Be not anxious . . ." He is not advocating financial dereliction. The disciple of Jesus is not permitted to be shiftless, reckless or thoughtless. Believers are admonished to work, if physically able, to provide their own living (cf. Prov. 6:6-8; II Cor. 12:14; I Tim. 5:8; II Thess. 3:6-15; I Thess. 4:10-12; Col. 3:22-25; Eph. 6:5-9, etc.). They are also taught by Jesus to be wise stewards of their material possessions (Lk. 16:1-13). Jesus and His apostles taught that honest labor deserves honest wages (cf. I Cor. 9:3-14; Mt. 10:10; Lk. 10:7-8). But the lust for accumulating things which would distract the believer's mind and heart from his first priority—the revealed will of God—is the "anxiety" Jesus forbids. It is significant that the Greek word *merimnate* is in the imperative mood and means that Jesus is *commanding* us, "Be not anxious!" If we say we know Him and we are anxious, we are not being truthful (I Jn. 2:4) because we are not keeping His commandment. What Jesus says to His disciples about anxiety is more than just suggestion—it is an order!

Anxiety is *unnecessary*. Jesus appeals to our *reason* to tell us so. Any honest-minded meditation will tell us that Life is more than the body. The *psyche* is more than *soma* (flesh). The spirit of man is sustained without anxiety over food and clothing. Jesus proved that in His incarnation. "Man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God" (Mt. 4:4). Jesus points to *nature* to demonstrate that anxiety is unnecessary. Birds and flowers do not worry, and God sustains them. They function according to their God-given capacities and He provides their needs. Men are of more value than these. Finally, the Lord says *experience* should teach man that anxiety is unnecessary. In all our fretting and fuming and worrying we do not add one "cubit" to the length of our lives. As a matter of fact, worrying probably shortens life!

Anxiety is *unworthy*. It is unacceptable for a Christian to be distracted. The disciple who is anxious about worldly affairs is not fit for the kingdom (cf. Lk. 9:57-62). Anxiety is a display of faithlessness and *disobeys* the specific commandment of Christ prohibiting it. It is shameful for a Christian to worry because it is *pagan*. The heathen are tossed about by their anxiety over sustaining the flesh. The Greek word *meteorizesthe* is translated "anxious mind." This word is used nowhere else in the N.T. In classical Greek it is used to mean, "tossed up and down, or suspended, like a boat in a stormy sea." Christians must not be in suspense about life. Anxiety is characteristic of heathen unbelief. Ceremonial orthodoxy and evangelistic zeal are only hypocrisy if in the financial affairs of life we do not trust God completely. The Christian is a citizen of God's kingdom. His King is absolutely beneficent. The heavenly Father is infallibly aware

of His children's needs. He has infinite power to equip every individual with everything needed. He promises to do so. If the Christian will seek the kingdom of God as his first (cf. Mt. 6:33) priority, God promises to make possible all the physical necessities for such seeking. The cure for anxiety is simply—believe God keeps His promises!

Why would Jesus say "Fear not *little flock*"? Because there will be few who will ever take seriously His admonitions about worldliness and anxiety! Does Jesus intend His command, "Sell your possessions . . ." to be taken literally? Yes! That should be qualified, however, by a consideration of other scriptures. The Lord does expect us to "earn our own living" (II Thess. 3:12). He does expect us to work at our jobs with our best craftsmanship (cf. Col. 3:22-23). The Lord expects us, if we are able, to earn our own food, our clothing and our shelter. He will provide health and opportunities to do so. And whatever is necessary (a house, tools, transportation, etc.) to earn our living we should not feel compelled "to sell." Should we have more than this, more than we may use for our living, we should sell and give to the poor, or to the work of the kingdom. Anything above what we need is "riches." Jesus counsels every would-be follower of His to sell his "riches" and give them as "alms," so the poor may be fed both; physical and spiritual food. We certainly cannot hoard riches in order to buy our way into His kingdom. It is His good pleasure to *give us* the kingdom. All of His kingdom we shall ever have shall be that which is given as a gift.

The Christian is to have a purse that does not grow old. In other words, he is to wear his purse out rapidly from continually opening it to give "alms" or dispense his riches to others. The Christian is to provide himself with a treasure in heaven that never depreciates, is never lost, never stolen and lasts forever. The only way the Christian can do that is to invest his "riches" (everything he has left from his basic living) in *people* (cf. Lk. 16:9), because people are all that shall survive this world. The rich man who died and went to "torments" realized too late that he should have invested his riches in the salvation of others (cf. Lk. 16:27-31), rather than squander them on himself. It is a fundamental principle that man gives his life to that which he values most. If one values spiritual things most, his whole heart will be devoted to acquiring spirituality. If a man values the same things heaven values, he will invest his life in things, and heaven is where his desires will focus. We must look to Jesus, who for the *joy that was set before Him*, endured the cross (Heb. 12:1-2). Let us set our minds on things above (Col. 3:1-4). As one commentator has said, ". . . it is the Master's will that his followers should sit loose to all earthly possessions, possessing them as though they possessed not." The Christian will pray that the Lord give him neither poverty nor riches (Prov. 30:8-9)!

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SECTION 3

Action as Alertness (12:35-48)

35 "Let your loins be girded and your lamps burning,³⁶and be like men who are waiting for their master to come home from the marriage feast, so that they may open to him at once when he comes and knocks.³⁷ Blessed are those servants whom the master finds awake when he comes; truly, I say to you, he will gird himself and have them sit at table, and he will come and serve them.³⁸ If he comes in the second watch, or in the third, and finds them so, blessed are those servants!³⁹ But know this, that if the householder had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have left his house to be broken into.⁴⁰ You also must be ready; for the Son of man is coming at an unexpected hour."

41 Peter said, "Lord, are you telling this parable for us or for all?"⁴² And the Lord said, "Who then is the faithful and wise steward, whom his master will set over his household, to give them their portion of food at the proper time?⁴³ Blessed is that servant whom his master when he comes will find so doing.⁴⁴ Truly, I say to you, he will set him over all his possessions.⁴⁵ But if that servant says to himself, 'My master is delayed in coming,' and begins to beat the menservants and the maidservants, and to eat and drink and get drunk,⁴⁶ the master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he does not know, and will punish him, and put him with the unfaithful.⁴⁷ And that servant who knew his master's will, but did not make ready or act according to his will, shall receive a severe beating.⁴⁸ But he who did not know, and did what deserved a beating, shall receive a light beating. Every one to whom much is given, of him will much be required; and of him to whom men commit much they will demand the more.

12:35-44 Watchful Servants: In describing what spiritual alertness is, Jesus makes a parabolic contrast between wise and wicked servants. These two parables continue His teaching about proper attitudes toward the things of this world. No servant of the Lord knows when the Lord will return. The Lord's servant must be constantly alert to his spiritual servanthood. In the first parable the lord (Gr. *kurion*) of the house went away to a marriage feast. Hour after hour passes, and the master does not return. This man's faithful servants never go to sleep nor even relax while he is gone. They are watchful. The Greek word *gregorountas* is translated *awake*; it means "watchful, alert, vigilant." It is the word from which we get the English name, Gregory. Watchfulness in the N.T. means spiritual alertness (cf. I Cor. 16:13; I Pet. 5:8; Col. 4:2; Acts 20:31; I Thess. 5:6, 10; Rev. 3:2-3; 16:15, etc.). Watchfulness involves:

- a. *Preparation:* Common dress in those days (and even among some Arabs today) was long, loose-flowing outer robes. When strenuous labor and alacrity was required, these robes had to be gathered up and the skirt fastened under the belt (girdle). Lamp wicks must be constantly trimmed of the black, sooty burnt portion lest the flame sputter and smoke and the lamp's light grow dim.
- b. *Maturity:* "Be like men . . ." not like boys, playing at the job. The watchful servant must have enough maturity to stay awake and on the job. They spend their time readying the house for the master's return. They do not have to be supervised like children; they involve themselves in all kinds of activities even though the night wears on and on.
- c. *Alertness:* In Jesus' day the old Jewish division of the night into three "watches" had given way to the Roman division of four watches, divided thusly: first watch from six to nine p.m.; second watch from nine to midnight; third watch from midnight to three a.m.; fourth watch from three to six a.m. The faithful servants, and especially the house-master (Gr. *oikodespotes*, "despot-of-the-house") or chief-servant, are on guard even in the midnight hours. Any chief-servant worth trusting would know you cannot anticipate when the thief will decide to break in (Gr. *dioruchthenai*, "dig through" the adobe walls of Palestinian houses). The master's servant must be on guard every moment.

The servants who are watchful will be ready to receive their master the very moment he returns. The master, pleased to find such faithful servants, will treat his servants as friends and equals bidding them to sit (Gr. *anaklinei*, recline) at his own table and he will minister to their wants. (cf. Rev. 3:21, "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne").

Jesus abruptly applies the lesson of the parable to His own Second Coming. All the servants of Christ must constantly apply the principles of these two parables to their discipleship. The Lord's Second Coming will come as a thief in the night, unexpectedly, unanticipated (cf. I Thess. 5:1-2; II Pet. 3:10; Rev. 3:3; 16:15; Mt. 24:36—25:30).

Peter, impressed by the part of the parable that pictured the "lord" serving the "servants," wants to know if this glorious promotion to equality with the Lord was going to be given to all the apostles, or just a few (like himself). Peter evidently anticipated the same kind of promotion to equality when Jesus was trying to teach humility by washing Peter's feet (Jn. 13:6-9). Jesus, apparently disregarding Peter's ambitious question, goes on with His parable, actually answering Peter by correcting his concept of *who* deserves to be rewarded:

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- d. *Following Instructions:* "Who is the faithful servant?" It is interesting to note how the Lord started the parable by using the word for slave (Gr. *doulos*—v. 37) and now uses the word for steward or house-servant (Gr. *oikonomos*—v. 42) and the word for attendants (Gr. *therapeias*, from which we get the English word *therapeutic*, but translated, "household" in v. 42). Faithful servants of the Lord are of more value than mere bond-slaves, but they are servants nonetheless. The servants who are considered true friends by the Master are those who administer His affairs ("give them their portion") according to His instructions ("at the proper time"). They do not presume to change the portion or the time on their own—they follow His will, realizing they are only stewards—not masters.
- e. *Serving:* "Who is the faithful servant . . . ?" The one found "so doing." Blessedness will come to those who "do" faithfulness. Faithfulness starts with an attitude but does not end there—it ends in *doing and being*. "If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them. . ." (Jn. 13:17). When the Lord returns and finds His servants being faithful in the small stewardship they have been given, He will then put them in charge of everything He has; for whoever is *faithful* in very little is faithful also in much (cf. Lk. 16:10).

Watchfulness is not trying to guess when the Master may return—but it is serving faithfully until He does return.

12:45-48 Wicked Servants: In the second parable (or the second part of the one parable) Jesus characterizes spiritual negligence:

- a. *Subjectivism:* The wicked servant "says to himself" (Gr. *en te kardia autou*, "in his heart"). The only righteous and infallible guidance for spiritual alertness is in the revealed will of the Lord—not in the subjective thoughts of a man's own mind (cf. Jer. 17:5-6, 9-10). This was the wicked servant's first mistake—and so it is of many a man. To follow human reason and human emotion is spiritual disaster.
- b. *Unbelieving:* The wicked servant said, "My master is delaying . . . he is not coming very soon . . ." This servant does not believe the master's warning that he may return at any moment. This servant's company is with the "unfaithful" (v. 46), the unbelieving, the distrustful and distrustful.
- c. *Exploitation:* The wicked servant began to cruelly abuse his fellow-servants. This wicked servant lives only by force. When his master is absent and no longer controlling him by force, he is ungovernable. Motivated only by force himself, he thinks that all others must be forced to serve. He is of a perverse and an unmerciful nature. He will use and abuse people and things for his own disadvantage.

- d. *Self-Indulgent*: The wicked servant began to eat and drink and get drunk. The master had left him in charge of his house to protect his possessions and promote the well-being of his estate. The wicked servant shows how little he cares for the master by indulging himself until he is senselessly drunk. The servant is not only of no benefit to his master, he is a menace.
- e. *Unprepared*: The wicked servant did not "make ready" (v. 47). How could he—he was too busy abusing the other servants and drinking himself into a stupor. Either the servant watches for his master's return which requires sobriety and honor and respect—or he becomes engrossed in watching out for himself. Self-indulgence tends to blind a person to reality. The master surprised the wicked servant.
- f. *Not Following Instructions*: The wicked servant did not act according to his knowledge of the master's will. All servants are responsible to know the master's will. If they do not know his will, they will be punished; if they do know his will and disobey it they will be punished.

Wicked servants who take what their master has entrusted to them as stewards and try to use it, abuse it and hoard it for themselves, will be punished. The Greek word translated *punished* is *dichotomesei* and means, "to cut asunder"—it is the word from which we get the English word, *dichotomy*.

Jesus makes it plain (v. 47-48) that reward will be according to faithfulness. Much has been conjectured about reward and punishment in the life to come. Certain things are clearly perceived from the scriptures:

- a. God does not judge according to human standards (cf. I Sam. 16:7; Isa. 55:8; Jn. 7:27; Jer. 17:10; II Cor. 10:12). God judges according to motives (cf. Mt. 6:1ff.; Mt. 23:27; Heb. 4:12-13), and intentions.
- b. Faithfulness is God's criterion for judgment; not how much was known or how much was accomplished. The wicked servant was punished because he was unfaithful to what he did know. The servants of the parables of the Talents and Pounds were rewarded according to faithful use of what they had been given—not according to what they had not been given.
- c. It is a fact of life that some people are given greater opportunities and capacities to know the will of God and to use it than others are. Perhaps reward and punishment will have to do with a man's capacity and opportunity to desire, appreciate and give himself to good—or to evil.
- d. One thing is certain—all who do not believe and prepare for the Master's return are considered to be wicked servants and they will be punished according to their choice to disregard His return.

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One very important thing a faithful servant will do continually is take inventory of how much he has been entrusted with in order that he may calculate how much he will be called to account for—and he will act according to his inventory!

SECTION 4

Attitudes That Aid Alertness (12:49-59)

49 "I came to cast fire upon the earth; and would that it were already kindled! ⁵⁰I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how I am constrained until it is accomplished! ⁵¹Do you think that I have come to give peace on earth? No, I tell you, but rather division; ⁵²for henceforth in one house there will be five divided, three against two and two against three; ⁵³they will be divided, father against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against her mother, mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law."

54 He also said to the multitudes, "When you see a cloud rising in the west, you say at once, 'A shower is coming'; and so it happens. ⁵⁵And when you see the south wind blowing, you say, 'There will be scorching heat'; and it happens. ⁵⁶You hypocrites! You know how to interpret the appearance of earth and sky; but why do you not know how to interpret the present time?

57 "And why do you not judge for yourselves what is right? ⁵⁸As you go with your accuser before the magistrate, make an effort to settle with him on the way, lest he drag you to the judge, and the judge hand you over to the officer, and the officer put you in prison. ⁵⁹I tell you, you will never get out till you have paid the very last copper."

12:39-53 Determination: The incarnate work of redemption which Jesus Christ would accomplish on the cross and in the resurrection would be the ultimate touchstone between truth and falsehood—between good and evil. His death and resurrection would be the final judgment upon unbelief. He would bring the final separation between sheep and goats, saved and lost, wise and unwise. The "fire" Jesus says He came to bring probably refers to the prophecy in Malachi 3:1-4. There it is predicted that the Messiah will come to the world to sit as a "refiner's fire and fuller's soap" to "purify the sons of Levi." This prophecy predicts the Messiah's first coming because it is in the same context which predicts the coming of Messiah's forerunner (3:1). Fire, in this instance, symbolizes purging or purifying. Messiah's death purifies and purges all who will believe from all who will not believe. Messiah's death is the great crucible of humanity. God judges all humanity.

according to its response to His Son. Those who obey the Son are God's precious possession; all who disobey the Son are dross and refuse to be destroyed.

This holocaust of suffering the second death which the Perfect Son chose to endure constantly immersed Him in pressure. He was *determined* that it would be accomplished (cf. Heb. 5:8-9; 10:1-5; 12:1-2), but the longer it took to be completed, the more intense became the temptation to refuse it. The prospect of His suffering for the sin of the world was a perpetual Gethsemane for Jesus, (Jn. 12:27-28; Lk. 22:39-46). He would gladly have done with it immediately—but God's will decreed, "Not yet." The Greek word *baptisma* is used by Jesus to characterize His atonement. Jesus would be immersed in death: He would take all the second death, be immersed in punishment for sin; that is what the word *baptisma* means—*immersion*. Anything short of that meaning would be ridiculous respecting Christ's death. That is how the word should be exclusively interpreted when it refers to Christian baptism (immersion; not sprinkling or pouring).

The Greek word *sunechomai*, literally means, "come together with," and is translated "constrained." It means "press together" or "pressure." Jesus experienced *pressure* as no other human being ever experienced it. There was no reason for Him to die; He could claim eternal life by right of His perfect obedience to God's will. No one could take His life from Him—He had power to lay it down and take it up if He wished. It was not fair, not just, not right that He should die for someone else's sins. But it was perfect, infinite, unadulterated love that determined He would! What pressure!

This infinite love and grace becomes the infallible rule by which all mankind will be judged. Jesus' death divides the world into believers and unbelievers. Upon no other point (besides the resurrection, of course) are we to decide who are believers and unbelievers. Those who do not decide to believe and accept His blood for their sins will oppose and persecute those who do. Jesus' death does not bring "peace" (as men think of peace—absence of trial and testing)—it brings division and a sword (cf. Mt. 10:34). The servant who wishes to be found watching may have to choose against his own family if it is so required to remain faithful to Christ. The water of Christian baptism is thicker than human blood-ties. Not even genetic relationship must stand in the way of loyalty to Christ. The highest human relationships must become secondary to the highest of all relationships—sonship to God, through discipleship with Jesus. Immersion of oneself in such complete self-sacrifice will require the *determination* of faith Jesus Himself exercised in the "baptism with which He was baptized." Self must die; Jesus must be formed in us (Gal. 2:20-21; 3:26-27; 4:19).

12:54-59 Discernment: Jesus chides the multitudes with the admonition to use the same intensity discerning the spiritual time as they do in discerning

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the weather. Heat and drought, wind and rain, affected the prospects of wheat-harvest, the vine-yield, and the fruitfulness of orchards and olive trees. The Jews probably made amateur forecasts of the weather every day just as the modern farmer does. The weather of Palestine is less variable than in most European and American countries. Jewish farmers and others made it their daily routine to check and try to read the signs indicating what the weather would be. If a cloud rose in the west, it would be bringing rain in off the Mediterranean Sea; if a wind blew from the south and east, it would be bringing scorching, drying wind in off the desert. They paid attention to these signs. But, just like men today, they seemed to be oblivious to spiritual signals all around them.

Why is it that men exert great effort, display expertise and logic in forecasting the weather (practicing law, medicine, constructing machines and buildings) but cannot arrive at the historical, logical deduction that Jesus is who He claims to be—the divine Son of God, God in the flesh? It is a moral problem! The facts that pertain to the weather, etc., are facts that do not demand a moral commitment; the second are facts which do! The facts of agriculture and buildings have to do with selfish accumulation of worldly riches; the second facts demand renunciation of worldly riches. Jesus made this same criticism earlier in His ministry (cf. Mt. 16:3).

What signs should they have been able to discern of the spiritual crisis surrounding them? Undoubtedly Jesus was referring to the very plain fulfillments of Old Testament prophecies then occurring in His incarnation. Micah 5:2 predicted His birth and messiahship; Isaiah 52 and 53 predicted what countenance the Messiah would present to the world; Isaiah 61:1-3 predicted the Messiah's ministry (cf. Lk. 4:16-32); Malachi predicted the Messiah and His forerunner (Mal. 3:1-4; 4:5-6; Isa. 40:3-5); Daniel 9:24-27 predicted the precise time in history when the Messiah should be expected to appear and certain political signs that should be looked for. Then, there was the recent ministry of John the Baptist as a sign of the Messiah's time. Finally, there were all the miracles and teachings Jesus Himself had been doing (even raising the dead). How, in the name of all that is logical, empirical, honest and practical could men not interpret (discern) the "present time"?

The same admonition applies to the world of unbelievers today. Wake up, be alert and watchful, and apply your minds and hearts to discern the signs of history. Declare that God came in the flesh in the Person of His Son, Jesus Christ. God's Son accomplished redemption and offers it to all men by faith and obedience to His New Covenant terms. They are there in His divinely inspired New Covenant scriptures for all to read and understand. Judge for yourself what is right, true and final—while there is still time:

- a. Every man must judge what is right and true for himself—we cannot decide for one another.
- b. There is only a certain amount of time to make our choice about truth—Today is the only day we really have to choose.
- c. We must settle with “the Judge” about our sins before we are taken into the court of no appeal. We settle about our sins by accepting the blood of the Judge’s Son as atonement. We do this by faith and obedience to His commandments.
- d. It will be too late when we stand before the Judge. Then the only thing left is eternal imprisonment, because imperfect men can never pay the perfect price required for fellowship with a perfect God.
- e. The next discourses of Jesus (Luke, chapter 13) will tell men how to settle with the Judge about their sins.

STUDY STIMULATORS:

1. What is the “leaven” of the Pharisees? Since there are no longer any Pharisees, do Christians today need to beware of this? Why?
2. Do you think God is aware and involved in the minute details of your life? How does that make you feel toward God?
3. Have you ever been tempted to doubt or deny that Jesus was God in the flesh? What do you think made you be tempted—persecution? human opinions?
4. What is the “unpardonable sin”? Do you think it is possible to commit that sin today? How?
5. What is covetousness? Why does the Lord say it is idolatry? Why is a man a fool to covet? How may covetousness be overcome in your life?
6. Are you ever anxious? Is it a sin to be anxious? Can you help it? How?
7. Name five characteristics of a “watchful” servant of the Lord.
8. Characterize the “wicked” servant—have you ever been one? When?
9. Do you think the Lord will reward or punish all people the same? Why?
10. What are the two attitudes that aid spiritual alertness? Are you cultivating these two attitudes in your daily walk with Christ?

Chapter Thirteen (13:1-35)

THE SON OF MAN CALLING FOR REPENTANCE

IDEAS TO INVESTIGATE:

1. If the Galileans were not worse sinners than others, why did God allow Pilate to mingle their blood with the sacrifices (13:1-5)?
2. What is repentance (13:1-5)?
3. Is Satan the cause of all our diseases (13:16)?
4. How many will be saved (13:23-24)?
5. Wouldn't it be easier to believe in Jesus if we could eat and drink in His presence (13:26)?
6. Why did Jesus call Herod a "fox"; isn't it wrong to call people names (13:32)?
7. How could Jerusalem be "forsaken"—isn't it still a city today (13:35)?

SECTION 1

Repentance Defined (13:1-9)

13 There were some present at that very time who told him of the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. 2 And he answered them, "Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans, because they suffered thus? 3 I tell you, No; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish. 4 Or those eighteen upon whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them, do you think that they were worse offenders than all the others who dwelt in Jerusalem? 5 I tell you, No; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish."

6 And he told this parable: "A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came seeking fruit on it and found none. 7 And he said to the vinedresser, 'Lo, these three years I have come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and I find none. Cut it down; why should it use up the ground?' 8 And he answered him, 'Let it alone, sir, this year also, till I dig about it and put on manure. 9 And if it bears fruit next year, well and good; but if not, you can cut it down.' "

13:1-5 Importuned: The Lord's discourse on preparation for being called to judgment reminded some of those present of the great calamity that probably had recently occurred. Pontius Pilate, procurator of Judea, had

ordered some Galileans slain as they worshiped in the Temple and their blood was "mingled" with that of the animals they had just sacrificed. This event is extant in no other historical record than Luke's. Pilate was the son of Marcus Pontius (according to tradition), a Roman general. Pilate was a friend of the famous Germanicus, and his wife was a granddaughter of Caesar Augustus. The Pilate we know from the Gospels and from secular history was a typical pragmatic Roman politician. He was not excessively wicked or cruel, but he was weak and vacillating and would sacrifice principle and honor for his own ends. He was assigned the most unrewarding and difficult post that existed in the Roman provinces—Judea. He went there in 26 A.D. and remained about ten years. He was not particularly adept at administering his post because of the intransigent nature of the Jews and his own fear of displeasing the emperor Tiberius. Once he put shields of war which were used in worship of the emperor and a portrait of the emperor into the Temple by night. This nearly precipitated a revolution. On another occasion when he needed money to build an aqueduct into Jerusalem, he took it from the Temple's treasury. This started a demonstration by the Jews that had to be put down by Roman force. About six years after the death of Christ he got involved in a confrontation that ended his career. A self-made prophet appeared in Samaria and claimed that the ancient Tabernacle of the Jews and its vessels were buried on the top of Mt. Gerizim. He gathered a crowd and they ascended the mountain, singing psalms and shouting patriotic slogans. Pilate sent his troops to stop the crowd but the confrontation turned into a riot and a massacre. Pilate was reported to his superiors, called back to Rome, banished by Caligula to Gaul where, it is reported, he killed himself.

The Jews had the idea that any great physical calamity upon a nation or an individual must be considered a direct result of extraordinary sinfulness by the persons or person upon whom the disaster had fallen. Job's friends attributed his calamities to Job's sinfulness (cf. Job 22:5ff.). Jesus' disciples just knew that the man born blind was a terrible sinner—or his parents were (cf. Jn. 9:1-2). This view was also held by many Gentiles (cf. Acts 28:4). Generally speaking, the understanding that physical calamity in the form of war, pestilence, flood, famine, drought, disease and death are God's portents that this material order has been judged is correct! The Bible teaches very plainly that whirlwinds, earthquakes and other natural disasters are God's constant warnings to this world that it is doomed and that mankind must repent in order to be saved (cf. Joel 1:1-20; 2:30—3:3; Amos 3:6; 4:1-13; Romans 1:18-20; Rev. 8:1-13; 16:8-11, etc.). Even the diseases and maladies men bring on themselves as a consequence of sinful living are God's signals for repentance (cf. Rom. 1:26-27). The wrath of

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God is revealed from heaven against man's sin in the dissolution and disorder of "nature." Of course, the goodness and patience of God is also generally revealed in the natural order (cf. Acts 14:16-18; 17:24-31; Mt. 6:25-30; Rom. 4:2). But these are all *general* announcements from God to the world that it must repent. When people are killed by riots or accidents or natural disasters it does not mean they are all greater sinners than those who might not be killed in such calamities. Nor does it mean that the locale of any calamity signifies its recipients are worse sinners than those in a neighboring locale which might have been spared the disaster. In the book of Revelation, John predicts a great holocaust of judgment upon the Roman empire in the form of natural disasters, wars, and internal disintegration. While millions will die during those years of tribulation to come upon Rome, including many Christians, the Christians will go through the great tribulation to heaven to be with the Lamb. The impenitent will die and go to eternal torments. When God's judgments fall upon the earth to call the world to repentance, both righteous and wicked die—but their eternal destiny is what is important.

Notice how Jesus corrected the view of His questioners without denying the fundamental truth that was already there in their minds. Yes, the two events, one deliberately brought about by Pilate's orders and the other an "accident," do mean God is calling the whole world to repentance. No, neither of the events give any justifiable reason to judge that certain people (those suffering extraordinary disasters) are more wicked than others. The Siloam Tower "accident" is recorded in no other historical document than Luke's—however, accidents like this occur every day. No, violent death does not mean the victim was unquestionably some specially wicked person. But all death and all dissolution of nature means God has cursed this created universe and its destruction is inevitable! Unless every man repents, he will likewise perish in eternal death. God has promised to create a new heaven and earth which shall be eternal. He has also promised that any person who repents and enters into covenant relationship with His Son will be regenerated at that moment and will continue to be recreated, so long as repentance is continued, into the image of His Son and saved forever. All the frailties of man and nature in this present world order are focused on leading man to glorify God, if man will only repent and believe (cf. Jn. 9:1-38; II Cor. 1:8-10; 12:1-10; Heb. 12:1-17).

Repentance—what is it? Perhaps to see what it is *not* would be the place to begin. Repentance is *not*:

- a. Just being "blue" or sorry or regretful. Criminals regret getting caught but they do not repent. Judas was sorry he betrayed Christ but he committed suicide—he didn't repent. King Saul was sorry

the kingdom was being taken from him but he didn't repent (cf. Mt. 27:3-10; I Samuel; II Cor. 7:10, etc.).

- b. Just being hyperactive in "church-work." The legalistic Pharisees were hyper-active but impenitent. Paul was "more zealous" than all his brethren, but needed to repent (cf. Acts 22:3-5; Phil. 3:4-11, etc.).
- c. Just reformation of outward actions; not just changing of bad habits to good habits; not just enrolling in self-improvement or image-building programs. Impenitence is deeper than the outward appearance (cf. Heb. 4:11-13).
- d. Just penance or doing assigned acts of contrition, trying to "pay-off" God or make atonement for one's own sins by severity to the body (cf. Col. 2:20—3:4). Going into a monastery or becoming an ascetic will not suffice for repentance.

The Greek word *metanoia* is translated *repentance* and means literally, "to have another or different mind." Repentance is a change of mind. The word was used by the Greeks as a military command, "about face," or "reverse your march." Repentance is to go in a different direction. Biblical repentance is redirecting the mind and heart constantly toward the revealed will of God and away from worldly-mindedness. One cannot become a Christian without repentance and he cannot remain a Christian unless he continues it. Repentance is the mental, emotional and volitional metamorphosis (transformation) that changes a person from a son of darkness to a son of light. William Chamberlain in his book, *The Meaning of Repentance*, wrote, "Repentance is a pilgrimage from the mind of the flesh to the mind of Christ." Repentance is a journey, a life long journey. A person never reaches in this life the point where he needs no more changing in his mind to that of Christ's will.

Repentance involves a change of mentality. New direction, new knowledge is sought and gained—the knowledge of God's revealed will (the Bible). Scripture places great importance upon the place of the mind in a person's relationship to God (cf. Rom. 12:1-2; Col. 3:1-4; Mt. 22:37; I Pet. 1:13; Eph. 4:23; Rom. 8:5; Phil. 2:5ff., etc.). The impenitent are those who are "hostile in mind" (Col. 1:21; Phil. 3:16-19; Jas. 1:8; Eph. 4:17). If we are to truly repent, we must "mind the things of God and not the things of men" (cf. Mt. 16:23; Mk. 8:33). Repentance means to think the thoughts of God. The thoughts of God are communicated to man *only* in the divinely inspired scriptures (cf. I Cor. 2:9-13). The mind of man *can* be directed, changed, renewed—it is up to man. Jesus taught that men must change their minds (repent) about what the nature of God's kingdom is—who the Messiah is—and what the right covenant relationship of men and women to God is (faith).

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Repentance involves a change of values. God wants men to love what He loves and hate what He hates. What we treasure determines the formation of our character (Hosea 9:10; Mt. 6:19-21; Prov. 23:7). Whatever is true, honorable, just, pure, lovely, gracious—value these things (Phil. 4:8ff.). Joy, appreciation, and satisfaction are found in fellowship with God's revelation of what is available—and that revelation is in the Bible. Man must repent and change his values to those of God. Jesus taught men that they must treasure right relationship with Him more than all other relationships. He said men must treasure God's word above all human opinions and traditions—treasure true and pure character above worldliness—treasure the welfare of people above rituals and ceremonies. He insisted that men must treasure discipline above indulgence and right motives above religious play-acting.

Above all, men must value the approval of God more than the applause of men. The repentance that demands a change of values is not easy!

Repentance involves a change of choice or will. The power to choose and decide is deliberately redirected in true repentance toward the expressed choices and purposes revealed as God's will. Surrendering the autonomy of our will to the rule of God is the epitome of repentance! We are free to choose or refuse His will. Truth and the evidences for it are not, of themselves, irresistible. Man may choose either truth or falsehood. With the choice comes the responsibility to accept the divinely-decreed consequences. God is going to give us what we choose! Jesus taught that men should surrender their wills to the will of God and put self-rule to death. The peace (will) of Christ should *rule* (Gr. *brabeueo*, arbitrate or umpire) in our hearts (Col. 3:15). Man must change his own self-determined righteousness and accept imputed righteousness from God. A kingdom with its citizens in revolt could not have peace. Men must surrender to God's rule in order for the kingdom of God to be a reality. Unless they do, they are subversives, enemies of God.

Repentance involves a change of conduct. The logical result of a truly changed spiritual nature is godly conduct. Repentance must be effected in deeds and actions because man is body and behavior as well as thoughts and feelings. Repentance is wholistic (Rom. 6:1-23). Man should conform his life to the "image" of God's dear Son (cf. Rom. 8:29). There are deeds "worthy" of repentance which the believer must do (cf. Mt. 3:8; Lk. 3:8; Acts 26:20, etc.). Not everyone who says, "Lord, Lord . . ." but the one who *does* the will of the Father in heaven is the one who repents, (cf. Mt. 7:21).

The Bible is the story of clashing viewpoints. Therein is recorded the clash between the will of God for man, and man's volitional rebellion against God's will. This clash occurs along the entire front of human life. The classic example of the clashing viewpoints is shown in Mark 8:31-33

and Phil. 3:4-11. When man's thinking centers in himself he is always antagonistic toward God. When God's will is made the center of a man's purpose then man finds peace. Satan assumes that even in religion man's primary objective is to feather his own nest. Satan thinks when religion ceases to yield physical dividends man will cease to worship God (cf. Job 1:9-11). This is the mind of the flesh personified in the devil. The *change* represented by the transition of mind from this Satanic philosophy to that of Christ, who, in the flesh, lived as a Perfect Man, is repentance.

13:6-9 Illustrated: Jesus brushed aside the demand for theological argument about the relationship of disasters to human wickedness and focused on the need of all men to repent—especially the Jewish nation. While the whole world needs to repent, the primary target of the Lord's teaching here is the Jewish people of His day. They must repent of their rejection of His messiahship lest the destruction predicted by their prophets come upon them (Deut. 28:58ff.; Dan. 9:24-27, etc.). Jesus illustrates His warning to them with this short but succinct parable.

A man planted a fig tree in his vineyard. He came seeking fruit but found none. He said to his vinedresser, I have come three years seeking fruit on this fig tree, and find none. Cut it down. The vinedresser begged for more time to cultivate it, then if it bears no fruit, he will cut it down. Whom do the characters in this story symbolize? God is the owner, Israel is the fig tree, and Jesus is the vinedresser. God has given Israel centuries to produce the fruits of repentance, but all that time (for the most part) she produced nothing in true repentance. She had been planted in a very fertile land. She had promised to produce (cf. Ex. 19) a kingdom of priests (servants of God). But through the centuries she had defaulted on her purpose. Now God is ready to "cut it down" but by His grace He gives Israel additional time to repent while the Messiah preaches to her. He even gives Israel forty years of grace beyond the preaching of the Messiah before He cuts her down in 70 A.D. Because she would not repent and serve her purpose, she became of no more use to God in His redemptive work, so He destroyed her.

What Jesus is saying to His audience is that repentance is something to do—not just talk about. Repentance is to produce in one's nature and life that for which he was created. Repentance is to fulfill one's God-ordained purpose. What is applicable to the nation of Israel is applicable to the whole world and to every individual in the world.

How shall such a transformation be wrought in men? First, it will be done gradually. Repentance, because it is a lifetime journey, cannot be accomplished all at one time. There is no "instant repentance." Repentance is *not* produced by:

- a. Intimidation. Mankind cannot be frightened or forced into repentance (cf. Rev. 9:20-21).

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- b. Indulgence. God makes His rain to fall on the just and unjust alike and yet all men do not repent. We cannot expect to produce repentance in people's lives by indulging them in their self-centeredness.
- c. Intuition. Man cannot find motivation within himself to repent. The heart of man is deceitful above all things, and desperately corrupt . . . (Jer. 17:9).
- d. Intoxication. Emotional, experiential excitation does not produce lasting repentance—it does not produce stability and steadfastness. Saul did not repent though he became emotional (I Sam. 24:16-22 and I Sam. 26:1ff.).
- e. Inventions. Organized programming of people, entertaining people, or inventing new human philosophies or ideologies does not produce godly repentance.
- f. Impressiveness. Our "testimony" or our example is not sufficient alone to produce repentance in others. God is the only absolutely faithful Person existing (Rom. 3:4) and His Life, manifested in His Son, is the only sufficient example to produce repentance.

Repentance is produced by the transforming of the human mind through the word of God (cf. Rom. 12:1-2). Repentance is produced by the infusion of the will (nature) of God into the mind and nature (will) of man. This is done when the word of God is preached and men believe it (cf. Rom. 10:14-17; Lk. 24:47; II Pet. 1:3-11; Jn. 6:63). Although some of the character or will of God is revealed in nature (cf. Rom. 1:18ff.; 2:4; Acts 14:16-17; 17:24-29), God's will for man's salvation is found in *only one place—the Bible*.

The mission of every follower of Christ is to proclaim repentance and remission of sins in Christ's name (Lk. 24:47; Acts 17:30-31, etc.). Repentance is begun when through the gospel we capture the minds of men for obedience to Christ (cf. II Cor. 10:3-6). Bringing men to repentance is *evangelism*. The classic example of the opposite of the mind of Christ is a quotation from H. L. Mencken (1880-1956): "I have done, in the main, exactly what I wanted to do. Its possible effects on other people have interested me very little. I have not written and published to please other people, but to satisfy myself, just as a cow gives milk, not to profit the dairyman, but to satisfy herself. I like to think that most of my ideas have been sound ones, but I really don't care."

The mission of the Christian is not to *eliminate* the will of man, but to *conform* it to the will of Christ. Alexander Campbell in *The Christian System* defined it as "impressing the moral image of God upon the moral nature of man." It is significant that even the church of Christ itself must carry on a constant program of repentance (cf. Revelation, chapters 2 and 3). In any program of repentance for the world or the church, preaching

the word of God is primary. There is no true repentance unless men hear and obey the word of God.

SECTION 2

Repentance in Doctrine (13:10-17)

10 Now he was teaching in one of the synagogues on the sabbath.
 11 And there was a woman who had had a spirit of infirmity for eighteen years; she was bent over and could not fully straighten herself. 12 And when Jesus saw her, he called her and said to her, "Woman, you are freed from your infirmity." 13 And he laid his hands upon her, and immediately she was made straight, and she praised God. 14 But the ruler of the synagogue, indignant because Jesus had healed on the sabbath, said to the people, "There are six days on which work ought to be done; come on those days and be healed, and not on the sabbath day." 15 Then the Lord answered him, "You hypocrites! Does not each of you on the sabbath untie his ox or his ass from the manger, and lead it away to water it? 16 And ought not this woman, a daughter of Abraham whom Satan bound for eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the sabbath day?" 17 As he said this, all his adversaries were put to shame; and all the people rejoiced at all the glorious things that were done by him.

13:10-14 Attack: This is another occasion when Jesus had been invited to give the Sabbath teaching in one of the Jewish synagogues. This particular synagogue is somewhere in Judea (probably in Jerusalem). This is the "hot-bed" of religious orthodoxy. There was a woman who had a spirit (Gr. *pneuma*) of infirmity (Gr. *asthenias*, lit., "lack of strength, weakness"). She had something that kept her bent double (Gr. *sugkuptousa*) and unable to stand erect for eighteen years. Apparently it was another case of demon possession. Luke calls it a "spirit" of infirmity and Jesus attributes her predicament to some "binding" by Satan (v. 16). Note, there is no suggestion of immorality in this woman's life. She was the victim of Satanic activity without any deliberate or conscious surrender to wickedness on her part. Why? We do not know. Perhaps the ancient incident in the life of Job (Job 1) may furnish some explanation. There is not even the slightest hint that this demonic invasion of her body had caused any immoral effects in her life. Here she was in the synagogue on the Sabbath. Evidently Jesus saw in her a faith that stood above some of the religious leaders and He called her "a daughter of Abraham." Jesus did not grant that appellation to every Jew!

Jesus saw her. He called to her, "Woman, you are freed from your infirmity." Then He laid His hands on her, and immediately her twisted and bowed

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frame straightened up and she continually praised God. Jesus did not have to lay His hands on her to effect the healing. He could heal with a word (He cast the demon out of the daughter of a Syrian woman with a word, Cf. Mt. 15; Mk. 7). When Jesus healed it was immediately and permanently. Luke uses the Greek word *apolelusai*, perfect tense verb meaning, "loosed and continually loosed." The healing was immediate, complete, unquestionable, un hysterical and without prolonged efforts to convince the woman she had been healed. Jesus probably laid His hands on her to make it absolutely clear that the powers of deity were in Him.

People with compassion and a common-sense judgment of what is good, right and true, would have joined the woman in rejoicing and giving praise to God. But not everyone in that synagogue had this kind of fundamental honesty and compassion. This healing was unquestionably an act of deity. The ruler of the synagogue was indignant (Gr. *aganakton*, originally signified physical pain or irritation). The official of the synagogue was angry because Jesus had broken a rabbinical tradition. The Old Testament Law specified only a few Sabbath restrictions. On the Sabbath, the Jew could not:

- a. Do any work (Ex. 20:9-10)
- b. Plow or harvest (Ex. 34:21)
- c. Kindle a fire (Ex. 35:3; Num. 15:32-36)
- d. Bake or boil food (Ex. 16:23)
- e. Tread the winepress (Neh. 13:15)
- f. Haul goods to market (Neh. 13:15)
- g. Trade or sell (Neh. 13:16; Amos 8:5)

The main thrust of the Sabbath legislation was not negative. The prohibitions of the Law were to force a spiritually-immature people to concentrate on the real issues God ordained the Sabbath for:

- a. to give men an opportunity to trust completely in God for providing all they needed for sustenance (Ex. 16:22-29).
- b. to be for man an opportunity to sanctify himself to God's holy way of life (Ex. 20:8ff.; Lev. 16:31), a day for "afflicting the soul in repentance" and thinking God's thoughts.
- c. to be a day set aside for worshipping the Lord in sacrifice and offerings (Num. 28:9ff.).
- d. to be a day for men to do good to their fellow man—to let their servants and sojourners find rest and help (Ex. 23:12ff.; Deut. 5:12-15).

The seventh day is no longer legislated as a special day since the Law was "nailed to the cross" (cf. Col. 2:14; Gal. 5:2-6; Eph. 2:14-16; Rom. 14:5-9, etc.) in the death of Christ. His death abrogated the entire Law of Moses, fulfilling it, suffering its penalty, and instituting a "better covenant."

But Christians are to live "a sabbath-kind-of-life." The Old Testament prophets kept predicting that the Messianic age was to be a sabbath-kind-of-life (cf. Isa. 56:1-4; 58:13-14; Jer. 17:19-27; Isa. 66:22-23; Ezek. 44:24; 46:3). In Hebrews 4:9 the Greek word, *sabbatismos*, is translated, "a sabbath rest." It is a word not found anywhere in all the Greek language until Paul uses it there. Paul "coined" this word to express or illustrate the experience of spiritual rest he said Christians are to have in their New covenant relationship in Christ. The Christian should live a sabbath-kind-of-life every day of his life—not just one day.

The major portion of the Jewish people never did comprehend the higher and more spiritual essence of the Law of Moses, including the Sabbath legislation. The people of the days of prophets, for the most part, profaned the Sabbath (cf. Amos 8:4-6; Ezek. 20:12; 22:8; 22:26; 23:38, etc.). After the captivities of the Jews, myriads of rabbinical traditions were accumulated and enforced regarding the Sabbath. There are thirty-nine kinds of forbidden Sabbath activity in the rabbinical tractate called *Shabbath*. The list includes such things as tying or untying a knot, seizing any prey, writing two letters of the alphabet or sowing seed. In addition to these specific rules, there was a huge collection of traditions argued by some as binding and not binding by others. Some argued such absurdities as:

- a. It was unlawful to eat an egg laid upon the Sabbath since the hen had broken the Law by laying the egg on Sabbath.
- b. It was unlawful to slaughter an animal on Sabbath, unless it was a louse—some would only allow that the louse's legs might be plucked off on Sabbath.
- c. Women were not allowed to look into a mirror on Sabbath lest they brush loose hairs from their shoulders and be working on Sabbath.

Some of the more liberal and conscientious rabbis held that it was legitimate to fight in self-defence on the Sabbath—that other religious duties might supersede the Sabbath such as keeping certain of the great feasts and circumcising a Jewish male-child. The saving of life takes precedence over the Sabbath (so says, Yoma 85a), so that anyone being assaulted or anyone dangerously ill (life-threatening illness) could be assisted on the Sabbath. The more rigid rabbis would have no part of such liberalism and forbade any kind of ministration to the sick on the Sabbath.

The effect of such multiplication of traditions and extreme legalism about the Sabbath (and rites of purification, etc.) was that many Jews, including the rabbis, learned devious and hypocritical ways to evade them. For instance, since on the Sabbath one might only travel a "Sabbath day's journey" (six stadia, or seven-eighths of a mile) a fictitious domicile would be invented, so that from that point it was within the Law to start off on another six stadia.

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13:15-17 Answer: Jesus denounces the hypocrisy of the rabbis here in His reminder, "Does not each of you on the sabbath untie his ox or his ass from the manger, and lead it away to water it?" Edersheim notes that rabbinic tradition in the Talmud provided for water to be drawn for beasts on the Sabbath. Jesus is showing the vicious perversity of this rabbinic legalism which would allow a beast to be watered, but not a faithful worshipper of God to be released from the malicious cruelty of Satan's invasion of her body. The hypocrisy of the ruler of the synagogue is evident:

- a. He was pretending to censure the crowd, but was really aiming at Jesus. "But the ruler . . . said to the people . . ." (13:14)
- b. He blamed the woman for coming to the synagogue for healing when he knew she came to worship. She had no idea Jesus would heal her.
- c. He placed institutional values above human values.
- d. He was more concerned about his animal property than the Sabbath.
He was only pretending to hallow the Sabbath!

It is so easy to lose the sense of values with respect to people in a highly technological and institutionalized society. There is even the danger in the church that we will manipulate, count, organize, systematize and institutionalize until people lose their identity. Let the church beware! Jesus makes it plain, "It is lawful to do good on the Sabbath" (cf. Mt. 12:12).

God rested from His creative work and on the seventh day began His eternal sustaining or sanctifying work (cf. Gen. 2:1-3). It is as Jesus said, "My father worketh until now, and I work . . ." (Jn. 5:17). God continues doing good, even on the Sabbath. In fact, doing good is God's way of resting. Rest, as God defines it, is not the cessation of work, but the doing of holiness which brings peace, satisfaction, joy, spiritual growth. That is rest!

Luke used the Greek word *deo* which is translated in English "ought." *Deo* is much more intense than two other Greek words (*opheilo* and *chre*) translated "ought." *Deo* means "it is binding, it is obligatory, it is inevitable, it is proper and right." There is no hint of any other option or alternative in this word. Jesus is saying that ethically and theologically, the need of this daughter of Abraham takes precedence over Sabbath laws, and especially over Sabbath traditions. The Sabbath was made for man's highest good—not man for the Sabbath. Jesus is saying that doing good, even in this particular case, is exactly the purpose for which God instituted the Sabbath. Not only was the woman's body delivered from Satan's invasion, knowledge of Jesus' deity was given her so she might accept the Messiah and His kingdom.

The irrefutable righteousness of Jesus' answer to the attack of the ruler of the synagogue had two results:

- a. His adversaries were put to shame. The Greek word *kateschunonto* means they were "confounded" or "dishonored." It is doubtful that Luke is referring to their shame in connection with any repentance. Jesus' answers exposed His adversaries' hypocrisy.
- b. All the people rejoiced. They rejoiced not only that the woman had been delivered from her physical malady, but also that they had seen divine truth about God's love for man and the real truth about the Sabbath.

SECTION 3

Repentance in Destiny (13:18-21)

18 He said therefore, "What is the kingdom of God like? And to what shall I compare it? 19 It is like a grain of mustard seed which a man took and sowed in his garden; and it grew and became a tree, and the birds of the air made nests in its branches."

20 And again he said, "To what shall I compare the kingdom of God? 21 It is like leaven which a woman took and hid in three measures of flour, till it was all leavened."

13:18-19 Infamous Kingdom: Jewish rabbis and politicians expected the messianic kingdom of God to begin in splendor, hugeness and power. Jesus tells this audience, especially the officials of the synagogue, that the messianic kingdom will begin very unpretentiously. It will begin like the tiny, speck-like mustard seed, but it will grow into a great "tree." The Greek word for "mustard seed," is *sinapi*, a word of Egyptian origin. The domestic mustard plant was known as *sinapis nigra*. The seed was well known for its minuteness. In good soil the plant often attained a height of 10 or 12 feet and had branches in which birds could nest or perch. The tree is a familiar figure of speech in the O.T. to portray a grand, great, benevolent kingdom (cf. Dan. 4:10-27; Ezek. 17:22-23; 31:6, 12).

That the messianic kingdom of God could arrive at such greatness with such an unpretentious beginning through the Rabbi from Nazareth and His fishermen-disciples was incredible to the apocalyptic-minded Jews of that day. While Jesus Himself was in His fleshly ministry, a statistical review of His "hard" countable successes would have confirmed their estimate of failure. Jesus' kingdom did not reach the proportions of a "tree" while He was here on earth. God's messianic kingdom must, by its very nature, begin unpretentiously. It does not have its origin in force, but in the acceptance of His word by free choice. His kingdom is not concerned primarily with any of this world's riches or fame, but in character and eternity. It has no power-structures through which men must climb to the top. Its King

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proved that greatness is found in humble service for others. God's great universal kingdom began in Palestine, the most obscure, despised and unlikely province of the glorious Roman empire of the first century. Its founder was a Jew, from Nazareth, in Galilee—a carpenter's son, despised and hated by His own political leaders. Both He and His principal assistants were unknown, unschooled, uninfluential people. They had no army, no budget, no capital city and no support from the masses. But after the death of its founder, this kingdom grew and grew and permeated the whole world (cf. Rom. 16:25-26; Col. 1:6, 23; I Thess. 1:6-10; Acts 28:22; 17:6, etc.). But that is the way God chose to conquer (cf. I Cor. 1:27-29) and conquer He did! In Paul's day some even of Caesar's own household had come into this universal kingdom (cf. Phil. 1:12-13)!

13:20-21 Infectious Kingdom: The Greek word for leaven is *zume*. It is "sour dough" in a high state of fermentation. Today's housewife uses yeast. Such fermentation makes bread dough "rise" giving it lightness and flavor. Unleavened bread is heavy, hard and tasteless. Leaven is used in the scriptures mostly to symbolize defilement or uncleanness—to characterize the pervasive nature of evil. In this case, however, the only point to be symbolized is the infectious, contagious nature of the messianic kingdom of God. The small, insignificant kingdom provides spiritual leavening for the whole world. Quietly, silently, unobtrusively the truth of Jesus made its way into the hearts of men and women. The word of God is like leaven. It works slowly (cf. Mk. 4:26-32), unseen in its working, but dynamically. It transforms as it permeates. God's truth, heralded by the church, has its influence in all of human culture (e.g. politics, commerce, science, arts, etc.), as well as in the transformation of individual people into the image of Christ, (cf. II Cor. 2:14; Rom. 16:19, 26; Col. 1:6, 23; Rev. 11:15; II Cor. 3:17-18; 5:17; I Cor. 6:9-11). Even by the time the apostle Paul wrote his epistle to the Colossians (about 60 A.D.) this leaven-like working of the Gospel had infected the known civilized world (Col. 1:6, 23) and by 313 A.D. (the edict of Constantine) it had conquered Western civilization. The Jews expected the messianic kingdom to be established almost instantaneously, spectacularly, powerfully and Jewishly. Never did they expect it to come slowly, quietly and universally. The Jews expected God to "signal" with some cosmic, catastrophic upheaval of political structures—they were so accustomed to God working through such natural spectacles they could hardly envision Him working otherwise. Elijah looked for God to come in an earthquake or storm—but God came in a "still, small voice" (I Kings 19:12). The prophet Zechariah had to remind the people of his day that God most often works "not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit . . ." (Zech. 4:6). Jesus cautioned the Jews that the kingdom would come "not with observation, but within" the hearts of men (Lk. 17:20-21; Rom. 14:17).

There are very important lessons for all followers of Jesus to learn from these two parables. First, we must not despise the smallness of things in the kingdom. God works with things small in the eyes of men (cf. I Cor. 1). Second, we must not try to make the kingdom into some humanistic, big-time, proud, world-like corporation and manipulate or regiment men and women. The kingdom works like leaven. All that is necessary is that the Word of God make contact with the hearts of men—the Word itself is the *only* agent able to transform the “dough,” (cf. Heb. 4:11-13, Jn. 6:63, James 1:18; I Pet. 1:22-24, etc.). Third, we must believe that the kingdom, though its beginnings are small and its working is unnoticed, will become great and accomplish its purpose and endure forever. These parables permit no pessimism or despondency. Men may take the good things of God’s creation (like the Sabbath) and violently pervert them and it may *appear* that such evil men control God’s kingdom. But the truth of the matter is, things are not as they appear. God’s kingdom does not operate as the “kingdoms” of men—but His kingdom will survive and conquer.

SECTION 4

Repentance is Difficult (13:22-30)

22 He went on his way through towns and villages, teaching, and journeying toward Jerusalem. ²³ And some one said to him, “Lord, will those who are saved be few?” And he said to them, ²⁴“Strive to enter by the narrow door; for many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able. ²⁵ When once the householder has risen up and shut the door, you will begin to stand outside and to knock at the door, saying, ‘Lord, open to us.’ He will answer you, ‘I do not know where you come from.’ ²⁶ Then you will begin to say, ‘We ate and drank in your presence, and you taught in our streets.’ ²⁷ But he will say, ‘I tell you, I do not know where you come from; depart from me, all you workers of iniquity!’ ²⁸ There you will weep and gnash your teeth, when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God and you yourselves thrust out. ²⁹ And men will come from east and west, and from north and south, and sit at table in the kingdom of God. ³⁰ And behold, some are last who will be first, and some are first who will be last.”

13:22-27 Urgency: After Jesus taught these two parables on the kingdom He apparently went to the Temple in Jerusalem for the Feast of Dedication. That visit is recorded exclusively in John’s Gospel (Jn. 10:22-39). The Feast of Dedication is better known by its Jewish name, *Hanukkah*. In 167 B.C., on the 25th of December, Antiochus Epiphanes (a Greek-Syrian)

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maliciously defiled the Jewish Temple by erecting an altar to Jupiter in it and by sacrificing a sow on the Temple altar. Exactly three years later, to the very day, Judas Maccabeus (Jewish patriot) defeated the forces of Antiochus, slew five thousand of them, recaptured Jerusalem and cleansed the Temple. He rededicated the Temple and declared a holy feast, *Hanukkah*, which means literally, "Feast of Lights." According to legend, Judas found only one cruse of oil fit to use in the Temple, which would normally have lasted but one day. A miracle occurred (supposedly) and the oil lasted eight days. All this legend is recorded in the Jewish Talmud. The *Hanukkah* ceremony is festive and happy. It begins by the recitation of two traditional blessings followed by the lighting of the 8-lamped *Menorah* (one lamp lit each night). Then the singing of Jewish hymns which would include the canting of the Hallel (Psa. 113-118). There are special readings of the Torah taken from Numbers chapter 7, and from the Haphtarah (Prophets) in Zechariah 2:14 through 4:7. These religious ceremonies are followed by games, dancing and eating. At this particular *Hanukkah*, Jesus gave one of the plainest affirmations of His messiahship He had ever given. He even claimed He had the power to give eternal life and to keep anyone who believed in Him from perishing. His "sheep" could never be lost or taken away from Him (cf. Jn. 10:24-30). When the Jews heard this they considered it blasphemous so some of them picked up large stones from the accumulated rubbish piles associated with Herod's remodeling work there and threatened to stone Him to death. Jesus withdrew from Jerusalem crossing over the Jordan river at Jericho and came to Bethany "beyond" the Jordan where John the Baptist had immersed many people, including Himself. In this area (and throughout southern Perea) Jesus conducted an extensive preaching tour which is summarized by Luke, "He went on his way through towns and villages, teaching, and journeying toward Jerusalem" (Lk. 13:22). All the preaching Jesus does from Luke 13:22 through Luke 17:10 is apparently done "beyond" the Jordan in Perea. It was the earlier trip to Jerusalem for *Hanukkah* and Jesus' astonishing claim to give eternal security that prompted someone to ask, "Lord, will those who are saved be few?"

Three other trends appearing in the Lord's public ministry were also responsible for this question: (a) Jesus was increasingly emphasizing the individual spirituality necessary for salvation; (b) there was a visible defection of disciples beginning to take place—many out of the clamoring multitudes of the second year were beginning to feel disillusionment with Jesus' refusal to get involved in politics; (c) and there was very evident intensification of the opposition by the Jewish rulers. Jewish exclusivism might also have prompted the query. In the Jewish apocrypha we read statements like: "The Most High hath made this world for many, but the world to come for few" (II Esdras 8:1), and "There be many more of them which perish, than of them which shall be saved: like as a wave is greater

than a drop" (II Esdras 9:15-16). Since those who lived in Perea were considered outside the pale of orthodox Judaism, one of the crowd in Perea might have been wanting to see where Jesus stood in relation to the Pharisaic haughtiness of those Jews in Judea.

The Lord's full answer to this question appears almost enigmatic. He says, "Yes, few—No, many!" Jesus does not answer specifically because the number of those who will be saved is information only God is capable of bearing. Man's standards and abilities to comprehend such a possibility are totally inadequate, (cf. Acts 1:7; Jn. 16:12; Rev. 7:9). Jesus answers first by saying, "Yes, few will be saved because so many are unwilling to enter salvation by the narrow gate." The Greek word *stēnes* is translated "narrow" but means "difficult, pressurized, restricted on both sides." Matthew uses the word *tethlimmene* to describe the "narrow" road Jesus proclaimed (Mt. 7:14). *Tethlimmene* means "afflicted." It is through "many tribulations" that we enter the kingdom of God (cf. Acts 14:22). If only few are saved, it will not be because the Jews are few and the Gentile nations are many, but because of all people of the world, only a few really strive to enter through the "narrow" door. The Greek word *agonizesthe* is translated "strive" and is the word from which we get the English word, "agonize." The same Greek word *agōna* is used in Hebrews 12:1 to describe the Christian life as a "race," a "contest." Never, in all His preaching, did Jesus suggest it would be easy to be saved. That idea is the heresy of men who are afraid of self-discipline and in love with statistics. Some want to "instant-package" salvation into some handy-dandy system, an emotional experience or "five easy steps." Many, who refuse to make strong, agonizing efforts to do the whole counsel of God, will be disappointed. Do not worry about debating the number of those who will be saved or not saved. Let each Christian concentrate on entering by the "narrow gate." The narrow gate demands stern self-surrender and painful self-sacrifice.

In the mini-parable Jesus tells here He is emphasizing difficulty of entering—a definite manner of entrance—few exercising the persistence to attain. Jesus knows nothing of "many" ways of salvation. He does *not* mean here to imply that many would be *seeking* to enter. His parable implies that many will shun the "narrowness" of the gate in this life and then cry out for access at judgment (cf. Lk. 16:19-31). Those who faithfully seek the narrow door shall find it.

Once the door is "shut" the opportunity to enter is over. Once death to this life comes or the final judgment (whichever is first), there is no more opportunity for salvation (cf. Heb. 9:27; Lk. 16:26). Jesus paints a terrifying picture here of those who find themselves *too late* to get in the door to salvation. It was there all their earthly lives to enter, but one day it will be closed *forever!* The people Jesus portrays here are those who socialized, played at religion, even condescended to associate with Christ on a non-surrendering basis. They recalled their opportunities. They remembered

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they had been invited by Him to follow Him and they had even been in His company while He was here in the flesh. But religious environment does not save—character does (cf. Lk. 11:27-28). Not even the power to work miracles saves (Mt. 7:23). Many today think they would have a better relationship with Christ if only they might “eat and drink” in His physical presence. Jesus pronounced those “more blessed” who have “not seen” and yet have believed (Jn. 20:29). The impenitent cities (Capernaum, Chorazin, Bethsaida) all had Jesus teach in their streets but most of their citizens did not enter His kingdom by the narrow door (cf. Lk. 10:13ff.). The greatest suffering of Hell may be the constant memory of lost opportunities (cf. Lk. 16:25—“son, remember . . .”).

13:28-30 Universality: It would be difficult for Jews to repent (change their minds) about the universality of the messianic kingdom. Jesus deals with that here in answer to the question “Will those who are saved be few?” “No,” says Jesus, “many will be saved.” Even those who never had opportunity to eat and drink and hear Jesus teach like Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and all the prophets. They came to God by the “narrow door” of agonizing, struggling, self-sacrificing faith. It is loyalty, faith and repentance that saves. None of these Old Testament saints depended on their own self-righteousness. They depended on God’s mercy and by faith accepted God’s covenant terms. Jesus continues by saying that men will come from “the east and the west, from the north and the south” and enter the kingdom. The kingdom will have as citizens men from every tribe, tongue, people and nation. The prophets of the Jews predicted this universality (especially Isaiah 2:2; 19:16-24; 25:6-12; 60:8-14; 66:18-24; Hosea 1:10-11; Zech. 14:16-21, etc.). However, the Jews, for the most part, refused to interpret their prophets as promising covenant acceptance for the Gentiles.

Jesus says, “Behold!” “Surprise, some are last who will be first and some are first who will be last.” In other words, there are going to be some shocking surprises in the matter of salvation. Those who enter by the narrow door are those the world expects to be lost! God’s judgment of saved and lost is in direct opposition to the world’s! Those the world would consider as prime prospects for salvation (first) will be last; those the world thinks have no chance at all to be saved (last) will be first, (cf. Mt. 19:30; 20:16; Mk. 10:31). Salvation does not depend on erudition, wealth, race, self-justification, or any form of law-keeping. “By the law shall no flesh be justified” (Gal. 2:16). Salvation is by the grace of God, appropriated by faith (Eph. 2).

SECTION 5

Repentance or Doom (13:31-35)

31 At that very hour some Pharisees came, and said to him, “Get away from here, for Herod wants to kill you.” 32 And he said to them,

"Go and tell that fox, 'Behold, I cast out demons and perform cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I finish my course.³³ Nevertheless I must go on my way today and tomorrow and the day following; for it cannot be that a prophet should perish away from Jerusalem.'³⁴ O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, killing the prophets and stoning those who are sent to you! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not!³⁵ Behold, your house is forsaken. And I tell you, you will not see me until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!'"

13:31-33 Denunciation: Herod Antipas was tetrarch of Galilee and Perea. He was the son of Herod the Great by Malthace (a Samaritan woman) one of his father's eight wives. Antipas married the daughter of Aretas who was a Nabatean king. While married to her he seduced and married his half-brother's wife, Herodias, who was also his niece. He was sly, treacherous, weak-willed, insecure, sensual, opportunistic and grovelled before the Caesars for his office. Accused of treason to Caligula by his nephew, Herod Agrippa I, he was deposed about 36 A.D. and spent the remainder of his days in exile. His attitude toward Jesus was one of curiosity (to see miracles, Lk. 23:7-12), yet He was jealous and fearful of Jesus' popularity (Lk. 9:9ff.—see comments there) lest Jesus be a threat to his throne. Jesus would not present Himself before Herod, either by invitation or threat. Jesus never feared Herod, neither his influence (Mk. 8:15) nor his power (Lk. 13:31ff.).

It is interesting to note that the Pharisees, of all people, warned Jesus of Herod's intentions. It is possible that some of the Pharisees (like Nicodemus and perhaps Joseph of Arimathea) were sincerely trying to protect Him. But it is more probable that these Pharisees were hoping to scare Jesus out of Perea (Herod's domain) into Judea or Jerusalem where the Sadducees and Pharisees had control (supervised, of course, by Pontius Pilate). They especially wanted to get Jesus away from the Galilean and Porean multitudes with whom He was still very popular. The Greek word *alopeki* is "she-fox" and some think Jesus intended His reply for Herodias who was the murdering conniver behind most of Herod's orders. She had married Herod because he was ruler of more territory than her former husband and she was power-hungry. Whatever the case, Jesus' reply was that of the sovereign Son of God. His answer to Herod might be paraphrased:

- a. I work miracles; I have divine power; I have more of that to do in Perea. I will leave when I am ready—not before.
- b. My program is definitely set by God. Herod will not be able to thwart it.

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- c. My mission will reach its goal.
- d. I will leave at the exact time that fits My appointed schedule.
- e. I must leave here, and go to Jerusalem (sarcasm) because that is where all prophets are killed. The “holy” city, the messianic city of “peace” and “righteousness” is the murderer of holy men.

“Three days” was merely a proverbial expression for a short time. Jesus remained in Perea longer than three days. He does not go to Judea until He is called there because of the death of Lazarus (cf. Lk. 17:11 with John 11:1-16).

Herod was a moral weakling. He could be manipulated by those who played on his sensual appetites. Occasionally, he regretted his wicked deeds, but he did not repent (change his mind and life). Jesus knew his heart and denounced him for what he was—a cunning, predator-like animal, a fox. Jesus’ refusal to appear before Herod is a classic demonstration of His teaching in the Sermon on the Mount; “Do not give dogs what is holy; and do not throw your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under foot and turn to attack you” (Mt. 7:6).

13:34-35 Desolation: The reminder that He would soon (in about 3 months) be killed in Jerusalem pierces His heart, not for Himself, but for the impenitent people of the city who shall do the deed. God tried desperately to save these people and their city. He sent prophet after prophet to call them away from their own self-righteousness and to repentance, but they killed the prophets. Finally, God sent His Son—now they will kill Him. What more can God do? He will not violate their own freedom to choose. They have chosen not to accept God’s will (cf. Jer. 6:16-19). He must leave them to their own rebellious designs. The Greek word here is *aphietai* meaning “leave in the sense of abandoning, forsaking.” Luke uses the Greek word *eremosis* in 21:20 which means literally, “desert, desolate place, uninhabited place.” A storm of terrible destruction is coming upon this people and their city (cf. Mt. 23:37-39; Lk. 21:20-24; 19:41-44). It was predicted by Daniel that the Jewish nation would, after rejecting its “Anointed One,” bring about its own destruction in conjunction with “the abomination of desolation” (Roman armies) (cf. Dan. 9:24-27).

What did Jesus mean when He said, “... you will not see me until you say, Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord”?

- a. He may have meant that, while these Pharisees were trying to get Him to go to Jerusalem immediately, Jerusalem would not see Him until about 3 months later when the Passover multitudes would shout, “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord” (cf. Mt. 21:9; Mk. 11:9; Lk. 19:38).
- b. He may have meant that Jerusalem did not want Him when He wanted to gather her under His wings, but she would definitely see

Him again when He came in power and judgment with the Roman armies (cf. comments Luke 21:25-32).

- c. He may have meant that although Jerusalem would see Him again in the flesh when she crucified Him, she would not acknowledge Him as who He really is, Lord and God, until she sees Him at His Second Coming when every knee shall bow and every tongue confess Him as Lord (cf. Phil. 2:9-11).

Quite frankly, we do not know which is the correct meaning. We prefer the first one because it fits the context here in Luke most suitably. We also acknowledge that Jesus made exactly the same statement in Matthew 23:37-39 after He had already made His "triumphal entry" into Jerusalem. The third alternative does not appear suitable because at His Second Coming all are not going to say, "Blessed is he who comes . . ." although all will acknowledge who He is.

STUDY STIMULATORS:

1. Do you know people today who think natural disasters or physical diseases signal the victims are worse sinners than others? Will this passage in Luke 13:1-9 help you answer them?
2. If repentance is a continuing thing in a man's relationship to Christ, and is brought about by knowing and doing the revealed will of Christ, how important is Bible study or Sunday School or preaching the word?
3. Are you fulfilling the purpose for which God created you or are you merely "cumbering the ground" like the fruitless fig tree? What did God create you for?
4. Is it really true that doing good to a human being in need should take precedence over religious ceremonies?
5. Is your whole Christian life a "sabbath-kind-of-life"? What needs to be improved?
6. Do you see the church today being the "unpretentious" but "infectious" kingdom Jesus characterized in these parables?
7. Why will there not be "many" who are saved?
8. Do you think Jesus treated Herod correctly?
9. Why did Jesus leave Jerusalem to herself?

Chapter Fourteen (14:1-35)

THE SON OF MAN DEFINING A TRUE DISCIPLE

IDEAS TO INVESTIGATE:

1. What is "dropsy" (14:2)?
2. Where is the "place of honor" at a feast (14:7)?
3. Does all this instruction about feasting apply to the twentieth century?
4. Is it wrong to invite your relatives to dine at your house (14:12)?
5. Is attending the "feast" of the kingdom of God more important than a person's marriage (14:20)?
6. How does one "bear his own cross" (14:27)?
7. Does "renounce all" that you have mean give away all earthly possessions and "renounce" one's family (14:33)?

SECTION 1

Good (14:1-6)

14 One sabbath when he went to dine at the house of a ruler who belonged to the Pharisees, they were watching him.² And behold, there was a man before him who had dropsy.³ And Jesus spoke to the lawyers and Pharisees, saying, "Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath, or not?"⁴ But they were silent. Then he took him and healed him, and let him go.⁵ And he said to them, "Which of you, having a son or an ox that has fallen into a well, will not immediately pull him out on a sabbath day?"⁶ And they could not reply to this.

14:1-2 Cordiality: Apparently Jesus received numerous invitations to dine in the homes of Pharisees. Earlier, in the Later Judean ministry, in the fall of A.D. 29, he was invited to a Pharisee's home for a meal (cf. Lk. 11:37ff.). That invitation was after the Feast of Tabernacles (September) and before the Feast of Dedication (December). This dinner invitation is in the Later Perean ministry, probably in January or February, A.D. 30. Jesus was cordial to all men—even to Pharisees and when invited always accepted and made the most of every situation for God.

A study of Jewish meal customs of the first century furnishes interesting background for this dinner invitation to Jesus. Plutarch, the Greek historian

(46-119 A.D.) wrote: "The Hebrews honor the Sabbath chiefly by inviting each other to drinking and intoxication." Not all Hebrews were this self-indulgent, but many of them were, especially the Pharisees who indulged themselves privately and pretended publicly to be very religious men.

Jews of the first century usually ate only twice daily. The first meal was anytime from early morning to noon, depending on the occupation of the head of the house and the social rank of the family. The evening meal came usually at sunset when the working day had ended and was the principal meal. The Hebrew diet was more varied than one might expect in light of so many dietary laws. Vegetables such as beans, cucumbers, onions, garlic, leeks, lentils (peas), carob pods, wild gourds, squash and others were served. Varieties of fruits, such as grapes, figs, olives, mulberries, pomegranates, oranges, lemons, melons, dates, almonds and walnuts were also common. Bread made from wheat, often leavened (except on Sabbath), was usually eaten warm and served with sour wine or meat gravy. *Kosher* meat for the more affluent tables might be mutton, goat, fish, beef, and sometimes wild game. Milk, cheese, butter and some eggs (fish and locust) were included in some meals.

The rich (Pharisees and others) usually reclined upon dining couches in imitation of Greek and Roman ways of dining. A *triclinium* is a long couch, large enough for three people to recline on as they ate. The "ruler of the feast" in John 2:9 is called in Greek, *architriklinos*, literally, "the ruling triclinium person." Knives, forks and spoons were not used to eat with—knives were used to prepare the meals. Contents of the meat and gravy bowl were taken either with the fingers or placed on a piece of bread (sopped or dipped) and carried to the mouth. The houses of the rich were large and it was customary for the poor and curious to come into the dining room to stand and watch the rich indulge. Pharisees enjoyed such ostentation. There was always a "pecking order" or seating arrangement at formal dinners according to "importance" or "popularity" and "places of honor" were rigidly observed.

The man who invited Jesus to dine was "a ruler who belonged to the Pharisees." Not all the Jewish "rulers" were Pharisees, and not all Pharisees were rulers. This man must have been a member of the local Sanhedrin. Each city and village had its local Sanhedrin or ruling body to settle religious and civil affairs. There was the Great Sanhedrin in Jerusalem (like our Supreme Court and Congress all in one body). There were other Pharisees present at this dinner where Jesus was a guest. The invitation extended to Jesus was *not* out of cordiality or hospitality. They were "watching" Him. The Greek word is *parateroumenoī*. The prepositional prefix, *para*, intensifies the participle, meaning they were "watching intently with a

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sinister motive," or "watching Him like a hawk" hoping to find something in His behavior or teaching by which they might accuse Him as a "law-breaker."

These Pharisees were watching Jesus because they saw a man there with "dropsy" and they knew Jesus' reputation for healing—even on the sabbath. This man was not one of the invited guests, but one of the onlookers. It was a custom of those days to allow the poor and curious to enter the courtyards of the rich and be spectators at formal dinners and feasts. The Greek word *hydropikos* is translated "dropsy" and is related to the Greek word *hydor* which means, "water." Dropsy, in modern medical language called edema, is a condition in which the tissues retain too much fluid. It may be caused by heart disease, kidney disease, or other infections, and may be fatal. In those days it was incurable. The Pharisees saw to it that this afflicted man was placed right in front of Jesus (Gr. *emprosthen*) so He would be forced into some choice. Would He ignore the man? That would contradict His reputation for compassion. Would He heal the man—on the sabbath? That would add to the accusations the Pharisees already had against Him. Perhaps the Pharisees doubted that Jesus could cure the man and they would have evidence once for all that He was an imposter.

14:3-6 Compassion: All their conniving was to no avail. Jesus destroyed any possibility that they could represent Him as a "lawbreaker" or an inconsiderate pretender. He knew exactly what they intended, so He put the onus on them by asking the question, "Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath, or not?" It is always "lawful" to do good on the sabbath (see comments Lk. 13:10-17). The Greek word *exestin* is an impersonal verb meaning, "it is permitted, or, it is possible." As we have pointed out in Luke 13:10-17, even their own traditions permitted care and the practice of medicine on the seriously ill on the sabbath. There is Jewish legend that Hillel (famous rabbi), before he became a rabbi, was found once half-frozen under masses of snow in the lecture room of certain teachers where he had hidden himself to profit by their great wisdom. He had to hide because he had been unable to earn the fee for entrance as a pupil. These teachers found him and rubbed and resuscitated him, even though it was the sabbath day. They are reported to have said that such a dedicated student was one for whose sake it was well worth while to break the sabbath.

His antagonists could not answer the righteousness of the question. They were silent because they knew if they denied the lawfulness of healing on the sabbath they would be exposed for the hypocrites they were and, of course, they did not want to say it was lawful to heal on the sabbath and contradict their own traditions. Jesus took hold of the man (Gr. *epilabomenos*), to demonstrate the power was from Him. After He had healed the man, Jesus dismissed him from the room (Gr. *apelusen*, "loosed him from") to

prevent the Pharisees from persecuting him as they sometimes did to those Jesus healed (cf. Jn. 9:1ff.). Then Jesus exposed their inhumanness with His reminder that when they had a son or an ox fall into a well they would go immediately, even on the sabbath, and pull him out. The ancient manuscripts are about equally divided over which is the proper wording—whether it should be “son” or “ass.” The Alexandrinus, Vaticanus, Bezae and other lesser manuscripts have the Greek *huios* or “son.” The Sinaiticus, Cyrius, Freerianus and others have the Greek *onos* or “ass.” Jesus is demanding that what ever the Pharisees permitted themselves to do on the sabbath for their own benefit, they must ethically and lawfully allow the Son of God to do for the benefit of others!

So here in the midst of the Lord's last three months of evangelism, the Pharisees give Him an opportunity to display unequivocally the way to please God. Jesus exposes the graphic contrast between the hypocrisy and inhumanity of the Pharisees (who considered themselves the only people pleasing to God) and His own compassion and truthfulness. Jesus made so plain the essence of God's will no one could contradict it. The true disciple will follow Jesus' teaching.

SECTION 2

Gracious (14:7-14)

7 Now he told a parable to those who were invited, when he marked how they chose the places of honor, saying to them, ⁸“When you are invited by any one to a marriage feast, do not sit down in a place of honor, lest a more eminent man than you be invited by him; ⁹and he who invited you both will come and say to you, ‘Give place to this man,’ and then you will begin with shame to take the lowest place. ¹⁰But when you are invited, go and sit in the lowest place, so that when your host comes he may say to you, ‘Friend, go up higher’; then you will be honored in the presence of all who sit at table with you. ¹¹For every one who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.”

12 He said also to the man who had invited him, “When you give a dinner or a banquet, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your kinsmen or rich neighbors, lest they also invite you in return, and you be repaid. ¹³But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind, ¹⁴and you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you. You will be repaid at the resurrection of the just.”

14:7-11 Humility: Luke uses the Greek word *epechon* to describe Jesus' observation of the men at this Pharisee's table choosing places of honor. The Greek word means literally, “to hold upon.” The Lord's attention

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was riveted upon the ludicrous scene. They were probably pushing, shoving, elbowing and arguing about places to recline. The Jewish Talmud says that on a couch holding three persons, the middle place is considered the place of greatest honor. The place to the left is next in honor and the place to the right last. The Talmud also records just such an instance of ridiculous behavior. At a banquet of Alexander Jannaeus (Hasmonean king of the Jews 103-76 B.C.) rabbi Simeon ben Shetach, in spite of the presence of some great Persian rulers, had thrust himself between the king and the queen at the dinner table. He was publicly rebuked and shamed. He tried to defend his behavior by quoting the Jewish apocryphal writing, Ecclesiasticus 15:5 which says, "Exalt wisdom, and she . . . shall make thee sit among princes." The audacious, arrogant man who repeatedly and presumptuously puts himself forward ("chooses the place of honor") is always in danger of public humiliation because there is inevitably always someone present more deserving of being honored. And even if the host is not forced to ask the presumptuous man to step down, the guests are almost always aware of the egotist's real position. By contrast the truly humble man, not concerned to "show-off" or greedy for attention, who takes a "lower seat," will usually be asked to "go up higher."

There is a fine line between the proper self-worth and sinful pride. The Greek words translated pride in the New Testament are *hyperephania* and *alazoneia*. *Hyperephania* is literally, "hyper-showing"; it is arrogance, haughtiness, disdain of others, making oneself to be pre-eminent (cf. Mk. 7:22). *Alazoneia* is from *alazon* (a vagabond or wanderer) and came to be used in the sense of braggadocio, boastfulness, and being "puffed up," (cf. James 4:16). Not even disciples of Jesus are immune to the temptation (cf. Lk. 9:46; Mt. 20:20-28; Lk. 22:24-27). Pride is the "snare of the devil" (I Tim. 3:6) and God hates pride (Prov. 8:13). It was the fundamental temptation the devil trapped Eve and Adam with in the Garden of Eden (cf. Gen. 3:5). There are four attitudes that clearly reveal a proud heart: (a) self-sufficiency; (b) self-justification; (c) self-righteousness; (d) self-importance. Pride is put to practice when men measure themselves by those they feel are inferior, in order to justify feelings of superiority (cf. II Cor. 10:12-14). On the other hand, acknowledging that God our Creator has accounted us worth the sacrifice of His Perfect Son, is not pride but the necessary admission that motivates us to enter into His covenant of salvation.

Humility in the scriptures is from the Greek word *tapeinophrosune* and literally means, "lowliness of mind." Humility is based upon:

a. Truth:

1. Creator-creature relationship
2. Kingship and divine Saviorhood of Jesus Christ
3. Revelational nature of the Bible

b. Trust:

1. In the Fatherhood of God
2. In the Substitutionary-atonement of Christ

c. Obedience:

1. Service to others
2. Carrying out God's will

The only sure cure for pride is to compare oneself with God and with His Perfect Son, Jesus Christ, and then to acknowledge the scriptural truth that the kingdom of God is not a society in which there is competition for "position" but a fellowship where "each counts others better than self" (Rom. 12:3, 10), and where everyone has the "mind of Christ" (Phil. 2:5ff.). Real humility is always spontaneous and attractive. It is false humility when we pretend we do not have a capacity that we do have. If you can do something well humility does not require you to pretend that you cannot; it only requires you to remember that you did not create the talents you have yourself, and that therefore, gratitude fits better than pride. Real humility walks the fine line between self-criticism and self-acceptance.

These Pharisees, expositors of God's word, scholars and religious guides, were giving the distinct impression that they considered the end of learning to be self-exaltation. They were showing they believed the purpose of wisdom was to make them superior to all other men. The purpose of learning and scholarship is for service to others. It is in serving others that valuable character is formed—not in self-exaltation. It is in humble service that the true dignity of the human being is manifested. It is in giving of self to the edification of others that a person reflects the glory of God and His Son (cf. Jn. 13:1ff.). When a person humbles himself, God's image is reflected in him and he is exalted. When a person exalts himself, the image of the devil is reflected and he is abased in the evaluation of good and honest men.

Is it possible that such grabbing at false honor could go on among modern-day rabbis and clergymen? When was the last time you heard sermons from the scriptures warning the followers of Jesus about such immodest behavior? How many conventions for preachers and church workers ever seriously consider this? A great deal is preached about sexual sin and about doctrinal error, but Jesus focused His most scathing denunciation on the egotism of the religious leaders of His day!

14:12-14 Hospitality: But Jesus wasn't through with His host. He had another lesson to teach all present at the dinner—the lesson of true hospitality. The true disciple of Jesus does not entertain or feed anyone with a motive that expects repayment. The good man of God is hospitable and charitable without any thought of getting anything out of it. He does his good because someone needs help—because he loves.

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The Greek word for hospitality is *philoxenia*, literally, "love of strangers or aliens." Jesus taught hospitality (cf. Lk. 10:30-37; Mt. 10:11-15; Lk. 10:5-12; Lk. 7:36-50). The N.T. writers exhort Christians to be hospitable (cf. I Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:8; I Pet. 4:9; Heb. 13:2). Philemon and John's epistles enjoin and exhibit hospitality. Jesus said, "When you give a dinner or a banquet, do not invite your friends . . . lest . . ." "Lest" emphasizes danger! There is danger in always giving dinners for friends and relatives! The danger is in asking to your feast someone who can (and will) repay you! The Lord's teaching here is revolutionary in light of modern-day practice! Obviously, Jesus is dealing mainly with motives. One's motive for inviting people to dinner is of supreme importance. This teaching of Jesus strikes hard at all of us. Which of us has ever had a banquet for the poor, maimed, lame and blind? What are our motives for giving dinners—pride? prestige? publicity? manipulation?

Clearly, there is nothing wrong with inviting your relatives or even your rich neighbors to dinner if your motives are pure. Matthew invited his fellow-publicans to dinner (Mt. 9:9-10). But, there are so many people who could use help, if we really followed this teaching we would have little time for feeding those who can take care of themselves. Hospitality and helping the needy will be a crucial issue at the judgment of mankind (cf. Mt. 25:35ff.; Mt. 10:40; Jn. 13:20).

God cares about the poor. He enjoins us to care about them (Ex. 22:25-27; 23:11; Lev. 19:9-15; 25:6-30; 25:39-42; 39:47-54; Deut. 14:28-29; 15:12-13; 16:11-14; 24:10-22; 26:12-13; Ruth 2:1-7; Neh. 8:10; Psa. 9:18; 12:5). The prophets championed the poor because rich people exploited them (Isa. 1:23; 10:1-2; Ezek. 34; Amos 2:6; 5:7; 8:6; Micah 2:1-2; Hab. 3:14; Mal. 3:5). Jesus always helped the poor when He had the opportunity to do so. The early church was made up of mostly poor people and slaves (cf. I Cor. 1:26-29; II Cor. 8:2-15; James 1:9-11; 2:1-13; 5:1-6). Paul and Barnabas were asked to remember the poor (Gal. 2:10). Opportunities are never lacking to give aid to the poor for they are always in the world (cf. Deut. 15:4-11; Jn. 12:8). The question is, shall those who have plenty avail themselves of these opportunities to help. Helping the poor will hardly ever be rewarded in this life. Jesus promises, however, that in the resurrection of the just, those who have shown compassion and mercy will be rewarded by the One who is able to give infinite compassion and mercy. It sounds illogical, and it is contrary to the world's values, but it is true that it is more blessed to give than to receive (Acts 20:35). It is only by faith that the follower of Jesus can put these admonitions into practice in his daily life. The world will say, if you want to get ahead, entertain the rich and powerful. And it even appears, in this life, those who do so "get ahead." But the follower of Jesus has his hope in the next world.

SECTION 3

Grateful (14:15-24)

15 When one of those who sat at table with him heard this, he said to him, "Blessed is he who shall eat bread in the kingdom of God!"
16 But he said to him, "A man once gave a great banquet, and invited many;
17 and at the time for the banquet he sent his servant to say to those who had been invited, 'Come; for all is now ready.'
18 But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said to him, 'I have bought a field, and I must go out and see it; I pray you, have me excused.'
19 And another said, 'I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to examine them; I pray you, have me excused.'
20 And another said, 'I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.'
21 So the servant came and reported this to his master. Then the householder in anger said to his servant, 'Go out quickly to the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in the poor and maimed and blind and lame.'
22 And the servant said, 'Sir, what you commanded has been done, and still there is room.'
23 And the master said to the servant, 'Go out to the highways and hedges, and compel people to come in, that my house may be filled.
24 For I tell you, none of those men who were invited shall taste my banquet.'"

14:15-20 Indifference: Jesus had spoken about the ideal banquet situation where goodness, helpfulness, humility and hospitality are sincere. It was apparent that Jesus was talking about the messianic age. Describing the kingdom of God as a "banquet" was a favorite expression of the Old Testament prophets (cf. Isa. 25:6-12; 65:13-16, etc.). Jewish apocryphal writings also picture the messianic age in this manner. One of the dinner guests was moved to exclaim, "Blessed is he who shall eat bread in the kingdom of God!"

The guest had the right subject. Jesus was indeed talking about the kingdom of God—the messianic age. Nothing short of the rule of God in the hearts of men could produce such an ideal society. The guest at the Pharisee's table was excited about the beauty of such an ideal. Jesus pictured a social order where there was no self-serving pride; a society where humility was sincere and there was no competition or exploitation of one another for positions of honor. He talked about true hospitality where love and care is given to the needy with no thought of payment or reward. Such a society is the kingdom of God—the church (cf. Acts 2:43-47; 4:32-37; 6:1-6, etc.).

At first glance it would appear that Jesus tried to stifle the enthusiasm of the excited guest. Jesus told His parable of the indifferent guests directly to the man who had expressed such anticipation of the kingdom of God. The man who gave the great banquet in the parable is God the Father and

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Christ the Son. The servant sent to invite guests is probably John the Baptist. The guests are the Jews. This parable had primary reference to the Jewish rejection of the Messiah and His kingdom. Its principle is relevant for all ages.

By this parable Jesus says, in effect, "Yes, you all admire the ideal but you are not prepared to act upon it. You think it is grand but you are too occupied with yourselves to take it seriously." The parable illustrates:

- a. the kingdom of God is a kingdom of grace—the banquet table is provided by Him.
- b. the privilege to participate is by answering the invitation of the king in the precise manner he has chosen to extend it.
- c. exclusion is due to a freely chosen refusal to answer the invitation—not to the king's discrimination.
- d. men choose to refuse because they value their own interests more precious than the king's banquet.

The guests of the parable were "one" (Gr. *mias*) in excusing themselves from the man's feast. The inference is that there was a united conspiracy to refuse to attend. The Greek word *paraiteisthai* means literally, "beg off." They had no valid reasons they could not attend, they simply tried to find some "excuse" by which they might justify themselves for refusing to attend.

The first guest's excuse was that he had just bought a field and must go see it. What business man would buy a field *before* seeing it? This man was either a liar or a fool! Furthermore, how could it be more important to go and look at a piece of ground than it could be to attend a great man's banquet? It was a deliberate choice of interest in possessions over gratitude to one's benefactor. The rich young ruler (Lk. 18:18ff.) refused the invitation of King Jesus because he had much riches. The second guest begged off saying he had just purchased five yoke (teams) of oxen and he had to test (Gr. *dokimasai*, "examine") them. Imagine a man buying oxen he has not tested or examined! Another man who was either a fool or a liar. The first man said, "I must go . . ." the second man said, "I am going . . ." There is the element of insolence in the second man's reply to the invitation. Work was more important to the second man than the feast. Many today consider the work they do more important than feasting on the Bread of Life. The third guest sent his reply back, "I have married a wife, and I cannot come." Someone has noted that this excuse has the least validity of all because wives like to go to social affairs! Surely the householder would have known of the recent marriage and have graciously invited the wife also. It is certainly true that the kingdom of God demands first loyalty over domestic ties (cf. Mt. 10:34-39).

Excuses, not reasons, are what these guests gave. Possessions, vocations and domestic ties are not valid reasons for refusing the invitation to participate in joyous feast of the Lord. In fact, there is no valid reason at all for refusing the invitation of God.

"Yes," Jesus said to the excited man, "you admire the ideal society I have been preaching and inviting you to, but you won't answer the invitation and your excuses are foolish, impertinent, rude and unacceptable."

14:21-24 Innovation: When the servant reported to his master the three refusals the master was very angry (Gr. *orgistheis*, the word from which we have the English word, *orgasm*). The host had gone to great expense to provide this feast (God gave His priceless Son). Those first invited (the Jewish rulers and rich men) scorned the invitation and sold their birthright for a "mess of pottage." The host sent his servant out to the highways and hedges (uttermost parts of the world) to "compel" the poor, maimed, blind and lame (spiritually) to come (probably the Gentiles). This host wants to be a benefactor to all who will allow him to do so.

The Greek word *anagkason* is from a root word which means "necessity." It most often means "to constrain by persuasion," (cf. Mt. 14:22; Mk. 6:45; Acts 28:19). Plummer insists the word could only mean "persuasion" in this instance since "A single servant could not use force." Those who were first invited and refused were not dragged in which would have been the case had the host meant to compel attendance by force. Christ authorizes no use of force or deceit in inviting people to His feast. Persuasion (II Cor. 5:11), the compelling power of truth, is the only valid means of inviting people to God's great spiritual feast. The Christian life is a spiritual "feast" (cf. Rom. 14:17; I Cor. 5:6-8; 10:1-5; Heb. 12:22-23; Mt. 5:6; etc.). The invitation to this spiritual feast may be accepted by anyone who is thirsty and hungry for what God has to offer. It may also be rejected. Those who refuse will never taste (experience) what God has prepared (peace, joy, holiness, forgiveness, life).

Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles (cf. Acts 13:44-52), gives the theological amplification of this parable in his great epistle to the Romans (chapters 9, 10 and 11). There he explains that the rejection of the gospel invitation by the Jews brought about the innovation of the Gentiles into God's covenant. Paul warns the Gentiles (in Romans), to whom God turned with His invitation, they must not become scornful of it or they too will be excluded.

Jesus told another parable, in the last week of His ministry, similar to this one (cf. Mt. 22:1-14). That one He concluded by saying, "For many are called but few are chosen." Many are invited, but few accept. Few are chosen because only a few are really hungry for spiritual food and are grateful enough to make the effort necessary to accept the invitation.

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SECTION 4.

Grounded (14:25-35)

25 Now great multitudes accompanied him; and he turned and said to them,²⁶ "If any one comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple." ²⁷ Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me, cannot be my disciple. ²⁸ For which of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it? ²⁹ Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation, and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him,³⁰ saying, 'This man began to build, and was not able to finish.' ³¹ Or what king, going to encounter another king in war, will not sit down first and take counsel whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand? ³² And if not, while the other is yet a great way off, he sends an embassy and asks terms of peace. ³³ So therefore, whoever of you does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple.

34 "Salt is good; but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? ³⁵ It is fit neither for the land nor for the dunghill; men throw it away. He who has ears to hear, let him hear."

14:25-33 Farsighted: True discipleship to Jesus must be based upon or grounded in reasoned commitment, not on superficial emotionalism. The "Jesus movement" was gaining a superficial momentum toward that "triumphal entry" into Jerusalem some three months hence. As He preached throughout Perea, Christ saw through the facade of popularity and gave this stern, uncompromising lecture, illustrating that there is no place for unreasoning, sentimental enthusiasm in His followers. This admonition of the Lord is doubly pertinent for today's would-be follower of Jesus! There is a vast difference between today's religious sentimentality and the real discipleship outlined in the New Testament.

The verb *strapheis* (2nd aorist participle) indicates Jesus turned *suddenly*, and threw into their ears the gauntlet of total commitment. Looking out over that sea of faces, Jesus could find very few whose minds and lives were committed to Him. It was an impulsive crowd spread around Him—they were following on feelings. He wanted thinking, intelligent, logical followers; He wanted farsighted, judicious, sober soldiers in His army, so He used clear, candid language to "sift" the multitudes and blow the "chaff" away.

No earthly love must ever come into competition with love for Christ. Entire self-renunciation is the cost of real discipleship. The Greek word *misei* ("hate") carries the idea of *choice* or *priority*. A man must choose

Christ over father, mother, wife, children, brethren and self. If Christ is not absolutely *first* in a person's life, he is no disciple (cf. Mt. 10:34-39). To the worldly mentality, these are shocking and severe words. To be a disciple of Jesus men must prepare themselves to choose Him over every one of life's dearest relationships! The world does not think like this. When a choice must be made between the church and one's family, most people choose family. The Bible strongly advocates love of family so the fact that Christ insists He must have first priority emphasizes the seriousness of this injunction. The terms of Christian discipleship are awesome. There can be no higher loyalty than that which Jesus requires. This statement of Jesus strikes at the very core of the excuse of the man who said, "I have married a wife . . ." If ever there is a conflict between the highest and dearest earthly love then we must deny that and follow Him.

Jesus associated discipleship with cross-bearing. The cross was the repulsive, terrifying, certain instrument of execution in the Roman world. When a person was given a cross to bear, it was certain he was on his way to death—excruciatingly painful death. Christian discipleship means certain death to ego-centricity. It means emptying one's life of everything that is selfish. It means choosing death to self and desiring Christ's life over ours (cf. Gal. 2:20-21; II Cor. 5:14-21; Phil. 3:4-11). Taking up the cross means total commitment. It is not easy to be a Christian—Jesus never promised it would be. It involves pain, struggle, surrender and death to self-rule. It is not just suffering—many people suffer and glorify themselves in it. Bearing the cross is not just giving up bad habits—it is sacrifice of self, surrender of all supposed rights to determine what one shall think and do. This was exemplified ultimately by Jesus (Phil. 2:5-11; Jn. 12:20-33).

If Christian discipleship involves the ultimate cost (death to self) then it is imperative that it not be entered into unadvisedly, hastily or flippantly. Christian discipleship involves decisions for eternity and demands, therefore, reasonableness, honesty, humility and faith. Jesus illustrates this with two short parables. He is requiring would-be disciples to count the cost by illustrating the momentous calling of discipleship. He is building an eternal temple (the church) and fighting a life-and-death battle against the strongest of foes. Christian discipleship is no place for the half-hearted. In recruiting, Jesus seeks the few good men. He is far too wise to pride Himself in mere numbers of converts. He is more concerned with quality than quantity. He always loathed the counterfeit, the double-minded and the superficial. Jesus always accentuated the severity and sacrifice of discipleship:

- a. "Foxes have holes . . . but the Son of man has nowhere . . ." (Mt. 8:20; Lk. 9:58)
- b. "Are you able to drink the cup . . .?" (Mt. 20:22)

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- c. "Go sell all that you have . . ." (Mt. 19:16-22; Mk. 10:17-22; Lk. 18:18-23).

Some tend to cover up the severity of discipleship to Christ. They make out like the Christian life is easy. They try to play down everything unpleasant about it. They do deceitful and indulgent things to lure prospects. Jesus, on the other hand, went out of His way to *sift* disciples! He was brutally frank and searching in challenging would-be followers. Is it not self-defeating to continually emphasize the difficulties of following the Lord? Should we simply say nothing about the "strait and narrow" way so we may reach more? Would it not be better to get as many enlisted as possible without worrying about their commitment? Not if we are to take Jesus as our guide. It is better never to enlist a single disciple than to enlist a half-hearted one! Jesus will not have reckless, carefree, spur-of-the-moment enlistments. Christ *discouraged* half-hearted kingdom enlistments. He was *negative* about superficiality. Lukewarmness makes Christ vomit! (Rev. 3:16).

The illustration of the man desiring to build a tower would be a familiar figure for that day. The Herod family was noted for its penchant for erecting magnificent public and private buildings. Many men probably tried to imitate them and found they did not have the will nor the funds to finish. There were probably scores of unfinished "towers" scattered throughout the land. These unfinished buildings served only as monuments to the hasty, near-sighted, half-hearted efforts of foolish and emotional men.

The picture of the wise king who takes counsel of his strength before he goes to battle is also taken from the history of the times. Herod Antipas' illicit relations with Herodias caused his first wife, the daughter of Aretas, to divorce him. Aretas, a powerful Arabian king, declared war on Herod and the result was disaster for Herod. Josephus declares that Herod's entry into this war was the commencement of all his subsequent misfortunes. Any commander of troops would be the laughingstock of all his contemporaries if he entered into a battle carelessly, flippantly and expecting to retreat.

Christ wants no shallow, half-hearted builders in His kingdom leaving "unfinished towers" for the world to mock. No one has any business in His army without the will to fight and finish. The Lord's terms for discipleship are severe:

1. He is engaged in building and fighting.
2. He wants followers who will stand by Him until He is done.
3. He wants quality more than quantity.
4. Discipleship must not be undertaken in a moment of emotional sentimentality or rashly. If it is, there will be disaster.
5. No would-be follower of Jesus should "put his hand to the plow" if he is planning to look back (cf. Lk. 9:62; II Pet. 2:21-22).
6. The Christian must fight, but not as "one that beateth the air . . ." (I Cor. 9:26).

7. The Christian must "run with perseverance the race that is set before him . . ." (Heb. 12:1).

Jesus said, "So, therefore, whoever of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple." One ancient Christian wrote, "We must live in this world as though the soul was already in heaven and the body mouldering in the grave" (St. Francis de Sales). To renounce what we have does not mean to indiscriminately throw away those things over which God has placed us as stewards. It means that not one of those things or all those things put together are to have first priority in our lives. These "things" include families and friends as well as properties. Any person not willing to pay that price cannot be Christ's disciple.

14:34-35 Functional: The true disciple of Jesus is not merely a follower—he is a functioning follower. Salt that does not function is worthless. Salt is absolutely essential to life. Medical science knows that a patient continually given liquids without salt-content soon has all the salt flushed out of his body and is in danger of death by water-poisoning! Salt seasons and preserves. Disciples who have no "tang" and no "bite" and who give the world no preserving functions are worthless. What good is a mountain of granules if they are saltless? What good is a mountain of disciples if they do not function? No wonder Jesus sought quality rather than quantity. True evangelism sifts out the chaff from the wheat! It is the very nature of the gospel to sift, so do not be discouraged when few decide to enlist. You must have willing ears to hear this.

STUDY STIMULATORS:

1. Jesus accepted an invitation to dine in a Pharisee's house—would you be sociable to a hypocrite? What if one tried to trap you into a religious mistake?
2. If it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath, is it all right to work on Sunday if your job demands it?
3. If there is an opportunity to help a neighbor who is in true need could one miss church services to help?
4. Do you see any room for growth in the area of humility among Christian leaders today? Can you name some leaders who are humble?
5. Is pride really dangerous?
6. When was the last time you gave a dinner and invited the poor, lame, blind and maimed?
7. Have you ever heard excuses similar to those of the guests invited to the great feast? What were your answers to the excuses?
8. If many are invited to the feast of God, why are only a few chosen?
9. Do you know any "builders" who have left "unfinished towers"?
10. Why doesn't the church spend more time emphasizing the cost of discipleship?

CONDUCT WORTHY OF THE GOSPEL

(Philippians 1:27-30)

By Paul T. Butler — OBC Chapel, 10-23-80

INTRODUCTION

I. THE PHILIPPIAN CHRISTIANS

- A. Lived in a city that had an illustrious history and a great heritage of citizenship—first in the Greek empire and later in the Roman empire.
 - 1. About 100 years previous to Paul's letter, Mark Antony and Octavian (Augustus) fought for control of the Rome empire there.
 - 2. Philippi had been given Roman citizenship and was proud of it.
 - 3. Roman colonies were little bits of Rome planted throughout the world. In Roman colonies the Roman citizens never forgot that they were Romans. They spoke the Latin language, wore the Latin dress, called their magistrates by the Latin names, insisted on being stubbornly Roman, however for they might be from Rome. . . . Barclay
 - 4. Tenney states that many retired Roman army officers lived in Philippi.
 - 5. There was a school of medicine there. Many think Luke was a native of Philippi. There seems to be a touch of native pride when Luke calls Philippi "a city of Macedonia, the first of the district" (Acts 16:12).
 - 6. They knew about the idea of pride in citizenship.
- B. Were members of the *first* European church Paul had founded.
 - 1. This church had to endure persecution from the very beginning.
 - 2. Paul and the Christians there were accused of subversive actions.
 - 3. They were attacked by a mob, ordered to be beaten with many blows after which they were imprisoned and placed in stocks.
 - 4. It was here Paul insisted on his rights as a Roman citizen and made the magistrates who imprisoned him illegally come and release him and apologize.
 - 5. There was a very intimate relationship built up between Paul and this congregation of believers.
They supported his work financially and in prayer, often.

II. LET YOUR MANNER OF LIFE. . .

- A. The Greek word translated "conduct" or "manner of life" or "conversation" is *polietuesthe*.
 - 1. It is a unique use of the word for Paul. He usually exhorts Christians to "walk" worthily and uses the Greek word *peripatein* which means "to walk about."
 - 2. *Polietuesthe* is the same word from which we get the English words, politicize, metropolis. It means "to be a citizen."

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3. This terminology would ring a bell with the Philippians.
 4. Paul wants them and us to understand that Christians are citizens of a heavenly kingdom—the kingdom of God.
 5. Sometimes Christians get the feeling of being disfranchised. They cannot feel at home in this world—everything they think is opposed to it, nothing in it satisfies them, they know it is going to be destroyed. **BUT THEY MUST REMEMBER THEY ARE "CITIZENS" THEY DO HAVE A CITIZENSHIP . . . THEY DO HAVE A KING.**
- B. The Greek verb is in the imperative—it is a command from Paul.
1. Conduct yourself!
 2. It will not happen automatically. It takes determination, decision, and action.
 3. It is something the Christian has to consciously do.
 4. It ought to be passionate, like patriotism. Patriotism is not automatic. It is not something one just talks about—it is something demonstrated—something done.

III. BE WORTHY. . .

- A. The Greek word is *axios*.
- B. It is the word from which we get the English word, *axiom*, *axiology*.
- C. It means literally, "value, acceptable, a standard of values."
- D. That which the Christian, the citizen of the kingdom of God, is to walk worthy of is THE GOSPEL.
 1. The gospel is a heritage. It is not a religion—it is not something we attach to our worldly lives.
 2. The gospel is a life—it is a citizenship. We *belong* to it.
 3. The Pioneer of our faith, Jesus, came to earth as the Perfect Man and struggled, fought the enemy, gave Himself up to humiliation and death, but victoriously won for us the New Beulah Land. **THIS IS OUR HERITAGE . . . struggle, fight, self-sacrifice and victory.**
- E. Being worthy means being loyal; it means being a person of integrity, a person of conviction. It means one's conduct measures up to this heritage of the gospel.

The classic illustration of this for me is the military service. There is a great pride (or was, anyway) among America's military men in their calling. This is true of both officers and enlisted men. The oldest of the military academies, West Point and Annapolis, have tried and true traditions and codes of honor by which all cadets conduct themselves.

Those codes of honor have their power, however, in the great heritage of the academies which have produced men who have struggled, fought, died and won victories for the principles of human freedom and dignity.

I'll never forget the pride that swelled up in me as I put on my first set of dress blues in the Navy and marched to some of the stirring John Philip

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Sousa's marches. I thought about the Yorktown, the Enterprise, Halsey, Nimitz. I was willing to give my life in that uniform, for that flag.

I challenge you this morning, that we must have an even more intense and passionate patriotism for the heritage of the Gospel. Let loyalty to your Christian citizenship swell up in you here and now and regret that you have but one life to give to Christ. Remember John the Baptist, Peter the fisherman, Paul the tentmaker; remember Gethsemane, remember Calvary, remember the empty tomb; remember Jesus!

Our text will tell us how to conduct ourselves worthy of the gospel because patriotism is something *you* do, something *I* do.

DISCUSSION

I. STAND FIRM

- A. The Greek word is *stekete*. It is present and imperative. It means to be immovable.
- B. Christians will not be moved from their citizenship in the Kingdom of God by anything, nor anyone.
 - 1. They will not be moved by circumstances.
 - 2. They will not be moved by fads or fashions or social pressures.
 - 3. They will not be moved by feelings or fleshly urges and desires.
 - 4. They will not be swayed by expediency, ease or comfort.
 - 5. They will not be moved by persecution, ridicule or slander.
- C. This does *not* mean the Christian will not grow, that he stays on one level of spiritual development all his life.
 - 1. It means he takes an immovable, unflinching, absolute stand *for* truth and goodness.
 - 2. Wherever he finds truth and goodness he appropriates it and makes it his—he stands for it.
 - 3. Wherever he finds evil, falsehood and wrong, he stands against it.

The early 1940's were the darkest days the citizens of England would ever know. Hitler controlled all of Europe from the borders of Russia to the coast of France. He was sending his V2 rockets (buzz-bombs) indiscriminately into English cities, killing hundreds. Britain's army had suffered the decimating defeat at Dunkirk. There was rumor that the powerful and ruthless German armies were poised to invade England.

Winston Churchill rallied his people: "We shall go on to the end . . . we shall defend our Island whatever the cost may be, we shall fight on the landing grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets, we shall fight in the hills; we shall never surrender. . . .

Long dark months of trials and tribulations lie before us. Not only great dangers, but many more misfortunes, many shortcomings, many mistakes, many disappointments will surely be our lot. Death and sorrow will be the companions of our journey; hardship our garment; constancy and valor

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our only shield. We must be united, we must be *undaunted*, we must be *inflexible*. . . ."

- D. The trouble with many of you—and you—I'm talking about you here, in this building, on this campus—IS THAT YOU HAVE NEVER TAKEN A STAND, INFLEXIBLY, FOR THE GOSPEL.
 - 1. You look around you and it looks like everybody else is indulging themselves in worldliness and you don't have the grit and courage to swim against the stream—to brace yourselves against the winds of fad and fashion.
 - 2. It is easier, more comfortable, more popular to vacillate . . . to drift with the majority.
- E. Why would you let someone you care for very much talk you into taking liberties with your body when you know it is wrong?
 - Why would you let a "buddy" or "friend" talk you into destroying school property (really God's property) by senseless pranks, when you know it is wrong?
 - Why would you skip the chapel worship service or sleep in on Sunday morning, or waste money on trivialities and not pay your school debt?

WHY? BECAUSE YOU HAVE NOT TAKEN AN INFLEXIBLE, UNBENDING, UNYIELDING STAND FOR THE TRUTH...FOR WHAT IS RIGHT...FOR THE GOSPEL!

- F. And why haven't we taken an unyielding stand for what is right? BECAUSE WE VALUE POPULARITY OR OUR OWN COMFORT MORE WORTHY THAN OUR SPIRITUAL HERITAGE . . . OUR HEAVENLY CITIZENSHIP.

Some of you have been lulled into complacency thinking that because you came from a Christian family and are now in Bible College your being a Christian is inevitable. DON'T BELIEVE IT!

YOU MUST TAKE A STAND ALL BY YOURSELF. IT IS YOUR FIGHT, YOUR STRUGGLE, YOUR PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY.

Being a Christian doesn't just happen to you.

Albert Barnes (of Barnes Commentaries) wrote: "A man who has been redeemed by the Blood of the Son of God should be pure. He who is attended by celestial beings, and is soon—he knows not how soon—to be translated into Heaven, should be holy. Are angels my attendants? Then I should walk worthy of my companions. Am I soon to go and dwell with angels? Then I should be pure. Are these feet soon to tread the courts of Heaven? Is my tongue soon to unite with holy beings in praising God? Are these eyes soon to look on the throne of eternal glory, and the ascended Redeemer? Then these feet and eyes and lips should be pure and holy, and I should be dead to the world and live for Heaven."

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It is said that when Napoleon's army was invading Russia his soldiers came to a village from which all the inhabitants had fled except one man. He was a Russian peasant, a woodsman, and still carried his ax in his leather belt. When the French captain saw him he ordered that he be shot immediately. The French soldiers leveled their guns at his head but he did not flinch. The captain was frustrated by this old man's courage.

Telling his soldiers to lower their guns, he said, "We will spare his life, but we will put a mark on him—we will brand him." So his soldiers brought a branding iron, got it red hot, and placed it on his hand. The man saw and felt his own flesh burn, but still he did not flinch. When the branding iron was removed the peasant saw the letter "N" branded on his palm. "What is that?" he asked. "This is the letter 'N' and it stands for Napoleon; you belong to Napoleon now," replied the captain.

For a moment the old man did not know what to do or say. His pain was intense, but his loyalty and patriotism was even more passionate, so he placed his burned hand on something solid, and as the soldiers were laughing and jeering at him, he took his ax from his belt with his other hand and brought it swiftly and forcefully down and severed his branded hand at the wrist.

"There," he said to the soldiers, "the hand may belong to Napoleon, but I am a Russian." "If I must die, I will die a Russian."

NOW THAT IS PRETTY SEVERE, YOU SAY. THAT'S A GOOD ILLUSTRATION, BUT WOULD JESUS ASK US TO DO ANYTHING LIKE THAT?

"If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and throw it away. . . . And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away; it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body go into hell" (Mt. 5:29-30). WHO DO YOU THINK SAID THAT? TO WHOM DID HE SAY IT?

JESUS IS SERIOUS ABOUT THIS MATTER OF TAKING A STAND . . . INFLEXIBLE, UNYIELDING STAND.

Paul wrote to the Christians at Colossae that they were reconciled to God by Christ's death, "provided they continued in the faith, *stable* and *steadfast*, not shifting from the hope of the gospel which they had heard . . ." (Col. 1:22-23).

STAND . . . STAND FOR THE GOSPEL . . . DON'T BEND, DON'T YIELD, DON'T BE MOVED. DO IT TODAY! DO IT EVERY DAY! IT MUST BE DONE EVERY DAY. THERE ARE NO VACATIONS FROM STANDING . . . NO "R & R" . . . IT DOESN'T GET EASIER AS YOU GET OLDER! NOW IS THE TIME TO SAY, "I AM DETERMINED, I'VE MADE UP MY MIND. . . ." EVERY TIME YOU HEDGE, EVERY TIME YOU COMPROMISE, EVERY TIME YOU BEND IT BECOMES EASIER TO DO SO! STABILITY AND STEADFASTNESS ARE THE MARKS OF TRUE SPIRITUALITY!

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II. STRIVING SIDE BY SIDE

A. The Greek word is *sunathlountes*. From it we get the English word, *athletics*, *athlete*. It was used of those who contended in the Greek olympic games.

B. Striving in athletic contests demands:

1. Self discipline, forcing oneself to give up any hindrance to the contest.
2. Training, practice, repetition, until excellence is achieved (which is never).
3. Expending energy, working, sweating.
4. Concentration of the mind, thinking, alertness.
5. The will to win.

C. You all know that. We don't really have trouble around here getting people to play games—to strive in contests of physical prowess; they run, jump, kick, tackle, throw things, hit things, shoot things, yell, shout and scream.

THEY DO IT IN AN ORGANIZED WAY, UNORGANIZED WAYS AND AND UNGODLY WAYS.

THEY DO IT FOR CLOTH LETTERS, METAL TROPHIES, AND THE UNGODLY ATHLETICS OR ANTICS ARE ENGAGED IN FOR THE FALSE JOY OF SELF-INDULGENCE AND REBELLION.

D. Paul wanted the Christians at Philippi to strive together for their spiritual prize, their spiritual heritage with the same intensity athletes strive for the glory of their country in the Olympics, or for the glory of their college alma mater.

1. That is what Christ wants for you here too.
2. When you are assigned a research paper, do you strive or sluff-off? Do you force yourselves to do hours of research in the library, to write and rewrite until excellence is achieved, concentrate, sweat, think, work?

WHY NOT? YOU DO WHEN YOU PLAY BALL, WHEN YOU ROUGH-HOUSE WHERE YOU SHOULDN'T!

3. When someone asks you to help at missions emphasis, or ambassadors or survey calling or rest-home visiting, do you force yourself, give up comforts, work, run, jump, yell and shout? WHY NOT?

JUST HOW MUCH IS THE GOSPEL WORTH TO YOU? HOW MUCH DOES IT MEAN TO YOU TO STRIVE FOR YOUR HEAVENLY COUNTRY. . . . TO WIN FOR YOUR KING?

E. Paul probably meant striving to face the enemies of the Philippians who were without.

1. But the enemy (the devil) without has a willing tool that is within us, SELF.

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2. We've got to strive with the enemy within us mightily—SELF MUST BE FOUGHT, SELF MUST BE BROUGHT UNDER THE SOVEREIGNTY OF CHRIST'S SPIRIT.
3. Have you ever been to boot-camp in the Marines or the Navy? A lot of you need it! Talk about striving, side by side. Reville at 5:30 a.m.; each person has 5 minutes to shower shave and get dressed; march in formation to breakfast; return to the barracks in formation; 5 minutes to get inside, get your pack and piece and fall out in formation; then it is close-order drill, rifle range, obstacle course, close-order drill, etc., etc. until you fall exhausted in your bunk and lights out at 10.

Why such agony, such torture, such striving? Because SELF must be whipped, self-control is an absolute must. Because when a marine is on the front lines, facing the enemy without, there is no way he can win if he has not striven with and conquered the enemy within!

F. The Christian life and the Christian ministry is no pleasure cruise. We are not here sailing along on the Love Boat—this is not Fantasy Island.

1. There is no place in the Christian struggle for the flippant and the blasé!
2. There was nothing blasé about Paul's struggle!
3. Listen to this:
 - a. 5 times 40 lashes
 - b. 3 times beaten with rods
 - c. once stoned
 - d. 3 times shipwrecked; a night and a day adrift at sea
 - e. danger from rivers, danger from robbers, danger from his own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brethren
 - f. in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night
 - g. in hunger and thirst, often without food
 - h. in cold and exposure
 - i. daily pressure and anxiety for all the churches

PAUL HAD NO OCCASION TO BE BLASE . . . HE WAS CONSTANTLY STRIVING WITH THE ENEMY WITHIN . . . He fought and fought, conquered, and then strained more, Phil. 3:7-16.

- G. What is your citizenship in the kingdom of God worth? Have you any sense of honor about being called into the army of Christ?
1. Is it worth striving against the profane, irreligious and immoral worldliness of a brother?
 2. Is it worth going against a father when he is wrong?
 3. Is it worth having to flee from your home?
 4. Is it worth suffering exploitation and injustice and ridicule?

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5. Is it worth working hard and honestly for?
6. Is it worth being a "pilgrim" in this world?
7. Is it worth going to a foreign country and dying there?

THAT IS WHAT IT WAS WORTH TO JACOB. God said: "Your name shall no more be called Jacob, but Israel (prince of God) for you have striven with God and with men, and have prevailed" (Gen. 32:28).

WE HAVE TOO MANY DON QUIXOTES IN THE KINGDOM, PLAY-PRETENDING, JOUSTING WITH WINDMILLS. They never get down to the hard realities of everyday striving with the real battles of lust, dishonesty, laziness, rebelliousness, greed, envy. They're out knocking down the imaginary enemies.

- H. Who are we to think we can enter into that rest without striving when it was our Master who, for the joy that was set before Him, endured the cross, who with loud crying and tears experienced obedience through the things He suffered. Nothing blasé about Gethsemane!

This same Paul, in prison later (after this), facing the end of his race, wrote to his young Timothy, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved his appearing . . ." (II Tim. 4:6ff.).

SO I SAY TO YOU THIS MORNING, STRIVE, STRIVE WITH YOURSELF AND BRING SELF INTO SUBJECTION TO THE SPIRIT AND WORD OF CHRIST . . . STRIVE SIDE BY SIDE AGAINST THE ENEMY, THE DEVIL AND HIS TOOLS . . . AND WHEN YOUR RACE IS OVER, YOU TOO WILL RECEIVE YOUR CROWN!

III. NOT FRIGHTENED IN ANYTHING BY YOUR OPPONENTS

- A. The enemy cannot shame you or enslave you, or make you less than you are.

1. You are the citizen of an unshakable kingdom.

Babylon fell, the glory of Greece is gone, Rome remains only in legend and crumbling ruins. Someday the glory that is America will disappear.

BUT NOT SO WITH YOUR KINGDOM, YOUR CITIZENSHIP . . . IT IS FOREVER YOUR KING CONQUERED DEATH, HERE, IN HISTORY, TO PROVE IT!

2. You are exalted to joint-heirship with Christ. You are royalty. No matter that now you must wear the tatters and rags of finite flesh—some day you shall wear the star-studded, celestial robes fitted for you from the heavenly closets!
3. One of the great temptations that has caused so much desertion among the ranks of God's soldiers (ministers of the gospel) today is male mid-life crisis.

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- a. There is an interesting parallel to this in a story I once read in *Readers Digest*, August 1978, "Portrait of a Traitor."
 - b. Brig. Gen. Jean-Louis Jeanmaire, a man who had outwardly personified the honor of Switzerland and the devotion of its citizen army, was arrested and discovered to be the worst traitor in the history of Switzerland.
 - c. His treason is traced in the article mainly to the fact that in his later years he had been transferred from the infantry to the civil-defense forces. His self-image suffered. He always envisioned himself as a combat officer who would lead his men against invading hordes. Now he felt that his career was floundering and the possibility of fulfilling his boyhood dreams was fading.
 4. Your opponents, the devil and his ambassadors, will try to ridicule, slander, and deceive you and destroy your Christian honor.
 - a. This is what the Viet Cong tried to do to our POWs. Read again that Book Section of *Reader's Digest*, June 1976, on the POW.

The way the POWs survived was to hold fast to their belief in who they were and the truth of what they had been fighting for.
 - b. The devil attacked Adam and Eve at this vulnerable point—self-image. If you will take the forbidden fruit you will be gods for as a believer you are less than you can be! A LIE!
 - c. The devil attacked Jesus at this point—self-image, If you are the Son of God. . . .
 5. Remember who you are. You are royalty. You are beautiful in God's eyes. You are eternally young and alive in God's eyes.

WHY DO YOU HAVE TO LISTEN TO THE DEVIL AND HIS HENCHMEN SEDUCING YOU INTO BELIEVING YOU HAVE TO SIN TO RETAIN YOUR BEAUTY OR YOUR LIFE! AS A BELIEVER YOU ARE EVERYTHING GOD MADE YOU TO BE!
- B. The enemy cannot rob you of your heavenly inheritance.
1. Moth and rust cannot consume it.
 2. Thieves cannot break through and steal it.
 3. You have an inheritance which is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept for you in heaven. . . . and you are guarded through faith until you receive it (I Pet. 1:4).
 4. Think of the tragic compromises some have made because they have let the enemy frighten them into thinking the only riches, or the only pleasures, or the only fame is IN THIS WORLD!
 5. Esau despised the spiritual birthright which was unseen, for a bowl of bean soup which he could have right then.

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6. This slight momentary affliction of having to stand and strive and be courageous is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison . . . (II Cor. 4:17).

THINK OF THAT . . . BEYOND ALL COMPARISON. THERE IS NOTHING IN THIS WORLD OF RICHES, ROYALTY, PLEASURE, HONOR, SATISFACTION WITH WHICH TO COMPARE YOUR INHERITANCE!

Don't let the enemy scare you into believing there is!

7. The enemy says, "If God has such great things for you, why doesn't He give them to you now . . . because He doesn't have them for you. . . . You'd better get what you can of riches, pleasure and power now. . . ." You only go around once!
8. But God, if He did not spare His own Son for you, will certainly come through on the promise of your inheritance (Rom. 8:31ff.).
9. God has already given you a down payment on your inheritance in the Holy Spirit dwelling in your heart, guiding you into the joys of spirituality through His Word, the Bible.

C. The enemy cannot destroy you.

1. In II Kings 6:11ff. the king of Syria sent his army to surround the city where Elisha was and take the prophet captive. When the Syrian army surrounded the city the servant of the prophet arose early in the morning and began to be afraid.

Elisha said, "Fear not, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them." And the Lord opened the servant's eyes and he saw the mountain full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha from the Lord.

2. In Revelation 13 people of the Roman empire worshiped the "beast" (Roman emperor), saying, "Who is like the beast, and who can fight against it?" THE BEAST IS INVINCIBLE, THEY SAID.

But John wrote, ". . . the beast . . . is human . . . its number is 666." THE BEAST IS NOT INVINCIBLE. ROME FELL, AND THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST LIVED ON!

3. The enemy, using the fear of death, kept most of the world of mankind in slavish bondage to sin, but Jesus came and destroyed that power.

The enemy tried to destroy Jesus, but Jesus rose victorious, having defeated the worst the enemy could do.

4. The enemy has tried to obliterate the written word of God and cannot even do that, because it is in the hearts of believers generation after generation and will always be.

The enemy has tried to kill the church but he cannot do that. It has survived every stratagem, persecution, false doctrine, materialism.

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5. John's vision in Revelation saw the church Rome tried to destroy as an innumerable multitude of individuals out of every tribe and tongue and nation, alive, worshipping God around His throne.

The great Admiral Nelson of the long-ago British Fleet was about to engage the enemy at the battle of Trafalgar. He dressed himself in his full uniform and placed all the medals and orders that he had won upon his breast.

His officers remonstrated with him, saying he should take off his decorations, or at least cover them with a handkerchief, as otherwise he would become a prime target for the enemy's musketry.

But the gallant Admiral would have none of their advice: "I won these distinctions in the face of the enemy," he said, "and I shall wear them in the face of the enemy."

YOU HAVE PUT ON CHRIST, YOU ARE A PRIME TARGET OF THE ENEMY. BUT DO NOT BE FRIGHTENED IN ANYTHING BY HIM AND HIS MINIONS. . . . SO LONG AS YOU WEAR THE CHRISTIAN ARMOR, HE CANNOT HARM YOU, MAKE YOU LESS THAN YOU ARE, ROB YOU OR DESTROY YOU!

CONCLUSION

I would like to discuss the rest of this text in this sermon, but time does not permit.

I close with this story: May 12, 1962, a great old American soldier is speaking some of the last words he will say to an Academy filled with young men preparing to become officers and future leaders of the Army of the USA:

"Duty—Honor—Country. Those three hallowed words reverently dictate what you ought to be, what you can be, what you will be. . . . The unbelievers will say they are but words, but a slogan, but a flamboyant phrase. . . . But these are some of the things they do. They build your basic character; . . . they make you strong enough to know when you are weak, and brave enough to face yourself when you are afraid. They teach you to be proud and unbending in honest failure, but humble and gentle in success, not to substitute words for actions, not to seek the path of comfort, but to face the stress and spur of difficulty and challenge; to learn to stand up in the storm but to have compassion on those who fail; to master yourself before you seek to master others; to have a heart that is clean, a goal that is high; to learn to laugh yet never forget how to weep; to reach into the future yet never neglect the past; to be serious yet never to take yourself too seriously; to be modest so that you will remember the simplicity of true greatness, the open mind of true wisdom, the meekness of true strength.

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The shadows are lengthening for me. The twilight is here. My days of old have vanished tone and tint; they have gone glimmering through the dreams of things that were. Their memory is one of wondrous beauty, watered by tears, and coaxed and caressed by the smiles of yesterday. . . . But in the evening of my memory, always I come back to West Point. Always there echoes and re-echoes in my ears—Duty—Honor—Country. . . .”

Douglas MacArthur, at his last roll call at the Point. He died two years later.

If we filled the stage this morning with old soldiers of the gospel, they would say to you:

Down through the years of your ministry may your memory always come back to God's Word and may this truth echo and re-echo in your heart. . . . Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ. . . . STAND FIRM. . . . STRIVE SIDE BY SIDE. . . . AND DO NOT BE FRIGHTENED IN ANYTHING BY YOUR OPPONENTS. . . .

Chapter Fifteen (15:1-32)

THE SON OF MAN SEEKING THE LOST

IDEAS TO INVESTIGATE:

1. If Jesus received sinners, should the church (15:1-2)?
2. How can heaven rejoice over one sinner more than over ninety-nine who need no repentance (15:7)?
3. Why do angels, who have never known what it is to be lost, rejoice over saved sinners (15:10)?
4. How could a man "come to himself" (15:17)?
5. Why did the father say his prodigal son was "dead" (15:24)?
6. Why would the elder son refuse to go in and enjoy the return of his brother (15:28)?
7. Had the elder son *never* disobeyed the father's commands (15:29)?

SECTION 1

Lost Sheep (15:1-7)

15 Now the tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to hear him. ²And the Pharisees and the scribes murmured, saying, "This man receives sinners and eats with them."

3 So he told them this parable: ⁴"What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness, and go after the one which is lost, until he finds it? ⁵And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. ⁶And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and his neighbors, saying to them, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost.' ⁷Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.

15:1-4 Rescue: Jesus had left the home of the Pharisees where He had been a guest at dinner (Lk. 14:1-24) and journeyed on through Perea. Great multitudes accompanied him (Lk. 14:25). Many publicans and "sinners" joined the crowds to hear Him teach about the kingdom of God. His words were so different from those of most religious teachers of that day. He

taught that God was gracious and forgiving to those who would repent and believe His word. The compassion Jesus exhibited in His deeds was electrifying in comparison with the hypocrisy and unloving attitudes of the Pharisees and rulers of the Jews.

We do not know exactly where the following parables were spoken nor exactly when, but He was somewhere in Perea and it was sometime in the winter (probably February) of A.D. 30. After these parables of chapter 15, He went on to teach more parables to the same crowds and in the same general area. His trip to Bethany and Ephraim (Jn. 11) should be inserted immediately between Luke 17:10 and 17:11. No doubt the multitudes were dwindling as a result of the stern and severe admonitions about the cost of discipleship. But His glorious descriptions of the ideal society where everyone is humble, loving and committed to God attracted those whom the self-righteous and proud had declared "outcasts." Jesus offered a kingdom where penitent publicans and sinners would be welcomed as citizens with all other penitents on an equal basis.

Jesus had long ago established Himself as a friend of publicans and sinners (cf. Lk. 7:29, 34, 37). He had even called a publican to be one of His apostles (Mt. 9:9-13; Mk. 2:14-17; Lk. 5:27-32). These Pharisees contemptuously refused to use Jesus' name when they said, "This fellow (Gr. *hoti houtos*) receives sinners and eats with publicans." The Greek word *prosdechetai* is translated "receives" but means, more emphatically, "allows them access to Himself—gives them welcome." He not only welcomed them, He ate with them. He accepted formal invitations from Levi and Zacchaeus and took His meals with other "sinners" when He was teaching out of doors. These Pharisees were correct in their statement but they were saying this to destroy Jesus' reputation and His ministry. They were insinuating that because He received sinners and ate with them He was a sinner also.

To stop their slanderous and malicious cavilling Jesus told three simple stories in one parable which contained irrefutable truth and logic. Each story is an illustration of the main subject of the one parable—God sent His Son to seek and save the lost. Actually, there are four parables in one. The "Elder Son" is a parable in its own right. All these stories answer the accusation that Jesus "receives sinners" with a passionate and resounding, "Yes!" The theme of the entire parabolic discourse is The Grace of God. The grace of God is what the publicans and sinners were seeking. The grace of Christ is what the Pharisees criticized and rejected. Publicans and sinners know they are lost; Pharisees are too proud and self-righteous to acknowledge they are lost. The Greek word *apollumi* in the active voice means, "to destroy, to kill," (Mt. 10:28; Mk. 1:24; 9:22); in the middle voice it means, "to perish," (Mt. 8:25; Jn. 3:16). Someone has said, "A man is lost when

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he cannot define his present or plan his future.” Millions of human beings are lost today in the black night of guilt, fear and anxiety or in the jungles of passion, hatred and vengeance. These gracious words of Jesus are as relevant for today’s sinners lost in the vast confusion of our age as they were for sinners of the first century.

The Lord’s first parable is of the lost sheep. The figure of “lost sheep” was a familiar figure to Jewish people. The Old Testament is replete with such usage (cf. Psa. 119:176; 23:1ff.; Ezek. 34:1ff.; Zech. 11:16-17; Isa. 40:11). There is much quoted passage from Isaiah “All we like sheep have gone astray . . .” (Isa. 53:6). Sheep are rather dumb and helpless animals. They “nibble” themselves lost. Drawn by first one clump of grass, and then another, the animal just keeps on following the grass without looking up. Finally when he does look up, he finds himself in a canyon far away from the shepherd and with night coming on. The sheep is *lost!* He just kept on “nibbling” unaware he was becoming lost. He didn’t even realize he was straying from the shepherd. What happens to sheep, happens to people. Few sheep or men ever start out to get lost. Becoming lost is usually something that happens almost imperceptively. Getting lost is almost always the result of “nibbling” farther and farther away from the shepherd and the flock. One little morsel of sin, then another, and another, until suddenly it is night and man is lost in the canyons of guilt, fear, rebellion and wastedness.

“Lost” is not a word most people would use to describe their condition. Many men even prefer to think of themselves as sinners rather than lost. There is a certain glamour or levity to the term “sinner.” But when men are told they are “lost” it means they are misdirected, wasted, useless and no one wants to own up to that! No man likes to confess he is *lost*. It is unmanly, humiliating, and a man will do almost anything to prove that he is not a poor lost child. Most men are like the Indian chief who says, “Indian not lost—*wigwam* lost!” But God knows, and so do we, we are lost. The young German soldier in “All’s Quiet On The Western Front” turns away from the chaos and carnage of the battlefield, so symbolic of the confusion of his generation, and says, “I . . . I think we are lost!”

The logic of Jesus’ presentation is undeniable. Everyone in His audience would admit they would leave ninety-nine and go after one lost sheep until they find it. Everyone leaves everything to look for so little a thing as a pin, or a key. Now what would you do if you were a father and one of your children was lost? What could be more expected than for God to look for lost men who look for lost pins and keys? It is tragic but true that while men will look for lost pins and keys, they often will not look for lost men. But God is not like men—He took upon Himself the servant-robe-of-flesh and descended into this dark and dangerous canyon of wickedness to find His lost men and women. God cares and will not quit as long as there is opportunity to rescue the lost.

15:5-7 Rejoicing: God is not satisfied with just ninety-nine—He wants every one. God is not willing that any should perish, but wants all people to come to repentance and salvation (II Pet. 3:9). Love cannot rest until that last one is at least searched for, and, hopefully safe. The great heart of God would have sent His Son to this world if there had been only one to be saved (cf. Jonah 4:11; Acts 17:30; 18:10).

When the shepherd found the lost sheep he did not berate the sheep for getting lost; he did not kick or strike the sheep. He gave it a seat of honor—a ride of glory—he put it on his shoulders and helped it back to the flock. Henceforth the shepherd would use his rod and staff to protect, to chasten and guide the errant sheep from straying again.

The shepherd was overcome with joy at finding his lost sheep. He rejoices all the way home and upon arriving there calls all his neighbors and friends to celebrate with him. This is the way men are. They feel compelled to share joys. It is human nature that the finding of something lost gives much more joy than the possession of things that are safe. Men rejoice more in recovery from sickness than they do in daily health. How much more intense and infinite is the joy of Heaven's King over the recovery of the lost!

The ninety-nine "righteous persons who need no repentance" probably refers to the self-righteous Pharisees or others who *thought* they needed no repentance. There are no human beings without the need of repentance! Barnes thinks the ninety-nine are angels: "They know of how much value is an immortal soul. They see what is meant by eternal death; and they do not feel too much, or have too much anxiety about the soul (angel's) that can never die." We believe Jesus meant the Pharisees for they were the ones who murmured against the Lord's associations with "publicans and sinners." Jesus places in sharp contrast the value Pharisees place on publicans and sinners and that of God!

SECTION 2

Lost Silver (15:8-10)

8 "Or what woman, having ten silver coins, if she loses one coin, does not light a lamp and sweep the house and seek diligently until she finds it? ⁹ And when she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbors, saying, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin which I had lost.' ¹⁰ Just so, I tell you, there is joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents."

15:8-9a Rescue: The coins the woman had were, in Greek, *drachmas*. They are, in the LXX, equivalent to the Hebrew *bega'* or "half-shekel." The half-shekel was equivalent to the Roman "denarius." The coin was worth about 16 cents American today—but then worth a day's wages.

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Hebrew women usually wore coin "frontlets," called *semedi*, as part of their dowry and thus a sign they were married. These coins were a daughter's "inheritance" from her father to take and share with her husband as they formed a new family unit. These coins had sentimental, financial and status-symbol value.

This parable pictures the *intensity* of God's interest in finding the lost. The woman is totally absorbed in finding the lost coin. All other pursuits become secondary to finding it. Searching for it cannot wait until morning —she lights a lamp and makes the dust fly until she finds it. A casual, superficial one-time search will not do. No distraction is strong enough to divert her. Diligently, doggedly, passionately she searches everywhere! Will God give up any one of His children for lost with any less determination and feeling? Shall we?

All three of the parables in this chapter cry out—ONE! We decide ourselves into thinking that size, more and bigger is always better. We are constantly bombarded with the propaganda that God will be impressed with mass—with sheer numbers. We cannot get a god-of-quantity out of our heads. Of course, God loves all men and wants all men to be saved. We tend to think of God more as the Creator of the millions of constellations and universe and generations upon generations of men and forget that He cares as intensely for "little ol' me" as the woman did for her one coin. Our God is infinitely careful for each snowflake—making each one different. God is personally, passionately and emotionally searching for one lost person at a time—no matter how unknown or how long they have been lost. The church must turn the world upside down searching for each lost person.

15:9b-10 Rejoice: These parables show us a God quite different from that of the philosophers and theologians. The God of these parables is a God who hurts when one of His is lost and knows how to be happy when one of His is recovered. Men are thrilled when they find a lost coin, but imagine how ecstatically happy God is when one of His, for whom He made this whole creation, for whom His Son died, is found and returned to His society of precious ones. When we see God we shall see Him as He is—these parables state unequivocally that we shall see Him expressing His joy. When one lost sinner is recovered the news flashes across Heaven and anthems of praise and joy are shouted. This is the only news Heaven is interested in. When men and women are baptized into Christ, Heaven does not say, "Ho hum" but "Hallelujah!" Heaven is soul-centered. Evangelism is the business which occupies and satisfies all who love God.

SECTION 3

Lost Prodigal Son (15:11-24)

11 And he said, "There was a man who had two sons; ¹²and the younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of property

that falls to me.' And he divided his living between them. ¹³Not many days later, the younger son gathered all he had and took his journey into a far country, and there he squandered his property in loose living. ¹⁴And when he had spent everything, a great famine arose in that country, and he began to be in want. ¹⁵So he went and joined himself to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed swine. ¹⁶And he would gladly have fed on the pods that the swine ate; and no one gave him anything. ¹⁷But when he came to himself he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have bread enough and to spare, but I perish here with hunger! ¹⁸I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; ¹⁹I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me as one of your hired servants."'

²⁰And he arose and came to his father. But while he was yet at a distance, his father saw him and had compassion and ran and embraced him and kissed him. ²¹And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' ²²But the father said to his servants, 'Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet; ²³and bring the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and make merry; ²⁴for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.' And they began to make merry.

15:11-16 Roaming: This parable has never lost its grandeur or poignancy in two thousand years of reading and telling. It is still as relevant as the day it was told. It is still provoking, puzzling and its ending as shocking and unbelievably wonderful as it was to those who heard it in the beginning. One commentator said, "It is the most divinely tender and most humanly touching story ever told on earth." Charles Dickens said: "It is the finest short story ever written." In 21 action packed verses the reader learns the profound secret of the kingdom of God—*grace!* Of all the things Jesus said, this parable alone gives the clearest insight into the very heart of God. Most often it is called, "The Parable of the Prodigal Son"; sometimes it is called "The Parable of the Perfect Father." As a matter of fact, the "Father" (God) is the hero of the story. "A certain man" (God) and his response to his two sons is what the parable is all about. The primary lesson of the parable is to show the difference between God's attitude toward sinners and that of the Pharisees (the elder brother).

It is undoubtedly intentional that Jesus said this "certain man" had only two sons. Two sons—prodigal ("sinner") and petulant (Pharisee)—that is all the sons God has (except His Perfect Son). All mankind falls into one category or the other—those who openly rebel and admit they are sinners, and those who try to pretend they are not. You and I were either prodigal or Pharisee—there is no other breed of man outside the grace of God.

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The younger son had been daydreaming, probably, of all the excitement and happiness he could have if only he could take what his father would pass on to him and spend it in some far off, exotic land. So he went to his father and demanded, "Give me . . ." The Greek word *dos* is (2 pers. sing. aor. 2) imperative for *didomi*, which means literally, an order or a command, "Give me . . ." Impertinent, impatient and impudent he orders his father, "Gimme . . ." According to Deut. 21:17, the eldest son was to get two-thirds of a man's estate and the younger son one-third when the man decided it was time to divide his property among his heirs. This son did not ask, did not suggest, did not beg—he did not seek his father's wishes at all. The prodigal-minded son was so obsessed with his own independence and craving for excitement he did not even think to ask what he might give his father. He was not concerned at all about his father's feelings and desires. "Give me . . ." to do with as I please are the impertinent theme words of every prodigal, fallen son of man.

It is important to note in v. 12 the father divided his livelihood (Gr. *bios*) between *them*—the elder son got his share too (later he will complain he was discriminated against). God feeds and clothes all His sons; He makes His rain to fall on the just and unjust alike; He gives rain and fruitful seasons from heaven on believer and pagan alike. It is what each does with his Father's benevolence that matters.

The father graciously and wisely let the son have his freedom. He undoubtedly knew what the lad intended to do. The father knew he could not force the boy to be a son. A son in rebellion, forced against his will, is a son in rebellion still! God knew from the very start, in Eden, He could not force Adam to be a son. He knew He must take the risk of giving man his free will if He was to have a son at all. The father could have made him stay home, say "Yes" to everything and the father could have smothered the son—possessed him body and soul—but that would have robbed the boy of his personhood. The Father gave the boy his freedom to be wrong in order that the boy might be able to be right some day, independently and lovingly—not slavishly.

The younger son gathered (Gr. *sunagagon*) or collected all his father gave him. If he had been given flocks or grain he sold them and converted them into money. He then departed and traveled to a "far country." There is a certain pseudo sense of power in breaking loose from parental supervision and provision. Boys become intoxicated with the idea of independence. Many of them lose all sense of propriety and reality when they first taste it. This lad, going far, went too far. He scattered (Gr. *dieskorpisen*, see the same word translated "scatters" in Mt. 12:30) his property in riotous living. The Greek word *asotos* is translated "riotous" but literally means, "without saving." He literally *squandered* all he had. He spent everything he had. He had left nothing behind at home because he had no plans to return there.

He believed he was sufficient unto himself. Without guidance, and undisciplined himself, he fell in with a crowd of profligate parasites. His life became a whirl of self-indulgence, careless wastefulness, and perversion of every good thing passed on to him by his father.

A great famine arose in that "far off country." In a society so decadent as one where few take thought for saving anything and where harlotry is rampant (cf. v. 30), famine may naturally be the consequence of such luxury, indolence and dissipation. The lad had "frittered" away every coin he had. He apparently had many "friends" so long as he had money to spend. But then one day he was destitute—and alone. His parasitic fellow-sinners left him "in want."

"Going, he glued himself to one of the citizens . . ." That is the way the Greek reads. He did not, could not, wait around for a job-offer. He went out to find some way to live. He latched on (Gr. *ekollethe*, "glued") to one of the locals. The citizen gave him a job of feeding swine—but he was given hardly anything at all fit to eat. To tend hogs was an abomination to a Jew and Jesus paints the most degraded condition possible here. To be compelled to do so was even more humiliating to a young man who had just recently been feeling so powerful and self-sufficient in his freedom from home. The "good times" were gone, but he probably kept telling himself at first how much better it was than being under a father's thumb. Very soon, however, he began to realize how bad things really were. He would gladly have fed on the pods that the swine ate, but he was not allowed to do so. The Greek word *keration* is mistranslated "husks" in some versions. Actually the word means, "little horn" and is describing carob-pods, the fruit of a tree called *carob* or *kharub*, common in Asia Minor and Syria. These pods are somewhat like the common garden-variety green-bean—not nearly as wholesome or tasty. They are still used in the Middle East as food for swine. What this boy had to eat was so scarce and so unpleasant, he wanted to eat what he was feeding the hogs but he was not at liberty to do so.

In his bull-headed attempt to get away from what he thought was a prison at home, he took himself prisoner. His "friends" turned out to be his enemies. Starving, degraded and depraved, he was still crying out, "Gimme . . ." but he could no longer have what he wanted. Now he must take what others wish to give him—which is really nothing at all.

15:17-20a Repentance: The need for repentance and its definition—a change of mind—was discussed in chapter 13. The parable of the prodigal son is a classic illustration of repentance in action.

The prodigal "came to himself." The Greek literally reads, "But to himself coming. . . ." The emphasis is on "himself." He had not only been away from his father, he had been away from himself. He had not been his right self. In sin, no man is in his right mind. All sin is a form of insanity (cf. I Cor. 15:34, RSV, "Come to your right mind and sin no more . . .").

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God did not make man for sin. Man is not for himself when he is sinning—man is choosing against himself and some personality other than his right one when he rebels against God. The prodigal's realization did not come like a bolt out of the blue. Note, ". . . coming to himself . . ." indicates it took a while for him to wake up. It takes a while for most men to repent—some never do.

He remembered what he knew of fellowship with the father and compared that with what he was then experiencing in rebellion and decided the father's house was to be desired no matter what sacrifices he might have to make. Coming "to the end of his rope" was his salvation. Suffering the consequences of his rebellion was the necessary prelude to his repentance. If God did not allow us to "suffer in our persons the due penalty of our errors" (Rom. 1:27), many more of us would go to hell. One writer has said: "Heaven builds its hopes on the defeat of man's ego." No man can be saved until he admits he is lost. No man can be saved until he admits no one else can help him but God.

The prodigal decided to get up and go to his father and confess his sin. He did not say, "It was my father's fault—he should not have been so strict—if he will come to me I will go back with him." The lad did not blame his downfall on his father, on his elder brother or on evil companions. He honestly accepted the responsibility himself. Many people regret the consequences of their sin and are sorry they have to suffer them, but they are not honest enough to admit they are responsible. Most people have a tendency to blame the consequences of their sin on someone else. Most people feel they must retain their own pride and dignity even at the cost of self-honesty. But this rebellious child knew what he was, admitted what he was and decided he could honestly blame no one else or claim any goodness of his own at all. He knew he could make no claim of relationship as son to the father at all. He will beg only for a hired servant's lot. He knew his father well enough to know that even a servant's lot with him was paradise compared to the hog-pen of the far country. So we see the subjective elements of repentance: (a) deep inner struggle with oneself; (b) rational evaluation of the consequences of one's sins compared with what one knows about God; (c) honest, humble admission of responsibility for sinful choices and actions; (d) confidence that the father will forgive and accept repentance; (e) poverty of spirit that will claim no merit or goodness of his own.

One last thing remains—to get up and go! "And he arose and came to his father." Driven by his need and drawn by his hope that the father will receive him, he exercises his will and his body to perform the overt action of returning to the father's house. Repentance is a change of mind and attitude which must result in action. The penitent son took with him words of confession and a heart of obedience (cf. Hosea 14:1-9). He returned, willing to obey the father even as a servant would obey. There may be tears

of regret and remorse but without obedience to the Father's (God's) will, there is no repentance.

Repentance is voluntary. The father did not force the son to return against his will. The father did not send servants to hypnotize, emotionalize or pressure the son into returning. If the son had returned under any other circumstances than a completely rational and voluntary surrender of his will, he would have been a son still in rebellion. The mission of the church is to speak the truth in love and with rational persuasiveness and then let the prodigal son voluntarily come to himself and to the Father. The church is *not* commissioned to seduce anyone into coming to the Father against his will. The church will do well to constantly review her purpose and methodology.

15:20b-24 Regeneration: "When he was a great way off . . ." The father had been mourning his lost son; he had been lovingly and longingly looking down the road each day hoping the prodigal would return. God is not willing that any should perish (II Pet. 3:9). When the father saw the son returning, he ran to meet the prodigal. The father did not wait to see if the son had cleaned himself up, or if the son had any means of reimbursement for all the heartache he had caused. The son had not run home—he had probably returned in a half-halting, hesitant manner, anticipating the humiliation he would have to endure and the scolding he would get. But the father saw the son first and ran to meet him and fell on the son's neck (embraced him) and wrapped him in love's arms. Eager to receive his son back no matter how destitute, the father kissed him before he could even finish his confession. The son was looking for, "I told you so . . ." but he received an excited embrace and profuse kisses (Gr. *katephilesen*). Instead of a lecture and punishment (which the son was anticipating), the father was moved with emotional feeling (Gr. *esplagchnisthe*, "compassion") and ordered his servants, "Bring quickly . . ." (Gr. *tachu exenekate*) robe, ring and sandals to put upon his son.

The robe was (Gr. *proten*, lit. "first") the best and signified honor; the ring signified authority; the sandals signified sonship since slaves went barefoot and only children of the house wore shoes. They were also ordered to bring the calf, the fattened one (Gr. *ton moschon ton siteuton*); there is only one such calf, reserved for some special occasion (cf. I Sam. 28:24). The father also invited the household to join the feast and merrymaking. The word "merry" does not precisely express the meaning of the Greek word *euphranthomen* for it is a combination of two words, *eu* and *phren*, which mean literally, "think well," or "be of a good mind." "Merriment" might infer frivolity whereas the Greek word allows for no superficiality but means deep, mental joy and happiness.

Why such a celebration? Because this father's son who was "dead" is "alive again"; the son, having been lost, was found. Because through the

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son's repentance and the father's forgiveness, the son has been born again. Notice that the rebirth came as a result of action on both the part of the son and the father. The lost and dead son could not be found and reborn until he came to himself, got up and returned home. Only then could the father constitute him reborn. The son was not passive, but active in the event. This scene is the supreme moment in all literature! It is the greatest love story ever told. Jesus did not make up this story. It is true. Jesus Himself wrote this story indelibly in the blood of His cross. Our God is like that father! And the boy? He is you and me. This is our life's story, if we have been found.

SECTION 4

The Lost Pharisaical Son (15:25-32)

25 "Now his elder son was in the field; and as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing.²⁶ And he called one of the servants and asked what this meant.²⁷ And he said to him, 'Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fatted calf, because he has received him safe and sound.'²⁸ But he was angry and refused to go in. His father came out and entreated him,²⁹ but he answered his father, 'Lo, these many years I have served you, and I never disobeyed your command; yet you never gave me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends.³⁰ But when this son of yours came, who has devoured your living with harlots, you killed for him the fatted calf!'³¹ And he said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours.³² It was fitting to make merry and be glad, for this your brother was dead, and is alive; he was lost, and is found.' "

15:25-30 Resentment: The primary thrust of this parable is to illustrate in a real-life situation the attitude of the Pharisees toward publicans and sinners. All that has gone before in the prodigal's story illustrates how publicans and sinners repent and how mercifully God receives them. But the prodigal's story is primarily background for the story of the elder brother which now follows. This story will cast the attitude of the Pharisees in black contrast to that of Jesus' (and God's).

Enter the villain—the elder brother. Outwardly this elder brother had presented the picture of correct conduct. He was industrious (out working in the field), respectable (he had never caroused like the prodigal), outwardly respectful to his father but his heart was that of a resentful, petulant hireling. He was only working in anticipation of getting more than his prodigal brother. One day he was out working in the field and upon returning to the house he heard music and dancing as he drew near. He called one of the hired servants and asked what the meaning of the rejoicing was.

The servant told him "Your brother has come . . ." Note, *your* brother—but the elder brother later calls him, "This son of yours . . ." to his father. He will not acknowledge the prodigal as *his* brother. How like the Pharisees—both ancient and modern! The servant told the elder brother that his father had killed the one calf they had been fattening and was using it to celebrate the return of that boy who had long ago left the household and squandered his inheritance in profligacy. The elder son had probably been anticipating the day when that fatted calf would be used to celebrate *his* taking over the father's estate. The prodigal had not only come back (which the elder son resented), but the father *received* him as a son again!

Upon hearing this the elder son flew into a rage (Gr. *orgishe*, from which we get the English words, *orgasm*, *orgy*, etc.). He was invited to enter the house and join the celebration, but he expressed that he had no desire to enter into the celebration. So the father came out of the house and begged (Gr. *parekalei*, literally, "call upon call; call after call") him to come in.

Now the elder son's true feeling toward the father manifests itself. He had stayed home and behaved—but for the wrong reason. The elder son was respectable, but only on the surface. Beneath the veneer of propriety is the self-righteous, jealous, hateful heart. His mask of hypocrisy has slipped off and he is exposed for what he really is. He is an ingrate. He should have been thankful his brother was home safe—even if only for his father's sake! He should have been grateful that a celebration was being made and have enjoyed himself participating. He should have been thankful that he was going to get any inheritance at all. After all, it was all to be inherited—it was not his, or his brother's, but *given* to both.

All this petulant, pouting, pretender can do is verbally attack his own father because his father was forgiving and gracious to the prodigal. The elder son rebukes his father, saying, "Lo, these many years I have served you, and I never disobeyed your command; yet you never gave me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends." He rebukes his father for not being aware of his obedient service; he rebukes his father for never rewarding him; he rebukes his father as being wrong for receiving the prodigal who had "devoured" his inheritance on "harlots." He even rebukes his father for thinking he should accept the prodigal as his "brother"—he will not recognize the prodigal as brother, only as the father's son.

One very perceptive writer asks, "Who is the prodigal after all? One came back—but one got lost at home. He locked himself out of the banquet—the key he lost was love."

The elder son: (a) wanted to be a son, but not a brother; (b) did not share his father's concern for the lost brother; (c) was envious of his brother and suspicious of his father; (d) was unable to enjoy what the father gave him because of his envy of the prodigal; (e) boasted of an obedience which he really did not have and revealed it by his attitude. The elder son was a classic Pharisee—unmerciful toward the prodigal whose sins were those of the

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flesh, but he refused to admit the sins of pride, jealousy, hypocrisy and self-righteousness were worse sins. Jesus was hardest on hypocrisy. Doing the right thing for the wrong reason was not Jesus' idea of goodness (cf. the Sermon on the Mount). *Pride*, not prodigality, is the chief sin!

15:31-32 Rebuke: There is pathos in the father's "Son, . . ." The father was made happy when the prodigal returned. Now he is saddened at the elder son's loveless resentment. God wants to save Pharisees as well as publicans. So, firmly but gently the father rebukes the petulant son, reminding him, ". . . you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours." The elder son could always have what the father wanted to give him if only he was of the right spirit to receive it as a gift. So long as he remained self-righteous and hateful and uncooperative, he could never have it. What the father has to give, he gives to his *family*. It was "fitting" to receive back the lad who came in humble penitence, wishing now to be an obedient son and sharing brother. It is also "fitting" that the elder brother join in the reception and sharing—if not, he can no longer claim family status. Yes, our salvation depends as much on *brotherhood* as it does sonship (cf. I Jn. 3:14-18; 3:23; 4:7-12; 4:20-21; 5:1-2, etc.). If the father forgives a prodigal son, *brethren must also forgive or they lose their own sonship*.

The story ends here with no indication whether the elder brother changed his mind or not. The Pharisees kept on despising publicans and sinners. God, in His Son, kept on receiving them and saving those who repented. This, perhaps the greatest of all the parables, stands as a judgment on the Pharisical self-righteousness which will not forgive a prodigal brother even when the Father has forgiven him. It also stands as a beacon of hope to those thousands of prodigals who have squandered their Father's inheritance in riotous living but come to themselves and want to be received back home.

STUDY STIMULATORS:

1. When you "eat with publicans and sinners" do you ever mention the will of God for their lives as Jesus did?
2. Have you ever been lost? Do you think all men not in covenant relationship with Christ today are *lost*?
3. Why are men like sheep in getting lost?
4. Do you think the church is as intense in finding the lost as the woman was in finding her lost coin?
5. How does your church react to baptismal services? "Ho-hum" or "Hallelujah!"
6. Did you find, while you were a "prodigal," that you were starving?
7. How would you tell another "prodigal" to "come to himself . . .?"
8. Do you recognize in the elder brother any of yourself?
9. Are you willing, and have you, forgiven every person God has forgiven? Who are those whom God has forgiven?
10. Is brotherhood with the forgiven as necessary to salvation as sonship?

LOVE IS A MANY SLENDORED THING

(Text: Heb. 12:5-11)

By Paul T. Butler — OBC Chapel, Spring 1973

INTRODUCTION

I. NOW THE WORLD HAS A SONG BY THAT TITLE

- A. But the popular song of a few years ago by that title failed utterly and miserably to really plumb the depths of love's splendor.
- B. Splendor means glory-sublimity-brilliance.
- C. Love is the most glorious, sublime capability any person has.
- D. Love is the most precious, the rarest jewel of all virtues.

II. BUT WHAT IS LOVE

- A. How many sermons I have heard over the years exhorting, "What we need is simply to love one another," or chastising, "If we don't get some love around here we're no better than the heathen."
- B. But how few sermons I have heard explaining what love is or how we are to love.
- C. Love is not self-defining. This is the supreme fallacy of situation ethics which says "do the most loving thing in every situation."
- D. No man has enough wisdom or experience to be guided only by his own instincts to do the most loving thing in every situation.
- E. We must go to the Word of God for precept and example.
- F. And I Corinthians 13 is not the only definition of love in the Bible.

III. SOME WILL INVARIABLY SAY, LOVE IS:

A. Concern

But how do you explain the many people who were hungry Jesus did not feed; the many lame He did not heal; the Greeks who came seeking him and He did not talk with; Herod who questioned Him about His teaching, to whom Jesus would not speak but called "fox," MUST A CONCERNED LOVE ALWAYS BE MANIFESTED THE WAY WE THINK?

B. Giving

But how do you explain Jesus' rebuke of Judas and the disciples when they suggested that the precious ointment Mary had poured upon Jesus could have been sold and given to the poor. MUST A GIVING LOVE ALWAYS BE MANIFESTED IN THE WAY THE WORLD THINKS?

C. Speaking Pleasantly

But how do you explain the words Jesus spoke to the Pharisees and sometimes to His disciples which were harsh, demanding and rebuking. How do you explain Paul's letters to the Corinthians;

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how do you explain Peter's words to Simon concerning being in the gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity. MUST LOVE ALWAYS BE COMMUNICATED TO PLEASE THE HEARER?

IV. LOVE IS MANY FACETED

- A. There is more to love than often meets the spiritual eye.
- B. I hope to present you three oft unseen facets of the brilliance of God-like love, agape love, this morning.
- C. LOVE IS: DISCERNING. . . DEMANDING. . . DELIBERATE
- D. "Those whom I love, I reprove and chasten; so be zealous and repent" (Rev. 3:19).

DISCUSSION

I. LOVE IS DISCERNING (discriminating; critical; judgmental; penetrating). All of those are words of love if the motives are right.

A. In Reality

- 1. Love is truth-oriented; truth-focused; truth-centered. Love is something done but always in a TRUTH frame-of-reference. Agape love makes every attempt to see things, issues, and persons as they are in reality for a purpose—a good purpose.
- 2. Agape love could never reject truth in favor of falsehood—it could never be satisfied with only half-truth about issues or persons.
- 3. "Little children, let us not love in word or speech but in deed and *in truth*" (I Jn. 3:18).
- 4. "The Christian loves truth (Eph. 4:15; II Thess. 2:10), but he never cruelly or unsympathetically uses the truth in order to hurt. . . . The Christian is never false to the truth, but he always remembers that love and truth must go hand in hand" Wm. Barclay, *More New Testament Words*, pg. 22, Harper & Row (article on Agape).
- 5. "Christian love does not shut its eyes to the faults of others. Love is not blind. It will use rebuke and discipline when these are needed. The love which shuts its eyes to all faults, and which evades the unpleasantness of all discipline, is not real love at all, for in the end it does nothing but harm to the loved one." *ibid.*
- 6. ". . . love . . . does not rejoice in wrong, but rejoices in the truth . . ." (I Cor. 13:6).
- 7. Would Jesus have loved Judas if He had concealed from Judas the truth about himself? Would God have loved the Hebrew

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people if He had concealed from them the truth about themselves in the days of the prophets? Would Paul have loved the churches and people he wrote the epistles to had he concealed from them the truth about themselves?

8. In that penetrating, piercing confrontation between Jesus and the Jews in John 8, Jesus seemed almost astounded that they would seek to kill Him because He told them the truth about themselves (Jn. 8:39-47). He did it because He loved them.
9. Paul wrote the Christians in Galatia, "Have I then become your enemy by telling you the truth" (Gal. 4:16)?
10. All through the Old Testament there is example after example of God's dealing with men trying to get them to see themselves as they really are; with men dealing with other men in the same way (God ? David; Nathan & David; David & Saul; Moses and Miriam; Jethro & Moses, etc.).
11. Now when God's Word pierces our facade of sham and discerns us as we are and deals with us realistically—IT IS GOD'S LOVE.
12. When men or women, older and wiser, more experienced and learned than we, discern us and judge us according to truth, LET US EXPECT IT TO BE SOMETHING DONE IN LOVE!

B. In Relationships

1. Love is person-oriented; it deals with persons discerning, judging estimating what they ought to be and can be with the help of God and Christian brethren.
2. A person who, by experience and wisdom knows something that would benefit me, and keeps it from me, does not love me.
3. If I tell my children the truth about themselves but do not share with them some truth that will help them I do not love them.
4. Jesus' dealing with the Syrophoenician woman would have been considered harsh, even cruel, by some (Mk. 7:25-30) but He dealt with her on the basis of what she could become.
5. Jesus' dealing with Peter when He said, "Get thee behind me, Satan," was discerning love in order to bring Peter to what he could be.
6. THERE ARE SOME OF YOU HERE THIS MORNING LIVING IN THE JOY OF BEING BETTER THAN YOU WERE BECAUSE ONE OF YOUR TEACHERS OR A GROUP OF TEACHERS HAVE DEALT WITH YOU ON THE BASIS OF THEIR JUDGMENT OF WHAT YOU COULD BECOME!

It seemed distasteful to you at first—you disliked us and accused us of putting you down at first—but now you know we judged that you could be better than you were and we insisted on it.

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7. Love demands that those who have the advantage of experience and leadership relate to others on the basis of building up—NOT LEAVING OTHERS TO GO BACKWARD . . . OR EVEN TO REMAIN WHERE THEY ARE!

C. In Remedies

1. Love is always seeking that which is practical—helpful.
2. That which is the most helpful in a situation, may not always be the most glorious or win the most applause. It may not even be the most soothing.
3. But love is interested only in that which is helpful.
4. Love seeks the long-range remedy. Love is never satisfied with superficialities or stop-gap measures.
5. "Now obviously no chastening seems pleasant at the time: it is in fact most unpleasant. Yet when it is all over we can see that it has quietly produced the fruit of real goodness in the characters of those who have accepted it in the right spirit" (Heb. 12:11-12) J. B. Phillips, *The New Testament In Modern English*.
6. NOW THERE MAY BE SOME OF YOU WHO HAVE HAD REMEDIES PRESCRIBED TO YOU THAT MAY HAVE SEEMED LIKE BITTER MEDICINE. SO FAR AS I AM ABLE TO JUDGE THE MOTIVES OF THOSE DIRECTING THIS COLLEGE, I BELIEVE THEIR REMEDIAL PRESCRIPTIONS WERE MADE IN GOD-LIKE LOVE.
7. In their years of experience and saturating their mind with the mind of Christ as revealed in His Word, they have always sought the long-term, helpful, strengthening remedy.
8. Their motives are, as far as I am able to judge, pure and loving. The wisdom of their decisions, I think, will be proved over the long-haul.
9. I have more than 100 letters from former students proving that hind-sight is usually more perceptive than fore-sight.

In an old book given to me by Bro. Wilson, I found some ageless principles stated as well as I have ever seen them stated. One of those principles is: ". . . if the moral powers (of man) are not employed on right objects and directed to a right end, there is not only perversion but deterioration. The more active they are the more they deteriorate. If, therefore, we would do the highest good to men we must seek, not only to perfect their powers, but to perfect the moral powers by directing them rightly. Our object must be to produce a change not merely in the condition, but in the state of men; and not merely in their intellectual state involving acquisitions and capacity, but in their moral state which involves, or rather which is, character." *The Law of Love and Love as a Law*, by Mark Hopkins, 1881, pg. 199.

LOVING, DOING THE HIGHEST GOOD TO MEN, MEANS DISCERNMENT!

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II. LOVE IS DEMANDING

A. It Restraints

1. "Our love to God is shown in the keeping of His commandments (Ex. 20:6; I Jn. 5:3; II Jn. 6). Love is more than a mere affection or sentiment; it is something that manifests itself, not only in obedience to known divine commands, but also in a protecting and defence of them, and a seeking to know more and more of the will of God in order to express love for God in further obedience (cf. Deut. 10:12). Those who love God will hate evil and all forms of worldliness, as expressed in the avoidance of the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh and the pride of life (Ps. 97:10; I Jn. 2:15-17). Whatever there may be in his surroundings that would draw the soul away from God and righteousness, that the child of God will avoid." *I.S.B.E.* Vol. 3, pg. 1933, art. "Love."
2. Love does not indulge. Dr. James Dobson, in his book, *Dare To Discipline*, says, "Perhaps the most common parental error during the past twenty-five years has been related to the widespread belief that 'love is enough' in raising children . . . *the greatest social disaster of this century is the belief that abundant love makes discipline unnecessary.*"
3. A New York psychologist, Peter Blos, is quoted in *Time*, Nov. 29, 1971; "... parents should set limits, affirm their personal values, deny the 'clamor for grown-up status,' and refuse to be intimidated by charges of authoritarianism."
4. In *Reader's Digest* (Feb. 1973), an article entitled "Why Some Women Respond Sexually and Others Don't," Seymour Fisher, a clinical psychologist, researching this over many years, states: "Highly responsive women tended to recall their fathers as having a definite set of values, being demanding and holding high expectations for them. . . . conversely, most low-responsive women remembered their fathers as being casual, overly permissive and short on definite values. . . . A demanding father, gives his daughter the feeling that he is concerned enough about her to devote time and energy to trying to guide her—even if she resents this discipline . . . this relationship, speculates Fisher, could even be the prime determinant of female sexual potential."
5. Permissiveness, or indulgence, is no sign of love! Permissiveness can be the most unloving thing one person ever does to another!
6. CAN YOU PICTURE JESUS INDULGING PEOPLE? He would not indulge Peter and the other disciples even in some actions that appeared correct (e.g. when they would forbid Him from going to Jerusalem and be killed, etc.). He would not indulge the rich

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young ruler to keep the riches which were strangling his loyalties. He would not indulge His own mother in her motherly pride (at Cana marriage feast).

7. THOSE OF US WHO WATCH IN BEHALF OF YOUR SOULS ARE DETERMINED NOT TO INDULGE YOU BECAUSE WE LOVE YOU! WE ARE DETERMINED TO DEMAND OF YOU PERHAPS WHAT NO ONE EVER DEMANDED OF US, BECAUSE WE LOVE YOU!
8. If we should indulge you to your harm, we would never be able to forgive ourselves; your parents and your churches would never forgive us; and God might not ever forgive us—if our indulgence were born of deliberate cowardliness.
9. With as much love, we believe, as Paul the apostle manifested toward Timothy and Titus, his student-preachers, we want to demand of you as much as he did of them (read the letters he wrote to them).

B. It Refuses

1. It sometimes has to say No!
2. Wm. Barclay, *op. cit.*, pg. 16: "When we understand what agape means, it amply meets the objection that a society based on this love would be a paradise for criminals, and that it means simply letting the evil-doer have his own way. If we seek nothing but a man's highest good, we may well have to resist a man; we may well have to punish him; we may well have to do the hardest things to him—for the good of his immortal soul. . . . In other words, agape means treating men as God treats them—and that does not mean allowing them unchecked to do as they like."
3. Curtis Dickinson, in *Christian Standard*, Jan. 25, 1958, art. "Love's Constraining Power," wrote, "It is easy to camouflage weakness and conformity under the guise of love. . . . It is just because God loves you that He cannot overlook you. . . . It is precisely because we love our children that we cannot let them escape punishment. How ridiculous, if we said of a child, 'I love her so much that no matter what she does I will consider it all right.'"
4. God said No to the perfect man in Eden. BECAUSE HE LOVED ADAM!
5. God said No to perhaps the greatest saint of all, Paul, *three times* God said No to him. BECAUSE GOD LOVED PAUL.
6. For a good mental and moral exercise why don't you personally run through in your mind all the great men of the Old Testament to whom God said "No"!

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7. Now list mentally all the churches and people to whom the apostles wrote letters stating many emphatic "Nos"! ADD THEM ALL TOGETHER!
8. THOSE WHOM THE HOLY SPIRIT HATH MADE OVERSEERS OF THIS ARM OF THE LORD'S CHURCH ARE BOUND BY THEIR LOVE FOR THE LORD, FOR HIS CHURCH, AND FOR YOU, TO SAY NO! WHEN IT BECOMES THE LOVING THING TO DO!
9. It is not something they take selfish, sadistic, prideful pleasure in—it is something for which they feel an obligation, and consider a privilege, because it gives them an opportunity to *love for real*.
10. The selfish thing to do would be to give everyone free reign to do as they please, go play golf, and when the situation became unbearable leave it to self-destruction and blame everyone else.
11. God said No to Moses (not enter promised land); God said No to Jonah; God said No to David (cannot build my temple). These listened. God said No to Saul; God said No to Baalam. These did not listen.
12. BE CAREFUL HOW YOU RESPOND TO GOD'S "NO!" IN HIS WORD . . . AND HOW YOU RESPOND TO THE "NO!" OF THE SHEPHERDS OF GOD'S FLOCK!

C. It Reiterates; Reinforces

1. Love does not give up with the first discernment or demand.
2. Love repeats and repeats and repeats (read *The Hound of Heaven*, by Francis Thompson). Love hounds, stalks, trails.
3. The immature tend to classify discerning, demanding love as nagging or harping, nor nit-picking.
4. Does the discerning, demanding love of God give us cause to accuse Him of nagging or harping?
5. Were the Old Testament prophets nit-picking when they repeated and repeated and repeated God's message?
6. CONTINUED REMINDERS TO KEEP YOUR DORM ROOM CLEAN AND ORDERLY, CONTINUED REMINDERS TO PAY YOUR ACCOUNTS, CONTINUED REMINDERS TO DRESS MODESTLY, CONTINUED REMINDERS TO DRIVE LIKE A CHRISTIAN, CONTINUED REMINDERS TO CONDUCT YOUR MAN-WOMAN RELATIONSHIP WITH DECORUM. . . THESE ARE NOT NAGGING, NIT-PICKING, . . . THESE ARE FUNDAMENTAL ISSUES OF LIFE AND CHRISTIAN WITNESS . . . AND THE REMINDERS ARE REITERATIONS OF LOVE!
7. It never ceases to amaze me that athletes, choir members, Impact members or others can so graciously and willingly condescend to take all the repetition of practices, take all the

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demand that they dress alike . . . and then get all upset and accuse others of the college, who love them equally as much, of nagging and nit-picking when they reiterate and reinforce moral and spiritual values.

III. LOVE IS DELIBERATE

A. It is Real

1. Agape love is sincere, genuine. J. B. Phillips translates Romans 12:9: "Let us have no imitation Christian love. Let us have a genuine break with evil and a real devotion to good."
2. Agape love will not stand for sham, superficiality, or unstable emotionalism (note: I said *emotionalism*. Love is part emotion but not all emotion.).
3. Agape love is not the silly, selfish sentimentalism so often portrayed by the world.
4. Wm. Barclay, *op. cit.*, "This agape, this Christian love, is not merely an emotional experience which comes to us unbidden and unsought; it is a *deliberate* principle of the mind, and a deliberate conquest and achievement of the will. It is in fact the power to love the unlovable, to love people whom we do not like."

It is important to understand. . . . Agape has to do with the *mind*: it is not simply an emotion which sweeps over us at intervals when we are in the right mood. It is a principle by which we deliberately live, every day, no matter what *mood* we're in or how we *feel*. It is a conquest, a victory, an achievement. No one ever naturally loved his enemies.

5. Agape love demands the whole man; mind, will and heart.
6. There may be some of you students I know more intimately than others. This often is due to circumstances outside ourselves. BUT IT DOES NOT MEAN THAT MY AGAPE LOVE FOR ANY OF YOU IS ANY MORE OR LESS THAN THE OTHER. THAT IS WHY AGAPE LOVE IS THE HIGHEST FORM OF LOVE . . . IT DOES NOT DEPEND UPON CIRCUMSTANCES! IT IS A REAL LOVE!
7. Many is the time we have been *tempted* to love some of you only according to how we *feel*, on emotions alone, BUT THAT IS NOT REAL LOVE!

B. It is Reliable

1. Decisive, dependable, firm, stable, consistent
2. Dennis Vath wrote it *Christian Standard*, Nov. 5, 1966: "Jesus loved consistently. True agape love is consistent. It does not always compliment. It is not always manifested in a pat on the back, for this is not always in our best interests. Agape love does not always agree. Scripture tells us that the one God loves

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is the one He chastens. Agape on the human level does not allow itself to be dominated or abused, because it is not in a person's best interests to allow him to take advantage of one."

3. One mark of love often overlooked is that characteristic of being able to make a decision, a consistent decision, a stabilizing decision and stand firm in that decision.
4. COULD YOU HONESTLY SAY YOU BELIEVED THE LEADERSHIP OF THIS COLLEGE LOVED YOU IF IT COULD NOT MAKE A DECISION, CONSISTENTLY, AND STAND FIRM?
5. A LEADERSHIP WHICH IS UNABLE TO MAKE A DECISION, CANNOT MAINTAIN CONSISTENCY, AND IS UNSTABLE, IMPRESSES ME AS A SELF-SEEKING LEADERSHIP!

C. It is Risky

1. Agape love will never let a man be selfishly-safe.
2. Agape love insists upon self-sacrifice.
3. Eugene Nida writes in *God's Word in Man's Language*: "The Conob Indians of northern Guatemala . . . describe love as 'my soul dies.' A man who loves God according to the Conob idiom would say, 'My soul dies for God.' This not only describes the powerful emotion felt by the one who loves, but it should imply a related truth—namely, that in true love there is no room for self. . . . True love is of all emotions the most unselfish, for it does not look out for self but for others. False love seeks to possess; true love seeks to be possessed. False love leads to cancerous jealousy; true love leads to a life-giving ministry."
4. The person who will not risk being hurt or thought badly of—the person who is afraid to do what is best for another because he is afraid of that person's displeasure with him—that person does not know how to love!
5. BELOVED, IT MAY SEEM TO YOU THAT WE DELIBERATELY SET OUT AT TIMES TO COURT YOUR DISPLEASURE WITH US! WE DO! BECAUSE WE WANT TO LOVE YOU WITH A REAL LOVE, WE ARE NOT PRIMARILY CONCERNED WITH WHAT YOU FEEL TOWARD US AT FIRST BECAUSE WE KNOW THAT ALMOST ALWAYS YOU WILL SOMEDAY UNDERSTAND THE LOVE BEHIND OUR COUNSEL AND LOVE US IN RETURN!
6. Any parent who is afraid to risk his child's temporary displeasure rather than enforce some genuine loving restraint, is not worthy to be a parent. AND THIS APPLIES IN THE FAMILY OF GOD!

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CONCLUSION

I. LOVE IS A MANY SPLENDORED THING

- A. Splendor means: glorious, sublime, superb, brilliance.
- B. Love is like a many-faceted jewel; there are many sides to it and they all reflect the glory of God.
- C. I hope I have caught your spiritual eye with three of the more dazzling facets of love this morning.

II. OUR LOVE FOR YOU IS AN ATTEMPT TO REPRODUCE IN YOU THIS SPLENDORED THING

- A. We are going to love you discerningly, demandingly, deliberately.
- B. We are going to love you with our mind and our will as well as our emotions.
- C. You may not be pleased with us always, but we are not going to let our love be directed by that.

C. S. Lewis writes in *The Four Loves*: "To love at all is to be vulnerable. Love anything and your heart will certainly be wrung and possibly be broken. If you want to make sure of keeping it intact, you must give your heart to no one. . . . Wrap it carefully round with hobbies and little luxuries; avoid all entanglements; lock it up safe in the casket of your selfishness. But in that casket—safe, dark, motionless, airless—it will change. It will not be broken; it will become unbreakable, impenetrable, irredeemable."

III. TO YOU, MY BELOVED BROTHER OR SISTER, I AM VULNERABLE

- A. I cannot lock myself up . . . break my heart if you will, I will still love you discerningly, demandingly, deliberately.
- B. To appropriate a phrase from Isaiah, "Behold, I have graven you on palms of my hands; your walls are continually before me."

Chapter Sixteen (16:1-31)

THE SON OF MAN ADVISING ABOUT MONEY

IDEAS TO INVESTIGATE:

1. What is a "stewardship" (16:1-2)?
2. Is it more acceptable to God to be prudent than to be honest (16:8)?
3. How can Jesus tell Christians to buy friends with their money (16:9)?
4. Did the coming of John the Baptist abrogate the law (16:16)?
5. Why is it "adultery" to marry a divorced woman (16:18)?
6. Where is "Hades" (16:23)?
7. Why is the "great chasm" fixed so that none may cross (16:26)?

SECTION 1

Be Shrewd (16:1-13)

16 He also said to the disciples, "There was a rich man who had a steward, and charges were brought to him that this man was wasting his goods.² And he called him and said to him, 'What is this that I hear about you? Turn in the account of your stewardship for you can no longer be steward.'³ And the steward said to himself, 'What shall I do, since my master is taking the stewardship away from me? I am not strong enough to dig, and I am ashamed to beg.⁴ I have decided what to do, so that people may receive me into their houses when I am put out of the stewardship.'⁵ So, summoning his master's debtors one by one, he said to the first, 'How much do you owe my master?' ⁶ He said, 'A hundred measures of oil.' And he said to him, 'Take your bill, and sit down quickly and write fifty.'⁷ Then he said to another, 'And how much do you owe?' He said, 'A hundred measures of wheat.'⁸ He said to him, 'Take your bill, and write eighty.'⁹ The master commended the dishonest steward for his shrewdness; for the sons of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own generation than the sons of light.¹⁰ And I tell you, make friends for yourselves by means of unrighteous mammon, so that when it fails they may receive you into the eternal habitations.

10 "He who is faithful in a very little is faithful also in much; and he who is dishonest in a very little is dishonest also in much.¹¹ If then you have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will entrust to you the true riches?¹² And if you have not been faithful in that which is another's, who will give you that which is your own?¹³ No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon."

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16:1-3 Wastefulness: Someone has wisely pointed out that money is merely a medium of exchange for a man's life. Man spends his time, talent and energy at a vocation and receives in exchange some medium—usually money. By spending that money a man exchanges his life for whatever he considers worthy of his life. If a man hoards his money or spends it all indulging himself it manifests a selfish, uncaring heart.

Jesus spoke the two stories of this chapter to His disciples but mainly for the benefit of the Pharisees who were lovers of money. The parables of the Lost Sheep, Lost Coin and Lost Sons struck a smarting blow to their selfishness and uncaring hearts. The two stories of this chapter continue to strike at this careless attitude the Pharisees had toward their fellowmen. The scoffing reaction of the Pharisees (16:14) shows clearly that Jesus had hit His target.

These stories were spoken in Perea, beyond the Jordan River, during the climax of Jesus' last year of public ministry. He was engaged in a great evangelistic campaign teaching the nature of the kingdom of God and discipleship, calling on all who would to become citizens of God's kingdom. It is significant that Jesus made citizenship in God's kingdom relevant to even such an everyday affair as what a man does with his money. The first story shows "how to" use your money to get to heaven or to send it on ahead in a different form; the second story shows "how to" use your money to get to hell!

A certain rich man (Gr. *plousios*, "plutocrat") had a steward (Gr. *oikonomon*, lit. "house-ruler, house-manager") who had been accused of wasting (Gr. *diaskorpizon*, squandering, same word used for Prodigal Son) his master's possessions. He could not get away with his sin—someone told on him. The master of the house called the accused steward before him and demanded an accounting. The steward was guilty and the master dismissed him from his job. This steward was: (a) extravagant—wasteful; (b) lazy—he wouldn't dig; (c) proud—he would not beg; (d) dishonest—cheated his master when later taking only partial payment for his master's debts. Apparently, before the steward left the employ of this master he would have occasion to settle outstanding accounts owed. He devised a scheme by which he could use his stewardship to make friends! A steward was a trusted care-taker of a rich man's household (cf. Gen. 43:19; Mt. 20:8; Lk. 8:3; 12:42). He was an employee-of-sorts (sometimes a slave) who often became almost like one of the family (cf. Gen. 15:1-3). But a steward was never an owner—he was always simply using his master's goods for the benefit of the master. He was held accountable to the master for the way he used whatever was temporarily put under his administration.

16:4-9 Wisdom: Jesus is not condoning dishonesty! He is simply holding the steward's sagacity up for emulation. There are character traits worth imitating in the worst of men and the wise will see them and copy them.

God never condoned the faults of Abraham but He holds the man up in His Word for emulation as "the father of the faithful." Jesus wants His followers to be both honest and prudent. The one good thing in this steward's nature was his shrewdness—this is the only lesson Jesus wishes to teach in this story. Jesus is not holding this man up as a believer—He is simply saying that worldly people (like this steward) are farsighted and astute in their endeavors for material ends. The Lord desires forethought, preparation and wisdom of His followers for spiritual ends. This steward was wiser than most church members (sons-of-light). There is a great lack of common sense in spiritual matters in the kingdom of God today. Some Christians do not have the courage of their convictions—they are afraid to give the self-discipline and sacrifice necessary to attain the spiritual profits promised by Christ. This parable is like a sharp thunder-clap, rousing us from our spiritual dozing. God will not let us get by with stupidity in our stewardship. He expects us to invest *everything* in our charge (money, time, talents) to produce spiritual gain as intelligently as most worldly-minded people invest their holdings to make material gain.

One of the first things we notice in this parable is the sharp division of humanity. Christ divides all humanity into "sons of this world" and "sons of light." There are only two classes of humanity in all the Bible—believers and unbelievers, obedient and disobedient, gatherers and scatterers, saved and lost, wise and foolish. Men make multiple categories of goodness and evil, but for Jesus, when the final test comes, every man gives allegiance to either Him or the devil. If you are not a son of light, you are a son of this world. There are only two destinies—heaven or hell; only two repositories for your "unrighteous mammon"—heaven or rust and destruction, and only two roads—the narrow and difficult that leads to salvation, or the broad and easy that leads to death.

The sons of this world are *not* wiser in *what* they choose! They choose what is temporal. This world and all its substance is doomed to destruction. Every dollar, every monument to fame, every work of art, every "thing" will perish. None of this world can be transferred as it is to heaven—not even the human body. "Things" must be exchanged for a different kind of "currency"—that "currency" is *people*, (I Thess. 2:19-20) transformed into the image of God's dear Son. The sons of this world choose what is vain. "Things" of the world—of the flesh—cannot satisfy the deepest and ultimate needs of the spiritual man. Men need grace, truth, forgiveness, hope, peace, love and identity. These cannot be obtained by the accumulation of things. Spiritual satisfaction comes from self-giving. Sons of this world also choose what forever must remain the Creator's. A man who is worth only the worldly goods he seems to have accumulated is poor indeed! None of these worldly goods really belong to him—they belong to God. True wealth is the spiritual investments a man has made.

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What Jesus is emphasizing is that the sons of this world may be wiser than most children of the light in *how* they conduct their business! Notice how candid this steward was in facing the facts about his situation. He did not lie to himself or fantasize—he did not hide his head in the sand like an ostrich. Business people know they must be brutally honest with themselves about their profit-loss ledgers. They must not lie to themselves about whether business is good or bad. They either learn to be realists or they "go under." Christians are too prone to construct a "fool's paradise" for themselves in the business of stewardship. They fantasize that their spiritual life must be good if they have an abundance of worldly possessions. They are prone to forget that not one "thing" in their charge belongs to them. Their worst fantasy is that as long as they dedicate ten percent to the Master, they may do as they please with the other ninety percent in their charge. This steward of the parable faced the reality that these things were not his; that he had them only for a short time to use; that he could use them to show mercy on people and make friends. He did not day-dream or procrastinate about the future and he did not pout about the past—he made the most of the present.

This worldly-minded steward was keen in the way he planned. He did not allow his emotions to take away his reason. He did not run away with his master's money and waste it like the Prodigal did. He didn't stash it away like the foolish farmer (Lk. 12). He didn't throw up his hands in despair and mental paralysis. He logically and deliberately reasoned out a plan. He decided to invest what was in his charge in helping people in order to help himself. Shakespeare said: "All life is a preparation for death." Jesus urges His followers to make all this life a preparation for the next life. Cold, lifeless money can be turned into a warm handshake, a smile of gratitude or a cheerful word from someone helped for Jesus' sake. Of course, friendship cannot be bought with crass mercenarism. Money genuinely used to help others will be rewarded, if not in this life then in the next. But fair-minded people are able soon enough to discern whether an offering of help is genuine or not. If Christians only dared to believe Jesus when He says, "Inasmuch as you have done it unto the least of these, my brethren, you have done it unto me" (Mt. 25:40), they might be wiser in the use of their stewardship.

The steward of this parable was shrewd in the execution of his plan. He made straight for his goal. He allowed no obstacle to hinder him. He accepted no compromise, no alternatives. He demonstrated self-control and dedication. This steward had to sacrifice time, effort, pride and money. He paid the price without hesitation. Tragically, even athletes exhibit more dedication than most Christians! This worldly-minded house-manager evaluated worldly things as supreme and let no sacrifice stand in his way. Christians say heavenly things are most important—but too many let everything else stand in their way.

16:10-13 Warning: It is an incontrovertible axiom of the business world that the man who can be trusted in small things can be promoted to large responsibilities. The man who will be dishonest and steals small amounts will almost inevitably embezzle large amounts. Jesus is using the parable to illustrate this startling warning; "If you have not been faithful (wise and prudent) in the unrighteous mammon, who will entrust to you the true riches?" If Christians cannot use money and earthly possessions wisely (to prepare for the next life), how shall God entrust to them the true riches of the next life? In other words, what the Christian does here on earth as a steward, determines whether he shall ever get to be a steward in the next life or not!

No steward can obey two bosses. No man can live a life filled with contradictions. It is logically and psychologically impossible. It is unacceptable to the Lord and impossible for the Christian to endure such a dichotomy. "No soldier on service gets entangled in civilian pursuits, since his aim is to satisfy the one who enlisted him" (II Tim. 2:4). Men who do not believe God keep on trying to serve the world, the flesh and the devil while also professing to serve the Creator. That is why the Christian's responsibility toward God in money matters is not completed with giving ten percent of his wages. The Christian is accountable to God for every cent. That does not mean every cent must be given into the treasury of a local congregation for disbursement. It does mean that whatever the Christian uses his money for it must in some ultimate way serve God (through providing for his family, helping those in need, assisting in personal witnessing, supporting civic governments and institutions which are promoting social order and welfare, etc.). The important point is that God must be our Master, and not Money. Our money must be *used* to serve God.

SECTION 2

Be Sanctified (16:14-18)

14 The Pharisees, who were lovers of money, heard all this, and they scoffed at him. ¹⁵But he said to them, "You are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts; for what is exalted among men is an abomination in the sight of God."

16 "The law and the prophets were until John; since then the good news of the kingdom of God is preached, and every one enters it violently. ¹⁷But it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away, than for one dot of the law to become void."

18 "Every one who divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery, and he who marries a woman divorced from her husband commits adultery."

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16:14-15 Knowledge of God: Faithfulness to God is more important than money. The Pharisees who were lovers of money (Gr. *philarguroi*, lit. "lovers of silver") scoffed at Jesus when they heard His penetrating warning about selfishness and dishonesty in stewardship to God. The Greek word is *exemukterizon* and is from *ek*, "from" and, *mukter*, "nose" and literally means, "turned up their noses," or, "snorted." They made a haughty face toward Him and derided Him because they were servants of money. Their actions proved exactly what Jesus had just said: no man can serve both God and mammon. They pretended to serve God, but they really served worldliness, so they "hated" anyone who stood for God. The Pharisees made themselves appear just and right publicly, but God knew their hearts. God knows all men's hearts. It will do us no good to put on public demonstrations of "godliness" if in our hearts we are secretly trusting in financial success. Financial success does not equal approval of God—especially if such success becomes one's master. In fact, it is an abomination to God! The world has a twisted sense of values. The world justifies sexual immorality, dishonesty, cruelty and a multitude of other sins so long as a man has attained financial success. Multi-millionaires are almost always looked up to as good and wise in the areas of civic leadership. But what is exalted among men is an abomination to God! The world is all wrong! Few, very few, rich men are ever members of the kingdom of God (cf. Mt. 19:23-30; I Tim. 6:6-10; I Tim. 6:17-19). Disciples of Jesus must sanctify their worldly possessions in stewardship to God who knows even the heart of man. God wants men to set apart their heart's devotion to Him because He knows that stewardship of possessions will inevitably follow (cf. II Cor. 8:5).

16:16-17 Kingdom of God: Some think Jesus interjected two disconnected teachings (entering the kingdom and divorce, 16:16-18) into His discourse on the use of money. But they are not really disconnected: they are very relevant to the whole subject of stewardship and especially money. The phrase "... the law and the prophets were until John; since then the good news of the kingdom of God is preached ..." does not mean that the Old Testament was abrogated when John the Baptist appeared on the scene. Nor does it mean that the kingdom of God (the church) was instituted, in fact, with the preaching of John the Baptist. It is plain from the Scriptures that the church was not instituted as a New Dispensation or Testament until the Day of Pentecost, A.D. 34, Acts 2:1ff. Jesus spoke of His church in the future (Mt. 16:18) during His ministry, after the death of John. What Jesus is emphasizing about John's appearance on the scene is the anticipatory *nearness* of the long-awaited kingdom of God. What these money-mad Pharisees had hypocritically expounded on so glowingly (the kingdom of God—the coming of the Messiah) was being heralded in their ears by John the Baptist and the Messiah Himself. It was in their very midst in the person

of the King (cf. Lk. 17:21), but it was not officially established and opened to all the world until the Day of Pentecost. The Pharisees could not, or would not, see the kingdom, even though it was so very near to establishment because they were serving mammon. The coming of John the Baptist was in fulfillment of their own prophets in the Old Testament (Isaiah 40:3-6; Malachi 3:1-2; 4:5-6) which many people were acknowledging. John's ministry did not establish the church (Lk. 7:28); it did not abrogate the law of Moses. Jesus advised those to whom He preached to keep the law of Moses until it be fulfilled (Mt. 8:4; Mk. 1:44; Lk. 5:14; Lk. 18:20, etc.). But John's ministry did prepare for the coming of the kingdom (cf. Lk. 1:76-79; 3:3-17; 7:29-30), and the Pharisees were not preparing themselves to receive the kingdom because they were not submitting to the "violence" necessary to enter it. The kingdom of God preached by Jesus (and John the Baptist) could be entered only when men "violently" trample down their human values and accept God's values. What is exalted among men is an abomination in the sight of God. Jesus is *not* saying that men were forcing their way into the kingdom of God—no one will ever be able to enter the kingdom by force. The "violence" Jesus is talking about is the spiritual "death" to self that must take place. To enter the kingdom and remain a citizen, a man must cut off his right hand or pluck out his right eye if it offends or causes him to sin (Mt. 5:29-30). Men must "violently" tear themselves away from subservience to money and fleshly indulgence if they are to enter the kingdom. It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom. Men must lay aside the sin which so easily besets them and run the race with patience and endurance if they are to be kingdom citizens. We enter the kingdom through much tribulation (cf. Acts 14:22). Kingdom citizenship requires a daily, agonizing, traumatic, "violent" struggle or war between the flesh and the spirit (cf. Rom. 7:15-25; I Cor. 9:27; Gal. 5:17). We enter by death! There must be a crucifixion of self (Gal. 2:20-21; Rom. 6:1-23) if we are to enter. The Pharisees "scoffed" at the revolutionary idea of using one's money to help the unfortunate (as Jesus had just taught in His parable). They scoffed at the idea that God would call them to account as stupid stewards. They scoffed at the idea that they could not serve both God and mammon. But Jesus' warning is that these ideas were in the law of God from the beginning and not one dot of the law of God could be made void by all their scoffing. Divine ownership and human stewardship is taught throughout the Old Testament (both the law and the prophets). Helping the less fortunate is the essence of the law; love for God and for one's neighbor are the two principle commandments of the law! So these Pharisees who boasted they were protecting the law of God are found to be in direct opposition to it. Their opposition will not keep it from being vindicated. It would be easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for any man to

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be able to get away with disobedience to God's law. God is serious about a man and his money!

16:18 Keeping God's Commandments: The subject of divorce is also connected to the subject of a man's money—as almost all married people will acknowledge. More marital discord ensues from troubled money matters than from almost any other problem. If financial difficulties (brought on by selfishness or poor management, usually) are not the number one agitation leading to divorce, they are a close second! In fact, in Jesus' day, marriages, divorces and remarriages were often entered into for very mercenary reasons. People even in those days tried to "marry well" in the matter of money. Men often divorced their wives and married those who had more money. Divorce laws were very liberal among many Jewish theologians in Jesus' day. A man might, according to some, divorce his wife if she "did not please him."

This statement of Jesus must be interpreted in the light of all New Testament teaching on divorce (cf. Mt. 5:31-32; 19:1-9; Mk. 10:11-12; Rom. 7:1-3; I Cor. 7:1-40). There must also be the consideration that all the New Testament teaching on marriage, divorce and remarriage focuses on the ideal. What the N.T. teaches is intended for the citizen of the kingdom and is the highest spiritual expectation of God for Christians. We cannot, therefore, expect unbelievers to share in the absolute ethical ideals of marriage presented in the New Testament.

The whole Bible is unequivocal in its teaching that divorce is a sin against God and against man. There appears to be one or two exceptions where divorce may be acceptable as a last resort (Mt. 5:32; 19:9). First, when there is sexual unfaithfulness by one member of a marriage. Second, where one member of the marriage is an unbeliever and "puts asunder" the marriage by desertion (cf. I Cor. 7:15) (see notes in Special Study on I Corinthians 7). Divorce over trivial matters, such as money, is a serious sin according to Jesus here. Jesus plainly says here that the man who divorces his wife (the exception already stated in Mt. 5:32; 19:9) and marries another commits adultery. He also says whoever marries a woman divorced from her husband commits adultery. There must be allowance, of course, for the man who marries a woman divorced from her husband because her husband was unfaithful. The Christian will not divorce a spouse except for the cause of fornication. The Christian will not marry a person divorced unless the divorced person was a victim of an unfaithful spouse.

We shall not here discuss the statement of Jesus in Mt. 5:32 that everyone who divorces his wife, except for the cause of fornication, *makes* her an adulteress. For an excellent discussion of this matter see *The Gospel of Matthew* by Harold Fowler, College Press, pgs. 272-286, and *Learning From Jesus* by Seth Wilson, College Press, pgs. 370-380. Since there are many questions about marriage, divorce and remarriage not specifically

dealt with by Jesus, especially as they would apply to Christians who had already involved themselves in marital problems before becoming Christians, it seemed good to this author to include a special study of I Corinthians, chapter 7. We accept the writings of the apostles as Holy Spirit inspired amplifications and commentaries on the general principles taught by Jesus as recorded in the Gospels. One thing is certain: the sexual union of one man to one woman for the purpose of mutual spiritual edification and procreation of the human race is the first institution ordained of God from creation. God wishes that union to continue in mutual faithfulness until death and forbids any man (person) from putting the union "asunder." Divorce is sin. Sin is rectified by substitutionary atonement accepted by faith and repentance.

"PROBLEMS THAT PLAGUE THE SAINTS" CELIBACY, MARRIAGE, DIVORCE, REMARRIAGE

I Corinthians, Chapter 7

INTRODUCTION

Paul was not married when he wrote I Corinthians. Some people have difficulty accepting advice on marriage from a bachelor.

It is possible that Paul had previously been married. If he was a member of the Sanhedrin it is doubtful that he could have been a member unmarried. Also, this chapter does seem to be written by someone who knew by experience what marriage was all about. He might have been a widower.

No one has ever glorified marriage more than the apostle Paul (cf. Eph. 5:22-23); Paul's great tribute to Timothy's home background (II Tim. 1:5) shows something of the esteem with which he looked upon home ties.

But whether he was married or not makes no difference. What he teaches is as the apostle of Christ and therefore to be believed and obeyed.

DISCUSSION

I. THE PURITY OF MARRIAGE, 7:1-9

A. Reason for this admonition

1. Apparently the Corinthians had written previously asking questions about marriage.
 - a. Some groups were already saying that the more "spiritual" people were the ascetics who abstained from marriage and they taught that even those Christians who were married should take a brother-sister vow and live in a platonic relationship.

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- b. Paul warned Timothy that such "denials" of the faith and demonic doctrines would appear in the church (I Tim. 4:1-5).
 - 2. On the other hand, Jewish Christians in Corinth would say there was no room in the church for celibacy.
 - a. The idea of not marrying was so foreign to the Jewish mentality that the O.T. does not even have a word for "bachelor."
 - b. A godly life for the Jew meant not only marriage, but children.
 - 3. The loose morals of the Corinthian culture surrounding the church there with the Greek and Roman religions advocating fornication.
- B. Celibacy and marriage are both pure in the Christian community, v. 1-2
- 1. Celibacy is good, but so is marriage. If a person does not have a special gift for celibacy, he is much better off to marry than to be tempted to immorality or to "burn" with unfulfilled passion (7:9).
 - 2. Marriage is honorable (Heb. 13:4); celibacy is honorable (Mt. 19:10-12; I Cor. 7:7-9).
 - 3. The unmarried state is not superior in any moral sense to the married, nor vice-versa.
 - 4. It is wrong to consider celibacy as morally superior to marriage; it may have its advantages—but then, so does marriage.
- C. Marriage is primarily for the exercise of human sexual powers.
- 1. It is in marriage men and women are granted this privilege.
 - 2. Marriage isn't all privilege—it has its responsibilities.
 - a. Both husband and wife, in marriage, give up exclusive rights to their own bodies, agreeing to share them fully with their partner (7:4).
 - b. The happiest marriages are those characterized by complete liberty, few inhibitions, and absence of any guilt complex.
 - c. The cause of so much marital trouble today is *selfishness* not only, but certainly foremost, in the areas of sexuality.
 - 3. There is an exception to sexual and marital responsibilities . . . for a *limited* time one of the married partners may give full time to religious duties.
 - a. These are definite instructions that there may come times when a *personal* time for seeking the Lord comes before the dearest on earth—**BUT ONLY FOR A LIMITED TIME**.
 - b. Church work cannot be used as an excuse for neglecting one's marital responsibilities; what is accomplished in serving the Lord if one's marriage partner is tempted and lost?
- D. Celibacy is a *special* gift (a *charismatic* gift).
- 1. Paul will deal with this more specifically in 7:17-40.

2. When God made man, He saw "that it was not good for man to dwell alone" so He made a helper "fit for him" (Gen. 2:18).
3. Jesus said, "not all men can receive this . . . but only those to whom it is given . . ." (Mt. 19:11).

II. THE PERMANENCE OF MARRIAGE, 7:10-16

- A. Apparently in Corinth, new converts were leaving their partners and breaking up their marriages.
 1. The ideal situation is that both partners in a marriage be Christians.
 2. Young people can and should choose Christian partners before marriage. Love is not something one "falls into" it is something he wills, decides and does, and does constantly in spite of emotions or circumstances!
 3. But this ideal is impossible in a world of unbelief. Sometimes in a marriage of two unbelievers, one is converted after the fact. What to do? Remain married to the unbeliever if at all possible!
- B. When it comes right down to it, there is no essential difference between a Christian marriage in a church and a pagan marriage in the living room of a justice of the peace.
 1. God's will is that marriage should be permanent, no matter who is involved.
 2. Marriage as an institution predates all other institutions. It was sanctioned by God before the Law of Moses or the Christian dispensation.
 3. Marriage is not "a sacrament of the church" performed exclusively by the church. It is for the maintenance of human social structures.
 4. It is a human institution, decreed by God, to be practiced by the entire human race.
 5. When two people sincerely agree to live with each other, and obey the social and civil norms for marriage in their community, they are husband and wife regardless of their religion!
- C. While it is possible for a marriage bond to be broken by unfaithfulness (Mt. 19:9), it is certainly not what God desires.
 2. Nor does He desire that the conversion of one of the partners precipitate the break up of a happy home.
 2. Divorce is not God's will for any marriage.
 3. There may be cases where one partner, not at all seeking to do God's will, may dissolve the marriage while the other partner may not be able to stop the dissolution.
- D. What about remarriage?
 1. Paul has already admitted the reality that there is a possibility of the dissolution of marriages even where one party does not want it to be so.

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2. The question is: Does the N.T. absolutely and unequivocally forbid remarriage after divorce? (cf. Mt. 5:31-32; 19:1-12; Mk. 10:2-12; Lk. 16:18; I Cor. 7:15, 39; Rom. 7:3-4).
3. We should also ask: Does the N.T. absolutely and unequivocally permit remarriage after divorce? The O.T. didn't (Deut. 24:1-4)! Actually, there are no absolute or unequivocal directions in this matter. What each of us believe or practice, we do so by our inferences or deductions from certain principles.
4. The following are my personal conclusions or deductions:
 - a. God made marriage for the whole human race.
 - b. Very few men or women have the "gift" to remain celibate.
 - c. Divorce is a sin; Marriage is *not* a sin.
 - d. No one can be *made* to be an adulterer or adulteress against their will simply by divorcing them. They may be stigmatized unjustly as an adulterer and whoever marries the stigmatized one may also suffer such stigma.
 - e. When there is a divorce there is no longer a marriage, neither in God's eyes nor in man's eyes—**THERE IS A SIN IN GOD'S EYES FOR WHICH SOMEONE MUST REPENT** (preferably re-marriage to the same partner).

But unless there is a reconciliation of those two persons, the marriage is over. They are no longer married to the other person.

- f. There are two circumstances which I believe God considers one partner of a marriage innocent in divorce (unfaithfulness; desertion) and the "brother or sister is not bound." Therefore, my opinion is that they are free to remarry—to be guided by their knowledge of the will of God for marriage and their own consciences.
5. I believe God and Christ are interested in producing the highest good in every person's life and in society in general and that is the spirit behind any O.T. Law or N.T. Principle (e.g. the "Sabbath" was made for man, not man for the sabbath, principle).
 - a. What practical or ultimate good is going to be served by forcing (by law, where there really is no such law) those once divorced to remain celibate the rest of their lives?
Of course, Christians should live by the highest law—Love and never need to divorce; but some "Christians" do fall! What about non-Christians? Should a minister of the gospel not also seek the highest good in every *fallen* person's life?
 - b. Many divorces involve small children. What if a husband is left with small children to rear? What if a wife is? Who shall support them financially? Are they better served to be reared without a father or without a mother?

- c. Would enforced celibacy heal the results of divorce? Will the church be able to support both materially and psychologically all broken homes? Will the taxpayers and the State?
- d. Would enforced celibacy heal the problems of temptation and incontinence (I Cor. 7:2, 5, 9, 36)?

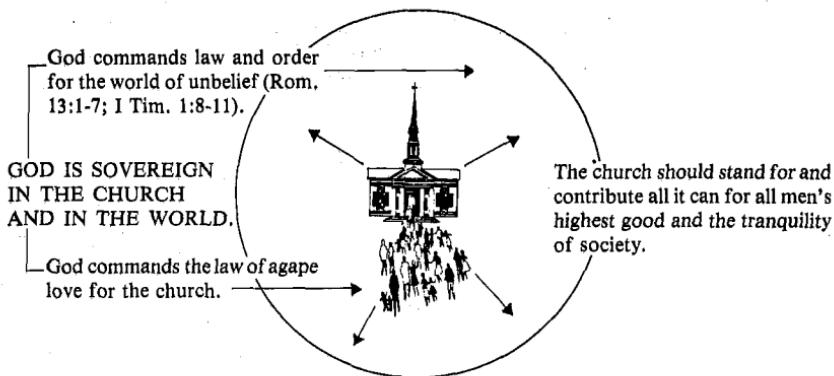
If we might paraphrase Jesus, "Is it lawful to do good through the institution of marriage or to tempt to promiscuity through enforced celibacy? Marriage was made for man, not man for marriage." Enforced celibacy in prisons intensifies sexual crime.

- e. In no sense of the word do I condone divorce. I do not even condone loveless marriages whether they remain legally and outwardly married until they die. Both are certainly less than God's ideal.
- f. But, neither do I think a minister of the gospel (since he is authorized by the civil authorities to do so) is "partaking of the sin of divorce by performing marriage vows for couples who are both unbelievers or one a believer and another an unbeliever or those who have been previously divorced.

God does not approve of divorce; I do not approve of divorce. God *does* approve of marriage—I approve of marriage. I had nothing to do with their divorce; but I can have something to do with their marriage.

And last, but not least, in every marriage I perform I may, in a positive way, be able to instruct and exemplify the Christian gospel—and in a negative sense I may not give anyone an opportunity to criticize the church for lack of compassion and understanding.

I am also standing for law and order in the lives of unbelievers who will not be controlled by the law of love.



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III. THE POWER OF MARRIAGE, 7:12-16

- A. Paul's instruction to the Corinthian Christian married to an unbeliever is that the believer should "sanctify" the marriage by trying to win the unbeliever.
 - 1. The unbeliever is in a "set apart" circumstance (at least that much set apart from the world) by being married to a believer.
 - 2. The marriage relationship is a powerful tool in the hands of God for salvation.
 - a. When a man is converted, as head of the house he should lead his family to find the Lord (the Philippian jailer and Cornelius).
 - b. When a woman is converted, she has to be content with a slower process. Peter says that wives should submit themselves to their husbands; the husbands will more readily be won to Christ this way than through their wives' nagging, "preaching" or arguing, I Peter 3:1-2.
- B. Children who have one or two Christian parents are at a great advantage over those reared in non-Christian homes. They also are "set apart" that much from complete worldliness.
 - 1. Paul does not mean that any unbeliever or child is automatically saved by being married to a Christian or being born of Christian parents.
 - 2. But they will undoubtedly hear the gospel or see it being lived out more clearly and often there than anywhere else.
- C. When the unbelieving partner in a marriage has a heart so hardened by sin he/she "puts asunder" (Gr. *choridzo*, the same word used in Mt. 19:6; Mk. 10:9, and means more than "separation.") or divorces the believing partner, then the believing partner is "not bound."
 - 1. I believe the way to remarriage is opened up, not only to the believer, but to the unbeliever.
 - 2. Dependent, of course, upon circumstances, needs, conscience, penitence and civil law.
 - 3. The unbeliever who has caused divorce has sinned. He/she must become a believer and be immersed in repentance in order to be forgiven.

But, for the benefit of society, if the unbeliever cannot be controlled from promiscuous sexual intercourse by self-control, he/she should be married according to the laws of the society in order to maintain some level of human responsibility and keep human society from degenerating into an animalistic level.

- 4. The civil law is for the non-Christian (I Tim. 1:8-11; Rom. 13:1-7).

IV. THE PRIVILEGE OF CELIBACY, 7:17-40

- A. Paul by guidance of the Holy Spirit, says that under certain circumstances it would be better to remain single.

1. That is quite startling in these days when apparently the unmarried condition is to be avoided at any cost.
2. Marriage and a family is the normal state of affairs for Christians and non-Christians alike.

But some people have been given the ability (charisma) to remain unmarried.

3. Some people tend to feel that there is something wrong with the Christian who is a "spinster" or a "bachelor"—Paul is not in agreement.

B. Paul's advise, "seek not."

1. Consider how dangerous it would be to marry, just for the sake of appearances, someone whose idea of loyalty to Christ is not your own.

2. God did not create us for marriage AT ANY PRICE!

3. Paul gives 3 advantages of celibacy:

a. Relief from anxiety about the things of the world which must be concentrated on by a "bread winner."

b. Freed from distractions in order to serve the Lord more fully and intensely.

c. Freed from troubles due to distressing times.

Now of course these may be achieved whether married or unmarried—but with less difficulty and more time for the Lord when unmarried, if the circumstances are such as to disrupt peaceful family life (like persecution, economic distress, etc.).

God forbade Jeremiah to marry (Jer. 16:1-4) because of terrible times.

C. If it is marriage out of the will of God, then it is better to remain single.

1. To step into any relationship outside the will of God is not only to involve oneself in tragedy, but perhaps to bring sorrow into the lives of a generation yet to be born.

2. Entry into a marriage out of the will of God which brings children into the world may cause their whole lives to know unhappiness, misery and unbelief.

Only the very strong, who by the grace of God having emotions and drives under control, with the special gift, are able to do this. All others should marry. And the married life is the norm—in no way inferior spiritually to celibacy.

SOME OBSERVATIONS OR CONCLUSIONS: (especially for Christians)

1. If you have the gift of celibacy, do not seek to be married but rather use your gift as a single person for God's glory.

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2. If you do not have the gift of celibacy, plan to marry. If you don't marry, you will most likely get into trouble. It is better to marry than to burn.
3. If you are getting married, be sure your husband or wife is a Christian.
4. If you are already married to an unbeliever, go to any extreme to preserve the marriage. You might well win your husband or wife to the Lord in conducting yourself in the Spirit of Christ in marriage.
5. If you want a happy marriage, do not neglect to afford your partner all the physical satisfaction desired, along with the love and spiritual aspects of marriage. The wife owns her husband's body, and the husband owns his wife's body.
6. If divorce comes in the marriages of believers or unbelievers, Christians must be involved in finding and guiding the fallen to the highest possible good for the person and for society. This will most likely involve re-marriage.
7. Most certainly, the church must emphasize in the minds of its membership (at the youngest level possible) God's will for marriage. The church must also emphasize *agape love* (love of choice, love of will-power, love of decision—not emotion only; a love for the unlovable; a love that is commanded by God) as the only security for marriage.

SECTION 3

Be Sharing (16:19-31)

19 "There was a rich man, who was clothed in purple and fine linen and who feasted sumptuously every day. ²⁰And at his gate lay a poor man named Lazarus, full of sores, ²¹who desired to be fed with what fell from the rich man's table; moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. ²²The poor man died and was carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom. The rich man also died and was buried; ²³and in Hades, being in torment, he lifted up his eyes, and saw Abraham far off and Lazarus in his bosom. ²⁴And he called out, 'Father Abraham, have mercy upon me, and send Lazarus to dip the end of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am in anguish in this flame.' ²⁵But Abraham said, 'Son, remember that you in your lifetime received your good things, and Lazarus in like manner evil things; but now he is comforted here, and you are in anguish. ²⁶And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, in order that those who would pass from here to you may not be able, and none may cross from there to us.' ²⁷And he said, 'Then I beg you, father, to send him to my father's house, ²⁸for I have five brothers, so that he may warn them, lest they also come into this place of torment.' ²⁹But Abraham said, 'They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.' ³⁰And he said, 'No, father Abraham;

but if some one goes to them from the dead, they will repent.' ³¹ He said to him, 'If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be convinced if some one should rise from the dead.' "

16:19-21 Selfishness: Jesus told about a rich man who used his riches selfishly to illustrate what happens to such people after they die. Some have called this a parable—but Jesus does not call it a parable. Jesus even gives the name of the beggar. We believe it was an event that literally happened and is true to the facts in every detail. There was such a rich man; there was such a beggar; there is such a place as Hades. Even if it was a parable Jesus would not "make up" a fantasy which had no basis in fact about such a serious matter as life after death. He would not concoct a fable which was untrue just to scare someone. Besides, what He teaches here about life after death for the impenitent is substantiated by the rest of the New Testament.

Note the contrasts between the two men:

The rich man

1. dressed in a purple robe
(Gr. *porphurān*) and fine linen
(Gr. *busson*); sign of luxury.
2. rich (Gr. *plousios*)
3. feasted sumptuously every day
(Gr. *euphrainomenos lampros*,
lit. "made merry flamboyantly") show of ostentation; he flaunted his riches.

The beggar

1. covered with open, festering sores (Gr. *eilkomenos*) licked by the dogs; destitution
2. poor (Gr. *ptochos*)
3. wished to be fed with crumbs from rich man's table (Gr. *epithumon chortasthenai apo ton pipton ton apo tes trapezes*, lit. "desiring to be satisfied from the table . . .") shows humility.

The beggar, Lazarus, lay every day at the gate of the rich man. The implication is that the rich man had to be aware of the beggar's destitution. Apparently the beggar expressed his "desire" to be fed crumbs from the rich man's table but nothing was offered him. This side of the grave the scoffing Pharisees and most of the world today would have contempt for the poor beggar—if not contempt then inactive pity (if there is such a thing). The avaricious Pharisees and most of the world today would envy the rich man. That is how it is in this world—but what about after this life is over?

16:22-25 Suffering: Here are two men at opposite ends of the economic and social spectrum—the very rich and the utterly destitute. Both of them died, of course, for every man does! Neither riches nor poverty can circumvent death. One had a funeral (the rich man was "buried") and the body of the other was probably cast into Gehenna (Jerusalem's city-dump). The beggar was carried by the angels to Abraham's "bosom." Abraham

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died himself when he was 175 years old (Gen. 25:7) and he was "gathered to his people." Since none of his ancestors were buried in the cave of Machpelah (where he was buried) the phrase "gathered to his people" does not simply refer to Abraham's death and burial. Apparently the phrase refers to Abraham's existence after death with those who before him had died in faith (Heb. 11:1-16). This is why the location of the departed spirit of this beggar "son of Abraham" was actually called "Abraham's bosom." The rich man went to Hades and was in torment. Death comes to all but it does not end existence. The dead apparently go to some intermediate state where they are conscious, knowing and being known, as they wait the final judgment and eternal existence. This intermediate state is an actual place. Samuel was recognized by both the witch and Saul (I Sam. 28:13-19) and Samuel was conscious. There are beings in another existence all around us if we could "see" them. God adjusted the eyes of Elisha's servant to "see" the fiery chariots and horses (II Kings 6:16-17). The apostles saw Moses and Elijah and recognized them as they were transfigured with Jesus (Mt. 17:3; Mk. 9:4; Lk. 9:30-31).

There have been declarations that the Old Testament does not teach life after death. That is sheer nonsense. Job believed (Job 19:25-26); Daniel believed (Dan. 12:2ff.); David believed (II Sam. 12:23); Abraham believed (Heb. 11:19); many O.T. saints believed (Heb. 11:35); Martha believed (Jn. 11:24); many of the Pharisees believed (Acts 23:6-8). For an extensive study of the O.T. teaching on the Future Life, see *Isaiah, Vol. II* by Paul T. Butler, College Press, pgs. 287-299.

Hades (Gr. *Haides*) in Greek mythology was the god of the underworld, the son of Cronos and Rhea and the brother of Zeus; the word came to be used to denote the kingdom ruled over by Hades, or the abode of the dead. The Greek conception of Hades was that of a locality receiving into itself all the dead, but divided into two regions, one a place of torment, the other of blessedness. Almost without exception the Septuagint uses *hades* to translate the Hebrew word *Sheol* which is the O.T. name for the abode of the dead. Although the word itself in Greek had its origins in Greek mythology, the concept Jesus and the rest of the N.T. teach about the abode of the dead is from the O.T. revelation of God. Admittedly the O.T. is vague and dim about life after death, still, once one gathers all that is said and inferred about Sheol from the O.T. it appears clear there was belief in a continuity of consciousness after physical death; there was rest and blessedness for the believer and torment for the infidel (cf. Isa. 14:12ff. for example). The O.T. as well as the N.T. places emphasis on the final judgment and redemption and leaves many things connected with the intermediate state in darkness.

The clearest picture we have in all the Bible on the intermediate state of the dead is in Luke 16:19-31. The N.T. seems to teach that life *immediately* after death will be a state of:

- a. *Consciousness*: II Cor. 5:8; Phil. 1:23; Lk. 23:43; 16:24ff.; II Cor. 12:2-4; Rev. 14:13.
- b. *Disembodiment*: However, the spirit will be reunited with a new and appropriate body at the final resurrection; I Cor. 15:35ff.; Rev. 6:9.
- c. *Incompleteness*: No part of the church is complete without the whole fellowship of the saints; Eph. 3:18; Heb. 11:40.
- d. *Restfulness*: Rev. 7:13ff.; Rev. 14:13; Lk. 16:25; Jn. 11:11; I Thess. 4:13.
- e. *Presence with Christ*: II Cor. 5:8; Phil. 1:23.
- f. *Torment for Unbelievers*: Lk. 16:24; Rev. 14:9-11; 19:20.

What these passages appear to teach is that at the time of physical death, there is no break in memory, mentality or change in personality. What a man chooses to *be* in this world he apparently chooses to *be* in the next world. Of course, just like the rich man, many will cry out in anguish at the torment. But that has to do with a desire for relief from unpleasant circumstances, and has nothing to do with a willingness to repent and surrender to God's sovereign will.

The Bible seems to teach that there are four states of existence for man:

1. *The Innocent State*: Infants and young children are apparently in a state of moral innocence until they come to the point of mental and moral maturity where they clearly know the will of God and choose to disobey it; (cf. Mt. 18:1-6; 19:13-15). Only those who have the mental and moral maturity to repent are commanded to do so in the N.T. Should these innocents die before they have made an intelligent, free, moral choice to disobey God's will, they apparently go to be with Jesus (in the intermediate state; see II Sam. 12:23, etc.). There is no categorical determination in the Scriptures as to the age a person will be when he reaches moral accountability. The Hebrews arbitrarily declared young men to have reached that age at 12-13 when they were given their *Bar-Mitzva* ("Son of the commandment").
2. *The Choice, or Probationary (Proving) State*: All persons who remain alive in this world long enough to make an intelligent, free, moral choice to disobey God's will *do so!* All men sin (Rom. 3:23). But God is not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance so He has declared His plan of redemption in a New and Final Testament. All who hear that and believe it by obedience to the terms become citizens of the Kingdom of Christ. Those who do not repent and obey are "sons of darkness" and servants of the devil. Every sinner is dead in sin—separated from God. Every sinner who believes the Gospel and obeys has been "resurrected" to a new life in Christ and is reconciled to God.

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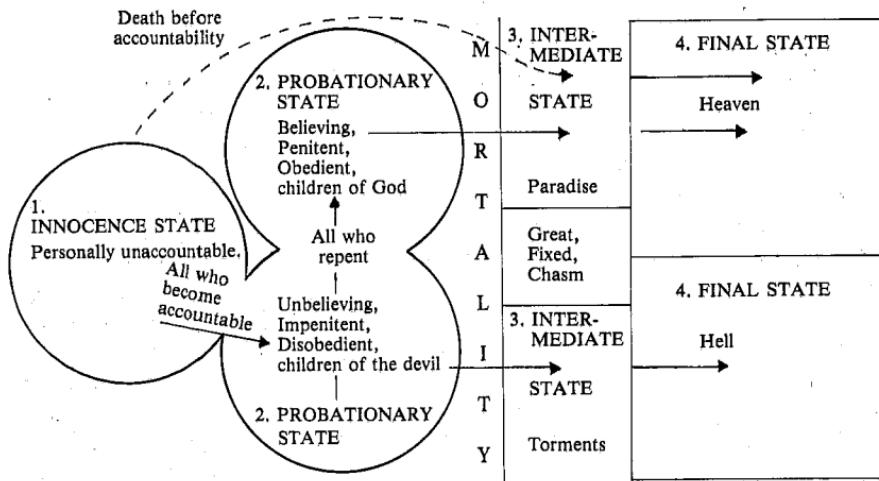
3. *The Intermediate State:* All persons die physically. All human beings must eventually be separated from this earthly body. When that occurs, the real person—the spirit of the person apparently goes to a disembodied, intermediate state of conscious existence. In the intermediate state there are two existences—Paradise (Lk. 23:43) for the saved and Torments (Lk. 16:23) for the unsaved. There is a “great gulf” or chasm separating the two realms over which mankind cannot pass (Lk. 16:26). There, all mankind awaits the Final State which will be realized at the Second Advent of Jesus Christ (I Thess. 4:13-18, etc.).
4. *The Final State:* At the Second Advent of Jesus Christ the Great White Throne Judgment and Him who sits upon it will judge all mankind (Rev. 20:11ff.). Eternal existence will be determined on the basis of what is written in the “books”—some will go to eternal blessedness and some will go to eternal separation from God in Hell (cf. Rev. 21:1—22:21). Those who by faith and obedience to the Gospel have taken part in the “first resurrection” (Romans 6:1-11; Jn. 5:24-29; Rev. 20:1-6) will be forever in the fellowship of God and will not suffer the “second death.”

Critics of the Bible have always felt rather smug about attacking this account of Jesus at the point in the story where the rich man is said to be “in anguish in this flame.” Their contention is that the Bible states an impossibility since flame consumes and it is a logical impossibility for something to be eternally consumed. We must remember, however, the Bible is written in human language, describing unseen, spiritual and supernatural things in natural terms. God must communicate to man in terms of man’s experience, so He likens eternal *torment* unto eternal *flames*. It is altogether possible, of course, for God to create a literal, eternal lake of fire and brimstone (Rev. 14:9-11; 19:20; 20:14-15; 21:8) and create a body for the impenitent spirit that will never be consumed but burned in flame forever. But the emphasis seems to be in this passage on the mental anguish and conscious moral suffering of the rich man in Hades. The Greek word *basanos* (“torment”) is sometimes translated “toil” and means primarily, “to rub on the touchstone, to put to the test, to examine by torture.” The word *odunomai* is translated “anguish” (RSV) and “tormented” (KJV) in 16:24; it is translated “pain” or “anguish” of the heart (Rom. 9:2; I Tim. 6:10). Mary uses the word of her mental anguish when she could not find the lad Jesus (Lk. 2:48) and Paul’s departure from the Ephesian elders brought deep sorrow to his heart (Acts 20:38). Every human being knows that mental and spiritual anguish is more severely tormenting than any physical torture. Men without faith in God have been able to endure excruciating physical tortures and survive—but without faith in God and His Word, mental anxiety or spiritual guilt is devastating. Unforgiven sin, unreconciled guilt and unpacified animosity forever and ever would

certainly qualify to be described as a "lake of fire and brimstone" of torment. An unrelenting, unappeased conscience burns and consumes like fire. Eternal torment consists of total and final confinement in cowardliness, untrustworthiness, pollution, murder, fornication, sorcery, idolatry, lying (Rev. 21:8; 22:15) forever and ever.

The beggar, in Abraham's bosom, is comforted (Gr. *parakaleitai*, "strengthened"). The eternal state of the comforted is described in Rev. 21:1-4; 21:22-27; 22:1-5.

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See pages 309 and 310 for scripture references and explanations.

16:26-31 Sentenced: The report on the rich man and Lazarus parts the veil on life after death and dispels many human heresies about it. First, there is no such thing as "second probation" (called by some, purgatory). The solemn reality taught by Jesus is that all who die in unbelief pass on to a lost eternity. There are no second chances. The great chasm (Gr. *chasma*, lit. "yawning") is impassable and immovable. The state of the wicked and righteous is fixed (Gr. *sterizo*, "established") after physical death. There are no scriptures anywhere in the Bible which teach a second chance. The passage in I Pet. 3:18-20 refers to the preaching of the Spirit of Christ who was in the prophet Noah (cf. I Pet. 1:10-11) when Noah preached to

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the antediluvian sinners (I Pet. 3:20). The spirits of those disobedient were "in prison" when Peter was writing his epistle, *not* during the preaching of the Spirit of Christ, (see *Letters From Peter*, by Clinton Gill, College Press, pgs. 90-91). Second, there is no such thing as "soul sleep." The same soul that was alive and conscious on earth was alive and conscious after death. The essential characteristic of spirit is life. There can be no such thing as a non-living or unconscious spirit. Consciousness is that which is the essence of spirit. Death is not extinction—only separation. Physical death is the separation of spirit from mortal body; spiritual death is separation of the eternal spirit from its Creator. Some verses used by those who teach "soul-sleep" are: (Jn. 11:11-14; Mt. 9:24; Acts 7:60; I Cor. 15:51; I Thess. 4:13-14; Eccl. 9:5-6; 9:10; Psa. 13:3; 6:5; 115:17; 146:3-4; Dan. 12:2). But these simply describe the person only as he *appears* from the human viewpoint which is limited to seeing the visible, physical manifestations of life. Jesus plainly indicates that there is consciousness beyond death. Abraham and the rich man recognized one another. There was thinking and feeling (emotions, at least). Jesus knew what reality was beyond death (cf. Jn. 14:1ff.). He would not deceive His hearers about so imperative a concept.

Third, there is no such thing as spiritism. The spirits of dead men do not return (unless God permits a special case, like Samuel). Death causes a complete break with this world as far as communication is concerned (cf. Job 10:21; 7:9-10; II Sam. 12:23; II Cor. 5:8). The attempt to communicate with the dead is forbidden by the Bible (Deut. 18:9-12; Ex. 22:18; Lev. 20:6; Isa. 8:19-20; II Kings 1:3, etc.). What is thought to be spiritism today may be either human hoax or the *lying* signs of the devil (cf. II Thess. 2:9-12; Rev. 13:13-15). The famous magician Houdini wrote a book entitled, *A Magician Among The Spirits*—a well documented and thorough exposure of spiritism. In his book he said, "Mine has not been an investigation of a few days or weeks or months, but one that has extended over 30 years, and in that 30 years I have not found one (spiritist) that did not reek of fraud, one that could not be reproduced by earthly powers, . . . up to the present time everything that I have investigated has been fraud."

There are some extremely important lessons to be learned from this story. The right use of privilege and possessions in this life is significant for all eternity. The conditions beyond this life result from a godly, merciful use of money to help those in need (cf. Mt. 25:31-46). Life which is not affected by morality now will not be affected by the miraculous now or after this life! Neither a miraculous apparition or someone returning from the dead, nor a tragic story of the torture and suffering of the damned would effect the repentance of the rich man's brothers! Miracles are to establish the faithfulness of God's revealed Word—they do not in themselves bring people to repentance. Hardship, persecution, tragedy seldom produce

repentance (cf. Amos 4:6-13; Rev. 9:20-21; 16:10-11). It is the proclamation of the absolute faithfulness and mercifulness of God as demonstrated in the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ that is the power unto salvation. Miracles simply confirm that what God has said about atonement, forgiveness, salvation and heaven is to be trusted. Plenty of miracles were performed by God's messengers in Bible times. Man does not need any more miracles. God's word is sufficiently validated to engender trust in Him. Men who will not believe now would not be *convinced* (Gr. *peisthesontai*) if another miracle were wrought before their very eyes. Men did not believe or trust Jesus even when He brought a different Lazarus back from the dead (Jn. 11:45-57). Miracles which could not be denied did not produce discipleship in and of themselves (cf. Acts 4:15-22). The task of the disciple of Jesus is to communicate the word of God clearly, plainly, understandably and lovingly to the unbelieving world and then to let every hearer make his own decision. Every human being deserves the opportunity to hear the Word presented in an understandable and winsome way at least once. Disciples of Jesus are *not* responsible for the choice—only for the *communication*. This starkly realistic look at eternity should motivate every Christian for evangelism immediately!

STUDY STIMULATORS:

1. Why, if material possessions are only temporary, does God's word say so much about how men use or misuse these possessions?
2. Do you consider all you own yours? After all you earned it! Or is it all God's? Why?
3. What is the best investment for your money?
4. Do you think some Christians or Christian endeavors are meeting the demand of Christ to be as wise as "children of the world" in their use of money? Why?
5. Have you ever thought there must be some people about half way between being lost and saved? What do you think about Jesus' categories?
6. Why can't a man serve two masters? How did the Pharisees prove that?
7. Do you agree with the religious denomination that today says John the Baptist founded the church?
8. What connection does Jesus' teaching on entering the kingdom by violence have to do with the proper use of money?
9. How is the subject of divorce connected to misuse of money?
10. Is divorce a sin? Can it be forgiven? What should the Christian attitude be toward remarriage of those who have been divorced?
11. Is the account of the rich man and Lazarus a parable? If it is how can we accept it as an accurate description of life after death?

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12. Where is Hades? What is it like?
13. Are the unsaved really going to burn forever in flames?
14. What are the four states of human existence?
15. Three religious heresies are disproved by the account of the rich man and Lazarus—what are they?
16. Why wouldn't sending a man back from the dead have convinced the brothers of the rich man?

HELL

(Mt. 10:28)

By Paul T. Butler — OBC Chapel, September 1975

INTRODUCTION

MY NAME IS NOT HARRY TRUMAN AND I'M NOT RUNNING FOR PRESIDENT.
But I propose to give you a sermon on Hell this morning.

I. HELL MAKES THE NEWS OCCASIONALLY.

- A. In May, 1967, *Time* magazine ran an article on it. Some theologians interviewed had doubts about whether there is an afterlife, and others absolutely disavowed the existence of an eternal hell.
- B. A 30 year old preacher in one of our western communities suddenly became a popular sensation and a national figure because he publicly and proudly denied the existence of hell—and was so quoted in *Time*—he said, “Hell is a damnable doctrine—responsible for a large measure of this world’s hatred. According to this doctrine, God, who commands us to love our enemies, plays the hypocrite by damning his enemies. This in turn stimulates the hatred of God by people who abhor hypocrisy—and it gives sanction to our hatred of certain selected enemies.”
- C. Of the doctrine of the Second Coming and all mankind, except a few, being extinguished or tormented for ever, Nels F. S. Ferre says (*Sun and the Umbrella*, pg. 33), “It seems doubtful that Jesus ever taught such a doctrine.”

II. BUT THERE IS A RETICENCE, EVEN OF BIBLE BELIEVING PREACHERS, TO PREACH ON HELL.

- A. Billy Graham says, in one of his tracts,
 - 1. Hell “... is the most unpopular subject a minister can choose. . .”
 - 2. “In glancing through the books in my library I found that there have been few sermons written on this subject in the past 50 years.”
 - 3. “I have had a number of ministers tell me that they have never preached a sermon on hell and yet, as I read the New Testament, I am amazed at the number of direct references to this subject, especially by Christ.”
- B. In a tract from the “Back To God Hour” the results of a survey taken and indicated that 99% of the people in this country believe in God, but only 58% believe in hell (Tract #112).

III. FEAR OF HELL IS A BIBLICAL MOTIVATION FOR REPENTANCE AND CONVERSION.

- A. Halley’s Handbook, pg. 459, Jesus “talked much about the future life. He appealed to the hope of heaven and the fear of hell. . . .

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It is a pity that the present day pulpit so generally deprecates the very motives that Jesus himself appealed to. Maybe that is one of the reasons the pulpit has lost so much of its power. One of the most powerful stimulants to good and deterrents from evil in this life is a profound conviction as to the reality of the future life, and that our estate there will depend on our behavior here. . . ."

C. S. Lewis, *Letters to Malcom*: "I have met no people who fully disbelieved in hell and also had a living and life-giving belief in heaven."

- B. C. S. Lewis, in *The Problem of Pain*, pg. 118: "There is no doctrine which I would more willingly remove from Christianity than this, if it lay in my power. But it has the full support of Scripture and, specially, of Our Lord's own words."
- C. Dwight L. Moody once said, "The word of God teaches us plainly that there is future retribution; if it does not teach that it does not teach anything. . . . Now some people say, 'Oh, you are just trying to scare us, you say such things just to alarm us.' I would consider myself an unfaithful servant if I did not so warn you. The blood of your soul would be required at my hands if I did not so warn you. . . . No one spoke of the judgment as Christ did; none knew it as well as he."

- D. Paul the apostle said, "Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men . . ." (II Cor. 5:11).

Peter wrote, "... pass the time of your sojourning here in fear . . ." (I Pet. 1:17).

- E. Donald F. Tweedie, Jr., *Eternity*, April 1965, said: ". . . I personally am not negative about fear as an inducement to a crisis which will culminate in a Christian conversion. Probably at least some element of fear is a necessary part of such a crisis experience. Certainly, if the dangers of lostness and hell are real, fear is a most appropriate emotion."

TO LET A LOST AND DOOMED WORLD OF MANKIND GO MERRILY, LAUGHING AND JOKING AND ENTERTAINING ITSELF WITH POSITIVE FEELINGS AND UNFOUNDED OPTIMISM TOWARD AN ETERNAL HELL IS LIKE LETTING A CHILD RUN MERRILY OUT INTO A BUSY STREET LAUGHING, THINKING HAPPY THOUGHTS ALL THE TIME AND NOT WARNING IT OF IMPENDING CATASTROPHE!

I am not contending that fear and hell and judgment is the most expedient way to motivate conversion. Trusting in the faithfulness, mercy, love and goodness of God is the most significant basis for a lasting and maturing conversion. But as easy as it is for any of us and all of us to fall into hypocrisy, presumptiveness upon the grace of God, or returning to a life

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of self-indulgence, WE NEED TO REMIND OURSELVES FREQUENTLY OF THE DANGER OF ETERNAL HELL!

IV. ILLUSTRATION:

A number of years ago four men were fishing from a boat in the Niagara River some distance above the world-renowned falls. As the fish were not very hungry the fishers got into a controversy regarding future punishment. Three of the number contended that there was no such place as hell, whilst the fourth accepted the testimony of Scripture on the subject. The discussion became so heated they failed to observe that their boat was getting perilously near the sweep of the current. Perceiving their danger, they seized the oars, and rowed with all their might to a safe spot on the river. "If there is no such place as hell," said the believer in God's Word, "why were you so afraid to go over the falls?" One of them replied, "The 'No Hell' doctrine is good enough to go fishing with, but it is very poor to go over the falls with."

DISCUSSION

I. HELL IS A REAL PLACE.

A. There are four words translated Hell in the KJV.

1. *Sheol*: The Hebrew word which represents the locality or condition of the dead (*keber* means tomb; *shahkath* means corruption). *Sheol* is not as precise about endless, retributive character of the life beyond as New Testament. Still, wherever used, it does usually represent the place of future retribution (Deut. 32:22; II Sam. 22:6; Job 17:15; 21:13; 26:6; Ps. 9:17; 18:5; 89:48; 116:3; 139:8; Prov. 23:14; 15:11; Isa. 14:15; Ezek. 31:16, 17; Amos 9:2; Jonah 2:2).
2. *Tartarus*: II Pet. 2:4 — the place where God cast the angels who sinned and who are delivered into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment.
3. *Hades*: Most frequently used as antithetical to heaven. Mt. 11:23; 16:18; Lk. 10:15; 16:23; Rev. 1:18; 6:8; 20:13. Sometimes simply the place of departed dead.
4. *Gehenna*: or Valley of Hinnom; Mt. 5:22, 29, 30; 10:28; 18:9; 23:15, 33; Mk. 9:43, 45, 47; Lk. 12:5; Jas. 3:6. Most used word and most associated with judgment.

The words in themselves do not prove hell's existence. They merely describe in human language that which man has not yet fully experienced. The existence of hell is proven from three lines of evidence.

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B. Natural Revelation (we shall equate judgment with hell).

1. "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and wickedness of men who by their wickedness suppress the truth. For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them . . . clearly perceived in the things that have been made . . . receiving in their own persons the due penalty for their error" (Rom. 1:18ff.).
2. The very fact that built into our universe and its moral structure there are penalties, judgments and executions of those judgments has indicated to the pagan world some place of future retribution.
3. Many would *like* to believe there is no such place and some even use the word hell to swear there is no such place, but God has not left Himself without witness to the whole world . . . so they shall be without excuse!
4. I've known some rounders in my day and every one of them except one believed there was a place of retribution—hell.

C. Man's Conscience

1. "When Gentiles who have not the law do by nature what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law. They show that what the law requires is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness and their conflicting thoughts accuse or perhaps excuse them . . ." (Rom. 2:14ff.).
2. Alfred M. Rehwinkel has written a masterful book on *The Voice of Conscience*.

Conscience is absolute in its verdict. There is no bargaining or compromising. We may attempt to excuse ourselves, but conscience will prevail. The judgment of conscience is final. Conscience does not change its verdict unless the standard or law is changed or done away. This is the very essence of the Christian's "passing from death to life"—Jesus has taken away the law that stood against us. This is the only escape from conscience. Without the removal of the law, judgment and retribution are inevitable. Conscience is no respecter of persons. It pronounces its unimpeachable judgments regardless of the opposing authority by which it may be confronted.

3. Conscience is man himself speaking as a moral being to himself. God has placed this voice in man at his creation and man cannot rid himself of it, even if he would.

Men have cried out to die and have committed suicide attempting to escape from the horror of a tormenting conscience. In the torments of an aroused conscience, man experiences a foretaste of everlasting torture in hell.

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D. On the Authority of Jesus Christ

1. Never were there words as solemn and as searching as those in which Jesus warned of hell and the judgment to come. In 12 out of 35 of his parables he depicts men as judged, condemned, and punished for their sins. In one, (Lazarus and the rich man) he draws back the veil on the conditions men in the hereafter . . . a chasm that is forever unbridgeable (Lk. 16:19-31).
2. More than the love of God is revealed at the cross. There we see, unsheathed, the implacable hostility of God's wrath against sin—past, present and future. It is a precursor of the last judgment.
3. The documents that make up our New Testament have been submitted to nearly 2,000 years of intense, scientific, archaeological, textual, investigation. They have been verified, authenticated, accredited as historically trustworthy. They have never, by any authentic evidence, been contradicted. They are a record of one Jesus of Nazareth who walked on the sea, healed the sick, cast out demons, raised the dead and was himself raised from the dead.

HE SAID THERE WAS A PLACE OF FINAL AND ETERNAL RETRIBUTION IN THE LIFE BEYOND THIS ONE. . . . I BELIEVE HIM! UNTIL SOMEONE COMES ALONG WITH BETTER CREDENTIALS THAN HIS, I WILL CONTINUE TO BELIEVE HIM!

Madalyn Murray O'Hair, speaking on the campus of Drake University, said, "There is absolutely no conclusive evidence that Jesus ever really existed. . . . These stories about him must be considered nothing more than folk tales. . . . But there is never going to be any way of verifying them one way or another. . . . I reject the idea of a life hereafter on the same grounds. Do you know anybody who has come back with a first-hand report on heaven? If you do, let me know. Until then you'll pardon me if I don't buy it. I agree with Mark Twain, who wrote about the hereafter, that there is no sex in it; you can't eat anything in it; there is absolutely nothing physical in it. You wouldn't have your brain, you wouldn't have any sensation, you wouldn't be able to enjoy anything—unless you were queer for hymn singing and harp playing. So who needs it? SPEAKING FOR MYSELF, I'D RATHER GO TO HELL."

II. HELL IS THE ETERNAL HOME OF THE IMPENITENT

A. It is described as:

1. the outer darkness (Mt. 8:12)
2. weeping and gnashing of teeth (Mt. 8:12)
3. the pit of the abyss (Rev. 9:2, 11)
4. eternal punishment (Mt. 25:46)

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5. torment or anguish (Lk. 16:24; Rev. 14:10, 11)
 6. eternal sin (Mk. 3:29)
 7. second death (Rev. 21:8)
 8. eternal destruction from the face of the Lord and from the glory of his might (II Thess. 1:9)
- B. Hell is the penitentiary of the moral universe in which all impenitent are sentenced for eternity to share with the devil and rebellious angels.
1. Obviously its essential characteristic is lostness, separation from God and the fellowship of the godlike.
 2. It is eternal remorse, despair, hopelessness and guilt.
 3. C. C. Crawford, *Survey Course in Christian Doctrine*, Vol. II, "Hell has been prepared for the devil and his angels. Wicked men will eventually go to hell, not because God will cast them into it, but because their own consciences will drive them, instinctively, to their proper place (as in the case of Judas, Acts 2:23). As water seeks its own level, they who in this present life fit themselves only for the society of the rebellious, wicked, unbelieving, will instinctively seek that type of society in the next world. For, without a doubt, the devil and all his kind would be miserable in heaven."
- C. A place where sin and wickedness is rampant
1. Judging from the manner in which God deals with unrepentant sinners (Rom. 1), that is, allowing their sin to go unrestrained, it follows that man's destiny is the free expression of pride, selfishness and greed, hate, hurtfulness.
 2. God says: "You have lived for yourself; now you may have just that. . . . Man who was created a social being, is in the end cut off completely from God and goodness."
 3. When you were born into this world, you came to a place that had been prepared for you. Generations of blood and breeding and tradition . . . and, of course, the particular preparation of parents, etc. You were expected; you were prepared for; and so you arrived, not at just a place, but a prepared place. IN OTHER WORDS, YOU ARRIVED AT HOME. HELL IS PREPARED FOR THOSE WHO WANT IT!
- IT SHOULD NOT BE A STRANGE THOUGHT THAT, EVEN AS THERE WAS PREPARATION FOR MAN'S ARRIVAL INTO THIS WORLD, THERE IS ALSO PREPARATION FOR HIS ARRIVAL IN THE NEXT WORLD!
- D. A place of utter ruin and lostness and destruction of reality
1. C. S. Lewis in *The Problem of Pain* (p. 125-126), "To enter heaven is to become more human than you ever succeeded in

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being in earth; to enter hell, is to be banished from humanity. What is cast (or casts itself) into hell is not a man: it is "remains." To be a complete man means to have the passions obedient to the will and the will offered to God: to *have been* a man would presumably mean to consist of a will utterly centered in itself and passions utterly uncontrolled by the will."

2. "By virtue of God's moral law, the sinner reaps as he has sown, and sooner or later is repaid by contempt, selfishness, hate, hurtfulness. Then the selfishness of one sinner is punished by the selfishness of another, the ambition of one by the ambition of another, the cruelty of one by the cruelty of another. The misery of the wicked hereafter will doubtless be due in part to the spirit of their companions. They dislike the good, whose presence and example is a continual reproof and reminder the height from which they have fallen, and they shut themselves out of their company. The Judgment will bring about a complete cessation of intercourse between the good and the bad" (Strong, *Systematic Theology*, p. 1035).
3. Uncle Screwtape, writing to Wormwood says:
"To us a human is primarily food; our aim is the absorption of its will into ours, the increase of our own areas of selfhood at its expense. . . . We want cattle who can finally become food; He (God) wants servants who can finally become sons. We want to suck in, He wants to give out. We are empty and would be filled; He is full and flows over. Our war aim is a world in which Our Father Below has drawn all other beings into himself. . . ."

HELL IS A PLACE OF TOTAL SELFISHNESS . . . WHERE EVERYONE DEVOURS, EXPLOITS, ABUSES, PERVERTS, DESTROYS, REBELLS.

Prisoners of hell enjoy forever the horrible freedom they have demanded and are therefore self-enslaved.

The blessed, forever submitting to obedience, become through all eternity more and more free.

What went on in Sodom and Gomorrah; what people did to people in the decadance of Rome; the hateful, hurtful tortures of the German Third Reich; the agonies and torments of the millions in Russian and Chinese concentration camps; the ruin, destruction, hopelessness, despair of thousands of American skid-rows, bars, brothels, and drug addicts. . . . MULTIPLY A MILLION TIMES A MILLION AND YOU STILL DO NOT KNOW THE HORROR OF HELL.

IT IS A PLACE WHERE ALL THE HORRIBLE CONSEQUENCES OF UNBELIEF AND REBELLION ARE ALLOWED TO RUN RAMPANT FOREVER AND EVER!

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III. HOW TO GO TO HELL

A. Just want to!

1. God created all of us with the power of will and choice. He will not revoke that power. He will give us what we choose.
2. C. S. Lewis, *Problem of Pain*, p. 127, "I willingly believe that the damned are, in one sense, successful, rebels to the end; that the doors of hell are locked on the inside. . . . they (occupants of hell) do not will even the first preliminary stages of that self-abandonment through which alone the soul can reach any good."
3. Just want this world—want what the devil wants—not the globe, but worldliness or mind-of-the-world (rebellion, license, greed, exploitation).
4. "To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law, indeed it cannot; and those who are in the flesh cannot please God" (Rom. 8:6).
5. ". . . friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God" (James 4:4-5).
6. "For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. . . . No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other. . . . You cannot serve God and mammon" (Mt. 6:21, 24).
7. DO NOT THINK YOU CAN PRETEND TO BE SOMETHING OR DESIRE SOMETHING OTHER THAN WHAT YOU REALLY WANT IN YOUR HEART AND MIND. JESUS' MOST SCATHING JUDGMENTS FELL UPON THE "GREAT PRETENDERS" THE PHARISEES, OF HIS DAY. WE MAY FOOL ONE ANOTHER, BUT WE CAN'T FOOL GOD ABOUT WHAT WE REALLY WANT.

It comes down to this: If you really *do not want to do the will of God*, God will grant you your choice and all eternity to make that choice and suffer the consequences.

B. Because, you become what you want

1. The Lord has the power to make us become what we want but He will not make us become something we do not want!
2. The people of the Old Testament wanted a king like the nations, worshiped gods like those of the nations, and became like the wicked people of the nations! (Hosea 9:10).
3. The Pharisees went over land and sea to make proselytes and by their hypocrisy *made* them two-fold more sons of hell than themselves (Mt. 23:15).

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4. Those who worship and serve the beast in the book of Revelation are stamped with the beast's image and character just as certainly as God's people are stamped with His Holy Spirit (sealed).
 5. What do those who do not want to do the will of God become? ". . . filled with all manner of wickedness, evil, covetousness, malice. Full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malignity, they are gossips, slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless . . ." (Rom. 1:29-31). THEY NOT ONLY DO THEM BUT APPROVE THOSE WHO PRACTICE THEM.
 6. ". . . immoral, idolaters, adulterers, homosexuals, thieves, greedy, drunkards, revilers, robbers will not inherit the kingdom of God" (I Cor. 6:9-10).
 7. ". . . immorality, impurity, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, anger, selfishness, dissension, party spirit, envy, drunkenness, carousing and the like . . ." (Gal. 5:19-20).
 8. ". . . reject authority, revile whatever they do not understand, grumblers, malcontents, following their own passions, loud-mouthed boasters, flattering people to gain advantage, act like instinctive, irrational animals" (Jude).
- C. One may actually do *nothing*, and go to hell.
1. "To him that knoweth to do good and doeth it not, to him it is sin" (James 4:17).
 2. The tree that produced nothing was hewn down and cast into the fire (Lk. 13:6-9).
 3. The parables of the talents (Mt. 25:14-30) and the pounds (Lk. 19:11-27) indicates those who did nothing incurred the wrath of the master.

ANXIETY, LETHARGY, SLOTHFULNESS ARE ALL SIGNALS OF UNBELIEF, WHAT YOU WANT, YOU BECOME; WHAT YOU BECOME YOU DO OR REFUSE TO DO!

The safest road to Hell is the gradual one—the gentle slope, soft underfoot, without sudden turnings, without milestones, with signposts (*Screwtape Letters*, C. S. Lewis).

CONCLUSION

I. HELL OR HEAVEN?

- A. These are the alternatives in the Word of God for the whole human race.

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1. By its warnings, threats, invitations and commands, it urges men to recognize the decisiveness of this life.
 2. It permits no silly, superficial view of life or of death, or of destiny.
 3. Instead, it insists on the inevitable fact that a man shall have what he has chosen. . . . "Let the evil doer still do evil, and the filthy still be filthy, and the righteous still do right, and the holy still be holy" (Rev. 22:11).
- B. It further declares that "now is the acceptable time" and "now is the day of salvation" (II Cor. 6:2).
1. It is unthinkable that a follower of Christ should take an indifferent attitude toward the issues of life.
 2. If the apostle Paul sought to persuade men, prompted by the terror of the Lord, it is difficult to see how we can become unconcerned for the salvation of the lost.
- C. Today's generation needs to be told what the New Testament teaches about hell and the awful reality of eternal retribution.
1. It is not a congenial task—not popular, but it is necessary.
 2. It must not be done sadistically, but seriously.

II. THE PLAIN FACT IS THAT WE ARE ALL CLOSER TO ETERNITY THAN WE MAY REALIZE!

- A. The judgment day is nearer than any of us think. In a very real sense it is here right now.
- B. The night is far spent; the day is at hand, right here, right now.
- C. The Day is here, pressing upon us all with the immediacy of the *constant* call of Christ for our personal surrender to Him.
- D. The call is to engage now in a battle in Christ's Name in all the areas of the devil's usurpation of the throne of our hearts and lives.
- E. As C. S. Lewis says, "In all discussions of hell we should keep steadily before our eyes the possible damnation, not of our enemies nor our friends . . . but of ourselves. This sermon is not about your wife or son, nor about Nero, Hitler or Judas Iscariot; it is about you and me."

III. GOD IN HIS UNSEARCHABLE GRACE HAS PUNISHED OUR SINS IN HIS SON ON THE CROSS AND OFFERED US THE CHOICE OF LIFE IN HIS NAME.

- A. The offer is to all men everywhere.
- B. Christ Himself is the source and the manifestation of that Life.
- C. The Scriptures are the invitation and the covenant terms of that Life.

Chapter Seventeen (17:1-36)

THE SON OF MAN ON PREPARING FOR THE END OF THE WORLD

IDEAS TO INVESTIGATE:

1. What is a "temptation" and why is it inevitable in this world (17:1-2)?
2. Can a person really uproot trees if he has faith (17:5-6)?
3. Why is a servant "unworthy" when he has done his duty (17:10)?
4. Why speak of the leper being "cleansed" and then "healed" (17:14-15)?
5. What did Jesus mean, "the kingdom of God is in the midst of you" (17:21)?
6. What is Jesus warning the disciples about in 17:22-25?
7. What are we supposed to remember about Lot's wife (17:32)?

SECTION 1

Be Good (17:1-10)

17 And he said to his disciples, "Temptations to sin are sure to come; but woe to him by whom they come! ²It would be better for him if a millstone were hung round his neck and he were cast into the sea, than that he should cause one of these little ones to sin. ³Take heed to yourselves; if your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him; ⁴and if he sins against you seven times in the day, and turns to you seven times, and says, 'I repent,' you must forgive him."

5 The apostles said to the Lord, "Increase your faith!" ⁶And the Lord said, "If you had faith as a grain of mustard seed, you could say to this sycamine tree, 'Be rooted up, and be planted in the sea,' and it would obey you."

7 "Will any one of you, who has a servant plowing or keeping sheep, say to him when he has come in from the field, 'Come at once and sit down at the table'? ⁸Will he not rather say to him, 'Prepare supper for me, and gird yourself and serve me, till I eat and drink; and afterward you shall eat and drink'? ⁹Does he thank the servant because he did what was commanded? ¹⁰So you also, when you have done all that is commanded you, say, 'We are unworthy servants; we have only done what was our duty.'"

17:1-2 Forbearance: Jesus warns His disciples against the careless, intemperate lack of self-control that puts a stumbling-block in the way of someone else. The Greek word Luke uses here is *skandala*; it is the word from which we get the English word, *scandal* or *scandalize*. The Greek

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word literally means, "a trap, or snare." The Greek word most often used in the New Testament for "temptation" is *perisamos*, which means to "test, try" and sometimes means "the subjective desire to sin and thus put God's warnings to the test." God sometimes sends or allows a *perisamos* ("temptation or test") to come (cf. Heb. 11:17; James 1:2-4; James 1:12). But God does not entice or lure anyone to break His commandments (James 1:13-15); enticement to sin is the work of Satan (Rev. 2:9; I Pet. 5:8-9; I Thess. 3:5; I Cor. 7:5; Mt. 4:1; Lk. 4:2; Mk. 1:13). The Lord is warning that men may allow themselves to become tools of Satan and put "stumbling-blocks" in the way of other men. Even disciples of Jesus are vulnerable; if they do not trust completely in His word, to enticing others to sin.

So long as there are people in rebellion against God's will stumbling-blocks are inevitable. Anything done contrary to the will of God is a potential enticement to sin for someone else. Age, social status, economic circumstances and educational level has no bearing on whether a disciple may or may not be instrumental in putting a stumbling-block in another's way. Temptation to entice someone else does not discriminate. It may come upon us in a rush, galloping boldly at us, trying to overpower us—or it may come seductively, discreetly, slithering through the brush—but it comes. It comes every day and in all circumstances! Temptation is almost always camouflaged. Evil artfully masquerades as good.. Evil appropriates the highest levels of life (sex, food, possessiveness) even religion, as its vehicles of expression.

Temptation may distort reality. This is the way the devil worked on Eve; ". . . has God said. . . ." Satan distorted the nature of God, portraying Him as a bully or an egomaniac. Some distort the real nature of God by imagining Him to be an indulgent grandfather type. Distort the nature of God and the reality of sin gets distorted. Temptation is more intense when we are near that which entices us to rebel against God. The case of David with Bathsheba is a classic. This is so obvious but so seldom acknowledged by men. As one person puts it: "It is not wise for a dieter to hang around a bakery!" "Flee youthful lusts. . . ." (II Tim. 2:22) is exemplified in Joseph's refusal to be seduced by Potiphar's wife. Temptation may be more effective when we have no fellowship with other believers. We are dependent upon the other members of "the body" for proper function (I Cor. 12:14ff.). Temptation may come at a time of great spiritual experience or triumph. It was right after David's greatest victories that he was tempted with Bathsheba; Israel's deliverance from Egypt was just before they made their golden calves; Elijah's despondency came right after his victories over the prophets of Baal; Jesus' most intense temptations apparently came right after His baptism and God's approving voice. Temptation may be based on the assumption that God's word is subject to our judgment, (cf. Jer. 5:12; Amos 9:10). The Corinthians fell into the trap. This is

the temptation to read the Bible to prove our point of view rather than to honestly determine what the author actually intended to say! The more we contemplate that which tempts us, the more apt we are to fall to it. Sin is like a birth. First the temptation is "conceived" through the wish or desire (lust); then it "grows" as it is harbored or nursed; finally it is "born" as the sinful act itself. Just as a child is *alive* before birth, so sin is alive in the "conception" stage—it doesn't have to be an action to be a sin! Repentance from sin necessitates a change of mind, a change or renunciation of the desire.

The subject of stumbling-blocks is very serious. The apostles had a great deal to say about it. The possibility that any man might tempt another to sin is always there. "No man is an island. . . ." said the poet, but the Holy Spirit said it long before the poet when Paul wrote, "None of us lives to himself, and none of us dies to himself," (Rom. 14:7). Paul wrote this in a context dealing with stumbling-blocks (Rom. 14:1—15:13). Things innocent enough in themselves, engaged in without regard for another person's scruples, may become stumbling-blocks and therefore sins. If we cause another to stumble, even though the thing we have done may not be against our own conscience, we have sinned against Christ (cf. I Cor. 8:11-13). There are four main chapters in the New Testament which amplify and elucidate Christ's warnings here—they are Romans 14, I Corinthians 8, 9, and 10. The reader must study these chapters in connection with the Lord's imperative warning in Luke 17:1-2.

To be trapped by a stumbling-block is sin. The man who succumbs to a temptation is guilty. But Jesus goes even further behind the sin to search out the one who put the temptation there! The one who put the stumbling-block in the way of the sinner is even more guilty than the sinner. There are those who not only do sinful things "but also approve of others practicing them" (Rom. 1:32). Peter's refusal to accept the will of God for the crucifixion of the Messiah became a "stumbling-block" to Jesus (Mt. 16:23; Mk. 8:33). Now the Lord did *not* say that the punishment of such a one is that he should have a great millstone hanged about his neck and cast into the sea. He said it would be *better* for such a one if that happened to him! It would be better to cut off one's right hand than allow it to cause anyone to stumble (Mt. 5:29-30)! It would be better to starve to death than to cause someone to stumble (Rom. 14:13-21; I Cor. 8:13; I Cor. 9:12, etc.). No wonder Jesus said, ". . . woe to him by whom they (stumbling-blocks) come!"

The "little ones" are not necessarily children, but all "little" or weak or beginning ones in their relationship to God. The apostles discuss the "weak" brother in their writings on stumbling-blocks. Some, because of conscience or custom, see things and actions as contrary to God's will which others do not so see. The truly mature Christian will forbear and

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even forego his own liberty in such areas rather than cause another to violate his conscience, and cause him to be enticed to sin. On the other hand the "weak" brother must not be guilty of a legalism which insists on binding his scruples (opinions) on the other who has been set free in Christ. Legalism may be equally as serious as carelessness. Legalism may in itself become a stumbling-block!

17:3-4 Forgiveness: What if the reverse should be true; suppose some one puts a stumbling-block in your way, sins against you or offends you. What is to be your attitude toward him? First, I am to rebuke him (Gr. *epitimeson*, lit. "charge him to do the honorable thing"). I am to point out to him that the thing he has done is wrong, dishonorable. Then, if he repents, I am to forgive him. Actually, we must have a willingness to forgive even if our enemy does not repent. If he does not repent, our willingness to forgive will not profit him but it will certainly profit us, for it will make us sons of our Father who is in heaven (Mt. 5:43-48). Christ died willingly forgiving all men their sins against God, but His forgiveness is of no avail to those who do not repent. One cannot forgive another unless he is willing, in some sense, to bear the consequences of the offense done to him. The only way Christ could forgive us was to bear our sins in His body on the tree. If we are unwilling to forgive until the humiliation, hurt or offense is transferred back to the offender, we really have not forgiven!

One of our greatest temptations is to be unforgiving. As a matter of fact, to be unforgiving casts a sure stumbling-block in the path of another. Forgiveness is not a virtue of the worldly-minded. The pagan philosophy is: Be kind to friends, take vengeance on enemies. Even in the Old Testament, man's forgiveness of man is seldom mentioned. Some Jews appealed to Deut. 23:6 and Ezra 9:12 to indicate that forgiveness of some was *not* necessary. Forgiveness is uniquely a Christian virtue. Forgiveness is a *must* for Christ's followers (Mt. 6:12). No limit can be set to the extent of forgiveness (Mt. 18:21-22). Even if a man says he repents, and offends you seven times in one day, and says he repents seven times, you are to forgive him seven times. Love does not keep records of the evil done against it (I Cor. 13:5). Better for your character to forgive seven times, even if the offender appear to you to be insincere, than by refusing to forgive and thus cast a stumbling-block in his way.

To forgive one another "as God in Christ forgives us . . ." (Eph. 4:32) demands humility and self-denial. It requires a realistic acknowledgement of sin and stumbling-blocks. It requires loving others as we love ourselves. The Christian's responsibility toward someone who has offended him is not created by the fact that he has been wronged, but by the fact that the sinner has sinned and harmed himself! That is how God forgives us. Forgiveness is a two-way street. It is one part of a relationship that must be mutual if both parties are to be profited. Repentance is the other part.

The desired effect of forgiveness is to restore a relationship of harmony and peace. But that effect cannot be accomplished without repentance by the one forgiven. Failure of the offender to repent does not release the offended from his obligation to extend forgiveness because an unforgiving heart is also an impenitent heart! The unforgiving heart is not prepared for the end of the world!

17:5-6 Fidelity: All the apostles were shocked. Jesus had spoken startling words. He had challenged them to a life on the level of heaven itself. He was preparing them for the end of this world and the coming of the next. When the initial shock had passed, they cried out, "Increase our faith!" What they were saying was, "Lord, if we are to live like that, to forgive like that, we must have more faith." Their appeal was an intelligent one. Faith is what it takes to live like that. Any man can live without concern for others. Any person can say selfishly, "What I do is my business, and if anyone is offended by it, that is their tough luck." Any person who thinks this world is all there is to life is sure to seek vengeance, hold grudges and be unforgiving. Only the person who believes God's word about atonement, judgment and the world to come has the power to live on the spiritual level Jesus described.

Jesus' reply is very much in contrast with the way men think of faith. Men say, "increase our faith . . ." as if more or bigger is better. Jesus said, in essence, "It is not more faith you need, it is better faith." Faith is not quantitative, but qualitative. He did not even give them any formula by which they might "increase" the amount of faith. He said faith as a grain of mustard seed was what they needed. Note, He did not say faith "as big" or "as small" as a grain of mustard seed. Jesus used the mustard seed to illustrate a faith that has life in it—seed—like faith. Life that is in a grain of mustard seed is powerful enough to overcome obstacles which seem insurmountable and produce a plant. Put a mustard seed into fertile soil and it will grow. If a clod or a rock gets in the way it will grow around it and come forth. The answer of Jesus was a strong rebuke which underscored the fact of their own personal responsibility for the quality of their faith. Christ cannot do for them what they must willingly do for themselves. He never *gave* them faith. He performed some miracles to prove Who He was and that His every word could be believed. But they had to do the believing. He always left people (including the apostles) to wrestle with their problems themselves by applying whatever lived in their hearts. If faith in Him lived there, any obstacle could be overcome; if unbelief lived there, even the smallest obstacle spelled defeat. Jesus is not talking about miracles of faith—but *works* of faith. He did not mean that everyone who believes can go around uprooting trees and dropping them into the oceans, literally. After all, trees and mountains are not man's real obstacles anyway! The real mountains to men are temptation, sin, guilt,

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death. Men can move mountains and trees with bulldozers—but not guilt. The most impossible things are possible and the absolutely unattainable things may belong to men who believe and follow the will of God. To keep from falling into temptation or from tempting someone else a person needs not miracles but a living, working faith. Jesus Himself overcame temptation, not by miracles, but by faith in God's word (cf. comments on Lk. 4:1-13). To forgive unlimitedly one needs not miracles, but a working trust in Christ's promises. We can live on heaven's plane if we believe. The kingdom of God on earth, the church, is supposed to be living on heaven's plane—it is in the world, but not of the world.

17:7-10 Fealty: Jesus told the parable of the "Unprofitable Servant" to warn all His disciples against thinking they can ever *merit* equal status with their Lord. God, by His grace through Jesus, may grant men joint heirship with Him, but they can never merit it. They may be called in at some time to sit down and eat, but they can never go in demanding it. Because they can never do more than they are obligated to do. The obligation of man is to believe and obey perfectly the Creator. Man is commanded to produce perfect service—he does not do so, therefore, he is an unprofitable servant. Until a servant has done *more* than is expected of him or that which is commanded of him he can expect no merit or reward. God owns us outright. We are His by right of creation. We are doubly His by redemptive grace. He does not owe us anything—we owe Him everything and *more*. This parable is aimed at erasing that kind of self-righteousness Jesus saw in the Pharisees and all who follow in their steps. The Pharisees arrogantly considered themselves to have done all they were commanded to do. They believed they had earned the right to *demand* from God a seat at the Master's table. This is no way to prepare for the end of the world. The way to prepare for being "called" in by the Master is to consider oneself an unprofitable servant, dependent totally upon the grace and goodness of God!

We must constantly remind ourselves that whatever God cares to give us is up to Him. There is nothing coming to us of good which we deserve! We can take no credit for our world, our wisdom, our opportunities. We are indebted to Him for everything. Even our expressions of thanks to Him add to our indebtedness to Him because even our thanks is borrowed. We would not even know how to say thanks as we should without his revealed Word. There are many things we would like to say to Him and should say to Him, but can't, which His Spirit says for us (cf. Rom. 8:26-27)! If we give Him our life we are only letting Him have what already belongs to Him. Only when we admit that we are born destitute (cf. I Tim. 6:6-7) of all merit and that we earn are we prepared to appreciate God. Only when we recognize He *gave* us our freedom to choose Him or not shall we be good servants. When we have this perspective, work in His vineyard is welcomed as a privilege and not as a necessary evil. Work

ceases to be work and become a way to express appreciation when we acknowledge that we are unprofitable servants.

To the non-Christian, "everything" must seem quite a price to pay for serving Jesus. But, in the light of God's "everything" it is nothing at all (cf. Rom. 8:31-39). It is the least we can do and live with our consciences—and not be depressed with unexpressed gratitude.

SECTION 2

Grateful (17:11-19)

11 On the way to Jerusalem he was passing along between Samaria and Galilee. 12 And as he entered a village, he was met by ten lepers, who stood at a distance ¹³and lifted up their voices and said, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us." 14 When he saw them he said to them, "Go and show yourselves to the priest." And as they went they were cleansed. 15 Then one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, praising God with a loud voice; ¹⁶and he fell on his face at Jesus' feet, giving him thanks. Now he was a Samaritan. 17 Then said Jesus, "Were not ten cleansed? Where are the nine? ¹⁸Was no one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?" 19 And he said to him, "Rise and go your way; your faith has made you well."

17:11-14 Made Well: A harmonization of the gospel accounts indicates that between Luke 17:10 and 17:11, Jesus was called to Bethany where His friend Lazarus had died. Jesus went there and raised Lazarus from the tomb. The account of this is found in John 11:1-57. From Bethany (which was a suburb of Jerusalem) Jesus retired to a remote area of Judea for a brief rest because the fateful Passover week of His arrest and crucifixion was only a few days away. The crowds were already gathering and forming caravans in the north (Galilee). Jesus wanted one final opportunity to evangelize, so He went through Samaria into Galilee to join one of these caravans bound for Jerusalem and the Passover. The time was the spring of A.D. 30. Luke takes up the record of His ministry here.

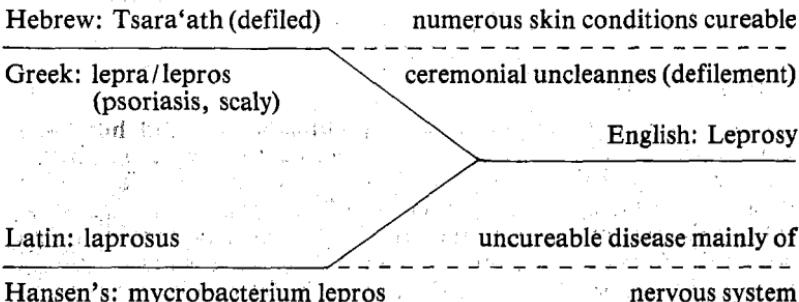
Before considering the incident of the ten lepers the student should refer to comments on Luke 5:12-26 concerning the information on Biblical leprosy:

- a. There is no mention of leprosy (defilement) after the death and resurrection of our Lord. Old Testament Law was nailed to the cross and fulfilled. When that was accomplished there was no such thing as ceremonial defilement for "psoriasis" or "scaly sores." The apostles healed the sick, cast out demons, raised the dead, caused the blind to see, the lame to walk, the deaf to hear, the dumb to speak, but *never cleansed a leper!* We therefore conclude that the significance of "psoriasis" in the Old Testament and in Jesus'

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ministry ("leprosy") was the need to be ceremonially cleansed, not healed. Biblical leprosy was not Hansen's disease.

- b. Actually the English word, leprosy, is a misnomer for both the Old Testament *tzara'ath*, for the New Testament *lepra* or *lepros*, and for modern Hansen's disease!



- c. What these ten "lepers" had was not Hansen's disease and a rotting away of the flesh, but a scaly skin disease like psoriasis which by Old Testament law caused them to be declared "defiled" and in need primarily of being declared, "cleansed."

Ten lepers came to meet Jesus as He entered a village near the border of Galilee and Samaria. Lepers were religiously defiled and therefore banned from all associations with other people. They haunted the roads leading into cities and villages (they were not allowed to live within the walls of the towns). Frequently they lived in caves. Whenever healthy people came near them they were to cry out, "Ame, Ame!" ("Unclean, unclean"). These lepers stood "at a distance" and cried out to Jesus, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us." Jesus healed them of their disease. Nine of them looked and found themselves "cleansed" (healed, too, of course) which apparently emphasizes they were Jews and thus restored to ceremonial cleanliness with their healing. All they needed to be permitted to worship again in the Temple and to be restored to society was official declaration from a priest. One of them, a Samaritan, was also "healed" but since he was not allowed in the Temple of the Jews anyway, there was no need to emphasize that he had been "cleansed." No doubt, even the Samaritans (because of their close adherence to the first five books of Moses) enjoined some social bans against lepers too, thus the only companionship this Samaritan could find was nine leprous Jews. It is a sad commentary on human nature, but true nevertheless, that human misery is the only condition that seems to draw people together *without* racial distinctions. Had these Jews and this Samaritan not been suffering the social ostracization of leprosy, they would probably never have associated with one another.

Some interesting observations about this healing:

- a. Jesus did not even touch the persons healed. He simply said a word and they were healed.
- b. Jesus did not pray for them to be healed, or to have faith.
- c. He sent them away before the miracle took place—to test their faith.
- d. He healed nine people whom He knew (by divine foreknowledge) would be ungrateful, hoping they would be grateful.
- e. He demanded no money, no praise, no testimonies—nothing—as a result of their healing.
- f. The one with the least privilege was thankful.
- g. The ingratitude of the nine apparently shocked and hurt Jesus.

17:15-19 Made Whole: Jesus addressed the Samaritan who returned to thank Him, "Rise and go your faith has made you well." Actually Luke reports Jesus as saying, ". . . your faith has saved you," using the Greek word *sodzo* which may be translated, "saved, preserved, made whole, delivered, set free, rescue." It was the Samaritan's attitude that "saved" him, or set him free, not the healing. Miracles do not save, attitudes do. The statement of Jesus implies that although the nine others were healed, they were not saved because they did not have the attitude of thanksgiving. Ingratitude is a symptom of disbelief. Ingratitude leads to futility and darkening of the mind in unbelief (cf. Romans 1:21). Nine of these lepers wanted to be cleansed (or healed), but that is all they wanted. They simply wanted to exploit the power of Jesus for their own selfish ends. They really did not wish any further commitment to Him. Ingratitude belies a condition of the heart making it impossible to receive grace. The ungrateful person refuses to acknowledge receipt of anything by grace. But it is only by grace that man can be saved. The man not willing to be saved totally by grace, really does not obey the will of Christ by faith—he obeys it hoping to merit salvation by self-righteousness.

SECTION 3

Guarded (17:20-37)

20 Being asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God was coming he answered them, "The kingdom of God is not coming with signs to be observed;²¹ nor will they say, 'Lo, here it is!' or 'There!' for behold, the kingdom of God is in the midst of you."

22 And he said to the disciples, "The days are coming when you will desire to see one of the days of the Son of man, and you will not see it.²³ And they will say to you, 'Lo there!' or 'Lo, here!' Do not go, do not follow them.²⁴ For as the lightning flashes and lights up the sky from one side to the other, so will the Son of man be in his day.²⁵ But first he must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation.²⁶ As it was in the days of Noah, so will it be in the days of the

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Son of man. ²⁷They ate, they drank, they married, they were given in marriage, until the day when Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all. ²⁸Likewise as it was in the days of Lot—they ate, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they built, ²⁹but on the day when Lot went out from Sodom fire and sulphur rained from heaven and destroyed them all—³⁰so will it be on the day when the Son of man is revealed. ³¹On that day, let him who is on the house-top, with his goods in the house, not come down to take them away; and likewise let him who is in the field not turn back. ³²Remember Lot's wife. ³³Whoever seeks to gain his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life will preserve it. ³⁴I tell you, in that night there will be two in one bed; one will be taken and the other left. ³⁵There will be two women grinding together; one will be taken and the other left.” ³⁷And they said to him, “Where, Lord?” He said to them, “Where the body is, there the eagles will be gathered together.”

17:20-25 Missing the Kingdom: Jesus had said a great deal about the “kingdom” of God in His ministry. He had worked many miracles; He taught with great wisdom and grace. Many believed He was speaking as a prophet of God and that He had some divine information about it. Others, however, were antagonistic toward Him because His teachings about the “kingdom” did not fit their materialistic, militaristic views. Jesus said much about the kingdom, but so far as they could see, He had done nothing to bring about what the Jews expected of the golden age of the Messiah. The Jewish Apocrypha reveals two fundamental expectations in Jewish tradition about the Messianic Age (or, the Kingdom of God):

- a. Politics — the Messiah will be a warrior, he will conquer the enemies of the Jewish people, subdue them and rule over them in an earthly kingdom with the throne in Jerusalem. He will kill many of the Gentiles and reduce all the others to servanthood to Israel.
- b. Prosperity — There will be great material prosperity for Israel. Some of the prosperity will take on supernatural proportions in the golden age of the Messiah. All Jews would be blessed with an abundance of worldly wealth.

So, when Jesus proclaimed Himself as the “Anointed One” (the Messiah) the majority of the Jewish people expected Him to show signs according to their concept of the “kingdom.”

Jesus informs these Pharisees that they are completely unprepared for the messianic age because they are not on guard spiritually. They are watching for a materialistic kingdom but the Messiah’s kingdom is not “of” this world—it is spiritual. Luke uses an interesting word to report Jesus’ answer. He uses the word *paratereseos* which is translated “signs to be observed.” The word is most often used to mean “watching with hostility” (cf. Mk. 3:2; Lk. 6:7; 14:1; 20:20; Acts 9:24 and Gal. 4:10). What Jesus

is saying then is that the kingdom of God is not recognizable by those watching for it with views hostile to it. Those who are looking for it with a worldly-minded concept are unable to see it because it is a spiritual kingdom. Pilate could not see Jesus' kingdom (Jn. 18:33-38) because it was a spiritual kingdom. His kingdom is not provincial—not localizable—because it is not earthly. His kingdom is wherever the King is in body or Spirit. His kingdom was right then in the very midst of the Pharisees because the King was there. But they did not see it. His kingdom is not at Jerusalem or on Mt. Gerizim, but in spirit and in truth (cf. Jn. 4). His kingdom is His rule in the hearts of men and is therefore universal.

Even His own disciples will be tempted to want an earthly utopia in place of a spiritual kingdom. The King will have to leave His disciples for a while and go back to heaven. The absence of the King will especially pressure His citizens to want Him to come back and set up an earthly Eden. Men will try to seduce the King's subjects into thinking that His kingdom is an earthly one and that it has been set up "Here" or "There." But Jesus' disciples must not let down their spiritual guard. They must not be seduced into thinking the kingdom is worldly in nature or they shall not be prepared for the ultimate manifestation of His "other-worldly" kingdom.

17:26-37 Manifestation of the Kingdom: Some day the Son of man will come back, bodily, to destroy the world and give the consummate manifestation of His kingdom. When the King comes back there will be no doubt by anyone as to the true essence of His kingdom. It will be revealed in a flash of brilliance like the lightning lightens the sky. In the meantime, the kingdom does exist in the world. The Spirit of Christ is ruling in that kingdom as He rules in the hearts and lives of men and women. But the world goes blindly on in its way of materialism unable to see the kingdom because it is spiritual. Some will try to say, "Lo, there!" or, "Lo, here!" or, "He will be here when you see this sign or that sign. . . ." but do not go running off after them. But keep your spiritual guard up. God does not operate according to man's concepts or man's time-tables. Christ never really stated times or seasons for His return. As a matter of fact, He stated that He would return when the world's society was functioning normally! The ultimate, final manifestation of His kingdom will not be preceded by any abnormal, extra-ordinary "signs" pointing to a definite time. It will be just like the days preceding the flood in Noah's time. There were no extra-ordinary signs that God was going to destroy the world before the flood. The only warning was the promise of God through the preaching of Noah. In Noah's day life went on its normal path. People married, built, ate and drank. Suddenly the end came. Business as usual—and without a signal, the end was there. So will the coming of the Son of man be. "The Son of man is coming at an hour you do not expect" (Mt. 24:44). "Of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven nor

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the Son, but the Father only" (Mt. 24:36; Mk. 10:32-33). If men cannot see the signs of His kingdom while it is here in the world, and surrender to it, they would not surrender to it in faith and obedience should spectacular signs be given to precede its final manifestation.

The final manifestation of the Son of man in His kingdom will be just like the days of Lot. There will be people still clinging to this world and its goods as if it were the only world. People who will not renounce all their worldly goods now for the kingdom will not be prepared to do so when the end comes. Remember Lot's wife! She had invested her life in Sodom, not in the spiritual heritage of her uncle Abraham. She could not give up this world.

The time to turn loose of this world's pull is now. When the Son of man reveals His kingdom for the final time it will be too late. And since no one knows when He will reveal His kingdom for the final time, since it could be the very moment you are reading this sentence, it is imperative that you and I lose our lives for His sake every day, every hour. If you are a disciple of Jesus you must be prepared every moment to leave all your worldly possessions behind. You must also be prepared to be separated from all your friends and relatives who are hostile to the kingdom. Because when the Son of man comes the great judgment of separation will take place. "One will be taken and one left." This is not to be taken literally, of course, that out of *every* bed one will be taken and the other left. In some beds and in some kitchens ("grinding at the stone") perhaps all will be taken, or all will be left. The idea is that those who have seen the spiritual kingdom and become members of it by faith and obedience will be taken—while those who have not seen it and are clinging to this world will be left to be destroyed with it. Would Jesus sneak up on the world? Yes! He is coming "as a thief in the night" (Mt. 24:27-51; 25:1-13; I Thess. 5:2-3; II Pet. 3:8-10). Thieves do not announce their coming ahead of time. If He came tonight would you go with Him? Is there anything or anyone you couldn't leave behind in order to go with Him? If there is, you aren't ready—you've let your spiritual guard down.

All this eschatological imagery excited the disciples so they eagerly asked Jesus, "*Where* will all this take place Lord?" Jesus replied, "Where the body is, there the eagles will be gathered." Wherever the dead are is where the vultures gather. The most important thing about Biblical eschatology is its emphasis on the certainty of the end of this world and the judgment. Where (and when) the rotten comes needs dealing with, there the Lord will come and deal with it—which is, of course, all over! The Lord's return will be instantaneous and universal. Jesus never spoke of His final coming in terms of time or place (see comments on Lk. 21), but of condition. There is only one way to be certain Jesus is coming again—that is to take His word for it. He promised, and His promise is authenticated by His

resurrection from the dead (Acts 17:30-31). That is the only sign this evil world will be given (cf. Mt. 12:38-42; Lk. 11:29-32). It is spiritually recognized and spiritually anticipated and comes neither at the first nor finally with "signs" perceivable by carnally-minded people.

Obviously, Luke 17:26-37 indicates Jesus does not expect to find "the faith" universally triumphant on the earth when He returns (cf. Lk. 18:8 which is connected to this discussion). There will be some (perhaps the majority) who will be indifferent or who have lost heart. Only those who have prayed and endured and kept up their spiritual guard will be vindicated (declared to have been right all along) when He comes back. Only those are prepared for the end.

STUDY STIMULATORS:

1. Just how careful must we be in our conduct in not causing someone else to stumble?
2. Does the "weaker brother" have any responsibility in the area of scruples?
3. Can you forgive like Christ forgave—even when you know the offender will not accept it? What if you don't?
4. How much does the willingness to forgive demand of you?
5. Why does it take faith to forgive?
6. Why doesn't Jesus *give* faith? Do miracles produce faith? If we had more miracles, wouldn't we have more faith?
7. Do you ever catch yourself thinking you are a worthy servant? Are you?
8. Does the church today need to be on guard against misidentifying the kingdom? How?
9. Is it possible that there are religious teachers today showing "signs" that the kingdom will come physically or materially "here" and "there"? What should you do about that?
10. If Jesus came to the world at midnight tonight, could you leave *all* your worldly possessions, even some of your kinfolk, and go with Him? He won't force you to, you know!

Chapter Eighteen (18:1-43)

THE SON OF MAN WARNING AGAINST WORLDLY-MINDEDNESS

IDEAS TO INVESTIGATE:

1. Will God, like the petulant judge of the parable, be worn down by our persistence and finally give in to our prayers?
2. What is wrong with being thankful that one is not an extortioner, unjust or an adulterer? Wouldn't God be pleased with that?
3. How could Jesus turn over the kingdom of God to children? Isn't that unwise?
4. Why would Jesus rebuke the rich young ruler for calling Him good?
5. Is Jesus' espousing the modern doctrine of "righteousness equals riches" in 18:29-30?
6. Who "hid" from the twelve the meaning of Jesus' prediction of His death?
7. Why did the crowd rebuke the blind beggar and tell him to quit crying out to Jesus? Were they so hardhearted they refused the man healing?

SECTION 1

Pessimism (18:1-8)

18 And he told them a parable, to the effect that they ought always to pray and not lose heart. ²He said, "In a certain city there was a judge who neither feared God nor regarded man; ³and there was a widow in that city who kept coming to him and saying, 'Vindicate me against my adversary.' ⁴For a while he refused; but afterward he said to himself, 'Though I neither fear God nor regard man, ⁵yet because this widow bothers me, I will vindicate her, or she will wear me out by her continual coming.'"⁶ And the Lord said, "Hear what the unrighteous judge says. ⁷And will not God vindicate his elect, who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long over them? ⁸I tell you, he will vindicate them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of man comes, will he find faith on earth?"

18:1-5 Vigilance: Jesus had just told His disciples He would not always be with them in this world, physically, as He was then. They would have to stay behind in a world of self-indulgence, irreverence, confusion about the kingdom and downright wickedness comparable to that of Sodom and Gomorrah (Lk. 17:20ff.). It is going to be a rotten world, ready for the vultures. The question a disciple of Jesus would have is, "What am I to

do living in a society like Noah's or Lot's?" Jesus is coming back but no one knows when that will be. In the meantime, He is to be crucified, raised from the dead and ascended into heaven. And His disciples must live in an indifferent society. There will be people like this judge—indifferent, callous and impervious. The poor and powerless will despair of ever receiving justice or being vindicated. Their rights will be trampled, they will be exploited and no one will care enough to make things right for them. What are they to do? How can the powerless and poor go on without just giving up and becoming like the rest of the world?

Necessary to the survival of one's spiritual life in a society like that is persistent, unbending, unending prayer. Jesus taught this parable to the effect that they ought always to pray and not lose heart. One's trust that God will ultimately answer with vindication is the one imperative for spiritual survival. The Christian's relationship to God must be steadfast for better or for worse, for richer or poorer, in sickness and in health. The Christian must pray without ceasing. The Christian must be like the widow of this parable who would not capitulate to her adversary. She was clinging to the hope that the judge would eventually vindicate her. This judge was about as indifferent to the woman's plea as a human could possibly be. Finally, out of some selfish motive of his own to rid himself of an inconvenience, he gave in and did what he did not want to do at first. But our God is *not* like that! It is not by praying that we "wear God down"—it is by persistent faith we put ourselves in the right attitude to receive what God wants eagerly and speedily to give us. This parable is teaching the same lesson as the one in Luke 11:5-13 (see comments there).

But how can a person "always pray" or, "pray without ceasing?" Aren't there other things in life, even the Christian life, to do besides praying? We must understand what prayer is. Prayer is far more than uttering words in some public meeting, or even alone at one's bedside. Prayer is the "urge" or "bent" of one's life toward God. Prayer is the continual conscious and unconscious focusing of the mind on that which is above. Prayer is the communication of an attitude of faith, trust and love, whether that be communicated in words or deeds or both.

18:6-8 Vindication: Here is what this parable says: If an indifferent, self-serving, callous judge like that will finally give justice to a poor, defenseless widow because she did not give up, is not our gracious God eager and able to give complete justice to us! Shepard says Jesus' argument in this parable is *a fortiori* ("with stronger reason"). God will speedily vindicate His elect. He does not need persuading, He only needs people who are preparing themselves by unswerving faith to accept His way and His time schedule. Some are not willing to exercise the persistent faith to accept God's way of vindicating them. Some, thinking God ought to work as man works, are unable to accept delay. Many are impatient with God.

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They will not accept the longsuffering of God so that all may have an opportunity to repent. It may appear to many that God delays for a long time. But we must understand the word "speedily" from God's perspective. God may have vindicated us immediately upon our asking and because we had no spiritual maturity we did not see it or understand it. He does not always vindicate in ways we would hope or expect or even comprehend. What we must have is faith in the absolute faithfulness of God to answer always, speedily, though the answer may be contrary to our expectations and understanding (cf. Isa. 55:6-11). Remember the faith of the patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac, Jacob) and remember that it took all the centuries until the first coming of Christ to vindicate their faith!

Jesus did not mean to suggest that He would find widespread wickedness and chaos when He said, "... when the Son of man comes, will he find faith on earth?" At least He did not mean to suggest that here, in this context. The Greek text has the definite article before the word faith and Jesus' statement should read, "... will he find *the* faith. . . .," the particular kind of dogged faith that produces persistent prayer in time of trouble. The Bible indicates there will be believers still alive on earth when Jesus returns (cf. I Cor. 15:51ff.; I Thess. 4:13ff.). So His question here is more in the form of a challenge. He asks, "Will there be any believers on earth praying with the persistence of this widow when I come back or will they have despaired and fainted and resigned themselves to the idea that God is not aware of their needs, or He doesn't care?" That is very near unbelief. That is pessimism. That is the way the world thinks. The disciple of Jesus must think differently.

SECTION 2

Proud (18:9-14)

9 He also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and despised others: ¹⁰"Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. ¹¹The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, 'God, I thank thee that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. ¹²I fast twice a week, I give tithes of all that I get.' ¹³But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me a sinner!' ¹⁴I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for every one who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted."

18:9-12 Haughtiness: Do not miss the purpose of this parable. Jesus told it to those who "trusted in *themselves* that they were righteous and

despised others." He told it to all who think they have something they have earned to present to God as justification. It is a warning to everyone like Job, in the O.T., who audaciously bragged that if he just knew where to find God, he believed he could stand before Him and argue his case. Job found out (Job 38:1ff.) that he was totally incapable of arguing his case before the Lord after all!

Two men went up into the temple to pray. All the men of Israel could go into the "court of Israel" to pray at the appointed times of prayer (3 times daily, cf. Acts 3:1). The "court of Israel" contained the altar of burnt offering and the laver. Only priests could enter the temple proper. Women prayed in the "court of women," the next court outside the "court of Israel." One of the men was a Pharisee and the other a tax collector, a publican. The Pharisee stood—probably in a place he could be seen—and prayed unto himself. The Greek phrase, *pros heauton proseucheto*, indicates the Pharisee directed his prayer, not really to God, but to himself! Five times he uses the personal pronoun "I" in the *nominative* case! Even as he thanked God he was *scorning* the publican. That is something to thank God for—that you are able to scorn someone else! Rabbi Simeon ben Jochai said: "If there are only two righteous men in the world, I and my son are these two; if there is only one, I am he!"

Pride has reached epidemic proportions among men. Children boast about their toys or fight for the front seat in the car. Parents fight at Little League games. Corporations are saturated with ego-maniacs trying to outmaneuver others. Church brotherhoods have their "pecking orders." Branches of the military services fight one another. As one man has put it, "Name just one person who is conscientiously working his way to the bottom of the heap!" Politicians like to say this country is the home of the common man—but who has ever met one?! When we research our family tree we look for kings and statesmen—not carpenters or cobblers.

Pride:

- a. is idolatrous self worship
- b. puts self in the place of sovereignty that belongs only to God
- c. is an attempt to appear in a superior light to what we are with an anxiety to gain applause
- d. is a consuming craving for appearance and reputation irrespective of reality
- e. is making oneself very good by the cheap method of making all others very bad.

Pride is extremely difficult to overcome because it takes root even in the essential virtues of life. We become proud of good works; we become proud of humility. It was good that the Pharisee was not an extortioner, unjust and an adulterer. But all his goodness was destroyed by his haughty

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pride. He was good because God's law told him not to be bad and he was afraid of the penalty of disobedience. He probably would have committed adultery or some other vice if he thought he could have gotten away with it. That is absolutely the wrong attitude toward God's law. He would probably have killed the publican had he thought he could have escaped punishment—he hated the publican in his heart. Jesus dealt with that kind of legalism in the Sermon on the Mount (cf. Mt. 5:17-47). Pride is the mother of all vice. It is the monster that fouled Paradise when the serpent hissed: "Ye shall be as gods." Pride fills hell, drives men mad for more, causes men to say their opinion is the only one, sours friendships, strangles love, devours faith, blinds men to their real needs, and segregates men from their neighbors. A man was meant to be doubtful about himself—but undoubting about truth. We have very nearly reversed this. Humble and self-effacing we must be—but modest about the gospel—never!

The tax-collector stood afar off. He did not feel worthy to be near the "righteous" Pharisee. He did not feel worthy of lifting up his eyes to heaven. The Greek verb *etupiteu* is an imperfect verb indicating the publican kept on "smiting" himself and kept on saying, "God be merciful to me a sinner." Over and over he confessed his unworthiness (cf. Dan. 9:18). The Pharisee confessed other men's sins; the publican confessed his own. The Pharisee evaluated himself as righteous; the publican evaluated himself as the worst of sinners. The Pharisee reminded God of what he had earned; the publican pleaded only for mercy. The Pharisee justified himself but was unjustified; the publican cried for mercy and was justified.

The publican exhibits classic humility. Jesus taught that true greatness is vindicated neither by great abilities and successes nor by the roar of popular applause but by service. "He that would be greatest among you let him be the servant of all." There is nothing "chicken" about humility. Looking God and His word in the face and believing what He says about you takes a man! No weakling can stand to know the whole truth about himself. Humility calls for that extra-ordinary courage to take it and step down from the throne of one's own heart in favor of God, pick up one's cross, and follow the humble Christ. Humility is not something with which one is born. It has to be learned, it has to be developed—and it comes by faith.

The Pharisee was not justified by God. How could he be? He did not think it was necessary for God to justify Him. He believed he had justified himself by his outward righteousness. He would not have accepted God's justification if God had offered it to him (which God had already done in type and prophecy). But the publican knew there was no possible way he could be justified if God did not do it. To "justify" is to pronounce free of guilt, to make one qualified, to declare pure and true. The tax-collector realized that in light of God's requirement of absolute holiness, he was

lost and the only thing he could do was plead for mercy so that God might find some way to pronounce him free of guilt. That was the only way he believed he could ever be cleansed of guilt. We had better believe that too! God had found a way—through the atoning death of His Son. That was and is still available to anyone who will believe it and enter into it through the covenant terms specified in the New Testament. That involves first of all a humbling of oneself to accept as a gift the forgiveness of God. Next it requires a humble surrender to God's sovereign command to be immersed in water for the forgiveness of sins (cf. Acts 2:38, et al). Then it requires a lifetime of humble discipleship and service to Jesus Christ as He has outlined it in the Gospels and the Epistles. Whoever humbles himself will be exalted, declared not guilty, and given an inheritance in the heavens, uncorruptible and undefiled that will not fade away.

SECTION 3

Pushy (18:15-17)

15 Now they were bringing even infants to him that he might touch them; and when the disciples saw it, they rebuked them.¹⁶ But Jesus called them to him, saying, "Let the children come to me, and do not hinder them; for to such belongs the kingdom of God.¹⁷ Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it."

18:15 Contempt: Apparently the discourse on marriage, divorce and celibacy (Mt. 19:1-12; Mk. 10:1-12) took place between the parable of the Pharisee and the publican and the bringing of the children to Jesus. The reason for thinking so is the parallel treatment of this incident in Matthew and Mark *after* that discourse.

It was customary for Hebrew parents to present their babies to a rabbi for rabbinical blessing. Jesus was a very popular "rabbi" at this moment. But why would the disciples, of all people, rebuke the parents for bringing children to Jesus? Most probably it was a selfish reason. Like most of us when we are listening to something that interests us we do not wish to be interrupted. The disciples were enraptured in the teaching Jesus had just done on the law concerning marriage and divorce and celibacy. They were hanging on every word, and suddenly an interruption by precocious parents and crying, laughing babies. So the disciples "rebuked" the parents. One commentator has suggested the disciples had gotten a false view of Jesus' purity from His discourse on celibacy. They thought anyone like Jesus was too holy, too transcendent to be bothered with children. Perhaps their motives were somewhat true and they simply wanted Him to have some

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rest. He was on the road to Jerusalem and the cross and the strain of the coming ordeal was already showing. He had had an extremely exhausting ministry just recently in Perea and Judea and He must have looked tired. One thing is certain: they did not know the heart of Jesus concerning children, nor did they comprehend the relationship of childlikeness to the kingdom of God.

18:16-17 Correction: The parallels to Luke's account are in Matthew 19:13-15; and Mark 10:13-16. It is important to read them in connection with Jesus' correction of the disciple's attitude toward children. Mark records that Jesus was "indignant" (Gr. *eganaktesen*, angry) with the disciples and said, "Permit the children to come to me." The three accounts together picture Jesus taking the children in His arms, blessing them, and laying His hands on them as He prayed. He embraced them and prayed for them. *Touching* and *talking* with children is essential to their being. It is really so with adults also. Even adults long to be given a friendly hand-shake or hug—there is nothing like it to say, "I care." Reading of this incident we should be reminded that Jesus was angry only two or three times in all the records of His life—this issue of forbidding the children to come to Him is a *very serious* matter to Him! It is central to the very life of the church that this issue be noted and understood! Children, even child-like adults, will want to come to Jesus almost the moment they are introduced to Him. Get a child into the presence of Jesus or tell a child who Jesus is and a child will almost always go straight to Him. For this reason it is significant that Jesus did *not* say, "Bring them to me . . .," but, "Forbid them not to come to Me." If a child is not almost immediately drawn to Jesus after he has heard of Him it is because some adult has put a stumbling-block in the child's way. How many thousands of "little ones" have been forbidden to come to Jesus because of either deliberate or unconscious adult barriers? Children are the very life of the church on earth. The church dare not be superficial and hasty about selecting those who will introduce the children to Jesus. There is no business of the church more important than its ministry to children. Jesus teaches here that *nothing* should come before allowing children to come to Him. The best way the church can perform this primary ministry to children is to *focus* its overall ministry on families. The church must train its *families* to be "the church" apart from the corporate worship activities. Even in the congregational activities the constant emphasis should be on family.

Why was Jesus so emphatic about this matter of children? Because the kingdom of God belongs to children. Unless any man become like a child, he cannot enter the kingdom. That does not mean, of course, an adult must regress to the infantile level of maturation mentally and physically. It means become child-like in nature. It means to strip oneself of all the sophistries and facades of adulthood and return to the uncomplicated, guileless simplicity of a child's pure faith. What is a child like?

- a. conscious of imperfection—always eager to be taught
- b. unprejudiced—receives peers without bias as to race, color, etc.
- c. malleable—will give in, bend and surrender to truth
- d. impressionable—trusting, receptive, vulnerable
- e. unhypocritical—honest, open, candid
- f. delights to make others pleased with him by giving love and affection.

Hobbs writes, "A child's simple, 'I love Jesus and want to live for Him,' may express a profounder Christian experience than reams of theological debate and explanation." Jesus was warning the disciples they had the whole thing backward. Instead of expecting an adult experience in the child, we should strive to bring about a childlike experience in the adult. Those who are scornful or contemptuous of the simplicity of a child have missed the very essence of right relationship to Jesus! Therefore, the thrust of all preaching and teaching of the gospel is to produce the character of childlikeness in people, old and young, or they will never be permitted to enter God's kingdom.

SECTION 4

Parsimonious (18:18-30)

18 And a ruler asked him, "Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" 19 And Jesus said to him, "Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone. 20 You know the commandments: 'Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Honor your father and mother.'" 21 And he said, "All these I have observed from my youth." 22 And when Jesus heard it, he said to him, "One thing you still lack. Sell all that you have and distribute to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me." 23 But when he heard this he became sad, for he was very rich. 24 Jesus looking at him said, "How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God! 25 For it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God." 26 Those who heard it said, "Then who can be saved?" 27 But he said, "What is impossible with men is possible with God." 28 And Peter said, "Lo, we have left our homes and followed you." 29 And he said to them, "Truly, I say to you, there is no man who has left house or wife or brothers or parents or children, for the sake of the kingdom of God, 30 who will not receive manifold more in this time, and in the age to come eternal life."

18:18-19 Righteousness of God: There are crucial lessons for every believer in this confrontation between Jesus and the rich, young ruler.

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The primary lesson is the one Jesus concluded with, "How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God!" (Lk. 18:24). Another very important lesson has to do with evangelism. Some have entitled this incident, "The big one that got away." Look at this prospect's potential:

- a. He was a rich, young, ruler.
- b. He was courteous (Mk. 10:17—He ran up to Jesus and kneeled before Him.).
- c. He had a deep interest in religion ("What must I do to inherit eternal life?"), he did not wait to be called on or found.
- d. He was enthusiastic in the pursuit of spiritual help.
- e. He was unafraid of public opinion (seeking help from Jesus, who was already in disfavor with most Jewish rulers).
- f. He was a man of moral action (He had kept more commandments of God than most men.).
- g. He had lived a life of purity.
- h. He was honest in business.
- i. He respected his parents.
- j. He was no liar or slanderer.
- k. He was successful in the world.
- l. He was a man of influence and authority.

He is the preacher's dream-prospect. Most preacher's would have had him signing a "commitment card" immediately. What a great statistic he would make—he could get "celebrity" billing. But Jesus disappoints us by handling this prime prospect rather roughly. He begins with a rebuke to the ruler; then challenges him about his faithfulness to the commandments of God; demands that he make an immense financial sacrifice; and finally lets the prospect get away.

The young man knelt, flatteringly, before Jesus and said, flatteringly, "Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" Jesus did not answer his question, but began with a rebuke. Paraphrased, Jesus would say, "The goodness of any *man* (which you take me to be) is not worthy to be noticed. It is God alone who is essentially good!" Jesus began His attempt to redirect this man's mind from worldliness by solemnly fixing his attention on God's character—infinite holiness. This young ruler had traveled so long in the company of those who reveled in the flattery of one another (calling one another "Master," "Rabbi," "Ruler") (cf. Mt. 23:6-7) that he could no longer see himself or any other man in proper perspective. He needed to see that God alone should be praised. Men must see themselves in relationship to God's absolute holiness before they can see themselves as they really are (cf. Isa. 6:1ff.)—in need of grace. It is almost shocking to realize that Jesus' first concern here is not the young

ruler himself, but seeing that God is glorified. The glorification of God was Christ's first priority (cf. Isa. 48:9-11; Ezek. 20:9, 22, 44, etc.). That was Jesus' primary goal in every instance of His ministry (cf. Jn. 17:1ff.). The young ruler centered attention on his own need—Jesus insisted that glorifying God was of first priority. This is the foundation of all evangelism, of all conversion. Man's salvation depends upon this fundamental principle. Evangelism is preaching who God is! Converting people must be preceded by establishing the character and nature of God as manifested in Jesus Christ. Without knowing God the sinner does not know whom he has offended. Without knowing God's faithfulness the sinner is left to trust his own abilities to justify himself. The gospel is not what man must do, but what God has done! God is Creator. God is Holy and His law demands (necessitates) judgment upon sin. The Bible speaks more of God's holiness than it does of His love! That is probably because men are more prone to concentrate on that which makes them feel at ease than on that which threatens or humiliates them. Much evangelism today is based in an insipid sentimentality which begins, "God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life." Jesus did not begin that way! He said, "Young man you had better get straightened out first in your own mind who God is!"

In the concept of most people today there is no room for the idea that God is holy. Most people think of God, C.S. Lewis once wrote, as an aged, indulging grandfather-type-person. Much of modern evangelism has lost touch with the divine method. Jesus did not speak soothing positive clichés to this man—He stirred up the fear of God in his heart by preaching that God alone is holy! We do not bring any sinner before God with the right attitude at all until we bring him bowing in humility and praise for God's holiness and penitence for his own sinfulness. We approach God for His own sake first, not ours. If God's absolute holiness and omnipotence is not validated and confirmed in our own mind, first, we are lost! Our salvation depends not on our goodness, but on His! (cf. Dan. 9:17-19).

18:20-21 Regulations of God: Finally Jesus said, "If you would enter life, keep the commandments," (Mt. 19:17b). The commandments (law) of God reveal the character and nature of God. The second important thing this self-righteous young man needed preached to him was the law of God. How can he know where he stands in relation to God's demands on his life if he does not have the law of God preached to him. Jesus reminded him of the first nine commandments. The absence of God's law from modern preaching is as responsible as any other factor for the evangelistic impotence of our churches:

- a. The word "sin" makes no sense apart from God's holy law. How can we convince today's sinners to really recognize they are sinners since most of them are totally ignorant of God's law for all mankind? Jesus continued to press the law at the rich young ruler.

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- b. The cross of Christ means nothing apart from the law. If Jesus did not die to atone for the penalty of the law, then His death is tragic and senseless. And that is exactly how many people see His death today because they are not made cognizant of the demands of God's law.

Jesus used God's law as a primary tool of evangelism. Many Christians today consider the law a relic of the past and of no use in evangelism. Satan has subtly deceived us into thinking law and love are contradictory. Precisely the opposite is true. Love cannot be expressed without the guidelines of divine law, and law cannot be kept spiritually except by the motive of love (cf. I Jn. 5:3). Law and love are not opposed to one another. The conflict arises between law and grace as a means of salvation. The law cannot be the means of salvation—salvation for sinful man is grace by faith. Men are not turning to Christ today because they have no sense of who He is and what He has done. They have no concept of sinning against God and therefore they do not think they need salvation. They do not know they are sinning because the law of God is not being preached. God is faithful. He keeps every word He utters. This was the burden of the Old Testament prophets. To turn Israel back to God so that He might redeem them and use them for His messianic plan of redemption, the prophets preached the law of Jehovah. A "remnant" recognized themselves as sinners and turned to the Lord in faith, repentance and covenant-keeping. A remnant was saved.

Jesus found the ruler's knowledge of the commandments to be superficial. He recognized the law's outward demands but not their spirituality. The law of God was spiritual. He intended it to be written on the spirits of men (on their hearts). But they perverted God's law by making a pretense of keeping the outward commandment while violating the spiritual principle of it in their hearts. Jesus did not come to destroy the law and the prophets (Mt. 5:17). He came to bring God's law to its spiritual fulness. It is in the Sermon on the Mount that Jesus puts His finger on the real spirit within God's law. Now Jesus puts His finger on the ruler's real sin. He says, "Go sell all. . ." Jesus preaches the tenth commandment in all its incisive spirituality. He used God's commandment, "Thou shalt not covet" as a scalpel to lance the festering sore of greed in the rich ruler's heart. The young man's sin was invisible to the human eye. It was even invisible to him! It did not show on the surface of his life. Had Jesus merely said, "Keep the tenth commandment, 'Thou shalt not covet.' . ." the rich man would probably have replied, "I do not desire anyone else's property or wealth, I am satisfied where I am and with what I have." That was the trouble, he was satisfied with his wealth and was not rich toward God (cf. Lk. 12:21). So Jesus translated the tenth commandment into its spiritual reality by demanding that he *abandon* his riches, give it to the poor, and

follow His way of "having not where to lay His head." The rich ruler loved his riches more than God's holy law. So all the time he had been "keeping commandments from his youth up" it was really hypocrisy. He kept only those commandments that did not demand complete renunciation of self and whole-hearted trust in God.

Totally out of character with worldly-mindedness, Jesus, rather than compromise the truth of God's holy law in the name of false love, allowed the ruler to depart! Had Jesus ignored the inviolable character of the perfect law to try to enlist this sinner, He would have lost him, because in compromising God's faithfulness Jesus would have destroyed love. True love for God is inseparably bound up in the keeping of His commandments (cf. Jn. 14:15, 21; 14:23; 15:10; I Jn. 2:24; 3:24; II Jn. 6; etc.). True love will never negotiate against the truth upon which it is established. Much of Christendom through the centuries and even today has tried to see how little it could demand in keeping God's commandments and still get converts. Many take the position that they do not want to offend, to divide, to lose fame or a thousand other things. Yet Jesus came to the world for the very purpose of judging, dividing, and casting a sword. The gospel is God's great sieve through which He sifts all mankind. Those who keep His Word have His Spirit, those who do not are of the devil. The kingdom of God is, after all, the *rule* of God in the hearts of men. The law of God is to be the arbiter (umpire) in our heart (cf. Col. 3:15).

18:22a Repentance: "Go, and sell all that you possess, . . ." said Jesus. Now Jesus is telling the rich young ruler what he must do to inherit eternal life—he must repent. He must change his mind about what he trusts most. He must turn from his "god of gold" and surrender to the mind of God as expressed in the tenth commandment. The "one thing" the young man lacked was the reversal of all his priorities. He must allow God's word to transform his whole viewpoint, revolutionize his fundamental philosophy of life. Telling people today, "Just accept Jesus as your personal Savior," will not save! People must repent! Christ cannot save anyone whose mind is still under the rule of carnality (worldliness). It is scripturally necessary, of course, to tell people to confess Christ and be immersed in water for the remission of sin. But it is not scripturally correct to tell them to do so without preaching repentance to them. Doubtlessly this ruler would have gladly accepted an invitation to become a follower of Jesus if Jesus had not demanded that he give up his wealth. He had come running to Jesus. But he is not willing to forsake mammon! His security was in mammon—not in Jesus. Churches are being filled with people willing to have Christ and "financial success" (mammon) today. They are never told they must renounce all they possess. They are never told they must repent of such double-mindedness. So their "converts" are as worldly after their "joining the church" as before. No one has the authority to *lower* the requirement for

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discipleship from what Jesus required here, of this rich, young, ruler, or what He required in many other places (cf. Lk. 14:25-33; 9:57-62; Mt. 10:34-39, etc.). Christ has not revealed a revised gospel for the twentieth century!

18:22b Regeneration: By asking the ruler to sell all he possessed and give it to the poor, Jesus was asking him to abandon his fundamental philosophy of life. He was urging the man to sweep his heart clean of all allegiance to any other priority. But the heart cannot tolerate a vacuum. It will inevitably yield its allegiance to someone or something. When the heart is rid of unworthy affection, it must deliberately choose the worthiest affection. So Jesus invited the young man, "Come, follow me!" Jesus did not offer this rich man an easy discipleship. He offered Himself to be followed, imitated, learned from and obeyed. The ruler had called Jesus, "Master," now Jesus is urging him to accept the portion of a servant. There is too much easy discipleship today. So-called "contemporary Christian music" tends to promote a discipleship of subjectivism rather than one of active servanthood. Jesus' invitation here contradicts much modern evangelism. Much of that seems to imply that Jesus is a personal Savior to help people get out of burdens and difficult circumstances and give "good feelings." Not much is ever said about Jesus being Almighty Master to be obeyed. Not much is ever said about Jesus giving us His strength to bear heavy burdens and difficult circumstances. Jesus is sometimes pictured as standing ready and anxious for us to crook our finger and say to Him, "Come, follow me, and keep all trouble out of my life."

Jesus will not deceive this lad. Eternal life is had by bowing down to the Lordship of Christ in active, obedient service to Him. It is a matter of the gospel record that many more turned away from Jesus than became obedient disciples (cf. Jn. 6:66:, etc.)—because He insisted men renounce all they had. Only on those terms does Jesus offer eternal life. Eternal life is being *saved from sin*. Faith is following Christ away from sin toward obedience to God's law. This is a strange doctrine in some places today. Many talk about accepting His help—but few say anything about accepting His rule in every thought, motive and action of life. Following Jesus involves *sacrifice*. Jesus was absolutely honest with this young man. To preach to people any other way is either unconscious failure or deliberate deceit. Would-be disciples must be challenged concerning the discipline which Christ demands. There must be complete honesty about the sacrifice, persecution, humility and self-surrender involved. It is not surprising that today when so many go forward to try the "Jesus-high" they are never seen again. Often the "convert," after a few days or weeks of professing Christ wakes up to discover that everyday "troubles" have been compounded by the very fact that he now calls himself a Christian. He finds himself being treated like Jesus was treated—and that was not what he was led to believe. The psychological honeymoon has ended so quickly.

Integrity and honesty demand that we evangelize like Jesus did. The modern sinner deserves to be treated like the rich young ruler. He must be told that the Lord to whom we are calling him will expect him to "sell all" and follow Him. People must be impressed with the gravity of deciding to be a disciple of Christ. Most evangelistic programs or meetings give one the impression that we should never let a prospect do any *prolonged, serious thinking* about answering the call to Jesus. We prefer to "psyche" them up emotionally, keep the "sell all" requirement low profile, and get them down the aisle before they do have time to think about real discipleship. We are afraid to do anything that might hinder *immediate* success or victory. Jesus wasn't! There is no evidence that the ruler ever trusted Christ and followed Him by giving up all he had. But he was *honestly* confronted with the gospel and its implications for his life. He was not tricked, "psyched," high-pressured, manipulated or emotionalized into a statistic. When he went away, he really knew the full answer to his *initial* question—"What must I do to inherit eternal life." He must be regenerated.

A few ancient manuscripts add after Jesus' statement, "Come, follow me," the words, "taking up the cross." But the best manuscripts omit these words. The word Luke uses to describe the young man's countenance is *perilupos*, meaning "pained." Mark uses the word *stugnasas* which means "gloomy, hateful, threatening or lowering" (cf. Mt. 16:3). The young man was shocked, stunned and agitated. He was very rich and what Jesus had demanded of him *seemed* altogether unreasonable, unheard of, unprincipled and even insane! This ruler did not just hang his head and slink away—he went away upset!

18:24-30 Rewards: Jesus looked with love at the young man as he was walking away in a disturbed mood (and at His disciples) and said: "How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God!" Why? Because wealth means power and a false sense of security and this is more likely to create pride and self-sufficiency than it is to create poverty of spirit. Actually, it is *more* than hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God, it is practically *impossible*. Jesus went on to say, ". . . it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God." The Greek words Luke used were *tramatos* which means "hole or eye" and *belones* which means "dart or needle." Jesus was not talking about a small gate in a city wall, He was talking literally about the eye of a sewing needle.

Matthew records that the disciples were "greatly astonished" at Jesus' statement. The Greek words used here are *exeplessonto sphodra* and mean literally, "violently stricken in mind." They were "floored!" What Jesus had said stunned them. It was inconceivable in contemporary Judaism that wealth should be a hindrance to entering the kingdom of God since this was considered to be a sign of God's favor! When God allowed Satan

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to take Job's possessions and children, Job's friends could only conclude that Job was guilty of some terrible sin against God. Poverty, physical illness (Jn. 9:1ff.) and other forms of catastrophic misfortune were considered a sign of sinfulness by most Jews. So the disciples were exceedingly amazed—and so is the rest of mankind. The disciples asked, "Then who can be saved?" If freedom from the wish to be rich and to hold on to one's hard earned wealth is the only route to salvation, who can be saved? There is not a man that would not be rich if he could. Most men, at one time or another, have day-dreamed about being rich. And if the desire for riches keeps us from salvation (cf. I Tim. 6:6-10) who can be saved? The disciples are probably being honest and expressing the unspoken affirmation of their own hearts that if they could have had the rich, young ruler's wealth they would have gladly accepted it. They were chagrined because they knew Jesus was not pointing His statement only at those who were rich in fact, but also to everyone who would *prefer* riches above almost anything else—which includes most of the people in the world!

Jesus' first reply was, "The things impossible with men are possible with God." What men cannot do meritoriously through human motivation, God can do by His grace in their heart when they believe Him. It is impossible for a man to renounce all he possesses until he allows his whole mental process to be taken captive unto obedience to Christ (cf. II Cor. 10:3-5). And man's whole mentality will not be surrendered to the rule of Christ until he resigns himself to the grace of God by faith. The difficulty of saving a rich man is not with God, it is with the man who resists God's grace by faith and insists on trusting in his own wealth as his sufficiency.

Christ has told the ruler that if he wished to fill the real void in his life and be "perfect" (complete) (see Mt. 19:21), he should sell all he had, give it to the poor and follow Him. When he would do this he would have *treasure* in heaven. That last statement stimulated Peter's mind. he immediately declared, "Lo, we have left our homes and followed you, what then shall we have?" (see Mt. 19:27). Peter apparently felt that he, and his comrades, stood in a much superior relationship to Jesus than the rich, young ruler. Peter's question implied, "We have done what you told him—we are the *first* of your disciples. This young ruler has turned his back on You, Lord, and if he should come back at the last moment, remember, we were working for you first, and we have left all and followed you."

Peter anticipated earthly rewards, Jesus declared the rewards for sacrificial service in His Kingdom would be spiritual. The essence of God's kingdom is of the spirit (Rom. 14:17). Jesus promised that everyone who labors will be rewarded, but many who are first will be last and the last will be first. The student should read the parallel accounts of this discussion in Matthew 19:23—20:16 and Mark 10:23-31. Matthew's account notes that Jesus first said, ". . . in the new world . . . you who have followed me

will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel." In other words, the disciples will have the privilege of letting the Jews into the kingdom of Christ by the preaching of the gospel and writing the New Covenant scriptures. Whatever these apostles shall one day preach will be the keys to the kingdom (cf. Mt. 16:18-20) and whatever they loose or bind on earth shall already have been loosed or bound in heaven (cf. also Mt. 18:18; Jn. 20:22-23). They will declare the terms of forgiveness, salvation and citizenship in God's kingdom. What they preach shall be the criteria (judgment). Then Jesus said, anyone who leaves worldly riches for Christ will receive all of God's world working toward his redemption, plus eternal life (cf. I Cor. 3:21-22). God will work everything for good to them that love him and are called according to His purposes (Rom. 8:28). Wherever a Christian goes in this world God will have available for him brothers, sisters, mothers and fathers in the spiritual family of God. Everywhere a Christian goes in this world God will use from His great storehouse of creation all that the disciple needs to serve Him. But what does a Christian need to serve God? Sometimes he needs chastening, deprivation and struggle. The believer does not always need bread and never needs indulgence. He does need faith, hope and steadfastness. God can supply that richly. Whatever is *needed*, God will supply. And what He supplies will always be *more* than whatever the believer has given up to serve Him.

We would be remiss if we did not insert here a brief comment on Matthew 20:1-16 because it is the parabolic conclusion to this subject of rewards. When Peter asked, "What then shall we have. . . ." Jesus answered with the Parable of the Laborers in the Vineyard (Mt. 20:1-16). This parable does not intend to teach that a man may foolishly waste his life and come to work for Jesus at the eleventh hour and expect a reward. Nor does it teach anything about socialism or communism or share-and-share-alike economic systems for nations or the world. It teaches one simple truth: In the kingdom of God a man's reward will be, not according to length of service, or notoriety of service, but according to his faithfulness to the opportunity which is given him. The owner of the vineyard rewarded according to his own judgment. The householder kept His promise—each person who chooses to labor for God will be graciously and generously rewarded. If the last are first and the first are last, it is none of the laborer's business. If those who went to work first had the right attitude, they would consider it a *reward* to be given opportunity to be first or longest out in the vineyard! God rewards on the basis of the spirit and attitude in which the work was done—not on volume. The last workers had not been at work before because no one had hired them—they had not the opportunities the first had. But when the householder sent them out they were faithful and true to their only opportunity. Their reward was what the owner

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decided to give them—the same as that given to those faithful to their earlier opportunity. Neither long nor short service is pleasing to God if done for wrong motives. Remember the Prodigal and Elder Son of Luke 15. Men will be rewarded in God's kingdom not for *what volume* of work they accomplish but what they would have done if they had had the opportunity. Of course we all show what we would do by our attitudes and actions toward the little opportunities we do have! "He who is faithful in a very little is faithful also in much; and he who is dishonest in a very little is dishonest in much" (Lk. 16:10; cf. also Lk. 16:11-12). God does not reward according to human standards (volume)—He looks on the heart (motives).

SECTION 5

Power-Mania (18:31-34)

31 And taking the twelve, he said to them, "Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and everything that is written of the Son of man by the prophets will be accomplished. ³²For he will be delivered to the Gentiles, and will be mocked and shamefully treated and spit upon, ³³they will scourge him and kill him, and on the third day he will rise." ³⁴But they understood none of these things; this saying was hid from them, and they did not grasp what was said.

18:31-33 Confrontation: The Lord could see where this whole discussion of leaving all to follow Him and rewards was focusing. In the minds of the disciples it was being turned into a fantasy of position and power. Especially the statement Jesus made about "judging the twelve tribes of Israel" and "sitting on twelve thrones," (Mt. 19:28). So Jesus predicted (for the third time, see Mt. 16:21-23; Mt. 17:22-23) plainly that he was going to Jerusalem and there would be *crucified* (see Mt. 20:17-19; Mk. 10:32-34) and on the third day raised from the dead. He knew He must repeat and repeat this concept of the Messiah's mission and the nature of His kingdom or these worldly-minded disciples would never survive the shock. They must be confronted honestly and plainly so that when it comes to pass they will remember Jesus did not mislead them.

Jesus' prophecy about His death and resurrection clearly demonstrates His supernatural knowledge. He knew ahead of time *where* He would die (Jerusalem). Had He been only a man He could never have been so specific. He knew ahead of His death *how* He would die (crucifixion, Mt. 20:19). Being a Jew and really having committed no crime against Rome, one would expect Jesus to meet death normally or, if executed by the Jews, by stoning. He knew prior to His death *who* would be involved (Jewish

and Gentile rulers, Mt. 20:18-19). All His enemies would have to do to prove Him a false prophet was to not fulfill His predictions—but they were fulfilled to the letter. Not only were Jesus' predictions of His death fulfilled but the prophecies of the Old Testament made centuries and millenniums before were also fulfilled. The student should read in this connection Isaiah 52:13-15; 53:1-12; 50:4-9; 49:1-7; Daniel 9:24-27; Psalms 22:1-31. When Jesus said to the disciples, ". . . everything that is written of the Son of man by the prophets will be accomplished. . . ." He was trying to emphasize to them that the Old Testament prophecies concerning the Messiah were *not* to be interpreted according to the popular Jewish rabbinical traditions. The tragedy was the apostles understood none of what He said. There was a reason for this.

18:34 Caprice: It wasn't because they *could* not understand. Jesus made His prediction plainly enough. There was nothing symbolic or figurative in His language. The Greek word *sunekan* is translated "understood" and means literally, "bring or set together." They could not bring together what Jesus said and their own earthly concepts of the Messiah. They *would* not get it all together! The Greek word *kekrummenon* is translated "hid" and is the word from which we get the English word "cryptic." It means "concealed, hidden, secret." The word in Greek is in the perfect tense which means this crucified-Messiah concept had been misunderstood in the past and was continuing to be misunderstood. And why had they misunderstood it? Because they deliberately refused to accept the concept. Peter rebuked Jesus for stating this concept the first time He made the prediction (Mt. 16:22; Mk. 8:33). The word "grasp" is the Greek word *eginoskon* and means "to be taking in knowledge, to come to know." They did not understand Jesus because they were *not* taking in what He was saying. They deliberately refused to listen to what He was saying.

Why, now after the third plain prediction of His death, do they still refuse to accept it? The student must here turn to Matthew 20:20-28 and Mark 10:35-45. There the underlying reason for their refusal to grasp the true Messianic concept (even though it was predicted centuries before in the Prophets) is revealed. They were striving among themselves for political positions in what they thought was going to be an earthly kingdom. Two of them, James and John, sent their mother to request promotion to favored positions. Jesus sternly warned the disciples they were acting like heathen and it must not be so among them. Luke omits this incident but at the same time he is the only one who records the disciples arguing about the same thing in the Upper Room at the time of the Last Supper (cf. Lk. 22:24-30).

The fact that the Messiah was to be crucified and suffer a humiliating death was perhaps the *most crucial issue* Jesus faced in His incarnation (other than His claim to be God in the flesh). We notice His own disciples,

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after more than three years of learning from Him, still conceived of His kingdom as an earthly one that would ultimately manifest itself in a human political structure. Furthermore, even after His death, the two disciples on the road to Emmaus had to be rebuked by Jesus and instructed again that their own Prophets had predicted the Messiah's humiliation. Paul wrote that the crucifixion of Christ was a stumbling-block to the Jews and foolishness to the Gentiles (I Cor. 1:23). The unregenerated mind of man will not believe that he can be saved by a crucified Savior, because human pride refuses to accept the idea of vicarious atonement. For that reason God raised Jesus from the dead and *verified* historically and empirically that Jesus' death was a vicarious atonement. The Jews never thought of their Messiah as one who would atone for their sins but one who would deliver them from their earthly bondage. They wanted political and economic deliverance, but they were really not interested in spiritual freedom (cf. Jn. 8:31-39). And after two thousand years of gospel history the majority of the world is still interested only in political and economic deliverance.

SECTION 6

Pitiless (18:35-43)

35 As he drew near to Jericho, a blind man was sitting by the roadside begging; ³⁶and hearing a multitude going by, he inquired what this meant. ³⁷They told him, "Jesus of Nazareth is passing by." ³⁸And he cried, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" ³⁹And those who were in front rebuked him, telling him to be silent; but he cried out all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!" ⁴⁰And Jesus stopped, and commanded him to be brought to him; and when he came near, he asked him, ⁴¹"What do you want me to do for you?" He said, "Lord, let me receive my sight." ⁴²And Jesus said to him, "Receive your sight; your faith has made you well." ⁴³And immediately he received his sight and followed him, glorifying God; and all the people, when they saw it, gave praise to God.

18:35-39 Cruelty: Finally Jesus leaves the area known as Perea, crosses the Jordan river into Judea and comes to Jericho. Immediately the careful student of the gospel records notices *apparent* discrepancies. In the first place, Matthew and Mark say, ". . . as He was leaving Jericho (Mt. 20:29; Mk. 10:46) and Luke says, ". . . as He drew near to Jericho. . ." (Luke 18:35).

- a. Solution #1: As Jesus entered, Bartimaeus cried out for help too late to be heard—he circled the town, joined by another blind man, appealed to Jesus as He left Jericho, and was healed.

- b. Solution #2: There were two Jerichos known to people in Jesus' day. There was the old Jewish city about a mile away from the new Jericho (a Roman city), and both were directly in Jesus' path to Jerusalem. Matthew and Mark refer to His leaving the older city; Luke refers to Him as being about to enter the newer Roman city. In between the two Jerichos, somewhere, Jesus healed the two blind men. Archaeology has confirmed this and solution #2 appears to be the most plausible (cf. *Archaeology and Bible History*, by Joseph P. Free, pg. 295, pub. Scripture Press). See our map, page 348.

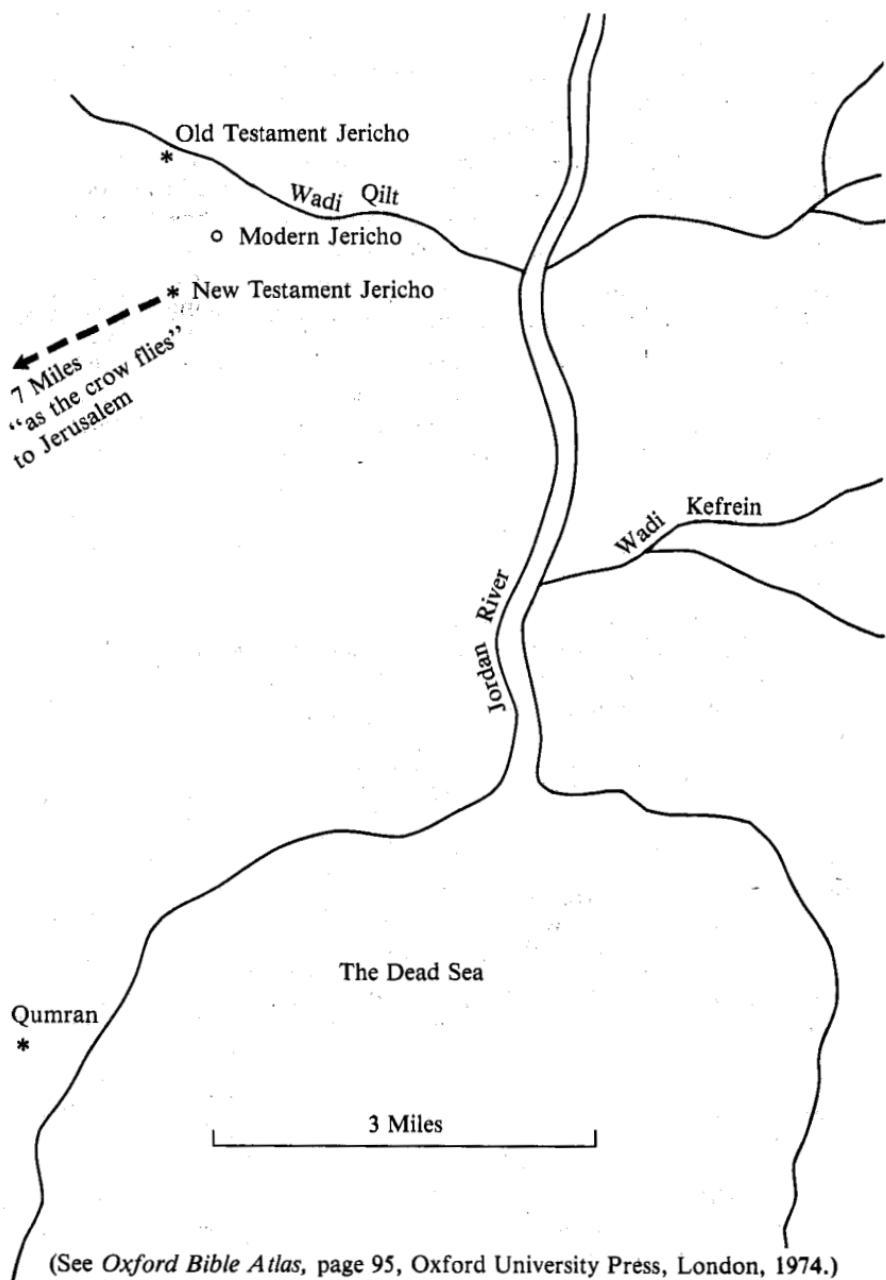
Another problem occurs when Matthew says there were two blind men (Mt. 20:30) while Mark and Luke mention only one (Mk. 10:46; Lk. 18:35).

- a. Solution #1: Remember the silence of one record is not, in itself a contradiction of what another affirms. The only way we could have the gospel writers *contradicting* one another is if they say "there was *only* one blind beggar. . . ." or "there were two blind beggars and *not* one. . . ."
- b. Solution #2: Mark and Luke mention only the one beggar because he was so forceful or singularly vocal and the leader of the two. As a matter of fact, Mark calls him by name!

Our reason for treating these details is that one of the "theories" used to "prove" that the Bible is inaccurate and therefore not inspired is called the "Two-Source Theory." In essence this theory says the gospel writers all copied from a common dual-source or from one another. Now if they copied from a common source, or from one another, why are they so different in so many details—not only here but in many other places?

Alongside the road between the two Jerichos sat the two blind men. One of them was named Bartimaeus. Hearing the multitude following Jesus passing by, he asked what was happening. When he was told that Jesus of Nazareth was passing through, he shouted, "Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy on me." The Greek word for "cried" in v. 38 is *eboeſe*, the same word used to describe John the Baptist's preaching in Luke 3:4, ". . . a voice of one *crying*. . . ." It describes someone shouting to gain attention. Notice the beggar believed two things about Jesus: (a) that He could heal blind people; (b) that He was the messianic, "Son of David." Jesus was apparently teaching the multitudes as He walked along the road and the man's loud yelling for attention made it difficult to hear Him. Or perhaps the blind man had staggered blindly out in front of the multitudes as they walked along side Jesus and became a hindrance to their progress and was looked upon as a nuisance. Those in front of the crowd rebuked the beggar. The Greek word for "rebuke" is *epētimon*, and means literally, "threw their weight around." They spoke contemptuously, with a high-and-mighty attitude toward this handicapped person who was in their way!

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(See *Oxford Bible Atlas*, page 95, Oxford University Press, London, 1974.)

They told him to shut up. But the beggar cried out all the more. This time the Greek word translated "cried" is *ekradzen* and denotes a cry of great emotion, or a piercing, agonizing cry, a clamorous cry. Since the Greek verb is imperfect it means Bartimaeus kept on clamoring for Jesus to stop and show him mercy.

18:40-43 Compassion: Matthew tells us, of course, that both blind beggars were crying out to Jesus. Jesus stopped and gave instructions to bring the beggars before Him. Mark tells us that Bartimaeus threw off his cloak, jumped up, and came to Jesus (along with the other blind man). One must try to visualize the scene to appreciate the impact of this incident. Jesus is on His way to Jerusalem. He has just been speaking of the cross to His disciples. Not only have they refused to hear Him, they have audaciously sought appointments to positions of honor and power. Multitudes are pressing all around Him as He walks this Jericho road. He is concentrating on the culmination of the great, eternal plan of God's redemption about to be agonizingly worked out in His becoming sin for the whole world. He has only a very limited time left to teach the twelve apostles. Suddenly two ragged, handicapped, blind, beggars are screaming at Him, "Help us, help us, help us!" They were misfits in society, social outcasts, nuisances with nothing to contribute to His own burdens but more burden, but Jesus stops to help them. Jesus completely subordinated His own feelings—He thrust aside His own breaking heart, to help these two helpless men. No one else offered. None of the twelve spoke on their behalf! The multitudes were contemptuous of them. But Jesus saw in them a beauty and value He did not see in these others—*faith*. Jesus asked what He could do for them. Bartimaeus said, "Lord, that I may see again" (Greek *anablepso*, "see again"). Jesus ordered, "See again!" The Greek word describing Jesus' reply is *anablepson*, imperative mood, meaning Jesus gave the command, "See again." So the interruption was not really a burdensome inconvenience to Jesus after all. In fact, the faith of these two blind beggars in the midst of all the worldly-minded clamoring of the multitudes (and even of His own twelve apostles) served as a refreshing relief and spiritual encouragement to Jesus as He faced the cross. Jesus told the beggars, "Your faith has made you well." The Greek word translated "well" is *sesoke* and is from the root word which means "saved." The usual medical term used for healing in the Greek language is *therapeuo* (sometimes, *iaomai*). *Sesoke* (from, *Sodzo*) is sometimes translated, "made whole." Luke probably used *sesoke* because it is ambiguous enough to mean that the blind beggars had not only been cured physically by their faith, but also made spiritually whole, or "saved." Not only did the faith of these blind beggars give Jesus spiritual comfort, the miracle He performed for them caused the multitudes to glorify God and perhaps registered in their hearts more about His saviorhood than all the words He had been saying to them.

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These men had just this one opportunity to be made whole. Jesus would not pass that way again. They had to avail themselves of this one opportunity in the face of probably contemptuous cries of, "Shut up," "Get out of the way," "Don't bother the Master," "Who are you that He should help you?" or others. But that did not stop their pleas—their cries—for help. And when invited by Jesus to ask, they got up and went to Him. These are the only kind of people Christ is able to help.

STUDY STIMULATORS:

1. The world's injustices tend to make people pessimistic. What does the Christian have to overcome that? Does it work for you?
2. Is it proper for Americans to thank God they are not like all the other people in the world who worship idols? Or would it be better for American Christians to pray, "God have mercy upon us. . . ."
3. Why couldn't the Pharisee be justified? Have you ever been tempted to feel like the Pharisee?
4. What are some stumbling-blocks people put in the way of children or "childlike" adults which keep them from Jesus? Have you put any there?
5. Why did Jesus begin with the rich, young ruler by reminding him that only God was "good"? Do you think this is where most preaching today should center?
6. Why aren't law and love contradictory? How had the rich, young ruler kept the commandments? Do you keep the "spirit" or the "letter" of the law?
7. Why should the church be honest about the sacrificial life of discipleship to Jesus?
8. Why is it hard for a rich man to enter God's kingdom? Are you rich?
9. Do you think there are other great men of God who should be rewarded more than you should be? What is God's basis for rewarding labor in His vineyard?
10. Why didn't the disciples understand Jesus' crucifixion? Do you have trouble with the idea of vicarious atonement?—someone else dying for your sins?
11. What did Jesus get out of stopping to help some beggars? Have you?

Chapter Nineteen (19:1-48)

THE SON OF MAN SPEAKING ABOUT SALVATION

IDEAS TO INVESTIGATE:

1. Why did Zacchaeus think he should restore *four times* anything he had defrauded (19:8)?
2. How does the parable of the pounds correct the misconception of the immediate coming of the kingdom of God (19:11)?
3. How could "stones" cry out in acclamation of Jesus (19:39)?
4. Who are the "enemies" of Jerusalem who will cast up a "bank" (19:43)?
5. Where is it written, "My house shall be a house of prayer" (19:45)?

SECTION 1

Penitence (19:1-10)

19 He entered Jericho and was passing through. ²And there was a man named Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector, and rich. ³And he sought to see who Jesus was, but could not, on account of the crowd, because he was small of stature. ⁴So he ran on ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him, for he was to pass that way. ⁵And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, make haste and come down; for I must stay at your house today." ⁶So he made haste and came down, and received him joyfully. ⁷And when they saw it they all murmured, "He has gone in to be the guest of a man who is a sinner." ⁸And Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have defrauded any one of anything, I restore it fourfold." ⁹And Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, since he also is a son of Abraham. ¹⁰For the Son of man came to seek and to save the lost."

19:1-5 Confrontation: Jesus passed on from healing the two blind men to the Roman Jericho. Jericho at that time was largely populated by Roman tax-gatherers and priests of Jerusalem. It was an important "customs gate." Archaeological ruins of the Roman Jericho produce a picture of magnificence with pools, villas, a hippodrome and a theater. A great civic center, of the best Roman masonry, with a spectacular facade containing statuary niches, potted plants and a reflecting basin before it, testify of the grandeur of the international culture that was Jericho's at the time of Jesus and Zacchaeus. Jericho was an important tax collecting station because of the many caravans passing through it or near it. It was a "winter resort" place for the affluent Jews and Gentiles in Palestine at that time.

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Herod had his winter residence there. Date palm trees flourished there, and balsam, from which medicine was extracted and its vegetable growing season was ideal making it a green oasis in the middle of the dry Jordan wilderness and a prosperous place to do business.

Zacchaeus was a "chief" publican (Greek, *architelones*) which probably means he was an executive of some sort in the tax-system of the Roman province of Judea. He may have been in charge of all the collections in Jericho and supervisor of a number of subordinate tax-collectors. He was rich, and influential. Tax-collectors (publicans) became rich only by extortion and dishonesty. Rome's method of collecting taxes in the provinces was to appoint certain natives of the province, assign certain tax amounts to be collected and forwarded to Rome, and then ask no more questions. The tax-collector had all the authority of Rome behind him and so if he were minded to do so he could "shake down" individuals and businesses by threats, demand more taxes than Rome required and pocket the excess. The publicans who became rich in this way were despised by their countrymen as "traitors" and "Gentiles." The financial dishonesty of government agents is reflected in John the Baptist's charge to the publicans, "Extort no more than is appointed you" (Lk. 3:13, see comments there). Zacchaeus admits he has wronged others and thus violated God's law. The Greek, *kai ei tinos ti esukophantesa*, is first person singular, first aorist indicative, and therefore a first class condition which means that Zacchaeus is saying, "On the condition that I have robbed anyone of anything, which I admit I have done. . . ." He had become rich by dishonesty and extortion. Most men who have become rich through dishonest means are men who have put their whole trust in riches and what they can buy. Riches gained by wickedness separate men from God and men from men. It is very unusual that a rich, powerful man like Zacchaeus should want to see the poor, itinerant, Galilean teacher who was violently opposed by Jewish officials. G. Campbell Morgan writes, "I am inclined to think one reason why he was glad to receive Jesus was that he was pleased to do anything that would annoy the Pharisees!" Whatever the case, Zacchaeus was *determined* to see Jesus. He had to overcome serious obstacles to fulfill his wish. The crowd selfishly pressed around him and paid no attention to him because he was "small of stature." They were not like the friends of the paralytic let down through the roof. They were the same crowd who told the blind men to shut up. Knowing Zacchaeus to be a publican and feeling safe with their numbers they probably blocked him away from Jesus deliberately. But neither the hostility of the crowd, his own secure position in wealth nor his physical impairment (small) kept him from his desire. He climbed up into a "fig-mulberry" tree. The "sycamore" tree of Palestine is *shiqmah* in Hebrew and is of the genus *ficus sycomorus*, the sycamore fig tree, bearing a fruit like the ordinary fig tree but of inferior quality.

When Jesus came to the tree He could see Zacchaeus there. Jesus would have known he was there even if he had not been visible. Jesus knew his name and there is no indication they had ever met before. The Lord said, "Zacchaeus, quickly come down from there, for in your house it is necessary that I stay this day." The Greek syntax emphasizes the *necessity*. The necessity was for Zacchaeus' benefit, not Jesus'. Jesus often accepted invitations to visit people's homes and eat with them, but this is the only recorded instance where Jesus invited Himself to someone's home. He had a compelling purpose—He saw in this "sawed-off" little government official, the possibility of repentance. Even though Jesus is bearing the heart-rending burden of the cross, His first thought is not of Himself but of "lost sheep."

Jesus risked His reputation with that crowd by calling upon Zacchaeus. He showed that He loved men even though He hated their sin. He showed that love and truth are not "cowed" in the presence of sin, power, wealth or popular opinion. Jesus took time to go into Zacchaeus' house (away from the hostile crowd) and teach the despised publican about the kingdom of God. Jesus demonstrated "the Son of man came not to be served but to serve."

19:6-10 Change: Zacchaeus came quickly down out of the tree and was almost beside himself with joy that Jesus was coming to his house. The Greek verb *hupedexato* means Zacchaeus was "hyper-receiving" Jesus. His expression of reception to Jesus' announcement was over and above normal welcoming. Add to that the Greek word *chairon* ("joyfully") and one gets a picture of Zacchaeus' excitement and joy so evident that the great crowds thronging the streets of Jericho saw it and were astonished. Many of them murmured (Gr. *diegogguzon*, "growled"), "He has gone in to be the guest of a man who is a sinner!"

How we would love to know what Jesus said to Zacchaeus and how the visit went. G. Campbell Morgan writes, "I have often wondered what Jesus said to him. I am sure He talked to him courteously, but there was more than courtesy." No doubt Jesus spoke firmly about the Law of Moses and sin and repentance. Jesus undoubtedly promised the tax-collector forgiveness if he would repent and believe in His Word. Zacchaeus' first commitment to Jesus' way of life was, "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor." Now there are many rich men who will give half their goods to the poor—as tax breaks, as salve for guilty conscience, or as attempts to earn righteousness before God. But Zacchaeus' commitment was by way of true repentance, for his second statement was, "and if I have defrauded any one anything, I restore it fourfold." Zacchaeus was willing to fulfill his trust in Jesus' word by complying with the law of God. Exodus 22:1 and II Samuel 12:6 indicate that four-fold restitution was a requirement of repentance for stealing or defrauding. The Greek word

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translated "defrauded" is *esukophantesa* and means literally, "a fig shower"; it is the word from which we get the English word, *sycophant* which also means, "accuse falsely, advise falsely, defraud or flatter to deceive." Jesus replied, "Today salvation has come to this house, since he also is a son of Abraham." Note the following things which indicate a dramatic change in Zacchaeus' thinking and living:

- a. He accepted Jesus and called Him, "Lord." Originally he got up into the tree to "see who Jesus was"—now he acknowledges Him as Lord.
- b. He acted in accordance with his trust in Jesus' conversation with him (whatever that was). He cut himself loose from his former life of trust in his money and power. He followed Jesus in offering service to an exploited, defrauded, oppressed society.
- c. He acted to remove the barriers between himself and his fellow man. His repentance was public. He said, "To the poor I am giving now. . . ." (Gr. *didomi*, present tense), not some future date. He repented in accordance with divine revelation.
- d. Jesus' closing statement implies Zacchaeus entered into a saving relationship. Salvation came to Zacchaeus by the grace of God through his faith in the Lordship of Christ, by repentance and by obedience to covenant terms. He had lost his inheritance by sinning against the Old Covenant, he became a true descendant and heir of Abraham by faith in Christ.

SECTION 2

Persistence (19:11-27)

11 As they heard these things, he proceeded to tell a parable, because he was near to Jerusalem, and because they supposed that the kingdom of God was to appear immediately.¹²He said therefore, "A nobleman went into a far country to receive a kingdom and then return.¹³Calling ten of his servants, he gave them ten pounds, and said to them, 'Trade with these till I come.'¹⁴But his citizens hated him and sent an embassy after him, saying, 'We do not want this man to reign over us.'¹⁵When he returned, having received the kingdom, he commanded these servants, to whom he had given the money, to be called to him, that he might know what they had gained by trading.¹⁶The first came before him, saying, 'Lord, your pound has made ten pounds more.'¹⁷And he said to him, 'Well done, good servant! Because you have been faithful in a very little, you shall have authority over ten cities.'¹⁸And the second came, saying, 'Lord, your pound has made

five pounds.' ¹⁹ And he said to him, 'And you are to be over five cities.' ²⁰ Then another came, saying, 'Lord, here is your pound, which I kept laid away in a napkin; ²¹ for I was afraid of you, because you are a severe man; you take up what you did not lay down, and reap what you did not sow.' ²² He said to him, 'I will condemn you out of your own mouth, you wicked servant! You knew that I was a severe man, taking up what I did not lay down and reaping what I did not sow? ²³ Why then did you not put my money into the bank, and at my coming I should have collected it with interest?' ²⁴ And he said to those who stood by, 'Take the pound from him, and give it to him who has the ten pounds.' ²⁵ (And they said to him, 'Lord, he has ten pounds!') ²⁶ 'I tell you, that to every one who has will more be given; but from him who has not, even what he has will be taken away. ²⁷ But as for these enemies of mine, who did not want me to reign over them, bring them here and slay them before me.' "

19:11-19 Faithful: As the multitudes in Jericho heard Jesus talking to Zacchaeus about being a son of Abraham, about salvation having come to his house that very day, about seeking the lost, they must have expressed some excited anticipation of an immediate messianic kingdom. They probably were talking among themselves that when Jesus got to Jerusalem, He would begin the proceedings of establishing an earthly kingdom much like Jewish tradition pictured it then. Jesus immediately told a parable to squelch that false concept. There are three things Jesus intends to teach in this parable: (a) He is going away to receive His kingly inheritance, but He is going without having brought His kingdom to the earth in its full, glorious and final manifestation; (b) in the meantime, those who wish to come under His rule must be faithful in keeping the instructions He left behind; (c) and, finally, He will return in all His magnificent authority to call all men to account for their attitudes and actions toward His kingship. There is a teaching on rewards for faithfulness, but that is coincidental. The main objective is to say, "I go to Jerusalem to do the Father's will, but my disciples will be disappointed because my kingdom does not come in earthly glory immediately—and my enemies will be encouraged to think they have rid themselves of My rule." Jesus says, essentially, "But, I want you to know, in spite of My death My kingdom *will* come and the faithful shall be rewarded, while the rebellious will be judged and punished." "Be faithful," Jesus says, "use what you are given to the king's advantage—rewards will certainly come when the king finally returns." Now the church Jesus established on the day of Pentecost, in Acts 2, is the kingdom (cf. Col. 1:13; Heb. 12:28; Acts 8:12; Rom. 14:17; I Thess. 2:12; Mt. 16:18-19, etc.), but it is the kingdom functioning while the King is away temporarily, anticipating His imminent return to consummate and manifest His kingly glory when He shares His inheritance with

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His citizens and banishes His enemies. Make no mistake about it, Jesus is now king, and His kingdom has (past tense) been established in fact. All who believe and obey Him become, in fact, citizens of His kingdom.

Some commentators believe Jesus referred vaguely to an incident in the political life of that country some 27 years earlier. Archelaus, son of Herod the Great had received the tetrarchy of Judea, Samaria and Idumea upon the death of his father in 4 B.C. But he was not satisfied with that. Leaving his palace in Jericho in 6 A.D., he journeyed to Rome to ask that he be declared "king of the Jews," as his father had been titled. When he went to Rome he left a man, Philippos, in charge with funds to apply to the maintenance of his "kingdom" while he was gone. But after he left for Rome, a disgruntled party of Jews sent a special deputation from his "kingdom" to inform the emperor of Rome, in no uncertain terms, that they did not wish Archelaus to rule over them. This may be so. But what Jesus says in this parable is going to come to pass just as He told it. The story of Archelaus has a different ending. Archelaus was deposed and lost his kingdom altogether. Jesus will not lose His!

Do not confuse this parable with the Parable of The Talents (Mt. 25). They are not the same. Note the following differences:

Parable of Pounds

1. Spoken publicly
2. Approaching Jerusalem
3. A Nobleman goes to a far country to receive a crown
4. Pounds are given to 10 men equally.
5. Enemies are mentioned in addition to servants.

Parable of Talents

1. Spoken privately to the apostles
2. Two days after the triumphal entry into Jerusalem
3. A man goes on a journey
4. Talents are given to 3 men unequally.
5. No enemies mentioned

Both parables, however, teach the same fundamental of discipleship—
FAITHFULNESS

Jesus sets forth the encouragement to faithfulness, diligence and persistence. His kingship is established. When He ascended to heaven, He was enthroned at the right hand of the Father. But the rewards for His citizens must await His return for them. In the meanwhile, while He is away, His citizens must put to work what He has left with them—the Gospel of Grace. Salvation, in all its rewarding glory, is yet to be. Salvation in its consummation depends upon faithfulness.

The Greek word translated "pound" is *mina*. There is a Hebrew word similar to it (*maneh*, I Kings 10:17) and the word *mene* ("weighed") in Dan. 5:25-26, may also be related. Some think the "pound" was worth about \$25 while the "talent" was worth about \$30,000. Here, Jesus chose

the smaller monetary amount because it was sufficient to illustrate His main point—faithfulness in using what had been given for the nobleman's profit. The nobleman left each servant with one pound to test the capacity of the servants to receive the promotion he had in store for them at his return. Some Christians, at first reading this parable, are confused about its very clear teaching on a difference in rewards. There is nothing inconsistent about there being a difference of rewards in heaven. In fact, such a difference would seem to be the inevitable result of differences in individual capacities developed. Jesus did not deny that there would be chief seats in the kingdom (Mt. 20:20-28; Mk. 10:35-45), He simply said they were not His to give at that time; they would be given later by the Father. Jesus did emphasize that those who think they should be first may be last and vice versa (Mt. 20:1-16). The parable of the Talents (Mt. 25:14-30) infers rewards will differ according to faithful stewardship of differing abilities and opportunities. Paul indicates (I Cor. 3:5-15) there will be some works burned up and some survive. Ultimately, reward will be based on faithfulness and dispensed by an Absolutely Just and Omniscient God! No human being converted to Christ's image will have reason or desire to complain. Note in this parable, the man who had gained five pounds was *praised* as warmly as the one who had gained ten, even though the reward was different in extent. Perhaps the servant who gained ten, had more opportunities and privileges. What would have happened to him, with all his opportunities and privileges, had he been slothful and gained only five? He would have been condemned! You see, the focus is on faithfulness—not numerical success.

19:20-27 Fearful: "Another" of the servants entrusted with a "pound" from his nobleman made no use of it at all. He did not spend it. He did not fling it away. He did not lose it accidentally. In fact, he congratulated himself that he had preserved it by hiding it. When presenting the one pound he had so carefully preserved, he gave the reason for hiding it his fear of the austerity of his master. The Greek word *austeros* is usually applied to unripe fruit and means, "sour, bitter, harsh." This servant believed his master was demanding more than his servant was able to render and therefore, more than he had a right to demand. The servant believed he knew better than the nobleman how to be a good steward of the gracious gift of the pound.

Study carefully the nobleman's reply. He does not admit to such an unfaithful characterization. As a matter of fact, his actual conduct shows this to be a false charge. He was gracious, trusting, more than fair and just. But the nobleman judges the faithless servant on the basis of the servant's own false charge. He says in effect, "If this was your evaluation of my character, that I would be rigid, firm and even severe, you would have been smart to have made much better use of the pound I gave you.

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If you fully expected me to require more of you than normally required, you certainly have no right to complain if you are judged by the standards you expected. That is how I will judge you!" The least the fearful servant could have done was put his "pound" out to the money-lender's tables (Gr. *trapezan*, "table"—not bank), so it could earn interest. But he was afraid even to do that. Every Christian is a steward of (a) the grace of God in the Word of God (I Cor. 4:1); and (b) the grace of God in personal talents or abilities (I Pet. 4:10; Rom. 12:4-8). Every Christian must do something to invest as much of the Word as he has in him and as much of his abilities as he has that it may bring a return for his King. No Christian is without something to invest. No Christian should think Christ will demand more than he is able to produce—Jesus is not unjust or unfair. He is gracious, trusting and completely fair. The nobleman in the parable did not rebuke the one who had made five because the other had made ten. Both were given the same but produced differently. It is not how much, but whether! His only rebuke is to the one who *did* nothing. Censure is for the one who was afraid to do anything and then tried to put the blame on the nobleman. The Christian servant never need be afraid to invest God's Word. It will always prosper. His Word will not return unto Him void (cf. Isa. 55:11) but will accomplish His purpose. His Word is living and active and will penetrate even to the thoughts and intents of men's hearts (Heb. 4:12-13). So put it to use!

When the nobleman took the one pound from the fearful servant and gave it to the one who had gotten ten, those standing by appeared to object. They wanted to know why the man with ten pounds should have his reward increased at the expense of the man who had only one pound. The principle of the nobleman's actions is this: The one who proves the most faithful in his stewardship is the one who can be trusted most with what has never been put to use while the one who proves altogether unfaithful cannot be trusted with anything. It is a principle running through the whole fabric of life. To every man a "pound," use it or lose it!

G. Campbell Morgan cites Paul's dissertation on each man's work being tested by fire (I Cor. 3:5-15) to illustrate his belief that the servant "was still a servant, but he had neglected his opportunity." In other words, Morgan believes the servant who produces nothing will be saved but he will lose his reward—his "wood, hay and stubble" will be burned up with fire.

We have difficulty with this interpretation, because of the Lord's following judgment. Jesus said, "But as for these enemies of mine. . ." and the Greek word for *enemies* is *echthrous* and means literally, "those who hate." Jesus also said, ". . . who did not want me to reign over them. . ." and the Greek words for *did not want* are *me thelesantas*, literally, "are not willing." Certainly the unfaithful steward despised the nobleman because

he considered him unfair and tyrannical. The unfaithful servant was not willing to be ruled by the nobleman or he would have obeyed instructions. Furthermore, Jesus pictures the nobleman calling the unfaithful servant a "wicked servant" (Gr. *ponere doule*, evil slave). Apparently, the servant who does nothing with his pound is accounted as an enemy and an evil servant and is slain along with the rest of those who are unwilling to have the nobleman rule over them. After all, every person is a servant of God and every person has been given a "pound." Those who try to save their lives shall lose them and those who lose them for Christ's sake shall save them. The reference to the enemies of the nobleman being slain (Gr. *katasphaxate*, "hewn to pieces") is a cryptic warning to the Jewish nation which will soon demonstrate rebellion against the Messiah and be destroyed. This is very much on the mind of Jesus as He faces the cross. In one week He will be humiliated and murdered, and the uppermost thing on his heart is the ruin his murderers are bringing upon themselves (Lk. 19:41-44).

SECTION 3

Praise (19:28-40)

28 And when he had said this, he went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem. 29 When he drew near to Bethphage and Bethany, at the mount that is called Olivet, he sent two of the disciples, ³⁰saying, "Go into the village opposite, where on entering you will find a colt tied, on which no one has ever yet sat; untie it and bring it here. ³¹If any one asks you, 'Why are you untying it?' you shall say this, 'The Lord has need of it.'" ³²So those who were sent went away and found it as he had told them. ³³And as they were untying the colt, its owners said to them, "Why are you untying the colt?" ³⁴And they said, "The Lord has need of it." ³⁵And they brought it to Jesus, and throwing their garments on the colt they set Jesus upon it. ³⁶And as he rode along, they spread their garments on the road. ³⁷As he was now drawing near, at the descent of the Mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works they had seen, ³⁸saying, "Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!" ³⁹And some of the Pharisees in the multitude said to him, "Teacher, rebuke your disciples." ⁴⁰He answered, "I tell you, if these were silent, the very stones would cry out."

19:28-34 Creation: John's gospel account tells us that Jesus arrived in Bethany six days before the Passover of His last week on earth (Jn. 12:1). Bethany was on the eastern side of the Mt. of Olives, about two miles from

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Jerusalem. Jesus apparently stayed in the home of Lazarus and his sisters (Martha and Mary) Friday night and Saturday night and left early Sunday morning to enter the city of Jerusalem (cf. Mt. 26:6-13; Mk. 14:3-9; Jn. 21:1-8). About a mile down the road toward Jerusalem, lay the village of Bethphage. The word Bethphage in Hebrew means "house of unripe figs"—it was in the vicinity of Bethphage that Jesus cursed the fruitless fig tree (cf. Mt. 21:18-20; Mk. 11:12-21). It was from this little village that Jesus began what is called His Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem.

This passage exudes divine authority. The reader cannot escape the implication that everything is done by foreknowledge and by divine schedule. When Jesus sent the two disciples (probably Peter and John) into Bethphage for the colt, there had been no prearrangements so far as the record goes. The description of the animals, where they were to be found and the reply to be given the owners all indicate the disciples were sent not by prearrangement but on the basis of the foreknowledge of Jesus. The same kind of foreknowledge was displayed by Jesus (undoubtedly for the benefit of His disciples) when the room for the last supper was obtained (cf. Mt. 26:17-19; Mk. 14:12-16; Lk. 22:7-13). If the action of Jesus here seems presumptuous, that is because it is! He intended this whole event (entry into Jerusalem) to be one of triumph. He would now affirm His lordship over all creation. He intended to receive the praise of all creation as due Him. The earth and all that is in it belongs to Him. The owners of the colt were doubtless disciples of Jesus; the animals were only borrowed for a time and then to be returned or reclaimed. The two sent for the colt were to furnish the explanation, "The Master has need of it," if they were challenged. Actually, they brought two animals—the colt and its mother (cf. Mt. 21:2), undoubtedly necessary to get the colt to come willingly.

Jesus might have walked into Jerusalem that Sunday morning, A.D. 30 but He rode on the colt of an ass to lay before the city (especially its rulers) a graphic, symbolic claim to be the Messiah. It was predicted by the prophet Zechariah (Zech. 9:9) that the King of the Jews would come to them humble and lowly, riding on the foal of an ass. Earlier, thousands would have made Him "king" according to their earthly aspirations (Jn. 6:15). Now, He announces He *is* King according to the Father's pre-ordained plan. He enters royally. He enters freely, not as a prisoner or victim. He did not hide or hurry. He acted deliberately and purposefully. The time has come for the great struggle—for the showdown. The time has come for the world to either acknowledge its ruler or to renounce Him. Not only was He announcing His kingship, He was announcing the nature of His kingship. He did not claim kingship as the Gentile world would expect (cf. Jn. 18:33-38). He did not ride in on a white stallion with a troop armed with swords. He rode on a beast of burden. His "army" was an unorganized mob; a multitude of shouting, conquered sheepherders and farmers. John records

that His disciples did not understand at first the mysterious or unique action of Jesus in riding upon the colt—but after He was “glorified” they remembered that this had been written of the Messiah in their prophets. This event which is said to be a *fulfillment* of the prophecy of Zechariah concerning the Messiah’s first coming, gives the careful Bible student a clear key for understanding the many other highly figurative and symbolic prophecies of the Old Testament concerning the Messiah and His kingdom. The whole context of Zechariah 9:9-17 is about the Messiah. Barnes thinks the prophecy of Zechariah 9:9 was “always, by the Jews, applied to the Messiah.” We have not found that to be so. In fact, one modern Jewish Bible encyclopedia, in its article on the prophet Zechariah, attributes Zechariah 9-11 “to the final days of Jeroboam, son of Joash, to the beginning of the Assyrian conquest.” Only the part of Zechariah’s imagery depicting the coming king as a “triumphant and victorious” one “commanding peace to the nations” would fit apocryphal aspirations. It is evident even from the New Testament that few Jews would accept (not even Jesus’ own disciples) a “humble, lowly” messiah.

19:35-40 Crowds: Even before Jesus’ arrival at the home of Lazarus, the crowds of Passover pilgrims were awaiting His coming to Jerusalem (see Jn. 11:55-57). Passover was the most significant national memorial of the Jews with all its overtones of deliverance from foreign oppression and divine intervention in history. The pilgrims were already engaged in religious rites of purification so they could participate. Josephus estimates some three million pilgrims jammed into Jerusalem and its suburbs at Passover time. People renewed old acquaintances, met cousins and other relatives for the first time in years, gossiped, talked politics, taxes and the state of the religious *status quo*. Popular opinions of the great, new Prophet and Rabbi (reputed to be a miracle-worker) versus the official pronouncements of the rulers concerning Him were discussed.

There were thousands of pilgrims already inside the city of Jerusalem (cf. Jn. 12:12-13) and these came out to meet Him (Jn. 12:18) as He approached. In addition, there were thousands of pilgrims still coming toward Jerusalem surrounding Him as He rode on the colt (Mt. 21:8-9; Mk. 11:8-10; Lk. 19:35-38) accompanying Him toward the city. This whole multitude was expecting Jesus to come to Jerusalem and make good on His promises to set up God’s kingdom as they perceived God’s kingdom (cf. Mk. 11:9-10). This multitude was in a state of frenzied euphoria remembering all the “mighty works” they had seen the Prophet of Galilee do. The thousands began to throw their cloaks down in the path of the colt upon which Jesus rode. Many of them climbed palm trees and cut off branches to throw down for the colt to walk upon, (Mt. 21:8; Mk. 11:8; Jn. 12:13). Some waved the branches back and forth. The palm branch was an emblem of victory and restoration of peace (cf. I Macc. 13:51; II Macc. 10:6, 7; Rev.

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7:9). They all shouted with loud roaring (Gr. *phone megale*, "voice, great"), joyfully, "Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest." Some shouted "Hosanna" (Mt. 21:9; Mk. 11:9; Jn. 12:13) which is an Aramaic word meaning, "Save now, we pray!"

The common pilgrims are shouting, "King!" But His garment is not a royal robe; it is homespun and seamless. His "charger" is a dumb, beast of burden, not yet old enough to be ridden. His "court" is of fishermen and hated publicans. His cavalcade is a mob of Galileans. Yet no pageant that ever passed through the streets of imperial Rome has so impressed the centuries as this one. The triumphal entries of Roman emperors have all but been forgotten, but this one, in every detail, is known and retold year after year, century after century.

As He moved toward the city He was creating a great "stir" (Mt. 21:10) (Gr. *seismos*, "quaking, trembling"). He was creating an "earthquake" of emotional excitement, but that is about all it amounted to with most of the thousands. The most striking characteristic of Judaism, of that century, and one which set it apart from all other religions of antiquity was its messianic fervor. The Jews looked for their "golden age" in the messianic *future* and not in the past like Greece and Rome. The Messiah of the Jews was supposed to usher in:

- a. Perfect happiness and peace.
- b. Super-abundance of materialism.
- c. Power over the whole world, politically.
- d. Destruction of all enemies.
- e. Supernatural renovation of the natural order.

The rulers were also "quaking" but from a different emotion—envy and hatred. They had already given orders for Jesus' arrest (see Jn. 11:53-57). Now they are wringing their hands in frustration and fear (Jn. 12:19; Mt. 21:10-16) because they want to kill Him but they do not dare while the cheering, jubilant thousands are acclaiming Him as their king. A confrontation is about to take place in one of the remote and despised frontiers of the Roman empire which will have cosmic repercussions. Men charged with teaching and administering the Word of God and His covenant are preaching to kill a Man who has already raised three people from the dead! They are even planning to kill one of those He raised from the dead (Lazarus, Jn. 12:10-11).

There were even Pharisees in that clamoring, shouting multitude with Jesus that Sunday morning as He approached Jerusalem. They knew very well that the Tower of Antonia was fully garrisoned with Roman troops with orders from Pontius Pilate to subdue with swift and ruthless force any signs of rebellion or sedition. The Roman procurator always reinforced

his troops in Jerusalem at Passover time. Sentries were placed on the roofs of all the great colonnades like Solomon's Porch and others. Many of the soldiers, off-duty, roamed the streets and shops of Jerusalem. When the great roars of "Hosanna," and "Blessed is the King. . . ." went up just outside the city walls and echoed across the Brook Kidron it sent "shivers" up the spines of the Roman soldiers. It would signal to their way of thinking, rebellion, riot, fighting and bloodshed. Many such skirmishes had already occurred within the city of Jerusalem between "hot-headed Jews" and Roman soldiers. Roman patience was wearing thin with the Jews. The Pharisees knew this well. They wanted to keep their political positions and their city from devastation by these powerful conquerors. So Pharisees curtly admonished Jesus, "Rabbi, rebuke your disciples." They demanded that Jesus quiet the crowd and put an end to all the praise lest some very serious blood-letting result from it.

Jesus' answer was a refusal to even try to silence the shouting. He could not do so (except by miraculously suspending their voices or some other supernatural intervention over human free will). If He should try to suppress such spontaneously strong emotions, they would find some other way to express what is being shouted. "Even the stones would cry out," would not seem to be intended literally, but figuratively. Although there is a sense in which "the things which have been made" (nature) cry out in testimony to God when men refuse (cf. Rom. 1:18ff.)! It is impossible to extinguish praise to God by hard repression. The Pharisees were soon to find that out! The Pharisees were trying to save their nation by repressing Messianic praise; Jesus knew that praising and acknowledging the Messiah would be the only way to save it.

SECTION 4

Peace (19:41-44)

41 And when he drew near and saw the city he wept over it,⁴² saying, "Would that even today you knew the things that make for peace! But now they are hid from your eyes.⁴³ For the days shall come upon you, when your enemies will cast up a bank about you and surround you, and hem you in on every side,⁴⁴ and dash you to the ground, you and your children within you, and they will not leave one stone upon another in you; because you did not know the time of your visitation."

19:41-42 Weeping: The crowds were clamoring, almost in hysteria, shouting loudly, "Peace in heaven. . . ." They were apparently oblivious to the Lord Himself so taken were they with their own emotions. As He rounded the crest of the Mt. of Olives and the thousand-year-old capitol

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city of the Jews came into view, He wept. The Greek word *eklausen* is translated "wept" but it means much more than tears; it suggests that His whole body was heaving with sobbing. It is the kind of deep, soulful sobbing the human body suffers at the death of a loved one. None of the crowd seemed to notice except perhaps one of His disciples who gave Luke this eyewitness account later. It is interesting that this particular incident is recorded only by Luke.

Jerusalem (Hebrew, *Yerushalom*) means, "Righteousness - Peace." They were shouting "Peace in heaven. . . ." but they had no idea of what it meant. Peace (in the Hebrew language, *shalom*) means, "soundness, wholeness, well-being." Peace as it relates to God may be experienced by man even in the midst of earthly conflict (cf. Jn. 14:27; Isa. 26:3). Jerusalem was the City of Peace and yet it represented the center of all that stood in opposition to the God of peace. Its people, for the most part, did not know the way of peace—not then, not ever. Isaiah condemned the nation in his day because it did not know the way of peace (cf. Isa. 59:8). This is the city of God's presence but the frivolous, materialistic-minded mobs, and the self-righteous rulers have taken the kingdoms by "violence" for themselves. The attitudes of the Jews toward Jesus are so vividly like those of the Jews toward God and His prophets in the days of Jeremiah (cf. Jer. 6:16ff.) that one should not be surprised at the terrible devastation predicted by Jesus here. Peace, true peace, is not the absence of struggle, discipline or conflict; it is the result of reconciliation and surrender to the will of God by being "in Christ" (cf. Eph. 2:11-22). This is what the inhabitants of Jerusalem rejected.

19:43-44 Warning: Jesus gives a somber and gruesome prediction in a general way here of what will happen to the Jews because of their soon rejection of the Prince of Peace. Later He gives in great detail the same prediction (Lk. 21:5-32; Mt. 23:37—24:35; Mk. 13:1-31). We will deal with this prediction fully in Luke 21:5-32. Jerusalem's enemies (the Romans) would "cast up a bank" (siege wall) around the city and "hem" them in. Thousands would starve to death, other thousands would fight and kill one another. Then the Romans would "dash" many to the ground, including infants as they slaughtered the besieged Jews. Josephus documents the literal fulfillment of Jesus' prophecy in 66-70 A.D. in his history of the Jews. Titus Vespasian razed Jerusalem so that it looked like "a plowed field," and not one stone was left upon another. The crowds seem unaware of this shocking prophecy. His prediction, if heard, would have been considered outrageous and completely out-of-place. Even His own disciples later (Mt. 23:37—24:35) could not believe that "not one stone would be left upon another" in their beloved Jerusalem. When Jesus said that so they could hear it later, they thought He was talking about the end of the world. To a Jew, the destruction of Jerusalem would be "the end of the world."

But, as incredible as it seemed, it came to pass to the very letter of the prediction just 40 years after Jesus said it.

All this was to come upon them "because they did not know the time of their visitation." The Greek word *episkopes* means literally, "to look upon, care for, exercise oversight." It may be used to denote a "visitation" from God in judgment (Isa. 10:3 in the LXX *episkopes*) or a "visitation" by the Son of man with mercy and redemption (Lk. 1:68, 78; 7:16; Acts 15:14; Heb. 2:6). God "visited" man in the Person of His Son, as Man, to exercise oversight for the purpose of accomplishing man's redemption. The prophets of the Jews predicted God would visit man as Man (Isa. 7:14; Micah 5:2ff.; Isa. 9:6ff.; Isa. 11:1-9; etc.). But when that Man came and claimed to be God in the flesh (Jn. 1:14, 18) they accused Him of blasphemy (Jn. 5:18) and plotted to kill Him. He invaded history in a fashion quite contrary to the human concept of how God would come. God's chosen people had been manipulating the written Law of God, His temple, His priesthood and His creation so long they thought they could manipulate Him. But God in the flesh, Jesus, would not be manipulated. When they rejected Him, He rejected them. They did not know Him because they did not know God (Jn. 5:30-47; 8:19; 8:42-47; 10:31-39; 14:8-11, etc.). "He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world knew him not . . . He came to his own home, and his own people received him not," (Jn. 1:10-11). Tragedy—tragedy—tragedy! And in spite of documentation by eyewitnesses of the historical reality of visitation by God in the flesh, Jesus Christ, most of the world today does not acknowledge with any personal obligation and responsibility—not even of praise—that He has visited to bring peace. What is left then for those who pass from this life into the next without personal recognition and responsible commitment to that "Visitor"? The opposite of peace—eternal rebellion, fragmentation and torment. It is important to notice here Jesus' pity never led Him to compromise the truth. In spite of the deep grief which made His whole body shudder with sobbing, He pronounced the terrible truth of Jerusalem's doom. Had He known it and kept it to Himself no sane person could call Him compassionate! Pity alone never saved anyone; the compassion which elicits truth spoken and acted is what saves.

SECTION 5

Prayer (19:45-48)

45 And he entered the temple and began to drive out those who sold, "saying to them, 'It is written, 'My house shall be a house of prayer'; but you have made it a den of robbers.'

47 And he was teaching daily in the temple. The chief priests and

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the scribes and the principal men of the people sought to destroy him; ⁴⁸but they did not find anything they could do, for all the people hung upon his words.

19:45-46 Temple Purged: Apparently Jesus and the Twelve entered Jerusalem each morning for four successive days and went out to lodge in Bethany each night. He entered Jerusalem Sunday morning for the Triumphal Entry and returned to Bethany that night, doing the same on Monday, Tuesday and probably Wednesday (cf. Mk. 11:11; Mt. 21:18; Mk. 11:19-28; Lk. 21:37-38). Thursday He entered the city to keep the Passover (Mt. 26:18-20), was arrested that night in the Garden of Gethsemane, put on trial all night long and crucified on Friday. On Sunday He merely entered the Temple precincts, looked around at the despicable commercialization and exploitation of the Temple and its worshipers and departed for Bethany with the Twelve since it was late in the evening (cf. Mt. 21:10-17; Mk. 11:11).

As He returned toward Jerusalem the next morning (Monday), He cursed the unproductive fig tree (Mt. 21:18-19; Mk. 11:12-14). After entering the city on Monday He went to the Temple and taught and healed. Children shouted, "Hosanna to the Son of David" and Jesus cautioned the indignant Pharisees, ". . . Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast brought perfect praise. . . ."

The incident of the cleansing of the Temple in our text took place on that same Monday, (see also Mt. 21:12-17; Mk. 11:15-19). The Temple of Jesus' day was magnificent. Herod the Great initiated grandiose plans in 20 B.C. for remodeling the Temple Zerubbabel had finished about 516 B.C. This remodeling was not completed until 64 A.D. (only 6 years before it was totally destroyed in 70 A.D.). Workers and materials were scattered about the Temple which Jesus knew. Ten thousand workers were employed in its remodeling. With nearly 3,000,000 people in Jerusalem at Passover time, and most of them coming to the Temple at least once a day, it was a very packed and busy place. Jesus was there probably every day of this last week. He would naturally gravitate to the Temple because of the teeming masses of people there at Passover time. He would have not only somewhat of a captive audience, but one with its mind concentrating on spiritual things. There also, were the rulers and religious leaders of the whole nation. This last week is the nation's "moment of truth." This last week will be the "crisis of the cosmos" (see comments on Luke 21). No longer will He keep a "low profile" on His Messiahship. Now is the time the issue is to be faced openly, thoroughly and plainly. There must be no lingering doubts about how much authority Jesus claims. The logical place for that authority to be claimed is the Temple. In addition to all this, the Temple, and its services, will provide immediate, vivid symbolism and

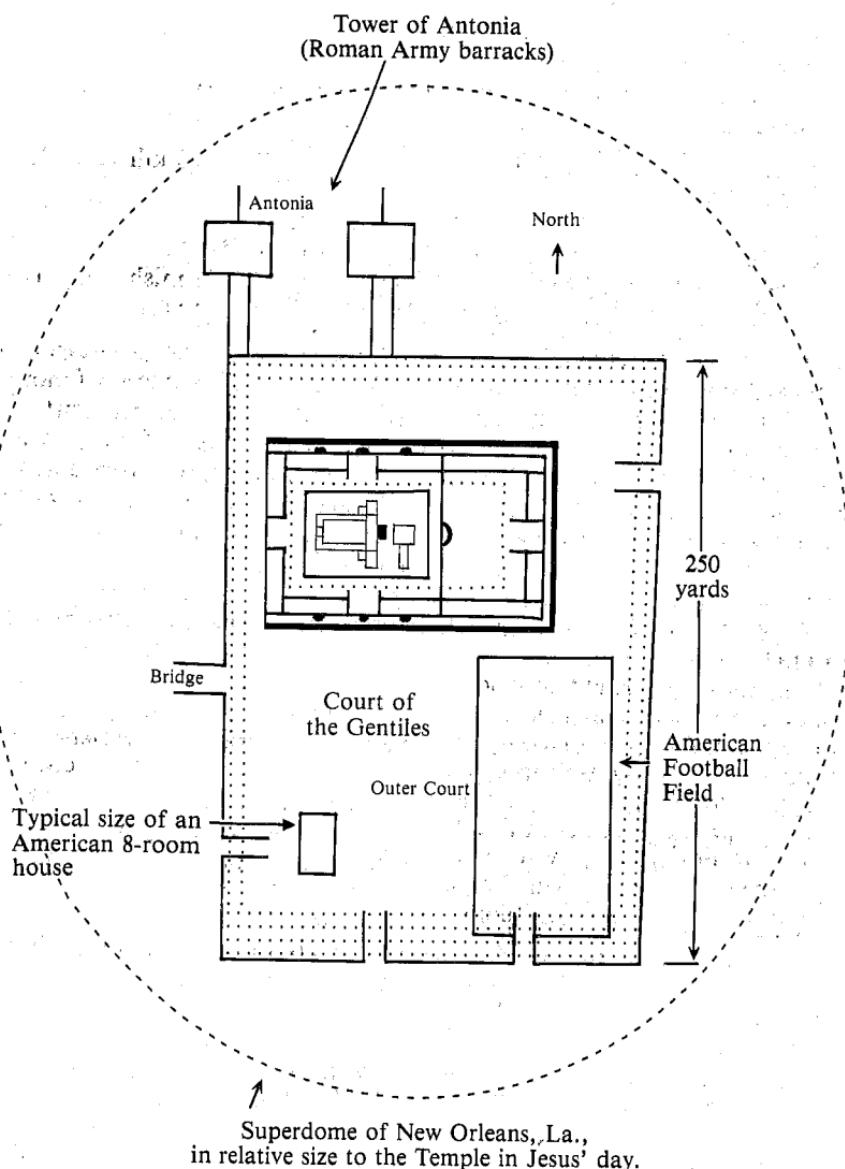
typology for Him to relate His redemptive work to the Old Testament of the Jews. Thus, He entered the Temple.

The Court of the Gentiles was called the "Bazaar of Annas" because the family of the High Priest made their fortune from the "markets" there. The Court of the Gentiles was a public place very much like the Forum in Rome or the Agora in Athens where anyone could go, including infidels, heretics, excommunicated Jews or unclean Jews. It was always crowded like a modern "Farmer's market" with people gossiping, buying, shopping, strolling around and selling. Merchants from all over the world were allowed to set up booths in it to hawk their wares. Along the walls, the huge colonnades (sheltered walk-ways) were gathering places. Roman soldiers walked along the roofs at Passover time patrolling the Court. It was "big business." Over \$1,000,000 a year was cleared by the family of the High Priest. The Roman general, Crassus, plundered the Temple of \$30,000,000 himself. The family of the High Priest had a "corner" on the market of "kosher" animals and "kosher" money for sale to Passover pilgrims. Jewish worshipers came from all over the Roman empire. Many of them could not bring a Passover lamb or Jewish shekels for their offerings. Nothing else was acceptable. Furthermore, all the priests had to do was pronounce any lamb that had been brought, unsuitable, and another one had to be obtained before the worshiper could observe the Passover. Often prices at the great feasts went up as much as fifteen times over the usual price of a lamb or a shekel. People were being exploited and defrauded in the name of religion.

Jesus was angry about this. He entered the Temple courts and began to drive out those who sold. The Greek word translated "drive out" is *ekballein* and means literally, "throw out." It is a word of action. Matthew records that He "overturned" the tables of the moneychangers and the seats of the merchants. The meek and mild Jesus vents His anger. There is a righteous magnificence to His roughness. He is demonstrating by actions what the prophets said so many times about the zeal of the Messiah for justice and relieving the oppression of the poor (Isa. 9:7; 11:1-5; 42:1-4; 61:1-4). As long as there was corruption in the Temple and its priesthood, there would be corruption in the whole nation. Where there is corruption in the religious leadership of any nation it will filter down and permeate the whole citizenry.

God never intended His "house" (covenant family) to become a market-place where men buy and sell, exploit the weak and powerless, and worship the god mammon. Isaiah predicted that God's "house" (the church) would be set aside to evangelize the "foreigner" and call all who would to come into covenant relationship and worship (prayer), (Isa. 56:1-12). Jeremiah told the people of his day the Lord was going to remove them from their land and take His presence from them because they made His house a "den

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of robbers." There is, in Jesus' reference to both these prophecies, a direct claim to deity and messianic authority. He vindicates His actions by claiming the divine authority of messianic prophecy.

19:47-48 Teaching Popular: Jesus, in this action on Monday, excited a whole spectrum of emotions that lasted for several days as He taught in the Temple.

- a. The rulers were indignant (Mt. 21:15) and sought to kill Him (Lk. 19:47-48).
- b. The sick flocked to Him to be healed (Mt. 21:14).
- c. The children shouted Biblical praises, (Mt. 21:15-16).
- d. Most of the multitude watched and listened in astonishment, awe and appreciation, "hanging on His words" (Lk. 19:48).

For one brief moment the Temple was what it should be—beautiful, holy and spiritual. It was untidy and noisy, but lovely. For one brief moment the Temple was no longer a market-place that made you feel dirty and ashamed for having been there. It was a house of prayer and glory to God. For one brief moment Jesus revived in the minds of the worshipers the spiritual ideals and atmosphere of the Temple and turned them from their crass materialism.

The rulers were filled with rage and would have killed Him on the spot but they were afraid to do so. Jesus did something which was very popular with the multitudes. It warmed their heart to see anyone with enough courage to take action and overturn money tables and drive the merchants out. With only a slight provocation, the crowds would have joined Jesus against the rulers. Furthermore, the rulers were guilty and they knew they were guilty. What Jesus was doing was right and their consciences told them so. Guilty consciences have made many powerful men cowards. Finally, although they were filled with rage, they were also calculating. They knew the expedient thing to do was wait for the right moment and hope for an opportunity to make Jesus appear to be the criminal. Then they knew they could win the popularity of the multitudes to their side.

The church, made of "living stones," is God's temple today (Eph. 2:11-22). He wants it to be His house of prayer and evangelism. He is angry when it prostitutes itself before the gods of materialism, false teaching and sensuality. Some of the last admonitions of the New Testament are for the church to purge itself—to repent—lest He come and take away its light (cf. Rev. 2-3). Let the church know what happened to the Temple (Mt. 23:37—24:35; Lk. 21:5-33), and repent.

STUDY STIMULATORS:

1. Would you risk your reputation to visit in the home of a "traitor" to teach about God's kingdom if invited? Jesus did!

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2. Is the "religious experience" of Zacchaeus (his salvation) an accurate example for salvation now?
3. What does the Parable of the Pounds do for your concept of rewards in heaven?
4. What do you think about faithfulness as the divine criterion for reward versus *amount* of work accomplished? Can you think of other teachings in the N.T. along the same line?
5. Have you ever been tempted to think of God as austere and too demanding? How do you overcome it?
6. Do you believe the Master has given you a "pound" to invest? What is it? Have you invested it?
7. What do you think you would have thought had you been a Roman soldier stationed in the city of Jerusalem the day Jesus rode in on the colt? What do you think you would do today if He rode into your town in an old, broken down automobile, followed by an entourage of common laborers, farmers and alleged traitors, claiming to be President of the United States?
8. Have you ever wept over the impenitence of your home town? Have you ever grieved over all the lost people who live there?
9. How many people do you know who have never acknowledged that Jesus was God in the flesh, visiting mankind? Have you ever talked to them about this?
10. Are there religious leaders making God's house (the church) a den of robbers today? How does Christ feel about this? What about your body as the temple of the Holy Spirit—is there anything in it that Christ might want to "drive out"?

Chapter Twenty (20:1-47)

THE SON OF MAN SPEAKING TO THE FUNDAMENTAL ISSUES OF LIFE

IDEAS TO INVESTIGATE:

1. Was Jesus dodging the issue of His authority by asking about John's baptism (20:1-8)?
2. Why did Jesus ask the Jews to interpret the parable of the wicked husbandmen (20:9-18; cf. Mt. 21:33-46; Mk. 12:1-12)?
3. What are the things a follower of Christ must "render to Caesar" (20:25)?
4. If there is no marriage in heaven, what kind of personal relationships will there be (20:34-40)?
5. Who is "my Lord" of David's Psalm (20:42)?

SECTION 1

Revelation and God (20:1-8)

20 One day, as he was teaching the people in the temple and preaching the gospel, the chief priests and the scribes with the elders came up and said to him, "Tell us by what authority you do these things, or who it is that gave you this authority." ³He answered them, "I also will ask you a question; now tell me, ⁴Was the baptism of John from heaven or from men?" ⁵And they discussed it with one another, saying, "If we say, 'From heaven,' he will say, 'Why did you not believe him?' But if we say, 'From men,' all the people will stone us; for they are convinced that John was a prophet." ⁷So they answered that they did not know whence it was. ⁸And Jesus said to them, "Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things."

20:1-4 Summons: Luke's chapter 20 documents part of the longest day recorded in the entire ministry of Jesus. Matthew gives more of the details of this Tuesday in Jerusalem than any of the other evangelists; almost one-sixth of Matthew's whole Gospel is taken up in recording this day. It is in Matthew 26:1, 2 we come to the end of Tuesday when Jesus says, "... after two days the Passover is coming," or, "... day after tomorrow the Passover is coming." Consider the following list of events which took place on this Tuesday:

- a. Jesus' Authority Challenged (Mt. 21:23-27; Mk. 11:27-33; Lk. 20:1-8)
- b. The Parable of the Two Sons (Mt. 21:28-32; Mk. 12:1a)
- c. The Parable of the Wicked Husbandmen (Mt. 21:33-46; Mk. 12:1b-12; Lk. 20:9-19)

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- d. The Parable of the Marriage of the King's Son (Mt. 22:14)
- e. Catch Question About Giving Tribute to Caesar (Mt. 22:15-22; Mk. 12:13-17; Lk. 20:20-26)
- f. Catch Question About the Resurrection (Mt. 22:23-33; Mk. 12:18-27; Lk. 20:27-39)
- g. Catch Question About the Greatest Commandment (Mt. 22:34-40; Mk. 12:28-34; Lk. 20:40)
- h. Christ's Questions About David's Lord (Mt. 22:41-46; Mk. 12:35-37; Lk. 20:41-44)
- i. Warning to His disciples (Mt. 23:1-12; Mk. 12:38-40; Lk. 20:45-47)
- j. Sevenfold warning to the Pharisees (Mt. 23:13-36)
- k. Lamenting over Jerusalem (Mt. 23:37-39)
- l. Commending a Poor Widow's Gift (Mk. 12:41-44; Lk. 21:1-4)
- m. Reflecting About the Coming of the Greeks (Jn. 12:20-36)
- n. The Sinful Unbelief of the Jews (Jn. 12:37-43)
- o. Jesus Summarizes His Own Message and Mission (Jn. 12:44-50)
- p. Discourse on the Destruction of Jerusalem (Mt. 24:1-34; Mk. 13:1-30; Lk. 21:5-32)
- q. Discourse on the End of the World (Mt. 24:35-51; Mk. 13:31-37; Lk. 21:33-36)
- r. More about the End of the World and Judgment (Mt. 25:1-46)
- s. General statements as to His death (Mt. 26:1, 2; Mk. 14:1; Lk. 21:37, 38; Jn. 13:1)

The physical and, especially, the emotional stress of such a day was no doubt exhausting to even a strong person like Jesus. It was a day when the political and religious leadership of the nation threw at Him all the pressure and craftiness they could muster to trap Him in some mistake by which they might turn the multitudes against Him. It was a day when the weight of His knowledge of the terrible future of His people pressed heaviest upon His heart. It was a day when the exasperating ignorance of His own disciples had to be patiently dealt with again. It was a day when He was vividly reminded of His vicarious atonement for the sins of the whole world when the Greeks sought Him. It was an emotionally charged and intellectually exhausting day.

The day started with an official summons by the chief priests, scribes and elders that He should produce some credentials for the authority He had assumed the day before in driving money-changers and merchants out of the Temple! Furthermore, He is challenged to give reason why He should have acquired such a massive following of people praising Him as the Son of David, etc. This challenge of Jesus' authority is not an honest one. As the religious leaders of the nation they were obligated to honestly challenge any desecration of the Temple or violation of the laws of Moses. But Jesus had done neither. The chief priests and scribes were the guilty

ones. The timing of this challenge from the authorities betrays the fact that it was not an honest effort to protect the sanctity of God's house but a scheme to discredit Jesus motivated by envy and hatred. Jesus had cleansed the Temple three years earlier (Jn. 2:13-22) and for three years had been demonstrating His authority (by miracles and fulfilling prophecies) to do so. There had been three full years of publicly demonstrated authority by which they should have accepted Him as Lord of the Temple—if the authorities had been asking an honest question, they had the answer. There was, in fact, no need for the question to be asked!

The real reason for the challenge was the way in which Jesus' righteous actions had intimidated and humiliated these so-called guardians of the faith in the eye of the public. They could not defend their exploitation of the house of God and to "cover up" they tried to turn the attack upon Jesus. Jesus put the onus right back upon them by recalling their ridicule and defiance of John the Baptist. They had "rejected the baptism of John" and thus rejected for themselves the counsel of God (Lk. 7:30). In a master stroke Jesus exposed their dishonesty by answering, "I also will ask you a question; Now tell me, was the baptism of John from heaven or from men?"

20:5-8 Silenced: These rulers immediately recognized they were on the horns of a dilemma. That, in itself, betrayed them as hypocrites. They knew how they *should* answer, but were grasping for a way to hide their dishonesty. If they answered: "John's baptism was from God. . . ." they acknowledged the revelatory nature of John's message and condemned themselves as opposing God's testimony through John the Baptist that Jesus was the Messiah. If they answered "John's baptism was not from God. . . ." they alienated the populace which had acclaimed John a "prophet of God." So, they said, "We do not know." But that answer did not solve their dilemma—it only exposed their guilt. Their answer was really a confession that they were in opposition to John's message and mission. If they could have proved John the Baptist was *not* from God they would have declared it. To stand there in the presence of the righteous Jesus, with all their knowledge (they had investigated the ministry of John the Baptist many times, Jn. 1:19ff.; 3:25ff.; Mt. 3:7ff.; Lk. 7:24-35), and say they "did not know" showed them to be either the dumbest people in Israel or the most blatant liars!

Jesus specifically asked these rulers about John's authority for immersing (baptizing) people rather than John's teaching because of the uniqueness of the act of immersing people in water unto repentance for the forgiveness of sin (Mk. 1:4; Lk. 3:3). There could be no quibbling or hedging with this question. Baptism was a concrete, vivid impressive *act*. No one could say, "What teaching?" Immersion of the entire individual in water for the remission of sins was doctrinally innovative. The law of Moses proscribed animal sacrifices for atonement. The issue was crucial—what

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right had John the Baptist to add to the Old Testament law such a commandment for the remission of sins? He had the right only if his commission came directly by revelation from God! The Jews knew nothing of the practice of baptism as John initiated it (see our discussion in Luke 3:1-6). The only logical and honest conclusion was either to accept John's ministry and message as a divine revelation from God or prove John to be an imposter. These rulers refused to take a stand either way and thus proved themselves to be imposters!

They were dishonest about John; they were dishonest with Jesus. Jesus refused to declare Himself to men incapable of honesty. What good would it have done? Jesus refused to declare Himself to these men because:

- a. This approach (letting the logic of His challenge about John speak for itself) lets the crowds see more clearly the hypocrisy and dishonesty of their leaders. The multitudes could not hope to save themselves until the stranglehold of these rulers over their thinking was broken.
- b. Jesus had already forced them to answer their own question. John the Baptist had testified Jesus was the Messiah. They would not discredit John (could not), so they actually were forced to admit Jesus had authority to cleanse the Temple and teach what He taught.
- c. They were not asking for information, but for evil purposes—they did not deserve to have the truth just to pervert it and use it for wickedness. If they were blind to the evidence of John's credentials, they would be blind to Jesus' credentials. It was wilful blindness and dishonesty—Jesus treated it as such—it was useless for Him to do otherwise.

Jesus proceeds to teach three parables in which He condemns their methods and their motives. These parables focus on the disobedience of the Jewish religious leaders. Only one of the parables is recorded by Luke—the parable of the wicked husbandmen, Lk. 20:9-19. The other two, the parable of the two sons and the parable of the king's marriage feast for his son are recorded in Matthew's account only (Mt. 21:28-32 and Mt. 22:1-14).

SECTION 2

Responsibility to Grace (20:9-19)

9 And he began to tell the people this parable: "A man planted a vineyard, and let it out to tenants, and went into another country for a long while.¹⁰ When the time came, he sent a servant to the tenants, that they should give him some of the fruit of the vineyard; but the tenants

beat him, and sent him away empty-handed. ¹¹And he sent another servant; him also they beat and treated shamefully, and sent him away empty-handed. ¹²And he sent yet a third; this one they wounded and cast out. ¹³Then the owner of the vineyard said, ‘What shall I do? I will send my beloved son; it may be they will respect him.’ ¹⁴But when the tenants saw him, they said to themselves, ‘This is the heir; let us kill him, that the inheritance may be ours.’ ¹⁵And they cast him out of the vineyard and killed him. What then will the owner of the vineyard do to them? ¹⁶He will come and destroy those tenants, and give the vineyard to others.’ When they heard this, they said, “God forbid!” ¹⁷But he looked at them and said, “What then is this that is written:

‘The very stone which the builders rejected has become the head of the corner’?

¹⁸Every one who falls on that stone will be broken to pieces; but when it falls on any one it will crush him.”

19 The scribes and the chief priests tried to lay hands on him at that very hour, but they feared the people; for they perceived that he had told this parable against them.

20:9-15 The Parable: The figure of a vine and a vineyard to portray God's chosen people was well known to the Jews. The Old Testament is rich in such imagery (cf. Psa. 80:8-18; Isa. 5:1-10; Jer. 2:21; 6:9; 8:13; 12:10; Ezek. 15:1-8; 19:10-14; Hosea 10:1). The grapevine was considered by some Jews to be the symbol of the Jewish nation. Herod had an ornate and expensive golden grapevine embossed on the great and beautiful gate of the Temple. The grape was the most important crop in the land of Palestine and the entire Mediterranean area at that time. The vineyard was usually planted on a hill; protected from animals and thieves by hedges, rock-fences and watch towers. Wine was the chief by-product of the grape harvest and wine presses and vats were built right into the vineyards and there the juice was squeezed out by the ancient method of human feet tramping on the gathered grapes. Often Jewish farmers merely rented or “share-cropped” the vineyards. While the farmer did all the labor, he was obligated to pay the owner of the vineyard a fixed amount, usually one-third or one-fourth whether the harvest was large or small. Jesus was using an illustration here in the realm of Jewish literature, of everyday life, and relating to the symbol of their national life. This parable is also recorded in Mt. 21:33-46 and Mk. 12:1-12. It should be plain that the owner of the vineyard is God; the tenants are the Jewish people; the three servants the owner sent to collect some of the fruit of the vineyard represent the prophets of old; the heir is Jesus Christ, the Son. Jesus infers in this parable that the Jewish people (especially the religious and political leaders) recognized the “heir” well enough to decide to kill Him!

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20:16-19 The Point: This parable tells about some tenants or stewards who took things into their own hands as soon as the Landlord left them alone, and when the Landlord sent servants to collect the rent, the tenants showed their rebellion by treating the servants shamefully. When the Landlord sent His Son, they killed Him. Redding says: "This skit has caught man red-handed in his most characteristic crime—playing God." The parable of the two sons teaches or exposes the hypocritical disobedience of the Jews; this parable of the wicked husbandmen foretells the fierce wrath of God upon disobedient tenants. This parable is really a tragic conclusion to Isaiah's vineyard parable (Isa. 5:1-11). The Jews had many opportunities and privileges following Isaiah's exposé of Israel's disobedience—even the Son of the vineyard's Owner had now come—but the workers still were disobedient. This parable re-enforces Jesus' manifestation of authority over the Jewish nation in the cleansing of the Temple by its declaration that He has come to *demand* fruit from them (repentance), and that He is the Son.

The Jewish nation had been blessed above all the nations of the earth, not because they deserved it, but because of God's sovereign grace. He blessed them for a purpose—that purpose was that they might produce a people (harvest) of righteousness (cf. Amos 3:2; Deut. 26:19; 28:9-10, etc.). But they wanted to have what God gave them for themselves and produce nothing for Him. There is strong emphasis in this parable on the grace, and long-suffering of God. The most touching picture of God's love is the sending of His Son to plead with these criminals. But these wicked workers wanted the whole "vineyard" for themselves (Mt. 21:38; Mk. 12:7; Lk. 20:14). It is true to life every day that man undertakes to take possession of his own life and the whole universe and tries to cast the Owner out. God is Owner, never forget that! (Ex. 19:5; I Chron. 29:14; Psa. 24:1ff.; 50:10-12; Jer. 27:5, etc.). He cannot be cast out!

Matthew notes that Jesus asked His audience, "When therefore the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?" They said to Him, "He will put those wretches to a miserable death, and let out the vineyard to other tenants who will give him the fruits of their seasons." Luke adds, "When they heard this, they said, God forbid." How masterful the Great Teacher's method: He compels them to come to the only right and just conclusion and thus to judge themselves. As the truth of it all began to destroy the facade of their pretensions, they said, "Let it not be!" The Greek text has *Me genoito*, "God" is not in the original text—it is an English translation.

No truth is more plain in the Bible: The patience of God can be exhausted with impenitent men. There is a limit even to Divine grace. After the wicked husbandmen refused to acknowledge the Son and killed Him, no more

mercy could be shown. Why? Because God has reached the limits of what He can do and still leave man a free moral being. If men will kill the Incarnate Word, what else can God do? Man committed the greatest of crimes against God by rejecting Jesus Christ, His Son. The Jews, Jesus said, "filled up the measure of their fathers" (Mt. 23:29-39) and "finished the transgression" (Dan. 9:24), and were guilty of all murder from Abel to Christ.

Jesus had led this audience to the inexorable logic that God was going to reject the "wicked husbandmen." They knew who these husbandmen were! They cried out, "May it never happen!" Jesus then plainly declared that the wicked husbandmen were the Jewish nation which would reject its Messiah. Their rejection of the "corner stone" had been predicted by the Old Testament. Jesus quoted Psalm 118:22. In its original context the verse refers to the covenant nation, the Jews. God had chosen them to be the *typical* corner-stone in His preliminary redemptive program—but the heathen world rejected that. And while this Psalm had typical and symbolic application to the nation Israel, its ultimate reference, even when it was written, was to the Messiah Himself. The prediction of Isaiah the prophet (Isa. 28:16) indicates that it was not the nation Israel which was the ultimate "stone . . . the builders" would reject, for it would be the "builders" themselves (the rulers of Israel) who would reject the "precious cornerstone." God was laying by prophecy and type that stone even in Isaiah's day. Who else could that be but the Suffering Servant whom they would despise (Cf. Isa. 52:13—53:12). It may be, as Hobbs says, some Jewish scribes interpreted Psalm 118:22 as teaching the Messiah would be rejected by the builders and later become the stone which would join together two walls, but most modern Jewish interpretations of this verse applies the "stone" to national Israel, *only*. *Socino Commentary* (Jewish) on Psa. 118:22: ". . . Israel, despised by neighborly peoples, has been appointed by God to have an essential function to discharge in the construction of His kingdom on earth." cf. *Isaiah*, Vol. III, pgs. 277-280, by Paul T. Butler, College Press for notes on Jewish interpretation of the nation as the Messiah.

The "builders" (rulers of Israel) had been "rejecting" the messianic concept all the time God had been "laying" it! They rejected God's messengers, the prophets. These prophets kept insisting that a personal, humble, righteous, atoning, but suffering Messiah would come to rule in the minds and affairs of God's covenant people. The leaders of Israel kept on rejecting that teaching and those who taught it. They even killed some of the prophets who predicted such a Messiah. However obscure this passage may have been to the Jewish mind (more because of their own prejudice than its vagueness), Jesus fully expected the Jews of His day to have read it and understood it as applying to the Messiah. Matthew writes that Jesus said

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here, "Have you never read in the scriptures: The very stone which the builders rejected has become the head of the corner. . . ." It is significant that there is no text of the Old Testament more frequently quoted (6 or 7 times word for word) or paraphrased in the New Testament. That the Messiah (Jesus Christ) was God's "key-stone" is thoroughly documented in the Bible (cf. Psa. 118:22; Isa. 28:16; Zech. 4:7; 10:4; Isa. 8:14; Acts 4:11; I Pet. 2:6, 7; Eph. 2:20; Rom. 9:33). The "key-stone" of man's relationship to God is a Person, Jesus, not a religious system.

The term, "head of the corner" is an interesting term. The "head of the corner" is the "key-stone" to an arch. In olden days, the procedure for building an archway out of stone was to construct the two sides first and the final, critical stone to be placed into the arch was last, at the very center or apex of the rise (much like the great metal Arch was constructed in St. Louis, Missouri, a few years ago). This is the stone which is absolutely necessary for the completion of the "corner" or arch. Without this stone being put in place the whole archway falls. The arch was a fundamental architectural support for buildings, aqueducts, bridges and other construction of that day. The Jews cast the key-stone out and their building collapsed and The Stone destroyed them. When they cast off the crucial Stone to their becoming God's "building," they both stumbled over Him to their own destruction (cf. I Cor. 1:18-25) and He fell on them and crushed out their existence (cf. Dan. 2:44, 45; Lk. 21:5-33). Jesus plainly told this audience that the kingdom of God would be taken from the Jews and given to a *nation* producing the fruits of it (cf. Mt. 21:43). This "nation" would be the *new Israel*, composed of both Jew and Gentile, which would listen to the messianic message and believe (cf. Acts 13:46-48; 28:28). The new Israel would be a "new creation" (cf. Gal. 6:15, 16; II Cor. 5:11-21). The Jewish people had been offered the grace of God through the promised Messiah, but they killed their Messiah, and spurned God's grace. God had given them the privilege to work in His vineyard as husbandmen, but they felt no responsibility or gratitude to His graciousness and greedily schemed to take over God's vineyard for themselves. There is a great lesson here for all who have now been called by grace into the *new Israel*. Let no Christian presume to take over God's vineyard. His kingdom (the church) belongs entirely to Him. No men have ever been enthroned to rule over His kingdom. All men are servants—some faithful and some unfaithful. "Wild olive branches" grafted into the Tree, may as easily be broken off and thrown away as the natural branches were, if the wild ones become proud and arrogant (cf. Rom. 11:17-24). Indifference to the grace of God extended in Jesus Christ will be punished eternally. This is a fundamental issue of life.

There was no doubt in the minds of the chief priests and scribes as to the object of Jesus' condemnation. And He had condemned them from

their own Scriptures! They “perceived” that He had told this parable “against them.” The word against is *pros* in Greek and means “toward, at.” In other words, Jesus told this parable and it pointed directly at the rulers. Instead of contrition, repentance and seeking forgiveness, they tried to lay hands on Jesus right there. Apparently they made some overt move to take Jesus bodily and were prevented from doing so by the threats of the crowds listening intently to Jesus’ searching parable. These crowds had just proclaimed Jesus “the Son of David.” They would have assaulted the scribes and chief priests had they tried to arrest Him there. The rulers, afraid of the people, craftily postponed temporarily what they fully intended to do later. And in the meantime, they decided to confront Him with hard, “catch” questions which they hoped would destroy His image before the people. They planned to trap Jesus into giving an answer to a political or theological question which would make Him appear to be a seditionist, a traitor or a blasphemer. If they could do this, they could sway the multitudes into joining them in demanding His crucifixion.

SECTION 3

Religion and Government (20:20-26)

²⁰So they watched him, and sent spies, who pretended to be sincere, that they might take hold of what he said, so as to deliver him up to the authority and jurisdiction of the governor. ²¹They asked him, “Teacher, we know that you speak and teach rightly, and show no partiality, but truly teach the way of God. ²²Is it lawful for us to give tribute to Caesar, or not?” ²³But he perceived their craftiness, and said to them, ²⁴“Show me a coin. Whose likeness and inscription has it?” They said, “Caesar’s.” ²⁵He said to them, “Then render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.” ²⁶And they were not able in the presence of the people to catch him by what he said; but marveling at his answer they were silent.

20:20-22 Subtlety: Jesus told the parable of the marriage feast (Mt. 22:1-14) before the Jewish rulers could regain their composure enough to start questioning Him. Soon after He finished this parable, they were ready with their question. The Pharisees had gone to discuss among themselves (Mt. 22:15) and join with the Herodians (Mt. 22:16; Mk. 12:13) to devise a plan of attack upon Jesus. The “Herodians” were influential men who were politically aligned with the Herod family in its campaign to retain the Jewish throne and to Romanize the Jewish culture. The Pharisees, of course, were philosophically in direct opposition to the Herodians. But they were true pragmatists when it came to any threat to their own

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popularity. Jesus posed a crucial threat to Pharisaic influence, so the Pharisees would compromise their vows and convictions and join with the hated Herodians to destroy Jesus. All three gospel writers positively state the motives of the questioners in this first question as "entrainment," in order to get Jesus indicted by the Roman governor (Procurator). Matthew uses the Greek word *pagineusosin* which means literally, "that which grips, binds or snares," (Mt. 22:15). Luke says they sent "spies" (Gr. *egkathetous*, "those who hide in the bushes awaiting their prey"). They were probably some Pharisees they thought would not be recognized by Jesus. This group pretended (Gr. *hypokrinomenous*, "play a part, act, pretend" or "hypocrite") to be sincere (Gr. *dikaious*, "just or righteous"). What they said flatteringly about Jesus' honesty and candidness was true. No doubt they said it grudgingly, but they also said it with malice aforethought. They intended to seduce Him with flattery. Flattery is a dangerous thing both for the flatterer and the recipient. Flattery "... works ruin" (Prov. 26:28); "it does not help the flatterer" (Prov. 28:23); it is "exploitative" (Dan. 11:21-34; Prov. 29:5; Jude 16). Flattery should never be a part of Christian methods! (I Thess. 2:5). Jesus did not succumb to it.

This group was sure they had the perfect trap for Jesus. They asked Him one of the most loaded questions they could have asked at that time. It had both political and theological ramifications. They asked, "Is it lawful for us to give tribute to Caesar, or not?" Luke uses the Greek word, *phoron*, which means literally, "something brought to" Caesar, or a monetary tribute. Matthew and Mark use the word *kensos* from which we get the English word *census* and meant in Jesus' day, "poll tax." There were many taxes the Jews had to pay. Taxation, and especially by a foreign oppressor, was a very sensitive subject. The Jews paid the following taxes in Jesus' time:

1. Tributum Soil - Roman land tax
2. Tributum Capitis - Roman poll tax
3. Annona - Grain and cattle for Roman military
4. Publicum - Customs, sales and salt tax for Roman government
5. Temple Tax - Jewish tax for support of Temple
6. Synagogue Tax - Jewish religious-education tax
7. Herod's Tax - Taxation for Herod's public works

At first Rome permitted the Jews to coin all their own money without the image of Caesar on it. But Herod Antipas forced the Jews to strike a coin with Caesar's image upon it as an act of political flattery to the Emperor. Patriotic Jews resented this bitterly as forced humiliation and as a sign of the erosion of their national sovereignty. It was also a theological question as to whether any faithful Jew should pay taxes to a government attempting to paganize Jewish culture. The issue was highly volatile! The silver denarius was the tribute required of every Israelite by Rome. The inscription on

this coin read: "Tiberius Caesar, Emperor, Son of Divine Augustus, The Illustrious High Priest." When the Law of Moses was given there was no such circumstance for the Jews and so the Law said nothing about this. The Jews did pay tribute to foreign governments many times (cf. II Kings 17:3; 18:13-16; 23:33; II Chron. 28:21) before their captivities. They certainly paid taxes to the foreign governments in whose lands they dwelt during their captivities. And the Biblical record also documents that they paid tribute to foreign governments after their captivities and their return to Palestine (cf. Ezra 4:13). They certainly did not like it—they detested it. But tribute to Caesar was nothing new!

20:23-26 Skill: Jesus does not fall into the trap of flattery. He demonstrates the very wisdom and courage they tried to use as flattery. He does not allow Himself to be impaled on the horns of their supposed dilemma. They think if He says, "Yes, pay tribute to Caesar" they will be able to justly indict Him for being a traitor to His own nation. They think if He says, "No, pay no tribute to Caesar," they will be able to get Him indicted as a seditionist against Rome. They apparently hoped He would say "No," because at His trial they accused Him (by lying) of forbidding to pay tribute to Caesar (Lk. 23:2). Jesus knew their malicious intentions and very skillfully corrects their question. They said, "give" (Greek, *dounai*); Jesus said, "pay" (Greek, *apodote*). Taxes to government are *paid* for the value of services received. Taxes are "dues" (Rom. 13:7) for services of enforcement of law and order and protection of inalienable human rights. There are two fundamental, inalienable (non-revocable) human rights granted by the Creator to all human beings: the sanctity of human life and the right to own property. These are sanctioned by the Bible itself from the very beginning. God had ordained the structures of human governments to protect those two basic rights by enforcement of restraint or capital punishment or restitution on evil doers and the approval of right-doers (cf. Rom. 13:1-7). No real conflict existed at the time of Jesus between the obligations of the Jews to God and Caesar since the Roman government permitted the Jews complete freedom to worship God as God had revealed and the Roman government maintained proper sanctions (laws) against murder and theft and enforced them. Thus Rome was carrying out, relatively, what God had ordained human governments to do—maintain law and order. The Romans had even allowed the Jews liberal measures of self-government. Jesus' answer, "Pay the things of Caesar to Caesar, and the things of God to God," is perfect—broad enough to meet the need of any circumstance in which the believer may find himself.

Old Testament political theory and practice is more liberal than the traditions of the scribes. It may be summarized as follows:

- a. The Jews were obligated by the Law of Moses to support their theocratic government by offerings and taxes (see Leviticus and Deuteronomy).

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- b. God decreed the Jews would have to support their demanded monarchy with taxes and military and civil service (I Sam. 8:9-18).
- c. The Old Testament prophets make it clear that God held all human governments (even pagan ones) responsible for maintenance of law and order, certain standards of morality, integrity to international treaties and sanctions (Isa. 10:5-19; 13-23; 36-39; Jer. 27:1-11; Dan. 4:27; 5:17-23; Amos 1:3-15, esp. 1:9; Obadiah 11-14, Esther, etc.).
- d. The Jews were told by the Lord to be subservient and not rebellious when they dwelt in the land of foreign people (Jer. 29:1-7). In fact, they were told to "seek the welfare" of those pagan lands in which they dwelt, and to pray for emperors and rulers (Ezra 6:10).
- e. Many Jews became important and influential officials in human governments (even in pagan ones), collecting taxes for pagan kings; Daniel and his three Hebrew companions; Nehemiah; Esther; Mordecai.
- f. Jews were commanded by the Law of Moses to enforce all kinds of sanctions, from capital punishment to personal restitutions for destruction of property. They had standing armies; fought wars against aggressors; assisted other nations in maintaining international law; and had a social welfare system built right into their religious and political structure.

The New Testament political theory and practice may be summarized as follows:

- a. In the New Testament Romans 13:1-7; I Pet. 2:13-17; I Tim. 1:8, 9; 2:1-4; Titus 3:1, 2 are the outstanding passages on the Christian and human government. In Romans 12, Paul discusses the "rendering unto God" that which belongs to Him. And in Romans 13:1-7, Paul discusses rendering unto "Caesar" that which belongs to him. The New Testament *commands* (not merely suggests) that Christians obey governments which fulfill the functions outlined in the references cited above. The two main functions of human government are the protection of human rights by the maintenance of law and order; public works for the common good of society.
- b. Rationality itself insists there must be structured governments for the very existence of human social order.

(1) Axioms:

- (a) Law and its enforcement is necessary to the maintenance of social structure (cf. I Tim. 1:8, 9). If you doubt this just universalize anti-social behavior such as murder, robbery, rape, etc. What if there were no laws against these acts of social anarchy at all?

- (b) Where there are no sanctions (penalties) and where penalties are not executed (speedily), there really are no laws. Laws without penalties being executed are merely writings on paper (cf. Eccl. 8:11). This same principle applies to international laws!
 - (c) Punishment must fit the crime. To sustain the majesty of the law against murder, there must be capital punishment (cf. Ex. 21:12).
- c. Revelation from God in the Bible commands that there shall be human governments:
- (1) Government in general:
 - (a) Is ordained by God (Rom. 13:1-7; I Pet. 2:13-17; Titus 2:15—3:2; Ezra 7:26; Ex. 22:28; Prov. 24:21, 22; Jer. 27:5-7).
 - (b) Is originated for God to execute His wrath on evil doers (Rom. 13:3, 4); to restrain the lawless (I Tim. 1:8, 9); to provide peace and tranquility so the world may come to know God's truth (I Tim. 2:2-4). The very first commandment God gave Noah by which to start the human race all over again after the flood was the order for capital punishment as the penalty against murder (Gen. 9:6).
 - (2) Government on international level:
 - (a) Nations which stand for peace, justice and tranquility, must arm themselves and ally one with the other against aggressive invasions of powerless peoples—even by declaring and fighting war if necessary.
 - (b) There are no specific New Testament scriptures to this effect, except the example of Paul appealing to the government of Rome for protection against the Jewish countrymen who wanted to kill him unjustly. But there are many Old Testament scriptures—and God does not change His principles (cf. Gen. 14:21-24; Josh. 8:1-29; I Sam. 30:1-31; Eccl. 3:8; Jer. 48:10; Dan. 5:17-28; Obadiah 10-14; Amos 1:9).
 - (c) There were a number of individuals serving in human governments even as law-enforcers who were Christians in the New Testament: Cornelius, Sergius Paulus, Caesar's own household, Erastus, the Philippian jailor. John the Baptist told certain soldiers not to extort, but he did not tell them to resign from the army to please God.

Any discussion of Jesus' reply to the question of "tribute" usually brings up the problem of civil disobedience. Our clearest Biblical examples of civil disobedience are found in Acts 4:19-20; 5:20; Daniel 1 and 6; and Exodus 1 and 2 (Jochebed). It is clear that Paul and Jesus did not acquiesce in the face of illegal treatment (Acts 23:1-10; John 18:19-23). Paul's attitude

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toward governmental authority is indicated in his appealing to his Roman citizenship for *protection*, (Acts 16:37-40; 22:25-29; 26:32). Paul was so conscientious to maintain the proper structure to social order through human government he even advocated capital punishment for himself if it could be sustained that he was guilty of a capital crime (Acts 25:10-12). *Civil disobedience must not be taken lightly!* It is a desperate act to be taken only when all other means fail. The Christian is bound to say that the law of God takes precedence over the law of man, *if the two are in clear, unequivocal conflict.* But the Christian must be very certain that there is an irreconcilable conflict before he takes the drastic step of disobeying civil law—whether he lives under a pagan ruler like Nero or one who espouses Christianity. The devil would like nothing better than to create civil anarchy in the name of Christian civil disobedience! Jehovah is a God of order, peace, discipline and obedience. He does not condone anarchy and social disorder (I Cor. 14:33) and especially so in His own kingdom, the church! Of course, God does not condone compromise of His commandments, either. God has instituted the authority of the home, the church and the state. Man's individual feelings do not supersede any of these. They are not to be violated on the authority of man, but can only be superseded by the higher law of God. What about "turning the other cheek" (Mt. 5:38-45)? That is forbidding *individual* retaliation. No man, especially a Christian, has the right to hand out individual vengeance. God has ordained human governments to mete out vengeance on His behalf (cf. Rom. 12:18 through 13:7). Why did Jesus tell the disciples to get swords (Lk. 22:35-38)? Two swords were enough to allow the disciples to *defend* themselves against the imminent mob-violence, but not enough to start a war of vengeance on Jesus' enemies. What about Peter's use of the sword in the garden of Gethsemane (Jn. 18:10-12; Mt. 26:51-54)? Jesus answered three ways: (a) I must drink the cup appointed Me; (b) If this were the time for power against My enemies I could call legions of angels; (c) Those who take the sword shall perish by the sword: Jesus meant to teach Peter not to take the law into his own hands and to predict that the murderous Jews would soon perish by Roman swords. God does a better job of avenging through His use of human governments than the individual could ever do.

A great amount of human speculation has been done on the question of religion and government. Jesus answered the Pharisees and the Herodians skillfully and succinctly. His very concise answer infers He expected His Jewish listeners to know there was a precise Biblical answer. He knew that God had revealed Himself thoroughly on the subject in the Old Testament scriptures. They should know exactly what belonged to Caesar and what belonged to God without any further details from Him! We also believe that the Bible is clear enough and thorough enough that any believer may

know what his responsibility is to both Caesar and God. There can be no equivocation on this great issue of life by the Christian. The Christian can have only one conscience about church and state—that is the one which the Bible delineates! For more discussion on this subject see the special study, "The Christian and War," *Isaiah, Vol. 2*, by Paul T. Butler, pgs. 72-82, College Press.

In Christ's brief answer, He laid the foundation for the principle of the separation of Church and State. Neither should replace or control the other. They may and do have mutual obligations. The State should maintain a peaceful and tranquil society in which the Church is free to do its work. The Church should produce the kind of character which will mean good citizenship. One sharp dividing line exists: neither should control the other or meddle in its affairs. When that prevails, society is blessed.

Not only could the Pharisees not trap Him into some *faux pas* and turn the multitudes against Him, they were so astounded and amazed at the truthfulness and skill of His answer they were dumbfounded—they were silenced! They dared not pursue the subject further. What Jesus had said was complete.

SECTION 4

Resurrection and the Grave (20:27-40)

27 There came to him some Sadducees, those who say that there is no resurrection,²⁸ and they asked him a question, saying, "Teacher, Moses wrote for us that if a man's brother dies, having a wife but no children, the man must take the wife and raise up children for his brother.²⁹ Now there were seven brothers; the first took a wife, and died without children;³⁰ and the second³¹ and the third took her, and likewise all seven left no children and died.³² Afterward the woman also died.³³ In the resurrection, therefore, whose wife will the woman be? For the seven had her as wife."

34 And Jesus said to them, "The sons of this age marry and are given in marriage;³⁵ but those who are accounted worthy to attain to that age and to the resurrection from the dead neither marry nor are given in marriage,³⁶ for they cannot die any more, because they are equal to angels and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection.³⁷ But that the dead are raised, even Moses showed, in the passage about the bush, where he calls the Lord the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob.³⁸ Now he is not God of the dead, but of the living; for all live to him."³⁹ And some of the scribes answered, "Teacher, you have spoken well."⁴⁰ For they no longer dared to ask him any question.

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20:27-33 Rationalizations of Humanism: The next group coming to try to destroy Jesus' image with the people were the Sadducees. They also had a "catch" question which they believed would be unanswerable. They fully expected to destroy Jesus' reputation as a teacher in the eyes of the people. Their question dealt with the most crucial issue of human life: Is there life after death?

The sect of the Sadducees were the humanists of the Jewish religious hierarchy. Most Sadducees were priests and their sect likely originated with Zadok, the famous priest of David's day (cf. II Sam. 15:24; I Kings 1:32; Ezek. 40:46; 43:19; 44:15; 48:11). Their name probably comes from the Hebrew word *tzaddikim* which means literally, "righteous ones." It may have been a sarcastic nickname given to them by others or a boastful one given by themselves. They believed in preserving the nation by intelligence, diplomacy and prudence. They asserted Jews need keep only the "essential" parts of the Mosaic Law (the so-called 613 great principles) and in everything where Moses did not speak they might act according to "the requirements of the time." They were pragmatic toward the attempts of the Seleucid (Syrian) conquerors to Hellenize the Jewish culture during the Maccabean era (300-100 B.C.). Sadducees were wealthy, controlled the Temple and its services, but were in direct opposition in almost every issue with the Pharisees. In Jesus' day, though they secretly hated the Romans, for the good of their nation they believed it was better to make the best of their situation and go along with most anything the Romans demanded. They were the aristocratic party; they did not believe in Divine providence, miracles or angels. They did not believe in a resurrection from the dead (cf. Acts 23:7, 8). They were suspicious of one another and had no group loyalty like the Pharisees had. They renounced all the traditional interpretations and practices of the Pharisees; accepted only the Pentateuch; they insisted on a rigidly literal application of Mosaic Law which led to judicial severity without mercy and made themselves unpopular with the common people.

The Sadducees came to Jesus with a hypothetical question which was probably one of the stock arguments they used against the Pharisees who undoubtedly had a great deal of difficulty providing an answer to it. They proposed the riddle of a woman married to seven husbands who all preceded her in death without ever giving the woman a child. The woman eventually died also, of course. The poser no one was able to answer was, "Whose wife will she be in the resurrection, since she had seven husbands?" The Sadducees started, of course, with the *a priori* that the doctrine of immortality was an absurdity and then made up an absurd illustration to prove it. The careful student will note the Sadducees arranged their story so all the woman's husbands were brothers making it conform to the Levirate law (Deut. 25:5, 6). They probably thought this would give the added impact

of inferring the Law of Moses denied immortality because the Law made life after death an impossibility. If a child had been born in the illustration to one of the husbands, it might have solved the question as to whose wife she would be in heaven—craftily they omit children.

20:34-40 Revelations from Heaven: Both Matthew and Mark record Jesus' first words in answer to this challenge as: "You are wrong, because you know neither the scriptures nor the power of God" (Mt. 22:29; Mk. 12:24). All humanists make the unforgiveable mistake of *a priori* rejection of the scriptural record as unworthy of consideration in the subject of life after death. The Bible claims to be an accurate documentation of historical events. It demands to be tested. If its historicity can be established by all the accepted canons of historical verification, it deserves to be studied and believed. The Sadducees were either innocently ignorant or deliberately ignorant of what the Old Testament said about life after death. They were probably like those people described by Peter who "deliberately ignored the facts" concerning the flood (II Peter 3:5). The Old Testament says this about life after death:

- a. There are actual, documented cases of resurrection from death in the Old Testament (cf. I Kings 17:22; II Kings 4:35; 13:21).
- b. There are documented cases of "translation" from this life to the next life without the experience called death (one in the Pentateuch) (cf. Genesis 5:22-24; II Kings 2:11).
- c. There is one case, well documented by eyewitnesses, of the reappearance of a man (Samuel) after he had died (I Sam. 28:12-19).
- d. There are many declarations in the Old Testament of immortality and eternity: (cf. II Sam. 12:15-23; Psa. 16:8; 23:4-6; Isa. 53:10-12; Eccl. 3:11; 12:5-14; Job 19:25, 26; Ex. 3:6).
- e. The statements in Genesis concerning the patriarchs who died and were buried, and were "gathered to their people" (cf. Gen. 25:8; 35:29) infer immortality. This term is constantly distinguished from death and burial and denotes the reunion in Sheol (place of departed spirits) with family and friends who have gone there before.

Jesus also told the Sadducees they were ignorant of the power of God. This becomes a problem at times even for those who have accepted the historicity and integrity of the Biblical record. The Christians in Corinth to whom Paul wrote two letters had this problem. They said, "Since we have no earthly experience by which to determine what kind of body we will have in the resurrection we have doubts that there will be a resurrection." Paul told them, essentially, just what Jesus said here; God has the power to do in the next life what He has never done in the earthly life. The fundamental ignorance of man is his presumption that the life after death, if there is one, would have to be like this life. That is because man wants to reject anything outside his own experience lest he find out he is

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not his own sovereign. Man does not want to admit there is another Sovereign beyond himself able to do things he himself is not able to do. An all-powerful, all-wise, supernatural God has power to transcend and overcome all the inadequacies and incongruities of this existence by creating another existence, different and everlasting, yet incorporating the best of this one. This was what Jesus tried to convey in His answer to the Sadducees.

Jesus said there would be no marriage or sexual intercourse in heaven. Procreation will not be necessary to the survival of the human race there because those worthy to attain to the resurrection from the dead will be immortal, never dying, like the angels. If we may trust what God has revealed (however little and dim it may be) concerning the next life, we know life and personal intercourse in heaven will be much more thrilling and sensational than any fleshly sexual intercourse could ever be in this life. The apostle Paul was convinced that the next life would be "very far better" than any experience in this life (cf. Phil. 1:21-23). C. S. Lewis wrote some of his opinions about life after death. Here are some excerpts from *The Joyful Christian*, by C. S. Lewis—we think they are appropriate to this text:

Resurrection of the body: What the soul cries out for is the resurrection of the senses. Even in this life matter would be nothing to us if it were not the source of sensations. . . . Memory as we know it is a dim foretaste . . . of a power which the soul . . . will exercise hereafter. At the present we tend to think of the soul as somehow inside the body. But the glorified body of the resurrection as I conceive it—the sensuous life raised from its death—will be inside the soul. As God is not in space but space is in God. . . .

Intercourse in the Afterlife: Our present outlook of the absence of physical, sexual intercourse in heaven is like that of a small boy who, on being told that the sexual act was the highest bodily pleasure, should immediately ask whether you ate chocolates at the same time. On receiving the answer, "No," he might regard the absence of chocolates as the chief characteristic of sexuality. In vain would you tell him that the reason why lovers in their sexual raptures do not bother about chocolates is that they have something better to think of. The boy knows chocolate. He does not know the "better" thing that excludes it.

We know the sexual life; we do not know, except in glimpses, the "better" thing, which in heaven, leaves no room for the lesser sensation.

In denying that sexual life, as we now understand it, it is not necessary to suppose that the distinction of sexes or personalities will disappear. . . . What is no longer needed (sexual distinction) for biological purposes may be expected to survive for splendor.

Heaven: Dance and game *are* frivolous, unimportant down here; for down here is not their natural place. Here, they are a moment's rest from the life we are placed here to live. But in this world everything is upside down. That which, if it could be prolonged here, would be a truancy, is likest that which in a better country is the End of Ends. *Joy* is the *serious* business of Heaven. . . . At the resurrection of the body . . . once again the birds will sing and the waters flow, and lights and shadows move across the hills, and the faces of our friends laugh upon us with amazed recognition.

For these reasons, and many more sublime than even C. S. Lewis might imagine, Jesus rebuked the Sadducees for not believing in the power of God to make the next life far beyond the limitations of this one. It is significant that in answering the Sadducees Jesus did not refer to Pharisaic traditions, Greek philosophy, nor even to His own authority (as He did in the Sermon on the Mount), but to the Scriptures! He, of course, was God in the flesh and author of the Scriptures. His deity was, at that point, an excusable stumbling to the Jews. He had every right to insist they believe in life after death merely on His "say-so," but giving them the benefit of the doubt about His identity, He appealed to the divine record. They could have no excuse for rejecting the Old Testament—its divine origin was the accepted basis for their existence as a nation and all their hopes for a future messianic relationship to God. Its historicity and integrity had been established by thousands of years of supernatural demonstration to their ancestors. So Jesus cited the Pentateuch itself as the authority for believing in life after death. At the burning bush Moses quoted God as saying that He *is* the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Ex. 3:6). All of these patriarchs had been dead for centuries before Moses, yet God said they were living presently with Him. God is not the God of the annihilated or dead—but of the living.

There are still humanists today denying life after death. The *Humanist Manifesto* of 1933, updated 1973 and called *Humanist Manifesto II*, says, "We find insufficient evidence for belief in the existence of a supernatural.... Humans are responsible for what we are or will become. No deity will save us; we must save ourselves. Promises of immortal salvation or fear of eternal damnation are both illusory and harmful. . . . The universe is self-existing and not created. The mind or soul does not exist apart from the body. . . ." Avowed humanist, Corliss Lamont, wrote in the magazine, *The Humanist*, March-April 1980, "Humanists live for actions, ideals on this Earth in our one and only life. Heaven must be built in this world or not at all. . . . While we're here, let's live in clover, for when we're dead, we're dead all over."

This is still the most crucial issue in the life of finite man—life after death. Upon the answer to this issue depends true love, morality, meaning,

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purpose and every human relationship. The only viable answer continues to rest upon the historical integrity and credibility of the Bible for it claims to be the only and final revelation of God concerning this life and the next! One need only compare the after-life concepts of the religions of human origin with that of Christ to appreciate the Biblical revelation. The Buddhist "nirvana" is an alleged state of non-existence; the Hindu after-life involves an endless cycle of re-incarnations into this world of imperfection and tribulation; the Islamic "paradise" is a place of sexual promiscuity and fleshly indulgence. Even orthodox Jews today believe that "some day a Jew will appear who will announce the end of the world as we know it and the establishment of the kingdom of God, in which finally the lion will lay down with the lamb. This Jew, and he will be a person, not an incarnation of God, as if such a thing were possible, is called *Mashiach*, or Messiah. When he arrives there will be a resurrection of the dead, called in Hebrew, *T'chiat Ha-metim*, and all the resurrected of the Jews will gather in Israel, there to live forever. *Mashiach* will be a descendant of the house of David and will be announced by Elijah the Prophet. . . . Nevertheless, if one were to say, 'While not denying what the sages have said, I have no belief concerning any aspect of the life after death or the world to come; all I believe is that my soul is in the hands of God and my faith is in Him' such a Jew would not be considered a heretic, even by the most pious. Much more important than speculation about the afterlife is the acceptance of the revelation of the Torah, which is entirely concerned with life and the living." *Living Jewish*, by Michael Asheri, pub. Everest House, pg. 196. The gospel of Christ is as relevant for the Jews today as it was when Jesus pointed out to the Sadducees that the Torah teaches life after death as a fact and a fundamental tenet of true faith in God. For more information on Old Testament teaching on life after death see special study, "The Future Life," *Isaiah, Vol. II*, by Paul T. Butler, College Press, pgs. 287-299.

The Lord's reply to the Sadducees destroyed the last "stronghold" of His enemies. And even the scribes, personally taking pleasure in His humiliation of the Sadducees, dared not ask Him any more questions. They were at least wise enough to see that from then on every trap laid for him would only give Him another opportunity to manifest His divine wisdom and destroy their pretensions. They give up this method of attack.

SECTION 5

Rationale of Christ's Glory (20:41-47)

41 But he said to them, "How can they say that the Christ is David's son? 42 For David himself says in the Book of Psalms,
‘The Lord said to my Lord,
Sit at my right hand,

⁴³till I make thy enemies a stool for thy feet.' ⁴⁴David thus calls him Lord; so how is he his son?"

45 And in the hearing of all the people he said to his disciples, ⁴⁶"Beware of the scribes, who like to go about in long robes, and love salutations in the market places and the best seats in the synagogues and the places of honor at feasts, ⁴⁷who devour widows' houses and for a pretense make long prayers. They will receive the greater condemnation."

20:41-44 Lord: Immediately after hearing Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, a lawyer (also a Pharisee) came to Jesus with a sincere desire to know the greatest commandment in the law. Matthew and Mark record Jesus' answer (Mt. 22:34-40; Mk. 12:28-34), but Luke omits it and goes on to record the question Jesus put to the Pharisees concerning the identity of the Messiah.

This quotation and question of Jesus from Psalm 110 is probably His clearest claim to deity recorded by the synoptic gospels. John's gospel, of course, records quite a number of Jesus' clear claims to deity, but the Synoptists are more interested in documenting His claims to be the Messiah.

Jesus knew that He would soon be arrested and charged with blasphemy because at the beginning of His second year of public ministry the Jews became aware He was making Himself equal with God (cf. Jn. 5:18). Now, with the end of His life on earth very near, it was imperative that He prove to the Jews from their own Scriptures that if He was the Messiah—and the multitudes here at the Passover-time were unquestionably shouting that He was—He was also Lord God. His claims to be Messiah, however opaque or transparent at different times, was not what enraged the Jewish rulers. They did not, of course, concede to His messiahship since He did not fit their materialistic preconceptions about the Christ. But they never threatened Him about that—for to have done so would have agitated the multitudes against them. What the Pharisees and scribes continually threatened Him for was His claims to deity. Jewish theologians, for the most part, were never able to understand that the Messiah was to be God Incarnate, and they still do not believe it (see comments on previous text). All Jews are able to answer the first question (as Matthew 22:41, 42) Jesus asked, "What do you think of the Christ? Whose son is he?" They would all answer, "The son of David!" But they cannot, or will not, answer the second question Jesus asked, "How is it then that David, inspired by the Spirit (Mt. 22:43), calls him Lord. . . ." or as Luke recorded it, "For David himself says, in the book of Psalms, The Lord said to my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, till I make thy enemies a stool for thy feet. David thus calls him Lord; so now is he his son?" In other words, How can the Messiah be both the son of David and Lord of David?

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The thrust of Jesus' second question was to demonstrate (from David's writings) that the Messiah was to be more than David's son—indeed the Messiah was to be David's Lord God. The statement of David in Psalm 110:1 can be understood in no other way. There David represents Jehovah speaking to David's Lord (Heb. *Adonai*), who is also David's Son, enthroning Him at Jehovah's right hand (co-equal). Jesus is pleading with the Pharisees and scribes to open their hearts to their own Scriptures and believe what God had promised. Any one of them could have grasped the revelation of God about the Incarnation from their own prophets, had they really wanted to, for some prophecies, at least, were plain enough, (*Isaiah 7:14; 9:6, 7; Micah 5:2; Malachi 3:1-3*).

This was the most pertinent question, then, or ever. It went to the very heart of the animosity those Jewish rulers had for Jesus. Had they acknowledged the Messiah to be God they would not have been bothered by politics, immortality or keeping God's commandments. It is still the most pertinent question. Men must make up their minds today as to the identity of Jesus of Nazareth. Essentially, the question Jesus asked here is the same question He knew He had to have settled in the minds of the apostles when He asked at Caesarea Philippi, "Who do you say that I am"? (cf. Lk. 9:20). The book of Hebrews in the New Testament, written by the apostle Paul, a former Pharisee, gives a thrilling exposition of Psalm 110 (cf. Heb. 5:6; 7:17; 7:20-22) teaching from it both the humanity and deity of Jesus and His eternal priesthood according to the order of Melchizedek. One would expect Jewish priests and scribes to have seen this from their own scriptures, but it was not their desire to do so (see special study, this volume, *The Messianic Hope*, pages 461-466, and notes from *Isaiah, Vol. III*, by Paul T. Butler, College Press, pgs. 277-280 and pgs. 415-418).

It is significant that in Jesus' question about the identity of the Messiah, He added an answer to each of the previous questions asked of Him. To the Sadducees, who did not accept any of the Old Testament except the Pentateuch, Jesus said (as Matthew records, Mt. 22:43) that David wrote Psalm 110 by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. To the Pharisees who rejected the concept that the Messiah could be God Incarnate Jesus said Psalm 110 predicts the Messiah will be David's Lord (God in the flesh). For the multitudes it is not only a revelation of His deity, but also a warning to those who are plotting to crucify Him of the terribleness of the deed.

20:45-47 Legislator: Luke now summarizes Jesus' great denunciation of the scribes and Pharisees which Matthew records in much detail (cf. Mt. 23:1-39). The details concerning Jewish scribes and Pharisees would not be of much interest to Luke's Gentile readers, and since Matthew had treated the subject thoroughly and Luke himself had documented an earlier denunciation of the scribes by Jesus (Lk. 11:37-54), he simply summarizes here.

Jesus' condemnation of the scribes and Pharisees means He claims the right to judge men's motives and actions. His rationale for deity comes from scripture (Psa. 110:1ff.) and from His very evident power to actually discern the thoughts and intents of men's hearts as He does here.

"Beware," He commands, to the crowds, His disciples, and even to the Pharisees themselves, "of the scribes. . . ." Before the nation could be won to Jesus' spiritual kingdom, the false teachers and their worldliness and hypocrisy had to be exposed for what it was. He challenged His disciples and the multitudes to disown the whole false system the Pharisees had imposed on the nation. These religious leaders loved the wrong thing. The motive for everything they did was self-centered. Pride and power were the motives for their actions. They loved to go about in long robes, to be saluted in the market places as "Rabbi, Master," and the chief seats of honor in the synagogues and at feasts. Pride and lust for power always produces unmercifulness and greed. They "devoured" widows' houses, all the while making a pretense to be very religious by reciting long prayers. Josephus records that the Pharisees had especial influence over wealthy women accepting hospitality and rich presents from them, devouring their riches for their own political purposes. The wife of Pheroras, brother of Herod the Great, paid the fines of thousands of Pharisees who had been fined for refusing to swear loyalty to Caesar. The Talmud gives evidence of the plundering of widows. The Pharisees and scribes claimed a very exact knowledge of the law and a perfect observance of it. They pretended to stand for justice toward the poor, friendship for the distressed and were willing to aid those who were in financial straits. They could therefore induce widows and poor people to commit the management of their property to them as guardians and executors, and then took advantage of them and defrauded them. The Talmud records the warning given by Alexander Jannaeus (Maccabean ruler) to his wife on his death-bed against trusting any advice of the Pharisees.

These are the last recorded words Jesus ever spoke to the Pharisees and scribes (except at His trial), and they were words of judgment and condemnation. And even these words are spoken with a broken heart, hoping at the last moment to drive them to repentance. He can do no more. If they now refuse both their own scriptures and His demonstrations of deity, judgment must come and they will receive the greater condemnation for they have been granted the greater privilege and have spurned it! Truly, they "filled up the measure of their fathers" (Mt. 23:32) and Jesus was forced by their obstinacy to "forsake" them and leave them with their "house desolate" (Mt. 23:37-39).

So ended the public prosecution of Jesus. The Pharisees and Sadducees never attempted to publicly discredit Jesus again. He answered all their questions with divine wisdom and, what they thought would ruin His

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reputation, began to work toward their own ruin. It was a tragi-comedy of trifles. The Pharisees and Sadducees and Herodians pretended to raise the fundamental issues of life. Jesus revealed that the fundamental issue of human life is to identify and surrender to the God who became Incarnate in the Son of David. Everything else in man's life is peripheral. To put anything before this is trafficking in trifles.

STUDY STIMULATORS:

1. Would referral to John's baptism still be a good answer to anyone (especially religious leaders) today who would challenge Jesus' identity and authority?
2. Is the parable of wicked husbandmen who refused to give the Owner his due only applicable to the Jewish nation—or could it be applied to anyone now? Who?
3. If Jesus expected the Jews of His day to have read and understood the Old Testament prophecies referring to the Messiah and to have seen their fulfillment in Him, what does He expect of Jews today? What about Gentiles?
4. Why is the "key-stone" of man's relationship to God a Person, Jesus, instead of a religious system, or "plan of salvation"?
5. How did Jesus react to the flattery of the Pharisees and Herodians? What should the Christian do about flattery?
6. How should a Christian look upon paying taxes to his government?
7. Would it be wrong for a Christian to serve in the armed forces of his country? Just what should be "rendered to Caesar" by the believer?
8. Where should the Christian stand on "civil disobedience"?
9. What is the basis upon which most unbelievers reject the idea of life after death?
10. What is the only viable evidence that there is life after death? Why?
11. If there is no marriage in heaven, how can there be any enjoyment?
12. Why should the Jews of Jesus' day have understood that the Messiah was to be God in the flesh? Why didn't they? Is that a problem for people today? How is it to be answered?

Special Study

THE MESSIANIC HOPE

by Paul T. Butler

The Old Testament made many glorious promises in connection with the Messianic hope. Isaiah, chapters 40-66; Daniel 9:24-27; Micah 4-7; Zechariah 9-14.

When the Jews returned from their captivities (cir. 536-444 B.C.) it was with this hope in their hearts. They believed Jehovah would rule the land directly through a son of David, he would enforce the Law and promote the ritual religion. Some looked for Zerubbabel to fulfill this.

Time after time their fulfillment of this hope was frustrated by some foreign (Ptolemies and Seleucids and Romans) or some home-grown (Hasmonean and Herodian) oppression.

As the physical, earthly accomplishment of this hope became less evident (i.e., accomplishment through natural events), the anticipation increased that Jehovah would intervene in a great crisis of the cosmos (see Jn. 12:31 where Jesus uses that very phrase in Greek in connection with His death on the cross) and effect a deliverance of all the righteous Jews (*not* Hellenistic Jews) and God would suddenly, secretly almost, institute the messianic age.

This hope had never been so much alive, so vivid, nor its fulfillment so urgently awaited, as it was in the first centuries B.C. and A.D.—a time of sadness and deep, tormenting, national humiliation.

There was a body of literature that arose between the Old Testament and New Testament that expressed the Jewish ideas of the expected messianic age called the Jewish Apocrypha (apocalyptic in nature). The Sybilline Oracles, Book III (150 B.C.); the Book of Enoch (164 B.C.); The Psalms of Solomon (48 B.C.) are the most graphic. The Mishna, Talmud and Targums (rabbinic writings written after Christ but expressing traditions in oral form before Christ) are also valuable for determining the messianic ideas of first century people. They testify generally that the Messiah will:

- a. Attain for the people a literalized fulfillment of the promises of the Old Testament prophets (physical prosperity; physical conquest of enemies; physical restoration of Judaism).
- b. Defeat Jewish enemies and force them to serve the Jews.
- c. Restore all Jews to their "land" forever.
- d. Institute an era of Mosaic purity (as interpreted, of course, by the rabbis).

Josephus speaks of a number of men before and after Jesus who pretended to be the Messiah, obtained followers, fought Jewish enemies, and usually ended up slain in battle or executed. Josephus says "there was an ambiguous prophecy (probably referring to Dan. 9:24-27) in the Holy

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Scriptures which told the Jews that in those times a man of their nation would become the master of the world" Wars, 6:312.

Some believed in Jesus' day in a personal Messiah. This belief took *four* forms:

1. An Angel: As earthly powers continued to oppress the Jews with more intensity it was inevitable that the concept of the Messiah should become more and more transcendent. Many despaired of human deliverance and turned to hope in an angelic being coming from heaven with cosmic, supernatural power. See the Similitudes of Enoch (I Enoch, 164 B.C.) where the Son of Man is presented as a heavenly being with no prior human existence . . . his face has the appearance of a man and yet it is "full of graciousness like one of the holy angels." (46:1ff.).

Remember the devil's attempt to get Jesus to show off some supernatural, angelic power . . . "if he was the Son of God. . . ." Matt. 4:5, 6.

2. A Prophet: Some interpreted Malachi 3:1ff. and 4:5 as referring to the Messiah himself rather than the forerunner—thus he would be a prophet like Elijah. Many of the disciples of John the Baptist refused to abandon their belief in him as the true Messiah and perpetuated into the 2nd century A.D. a sect which held up John the Baptist messiahship in opposition to Jesus (The Mandaens; see Ency. Britt. Vol. 4 and 10).

The Samaritans were expecting a prophetic messiah, Jn. 4:19-26. Many of the Jews thought this also, Jn. 7:40; Mt. 16:14; Jn. 1:21; I Macc. 4:46; etc. Jn. 6:14.

3. A Priest: In later interbiblical history there appears the idea of a messianic priest. When the offices of High Priest and prince of Israel were combined in Simon the Maccabean, impetus was given to the development of such hope. But as the High Priesthood became more and more secularized and corrupted, this view seems to have found less and less acceptance. See the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs (110 B.C.).

4. A King: By far the most popular view was a Messiah-warrior-king. He would appear as a political champion. Jews from all over the world would rally to his side, sweep the pagans from Palestine, subdue the world, plunder its riches, kill all idolaters and make proselytes and servants of the rest. See this view in all the earliest Jewish apocryphal writings, and, Mt. 21:9, 15 (cf. Zech. 9:9, 10); Mt. 22:42; Mk. 13:35;

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Lk. 20:41; Jn. 6:15; I Macc. 2:57; Psalms of Solomon 17:5, 23, etc.

Even this popular view expected the Messiah's origin to be shrouded in mystery (Jn. 7:21ff.) and His mission to be one of cosmic supernaturalisms, Mt. 12:38; Jn. 7:31.

Remember the temptation of the devil to make Jesus an earthly king.

There were many who arose pretending to be the Messiah. *Theudas* had 400 followers but he was slain (Acts 5:36; Josephus, Antiq. 20:97ff.). *Judas the Galilean* was also slain (Acts 5:37; Josephus, Antiq. 18:23). *An Egyptian* gained about 30,000 followers, (Josephus, Wars 2:261ff. and Acts 21:37, 38). Menachem bar-Judah and Simeon bar-Giora (Wars, 2:17:8; Wars, 4:9:7 respectively), and many others after Jesus were hoped-for messiahs.

There was great expectancy in the first century A.D., but there was also great confusion and misunderstanding concerning the Messiah and His kingdom. Jesus' most frustrating ministry was to try to *convert*, literally change, the confusion, materialism and patriotic provincialism of the messianic people into what it was really intended to be by God as predicted in the Old Testament prophets.

WHAT DID THE PEOPLE OF JESUS' DAY THINK OF THE MESSIAH? (Our best sources are the Gospel records themselves.)

1. Mt. 2:4-6: He would be born in Bethlehem—the scholars knew this much.
2. Lk. 2:25, 38: Some were “looking for” the “consolation” and “redemption” of Israel and Jerusalem.
3. Lk. 3:15-18: Many thought John the Baptist might be the Messiah.
4. Mt. 4:1-11; Mk. 1:12-13; Lk. 4:1-13: Jesus’ temptations indicate the popular messianic concept.
5. Jn. 1:19-28: Jewish leaders knew a connection between Elijah and Messiah and thought John the Baptist might be one or the other.
6. Jn. 1:45-51: Nathanael did not believe the Messiah would come from Nazareth.
7. Jn. 4:5-26: Samaritans believed when Messiah came he would settle religious disputes.
8. Lk. 4:16-31: Jews of Galilee did not accept Messianic prophecies of Isaiah 61 being made available to Gentiles.
9. Mt. 9:1-8; Mk. 2:1-12; Lk. 5:17-26: Apparently the Jews did not think their Messiah would be God incarnate and able to forgive men’s sins.

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10. Mt. 9:10-14;
Mk. 2:15-22;
Lk. 5:29-39:
Apparently Jewish rabbis did not think their Messiah would associate with publicans and sinners.
11. Mt. 11:2-19;
Lk. 7:18-35:
Messiah is called "The Expected One" (as in Similitudes of Enoch) by John the Baptist who apparently expected Him to be more militant than Jesus was.
12. Mt. 12:38:
Jewish rulers insisted Jesus must show a "sign" to prove his messiahship.
13. Mt. 13:54-58;
Mk. 6:1-6:
People could not imagine Jesus as the Messiah because they knew his origins.
14. Jn. 6:14, 15:
Messiah would be "The Prophet" and he must be crowned King.
15. Jn. 6:22-59:
Jesus perceived the people wanted a bread-and-fish Messiah—one who would do a "work" to prove he was the Messiah.
16. Jn. 6:66-71:
Jesus' disciples thought of the Messiah as "The Holy One of God."
17. Mt. 16:13-16;
Mk. 8:27-29;
Lk. 9:17-20:
Disciples show that the people thought the Messiah would be Elijah, Jeremiah or one of the prophets, perhaps. Peter would not believe the Messiah was to die Mt. 16:21-23; Mk. 8:31-33.
18. Mt. 17:10-13;
Mk. 9:11-13:
Elijah's coming must precede that of the Son of Man—a literal Elijah, perhaps.
19. Mt. 18:1-5;
Mk. 9:33-37;
Lk. 9:46-48:
Disciples thought of messianic kingdom in terms of power struggles.
20. Jn. 7:2-9:
Jesus' brothers expected him to prove his messiahship in Jerusalem in some public, spectacular, carnal demonstration of power.
21. Lk. 9:51-56:
Disciples expect Messiah to punish those who reject him by fire from heaven.
22. Jn. 7:27:
No one is supposed to know where the Messiah comes from—he is to appear suddenly—but he would perform enough signs for everyone to know him—not just the rulers.
23. Jn. 7:35:
Messiah was not expected to go among the Jewish dispersion.
24. Jn. 7:40-43:
Confusion about Messiah. Some thought he would be The Prophet from Galilee, others believed from Bethlehem.
25. Jn. 8:52, 53:
Jewish scholars did not expect the Messiah to be an "eternal" personage.
26. Lk. 11:16:
Messiah must show a sign from "heaven."

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27. Lk. 12:54-59: Jews could not read the "signs" that their Messiah was to come in judgment upon their nation.
28. Jn. 9:13-34: Messiah must keep Sabbath according to their traditions.
29. Lk. 14:15: Jews were looking for a time of "eating" of banquets in the messianic kingdom as repayment for their troubles (cf. Isa. 25:6ff.).
30. Mt. 20:20-28; Mk. 10:35-45: Mother of the sons of Zebedee understood the messianic kingdom to be one of position and power.
31. Jn. 12:20-36: Some believed the Messiah was to remain forever and not die.
32. Mt. 22:41-46; Mk. 12:35-37; Lk. 20:41-44: Apparently the Jews did not conceive of the Son of David as also *David's Lord!*
33. Mt. 23:37—
Mt. 24:1-4;
Mk. 13:1-4;
Lk. 21:5-7: Apparently the people did not think of the coming of the Messiah as a judgment upon Jerusalem and the nation. They did think of his coming as the end of the world and Jesus had to correct this view.
34. Mt. 26:51, 52; Jn. 18:10, 11: Peter thought of messianic kingdom as needing to be defended with swords.
35. Mt. 26:57-68; Mk. 14:53-65: Apparently the High Priest did not conceive of the Messiah or anyone else calling himself "God."
36. Jn. 18:28-38: Pilate understood Jesus to be an idealist—not an earthly king.
37. Lk. 23:51: Joseph of Arimathea "was looking for" the kingdom of God.
38. Lk. 24:13-32: Disciples despondent when Jesus did not "redeem" Israel according to their own hopes. Jesus, however, *expected* them to have a *spiritual* view of the Old Testament messianic promises and *rebuked* them for not having it.
39. Acts 1:6: Even after the resurrection the disciples had a somewhat earthly view of the kingdom of God.
40. Acts 6:8-15: The Jews would not accept any claimant to the messianic throne who would "change the customs which Moses delivered."

The humanistic, materialistic traditions of the Pharisees and Sadducees and others (Essenes, et al), kept the common people confused about the Messiah and his kingdom. Jesus actually did not convert a single person fully to His teaching of the Messiah and the kingdom. It was only after His death and resurrection and the Day of Pentecost that some of the Jews began to see it correctly (including His disciples). And even then, it took

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some years before most of the Jews accepted the idea that the messianic kingdom was to be available to the Gentiles on the same basis as to Jews.

But the four gospel accounts testify to this:

JESUS OF NAZARETH, SON OF MARY ACCORDING TO THE FLESH, IS INDEED THE ANOINTED (MESSIAH) OF JEHOVAH—THE PROPHET, PRIEST AND KING PREDICTED BY THE OLD TESTAMENT. AND HE IS THE MESSIAH OF ALL THE NATIONS!

For a résumé of modern Jewish messianic theology, see *Isaiah, Vol. III*, by Paul T. Butler, pub. College Press, Joplin, Mo., pgs. 277-280 and 415-418.

Chapter Twenty-one (21:1-38)

THE SON OF MAN PREDICTING THE END OF THE JEWISH NATION

IDEAS TO INVESTIGATE:

1. Is there any connection between Jesus' condemnation of the Pharisees (Lk. 20:45-47 and Mt. 23:1-39) and His observation of those casting offerings into the Temple treasury (Lk. 21:1-4 and Mk. 12:41-44) and His prophecy of the destruction of Jerusalem (Mt. 24; Lk. 21; Mk. 13)?
2. Why did some speak to Jesus of the temple's noble stones and offerings (21:5)?
3. Who would come and what time would they say was at hand (21:8)?
4. What earthquakes and famines would precede the destruction of Jerusalem (21:10-11)?
5. How would armies surrounding Jerusalem "fulfill all that is written" (21:20-24)?
6. When would the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled (21:24)?
7. Are verses 21:25-28 referring to the destruction of Jerusalem only?
8. What generation would not pass away (21:32)?
9. What "day" is referred to in 21:34?

SECTION 1

Presentment of Sion's Default (21:1-4)

21 He looked up and saw the rich putting their gifts into the treasury; and he saw a poor widow put in two copper coins. ³And he said, "Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all of them; for they all contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty put in all the living that she had."

21:1-2 Appearances: After His scathing denunciation of the Pharisees (Lk. 20:45-47 and Mt. 23:1-39) probably within the Court of Israel (where men only were allowed), Jesus walked down about 15 steps to the spacious Court of the Women and sat down near the place of the Treasury. The Greek word is *gazophulakion*, a combination of *gaza*, "thing stored," and *phulake*, "guarded." The Greek may be a translation of an Aramaic or Hebrew word *ginzaya* which also means, "treasure house." Solomon's temple treasures were closely connected to the "porches" (cf. I Chron. 28:11). The Second temple also had treasuries (cf. Neh. 13:4ff.). In Herod's temple (the one of Jesus' day) the Women's Court was called the "treasury" because that is where the 13 bronze, trumpet-shaped boxes were placed

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for the reception of the offerings of the worshippers. The boxes or chests were narrow at the mouth and wide at the bottom, with their contents clearly marked on them; trumpets 1 and 2 were for the half-shekel Temple-tax for the current year and the year immediately past; trumpets 3 and 4 received the sin-offering money for the purchase of turtledoves by women who needed this particular sacrifice—the money was daily taken out and a corresponding number of turtledoves were offered; trumpet 5 contained offerings for the purchase of wood used in the temple altars, etc.; trumpet 6, offerings for the purchase of incense; trumpet 7, offerings for the golden vessels; if a man put aside a certain sum for a sin-offering, and any money was left over after its purchase, such money was to be cast into trumpet 8; and trumpets 9, 10, 11, 12, and 13 were to receive any money of a worshipper left over from trespass-offerings, offerings of birds, the offering of the Nazarite, of the cleansed leper, and voluntary offerings. These chests were out in the open, accessible spaces of the Women's Court, but there was also a special treasury-chamber into which, at certain times, they carried the contents of the thirteen chests for safe-keeping. Mark's record of this incident says Jesus "watched" the multitude putting money into the treasury. Mark uses the Greek word *etheorei* (Mk. 12:41) which means His observation was not an accidental one but deliberate. He sat down purposely to observe the worshippers. What Jesus saw was a representation of the cancer of rebellion which was destroying the Jewish nation. He saw many rich putting in much—but their much was only a facade. He saw a poor, probably oppressed, widow putting in *all her living*. The many rich were only giving for appearances sake. Probably the reason the rich gave much was that the many coins would make a louder and longer sound sliding down the narrow openings of the bronze boxes and clanging into the flaring, trumpet-like bottoms. The widow put in two small copper coins. The Greek word for her coins is *lepta*; the word literally means, "peeled, fine, thin, small, light." It came to be used to designate a small copper coin, often mentioned in the Mishna as the smallest Jewish coin. Its value was about one-eighth of the Roman money, *as*, or about one-one hundred twenty-eighth of a *denarius*; one *denarii* constituted a day's wages in buying power for the common laborer then. Two "mites" or *lepta* would be worth about 60¢ in American coin today. What would 60¢ be compared to probably hundreds of dollars being cast into the treasury by the rich?

21:3-4 Actualities: If a "contributors-list" had been published in the "Temple News-letter" these two "mites" would probably be hidden in the "Miscellaneous Gifts" section, if listed at all! Yet out of the midst of all the *large* gifts by "important" people, the Son of God selected these two "mites" and held them up for all the world to see and for centuries of believers to marvel at and use to examine themselves. Contrasted with all the powerful and great people and over against all their hostility and

unbelief is this nameless widow and her insignificant coins. As God saw it, it was the most important thing that happened there on that Tuesday. The Lord's standard of values are out of this world! What Jesus said was "more" is exactly opposite from what the world says is "great." And why?—because of the motive, because of the attitude. Any amount given grudgingly, of necessity or out of coercion is an abomination before God (cf. II Cor. 9:5-8). On the other hand, "if the readiness is there, it is acceptable according to what a man has, not according to what he has not," (II Cor. 8:12). These many rich people cast into the treasury boxes out of their abundance. The Greek word translated *abundance* is *perisseuontos* and may be translated superfluity, or, sometimes, *left-over* (see Mark 8:8). What these rich gave was what they had *left over* after they made sure their own needs and wants were secured (probably with a goodly portion also socked away in savings for "a rainy day"). It was an out and out manifestation of greed, selfishness, and, worst of all, mistrust in God's promises to supply every need. What these rich gave represented no sacrifice of self at all! There was nothing spiritual in their giving at all—it was all ritual and pretense. In giving only left-overs, even though it was *much*, they revealed their blatant disrespect for God's Law. This is the way Christ saw their offerings!

The widow put into the offering box, "more than all of them" because she gave when she was suffering privation and poverty herself. Not only did she give, she gave all she had to live on. The Greek word translated "living" is *bios* which is the word for physical life. Those two "mites" represented all that was between her and starvation! It is almost incredible that anyone would do such a thing as this widow did. If it were not in the Bible we could not believe it! This widow follows in the train of that godly widow in Elijah's day who had only a handful of meal and a little oil between starvation for herself and her son but by faith in God willingly shared it with the prophet, (I Kings 17:12-16).

What this widow did was probably scorned by the rich, but for Jesus it manifested her complete trust in the Father's word. Such a deed is evidence of belief in God like nothing else. This is the way the Macedonians gave (II Cor. 8:1-7)—"in their extreme poverty." Such faith "proves" our love (II Cor. 8:8, 24) and our obedience (II Cor. 9:13). Giving like this is "doing the work of God" (II Cor. 8:7). The widow's offering was sacrificial. Sacrifice means literally, "to slay and offer." This widow put self to death and offered self to God, totally. She gave all her living. God measures sacrifices and offerings not so much by what one gives as by what one keeps! He evaluates offerings not in terms of amount but in terms of devotion (II Cor. 8:12; 9:5, 7, 8). Her deed was altogether spiritual. She would not accept the philosophy that life consists in the things one possesses—that there is no life after death and that we live only in the realm

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of the material existence. She put the glorification of God before her own physical life. She did so, right where she was, with what she had at that moment—not waiting until something more exciting and applaudable came along. She would never know what her last coin would accomplish—she would never be acknowledged by men or receive applause. But that was not her concern. She loved God and was grateful to God with *all* her being. She believed and trusted the First Commandment. The widow's offering shows the superficiality of the saying: "nine-tenths with God's blessing, equals more," and all those other pragmatic, materialistic motivations for tithing.

While Jesus waited and watched to see some fruit of godliness and respect for God's Law in the religious leaders of Israel in that dark and desolate hour, He saw in them only hypocrisy and contempt for God. But He did see one godly widow living in poverty, come to show there was still a small remnant of faith, real faith, in Israel. If Jesus were to write down what He sees in the church today, would it approximate what He saw in the Treasury (cf. Rev. 2:9 and 3:17)? What He saw in the Treasury indicated to Him that God's Zion, His redemptive nation, had defaulted on its call and covenant. Time was fast approaching when the terrible judgment of Jehovah must fall. They had rejected Him—He will reject them.

SECTION 2

Preliminary Signs of Destruction (21:5-19)

⁵And as some spoke of the temple, how it was adorned with noble stones and offerings, he said, "⁶As for these things which you see, the days will come when there shall not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down." ⁷And they asked him, "Teacher, when will this be, and what will be the sign when this is about to take place?" ⁸And he said, "Take heed that you are not led astray; for many will come in my name, saying, 'I am he!' and, 'The time is at hand!' Do not go after them. ⁹And when you hear of wars and tumults, do not be terrified; for this must first take place, but the end will not be at once."

¹⁰Then he said to them, "Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; ¹¹there will be great earthquakes; and in various places famines and pestilences; and there will be terrors and great signs from heaven. ¹²But before all this they will lay their hands on you and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues and prisons and you will be brought before kings and governors for my name's sake. ¹³This will be a time for you to bear testimony. ¹⁴Settle it therefore in your minds, not to meditate beforehand how to answer; ¹⁵for

I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which none of your adversaries will be able to withstand or contradict.¹⁶ You will be delivered up even by parents and brothers and kinsmen and friends, and some of you they will put to death;¹⁷ you will be hated by all for my name's sake.¹⁸ But not a hair of your head will perish.¹⁹ By your endurance you will gain your lives.

21:5-7 Predicted Catastrophe: The complexity of this text makes it imperative that the reader avail himself of a harmony of the gospel accounts as an aid to understanding it. First, it is important to know that immediately preceding Jesus' watching the widow's offering He uttered the following two eschatologically startling statements:

- a. He condemned the Pharisees, denouncing them as "sons of hell" (Mt. 23:15) and pronouncing upon them "all the blood" of the righteous shed upon the earth (Mt. 23:31-35). These were the "keepers" of the Hebrew system. Most Jews would consider their fall the end of the Jewish "world."
- b. He declared the "house" of Judaism *desolate* and *forsaken* (Mt. 23:36-39). This is terminology Jeremiah and Ezekiel used to warn their contemporaries of the Babylonian captivity and destruction of the Temple by Nebuchadnezzar (Jer. 19:8; Lam. 1:4; see Ezek. ch. 8-11).

After observing the widow's offering, Jesus preached the alarming sermon on Death and Life (John 12:20-50). He agonized over His own impending death (Jn. 12:27); He warned, "Now is the judgment (Gr. *crisis*) of this world (Gr. *cosmos*)"; He said the ruler of this world would be cast out (John 12:31); and He referred to the "last day" (Jn. 12:48). The statement, "Now is the *crisis* of this *cosmos*," was enough to precipitate the questions of the apostles about the destruction of Jerusalem. The word *cosmos* means "order, system, establishment." It was very plain to the apostles Jesus was predicting the destruction of the present Jewish order, involving the desolation and forsakenness of the Temple and the nation in that generation (Mt. 23:36). Matthew records that as Jesus left the temple His disciples came "to point out to him the buildings of the temple," (Mt. 24:1). Mark and Luke tell us they spoke to Him about how beautifully and wonderfully the Temple and the city was adorned with "noble stones and offerings." The inference is that the apostles were filled with incredulity and excitement in response to all these startling predictions. Some of the great stones of Herod's Temple were, according to Josephus, 25 cubits long, 8 cubits high and 12 cubits wide. Using 18 inches to a cubit one stone would be 38 ft. long, 12 ft. high and 18 ft. wide. Eight large-sized American automobiles (Ford, LTD) could be stacked

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into those dimensions. The "offerings" were probably gold-plating on columns and the golden grape-vine decorating the huge doors of the Temple. When Jesus predicted "not one stone would be left upon another" it is not surprising that the apostles asked Him, "Tell us, when will this be? And what will be the sign of your coming and of the close of the age?" (cf. Mt. 24:3; Mk. 13:4). The Greek word *sunteleias* is translated *close* (of the age) in Matthew 24:3—the word is more often translated, "consummation." The apostles were persuaded Jesus was talking about "the consummation of the age."

It is now necessary to comment briefly on rabbinical eschatology apparently current in Jesus' day. Jewish scribes and rabbis had divided their eschatology into three eras (more or less): (a) *Olam hazzeh*, the order then existing; (b) *Athid labho*, the age to come after that existing order; and (c) *Olam habba*, the world to come. In some rabbinic tradition, the age to come and the world to come blended into one. The *existing order* was to be succeeded by the "days of the Messiah" which would stretch into the *coming age* and end with the *world to come*. According to the rabbis, the birth of the Messiah would be unknown by his contemporaries; he would appear, carry on his work, then disappear—probably for 45 days; reappear, destroy the hostile powers of the world (notably "Edom"—symbolizing Rome, the fourth and last world empire listed by the prophet Daniel). Israelites would be brought back to Palestine from all over the world through miraculous deliverances and, according to the Midrash, all circumcised Israelites would then be released from Gehenna, and the dead Jews raised (according to some, by the Messiah). This resurrection would take place in Palestine so that those who had been buried elsewhere would have to roll underground—in great pain—until they reached the holy land of Palestine.

In the coming age, *athid labho*, the rabbis wrote that all resistance to God would be concentrated in the great war of Gog and Magog (Ezekiel, ch. 38-39), and there would be an intensification and focusing of all wickedness upon Israel in her land. Israel's implacable enemies would three times assault the Holy City to destroy it, but each time be repelled. The city would suffer some destruction, but not complete. When Israel's enemy was destroyed completely, the Holy City would be gloriously rebuilt and inhabited. The new city would be lifted to a height of some nine miles—some said it would even reach as high as the throne of God—and extend from Joppa to the gates of Damascus. The new Temple, the Messiah was to erect, would contain every glorious item which had been absent in Herod's Temple; the golden candelabra, the ark, the heaven-lit fire on the altar, the Shekinah, and the cherubim. Some rabbis insisted that the whole of the ancient ceremonies of Moses' Law plus rabbinic traditions would be practiced. More liberal ones believed that only the Day of Atonement and

the Feast of Esther (Purim), or Feast of Tabernacles, would be observed and only the thank-offerings made. Some insisted that the many stipulations concerning lawful and unlawful foods would be abolished.

The end of that age would blend right into the world to come, *olam habba*, a glorious period of holiness, forgiveness and peace. In this vast new land and Holy City (not heaven, but literal Palestine), angels would cut gems 45 ft. long and 45 ft. broad and place them in the City's gates. The walls of the City would be of silver, gold and precious gems, and precious jewels would be scattered all over the land which every Israelite was at liberty to take. Jerusalem would be as large as all Palestine and Palestine as large as the world. Every event and miracle in the history of Israel would be repeated, only on a much more magnificent scale, in the Messianic days. Wheat would grow as high as the mountains and the wind would miraculously convert the grain into flour and blow it into the valleys of the land. Every woman was to bear a child, daily, so that ultimately every Israelite family would number as many as all Israel at the time of the Exodus. All sickness and disease would pass away; Israelites would not die; some Gentiles would live hundreds of years. The Messiah was to rule the entire world from Jerusalem; Jerusalem would be the capital of the world and take the place of the fourth world empire (Rome). The time of this was among the seven things, according to the rabbis, unknown to man.

A war, a revival of that of Gog and Magog, would close the Messianic era. The nations, which had to this point given tribute to the Messiah, would rebel against him, and he would destroy them by the breath of his mouth, so that Israel alone would be left on the face of the earth. That period of Gentile rebellion was to last seven years. Then the final Judgment would commence. There seems to be no resurrection for Gentiles at all, except to immediately die again at Judgment. Gehenna, where all Jews but the perfectly righteous Jews were kept, served as a Jewish purgatory, from which they were all ultimately delivered by Abraham, to go to heaven. No such deliverance was ever considered for the heathen, or apostate Jews—they would suffer eternal torments. The final Judgment would be held in the Valley of Jehoshaphat by God, leading the Heavenly Sanhedrin, composed of the elders of Israel. After the final Judgment there would be a renewal of heaven and earth and the full implementation of *olam habba*, the world to come. Now when Jesus spoke of the judgment of the Jewish hierarchy, the desolation of Jerusalem, and the "crisis of the cosmos," the apostles concluded that such catastrophic events would be signalling the end of the existing order, *olam hazzeh*, and the ushering in of *athid labho*, the coming age, and perhaps, *olam habba*, the world to come. The apostles asked three questions which indicates how influential the rabbinic interpretations had been on them, and how confused they were trying to reconcile that with Jesus' statements. While the apostles apparently did

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not hear the Lord's prediction earlier (Lk. 19:41-44), or it did not register on their minds due to the excitement of those moments, they were hearing Him now. We must refer to a harmonization of the Synoptists to find the three distinct questions. Their first question was: *When* will all this destruction be? (Mt. 24:3a; Mk. 13:4a; Lk. 21:7a); second, *What* will be the *sign* that *You* are coming? (Mt. 24:3b; Mk. 13:4b; Lk. 21:7b). Matthew alone mentions a third part to their questioning: *What* will be the *sign* of the *consummation* of the age (Gr. *sunteleias tou aionos*)? (Mt. 24:3c).

Recognizing the dangers inherent in their confusion, Jesus sets out immediately to reveal a number of future events and to specify that they are *not* signs of the rabbinic theories coming to pass, *nor* are they signs of the consummation of the ages. At the end of His discourse, He tells them what they are *not* to know (signs of the end of the world). But for the immediate future of these apostles and those of their generation who would become followers of the Way, He gives some very practical instructions so they would not be led astray. The destruction of Jerusalem and the Jewish commonwealth would not take place for more than 30 years after Jesus died, was raised from the tomb and ascended to heaven (beginning in 66 A.D. and coming to a climax in 70 A.D.). The apostles have not yet understood that Jesus must "go away." When He did return to His heavenly throne, they would long to have Him back (cf. Lk. 17:22). Great persecutions were to come upon them. They must live in daily expectation of His return. They would be vulnerable to false expectations of a coming messianic age as portrayed by the rabbis, because the circumstances preceding the destruction of Jerusalem were to be similar to rabbinic messianic eschatology. So Jesus spoke His warnings.

21:8 Pseudo-Christians: Jesus warned the apostles that their generation would experience the rise and fall of many who would come in His name, saying they were the Messiah (Anointed One, Christ) (cf. Mt. 24:4-5; Mk. 13:5-6). But the first century Christians were not to be led astray by these claimants—for in spite of all the excitement and troubles attending these pretenders, He was not then returning, nor was "the time at hand." Pseudo-Christians coming to proclaim the new age would precede the desolation of Jerusalem Jesus predicted. There were many such imposters who deluded multitudes of first century Jews into following them claiming they would prove they were the Christ by exhibiting wonders and signs by the power of God (see *Antiquities*, XX, VIII, 5, by Flavius Josephus). About 44 A.D. (during the rule of Palestine by Fadus, Roman procurator) one Theudas (*not* the Theudas of Acts 5:36) gathered a large band of followers claiming he was a miracle working deliverer. And about 54 A.D. (during the reign of Felix) an Egyptian claimed to be a deliverer with prophetic powers. Such pseudo-Messiahs were plentiful. All these came to a climax 62 years *after* the destruction of Jerusalem in the great rebellion against Rome under the false Messiah, Bar Kokhba, A.D. 132-135.

21:9-11 Presaging Crises: The Greek word *polemous*, "war," is the word from which we get the English word, "polemics." It means "to fight." Rome was having increasing difficulty with civil war among Roman emperors and army generals. There was also an ever recurring necessity for Rome to defend her empire against foreign invaders. Jesus is probably predicting the increasing rebellious attitude of the Jews against Rome when He predicts "wars and rumors of wars." Herod Agrippa, given his uncle Philip's territory by Caligula, set out to revenge his uncle Philip against Herod Antipas who had stolen Philip's wife, Herodias. Agrippa spread the *rumor* to Rome that Antipas was conspiring with the Parthians against Rome and would make war, rumorizing that Antipas had in his arsenal at Tiberias enough armor to equip 70,000 men. Riots broke out in Alexandria, Egypt, between the Egyptians and the Jews of that city (37-38 A.D.). A riot broke out in Jamnia (western Judea) (39 A.D.) when some Gentiles erected an altar to the Roman emperor and Jews tore it down. The emperor sent two Roman legions (12,000 men) to Jerusalem to set up his statue in the Jewish Temple. Jews vowed to resist to the last Jewish death. Some Jewish Christians in Palestine thought this impending blood-bath was a fulfillment of Jesus' prophecy here. Caligula was assassinated before this could be enforced. Claudius was forced to put down another riot in Alexandria with bloodshed (A.D. 53). We have already mentioned the Jewish rebellion under Theudas in the days of the Roman procurator Fadus. After the death of Herod Agrippa I (44 A.D.) the Roman emperor again imposed a rule of procurators upon Judea which deeply agitated the Jews. In the days of the procurator Cumanus (48 A.D.), a Roman soldier from the garrison in The Tower of Antonia, exposed his genitals to the Passover crowds which infuriated them. The Jews rioted and Roman soldiers killed hundreds of Jews in suppressing the rioting (cf. Josephus, *Antiquities*, XX, V, 3). There were continuing frontier disputes between Jews and Samaritans—Jews and Gentiles rioted in Caesarea (cf. *Israel and The Nations*, by F. F. Bruce, pub. Eerdmans, pgs. 197-225). Wars and tumults (Gr. *akatastasia*, "confusion, instability" or literally, "falling down away from") were predicted to precede the destruction of Jerusalem. Although nations rise against one another and the world society seems to be unstable, Jesus warned His disciples they should not be "terrified" (Gr. *ptoeo*, "frightened, intimidated"). Luke records Jesus' statement, ". . . for this must first take place but the end will not be at once" (Lk. 21:9). Why the exhortation against being alarmed? Because Jesus is giving a very plain prediction of the holocaust coming upon Jerusalem and Israel. But Jesus has a work for them to do in Jerusalem and Palestine (Lk. 24:47; Acts 1:8) which will take years to accomplish. He does not want them to be terrified when wars and instability come so that they will "flee" Jerusalem before the real holocaust comes. When the actual, final destruction of Jerusalem

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comes He will want all who are able to escape (cf. Mt. 24:15-22; Mk. 13:14-20; Lk. 21:20-24). Jesus warns them not to be alarmed when great earthquakes in various places and famines and pestilences and terrors and great signs from heaven occur because these, too, would not necessitate their fleeing Jerusalem. Even when these great disasters were "headlined" throughout the Roman empire, they were not signalling the immediate holocaust He was predicting. One famine, recorded in the New Testament (Acts 11:29ff.) occurred about 45-46 A.D. and was very severe in Palestine. Luke tells how the church at Antioch sent relief to their Jewish brethren in Palestine. Josephus tells how Queen Helena, an Adiabene convert to Judaism, also sent relief to the Jews in Palestine for the same famine (cf. Josephus, *Antiquities*, XX, II, 5) (Adiabene is a territory east of the Tigris River).

Many destructive earthquakes have been recorded in the history of Syria (the land bordering Palestine on the north). The *Hauran* beyond the Jordan is covered with signs of violent earth-shocks, and the cities on the coast of Palestine have suffered many quakes. The New Testament documents a great earthquake in Palestine at the death of Christ (Mt. 27:51-54); one at Christ's resurrection (Mt. 28:2); one at Philippi in Macedonia (Acts 16:26). Josephus mentions one in the reign of Herod "such as had not happened at any other time, which was very destructive to men and cattle" (*Antiquities*, IV, V, 2). The records of many such earthquakes in Palestine could have been recorded by the Jews and destroyed when Rome burned the city of Jerusalem. Roman historians document numerous earthquakes which preceded the destruction of Jerusalem: (a) one occurring in A.D. 46; (b) one in Rome on the day Nero assumed the toga, A.D. 51; (c) one at Apamaea in Phrygia; (d) one at Laodicea in Phrygia, A.D. 60; (e) one in Amporia, A.D. 62. Seneca and Tacitus both mention earthquakes in places like Asia, Achaia, Syria, Macedonia, Cyprus, Paphus, Crete, Italy and places already mentioned. The records of great plagues and pestilences may have been practically destroyed also. But there is at least one pestilence, mentioned by Josephus, in Babylonia (40 A.D.) which killed some 30,000 people (*Antiquities*, XVII, IX, 8), and one in Italy (66 A.D.) recorded by Tacitus.

What Jesus probably meant by "great signs from heaven" were the catastrophies of "nature" such as volcanic eruptions, cyclones, meteors or other great storms from the "heavens" which often terrify men. Josephus records the following "signs" which preceded the destruction of Jerusalem: (a) a star resembling a sword stood over the city; (b) a comet that lasted a whole year; (c) at the Feast of Unleavened Bread, during the night, a bright light shone around the altar and the Temple, so that it seemed to be broad daylight; (d) the eastern gate of the Temple, of solid brass, fastened with strong bolts and bars, which required 20 men to shut, opened in the night of its own accord; (e) chariots and troops of soldiers in their armor were

seen running about among the clouds, and surrounding certain cities; (f) a great noise of a multitude, was heard in the temple, saying, "Let us remove hence"; (g) four years before the war began, Jesus, the son of Ananus, a farmer, came to the feast of Tabernacles when the city was in peace and prosperity, and began to cry aloud, "A voice from the east, a voice from the west, a voice from the four winds, a voice against Jerusalem and the holy house, a voice against the bridegroom and the bride, and a voice against this whole people!"—he was scourged and at every stroke of the whip he cried, "Woe, woe to Jerusalem!"—this cry was continued every day for more than seven years, until he was killed in the siege of the city, shouting, "Woe, woe to myself also!" (Josephus, *Wars*, VI, V, 3). Some of these "signs" were probably the product of rumor and since we have no corroborating eyewitnesses to substantiate Josephus, we must be skeptical about some of them. But the very fact that Josephus records them indicates they were being rumored around Jerusalem. And that is the whole point of Jesus' warning here—to keep His disciples from being terrified at such rumored signs so that they might not desert their work of evangelism. Jesus counsels them that should they see unusually frightening natural phenomena or even hear rumors of such, Jerusalem's destruction is still not imminent.

21:12-19 Persecuting Countrymen: Jesus now warns the apostles that even severe persecutions to come upon His followers will not be signalling any imminent eschatological end. Up to the time of Jesus' death, there were no severe persecutions against those who followed Him. The authorities had determined to kill Jesus, but His followers were still free of such malice. But immediately after His death, their tribulation would begin. Even this should not cause them to expect the imminent destruction of the Jewish commonwealth. Even this should not terrify them into fleeing Jerusalem and neglecting to fulfill their commission to preach the gospel there first. As a matter of fact, being brought to trial in Jewish synagogues and prisons, and before Jewish rulers, would be an opportune "time for them to bear testimony" (21:13).

Jesus told the disciples they were not to "meditate beforehand" how to answer when hailed before persecutors. Luke uses the Greek words *me promeletan* which mean primarily, "have no concern prior to." The better way to translate the word is "be not anxious beforehand." In other words, Jesus exhorts those who anticipate being called to questioning before tribunals they need not distress themselves beforehand that they will not be able to endure the questioning or not have sufficient knowledge to give the testimony that should be given. What Jesus wants them to say will be given them between His prophecy here and the coming persecutions. This is *not* a promise of Jesus that they will need no preparation between these times. They will indeed be given many things to say from their own eye-witnessed experiences (primarily, Jesus' death and resurrection—which is

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essentially what they testified to before their persecutors). Jesus did not want the apostles to let His predictions of the coming persecutions fill them with anxiety ahead of time so they might hastily decide to flee from Palestine immediately upon His death. He desired to warn them here, at this moment, they would have a testimony of historical facts which none of their adversaries would be able to contradict. They need not be afraid they would have nothing to say.

Matthew and Mark add that Jesus predicted apostasy (Mt. 24:10), false teaching (Mt. 24:11), lawlessness and indifference (Mt. 24:12) would all characterize the Jewish society in which the apostles would live preceding the holocaust upon the Jewish nation. Furthermore, the gospel of the kingdom would be preached in the whole world for a witness to all the nations—then the end of Jerusalem and the nation would come (Mt. 24:14; Mk. 13:10). The hatred and persecution of Christians and Jews is abundantly confirmed by pagan historians (between 34-70 A.D.) as well as in sacred history (Acts of the Apostles), in the Pauline epistles, and in John's Revelation. The rise of false teaching and apostasy within Judaism and within the Christian Church as well as the betrayal of Christians by their own brethren is well documented in the epistles of the New Testament and in the book of Revelation (cf. Gal. 1:7; 2:4; II Cor. 11:13-15; I Tim. 1:3-7, 1:19-20; II Tim. 3:8-9; Titus 1:10-11; Jude; II Pet. 2; Rev. 1:3; Acts 15:1, etc.). Neither do we have to speculate as to what Jesus meant when He prophesied that the gospel of the kingdom would be preached to "the whole world" before Jerusalem was destroyed. We have the documentation of the fulfillment of that from the pen of the inspired apostle Paul (cf. Rom. 1:5, 8; 10:18; 16:26; Col. 1:6; 1:23). The same apostle made it abundantly clear in his epistle to the Hebrews that Judaism was doomed and "near to passing away" (cf. Heb. 8:13; 10:25; 12:25-29; 13:14).

Very alarming words had fallen from the lips of Jesus. The apostles, combining with these words their undoubted knowledge of popular rabbinical traditions of the "coming age" were startled. Jesus recognized the need to allay their anxieties lest the events which would *precede* the judgment of God upon the Jewish nation might terrify them into fleeing from Palestine before they could accomplish His purposes there. Jesus revealed to the apostles these events of history *before* they came to pass in order that they might believe and trust Him and carry out their mission (cf. Mt. 24:25; Mk. 13:23; Jn. 13:19; 14:29). These are events preliminary to the destruction of the Jewish nation.

SECTION 3

Precise Signs of Destruction (21:20-32)

20 "But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation has come near. ²¹ Then let those who are in Judea

flee to the mountains, and let those who are inside the city depart, and let not those who are out in the country enter it; ²²for these are days of vengeance, to fulfil all that is written. ²³Alas for those who are with child and for those who give suck in those days! For great distress shall be upon the earth and wrath upon this people; ²⁴they will fall by the edge of the sword, and be led captive among all nations; and Jerusalem will be trodden down by the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.

25 "And there will be signs in sun and moon and stars, and upon the earth distress of nations in perplexity at the roaring of the sea and the waves, ²⁶men fainting with fear and with foreboding of what is coming on the world; for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. ²⁷And then they will see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. ²⁸Now when these things begin to take place, look up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near."

29 And he told them a parable: 'Look at the fig tree, and all the trees; ³⁰as soon as they come out in leaf, you see for yourselves and know that the kingdom of God is near. ³¹So also when you see these things taking place, you know that the Kingdom of God is near. ³²Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away till all has taken place.'

21:20-21 Pagan Profanation: Jesus now lists a number of things that will be plainly observable to the generation then living. He prophesies there will be immediate signs that Judaism is "forsaken" and "desolated" and that the end has come for Jerusalem (cf. Mt. 24:15-34; Mk. 13:14-30). The first of these "immediate" signs will be when Jerusalem is surrounded by armies. Matthew and Mark call it the "desolating sacrilege spoken of by the prophet Daniel" (cf. Daniel 9:27; 11:31; 12:11, see our comments there in *Daniel*, College Press). Daniel predicted the desecration of the Temple and the city by Romans armies as the consequence of the Jew's rejecting their "Anointed Prince" 490 years after the restoration of the Jewish commonwealth in 457 B.C. (Dan. 9:24-27). After a series of Jewish uprisings and riots, the city of Jerusalem was first besieged in November A.D. 66 by the Roman legate of Syria, Cestius Gallus. He had marched to Judea in November, 66 A.D., with the Twelfth Legion and surrounded the city on orders from the emperor, Nero. Gallus occupied the northern edge of Jerusalem, called Bezetha, but concluded his forces were too small to take the rest of the city so he withdrew. The Jews, assuming Divine providence had intervened to spare the city, took no advantage of the opportunity to flee. In fact, many Jews living in the immediate environs outside the city fled into the city for what they thought would be protection. Meanwhile, on the way back to Syria Gallus and his forces were ambushed by Jewish insurgents in the pass at Beth-horon and the Romans suffered great losses. Christians, remembering Jesus' prophecy, fled to Pella when

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Cestius Gallus returned to Syria. Eusebius writes in his *History*, 111:5:3, ". . . the people of the church in Jerusalem, being commanded to leave and dwell in a city of Perea, called Pella, in accordance with a certain oracle which was uttered before the war to the approved men there by way of revelation. . . ."

Nero sent his general, Vespasian, with 60,000 men to Judea in the Spring of 67 A.D. Vespasian conquered all of Judea and was about to besiege Jerusalem, when he was called back to Rome after Nero's suicide. Vespasian became emperor and sent his son, Titus, to Judea to put down the Jewish revolt. July 24, 70 A.D., Titus recaptured the Tower of Antonia at the northern edge of the Temple courts. August 5, he caused the daily sacrifices of the Jewish priests to cease. August 27, the Temple gates were burned. August 29, (the anniversary of Babylonian destruction of Solomon's temple in 587 B.C.), the sanctuary itself was set on fire. While the sanctuary was burning, Roman soldiers brought their legionary standards into the Temple area and offered sacrifices to the Roman emperor there! On September 26, A.D. 70, the whole city was in Titus' hands. All during the seige and assaults on the city by the Romans, the Jews within the city had been reduced to such desperation there were atrocities the Jews perpetrated upon one another almost too horrible and gruesome to recount.

21:22-24 Terrible Tribulations and Deceiving Deliverers: Jesus specifically and categorically says of this terrible holocaust, ". . . for *these are* days of vengeance, to fulfill all that is written. . . ." Moses wrote that this would happen should the Jews reject The Prophet (cf. Deut. 18:15-18; 28:15-68); Daniel prophesied these things would come to pass because the Jews would "cut off" their "Anointed One," (cf. Dan. 9:24-27); Jesus proclaimed they would "Fill up the measure of their fathers . . . that upon them would come all the righteous blood shed on earth. . . ." (Mt. 23:31-36) because they were going to kill the Son of God. Luke records Jesus as saying: "For great distress shall be upon the earth and wrath upon this people." Matthew and Mark record that Jesus said further: "For then will be great tribulation, *such as* has not been from the beginning of the creation which God created until now, and never will be." This is one of the points of the Olivet Discourse which causes major confusion. Many readers insist that such language cannot be referring to the destruction of Jerusalem, even though that event was certainly terrible in its time. First, there have been many "tribulations" since the destruction of Jerusalem much worse in statistics than that one. For example, two world wars caused more death and destruction than that. Nazi Germany killed approximately 8,000,000 Jews during World War II—that is certainly more than the estimated 1,500,000 slain and captured in 70 A.D. Then there is Hiroshima and Nagasaki; the prisons of Russian Siberia and Chinese Mongolia.

But the term, *such as*, in the description of Jesus, really does not refer to the statistical magnitude of the tribulation—it refers rather to the *kind* of tribulation. Jesus is anticipating the uniqueness of the cause and effect of the suffering and affliction—not the quantity or number who suffered. It is hardly possible for any tribulation to exceed in magnitude that of the flood of Noah's day when there were only eight survivors! We must explain what Jesus said, then, by quality or uniqueness. Perhaps these suggestions will help us understand why Jesus intended this "great tribulation" to be applied to the destruction of Jerusalem and Judaism:

- a. This tribulation involved the final destruction of what once had been God's holy nation. This had never happened before. God rescued a remnant from captivity and restored their nationality. It will never happen again, since the Church of Christ is now God's holy nation (I Pet. 2:9) and it will never be destroyed (Mt. 16:18; Dan. 2:44).
- b. The circumstances of the Jews trapped in Jerusalem was unique in all of history. God had withdrawn His presence. They were abandoned to their own evil. The residents turned on one another in hatred and panic, and inflicted on themselves atrocities more horrible than even the Romans could invent!
- c. It was a tribulation suffered only by those Jews who had rejected Christ. Those who believed Jesus (especially this prophecy of Jerusalem's destruction), were saved from the disaster of 70 A.D.

Still, how can we accept this statement that there was never such tribulation before or after 70 A.D.? Consider the following possibilities:

- a. The Bible was written for all time—the "atomic age" as well as that of bows and arrows. For Jesus to try to compare the tribulation of Roman warfare with Hiroshima would mean nothing to the apostles. So, Jesus is simply saying, "In the frame-of-reference of what you apostles know and can visualize, Jerusalem's suffering is going to be the greatest." This is no contradiction of Jesus' omniscience. He is, in fact, condescending to the human limitations of the apostles. He did this at other times. He told them a few hours later, "I have many things to say to you which you are not presently able to bear" (Jn. 16:12f.).
- b. The holocaust of 70 A.D. was unique in the way Jews tortured, murdered, and despised their fellow Jews. Jerusalem was really self-destroyed. Titus, the Roman general, made every effort to spare the people, the city and the Temple; but the Jews were implacable in their intentions to never surrender to the Romans again. Titus eventually could wait no longer and went into Jerusalem, killing and burning.

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- c. It may be that this great tribulation which began with the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D., has continued with more or less intensity up to the present time! The Jews, since 70 A.D., have, in many lands and many centuries suffered great tribulation.

Matthew and Mark add, "And if those days had not been shortened, no human being would be saved; but for the sake of the elect, whom he chose, those days will be shortened" (Mt. 24:22; Mk. 13:20). Titus first thought to build a seige wall and starve the Jews all to death or let them all die of disease. But then, with pressing business back in Rome beckoning, he stormed the city, killed, burned and took thousands of Jews captive. Thus many thousands of Jews were saved alive who would have otherwise perished (cf. Josephus, *Wars*, I:12:1).

Luke records that Jesus specifically predicted the great tribulation would involve the death of many Jews, but many would also be "led captive among all the nations." Jesus then makes a statement, recorded by Luke alone, which has been the focus of much confusing comment by alleged students of eschatology. Jesus said, ". . . and Jerusalem will be trodden down by the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled" (Lk. 21:24b). By the word "until" Jesus is indicating that the desolation of Jerusalem would continue as long as God sees fit. That is the question—how long will that be? There is a passage in Romans 11:25-26 which should provide a clue. That passage says, ". . . a hardening has come upon part of Israel, until the full number of the Gentiles come in, and so all Israel will be saved. . . ." This passage makes it clear that at the time all Israel has been saved, the full number of the Gentiles ("the times of the Gentiles . . . fulfilled") will have come in. So the question really focuses on *all Israel's salvation*. It is plain from the New Testament that "Israel" is the church of Jesus Christ. Paul says in Romans 9:8 ". . . it is not the children of the flesh who are the children of God, but the children of the promise are reckoned as descendants. . . ." Paul writes in Galatians 3:29, "And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise." The "until" then points to a time when God will have "grafted" into true *spiritual Israel*, all that through faith in Christ and obedience of that faith shall be saved. That is the end of time. Jerusalem will be trodden down by the Gentiles until the end of the world. The Jews had their time. They were allotted 490 years from the reestablishment of the Jewish commonwealth (457 B.C. to fulfill their messianic destiny and bring the Messiah into the world and complete God's redemptive program (34 A.D.) (cf. Dan. 9:24-27, see our comments there in *Daniel*, College Press). They rejected the Messiah and crucified Him. So the kingdom was taken from the Jews and given to others (cf. Mt. 21:43). God gave His kingdom to a mixture of all races and tribes and languages which would produce the fruits of repentance. In this kingdom neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but a new creation. Those who walk by this rule *are the Israel of God*.

(cf. Gal. 6:15-16). God has not absolutely rejected the Jews, neither have the Jews totally rejected Christ—a hardening has taken place only in part. There are still Jews coming to God through Christ today. But that is the *only* way God will accept anyone (cf. Jn. 5:23; 14:6; Heb. 10:10; 10:12-14, etc.), from now until the end of time. Genetic Jewishness counts nothing with God—never did, never shall (cf. Rom. 2:28-29; 4:9ff.; 9:22-26; Gal. 3:6-9, etc.); it has always been faith that made anyone a child of God. When the Jews were given their allotted time and when the apostles had completed the first part of Jesus' Great Commission and had taken the gospel to Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria (Acts 1:8), and they had, for the most part, rejected it, then the gospel of the kingdom was delivered to the Gentiles (see Acts 13:46). The time allotted for the Gentiles (and any Jews who will now believe in Christ, for they are no longer His chosen but are as the Gentiles) is until Christ delivers up the kingdom to God after destroying every authority and power (cf. I Cor. 15:23-28), and that is the end of time.

Until the end of time Jerusalem will be “trodden down by the Gentiles.” Geographical Jerusalem and national Israel will be characterized as “Gentile” so long as the present world exists. So long as a Jew will not come to Jehovah by faith in Jesus Christ, he is a heathen, an unbeliever, one who crucifies Christ afresh and for him there is no possibility of repentance before God unless through Jesus Christ (cf. Heb. 6:1-8; 10:1-31). There is no grace of God for anyone outside of Christ, not even in Judaism (cf. Gal. 5:2-6). Jews in Jerusalem today, outside of Christ, are as Gentile as any unbeliever practicing any form of idolatry, because God's covenant is *in Christ!*

At this point in the discourse Jesus warned that another of the signs indicating the imminent destruction of Jerusalem would be false Christ's and false prophets showing signs and wonders attempting to lead many astray, even the elect. These pseudo-Christ's would try to convince many to follow them into different places of alleged safety. But Jesus exhorts His listeners to “take heed, I have told you all things beforehand” (cf. Mt. 24:23-27; Mk. 13:21-23). Then Jesus adds, “For as the lightning comes from the east and shines as far as the west, so will be the coming of the Son of man” (Mt. 24:27). What Jesus is saying is this: “Do not follow the pseudo-Christ's; their signs will be obscure, deceitful and false. When the Son of man comes in His judgment upon this city, the signs will be unmistakable. The signs which I have told you will be as clearly visible as the lightning!” This interpretation of the Son of man's “coming” in Mt. 24:27 is in harmony with Jesus' next statement, “Wherever the body is, there the eagles (Gr. *aetoi*, “vultures”) will be gathered together” (Mt. 24:28). Vultures easily ascertain where deadness is and hasten to devour them. The Romans pounced on the rotting carcass of Judaism. The Jews expected a Messiah to appear from out of nowhere and deliver them from the Romans. Those Jews besieged within the walls of Jerusalem were

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especially vulnerable to false prophets and false Christs. Jesus said this would be a sign that Jerusalem was about to be wiped out. The real Messiah did "come" in 70 A.D. with His army to destroy (not deliver) Jerusalem. The reader is referred to Matthew 22:7 where Jesus is plainly parabolizing the destruction of the Jewish nation at the hands of the "King's troops" who destroyed and burned their city (see also, Isa. 10:5-10; Jer. 27:5-7). This reference to the destruction of Jerusalem as a "coming" of the Son of man is imperative for the proper understanding of the next section of Jesus' discourse.

Before continuing with the narrative, however, it is necessary at this point to include a few brief notes from Josephus' account of the destruction of Jerusalem in his, *Wars*, Books V and VI:

1. Three different political parties of the Jews were within the city fighting one another for the three years of seige.
2. They fought one another with such malice and abandon that thousands of innocent Jews were slain in their "cross-fire." Even priests and worshipers in the Temple courts were slain in the very act of offering sacrifices.
3. These factions burned storehouses filled with food, polluted water reservoirs to keep others from having them, and thus caused the starvation of thousands of their countrymen.
4. Anyone who sought to escape the city, if caught by the Jews, was slain by having his throat cut.
5. Burial of dead bodies within the city was impossible so they simply let the cadavers rot, tramped over them, or threw them over the walls.
6. Some Jews tried to swallow their gold and escape the city, hoping to pass it after escape. Both their own countrymen, and later the Romans, caught on to their ruse. When such people were captured trying to escape, they were thrown to the ground and disemboweled alive and their gold taken from their intestines while they writhed in death throes.
7. Robbers plundered stores, homes, government buildings, torturing anyone found inside for food or other articles of value.
8. Children pulled the very morsels of food out of the mouths of their aged parents, and parents did the same to children.
9. Many Jews sold their homes, their children, anything they possessed, for *one* measure of wheat or barley.
10. One method of Jews torturing Jews was to drive wooden spikes up their "private parts" and this for no reason at all except they wished to express some anger.

11. Romans crucified Jews who escaped at the rate of 500 per day. They ran out of wood with which to make crosses so many were crucified.
12. Tens of thousands died of rampant disease and pestilences.
13. Some Jews leaped from the tops of the walls of Jerusalem, broke bones, mangled bodies, and many died. If they did survive and escape, they ate food, when they could find any, so much and so rapidly, they died.
14. Dead bodies were stacked in great heaps as high as houses.
15. Blood ran down the gutters and narrow streets of Jerusalem ankle deep.
16. Some ate from public sewers, cattle and pigeon dung, wood, leather shields, hay, clothing, and things even scavenger animals would not eat.
17. Book VI:3:4, documents the incident of a woman roasting her own infant son and eating his flesh to stay alive (cf. Deut. 28:53).
18. Many false prophets went throughout the city telling people to take refuge in the Temple. As a result, 10,000 were slain and burned when Titus burned the Temple.
19. After the woman (mentioned above) ate the flesh of her own child, "the whole city was full of this horrid action immediately" Josephus says.
20. The Romans, upon capturing the entire city, slew every living person they came into contact with—"they obstructed the very streets with their dead bodies, and made the whole city run down with blood, to such a degree that the fire of many houses was quenched with these men's blood."
21. Josephus records that 1,100,000 perished and 97,000 were taken captive at this destruction of Jerusalem. Some estimates go as high as a total of 2,000,000.
22. Josephus concludes, ". . . thus the city was thoroughly laid even with the ground. . . ." Only three towers and a little part of one wall was left by Titus to "memorialize" his victory over the Jews.

21:25-28 Potentates Plummeting: Luke says, "And there will be signs in sun and moon and stars. . . . etc." Matthew says, "Immediately after the tribulation of those days. . . ." (Mt. 24:29) and Mark says, "But in those days, after that tribulation. . . ." (Mk. 13:24). The very strong indication that this text (Lk. 21:25-28 parallels Mt. 24:29-31; Mk. 13:24-27) is a continuation of the prophecy of the destruction of Jerusalem and Judaism may be seen from: (a) "Immediately" does not usually make room for much of a time gap—certainly not a gap of over 2000 years; (b) "When

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these things begin to take place. . . ." (Lk. 21:28) surely is not referring to the Second Coming for there will be no signs pointing to its nearness—it will be instantaneous; (c) and the further statement, ". . . this generation will not pass away till all these things take place" (Lk. 21:32; Mt. 24:34; Mk. 13:30) undoubtedly includes the sun and moon being darkened, stars falling from heaven, perplexity and distress of nations and the powers of the heavens being shaken.

Now this section is difficult for the Occidental mind, but not for the Oriental. The careful Bible student will find much help in understanding this simply by giving attention to context, comparable passages from the Old Testament and Biblical word usage. This section is plainly couched in what is called "apocalyptic" language, similar to that of the Old Testament prophets and Revelation when predicting the "coming" of God in judgment upon pagan nations (and even upon the Jewish nation). Apocalyptic language is characterized by its figurativeness, symbolism and drama. The apocalyptic language of Jesus here should be interpreted in light of the following considerations:

- a. Sun, moon, and stars darkened or falling from heaven is often stated symbolically in the Old Testament to picture any inexpressible calamity such as an overturning of kingdoms or cities or kings or religious potentates thought otherwise to be invincible. It is clear that Isaiah 13:10; 14:12ff.; 24:23; 34:1-4; Jer. 4:23-28; 15:9; Joel 2:10; 2:30—3:21; Amos 4:9; Micah 3:6; Hab. 3:11, and others, refer to the fall of kingdoms and kings in such terms. This kind of imagery goes back at least as far as Joseph and his brothers (cf. Gen. 37:9ff.). They understood it then.
- b. Luke says, "distress of nations . . . in perplexity at the roaring of the sea and the waves. . . ." This is picturing the distress of the wicked as these calamities of the destruction of Jerusalem roll over them like waves of the sea. Isaiah 57:20-21 uses the same symbolism. It may also refer to the overwhelming flood of the Roman army to come upon Jerusalem (see Jer. 6:23ff. describing the flood of Babylonians about to come upon Jerusalem in 606 B.C.).
- c. "The powers of the heavens being shaken. . . ." is apparently a figurative prophecy of the "shaking down" of the system of Judaism and the obsolete priesthood (cf. Heb. 8:13; 12:25-29; 13:13-14 with Isa. 14:12ff.; 24:21-23).
- d. Then will "appear the signs of the Son of man. . . ." or as Luke puts it, "And then they will see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. . . ." Jesus plainly told His apostles some of them would not taste death before they see the kingdom of God come with power and before they saw the Son of man coming in

His kingdom (cf. Mk. 9:1; Mt. 16:28). He is saying here that when the destruction of Jerusalem occurs it will be unmistakable evidence to His followers, at least, that the Son of man has "come" to keep His word about taking the kingdom from the Jews.

- e. Luke says "men will be fainting with fear and with foreboding. . . ." Matthew says, "then all the tribes of the earth will mourn." Jews had been scattered all over the world ever since the Babylonian captivity. These would certainly mourn and faint with fear when they learned of Jerusalem's obliteration by the Romans because they would fear the same treatment. This probably refers also to the prediction of Zechariah (12:10). There the Jews are predicted as mourning over the crucifying of their Messiah. John refers to this prophecy at the crucifixion (cf. Jn. 19:37). The destruction of Jerusalem was God's wrath upon the nation for crucifying ("cutting off") the Messiah (cf. Dan. 9:24-27).
- f. This is probably what Jesus meant when He said the same thing to the High Priest warning him of the consequences of crucifying the Messiah (cf. Mt. 26:64)—the destruction of Judaism.
- g. Matthew and Mark add the words: "And he will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other," (Mt. 24:31; Mk. 13:27). Luke says it this way, "When these things (the signs that could be determined about the fall of Jerusalem and the release of the Jewish strangle-hold on the kingdom) begin to take place . . . your redemption *is drawing near*." Luke does not say, ". . . your redemption *is here*" in the twinkling of an eye! When the fall of Judaism is accomplished, the fruitless fig tree will have been withered, and a great obstacle standing in the way of the gospel unto the whole world will be removed (cf. Mt. 21:18-22; Mk. 11:12-14; Mk. 11:20-25). From that time God will signally build up His kingdom. It shall be fully and exclusively established and recognized when the Jewish system comes to an end. This note of Luke in 21:28, ". . . now when these things begin to take place. . . ." is parallel to his note in 21:31, "So also, when you see these things taking place. . . ." and both of them refer to the visible destruction of Jerusalem. Isaiah predicted that God would create a new "land" or "nation" with "one stroke . . . in one day" before the old nation had passed away (Isa. 66:7-9). But Isaiah also predicted that this new nation (the church) would "go forth and look on the dead bodies of the men that have rebelled against me. . . ." (Isa. 66:24).

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These prophecies, we believe, refer to the establishment of the New Israel, the church, on the day of Pentecost—and the subsequent destruction of the old order, Judaism, (see our comments, *Isaiah, Vol. III*, College Press).

21:29-32 Readily Recognizable: With the parable of the fig tree, Jesus was using an illustration his disciples, as outdoors men, could readily understand. As Russell Boatman says, in *What The Bible Says About The End Time*, College Press, "A budding tree, whatever its specie, is a sign that 'spring has sprung' and 'summer is nigh.' Thus He was telling His disciples that when they should see the things He had enumerated, they should know the fall of Jerusalem was at hand." The signs of Jerusalem's destruction and God's judgment of the Jewish establishment (the rule of Herod and the rule of the High Priest and the Pharisees) will be as easily recognizable as the signs that summer is drawing near. Matthew records it, ". . . when you see all these things you know that he is near, at the very gates" (Mt. 24:33)—Luke's parallel verse says, ". . . when you see these things take place, you know that the kingdom of God is near. . ." (Lk. 21:31). When the signs were seen, Jesus' followers would know that the Son of man was at the gates of Jerusalem with His "army" for judgment. They would know that the kingdom of God had come in its power and destroyed the usurpation of the wicked husbandmen who tried to take the kingdom ("vineyard") for themselves. Paul wrote to encourage Hebrew Christians not to go back to Judaism (in the book of Hebrews), but to hold fast to Christianity, "and so much more as they were seeing the Day approaching" (Heb. 10:25). What "Day" could Jewish Christians *see approaching*? The answer is, of course, the approaching destruction of Judaism and Jerusalem—certainly not the Second Coming of Christ. Their "redemption" would be the breaking of the strangle-hold of Judaism from the throat of the infant Church, allowing it to survive the Judaizers.

"This generation shall not pass away till all these things take place," writes Matthew. Luke says, "Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away till all has taken place." The first thing the careful student will do is compare the same usage of the word generation in Mt. 11:16; 12:41; 23:35-36; cf. Mt. 16:28; Mk. 9:1; Lk. 9:27. "Generation" does not mean "race" as some have thought. It plainly means a life-span of some 35-40 years. "All *these* things. . ." refers back to all the tribulations predicted from Mt. 24:4 through Mt. 24:34, from Mk. 13:5 through Mk. 13:30 and from Luke 21:8 through Luke 21:32. Notice the significant and continued use of "these" (contemporary things) all the way through the afore mentioned sections. But after Mt. 24:34 and Mk. 13:30 and Lk. 21:32 Jesus begins using "that" to refer to His Second Coming when *heaven and earth* is to "pass away."

Summarizing, it is clear that all Jesus has predicted in His Olivet Discourse up to this point applies strictly to the destruction of Jerusalem and Judaism. Note the following points:

- a. "All these things. . . ." indicates *all* which He has said *prior* is said of the destruction of Jerusalem.
- b. Up to this point in the discourse, Jesus says everything that is to happen is to happen in those "days" (*plural*). Everything after this point (after Mt. 24:34; Mk. 13:30; Lk. 21:32) is in that "day" (*singular*). The phrase, "that day" (*singular*) is a widely used phrase in the New Testament to speak of the end of the world and judgment.
- c. The conjunction "But" in Mt. 24:36; Mk. 13:32; Lk. 21:34 is a definite word separating that which has been predicted earlier and able to be known, from that which follows the conjunction which cannot be known by signs.

SECTION 4

Portends the Second Coming (21:33-38)

³³Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

34 "But take heed to yourselves lest your hearts be weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and cares of this life, and that day come upon you suddenly like a snare; ³⁵for it will come upon all who dwell upon the face of the whole earth. ³⁶But watch at all times, praying that you may have strength to escape all these things that will take place, and to stand before the Son of man."

37 And every day he was teaching in the temple, but at night he went out and lodged on the mount called Olivet. ³⁸And early in the morning all the people came to him in the temple to hear him.

21:33-36 World's End Heralded: Jesus makes a transitional statement by saying, "Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away" (21:33). The terrible destruction predicted of Jerusalem and Judaism shocked their Jewish mentality. It was as if the world was coming to an end! So Jesus is saying, "Indeed, the world *is* going to come to an end (Heaven and earth *will* pass away)—however, the destruction of Jerusalem is *not* the end of the world" Jesus is emphasizing that His words concerning the destruction of Jerusalem will not pass away—they will be fulfilled. Every promise He made, every prediction He made came to pass no matter how incredible it may have seemed to the Jewish mentality.

Then, as Matthew and Mark record, He said, "But of that day (passing away of heaven and earth) and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only" (Mt. 24:36; Mk. 13:32).

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From that statement onward Jesus gave one illustration after another to re-enforce His warning that *no one* would be able to know when He would return to destroy both heaven and earth. If this knowledge is excluded from angels and the Incarnate Son, how do present-day eschatology experts presume to be able to figure it out from Scriptures which even Jesus and the Jews had in their day? Was Jesus, with all His wisdom, unable to interpret Daniel, chapters 7 through 12, while modern-day dispensationalists are? To say that Jesus simply did not know the year or day of the month and the exact minute, but that He did tell us certain signs to look for and then know that it is near, makes this whole context ridiculous! If Jesus knew the time of the end of the world but declared He would not (or could not) tell it, the temptation to read into His every statement some subtle prediction as to the exact time would be almost overwhelming. Not only does Jesus not predict the time of the end, He cannot because God did not reveal it to Him while He was on earth. There is no excuse for anyone trying to predict the time of the Second Coming when we understand that even Jesus Himself did not know. The most important thing about eschatology is the emphasis on the *certainty* of the end of this world and of judgment (cf. Acts 17:30-31). There are some times and seasons which God has reserved for only Himself to know (cf. Acts 1:7). *Where* and *when* the rotten universe needs dealing with, there the Lord will come and deal with it. Where it needs dealing with is all over! When it needs dealing with, only He knows. Jesus never spoke of His final coming in terms of *time* or specific *place*, but in terms of *condition*. Men will try to exploit the Word of God and the faith of believers for their own greedy ends by telling everyone they know when the time of His coming will be. For emphasis we insert here a brief résumé of the remainder of Jesus' discourse on the end of the world as recorded by Matthew and Mark:

- a. It is as if Jesus had said, "Let me illustrate. . . ." for the remainder of this entire discourse (from Mt. 24:37 through Mt. 25:46; including Mk. 13:34-37) is a series of parables to repeat the *unexpectedness* of the end of the world. Note the following emphasis:
 - (1) Mt. 24:36 ". . . of that day and hour, *no one knows.* . . ."
 - (2) Mt. 24:37-39 ". . . as the days of Noah . . . *they did not know.* . . ."
 - (3) Mt. 24:42 ". . . watch . . . for *you do not know.* . . ."
 - (4) Mk. 13:35 ". . . watch . . . for *you do not know.* . . ."
 - (5) Mt. 24:44 ". . . at an hour *you do not expect.* . . ."
 - (6) Mt. 24:50 ". . . when *not expected* . . . when *not known.* . . ."
 - (7) Mt. 25:13 ". . . you *know neither* the day nor the hour. . . ."
 - (8) Mt. 25:19 ". . . after a *long time.* . . ."
 - (9) Mt. 25:31 ". . . when the Son of man comes. . . ."
 - (10) Lk. 21:34 ". . . and that day come *upon you suddenly* like a snare. . . ."

Jesus summarizes all the warnings and exhortations to faithfulness and "watchfulness" before He gives all the parabolic illustrations. Luke records that summarization and omits the parables. Jesus said the day the world ends will "spring shut" on mankind like a trap. So He warns those who believe Him to keep themselves from excessive attention to this world as if it is all the world there is ever going to be. Let no one be "weighed down" with worldliness or they shall be caught in the trap when it is suddenly "tripped." The Greek word *kraipale* is translated, "dissipation" and means literally, "headache" or the "stupor and hangover which comes from drunkenness." The word "drunkenness" is the Greek word *methe* which in English is combined with certain suffixes and becomes, "methanol, methane, methyl, methylene," all having to do with a form of alcohol. The word "cares" is the Greek word *merimnais*. It is the same word Jesus used in the Sermon on the Mount (Mt. 6:25-34), translated "anxious" and means "divided in mind." Jesus is saying that worry and divided loyalty is as unbecoming as revelling and drunkenness in light of the unexpectedness of the end of the world. An attitude of prayer (total dependence on God), resistance toward sin, and faithful stewardship in doing the Lord's work is the "watchfulness" Jesus says prepares the believer to "stand before the Son of man" when He finally returns. The parables of Jesus in Matthew and Mark clearly indicate the following conditions when the end comes suddenly:

- a. "As the days of Noah" illustrates the end will come at a time of normalcy, Mt. 24:37-42.
- b. Parable of the Householder illustrates God expects each human being to be doing His work, but many will be "asleep," Mk. 13:34-37.
- c. Parable of the Thief at Night illustrates God is not going to signal the world ahead of time when He is coming, Mt. 24:43-44.
- d. The Parable of the Wise and Wicked Servants illustrates that some will be ready for the Master's return because they are *always* ready, while others will believe He is delayed and continue to exploit their fellow servants, Mt. 24:45-51.
- e. The Parable of The Ten Virgins illustrates that some are always prepared for the Bridegroom's coming, while others give no concern to prepare to meet Him, Mt. 25:1-13.
- f. The Parable of the Talents illustrates the need for faithful use of the blessings God has given in proper preparedness for the end of the world, Mt. 25:14-30.
- g. The Parable of the Sheep and the Goats illustrates the way to prepare for His coming and the Judgment is to be found practicing love for the needy in the affairs of every-day living, Mt. 25:31-46.

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On the one hand there will be some who scoff at the very promise of His return and the end of the world (II Pet. 3:8-10). On the other hand there will be some who will be constantly saying they know when it will be, saying, "Lo, here, or Lo, there," (Lk. 17:23). But the true disciple of Christ will not be seduced by either miscalculation because he pays attention to what the Bible really says—no one knows, therefore, be constantly "watchful."

21:37-38 Worshipers Eagerly Hearing: Luke now summarizes the public part of the last week. Every day Jesus came to the temple to teach, great crowds of eager people came early each morning to hear Him. He taught on Monday and Tuesday, and went out every night and lodged "on the mount called Olivet" which probably means in Bethany at the home of friends (Martha, Mary and Lazarus, or, Simon the Léper). After Tuesday evening when He went out to the Mount of Olives and delivered the discourse on the destruction of Jerusalem and the end of the world, He probably never entered the temple as a public teacher again. Matthew 26:1-2 indicates the discourse on Jerusalem's destruction ended Tuesday evening, "two days" prior to the Passover supper. Mark 15:42 clearly says that Jesus was crucified on Friday ("the day of Preparation"), so Passover was on Thursday that week. We have no record of what took place on Wednesday. No doubt the Jewish rulers were making final arrangements with Judas to betray Jesus when they came to arrest Him. Jesus had probably retired to some place away from the busy Jerusalem—probably even away from Bethany—where He and His disciples could be completely alone. He may have taught them some of the "things not written" (Jn. 20:30-31) in the gospel records. There were probably crowds of eager worshipers sadly disappointed that Wednesday morning when Jesus did not appear.

STUDY STIMULATORS:

1. Why do you give to the Lord's work? Why should you give?
2. If giving only what is "left over" is not pleasing to God, what should one give?
3. Do you believe this widow gave everything she had between her and starvation? If God wanted you to do that, could you? Does He?
4. After reading the statements of Jesus prior to the prediction of the destruction of Jerusalem, and after reading the Jewish traditions about the Messianic age, what do you think your reaction would have been about "not one stone left upon another"?
5. If Jesus' warning about not being frightened at "wars and rumors of wars" was concerning the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D., what about all the "tribulation and rapture" literature being published today?

CHAPTER 21

LUKE 21:33-38

6. Was the gospel preached to the whole world before the destruction of Jerusalem?
7. When was the "time allotted to the Jews"? When will the times "of the Gentiles" be fulfilled? When will "all Israel be saved"? Are you an Israelite?
8. Have you read the Old Testament passages using phrases about "sun and moon" being darkened in connection with the fall of empires? Do you think this is legitimate literary vehicle? Do you think Jesus might use them about Jerusalem's fall?
9. What are the signs preceding the Second Coming and the End of the World? When is it going to happen?
10. How should the believer prepare himself for the end of the world?

ESCHATOLOGY

Non-Biblical and Biblical—A Brief

By Paul T. Butler — OBC Convention, 1977

INTRODUCTION

I. DEFINITIONS

- A. Eschatology is from Greek, *eschatos*, last, and *logia*, knowledge or study. Eschatology is: a study of last things, i.e., studying what the Bible says about the end of this world and the 2nd Advent of Christ, judgment, etc.
- B. There are many differing eschatological theories in the religious world today. Postmillennialism; Premillennialism; Dispensationalism; Amillennialism; each one of these having different theories.
- C. We are going to deal with the general subject rather than with any specific theory.

II. IMPORTANCE OF THE SUBJECT

- A. A man's eschatology inevitably affects his:
 1. Hermeneutics
 2. Politics
 3. Evangelism
 4. Fellowship (Unity)
 5. And, as a result of the above, his Ethics
 6. We shall amplify this later in the study.
- B. The Bible says a great deal about eschatology.
 1. The eschatology of the Old Testament ("last things") refers mainly to the last of the Old Testament dispensation and the coming of Christ and the church.
 2. The eschatology of the New Testament refers mainly to the Second Coming of Christ.
 3. Most New Testament books have references to His Second Coming/Judgment.

DISCUSSION

I. ERRONEOUS ESCHATOLOGY

A. The Late Great Planet Earth

- 1. "The nation of Israel cannot be ignored; we see the Jews as a miracle of history . . . have survived as a distinct race . . . can trace their continuous unity back nearly 4000 years" pg. 45, etc.

Answer: Who is a Jew? (Rom. 2:28-29). Who is Israel? (Gal. 6:15-16). Jacob Gartenhaus, president of International Board of Jewish Missions, born in Austria and educated in rabbinical schools there, says: "No Jew today can trace his ancestry back beyond two or three hundred years" *Christianity Today*, 3-13-70.

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There are only 3 million people in Israel today and 12% of those are Arabs; 3% are Christians. There are more Jews in New York city than in Israel.

The government of Israel today cannot even decide who a legal Jew is. Is Sammy Davis, Jr. a Jew? Will Jerry Lewis take up residence in Israel? Unlikely they will do so willingly!

2. Hal Lindsey predicts the return of the Messiah in 1988. ". . . within forty years or so of 1948, all these things could take place . . ." pg. 54. He says in his booklet *Homo Sapiens, Extinction or Evacuation*, pg. 20, "You are the generation seeing these things; you are the generation which is not going to see physical death. I expect one day in my life to be physically called to see the Lord in the air, without seeing death."
- Answer: I would like to have that assurance but I hesitate to jeopardize my credibility with such absolute predictions in view of so many other absolute predictions missed.
3. By 1988 the Jewish Temple and reinstitution of Jewish sacrifices will have to be accomplished (pgs. 54-57).
Answer: This contradicts the teachings of Romans, Galatians and Hebrews as to the abrogation of the Jewish system of sacrifices and the finality of the Christian system.
4. In his attempt to make Russia and Egypt the object of Daniel 11 (kings of north and kings of south) he says Cush means "black man" in Hebrew (pg. 13-14 of *Homo Sapiens*). One Hebrew lexicon (Young's) out of scores of others gives "black" as a meaning of the Hebrew word Cush. All other lexicons give another Hebrew word as the word used for "black."
Answer: Daniel 11 very evidently refers to the history of the Seleucids prior to the First Coming of the Messiah.
5. On page 112 Lindsey talks of the False Prophet he says is predicted in Rev. 13:11-18 and thinks the False Prophet will be from the tribe of Dan.
Answer: The 12 tribes of Jews in Revelation 7 which so many think apply to the restored Jews in Israel do not even include the tribe of Dan!
6. On page 139 Lindsey says I Cor. 15:50 teaches that Christians cannot inherit the Kingdom of God in the type of bodies we now have—flesh and blood. However, he says, the gospels and the Old Testament teach there will be certain people who *will* inherit for a time the Kingdom of God in bodies of flesh and blood. And this is going to be the millennial kingdom ruled over by Christ here on earth!

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Answer: Does God contradict Himself? Is His Spirit the author of a confusing revelation?

7. There are *many* more exegetical and hermeneutical errors in this book and his other books. We cannot deal with them all in this study.

B. Seventh Day Adventists (*Signs of the Times*)

1. Following Ussher's chronology William Miller interpreted the 2300 days of Daniel as 2300 years and predicted Christ would return to earth in 1843. That didn't happen so they set Oct. 22, 1844. That didn't happen, so they said Christ passed from one section of heaven to another in 1844 to perform a work known as the "investigative judgment."
2. Their view of the 1000 years of Rev. 20: "During the one thousand years the earth lies desolate; Satan and his angels are confined here; and the saints, with Christ, sit in judgment on the wicked preparatory to their final punishment."

C. Jehovah's Witnesses (*Watchtower*)

1. "There is another way that helps confirm the fact that we are living in the final few years of this 'time of the end.'" (Dan. 12:9). The Bible shows that we are nearing the end of a full 6000 years of human history. . . . According to reliable Bible chronology, Adam and Eve were created in 4026 B.C.E.

4026 B.C.E. to 1 B.C.E.	4025 years
1 B.C.E. to 1 C.E.	1 year
1 C.E. to 1968 C.E.	<u>1967 years</u>

Total to autumn 1968 5993 years

2. "This would leave only seven more years from the autumn of 1968 to complete 6000 full years of human history. That seven-year period will evidently finish in the autumn of the year 1975." Quoted from *Awake* dated Oct. 1968.
3. They predicted Christ came to earth in 1914, *invisibly!*

C. Oswald J. Smith, in his book, *Is the Antichrist at Hand?* said:

1. "I have been studying with interest . . . the prophetic writings of . . . diligent students of the Bible. . . . Of all . . . those who have undertaken to work out the chronological forecast, there is not one who sets any date beyond 1934. The earliest suggested by these writers is 1928."
2. "If our chronology is correct, it means that all these things, including the Great Tribulation, the revival of the Roman Empire, the reign of the Antichrist and the Battle of Armageddon, must take place before the year 1933."

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D. Some Other Date setters:

1. Augustine calculated the end of human history would be about 650 A.D.
2. Then eschatology buffs focused on the year 1000 A.D.
3. Then the Second Coming was predicted for 1044, 1065, and other dates.
4. I. M. Holdeman, pastor First Baptist Church of New York, said in 1911, ". . . the hour is ripe for the moment when the Lord shall descend and gather His Church to Himself."
5. W. E. Blackstone, in his book, *Jesus Is Coming*, printed in 1898, said, ". . . His coming, the rapture, is near."
6. In January, 1963, a well-known Bible teacher in So. California entitled an article "Jesus Will Come in 1968!"
7. On April 17, 1971, the Minneapolis Star carried a review of a book, *God, History and the End of the World*, in which Kenneth Aune, the author, claims that in March, 1990, will come the battle of Jerusalem, the return of Jesus Christ, and the battle of Armageddon.
8. May 10, 1974—an Israeli tour guide (see *Christian Standard*, Ed. 8-18-74)

II. EFFECT OF ERRONEOUS ESCHATOLOGY

A. Confusion and Ridicule

1. The non-christian world looks at the multitude of different predictions.
 - a. It scorns and ridicules Christianity and the Bible and the Church because every date set in the past (set by apparently sincerely convinced prophecy scholars) has been wrong!
 - b. It asks, Is there any truth to the Bible at all; if so, which religious group has the truth—they all differ on one of the most important doctrines of the Bibles, the end of time.
2. Even Christians are prompted to become disillusioned and suspicious of their Bible teachers when faced with the errors and confusion.

B. Erroneous Hermeneutics and Wresting the Scriptures

1. The theory of Premillennialism and Dispensationalism asserts that Christ came to earth for the purpose of setting up His kingdom. Quite by surprise, He was rejected by the Jews, however, and established the church instead. When He returns, He will allegedly raise only the righteous dead, after which He will restore national Israel, sit upon David's literal throne in Jerusalem and subsequently reign for 1000 years. After this, the resurrection of the wicked dead and the final judgment are supposed to occur.

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2. This violates proper hermeneutics because:

- a. It reflects upon the integrity of Bible prophecy by implying that the Jewish rejection of Christ was a miscarriage in God's plan. However, the Old Testament clearly foretold that rejection (Isa. 53:1ff.; Jn. 12:37-38; Psa. 118:22-23; Mt. 21:46, etc.).
- b. It denies plain Bible teaching concerning the establishment of the kingdom in the first century (Dan. 2:44; Isa. 2:2-4; Acts 2:16-17; Col. 1:13; Rev. 1:4, 6, 9).
- c. It suggests that the church was not a part of God's eternal purpose, but only an interim (parenthesis) emergency measure (Eph. 3:10; Rev. 13:8; Acts 20:28).
- d. It denies that Christ is now seated on David's throne (Zech. 6:12-13; Heb. 8:1; Lk. 1:32-33; Acts 2:30; Rev. 3:21).
- e. It denies that we are in the last days (Acts 2:16-17), and that Christ's next coming will end this world . . . (I Cor. 15:24; Lk. 17:26-30).
- f. It teaches, contrary to the Bible, that Christ will come again to deal with sin through a Jewish economy (Heb. 9:28).
- g. It affirms, contrary to Scripture, that there will be two literal resurrections from the dead, 1000 years apart (Jn. 5:28-29; Acts 24:15).
- h. It denies the *expressed* symbolic nature of the book of Revelation by literalizing its figures (Rev. 1:1; 20:1-6).
- i. It denies that through the redemptive work of the First Coming of Christ *only*, must Jew and Gentile become "one" (Gal. 3:1ff.; Eph. 2:11-22, etc.).
- j. It denies that "Zion" of the Old Testament Prophets had its fulfillment in the New Testament church (cf. Heb. 12:22).

C. Unjust Politics

1. Oswald T. Allis in an article in *Christianity Today*, entitled, "Israel's Transgression in Palestine," Dec. 24, 1956, made an ethical evaluation of the Zionist/U.N. partitioning of Palestine.
2. The Zionists appeal to Gen. 18:18 to prove the Jews should claim sovereignty of Palestine. BUT DOES THIS SCRIPTURE GIVE THE ISRAELI A CLEAR TITLE TO PALESTINE? NO!
 - a. This promise was conditioned upon obedience. The Jews have disobeyed God from the days of Moses even to the rejection of the Messiah,
 - b. Any restoration of the Jews was conditioned upon repentance (Deut. 30:1-10).
Any return to a Jewish economy to seek the Lord would place them in a position "impossible to repent" (cf. Heb. 6 & 10).

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- c. The dispersion of the Jews and the taking of their place from them was a punishment from God (Mt. 21:43; 24:2; Lk. 21:24).
- d. Jesus and His apostles predicted the end of the Jewish economy and nationalism (Jn. 4:23; Lk. 4:23-29; Eph. 3:1-13, etc.).
- e. There is little spiritual difference between the Jews of America and the Jews of Palestine. A believing Jew is today as near heaven in the U.S., where 5 million of his fellow Israelites now live and apparently expect to continue to live, as if he were in Jerusalem. An unbelieving Jew is just as far from Heaven in Jerusalem as he would be in New York or London.
- e. The attempt to restore the Jews to Palestine has proved to be unjust in itself and highly dangerous to the peace of the world. Palestine did not belong to the British. It did not and does not belong to the U.N. The persecution of the Jews by the Nazis and now by the Russians is unjust. But allowing the Jews to take possession of a large part of Palestine and to force hundreds of thousands of Arabs out of it is an equally grievous wrong.

D. Division and Schism

- 1. Christians may have widely divergent views in regard to the Second Coming of Christ.
- 2. All views must be submitted to the crucible of proper hermeneutics.
- 3. But division comes when the particular view is overemphasized to such an extent that it becomes a "test of fellowship."
- 4. And this continues to be made such a test of fellowship by churches, colleges, and individuals.
- 5. It also becomes a heresy when it draws people away from the church (Armstrongism, J.W.s, etc.).

E. Evangelism

- 1. It tends to stifle evangelism because it majors in prophecy dates, charts, signs, etc., and minors in the plan of salvation given in the New Testament.
- 2. It tends to unethical, scare-tactic, pressure evangelism.
- 3. Many use the "signs of the times" (the phrase is used only once in the Bible, Mt. 16:3, and referred to His *first* coming, not His 2nd) *to bring believers into line, and convert hard-case unbelievers.*
- 4. This approach seems to say that what is really important is to be in good shape at that particular point in time when Christ appears about to return. It's the old I-don't-want-to-be-caught-in-there-when-Jesus-returns syndrome. It suggests in a veiled way

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that the mark we get on our ethical report card is the mark we happen to receive on the pop quiz given at the Parousia rather than the cumulative grade for the entire course.

Jesus said, ". . . occupy till I come" (Lk. 19:13). He did not say, "Only be found occupying when I come."

F. Some very extreme views connected with eschatology:

1. "Russia with all of her current satellites and all she might acquire in the future, will not be able to successfully invade Israel. ISRAEL IS INVINCIBLE UNLESS GOD IS VULNERABLE," *Maranatha Trumpet*.
2. "Christ will not come back to the earth until the Jewish people ask Him to come back. . . . This is the basis of the Second Coming of Christ. . . . Satan knows that once Christ returns his career will be finished. . . . He also understands that Christ will not come back until the Jews ask Him to come back. If Satan can succeed in destroying all the Jews before they have a chance to ask Christ to come back, Christ will not come back and Satan will be safe. That is why Satan is in an all-out campaign to destroy the Jews. . . . The power of the Second Coming of Christ is very much in the hands of Israel." *The Chosen People*, May 1975.
3. "This false Messiah will fool the Jews by doing miracles through the devil who will have entered his body in the middle of the 7 years. At this point in time, the Jews will look in the Bible to see if this man comes out of the predicted blood line of David. The Jews will find that this line or family tree ends with Christ (since he was killed and had no children). The Jews will also discover that the prophecies about the true Messiah fit only Christ. When the Jews have finally repented of their misconception about Christ, the world will see the appearance of Jesus Christ in person who will come in power and force to establish a Kingdom of Peace to last 1000 years on this present earth. The Jews will finally have their promised kingdom which in the final analysis, fulfills Old Testament promises to the Jews." An unsigned paper in the author's files.

III. ESSENTIAL ESCHATOLOGY

A. Certainty of His Coming

1. The most important thing about biblical eschatology is its emphasis on the certainty of the end of this world order, the Coming of Christ, and judgment.
2. "The Coming Judge," by Seth Wilson, pub. *Christian Standard*, 4-12-58: "He (Jesus) is far more than a prophet in the past.

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He is a power in the present. And He is the most certain and significant of all the prospects for the future!"

3. There is only one way to be certain Jesus is Coming Again—that is to take His word for it. He promised it and His promises are *authenticated* by His resurrection from the dead.

"The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all men everywhere to repent, because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed, and of this he has given *assurance* to all men by raising him from the dead" (Acts 17:30-31).

THE ONLY SIGN OR ASSURANCE WE NEED THAT HE IS COMING AGAIN IS HIS RESURRECTION. THAT ASSURANCE WILL CALL MEN TO REPENTANCE.

The eyewitnessed, empirically verified, historically authenticated resurrection is *all-sufficient* testimony to His Second Coming. Human predictions about "signs of the times" are subject to all the enigma and vagary of speculation.

4. Jesus promised His return: Matt. 16:27; 24:30b; 24:37-42; 24:43-51; 25:1-13; 25:14-31; 26:64; Lk. 17:26-30; 19:11-27.
5. The angels promised His Return: Acts 1:11.
6. The apostles promised His Return: I Thess. 4:16; Acts 3:20-21; I Pet. 1:7; 5:4; II Pet. 3:3-4; James 5:7; Heb. 9:28; I Jn. 2:28; Rev. 1:7; I Cor. 1:7; 4:5; 11:26; 15:23; Phil. 3:20-21; Col. 3:4; I Thess. 1:10; 2:19; 3:13; 4:16-18; 5:1-4, 23; II Thess. 1:7-10; 2:1-8; I Tim. 6:14-15; II Tim. 4:1-8; Titus 2:13.

B. The Time of His Coming

1. "But of that day and hour *no one knows*, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only" (Mt. 24:36; Mk. 13:32-33). THE TRUTH OF THAT STATEMENT HAS ALREADY BEEN VERIFIED BY THE SPECULATORS OF THE PAST WHO WERE SURE THEY KNEW FROM THE "SIGNS OF THEIR TIMES."
2. He will come "as a thief in the night" (I Thess. 5:2-3; Mt. 24:27-51; 25:1-13; II Pet. 3:8-10). There will be no preliminary announcements ahead of His coming! He will come unexpectedly—suddenly!
3. *No one will miss knowing* when He comes—there will be *no secret* coming or rapture. The next time Jesus comes it will be with a shout and trumpet blast to be heard by all the living and the dead—*every eye* shall see Him (cf. Rev. 1:7; Mt. 24:26-31; I Cor. 15:52; I Thess. 4:16).
4. THE EMPHASIS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT IS THE NEED TO BE *READY AT ALL TIMES!* Setting dates; making lists of "signs of the end"; speculative and divisive dogmas devitalize and weaken this readiness!

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5. He is coming when people will be doing the normal things of life, "eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage" (Mt. 24:37-38).
6. There will be no abnormal, extra-ordinary "signs" pointing to His "soon" coming. "The Son of man is coming at an hour you do not expect" (Mt. 24:44).

C. Particulars Concerning His Coming

1. Seth Wilson, *ibid.*: "The Lord has revealed only a few particulars . . . of the great events which will take place when He comes. No doubt there are many things in store for us that we have not been told because we could not grasp and appreciate them now. Very likely some of the things predicted will not happen as we imagine them."
2. The dead will be raised (I Thess. 4:16; Jn. 5:28-29).
3. Those alive will be changed into bodies fitting them for their eternal destiny (Phil. 3:21; I Cor. 15:52-54; Rom. 8:23-25).
4. The redeemed will (the resurrected and changed—all together) be with the Lord (I Thess. 4:17).
5. The world and its carnal works will be burned up, melted, (II Pet. 3:11-13).
6. A crown of glory will be given to the faithful (II Tim. 4:8; I Pet. 5:4).
7. Christ, with His angels, will execute judgment upon all men (II Tim. 4:1; Jude 14-15; Acts 10:42; 17:31; Jn. 5:22-29; II Cor. 5:10, etc.).
8. Many will be rejected who thought they were saved (Mt. 7:21-23; 22:13-14; Lk. 13:25-27, etc.).
9. The opportunity for salvation will be forever closed (Lk. 13:25-28).
10. There will be grief and terror in the hearts of many because they are unprepared to meet Him (Mt. 24:30, 50, 51; 25:30, etc.).

IV. EFFECT OF ESSENTIAL ESCHATOLOGY

A. Purity of Living

1. "Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of persons ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, waiting . . . for the coming of the day of God . . ." (II Pet. 3:11-12).
2. ". . . we know that when he appears we shall be like him, . . . and every one who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure" (I Jn. 3:2-3).
3. MORE EMPHASIS ON THE CERTAINTY OF HIS COMING AND ON THE IMMINENT URGENCY OF IT (DAILY, HOURLY URGENCY) WOULD PROMOTE MORE GODLINESS THAN ALL THE PROMOTIONAL GIMMICKS AND ENTERTAINMENT SESSIONS OF ALL THE CHURCHES PUT TOGETHER!

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4. *More sermons are needed on Judgment, The End of the World, The Second Coming.*
- B. Encouragement For Endurance of Trials and Tests
 1. “... we who are alive . . . shall be caught up together . . . to meet the Lord in the air; and so we shall always be with the Lord. . . . Therefore comfort one another with these words” (I Thess. 4:17-18).
 2. “But rejoice in so far as you share Christ’s sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed” (I Pet. 4:13).
 3. CHRISTIANS WHO TRUST THAT CHRIST IS COMING AGAIN TO RIGHT ALL WRONGS, TO VINDICATE ALL COMMITMENTS, TO JUDGE ALL SECRETS . . . TAKE COURAGE AND ENDURE, CONFIDENT THAT CHRIST WILL VINDICATE THEM *PERFECTLY!*
- C. Evangelism
 1. “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive good or evil, according to what he has done in the body. Therefore knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade men . . .” (II Cor. 5:10-11).
THE REMAINDER OF THAT CHAPTER SPEAKS OF BEING AMBASSADORS FOR CHRIST.
 2. “He has commanded all men everywhere to repent, in that he has appointed a day in which he will judge the world . . .” (Acts 17:31).
 3. JESUS MAY COME TODAY! WE MUST PREACH THE WORD WITH ALL URGENCY IN SEASON AND OUT OF SEASON.
EVERY MAN AND WOMAN MUST AT LEAST HEAR AND BE GIVEN OPPORTUNITY TO RESPOND!
 4. “It is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves home and puts his servants in charge, *each with his work . . .*” (Mk. 13:34).
“Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom his master has set over his household, to give them their food at the proper time? Blessed is that servant whom his master *when he comes shall find so doing*” (Mt. 24:45-46).
- D. Contemporaneity
 1. Michael Green in an article in *Christianity Today*, 1-1-65 says: “I believe that in this biblical doctrine of the Christian hope (the Second Coming) we have an intelligible answer to the modern quest for purpose in the world.”
 2. Quest for Personal Identity: Man is in quest of personal identity. What is he worth? What does he matter? What is his destiny? That God is Coming Again in His Son to consummate His great redemptive work for *man* (the end of God’s whole cosmic

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scheme) in a *personal* appearance is a message that is relevant in our depersonalized age!

3. Quest for Realism: Man is skeptical in our age of any theory of regeneration or redemption of society or the cosmos which is unsupported by hard facts.

Is the Christian doctrine of a returning, redeeming Christ realistic in the 20th century? . . . Is the Christian optimism that "all will be well in the end" justifiable? Or is it a fantasy, a fairy tale like all the schemes of men?

4. The Christ who came and who will come, just because of this, IS COMING TO US DAY BY DAY, CHALLENGING US CONSTANTLY FOR AN ENTRANCE INTO OUR LIVES. . . SEEKING OUR FELLOWSHIP!

5. God's purpose is to demonstrate NOW, in this world, this transitory world, the beauty, power, holiness, and permanence of the age to come. He who has called us out of this world is Holy. He who will come for us is Holy. In the meantime, He has given us His Holy Spirit to work out in our lives something of the character of the age to come.

CONCLUSION

- I. ERRONEOUS ESCHATOLOGY BRINGS REPROACH UPON GOD'S WORD AND HIS CHURCH: IT CREATES DIVISION: IT DISCOURAGES: IT HINDERS PRODUCTIVE BIBLE STUDY.
- II. ESSENTIAL ESCHATOLOGY DOES NOT CREATE DIVISION: PROMOTES PURITY OF LIVING: GIVES ENCOURAGEMENT: URGES EVANGELISM: FILLS THE NEEDS OF CONTEMPORARY MAN.
- III. THE LORD DOES WANT US TO KNOW SOME THINGS ABOUT THE FUTURE.

He wants us to know that Christ is coming personally to this world of time and space again just as certainly as He came forth from the dead in a time-space event.

He wants us to know there is a "far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory" beyond this world which will be destroyed completely.

Therefore let us be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord . . . for we know our labor is not in vain in the Lord.

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A LIMITED BIBLIOGRAPHY OF BOOKS AND ARTICLES HELPFUL IN THE AREA OF ESCHATOLOGY

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MODERN PROPHECY EXAMINED

(Acts 20:28-32)

By Paul T. Butler — OBC Convention, 1978

INTRODUCTION

- I. There were both true and false prophets in the first century church.
 - A. The New Testament is replete with instructions and warnings about those who are to be listened to and not listened to.
 - B. The most frightening aspect of New Testament teaching on prophecy is that the false prophets will arise from *within the brotherhood of believers!*
- II. There was a special charismatic gift of prophecy given to some in the first century church.
 - A. That was given only by the laying on of the hands of the apostles (see lesson on Paul's Power to Give Charismatic Power).
 - B. This ceased (and was intended to cease) when the perfected church arrived (see lesson from last year's convention on Gifts, Miracles, by Butler), or when the apostles died.
- III. So, we will look at the phenomena of Modern Prophecy from these two conclusions.
 - A. Even when there were true prophets, not all who claimed to be prophets were to be followed . . . and
 - B. The New Testament indicates the miraculous gift of prophecy was to cease with the apostles deaths.

DISCUSSION

- I. Who are the Modern prophets and what are they prophesying?
 - A. Ever since the end of the apostolic age self-appointed prophets have been predicting and revealing messages from God (so they say).
 1. No two of them seem to agree on interpreting events or times.
 2. Hardly any of them agree doctrinally (except on charismatic gifts for today).
 3. There are hundreds of them just in the Midwest—let alone the other hundreds all over the world.
 4. I will deal with just a few because they are basically all alike—false!
 - B. Salem Kirban, author of *Guide to Survival*, and other books and films
 1. Rapture must occur 7 years before 2000 A.D., but there is a 4-year error in our calendar, therefore the Rapture is to be

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in 1989 and the Millennium begins in 1996 (after 7 years tribulation).

2. Then Mr. Kirban states, "However, nowhere in God's word does He tell us the exact date . . . for the Rapture."
- C. David Webber, Pastor of Southwest Radio Church, Oklahoma City, Okla. and publisher of *The Gospel Truth*.
 1. Refers to Gorge Orwell's 1984 for the prediction that by that date a world dictator would control all nations; refers to Hal Lindsey's book and to movies with "apocalyptic warnings" like The Birds, Earthquake, The Omen which "testify to these things which are soon coming upon the earth."
 2. Mr. Webber says, "Scripture indicts ministers and pastors who refuse to investigate the signs of the time leading to Christ's return, and warn the unsaved to prepare, as being ignorant, hypocrites, and false prophets (Mt. 16:3; II Pet. 3:3-5)."
 3. Mr. Webber's time table is: 1974-78 Jewish temple rebuilt; 1981-85 Beginning of the Tribulation; Beginning of the Kingdom age 1997-2001.
- D. Morris Cerullo, World Evangelism, San Diego, Calif. (produced T.V. program "Masada")
 1. Ezekiel's prophecy of the "dry bones" predicted the Nazi slaughter of 6 million Jews, and the survival of modern Israel.
 2. This is the "beginning" "the *exact* summer season."
 3. This "generation" that sees the birth of the nation of Israel. . . . is in the "summer season" (he cites Lk. 21:29-33).
 4. "I tell you, I would not trade places with Moses, with Elijah, with any of the apostles. I would rather be alive today. This is the greatest moment of history, when the trumpet of God will sound, and your Lord and mine will come. . . ."
 5. "When I was only 15 years old . . . God dealt with me in a vision in which I was caught up into the heavens and I stood as close to the glory of God as when Moses spoke face to face with Him. . . . The brightness of his glory moved from the place where He had stood, there were two holes in the shape of footprints left in the heaven through which I could see countless thousands of people going to hell without Christ. . . . In the vision I moved to stand in these open footprints . . . and my feet fit exactly where His had been. . . . I knew that God had called me to go to the multitudes of this world with the message of salvation. . . ."
- E. Dr. Charles Taylor, Redondo Beach, Calif., author of *Get All Excited, Jesus is Coming Soon*.
 1. First predicted the Rapture in 1975

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2. Then changed, saying, 1948 Israel established
 3. Makes "this generation" (Mt. 24:34) point of reference; a generation in the Bible is 35 years acc. to Job 42:16
 4. Thus the Rapture will be Sept. 25, 1976 (Feast of Trumpets and a Sabbath day)
 5. Millennium is to begin in 1983
- F. Joel Darby, Book Fellowship Tract, (Tract entitled, *Why All the Vultures*)
1. A new breed of vultures has appeared in Israel, a breed never seen before.
 2. They are multiplying at 3 times the normal rate in Israel.
 3. This is a sign of the end time, writes a former Rabbi Michael Eses, in his new book, *Next Visitor to Planet Earth*, pub. Logos, Plainfield, N.J. 07060.
 4. Whereas these "buzzards" normally lay one egg at a time, they are now laying FOUR!
 5. According to Reuters News Agency, Russia has bought large quantities of powerful archery equipment from the British, also draught horses from all over the world.
 6. At any rate the amazing multiplication of the buzzard population right now should warn any careless Christian to get busy and work. . . . God would not be off on His timing. . . . He would not provide for the vastly increased buzzard population NOW if the need for them was 10 or 20 years hence!
- G. Christian church people
1. *Christian Standard*, March 15, 1969, art. entitled "Crisis in the Middle East."
 - a. Applies Daniel's prophecies in ch. 11 to the Second Coming of Christ, suggesting that Armageddon may be within "the near future."
 - b. Applies Ezekiel 38-39 to return of the Jews to Palestine now and the immediate future.
 2. At a widely attended men's clinic in the late 1950's a college professor's prediction of Communist terror "Within 4 years we'll all be dead or wish to God we were!" was proclaimed.
 3. *The Exhorter*, a publication of Churches of Christ, Hammond, La., "With the amazing acceleration of human history in the last few years, we would expect to see the fulfillment of these prophecies (Zech. 14; as applied to Israel's return to Palestine, etc.) in a very short space of time." date of paper, January 1969

This is just a drop in the bucket: Billy Graham, David Wilkerson, Oral Roberts, Richard DeHahn, Pastor Pack, Bill Bright, Rev. Moon, Armstrongites, J.W.s, 7th Day Adventists, Mormons, on and on they go,

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disagreeing both in prophecies and doctrines.

MILLIONS OF PEOPLE GIVE MILLIONS AND BILLIONS OF DOLLARS TO PROMOTE PEOPLE WHOSE MAIN EFFORTS ARE SPENT PREACHING AND PRINTING SUCH USELESS VERBIAGE.

II. Why are they prophesying thus?

- A. There are some who mistakenly think such a *literal* view of the Old Testament Prophets and Revelation is equal to a fundamentalism.
 - 1. "If we believe the Bible as the infallible and inspired word of God, then we must also believe that God has set a day before the literal return of Christ to the earth in which everyone will have to worship the Antichrist as God in order to get their code and number." from *The Midnight Cry*, pub. by Dr. Wm. F. Beirnes, Shoals, Indiana
 - 2. "Numerous passages in the Bible predict the return of Israel to the land. It is difficult to find any doctrines taught more clearly or emphatically in God's word. Yet, many people have failed to accept this truth. They have either ignored these passages, or said that they were fulfilled in the return of the Jewish captivity from Babylon, or that they were figuratively fulfilled in the church." from *The Exhorter*, already cited
 - 3. "He (God) made a covenant with Abraham, promising a large portion of the Middle East . . . for him and his descendants. The covenant is unconditional . . . and we, knowing Him who made the promise, totally support the people and land of Israel in their God-given, God-promised, God-ordained right to exist. Any person or group of nations opposed to this right isn't just fighting Israel, but God and time itself." in the New York Times over the name of the American Board of Mission to the Jews, supported by 48 named churches.
- B. Fascination with and psychological need for knowing the unknown
 - 1. This has been true of people ever since the garden of Eden.
 - 2. It was a problem with the first century church (Thessalonians, Corinthians, etc.).
 - 3. Martin Gardner, reviewer of *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*, says, "Long having lost faith in science and politics, millions of Americans are now longing for a mystical breakthrough from the skies which will usher in the Age of Aquarius."
 - 4. Many people are looking for God to solve the problems of the Christian who has to face an ungodly world by supernatural intervention rather than through hard, faithful discipleship.
 - a. Fascination with all these details of so-called Bible prophecies relieves people from the hard things in Christianity.
 - b. If we can believe that the main thrust of God's redemptive

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program is going to deal with circumstances (land, armies, temples, etc.) we may hope in that as His ultimate program.

c. BUT THE MAIN THRUST OF GOD'S REDEMPTIVE PROGRAM IS THE CHANGING OF THE NATURE OF THE INDIVIDUAL.

5. The essential elements of all the dispensational, pre-millennial systems may be found in the Jewish Apocryphal writings.
6. The New Testament tells us we do not need to know times or seasons which God has set in His own authority (2nd Coming, etc.). We do not need to know what type of resurrection body we will have. There are many things we do not need to know....
7. C.S. Lovett, *Personal Christianity*, Baldwin Park, Calif. "The Holy Spirit has given us a unique method for unlocking the deeper truths. If, for example, you were reading Lovett's Lights on *Thessalonians*, the books that offer Paul's comments on antichrist and the rapture of the church (which I strongly believe in), you'd find your imagination set on fire. . . ."

C. Instant Evangelism

1. "The signs of our time indicate the days of this age are winding down, and God does not want us to be ignorant when the day of Christ's return is at hand. . . . We must be about the Father's business, urging the lost to be saved . . . before that terrible day of darkness falls upon the earth." from the *Midnight Cry* already cited.
2. "Unlike other missions, Jewish missions is not merely evangelistic. The purpose of missions in general is to evangelize and disciple. But Jewish missions is more so. Not only does Jewish missions seek to evangelize . . . it is also a prophetic ministry. . . ." *The Chosen People*, already cited.
3. Hal Lindsey's books appeal for urgent evangelism because "the time is short. . . ."
4. In some way or another, these prophets seem to think they can by-pass the plain urgings of Jesus to insist that people count the cost, that Christian discipleship should be based on conviction, not emotion.

They think that all these "count-downs" and "horror pictures" will persuade people to repent.

Revelation 9:20ff. plainly says that all the terrible things symbolized by the Trumpets (judgments upon the Roman empire) did not cause the rest of mankind to repent!

5. I was in a Christian Service Camp a few years ago (Guadalupe, N.M.) and a preacher was showing his slides of the Holy Land and preaching on the Rapture, etc., and 5 or six kids got so

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upset they started crying and making long distance phone calls to make sure their parents were home.

D. Zionism is politically chic!

1. Some people consider it a test of your relationship to Christ that you believe the Jews have a biblical right to Palestine.
2. We have already cited the quotation in II, A. 4.
3. *Time* magazine continually prints editorials and articles on the Jews returning to Palestine "Thus Judaism . . . and Israel, have a commanding moral claim to Jerusalem . . ." *Time*, 12-27-71.
4. U. S. Presidents from Truman to the present have been forced by powerful Jewish opinion to politically support something that although politically expedient, was actually unethical!
5. What really upsets me is the fact that most of our U. S. congressmen blasted their own countrymen for trying to protect the sovereign land of S. Vietnam against invasion by N. Vietnam (agreed to by treaty), and on the other hand acclaimed the U. N. partitioning of Palestine in 1948 to the Jews, forcing Palestinians out, as right.

E. Ego-trip, fame, gather a following (III John 9).

1. The scriptures indicate this as a motive for false teachers and false prophets.
". . . from among your own selves will arise men speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them. . . ." (Acts 20:30).
2. The indication in I Corinthians 12-14 is that people were even using *bona fide* gifts of tongues and prophecy for ego-trips.
3. There are thousands and thousands of "itching-eared" people who do not want to endure sound doctrine and accumulate to themselves teachers to suit their own likings, and turn away from listening to the truth and wander into myths (II Tim. 4:1-5). THERE ARE EGO-HUNGRY PREACHERS WILLING TO EXPLOIT THESE ITCHING EARED PEOPLE TO MAKE LUCRATIVE LIVINGS AT IT!
4. Even the *People of God*, led by Moses David, use modern prophetism to recruit and obtain members and money, Bicentennial Issue of *Que Sera, Sera* (would you help us with a donation, please!).

F. Money

1. One example; many others might be cited
2. Rex Humbard's Archives of Faith for Sinners
In anticipation of the soon coming of Christ, the rapture

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and the 7 years of Great Tribulation (during which it will not be easy for those who are left).

After Humbard and all other saved Christians have been raptured only unrepentant sinners will remain on earth.

Mr. Humbard will be on video tapes to tell them how to reach salvation. Just push a button, and he'll be there. The right to record a personal testimony to a maximum length of four handwritten pages is now being offered to anyone for a donation of \$100. These microfilmed testimonies will represent a reservoir of faith for those left behind. At the archives there will be a film explaining what has happened with the rapture, etc. The first one to record a personal testimony will be Johnny Cash . . . he will not have to pay the \$100 because he has contributed liberally in the past.

The date of the rapture, according to Humbard, is uncertain, but all those who have been born again know we are on the verge of the Lord's return. While it is true that no one knows the day or the hour, there is something on the inside of each believer that tells him the Lord is soon to return.

Mr. Humbard emphasized that the inclusion of names or testimonies in the archives was not a guarantee of salvation. . . . "We're just fixing to memorialize some people who help us do the job."

3. Of course, the recent expose of the Armstrong fortunes reminds us that they got it from majoring in this kind of modern-day prophetism.

Granted, not all those who think they are prophets today are charlatans or ego-maniacs. Some of them probably would not even claim to be prophets but merely interpreters of Bible prophecies. This may be another subject for study altogether—however, it is interesting that practically all those who have claimed to receive revelations and prophesy, and those who give literal dispensational-pre-millennial interpretations to Bible prophecies AGREE on current events of history!

"And God told me to tell my partners that the moment they hear me say \$77 or \$777 or multiples of 7's, to act upon it quickly" Oral Roberts, *Abundant Life*, January 1978.

III. What God Says about Prophets

A. Biblical tests of a True Prophet

1. They speak ONLY in the name of God or Christ (Deut. 13:1-5; 18:20).
 - a. False prophets may predict the future or work signs (Deut. 13).
 - b. Satan can do signs (II Thess. 2:9; Rev. 13:13-15).

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- c. God may allow a prophet to be self-deceived and to deceive sinful peoples as punishment (Ezek. 14:9-11).
 - d. This is not the *only* test because a false prophet may pretend to speak in the name of the Lord (Jer. 29:8-9).
 - e. *In the name of*, means, *by the authority of*.
 - f. We have not only the right but the obligation to challenge every alleged prophecy or prophet with the proposition that the ONLY AUTHORITATIVE WORD FROM GOD FROM NOW UNTIL THE END OF TIME IS CONTAINED IN THE 66 BOOKS OF OUR BIBLE!
 - g. Even authentic prophets can be deceived! (I Kings 13).
2. They speak ONLY by revelation or inspiration.
- a. If prophets of biblical times practiced augury, sorcery, divination, they were rejected as false (Deut. 18:9-14).
 - b. Heathen magical practices were not practiced by true prophets of God.
 - c. Deceivers who prophesy lie (Ezek. 12:24; 22:28; Jer. 14:14; Micah 3:7, 11); they speak their *own heart*, not God's revelation (Jer. 23:16, 26; Ezek. 13:2).
 - d. True prophets receive *direct* revelations from Jehovah (Num. 12:6).
 - e. False prophets may claim visions and dreams (Deut. 13:1-5; Ezek. 14:9-11).
 - f. Modern day prophets appeal to soothsayers like Jeanne Dixon; scientists; military prognosticators; even to *Reader's Digest* and current events to validate their prophecies.

Examples:

The Midnight Cry (already cited): "The November 1976 *Reader's Digest* carries an interesting story related to our subject entitled 'Coming Soon; Electronic Money.' 'This (cashless society) is what both the Bible predicts and financial experts now affirm.'"

The Gospel Truth (already cited): "George Orwell in his book, 1984, predicted that by this date a world dictator would control all nations. Mr. Orwell may be proven to be a prophet with honor in this respect. . . . "Financial experts predict that by 1980 . . . etc.
"A news release this past month stated . . . etc.
"President Valery Giscard D'Estaing of France said . . . etc.
"Henry Kissinger said . . . etc.
". . . it was the consensus of scientists who worked there (Kennedy Space Center) that if man did not destroy himself by the year 2000 . . . etc.

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Personal Christianity, VI. 17, No. 6, June 1977, C. S. Lovett

"Antichrist is in the world this moment! Who says so? Jeane Dixon, the well known Catholic soothsayer. She claims he will surface in the early 1980s. But do we consider her a true oracle of God? No way! Not all of her predictions come true. Nevertheless she has quite a record of accurate predictions when it comes to world rulers, such as . . ."

3. They were conscious of a definite call—they could not mistake it!

a. Moses (Ex. 4:10-12; Jer. 1:4-10; Amos 7:4-15).

b. Samuel (I Sam. 3:19-20).

c. Mrs. Oral Roberts, explaining God's calling her to:

"... Lord . . . I'd like to hear Your voice as Oral does. . . .

So as I walked I prayed in the Spirit at length. I couldn't understand the prayer language coming over my tongue. It sounded Oriental to me . . . and the interpretation came back in my own language one line at a time. . . .

'No, you will not hear My voice as others do. . . . I speak to him (Oral) in an audible voice but I will not speak to you audibly. . . . I will speak to you out of the everydayness of your life. . . .'" (*Abundant Life*, Jan. 1978)

d. Morris Cerullo: "Theresa (his wife) excused herself to tend to some sewing but was soon fast asleep on the couch. When I noticed that she had fallen asleep, I thought. Now that's strange! We just woke up from a good night's sleep!"

I soon realized that God had placed that sleep upon her, . . . so that He might prepare the way for the supernatural visitation of His presence right there in my kitchen. . . . Then God spoke to me. . . .

"... while I was in the back of a bus coming from a crusade . . . God had spoken to my heart . . . so forceful was God's visitation to me on that occasion, that I left the other members of the team and went to the very back of the bus and let God speak to my heart. . . ."

It is strange that all modern day prophets get their "calls" from God when no one else can verify it!

4. True prophets did not seek the office, they were chosen by God and spoke by divine compulsion.

a. Many of them resisted (Jer. 1:4-19; Ex. 3:10-12; Ezek. 3:12-15; Jonah 1:1-3).

b. Even when Paul told the Corinthians, "desire the spiritual gifts" he also told them that the Holy Spirit distributed His gifts (miraculous) according to His will . . . and not according to the wishes of men.

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5. The commission of the true prophet was authenticated by signs or miracles.
 - a. Ex. 4:1-21 . . . Moses
 - b. Joshua 3:7-13 . . . Joshua
 - c. I Sam. 12:16ff.
 - d. Miracles of Elijah and Elisha
 - e. Paul, Peter, and those upon whom they laid their hands.
 - f. signs and miracles may be copies or faked by false prophets
Deut. 13:1-5; Ex. 7:8-13; 7:20-22; 8:7; Mt. 24:24; Mk. 13:22;
II Thess. 2:9.
6. The message of the True Prophet was always in harmony with the whole will of God which had been revealed up to that time.
 - a. Deut. 13:1-3 - could not contradict previous truth
 - b. I Kings 13 - true prophet would not have been deceived by old prophet if he had used this test.
 - c. Jer. 26 - leaders were going to kill Jeremiah because he predicted destruction of Jerusalem. Some elders remembered Micah years before predicted the same. . . . Jeremiah spared
 - d. I John 4:1-6
 - e. This harmony with revealed truth applies to all the doctrines of the Bible . . . not just predicted history.
 - f. Modern day prophets for the most part do not teach the full apostolic doctrine.

Billy Graham, for example, who interprets biblical prophecy and declares he is God's spokesman, said, "I used to believe that pagans in far-off countries were lost—were going to hell—if they did not have the Gospel of Jesus Christ preached to them. I no longer believe that. . . . I believe that there are other ways of recognizing the existence of God—through nature, for instance—and plenty of other opportunities, therefore, of saying 'yes' to God."

"Graham once believed that Jews, too, were lost if they did not convert to Christianity. . . . Today Graham is willing to leave that up to God. . . ."

"I've found that my beliefs are essentially the same as those of orthodox Roman Catholics. . . . We only differ on some matters of later church tradition." *McCalls* magazine, January 1978

7. The message of the true prophet and the prophet himself was authenticated by historical fulfillments of his prophecies.
 - a. Deut. 18:21-22
 - b. Jer. 28:17
8. The moral character of the prophet and his prophecies must agree with God's full revelation.
 - a. False prophets tend to be ungodly and preach ungodly (both morally and theologically).

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- b. Jer. 23:10-17
- c. Matt. 7:15-20; II Pet. 2:1-22; Jude 1-23

- B. We do not need modern day prophecies and prophets!
 - 1. There is enough prophecy in the Bible, fulfilled in minute detail (Daniel, Isaiah, Revelation) to show that God is in control of history!
 - 2. We do not need, beyond what is revealed in the Bible, to know future circumstances—because knowing the future of earthly history has nothing to do with our covenant relationship to God (I Jn. 3:1-3).
It is not circumstances that save or destroy, it is faith or lack of faith—regardless of circumstances.
 - 3. The Bible is all sufficient.
 - a. "And now I command you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified" (Acts 20:32).
 - b. "All scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work" (II Tim. 3:16-17).
- C. Modern day prophets need to take warning from Jeremiah, ch. 23 and Ezekiel, ch. 13.

Excerpt from a Workshop on the Second Coming of Christ for the NACC, July 14, 1978, Oklahoma City, Okla., by Paul T. Butler.

ZIONISM (Restoration of a Jewish nation in the land of Palestine). Modern Zionism strictly political; never intended to exclude Palestinians (*Enc. Brit.* "Zionism").

- A. Some little known historical facts about Zionism and modern Jews
 - 1. Theodor Herzl, founder of political Zionism, was schizoid, given to frequent fits of melancholy and depression and threatened suicide several times. He spent vast sums of money bribing Turkish officials in order to gain the Sultan's approval of a Jewish settlement in Palestine.

Pauline, his first child, became a drug addict, had several men who left her, wound up overdosing and dying of drugs, at 40.

Hans, his son was manic depressive, treated by Freud who diagnosed an extreme Oedipus complex. Committed suicide on the day of Pauline's funeral.

Trude, married and became a mental case, her marriage broke down and she died after being an inmate of a number of mental institutions. . . . *The Hebrew Christian*, Winter, 1977, Vol. L, No. 4.

- 2. What about the Falashas? 50,000 black, East Central Africans who have practiced Judaism since 600 B.C., and who claim to be

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descendents of King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba. They observe all Jewish rites, sacrifices, and festivals except Hanukkah. . . . *Christianity Today*, 12-7-73, "Black Jews: A House Divided," pg. 52.

3. Most East-European "Jews" (Poles, Hungarian, Czech, etc.) are not really descendents of Israelites, but descendents of the Khazars, Caucasians who became converts or proselytes to Judaism about 900-1000A.D. The Khazars were "Gentiles" from south Russia! . . . *The Thirteenth Tribe*, by Arthur Koestler, Random House pub., (so well documented and important a book it was reviewed by Wall Street Journal)
4. No Jew today can trace his ancestry back beyond two or three hundred years. So how do we know for sure that they are really Jews (true Israelites according to the Old Testament and from the 12 tribes)? . . . *Christianity Today*, 3-13-70, Jacob Gartenhaus, "The Jewish Conception of the Messiah." (he was born in Austria and educated in rabbinical schools there).
5. *CBS, "Sixty Minutes" program*, 4-10-77:
 - a. As many people are leaving Israel to come to the U.S. as are going into Israel to live each day.
 - b. There are over 200,000 Jews in N.Y. City and many have come there recently from Israel.
 - c. Some Jews who have lived in Israel from its very beginning in 1948 have recently come to the U.S.
 - d. A taxi-driver in N.Y., who couldn't make a living in Israel, has made over \$100,000 in 3 years since coming to N.Y.
 - e. Why are they leaving? 30 years of war; no exemptions from army service; not enough space; inflation rate over 35%; strikes; bureaucracy; takes 5 year wait to get a telephone; corruption in government; income tax takes 65% of wage earner's living.
 - f. 1/10 of all Israeli citizens live outside the country.
6. The present Israeli government has made it unlawful to do Christian evangelism in that land. How will the millennium ever come about?

B. Zionism and the Bible

1. Repentance and obedience to God's commandments and prophecies was the *condition* upon which God promised to give the land of Palestine to the Jews in the Old Testament.
Significantly, God gave the Jews into the hands of their enemies a number of times when they disobeyed Him. They were taken out of Palestine and brought back a number of times.
2. The ultimate disobedience of the Jews was the rejection of God's Son, the Messiah (cf. Dan. 9:24 ". . . to finish transgression" and Mt. 23:29-39 ". . . may come all the righteous blood shed on earth . . . and your house is forsaken and desolate"; and Luke

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- 19:41-44 ". . . because you did not know the time of your visitation."
3. Jesus predicted the dispossession of the Jews by God in His parables in Matt. 21 and 22.
 - a. King's marriage feast for his son . . . the king sent his troops (Rome's army, Mt. 24:15, "desolating sacrilege") and destroyed those murderers.
 - b. The householder's vineyard. . . . "He will put those wretches to a miserable death, and let out the vineyard to other tenants who will give him the fruits in their seasons." This is the sentence the Jews pronounced upon themselves! (Mt. 21:33-41),
Then Jesus reinforced it, "Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a nation producing the fruits thereof."
 4. Jesus predicted the Jews would ". . . fall by the edge of the sword, and be led captive into all the nations, and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled" (Lk. 21:24). The Old Testament era was the times of the Jews. The New Testament era is the times of the Gentiles. Judaism is a thing of the past!
 5. The apostle Paul, speaking of the Jews nationally, said that "God's wrath *came* (*ephtasen*, Gr. aor. past tense) upon them *to the end* (*eis telos*), or "*to completion*" (I Thess. 2:16). *Judaism cannot be revived*, although individual Jews may be saved if they accept the gospel (Rom. 1:16-17). Dan. 9:27 calls the destruction of Jerusalem —the "*decreed end*."
 6. Once the Messiah has come and completed His work, God has dispensed forever with a special *place* of worship (Jn. 4:21-24; Acts 17:24-25); any other *sacrifices* (Heb. 9:26; 10:12-14), etc.
 7. To populate Palestine with a theocracy of Judaism, reinstitute the Temple and its sacrifices, reconstitute a Jewish priesthood, would violate and contradict the very plain teaching of the New Testament that the church of Jesus Christ (composed of both Jew and Gentile on the same basis) is the primary object of God's redemptive work . . . and not the Jewish nation!
 8. The book of Galatians makes it plain that "in Christ" there are no more racial or social distinctions ever again (Gal. 3:26-29). If we are in Christ, we are Abraham's "offspring." Or, to put it another way, a true "Jew" is one who is one inwardly, not genetically (Rom. 2:28-29). The true Israel of God is that which is a *new creation* (Gal. 6:15-16).
 9. True Zion is the church (Heb. 12:18-24).
 10. Judaism is the kingdom that was "shaken" and "removed" (Heb. 12:25-27).
 11. Christianity is the kingdom that "cannot be shaken" (Heb. 12:28).

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12. Judaism is "no lasting city" (Heb. 13:14) and to go to Christ it must be outside the camp (of Judaism) (Heb. 13:13).
13. The twelve tribes of Israel in Rev. 7:1-8 cannot refer to a literal return of Old Testament Israel to Palestine because that list leaves out the tribes of Dan and Ephraim, and inserts two tribes not originally given an inheritance—Levi and Joseph.
14. It is very significant that no New Testament writer mentions a future return of the Jews to the land of Palestine. Very obviously the return of the Jews to the land of which the Old Testament prophets spoke had already occurred in the restoration of the captivities, or, figuratively in the establishment of the church.
15. Daniel's prophecy (Dan. 9:24-27) plainly teaches that *God would finish His work* for the redemption of the world *through the Jews* 490 years after the "going forth of the word to rebuild" Jerusalem. From 457 B.C. (see Ezra 7) to 34 A.D. (allowing for the 4-year mistake in our calendar) is 490 years. 34 A.D. was after the stoning of Stephen and when the gospel was initially taken to the Gentiles.
16. Isaiah predicts that God will establish a "new" nation before the "old" one passes away (Isa. 66:7ff.) and that the new will be established with one stroke (Heb. *pa'am*). A land and a nation was brought forth with one stroke before the old passed away on the Day of Pentecost, June, A.D. 30.

This does not mean, of course, that some who call themselves Jews today, will never go back to Palestine. They may even build a new Temple there some day. But it does mean that as any of them go back they do so entirely on their own, apart from any covenanted purpose to that end and entirely outside of Scripture prophecy. No Scripture blessing is promised for a project of that kind.

It may be that in years to come the Jews will possess a larger part, or even all, of Palestine. We do not know. But if they do they will secure it as other nations secure property, through negotiation, or purchase, or conquest, NOT BY VIRTUE OF ANY AS YET UNFULFILLED PROPHECIES OR BIBLICAL PROMISES. THERE ARE NO SUCH PROPHECIES OR PROMISES!

In the mean time, Zionism, premillennialism and dispensationalism must bear part of the responsibility for the evil and dangerous situation that has arisen in the Middle East, since it has encouraged Jews to believe they are rightful owners of that land and that it is divinely ordained that they are again to possess it.

The British had no ethical or political right to promise Palestine to the Jews at the end of World War I. The UN had no right to partition it. It should have legally been returned to the Palestinians. Ever since the partitioning, the Jews have extended their borders beyond those set by the UN.

Chapter Twenty-two (22:1-71)

THE SON OF MAN PREPARING HIS APOSTLES FOR HIS DEATH

IDEAS TO INVESTIGATE:

1. What implications concerning the Biblical teaching that man has a free will does the statement, "Then Satan entered into Judas. . . ." have (22:3)?
2. What was involved in "preparing" the Passover (22:1-13)?
3. Was Jesus indicating He would observe the "Lord's Supper" with them at some future time when He said, "I shall not drink . . . until the kingdom of God comes. . . ."? What future time was He indicating (22:18)?
4. Why, after chastizing the apostles about seeking positions of honor, did Jesus immediately promise them they would sit on thrones judging Israel (22:30)?
5. Why did Jesus, the Prince of Peace, order the apostles to buy swords (22:36)?
6. Was Jesus trying to evade the cross in His prayer in Gethsemane (22:42)?
7. After the Lord has counseled the apostles to arm themselves with swords, why did He forbid them to use them at His arrest (22:51)?
8. Did Peter deny he was a follower of Jesus because he was afraid of dying (22:57)?
9. What would the chief priests not answer should Jesus ask them (22:68)?
10. How would the Son of man be seated at the right hand of the power of God (22:69)?

SECTION 1

Communion (22:1-30)

22 Now the feast of Unleavened Bread drew near, which is called the Passover.² And the chief priests and the scribes were seeking how to put him to death; for they feared the people.

3 Then Satan entered into Judas called Iscariot, who was of the number of the twelve; ⁴ he went away and conferred with the chief priests and officers how he might betray him to them. ⁵ And they were glad, and engaged to give him money. ⁶ So he agreed, and sought an opportunity to betray him to them in the absence of the multitude.

7 Then came the day of Unleavened Bread, on which the passover lamb had to be sacrificed. ⁸ So Jesus sent Peter and John, saying,

"Go and prepare the passover for us, that we may eat it." ⁹They said to him, "Where will you have us prepare it?" ¹⁰He said to them, "Behold, when you have entered the city, a man carrying a jar of water will meet you; follow him into the house which he enters, ¹¹and tell the householder, 'The Teacher says to you, Where is the guest room, where I am to eat the passover with my disciples?' ¹²And he will show you a large upper room furnished; there make ready." ¹³And they went, and found it as he had told them; and they prepared the passover.

14 And when the hour came, he sat at table, and the apostles with him. ¹⁵And he said to them, "I have earnestly desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer; ¹⁶for I tell you I shall not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God." ¹⁷And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he said, "Take this, and divide it among yourselves; ¹⁸for I tell you that from now on I shall not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes." ¹⁹And he took bread, and when he had given thanks he broke it and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me." ²⁰And likewise the cup after supper, saying, "This cup which is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood. ²¹But behold the hand of him who betrays me is with me on the table. ²²For the Son of man goes as it has been determined; but woe to that man by whom he is betrayed!" ²³And they began to question one another, which of them it was that would do this.

24 A dispute also arose among them, which of them was to be regarded as the greatest. ²⁵And he said to them, "The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and those in authority over them are called benefactors. ²⁶But not so with you; rather let the greatest among you become as the youngest, and the leader as one who serves. ²⁷For which is the greater, one who sits at table, or one who serves? Is it not the one who sits at table? But I am among you as one who serves.

28 "You are those who have continued with me in my trials; ²⁹and I assign to you, as my Father assigned to me, a kingdom, ³⁰that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

22:1-13 Preparation: The day on which the Passover feast was to be observed was determined by the Lunar Calendar (moon phases). Passover supper was to be eaten on the 14th of Nisan (Jewish month). This was calculated to be fourteen days after the first new moon, following the vernal (Spring) equinox. Passover, therefore, was in the month we know as April. According to the Gregorian Calendar (presently in use by most

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of the world), Passover varies as to the day because Gregorian months are not lunar. Fourteen days after each "new moon" a "full moon" appears, So Passover time was always at "full moon."

The Hebrew word *pesach* is translated Passover, and means literally, "to pass, spring over, or spare" (cf. Ex. 12:13-27). Passover day was one day out of a festival of seven or eight days duration, called in Hebrew, *hammatzzoth*, literally, "the unleavened things," (cf. Lev. 23:4ff.). So, Passover came to be called, the Feast of Unleavened Bread (Lk. 22:1). The parallel accounts, which the student should read are Matthew 26:3-75; 27:1; Mark 14:1-72; 15:1 and John 13:1 through John 18:27.

Luke notes that as the Passover drew near, the chief priests and scribes were seeking how to put Jesus to death. Matthew records that at that moment Jesus was predicting, for the fifth time, His death at their hands (Mt. 26:1-2). While the chief priests and Sanhedrin were planning to postpone their efforts to destroy Jesus until after the Feast (Mt. 26:3-5), Jesus was predicting they would actually crucify Him during the Feast. Jesus not only knew their murderous scheme, but He knew they would change their plans to delay and carry them out during the Feast. So, in the palace of Caiaphas, the high priest, they concluded they must arrest Jesus by "stealth" or "secretly," lest the multitudes, who were proclaiming Jesus to be the Son of David, their king, might rise up against them. Quite unexpectedly, they are presented a way to find Him and arrest Him without the multitudes knowing it until it is done.

Luke alone records, "Then *Satan entered into Judas* called Iscariot . . . He went away and conferred with the chief priests and captains how he might betray him to them," (see also Jn. 13:2, 27). Scripture indicates Judas was greedy and dishonest from the beginning of his discipleship (cf. Jn. 12:6). The point to remember here is that Satan accomplished possession or entry into Judas' heart because Judas wanted him to! Men may either "give place" to the devil or not, Eph. 4:27. Men may "resist" the devil or not, James 4:7. God only gives up on men when men refuse to have God (Rom. 1:18ff.; II Thess. 2:10-12; Rev. 13:1ff.). Judas knew of the hatred, anger, malice and subterfuge of the priesthood toward Jesus. Judas had seen and heard their desire to destroy Jesus many times. Judas was not an unwilling victim of Satan. Judas' motive, so far as the record goes, was strictly greed. There is no indication that there was anything political, ideological or theological involved at all. H. Schonfield says in his book, *Passover Plot*, that Jesus, wanting to be Messiah, plots to get Himself crucified so He can fulfill Old Testament prophecies. In doing so, Jesus tricks Judas into betraying Him by continually applying "pressure" or psyching Judas into it through pointed references to Judas as " betrayer," "thief," etc. Judas, then, having supposedly discerned that this is what Jesus wanted, decided to make a few pieces of silver from the plot. One

has only to read the gospel documents to see the absurdity of such run-away imagination. For Jesus to have carried out such a "plot" would have required more divine omniscience and omnipotence almost than even the gospel records accord Him! He would have to know with divine certainty the future movements and decisions of scores of people; He would have to have had the power to manipulate people and times and circumstances beyond any mortal's control. How did Jesus, if He were only human and not divine, even know Judas had betrayed Him? Judas did not report back to Jesus!

The day of "Unleavened Bread" was the day when the Jew searched his house for *chametz*, leaven, to purge the house of all of it. It was also the day on which the passover lamb had to be sacrificed on the Temple altar. Luke indicates Jesus waited until the Feast was in its first day to prepare. He apparently did this because there would be no need to prepare sooner (except to have the lamb selected, which the owner of the "upper room" probably did), and He was extremely busy up until the very day of the Passover meal. It also gave opportunity for another demonstration of His supernatural foreknowledge of the exact place and circumstances in connection with His observance. Finally, it would keep the meeting place secret until He could assemble His disciples for a final, personal and intensive session of instructions and encouragements. Judas was thereby prevented from betraying the place where Jesus might be arrested before Jesus desired it.

Jesus appointed Peter and John to make preparations for the observance of the Passover. When they asked Him "Where?", He demonstrated once again His divine foreknowledge by predicting they would meet a man carrying a pitcher (Gr. *keramion*, from which we get English, *ceramic*) of water. It would be unusual for the *master* of a house (Gr. *oikodespote*, "the despot of the house") to be carrying a ceramic jar of water—that was the work of servants and women! But Jesus foreknew the exact moment the two disciples would reach a certain point in order to be able to find this particular householder carrying a jar of water, and that this householder would invite them to use his upper room. A literal translation of the Greek text would read: "And you will say to the house-master of the house, Says to you the Teacher. . . ." This man must have been a wealthy disciple of Jesus. The homes of the wealthy had large upper rooms as second-story guest rooms with a staircase built on the outside wall of the house. Guests could enter and leave their guest room on the second floor without disturbing the householder's family. The word *furnished* is the Greek word *estromenon* and means literally, *spread out*, as one prepares a bed or spreads out straw for a bed. The upper room was "spread out" (furnishes) especially with a table and couches for Jesus' observance of the Passover.

The two apostles went into the city and found it exactly as Jesus had told them it would be. They immediately set about to prepare for the Passover.

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Wednesday evening, at sundown, would have begun the Passover when every "householder" would gather his family and they would all take lamps and search the house diligently for leaven. So many preparations were required, the actual meal itself would not be eaten until the next evening (Thursday). The ingredients for "bitter herbs" had to be gathered (horse radish, bay, thyme, majoram or mint and basil). This was all used to make the sauce or gravy called *charoseth*—the "sop" into which the unleavened bread (matza-bread) was dipped to symbolize the mortar the Hebrews had to make as slaves in Egypt. Utensils for holding the "sop," for drinking the wine, for "washing" (purification) of hands and feet, etc., had to be procured. The most important preparation was taking the lamb (which had been selected four days earlier) to the temple and slitting its throat so that its blood could be poured out on the altar. Priests and Levites collected the blood and poured it out. The blood then ran down the gutters into the Kidron valley. Even with a conservative estimate of one million worshipers at Passover, there would be 100,000 lambs slain in one day. That would average approximately 4,166 every hour or 69 every minute! The entrails and fat were thrown on the fire on the altar causing the stench of burning flesh to float over the city. The smoke, bleating of sheep, smell of warm blood, trumpets blowing and people shouting must have made a spectacle beyond imagination. The worshiper took his slain lamb home, roasted it, careful not to break a bone, and the Feast was ready. Using a bunch of hyssop, its blood was sprinkled on the lintel and door-posts of the house. All these preparations probably took Wednesday night and most of Thursday morning so Jesus and the apostles did not start supper until late Thursday afternoon. They may have slept a few hours Wednesday night, but they would not get but a few "winks" for on Thursday night they were out in the garden of Gethsemane.

22:14-30 Participation: When everything was ready, Jesus reclined (Greek, *anepese*) on a couch pulled up to the table (Lk. 22:21, Greek word for table is *trapezes*, from which we get the English word, *trapeze*). Jews of that day usually ate according to the Roman custom by reclining on couches large enough to hold three people. When the "family" had gathered to the table, a prayer was said and then everyone dipped a piece of matza bread into the *charoseth* sauce (the "sop"). *Charoseth* is a Hebrew word meaning "bondage or captivity." This was eaten and the first cup of wine was drunk accompanied by a "blessing" (the Greek word for blessing is *euchariste*, see Lk. 22:17). Then, Psalm 114 was recited telling how the Israelites left Egypt. Next, drops of salt water were drunk in memory of the tears their forefathers shed in bondage. Next, they began to eat the roasted lamb, accompanied by the "bitter herb" sauce. Two more cups of wine were drunk, passed from hand to hand, and the third cup was called, with particular solemnity, "the cup of benediction." Next, the "Hallel" (Psa. 113-118) was chanted

as a prayer of thanksgiving, and when the verse, "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord" (Psa. 118:26) was recited, a fourth cup of wine, the last of the ritual, was passed among the family. The Passover was usually a cheerful feast, reminding the Hebrews of the deliverance of their nation from bondage. The Talmud says: "It is as savory as an olive," and, "The Hallel should burst through the roof of the house." This feast was extremely significant for Jesus! Just before they began the rituals of the Passover, Jesus announced, "I have earnestly desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer." He knew it would be the last Passover of any significance for these apostles. The Passover was to be superceded by the fulfilling of it in the kingdom of God (the church). Henceforth Jesus' disciples would memorialize Him (cf. I Cor. 5:6-8; I Pet. 1:19) as their "Passover" in a ceremony called, "the Lord's Supper." This is the last *Jewish* communion Jesus would have with His disciples. After this, in His Spirit, He would meet with them around His table, communing with them in *His* Supper. Paul clearly indicates that when Christians observe the Lord's Supper they are communing with Him (I Cor. 10:16) and He is participating with them. Jesus said, "Wherever two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them," (Mt. 18:20). Jesus had much to teach these apostles before He left them to return to heaven. The Passover usually called forth the most spiritual moments in the life of a Hebrew. With all the remembering of God's atonement, God's love, God's serving and God's Spirit guiding the Hebrews in their deliverance from Egypt, Jesus anticipated this last Passover at the most opportune time to focus the hearts of the apostles on the *new deliverance*—the fulfillment of what the Passover merely typified. It is evident the apostles needed spiritual edification! The kingdom of God was soon to be established and left to their charge and they were still very much insensitive to its true nature. They were arguing and competing for places of honor and position, (22:24).

Luke apparently departs from a strict chronological account of these events, and places the institution of the Lord's Supper (22:19-23) before it actually took place. Mark's gospel places it later, after the departure of Judas (cf. Jn. 13:27-30). It seems more logical to follow Mark's chronology. When one takes all four gospel accounts into consideration here, it is evident that some omit what others record and as a result some rearrangement in chronology must be made. This, of course, does not destroy the integrity of authenticity of any of the accounts. The same omissions and anachronisms would be found in the notes of any four newspaper reporters should they report on the same incident after having talked to different eyewitnesses on different days! We skip now to Luke 22:24-30 for the sake of chronological precision.

Apparently Jesus had just poured the first cup of wine for the Passover and given it to the apostles when He noticed their contention. The Greek

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word *philoneikia*, means "love of strife" and signifies a spirit of contentiousness. The apostles were enjoying their dispute over who would be greatest. Jesus had to interrupt this precious moment to rebuke these ambitious men. He had already rebuked them in practically the same words, just a few weeks earlier, as they walked through Perea on their way to this very Passover (cf. Mt. 20:25-28). They did not get the message then. Now they were still acting like pagans. Gentiles (unbelievers) get power over one another by bribery, flattery, deceit, favoritism or force. They do it for selfish reasons: security, fame or self-indulgence. Jesus made it very plain: "Not so with you!" They must understand what the world does not understand—the only man who really has any influence over others is the one who gets it from others who have given it willingly because he has loved them and served them. Any man whose influence over others depends on force, deceit, flattery or partiality does not really have honor, willingly, but grudgingly. That is false honor. The greatest apostle would be the one who served the most. Jesus was the ultimate example of this principle. Whereas the so-called great rulers of mankind have ruled because men gave in to them grudgingly, and partially, Jesus rules completely because men and women surrender to Him willingly and totally. Men give Jesus their minds, souls, hearts and bodies, because He demonstrated genuine, perfect love for them. He who was the greatest servant is the greatest ruler. He promised the apostles that the rewards which were to be theirs when they served in His kingdom would surpass any kind of fleshly reward or honor they were then dreaming about. They would receive the real rewards, the spiritual rewards, the eternally abiding rewards. They, as believers, would be allowed to sit with Him at His table in the messianic kingdom, constantly feasting on the Bread of Life and the Living Water. They, as apostles and evangelists, would be given the privilege of preaching the gospel and writing the new covenant scriptures which would "judge the twelve tribes of Israel." Jesus is not ranking the apostles in some sort of ecclesiastical hierarchy here, He is offering them the privilege of being *first* into the vineyard (cf. Mt. 20:1-16). They will be first to open the doors of the kingdom of the Messiah by preaching the gospel on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2). Every Jew will ultimately be judged by Jehovah according to the response he makes to the apostolic gospel, preached and written. So will every Gentile. The apostles themselves are not "the judge"—the gospel is. Whatever they proclaim will "have already been bound in heaven" (cf. Mt. 16:19 et al.).

Immediately after this rebuke, Jesus rose from the supper, laid aside His garments, and wrapped a towel around His waist. He then took a wash basin filled with water and began to wash the apostle's feet (cf. Jn. 13:1-21). This event should be chronologically inserted here.

Next, as Luke records in 22:21-23, Jesus exposed the betrayer, Judas (see also Mt. 26:21-24; Mk. 14:18-21; and John 13:22-30). A number of

Old Testament predictions were fulfilled when the Messiah was betrayed (see Psa. 41:9; Zech. 11:7-14). Jesus predicted His betrayal before it was known by others so that when it came to pass the apostles would not be caught unaware and fall into despondency. When they looked back on these events after His resurrection they would have their faith in Jesus strengthened. Jesus also made a last attempt to provoke Judas to repentance. Mainly, Jesus' prediction here was to show that what was happening to Him was within the fore-ordained plan of God. Jesus was not the unfortunate victim of circumstances. He was not powerless before the evil machinations of men. He was not killed, He chose to die. He chose when, how, and by whom. He laid down His life and He took it up again. No one took it from Him (cf. Jn. 10:17-18; 19:11). Jesus encouraged His apostles, that when they should see Him betrayed, they should not be dismayed—it was what He came for, He was in complete control, this was His mission (cf. Jn. 13:20).

The other disciples did not understand that Judas was the betrayer when Jesus announced it! Perhaps this was because He first gave a generalized statement about a betrayer. Matthew and Mark indicate the apostles began to be very depressed and question one after the other, "Is it I, Lord?" Peter beckoned to John to ask Jesus who the betrayer was (Jn. 13:23-26). Still Jesus gave an answer that could have included all or any one of them when He said, "It is he to whom I shall give this morsel. . . ." (Jn. 13:26). He probably had dipped the "morsel" for each one of them since He would be the "master" of the group. Judas was expert at deceiving his comrades. He joined right in with the chorus of "Is it I, Lord?" Jesus probably reclined on a couch with John and Judas—John at His front, Judas at His back; Peter was on a couch with two others across the table from Jesus. Jesus leaned back toward Judas and lowered His voice as He replied to Judas (Jn. 13:27-30). The other apostles, still in a state of shock and confusion, murmuring among themselves, did not observe Jesus' hushed remarks to Judas, nor did they observe Judas as he got up and slipped out into the night. Jesus aimed to expose the plot, let Judas know privately He knew who the betrayer was, and yet not cause the other apostles to mob Judas and kill him with their own hands.

Now we come back to Luke 22:19-20, and the institution of the Lord's Supper. The careful student will notice there is no verse 20 in the RSV text printed at the beginning of this lesson. After the word "body" in 22:19, the following words have been deleted from the Revised Standard Version English text:

which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me. 20 And likewise the cup after supper, saying, This cup which is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood.

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There is, however, such a preponderance of the best, most ancient, Greek texts in favor of these words as part of the original text, we choose to consider them as such and comment on them. The Greek texts called Sinaiticus, Alexandrinus, Vaticanus, Codex Ephraemi and a host of others include these words. The Greek texts which do omit them are not of the same significance as those which include these words.

During the discussion of the betrayal Jesus and the apostles continued to eat the Passover meal. "As they were eating," according to Matthew and Mark, "He took bread and blessed it, and broke it and gave to them...." Luke uses the Greek word *eucharistesas* which is translated into English, "thanks." It is the word from which we get the English word, *eucharist*, often used as a synonymous title for the Lord's Supper. Jesus used two elements right out of the Passover supper itself to institute the memorial "supper" He commanded His disciples to observe forever after—unleavened bread (Hebrew, *matzzah*; Greek, *azumon*) and wine (Hebrew, *yayin*; Greek, *oinos*). In the text the wine is referred to as "the cup" (Gr. *potion*). At the Passover the "cup" contained *yayin*, a sweet wine from the grape with probably a low degree of fermentation (see Harold Fowler's Special Study, "Should Jesus Drink Wine?", in *The Gospel of Matthew, Vol. II*, pg. 526-533, pub. College Press). These two elements, bread and wine, are used often in the Bible to symbolize "flesh and blood" or "life." Their symbolic significance would not be lost on these Jewish apostles.

Jesus said, "Do this in remembrance of me." The apostle Paul tells us that Jesus also said, "Do this, *as often as you drink it*, in remembrance of me," (cf. I Cor. 11:25). Jesus did not, at this Passover supper, so far as the record goes, specify how *often* this remembrance was to be observed. However, the divine history of the early church (Acts of Apostles, 20:7), indicates the first century church observed this memorial each first day of the week. Writings of the earliest post-apostolic church leaders (Justin Martyr, cir. 150 A.D. et al.) indicate it was observed every first day of the week by the early Christians. It would certainly seem reasonable that every time a local congregation of Christians meets as a whole body for worshiping the Lord they would want to observe the Lord's Supper. It would also appear that following the precedent set by the first century church would be desirable for the church for all ages. The very fact, however, that Jesus did not specify in detail how often it must be observed, should make any Christian beware of being legalistic about the matter. Legalism in respect to frequency, whether too often or not often enough, robs it of its very essence—remembrance out of love. Jesus did not want Christians to have to be forced or coerced by human manipulation to remember Him. He wants believers to come in loving remembrance of His atonement of grace. He does not want anyone to come to His supper trusting in a ritualistic observance to attain self-justification.

The purpose of the Supper is, first, to memorialize in a new and more complete manner God's redemption of man. The Passover typified a redemption God would fulfill in the future. Christ's Supper memorializes redemption as an accomplished fact of history. It signifies that our redemption is accomplished by the Person, Christ, not by any works of our own. The Supper is *not* a "means of grace." Christians observe it as an expression of their faith in what Christ accomplished for them. It is a divinely instituted ceremony through which Christians express their love for Jesus. *Deliberate* refusal to observe it would result in being lost because that would be rebellion and faithlessness. The Supper is also for the purpose of *communion*. Jesus said it was "the new covenant in my blood." After His death, resurrection and ascension He promised He would participate with believers through this Supper. So, all Christians commune with Christ as they observe His supper. The Greek word *koinonia* (I Cor. 10:16-17) is translated communion, but means *participation*. Christians participate by faith expressed through this Supper, in the death and resurrection of Christ. But the Lord's Supper is not the only expression of faith or participation in the atonement of Christ. Peter tells us Christians are "made partakers (Gr. *koinonoi*, same word as used in I Cor. 10:16-17) of the divine nature through a long list of things, headed by "His very great and precious *promises*" (cf. II Pet. 1:3-11)! Christians also declare their participation with *one another* as one body through this Supper (I Cor. 10:17; 11:17-34). The Supper is a weekly celebration of the believer's union with Jesus and with His body, the church.

According to the apostle Paul, the Lord's Supper is also to be used as a vehicle for self-examination, for proclamation of the gospel and a testimony to His Second Coming (cf. I Cor. 11:23-32). It certainly should be a time for thanksgiving (eucharist). It is one way a believer may offer a beautiful prayer to the Lord Jesus Christ. Man is so prone to forget! The Lord's supper is an act of gracious mercy by Jesus—not a tyrannical enslavement. If He had not instituted it, we would surely be spiritually poor. What a blessing it is—impressive in its simplicity, grand in its depth. Let us love it and honor it from the heart.

Some religious people want to make the Lord's Supper a *sacrament*—a literal means of obtaining the grace of God. One form of such literalism is called *transubstantiation*. In this particular view, the Supper is called "Mass" and at a specific time in the Mass, when the "host is elevated," a bell rings, and the bread and wine are, allegedly, changed by a miracle into the *actual body* and *actual blood* of Jesus. This literalism, and many differing shades of it, are all based on an unnatural emphasis on the word "*is*" in the statement of Jesus, "This *is* my body . . . this *is* my blood. . . ." Consider the following:

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- a. When Jesus instituted the Supper His physical flesh and blood were still intact in His physical body. None of the apostles were actually chewing His flesh or drinking His blood. No miracle is said to have taken place in the upper room to make the bread and wine into His actual substance.
- b. Even if one could literally eat His flesh and drink His blood, it would *not* be profitable (cf. Jn. 6:63). When Jesus gave His sermon on the Bread of Life (Jn. 6:51ff.), many Jews did think He was talking like a cannibal, but Jesus corrected them precisely and concisely.
- c. Which bread and wine are actually His flesh and blood? If we should put the emphasis on "*This* is my body. . . ." then the very bread and wine which the *apostles* consumed would be the only body and blood Jesus gave.
- d. Jesus used other things in a "representative" way and never intended them to be taken literally: "*I am* the Vine, you *are* the branches . . ." "*I am* the door of the sheep, my *sheep* hear my voice. . . ."

It is faith in the heart of the believer expressing itself in obedient love that makes the bread and wine efficacious—not the ceremony, not the elements and not even the statement, alone, of Christ. If efficaciousness be in the ceremony, or the elements or even in the statement, alone, of Christ, without the faith of the believer, then the Supper provides efficacy for anyone who merely partakes. Paul makes it clear that there is a possibility of participants, with the wrong motives and attitudes, drinking condemnation unto themselves (I Cor. 11:27).

SECTION 2

Care (22:31-38)

31 "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat,³²but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail; and when you have turned again, strengthen your brethren." ³³And he said to him, "Lord, I am ready to go with you to prison and to death." ³⁴He said, "I tell you, Peter, the cock will not crow this day, until you three times deny that you know me."

35 And he said to them, "When I sent you out with no purse or bag or sandals, did you lack anything?" They said, "Nothing." ³⁶He said to them, "But now, let him who has a purse take it, and likewise a bag. And let him who has no sword sell his mantle and buy one.

³⁷For I tell you that this scripture must be fulfilled in me, ‘And he was reckoned with transgressors’; for what is written about me has its fulfillment.” ³⁸And they said, “Look, Lord, here are two swords.” And he said to them, “It is enough.”

22:31-34 Advised: What John’s gospel records (Jn. 13:31-38) precedes Jesus’ warning to Peter here. So, also, do the texts in Matthew 26:31-33 and Mark 14:27-29. These three texts document the overconfident braggadocio of Peter. John’s gospel indicates Jesus begins to talk about His imminent humiliation on the cross in the enigmatic statement, “Little children, yet a little while I am with you. You will seek me; and as I said to the Jews so now I say to you, Where I am going you cannot come.” Then Jesus gave the “new commandment” that all His disciples should love one another with the same kind of love He displayed so the world would know they are His disciples (Jn. 13:34-35). But Peter was not listening intently to that. He was still thinking about “going” wherever Jesus was. He was determined and confident that he could follow Jesus anywhere Jesus would go. In the Matthew and Mark texts Jesus quotes the messianic passage in Zechariah 13:7 about the “Shepherd” being smitten and the “sheep” scattering, as a warning to Peter and the other disciples, that when the time comes for Him to be humiliated, they will all scatter. Peter boastingly says, “Even though they all fall away, because of you, I will never fall away” (Mt. 26:33; Mk. 14:29). Yes, Peter was no coward when it came to physical combat. He later proved that in Gethsemane when he whipped out his sword and took a swipe at one of the mob come to arrest Jesus (Lk. 22:49-50; Jn. 18:10). And our text here in Luke 22:33 documents the fact that Peter was willing to go with Jesus to prison and to death. But there is a great deal of difference in fighting proudly for an earthly ambition than being willing to suffer humiliation and apparent failure for a spiritual goal! None of the disciples wanted to “go” with Him when, later, it appeared that He had failed to set up His kingdom and was willing to be humiliated like a common criminal on a cross. Jesus predicted they would all “fall away” that very night, and the gospel writers used the Greek word *skandalisthesesthe* from which the English word, *scandalized*, originates. The disciples were *not frightened* by the mob which came to arrest Jesus—they would have fought for Him until they died had He only asked them to do so. But they were *scandalized* by His acquiescence, His humility, and His submission to be unjustly slandered and slain with a criminal’s execution—crucifixion. They were *scandalized* by what they considered His failure to be able to carry through with the establishment of the “kingdom” He had so often promised to set up.

So Jesus warns them all. They are all much too confident in the flesh. Jesus said, “Simon, Simon, behold, Satan asked to have you all, that he

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might winnow you like wheat. . . ." The Greek pronoun in 22:31 is plural, showing that Jesus is warning them of Satan's designs on them all. But in 22:32 the pronoun is singular indicating that Jesus is focusing on Peter because he was in special danger, being the most impetuous of them all.

The Greek verb *exetesato* is aorist and intensive. It is translated "demand" in the RSV, however, Vine says the Greek word *punthanomai* is usually translated "demand" (see Mt. 2:4; Acts 21:33). The word *exetesato* means to "examine, seek out by intense inquiry, search out or ask intently." G. Campbell Morgan says, "What He (Jesus) said about this is most arresting. 'Satan hath obtained you by asking.' That is the real force of the Greek verb. It is not merely that Satan had asked; he had obtained them by asking." It certainly is a clear indication that Satan is always under God's sovereign power. Satan can have nothing unless God gives it to him. Satan cannot "winnow" until he is given permission—he must ask. Satan is always "bound" to some degree by the very fact that he is creature and not Creator. There is only one Almighty and that is Jehovah and His Son.

Satan wanted to "winnow" the apostles like the farmer winnows his wheat. When a farmer winnowed his wheat in those days he took some kind of a shoveling instrument and threw the threshed grain roughly into the air, measure by measure, and let the wind blow upon it to separate the good grain from the chaff. It was a purifying process, much like putting gold or silver into a crucible to purify it and test it. Jesus "winnows" men by the truth hoping to sift all impurity and chaff away. Satan asks to "winnow" men by falsehood hoping to sift all the good wheat away so that only the chaff is left.

Jesus encouraged the apostles by saying, "I have prayed for you. . . ." The Greek word translated "prayed" is *edeethen*, from the verb, *deo*, which means, "to bind." In other words, Jesus is saying, "I have asked the Father for you, as your Bondman—your Surety. I have asked the Father that you be bound to me." Jesus prayed that their faith would not fail, especially Peter's faith, for Peter would be the one needed to strengthen and establish his brethren. Jesus knew Peter's faith would not fail, but that it would simply need redirection, turning. The Greek word *epistrepsas* is an aorist participle and might be translated, "having turned . . ." confirm your brethren. Peter believed wholeheartedly in Jesus, but he needed that heart-rooted faith redirected toward the *spiritual* and heavenly goals of Christ. After the resurrection and the pouring out of the Holy Spirit, Peter did direct that deep faith toward spiritual matters and he did strengthen his brethren! Jesus plainly predicts that, in spite of Peter's courageous commitment to die physically for his Lord, before morning comes (before the cock crows) he will *disown* (Gr. *aparnese*) or deny knowing Jesus three times. Peter is not willing to die spiritually for Christ. Jesus knew Peter's heart then—later, Peter saw it too (cf. Lk. 22:54-62).

22:35-38 Armed: This was an evening of amazing statements by the Lord. But the next statement was one of the most amazing ever to fall from the lips of Jesus! He reminded the apostles of the time He had sent them out to do the work of the kingdom without money bags or sandals and they had lacked for nothing (Mt. 10:1-42; Lk. 9:1-6; Mk. 6:7-13). For that job, they had everything which was sufficient. Now, He had another job for them. It was an urgent one. He commanded them, "Let any one of you who has a purse, take it immediately, or a bag—and anyone of you who does not have a sword—take his outer cloak immediately and sell it and buy a sword." The Greek verbs *arato* and *polesato* ("take" and "sell") are aorist imperative and suggest that He commanded them to take and sell immediately.

The mission Jesus had for His apostles here was to protect Him against the mob that He knows had gathered and would want to seize Him for murder on the spot. Jesus knew He was going to die. He accepted the will of God, but He also knew it was God's will that He die in a particular way (crucifixion) and at a particular time. He would not surrender to the violence of a mob. Jesus was no pacifist. He always stood for law and order (see comments on Lk. 20:19-26). Jesus told the apostles to make haste, even if they must sell their coats (so necessary for keeping warm), to purchase some swords to defend Himself and them against the disorderly, anarchistic mob of Jerusalem's rabble, agitated by the murderous priesthood, coming to do violence to Him. Some have suggested that Jesus ordered the apostles to get swords to defend themselves against the persecution that came their way as they went to preach the gospel. They certainly did not carry swords as they later went out to evangelize. But very shortly they faced uncontrolled hostility and mob mentality. He and they were in peril of life and limb from a lawless mob which looked upon Jesus and His followers as "transgressors" and "insurrectionists." They needed some weapons to defend themselves. Two swords were enough for defense, but not enough to start a war. Jesus did not intend them to use swords to fight for His release, (see Jn. 18:10-11). We certainly cannot interpret Jesus' instructions here to be sanctioning vigilante action or armed aggression. Neither does He intend by this to advocate spreading the gospel by the power of the sword (as Mohammed advocated). When the apostles told Jesus they already had two swords among them, He said, "That is enough." One of these two swords appeared in the hand of Peter in the Garden of Gethsemane. He drew it and cut off the right ear of the high priest's servant. There Jesus told Peter his action was wrong (see comments, Lk. 22:50-51).

SECTION 3

Conquest (22:39-46)

39 And he came out, and went, as was his custom, to the Mount of Olives; and the disciples followed him.⁴⁰ And when he came to the place

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he said to them, "Pray that you may not enter into temptation."⁴¹ And he withdrew from them about a stone's throw, and knelt down and prayed, ⁴²"Father, if thou art willing, remove this cup from me; nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done."⁴³ And when he rose from prayer, he came to the disciples and found them sleeping for sorrow, ⁴⁴and he said to them, "Why do you sleep? Rise and pray that you may not enter into temptation."

22:39-43 Acquiescence: Some of the tenderest words ever from the lips of Jesus were spoken between the command to buy swords and His agony in Gethsemane. They are words which show us the heart of God. These words are recorded in the Gospel of John, chapters 14 through 17. The student should read these words, so full of pathos, but so encouraging, as background for the agony in the Garden.

It appears Jesus intended to go out into the night after He spoke the words about His coming back as the Holy Spirit. He concluded that first discourse with the words, "Rise, let us go hence," (Jn. 14:31). But John's record (Jn. 18:1) indicates Jesus did not go into the Garden of Gethsemane until He had finished all the discourses (recorded by John) and had sung a hymn (cf. Mt. 26:30; Mk. 14:26). After this He and His apostles went out across the Kidron valley (Jn. 18:1) where there was a garden, called Gethsemane (Mt. 26:36; Mk. 14:32) on the Mount of Olives (Lk. 22:39).

After telling His apostles to "Sit" in a particular place, He told them to "pray" that they may not enter into temptation because He was going to withdraw from them, "about a stone's throw" away and pray Himself. He probably stationed eight of the apostles near the entrance to the garden as guards, armed with one of the two swords, and then stationed Peter, James and John, within a "stone's throw" from Himself, with one of the swords, as an "inner guard," (cf. Mt. 26:37; Mk. 14:33). Matthew and Mark record that He "began to be greatly distressed and troubled," and said to them, "My soul is very sorrowful even to death; remain here and watch with me," (Mt. 26:37b-38; Mk. 14:33b-34). Just two days earlier (Tuesday) Jesus said almost the same thing (cf. Jn. 12:27-36) as He anticipated the humiliation and agony of the crucifixion.

Luke says Jesus first knelt to pray (22:41); Matthew and Mark indicate the Lord fell down upon the ground (Mt. 26:39; Mk. 14:35). The Semitic religions have long practiced the custom of first kneeling, then bowing the face all the way to the ground in prayer. This is apparently the posture Jesus assumed in this moment of emotion and agony. The prayer of Jesus, "Father if thou art willing, remove this cup from me; nevertheless not my will, but thine be done," is one of the greatest moments in all the Bible! The whole redemptive plan of God was hanging in the balance at that moment. Hebrews 5:7-10 stresses the humanity of Jesus. So does Philippians

2:5-9. Jesus knew all along He was sent to die an atoning death on the cross. He predicted it many times. Yet all the black, horrid weight of sin upon His immaculate soul gripped Him with reality here in the garden as at no other time. If Jesus was human, and the scriptures emphasize He was, He grew in wisdom and understanding just like other human beings (cf. Lk. 2:40, 52). The impact of the cross apparently was something that came upon Him in graduating intensity until it burst upon Him in the garden like a personal holocaust. This does not deny His perfection, it only glorifies it. But in His willing assumption of the limitations of the flesh (cf. Phil. 2:5ff.; Heb. 10:5ff.) He did not come to full realization of the mortifying, oppressive harshness of it until He had to make this ultimate decision. It was no more wrong for the human Jesus to cry for release from His cross than for the human Paul to cry for release from his thorn (cf. II Cor. 12:7-10). God's grace was sufficient for both of them to drink their "cup."

It was predicted that the Messiah would be distressed and troubled (cf. Isa. 49:1ff.; 50:4-9), but victorious over His discouragement by simply committing His cause to Jehovah. This is what Jesus did. He did not distrust the Father or rebel against Him. He cried out in agony, "Nevertheless, not my will but thine be done." The perfect Man's struggle is on record. God bares it for all men to see and have faith. Suppose the Incarnate Son of man had simply said nothing but had, stoically, without a struggle, gone to the cross, merrily, singing and smiling all the way? What help would that have been to fleshly mortals? Either we would doubt His sincerity or scoff at the idea of His telling us how costly it was to do God's will. How then could He preach to others about cost? Or, He would have appeared as a divine being that nothing in the human circumstance could ever touch or bother. We might be awed by His divine strength and power, but we would have difficulty believing He could understand our weaknesses and frailties. There are times when human beings do not want to do the will of God—does Jesus understand that? Yes! Man must have just such a Savior and Intercessor. Jesus did not want to go to the cross. It was there God would make "Him who knew no sin, to become sin on our behalf" (cf. II Cor. 5:21). He did not deserve to be punished for anyone's sin. Justice would demand every sinner die for his own sin (Ezek. 18:5-24; Rom. 3:10f.). But Jesus was sent to the world in human form to conquer sin in the flesh (that is, to live in the flesh without ever sinning), then to die a vicarious death (separation from God) on man's behalf. Here we see Jesus, all alone, working out the great struggle of His own mind and heart in His dread of the will of God for Him at Calvary. Jesus must do it Himself. God will not and cannot decide for Him. It is Jesus' choice alone! Here we see Man as God intended him to be when He created man. Here we see Man choosing the will of God above the greatest temptation to

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selfishness that could be thrown against man. By all that is fair, and meritorious, Jesus could have said, "It is not My cup to drink—I have done nothing that I deserve this." Virgil Hurley wrote, in *Christian Standard*, March 31, 1974:

The humanity of Jesus dreaded the cross . . . Jesus was a man, with a flesh-and-blood body, capable of fear, shock, sorrow, weariness, and weakness. . . . We tend to overlook this. We don't want Him to have any doubts or fears about anything, or we think He might be less than deity. . . . But there is no need to say, "Be perfect, like Christ," unless Christ had the same kind of body we have, susceptible to weaknesses and temptations; unless He lived perfectly only because He relied on God. . . . Jesus proved to be a human being in Gethsemane. . . . He also proved that humanity, devoted to God, can overcome all problems and circumstances. He proved that He, too, had to struggle to do God's will. We can understand this. We always have to struggle to do right. . . . This is the one relationship in which we see Jesus struggle, but it is enough to teach us that we can have inward conflicts without sinning. It is possible to know the right thing, to want to do the right thing, to intend to do the right thing—and still have to fight oneself to do it.

Jesus' struggle is a demonstration in human flesh of agape-love. Agape-love does what is right, what is the will of God, regardless of what one's feelings may urge him to do. Agape-love is a matter of the will, of the power of choice—not a matter of infatuation or emotions. Feelings are controlled by agape-love. This is why Jesus could say, "A new commandment I give you, that you love one another as I have loved you," (Jn. 13:34-35). That kind of love can be commanded. One does not have to wait until he "feels" like it to love in that manner.

There are some ancient manuscripts which omit Luke 22:43-44 (Vaticanus, Alexandrinus and Washingtonius), but some ancient and weightier manuscripts include the verses (Sinaiticus, Bezae, Cyprius, Freerianus, Koridethi and others). The weight of textual evidence seems to favor its inclusion.

Luke alone tells us that an angel came, strengthening Jesus between His first season of prayer and the second and third. Matthew and Mark tell us Jesus prayed three times, using the same words (Mt. 26:42-44; Mk. 14:35-39). Just how the angel "strengthened" Him we are not told. We presume the heavenly being brought words of encouragement and admiration to Jesus directly from the Father as had been done before (cf. Mt. 3:16-17; 4:11; Jn. 12:27-29).

22:44-46 Agony: The Greek word *agonia*, translated "agony" is used by some ancient Greek to mean "anxiety." One commentator seems to

think the word as used by Luke has the idea of "agony of fear." If it was "fear" it was "godly fear" for the inspired comment from Hebrews 5:7-9 indicates that by the use of the Greek word *eulabeias* which means, "reverent awe, fear of God." The Greek word *ektenesteron* is translated "more earnestly," and is from a root word which means "to stretch, to make tense." The idea suggested is that of not relaxing, of being wound up tight, of being totally concentrated—fervency. This was not a matter of half-heartedness. He was pouring out His soul in filling up the cup of God. He was totally oblivious to every other thing or thought. Every fiber of His being was focused on the ultimate act God had sent Him here to do—*become sin for all mankind!* There was no reason He should—there was no justification for it. The question He must settle, once and for all, was, Did He love man enough to do this in spite of how He felt about it or how unjust it was? Yes, He did!

But He did not settle it before He cried tears and sweat great drops of blood. Literally, the Greek text would read, "And became the sweat of Him as clots of blood falling down onto the earth." The Greek word *thromboi*, is the word from which the English word *thrombosis* comes. We quote here from *The Final Week*, by R. C. Foster, pg. 180, pub. Baker:

The word translated "great drops of blood" can be rendered "blood clots." It seems to mean more than that His drops of sweat resembled drops of blood by their size and frequency; otherwise there would be no reason or force in such a comparison. "Bloody sweat" is a good translation. Plummer cites the case of Charles IX of France as reported by Stroud, *The Physical Cause of the Death of Christ* (Commentary on Luke, p. 511): "During the last two weeks of his life (May 1754) his constitution made strong efforts . . . blood gushed from all the outlets of his body, even from the pores of his skin; so that on one occasion he was found bathed in a blood sweat." Even if no such phenomenon were known today, it would not prove that such did not occur in the case of Jesus. His agony was unique. The nobler the person, the more sensitive he is to suffering of this type.

Who, among sinful men, would know the physical results of the agony of a sinless One wrestling with the will of God in such a matter as *becoming sin* when He did not have to?

After this first agony, Jesus arose from the ground, and sought the solace of His apostles. They had so confidently vowed they would stand with Him even if it demanded their death. But when Jesus came to where they had been stationed, He found them asleep. Luke says they were asleep out of (Gr. *apo*, "out of") sorrow (Gr. *lupes*, "grief"). In view of the fact that Jesus, when He was praying, cried with loud cries, agonized until

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bloody clots fell from His body, and tears gushed from His eyes, it seems incredible that the apostles, only a "stone's throw away," could go to sleep. But they had been weighed down with all the sorrow-filled things Jesus had been saying to them about His "going away" and that they "could not go with Him." He had also said much about betrayal, death by crucifixion and the powers of Satan that night. They had been excited at first with the entrance to Jerusalem on Sunday, the power and potential Jesus displayed on Monday and Tuesday when one enemy after another was dispatched in humiliation. The Passover supper excited them to begin making plans as to who would be the greatest in the kingdom. Excitement, depression, stuffed with food, awake for long hours each day and missing many hours of sleep already this week, "the spirit may have been willing, but the flesh was weak" (cf. Mt. 26:41; Mk. 14:38). Indeed, every follower of Jesus needs to take warning against overconfidence. Even the great apostle Paul "buffeted his body and subdued it, lest after preaching to others he himself should be disqualified" (I Cor. 9:24-27). "Therefore let any one who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall" (I Cor. 10:12). The apostles thought that they could stand, but they fell. It is one thing to stay awake to fight with a sword—it is another thing to stay awake to sympathize with someone who needs you.

Jesus told the apostles, "Why do you sleep? Rise and pray that you may not enter into temptation." Jesus then withdrew a second time to pray (Mt. 26:42; Mk. 14:39). When He returned to the apostles, He found them asleep again. This time their eyes were so heavy and they were in such a stupor, "they did not know what to answer Him" (Mk. 14:40). He withdrew a third time and prayed (Mt. 26:44; Mk. 14:41); a third time He returned and found them sleeping. This time He said, "Sleep now (*katheude*, imperative, a command, Mk. 14:41) and take your rest." Now His agony is over. His struggle is resolved. He is ready to face the mob and Calvary. But they will need their sleep. How patient He was, how loving. No rebuke, no haughty criticism, no pouting—just concern for them when they had been totally concerned for themselves. Finally, He awakened them and said, "It is enough; the hour has come; the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us be going; see, my betrayer is at hand" (Mt. 26:45-46; Mk. 14:41-42).

SECTION 4

Condescension (22:47-53)

47 While he was still speaking, there came a crowd, and the man called Judas, one of the twelve, was leading them. He drew near to Jesus to kiss him; ⁴⁸but Jesus said to him, "Judas, would you betray

the Son of man with a kiss?"⁴⁹ And when those who were about him saw what would follow, they said, "Lord, shall we strike with the sword?"⁵⁰ And one of them struck the slave of the high priest and cut off his right ear.⁵¹ But Jesus said, "No more of this!" And he touched his ear and healed him.⁵² Then Jesus said to the chief priests and officers of the temple and elders, who had come out against him, "Have you come out as against a robber, with swords and clubs?⁵³ When I was with you day after day in the temple, you did not lay hands on me. But this is your hour, and the power of darkness."

22:47-51 Conspirator: Jesus knew all along that Judas Iscariot would conspire with His enemies to betray Him in some secret place, away from the multitudes. Three other gospel accounts combine to document the careful preparations by His enemies to arrest Him; (cf. Jn. 18:1-12; Mt. 26:47-56; Mk. 14:43-52);

- a. Soldiers, Temple police and "a great crowd armed with clubs and swords" to take care of any resistance whether by Jesus' disciples or some "wonder" He might perform.
- b. Having soldiers along gives the incident a "seal" of legality.
- c. Torches were carried to light the way and to search the dark corners of the garden.
- d. Cords or chains were brought to bind the prisoner lest He overpower them (a crowd with swords and clubs?).
- e. A guide to direct them to the place where He might be found away from the multitudes in the person of one of His disciples.
- f. A pre-arranged sign of betrayal which hopefully would catch the victim unawares, an embrace!
- g. Priests, officers and elders led a huge mob to make sure that previous failures are not repeated (cf. Jn. 7:32, 40-44; Lk. 22:52).
- h. The High Priest remained in his palace rehearsing bribed witnesses in what they must say to make the false accusations sound legal (cf. Mt. 26:59).

We are also indebted to these other three gospel accounts for a harmonization of the order of events at the arrest. Luke has the briefer account and omits some of the details included by the others. The order of events are:

- a. As Jesus was rousing the apostles from sleep the great crowd entered the garden (Mt. 26:47; Mk. 14:43; Lk. 22:47).
- b. They were being led by Judas Iscariot and searching for Jesus.
- c. Jesus stepped forward asking, "Whom do you seek?" When they said, "Jesus of Nazareth," He replied, "I, even I am He!" (Jn. 18:4-5).

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- d. Taken completely by surprise and half afraid He might do a miracle, those in front stumbled backward and some fell down. The mob was not prepared for such awesome honesty and docility (Jn. 18:5-6). There is no indication in any text that Jesus caused these people to fall miraculously. They went out to slip up on Him, knowing they were being led by a traitor, and they were completely surprised and shamed and so, stumbled backward over one another!
- e. Jesus surrenders Himself and requests that His disciples be allowed to "go away from" (Gr. *hupagein*) the same fate (Jn. 18:8-9). Apparently the mob, at first, honored Jesus' request for the disciples, but later (Mk. 14:51-52) tried to seize one of His followers.
- f. Then Judas confirms Jesus' identity with the pre-arranged sign—the embrace (Gr. *katephilesen*, "effusive embracing" Mt. 26:49; Mk. 14:45), and said, "Hail, Rabbi!" Jesus answered, "Friend (Gr. *hetaire*, "Comrade") why are you here?" Jesus is reminding Judas of the baseness of betraying "comradeship" (Mt. 26:48-50; Mk. 14:44-46; Lk. 22:47-48).
- g. The soldiers came and "threw" (Gr. *epebalon*) hands upon Jesus and seized Him. It was a scene of rough, coarse and violent action.

There has been no warrant presented for Jesus' arrest, sworn to by witnesses. There has been no "inquiring diligently" (cf. Deut. 17:2-5; Lev. 5:1) into the accusations of blasphemy made about Jesus prior to His arrest. All this, instigated by the priests and Pharisees, has been done illegally.

Luke records that Jesus' apostles asked if they should fight with the swords (Gr. *machaire*, "short, dagger-type sword," copied by the Romans from the Greeks) they had. Peter did not ask (Mt. 26:51; Mk. 14:47; Jn. 18:10); but drew his sword and struck a servant of the High Priest, named Malchus, and cut off his right ear. Since Peter was not defending himself or the other apostles, Jesus told him to put up his sword because taking the law into one's own hands (without due process) leads to anarchy. Force is self-destructive. The only kingdom that lasts will be the one of love and persuasion. The "cup" which the Father gave, Jesus "must" drink. Peter's action is at variance with God's will (Jn. 18:11). The world must know that His kingdom is not of this world. If Jesus had wished to defend Himself He could have called thousands of angels (Mt. 26:53). What was happening, Jesus declared, was in perfect agreement with the Old Testament prophets concerning the Messiah (cf. Mt. 26:54; Psa. 22; Isa. 53, et al.).

Luke alone tells us that Jesus healed the servant's severed ear (22:51). The Greek phrase here translated, "No more of this!" might literally be rendered, "Allow ye it thus far. . ." meaning, probably, "Let me reach

far enough to touch his ear." Thus is documented clearly one healing by Jesus where there is a definite absence of faith in Him, and no indication that Jesus tried to elicit faith from the one healed. Jesus could heal even the enemies of the faith. His mercy and compassion probably squelched what might have quickly turned into a bloody riot.

22:52-53 Cowards: Luke notes that the "chief priests" and "captains of the temple" and "elders" were among this illegally operating gang of people. Jesus rebuked and shamed the mob for treating Him as if He were a gangster or highway robber (Gr. *lestēn*, from the root word *leia*, "booty" and different from the word *kleptes*, "thief"). He had always taught peace and had never done anything criminal (in fact He tried to clean the criminals out of the Temple). They had plenty of opportunities to see His conduct and know that He was not a violent man (like Barabbas, Lk. 23:18-19).

They could have arrested Him in the Temple. But they were cowards. They had been afraid to take Him while the multitudes thronged about Him. The multitudes knew He was innocent and they would have attacked these chief priests and elders had they tried it then. Cowards and criminals operate in the darkness. They must have the protection of night and falsehood. God is allowing the power of darkness to have its "hour" and now it has come. Satan, and all those aligned with him, are to be allowed to exercise the ultimate wickedness. But the forces of darkness are to be "cast out" and judged (cf. Jn. 12:31; 16:11).

The apostles all forsook (Gr. *aphentes*, "took off, pardoned, excused") Him and fled (Gr. *ephugon*, "shrank away from with aloofness, shunned") from Him (Mt. 26:56; Mk. 14:50). We repeat, the apostles were not cowards. They wanted to fight for Him. But they were unwilling to share in His humiliation. Awakened by the noise, a "young man" (perhaps John Mark) leaped out of bed, covered only by a bed sheet, and ran after the mob taking Jesus prisoner (Mk. 14:51-52). The mob then tried to take prisoner this follower of Jesus.

SECTION 5

Contribution (22:54-65)

54 Then they seized him and led him away, bringing him into the high priest's house. Peter followed at a distance;⁵⁵ and when they had kindled a fire in the middle of the courtyard and sat down together, Peter sat among them.⁵⁶ Then a maid, seeing him as he sat in the light and gazing at him, said, "This man also was with him."⁵⁷ But he denied it, saying, "Woman, I do not know him."⁵⁸ And a little later some one else saw him and said, "You also are one of them." But Peter said, "Man, I am not."⁵⁹ And after an interval of about an hour still another

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insisted, saying, "Certainly this man also was with him; for he is a Galilean." ⁶⁰But Peter said, "Man, I do not know what you are saying." And immediately, while he was still speaking, the cock crowed. ⁶¹And the Lord turned and looked at Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said to him, "Before the cock crows today, you will deny me three times." ⁶²And he went out and wept bitterly.

63 Now the men who were holding Jesus mocked him and beat him; ⁶⁴they also blindfolded him and asked him, "Prophesy! Who is it that struck you?" ⁶⁵And they spoke many other words against him, reviling him.

22:54-65 and 63-65 Abnegation: They first led Jesus bound to the palace ("house") of the High Priest. There, according to John's gospel (Jn. 18:13-18), Jesus was interrogated by Annas. Annas was father-in-law to Caiaphas who was the official high priest at that time. The "house of Annas" was the most powerful in all Judaism in that era and was detested by the common people. Annas was a Sadducee who had been appointed high priest in A.D. 7, but deposed by the Roman procurator Gratus in A.D. 14. He was able to get five of his sons appointed to the high priesthood, his son-in-law Caiaphas, and one of his grandsons. Annas was the real power behind the office-holder of the high priesthood.

Peter and another disciple (John, see Jn. 18:15-17) followed the mob and actually gained entrance into the courtyard of the palace of the high priest. These apostles were not cringing cowards. In fact, when a maid challenged Peter's identity as he was about to enter the courtyard (Jn. 18:17), Peter's reason for denying his relationship to Jesus may very well have been for the purpose of keeping himself *incognito* hoping to effect a physical rescue of Jesus should the opportunity avail itself. Both Peter and John were manifestly brave enough to sit right down with the soldiers who had just arrested Jesus!

Between the first challenge by the maid at the gate of the courtyard and the subsequent denials of Peter (Lk. 22:56-60), the gospel accounts document the details of Jesus' trials before Annas and Caiaphas (cf. Jn. 18:13-24; Mt. 26:57-68; Mk. 14:53-64). We simply comment here that in both trials, the law of Moses and all the principles of human rights were violated in these "kangaroo courts." Jesus was subjected to interrogation by Annas who was not officially authorized to assume such authority. He was interrogated at night and during a feast, which was illegal. Even the oral "laws" of Judaism (the Mishnah) stated that in capital cases (murder, treason, blasphemy) both trial and verdict must be reached in daytime. In all the interrogation by Annas there were no witnesses and no evidence presented. Even in Jewish law a man was presumed innocent until proven guilty by

two or more witnesses and by evidence. When Jesus was taken before Caiaphas there were bribed witnesses testifying falsely against Him. They contradicted one another so blatantly the high priest had to resort to demanding that Jesus, the defendant, testify against Himself. By all the principles of proper jurisprudence, a mistrial should have been declared and Jesus released. Even Pilate, the Roman procurator, would later see through the hypocrisy and shame of the Jewish proceedings, finding no fault in Jesus (Jn. 18:38; 19:4).

Apparently Luke decided to tell of Peter's anguish and contrition before finishing all the events prior to the moment Jesus "looked" at Peter. Matthew and Mark indicate that after Caiaphas had elicited a verdict of "death" from those gathered in his palace, some of the rabble, along with the "guards" began to spit on Jesus, and, having blindfolded Him, they struck Him, slapped Him and taunted Him, "Prophesy to us, you Christ! Who was it that struck you?" (Mt. 26:67-68; Mk. 14:65). Luke records this inhumane abuse in 22:63-64.

While this beastliness and mockery was going on, Peter was warming himself by the fire in the courtyard (cf. Mt. 26:69; Mk. 14:66-67). Luke says "a maid" saw Peter sitting in the light of the fire, Lk. 22:56. She looked at Peter and said for all to hear, "This man also was with Him." Matthew and Mark say the maid called Jesus, "the Galilean" and "the Nazarene." Peter denied (Gr. *ernesato*, "disowned") saying he did not know Jesus. A little later, someone else saw Peter and recognized him as one of Jesus' disciples, but Peter again denied being one of His followers. After about an hour, a third person said, "Certainly this man (Peter) also was with him (Jesus); for he (Peter) is a Galilean." Matthew and Mark record that Peter began to invoke a curse on himself (Gr. *katanathematizein*, "anathematize himself"), and to promise vehemently (Gr. *omnuein*) or swear that he did not know this man Jesus of whom they spoke. Luke says Peter replied that he did not know what they were talking about. Peter did not use obscene and vulgar language—he did lie and did so under self-imposed oath.

22:61-62 Anguish: Immediately (Gr. *parachrema*, lit., "with the matter or business itself,"), in other words, at the same instant Peter made his third denial, the cock crowed. It was apparently the breaking of day (dawn) when this took place. The next notation of time is "When morning came," or ". . . as soon as it was morning" (Mt. 27:1; Mk. 15:1) when they took Jesus before the Sanhedrin. Roosters crow at the first break of day which is quite some time before the sun rises. Jesus was taken before the Sanhedrin at sunrise on Friday morning—not before because the Sanhedrin could not legally meet to try capital cases before sunrise.

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Why did Peter, who so often had stood with the Lord in the face of opposition and difficult circumstances, deny Him? Why do you and I deny Christ? (a) overconfidence in humanness; (b) disagreeing with God's revealed plan; (c) ill-prepared for the suddenness and subtleness of temptation; (d) repulsed at the humbleness of His way. The only power available to keep from denying Christ is a faith and trust in Him which acknowledges that His revealed will is absolutely true and good regardless of what anyone else may say.

Luke alone records that the Lord "turned and looked at Peter" (22:61). In one understanding and sad look, Jesus penetrated into the very soul of Peter, and Peter "remembered"! The "look" of Jesus revealed to Peter that he had let his Lord down and it broke Peter's heart. This "look" revealed to Peter his overconfidence and self-will was so wrong and it caused him great shame. Mark uses the Greek word *epibalon* to describe Peter's reaction. The KJV translates the word, ". . . and when he thought thereon," he wept. The RSV translates the word ". . . and he broke down" and wept. The RSV is the better translation. The Greek word literally means, ". . . throwing down," or "down-cast." Peter wept "bitterly" (Gr. *pikros*, from a root word meaning, "to cut, to prick," hence, "sharp, pungent"—the word is used in the LXX of a certain "bitter herb"). Out of this experience, Peter found himself out. This soul-searching look of Jesus saved Simon Peter and gave to the world the humble, spiritual giant of an apostle. Two men betrayed Christ—Judas Iscariot and Simon Peter. Two were exposed to themselves; one killed himself, the other wept bitterly and repented. What constituted the difference? The fundamental essence so needful to character-change and spiritual growth—a love for truth and trust in God instead of self. Peter longed for forgiveness; Judas did not. Would you like Jesus to look into your soul and change you? Then let His Word (read and preached), which is able to "pierce" to the division of soul and spirit, able to discern the thoughts and intentions of the heart (Heb. 4:11-13) search your soul. You may weep bitterly, but if you repent and seek forgiveness, He will give it.

SECTION 6

Confirmation (22:66-71)

66 When day came, the assembly of the elders of the people gathered together, both chief priests and scribes; and they led him away to their council, and they said, ⁶⁷"If you are the Christ, tell us." But he said to them, "If I tell you, you will not believe; ⁶⁸and if I ask you, you will not answer. ⁶⁹But from now on the Son of man shall be seated at the right hand of the power of God." ⁷⁰And they all said, "Are you the

Son of God, then?" And he said to them, "You say that I am." ⁷¹ And they said, "What further testimony do we need? We have heard it ourselves from his own lips."

22:66-69 Adjured: Early Friday morning, Jesus was taken, still bound, no doubt, from the palace of the high priest, traditionally quite some distance from the Temple, to the meeting place of the ruling council of the Jews. Luke calls this council "the assembly of the elders of the people . . . both chief priests and scribes. . . ." The Greek word for "elders" is *presbyterion* from which the English word, *presbytery*, or *presbyterian*, comes. The word Luke used in Greek is *sunedrion* and is translated "council," and means literally, "seated together." The Sanhedrin usually met in the portion of the rooms immediately surrounding the "court of Israel," called, Gazith, or Hall of Hewn Stones. This is probably where they took Jesus for "trial" Friday at sunrise. There is no historical evidence for the existence of the Sanhedrin before the Greco-Syrian era. It seems to have been originally known as the *Gerousia* which signifies an aristocratic council of elders presided over by an hereditary high priest. During the Roman rule of procurators in Judea it was composed of 70 officials plus the Roman-appointed high priest and restricted in its power to Judea. This is probably the reason Pilate sent Jesus to Herod when he discovered Jesus was a Galilean. Herod Antipas ruled Galilee. Once Jesus came to Judea, however, the Sanhedrin, under Jewish custom, could indict Him. Its power was annulled after the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. although it continued in "name." According to Josephus, the Sanhedrin was formally ruled by Sadducean high priests in Jesus' time, but really controlled by the Pharisees who had the backing of the people. Seventy-one men sat in a semi-circle in the Hall of Hewn (Polished) Stones exercising not only civil jurisdiction, but also criminal jurisdiction (under the limitations, of course, imposed upon it by the Roman emperor). It was the final appeals court for a Jew. It determined questions of peace and war. It could try high priests, kings (even Herod was afraid to disobey a summons from it) and all citizens. It had the right to pronounce capital punishment until about 30 A.D. After that it could not execute a sentence of death without the confirmation of the Roman procurator. The Sanhedrin could meet any day except Sabbath and holy days. They met from the time of the morning sacrifice until the time of the evening sacrifice. Twenty-three members formed a quorum. Acquittal could be pronounced by a bare majority. It took two more than a majority to secure a guilty verdict. In capital cases, judgment was pronounced on the *same day only* when it was for *acquittal*. If the judgment was "guilty" it had to wait for the next day to be pronounced. Capital cases were never tried on Friday (except in Jesus' case) on account of the above rule forcing a "guilty" verdict to have to be pronounced on Sabbath. These men are so intent upon killing

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Jesus they cast all their own rules and ethics to the winds of hate and greed. They had even decided upon a "guilty" verdict before they met and heard the case (cf. Mt. 27:1). They had decided that at the unofficial and illegal "kangaroo court" held at the home of the high priest the night before (cf. Mt. 26:66; Mk. 14:63-64). Thus far we have documented several blatant illegalities in the arrest, trial and "conviction" of Jesus:

- a. He was arrested without a warrant, by a mob, on a feast day.
- b. He was taken before someone who had no official standing and interrogated, abused and not released when He Himself called for evidence for His arrest.
- c. He was taken before an illegal gathering of Jewish officials (at night), having never been officially accused, and having no witnesses accuse him (contrary to Mosaic Law). This council, meeting illegally, had already pre-determined His guilt and sentence.
- d. Witnesses were bribed to bear false testimony.
- e. Their witness, even bribed and coached, did not agree.
- f. He was adjured to testify against Himself.
- g. All the evidence and claims He made in His own behalf were not introduced into the court proceedings.
- h. He was allegedly arrested for one charge, and, when brought before the illegal meeting of the council, was condemned for another charge.
- i. He was abused, mocked, reviled and physically assaulted in the presence of civil officials charged with law and order and humane treatment of defendants.
- j. Finally, He is brought before the Jewish council, convened on a Friday and given a guilty sentence, which was contrary to legal practice of this council.

There was no warrant for arrest, no charge, no evidence, no testimony, and no legal proceedings. There was no case. Jesus deserved to be dismissed, even on a legal basis. A mistrial should have been declared, notwithstanding the fact that He was innocent!

This morning "trial" before the council was to give the council's murderous machinations a facade of legal correctness. The council demanded, "If you are the Anointed One (Christ), tell us." Standing before Annas (Jn. 18:19-23) Jesus said, "I have spoken openly . . . I have said nothing secretly. . . Ask those who have heard me, what I said to them; they know what I said." Next, before the council in Caiaphas' house, under oath, when asked if He were the Christ, the Son of God, Jesus replied "I am" (Mk. 14:62). Now, with the semblance of official correctness on their side, in

the morning meeting of the council, they demand again that He say He is the Christ.

Jesus' answer is a masterful exposé of their prejudice and hypocrisy. He had already told them plainly, not once, but many times. He had confirmed His claims with many miracles, some of which the men on this council saw with their own eyes. If He told them now again, they would not believe. They had their minds already made up to kill Him for their own reasons. If He questioned them and tried to discuss the matter (which they pretended to want to investigate), they would not answer—because they really did not want to know the truth. He had many confrontations with these men earlier in the week and much earlier in His ministry, but they did not answer His questions then, either, for they had determined to murder Him.

Then Jesus said a very significant thing: "But from now on the Son of man shall be seated at the right hand of the power of God" (22:69). In this statement He is informing them that as the Messiah (Son of man is a messianic term, Dan. 7, etc.). He fully expected to survive the death they had planned for Him and to be seated forever at the right hand of the power of God. Even though they were presently judging Him, He would soon be enthroned as their Judge with all the power of God Almighty given to Him. He had said this earlier, the night before, at Caiaphas' house. There He added the implication that He would be coming "on the clouds of heaven" exercising His judgmental powers against them and their city and their nation (see comments in Lk. 21), at the Roman destruction in 70 A.D.

22:70-71 Adjudged: That statement by Jesus infuriated the council and prompted them to all cry out together, "Are you the Son of God, then?" They wanted it on the official record that this Galilean rabbi had claimed to be not only the Messiah, but that the Messiah was God's Son (that is, God in the flesh). This was the great stumbling block to the Jewish mentality. That God could ever become flesh was an impossibility to them because they judged the concept on the basis of human experience rather than accepting it as a revelation from God by faith (see comments, Lk. 20:41-44). Their interpretation of the "Shema" (Deut. 6:4-9), "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is *one* Lord . . ." was that God could never become two, or three, or four. But the real meaning of that passage is that God can never be double-minded, at variance with Himself. Jesus proved conclusively that He and God were one-minded, one in teaching, one in power, one in action—invariable and in perfect unity. Father and Son, were, One! There was nothing, "two," or "three," about them.

Jesus' answer, as recorded in Greek by Luke, is significant. Literally, Luke writes it, "You are saying that I am being I am." Jesus is saying, "You've got it! I am Jehovah." The statement, "I am being I am," is the

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same as the statement of God in Exodus 3:14, *'ehheyeh 'esher 'ehheyeh*, which in Hebrew means, "I am that I am." Luke put it in Greek, *hoti ego eimi*. Jesus is claiming to be God. The council members knew it. So they shouted, "What further testimony do we need? We have heard it ourselves from his own lips." They did not need any further testimony. There had been more than enough evidence to substantiate Jesus' claim as true. More evidence would not have changed the council member's conclusion, because their conclusion had been made in spite of the evidence they already had.

The Jewish rulers rejected the claims of Jesus to be the Incarnate God. The apostles rejected the teaching of Jesus that their Messiah must die a humiliating death. So these last hours surrounding the Passover, the Lord's Supper, the foot washing, the discourses on the Holy Spirit (John's gospel) and Gethsemane were focused on saving and preparing the (now eleven) apostles to become heralds of the glad tidings throughout the world. Although these apostles deserted Jesus after His arrest, they were not cowards. They did not despise Jesus, nor had they wanted to exploit Him as Judas had. They were simply disillusioned because He had not fulfilled their materialistic fancies concerning the kingdom of God. They would gladly have joined Jesus in a war to bring in by force a kingdom to renovate the then present Jewish system. But it appeared to them that Jesus had become a passive victim of the system. To understand how they thought and felt one has only to read ahead the words of the two disciples on the way to Emmaus (cf. Lk. 24:17-27).

These apostles understood and acknowledged Jesus' way when they saw Him later as the Christ of *glory*, when they acknowledged, almost incredibly, that He had become victor, not victim.

STUDY STIMULATORS:

1. Can Satan take over a person without that person agreeing to it? What do you think about all the modern motion pictures portraying people being innocently victimized by Satan?
2. Why do you think Jesus chose the Passover time to institute what is called, The Lord's Supper? Wouldn't some other time have been equally appropriate?
3. How could these apostles be so insensitive to these hours of pathos in Jesus' personal life as to be arguing among themselves about being greatest? Why hadn't they accepted this matter as having been settled long ago by Jesus?
4. Is the Lord's Supper a "sacrament"? In what way is the Lord's Supper a "participation" for the Christian? Do you really believe Jesus is communing with you every time you partake? Why do you believe that?
5. Are the elements (bread and wine) of the Supper actually "the flesh and blood" of Jesus?

CHAPTER 22

LUKE 22:66-71

6. Peter was ready to die for Jesus—are you? Are you willing to live for Jesus?
7. What do you think of Jesus' command for the disciples to arm themselves with swords? Why didn't they just surrender like Jesus did? Aren't we to follow Him in this example?
8. Can you name, in order, the great discourses of Jesus (in John's gospel alone) spoken between the Last Supper and the Garden of Gethsemane?
9. Is it encouraging to you to know Jesus had to struggle with Himself to fulfill God's will in His life?
10. What does Jesus' prayer in Gethsemane say to us about our "feelings" and what the Lord has revealed about His will for us in the Bible? Have you ever had to do the Lord's will when you didn't "feel" like it? How did you get it done?
11. Did Jesus really "sweat blood"? Have you ever been in deep agony over the conflict in your soul and the Word of God?
12. Were the apostles cowards? Why did they all leave Jesus and flee at the time He was bound and arrested? Why did Peter go into the courtyard of the high priest's house?
13. Why did Peter, so willing to fight for the Lord earlier, deny knowing Jesus? Have you ever denied Him? Why? Is it something to weep bitterly over?
14. How many illegalities were there to these early trials of Jesus? Why didn't one of the council members protest? Would you have?

Chapter Twenty-three (23:1-56)

THE SON OF MAN CRUCIFIED

IDEAS TO INVESTIGATE:

1. Why did the Jews take Jesus to Pilate—why didn't they kill Him themselves (23:1ff.)?
2. Why did Herod want to see “some sign” by Jesus (23:8)?
3. What charges did the Jews make against Jesus to Pilate (23:14)?
4. After Pilate had declared Jesus innocent of the charges, why did he propose to chastise Jesus before releasing Him (23:16)?
5. Why did Pilate finally give in to the demands of the Jews that Jesus be crucified (23:24)?
6. What did Jesus mean in His reference to the “green wood” and the “dry” (23:31)?
7. What does death by crucifixion mean (23:33)?
8. How could Jesus promise the thief on the cross salvation if he had not been baptized (23:43)?
9. How could a Roman centurion “praise God” at the crucifixion of Jesus—which God was he praising (23:47)?
10. What is the day of Preparation? What significance has the note of the day of Jesus' crucifixion (23:54)?

SECTION 1

Indicted (23:1-25)

23 Then the whole company of them arose, and brought him before Pilate. ²And they began to accuse him, saying, “We found this man perverting our nation, and forbidding us to give tribute to Caesar, and saying that he himself is Christ a king.” ³And Pilate asked him, “Are you the King of the Jews?” And he answered him, “You have said so.” ⁴And Pilate said to the chief priests and the multitudes, “I find no crime in this man.” ⁵But they were urgent, saying, “He stirs up the people, teaching throughout all Judea, from Galilee even to this place.”

⁶ When Pilate heard this, he asked whether the man was a Galilean. ⁷And when he learned that he belonged to Herod's jurisdiction, he sent him over to Herod, who was himself in Jerusalem at that time. ⁸When Herod saw Jesus, he was very glad, for he had long desired to see him, because he had heard about him, and he was hoping to see some sign done by him. ⁹So he questioned him at some length; but he made no answer. ¹⁰The chief priests and the scribes stood by vehemently

accusing him.¹¹ And Herod with his soldiers treated him with contempt and mocked him; then, arraying him in gorgeous apparel, he sent him back to Pilate.¹² And Herod and Pilate became friends with each other that very day, for before this they had been at enmity with each other.

13 Pilate then called together the chief priests and the rulers and the people,¹⁴ and said to them, “You brought me this man as one who was perverting the people; and after examining him before you, behold, I did not find this man guilty of any of your charges against him;¹⁵ neither did Herod, for he sent him back to us. Behold, nothing deserving death has been done by him;¹⁶ I will therefore chastise him and release him.”

18 But they all cried out together, “Away with this man and release to us Barabbas”—¹⁹a man who had been thrown into prison for an insurrection started in the city, and for murder.²⁰ Pilate addressed them once more, desiring to release Jesus;²¹ but they shouted out, “Crucify, crucify him!”²² A third time he said to them, “Why, what evil has he done? I have found in him no crime deserving death; I will therefore chastise him and release him.”²³ But they were urgent, demanding with loud cries that he should be crucified. And their voices prevailed.²⁴ So Pilate gave sentence that their demand should be granted.²⁵ He released the man who had been thrown into prison for insurrection and murder, whom they asked for; but Jesus he delivered up to their will.

23:1-5 Pronounced an Insurrectionist: Matthew records the remorse of Judas (Mt. 27:3-10) in advance of its chronological order apparently so as not to interrupt his subsequent narrative of the trial before Pilate. Judas' regret (Gr. *metameletheis*, not *metanao* which means “repent”—see II Cor. 7:8-10 where these two words are shown in contrast) must have taken place after Pilate's ratification of the Sanhedrin's sentence because they had returned to their Hall of Hewn Stones (cf. Mt. 27:3). Most harmonies of the gospel accounts place Matthew's account of what Judas did *before* the Sanhedrin's trip to Pilate's judgment hall. There is a sorrow of the world that produces death—it is a remorse or regret without the decision to change. Repentance, on the other hand, is a sorrow that is climaxed by change. It is significant that the complete innocence of Jesus could have such impact on one who was so devoted to crass materialism. Certainly if the one who betrayed Him testifies to His innocence in such a manner, he was innocent.

Pilate's judgment seat was in the Tower of Antonia, the Roman army barracks just north of and attached to the Temple courts. Pilate's permanent residence was at Caesarea on the sea coast of Palestine. Pontius Pilate, it is alleged, was the son of Marcus Pontius, a general of the Roman army in Spain during Agrippa's war against the Cantabri. He was a friend of the famous royal prince Germanicus and married to Claudia Procula, granddaughter of Augustus the emperor (see our comments on Pilate at Lk. 3:1-6).

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To understand Pilate's behavior at the trial of Jesus, one must be aware of his former dealings with the Jews and the pressures he felt from the terrifying political inquisitions perpetrated by Tiberius Caesar in his later years. Pilate had a relatively "free hand" in ruling Judea, responsible directly to Tiberius. In Pilate was vested the power of life and death for all Roman provincials. He was both final judge and governor. The territory of Judea, being under the direct rule of a Roman procurator, was not allowed to execute capital punishment even on a Jewish citizen (cf. Josephus, *Antiquities* IX:1:1; Jn. 18:31). Pilate was in continual conflict with the Jews. Most procurators were. The Jews would not let them be otherwise. When Pilate first came to Palestine he wanted to abolish all Jewish laws and customs, but found this politically impossible. He brought effigies of Caesar to Jerusalem and set them up at night. When the Jews heard, they came by the hundreds and camped around his palace at Caesarea imploring him to remove them. He refused, called them to his judgment seat, surrounded them with an army in ambush, and threatened to kill them. They refused and threw themselves down on the pavement baring their necks to the sword. Pilate had to retreat. Another time he ordered an aqueduct to be built to improve Jerusalem's water supply and attempted to pay for it with Temple treasure. The Jews rioted, Pilate ordered them slain, but had to face continued hatred of the Jewish populace for having used "sacred" funds. Later, he ordered some Galileans slain as they were in the act of offering sacrifice (cf. Lk. 13:1) for some reason known only to him. This may have been the reason he and Herod Antipas were at odds with one another. Finally, about A.D. 36, a self-appointed prophet asserted that Moses' tabernacle and holy vessels were buried on Mt. Gerizim (in Samaria). A multitude of Jews, attempting to climb the hill and dig these alleged vessels up was slain by order of Pilate. Pilate was then called to Rome, banished, and, tradition says, he committed suicide near Vienne (Gaul). The relations between the Jews and Pilate were very strained. He detested them, and they hated him. The Jews were on the lookout for some cause to petition Tiberius Caesar for the removal of Pilate—and Pilate knew it. Only by yielding to the clamor of the Jews for the death of Jesus (30 A.D.) did he last until 36 A.D.

The *whole company* (Gr. *plethos*) of the Jewish council (not the "multitudes") rose as an official body and took Jesus before Pilate. The Sanhedrin began to *accuse* Jesus (Gr. *kategorein*, from which *categorize* originates) charging Him officially with a capital crime—insurrection. They said they had found (Gr. *heuromen*, to find by investigation) "this fellow" (Gr. *touton*) perverting the Jewish nation. The Greek word *diastrephonta* is translated "perverting" and means literally, "turning through." The accusation is that Jesus has been going throughout the nation subverting, twisting, distorting and corrupting people by the thousands, teaching them to resist Caesar's taxes and claiming himself to be a king. Pilate later uses

the word, *apostrophonta*, (23:14) which literally means, "Turning away" the people. Of course, Jesus was not guilty of the charge of forbidding to pay taxes to Caesar. In fact, He had advocated just the opposite (cf. Lk. 20:21-26). And, He was not guilty of the charge of claiming to be "king" in the way the Jews intended Pilate to understand it.

Pilate did not observe the full legal procedure carried out in the courts at Rome—he was not required to. But he did imitate it to a certain extent. He had full discretion in judgment. No Jew had the right of appeal to Caesar unless he was also a Roman citizen. Roman procurators were usually content for the provincials to govern themselves provided they did nothing to impinge upon the authority of Rome. Any conviction on a capital charge had to be referred to the Roman procurator for ratification or reversal. The Jewish council could condemn but not execute (cf. Josephus, *Ant. IX:1:1*; Jn. 18:31).

When Pilate accepted Jesus as a prisoner he did not do so as a court of appeal. Jesus made no appeal. Pilate was bound to review the proceedings themselves by which Jesus had already been tried and brought before him. And that was all Pilate was bound to do. The Jews would not enter the Praetorium (Gr. *praitorion*, lit. "general's tent" but later, "residence or judgment hall of the provincial governor") because they believed they would be "defiled" (Jn. 18:28). It appears Pilate, by his question about "accusation" (Jn. 18:29) was going to try the case in due form of law and for some undisclosed reason the Jews had not expected him to adopt this attitude (Jn. 18:30). They act as if they had reason to suppose Pilate knew quite well why they had brought Jesus before him. They apparently thought Pilate would just do what they wanted him to do with the prisoner, assuming they had already found Him guilty! Pilate either guessed, or had advanced information, that Jesus' Jewish trial was a farce. We are told later that Pilate knew the Jews had delivered Jesus "for envy" (Mt. 27:16). Pilate evidently saw an opportunity to agitate, belittle and "get back" at these Jewish hypocrites. Realizing Pilate was going to insist on a formal trial, the Jewish rulers began to accuse Jesus of perverting their nation in a tax revolt against Rome and making Himself a king. These accusations were lies. These rulers knew Jesus had never done any of them. They are accusing Him of what was the desire of their own hearts. The Jewish refusal to pay tribute to Caesar a few years after Jesus' death is what precipitated the conflict ending in the destruction of Judaism (70 A.D.).

The charge of sedition made, Pilate's next step was to interrogate the prisoner (Mt. 27:11; Mk. 15:2; Lk. 23:3; Jn. 18:33). He began by asking, "Are you king of the Jews?" John tells us Jesus first answered by asking Pilate, "Do you say this of your own accord, or did others say it to you about me?" (Jn. 18:34). In other words, "In what sense do you use the word 'king'?—as a Roman official trying to decide whether I claim to be

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an earthly king in opposition to Caesar? Or, are you merely repeating a question put into your mouth by my Jewish countrymen who know quite well that I do no^t claim to be that sort of king?" Pilate replies: "I am repeating the charge of your country-men (Jn. 18:35). You and they are Jews. You must know in what sense they use the term king and you will know what they mean better than I—what then have you done, exactly?"

Jesus did not back away. He said, "My kingship is not of this world. . . ." He asserted that He did have a kingship in the sense in which He had often made the claim to Messiahship. But He would have Pilate understand that His kingship was not of this world (cf. Jn. 18:36). He made no claim to any worldly throne as the Jewish council had accused Him. Jesus said, in effect, "I am not guilty of sedition against Rome's political sovereignty."

Pilate again said, "So you are a king?" Luke and the other Synoptics record Jesus' second answer, "You have said so." Modern speech would translate that into, "You have it correct, I am the Messiah of the Jews." John records the additional statement of Jesus here, "For this I was born, and for this I have come into the world, to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears my voice," (Jn. 18:37). Pilate's soliloquy, "What is truth?" was not said flippantly—he was wrestling with his conscience. He had a premonition where this would eventually come to a head. Eventually he would have to decide either to release this idealistic, but innocent, Jewish rabbi and incur the wrath of these detestable rulers, or give in and execute Him. Truth is justice in action. Pilate knew that. Everyone knows that by instinct or conscience. Pilate also knew he had better make no political blunders with Tiberius on the throne in Rome. So, while he was being pressed by his conscience to act justly and truthfully, and with the desire to get "one up" on these antagonists of his, the Jews, and considering the practical consequences of what he would do, he philosophized on, "What is truth?" He probably asked the question to himself as much as to anyone else. The more he reflected on this question and the more he thought about Jesus, the more he was convinced that Jesus was not guilty of sedition or political rebellion against Rome.

Pilate said to the chief priests and the multitudes (Lk. 23:4), "I find no crime in this man." The Greek word *ation* is strictly a legal term meaning, "a crime, a legal ground for punishment." It was clearly a verdict in the judicial sense of "not guilty." Here, the trial should have been over. The highest tribunal in the land at that point had spoken. The prisoner should have been freed.

The verdict of Pilate sent the Jews into a fit of rage. Luke uses the Greek verb *epischuo* which means literally, "intensely strong" to describe their reaction. Mark says at that point the chief priests "accused him of many things" (Mk. 15:3) and Pilate asked him, "Have you no answer to make? See how many charges they bring against you?" But Jesus said nothing more to Pilate not even answering one of the charges. Pilate was amazed.

23:6-12 Perverse Interrogation: Amid the shouting and tumult of the accusations of the Jews against Jesus, Pilate overheard the cry that the prisoner had been teaching in Galilee. This gave Pilate an idea. He inquired whether Jesus were a Galilean. Pilate and Herod (tetrarch of Galilee) had been political enemies for some time. Each had probably tried to court the favor of Rome by slandering the other concerning their administration of assigned portions of Palestine. Pilate did not want to intensify the estrangement and saw at once an opportunity, since this prisoner was a Galilean, to appease Herod and express his contempt for the Jewish rulers in one stroke. He would send the prisoner to Herod as a gesture of political courtesy. Herod was in Jerusalem at that moment having come to observe the Passover.

Herod had been wanting to see Jesus to make sure He was not John the Baptist returned from the dead (cf. Lk. 9:7-9). Herod knew he had blundered in the execution of John the Baptist—the deed had intensified the hatred of the populace against him; it alerted Rome to his ineffectiveness; it bothered his conscience. Rome would depose him, and he knew it, if he should blunder in public favor again like he had with John the Baptist. So Herod intended to play this one “close to his vest.” He would not plunge into this without thinking. Herod besought Jesus to do some “sign” for him. Apparently Herod, too, recognized that Jesus posed no real political threat or he would have found some way to condemn Jesus to execution. Since Jesus presented no political problem, Herod decided he would not make trouble for himself where there was none. All he intended was to amuse himself with some “signs” from the Galilean prophet, talk with Him about His teachings, and send Him back to Pilate. But Jesus would do no signs nor would He talk. Herod was the “pig” and “dog” of Matthew 7:6. He wanted to see the power of the miraculous and hear about Jesus’ teachings only for carnal reasons. He wanted to be amused. He wanted to exploit Jesus, not learn from Him for any righteous reasons.

Luke alone records the details of Herod’s interrogation. Jesus’ refusal to speak to Herod shocks our sensibilities at first. It seems too out of character for Jesus to pass up an opportunity to speak to the worst of sinners about his soul. Apparently Jesus was manifesting for the record that Herod had evidence enough and teaching enough to which he might respond to God’s will should he choose to do so. Jesus’ silence is saying that any further discussion with Herod about spiritual matters would be to no avail until Herod should repent in accordance with the truth he already had. Those who have no love for the truth, but take pleasure in unrighteousness will be allowed to continue in their self-chosen delusion (II Thess. 2:10-12, etc.). Herod is the one person in all the New Testament Jesus refused to talk with. He talked with Pilate and Judas, but not with Herod.

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All the time Herod was trying to get Jesus to answer his questions, the chief priests and the scribes stood by, *vehemently* (Gr. *eutonos*, lit. "well-stretched" or "extending") accusing Jesus. They were raging beyond all boundaries of propriety for "spiritual leaders" and "judges" of the nation. Herod would not allow himself to be trapped into another *faux pas*. He refused to be swayed by the Jewish priests and pronounced no sentence. Herod was the craftier of the two governors. He ridiculed Jesus as a "nobody" and sent Him back to Pilate—perhaps with a written note of conciliation. But Herod did display his perverse and wicked mentality. When Jesus would not satisfy his curiosity with a "sign" or a word, Herod had Him mocked and physically abused. Herod and Pilate became friends (Gr. *philoī*, sometimes translated "lovers") from that very day.

23:13-25 Proclaimed Innocent: Pilate did initially what his conscience told him was right. He called together the chief priests and the rulers of the Jews and the people. He told them he had *examined* (Gr. *anakrinās*, a legal term denoting the preliminary investigation for gathering evidence for the information of the judges) Jesus and *indeed* (Gr. *kai idou*, lit. "and behold") had found Him *not guilty* of *any* of the charges they had brought against Him. *Eight times* Pilate would insist Jesus was innocent:

- a. John 18:38, before He sent Jesus to Herod.
- b. Luke 23:15, immediately after Jesus' return from Herod.
- c. Luke 23:20, again he tried to release Jesus.
- d. Luke 23:22, Pilate said again he found no crime in Jesus, and offered to "chastise" Jesus and release Him.
- e. John 19:4, *after* Pilate had scourged Jesus.
- f. John 19:6, when Pilate said, "Take Him yourselves and crucify him, I find no crime in him."
- g. John 19:12, after Jesus warned Pilate of his sin, Pilate again sought to release Him.
- h. Matthew 27:24, Pilate tried to convince himself he had released Jesus and was free of the criminal actions of the Jews.

Pilate also insisted to the Jews that Herod found Jesus innocent of their charges against Him.

No matter how much Pilate implored, the Jewish rulers were implacable. They would not listen to reason; they threw caution to the wind and shouted down the Roman procurator. Pilate had to find an alternative. Suddenly he thought of the Roman custom of releasing a prisoner (cf. Mt. 27:15; Mk. 15:6; Jn. 18:39) (probably a political prisoner) on festival days in the provinces. Some say Pilate was following the normal practice by offering the Jews the choice between Jesus and Bar-Abbas; not really! Matthew (27:15) says the usual custom was to let the provincials choose "whom they wanted." Pilate offered them only one alternative—Jesus or Bar-Abbas.

Pilate capitulated! All jurisprudence has been abrogated. Pilate did not insist on law. He found a way to compromise, but it was a capitulation of principle. He hoped the Jews had rather have the harmless Jesus loosed than a murdering, thieving insurrectionist and troublemaker like Bar-Abbas. About that time Pilate's attention was diverted by a note from his wife. This gave the Jewish rulers an opportunity to stir up the crowd to cry out for Bar-Abbas, (see Mt. 27:19-20). After reading his wife's note he asked again for their choice—they cried again, "Bar-Abbas!" As for the one who called himself, "Christ," they cried, "Crucify him!" Pilate insisted a third time that Jesus was innocent (Lk. 23:18-22). He then compounded his compromise and offered to chastise Jesus.

The name Bar-Abbas means, "son of the father." That may be, as G. Campbell Morgan notes, a title rather than a name. Peter's name was Simon, but he was titled, Bar-Jonah, "son of Jonah." Matthew and Mark say the insurrectionist the Jews asked to be released in place of Jesus was simply a "man" "called" Bar-Abbas. This "man" may have given himself the title, "son of the father," claiming to be the Messiah. From the time of the Hasmonean family until long past the time of Jesus many false Messiah's arose seducing some of the Jews to follow them. Bar-Abbas was not a common criminal—he was a political radical, a terrorist, who had attempted to overthrow the Roman rule of Palestine. He had been captured and imprisoned and awaited execution. Pilate, cagily, left them with only a choice between a man who had tried, by force, to set up an earthly Jewish kingdom (Bar-Abbas) or a man who claimed to be the only true Messiah but who maintained the kingdom was a spiritual relationship to God by faith and that it could exist in this world even under Roman political rule. The Jews, in demanding the release of Bar-Abbas and the crucifixion of Jesus, manifested their carnal expectations concerning God's kingdom.

Once he compromised justice by not releasing the innocent prisoner, Pilate feels like he must continue in the course at all costs. Actually, Pilate could have freed Jesus at any time. All he had to do was say the word—and suffer the consequences. When his first compromise did not work, he tried another. He offers to "chastise" Jesus and then let him go. He hoped scourging Jesus would placate the emotions of the mob. The Greek word for *chastise* is *paideusas* from the root word which means "child." The word means literally, "instruct, correct, discipline." Sometimes the "chastising" was used to "cross-examine" a defendant to see if he was telling the truth or not. Sometimes it was used as a form of punishment for one found guilty of a crime to "correct" the wrongdoer. Pilate wanted to subject Jesus to this last-resort form of "cross-examination" hoping it would convince the Jews once for all that He was innocent.

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The Roman scourge was a whip with several thongs, each loaded with acorn shaped balls of lead, or sharp pieces of bone or spikes. Stripped of his clothes, his hands tied to a column or a stake, with his back bent, the victim was lashed with these whips by six soldiers. Each stroke cut into the flesh until the veins and sometimes the intestines were laid bare. Often the whips struck the victims face knocking out eyes and teeth. It sometimes ended in death.

John's gospel tells us that at this moment Pilate took Jesus (into the procurator's judgment hall) and scourged him (Jn. 19:1-12). Pilate then brought Jesus out before the Jews and made his famous statement, "Ecce homo" ("Behold, the man"). Three more times here he tried to proclaim Jesus innocent and release Him. The third time the Jews cried out, "If you release this man, you are not Caesar's friend; everyone who makes himself a king sets himself against Caesar" (Jn. 19:12). Luke simply says, "And their voices prevailed" (Lk. 23:23). Indeed, their implied threat to represent Pilate as an enemy of Caesar prevailed over the voice of conscience in Pilate's heart. Up to this point he kept trying every way he knew to release Jesus and placate the Jews at the same time. But now it is Pilate's neck or Jesus'! So at 6 a.m. Friday morning, Nissan 15, 30 A.D., Pilate said to the Jews, "Here is your king" (Jn. 19:14). But the Jews shouted all the more, that he should be crucified. Pilate said, "Shall I crucify your king?" But the chief priests, not being altogether truthful, said, "We have no king but Caesar" (Jn. 19:14). Pilate saw that he was not going to get by without ordering Jesus crucified—the Jewish mob looked like it was about to riot. He took water and washed his hands before the crowd, saying, "I am innocent of this man's blood; see to it yourselves" (Mt. 27:24-25). The mob shouted back, "His blood be on us and on our children" (Mt. 27:25). Pilate gave official (Gr. *epekrine*) "sentence" that their demand (crucifixion) should be granted. He released Bar-Abbas and gave Jesus up to their will (Gr. *thelemati*). Crucifixion was exclusively a Roman method of executing criminals. The Jewish method of execution was death by stoning. Jews considered any one crucified ("hanged on a tree") to be cursed (Gal. 3:13). They specifically wanted Jesus to be crucified. Such an execution would imply innocence on their part in His death and it would infer that Jesus was "cursed." Little did they know that this was God's plan for Jesus—to become a "curse" for the whole world (Gal. 3:13; II Cor. 5:21).

We would expect Jesus to be the central figure at the trials. But the more we look at the narrative, the more we are impressed with the fact that Pilate and the Jewish rulers are the focus—at least on the surface. That is because it is not really Jesus who is on trial—it is mankind represented in Pilate and the Jews. Men are "in the docks," not the Son of man. He is innocent. What they do with Absolute Innocence incriminates them!

SECTION 2

Impaled (23:26-49)

26 And as they led him away, they seized one Simon of Cyrene, who was coming in from the country, and laid on him the cross, to carry it behind Jesus. ²⁷And there followed him a great multitude of the people, and of women who bewailed and lamented him. ²⁸But Jesus turning to them said, ‘Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. ²⁹For behold, the days are coming when they will say, ‘Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bore, and the breasts that never gave suck!’ ³⁰Then they will begin to say to the mountains, ‘Fall on us’; and to the hills, ‘Cover us.’ ³¹For if they do this when the wood is green, what will happen when it is dry?’

32 Two others also, who were criminals, were led away to be put to death with him. ³³And when they came to the place which is called The Skull, there they crucified him, and the criminals, one on the right and one on the left. ³⁴And Jesus said, “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.” And they cast lots to divide his garments. ³⁵And the people stood by, watching; but the rulers scoffed at him, saying, “He saved others; let him save himself, if he is the Christ of God, his Chosen One!” ³⁶The soldiers also mocked him, coming up and offering him vinegar, ³⁷and saying, “If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself!” ³⁸There was also an inscription over him, “This is the King of the Jews.”

39 One of the criminals who were hanged railed at him, saying, “Are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us!” ⁴⁰But the other rebuked him, saying, “Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? ⁴¹And we indeed justly; for we are receiving the due reward of our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong.” ⁴²And he said, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.” ⁴³And he said to him, “Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise.”

44 It was now about the sixth hour, and there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour, ⁴⁵while the sun’s light failed; and the curtain of the temple was torn in two. ⁴⁶Then Jesus, crying with a loud voice, said, “Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit!” And having said this he breathed his last. ⁴⁷Now when the centurion saw what had taken place, he praised God, and said, “Certainly this man was innocent!” ⁴⁸And all the multitudes who assembled to see the sight, when they saw what had taken place, returned home beating their breasts. ⁴⁹And all his acquaintances and the women who had followed him from Galilee stood at a distance and saw these things.

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23:26-31 Empathy: As soon as Pilate turned Jesus over to the Jews with an official edict to have Him crucified, Pilate's soldiers took Jesus into the Praetorium, called the small band on duty together, stripped His clothes off, put a scarlet robe on him, jammed a plaited crown of thorns down on His head, put a reed in His right hand, and kneeled before Him, mocking Him with the words, "Hail, King of the Jews" (Mt. 27:27-31; Mk. 15:16-20). They spat upon Him and struck Him in the head with a reed. Spitting in a person's face indicated gross contempt (Num. 12:14; Deut. 25:9; Job 30:10; Isa. 50:6; Mt. 26:67; 27:30), and when performed by an "unclean" person it produced defilement (Lev. 15:8). This psychologically demeaning and abusive experience, following the mock trials and the scourging, constituted a terrible prelude to the excruciating spiritual struggle and physical torture of the cross.

As they led Him away to be crucified, they seized a bystander by the name of Simon of Cyrene, who was coming in from the country and laid on him the cross to carry it behind Jesus. Jesus probably bore the cross Himself until they neared the gate in the northern wall of the city. It was Roman practice to make the accused bear a 300 pound cross to the place of execution. The accused usually wore a sign announcing his crime. As the accused proceeded through the city bearing his cross he was often flogged by Roman whips and pelted with rocks and other missiles from the gaping multitudes along the way to execution. Apparently Jesus was going too slowly or He may have fallen under its weight. The latter would be more likely when one considers the devastating tortures He endured for hours and hours prior to this experience. The man pressed into service to carry His cross was from North Africa (Cyrene) but he was evidently a Jew (named, Simon). Alexander and Rufus were his sons and probably Christians (Rom. 16:13). Simon may have later become a Christian himself. A scene as this would call forth the natural tender-sympathies of women.

These were women of Judea or Jerusalem—not of Galilee. They were wailing out of pure feminine pity and empathy for Him. The wells of human pity almost always overflow the feminine heart in the presence of suffering. But, almost incredibly, Jesus warned them, "Do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and your children." He was not spitefully slighting their sympathy but He knew that His death was going to result in something even more terrible for Jerusalem and its inhabitants (cf. Lk. 19:41-44; 21:3-32). He is repeating, in capsule form, what He had already announced—the doom of Jerusalem and Judaism. The Romans will crucify Jesus (at the insistence of the Jews) who is The Green Wood but which will *not* be consumed because there is no real crime in Him. The Romans *will* destroy the Jewish nation which is The Dry Wood because it is guilty of killing the Son of God. The time will come to these wailing Jewish women when they will wish they had not borne any children.

Evidently these Jewish women were not believers—only sympathizers. They wailed because they took pity on His fleshly torture. His physical weakness is all they saw, however. They had not seen His deity. May we suggest that we too may be overly inclined to show pity only for the physical torture Jesus had to endure and may miss focusing our contrition in the right place. What we should lament is our sin and the injustice of the perfect Son of man having to be “made sin on our behalf.” If we come to the cross and pity His physical suffering primarily, we have not really grasped the deepest truth concerning His sorrow. As G. Campbell Morgan said: “In the last analysis, Jesus is never an object of pity on the part of sinful, condemned humanity. He is the Object of wonder and of true worship, as He is seen moving in regal splendor towards His Cross.” It is nothing short of awesome that Jesus, in these hours of severest psychological and physical torture, could take time to show concern and deep sympathy for the Jewish nation and warn them once more of the heinousness of their evil. These are the only words He spoke between Pilate’s judgment and the cross!

23:32-34 Execution: Now Luke tells the story of the crucifixion. Along with the other gospel writers he states the facts with incredible brevity! This brevity is for a purpose. Had the gospel writers gone into great detail about the physical aspects of the crucifixion, it would only have intensified the human inclination to concentrate on the physical and miss the spiritual.

They took Jesus out, His only companions were two criminals (Gr. *kakourgos*, lit. “evil-workers”), and proceeded to a place called, “The Skull.” Matthew and Mark call it in Greek, *Golgothan*, (Mt. 27:33; Mk. 15:22) which is a transliteration of the Hebrew word, *guleboleth*. The Hebrew word means, “bald, round, skull-like mound or hill.” Luke calls it in Greek, *kranion*, which is simply, “Skull.” The KJV in Lk. 23:33 follows the Latin Vulgate and translates, *Calvary*. The Latin word *calvaria* is a rendering of the Greek *kranion*, both of which mean “skull.” A fourth century tradition says Golgotha was where the Church of The Holy Sepulchre now stands (within the city walls at Jerusalem). The more likely site is “Gordon’s Calvary” discovered in 1849, a few hundred feet northeast of the Damascus Gate—sometimes known as the “Green Hill” (outside the ancient walls of Jerusalem). Hebrews 13:12 may indicate (unless it is to be interpreted symbolically) Jesus was put to death “outside” the city. The traditional site for Golgotha was for many years associated with the Church of the Holy Sepulchre marking the spot where Constantine, in dismantling a pagan temple, allegedly found the sepulchre where Christ had been buried. Constantine’s mother, Queen Helena built a Christian church there in 326-330 A.D. Recently, Miss Kenyon, an archaeologist, discovered the ruins of an ancient stone quarry near the Church. The quarry could be dated from 700 B.C. to sometime after 70 A.D. Some have theorized,

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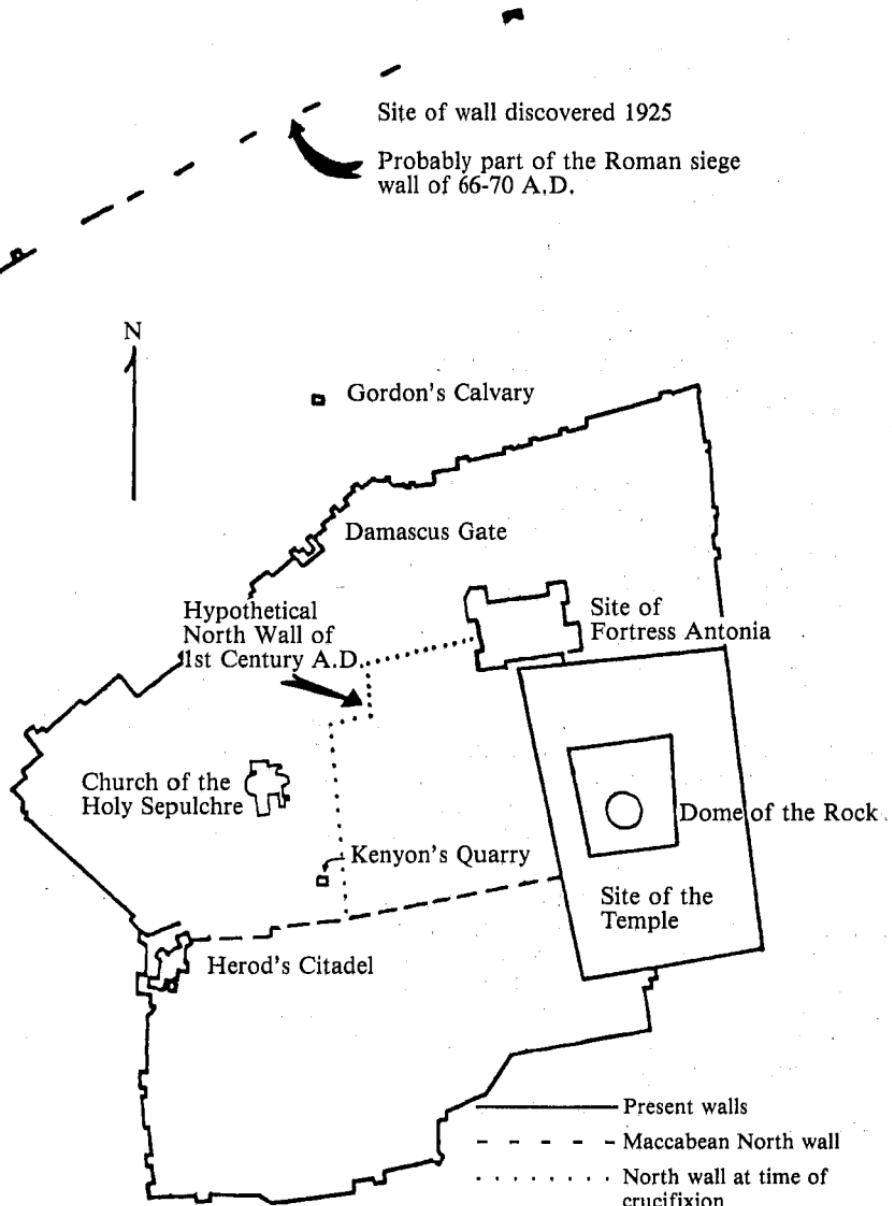
that a quarry would necessarily be outside the ancient city walls and, therefore, the location of ancient Golgotha may very well have been near where the Church is now (see map on page 471). We prefer Gordon's "Calvary" because of the following reasons:

- a. The place of executing, both with the Romans and the Jews was customarily outside the city or camp (Palutius, a Roman general wrote of this in his *Military Glories*, 2:4:6; see also Deut. 17:5; I Ki. 21:13; Acts 7:58; Heb. 13:12; Lev. 24:14; Num. 15:36).
- b. John 19:20 says the place where Jesus was crucified was "near the city . . ." and apparently where passers-by would be able to see clearly the spectacle . . . even those afar off (Mk. 15:40).
- c. Gordon's Calvary is only a few hundred feet northeast of the Damascus Gate.
- d. Prevailing archaeological opinion is that the wall of Jerusalem is now just where it was in Jesus' day.
- e. There is only one place around Jerusalem which has borne, and still bears, the name "Skull Hill," that is Gordon's Calvary.
- f. Gordon's Calvary is near where the Tower of Antonia was (Pilate's judgment hall) and Gordon's Calvary would appear to be the most readily accessible place (away from crowded streets of the city) to carry on the act of crucifixion.

The origin of crucifixion as a method of execution may be traced to the Phoenician, Carthaginian, Persian and Median civilizations. Syrians and Greeks also used this barbaric instrument of death. The Romans adopted the practice because of the unparalleled suffering it inflicted and the spectacle it presented. It was inflicted on vicious criminals and slaves. It proved to be an effective deterrent to widespread crime or sedition. A Roman citizen could choose execution other than by crucifixion. The Jews would impale a *dead* man to signify a curse upon him (Gal. 3:13; Deut. 21:22-23) but never would they execute anyone by crucifixion. Their profound hatred of Jesus is intensely revealed in their cry, "Crucify him!" An article in *Time* magazine, January 18, 1971, brought to light some new and important information on the method of crucifixion by the Romans. In June 1968, thirty-five human skeletons were found by archaeologists in Israel dating back to the first century A.D. near the old Damascus Gate of Jerusalem. Among them the skeleton of a young adult male whose name, Yehohanan (John, in Aramaic), was inscribed on a burial ossuary. The man's heel bones were penetrated by the rusty remains of a seven-inch long nail. The nail had been bent by trying to force it into a knot. The only way to get the body down from its cross was to cut its feet off and remove the entire complex—piece of wood, nail, feet and the rest of the body—for burial.

CHAPTER 23

LUKE 23:26-49



See article "Where Did Jesus Die?" by Wm. Palmer in *Christian Standard* 3-19-78.

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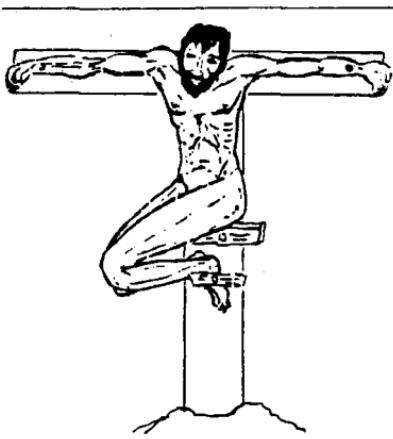
This is the first firm physical evidence of an actual crucifixion in the ancient Mediterranean world. It is very significant because: It tends to revise classical artist's concepts of the manner of crucifixion.

The crucified Jesus is usually shown in an erect position, fastened to the cross by nails driven through hands and feet. To some scholars, that interpretation seemed highly implausible. With the bulk of the victim's weight suspended from his hands, his body would sag; it would become extremely difficult for the breathing muscles to operate, and death would follow rapidly. The delicacy of the hand-structure would also tend to tear and come loose from the nails supporting all the body weight.

According to a reconstruction of Yehohanan's crucifixion by Nicu Haas, anatomist and archaeologist, the nails were driven through the forearms to provide greater support. The victim's legs were twisted to one side and folded up, then a nail and a piece of wood forming a cleat were nailed into his feet near the heel bone. This unnatural position served the purpose of the executioners very well: it would have prolonged both the victim's life and his agony. Incidentally, Yehohanan's skeleton gave evidence that the traditional *coup de grace* (a blow breaking both legs to hasten the victim's death by hemorrhage and shock) had been administered.

Usually an anesthesia was given to the victim of crucifixion, a mixture of wine and myrrh (Gr. *smurna*, a gum-resin from a tree which grows in Yemen—an astringent, antiseptic and stimulant) and also mixed in with this was "gall" (Gr. *chole*, which some think may have been a small dosage of reptilian venom). But Jesus refused to be anesthetized! He was determined to drink the "cup" of God's wrath upon sin to the full, (see Mt. 27:34; Mk. 15:23).

With cold-blooded detachment the Romans would securely fasten the mutilated body to the cross. The ringing hammer against nail, mingled with shrieks of pain (from many other victims) produced a chilling sensation in the bystanders. With a dull thud and more screams from the victim the cross would be dropped into a hole with the victim nailed to the wood, suspended between earth and sky. All that remained was the wait for death. The pain of tearing flesh and muscle cramps became unbearable. Many victims fainted, revived, and fainted again, often, before death. Severe inflammation of open wounds from scourging and the nails occurred.



Exposure to the elements of heat and cold (at night); rain and sunshine; insects and birds pecking at the helpless victims, created agony beyond comprehension. The arteries of the head and stomach were surcharged with blood creating excruciating headaches and stomach cramps plus psychological trauma. Tetanus with attendant convulsions often set in. Death rarely came before thirty-six hours elapsed. Nine days is the longest record of torturous endurance on a cross. This form of execution engulfed the victim not only with pain, but with moral reproach and public humiliation!

It was 9:00 a.m. in the morning (Mark 15:25 calls it "the third hour") when Jesus was nailed to the cross. Placing Jesus between two thieves was intended to humiliate Him further. All manner of derisive, abusive and mocking taunts were probably being hurled at Jesus as He was being nailed to the timbers. There was not one sympathetic, helpful word or touch until the word of one of the thieves. Of course, His mother, other women and John the apostle were there, but they were not allowed near Him. And what was Jesus doing as the Roman soldiers were driving the spikes into His hands and feet? He was praying for the "forgiveness" of His executioners. The Greek verb *aphes* is in the imperfect tense meaning Jesus kept on saying, "Father suffer them (or, wait for them) for they know not what they are doing" Lk. 23:34. This is the *first* "word from the cross"—there will be six others. Luke records three of the seven words from the cross, John records three, and Matthew and Mark record the other one. These words are precious revelations of what was passing through the mind of our Savior in these final hours.

The Greek word *aphes* ("forgive") is the same word used in Mt. 19:14, *aphete*, where it is translated "suffer" or "allow," and in Mt. 27:49 where it is translated "wait." Jesus was *not* asking God for blanket forgiveness here, nor was He praying for the immediate forgiveness of His executioners without their repentance. No where in the scriptures is such a doctrine taught. What Jesus was praying was that God would "wait" with divine forebearance, put off His wrath upon these who were unaware of their heinous crime, until they might have an opportunity to respond to a better knowledge of what they had done. These Roman soldiers were under military orders, carrying out an assignment given them by their superiors. They would assume Jesus to be guilty, unless they were privy to Pilate's statements to the Jews. Paul says if the rulers had known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory (I Cor. 2:8). Peter said the same thing in Acts 3:17. But now God commands all men everywhere to repent—and He has given assurance by raising Jesus from the dead (Acts 17:30-31). After Jesus' resurrection these executioners, and all men everywhere (Col. 1:23), *did* have an opportunity to know for Paul said the gospel was preached to the whole world in his lifetime. At that time they must respond in repentance and obedience to covenant terms (immersion in water) to

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have the forgiveness Christ prayed they *might have opportunity* to choose. No man should take sin lightly. Jesus was not praying for indiscriminate forgiveness or universal salvation. Jesus was pleading for *time* for men who had no opportunity to know of Him as the vindicated, validated Lord of glory.

Pilate had written a placard with the title, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews," (cf. Jn. 19:18-22). It was written in the three main languages spoken or read then, Hebrew, Latin and Greek. Pilate probably did it more to express his contempt and spite toward the Jewish rulers than for anything else. It may have been for the sake of the Roman official records since "blasphemy" of a *foreign* god would not be a capital crime by Roman law. The Jews objected but Pilate said it would remain that way, so the soldiers nailed the sign to the cross. Next, the soldiers divided His garments (plural). He probably wore a turban, a cape or cloak, a girdle or belt, sandals and the under-garments. They divided these among themselves and decided to "cast lots" for the seamless tunic (cf. Jn. 19:23-25) which was of extra-ordinary workmanship. This action was foreknown by God and predicted about a thousand years before it occurred (cf. Psa. 22:18).

23:35-39 Excoriation: The people stood by watching. The extreme cruelty of crucifixion often left those who witnessed it in speechless shock. The Jewish rulers, however, were so filled with raging malice they were impervious to the inhumanity of it all and scoffed as they heaped verbal abuses upon Jesus. Matthew says they cried blasphemous words (Gr. *eblasphemoun*, "derided") at Jesus (Mt. 27:39), wagging their heads or nodding in the direction of the cross as if sneering at this end for the alleged Messiah. Their taunt, "He saved others; let him save himself, if he is the Christ of God, his Chosen One," was a verbal reinforcement of their disbelief and maliciousness. The soldiers "mocked" (Gr. *enepaizon*, "to play like a child, to sport or jest with") Jesus and so did the Jewish rulers (Mt. 27:41; Mk. 15:31). The rulers affirmed their opinion that God wanted nothing to do with Jesus by saying, "He trusts in God; let God deliver him now, if he desires him; for he said, I am the Son of God" (Mt. 27:43). One of the saddest spectacles about Jesus' crucifixion was the conduct of those around the cross. Rather than sit in silence and think or observe, they circled and paced about, spilling out venomous spite and hate like wild animals ("bulls," Psa. 22:12) circling around a wounded and dying prey. Note the admission of the rulers in their statement, "He saved others . . ." that Jesus had done miracles. Perhaps they were remembering the resurrection of Lazarus. Would they have believed had Jesus come down from the cross? Did they believe the miracles they admitted He did? Did they believe after He arose from the dead? Some did (Acts 6:7)!

Matthew and Mark indicate that *both* the thieves started reviling Jesus (Mt. 27:44; Mk. 15:32). Luke mentions the one because the other repented.

Perhaps the thieves felt they were dying before their time and Jesus was the cause—they were undoubtedly crucified with Jesus to bring additional shame upon Him. The one thief said much the same as the rulers, If you are the Christ as you allege, save yourself and us from this excruciating death. His concept of the Christ was carnal too. Luke uses the Greek word *eblasphemei* to describe the thief's railing at Jesus, Lk. 23:39.

23:40-43 Exaltation: Suddenly, one of the thieves began to rebuke the other, "Do you not fear God?" Then he began to confess his sin, ". . . we indeed justly; for we are receiving the due reward of our deeds. . . ." He then added his belief of Jesus' innocence, saying, "but this man has done nothing wrong." He repented, or changed his mind and actions, from that of blaspheming Jesus to asking for His help. The thief believed Jesus was going to somehow fulfill His claim of Messiahship and "come into His kingdom." He surely did not think Jesus would survive death on the cross, so he must have believed in some kind of spiritual or other-worldly kingdom. Jesus would have welcomed such faith in the multitudes to whom He preached so often and so intently. But how could this thief have come to such conclusions about Jesus?

- a. John the Baptist's preaching was *widely* known and heard.
- b. Jesus' teachings and miracles were even *more widely* known and talked about.
- c. If the thief was a Jew, he probably knew something of Old Testament prophecies and rabbinic traditions.
- d. Both these thieves may have heard about the things said at Jesus' trials, or they may have been onlookers at the trials.
- e. The one thief was impressed with the divine behavior of Jesus at His crucifixion like the Roman soldier was.

At that moment Jesus spoke His *second* utterance from the cross: "Today, you will be with me in Paradise" (Lk. 23:43). The word *paradeiso* is the Greek translation of a Persian word which originally meant "garden" or "park." It is found only three times in the New Testament (Lk. 23:43; II Cor. 12:4; Rev. 2:7). There is a Hebrew word, *parades*, in Song of Solomon 4:13; Neh. 2:8; Eccl. 2:5 translated *forest* or *orchard*. In Jewish apocrypha the word is used extensively to denote the place of happiness to be inherited by the righteous. Jesus used the word only once. When Jesus spoke to the thief it was no time to use "theological" words so He used a word of the vernacular, "Paradise." No human being knows the location of Paradise—but wherever Jesus went *that very day*, this thief was with Him, (cf. also Phil. 1:21-23; Lk. 16:19-31). The question arises, how could this thief be saved without being baptized?

- a. Obviously Jesus could give salvation to anyone on any terms He wished so long as His last will and testament had not been probated by His death (cf. Heb. 9:16).

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- b. While a man still lives he has the right to dispense his possessions as he may see fit (cf. Mt. 9:2-8; Lk. 7:48). But after his death, his property must be dispensed according to the terms of his will (cf. Heb. 9:15-28).
- c. Christ's last will and testament was *probated* (from Latin, *probare*; "to prove or establish") on the Day of Pentecost, A.D. 30, when its divine authority was attested to by His resurrection and subsequent miracles of the Holy Spirit. On that day the Lord's executors gave the terms of Christ's will—"repent and be immersed, everyone of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of your sins . . ." (Acts 2:38).
- d. Since that time, everyone who wishes to be in Paradise with Christ must obey the terms of His probated will!

23:44-49 Exclamation: John records the third utterance from the cross: "Woman, behold your son!" (the apostle, John); and, "Behold your mother!" (Jn. 19:25-27). Four women; Mary, Jesus' mother; Mary Magdalene; Mary, mother of James and Joseph (also wife of Clopas); and Salome, mother of the sons of Zebedee (James and John) (also Jesus' aunt); and John, the beloved apostle, stood with the crowd around the cross. It was blazing noon-day (Luke calls it, "the sixth hour"); Jesus had been on the cross three hours. Now is fulfilled Simeon's prediction (Lk. 2:35), "a sword will pierce your (Mary, the mother) heart also." Jesus is Mary's Lord, to be sure, but just now He is her son, the baby who lay upon her breast long ago, the lad of Nazareth, the good, true, holy boy who grew into manhood under her loving eyes. From that hour John the apostle took Mary into his home (Jn. 19:27).

Luke (as well as Matthew and Mark) document for us the fact that there was an unnatural darkness, at midday, over the whole land, which lasted for three hours. Luke, according to the Nestle text, used the Greek word, *eklipontos*, from which the English word *eclipse* comes, to describe this darkness. It was, however, no natural eclipse because it was "full-moon" time (being Passover time). This was a miraculous *darkness* (Gr. *skotos*, the word which all three of the Synoptics use to describe the phenomenon). The darkness probably did not cover the whole earth. One pagan historian, however, does discuss it. Phlegon, Roman astronomer, speaking of the fourteenth year of the reign of Tiberius (29-30 A.D.) says, ". . . the greatest eclipse of the sun that was ever known happened then, for the day was so turned into night that the stars appeared."

The supernatural rending of the veil of the Temple is recorded by Luke (23:45) here. Matthew and Mark (Mt. 27:51; Mk. 15:38) place it at the moment of Christ's death. A careful examination of Luke's account indicates he is making a summarization for he says that the darkness and the rending of the veil took place sometime, and Luke is not intending to

be exact, during the three hours from the sixth hour (noon) until the ninth hour(3:00 p.m.). The veil was apparently torn in two (from top to bottom, Mt. 27:51; Mk. 15:38) at the ninth hour when Jesus "breathed his last" (Mt. 27:50; Mk. 15:37; Lk. 23:46). This incident was very evidently a miracle. It was not caused by the earthquake because Matthew says that happened *after* the veil was rent (Mt. 27:51-53). Edersheim says this veil was 60 ft. long (that is six stories), 30 ft. wide, and the thickness of the palm of a man's hand (about 4-5 inches). It was a composite of 72 equal squares of material and took scores of priests to manipulate. Rabbinical literature tells of two veils in Herod's Temple, one before the doors into the Holy Place, and one before the entrance to the Holy of Holies. The one torn in two was undoubtedly the veil before the Holy of Holies. Hebrews 9:1-28 is clearly a reference to this historic event as symbolizing the spiritual reality that was accomplished at the death of Christ. This miracle, witnessed no doubt by many priests, may be part of the reason many priests became followers of Christ later (see Acts 6:7).

Between noon and 3:00 p.m. Jesus made four more utterances from the cross:

- a. "Eli, Eli, lama sa-bach-thani?" this is Aramaic meaning, "My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (cf. Mt. 27:46; Mk. 15:34).
 1. It is the cry of God, Himself, on the cross coming into identification of Himself with the issue of the sin of man.
 2. God "interposed Himself" with an oath (Heb. 6:17) at the cross, and took man's place.
 3. It is God-man entering into the experience of both at the point where reconciliation must be achieved.
 4. It is the Incarnate God becoming His own *curse* upon sin and sinners (Gal. 3:13).
 5. It is Him who knew no sin, being made to be sin on our behalf (II Cor. 5:21).
 6. It is God being both Just and the Justifier of those who believe in Jesus Christ (Rom. 3:26).
 7. It is the cry of a soul at the uttermost of sin—separating the soul from its Creator. It is the cry of the agony of absolute estrangement from God and all its consequences.
 8. It is the cry of a soul at the uttermost of sorrow—sorrowing over its loss of identity because forsaken by God, the soul is *lost even to itself!*
 9. It is the cry of the soul in the presence of the Divine silence. God withdraws—darkness and silence like no one has ever experienced. It is the silence and withdrawal of Hell!
 10. It is a word from the lips of God. God is expressing from the

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human lips of His Son the fact that the pains and penalties of human sin were His—He took them for us!

11. It was all the cries of all the doubts of all humanity at the seeming injustices and incongruities of life and death. "My God, why? . . ." Is there any answer? Yes! If Calvary raises these questions, Easter morning answers them! *God has not forsaken man!*
- b. "I thirst . . ." (Jn. 19:28)
 1. Six hours of physical and psychological torture more severe than any person has ever known is what Jesus has endured thus far.
 2. His tongue probably was swollen, his lips parched and cracked, and his every nerve crying out for the relief of a cooling drink.
 3. Soldiers say that on the battlefield all other agony of torn bodies and severed limbs is forgotten in the agony that exceeds them all—that of thirst.
 4. And someone gave Him vinegar on a sponge, attached to a reed or a limb off an hyssop shrub.
 5. How could Jesus drink the wine-vinegar now after refusing the wine and myrrh at first. Vinegar alone (soured wine) has no anaesthetic value, and, now He has tasted to the full His primary "cup" and it is now "finished."
 6. He who is the "Water of Life" drank the bitter cup of sin for the whole world there so those who believe and obey Him may drink the sweet wine of victory and forgiveness,
- c. "It is finished" (Jn. 19:30).
 1. He cried it with a loud voice. It was a shout of triumph, not of defeat.
 2. The Greek word is *tetelestai*, a perfect tense verb meaning, "It has been brought to fulfillment with a continuing result of fulfillment." In other words, what Jesus completed on the cross will continue to stand as completed. It will never need to be completed again! (cf. Heb. 9:25-28; 10:12-14, etc.).
 3. The word of God for the redemption of mankind—so far as the Son's part was concerned—was completed.
 4. All the types, symbols and prophecies of the Old Testament pointed to this moment (Dan. 9:24-27; Isa. 53:1-12; Zech. 13:1ff)

—FINISHED!

Luke alone records the last utterance from the cross (Lk. 23:46): "Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit!" The Greek verb, *parathesomai*, is the same word as its noun form in II Tim. 1:12 where Paul says he is persuaded God is able to keep that which he has "committed" to Him. It is a word which means "deposited with" or "entrusted with." Matthew says

Jesus cried again with a loud voice and "yielded up" His spirit. Matthew uses *apheken*, a Greek word which means Jesus "released, delivered, dismissed or yielded up or let go" His spirit. Jesus finished His work in the earthly body given Him (see Heb. 10:5-10), dismissed His spirit, and deposited it, along with His redemptive work, with the Father for safe-keeping and use as the Father intended it. Jesus was in control all the way. He did not release His spirit until "it was finished." He was King. No man took His life—He gave it! Matthew records (Mt. 27:51-53) that when Jesus breathed His last, the veil of the Temple was torn in two from top to bottom; the earth shook, and the rocks were split; the tombs were opened and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised, and coming out of the tombs after His resurrection they went into Jerusalem and appeared to many.

The centurion (Matthew adds, and those assigned with him) and all the multitudes assembled to see the sight of the crucifixion, saw sights they had not expected. Darkness for three hours, earthquake and other phenomena (about which they all heard) were things which flooded their minds with awe and agitated anxiety (Gr. *sphodra*, "violent restlessness"). The women stood at a distance and saw these things (Mt. 27:55-56). The "on-lookers" returned home beating their *chests* (Gr. *stethe*, "chest"—is the word from which the medical term, *stethoscope*, comes). It was customary to display publicly such emotions as grief, anguish, remorse or shock (see Lk. 18:13). It is still a custom of the people of the Middle East. Perhaps some of the on-lookers, having had time to be away from the mobs shouting, "Crucify Him," and having seen His divine behavior, had begun to realize Who this was and what they had done! Luke says the centurion "praised God" and said, "Certainly this man was innocent." Matthew and Mark report that the centurion said, "Truly, this man was a Son of God!" The Greek phrase in Matthew and Mark is *alethos theou huios en houtos*. Literally that would be translated: "Truly, of a god, a son was this man." The absence of the definite article in Greek constitutes, where the context indicates, the equivalent of the indefinite article in English. We believe the context indicates that here. Furthermore, in Greek, the noun with the definite article identifies, but the noun without the definite article *qualifies*. In this phrase we have the noun (*theos*) *without* the definite article. This centurion was a pagan and probably had no concept of monotheism. Romans often made their emperors and other famous men gods and worshiped them. Especially did the Romans idolize stoic endurance of suffering. The centurion was honest-hearted enough to recognize Jesus' innocence (Gr. *dikaios*, "justness"). So what he is exclaiming is that Jesus' behavior, and the signs he had seen, indicated to him Jesus was probably a son of a god! He knew Jesus was different from any other human beings he had ever known.

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John notes that it was the day of Preparation (Gr. *paraskeue*, "Friday"), Mark expressly says "Preparation" was the day before the Sabbath (Mk. 15:42), and the Jews, meticulously careful that no bodies be left hanging after sundown Friday (which would be the beginning of Sabbath), encouraged Pilate to speed up the execution (Jn. 19:31-37). Romans employed a very grim method of hastening execution by crucifixion—they smashed the legs of the victim with an iron hammer. This kept the victim from being able to support himself so his body sagged and cut off his breathing and he suffocated. Also, the utter shock of such treatment usually precipitated immediate death. John emphatically states as an eyewitness that Jesus was dead. John notes that the soldiers did *not* break the legs of Jesus because He was already dead, (Jn. 19:33). One of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear (Jn. 19:34) and at once there came out blood and water. It is very important that we mention John's eyewitnessed testimony here, for if Jesus did not really die, He was not really raised from the dead. In fact, that is the primary thesis of Dr. Hugh Schonfield's celebrated book, *The Passover Plot*. He theorizes that Jesus did not really die on the cross but He had plotted earlier with some of His friends that they should drug Him while He was being crucified. Then when He appeared dead, they should ask for His body and put Him in a tomb so that He might later come out and appear to have risen from the dead. We prefer to accept the testimony of an eyewitness, John, rather than the theory of someone writing two thousand years removed from the actual event.

SECTION 3

Interred (23:50-56)

50 Now there was a man named Joseph from the Jewish town of Arimathea. He was a member of the council, a good and righteous man, ⁵¹who had not consented to their purpose and deed, and he was looking for the kingdom of God. ⁵²This man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. ⁵³Then he took it down and wrapped it in a linen shroud, and laid him in a rock-hewn tomb, where no one had ever yet been laid. ⁵⁴It was the day of Preparation, and the sabbath was beginning. ⁵⁵The women who had come with him from Galilee followed, and saw the tomb, and how his body was laid; ⁵⁶then they returned, and prepared spices and ointments.

On the sabbath they rested according to the commandment.

23:50-52 Compassion: The fact of Jesus' death is of such importance we here summarize the gospel's testimony to it:

- a. "He gave up His spirit" (John 19:30).
- b. The centurion stood facing Him and saw that He had breathed His last (Mk. 15:39).
- c. The soldiers came to break His legs but saw that He was already dead (Jn. 19:33).
- d. John saw Him die and claims to be an eyewitness (Jn. 19:35).
- e. Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus knew He was dead, Mt. 27:57ff., Jn. 19:39, two council members of the Jewish Sanhedrin.
- f. Pilate made sure by questioning the centurion that Jesus was dead (Mk. 15:44-45).
- g. Joseph and Nicodemus put His body in a tomb and rolled a stone against the door (Mt. 27:59ff.; Mk. 15:46ff.; Lk. 23:50ff.; Jn. 19:38ff.)

Joseph's home town, Arimathea, was fifteen miles east of Joppa. Joseph was a rich man, indicated by the fact that he had a tomb hewn for himself out of solid rock. He was a *respected* member of the Sanhedrin (Mk. 15:43) and "was looking for the kingdom of God." This undoubtedly infers he believed the prophets of the Old Testament and believed Jesus was the fulfillment of them. He was a *good* man (Lk. 23:50-51) who had voted contrary to the Sanhedrin's sentence of death for Jesus. G. Campbell Morgan notes: "It is an interesting fact that on that day, when He was dead, those who cared for His final burial were secret disciples. . . . In the hour of crisis, it is often some loud-voiced Peter who says, Though all forget Thee, yet will not I, who fails, while the secret disciples suddenly gain courage." It was Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, men who loved, and men who believed in the coming of the kingdom, who buried Jesus. No hand but the hand of love ever touched the dead body of Jesus. Those who loved and believed Him took Him down from the cross, and put His body in a grave they provided. It was those who loved Him and believed Him who anointed His body with spices. God would not give the body of His Son to the pagans or the Jewish rulers to desecrate further.

23:53-56 Crypt: Just down the slope west from Gordon's Calvary is a garden. At the north end is a rock wall with an opening. One must stoop to enter. There is a runway there where a large round stone might be moved back and forth. Within the opening is a room, nine or ten feet square. There is a ledge on the east side of the room just large enough to hold a human body for burial. Many scholars believe this is the actual tomb of Joseph where Jesus' body was interred. It does seem to fit every specification of the scriptural account. Note the following:

- a. He was buried in a tomb no one else occupied ever before.
- b. One hundred *litras* (80 lbs. U.S.) of burial spices were used.
- c. There was no time for hired mourners or the other customary rites of Jewish burial at the home.

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- d. The body was wrapped limb by limb with spices sprinkled profusely upon each bandage.
- e. The body was not carried on a bier to the grave as was customary.
- f. Everything was hurried and without ceremony.
- g. It was in a rich man's tomb (fulfillment of Isa. 53:9).
- h. His body did not see corruption (decay) according to prophecy also (Psa. 16:10).

Because it was late Friday evening, and the sabbath began at sundown, the women (those who had come with Jesus from Galilee) simply followed Joseph and Nicodemus to the tomb to make certain they could find it after the Sabbath to anoint it with spices. Luke says, "they saw the tomb, and how his body was laid . . ." then they returned to the city to prepare spices and ointments. This is significant. There have been many theories attempting to explain away the testimony of the empty tomb where the dead body of Jesus had been interred. These are attempts to deny the bodily resurrection of Jesus. One of those theories is that the women got lost on their return to the garden, after sabbath, and came to a tomb which was empty, but it was not the tomb where Jesus had been buried. The information Luke recorded was that the women took dangerous but exacting measures to be certain they would *not* return to the wrong tomb. In light of Luke's record which, according to his own preface (Lk. 1:1-4), was written only after the most extensive accumulation of eyewitnessed testimony, it seems ludicrous to try to explain the empty tomb by theorizing these women went to the wrong tomb!

Now the enemies of God have done their utmost. The pretended "ruler of this world" thinks he has "devoured the man-child" (cf. Rev. 12:1-6). If God is to be dethroned, this will be the hour, for His Son has been put to death and buried. The greatest power-confrontation of all time has come to a head. The battle has been fought! But who is victor? Not Satan. He has, in fact, sealed his own doom. He has suffered final and absolute defeat. He has been "cast out" (Jn. 12:31), "destroyed" (Heb. 2:14-15), "judged" (Jn. 16:11), and "bound" (Mt. 12:29, etc.). Death has no power over Jesus (Jn. 14:30)—it cannot hold Him! His followers will go to the tomb to see Him but they will be told they are seeking the "living" among the dead! God is victor! He took the worst the devil could ever do to both God and man, the death of the Son of God and man, and made it the justification of both God and man!

We cannot here continue commenting on the *meaning* of the death of Christ. That remains for the epistles of the New Testament. The purpose of the gospel records was simply to document the facts of His death as written testimonies of eyewitnesses. It is nothing short of supernatural that those who wrote these gospel accounts, some twenty years after the events, did not indulge in expansive interpretations of the facts they recorded.

It should be considered proof that the gospels were written under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, that they do not regale the reader with interpretations of events as most human reporters do.

STUDY STIMULATORS:

1. What kind of pressures would Pilate be under that would make him want to appease a vanquished Jewish hierarchy? Didn't Pilate have freedom to override their demands if he wished? Is Pilate the only political official ever to feel this kind of pressure? How should we expect politicians to react under such pressure? How does God expect them to react?
2. Does it appear to you that Pilate began his review of the charges against Jesus with honesty and justice in mind? Or, maybe he thought he could use this incident to torment his Jewish tormentors? What do you think? In light of unchristian human behavior, what do you think of Pilate?
3. Why didn't Jesus talk to Herod? Does it bother you that Jesus did not even try to get Herod to repent? May we use Jesus' conduct as an example to follow in certain confrontations we may have?
4. What does the demand of the Jews to have Bar-Abbas released instead of Jesus show about their purposes and relation to God's Word?
5. What does the scripture say about those who violate their own conscience? (cf. Romans 2:12-16; 14:1-23; I Cor. 10:23-30). Is that what Pilate did?
6. What is your reaction to Jesus' compassionate warning to the women of Jerusalem as He, Himself, was being abused on the way to Calvary? Could you be like Him in such circumstances? Are you supposed to be?
7. What do you think of the method of execution by crucifixion? Do you think it had a deterrent-value? Is execution necessarily supposed to be humane? Is crucifixion any less humane than Jewish death by stoning?
8. When Jesus prayed for the forgiveness of those crucifying Him, did God answer His prayer? When? How?
9. Where is "Paradise"? When did Jesus go there? Is that where all believers go after death?
10. How could a "secret" disciple of Jesus like Joseph of Arimathea get such courage to ask Pilate for the body of Jesus and bury it in his own tomb? What had he done at the Jewish trials of Jesus? Why? Should Joseph have done more in Jesus' defense?
11. What is significant about all the documented details of Jesus' death and burial? Did Jesus really die? What if He did not?
12. What about the importance of the women *seeing* where He was buried?

Chapter Twenty-four (24:1-53)

THE SON OF MAN RISEN FROM THE DEAD

IDEAS TO INVESTIGATE:

1. Is there an alternative explanation for the empty tomb of Jesus besides the actual, bodily resurrection of Jesus from death?
2. Why did the angels have to remind the women of His prediction of resurrection?
3. Why did the apostles look upon the women's report as "an idle tale"?
4. Why didn't the two disciples on the road to Emmaus recognize Jesus?
5. Since the women and others had already reported an empty tomb, why were these two disciples so despondent?
6. Where do the Old Testament prophets write about the Messiah's death and resurrection? Why didn't the Jews believe what the prophets wrote?
7. How were the eyes of the two disciples "opened"?
8. When did the Lord appear to Simon?
9. Why were the disciples startled when Jesus appeared among them?
10. How is it possible to "disbelieve for joy"?
11. What was the promise of the Father yet to come upon the apostles?

SECTION 1

The Empty Crypt (24:1-12)

24 But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they went to the tomb, taking the spices which they had prepared. ²And they found the stone rolled away from the tomb, ³but when they went in they did not find the body. ⁴While they were perplexed about this, behold, two men stood by them in dazzling apparel; ⁵and as they were frightened and bowed their faces to the ground, the men said to them, "Why do you seek the living among the dead? ⁶Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, ⁷that the Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and on the third day rise." ⁸And they remembered his words, ⁹and returning from the tomb they told all this to the eleven and to all the rest. ¹⁰Now it was Mary Magdalene and Joanna and Mary the mother of James and the other women with them who told this to the apostles; ¹¹but these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them.

24:1-7 Dramatic Decree: More authentic detail is available on the death and burial of Jesus than of any other great man of the ancient world. There was no doubt in the minds of both His associates and His enemies that He had died and was buried in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea. And the women who had watched where He had been buried came, very

early, on the first day of the week (Sunday), after the Sabbath was over, to anoint His body in the tomb. We now summarize a chronological order of the preliminary "watching" of the tomb by the women:

- a. Friday afternoon, "the sabbath was beginning" Lk. 23:54 Mary Magdalene and Mary, mother of Joses saw the tomb and "how His body was laid."
- b. Friday evening Lk. 23:56a They returned and prepared spices for embalming His body
- c. Friday after sunset and up to sunrise Saturday, Lk. 23:56b They rested "according to the commandment"
- d. Saturday before noon Mt. 27:62-66 Jewish rulers and soldiers secured the tomb—sealed it and set a guard.
- e. Saturday night, before sunset, Mt. 28:1 Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb (Wieand says the Greek word *opse*, (translated "after" in RSV), may be translated "late," (Arndt and Gingrich say the same).
- f. Saturday, after sunset Mk. 16:1 They purchased additional spices (after sunset on Saturday, sabbath restrictions are lifted since it is no longer the Sabbath). They went home for the night (not definitely stated but necessarily implied).
- g. Sunday, before sunup Lk. 24:1; Mk. 16:2; Jn. 20:1 Before sunup the women started for the tomb. Lk. 24:1 reads literally, "And on the one of the week, deeply early (very early) in the morning." Mk. 16:2 reads, "and extremely early." Jn. 20:1 reads, "early darkness."
- h. Sunday morning, sunrise Mt. 28:2-4 At sunrise a great earthquake; Jesus raised from the dead; an angel rolled back the stone; the soldiers fell down as if dead, then they ran off to report to their superiors.
- i. Sunday morning, just after sunrise, Mk. 16:2; Lk. 24:1; Jn. 20:1a John 20:1 says, "while . . . still dark" but the Greek verb *erchomai* may be translated either "came" or "went."

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The women *arrived* at the tomb.

j. Sunday morning, Mk. 16:3-4,

Lk. 24:2; Jn. 20:1b

k. Sunday morning, still early,

John 20:2

l. Sunday morning, Mt. 28:5-8

m. Sunday morning, Mk. 16:5-8

Lk. 24:3-8

Wieand suggests *switching* John's usage to "went" (while still dark) and Mark's usage to "came" (when the sun had risen). The original authors, for all we know, may very well have intended such usage. And, after all, it is a matter of English translation as to which word should be used—and that should be determined according to parallels and harmonization.

The women saw the tomb already opened.

Mary Magdalene is shocked; believing someone has taken Jesus' body from the tomb, she runs to tell Peter and John. John 20:1a mentions only Mary Magdalene as going to the tomb. This is *not* a contradiction since John does not say she was the *only* woman who went. John mentions her specifically because she is the one who ran to him and Peter with the report of the empty tomb. The Synoptic gospels were already in existence when John wrote (95 A.D.) so he simply supplies material the Synoptics omitted.

An angel appears to the other women; calms their fear; announces Jesus' resurrection from the dead; invites them into the tomb to see for themselves; tells them, after they have seen, to go tell His disciples they will see Him in Galilee.

They entered the tomb and another angel was there. They looked at the empty burial clothes, were exceedingly frightened, and hurried away with fear, and yet with great expectancy of joy. There appears to be some lapse of time before they told the disciples. They were afraid to tell

n. Sunday morning, Lk. 24:9-12
Jn. 20:3-10

anyone at first (cf. Lk. 24:8 as it qualifies Mt. 28:8). This lapse of time would explain how Mary Magdalene could run away to tell Peter and John, run back to the tomb with them, have Jesus appear to her there, and still be found with the group of women later when Jesus appeared to the group. (This will be discussed further in the chronology of appearances).

Peter and John, having been told by Mary that Jesus' body was missing from the tomb, ran to the tomb. Peter entered, found the facial cloth rolled up neatly apart from the rest of the burial wrappings. John then entered, saw, and confirmed for himself that the body was gone. As yet they are *not* convinced Jesus is raised from the dead.

Luke reports the women found the stone rolled away upon their arrival at the tomb. It is probable that Christ arose from the dead at the moment the earthquake occurred (Mt. 28:2). Often in Scripture the earthquake signifies a divine visitation (Mt. 27:51, 54). But we cannot be dogmatic about the exact time of His resurrection. No one saw it or recorded it. The angel came to roll away the stone, not to allow Jesus to leave the tomb, but to let men and women see with their own eyes the empty tomb. Jesus did not need the stone rolled away or doors opened for Him to leave or enter any place (Jn. 20:19) after His resurrection. There was no need for anyone to be present at the exact moment of His resurrection, either, since He appeared afterward in His glorified body to many eyewitnesses. That is the proof of His resurrection.

The women entered the tomb and found the body of Jesus gone. They had seen, themselves, His body placed in that very tomb by Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus. They were perplexed; Luke uses the Greek word *diaporeisthai*, which means literally, they were "searching for a way through" their confusion. They could think of no explanation at this moment for the body being gone. There are really only four possible explanations: (a) Jesus did not die and was not buried; that has already been disavowed by enemies and associates alike, if the records are authentic; (b) the women went to the wrong tomb; but the gospel accounts document

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the meticulous efforts of the women to determine exactly where He was interred, even to going to the tomb at the moment of burial and returning once again; (c) either friends or enemies stole His body and placed it elsewhere; we will deal with the allegation that His friends stole His body, later, but most assuredly the enemies of Jesus were *not* interested in seeing His body stolen from that tomb and letting anyone get the idea that He had risen from the dead—they took every human precaution they could to preclude that possibility; (d) He actually arose from the dead, in His crucified and buried body, and came forth from the tomb by His glorified, supernatural power, as the gospel accounts declare. If the gospel accounts are authentic and credible (and they certainly are that), the last possibility is the only one acceptable.

While the women were in a state of confusion, two men (Gr. *andres*) stood beside them. These “men” were angels (Mt. 28:2, 5). Luke describes them as clothed in “dazzling apparel” (Gr. *astraptousais*, the same word used to describe the appearance of Jesus at His transfiguration, Lk. 9:30). These were heavenly beings who looked like men. Matthew and Mark mention only one—they do not say there is just one. The women were terrified. This is the normal human reaction when confronted by angels (cf. Dan. 10:7-9; Rev. 22:8-9). But these men said to the women, “Why do you seek the living among the dead?” More literally, the angels said, “Why are you seeking the living *one* among the dead ones?” The phrase “he is not here, but has risen” should, we think, be a part of the text. Most of the earliest and most significant ancient manuscripts contain the phrase. Only a few manuscripts omit it. The women still did not understand. Finally, the angels said, “Remember how He told you, while he was still in Galilee, that the Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, *and on the third day rise.*” Jesus made this prediction a number of times in Galilee (Mt. 16:21; 17:23) and in Judea (Mt. 20:19). When Jesus had said it before, those who heard it, because of prejudice and because of its non-experiential nature, did not let it register. They could not conceive of such a thing so they did not believe it. But now, the drama of the angelic presence and the empty tomb and the message of the angels force them to remember and accept the predictions of Jesus as the possible answer to the empty tomb.

24:8-12 Doubting Disciples: Jesus never referred to His cross without declaring also that He would rise again. The angels remembered; men and women did not! Human beings heard, but they did not comprehend—because they did not believe. It was not until Jesus appeared, bodily—in the same body laid in the tomb with nail prints and all—that His own followers believed:

- a. Sunday morning (John 20:11-17): *First appearance:* All the women, except Mary Magdalene (who had gone to tell Peter and John), left

the tomb and started back to Jerusalem. Peter and John, and probably Mary Magdalene following them, must have gone to the tomb by another way. Mary Magdalene stood near the tomb weeping, after Peter and John had returned to the city. Jesus appeared, there in the garden, some distance from Mary. In the early morning she could not distinguish who the person was. Jesus spoke her name and she recognized Him and grabbed Him. Jesus informs her that she cannot keep Him on earth any more—she must prepare herself for His return to Heaven.

b. Sunday (Mt. 28:9-10; Lk. 24:9-11; Mk. 16:10-11; Jn. 20:18): *Second appearance:* Mary Magdalene apparently caught up with the group of women as they were returning to the city. Jesus then appeared to the whole group of women, Mary Magdalene included (Lk. 24:10), as they were on their way to tell the disciples gathered in a secret place in Jerusalem. The women finally arrived (Mary Magdalene appears to be the spokeswoman) and told the apostles they had seen the risen Lord. Mark tells us the apostles were mourning and weeping (Mk. 16:10). When the women (led by Mary Magdalene, John 20:18) told the apostles their story, the apostles would not believe (Mk. 16:11) and thought that the women were making up some fairy story! (Gr. *leros*, a medical term describing giddiness, delirium or hysteria). These apostles were hard-headed, logically-thinking men who insisted on a world of reality. That is the way they had lived their whole lives as fisherman and tax-collectors. They knew Jesus had died; they knew He had been buried; they would not believe He was alive again unless they could see Him up, walking and talking and eating in that same body (as they had seen Lazarus, earlier).

Sometime that same Sunday the guards who fled from the tomb reported to the officials of the Sanhedrin *all* that had taken place (cf. Mt. 28:11-15). What the “*all*” includes we may only speculate. We wonder if the guards knew more about the resurrection than that an earthquake had taken place. We wonder what they thought about the stone being rolled away—perhaps they, too, saw the angel. They knew enough that they had to be bribed. Not only so, but a story was fabricated for them in order to *explain away* the truth. The “stolen body theory” is as ludicrous now as it was then!

c. Sunday (I Cor. 15:5): *Third appearance:* Jesus appeared to Peter alone somewhere in Jerusalem. The two disciples on the way to Emmaus mention it (Lk. 24:34) as having already happened when Jesus walks with them. Peter was the acknowledged “leader” of the apostolic band. Jesus had already exhorted Peter to strengthen his brethren when he should repent of his denial. Peter would welcome special indication from Jesus that he had been forgiven and was still trusted to be an apostle. Peter would be one of the first to proclaim the resurrection (Acts 2) and one of the first to defend it before Jewish enemies—he must be *certain* of it!

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SECTION 2

The Emmaus Conversation (24:13-32)

13 That very day two of them were going to a village named Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem,¹⁴ and talking with each other about all these things that had happened.¹⁵ While they were talking and discussing together, Jesus himself drew near and went with them.¹⁶ But their eyes were kept from recognizing him.¹⁷ And he said to them, "What is this conversation which you are holding with each other as you walk?" And they stood still, looking sad.¹⁸ Then one of them, named Cleopas, answered him, "Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?"¹⁹ And he said to them, "What things?" And they said to him, "Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people,²⁰ and how our chief priests and rulers delivered him up to be condemned to death, and crucified him.²¹ But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since this happened.²² Moreover, some women of our company amazed us. They were at the tomb early in the morning²³ and did not find his body; and they came back saying that they had even seen a vision of angels, who said that he was alive.²⁴ Some of those who were with us went to the tomb, and found it just as the women had said; but him they did not see."²⁵ And he said to them, "O foolish men, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken!²⁶ Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?"²⁷ And beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.

28 So they drew near to the village to which they were going. He appeared to be going further,²⁹ but they constrained him, saying, "Stay with us, for it is toward evening and the day is now far spent." So he went in to stay with them.³⁰ When he was at table with them, he took the bread and blessed, and broke it, and gave it to them.³¹ And their eyes were opened and they recognized him; and he vanished out of their sight.³² They said to each other, "Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the scriptures?"

24:13-24 Dark Despondency: Luke gives a very condensed account of the first day (Sunday) of the resurrection. He mentions the empty tomb, two appearances of Jesus, and then, omitting all the intervening thirty-nine days, describes the ascension (Lk. 24:44-53; Acts 1:6-11). But Luke's account is of great significance. He was a physician. All his scientific

training would have prejudiced him against a bodily resurrection. The two appearances he records are uniquely suited to supply evidence to this physician (and any other scientist) of the reality of a phenomenon outside his human experience! Luke traced all things accurately. He has the facts. Here they are:

d. Sunday afternoon ("that very day . . .") (Mk. 16:12; Lk. 24:13-35): *Fourth appearance:* Two disciples of Jesus had left Jerusalem and were headed for the little village of Emmaus. Emmaus may be derived from an Aramaic name meaning, "bath" or "wells"; it was about seven miles northwest of Jerusalem. One of the disciples was named *Cleopas*. Lightfoot believes Cleopas to be Alpheus, the father of the apostle James (cf. Mt. 10:3). It is not the same person as Clopas, the husband of Mary (Jn. 19:25), in Greek the two names are spelled differently—*Kleopas* and *Klopa*, respectively. Some think the "other" disciple might have been Luke, but that is highly improbable; other commentators think it may have been the wife of *Cleopas*. We do not know.

These two disciples were walking along the dusty road sermonizing to one another. Luke uses the Greek word *homilein* to describe their conversation—it is the word from which we get the English, *homiletics*, or sermonizing. They were analyzing all the things that had happened in Jerusalem concerning Jesus the last few days. The Greek word *suzetein* is translated "discussing" in verse 15, and means "debate, argue, reason, dispute." This was not a casual conversation! They were so engrossed in their discussion they did not even notice when Jesus joined them in their journey, nor did they notice who He was. There was nothing miraculous about their "eyes being kept from recognizing Him." Jesus certainly had no purpose in keeping them from knowing who He was—in fact, His purpose was to *get* them to recognize Him. They were depressed. They had no more anticipation of a bodily resurrection than the apostles back in Jerusalem. Jesus asked about their discussion. The Greek literally reads, "What are these *words* (*logoi*) which you are *throwing* back and forth (*antiballete*) toward one another?" It was an animated conversation! They stopped and looked out of their eyes sadly (Gr. *skuthropos*)—probably looking toward the ground. Perhaps without even looking up, Cleopas answered, "Are you the only *stranger* (Gr. *paroikeis*, lit. "one who dwells parallel to; or, alien") to Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?" They thought it incredible that anyone, even an outsider or a visitor, should not have heard something of what had transpired recently. So they related to this fellow traveler all the information they had, adding their interpretation. Their information was:

- a. Jesus of Nazareth was a prophet; mighty in deed and word before God and all the people.
- b. The chief priests and rulers delivered Jesus up to death by crucifixion.

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- c. Three days had gone by since that had taken place.
- d. Some women disciples of Jesus, gone to the tomb, found the body of Jesus gone, reported back that angels told them He was alive.
- e. Other disciples they knew personally had gone to the tomb and found it just as the women had said—empty.
- f. But no one had seen Jesus.

Luke's Greek is interesting as he reports their statement: "*But* (Gr. *de*) we were hoping that He is the one going to redeem Israel." "*Yes, and* (Gr. *alla ge*) besides all this, it is now the third day since this happened." "*Moreover* (Gr. *alla kai*) some women amazed us. . . ." These hesitating, vacillating words imply emotional confusion. "We wanted to believe . . . but then He has been dead three days . . . but on the other hand we have this incredible story by the women. . . ." They had seen His mighty deeds and heard Him prophesy; they knew what the Old Testament prophets had written about the Messiah; they had heard the accounts of the empty tomb and the angelic announcements; still they did not believe! One of the greatest proofs of the resurrection of Jesus is that none of His followers expected it to happen!

24:25-32 Delirious Delight: Jesus rebuked them for their absence of understanding (Gr. *anoetoi*, "without comprehension"). He told them they were too hesitant (Gr. *bradeis*)—they should believe the facts testified to by the women as the fulfillment of what their prophets predicted and not let their human rationalizations hinder them from faith. Jesus asked the rhetorical question, "Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and enter into his glory?" He expected them to answer, "Yes!" But they did not answer. So He began with Moses (the Pentateuch) and went through all the prophets, interpreting to them in all the scriptures (including the books of poetry too) the things concerning Himself. This would involve instruction in all the *types* and *prophecies* and *symbols* in the Old Testament which point directly or indirectly to the Messiah's redemptive suffering (Gr. *pathein*, "pathos"). The limitation of space does not permit us here to list all the types and symbolisms of the Messiah's suffering and glorification. We trust the following references to prophecies will suffice to explain Jesus' exhortation:

Isaiah 52:13—53:12
Zechariah 11:7-14
Zechariah 13:1-9
Psalm 110:1-7
II Sam. 7:12

Daniel 9:24-27
Zechariah 12:10-14
Psa. 16:1-11
Psalm 22:1-31
Psalm 89:3-4

The tenth verse of Psalm 96, according to some ancient Christian scholars, has been corrupted. Jerome, Augustine, Tertullian and others

make this charge. Justin Martyr, 100-167 A.D., stated his belief that the Jews, out of hatred for Christ, tampered with the text because it prophesied the establishment of the Messiah's kingdom by means of His suffering and death upon the cross. Our modern versions read; "Say unto the peoples: the Lord reigneth." In the version called *Italica Antiqua*, which was in use during the first centuries of the Church, and also in the *Psalterio Romano*, the verse is rendered: "Say unto the peoples: the Lord reigneth from the tree" or *a ligno*, as it is in the Latin. For the Psalmist to say that the Lord God Himself—the Almighty—was to establish His government in the hearts of men on the basis of a cursed cross was something so horrifying, so unthinkable and so repulsive to the human rationalizations of the Jews they simply refused to accept the idea. The cross of Christ became a stumbling block to the majority of them (cf. I Cor. 1:23).

Jesus did not merely recount all the Old Testament predictions of the Messiah, He "interpreted" (Gr. *diermeneuen*, the word from which we get "hermeneutics") to them the things concerning Himself. What a lesson that must have been! Beginning with the "seed of the woman" (Gen. 3:15) He would proceed through the types and shadows of the Mosaic covenant, into the monarchy and David's throne, and concluding with all the prophets. Still mastered by their despondency more than His teaching, they do not yet recognize Him. He has done nothing yet to give them evidence He is Jesus, risen bodily from the dead.

When they drew near to Emmaus Jesus gave some indication that He was going to travel on. Perhaps they were intrigued and deeply interested in what He was saying, perhaps they were simply exercising the importance placed on hospitality to strangers, so they "constrained" Him to stay with them. So He went in to abide (Gr. *meinai*) with them. When it came time for the evening meal, they all reclined (Gr. *kataklithenai*) on their couches about the table and Jesus took the bread and blessed, and broke it, and gave it to them. Here, as a guest, Jesus takes the part of the host or the "Master" of the meal. The Greek phrase would read literally, "And it was, in the reclining of Him with them, taking the loaf He blessed, and having broken He gave to them." This was just the way He had acted with them so many times before. As He broke the bread, they may have seen the nail prints in His hands; as He prayed, they may have recognized familiar phrases or urgency of voice. Whatever the evidence they now had, it was enough to make them recognize Him (Gr. *epegnosan*, "fully perceive, discern, recognize"—from the Greek verb, "to know"). No sooner did they discover it was Jesus, risen bodily from the dead, eating supper with them, than He vanished out of their sight. The Greek phrase is, *autos aphantos egeneto*, "He, non-visible, became." Barnes thinks there was nothing miraculous in this, but He simply withdrew from their presence while they were still stunned by the surprise. On the other hand,

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it is possible that it was a miraculous disappearance to give them evidence of His glorified state. All the disciples must understand that He is not risen bodily for the purpose of remaining on earth. He told Mary she must not "hold onto Him" as if to keep Him on earth (cf. our comments, *Gospel of John*, pg. 426, College Press). Later, He will appear suddenly to the apostles in the room where they had closed all the doors for fear of the Jews (cf. Mk. 16:13-14; Lk. 24:36-42; Jn. 20:19-20). In His glorified body He was able to appear and disappear, to materialize and dematerialize, to go through closed doors or walls—and why shouldn't He if He was earlier able to walk on water, read minds, predict the future, raise the dead, cast out demons and be transfigured to talk with Moses and Elijah!

Whatever happened, it so excited these two disciples, they exclaimed, "Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the scriptures?" The Greek word for "burned" is *kaiomene* and is often used metaphorically of spiritual light (cf. Lk. 12:35; Jn. 5:35). Jesus had turned on the light of truth about the Messiah's death and resurrection in their hearts that day. Their gloom was gone. They were no longer despondent and without hope. Now they were filled with faith and joy. They could not contain themselves.

SECTION 3

The Eleven Confronted (24:33-43)

³³ And they rose that same hour and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven gathered together and those who were with them,
³⁴ who said, "The Lord has risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon!"
³⁵ Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he was known to them in the breaking of the bread.

36 As they were saying this, Jesus himself stood among them. ³⁷ But they were startled and frightened, and supposed that they saw a spirit.
³⁸ And he said to them, "Why are you troubled, and why do questionings rise in your hearts? ³⁹ See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself; handle me, and see; for a spirit has not flesh and bones as you see that I have." ⁴¹ And while they still disbelieved for joy, and wondered, he said to them, "Have you anything here to eat?" ⁴² They gave him a piece of broiled fish, ⁴³ and he took it and ate before them.

24:33-40 Disconcerting Demonstration: The two disciples in Emmaus rose from the supper table and returned (rapidly, no doubt) the seven miles back to Jerusalem. It took them about an hour to walk the road back.
e. Sunday evening, late (Jn. 20:19-20; Mk. 16:13-14; Lk. 24:33-43):
Fifth appearance: To the apostles and disciples in Jerusalem, Thomas

absent. The Emmaus disciples arrived in Jerusalem and found where the apostles were hiding. John tells us the doors were shut where the apostles were for fear of the Jews (Jn. 20:19). They are now called by the title "the eleven" instead of "the twelve" since Judas had hanged himself. But there were not eleven of the apostles present—Thomas had absented himself for some reason (see Jn. 20:24). This also shows that the two Emmaus disciples were not apostles. There were others present with the apostles and some of them said, "The Lord has risen indeed and has appeared to Simon!" The Greek word translated "appeared" is *ophthe* and is a derivative of the words *horao* and *ophthalmos* and carries with it the definite connotation of something seen with the eyes. The Lord's "appearance" to Peter was objective, not subjective. The two disciples from Emmaus then related to the group their experience of seeing the risen Lord and gave the objective evidences which convinced them it was Jesus. The apostles did not believe even then (Mk. 16:13).

As they were talking, Jesus appeared suddenly in the room with them. They were terrified (Gr. *ptoethentes*, "in consternation, in paralyzed fear") and filled with fear (Gr. *emphoboi*, phobia). Apparently He did not come through a door as normally expected, but "materialized" right through the closed door. They thought (Gr. *edokoun*, stronger than "supposed") they were seeing a spirit (Gr. *pneuma*). Jesus chides them for having troubled minds and doubts and suspicions. They have the testimony of the women, the testimony of Peter and the testimony of the two Emmaus disciples—why do they still doubt? But with the patience and love He had always shown, Jesus offers further evidence. It is very important to note here that Jesus presented proof to three of the sensory perceptors of man—sight, hearing, touch. This is *scientific* evidence; it is what is called *experiential* and meets the demands of any honest-minded scientist to prove the fact beyond any reasonable doubt. The apostles appeal to this sensate evidence later as the very center of their gospel proclamation (Acts 10:41). The apostles did not seek to persuade men on the basis of their own faith, but on the basis of scientific, eyewitnessed evidence. Jesus invited them to "see and touch" the hands and feet which had the nail scars in them (as well as His side, Jn. 20:20).

"A spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have," said Jesus, and then He showed them His hands and His feet. That last phrase is omitted from our printed text (v. 40), but many ancient manuscripts include it (Sinaiticus, Vaticanus, Alexandrinus, et al.). We believe it to be textually verified.

24:41-43 Dazzled Disciples: They "disbelieved for joy." That is not an unusual reaction when surprised by a visit from someone one thinks is dead. Many people have had the same experience with returned prisoners-of-war or with "miraculously escaped" victims of natural disasters and

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have said, "I see you, but I just can't believe you're alive—is it really you—say something or do something so I will know it is you!" The apostles were wondering and Jesus asked for something to eat to prove to them "He was Himself" (Gr. *ego eimi autos*, 24:39). They gave Him a piece of broiled fish (some manuscripts add, "and honeycomb") and He ate it. Once again, Luke the physician has traced accurately all things and documented evidence of the bodily resurrection of Jesus experiential enough to satisfy his own scientific mind and any other fair-minded person who will investigate the authenticity and credibility of Luke's record.

- f. One week later—Sunday (Jn. 20:26-29): *Sixth appearance*: Jesus appeared to the apostles again in Jerusalem. This time Thomas was present. Thomas was invited to touch the nail prints in Jesus' body. Thomas was convinced. The only way to call this an hallucination is to call John a liar. The gospel account plainly states it as an *empirical event*.
- g. Sometime later—unknown time (Jn. 21:1-25): *Seventh appearance*: Jesus appeared to seven of the apostles while they were fishing. They did not recognize Him at first. He worked a miracle and invited them to breakfast. John then recognized Him. Peter jumped out of the boat and hurried to shore ahead of the others. This is the *third* revelation of Himself to the apostles. After breakfast, Jesus challenges Peter's concept of "love."
- h. Still later—unknown time (Mt. 28:16-20; Mk. 16:15-18): *Eighth appearance*: Jesus appeared to the eleven apostles on a mountain in Galilee and gave them the Great Commission. Some make this the same as the appearance to the "five hundred brethren at once" in I Cor. 15:6. The text seems to imply this appearance was restricted to the eleven apostles.
- i. Still later—unknown time (I Cor. 15:6): *Ninth appearance*: Jesus appeared to over "five hundred brethren at once" in a place unknown, but testified to by the apostle Paul. Many of those people were still alive when Paul wrote to the Corinthians.
- j. Still later—unknown time, at Jerusalem (I Cor. 15:7): *Tenth appearance*: Jesus appeared to James. We are not certain which James, but probably Jesus' half-brother—the leader of the Jerusalem church (Acts 15).

SECTION 4

Eleven Commissioned, Again (24:44-53)

44 Then he said to them, "These are my words which I spoke to you, while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the

law of Moses and the prophets and the psalms must be fulfilled.”⁴⁵ Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures,⁴⁶ and said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead,⁴⁷ and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be preached in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem.⁴⁸ You are witnesses of these things.⁴⁹ And behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you; but stay in the city, until you are clothed with power from on high.”

50 Then he led them out as far as Bethany, and lifting up his hands he blessed them.⁵¹ While he blessed them, he parted from them, and was carried up into heaven.⁵² And they returned to Jerusalem with great joy,⁵³ and were continually in the temple blessing God.

24:44-49 Divine Declaration: In Jerusalem, at some time between His appearance to James and His ascension, Jesus met with His apostles and reiterated His commission to them. We do not know how much time elapsed. We do know it was forty days between His resurrection and His ascension.

k. Still later—unknown time, at Jerusalem (Lk. 24:44-49): *Eleventh appearance:* Both Wieand in his, *A New Harmony of The Gospels*, and Shephard, in his, *The Christ of the Gospels*, place this appearance separate from fifth appearance (Lk. 24:36-43). The same appearance is described in Acts 1:3-8. Evidently Jesus spent many hours during these forty days in intense instruction to the apostles and disciples concerning the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies in His redemptive incarnation. The two great lines of evidence appealed to in apostolic preaching (Acts) and apostolic writing (Epistles) are the empirical facts witnessed in His death, burial and resurrection, and the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies in His deeds and teachings.

It is interesting to note that Jesus summarized the entire message of the Old Testament as a prediction that the Messiah should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be preached in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. Yes, that was what God was saying in the Old Testament—redemption and evangelism. There is little doubt that the Old Testament is filled with predictions that God’s redemptive deeds will be to all people when one reads the prophets—especially Isaiah (cf. Isa. 2:1-4; 19:16-24; 25:6-9; 42:1-4; 49:5-7; 51:4-6; 60:1-3; 61:1-9, etc.). All this God chose Israel to do. It was Israel’s destiny to give birth to the Redeemer and to be a kingdom of priests in order to take the message of redemption to the whole world. The majority of the Israelites defaulted on that destiny. But God’s redemptive program was not thwarted. He called upon a small minority, a remnant, eleven apostles and a few disciples, and they answered.

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He sent them to preach repentance and forgiveness of sins to all the nations. And that message of repentance and forgiveness was validated by the testimony of the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead (cf. Acts 2:22-42; 3:12-26; 17:30-31, etc.). There is no reason for men to repent if Christ is not raised; there is no hope for forgiveness if Christ is not raised. So Jesus said, "You are witnesses of these things." They witnessed only His death, burial and resurrection. They preached repentance and forgiveness because He promises it and His promises are absolutely trustworthy *because* of His resurrection. Repentance (a change of direction, both in mind and deed) and forgiveness of sin (release from guilt and reconciliation to God) is man's most fundamental need. Jesus says it is available "in His name"—that is, by His authority, and in His way of life.

Jesus said to the apostles He would send the "promise of the Father" upon them. That "promise" was, of course, the supernatural powers and privileges enumerated by Jesus at various times (Mt. 16:17-20; 19:28-30; John 14:17; Jn. 20:20-23, etc.). These eleven apostles (and one to be added) would open the doors to the kingdom, establish it, with the aid of the Holy Spirit, and leave with the infant church an infallibly inspired set of documents known as the New Testament. To these apostles would be granted great privilege, great responsibility and great persecutions (Mk. 10:30). All those were promises of the Father.

This same conversation in the book of Acts reveals to us that the apostles were still clinging to the materialistic view of the kingdom of God. They asked Jesus if He were, at this time, about to restore the kingdom to Israel, (Acts 1:6). They must, therefore, have the power of the Holy Spirit to accompany their preaching. The Holy Spirit's miraculous powers working through the apostles would be necessary not only to keep them aware that the kingdom was spiritual and to guide them inerrantly in their teaching, but also to verify their message of the spirituality of the kingdom for the whole world. The spiritual nature of the kingdom of God is foreign to the carnal mind of man. Without the inspired revelation of the Holy Spirit, men would not believe it!

24:50-53 Dedicated Devotees: After admonishing them to stay in the city of Jerusalem until they were "clothed" with power from on high, He led them out as far as Bethany (on the Mount of Olives, cf. Acts 1:12), and lifting up His hands He blessed them.

1. Last of May (Hebrew month, Iyyar), A.D. 30: *Twelfth appearance:* While He blessed them, He parted from them. Greek manuscripts Alexandrinus, Vaticanus, Ephraemi, Washingtonius and Koridethi, et al, add, "and was carried into heaven." We do know that He ascended into heaven because this same gospel writer, Luke, records the event in his Acts of the Apostles (Acts 1:9-11). The apostles saw Him go, bodily, up into the heavens and disappear from their sight. He appeared, once more, bodily, to Saul of Tarsus, near Damascus, Syria (I Cor. 15:8; Acts 9:3-9).

For a while the apostles remained, staring into heaven, awed, shocked, wondering and probably confused. But two angels appeared and directed them, "Why are you standing here staring into the heavens, this same Jesus who was received up from you into heaven, will come back from heaven in the same manner you saw Him go." This filled them with great joy, and they returned to Jerusalem in obedience to their Lord's word, worshipping in the Temple as they awaited the beginning of their great task to preach His name to the whole world.

The record of God's redemption according to Luke does not really end here. It continues through the Acts of the Apostles, for the good news resulted in the establishment of Christ's church first at Jerusalem, and then in the uttermost parts of the civilized world. The Holy Spirit did empower the apostles; He did validate their message with miracles and signs (cf. Heb. 2:3-4; Acts 2:1ff.). The Holy Spirit did call to their remembrance all Jesus taught them as recorded in this Gospel and the others; He did lead them into all the truth necessary for the establishment and satisfaction of the church. And the apostles (and thousands of other believers) did go and bear witness to the redemptive plan of God as it was accomplished in Christ.

Jesus did and said many other things than those recorded in Luke's gospel or John's gospel or in the other two (cf. Jn. 20:30-31; 21:25), but all that is necessary for any man to believe and obey Christ unto salvation is recorded in the New Testament. What is recorded in the gospel accounts is sufficient to produce faith in Christ as the Son of God in the heart of any honest-minded individual. We will discuss the matter of believing the gospel accounts in the addendum to this chapter. You will want to read that next!

Tradition says that Luke lived until he was 84 years of age never marrying, and after his death he was buried in a city called Thebes, in Bithynia. We do not know the certainty of all that but we do know Luke's name will live on while this earth remains and his great faith and dedication to produce an "orderly and accurate" account after having "followed all things closely" has resulted in millions of people coming to believe Jesus is the Son of Man and the Son of God and may result in millions more believing also. We here express our gratitude to God for His divine providence that would call and empower such a man as Luke to put into writing the deeds and sayings of our Lord Jesus Christ. The uniqueness of Luke's record, compared to the other three records, is a classic example that God wishes to communicate His good news to all men, whatever their culture or whatever their inclinations.

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ADDENDUM ON THE BODILY RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST FROM THE DEAD

The bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead is the fundamental fact of Christianity. Without it there can be no Biblical Christianity. Without it there is no hope for mankind. Paul makes it the one absolute essential to faith, morals, brotherhood and proclamation (I Cor. 15:1-58). Without the bodily resurrection, in time, in space, in history, established on empirical evidence, the death of Christ is vain, the faith of the Christian is vain, the preaching of the church is vain, and Christians are, of all men, most to be pitied. So we here offer this study in the hope that believers will have their faith founded on this fact of history and that unbelievers will, in honesty and openness, be persuaded to believe in the living Christ.

I. BASIC ATTACKS ON THE RESURRECTION

- A. Denial of the authenticity of the gospel accounts, or a denial of their credibility.
- B. Explaining the gospel miracles as myths.
- C. Making faith in God a matter of subjective experiences or feelings and, therefore, declaring the factuality of miracles and the bodily resurrection irrelevant to being a Christian.

II. FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES OF THE LAWS OF EVIDENCE APPLIED TO THE QUESTION OF THE FACTUAL TRUTH OF CHRISTIANITY (excerpts from an article by John Warwick Montgomery, entitled, "Legal Reasoning and Christian Apologetics," *Christianity Today*, 2-14-75).

- A. The "ancient documents rule:"
 1. Ancient documents will be received as competent evidence if they are fair-on-their-face (i.e. if they offer no internal evidence of tampering) and have been maintained in reasonable custody (i.e. if their preservation has been consistent with their content).
 2. Applied to the gospel records, and reinforced by responsible lower (textual) criticism, this rule would establish their competency in any court of law.
- B. The "parol (i.e., oral, word of mouth) evidence rule:"
 1. External, oral testimony will not be received in evidence to add to, subtract from, vary, contradict an executed written instrument such as a will.
 2. Applied to the Biblical documents which expressly claim to be "executed" and complete (Heb. 9:15-17; Rev. 22:18-19), this rule insists that Scripture be allowed to interpret itself and not be twisted or contradicted by external, extra-biblical data (such as comparative New Eastern religious texts and practices, "new" hermeneutics, Form Criticism methods, etc., etc.).

C. The "hearsay rule:"

1. A witness must testify of his own knowledge, not on the basis of what has come to him indirectly from others.
2. This demand for primary-source evidence is fully vindicated in the New Testament documents by the constant claim of its authors to be setting forth that which they have "seen and heard and handled (touched) concerning the Word of Life. . ." (I Jn. 1:1-4).
3. In the document of Luke, he nowhere claims for himself eye-witness primacy, but he does so for his sources, (Lk. 1:1-4).

D. The related "cross-examination" principle:

1. All trials proceed upon the idea that some confidence is due to human testimony, and this confidence grows and becomes more stedfast in proportion as the witness has been subjected to a close and searching cross-examination.
2. Applied to the New Testament message of the first century, this rule underscores the reliability of testimony to Christ's resurrection which was presented in the very teeth of opposition (in Jewish synagogues and among Greek and Roman philosophers and rulers) among hostile cross-examiners who would certainly have destroyed the case for Christianity had the *facts* been otherwise.

Just such rules of evidence sufficiently settle issues of life and death in human society—and always have—even in the most "primitive" societies. They are sufficient for believing in historically documented facts upon which to establish faith and action in religion (as they are for scientific and legal matters).

III. TREATISE ON THE LAW OF EVIDENCE (excerpts from the writings of Simon Greenleaf, 1783-1853, U.S. legal educator, head of Harvard Law School in 1846; drafted original constitution of Independent Republic of Liberia; classed with the world's greatest legal minds such as Kent and Blackstone; president of Massachusetts Bible Society for many years; wrote, *the Testimony of The Evangelists*).

A. Principles

1. To establish the historicity of the facts of Christianity, nothing more is demanded than is readily conceded to every branch of human science!
2. Christianity does not profess to convince the perverse and headstrong, to bring irresistible evidence to vanquish every question. All it professes is to propose such evidence as may satisfy the disciplined, teachable, honest, serious searcher for truth.
3. The foundation of Christianity is based on facts. These facts are testified to as having occurred within the personal knowledge of

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the Gospel writers. Christianity, then, rests upon the credibility of these witnesses. Are they worthy of implicit belief? This is the question in all human tribunals in regard to persons testifying before them.

B. Precepts

1. Every document apparently ancient, coming from the proper custody, and bearing on its face no evident marks of forgery, the law presumes to be genuine, and devolves on the opposing party the burden of proving it to be otherwise. We are entitled to assume the texts of the Gospels are genuine until the contrary is shown conclusively with empirical evidence.
2. If it be objected that the originals are lost, and that we have only copies, the principles of municipal law apply here also. For if any ancient document concerning our public rights (our Constitution, Bill of Rights, etc.) were lost, copies which had been as universally received and acted upon as the four Gospels have been, would have been received in evidence in any court of law without the slightest hesitation.
3. In trials of fact, by oral testimony, the proper inquiry is *not* whether it is possible that the testimony may be false (as critics approach it) *but* whether there is sufficient probability that it is true!
4. In weighing the evidence of any proposition of fact, the question to be determined is, *when* may it be said to be proved. A proposition of fact is *proved*, when its truth is established by competent and satisfactory evidence beyond *reasonable* doubt.
 - a. Competent: Such as the nature of the thing to be proved requires. (seeing, hearing, touching, etc.).
 - b. Satisfactory: Amount of proof which ordinarily satisfied an unprejudiced mind beyond any reasonable doubt.
 - c. Sufficiency: Enough to satisfy the mind and conscience of an honest man and cause him to act upon that conviction.

When one has this degree of certainty, it is unreasonable to require more.

5. In the absence of circumstances which generate suspicion, every witness is to be presumed to be credible, until the contrary is shown. The burden of impeaching his credibility lies upon the objector.
6. Honesty: All witnesses are entitled to the benefit of the axiom that men ordinarily speak the truth, when they have no prevailing motive or inducement to the contrary. If the testimony of the gospel writers is false why would they have lied to bring

upon themselves all the misery and persecution of Christianity's enemies?

7. Ability: The ability of a witness to speak the truth depends on the opportunities he has had for observing the fact, the accuracy of his powers of observing and discerning, and the faithfulness of his memory in recalling the facts. We can at least grant to the gospel writers the abilities of most human beings until the contrary is shown. This is the procedure of legal justice. Matthew was a tax-collector; Luke was a physician; both were trained in such abilities to remember and record facts.
8. Number and consistency of witnesses: Enough disparity is needed in the witnesses (as to time separations, geographical separations, etc.) to show there was no collusion. Enough agreement in the documents of the witnesses is needed to show they were independent recorders of the *same* great events.
9. Conformity of testimony with experience: What the gospel writers witnessed and testified to was experienced or seen and heard by others (cf. Acts 2:22, etc.).
10. Coincidence of testimony with collateral and contemporaneous facts and circumstances:
 - a. Had the evangelists been false historians, they would not have *committed* themselves on so many *particulars*.
 - b. Had the evangelists been false historians, they would not have furnished their enemies with such documents for bringing them into discredit with their audiences.
 - c. It is not possible for the wit of man to *invent* a story, which if closely compared to the actual occurrences of the *same* time and place, may not be shown to be false.
 - d. Comparing the gospels to the histories of that era proves their authenticity.
 - e. False witnesses will not willingly or *consciously* detail any circumstances in which their testimony may be open to contradiction. Nor will they *multiply* circumstances where there is danger of comparisons that could be made and exposure made.
 - f. False witnesses deal in *general* statements and broad assertions. When forced to use names and particular circumstances they will try to invent such as will be out of reach of all investigation and opposing proof. THIS IS NOT SO WITH THE GOSPELS!

It should be clearly settled in the mind of honest investigators that the Biblical documents known as the Gospels meet all the principles and rules of legal and scientific evidence herein proposed.

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IV. THE GOSPELS ARE NOT MYTHS

- A. Rudolph Bultmann, celebrated theologian, says, the message of Christ provides religious truth, but *not* historical facts.
 1. Jesus of Nazareth, according to Bultmann, was merely a man about whom we know very little.
 2. Whatever the Gospels say about Jesus cannot be taken as historically true except for a few facts such as his life in first century Palestine, his trial under Pontius Pilate, and his death by crucifixion. The rest must be myth and fable *created* and compiled by the early Christian believers.
 3. These early believers used the "religious myths" of the virgin birth and the resurrection to ascribe divinity to Jesus. The "myth" concept is popularized in books like *The Passover Plot*.
- B. Myths compared to the Gospels
 1. In Homer's *Odyssey* there is the myth of Circe, an evil enchantress who lured men into her garden and then changed them into pigs. In the same Greek mythology is the myth of Polyphemus, the one-eyed Cyclops who killed and ate some of Odysseus' men who hid in his cave. Aesop's Fables are a form of myth.
 2. But the gospel accounts are factual documents describing a man named Jesus who lived and died and was resurrected completely and *bodily within the realm of history*.
 3. Mythological gods lived in the imaginary realm of the unseen on Mount Olympus or some other unknown and unseen place, and never performed their alleged deaths or resurrections in real life as real-bodied beings. They could never be verified historically.
 4. Christ's resurrection happened only once! Mythological gods were resurrected constantly, according to the annual changes in seasons.
 5. J. Gresham Machen in *The Origin of Paul's Religion*, says, most of these mystery religions did not exist in the form which the critics say is like Christianity.
 6. Only some forty days after the death of the historical person Jesus, His disciples were proclaiming to their contemporaries the detailed facts of His return to life in the same body buried in the tomb. Mythological characters took many generations and often, centuries, to develop and gain followers.
 7. Even if the disciples of Jesus had borrowed (which no evidence shows they did) from the myths prevalent in their day it would have taken longer than forty days to establish the "Jesus-myth." Extant portions of copies of manuscripts of the Gospel accounts date back to within 50 years of the eyewitnesses of Christ's life!

8. The history of the Jews (and Jesus' apostles were Jews) during the first century A.D. and before shows they were *violently opposed* to Greek and Roman religious mythology. So Jesus' apostles would have been seriously anti-mythology.
 9. If the resurrection of Christ was a myth, why encumber it with the details of a common human existence which made it open to investigation by its enemies! Placing the hero of this alleged "Christ-myth" in their own time, instead of saying it happened centuries before their time, these apostles would have robbed their story of the enormous prestige of antiquity. Surely, they would have been as intelligent as other myth-makers.
 10. If the resurrection of Christ had been nothing more than a myth, the witness to it would have been just as *palatable* as the hundred other myths were to the pagan civilization of their day. Myths required no sacrifice to believe, hardly ever did they involve persecution, and they usually permitted gross indulgences of the flesh. History shows that the message of Christ's atonement and resurrection was *not* palatable to those devotees of contemporary mystery religions and the same is still true today!
- CHRIST'S RESURRECTION IS NO MYTH!

V. SUBJECTIVE OR "FEELING" RESURRECTION IS ALL THAT IS NEEDED

A. "We cannot prove the resurrection as an historical fact and we do not need to . . . what the church needs . . . is the testimony of persons who . . . say that Christ has appeared to them . . . and that they have experienced his presence in some of the crises of meaningful experiences of their lives." by Dr. J. Daniel Joyce, dean of the Graduate Seminary, Phillips University, in *The Christian*, 3-30-1969.

"Christians need not affirm that Christ rose from the dead at all . . . so far as its having literal historical significance, it has become excess baggage for most of us . . ." Dr. D. W. Ferm, Presbyterian minister in *Newsweek*, 3-3-1972.

Rev. John Burke, P.O., executive director of the Word of God Institute, a Catholic organization, quoted in the Los Angeles Times, 9-5-1977: "said he did not know of 'any credible biblical scholar who would hold for a bodily Resurrection.'"

Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, Supplementary Volume, article by F. W. Saunders says the earliest form of Resurrection accounts among the first Christians "may have been the experience of Peter and his brethren in coming to faith, 'seeing' that Jesus was not a martyred prophet but in very fact Lord and Christ

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enthroned in glory. The mystery of that conviction is the mystery of faith.”

ALL SUBJECTIVE! NOW CONTRAST THESE STATEMENTS . . . WHICH DO YOU THINK REPRESENTS WHAT, USING THE NORMAL RULES OF UNDERSTANDING HUMAN LANGUAGE, THE GOSPEL WRITERS INTENDED THEIR READERS TO UNDERSTAND?

- B. “The greatest derangement of the human mind is to believe because one wishes it to be so.” Louis Pasteur

“The heart cannot delight in what the mind rejects as false. . . . The beauty of the gospel in the avalanche of competing religious claims is precisely the possibility we have of checking it out historically and factually.” Clark Pinnock, in, *Set Forth Your Case*.

“The gospel is good news of God, not news of man . . . it has as its first concern not what man must do, but what God has done. It asks, Since God has so acted, what ought we men do? The Christian message demands attention not because it may be helpful, but because it is true. . . .” Sidney Cave, in, *The Christian Way*.

- C. Facts → Testimony → Faith → Feeling, in that order and none other! “Because the power of faith (like prayer) rests not in the faith (or in prayer) itself but in the *object* (God and Christ) of the faith.

“It is not choosing nor refusing; it is not loving, hating, fearing, desiring or hoping; it is not the nature of any power or faculty or capacity of our being, nor the exercise of them but the *objects* or *things* upon which they are exercised which give us pleasure or pain; which induce us to action, or influence our behavior.

“The nature of God, demonstrated by the deeds of God, transmitted to us and imprinted upon our nature through the testimony of language transforms us into His image.” Alexander Campbell, in, *The Christian System*.

- D. “The validity of Jesus rests *not* on how he makes us feel but on the historical facts of the first century. Getting high on Jesus is a dangerous step toward emotional insecurity. Christianity is not limited to our subjective feelings . . . else whenever we are depressed or frustrated, our faith is almost worthless. Christianity is sure no matter how many times we fail because it is factual. Christianity is not invalidated by our lack of success.” Dr. James North in San Jose Bible College *Broadcaster*, March 1974.

- E. Our hope in the resurrection is not based on subjective feelings.

1. Christianity based on subjectivism or existentialism is like impressionistic art—its beauty is in the eye of the beholder. Such Christianity is validated by feelings, not by facts.

2. Any outlook which over emphasizes the subjective in religion and disregards rational objectivity can neither invalidate a false revelation nor validate a true one. If you are sincere in your search for the Real, you must not repudiate the Rational.
3. Man trusts, has assurance, loves, acts morally, and hopes on the basis of what God has done, historically, in the past. God has given man a trustworthy record of His redemptive action.
4. Validating one's religion primarily by one's subjective feelings makes one his own god and that is no better than any other form of idolatry.
- F. The Gospels (and the whole New Testament) are authentic, trustworthy historical records by eyewitnesses that God entered history in the Person of Jesus Christ, died to atone for sin, arose from the dead bodily, and ascended into heaven. The Bible does not ask us how we feel about that, but rather, do we believe it and are we willing to obey it! Redemption does not depend on what one feels about these things, but on what one believes and does about them. This is objective faith.
- G. The difficulty many people face is that subjective faith is almost like objective faith in what it professes. But subjective faith shifts faith to feeling and says we really don't have to concern ourselves with the historical details of the gospel so long as we *feel* all right inside. It shifts faith from what God *has* done, as its focus, to what God *is* doing now inwardly. Salvation has changed focus, here, from the cross and the resurrection to the emotional experience of the person. This is the "existential leap in the dark" whether preached by Barth or Graham!

VI. REFUTATIONS OF ATTACKS ON THE HISTORICITY OF THE BODILY RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST FROM THE DEAD

A. The Empty Tomb

1. *Attack:* The earliest attempt to explain away the empty tomb was that of the Jewish leaders giving money to the guards to say the apostles had come and stolen His body while they slept (Mt. 28:11-15).
Refutation: To imagine that the disciples could have done that without waking the guards is incredible. To imagine the guards could verify the disciples had stolen the body "while they slept" is unacceptable. To imagine the disciples did steal the body and then laid their necks on the block for what they knew was a hoax is preposterous!
2. *Attack:* Another attempt to explain the empty tomb is that Jesus' enemies (the Jewish rulers) or Roman officials removed His body.

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Refutation: Seven short weeks after His death Jerusalem was seething with the preaching of the resurrection. If the Jews or Romans had known where His body was it was rather stupid of them to keep it hidden and allow credence to this uproar. And the Jews were *upset* about this preaching! Why didn't they produce His body and squelch that preaching once for all? Quite clearly, they could not because His body was not in the tomb and they did not know where it was!

3. *Attack:* Another theory is that the women, strangers in Jerusalem, half awake, half scared, blinded by tears, went to the wrong tomb. A young man was hanging around there, and guessing what they wanted, said, "You seek Jesus . . . He is not here (pointing to the tomb they were looking at) . . . Behold the place where they laid Him (pointing to another tomb). The women became frightened and ran away. Subsequently they decided that the young man was an angel proclaiming the resurrection of Jesus.

Refutation: First, this attack is a dishonest statement of what the gospel record says—it leaves out the statement of the angel, "He is risen!" As we see from the gospel records the women were at the tomb more than once and knew precisely where it was. They witnessed the burial. Joseph knew where his own tomb was. Why did he not come forth and correct the women if the resurrection story was built on a simple mistake about the place of burial?!

4. *Attack:* Finally, there is the theory that Jesus did not die, but fainted. They thought He was dead so they allowed Him to be taken down, placed in a cool tomb where He revived and was able to come out of the tomb and appear to His disciples. They, being the ignorant men they were, could not believe that He had just fainted and gotten over it so they went out preaching that He was raised from the dead.

Refutation: If Jesus had not died on the cross He would have to have died eventually of some cause, so the enemies of Christianity merely had to take note and point out the dead body to stop the story of a bodily resurrection. Furthermore, a man already physically exhausted, hanged on a cross for 6 hours, run through with a spear, allegedly gets up after three days and nights in a tomb and rolls back a huge stone that several women could not handle—again it is incredible! The crucifying soldiers declared Jesus dead. How could men whose business was execution make such a mistake—when their own reputation, and perhaps their lives were at stake with their superiors. Pilate

checked their report and was satisfied Jesus was dead. The Jews were satisfied He was dead and not merely swooned when the soldiers reported all that had happened.

The record says there was an empty tomb. Either it was or the documents are false. The record says the reason the tomb was empty was that its occupant arose from the dead and was seen alive after dying. This is the record of eyewitnesses. Some have *theorized* explanations for an empty tomb other than a resurrected occupant. The gospel writers claim to be writing eyewitnessed accounts—which are most believable to you? In the public preaching to non-believers in the book of Acts there is enormous emphasis on the resurrection but *not one reference* to the empty tomb. Why? Because there was no point in proving the empty tomb since everyone, friend and foe alike of the first century, *knew it was empty*.

B. The Appearances of Jesus After His Resurrection.

1. *Attack:* Unbelieving critics explain the gospel accounts of Christ's appearances as hallucinations or some form of psychological or pathological experience.

Refutation:

- a. Hallucinatory experiences commonly conform to certain rules which do not apply in the case of Jesus' appearances:
 - (1) Only certain types of persons have experiences called hallucinatory (the type we call "high-strung"-highly emotional, nervous). Do all the hundreds of eyewitnesses to the appearances of Jesus (over 500 at once) fit into this category?
 - (2) Hallucinatory experiences are highly individualistic (that is, "private") because they are linked to the subconscious and the peculiar past of individuals. Two different people, with different pasts, will not have the same hallucination. Yet over 500 plus the eleven, plus the ten (Thomas absent), plus the seven, plus three or four women, plus Peter, had the *same* hallucination, all within forty days, and over 500 all at the *same* time! More difficult to believe than the actual bodily resurrection!
 - (3) Hallucinations commonly concern some expected or eagerly anticipated experience. Yet the gospel's are emphatic in declaring the witnesses did *not* expect a resurrection.
 - (4) Hallucinations usually occur in suitable surroundings and circumstances. But look at the resurrection appearances: one at the empty tomb, very early in the morning; one during an afternoon walk in the countryside; one or two in the full light of day.

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- (5) Hallucinations usually keep appearing to individuals over and over until some crisis occurs. At the end of forty days not one of these men or women claims to have had such an experience again, until we come to the one-time appearance of the risen Christ to Saul of Tarsus.
2. *Attack:* Unbelieving critics try to explain the gospel accounts of Christ's appearances as the practice of spiritism, seances, etc. *Refutation:* There is not one "medium" mentioned or anything resembling a "seance." Jews were strictly forbidden to practice necromancy. When Jesus appeared, according to the record, He was not some ghost-like apparatus like smoke or a sheet, but a real-life person in a body who ate with them and showed them the scars in His hands and side and feet. Such an attempt to explain away the bodily resurrection of Jesus as it is recorded in the gospels is desperate grasping at straws.
3. *Attack:* The Telegram Theory which says "The ascended Lord (ascended in His spirit, not in his body) *telegraphed* back pictures of Himself to the minds of the apostles in such a vivid way they were led to believe they had seen the risen Lord in their midst." *Refutation:* This is almost more miraculous than the actual resurrection. It makes Christ a deceiver of the apostles and the apostles deceivers of the whole world. Then the apostles and millions more of Jesus' followers gave up their lives gladly for such a deception.

Through the twenty centuries since Jesus arose, attacks upon the gospel records have come and gone. They keep repeating themselves. There is really nothing new under the sun from the unbelieving attacks upon the gospels. If an unbeliever says Jesus was not raised from the dead, bodily, I say, prove it! The burden of proof is with the doubter—he must produce evidence, historical, empirical, scientific evidence which, beyond any reasonable doubt, contradicts the eyewitnessed testimony of people who were there, who saw and heard. Theories, assumptions, speculations and philosophies will not be satisfactory. It is not a question of whether a resurrection could or could not occur. The question is, did it or didn't it. The question is not to be resolved theoretically or philosophically, but scientifically, empirically and legally—on the basis of evidence and testimony. The answer is, Yes, beyond any reasonable doubt, the resurrection, bodily, of Jesus Christ, did occur.

VII. RELEVANCY OF THE RESURRECTION

- A. If Christ arose from the dead, then the Bible is God's revelation of Himself and His redemptive system for man and creation.

1. The Bible is the *only* direct revelation of God to man, and it is the final one.
 2. Both Old and New Testaments are confirmed, verified and fulfilled in Christ and His redemptive work.
 3. All of this is established on the basis of Christ's historical, bodily resurrection.
- B. If Christ arose from the dead, then the Church of the New Testament is God's divinely appointed institution on earth in which His redemption is to be appropriated.
1. Without the resurrection of Christ as its basis, the church becomes simply another social institution founded by unredeemed and dying men.
 2. There is only one church sanctioned in the New Testament—that is the one obeying the precepts and principles of the New Testament.
 3. Any man or woman in the world may become a member of that church by believing that Christ is who He claims to be and by being immersed in water in obedience to Christ's command.
 4. There is no promise of redemption to anyone not a member of Christ's church.
- C. All that men do as members of the church is relevant only because Jesus arose from the dead (I Cor. 15:58).
1. There is no psychological benefit to anyone in baptism, or the Lord's supper, or stewardship or prayer, if Christ is not alive and if His resurrection is not an historically provable event.
 2. His death on a cross in Palestine in the days of Pontius Pilate is not only tragic, but irrelevant to me or anyone else if He is still dead, and not bodily resurrected from the dead.
 3. There is no reason for me to be immersed in water, attend worship services, live a morally clean life, pray or read the Bible if He is not risen from the dead.
 4. In fact, there is no such thing as any moral absolute if He is not risen from the dead.
- D. Jesus is coming again, bodily, as the apostles saw Him go into heaven.
1. The only verification that He is coming again is His resurrection—not "signs of the times" (cf. Mt. 24:36, 42, 44; 25:13, etc., with Acts 17:30-31).
 2. Heaven *is* real, hell *is* real, justice *will be* done, men and women *are* lost, the world *is* doomed to destruction supernaturally.
 3. Evangelism *is* imperative.
 4. If Jesus had not risen bodily from the dead, none of the above would be worth believing or doing.

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5. The resurrection of Christ is the message, redemption is the result.

E. Man has one alternative to the imperatives of the resurrection.

1. That alternative is not stoicism—the “grin and bear it” way. There is too much trouble and injustice for that way.

2. It is not Pharisaism—“the playing like I’m holy” way. That does not get rid of guilt, hopelessness or frustration—it only intensifies it.

3. It is not humanism or altruism—believing in the prevailing goodness of man. Man is *not* prevailingly good. That is demonstrated every day of man’s existence. He is not creating any utopias for himself—only problems.

SO WHAT IS THE ONE ALTERNATIVE?

F. The one alternative to believing and living in accordance with the way of the resurrected Jesus is:

1. “Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die” (I Cor. 15:32).

2. If Christ is not raised, let’s not “play church” or “play good” or play anything but self-indulgence.

3. Barbaric, animalistic hedonism is the only alternative to faith in Christ.

But in Christ, living by faith in the testimony of His bodily resurrection, and living in the hope of your own resurrection to eternal life, my friend, there is fulfillment, satisfaction, joy and accomplishment.

“Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain” (I Cor. 15:58).

May God make this the blessing of your life for having studied and believed the gospel, according to Luke.

STUDY STIMULATORS:

1. Name the four possibilities the women might have considered as an answer for the empty tomb. Are there any other possibilities? Which do you think you would have thought about had you been one of the women?
2. Why did the apostles and other disciples of Jesus not remember His predictions of His resurrection? Why do people not believe it today?
3. Why were the two disciples on the way to Emmaus so despondent?
4. Would you walk seven miles to tell someone you had evidence that Jesus was arisen from the dead? Why?
5. What do you think about the idea that Jesus “materialized” and/or became invisible instantaneously as He wished to after His resurrection?

CHAPTER 24

LUKE 24:44-53

6. What did Jesus spend His time doing during the forty days between His resurrection and ascension? Does this give us any clue how important such activity is?
7. What were the "powers" the Father promised the apostles? Are they promised to any other Christians?
8. When Jesus parted from the apostles, where did He go? Do you think of Jesus as alive now—as much alive as He was when He companied with the apostles in a fleshly body?
9. If someone said to you that religion's faith is different than matters of proving something scientifically or legally, what would you answer?
10. What if your brother or sister, or your child, returned from college and told you he/she had been taught by a religion professor that Christianity is based on ancient myth—what would be your answer?
11. Has one of your neighbors ever told you that religion is all feeling and the facts do not really matter? How did you answer? What do you think now—is it important to answer that allegation?
12. If you were challenged with the proposition that the tomb where Jesus had been buried was never empty, but that the women went to the wrong tomb, how would you answer?
13. What would you say if someone said that what the disciples saw when they reported having seen Jesus, were hallucinations?
14. What about all these theologians, churches and "christians" who deny the bodily resurrection of Jesus but continue to go to church and consider themselves followers of Jesus? If you did not believe Christ actually arose from the dead, bodily, would you be a Christian? What would you live like if you didn't believe it?

FIRE IN MY BONES

(Jer. 20:7-8, 14-18)

A Biographical Sermon on Jeremiah for OBC Chapel, Dec. 4, 1979

by Paul T. Butler

I preached this sermon 16 years ago in Chapel, September 24, 1963. There is some revision now, but since only about 6 or 7 of you could possibly have heard it then, its repetition should not offend too many of you.

INTRODUCTION

I. DISCOURAGEMENT AND DESPONDENCY

- A. About 2600 years ago a discouraged, despondent, despairing preacher (the son of a clergyman—priest) sat struggling with the innermost conflicts of his soul.

He was ready to quit the ministry! In fact he was cursing the fact that he had ever been born.

He felt like he was at the breaking-point—that he could go on no longer. He would prefer to give up and be done with the overwhelming feeling of failure.

- B. There are a lot of people who ask, "How can a preacher ever get discouraged?" There is a lot of pseudo-Christianity being hawked by the hucksters today which gives the impression that being a Christian is one continual "high"—if ever you have a "low" you cannot be a man of God.

1. Francis Schaeffer has this to say: "Anybody who asks that has never been in the midst of the battle; he understands nothing about a real struggle for God."
2. And . . . "It is possible to be faithful to God and yet to be overwhelmed with discouragement as we face the world. In fact, if we are never overwhelmed, I wonder if we are fighting the battle with compassion and reality, or whether we are jousting with paper swords against paper windmills."

Death In The City, p. 68.

II. DARKNESS

- A. From a human perspective, Jeremiah had every reasonable, justifiable, emotional excuse possible for doing just that—GIVE UP, QUIT THE MINISTRY!
- B. Political darkness: He probably was born and reared in the reign of Manasseh—the most ungodly king Judah ever had; lived through the so-called reforms of Josiah's reign; prophesied during the reign of the weak, worldly-minded, compromising Zedekiah.

FIRE IN MY BONES

The powerful, pagan empire of Babylon was poised to destroy Jeremiah's homeland and carry his family, friends and countrymen far away into exile. Jeremiah knew it was inevitable and plead with all his soul but no one would believe him.

- C. Social darkness: Widespread exploitation of the poor; sexual promiscuity (each neighing for his neighbor's wife); civil justice totally corrupt; materialism rampant; murder, robbery, cruelty, indifference everywhere. *Do not trust your family or your neighbors* Jeremiah was told.
- D. Religious darkness: idolatry; Canaanite naturism; Phoenician Baalism; Babylonian astrology; and an utterly meaningless Jewish formalism; SACRIFICE OF HUMAN BEINGS (CHILDREN).

Priesthood dedicated to making money by urging people to sin. False prophets crying "peace, peace" when there was no peace.

III. DIABOLICAL DANGER

- A. Jeremiah takes 18 chapters (2-20) to characterize the ungodly people to whom he was sent to preach.

He characterizes them as: idolatrous, stupid, adulterous, liars, obstinate, deluded, untrustworthy, malicious, good for nothing, backsliders, stubborn.

Ezekiel says of the very same people: stubborn, rebellious, impudent, hardheaded, stiff-necked, flint-faced.

THAT WAS HIS CONGREGATION. NOT ONLY IS IT DIFFICULT TO PREACH TO SUCH A CONGREGATION . . . IT IS DANGEROUS!

- B. Consider these personal tribulations of the man himself:

Read also Lamentations 3.

1. His message was almost totally unpopular—even hated; ridiculed (20:7-12).
2. His own family sought his death (12:6).
3. He was forbidden the possible support of marriage (16:1-4); and social life (16:8).
4. His countrymen continually clamored for his death (18:18f.—26:7f.)
5. His book of warnings from God was cut to pieces and burned (36:21f.).
6. He was arrested as a common criminal (26:7-12).
7. He was locked in the stocks and beaten (20:1-2).
8. He was pronounced a traitor and hunted by all the authorities (32:2-3; 33:1).
9. He was thrown into a pit to starve to death (37:11-16).
10. He was later thrown into a cistern up to his chin in mire and muck and left to die (38:4-6).

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11. Later, in his old age, he would be kidnapped and forced to flee as a hostage with his wicked countrymen to Egypt (43:1f.).
12. So far as we know, he had only one person in the whole nation he could call friend and trust—Baruch, his secretary. Perhaps one other prophet or two (Uriah 26:20) and Ezekiel.

One biographer says of this man: "A more crushing burden was never laid upon mortal man. In the whole history of the Jewish race there has been no such example of intense sincerity, unrelieved suffering, fearless proclamation of God's message, and unwearying intercession of a prophet for his people. But the tragedy of his life is this, that he preached to deaf ears and reaped only hate in return for his love to his fellow-countrymen. He was lightly esteemed in life, and sank into the grave a broken-hearted old man. From being of no account as a prophet, he came to be regarded the greatest of them all."

EVERY STUDENT-MINISTER OUGHT TO BE REQUIRED TO SERVE A SUMMER-INTERNSHIP WITH JEREMIAH. EVERY NORTH AMERICAN CHRISTIAN CONVENTION OUGHT TO HAVE A JEREMIAH PREACH TO IT. EVERY BIBLE COLLEGE STAFF MEMBER OUGHT TO HAVE AN ANNUAL VISIT FROM JEREMIAH.

IV. DETERMINATION

- A. This is not the end of the story. Hear Jeremiah again:

"If I say, I will not mention him, or speak any more in his name, there is in my heart as it were a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I am weary with holding it in, and I cannot" (20:9).

"O Lord of Hosts, who triest the righteous, who seest the heart and the mind, . . . to thee have I committed my cause" (20:12).

- B. Not since the days of Noah (when every thought of man was evil continuously) had morality and the fear of God ebbed so low on the entire face of the earth.

1. Yet this preacher, in the face of monstrous adversity, was *compelled* by a fire in his bones to preach—he could *not* quit—he *must go on!*

2. The fire in his bones was the Word of God!

"Thy words were found, and I ate them, and thy words became to me a joy, and the delight of my heart . . ." (15:16).

3. "Is not my word like fire, says the Lord, and like a hammer which breaks rocks in pieces?" (23:29).

4. ". . . behold, I am making my words in your mouth a fire . . ." (5:14).

NO SLICK PSEUDO-ENTHUSIASM HERE . . . NO FAÇADE OF SUCCESS-ORIENTATION OR POSSIBILITY THINKING HERE . . . JUST PLAIN OLD, "GUT-LEVEL"—LAST RESORT DEPENDENCE ON THE REVELATION OF GOD.

HAD JEREMIAH DEPENDED ON HIS EMOTIONS, HE WOULD HAVE QUIT.
HAD JEREMIAH DEPENDED ON THE TESTIMONY OF OTHERS, HE WOULD

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HAVE QUIT. (THERE WAS NO TESTIMONY OF ANOTHER'S GODLY LIFE TO PUT A FIRE IN HIS BONES.)

IT WAS THE WORD OF GOD. . . . IT WAS THE WORD OF GOD. . . . IT WAS THE WORD OF GOD!

In a world of idolatry, unbelief, moral depravity, violence and inhumanity today, Ozark Bible College dedicates itself to igniting a fire in your bones by the Word of God so that you, each in your own place and time, will become a Jeremiah, and when you say, "I will not mention him or speak anymore in his name . . . you cannot hold it in."

DISCUSSION

I. FIRE OF CONVICTION

- A. There was a fire in Jeremiah's bones because he knew the word of God was true.
 - 1. The veracity of God's word burned away all doubt. He did not conquer doubt by the power of positive thinking, but by conviction that God's Word was actually, literally, historically true and accurate.
 - 2. Jeremiah based his message upon the historical deeds of God recorded as God's revelation (cf. Jer. 2:4-8; 7:21-26; 11:1-8, etc.).
 - 3. Jeremiah appealed to the evidence from creation for argument against false religion and in support of God and his message (cf. Jer. 10:12-16; 32:17ff.; 33:19ff.).
 - 4. The conviction that the Word of God was true was the fire in the bones of all the prophets.
 - a. When Isaiah wanted to save a remnant for the Messiah, he said to those who would listen, "To the teaching and to the testimony" (Isa. 8:20).
 - b. When Daniel wanted to encourage the people of the Babylonian captivity he went to the scroll of Jeremiah (Dan. 9:2).
 - 5. The fire in Jesus' bones was the conviction that the Word of God was absolutely and unalterably true, "The Scripture cannot be broken . . ." (Jn. 10:35).
 - 6. The fire in the bones of the apostles was their conviction of the historical certainties of the resurrection of Christ and fulfilled prophecy.
 - a. Evangelism, Acts 17:30-31 ". . . he was given assurance to all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead."
 - b. Edification, I Cor. 15:1ff. (the historical certainties of the cross, the resurrection and fulfilled prophecy)
- B. Jeremiah's fire was not based on feelings.
 - 1. It was his feelings that kept trying to put out the fire!
 - 2. Had Jeremiah allowed his moods and feelings to become his motivation he would have quit the ministry.

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3. If Jesus had let His feelings rule Him He would have refused to go to the cross. . . . "O Father, let this cup pass from me, nevertheless, not my will but thine be done" (Lk. 22:42).
- C. Jeremiah's fire was not based on the pragmatic workability of religious activity.
 1. The Word of God is not relevant because it works, but because it is true.
 2. Jeremiah said, "Stand by the roads, and look, and ask for the ancient paths, where the good way is; and walk in it, and find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk in it" (6:16).

THINGS DIDN'T ALWAYS WORK FOR JEREMIAH! AND ONLY BECAUSE THE FIRE IN HIS BONES CAME FROM CONVICTION THAT THE WORD OF GOD WAS TRUE WHETHER THERE WAS ALWAYS VISIBLE SUCCESS OR NOT WAS HE ABLE TO STAY WITH HIS MINISTRY!

- D. There are two fundamentals necessary to bring man to God—neither of them have to do with emotions of pragmatics.
1. He that cometh to God must believe that He is (exists).
 2. And that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.
 3. The fire in men's bones is not a result of religious activity or the practice of a systematic religion. The Jews of Jeremiah's day were busier in religion than any people have ever been! BUT THEY WERE TOTALLY DEVOID OF THE FIRE IN THEIR BONES WHICH JEREMIAH HAD.
 4. The God who is There is the God of the Bible. He cannot be reduced to our moods and feelings nor to our systems and traditions.

If you want Jeremiah's fire in your bones you will not find it by conjuring up a god of your own moods and whims or a god reduced to religious activity—but in saturating your mind and life with Scripture for that is where He reveals Himself. It is in believing and obeying His Word that we come face-to-face, mind-to-mind, and heart-to-heart, Spirit-to-spirit with God.

About 120 years ago (January, 1856), a young lad was born to a wealthy manufacturer and his wife of Hoboken, New Jersey.

This lad grew up in a home where both mother and father believed the Bible. In fact the Bible (and other religious books) was read every Sunday afternoon after the family had come home from worship services.

This lad grew up and went off to Yale University to study for law. He was in school for a good time and the prestige he might gain, as he himself admits. "I can hardly believe what I know to be true about my own affections and about my likes and dislikes. . . ." He wrote later in life, ". . . In those days I hated the Bible. I read it every day, but it was to me about the most stupid book I read. I would rather have read last year's almanac

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any day than to have read the Bible. . . . In those former days . . . I loved the card table, the theater, the dance, the horse-race, the champagne supper, and I hated the prayer-meeting and Sunday services. . . ."

In his Junior year, disillusioned with his frivolous life, and captivated by the lecturing of James D. Dana proving that geology verified the Genesis record and not evolution, this young man found a "fire in his bones" and dedicated himself to the ministry.

He went on to become the first president and really the builder of Moody Bible Institute. While doing that he also became the minister of the Chicago Ave. church and in six months had its membership from 2000 to 3000.

In four years of revivals in India, New Zealand, Australia and the British Isles 70,000 people became believers.

He wrote books and articles on the fundamentals of Christianity which were so influential he started the movement known as Fundamentalism.

He became convinced through a searching study of the Scriptures that immersion was the mode of baptism practiced by Christ and the apostles and he and his wife were immersed.

He was the first president and builder of Biola (Bible Institute of Los Angeles) and when it appeared the trustees of the college wanted to emphasize liberal arts and cut out some Bible courses, he resigned.

He made it a never faltering practice throughout his ministry to devote every morning from 5 till 11 a.m., 5 days per week, to Bible study.

He began every revival with the sermon "Ten Reasons Why I Believe the Bible is The Word of God."

All of these accomplishments without the aid of the Imperials back-up, radio, T.V., overhead projectors, microphones or speakers, testimonies of celebrities.

Lest you think this man was your regular, run of the mill sensationalist and crowd manipulator type preacher . . . his biographer, Roger Martin, says he appeared to many people to be stern, withdrawing, demanding, and cold. "He spoke primarily to the conscience and reason rather than to the emotions, and rarely raised his voice beyond a conversational tone."

He was more concerned with retention of converts than he was in counting numbers. His son wrote of him, "In the ensuing years I have met persons from England and Scotland who were converted in my father's meetings and frequently I have been told that the results of his meetings have stood and made a more permanent effect on the religious life of these countries than other such meetings. This they have ascribed to his logic, avoidance of emotionalism insistence on membership in the church and studying the Bible."

He was Reuben A. Torrey; he was a man with a "fire in his bones. . . ." BECAUSE HE WAS A MAN OF THE BOOK!

II. FIRE OF HOLINESS

A. Jeremiah was a man, a human being, not a robot.

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1. He had feelings, moods, physical drives, urges, temptations, trials, tribulations, ups and downs, just like any one else.
 2. He complained, doubted, cried, became angry, afraid, lonely one time and tired of having others always around on the other hand.
 3. He had to go through life without the strength and comfort of a wife, Jer. 16:1-2, so he had to control his sexual self.
 4. He had to go through life suffering persecution and defamation unjustly, so he had to control his urge to retaliate. 11:20 . . . "to thee have I committed my cause."
 5. He had to go through life without merrymaking or fun, 15:17 ". . . I did not sit in the company of merrymakers, nor did I rejoice." He sublimated the urge for fun for the higher goal of being found pleasing to his Lord.
 6. He had to go through life being very unpopular. He could not know the admiration or acceptance of his peers. They all shunned him. He had to forget about the human ego which demands to be recognized, appreciated and applauded!
- B. What was this fire in his bones that purged him of human weakness and gave him power to overcome temptation? IT WAS THE WORD OF GOD.
1. "Who has commanded and it came to pass, unless the Lord has ordained it? Is it not from the mouth of the Most High that good and evil come?" (Lam. 3:37-38)
". . . my affliction and my bitterness . . . my soul continually thinks of it and is bowed down within me . . . but this I call to mind, and therefore I have hope: The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases, his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is thy faithfulness" (Lam. 3:19-23).
 2. Jeremiah knew a man could not trust in his own heart or feelings or reasoning.
"Cursed is the man who trusts in man. . . . Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord. . . . The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately corrupt; who can understand it?" (Jer. 17:5-10)
- C. My friend, this is your only hope of overcoming; my only hope of overcoming—PUTTING THE WORD OF GOD IN YOUR MIND AND HEART THAT YOU MIGHT NOT SIN AGAINST HIM.
1. It comes down to a "gut-level" faith. We refuse to fall into any temptation simply because the word of God says it is wrong!
 2. We may philosophize, analyze and rationalize adultery and fornication all we want, but the ultimate choice will be made against it by you or by me because God's Word forbids it; or for it because we do not care what God's Word says.

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3. We may hold seminars, write books and pay psychiatrists to counsel people on marriage and divorce, but when it comes right down to it people will stay married because God's word commands it; or people will get divorced because they do not think God means what He says!
4. We either obey our feelings or the Word of God!
5. James Oppenheim, an American writer of the 1920s characterized the attitude of the man who refuses to let the Word of God be a fire in his bones.

"Let nothing bind you; if it is duty, away with it. If it is law, destroy it. If it is opinion, go against it. There is only one Divinity, Yourself; only one God, You."

HUMANISM HAS TRIED TO DEAL WITH THE SIN-HOLINESS PROBLEM BY PSYCHOLOGY, GOVERNMENTAL REGULATIONS, HUGE AMOUNTS OF MONEY FOR MATERIAL WELFARE, ENTERTAINMENT, COMMUNISM. . . . EVERYTHING UNDER THE SUN EXCEPT THE WORD OF GOD.—AND NONE OF HUMANISM'S PANACEAS HAVE WORKED. . . . IN FACT, THEY HAVE ONLY INTENSIFIED THE PROBLEM OF SIN A THOUSAND-FOLD.

- D. Jesus demonstrated that it is possible for human beings to resist sin and be holy by the fire of the Word of God in us.
 1. Jesus was tempted to distrust God to feed Him after 40 days fasting and work a miracle, but He said, "It is written."
 2. Over and over Jesus said, "It is written. . . ."
 3. Although He was a son, he experienced obedience through what he suffered, and was heard for his godly fear.
 4. Jesus did not feel like going to the cross. . . . "O, Father, I don't feel like going to the cross, nevertheless, not how I feel, but thy will be done."

"I believe that we can live on earth according to the teachings of Jesus, and that the greatest happiness will come to the world when man obeys His commandment, 'Love ye one another.'

"I believe that every question between man and man is a religious question, and that every social wrong is a moral wrong.

"I believe that we can live on earth according to the fulfillment of God's will, and that when the will of God is done on earth as it is in heaven, every man will love his fellow men and act towards them as he desires they should act towards him. . . .

"I have four things to learn in life:

To think clearly without hurry or confusion;
To love everybody sincerely;
To act in everything with the highest motives;
To trust in God unhesitatingly."

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If ever there was anyone with justifiable reason to be bitter, to hate, to be selfish and demand pity, it was the woman who said that—Helen Keller.

DO YOU FEEL LIKE LYING? GOD'S WORD SAYS NO!

DO YOU FEEL LIKE YOU NEED NOT GIVE YOUR MONEY FOR GOD'S WORK . . . GOD'S WORD SAYS YES!

DO YOU FEEL LIKE YOU NEED NOT TEACH HIS GOOD NEWS TO OTHERS . . . GOD'S WORD SAYS YES!

DO YOU FEEL LIKE YOU DO NOT NEED TO BE CAREFUL ABOUT YOUR EXAMPLE TO OTHERS? GOD'S WORD SAYS YES!

DO YOU FEEL LIKE YOU DO NOT HAVE TO KEEP NATIONAL LAWS, SCHOOL RULES, PARENTAL DISCIPLINE. . . . GOD'S WORD SAYS, YES, YOU DO!

AND IN THE FINAL ANALYSIS, YOU WILL CHOOSE AGAINST YOUR FEELINGS ONLY WHEN YOU TRUST GOD'S WORD UNHESITATINGLY.

God's word is the truth. . . . He will tell you the truth. . . . He even gives you the motivation in the Good News to want the truth . . . but He will not choose for you. YOU MUST CHOOSE THE TRUTH.

The OBC diploma has this statement first in priority. . . . "Be it known unto all that _____ having shown possession of Christian character and refinement. . . . etc.

Christian character and refinement come by self-control or control of self. But self does not control self. There is absolutely no way the human self can be controlled apart from the Word of God. It has been so ever since the human being was created in Eden!

EVERY BIBLE COURSE OR BIBLE RELATED COURSE . . . EVERY RULE, EVERY COUNSELING SESSION, EVERY CHAPEL, EVERY DEVOTION WHERE THE WORD OF GOD IS EXERCISED IS TO FULFILL THAT NEED FOR CONTROL OF SELF AND DEVELOPMENT OF CHRISTIAN CHARACTER.

YOU COULD LEARN EVERY HOW-TO-DO-IT COURSE BY MEMORY AND BUILD UP A HUGE CONGREGATION, WITH A MASSIVE BUILDING COMPLEX AND A MULTI-MILLION DOLLAR BUDGET, AND FAIL MISERABLY AS A MINISTER OF GOD IF YOU DO NOT HAVE CHRISTIAN CHARACTER!

A great man once wrote: "Moral facts develop moral character . . . all the works and words of God are moral facts and truths . . . you find the works and words of God in the Bible . . . when these moral facts are brought into immediate contact with the mind of man, they delineate the image of God upon the human soul. . . ."

The man who said that remembered in his childhood that "It was the rule that every family member should memorize, during each day, some portion of the Bible, to be recited at evening worship . . ." and he said later in life, "They (the scriptures) have not only been written on the tablet of my memory, but incorporated with my modes of thinking and speaking."

IF THAT MOTHER AND FATHER HAD NOT PUT THAT FIRE OF HOLINESS, HONESTY, INTEGRITY, GOODNESS AND LOVE IN THE BONES OF THEIR

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CHILDREN THROUGH THE WORD OF GOD, YOU AND I MIGHT NOT BE HERE TODAY!

THAT MAN WAS ALEXANDER CAMPBELL.

III. FIRE OF EVANGELISM

A. Jeremiah preached 23 years in Jerusalem before he was taken hostage down into Egypt and even from there he preached on, apparently until his death. He never retired. The fire of the word of God never went out or died down in his heart.

1. He ran through the streets of Jerusalem preaching, trying to locate one righteous man (5:1ff.; 11:6).
2. He preached in the Temple courts (20:1ff.; 26:1ff.).
3. He preached in the gates of the city (17:19).
4. He went to the Euphrates river in God's service (13:4).
5. He went to the shops of the craftsmen (potter) to preach (18:1).
6. He went to the city dump (Hinnom) to preach (19:1ff.).
7. He preached in the king's palace (22:1ff.).
8. He preached while imprisoned (32:1ff.).
9. He preached in war (while Jerusalem was under attack) (34:1ff.).
10. He preached in Egypt (43:8ff.).
11. He wrote sermons in letter form to the exiles in Babylon (29:1; 30:1).

In every place conceivable, in every circumstance, in every method possible, Jeremiah preached.

Nothing could stop him; not discouragement, not kings, not pagan rulers, not prison, not false religious teachers. When he had no audience, he went looking for one; when he could find none, he wrote letters.

B. Jeremiah's fire was kindled by his hope in the promises of God. He preached because he believed in *God's absolute faithfulness*.

1. Without the absolute faithfulness of God's Word there is no hope.
2. The fire in our bones for evangelism must be based on the absolute faithfulness of God's word—not in our religiosity, not in our ancestry, not in our human skills.
3. We are responsible only for sowing the seed; God is responsible for the success and the growth; God has put the growth factor in the seed (The Word) not in human skilfulness.
4. The world thinks there is hope only in the elimination of absolutes. The Christian must rest his only hope in the absolute God! and His absolute word.
5. Without the absolute faithfulness of the Word of God in our heart there would be no motive strong enough to keep anyone faithful in evangelism.

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C. "Christianity is not a modern success story," says Francis Schaeffer, in *Death in The City*, "It is to be preached with love and tears into the teeth of men, preached without compromise, without regard to the world's concept of success. If there seem to be no results, remember that Jeremiah did not see the results in his day. They came later. If there seem to be no results, it does not change God's imperative. It is simply up to you and to me to go on, go on, go on, whether we see the results or whether we don't. Go on."

1. Jeremiah saw by faith the fulfillment of God's promises to bring to his people a new David (the Messiah), a new covenant, a new nature. So he preached. And, as Hebrews 11:4 says of Abel, "he died, but through his faith he is still speaking . . ." it is true of Jeremiah.
2. And it may be true of You. Jenkin Lloyd Jones in an editorial in the Joplin Globe of Sept. 16, 1979, writing of the present trends all over the world of growing persecution of Christianity, wrote, "The missionary of tomorrow will be met, not by cringing awe, not by smiles and outstretched hands, not even by spears and leather shields, but by automatic weapons. Martyrdom is coming back, and it will be a testing time for Christianity."
3. No sooner had Martin Luther begun his great reformation of the church when he received word about the first Protestant martyrs. Some monks had read Luther's work, turned to this way of thinking, and were burned alive in the Grand Place in Brussels. When Luther heard that, he began to walk the floor and he said, "I can't go on. I can't do it any more. Because of me other men are being killed. I can't go on!" Then as he wrestled with it, he understood that because it was truth, no matter what the cost to himself or anybody else, he must go on. And so he did, and we follow in his train.

CONCLUSION

Dwight L. Moody tells of an aged missionary of the Free Church of Scotland named Duff who had been in India most of his life preaching the gospel and establishing schools. He came back to Scotland a broken man physically. He was permitted to address the Edinburgh General Assembly to make an appeal for men to go to the mission field.

He spoke with such passion that suddenly he fainted and dropped to the floor. They carried him into another room where doctors worked over him for some time until he began to recover. When he realized where he was, he sat up and said:

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"I did not finish; carry me back and let me finish." They told him he could only do at the very peril of his life. He replied: "I WILL DO IT IF I DIE."

So they took him back to the hall. As the aged, white-haired man appeared at the door, every person sprang to his feet; the tears flowed freely as that great assemblage looked upon the grand old veteran. With a trembling voice he said:

"Fathers and mothers of Scotland, is it true that you have no more sons to send to India to work for the Lord Jesus Christ? The call for help is growing louder and louder, but there are few coming forward to answer it. You have the money put away in the bank, but where are the laborers who shall go into the field? When Queen Victoria wants men to volunteer for her army in India, you freely give your sons. You do not talk about their losing their health; and about the trying climate. But when the Lord Jesus is calling for laborers, Scotland is saying, 'We have no more sons to give.'"

Turning to the President of the Assembly, he said, "Mr. Moderator, if it is true that Scotland has no more sons to give to the service of the Lord Jesus Christ in India, although I have lost my health in that land and came home to die, if there are none who will go and tell those heathen of Christ, then I will be off tomorrow, to let them know that there is one Scotsman who is ready to die for them. I will go back to the shores of the Ganges, and there lay down my life as a witness for the Son of God."

GOD GRANT, THAT IN EVERYONE OF US HERE GATHERED THIS MORNING (AND THOUSANDS MORE).

"... THERE IS IN MY HEART AS IT WERE A BURNING FIRE SHUT UP IN MY BONES, AND I AM WEARY WITH HOLDING IT IN, AND I CANNOT...."

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