

**THE LIFE  
OF  
CHRIST**

BRIAN J. BAILEY, Ph.D., D.D.

Version 2.1  
“*The Life of Christ*”  
©1998 Dr. Brian J. Bailey  
Previous version 2006 (Version 2.0)  
Revised January 2009

Front Cover Design  
©2002 Zion Fellowship Inc.

All Scripture quotations in this book are taken from the  
*King James Version Bible* unless otherwise stated.

Published by Zion Christian Publishers.  
Reprinted September 2016 in the United States of America

ISBN # 1-59665-009-5

For more information, please contact:

**Zion Christian Publishers**  
**A *Zion Fellowship*® Ministry**

P.O. Box 70  
Waverly, New York 14892

Phone: 607-565-2801  
Toll free: 1-877-768-7466  
Fax: 607-565-3329  
[www.zcpublishers.com](http://www.zcpublishers.com)

# Acknowledgements

**Editorial team:** Carla Borges, Barbara Fuller, Sarah Brogan, Mary Humphreys, David Kropf, Justin Kropf, Lois Kropf, Caroline Tham, and Suzanne Ying.

We wish to extend our thanks to these dear ones for without their many hours of invaluable assistance, this book would not have been possible. We are truly grateful for their diligence, creativity, and excellence in the compilation of this book for the glory of God.



# Contents

<i>Preface</i>	7
----------------	---

## *Christ's Pre-Existence*

1 Christ's Pre-Existence	15
--------------------------	----

## *Christ's Birth and Early Years*

2 Preliminary Events	23
3 The Infancy of Christ	39
4 His Youth	57

## *The Ministry of Christ*

5 Introduction to the Ministry of Christ	69
6 The Beginning of Christ's Public Ministry	75
7 The Great Galilean Ministry (Between First and Second Passover)	113
8 The Great Galilean Ministry (From Second to Third Passover)	135
9 The Great Galilean Ministry (Third Passover and After)	195
10 The Later Judean Ministry	237
11 The Later Perea Ministry	269
12 The Last Public Ministry in Jerusalem	303

## *Christ's Crucifixion*

13 The Upper Room	331
14 Gethsemane	347

15	The Trials	359
16	His Death	377
<i>Christ's Resurrection</i>		
17	Christ's Resurrection	393
	<i>Epilogue</i>	<b>409</b>

# Preface

When I felt that the Holy Spirit wanted me to write on the life of the Lord Jesus Christ, I had a sense of profound inadequacy. But the Holy Spirit has most graciously led me by a series of visions through the life and ministry of our Saviour here upon earth. Although I have rarely mentioned these visions in the text, nonetheless there is one that I would like to recount here in the Preface. I saw the Lord in white garments, seated on the hills surrounding the Sea of Galilee looking out over the sea. His appearance was one of absolute beauty, grace, and youthfulness; His spirit, so very free.

From above, I felt the profound love of the Father for His dear Son, for it was as though I were contemplating Jesus through the eyes of the Father. I also felt the deep satisfaction that the Father experienced as He contemplated His Son. This vision produced in me an intense fervour and desire to bring joy in some small way to the Father as He observes my life.

This book is dedicated firstly to the beloved Holy Trinity, praying that They will be glorified through these pages. However, it is also presented with the prayer that you, beloved reader, will appreciate Their combined work of grace that brought Jesus to the Cross for our eternal salvation.

May this book enable you to appreciate the love of the Father who sent Jesus; Jesus who came willingly; and the

Holy Spirit who enabled Jesus to live His matchless life of love, truth, and purity upon earth. God grant that this book may draw you closer to Them, and that you will live your life whole-heartedly and pleasing in Their sight. May God so bless you!

*Brian J. Bailey*



# Introduction

The study of the life of Christ is accomplished primarily through studying the Gospels. It is difficult to determine at times which Scriptures parallel each other. As a result, certain divergences do occur in the harmony of the Gospels. There are four Gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. The four living creatures mentioned in Ezekiel 1:10 had the faces of a man, a lion, an ox, and an eagle. These four faces can be viewed as the various presentations of Christ in the four Gospels.

Matthew presents Christ as the lion, the King of the Jews. He took special care to delineate Christ's royal lineage from King David, in order to prove His kingship and royalty. The Gospel of Matthew was written for the Jews.

Mark reveals Jesus as the ox. Oxen were used in Old Testament sacrifices. Christ is the High Priest of our faith who gave Himself as the ultimate sacrifice (Heb. 3:1). Mark gives a more dynamic revelation of the passion of Jesus than the other Gospel writers. Mark's Gospel was written for the Romans.

In Luke's Gospel we see Christ as the man. Luke emphasises Christ's humanity as he reveals Him as the Son of Man. He wrote primarily to the Gentiles.

Matthew, Mark, and Luke are called the Synoptic Gospels (or *the seeing Gospels*), for they are eyewitness accounts of

the life of Jesus. However, John's Gospel, which is called "the spiritual Gospel," is unique because it was written for an entirely different purpose. John's Gospel reveals Christ as the eagle—the eagle that soars into heavenly places. The eagle speaks of Christ as the Son of God. John deals with the divinity of Christ more than any of the other Gospel writers.

The Gospel of John has greater revelation than the other Gospels. In his Gospel, there are the seven "I AM's of Christ," declarations that certify His deity. When the Lord appeared to Moses in the burning bush, Moses asked Him what His name was, and He replied, "I AM that I AM" (Ex. 3:14). Therefore, when Christ said, "I AM," on several occasions in John's Gospel, He was declaring that He is the pre-existent One, the Jehovah of the Old Testament.

## **The Application of the Life of Christ**

Rather than merely looking at the life of Christ from a historical point of view, we must understand that the Lord wants us to experience His life. The life of Christ is a pattern for our lives. Remember, the Lord Jesus Christ is the chief cornerstone from which we take all of the measurements for our spiritual life and walk (see Ephesians 2:20-21).

In John 1:32-33, we read that the Spirit came upon Christ when He was baptised and then remained upon Him for the duration of His ministry. Christ was anointed with the Holy Spirit "without measure" (Jn. 3:34). God wants us to be filled

to overflowing with the Holy Spirit. Unless we understand His desire to fill His Last Day Church with the Spirit we will really miss the whole point of the life of Christ. The Lord Jesus clearly stated the reason He came in John 10:10, “...*I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.*”

The purpose of this study and the prayer of the author is that each one of us will begin to experience the life of Christ in a fresh way, and in so doing, we will come to know Him intimately.



**PART I**

**CHRIST'S**

**PRE-EXISTENCE**



# Chapter 1

## ***CHRIST'S PRE-EXISTENCE***

Before we look at the earthly life and ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ, we must first consider the fact that Christ was pre-existent before He was born as a babe in the manger of Bethlehem. Christ has always existed as the Son of God. We must realise that He had no beginning, and He has no end. Paul says in Colossians 1:17 that He is “before all things.”

### **Christ Has No Beginning**

Paul develops this in Hebrews 7:3, where he speaks of Melchizedec, who was “*without father or mother, without genealogy, without beginning of days or end of life, like the Son of God he remains a priest forever*” (NIV). Melchizedec, the king-priest, had *no beginning of days*. By this, Paul meant that his kingship and priesthood were not traced back to his genealogy or birth. Neither did this man, who is a type of the Lord Jesus Christ, our High Priest, have *end of life*.

In other words, his ministry continued into eternity and did not consummate at death. This man was made like unto the Son of God. Christ literally had no beginning of days because He has always existed. The Lord says in Isaiah 57:15 that He “inhabits eternity.”

## **Christ Is Eternally the Same**

Christ is eternally the same; He never changes. Hebrews 13:8 says, “*Jesus Christ [is] the same yesterday, and today, and forever.*” *Yesterday* refers basically to the days prior to His manifestation as a babe in Bethlehem. *Today* speaks of our days, the Church Age. *Tomorrow*, of course, refers to His millennial reign upon the earth and for all of eternity in the new heavens and new earth.

## **Christ Has Always Existed**

Micah 5:2 speaks clearly of Christ’s eternal activities: “*But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth [or origins] have been from of old, from everlasting.*” Christ was born as a babe in Bethlehem, but He existed prior to that event. His goings have been of old, from everlasting. The prophet Habakkuk said, “*Art thou not from everlasting, O LORD my God, mine Holy One?*” (Hab. 1:12). You see, Christ has always existed, but at a certain point in time He came to earth in His human form. **Christ is the Lamb that was slain before the foundations of the world (Rev. 13:8).**

## **Christ Existed Before the Creation**

It is clear from the Holy Scriptures that Christ existed before the creation. John 1:1 poignantly declares, “*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word*



*was God.” Before time began, Christ already existed with God.* In Proverbs 8, Christ is personified as wisdom. Christ is the wisdom of God. Paul said in 1 Corinthians 1:24, “*But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.*” Christ possesses all wisdom and knowledge (Col. 2:3).

Christ, the personification and embodiment of wisdom, says in Proverbs 8:22-27: “*The LORD possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old. I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was. When there were no depths, I was brought forth; when there were no fountains abounding with water. Before the mountains were settled, before the hills was I brought forth: While as yet he had not made the earth, nor the fields, nor the highest part of the dust of the world. When he prepared the heavens, I was there: when he set a compass upon the face of the depth.*” Christ also said in John 17:5, “*And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.*”

### **Christ Is the Co-Creator**

Another proof of Christ's pre-existence is that He is the Co-Creator of the earth. Colossians 1:16-18 makes this very clear: “*For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist. And he is the head of the body,*

*the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence."*

Paul says in Ephesians 3:9, "*And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ.*" God the Father created all things by Jesus Christ. John 1:3 says of Christ, "*All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.*" The heavens, the world, and the whole universe were made by Christ (Jn. 1:10). Along with God the Father, Christ was the Co-Creator of the whole universe and everything in it.

### **Christ Was Before Abraham**

The Lord Jesus Christ said to the Jews in John 8:58, "*Before Abraham was, I AM.*" This saying of His, "I AM," denotes eternal existence. Christ claimed existence prior to Abraham. In fact, Christ is the One who created Abraham. When God made mankind, He said, "*Let us make man in our image*" (Gen. 1:26). In actuality, it was God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit who created man.

### **Christ Is the Jehovah of the Old Testament**

When Christ said to the Jews, "Before Abraham was, I Am," He was declaring Himself to be the Jehovah of the Old Testament. The Jews understood what Christ was saying, and they sought to stone Him (Jn. 8:59). When Christ appeared to Moses at the burning bush, Moses asked Him what His

name was. He replied, "I AM THAT I AM," which is the meaning of *Jehovah* (Ex. 3:14).

When Christ used this title in John's Gospel, He was declaring Himself to be Jehovah. Christ is the Son of God. It was Christ, not God the Father, who appeared to Moses and the other prophets in the Old Testament. The Apostle Paul says in 1 Corinthians 10:4, "*And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ.*"



**PART II**

**CHRIST'S**  
**BIRTH AND**  
**EARLY YEARS**



## Chapter 2

### *PRELIMINARY EVENTS*

Now we are going to look at the Life of Christ as recorded in the four Gospels. In Part Two, we will consider His birth and early years. The first section will deal with the events leading up to Christ's birth, including the birth of His forerunner, John the Baptist. Then we will consider the first 30 years of His life, which were, for the most part, hidden years. Although very little is recorded about Christ during these years, they were the time of preparation for His ministry and calling.

Before Christ came to the Jordan River to be anointed with power from God, there were 30 long, uneventful years of preparation. These were years of being hidden in the shadow of His Father's hand. During this time, the Lord Jesus Christ was becoming the vessel that could be anointed by the Father and could manifest the power and glory of God. There is a very high price to pay to have God's best and to have His glory. It was during these years that Christ was qualifying for His calling.

Before we go any further, we must note that the Gospels are not written sequentially. A great amount of effort is required to obtain the chronological order of the life of Christ. Therefore, we will switch back and forth between

the four Gospels to give you the chronological sequence of events.

***The Annunciation of the Birth of John to Zacharias***  
(Luke 1:5-25)

In Luke 1:5-7, we are introduced to the godly parents of John the Baptist: *“There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judea, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the course of Abia: and his wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elisabeth. And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless. And they had no child, because that Elisabeth was barren, and they both were now well stricken in years.”*

In a time of great national apostasy, Zacharias and Elisabeth remained faithful and true to the Lord. Elisabeth and her husband were both of priestly descent. They had walked in the statutes of the Lord for many years and had been blameless, but they had been deprived of having children.

Elisabeth was barren. She is one of the seven women in the Word of God to experience the miracle birth of a son, along with Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel, Ruth, Manoah’s wife, and Hannah. It is very interesting that all of these barren women brought forth a notable son. Sarah brought forth Isaac. Rebecca brought forth Jacob. Rachel brought forth Joseph. Ruth brought forth Obed (lineage of David). Manoah’s wife brought forth Samson. Hannah brought forth Samuel, and



Elisabeth brought forth John the Baptist. Barrenness in these women's lives produced great fruit. In the same way, spiritual barrenness in the life of a believer produces great fruit. If you want fruit that abides, you must allow the Lord to take you through a time of barrenness and reproach.

*Isaiah 54:1-3 says: "Sing, O barren, thou that didst not bear; break forth into singing, and cry aloud, thou that didst not travail with child: for more are the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife, saith the LORD. Enlarge the place of thy tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of thine habitations: spare not, lengthen thy cords, and strengthen thy stakes; For thou shalt break forth on the right hand and on the left; and thy seed shall inherit the Gentiles, and make the desolate cities to be inhabited."*

If you want to produce a child like John the Baptist, of whom Jesus said, "there is not a greater born of woman," you must be willing to go through spiritual barrenness.

In Luke 1:8-11, while Zacharias was offering incense at the altar, faithfully performing his God-ordained priestly duties, the angel Gabriel appeared to him standing on the right side of the altar of incense. *"And it came to pass, that while he executed the priest's office before God in the order of his course, According to the custom of the priest's office, his lot was to burn incense when he went into the temple of the Lord. And the whole multitude of the people were praying without at the time of incense. And there appeared unto him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense."*

It seems that “*the right side of the altar*” would be the side that holds the candlestick. Entering the Holy Place from the Outer Court, the candlestick would be on the left side. However, entering the Holy Place from the opposite direction—the Holy of Holies—the candlestick would be on the right side. The candlestick speaks of the seven Spirits of the Lord, and the manifestations of the angels of the Lord. Thus this seems the more probable interpretation of the *right side of the altar*.

Gabriel said to Zacharias, “...*Fear not, Zacharias: for thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John*” (Lk. 1:13). The angel told him that he would have a son, and instructed Zacharias to call his name John.

It is interesting that both Jesus and His forerunner, John, were named by God before their birth. The Lord called Josiah by name nearly 300 years before he was born (1 Ki. 13:2), and named King Cyrus about 150 years before his birth (Isa. 44:27-28). Names have great significance—they signify one’s ministry and eternal purposes. John means “grace” or “beloved of the Lord.” John not only would bring joy to his parents by being a wise son, but many others would rejoice at his birth (Lk. 1:14).

Gabriel went on to say of John in Luke 1:15-17: “*For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother’s womb. And many of the*

*children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God. And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.”*

John was not Elijah, whom the Jews were expecting (Mt. 17:10), but he came in the spirit and power of Elijah to perform the ministry of Elijah. John’s ministry was to prepare the people to receive the Messiah.

The Jews misunderstood the prophecy in Malachi 4:5-6, which reads: *“Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord: And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.”* Elijah and Moses will indeed come before the Lord’s Second Coming. However, John was sent as the Lord’s forerunner before His first advent.

It was essential for John the Baptist to come before Christ to prepare the way. John fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah 40:3, which says, *“The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.”* This was John’s testimony of himself and of his ministry—he was one crying in the wilderness, *“Prepare ye the way of the Lord”* (Mt. 3:3).

In olden times, a king would never make a public appearance without having a herald first announce his coming. For

instance, Elijah ran before the chariots of King Ahab about 40 kilometres, from Mount Carmel to Jezreel (1 Ki. 18:46). In much the same way, John ran before the Lord Jesus Christ, the King of kings, announcing His coming in the power and spirit of Elijah the prophet.

As a King, Christ had to have a forerunner to announce His coming. The whole purpose of John's life was to prepare the way for Jesus, and introduce Him to Israel. As we shall see later, John announced Jesus to the multitude by saying, "*Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world*" (Jn. 1:29).

In Luke 1:18-23, we read that Zacharias responded to Gabriel with unbelief, because in the natural, it looked impossible for Elisabeth to have a child. The angel then told him that he would not be able to speak until the day his son was born. After Zacharias finished his time of ministry at the Temple in Jerusalem, he returned to his home in the hill country, which probably was not too far from Jerusalem (Lk. 1:39). As the word of the Lord had declared, Elisabeth became pregnant and remained in seclusion for five months (Lk. 1:24-25).

### ***The Annunciation of the Birth of Jesus to Mary***

(Luke 1:26-38)

The next event was Gabriel's announcement of the birth of Jesus to Mary. This event is recorded in Luke 1:26-38. We read in Luke 1:26-31: "*And in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, To a*

*virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. And the angel came in unto her; and said, Hail, thou that art highly favored, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women. And when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be. And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS."*

The Lord Jesus was named from the womb, prior to conception. This is the fulfilment of Isaiah 49:1, which says, "*The LORD hath called me from the womb; from the bowels of my mother hath he made mention of my name.*" Christ was named with a purpose. His name revealed His calling and mission in life. *Jesus* is the Greek translation of the Hebrew name Joshua (cf. Heb. 4:8). *Jesus* means "the Lord is salvation" or "Saviour." Matthew 1:21 makes this very clear: "*And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins.*" His calling was to be the Saviour of the human race, setting people free from the yoke and bondage of sin.

Gabriel went on to say in Luke 1:32-33, "*He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.*" It was made very clear that Jesus was the Son of God, and therefore deity. When Christ returns, God will give Him the throne of His father David.

Christ is the Davidic Messiah that was promised in the Old Testament. He will establish His throne in Jerusalem and reign over all the earth for 1,000 years. He will rule over the house of Jacob, and His rule and kingdom will last forever.

We see the response of the virgin Mary to this extraordinary promise in Luke 1:34: *“Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?”* Gabriel replied, *“The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God”* (Lk. 1:35).

The Incarnation took place by a miracle of the Holy Spirit. Jesus was given a human body and nature, but at the same time He was still God. This may be difficult for our finite, carnal minds to comprehend, but remember, with God nothing is impossible (Lk. 1:37)!

## **The Incarnation**

The birth of Jesus, called the Incarnation of God in man, occurred thusly. In the fullness of time, God spoke from His throne in heaven, saying, “Whom shall I send, and who shall go for us?” There was then a profound silence in heaven. Every creature in heaven wanted to respond, but none was able or worthy. Then arising from His throne situated at the right hand of the Majesty on High, the Son of God came and stood before His Father, saying, “Here am I; send me,” to which the Father said, “Go.” At that point, the Son started to descend from the

pinnacle of heaven's glory. As He went from one plain of glory to another, He progressively emptied Himself.

Paul tells us in Philippians 2:7 that He made Himself of no reputation and emptied Himself of heaven's glory. Finally leaving heaven, He descended to this earth, at which point the Son of God became a seed within the womb of the virgin Mary. This was the miracle of the Incarnation—the Son of God took on the nature of man by an act of the Holy Spirit.

***Mary's Visit to Elisabeth and the Song of Elisabeth***  
(Luke 1:39-45)

After the angel told Mary that her cousin (or relative) Elisabeth was six months pregnant, Mary went to visit her and stayed with her for three months (Lk. 1:56). When Mary greeted Elisabeth, John leaped for joy in Elisabeth's womb because the mother of his Lord had come. Elisabeth blessed Mary and pronounced a blessing upon the Holy Child she would bear.

***The Magnificat of Mary***  
(Luke 1:46-56)

In what is known as "The Magnificat of Mary" or "Mary's Song," Mary magnified the Lord and praised His name. She said in Luke 1:46-55: *"My soul doth magnify the Lord, And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour. For he hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden: for, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed. For he that is mighty hath done to me great things; and holy is his name.*

*And his mercy is on them that fear him from generation to generation. He hath showed strength with his arm; he hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree. He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich he hath sent empty away. He hath holpen his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy; As he spake to our fathers, to Abraham, and to his seed for ever.”* Mary remained with Elisabeth for about three months, and then returned to her own house.

### ***The Birth of John the Baptist***

(Luke 1:57-80)

When the time came for Elisabeth to deliver her child, there was great rejoicing among her neighbours. When he was circumcised, he was named John by his father Zacharias according to the word of the angel Gabriel in Luke 1:13. Then Zacharias prophesied concerning his son in Luke 1:76: *“And thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Highest: for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways.”* John would indeed come in the power of the prophet Elijah to prepare the way of the Lord Jesus Christ.

### ***The Annunciation of the Birth of Jesus to Joseph***

(Matthew 1:18-25)

The next event that took place was Gabriel’s appearance to Joseph to inform him that Mary, his fiancée, as we would call her, would give birth to the Son of God. We read in



Matthew 1:18-19: *“Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost. Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not willing to make her a public example, was minded to put her away privily.”*

Joseph and Mary were not united in marriage at this time. They were still in the sacred year of betrothal or engagement. This year of engagement was legally binding in the Jewish culture; therefore, Joseph and Mary were considered already married at this time. The only way this engagement could be broken was if proof were provided that the spouse had been sexually unfaithful (Mt. 19:9). When Joseph realised that Mary was pregnant, he sought to cover what he assumed was her infidelity. Although he had every right to stone her, he was contemplating giving her a bill of divorce privately to avoid making a public shame of her. This is the action of a just and righteous man.

The righteous always seek to cover and not openly expose other people's transgressions and failures. Yes, we must adhere to the laws of God, but remember, upon the tables of the law rested the Mercy Seat, signifying that God's mercy is above His law. A truly righteous person is also a merciful person. Unless God clearly directs otherwise, we should always seek to cover people's transgressions if at all possible.

Matthew 1:20-23 says: *“But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream,*

*saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins. Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us” (cf. Isa. 7:14).*

These verses are very important. Their purpose is to document the absolute deity of Christ. We must understand very clearly whom Jesus came from. His mother was Mary; however, His Father was God, not Joseph. Mary conceived Jesus by the Holy Ghost, not by Joseph.

### ***The Two Genealogies of Jesus***

(Matthew 1:1-17, Luke 3:23-38)

Let us now look at the genealogy of Christ, which is recorded in both Matthew and Luke. You will readily notice that although there is a distinct difference between these two genealogies, they do not contradict each other. The answer to the apparent contradiction is actually quite simple.

The genealogy in Matthew is taken from Joseph, Mary’s husband, while the genealogy in Luke is taken from Mary. This is apparent from Matthew 1:16, which says, “*And Jacob begat Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ,*” whereas in Luke 3:23 we read, “*And*

*Jesus himself began to be about thirty years of age, being (as was supposed) the son of Joseph, which was the son of Heli.”* Joseph’s father was Jacob, but he became Heli’s son through marriage. Heli, in actuality, was Mary’s father, and Joseph’s father-in-law.

Although Luke records Jesus’ genealogy through Mary, the reason Joseph’s name is mentioned rather than Mary’s is that the Jews always reckoned genealogies according to the male. Joseph was a descendent of David through Solomon (Mt. 1:1-16). Mary also was a descendant of David, but through David’s son Nathan (Lk. 3:23-31).

Christ was from the tribe of Judah, the kingly tribe that was given the throne (Gen. 49:10). Judah was spoken of as being a lion, and Christ is the Lion of the tribe of Judah (Rev. 5:5). Jesus Christ is the King of all kings, and He is from the root of David. Matthew’s genealogy of Christ through Joseph proves that Jesus is the Messiah. He was the Messiah and the promised “Son of David.” This shows His “royal” lineage from David through Solomon and the kings of Judah, proving that He is the King of the Jews. Also, Matthew 1:17 records that there were 42 generations from Abraham to Christ. This is very significant, for we know that there were about 20 generations from Adam to Abraham, making a total of 62 generations from Adam to Christ.

The number 62 is a very significant and important number in Bible prophecy. It speaks prophetically of the coming of the Messiah. The number 62 is used twice in Daniel. In

Daniel 5:31, we are told that King Darius, who is a type of Christ, was 62 years old when he took the kingdom. And in Daniel 9:26 we read that the Messiah would be “cut off” after 62 weeks—again linking the Messiah with the number 62.

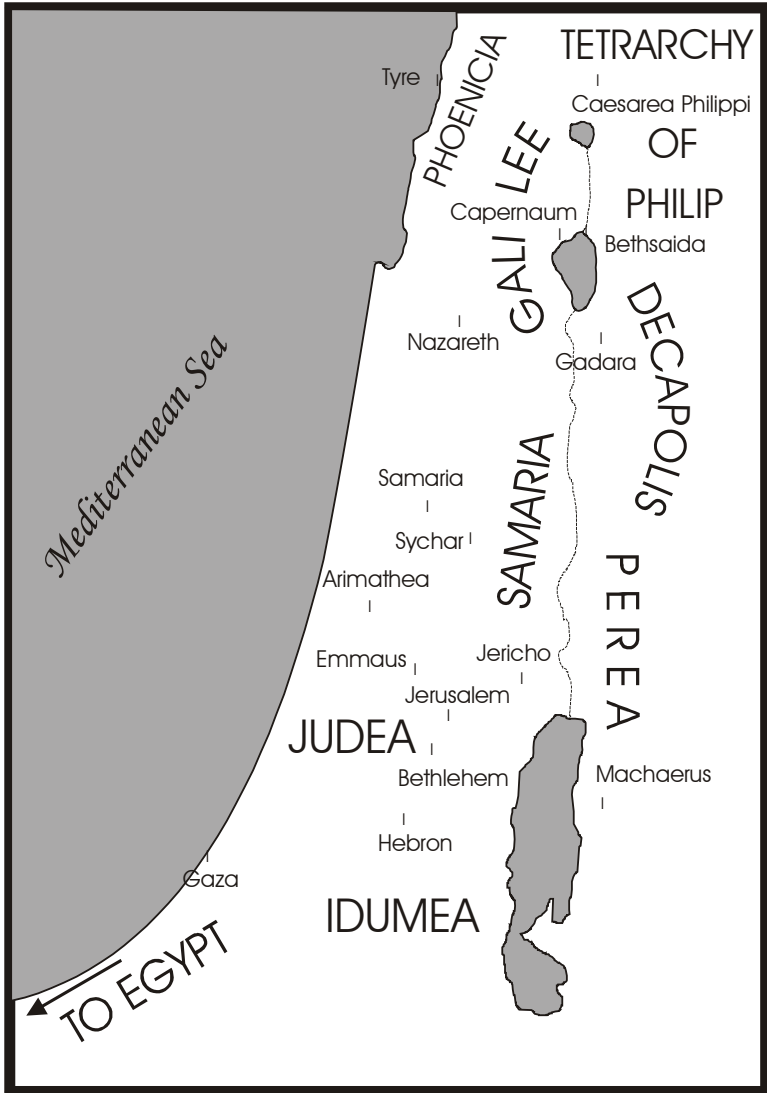
Therefore, the difference between the two genealogies of Christ in Matthew and in Luke is easily explained. Never let *seeming* contradictory statements in Scripture shake your faith in the Lord or His Word. Remember, the Holy Spirit is the Author of the Scriptures, and He does not make mistakes.

The genealogy of Christ was purposely included in the Holy Scriptures for basically two reasons: firstly, to prove that Jesus is the promised Messiah and King who descended from David; and secondly, to prove that Jesus is the son of Mary and the Son of God, not the son of Joseph. Therefore, Christ was given two natures. Because God was His Father, He was the Son of God, and He was divine. As God, He could not sin because God cannot sin.

However, He also took upon Himself the nature of man. His body was made of the substance of Mary. Therefore, He was also the Son of Man, a title used about 84 times in the Gospels. John 1:1 says of Christ, “*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.*” This speaks of His divine nature. In John 1:14 we read of His human nature: “*And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us.*”

Christ was 100 percent God and 100 percent man simultaneously. Thus it is very clear that Matthew records Jesus' genealogy through Joseph, and Luke records Jesus' genealogy through Mary. This view, though not accepted by all scholars, is found as early as the third century A.D. in the writings of Eusebius, the noted historian and "father of Church History" (circa A.D. 263-340), and is the only satisfactory way to reconcile the two genealogies.

# Palestine in the Time of Christ



# Chapter 3

## *THE INFANCY OF CHRIST*

### *The Birth of Jesus*

(Luke 2:1-7)

At the time that Jesus was ready to be born, God orchestrated the events to fulfil prophecy and to bring to pass His eternal purposes. We read in Luke 2:1-5: *“And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed. (And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.) And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David:;) To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child.”*

Caesar Augustus was the Roman Emperor at that time. He reigned from 27 B.C. to A.D. 14. From history, it appears that Cyrenius was governor of Syria at two different times. He first governed from about 5 B.C. to A.D. 1, during which time this census took place; and then he reigned again from A.D. 6-10. This *taxing* was a numbering or census of the whole of the Roman Empire for the purpose of future taxation.

God used a heathen emperor to further His purposes. Jesus had to be born in Bethlehem, the birthplace of King David, to fulfil the prophecy of Micah 5:2: *“But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.”* All the Jews knew that the promised Messiah and Son of David would come from Bethlehem (cf. Mt. 2:4-6). That is why it was essential for Jesus to be born in Bethlehem.

However, at that time Joseph and Mary were living in Nazareth, which was in Galilee. According to Roman law, everyone was taxed in the city where he was currently residing. However, according to Jewish law, everyone had to return to his place of origin to be taxed. Herod made a special concession for the Jews, and allowed them to be taxed in their city of origin. Thus, Joseph and Mary journeyed from Nazareth to Bethlehem, David’s birthplace, because they were of the tribe of Judah and of the house of David. It is significant that Bethlehem means “the house of bread,” since Christ is the Bread of Life (Jn. 6:35).

We read in Luke 2:6-7: *“And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.”* After their journey from Galilee to Nazareth, which probably took at least three days, they arrived in Bethlehem on a winter evening when the inn had no vacancy. Joseph was forced to



find other shelter for his pregnant wife. They ended up in a stable and used a manger, the feeding trough for animals in a stall, for Jesus' cradle. This is the lowly place where Jesus was born. The delight and joy of heaven, the King of kings, was born in a manger among animals.

*Visit of the Shepherds and the Praise of the Angels*

(Luke 2:8-20)

Shortly after Jesus' birth, the angel of the Lord appeared to some shepherds who were watching over their flock near Bethlehem. We read in Luke 2:8-12: *"And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord."*

The reason for the annunciation of Jesus' birth to the shepherds and their visit to the baby in the manger is that Jesus Christ is, in actuality, the Good Shepherd. Years later, He would say in John 10:11, *"I am the Good Shepherd."* That is one of His titles. The angel told the shepherds that this baby was the Saviour of God's people, the Christ (or Messiah), and that He was the Lord (or God). Indeed, this was the promised Messiah.

After the angel told the shepherds of the birth of Jesus, a multitude of angels began praising God, as recorded in

Luke 2:13-14: *“And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, good will toward men.”* Then the shepherds went to Bethlehem and found Jesus lying in the manger, just as the angel had said, and they glorified the Lord as they went back to their sheep (Lk. 2:15-20).

Mary kept all these things in her heart and pondered them. This act on the part of Mary holds a very beautiful spiritual truth. It is obvious that nobody would have believed her story if she had attempted to explain what had really happened to her. She would have subjected herself to unnecessary mockery and ridicule. May we be as wise as Mary, always having Proverbs 21:23 in mind, which says, *“Whoso keepeth his mouth and his tongue keepeth his soul from troubles.”*

### ***The Circumcision of Jesus***

(Luke 2:21)

Eight days later, Jesus was circumcised. *“And when eight days were accomplished for the circumcising of the child, his name was called JESUS, which was so named of the angel before he was conceived in the womb”* (Lk. 2:21). This was done in accordance with the keeping of the Law prescribed in Leviticus 12:3: *“And in the eighth day the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised.”*

Jesus, the One who gave the Law to Moses, was circumcised to keep the Law, since circumcision was the token of being in

covenant relationship with God. Spiritual circumcision is the process whereby God removes all hardness from our hearts and gives us a new heart that is soft and tender toward Him.

***Jesus' Presentation in the Temple***

(Luke 2:22-24)

Then we read of Jesus' presentation in the Temple in Luke 2:22-24: *"And when the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were accomplished, they brought him to Jerusalem, to present him to the Lord; (As it is written in the law of the Lord, Every male that openeth the womb shall be called holy to the Lord;) And to offer a sacrifice according to that which is said in the law of the Lord, A pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons"* (cf. Ex. 13:2).

According to the Law of Moses, the mother of a male child was unclean for 40 days (see Lev. 12:1-8). After this time of purification was completed, she had to bring a burnt offering and a sin offering to the priest. When Mary came to the Temple to present her firstborn son to the Lord, she offered a pair of turtledoves for her burnt offering. A lamb was the required burnt offering, but the Law made allowance for those who were poor and could not afford a lamb to bring a turtledove or a pigeon (Lev. 12:8).

Mary and Joseph's offering gives us insight into their financial situation. They apparently were very poor. Therefore, it is obvious that Jesus did not grow up in an affluent household. He emptied Himself and divested Himself of all His heavenly

glory and splendour, and came as the Servant of all. He made Himself of no reputation (Phil. 2:7).

### ***Simeon's and Anna's Homage to Jesus***

(Luke 2:25-38)

While Joseph and Mary were in the Temple presenting Jesus unto God, they encountered two people in particular. The first was Simeon. We read of Simeon in Luke 2:25-26: *“And, behold, there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon; and the same man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel: and the Holy Ghost was upon him. And it was revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ.”*

Simeon was a just and devout man who was waiting for the consolation of Israel—the coming of the promised Messiah. Thus we can see that the stage was set in Israel for Christ's coming. The people were eagerly awaiting His appearance. Simeon took baby Jesus in his arms and blessed God. He said in Luke 2:30 that he had seen the Lord's salvation. Simeon was permitted to see the long-awaited Saviour of God's people before he died. Simeon prophesied that Jesus would be a light to the Gentiles, a fulfilment of Isaiah 49:6. This refers primarily to His post-resurrection ministry.

At this point, this question comes to our minds: *What is the significance of this, and why was this elderly man named Simeon?* Simeon, meaning “hearing,” symbolised that the

babe would hear from God and would indeed also be heard of God. Isaiah 50:4 speaks prophetically of Christ, saying that the Father awakened Him morning by morning to hear as the learned. Simeon was chosen to introduce Jesus, the righteous King, because he was a just and devout man. Jesus is called “the Just” in Acts 3:14. Jesus is Jehovah-Tsidkenu, “The Lord our Righteousness.”

Jesus was also met by Anna the prophetess, whose name means “grace” (Lk. 2:36-38). Anna’s appearance portrays that Christ would be the Prophet and fulfil His ministry by the grace of God. Do you see how all of these events in the life of Christ were predetermined? They all have great significance. Jesus Christ is the Prophet like unto Moses.

The Lord said to Moses in Deuteronomy 18:18, *“I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him.”* Therefore, this encounter with Anna the prophetess foreshadowed Christ’s ministry as the Prophet.

### ***The Visit of the Wise Men***

(Matthew 2:1-12)

It appears that the visit of the wise men took place after Jesus’ presentation in the Temple. Joseph, Mary, and Jesus returned to Bethlehem, which is about five or six miles south of Jerusalem, after the presentation in the Temple. No specific details are given about their return, except that they moved into a house (Mt. 2:11).

A short time later, wise men from the East saw a star in the sky and followed it to Jerusalem. These wise men were expertly schooled in the study of the stars. The star they saw in the sky led them to Christ, who is called “the Star out of Jacob” (Num. 24:17). They inquired in Jerusalem of the whereabouts of the newborn King of the Jews. This made King Herod and the religious party very uneasy and apprehensive. Herod sent the wise men to Bethlehem and told them to inform him where the child was once they found Him. The star reappeared and led these wise men right to the place where Jesus was.

Why did a star lead them to Christ? The reason is that Christ is the Morning Star (Rev. 2:28; 22:16). The purpose of the wise men’s visit was to pay homage to the One who is the Wisdom of God (1 Cor. 1:24). In Christ are “hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Col. 2:3).

These wisemen presented three gifts unto Jesus: gold, frankincense, and myrrh (Mt. 2:11). Each of these precious gifts had a spiritual significance. Gold is a symbol of deity. Frankincense has to be burned with fire in order to release its fragrance. Therefore, in this case, it typifies suffering. Myrrh was the embalming fluid of the East, and thus a symbol of death. These three gifts were prophetic and symbolic of the fact that Jesus, who was God, was born to suffer and die for the sins of the world.

### **The Time of Jesus’ Birth**

It is interesting that Matthew records that Jesus was born in the days of King Herod, who was called Herod the Great.

He was made king by the Romans in 40 B.C., although he did not become sole king of Judea until 37 B.C. He reigned until the time of his death, which probably took place in late March or early April of 4 B.C. We know that a lunar eclipse occurred just prior to his death, which has been calculated as occurring on the night of the 12th-13th of March 4 B.C. (Josephus Antiquities 17. 6. 4). Because Christ was born during his reign, He was obviously born before the end of March 4 B.C. Several events took place between Jesus' birth and the death of Herod. Thus Jesus' birth must have taken place some time in 5 B.C.

***The Flight of Joseph, Mary, and Jesus into Egypt***  
(Matthew 2:13-15)

Being warned in a dream not to return to Herod, the wise men returned to their own country. The angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and also warned him of Herod's plot to kill Jesus (Mt. 2:13). Joseph arose in the night and quickly departed for Egypt with Mary and Jesus. They were there until after Herod's death in March 4 B.C.

Let us consider for a moment why Herod desperately wanted to kill Jesus. Herod was not a Jew; he was an Edomite. He ordered all the genealogies of the Jews to be destroyed in his quest to prove that he was a Jew. The Edomites are descendants of Esau. Esau had a perpetual anger against Jacob and his seed, and was ever seeking to kill Jacob (see Amos 1:11, Obad. 1:10).

Esau lost his birthright because of disobedience. He and his descendants sought to destroy the ones who received the birthright—Jacob and his descendants, the Israelites. Herod, although called “the Great,” was one of the most treacherous murderers in the history of mankind. His massacres were many. He even killed his own wife and son. Thus his order for the children to be slain was a way of life for him.

Satan has always sought to destroy the godly. In the time of Moses, Satan energised Pharaoh to destroy all the male Hebrew children. Satan knew that Moses would be born and become a saviour to the nation of Israel, so he tried to kill him. It was again Satan who stirred up Herod to seek to destroy Jesus. In Revelation 12, we see how he will seek to kill the *man child*, a special group of overcomers in the Church of the last days.

The reason God directed Joseph to seek refuge in Egypt was to fulfil prophecy and complete the prophetic flow from the Old Testament. Matthew 2:15 says of their descent into Egypt, “*And was there until the death of Herod: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Out of Egypt have I called my son.*” This is a quotation from Hosea 11:1, which speaks of Israel’s deliverance from Egyptian bondage. Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Matthew applied this verse to Christ’s return from Egypt.

Why was Christ sent to Egypt and not somewhere else? To fulfil prophecy. Why was this prophesied? What was the



purpose behind the prophecy that Christ would go to Egypt? To complete the *flow* of prophecy throughout the Word of God. There is a pattern that recurs throughout the Word of God.

Abraham went down into Egypt. Jacob went to Egypt, as did his seed. Egypt is a symbol of the world. The children of Israel were called to come out of Egypt (out of the world)—and so is every believer. What happened in Christ’s life must have a fulfilment in the lives of His spiritual sons and daughters in the Church. Therefore, the Church is called to come out of the world, in the sense that Christians should not be conformed to the ways of this world.

Egyptian tradition places the residence of the Holy Family near Heiropolis (modern-day Cairo). They were cared for by the Egyptians during the slaughter of the innocent in Israel. When I first had the privilege of ministering in Egypt, I was seeking the Lord as to how I would open my message in order to gain a rapport with these dear Egyptian pastors. The Lord spoke to my heart and said, “I have never forgotten how Egypt cared for My beloved Son.” When I shared what the Lord had told me, those dear pastors wept and afterwards gave me a calendar with the following Scripture: “*Blessed be Egypt my people*” (Isa. 19:25).

### ***The Slaying of the Children at Bethlehem***

(Matthew 2:16-18)

When Herod realised that the wise men had returned to their own country and were not going to tell him where the newborn

baby was, he became angry and commanded that all of the children under the age of two in Bethlehem and the surrounding area be killed. This fulfilled the prophecy of Jeremiah 31:15.

We read of this terrible slaughter in Matthew 2:16-18: *“Then Herod, when he saw that he was mocked of the wise men, was exceeding wrath, and sent forth, and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently inquired of the wise men. Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying, In Rama was there a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not.”*

We might cringe at this wicked, diabolical deed of Herod, and yet we ignore the fact that the same atrocity is taking place worldwide today. Abortion is genocide. Never before in the history of mankind has universal genocide been accepted, much less legalised. It should not surprise us, then, that the Lord is going to bring tremendous judgments upon the earth in these last days. In God’s eyes, abortion is murder! There is no way around this.

Many years ago, several brethren and I were praying for deliverance for a certain lady. She had many spirits and bondages. She was set free from all the guilt of her past, except for the sin of abortion. We prayed and prayed, and although she repeatedly confessed the sin of abortion, she could not get deliverance from the terrible guilt of this awful sin. Then the Lord spoke to

me, “Tell her to confess the sin of murder.” She then confessed the sin of murder, and was immediately set free. Abortion is actually murder. Therefore, when nations legalise abortion, they are actually legalising murder; and God will not stand for that. There are three occurrences of genocide in Scripture: 1.) In the time of Moses; 2.) In the time of Christ; and 3.) In the last days (the man-child of which we read in Revelation 12).

### ***The Return to Nazareth***

(Matthew 2:19-23, Luke 2:39)

After the death of Herod the Great, which we know from history took place in March of 4 B.C., the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream in Egypt and told him it was safe to return to Israel.

Joseph, Mary, and baby Jesus returned to Israel, but when Joseph heard that Herod’s son, Archelaus, was reigning over Judea, he was afraid to return to Judea. The Lord confirmed Joseph’s concern in a dream and told him to go to the region of Galilee. They went back to Nazareth and took up residence there. As far as we know, Jesus lived there until the time when He entered the ministry at the age of 30.

When Herod died in 4 B.C., the Romans divided his kingdom among his sons. Archelaus became the governor of Judea, Idumea, and Samaria. Archelaus was a very cruel ruler. He was deposed by Caesar Augustus in A. D. 6 and banished to Gaul. Antipas became the tetrarch of Galilee. Herod the Great’s other son, Philip, ruled over Northeast Palestine.

God led Joseph to Nazareth with a specific purpose. That was the place He had ordained for His Son Jesus to be raised. Matthew 2:23 says, “*And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene.*”

This verse is difficult to understand because we have no record in any of the Old Testament prophets that Christ would be called a Nazarene. However, it does not mean that Christ was a Nazarite. John the Baptist was a *Nazarite*, but Jesus was a *Nazarene*. The root meaning of the word “Nazarene” is the Hebrew word “netzer,” translated *branch*. It is found in Isaiah 11:1, which says, “*And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse [the father of David], and a Branch shall grow out of his roots.*” In other Old Testament prophecies where the Messiah is designated as the Branch, the Hebrew word “tsemach” is used, which means basically the same thing as “netzer”—a sprout or a branch (see Jer. 23:5; 33:15, Zech. 3:8; 6:12).

Christ, the Branch out of Jesse’s roots and descendant of David, was small and despised (cf. Isa. 53:3). Thus Jesus became known as “Jesus of Nazareth” and “Christ of Nazareth.” He is referred to by these titles nearly 20 times in the New Testament. *Nazarene* literally means “of Nazareth.” The inhabitants of Nazareth were despised and viewed as “second class” by the more cultured people in Jerusalem. Therefore, the term “Nazarene” signified someone who was despised and contemptible. This displayed the beginning of Christ’s rejection by His people.

*Jesus' Childhood at Nazareth*

(Luke 2:40)

Nazareth was the place God the Father chose for His Son Jesus to spend his childhood. Let us now consider what Nazareth was like. It was located in the region called “Galilee of the Nations” (Isa. 9:1) and “Galilee of the Gentiles” (Mt. 4:15). Galilee had a mixture of people. The northern kingdom of Israel, along with its capital city, Samaria, was destroyed in 722 B.C. The Jews were deported from their lands and scattered throughout other countries. People from Babylon and Assyria were brought to this northern part of Israel, including the region of Galilee. Obviously, these people were not true Jews.

Galilee was a centre of commerce, and foreigners constantly passed through it along one of the greatest highways of that time. Nazareth was like a cesspool, filled with the corruption of the unconverted Gentiles. This region was disdained and despised by the religious people of Judah and Jerusalem. What a stumbling block this situation must have been for the religious people who assumed that the Messiah would be raised in Jerusalem, the centre of religious teaching and government, and not in a corrupted city inhabited by peoples of heathen religions.

When Philip told Nathanael that they had found the Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth, Nathanael replied, “*Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?*” (Jn. 1:45-46). Nazareth had a terrible reputation. It was like the San Francisco of America or

Amsterdam of Europe. However, this was the city God chose for His Son to be raised in. Thus, of a surety, even from a very young age, Jesus had a tremendous obstacle to overcome in the ungodly environment of Nazareth because He was surrounded by people who did not walk in the ways of God. He had to make a conscious choice to do what was right.

How did Christ triumph in the midst of these terrible surroundings? The key is found in Isaiah's prophecy of Christ in His formative years: "*Therefore, the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel. Butter and honey shall he eat, that he may know to refuse the evil, and choose the good*" (Isa. 7:14-15). There is a popular saying in America that is really quite true: "You are what you eat." Spiritually, you are what you eat, too.

When this prophecy speaks of Christ's eating *butter and honey*, it speaks more of His spiritual diet than it does His natural diet. Therefore, let us consider the spiritual interpretation of butter and honey. Butter, we know in the natural, is the abundance of milk (cf. Isa. 7:22). Spiritually, milk speaks of the Word of God. Peter said, "*As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby*" (1 Pet. 2:2). The key to spiritual growth is to feed upon the sincere milk of the Word. Since milk speaks of the Word of God, *eating butter* would represent feeding upon the Word of God in abundance. From an early age, Christ was a dedicated student of the Scriptures, constantly meditating upon them. Paul's commendation of Timothy could well

be said of Christ, *“And that from a child thou hast known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation”* (2 Tim. 3:15).

Honey speaks of enlightenment. First Samuel 14:27 says that when the famished Jonathan tasted the honey, *“his eyes were enlightened.”* Honey symbolises the anointing of the Holy Spirit, which *“opens the eyes of our understanding”* (Eph. 1:18). Therefore, Isaiah 7:14-15 clearly speaks of the fact that Christ would feed upon the Word of God (butter) and the anointing of the Holy Spirit (honey), and because of this, He would know to refuse the evil and choose the good.

Sociologists say that children are a product of their environment. That is not true at all! Jesus was not a product of His environment; He overcame the obstacles and disadvantages of the city where He grew up, and He triumphed over sin. The prophet Daniel purposed in his heart that he would walk in the ways of God even in Babylon, the centre of witchcraft. Moses was raised in Pharaoh’s court, among all the magicians and wicked people of Egypt, yet he chose in his heart to do what was right (Heb. 11:25).

If the Lord has called a family to a mission field that has a bad environment or to a city that is full of iniquity, the parents should not worry. If God could keep Daniel in Babylon and Jesus in Nazareth, then He can protect your children anywhere.

Parents should obey the call of God, be faithful to train their children in the way they should go (Prov. 22:6), and trust the

Lord to watch over them. While it is true that an environment can have an effect upon a person, the whole issue is their personal choice. We must choose the good and refuse the evil, just as the Lord Jesus Christ did!

Luke 2:40 records Jesus' childhood at Nazareth, "*And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him.*" In the terrible environment of Nazareth, Jesus grew in grace and wisdom, and became strong in spirit.



# Chapter 4

## *His Youth*

### *His Visit to the Temple at the Age of Twelve*

(Luke 2:41-50)

From the time the Holy Family returned from Egypt and took up residence in Nazareth, nothing is recorded about the life of Christ until He was 12 years old. When He was 12, His parents went to Jerusalem to celebrate the Feast of Passover, as they did every year, and took Him with them. When they had finished celebrating the feast, Joseph and Mary began their journey home in the caravan. They had travelled a whole day's journey before they realised that Jesus was not with them. After searching diligently, but unsuccessfully, for Jesus among their relatives and travelling companions, Joseph and Mary returned to Jerusalem to look for Him.

After three days they found Him in the Temple, "*sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions*" (Lk. 2:46). The number *three* is the number of deity, drawing our attention to the fact that this 12-year-old boy was indeed the Son of God. Luke 2:47 records the wisdom that He possessed: "*And all that heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers.*" At the age of 12, Jesus—the Incarnate Word—confounded all the doctors of the Law with His questions and answers. In Biblical numerics, the number 12

is symbolic of government. Isaiah prophesied of the Messiah, “*And the government shall be upon His shoulder*” (Isa. 9:6).

When His parents found Jesus in the Temple, they were amazed. Mary said to Him, “*Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing*” (Lk. 2:48). Jesus replied, “*How is it that ye sought me? Wist ye not that I must be about my Father’s business?*” (Lk. 2:49). Jesus’ reply is remarkable. At this young age, He had an understanding of the purposes of God for His life. Jesus knew that He was the Son of God. He also knew this was a very important event. It was foreshadowing the fact that He would become the Teacher of Israel and the Church.

The third day also speaks of the millennial reign. Remembering that in Bible typology a day is as 1,000 years (cf. 2 Pet. 3:8), the third day would speak of the 1,000-year-reign after the 2,000 years (or two days) of the Church Age. In the Millennium, the temple which Ezekiel saw will be constructed (Ezek. 40–48). The Lord Himself will teach from this temple, and the law shall go forth from Zion (Isa. 2:3).

### ***Eighteen Silent Years at Nazareth*** (Luke 2:51-52)

The next 18 years of Christ’s life, after His visit to Jerusalem at the age of 12, were spent in obscurity. Nothing is recorded in Scripture about these “silent years,” as they are called. Jesus is not mentioned again in Scripture until His presentation to Israel by John the Baptist when He was 30 years old. The

only thing we are told is that Jesus returned to Nazareth and was made subject to His parents during this time (Lk. 2:51).

Children have basically one duty: *to obey their parents*. The Apostle Paul said in Ephesians 6:1-3: *“Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honour thy father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise; That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth.”* If children want to prosper and live a long life, they must obey their parents. In Colossians 3:20 Paul said, *“Children, obey your parents in all things: for this is well pleasing unto the Lord.”*

Although this portion of Christ’s life is veiled, we do know that during this time He was learning obedience in His father’s house. Hebrews 5:8 speaks of Christ during His formative years at Nazareth: *“Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered.”* Jesus learned instantaneous and unquestioning obedience by being made subject to Joseph and Mary. Let me say that obedience is *learned*; it is not inherited. This foundation of obeying without questioning the command was necessary for Christ as the Son of God. Without this prior training, He would never have had the fortitude of character to say “yes” in Gethsemane when His Father asked Him to drink the cup filled with all the sins of the human race.

During these 18 years, the prophecy in Isaiah 49:2 was being fulfilled, which says, *“And he hath made my mouth like a sharp sword; in the shadow of his hand hath he hid me, and*

*made me a polished shaft; in his quiver hath he hid me.*” In this prophecy, we see the formation of Christ as the Arrow of God. Christ was being made the Arrow of God that would be shot forth in God’s time to hit the mark. His mark was the cross.

An arrow has basically two parts: the *arrowhead* made of steel like a sword, and the polished *shaft* made of wood. The arrowhead speaks of the Word of God, which was like a sword in His mouth. The arrowhead was already developed in the life of Christ at a very young age. By the time He was 12 years old, He could converse with the doctors and scholars of the Law in the Temple. They were utterly amazed at His knowledge of the Scriptures. One would be led to think that Christ was ready to begin His ministry at the age of 12. However, there was further preparation necessary.

Christ also had to become the polished wooden shaft. The shaft of an arrow has to be polished until all the rough edges are removed. If an arrow is not perfectly polished, when it is shot toward the mark, aerodynamic forces will deflect it off course, causing it to miss the mark. This would be a tragedy. After all, the whole purpose of an arrow is to hit the predetermined mark.

Wood speaks of humanity. Therefore, Christ’s human nature had to be polished. This was accomplished through the things, which He suffered in His parents’ house. Hebrews 5:8-9 says, *“Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all*

*them that obey him.*” Christ learned obedience and was made perfect through sufferings (Heb. 2:10). Now, you might be asking yourself: *What do you mean when you say that Christ was made perfect? Wasn't the Son of God already perfect?* Perfect, in this verse, means to be fully equipped to fulfil the purpose that God sent Him into the world to perform.

We can only become polished and equipped to hit the mark through years of suffering and discipline. The arrow does not decide where it wants to go or when. Neither does it determine its mission. That is decided by the archer. We are made obedient and submissive to God, the Divine Archer, through sufferings. This is the way that we learn obedience.

The arrowhead represents Jesus as the Son of God, the Incarnate Word. The shaft represents Jesus as the Son of man. As the Son of God, He could not fail, but as the Son of man, with the frailty of the human nature, He could miss the mark. That is why this long period of preparation was so important.

It is believed that Christ was polished and ready to begin His ministry possibly by the age of 28. However, another period of about two years of waiting was necessary. An archer never puts an arrow into the quiver until it is perfectly polished and ready to be shot forth. Christ was placed in the quiver and was further mellowed for about two more years. Christ said in Isaiah 49:2, *“In his quiver hath he hid me.”* The Father hid Christ in the quiver until it was His ordained time for Christ to begin the ministry. This is very clear.

We have taken the age of 28 from the life of Joseph, who is a type of Christ. Joseph was ready for the throne before he was summoned by Pharaoh. He was ready at least two years beforehand, when he interpreted the dreams of the baker and the butler. But it was not until Joseph was 30 that he was ushered into the throne to begin his ministry. Therefore, knowing that Christ was ready before the time, we could say that it is quite possible that He was ready about two years beforehand as well. Then came the time of waiting in the quiver. This could very well be the most difficult time of our preparation. It is so difficult to wait.

God has a purpose for each one of our lives, and we all have a mark to hit. However, it is one thing to be ready, but it is another thing to be shot forth toward the mark at God's appointed time. Thus Christ had to wait in humility for possibly two years until His Father decided it was time for Him to begin His ministry. At the age of 30, Christ was presented by John the Baptist at the Jordan River. At this time, He was placed in the bow and was shot forth toward the mark that God had ordained for His life—the cross of Calvary.

You will notice in the Scriptures that Satan was not afraid of miracles. Satan even tempted Christ on several occasions to perform miracles (Mt. 4:3, 6). Satan did not fear Jesus' teachings either. What Satan feared the most was for Christ to hit the mark and go to the cross. He tried everything he could to deter Christ from the cross. He even offered Him a shortcut to the throne and to the kingdoms of the world if He would just not go to the cross (Mt. 4:8-9).

A certain man who was casting a demon out of a person said to the demon, "Do you remember the cross?" The demon replied, "Yes. If we had won that battle, we would have won everything." Satan and his demons knew that they would be defeated when Jesus went to the cross. Men and women who are sold out to do the will of God, and to hit the mark for their lives, defeat the devil. However, we must wait for the time of God and not launch out prematurely. We do not want to be like Ahimaaz, who ran before the time and did not have a message to deliver to the king (see 2 Sam. 18:19-30). Let us wait until the message of God is developed in our lives, and be committed deep in our hearts to stay on course and complete God's purpose for our lives.

Then we read in Luke 2:52 of something else that was taking place in the life of Christ during these hidden years: *"And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man."* Because Christ was obedient to His parents, He grew in favour with God and man. Wisdom was also growing in the life of Christ. Jesus applied His heart to wisdom every single day (Ps. 90:12). Wisdom is the principal thing in life (Prov. 4:7). Not only did Christ learn spiritual wisdom, but He grew in natural wisdom too. He learned Aramaic, the common language at that time, Hebrew, Greek, and quite possibly Latin as well.

### **Jesus the Firstborn Son**

It seems certain that Joseph died some time during these 18 years from the time Christ was 12 to the time He was

30. Joseph is not mentioned again after their return from Jerusalem when Jesus was 12. Joseph and Mary had four male children: James, Joses (or Joseph), Jude (or Judas) and Simon; and Joseph also fathered Jesus' half-sisters (Mt. 13:55-56, Mk. 6:3).

As the firstborn son in the household (Mt. 1:25), Jesus had many responsibilities after His stepfather Joseph died. He had to care for His mother Mary and for His half-brothers and half-sisters. While Christ was on the cross, He gave His mother over to the care of the Apostle John because He was about to die, after which John took Mary to his own house (Jn. 19:26-27). Joseph was obviously dead at this time. Thus, as the firstborn son, Christ learned the burden of responsibility. He learned how to be a good leader and how to care for others during these years. This was a preparation for His future ministry.

### **Jesus the Carpenter**

Jesus took up the trade of carpentry during these 18 years. Years later the people of Nazareth would ask, "*Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary?*" (Mk. 6:3). This was the trade of His father Joseph. The Jews said of Jesus in Matthew 13:55, "*Is not this the carpenter's son?*" It was the normal custom in Israel for children to be trained in the occupation of their fathers. Jesus was a carpenter, and He worked very hard doing physical labour. This was a humbling process for the Son of God. During this time, He was becoming the Servant of all (Mk. 9:35), and He was making Himself of no reputation.



## **The Last Day in the Carpenter's Shop**

A dear Canadian pastor whom I know had a vision of the last day that Jesus spent in his step-father's carpenter shop. In this vision, Christ looked with great satisfaction at a table that He had just finished making. He was happy because He had done a good and honourable job. Christ was preparing to leave that carpenter shop for the last time, knowing He would not return to it. He was now to take on a new identity as the Son of God. Jesus then gathered up all His tools and placed them neatly in their slots in the tool rack on the wall. He then proceeded to take off His apron. He folded it with care, and placed it upon a stool.

Christ opened the door to the carpenter shop, and then turned around and took one last affectionate look at the shop where He had spent so many years. It is quite possible that it was in this shop that He learned the trade from His stepfather Joseph as an apprentice. When Joseph passed away, Jesus probably taught His younger brothers carpentry. Jesus then closed the door of the shop and walked out of Nazareth, down to the Jordan River to begin His ministry.

It is interesting that everything the Lord Jesus did, He did well. He did everything, no matter what it was, small or great, with His whole heart. He finished every task He was given to do, and finished everything He started. This was one of the major reasons for Christ's success. Beloved, may we learn to have this same kind of discipline as well.



**PART III**

**THE MINISTRY  
OF CHRIST**



# Chapter 5

## *INRODUCTION TO THE MINISTRY OF CHRIST*

Now we come to Part Three, the Ministry of Christ. This section covers Christ's presentation to Israel at the Jordan River by John the Baptist and His ministry up until the last week of His life upon earth.

The ministry of Christ can be studied in several different ways. The Synoptic Gospels present His ministry from a geographical point of view—His ministry in the various regions of Israel. John's Gospel, called the spiritual Gospel, takes a totally different approach. John develops what is known as the "quadrapascal" ministry of Christ, which is Latin for "the four Passovers." John covers the four Passovers that took place during Christ's ministry. The Gospel of John also develops the fact that Christ fulfilled the truths associated with the Tabernacle of Moses.

In our study, we will follow the ministry of Christ in chronological sequence and point out the various geographical locations where He ministered. We will also review the four Passovers as they occurred in His ministry.

Let us consider the time span of Christ's ministry, which He began when He was 30 years old (Lk. 3:23). In the

Old Testament, 30 was the age when the priests entered the ministry and began their service in the Tabernacle (Num. 4:3). Christ began His ministry when He was 30 because He is the High Priest of our faith after the order of Melchizedec (Heb. 3:1). However, as our High Priest, Christ did not offer up animal sacrifices, but His very own life.

First of all, we must determine when Christ's baptism and presentation to Israel, the events that mark the commencement of Christ's ministry, took place. This takes a careful examination of the Gospels. It is clear that four Passovers took place during the ministry of Christ, the fourth taking place when He was crucified, marking the end of His earthly ministry. In our calendar, the Passover takes place in April (the March/April period). Therefore, there was a time frame of three years from the first Passover to the fourth Passover.

However, there were several things that took place prior to the first Passover. Jesus was baptised by John, He was tempted for 40 days in the wilderness, and He began His initial ministry in the region of Galilee, including His first miracle of turning water into wine at Cana (Jn. 2:1-11). Most conservative commentators have fixed the timing of Jesus' baptism by John in the fall of A.D. 26 before the first Passover, possibly in October because it is quite unlikely that John would have been baptising during the wintertime. Christ would have been about 30 years old at this time (Lk. 3:23).

The Word of God does not specifically state the time when Jesus was baptised by John. Also, when Christ was baptised, He was anointed with the seven Spirits of the Lord when the Holy Spirit came upon Him in the form of a dove. The anointing of the seven Spirits of the Lord in Scripture is associated with the Feast of Tabernacles, which symbolises the outpouring of God's Spirit. This seventh feast in the Jewish calendar takes place around October. This is the feast of the outpouring of God's Spirit. This would mean that Christ's ministry lasted approximately three-and-a-half years. We should not be dogmatic about the length and dates of Jesus' ministry and baptism because Scripture does not give us exact times.

The earthly ministry of Christ is a type of His ministry in the Last Day Church through His two witnesses—Moses and Elijah (Rev. 11:3-12). Virtually everything that happened to Christ has a spiritual fulfilment in the Church. Thus, Moses and Elijah's ministry in the last days of three-and-a-half years (or 1,260 days) points to a similar time period for the earthly ministry of Christ.

We know that the coming Antichrist will seek to duplicate everything Christ did. Moreover, in the last days, he will confirm a covenant with Israel for seven years (Dan. 9:27). Then after three-and-a-half years, he will break that covenant and offer up the abomination of desolation in the Temple in Jerusalem. The last three-and-a-half years of his reign is known as the Great Tribulation (Mt. 24:15,21, Rev. 13:5). Thus this time period also points to a three-and-a-half year time frame for Christ's ministry.

In the last days, the Lord's ministry will be completed in the Church, the spiritual Israel. There will be great glory and power. Christ Himself said, "*He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father*" (Jn. 14:12). The Last Day Church will experience greater power than the Early Church.

Considering that certain things can be fixed with accuracy in the life of Christ, we should touch on the chronological data we have available. The calendar that the Romans used is called A.U.C., which is an abbreviation of the Latin *Anno urbis conditae* (meaning *in the year from the founding of the city of Rome, or the year of the building of Rome—circa 753 B.C.*). In view of this, "A.D. 1" equals 753 A.U.C. Thus the birth of Christ could be placed around 748 A.U.C. (5 B.C.). We also can fix with some certainty the baptism of the Lord Jesus Christ. It most likely took place in the autumn of A.D. 26, possibly around the time of the Feast of Tabernacles.

The other notable date that we can fix from Scripture is the first Passover of the Lord's ministry, as brought out in John's Gospel. It most likely took place in the Spring of A.D. 27. The crucifixion thus took place during the Passover of A.D. 30. Jesus' resurrection was followed by a post-resurrection ministry of 40 days, after which He ascended into heaven.

John the Baptist, the son of Zacharias and Elisabeth, was Jesus' cousin, who was six months His senior. As a child he grew and waxed strong in spirit and was in the desert



until his showing unto Israel. He was the voice crying in the wilderness, saying, *“Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God”* (cf. Isa. 40:3). The reference to a desert can also speak of the spiritual condition of the nation of Israel at that time. Isaiah 53:2 says that Christ was *“a root out of a dry ground.”*

The ministry of John the Baptist was to introduce the Lord Jesus Christ to Israel as “the Lamb of God who taketh away the sins of the world.” John’s ministry lasted a brief 18 months, and was terminated by Herod Antipas, who beheaded him at the request of his adulterous wife Herodias. John had reprimanded Herodias’ divorce and remarriage. Jesus testified of John that there was no greater man born of woman. He was faithful to the ministry that God called him to.



# Chapter 6

## ***THE BEGINNING OF CHRIST'S PUBLIC MINISTRY***

Christ's ministry began inconspicuously. Very few events are recorded during this period of about six months, from His baptism to the first Passover. Prior to the beginning of Christ's public ministry, John the Baptist had come on the scene to prepare the way for Him. John's message was repentance, and he prepared the hearts of the people to receive the Messiah.

### ***The Baptism of Jesus***

(Mark 1:9-11, Matthew 3:13-17, Luke 3:21-23, John 1:32-34)

To the best of our knowledge, considering the scanty information that we are given, Jesus' baptism probably took place in the fall of A.D. 26. John said in Matthew 3:11, "*I indeed baptise you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptise you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire.*"

The baptism of John was with water unto repentance. John prophesied about the post-resurrection ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ, which was to baptise His believers with the Holy Spirit and with fire. The initial fulfilment of this took

place on the day of Pentecost when the disciples spoke in other tongues. John also said of Jesus in Matthew 3:12, *“Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.”* A “fan” speaks of a winnowing fork. This speaks of the Lord Jesus as the Refiner’s fire of whom Malachi prophesied (Mal. 3:1-3).

In Matthew 3:13 we read the first account of Jesus since His visit to Jerusalem at the age of 12, *“Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptised of him.”* Jesus travelled from Galilee to Jordan to be baptised by John. John humbly said to Jesus, *“I have need to be baptised of thee, and comest thou to me?”* (Mt. 3:14).

The Lord’s reply in Matthew 3:15 is very interesting: *“Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness.”* Jesus did not deny that John needed to be baptised of Him, but He told John that it was absolutely essential for Him to be baptised in order to fulfil all righteousness. The act of water baptism is a step of obedience and an act of faith.

### **The Importance of Water Baptism**

Water baptism is one of the ordinances of the Christian life. For a born-again believer to move on with God, he must be water baptised. Otherwise, his spiritual life will never grow or progress. As we have said before, Christ’s life shows us the pattern for our lives. Therefore, if Christ was baptised in water, we must be water baptised as well.

I want to emphasise that the Lord Jesus was not baptised as a baby. It is very clear that water baptism, as practiced in the New Testament and ordained by the Lord and the Apostles, is by full immersion. John 3:23 records another time when John the Baptist was baptising near Salim because there was *much water* there. Obviously, much water is not needed if baptism is practiced by sprinkling water over the head. The English word “baptism” is a transliteration of the Greek word “baptizo.” This Greek word means “to make fully wet” or “to immerse.” In classical Greek, this word was used to describe a ship that had sunk, and also to describe a garment that had been completely soaked in liquid dye.

The Apostle Paul explained the significance of water baptism in Romans 6:3-4, saying: *“Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptised into Jesus Christ were baptised into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.”* In other words, when we are water baptised, we are declaring to the Lord, the angels, and the world that we are dying to self so that we can live anew for Christ.

### **The Holy Trinity at the Jordan River**

There is a beautiful picture of the Trinity in the Book of Matthew: *“And Jesus, when he was baptised, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: And lo a voice from*

heaven, saying, *This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased*” (Mt. 3:16-17). When the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, came up out of the water, the Holy Spirit descended upon Him in the form of a dove and anointed Him with the seven Spirits of the Lord (Isa. 11:2). Then the Father spoke from heaven, giving His approval of His Son who was now beginning His ministry. The Three-in-One—the Godhead—were preparing to demonstrate over the next three to three-and-a-half years what could be done through One who was totally obedient.

In John 1:32-33 we read that the Spirit came upon Christ and remained upon Him for the duration of His ministry. The heavens opened above Christ, and He had an open heaven until He became sin for the world and said on the cross, “*My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?*” (Mt. 27:46). God wants us to have an open heaven too, beloved, whereby the Lord can reveal Himself and His purposes to us each and every day.

### ***The Temptation of Jesus***

(Mark 1:12-13, Matthew 4:1-11, Luke 4:1-13)

After His baptism, Christ was led by the Holy Spirit into the wilderness to be tested for 40 days. Matthew 4:1 says, “*Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil.*” The first thing that happened to Christ after He was water baptised and anointed by the Holy Spirit was that He was tested in the wilderness. This gives us a pattern for our lives as believers and followers of Christ. We will go through the same experiences He went through.

These experiences can be illustrated from the account of the journey of the children of Israel, which, Paul tells us, was written for our admonition (1 Cor. 10:11). The children of Israel first partook of the Passover lamb (which represents Christ as our salvation), then left Egypt (symbolic of this world), crossed the Red Sea (a type of water baptism – 1 Cor. 10:2), came to Mount Sinai during the time of the Feast of Pentecost (a type of the baptism of the Holy Spirit), and then were led into the wilderness to be tried of the Lord. Every believer who desires to move on with God will go through the wilderness!

God clearly states the purpose of the wilderness experience in Deuteronomy 8:2: *“And thou shalt remember all the way which the LORD thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments, or no.”* The ultimate purpose of God in all of our trials and wilderness experiences is that He may do us good in our latter end (Deut. 8:16). For Christ, it was to test His mettle to see whether or not He would be found worthy to be sent forth on His God-appointed course.

The Lord fasted for 40 days. This reminds us of the 40 days Moses spent upon Mount Sinai alone with God (Ex. 24:18), and the 40 days during which Elijah journeyed from Beersheba in the wilderness to Mount Horeb (Sinai) in the strength of the food the angel had given him (1 Ki. 19:4-8). Jesus became very hungry after He had fasted for 40 days. Doctors say that hunger returns after the fortieth

day of a fast. It was in His weakest moment that Satan came to tempt Him.

Satan was seeking to disqualify Christ from being the Saviour of mankind. If he could have provoked the Lord Jesus Christ to do something outside of God's will, Christ would have disqualified Himself. God is the One who led Christ into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil to prove that He was sinless, and that He indeed was worthy to be the Redeemer.

Satan tempted Christ three different times in three areas of His life: in His flesh (material needs and bodily appetites), in His soul (emotions), and in His spirit. Man is a triune being. He has a physical *body*; he has a *soul*, which includes his mind, his emotions, his will, and his affections; and he has a *spirit*. Moreover, we know that the Lord desires man to worship Him in *spirit* and in truth. These are the three same areas in which we will be tested. Therefore, let us see how Christ triumphed and how we can, too.

### **The First Temptation - His Flesh**

Satan said to Christ, "*If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread*" (Mt. 4:3). The devil tempted Christ by saying, "*If thou be the Son of God...*" He tried to make Jesus doubt that He really was the Son of God. Doubt is Satan's greatest weapon. If he can get us to doubt what God has spoken and weaken our faith, then he has defeated us and severed our spiritual lifeline of communication with God. Satan caused Eve to fall by saying to her, "*Yea, hath*



*God said...?"* (Gen. 3:1). Satan tried to make Eve doubt that God had really said that they could not eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

This was a tremendous battle for Christ. Remember, He had to believe by faith that He was the actual Son of God. He came as a baby and grew up as all other boys do. Thus it took a great amount of faith to believe that He was the literal Son of God. Satan knew that this was very difficult for Christ. That is why he hurled these doubts at Him.

Satan said to Christ, "*If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread.*" This was a tremendous temptation. He tempted Christ in the area of His flesh, tempting Him to satisfy His natural needs. This was very difficult, especially since Christ had not eaten in 40 days. If He did not perform the miracle, then Satan would say that He was not the Son of God because He could not turn stones into bread.

We must see here that there is nothing wrong with eating and meeting our natural needs. The reason Christ could not perform this miracle was because it would have been at the behest of Satan. The source and motivating force of our actions, especially in the realm of miracles, must be *the Lord and the Lord alone*; otherwise, it is sin. We must be controlled by the Spirit so that we do not do things to prove a point or satisfy our needs. We must do everything at the behest of God. If we want to be used to demonstrate the power of God, we must be *totally* in submission to the will of God.

Every time Satan attacked Christ, He defended Himself with the sword of God's Word. Thus we see how well versed Christ was in the Holy Scriptures. The written Word of God was His defence, and it must be ours too. Following Christ's example, every time the Devil tempts us, we should quote the Word of God in our defence. The Word of God is powerful, and it will defend us from the enemy of our souls.

Jesus replied to Satan in Matthew 4:4, "*It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God*" (cf. Deut. 8:3). In this instance, "proceedeth" refers to present tense. Christ said that we live by every word that continually proceeds out of God's mouth. In other words, we need to hear from God every day.

We should pray for the Lord to give us a keen ear to hear what He is saying. We want to have a listening ear so that we hear Him speak to us throughout the day, and commune with Him as a bride does with her bridegroom. King David said in Psalm 40:6, "*Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire; mine ears hast thou opened: burnt offering and sin offering hast thou not required.*" David's spiritual ears were opened by the Lord to hear what He really desired. Let us pray, "Lord, open my ears to hear Your voice."

### **The Second Temptation - His Soul**

Satan tempted Christ again—this time in the area of His soul. Again the enemy sought to make Christ doubt that He really was the Son of God. We see here the tremendous humility

of Christ. He allowed Satan, the corrupter of His beautiful creation, to touch Him, physically lift Him, and take Him to a pinnacle of the temple. Satan said to Jesus, "*If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone*" (Mt. 4:5-6). Satan can quote Scripture, too. Here he quoted Psalm 91:11-12. However, Scripture that is misapplied and not quickened by the Holy Spirit can result in error. That is what Satan did. He quoted the written Word of God out of context for his own purposes, and applied it in a different way than it was written. Satan applied these verses in a way that was contrary to God's will for Christ's life.

Jesus combated the Devil again by quoting the Word of God (Deut. 6:16), saying in Matthew 4:7, "*It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.*" Christ attributed to Satan the sin of seeking to tempt God and force God to move. Many Christians are in danger of this same sin when they try to force God to do something on their behalf that He does not want to do. Christ rightly applied the Scriptures, knowing that although God had promised He would protect Him, this promise would be voided if He did something outside of God's will. God's promises *only* apply to us as long as we *walk in obedience to His will*.

People crave the miraculous and supernatural. If Christ had jumped off this high place and landed on the temple area without being harmed, everyone would have been amazed. Similarly, when He miraculously fed the 5,000, the people

would have desired to make Him king (see Jn. 6:14-15). This certainly would have proven that He was the Son of God. However, it was not God's will for Christ at this time. We must not seek to gratify our emotions or draw attention to ourselves, and we must always walk in obedience to God's will.

### **The Third Temptation - His Spirit**

Then Satan tested the Lord a third time, this time in the realm of His spirit. *“Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and showeth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; And saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me. Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve”* (Mt. 4:8-10, cf. Deut. 6:13).

Satan took Christ up into a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world at the same time. Satan was offering the Lord a shortcut to bypass the cross. He told Christ that, as the prince of this world (Jn. 12:31), he would give Him all the kingdoms of this world if He would worship him. The Devil said to Christ in Luke 4:6, *“All this power will I give thee, and the glory of them: for that is delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will I give it.”* Prior to the cross, the influence and power of Satan was far greater. However, although he ruled over this world to a certain extent, he was always subject to the authority and power of Almighty God (Dan. 4:17).

We worship from the realm of our spirit. Worship is an essential element of all false religions, which are governed by fallen angels. Satan longs for worship, but worship belongs only to God, for He alone is worthy of our worship. We must not worship anything or anyone else other than the Lord. Lucifer (Satan's name before he rebelled) was the worship leader of heaven, and he directed the worship of all of heaven to God (cf. Isa. 14:12-14, Ezek. 28:13-17). But inside he began to crave and desire that worship for himself. This is the reason he failed.

Satan was willing to give up everything if Christ would just worship him. This same desire for worship can be seen in the lives of many tyrants. For example, King Nebuchadnezzar built the golden image and commanded everyone to worship it at the sound of the music (see Dan. 3:1).

Christ replied to Satan by quoting Deuteronomy 6:13: *"Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve."* What do we worship? This is one of the greatest tests we will face. The Lord said in Isaiah 42:8, *"I am the LORD: that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images."* Do we worship only the Lord or other things too? God desires to purify our spirits. Speaking of those who will abide in heavenly Mount Zion, Hebrews 12:23 says that they are just men whose spirits have been made perfect. We want to be disciplined in these three areas of life, and love the Lord with all our body, soul, and spirit.

Satan used all his armoury of weapons trying to cause Christ to sin. When Satan realised that he could not succeed, he finally left Him. Then the angels, who are ministering spirits, came to minister to Christ. We read in Matthew 4:11, *“Then the devil leaveth him, and, behold, angels came and ministered unto him.”* The angels probably bowed in reverential fear and love for the Son of God, and gazed upon Him with great delight.

***The Presentation of Jesus as the Messiah***  
(John 1:19-34)

This passage can be divided into two sections:

1. John’s testimony to the delegation sent from Jerusalem - 1:19-28
2. John’s identification of Jesus as the Messiah - 1:29-34

John the Baptist’s appearance on the religious scene sparked a renewed spiritual interest in Israel. The crowds flocked to John in the wilderness. This stirred the curiosity of the religious order in Jerusalem. They sent a delegation of priests and Levites to John to ask him who he was. John clearly stated that he was not the Messiah (the Christ).

When these Pharisees pressed John for his identity, he replied, “I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness; Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Isaiah.” John identified himself as the messenger of the Lord who would prepare the way for the coming of the Messiah, as prophesied by Isaiah.

Then the priests asked John why he baptised in water if he was not the Messiah or Elijah. John humbly responded by saying, "*I baptise with water: but there standeth one among you, whom ye know not; He it is, who coming after me is preferred before me, whose shoe's latchet I am not worthy to unloose*" (Jn. 1:26-27).

John's deep humility was one of the reasons that he was chosen for the unique calling of being Christ's forerunner. John had been so emptied of himself that he did not desire any glory or fame for himself. All John wanted was to point the way to his Lord, the Messiah, and to lead people to Christ. May we, likewise, not seek to draw attention to ourselves. This incident took place in Bethabara, which is on the east side of the Jordan River. This is where John was baptising, and in all probability it was where he baptised Jesus. Bethabara means "house of crossing," and is the place where the children of Israel crossed over into the land of Canaan in the days of Joshua.

The next day when Jesus came again to where John was baptising, John introduced Him as "the Lamb of God." We read in John 1:29, "*The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.*" John did not present Him as the King of Israel, but as the Lamb of God. John revealed the reason Jesus came to the world—He came to be the Lamb of God that would give His life upon the cross and take upon Himself the sins of the world. Jesus came to this earth to *die*!

In his book *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, Alfred Edersheim says that the whole of Israel was anxiously waiting

for the Messiah to come. However, they were expecting their Messiah to come as the conquering King who would overthrow the Roman Empire and bring in the theocratic reign of Christ upon earth. They were not anticipating the suffering Messiah of Isaiah 53, who would take away the sin of the world as the Lamb of God. This is where the great conflict arose.

They awaited a military leader, but the Lamb of God was sent to them. This concept of the Messiah in the minds of the Jews can be seen in the appearance of Jesus to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus. They were discouraged and despondent because Jesus had been crucified, shattering their hopes that He would break off the yoke of Roman rule and redeem Israel (Lk. 24:13-21). They said to Jesus, whom they did not recognise, *“We trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel.”* Jesus replied to them, *“Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?”* (Lk. 24:26). Then He explained to them through the Scriptures how He had to suffer and die first.

Then after His resurrection when He appeared to His disciples, they said to Him, *“Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?”* (Acts 1:6). All the disciples were interested in was whether Jesus was going to establish His millennial rule and overthrow the Roman Empire. Yet Christ had an entirely different priority. His chief concern was for them to receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit and then become His witnesses in all the earth (Acts 1:5,7-8). Thus we see that John had two messages of which Israel was entirely ignorant. Firstly, he introduced Jesus as the One who would baptise them with the Holy Ghost and fire; and secondly, he introduced Him as the Lamb of God who would



take away the sins of the world. This concept of the Messiah was quite foreign to the thinking of the religious leaders.

I believe that it is important for us to grasp this concept, because we misunderstand and misapply truth as well. We can say, "Lord, what about this, that and the other?" while the Lord is trying to say something entirely different to us. The Lord says in Isaiah 55:8-9: "*For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.*" Many people rejected Christ because He did not fit their concept or description of the Messiah. That is why we must absolutely surrender our minds and thoughts to the Lord.

You see, unless we grasp what was taking place at the time of Jesus' appearance and the misconceptions that the Jews had about the Messiah, we cannot really appreciate or understand the terrible conflict that the religious leaders had when Christ appeared. The Jews were looking for a different Messiah than the One John was presenting. Obviously, what they were waiting for is going to be fulfilled at the Second Coming, but they thought it would take place then.

***The Calling of the First Disciples***  
(John 1:35-51)

Before looking at this account concerning the calling of the first disciples, it is important to understand that we can never accomplish God's will on our own. We need *helpers*,

as well as a *spiritual seed* who can inherit the promises we have received from God. This is why it was so important to the Lord Jesus to find faithful men that would carry on His work after He returned to heaven. He had to have trained disciples who could continue the establishment of the Church after His ascension. We could almost say that from the very onset of His ministry, Jesus was preparing for His departure and wanted to make sure that His ministry was left in “good hands.”

We must always think long-term, with the idea of continuance in mind, when we do something for the Lord. We want fruit that remains (Jn. 15:16). This is only possible if we raise up disciples who have our same vision, and the same desire to continue the work that God has begun through us. The Apostle Paul raised up Timothy, and we likewise should ask God for such who will take our place when it is our time to leave this earth for our eternal home in heaven above.

Paul exhorted his spiritual son Timothy, “*And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also*” (2 Tim. 2:2). Paul wanted his message and vision to continue after he died, and after Timothy died. For this reason, he exhorted Timothy to teach what he had taught him to other faithful men, who in turn would be able to pass that message on to others.

It is important also to realise that in one sense it is the Holy Spirit who draws to us those whom the Father has ordained

to be our companions. Christ said at the end of His ministry, *"I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word"* (Jn. 17:6). However, at times certain people will seek to join themselves to us even though God has not ordained them to. John the Beloved said in 1 John 2:19, *"They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us."* So we must make sure that we make the right alliances.

Let us now consider the calling of the first disciples. After John had testified of Jesus for two days, five disciples were enrolled: Andrew, Peter, Philip, Nathanael (or Bartholomew), and an unnamed disciple who, in all probability, was John the Beloved. We read in John 1:35-38: *"Again the next day after John stood, and two of his disciples; And looking upon Jesus as he walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God! And the two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus. Then Jesus turned, and saw them following, and saith unto them, What seek ye? They said unto him, Rabbi, (which is to say, being interpreted, Master,) where dwellest thou?"*

It is very interesting that these two disciples of John the Baptist—Andrew and most likely John the Beloved—were living in present truth. A disciple means "a learner who attaches himself to a teacher." Present truth at that time was the teaching of John the Baptist. He was the one through whom God was moving. Yet now God was doing something

new in the land of Israel. The new move of God was in the ministry of Jesus. These disciples were able to make the transition from John to Jesus because their hearts were fixed upon *the Lord* and not upon the move of God itself. Others, however, were unable to make the transition from the old move of God to the new.

Many of John the Baptist's followers did not embrace Jesus when He came. Even many years later, Paul found some believers at Ephesus who only knew John's baptism (Acts 19:3). These believers had been stuck in a rut for many years, remaining in the old move of God when God was doing something new. They had not received the revelation of Jesus the Messiah. This is very important for our days, because we are living in a time when the Charismatic Revival has been waning for years, and we are waiting for something new to break out—the last day revival of the Feast of Tabernacles. We want to embrace the new move of God when it comes.

Andrew then brought his brother Simon to Jesus, and Jesus surnamed Simon “Peter,” which means a *rock*. Simon was anxious to meet Jesus after Andrew told him that they had found the Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth.

The following day the Lord found Philip, and Philip in turn went and found Nathanael. Nathanael was skeptical and unbelieving at first because of the reputation of Nazareth. However, once he met Jesus, he said to Him, “*Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel.*” His statement reveals what every devout Jew was looking for—a political

Messiah who would establish His reign. The sixth day was probably taken up with the journey to Galilee, and then on the Sabbath the Lord would have been in a synagogue as was His custom.

In John chapter 1, there are seven titles of Christ that are important (please see our companion book on *The Gospel of John*):

- 1. The Word (1:1,14)**
- 2. The True Light (1:8, 9)**
- 3. The Son of God (1:18, 49)**
- 4. The Lamb of God (1:29, 36)**
- 5. The Messiah - Christ (1:41)**
- 6. The King of Israel (1:49)**
- 7. The Son of Man (1:51)**

### ***Christ's First Miracle***

(John 2:1-11)

The third day (literally two days later) after His conversation with Nathanael, Jesus was in Cana at a wedding feast. Cana was a little town about four miles northeast of and visible from Nazareth. *This* was not included in Holy Writ accidentally—the *third day* has a spiritual significance. It speaks of Christ's resurrection three days after His death upon the cross. This event is only recorded in the Gospel of John, and it is evident that John was an eyewitness to this miracle by the extraordinary details that are mentioned in

his account. It was here in Cana that the Lord performed His first miracle. This first miracle is actually *a sign* (Jn. 2:11). The Greek word *semeion* used here for a miracle actually means “a sign.” These signs emphasise the *significance* of the miracles. That is why John calls them signs in the Greek. The purpose of a sign is to set the stage for the revelation of a spiritual truth. These outward miracles point to a greater spiritual truth that Christ was trying to portray.

John’s Gospel records eight signs (miracles) that Christ performed—seven pre-resurrection signs and one post-resurrection sign. They are: (1) Jesus turns water into wine - 2:1-11; (2) Christ heals the nobleman’s son - 4:46-54; (3) Christ heals the paralytic man - 5:1-9; (4) Christ feeds the 5,000 - 6:1-14; (5) Christ walks on water - 6:15-21; (6) Christ heals the man born blind - 9:1-41; (7) Christ raises Lazarus - 11:1-44; (8) Christ’s miraculous draught of 153 fish - 21:11.

In John 2:3-4 we read, “*And when they wanted wine, the mother of Jesus saith unto him, They have no wine. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, what have I to do with thee? mine hour is not yet come.*” They ran out of wine during the wedding feast. This must have been very embarrassing for the bridegroom, who was responsible for the provisions of the feast. Wine was an essential part of the festivities. The wine was mixed with water, especially towards the end, so that the guests would not get too drunk. A wedding feast was a time of great solemnity and rejoicing for all those invited to it. This generally included the whole village, since

everyone knew each other in a small village. The fact that Mary was invited and seemed to have had a certain measure of authority at this wedding has given rise to the belief that she was related to the parents of the bridegroom. However, Holy Scripture does not elaborate on this; therefore, it is not needful to pursue this conjecture.

There was a deep concern in the bridegroom's house at this moment of time. In turning to Jesus, Mary may not have been thinking of the possibility of a miracle, but could rather have been simply sharing her concern with her firstborn son, since Joseph her husband had already died.

Jesus performed His first recorded miracle by turning the water into wine. This was a sign pointing to His own death. He said to Mary, "*Mine hour is not yet come,*" a phrase that He repeated often until the time appointed of God for the Passover Lamb of God to be offered upon the cross of Calvary. The ruler of the feast recognised and pointed out that the bridegroom had kept the best wine until last (2:9-10). This revealed the spiritual truth that our Heavenly Bridegroom, Christ, has reserved the best wine until last. Wine speaks of joy and the fruit of the Spirit.

God is going to anoint His Church with the oil of joy in the last days when the Feast of Tabernacles is spiritually celebrated. One of the titles of the Feast of Tabernacles is "the feast of joy" (cf. Lev. 23:40, Deut. 16:13-14, Neh. 8:9-10,17). And so in these last days we can expect to see the Lord excel and far exceed anything He has ever done in the past. The

joy of the Lord is our strength (Neh. 8:10). The battles and onslaught of the enemy will be the greatest in the last days. Therefore we will need the greatest joy. This miracle caused His first disciples—Andrew, Peter, John, Nathanael, and Philip—to believe He was the Messiah (Jn. 2:11). This miracle is addressed in a more complete sense in our exposé of John’s Gospel.

### ***His First Sojourn at Capernaum***

(John 2:12)

Capernaum would later become the base of operations for Jesus’ ministry, but in this instance Jesus only stayed there for a short time. He was accompanied by the members of His family: “*After this he went down to Capernaum, he, and his mother, and his brethren, and his disciples: and they continued there not many days*” (Jn. 2:12). It is indeed appropriate to say that they went down to Capernaum, since Cana is in the highlands and Capernaum is on the shores of the Sea of Galilee.

## **THE FIRST PASSOVER**

After the Lord’s short stay in Capernaum, He embarked for Jerusalem to celebrate the Feast of Passover. This is the first Passover of Jesus’ ministry, and is very significant. It most likely took place around March/April of A.D. 27. At this first Passover, He cleansed the Temple, which He also did at the end of His ministry, signifying that Christ will cleanse His Church in the last days just as He did the Early Church.



*The First Cleansing of the Temple*

(John 2:13-25)

This Passover occurred in the Spring of A.D. 27. *“And the Jews’ Passover was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem, And found in the temple those that sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the changers of money sitting: And when he had made a scourge of small cords, he drove them all out of the temple, and the sheep, and the oxen; and poured out the changers’ money, and overthrew the tables; And said unto them that sold doves, Take these things hence; make not my Father’s house an house of merchandise”* (Jn. 2:13-16). Christ drove all the moneychangers out of the Temple and overthrew their tables. In order to perform this feat, the Lord was evidently clothed upon with the Spirit of might that was manifested in the life and ministry of Samson.

These moneychangers were dishonest. They would only accept money for Temple offerings in the coinage of the Temple (the shekel). When pilgrims from all over the world came to Jerusalem to visit the Temple, the corrupt moneychangers would convert their money into Temple coinage, but they added a huge percentage onto the exchange rate for their personal profit. They made the house of God a place of commerce.

Unfortunately, this did not only happen in the times of Christ. The Church is in a similar condition today. Many churches and ministries make merchandise of the Gospel, using all kinds of gimmicks and programs for the sole reason

of making money for themselves. This is not God's way, nor is it pleasing in His sight; so let us not walk in the ways of the covetous. Remember, the love of money is the root of all evil (1 Tim. 6:10).

When Jesus cleansed the Temple, His disciples remembered the scripture from Psalm 69:9, which says, *"For the zeal of thine house hath eaten me up."* Christ was consumed with zeal for the honour of His Father's house. As we have mentioned, there are actually two times that Jesus cleansed and purified the Temple. He cleansed it here in John 2 at the beginning of His ministry, and He also cleansed the Temple again at the end of His ministry (Mk. 11:15-17).

In between these two cleansings, in a space of three years, the Jews had gone back into commerce. These two cleansings of the Temple speak of the fact that Jesus will cleanse His Church (in a significant way) twice. Just as He cleansed the Early Church, He will cleanse the Last Day Church before He returns.

### ***The Temple of Christ's Body***

(John 2:18-22)

Then the unbelieving Jews said to Jesus, *"What sign showest thou unto us, seeing that thou doest these things?"* (Jn. 2:18). The Jews always wanted to see signs to prove that what Jesus said was true. The Apostle Paul, commenting upon this many years later, said in 1 Corinthians 1:22, *"For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom."* Then he added in

1 Corinthians 1:23, "*But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness.*" "Christ crucified" is why He came into the world—to be the Lamb of God who would die on the cross of Calvary.

Jesus' response to the Jews was baffling to them because they did not understand what He meant. He answered, "*Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.*" Then the Jews said, "*Forty and six years was this temple in building, and wilt thou rear it up in three days?*" (Jn. 2:19-20).

This was the 46<sup>th</sup> year of the building of the Temple of Herod. From reliable historical records, we are thus enabled to calculate the approximate date of our Lord's ministry. The commencement of the Temple of Herod was in the fall of the 18<sup>th</sup> year of Herod's reign, which was in about 19 B.C. (Josephus Antiquities XV 11.1-6). Therefore, Herod's Temple, which was finished in A.D. 64, would have been more than 80 years in building. It was destroyed six years later by the Romans in A.D. 70. This places the first Passover in A.D. 27.

Jesus ministered for approximately three-and-a-half years (three years after this event). When He was crucified, the Temple of Herod had been under construction for over 49 years, going on 50. The 49<sup>th</sup> or 50<sup>th</sup> year was the year of jubilee and release in Israel (Lev. 25:8). At His death upon the cross, Christ released His people from all the animal sacrifices of the Temple because as the Lamb of God, He had made the final sacrifice needed for the redemption of man. He set His people free into a new way of living—bringing them into the

age of grace. Now Christ is concerned with building up His spiritual temple, the Church.

The interpretation of Jesus' saying is now given by John: *"But he spake of the temple of his body. When therefore he was risen from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this unto them; and they believed the Scripture, and the word which Jesus had said"* (Jn. 2:21-22). Jesus was speaking of the temple of His body. He was speaking prophetically concerning His resurrection, which would take place three days after His death.

***Many Believe on Jesus***  
(John 2:23-25)

It is evident that Jesus performed many miracles at this time which are not recorded. We read in John 2:23: *"Now when he was in Jerusalem at the Passover, in the feast day, many believed in his name, when they saw the miracles which he did."* These miracles were not recorded, even as John states in John 20:30, *"And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book."* There was a continuous flow of miracles in the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ. Only a few of His miracles are recorded in the Gospels, but He moved in the realm of the miraculous continually. We need to believe for this power to be restored to the Church today!

In spite of the fact that many people believed in Jesus at this time, He did not commit Himself to them: *"But Jesus did*

*not commit himself unto them, because he knew all men, And needed not that any should testify of man: for he knew what was in man*" (Jn. 2:24-25). There is a hidden lesson in this for us, beloved. We must be very careful whom we confide in and whom we trust. Regretfully, over the years I have been betrayed and forsaken by many who walked with me. Some in similar positions have become bitter, but I thank the Lord that He has been my source of comfort.

In one recent betrayal, the Lord graciously held His nail-pierced hand down by my side, and He gave me the interpretation from Zechariah 13:6: "*And one shall say unto him, What are these wounds in thine hands? Then he shall answer, Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends.*" Micah 7:5-6 says: "*Trust ye not in a friend, put ye not confidence in a guide: keep the doors of thy mouth from her that lieth in thy bosom. For the son dishonoureth the father, the daughter riseth up against her mother, the daughter in law against her mother in law; a man's enemies are the men of his own house.*" Therefore, let us be careful whom we trust, and place our trust in the Lord at all times.

### *Nicodemus' Night Visit*

(John 3:1-21)

*"There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews: The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him"* (Jn. 3:1-2). Nicodemus, a Pharisee

and member of the Sanhedrin, came to Jesus by night for fear of reproach by the religious leaders. Nicodemus is mentioned twice after this event—first when he defended the Lord against the accusations of the Jews (Jn. 7:50), and when he aided Joseph in embalming Jesus (Jn. 19:39).

We see here that Jesus' miracles authenticated His teachings. This is God's pattern for the Church as well. Miracles establish and validate the truths of His Word. We read in Mark 16:20, *"And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen."*

When Nicodemus came to Jesus saying, *"Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him,"* the Lord did not dispute or acknowledge his statement, but instead He directly addressed the need in Nicodemus' heart, saying, *"Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God"* (Jn. 3:3). The message of being born again is the all-important truth that one must preach. Christ said that unless a person is born again by the Spirit of God, he cannot and will not make it into heaven.

It is not enough to be a good person, give to charitable organizations, pay taxes, live a good life and even go to church. None of these will get a person into heaven. We must have an encounter with the Lord Jesus Christ, repent, believe in our hearts, and profess Him with our mouths—and

when we do, the Spirit of God births us into the kingdom and family of God.

Nicodemus did not understand what Jesus was saying. "*Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?*" (Jn. 3:4). It is clear that Nicodemus was completely controlled by his natural mind, and had no concept of the new birth experience.

Therefore, Jesus tried to clarify this all-important experience, saying to him in John 3:5-7: "*Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.*"

Jesus then explained that the workings of the Holy Spirit are very similar to the blowing of the wind, which cannot be understood or comprehended by man: "*The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit*" (Jn. 3:8). In like manner, those who are born of the Spirit are not understood by others.

Then Nicodemus said to Jesus, "*How can these things be?*" (Jn. 3:9). Jesus gently rebuked him, saying in John 3:10, "*Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things?*" Although Nicodemus was one of the spiritual

leaders of Israel at this time, he did not even understand the basic doctrine that a man must be born again to enter into the kingdom of God. There was tremendous spiritual blindness in the time of Jesus. What a sad situation! Much like our days, the blind were leading the blind, without having any understanding of God's ways or purposes. Elihu said to Job in Job 32:9, "*Great men are not always wise: neither do the aged understand judgment.*"

Then the Lord spoke plainly concerning His crucifixion: "*And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up*" (Jn. 3:14). The reference is to Numbers 21:8-9, which says: "*And the LORD said unto Moses, Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole: and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live. And Moses made a serpent of brass, and put it upon a pole, and it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived.*" As we look unto Jesus and call upon His name, we shall be saved.

The theme of this discourse on the new birth is seen in John 3:16, one of the most beautiful verses in the whole of the Word of God: "*For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.*" God's solution to the fall and rebellion of man was to send His only begotten Son into the world to die so that we might have eternal life. God the Father did all of this out of love for you and me. I pray that we will never forget this.



Then we read in John 3:17, *“For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.”* Let us not forget the words of Paul, who said that God desires *“all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth”* (1 Tim. 2:4).

Jesus continued by saying in John 3:18-19: *“He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.”* God has provided a solution for our sins—the blood of Christ. Jesus did not come to condemn us. He came to give us eternal life. We are condemned if we do not believe in Him and receive His free gift of salvation and pardon.

In John 3:20-21 the Lord spoke of the difference between those who love darkness and those who love the light: *“For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.”*

Those who love sin and darkness hate the light because it exposes their wickedness. The wicked love to get drunk in dimly lit bars. I remember listening to an African pastor in the Cameroons who said to his people: *“You know that adultery is wrong. Why? Because you do it in the dark.”* The congregation assented with a grudging *“amen.”*

Paul stated in 1 Corinthians 3:13, “*Every man’s work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man’s work of what sort it is.*” Let us cry out to God that our works will not be wood, hay, and stubble, but rather, be those good works that the Lord has worked in and through our lives.

### ***The Two Baptisms*** (John 3:22-36)

After the brief time He spent in Jerusalem, Christ retired with His disciples to the countryside of Judea (Jn. 3:22). Some scholars refer to this time as the *Early Judean Ministry*. Both Jesus and John the Baptist were baptising at this time. In fact, Jesus was baptising more people than John. John gave an eloquent discourse of the merits of Jesus as the Son of God, and declared that the Father had given the Spirit without measure to Him. He then said in John 3:30, “*He must increase, but I must decrease.*” In order for Jesus to be seen in us, we must decrease and He must increase.

### ***Jesus Leaves Judea*** (Mark 1:14, Matthew 4:12, Luke 3:19-20; 4:14, John 4:1-4)

Knowing that the Pharisees had heard that He was baptising more disciples than John, Jesus left Judea for Galilee. On the way there He determined to pass through Samaria—an astonishing decision, since the pious Jews of that day always avoided Samaria due to the fact that the people there were non-Jewish, and the Jews did not want to be defiled by them

(Jn. 4:1-4). The religious Jews travelled north to Galilee along the east side of the Jordan River to avoid Samaria. However, Christ knew there was a reason why He needed to go through Samaria. His Father had a ripe harvest awaiting Him there. We are further told in Luke 4:14 that Jesus left Judea after He heard that Herod had put John the Baptist in prison, and that He returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit.

### *Jesus in Samaria - The Water of Life*

(John 4:5-42)

*“Then cometh he to a city of Samaria, which is called Sychar, near to the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph”* (Jn. 4:5). Sychar is a small village related to the Shechem of Old Testament fame. We might call them twin cities. Sychar was near the piece of ground that Jacob bought from Hamor, as recorded in Genesis 33:19: *“And [Jacob] bought a parcel of a field, where he had spread his tent, at the hand of the children of Hamor, Shechem's father, for an hundred pieces of money.”*

Jesus came to Jacob's well and sat down on it. *“Now, Jacob's well was there. Jesus therefore, being wearied with his journey, sat thus on the well: and it was about the sixth hour”* (Jn. 4:6). Jacob's well is about 120 feet deep, and has a stone parapet around it where the weary traveller can sit down to rest. The sixth hour is 12 noon our time.

A woman of Samaria, a social outcast by virtue of her many husbands and immoral life-style, came to draw water at a

time when no one else would be at the well. The Lord asked her to draw water for Him. Surprised, she asked Jesus how He, being a Jew, could ask her, a Samaritan woman, for water, since the Jews had no contact with the Samaritans. Then Jesus gave a discourse on the Water of Life, His second of seven public discourses in John's Gospel. (The other discourses are: The New Birth (Jn. 3:1-36); The Divine Son (Jn. 5:19-47); The Bread of Life (Jn. 6:22-66); The Life-Giving Spirit (Jn. 7:1-52); The Light of the World (Jn. 8:12-59); and The Good Shepherd (Jn. 10:1-42).

In simple steps, the Lord converted this woman from a habitual sinner into a flaming evangelist for the Gospel. He spoke to her about the well of living water springing up within unto eternal life (the experience of being born again by the Holy Spirit). Jesus led her to the water of life that would satisfy the longing in her soul. This woman had sought for satisfaction in human love, but she had not found it—for satisfaction is found only in Christ, who is the Fountain of Living Waters. In Him and Him alone can we drink and be satisfied.

Receiving a progressive revelation of Christ and catching a glimpse of something far better than what she had, this woman gave her life to the Lord. After this experience, she went into her village and proclaimed to everyone that He was Christ. Subsequently, the men came out of their fields to follow Jesus. Seeing all of this, Jesus proclaimed that one should not say that there are yet four months to the harvest, for the fields were already ripe for harvest. This is also true

today. We need to realise that there are souls everywhere waiting to be saved.

### ***The Revival in Samaria***

(John 4:28-42)

A whole city experienced revival because this one woman was touched by the Lord. She became a tremendous witness for the Lord, and in spite of her terrible past, she became very fruitful and effective for the kingdom of God. She led virtually a whole city to Christ. All it took was one person who caught the vision and got “on fire” for the Lord.

Every time we travel to different places, we should ask the Lord to give us key people to whom we can witness. Often, as in this woman's case, it is the *hopeless* who respond the quickest to the Gospel. It is these people who can evangelise their localities and open many hearts to the Lord. Christ ministered there for two more days, and then He continued on His journey to Galilee.

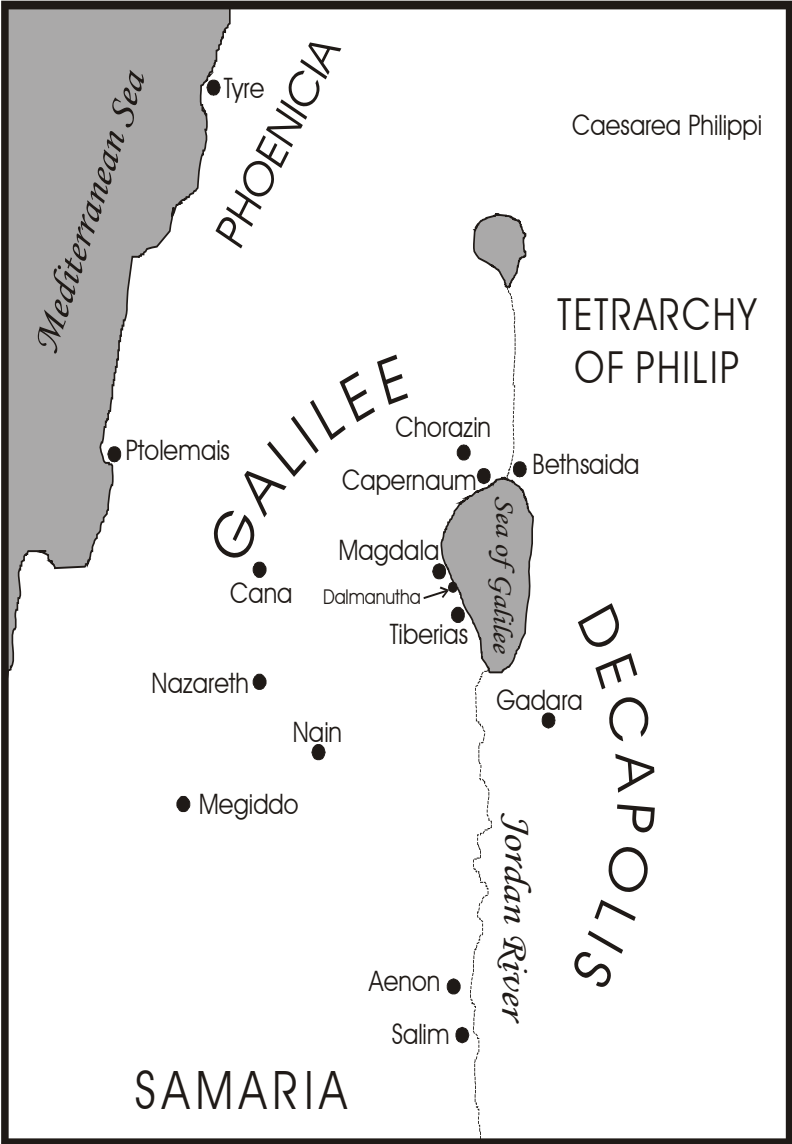
### ***The Arrival in Galilee***

(John 4:43-45)

Jesus arrived in Galilee, and the Galileans gladly received Him. *“Now after two days he departed thence, and went into Galilee. For Jesus himself testified, that a prophet hath no honour in his own country. Then when he was come into Galilee, the Galileans received him, having seen all the things that he did at Jerusalem at the feast: for they*

*also went unto the feast”* (Jn. 4:43-45). This subject will be dealt with in more detail as we examine the different sections containing the accounts of Luke 4:24, Mark 6:4, and Matthew 13:57.

## Galilee and the Surrounding Area







# Chapter 7

## ***THE GREAT GALILEAN MINISTRY***

### ***(Between First and Second Passover)***

This marks the beginning of what is called *The Great Galilean Ministry*. It encompasses the longest period of Christ's ministry, from some time after the first Passover in A.D. 27 until after the time of the Feast of Tabernacles in October, A.D. 29. During this time, the Lord ministered predominantly in or around the region of Galilee. (Please see the map of Galilee and the surrounding area.)

It was a time of teaching and great miracles, as evidenced by the way in which the Gospel writers introduce this period of His ministry: "*And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee: and there went out a fame of him through all the region round about. And he taught in their synagogues, being glorified of all*" (Lk. 4:14-15). We are told in Mark 1:14-15 and also in Matthew 4:17 that He preached that men should repent and believe the Gospel, for the time was fulfilled and the kingdom of heaven was at hand.

Christ spent the majority of His ministry in the region of Galilee, and most of His disciples were from this area. It is estimated that nearly 70 percent of Christ's recorded miracles took place in the region of Galilee. This was a fulfilment of

the prophecy of Isaiah: *“Nevertheless the dimness shall not be such as was in her vexation, when at the first he lightly afflicted the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, and afterward did more grievously afflict her by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, in Galilee of the nations. The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined”* (Isa. 9:1-2, cf. Mt. 4:14-16).

Christ, the Light of the world, was the Great Light that shined very brightly during His earthly ministry in Galilee. This was one of the most fruitful areas of ministry for Jesus, because the people were open-minded (whereas many in the religious capital, Jerusalem, were closed to His message).

### ***The Healing at Cana of the Nobleman’s Son*** (John 4:46-54)

In John 4:46-54 there is an account of Jesus’ second recorded visit to Cana, after the wedding feast. During this visit He healed a nobleman’s son who was sick to the point of death. The Lord interjected the remark, *“Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will in no wise believe.”* (He later developed this thought when speaking to Thomas in John 20:29: *“Blessed are they which have not seen, and yet have believed.”*) Then the Lord continued by saying, *“Go thy way, thy son liveth.”* This nobleman believed the word that Jesus had spoken unto him, and when he got home he found that his son had been healed at the very hour when Jesus had declared that he was healed.

This was a fulfilment of Psalm 107:20, which states, “*He sent His word and healed them.*” We should believe in the power of the Word spoken under the anointing of the Holy Spirit to bring healing, for it is creative. The word of the Lord is very powerful. A spoken word from the Lord can heal someone miles away. The words that proceed from the mouth of God are creative. We want to have His words in our lips, too, so that we speak creatively on the Lord’s behalf.

***His First Rejection at Nazareth***  
(Luke 4:16-30)

From Cana Jesus went on to Nazareth, the town where He had lived during His formative years. Luke 4:16 says, “*And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up for to read.*” As was His custom, Christ entered into the synagogue on the Sabbath day. In all likelihood, this was the synagogue that He had frequented as a child growing up in Nazareth. Year after year, He was just a face in the crowd, awaiting His Father’s time to begin His ministry.

We would do well here to ponder the Lord Jesus’ manner of life. The Lord shows us by example that we should be diligent to attend church on a regular basis. The Apostle Paul exhorts us in Hebrews 10:25, “*Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.*”

Although Christ was not a Levite or a son of Aaron by descent, He was given a portion of Scripture from the Prophets to read. This was not uncommon in His day. According to Rabbinical tradition, first a priest, then a Levite, and then five non-Levitical Israelites would read passages of Scripture in the synagogue on the Sabbath day.

Christ turned in the book to Isaiah 61 and read verses 1-2: *“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, To preach the acceptable year of the Lord...”*

Christ stopped reading in the middle of verse 2, which actually says: *“To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn.”* The Lord stopped on a comma. The reason He did not finish this verse was because in His First Coming He had only come to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord. *“The day of vengeance of our God”* is reserved for His Second Coming, when He will judge the nations of the earth. At that time He will come to defend Israel and comfort those who mourn in His chosen nation.

Between the phrase *“the acceptable year of the Lord”* and the phrase *“the day of vengeance of our God”* there is a time gap of about 2,000 years (from His First Coming to His Second Coming). It is so important when we study prophecy that we know when to stop at a comma! We must not force things to

fit our timetable or our sequence of events, but we must let Scripture interpret itself. From this example I think that we have an understanding of that which the Apostle Peter wrote in 2 Peter 1:20: *“Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation.”* Who could have known that there were many years intervening between these two parts of prophecy unless the Holy Spirit had revealed it to them? Therefore, when we come to the Holy Scriptures we must pray that the Lord will give us the correct interpretation of the passages we are studying.

Christ closed the book, gave it to the minister, sat down, and then said to all the people there, *“This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears.”* They began to say among themselves, *“Is not this Joseph’s son?”* Jesus then said to them, *“Ye will surely say unto me this proverb, Physician, heal thyself: whatsoever we have heard done in Capernaum, do also here in thy country... Verily, I say unto you, No prophet is accepted in his own country”* (Lk. 4:21-24).

My impression of Christ as I come to this point in His life is that He was a man who had everything under control and was very active in the performance of His Father’s business. As I was writing this commentary, I had a vision of Christ. What impacted me about His life was that He had all authority, knew what He was doing, and had tremendous strength of character.

Christ’s rejection by His own people reminds us of the prophet Ezekiel. In essence, God said to Ezekiel: *“If had I sent you to a foreign country, the people there would have*

accepted you. But because I have sent you to the house of Israel, your own people, they will reject you and oppose you” (cf. Ezek. 3:5-7). It is often true that we have our most fruitful ministry among those whom we do not know.

When you study Church history, you find that the majority of spiritual breakthroughs came as a result of missionary endeavours. Man has the strange tendency to accept things more easily from a stranger than from his own people, which is why missions is so important. Christ went on to say in Luke 4:25-27: *“But I tell you of a truth, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when great famine was throughout all the land; But unto none of them was Elijah sent, save unto Sarepta, a city of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow. And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Elisha the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, saving Naaman the Syrian.”*

Christ gave two historical accounts from the lives of Elijah and Elisha (1 Ki. 17:8-24, 2 Ki. 5:1-14) to show the Jews how often throughout their history they had rejected their own prophets, causing the Lord to turn to the Gentiles. Upon hearing this, those in the congregation said, *“but is not this the son of Joseph the carpenter,”* and became offended at Him. Jesus’ message infuriated the Jews.

They took Jesus out of the city and were going to throw Him over a very steep hill which the city was built upon, but by the power of God, Christ just walked through the midst of

them. This incident was an attempt by Satan to kill the Lord before the time, and thus prevent Him from fulfilling God's plan of redemption for us through His death on the cross. Notice that Satan's one desire was to keep Christ from the cross, because it was on the cross that Jesus would defeat him. It is significant that here Satan moved the people to try to kill Jesus, and later moved the religious rulers with envy to kill Him. However, when He was on the cross, Satan tried everything he could to get Him to come down from the cross. It was not Jesus' death that Satan feared, but Jesus' sacrificial death on the cross.

Satan moved the chief priests and elders to say to Jesus while He hung upon the cross, "*He saved others; himself he cannot save. If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him*" (Mt. 27:42). Therefore, we can see how important it was for Christ to hit His mark—the cross. For this reason, Jesus used His power to walk through the midst of the crowd unharmed.

Leaving the highlands of Nazareth, Jesus then went down to the city of Capernaum on the shores of the Sea of Galilee.

### ***His New Home in Capernaum***

(Matthew 4:13-16, Luke 4:31-32)

After His rejection at Nazareth, the Lord left His hometown and travelled about 25 miles northeast to Capernaum, which then became the centre for His ministry for the remainder of His life until He left Galilee six months before His

crucifixion. This is significant for us, since so often in life the Lord graciously moves us to where we will be the most fruitful for Him. Luke 4:31 says, *“And [He] came down to Capernaum, a city of Galilee, and taught them on the sabbath days.”* Capernaum became Christ’s base and headquarters during His ministry in Galilee. He took up residence here (cf. Mt. 9:1). He went out from Capernaum to minister all around the region of Galilee. God’s ways are perfect and so much higher than our ways. Christ’s rejection by His own people at Nazareth seemed like a great defeat, but it actually opened up a time of great popularity in virtually every other city in Galilee. The multitudes flocked to Him during this time.

*“And leaving Nazareth, he came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is upon the sea coast, in the borders of Zabulon and Nephthalim: That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, The land of Zabulon, and the land of Nephthalim, by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles; the people which sat in darkness saw great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up”* (Mt. 4:13-16). This is in reference to Isaiah 9:1-2. Galilee is described as the land of the shadows of death. This area was populated with a mixture of people from the days of Esarhaddon and Ashurbanipal, the last kings of the Assyrian Empire. These kings deported many Israelites and replaced them with people from other lands. The Heavenly Father granted these people the privilege of seeing the Light of the World shining forth from the person of Jesus.



It would be profitable to record the description Josephus gives of this area that had now become the hub for the ministry of the Lord. Speaking of the Sea of Galilee, Josephus wrote, “The water is sweet to the taste and excellent to drink and perfectly pure. All the shores of the lake being pebbly or sandy and the lake contains species of fish different in taste and appearance than those found elsewhere” (Josephus, War 1. 506-508). Josephus also mentions that the fertile plain on the north was remarkably beautiful, and abounded with walnut, palm, fig, and olive gardens. Capernaum was a flourishing city on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee.

Although Galilee was a place of great spiritual darkness, filled with people from other countries who served heathen gods, it was chosen by God as the place for a great revival. When my wife and I ministered in France, we learned that this is how the Lord works many times. The areas where we had the *most success* were places of *great spiritual darkness*. We had a flow of miracles in these towns. However, when we went to towns that were largely Protestant, we rarely saw miracles take place and few lives were changed. It was very difficult to establish churches in those places. This is how it was in the time of Christ.

### ***Calling of the Four Fishermen***

(Mark 1:16-20, Matthew 4:18-22, Luke 5:1-11)

At this point, Christ calls Peter, Andrew, James, and John to a permanent discipleship and full-time service. These men had already met Christ at the Jordan River and accompanied

Him on several of His preaching tours, but now they were called to a closer walk with the Master. Mark 1:16-20 and Matthew 4:18-22 record the calling of Andrew, Peter, John, and James while they were fishing.

However, Luke 5:1-11 gives a more detailed explanation of this event: *“And it came to pass, that, as the people pressed upon him to hear the word of God, he stood by the lake of Gennesaret, And saw two ships standing by the lake: but the fishermen were gone out of them, and were washing their nets. And he entered into one of the ships, which was Simon’s, and prayed him that he would thrust out a little from the land. And he sat down, and taught the people out of the ship. Now when he had left speaking, he said unto Simon, Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught. And Simon answering said unto him, Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing: nevertheless at thy word I will let down the net. And when they had this done, they enclosed a great multitude of fishes: and their net brake. And they beckoned unto their partners, which were in the other ship, that they should come and help them. And they came, and filled both the ships, so that they began to sink. When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus’ knees, saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord. For he was astonished, and all that were with him, at the draught of the fishes which they had taken: And so was also James, and John, the sons of Zebedee, which were partners with Simon. And Jesus said unto Simon, Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men. And when they had brought their ships to land, they forsook all, and followed him.”*

At the apex of their profession, after catching this tremendous draught of fishes, these highly successful fishermen left their families and vocation to follow the Lord Jesus, and they became “fishers of men.”

We also read in Matthew 4:18-22: *“And Jesus, walking by the sea of Galilee, saw two brethren, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers. And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men. And they straightway left their nets, and followed him. And going on from thence, he saw other two brethren, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in a ship with Zebedee their father, mending their nets; and he called them. And they immediately left the ship and their father, and followed him.”*

Jesus said to them, “Follow me.” These men had already caught the vision, but Christ had not sovereignly called them until this point. You see, the sovereignty of God is the all-determining factor in the timing of one’s call. Another man came to Jesus in Luke 9:57 and said, *“Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest.”* Christ said to him, *“Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head.”*

In other words, Christ was saying that the price to follow Him was too great for that man. Therefore, we can only enter the ministry when we are sovereignly called by God. We can desire to serve the Lord, but we cannot enter the ministry until we receive the divine call.

When the call came and the Lord said, "Follow me," James and John immediately left their careers and their father and followed Christ. Many times the call of God will require us to leave our father's house, our friends, our family, and our jobs. Speaking of the Bride of Christ, Psalm 45:10-11 says, "*Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people, and thy father's house; So shall the king greatly desire thy beauty: for he is thy Lord; and worship thou him.*" When the call of God apprehends us, we must forsake everything to follow the Lord. This is not to say that we do not honour our parents or care for them, but the call of God must come first.

Another point worthy of note here is the difference between Peter and Andrew, and James and John. Peter and Andrew were *casting* their net into the sea to catch fish when the Lord called them; whereas James and John were *mending* their nets when they were called. Peter was the prototypical evangelist, who would cast his net out and bring in 5,000 souls in one day. John, on the other hand, was a pastor who was in the business of mending broken hearts and ruined lives. You see, it all depends on the call of God. If we are called to a ministry similar to John's, we should not try to imitate Peter's ministry, and vice versa. Every believer has an important role to play in the body of Christ. In a church, these two ministries must function together. There must be those who evangelise and bring souls into the church, and then the pastor and other leaders can nourish them and lead them on to maturity.

***The Synagogue Deliverance***

(Mark 1:21-28, Luke 4:31-37)

In both Mark 1:21-28 and Luke 4:31-37 we have the account of where the Lord cast an unclean spirit out of a man. Because of this deliverance, Jesus' fame spread throughout the region of Galilee. Apart from the blessing that miracles are to the recipients, miracles propagate the Gospel far and wide. We should believe God for notable miracles in our own ministries, too.

***In the House of Peter***

(Mark 1:29-34, Matthew 8:14-17, Luke 4:38-41)

After leaving the synagogue, Jesus went to Peter's house and healed Peter's mother-in-law. It is noteworthy that Holy Scripture clearly states that Peter and many of the leading apostles were married. This totally contradicts Catholic theology. As the sun was setting, multitudes of sick people came to the door of the house, and Jesus healed them and delivered them of demons. As the demons came out, they declared that Jesus was the Son of God, for they knew Him. However, the Lord forbade them to testify of Him because He did not want their testimony. All these things happened to fulfil the prophecy of Isaiah 53:4, which says that He took our infirmities and bore our diseases.

***The First Tour of Galilee***

(Mark 1:35-39, Matthew 4:23-25, Luke 4:42-44)

Arising a long time before daybreak, Jesus went into a desert place to pray. Herein lies a precious truth—the early hours of

our day should be set aside for prayer and meditation upon the Lord. It is important to meet with God at the beginning of each day, because it is during these times of intimacy with the Lord that He gives us strength, wisdom, and direction for the day. Those who are most fruitful for God and effective in the ministry are those who arise early to meet with the Lord. When Jesus' disciples found Him, they said to Him, "*All men seek for thee*" (Mk. 1:37). He then went with His disciples into the towns of Galilee to preach the Gospel.

*"And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people. And his fame went throughout all Syria: and they brought unto him all sick people that were taken with divers diseases and torments, and those which were possessed with devils, and those which were lunatic, and those that had the palsy; and he healed them. And there followed him great multitudes of people from Galilee, and from Decapolis, and from Jerusalem, and from Judea, and from beyond Jordan"* (Mt. 4:23-25).

The multitudes began to flock to Jesus and follow Him. His fame had spread abroad, even beyond the borders of Israel. In a very real sense, the prophecy of Joseph was being fulfilled: "*Joseph is a fruitful bough, even a fruitful bough by a well; whose branches run over the wall*" (Gen. 49:22). Our prayer should be to be like Joseph and Christ, so that our "branch goes over the wall." We want to be a blessing not only to our own church, but to many peoples and nations.

Christ became very well known in many places because of His miracles in Galilee. He was well known even in the north in Syria. He had a following of people from Galilee, Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea, and from beyond Jordan (Mt. 4:25). There was a tremendous move of the Spirit during this time, between the first and second Passover of Christ's ministry. While Christ ministered in the region of Galilee, people came unto Him from all over. This is something we will see in the last day revival. People will travel many miles to attend a service where the Spirit of God is moving. Distance will not be a factor to many people.

### ***The Healing of the Leper***

(Mark 1:40-45, Matthew 8:2-4, Luke 5:12-16)

We read in Mark 1:40-42: *“And there came a leper to him, beseeching him, and kneeling down to him, and saying unto him, If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean. And Jesus, moved with compassion, put forth his hand, and touched him, and saith unto him, I will; be thou clean. And as soon as he had spoken, immediately the leprosy departed from him, and he was cleansed.”* Moved with compassion, the Lord healed this leper. Christ said to him, *“Be thou clean,”* and the leprosy immediately departed from him. The Gospels record time and time again that the Lord's *compassion* released His healing power. God wants to fill us with this same compassion so that we truly care for those in need. Compassion will release the power of God to flow through us.

To uphold the law, Jesus then instructed this man to show himself to the priest in accordance with Leviticus 14:2-4, which says: *“This shall be the law of the leper in the day of his cleansing: He shall be brought unto the priest: And the priest shall go forth out of the camp; and the priest shall look, and, behold, if the plague of leprosy be healed in the leper; Then shall the priest command to take for him that is to be cleansed two birds alive and clean, and cedar wood, and scarlet, and hyssop...”* The Lord sternly charged him not to make his healing known, but he did anyway. News of this miracle spread so fast and increased Christ’s popularity so quickly that He could not enter openly into Capernaum because of the multitudes, and was obliged to resort to desert places.

### ***Christ’s Return to Capernaum***

(Mark 2:1-12, Matthew 9:1-8, Luke 5:17-26)

Upon His return to His home in Capernaum, the crowds flocked to Jesus once again. There was tremendous power manifested by the Lord in Capernaum. It was a special place. It was in Capernaum that some people made a hole in the roof and let down a paralytic man so that Jesus would pray for him, since they were unable to enter the house due to the large crowds. People wanted to touch Jesus because He had the power of God.

When Jesus saw their faith, He said to the paralytic man, *“Son, thy sins be forgiven thee”* (Mk. 2:5). *“But there were certain of the scribes sitting there, and reasoning in*



*their hearts, Why doth this man thus speak blasphemies? who can forgive sins but God only?"* (Mk. 2:6-7). The sceptical scribes were appalled that Jesus had told this man that his sins were forgiven. They realised that Jesus was claiming to be God by this action. By the anointing of the Holy Spirit, Jesus knew what they were thinking (cf. Jn. 2:25). They did not even have to vocalise their thoughts. When He healed this paralytic man, *"they were all amazed, and glorified God, saying, We never saw it on this fashion"* (Mk. 2:12).

When God manifests and develops the gift of healing and the gifts of miracles in a person's life or in a church, the crowds come flocking as they did to Kathryn Kuhlman's meetings. I believe this is what is going to happen in the last days when God develops the gifts of miracles again in His Church. On this question of forgiveness of sins, we should remember that the Lord specifically gave this prerogative to His disciples in John 20:23: *"Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained."* Therefore, those to whom Jesus gives this prerogative today have the power to forgive sins, but it must be given by Christ!

### ***The Call of Matthew (Levi)***

(Mark 2:13-17, Matthew 9:9-13, Luke 5:27-32)

Now Matthew is called by Christ to follow Him and be one of His disciples. In Luke 5:27-28 we read: *"And after these things he went forth, and saw a publican, named Levi, sitting*

*at the receipt of custom: and he said unto him, Follow me. And he left all, rose up, and followed him.*” Walking along the shores of the Sea of Galilee, with the multitudes surrounding Him, Jesus passed by a toll station or customhouse along the main road. This road led to Acre on the Mediterranean coast and Damascus in the North, and also went past Capernaum. Levi collected taxes on the goods that were transported by that road for the dreaded Herod Antipas, in whose kingdom Capernaum was located.

Tax collectors were bitterly hated by the Jews. The Jews looked upon them as being employees of the occupying force (the Romans), and in addition to this, most of them were corrupt, overcharging the people. However, the Lord does not choose only one class or profession of people; He chooses those whose hearts are inclined toward Him. That is readily seen here in the case of Levi, for his response to the call of the Master was immediate. He left everything to follow the Lord.

Luke 5:29-32 continues: *“And Levi made him a great feast in his own house: and there was a great company of publicans and of others that sat down with them. But their scribes and Pharisees murmured against his disciples, saying, Why do ye eat and drink with publicans and sinners? And Jesus answering said unto them, They that are whole need not a physician; but they that are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.”*

Levi made a feast in the Lord’s honour, inviting many publicans and sinners as well. It is evident that Levi wanted

these people to meet the Saviour of the world. Levi must have been an extremely rich person to host such an elaborate feast. Including the publicans and sinners drew criticism from the Pharisees and scribes, for their traditions prohibited them from mingling with such people. Jesus responded by pointing out that it is not the whole, but the sick who need a physician.

Then the Lord made a clear-cut declaration of the Godhead's desire—which is to show mercy. In actuality, mercy is the highest revelation of God, as is seen in the Tabernacle of Moses. It was above the Mercy Seat in the Holy of Holies that the Lord manifested His glory (Num. 7:89). How gracious is our Lord! He came to save sinners. This is something that we must never forget. We are not only called to be teachers of righteousness, teaching those who want to follow the Lord, but like the Lord Jesus Christ we must also evangelise and seek to convert those who are lost.

It is amazing how Christ, in His band of disciples, united Matthew the tax collector and Simon the zealot—two men whose previous ideologies were diametrically opposed to each other—and caused them to flow together for the purposes of God. The Lord chose Matthew for a very specific reason. Matthew possessed certain qualities that would be very fruitful for the kingdom of God. As a tax collector (or accountant), he was accustomed to dividing things up into categories. That is how he wrote his Gospel—not necessarily in chronological order, but according to themes and headings. The Lord had a special call and task for Matthew, and he wholeheartedly responded to the call of the Master.

***The Lord's Three Parables on Fasting***

(Mark 2:18-22, Matthew 9:14-17, Luke 5:33-39)

Fasting occupies a very important place in the life of a believer as a necessary spiritual exercise. There are many questions that surface in the minds of God's people concerning this subject. The Lord addresses some of these questions in the following three parables.

***The Parable of the Bridegroom***

(Mark 2:18-20, Matthew 9:14-15, Luke 5:33-35)

*“Then came to him the disciples of John, saying, Why do we and the Pharisees fast oft, but thy disciples fast not? And Jesus said unto them, Can the children of the bridechamber mourn, as long as the bridegroom is with them? but the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken from them, and then shall they fast”* (Mt. 9:14-15).

The disciples of John the Baptist came to Jesus and asked Him why they and the Pharisees fasted often, but His disciples did not. By posing this question, the disciples of John were aligning themselves with the Pharisees.

Jesus responded by giving the parable of the Bridegroom. Jesus is the Bridegroom. His friends could not fast while they were in His presence because it was a joyous time. However, the Lord said that they would fast after His death. Fasting is a very good thing for Christians to do when they want to seek the Lord for a fresh word from Him or for a special occasion. Let me

emphasise, however, that it is important for us to be directed by the Lord when we fast as to how long we should fast.

The Lord spoke of the true fast in which He delights in Isaiah 58:6-7: *“Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke? Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh?”*

### ***Parable of the Old Garment***

(Mark 2:21, Matthew 9:16, Luke 5:36)

*“And he spake also a parable unto them; No man putteth a piece of a new garment upon an old; if otherwise, then both the new maketh a rent, and the piece that was taken out of the new agreeth not with the old”* (Lk. 5:36). Jesus is saying here that His new doctrines do not agree with the traditions of the Pharisees and scribes. They commended outward fasting as a religious observance, but they themselves were ravening wolves inwardly.

### ***Parable of the Old Wineskins***

(Mark 2:22, Matthew 9:17, Luke 5:37-39)

*“And no man putteth new wine into old bottles; else the new wine will burst the bottles, and be spilled, and the bottles shall perish. But new wine must be put into new bottles;*

*and both are preserved. No man also having drunk old wine straightway desireth new: for he saith, The old is better”* (Lk. 5:37-39). The Pharisees had set times for fasting, but their fasting made them self-righteous instead of developing a hunger for God within them. They were “old wineskins.” They could not be remedied by a new doctrine. They had to be entirely done away with.

The Holy Spirit used this parable to explain to me the reason that those who received the baptism of the Holy Spirit during the Charismatic Revival should not remain in their mainline denominational churches. God poured out His Spirit upon virtually every denomination at that time, but as always, there are certain denominations that refuse to go on with God. They are like old wineskins—they cannot receive the “new wine” of the Spirit. Therefore, believers should attend churches that are open to the new move of God.

I remember the testimony of a dear pastor whom God used to bring the Pentecostal message to France. He had pioneered many churches in that country. When he brought the message of the Holy Spirit into a certain mainline denominational church, they really embraced it. However, when he returned several years later, he found that this church was spiritually dead again. He asked the Lord why, since all the other churches he had founded were doing so well. The Holy Spirit responded that one cannot put new wine into old wineskins. May we forever remember this and not labour for the fruit that perishes, but for that which abides eternally.

# Chapter 8

## ***THE GREAT GALILEAN MINISTRY***

***(From Second to Third Passover)***

We now come to the second Passover in the ministry of Christ. We read in John 5:1, “*After this there was a feast of the Jews; and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.*” The Scriptures do not specifically state that this feast was the Feast of Passover, but it is generally accepted by most theologians as being the Passover. The time frame for these events fits the time of the Passover. This accounts for the four Passovers in Jesus’ ministry. The first Passover is recorded in John 2:13, the second is recorded here in John 5:1, the third in John 6:4, and the fourth and final one at His crucifixion in John 13:1.

### ***The Healing of the Lame Man on the Sabbath***

***(John 5:1-47)***

This event is uniquely reported in John 5:1-47. John records that it occurred on a Jewish feast day. The miracle took place at the Pool of Bethesda, which means the “House of Mercy.” Therefore, this miracle was an act of the Lord’s mercy.

The pool had five porches, which can be likened to the five pillars of the entrance to the Holy Place in the Tabernacle of Moses. In His ministry, Christ spiritually fulfilled the truths

of the Tabernacle of Moses, and this begins what is called “the Lord’s ministry in the Holy Place.”

There were a large number of impotent people waiting beside this pool for an angel to stir the water. An angel would stir the water from time to time, and the first person to enter the water was gloriously healed. The Lord saw an impotent man who was waiting there for the water to be stirred and asked him if he wanted to be healed. The man replied, “*Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool: but while I am coming, another steppeth down before me*” (Jn. 5:7). Jesus responded by saying, “*Rise, take up thy bed, and walk.*” This impotent man was instantly made whole.

Christ only healed one particular person—a man who had suffered with an infirmity for 38 years. Numbers in the Word of God are recorded for a purpose. They have spiritual significance. Why is it recorded that this man had an infirmity for 38 years? There is obviously something the Lord is trying to point out to us. According to the hermeneutic principle entitled “the law of first mention,” whenever something first occurs in Scripture, there is a significance attached to it.

The number 38 first occurs in Scripture in Deuteronomy 2:14, which says, “*And the space in which we came from Kadesh-Barnea, until we were come over the brook Zered, was thirty and eight years; until all the generation of the men of war were wasted out from among the host, as the LORD sware unto them.*” The children of Israel wandered in the wilderness for 38 years after their disobedience at Kadesh-Barnea.



Therefore, this was no ordinary miracle. It was a sign to Israel. This sick man represented the rebellion that is inherent in Israel. They rebelled at Kadesh-Barnea, refusing to go on with God. This particular man whom Jesus healed, therefore, typifies the ministry of Jesus to Israel as a nation. Jesus was offering healing to the nation of Israel for their rebellion.

When Jesus said to this man in verse 6, "*Wilt thou be made whole?*" in actuality, this is what He was saying to the Jewish nation. If the nation of Israel had responded to Jesus when He said to them, "*Wilt thou be made whole?*" the whole of history would have been very different indeed. Yet the time is coming when the nation of Israel will be healed and restored at Christ's return.

In spite of the Lord's graciousness, the Jews sought to kill Him because He had performed this miracle on the Sabbath day. The Pharisees cared more about their rules concerning the Sabbath day than they did about people. The Lord later found this man in the Temple and said to him, "*Behold thou art made whole, sin no more lest a worse thing come upon thee.*"

Then the Lord continued in John 5:17-47 by giving a discourse on His Divinity. We will not look at this in detail. We will only consider a few important points because it is covered more extensively in our companion book on *The Gospel of John*. Jesus compounded the Jews' hatred for Him when He stated in John 5:17, "*My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.*" By this statement, Jesus was claiming to be the Son of God and thus equal with God. We see the result of this statement in

John 5:18: *“Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only had broken the sabbath, but said also that God was his Father, making himself equal with God.”*

In John 5:19, the Lord declared His holy dependency upon the Father, saying, *“...The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise.”* Herein is a very important truth for our lives, too. As we wait upon the Father, depend on Him, and look to Him for direction, we will know what we should do in every circumstance. When we are led by the Spirit, we will complete the work that the Lord has called us to do.

The Lord emphasised His own greatness by saying that the Father has committed all judgment unto Him (Jn. 5:22-23). The reason for this is so that everyone will give honour to the Son of God. The Lord gives us insight into how we can also see clearly in the realm of judgment in John 5:30, where He said, *“...My judgment is just because I seek not my own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me.”* When the will of God is our foremost desire, we will know how to handle every dispute that arises in the church.

The Lord also spoke of the resurrection, when everyone will be divided into two groups. Those who have done well will inherit eternal life and those who have done evil will inherit eternal damnation (Jn. 5:29). Jesus then spoke of the fact that John the Baptist was a burning and shining light who bore witness of the Lord. Jesus also had the testimony of His miracles and of His Father in heaven (Jn. 5:31-37).

Jesus told the Jews that they had rejected Him, furthermore, they would accept one who would come in his own name—the Antichrist (Jn. 5:43). Therefore, the name of the Antichrist will be very well known by everyone. Concluding this discourse, the Lord stated that Moses, in whom they trusted, will be the one who will accuse them, because he wrote about Jesus, but they refused to come unto Jesus to be saved (Deut. 18:15, Jn. 5:44-47).

The chronology of the life of Christ now returns to the Synoptic Gospels. There is a time gap of about a year between John 5 and John 6. The setting of John 5 is the second Passover, and John 6 opens with the third Passover. Therefore, we must now look at the Synoptic Gospels to see what happened in the second year of Christ's ministry.

### *A Sabbath Day in the Corn Fields*

(Mark 2:23-28, Matthew 12:1-8, Luke 6:1-5)

After the Second Passover, Jesus was walking along with His disciples in some cornfields on the Sabbath day. His disciples began to pluck the corn and eat it. This infuriated the Pharisees because they did it on the Sabbath day. The corn ripens in Palestine between April and June. This substantiates that this event occurred as Jesus was leaving Jerusalem en route for Galilee after the Passover, which is in April. Jesus responded with five arguments to justify His disciples' actions:

1. He made a historical appeal to the conduct of David when he ate the shewbread in the house of God because he was

hungry (1 Sam. 21:1-6). Jesus used this incident to illustrate that the ceremonial law was not applied in a legalistic manner even in the Old Testament.

2. He made an appeal to the Law, for the priests “profaned” the Sabbath by offering two lambs on the Sabbath day (Num. 28:9-10).

3. He is greater than Moses, and He made the Sabbath.

4. The purpose of God was not condemnation, but mercy. Hosea 6:6 says, *“For I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings.”*

5. The Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath. Man was not made for the Sabbath, but the Sabbath for man. The Sabbath was made for man’s benefit; man was not made to serve the Sabbath day. The Lord was saying that it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath day. We must keep “the spirit of the law.” In keeping the letter of the law, the legalistic Pharisees were guilty of breaking “the spirit of the law,” by being unmerciful and unkind.

In reality, the Pharisees had fallen into the error of worshipping the law more than the Lawgiver—the Lord Jesus. The One who gave the Sabbath day is obviously far greater than the Sabbath day. Many believers and denominations fall into this same error of legalism. Therefore, let us take this exhortation to heart.

*The Third Sabbath Controversy*

(Mark 3:1-6, Matthew 12:9-14, Luke 6:6-11)

The Lord healed a man with a withered hand in the synagogue. Because it was on the Sabbath day, there again arose a controversy as to whether it was lawful to heal on the Sabbath. The Lord replied by saying that the Jews were hypocrites. If one of their sheep had fallen into a pit on the Sabbath day, they would have lifted it out, but they were unwilling to help those who were in need on the Sabbath day. He asked them, "Is it lawful to do good or to save a life on the Sabbath?" Jesus then stated that a man was of far greater value than a sheep, and that it was lawful to do good on the Sabbath.

The Pharisees and the Herodians were angered by Jesus' actions, and took counsel together as to how they might kill Him (Mk. 3:6, Lk. 6:11). Thus we see how the traditions of men and making an idol of the law can indeed turn us away from a fresh move of God, and can cause us to reject the very revival for which we have been praying.

The underlying reason for the union between the party that supported Herod and the Pharisees was that neither of them wanted Jesus to upset the status quo, thereby, giving occasion for the Romans to dethrone Herod. If that happened, they would lose their position and power, which had been conferred upon them by Herod.

***The Healing of the Multitudes by the Sea of Galilee***

(Mark 3:7-12, Matthew 12:15-21)

Jesus' fame had been spread far and wide. People from as far south as Idumea, as far north as Phoenicia, as far east as Perea began seeking Jesus. He healed the multitudes by the Sea of Galilee. As Jesus cast out the unclean spirits, they declared that He was the Son of God, but He charged them not to make Him known. As Matthew tells us, all of this was the fulfilment of the prophecy in Isaiah 42:1-4: *"Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon him: he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles. He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street. A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench: he shall bring forth judgment unto truth. He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment in the earth: and the isles shall wait for his law."*

***The Choosing of the Twelve Apostles***

(Mark 3:13-19, Luke 6:12-16)

After a night of communion with the Father in prayer, Jesus chose the twelve apostles. They are called the twelve apostles of the Lamb in Revelation 21:14. The list of the names of the twelve apostles occurs in Matthew 10:2-4, as well as in Acts 1:13. Judas was chosen to fulfil this scripture: *"Let his days be few; and let another take his office"* (Ps. 109:8). Judas Iscariot, whose name really means "Judas from Kerioth," was from Judea. Thus, as far as we can tell, he was the only non-Galilean among the original twelve apostles.

Christ called the twelve disciples unto Himself and ordained them in the second year of His ministry. As leaders, we should never hurry the ordination of people. We should take our time and let them develop and prove themselves, because it is very easy to install people into a position, but it is very difficult to remove them. Christ gave His disciples the power to heal and cast out unclean spirits. Then He sent them forth to preach to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

***The Sermon on the Mount***  
(Matthew 5 - 7, Luke 6:17-49)

Most theologians believe that the accounts of Matthew and Luke describe the same event. The mountain referred to here was just above Capernaum, where Jesus spent the night in prayer. He came down from the highest level and sat down with three groups of people: the twelve apostles, a great multitude of His disciples, and a multitude of people. It should be noted that in those days teachers would often walk while giving their lectures, but when they had something really important to say, they sat down. Therefore, the instruction which follows is of the utmost importance.

**The Beatitudes**

The Old Testament contains the Ten Commandments, which governed the conduct of the children of Israel. As New Testament saints, we have the Beatitudes to guide us along our earthly pilgrimage. Just as the Law was given upon Mount Sinai, so the Beatitudes (the inward laws) were given upon a mountain as

well. The teachings of the Sermon on the Mount were the core message of the Lord Jesus for believers. They are the essence of what it means to be a Christian. The whole of the New Testament can be summed up by the Sermon on the Mount.

The Beatitudes are all preceded by the word “blessed.” Although this word is sometimes translated “happy,” it means the joy and peace that God alone can give. The word “blessed” involves a partaking of the joy, peace, serenity, and state of bliss enjoyed in heaven. For this reason, “happy” is not a good translation, because happiness comes from the root word “hap” or “happenstance”—something that happens by chance, luck, or good fortune.

Happiness, *per se*, is dependent upon circumstances. God’s joy and state of blessedness is not dependent upon circumstances, situations, or people, for He is our source of joy (Ps. 16:11). Therefore, as we seek to live by these beatitudes and have them worked out in us, we will experience the joy of heaven here upon earth. We will now comment briefly upon the Beatitudes, which are arranged sequentially by the Lord.

**1. “Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven”** (Mt. 5:3). Being “poor in spirit” means that we recognise our own unworthiness and inability. This is the first prerequisite to receiving anything from God. This beatitude is well illustrated by the testimony of the Lord Jesus concerning His own dependence upon the Father in John 5:19, “...*The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do.*” Being poor in spirit signifies that we recognise our dependence upon the Lord.



It is really the attitude of a beggar—"I have nothing, I can do nothing, and I am nothing. Lord, please help me." This beautiful attitude was displayed by the Syrophenician woman when she said to the Lord, "*Yes, Lord: yet the dogs under the table eat of the children's crumbs*" (Mk. 7:28).

In other words, she was begging for the Lord to help her. She did not demand the best part; she was content to receive the crumbs that had fallen on the ground. A true beggar is grateful for every little morsel that he is given. This quality of being "poor in spirit" and being dependent upon the Lord is developed through severe trials. We must be taken beyond the limits of our own capabilities, strength, and wisdom so that we learn to depend upon the Lord. It is the poor in Spirit who will receive the kingdom of heaven.

**2. "Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted"** (Mt. 5:4). The second beatitude concerns those who are holy mourners. We need to have a holy mourning for our sins and for the state of the unsaved, as well as for backslidden believers, and for the state of the Church in general. In Scripture, there are basically two kinds of mourning (there are more, but these are the two principal ones).

- a. Mourning because of one's own shortcomings or sinful ways
- b. Mourning because of the state of a loved one, the Church, or a nation

• ***Mourning because of one's own shortcomings or sinful ways***—The first aspect of mourning is when we fall short of the glory of God, which we all have done. When we are weak in a certain area and we yield to temptation, part of the process of repentance and restoration includes mourning.

Paul speaks in 2 Corinthians 7:9-11,13 concerning a Corinthian believer who had fallen into sin and was then restored: *“Now I rejoice, not that ye were made sorry, but that ye sorrowed to repentance: for ye were made sorry after a godly manner, that ye might receive damage by us in nothing. For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death. For behold this selfsame thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves, yea, what indignation, yea, what fear, yea, what vehement desire, yea, what zeal, yea, what revenge! In all things ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter... Therefore we were comforted in your comfort: yea, and exceedingly the more joyed we for the joy of Titus, because his spirit was refreshed by you all.”* Paul had to send a reprimand to this man. The result of dealing with his sin “head-on” was that this man repented. He mourned with great sorrow because of his sin. The end result was repentance, restoration, and *comfort*. Remember, Jesus said, *“Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.”*

• ***Mourning because of the state of a loved one, the Church, or a nation***—The second aspect of mourning is the mourning that comes upon God's people when an individual, a nation, or the Church is backslidden.

In the days of the prophet Ezekiel, the angel of the Lord was sent through Jerusalem to set a mark upon the foreheads of those godly saints who mourned and cried for the wickedness of the city. *“And the LORD said unto him, Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof”* (Ezek. 9:4). The Lord promised to spare these “holy mourners” when the Babylonians destroyed Jerusalem. We need mourners to rise up in the Church today to mourn for the wickedness not only of the nations, but also of the Church, especially in North America.

The promise to those who mourn, either in a godly way for their own sins or for the backslidden condition of others, is that they will be comforted. We read in Isaiah 61:2-3: *“To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn; To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that he might be glorified.”* God is the God of all comfort (2 Cor. 1:3), and He wants to comfort and console us.

**3. “Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth”** (Mt. 5:5). In order, to progress on in our Christian life, there is the need for meekness. Meekness is viewed by non-Christians as weakness and a lack of strength of character; we would say in modern terms “a push-over”—

one who is easily taken advantage of or defeated. However, in God's eyes meekness is a precious character trait. Peter tells us that "*a meek and quiet spirit is in the sight of God of great price*" (1 Pet. 3:4). Meekness is not weakness, but controlled strength. It is the strength of character that enables us not to retaliate or defend ourselves. It is exemplified by the words of Paul in Romans 8:28, "*And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to his purpose.*" Those who are meek accept every circumstance that comes their way from the Lord with a rejoicing attitude, realising that God uses every situation to purify and perfect us.

The Greek word translated "meek" is "praus," which speaks of being mild or tamed. It can be illustrated by a mature dog that has been trained to respond to every command of its master. This quality can be illustrated from Proverbs 21:1, which says, "*The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will.*" Being meek is the quality of being pliable and easily controlled by the Lord.

The virtue of meekness is so rare that, in fact, only two men in the Word of God are called meek—Jesus and Moses. Jesus said in Matthew 11:29, "*Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.*" And we read in Numbers 12:3, "*Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth.*"

The reward of the meek is that they will inherit the earth. This is repeated in Psalm 37:11: *“But the meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace.”* Therefore, to obtain our inheritance, we must cry out to the Lord to work out this beautiful quality in our lives.

**4. “Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled”** (Mt. 5:6). It is those who hunger and thirst after righteousness that will be filled. There are two kinds of righteousness: *imputed* and *imparted*. When we accept Christ as our Saviour, we are counted righteous in His sight (Rom. 3:22). In other words, His righteousness is imputed to us.

However, there is a further degree of righteousness that the Lord wants to bring us into—imparted righteousness, which means that His righteousness is actually worked out in our lives, so that we are righteous as He is (cf. 1 Jn. 3:7, Mt. 5:20). We receive the gift of His righteousness (Ps. 24:5).

We will be filled with whatever we desire and long for. If we hunger and thirst after righteousness, and allow the Lord to make us righteous, then we will receive the crown of righteousness at the end of our lives (2 Tim. 4:8).

**5. “Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy”** (Mt. 5:7). In order for us not to become hard, critical, and self-righteous, the mercy of God must be worked out in our hearts. We must realise that it is only because of God’s mercy that we are saved, and must look upon others through the eyes of mercy.

When we are merciful to others, God will be merciful to us. It is those who are merciful that will obtain mercy. The Lord said to Moses as He passed by before him in Exodus 34:6, *“The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth.”* David wrote in Psalm 18:25, *“With the merciful thou wilt show thyself merciful; with an upright man thou wilt show thyself upright.”*

“Mercy” is a translation of the Hebrew word *checed*. This is a very difficult word to translate into English because it has several meanings and connotations. It describes an outflowing of love, compassion, loving kindness, and sympathy for one in need. Mercy is always expressed through actions, and is always associated with good works. James speaks of “mercy and good fruits” (or works) in James 3:17. Mercy not only causes us to feel compassion for a person, but it causes us to help the person in need.

If you are walking along the road, much like the Good Samaritan, and you see someone who has fallen down into a pit, you might say, “Oh, that poor fellow. I really feel sorry for him,” and then keep on walking without helping him. Let me make it very clear that this is not mercy. Mercy would cause us to reach down into the pit and lift that man out of it.

**6. “Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God”** (Mt. 5:8). “Pure” is a ceremonial word. It speaks of a heart that is laid out upon the altar for the inspection of God. This

cleansing is spoken of in Psalm 139:23-24: “*Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.*” We must open our hearts before the Lord, and allow Him to inspect us to see if there is any impurity in our lives. If there is, we must allow Him to purify us. Let us pray that God will purify us of all criticism, anger, jealousy, and hatred, so that we may be rooted and grounded in the love of God.

The human heart has four valves: the tricuspid, pulmonary, mitral, and aortic. These four valves can represent the four groups of people who inspect us: the world, Satan, the Church, and Christ. The Lord Jesus Himself, as the Passover Lamb, was inspected by four people: Annas, Caiaphas, Pilate, and Herod. Upon His inspection, Jesus was found to be clean and pure. Let us pray that we will be found pure when we are inspected as well.

Jeremiah, one who really understood the heart of man, said in Jeremiah 17:9, “*The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?*” It is out of the abundance of our heart that every sin proceeds (Mt. 15:19). The only remedy for a heart that is bent on wickedness is to pray continually to the Lord, as King David did in Psalm 51:10: “*Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.*” David wrote this after his sin with Bathsheba. Let us cry out for purity of heart *before* we are tempted to fall into sin, so that we may be preserved from falling.

**7. “Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God”** (Mt. 5:9). The seventh beatitude, which pronounces a blessing upon the peacemakers, flows out from the sixth beatitude. We should seek to bring reconciliation in the body of Christ, and make peace whenever it is possible. The Lord Himself is the supreme Peacemaker.

We read in Ephesians 2:14, *“For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us.”* Due to our sins, there was a dividing wall between us and God, which the Lord broke down by His death upon the cross. We should seek to be peacemakers and break down the walls of partition and division between friends, husbands and wives, children and parents, and churches.

**8. “Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness’ sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven”** (Mt. 5:10). We should endure the mistreatments of others without responding or reacting in an ungodly way. Even as Christ was like a lamb, which is dumb before its shearers, so should we endure persecution with a right attitude. We will be persecuted because we are followers of Christ. Jesus said in John 15:18-19: *“If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.”* If the world loves us, then we need to stop and ask ourselves if we are living a godly life.



The Lord tells us that if we are godly, we will be hated by the world. Paul said in 2 Timothy 3:12, *“Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.”* If we seek to live a godly life, we can be sure that we will be persecuted. A certain young Christian said to a dear old pastor: “I do not believe in Satan. I have never been troubled by the devil.” This pastor looked him straight in the eyes and said: “I do not suppose, then, that you have tried to be holy either. Of course Satan is not going to trouble you, and you are unaware of his presence because you are living like him. You are no threat to him.” The enemy seeks to persecute those who are a great threat to the kingdom of darkness. Therefore, as we seek to press on in the Lord, let us realise that persecution will come.

**9. “Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake”** (Mt. 5:11). The Lord now reemphasises this truth. We will be criticised and reviled because we are bearers of the lovely name of Jesus Christ. The Lord said in John 16:2-3: *“They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service. And these things will they do unto you, because they have not known the Father, nor me.”*

**10. “Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you”** (Mt. 5:12). Our attitude when we are persecuted is very important. We are told to rejoice when we are persecuted. A rejoicing spirit is like the wine

libation that was offered to complete the Old Testament offerings—a rejoicing spirit completes our love offering to the Lord.

May we at all times have that rejoicing, triumphant spirit that characterised Jesus' attitude even on the last evening when He spoke of His joy to His disciples in the Upper Room, knowing He would be crucified shortly afterwards. Let us delight to do the Lord's will and endure persecution with joy.

The rest of the teachings of the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5 can be divided into the following headings, which explain the essence of these teachings:

- 1. Christ's righteousness is superior to the legalism of the Pharisees (Mt. 5:13-20).**
- 2. Anger is likened to murder. Reconciliation should always be sought between brothers in the Lord (Mt. 5:21-26).**
- 3. Lust is equated with adultery (Mt. 5:27-30).**
- 4. Divorce and remarriage are condemned (Mt. 5:31-32).**
- 5. Let one's speech be "yea" and "nay" (Mt. 5:33- 37).**
- 6. Let there be no retaliation. We should not have the attitude of "an eye for an eye," but rather submit to those who wrong us (Mt. 5:38-42).**

**7. Love is perfect. We should not only love our neighbours, but also our enemies** (Mt. 5:43-48). In so doing, we will be made perfect like our Heavenly Father.

***The Hypocrisy of the Pharisees***

(Matthew 6:1-18)

In Matthew 6:1-18, the Lord exposed the hypocrisy of the Pharisees in the following areas:

**1. Almsgiving** - Giving should be done privately as much as is possible. Those who give for the praise of man will receive their desire, but they will not have a reward in heaven.

**2. Prayers** - Since the Pharisees loved to be seen of men when they prayed, their reward was not from God but was instead, the praise of man. The real purpose of prayer is to have communion in secret with our Heavenly Father. We should not use vain repetitions like the Buddhists' prayers, but rather pray in the manner of the Lord's prayer.

**3. Fasting** - The motive of fasting must never be to appear righteous or spiritual in the sight of others.

***Single-hearted Devotion Toward God***

(Matthew 6:19-24)

In Matthew 6:19-24, the Lord speaks of single-hearted devotion toward God. Wherever our treasure is, there will

our heart be also (Mt. 6:21). For this reason, we must not set our eyes on material blessings and treasures upon earth, but rather we must seek for the better and enduring treasures in heaven. In reality, we cannot serve two masters. A man cannot work for two bosses, because eventually there will be a conflict of interest. It is the same with us as Christians. We must be wholehearted for the Lord Jesus Christ. We cannot serve Him and someone or something else, too, especially mammon (money).

***Seek Ye First the Kingdom of God***

(Matthew 6:25-34)

Jesus taught extensively on the need to trust God for our daily provision. Our minds should not be preoccupied with the material things of this life. Then He gives examples to illustrate how our Heavenly Father cares for us. The Father looks after the birds of the air as well as the lilies that are clothed more gloriously than even Solomon. The Gentiles seek the material things of life, but our Heavenly Father knows our needs. Therefore, Jesus admonishes us to seek *first* the kingdom of heaven and His righteousness. If we do, everything else will be added unto us (Mt. 6:19-34).

It is a wonderful experience to be able to enter into rest with respect to our earthly needs. When we are young in the faith, we tend to worry much, but as we become older, heavenly provision becomes a way of life.

*A Warning Against Criticism*

(Matthew 7:1-6, Luke 6:37-42)

Here the Lord gives a stern warning against criticising others. He gives a little story of the mote and the beam to illustrate the terrible danger of judging and criticising others. Paul reiterates this warning in Romans 2:1: *“Therefore, thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things.”* It is a strange phenomenon that those who criticise others are usually guilty of the same sin.

I once had a vision of a very cruel and unmerciful police officer. He criticised and even mocked those who were Christians. However, in the end, that man, as I saw in the vision, fell into the bottomless pit. And as he was falling into hell, in his ears rang the cry, “mercy, mercy, mercy.” Because he had not shown mercy to others and had criticised them, now he was punished without mercy.

Criticism, one of the most heinous crimes, is severely punished by God. All of us are what we are by the grace of God. It is for that reason that it is written, *“Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee”* (Jude 1:9). Even the archangel did not criticise Satan. Dear ones, let us be gracious one to another, understanding that we stand only because of God’s grace. Later we will see how Peter fell

because of his criticism of the other apostles just prior to the crucifixion.

### *Prayer*

(Matthew 7:7-11)

*“Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?”* (Mt. 7:7-11). The theme of asking runs through the Word of God. We are encouraged to ask the Lord for our needs. In fact, we are admonished to ask the Lord for wisdom and spiritual gifts. Also, we are told to ask for the salvation of others and deliverance for those who are entrapped by Satan through sin, that God might save them from the eternal fires.

In Luke 11 we see that the Lord is encouraging us to ask for the blessed Holy Spirit. Here, Jesus’ emphasis is on the need for perseverance and persistence in prayer. When we pray, we must not only pray once and then wait for the answer to come—we must continue praying until God answers our prayer.

When Daniel was seeking the Lord about a specific situation, he continued praying for 21 days. On the 21<sup>st</sup>

day, his answer came. The Lord spoke to him through an angel that his prayers had been heard from the very first day, but an evil spirit had been hindering the answer to his prayer. Daniel had to persevere in prayer for 21 days until he had a breakthrough (Dan. 10:12-13). You see, we must not pray once and then stop praying and only wait for our answer to come. We must persevere until we see the answer to our prayer!

### ***The Golden Rule***

(Matthew 7:12, Luke 6:31)

*“Therefore, all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets”* (Mt. 7:12). This is reemphasised in Luke 6:31: *“And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise.”* This strong statement merits much meditation so that it may become a way of life for us. This is what is known as *“The Golden Rule.”* It is the summary of the whole Bible—love your neighbour and be kind to him.

The basic principle of the Golden Rule is that we will reap what we sow—how we treat others is how we will be treated. If we treat others cruelly, that is how we will be treated. Let me ask you a question: How do you want to be treated? That is the way you should treat others. Let us, therefore, seek to do good to all men, not rendering evil for evil but blessing instead, and God will be kind and gracious to us.

***Exhortation on Circumspect Living***

(Matthew 7:13-29)

In this final passage of the Sermon on the Mount, our blessed Lord deals with three themes:

**1. “Enter ye in at the straight gate”** (Mt. 7:13-14). Narrow or careful living will enable us to walk in the way of righteousness, which leads to the narrow gate. The only way to enter the kingdom of heaven is through the narrow gate. The way of the world is likened to the broad way, where there are no restraints and anything goes; but that path leads to hell.

**2. “By their fruits ye shall know them”** (Mt. 7:15-23). Trees are known for their fruit. You are able to distinguish trees by their fruit. An apple tree bears apples. It is the same in the spiritual. If a person walks uprightly, that fact will be obvious by the godly fruits. But if a person is walking in sin, contrary to the Word of God, eventually his bad fruit will be noticeable to others.

In verses 21-23, the Lord stresses the importance of a godly life. Performing miracles and doing good works (such as prophesying and casting devils out of people) are not enough. They will not make us acceptable in the eyes of God if we do not walk uprightly, or have a personal relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. It is those who bring forth the fruit of the Spirit in their lives who will inherit eternal life.

This passage has been perplexing to many people over the years; therefore, I think it could use a word of explanation. I



have known many preachers and professing Christians who have seemingly led an outward Christian life, but inwardly they were full of criticism, bitterness, jealousy, and perhaps even immorality. I have known many talented people who have ministered for the Lord, performed miracles, and done many wonderful things for the Lord, but they have been backslidden in heart and have never repented. And the Lord says to them that He never knew them. You see, we are judged on our *fruits*, not on our gifts!

A number of years ago, my wife and I were at a large Christian convention, where the speaker was twisting the Scriptures to condone sin and carnal living. My wife and I felt sick inside from what this minister was saying. When we got back to the room where we were staying, the Lord was there. His head was hung down and He was shaking it back and forth. He did not say anything to us, but He did not have to, because the Holy Spirit thundered the words from Matthew 7:21-23 in my heart, "*Many, many will say in that day, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name...*"

When he was a missionary in the Philippines, a dear friend of mine had a vision of the main Pentecostal leaders in a certain denomination. He was horrified by what the Lord showed him. These leaders were discarding all the laws of God and allowing very loose living. Then he saw a huge congregation, of which some of the people were saying, "Surely, what our leaders are saying is not right." However, others said, "Well, after all, they are our pastors; we must follow them." There was a large number of Christians who were following these

leaders. Finally, he saw that their path went down into a huge pit. The Lord said, "Warn my people." You see, in the last days there will be many who will seek to lead God's people in the wrong way. May we be those who are approved of the Lord!

**3. "Build your house upon a rock"** (Mt. 7:24-29). The Lord gives a little story on two types of foundations for houses. One man built his house upon a rock, whereas another man built his house upon the sand. These represent two types of people. Those who hear the Lord's teachings and obey them are wise in God's sight. Their lives are built upon the solid rock and foundation of obedience. When the storms of life come, they will not be moved because they are rooted in the Lord.

By contrast, those who hear the Lord's teachings and do not keep them are foolish. They build their lives (houses) upon the sand (a very flimsy and unsteady foundation), and when the storms of life come, they will be destroyed. Without obedience, we cannot stand!

One little illustration may be *apropos* here. A certain pastor who was seeking to lead his little flock in the right way of true holiness was perplexed by the large numbers that another pastor (who had compromised the truth of God's Word) was attracting. The Lord spoke to this godly pastor to go down into the basement of this other large church. There he saw that the walls and the foundations of the physical building were literally cracking.

The Lord explained to this pastor that this was the spiritual state of the people and the congregation as a whole. They

were not built upon the solid rock—Jesus Christ—and when the storms and trials of life came to that church (for every church will be tested of God), then it would crumble. All that the other pastor was producing was wood, hay, and stubble—fruit that would not abide or last. Let us seek always to be obedient to the Lord, for in so doing, we will be founded upon the Rock.

The result of Jesus' teachings, called the Sermon on the Mount, can be seen in Matthew 7:28-29: *“And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine: For he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.”*

The people were amazed and astonished at the Lord's teachings, for He taught with authority. His words were strikingly different from the teachings of the scribes and Pharisees. How did the scribes and Pharisees teach? Their sermons were basically a compilation of quotes by other teachers.

I want to make a very important point here. As ministers, preachers, and Sunday school teachers, we need to get our messages from the Lord. There are many resources such as commentaries, lexicons, and study books that can help clarify, support, and illustrate our message, but we must not get our messages from commentaries. We are to be the “oracles of God” (1 Pet. 4:11). We must hear from God what is upon His heart, and speak His words. Then we can use the wealth of knowledge that others have recorded for us to help illustrate our messages.

***Healing of the Centurion's Servant at Capernaum***

(Matthew 8:5-13, Luke 7:1-10)

*“And when Jesus was entered into Capernaum, there came unto him a centurion, beseeching him”* (Mt 8:5). Jesus had left the mountain above Capernaum where He had delivered His most famous sermon, and was now back in the town of Capernaum. While He was there, a centurion (a Roman soldier responsible for 100 men, and roughly equivalent to a captain in Western armies) came to Him on behalf of his servant who was extremely sick, even to the point of death.

Upon hearing this, the Lord offered to come to his house. However, this centurion refrained him, saying that he was not worthy for the Master to enter his house. He told Jesus to merely speak the word, so that his servant would be healed. He believed that the sickness would respond to the words of Jesus. The Lord was amazed by this man's faith. He said in Matthew 8:10, *“I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel.”* Then He turned to the centurion and said, *“Thy servant is healed,”* and he was healed that very hour.

We must always remember that without faith we cannot please God, *“for he that cometh unto God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him”* (Heb. 11:6).

***The Raising of the Widow's Son***

(Luke 7:11-17)

The next day after this miracle, the Lord came to a town by the name of Nain, meaning “pleasant.” It was situated

on a hillside overlooking the plain of Esdraelon in the southwest of Galilee. As Jesus approached the gate of the city, a widow's only son, who was dead, was being carried out. Having compassion upon the widow, the Lord spoke to the young man saying, "Arise." The young man was raised from the dead, and he sat up and began to speak. This miracle caused great fear to come upon all the people, and they glorified God, saying that a great prophet had risen up among them. The Lord's fame spread throughout the whole region of Judea.

We must not underestimate the power of miracles to open up people's hearts to the Gospel. News of this miracle in the region of Galilee spread all over the region of Judea, and many people followed the Lord because of it. The Early Church used "notable miracles" to evangelise the whole world at that time. We need to believe God for His power to be restored to His Church. Oh, we need His power more than ever before.

### ***The Lord's Gracious Response to John the Baptist***

(Matthew 11:2-19, Luke 7:18-35)

John the Baptist was at this time imprisoned by Herod Antipas, the tetrarch, since he had reprimanded him for marrying Herodias, his brother Philip's wife. The fame of Jesus, occasioned by the raising of the widow's son, had reached John's ears in the fortress prison of Machaerus, east of the Dead Sea. John sent messengers to inquire if Jesus really was the Messiah or if they should look for another.

It is a very sad commentary upon the human race that so often we fail when we are tested upon our strongest points. Here we have John the Baptist who was the acknowledged forerunner of Christ—"the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord." John is the one who said at the Jordan River, "*but that He should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water*" (Jn. 1:31). Yet, here John was asking Jesus, whom he had publicly identified as the Son of God, if He really was the Messiah. You see, even the greatest of prophets can become discouraged and begin to doubt his message. At one time, the prophet Elijah wanted to die because he was so discouraged (1 Ki. 19:4).

Moses, the meekest man on earth, was tested on his greatest virtue, meekness, and failed on this very point when the children of Israel provoked his spirit. How important it is to walk humbly before God all the days of our lives and to be dependent, always, upon God for victory.

To the messengers of John, Jesus most graciously responded by saying, "*Go and show John again those things which ye do hear and see: The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them*" (Mt. 11:4-5).

When those messengers had departed, Jesus gave a very gracious and magnificent eulogy of John, saying that of those born of women, there had not arisen a greater than John the Baptist (Mt. 11:7-15). Jesus even likened John to

Elijah, albeit not identifying him as that prophet, since Elijah is yet to come again before the Second Coming of the Lord as one of the two witnesses mentioned in Revelation 11.

Then commenting on the generation of His time, the Lord Jesus said, *“They are like unto children sitting in the marketplace, and calling one to another, and saying, We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned to you, and ye have not wept. For John the Baptist came neither eating bread nor drinking wine; and ye say, He hath a devil. The Son of man is come eating and drinking; and ye say, Behold a gluttonous man, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners! But wisdom is justified of all her children”* (Lk. 7:32-35). Therefore, both John and Jesus were rejected by that generation. Beloved, if the ministries of these two were rejected, marvel not if we, too, are rejected in our day.

### ***Jesus’ Proclamation of Woes Upon the Cities***

(Matthew 11:20-24)

Jesus had performed mighty works in the cities of Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum. Chorazin was located some two miles north of Capernaum, and was a notable wheat-growing area in those days. Bethsaida, meaning “house of fish,” was located on the northeast of the Sea of Galilee and was the home of Andrew, Peter, and Philip.

Capernaum was located on the northwest shores of the Sea of Galilee. These three towns were clustered together on

the northern parts of the Sea of Galilee within a few miles of each other. These places experienced a great revival and mighty miracles through the ministry of none other than the Son of God Himself. And yet after all this, for the most part, they showed no signs of repentance and change.

Many of the people flocked to Jesus to see the miracles, but very few of them ever caught the vision and served the Lord with all their hearts. The Lord's headquarters for most of His ministry, Capernaum, experienced a mighty revival, but the inhabitants of the city were not willing to give up their wicked ways. The Lord said that the heathen towns of Tyre and Sidon would have repented if they had received the divine manifestation of God's power and grace as these three cities had. For this reason, the majority of the population of Capernaum would go down into hell, into the centre of the earth—the place of the lost and eternal torments. Moreover, Jesus stated that even the wicked town of Sodom, whose name represents the most bestial sexual acts of mankind, would have repented and remained unto this day if they had seen the signs and wonders that Capernaum had witnessed. Therefore, the Lord said that in the day of judgment it would be more tolerable for those heathen cities than for the three cities that had witnessed such mighty deeds and yet showed no signs of repentance.

This is one of the most notable passages concerning eternal judgment. Eternal judgment is based not only on the light that we have and what we do with that light, but what we would have done with greater light. This passage does not



imply that Sodom and Gomorrah will be saved. Rather, it means that Capernaum, which rejected the greater light, will receive greater judgment than Sodom and Gomorrah. Sodom was wicked. They were not counted worthy of receiving greater light; but if they had received the greater light, they would have repented. How just is our God! None shall be able to accuse Him of unrighteousness.

***The Rest of God***  
(Matthew 11:25-30)

The Lord Jesus then lauded the Father because He has chosen to reveal the secrets of eternity to babes and not to the wise of this world. The Apostle Paul reiterates this truth in 1 Corinthians 1:26-27: *“For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty.”* It is that no flesh shall glory in His presence.

Furthermore, only the Son can reveal the Father. The Son reveals the Father to whom He wills. Therefore, we understand that it is by *grace and grace alone* that we can understand the mysteries of the Godhead and receive His wonderful salvation.

Then Jesus gives us one of the most sublime invitations ever given to mankind—to enter into the rest of God. The steps are clearly delineated as follows:

1. We must come to Jesus without reservation.
2. We must take His yoke upon us in the manner that a young oxen is yoked to a mature animal. As we are yoked to the Lord, we will be able to walk with Him through life's trials.
3. In so doing, we learn how He negotiates the trials of life.
4. We must seek to have His meekness and lowliness of heart so that we do not resist those trials, which are for our purification and instruction.
5. Then we will enter into the rest of God—which is an absence of stress. It means that we cease from our own labours, and allow the Lord to work in and through us for His good pleasure.

### *Jesus Anointed by a Sinful Woman*

(Luke 7:36-50)

A certain Pharisee named Simon invited Jesus to come into his house to eat. A sinful woman, knowing that He was there, entered the house and anointed His feet, as they were stretched out on the couch. (This was the custom in Israel at that time. Evening meals were eaten leisurely, and the guests would be welcomed to stretch out their legs.) Weeping, under the deep conviction of the Holy Spirit for her sins, she washed the Master's feet with her tears, dried them with her hair, and anointed His feet with ointment.

Simon the Pharisee criticised the Lord in his heart, saying, "This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and

what manner of woman this is that toucheth him: for she is a sinner” (Lk. 7:39). Simon did not vocalise his criticism of the Lord, but the Lord heard what he said *in his heart*. You see, God hears what we say in our hearts.

***The Parable of the Two Debtors***

(Luke 7:41-43)

In response to Simon, Jesus gave the parable of the Two Debtors. One man owed the creditor 500 pence, and another man owed him 50 pence. The creditor decided to be merciful and forgave both of them their debts. We read in Luke: “... *Tell me therefore, which of them will love him most? Simon answered and said, I suppose that he, to whom he forgave most. And he said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged*” (Lk. 7:42-43). The one who was forgiven the most would love the most. This is a profound theological truth. To the degree that we *recognise* our terrible sinfulness, will we love the Lord who has forgiven us of all our sins. Those who are self-righteous, like the Pharisees, do not have an appreciation of what true forgiveness is, and as a result, their love for the Lord is very shallow. However, those who realise the pit that they were in before the Lord saved them are in love with Jesus for all that He has done for them.

***The Second Tour of Galilee***

(Luke 8:1-3)

This passage is a prelude to the journey through the cities of Galilee. Here, we are told that the Lord was accompanied

this time not only by His disciples, but also by certain women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities. They were notably, Mary Magdalene and Joanna, the wife of Herod's steward. These women ministered to the Lord and His disciples with their substance, for they were very wealthy. This shows us that the loving Heavenly Father drew to Jesus those who would care for His earthly necessities.

Beloved, He will do the same for us when He sends us forth to minister as His ambassadors. When we are in the centre of God's will, we will never lack His provision!

### *The Busy Day*

(Mark 3:19-30, Matthew 12:22-37)

We have a detailed account of the happenings on this very crowded day in the life and ministry of our beloved Lord. It commences in the morning in a house where the multitudes found Jesus. They brought to Him a blind and dumb man who was possessed with a devil, and Jesus delivered him.

The scribes and Pharisees, who had come down from Jerusalem, declared that Jesus was casting out devils by the prince of devils, Satan. Jesus replied, "*...Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand: And if Satan cast out Satan, he is divided against himself; how shall then his kingdom stand?*" (Mt. 12:25-26). The Lord stresses the importance of unity—if a house or kingdom is divided against itself, it will not stand. By this He was pointing out

the obvious—that Satan would not cast demons out of people, because that would be defeating his purpose.

Then follows one of the most awesome warnings in Holy Scriptures, coming from no less than the mouth of the Lord Himself. It is concerning the unpardonable sin—blasphemy of the Holy Spirit. *“Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men. And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come”* (Mt. 12:31-32). The blasphemy of the Holy Spirit, basically, is attributing *with knowledge* the works of the Holy Spirit to Satan. I have met people who have thought that they have committed this sin, and are under a tremendous amount of guilt. However, most of them did not do it knowingly, and I have had to comfort them. There are many people who have thought that the baptism of the Holy Spirit is not of God, but afterwards have been convicted by God and have received the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

Many years ago, I witnessed a man commit blasphemy of the Holy Spirit. I was a student at a Bible school in England that did not believe in the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Well, I was being very vocal about my position, and I spoke in tongues all the time. Then I got called into the office of the principal of the school. He said very sternly to me, “I do not want you to speak in tongues in this school any more.” The Spirit of

God spoke through me and said to this man, “Is speaking in tongues of God, or Satan?” A look of horror came upon his face. He knew he was trapped.

If he said that it was of God, I would have said, “Then why do you not preach it and allow it in your school.” He would have had to deny what his denomination believed to embrace speaking in tongues, and he would have lost his position if he had done that. He replied, “Speaking in tongues is of the devil,” and hung his head down. He knew he had committed blasphemy of the Holy Spirit because he knew that it was of God. I said to him, “Then I cannot stay here at this Bible school.”

Then in Matthew 12:33-37 the Lord gave a discourse, speaking of the importance of our words. Therefore, let us heed the words of the Lord’s half-brother James, who said, “*Be swift to hear and slow to speak*” (Jas. 1:19).

### ***The Afternoon of the Same Day***

(Matthew 12:38-45)

Then certain of the scribes and Pharisees came seeking a sign of Jesus. This is in conformity to the nature of the Jews, as Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 1:22: “*For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom.*” Calling them an adulterous generation, Jesus refused to grant any sign to them. The only sign they would see would be the sign of Jonah, who was in the belly of the whale for three days and three nights (Jon. 1:17, 2:1-2). Jesus would be the fulfilment

of this sign, for He would spend three days and three nights in the heart of the earth, where Satan's kingdom is located.

This is confirmed by 1 Peter 3:19-20: *“By which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison; Which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water.”* Even if these scribes and Pharisees had seen a sign, they would not have repented. This is illustrated in the story of the rich man and Lazarus: *“And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent. And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead”* (Lk. 16:30-31). Jesus refused to perform signs to satisfy the desire in people to see signs and the miraculous. We must be just as careful in our own ministries not to try to satisfy people with signs, unless God has clearly directed us to do so.

Returning to the discourse, Jesus continued by saying in reference to Jonah that the men of Nineveh repented at his preaching. Therefore, they would rise up in condemnation of Jesus' generation who did not repent at the preaching of the Son of God. In Matthew 12:42 we read, *“The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here.”* The Queen of Sheba would also condemn that generation as well.

Then in verses 43-45, Jesus likens His generation to a man who has been cleansed of an evil spirit. This brings us to a very important point about deliverance. As Jesus tells us, after you cast a demon out of a person, he has to be fed with the Word of God and filled with the things of God. Otherwise, an open door will remain in his life for the spirit that was cast out to return. Not only will it return, but it will also return with seven other spirits, and the end state of that man will be far worse than before.

This is where many deliverance ministries have erred. When we cast a demon or evil spirit out of someone, we must take great care that we first have clear direction from the Lord to do so. We should also have a follow-up program to teach him the ways of God, so he will be able to withstand future attempts of evil spirits to enter into him.

What Jesus was saying here was that the state of His generation will be infinitely worse than before He came because they had the opportunity of receiving Him, but refused it. Incidentally, the generation that rejected and crucified the Lord saw the Roman Empire crucify over 4,000 of their sons, and destroy the city of Jerusalem and the Temple. That generation had the unique privilege of seeing and hearing the Lord of glory Himself, and certainly, to whom much is given will much be required.

### ***His Mother and Brethren Seek to Bring Him Home***

(Mark 3:31-35, Matthew 12:46-50, Luke 8:19-21)

One of the most common, and to a certain degree, justifiable complaints heard in our generation, is that one comes from



a dysfunctional home. This refers to an abnormal home in which either the father or mother is not there, or there are divisions among the children. Certainly, this was the case with the family of our blessed Lord. They did not understand who Jesus was, and were now seeking to bring Him home. At this time, His brothers did not believe in His ministry, and certainly not in His deity. Therefore, the Lord, as the Apostle Paul says, was tempted in all points as we are, but without sin (Heb. 4:15).

Thus, we can take courage that because of this fellowship in trial, the Lord Jesus can succour us in times of need when our family does not understand us, and even opposes us. We must not murmur or complain, but instead turn to the Lord for grace in our time of need. We will then be able to overcome our circumstances with joy. Even in these circumstances we can be more than conquerors through Christ who strengthens us.

After Jesus' ascension, His brothers understood who He was, and two of them, James and Jude, became apostles, contributing to the writings of the New Testament by their epistles. Therefore, we should be encouraged and believe that God will in time cause our families to serve Him, if they are not already doing so.

To the declaration that His mother and brethren were outside looking for Him, Jesus replied, "*Who is my mother? and who are my brethren?*" He stretched forth His hand toward His disciples and said, "*Behold my mother and my*

*brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother”* (Mt. 12:49-50). Jesus did not give any special place of prominence to His natural mother, Mary. In fact, we see by this that Mary had no special influence over the life of Jesus after He entered into His ministry as the Son of God, and she has even less influence now. Therefore, all the prayers that are directed to her by devout Catholics are meaningless and absolutely futile.

Another point here that is very important is the thought of spiritual relationships. Very often our closest relationships are not with our own family members, but with brothers and sisters in the Lord. Perhaps our family is not saved or does not have the same vision as we do. The Lord Jesus Christ said, *“Who are my brethren? Those who do the will of my Father.”* In other words, those who were closest to Him were His disciples—those who had the same vision and goals that He had. Fellowship is based upon walking in the light (1 Jn. 1:7). Our sweetest fellowship and closest relationships will be with those who have the same spirit and vision as we have, and who are walking in the light. Let us not forget this.

### ***The Parables of the Kingdom***

(Mark 4:1-34, Matthew 13:1-53, Luke 8:4-18)

During this same day, the Lord gave the great parables of the Kingdom. Seeing the great multitudes, Jesus got into a small boat and pushed off from the beach a little way.

Sitting down in the boat, He addressed the multitude that stood on the beach.

***The Parable of the Sower***

(Mark 4:3-20, Matthew 13:3-23, Luke 8:5-15)

This is one of the best-known parables of Jesus, and probably one of the most important. It enables us to understand the different spiritual categories of mankind. The Sower sows the Word of God, and it falls upon human hearts, which according to their spiritual state and heart condition, produce varying degrees of fruit.

**1. The way side** - The sower first sowed seed by the way side. This speaks of the type of heart that is not prepared to receive God's Word. Because of a lack of understanding, the devil is able to snatch away the seed that was sown, and it does not bear any fruit.

**2. The stony places** - Stony places speak of a hardened heart. These types of people receive the Word with joy, but do not allow the Lord to work within their heart, and their roots never grow down deep. As a result, when trials and suffering come their way, they fall back again, become offended, and do not produce any fruit.

**3. The thorns** - Thorny ground represents Christians whose hearts are filled with the cares, riches, and pleasures of this life. These choke the Word of God that was sown in their hearts so that they do not bring any fruit to perfection or maturity.

**4. Good ground** - The fourth type of ground and heart condition is good ground. This represents those who receive the Word of God. But even here, there is a division. Some of them bring forth thirty fold fruit, others sixty fold, and others a hundred fold. May we be those who have a clean heart and diligent spirit that bring forth a hundred fold fruit for the Lord.

There is not a high percentage of people who respond to the Lord. In this parable, only one out of four bore fruit, and out of that fourth, only a third bore a hundred fold fruit. Let us cry out to the Lord that we may be hundred fold Christians—that we may go all out for Jesus and produce much fruit for Him.

After Jesus gave this parable, the disciples asked Him why He was speaking to the people in parables, He replied, “*Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given*” (Mt. 13:11). The reason Jesus spoke in parables was to conceal the truth from those who had no love for the truth in their hearts and to reveal the truth to those who did love the truth. Parables have a two-fold purpose—they *conceal* and *reveal*. They conceal from those who are not walking uprightly and reveal to those who are walking in righteousness. All of this was a fulfilment of Isaiah 6:9 where the Lord said, “...*Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not.*” It is by grace and grace alone that we can understand the Gospel and be born again.

Therefore, let us seek to do only those things that please the Lord so that we will be recipients of His grace and favour.

Jesus concluded this parable by saying, “*For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath*” (Mt. 13:12). Whatever path we set our feet in, the Lord will confirm us in that path. For example, those who apply their hearts to wisdom will be given more wisdom. Let us seek, therefore, to apply our hearts to wisdom, knowledge, understanding, and the fruits of the Holy Spirit.

During this same day, which was indeed a very long one, the Lord taught the multitudes the other six parables of the kingdom, but we will not consider these parables because they are covered in our commentaries on the Gospels.

### *At Eventide on the Sea of Galilee*

(Mark 4:35-41, Matthew 8:18, 23-27, Luke 8:22-25)

When evening of the same day came, He said to His disciples, “*Let us pass over unto the other side*” of the lake (Mk. 4:35). Having had a very full day already, Jesus fell asleep at the back of the boat. While He was peacefully sleeping, a great storm arose. This occurrence is not unusual for the Sea of Galilee. In the evening, due to the cooling of the mountains above, winds rush down the ravines, producing storms over the lake. Such was the case on this particular evening.

However, this storm also had diabolical origins. The disciples feared for their lives, because the boat was filling up with water, and they violently awakened the Lord out of desperation. When He awoke, the Lord gently rebuked

them for their little faith, and then rebuked the storm, saying, "*Peace, be still*" (Mk. 4:39).

A Canadian friend of mine had a vision of this event in the life of Jesus. He saw Jesus and the disciples take off from the shore. When they left the shore, the weather was perfect. After they had gone out a little way, Jesus lay down at the back of the boat because He was tired. The Lord was curled up, lying there sound asleep totally oblivious to everything around Him. Meanwhile, the disciples were trying their best to bail water out of the boat. The boat began to sink, and in desperation, they shook the Lord and woke Him up, saying, "Master, carest thou not that we perish?" The Lord's reaction was very beautiful. He slowly opened His eyes, calmly stretched Himself, stood up, walked slowly to the side of the boat, and said, "Peace, be still!" Jesus was in command at all times. The Lord rebuked His disciples because they did not have faith, even though the Creator of the universe was in the boat with them. In a spiritual sense, it is the God of peace who will bruise Satan under our feet (Rom. 16:20). Therefore, when we pass through the storms of life and the enemy attacks us, we should rest in His peace.

In his autobiography, Dr. Adam Clarke recorded that when John Wesley was returning to England by ship, considerable delay was caused by contrary winds. Wesley was calmly reading when he was apprised of the situation. He did not get worried or fear for his life; he simply prayed and then resumed reading. When Dr. Clarke went up on deck, what he saw amazed him. The storm had assuaged, and the ship was travelling right on its course. They all safely arrived some time later at the harbour. John Wesley was

not surprised by this at all, for he fully expected his prayer to be answered by the Lord.

***The Healing of the Gerasene Demoniac***

(Mark 5:1-20, Matthew 8:28-34, Luke 8:26-39)

Jesus and His disciples arrived at the other side of the sea in the region of the Gadarenes near the village of Gerasa. When the Lord stepped out of the boat, He was met by two men possessed with devils. Only one man is mentioned in the accounts of Mark and Luke, but Matthew notes that there were in actuality two men. The reason for this is presumably that the one mentioned by Mark and Luke was the most prominent. The demons which possessed these men cried out to the Lord that He would not torment them before the time. Therefore, it is very clear that demons know that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that eternal torment awaits them at the end of this dispensation.

Jesus commanded the demons to leave and granted their request to enter into a herd of swine nearby. The demons entered the herd, causing them to panic, and they rushed down a steep slope into the sea below. The whole herd of swine drowned in the water. This account illustrates the principle that demons desire to inhabit people and animals. For this reason, the ministry of discerning of spirits, along with the gift of faith, are both necessary to bring deliverance to those who are bound by evil spirits.

Great fear came upon all the inhabitants of that area, and they pleaded with Jesus to leave their territory. Jesus told

the delivered man to remain and broadcast all over the great things that the Lord had done for him.

### ***Jesus Returns to Capernaum***

(Mark 5:21-43, Matthew 9:18-26, Luke 8:40-56)

Afterwards, Jesus got into a boat again to return to Capernaum on the other side of the lake. Once He arrived, there was a multitude awaiting him. One of the rulers of the synagogue, Jairus, came to Jesus and beseeched Him to come to his house and heal his 12-year-old daughter, for she was at the point of death. The Lord went with Jairus, and the multitude followed Him.

On their way to Jairus' house, a woman who had suffered with an issue of blood for 12 years touched the hem of His garments and was instantly healed. She pressed through the crowd because she had faith in her heart that if she touched Him, she would be healed. This was the touch of faith. When we come to the Lord for our own needs, we must have this same faith and believe God for our miracle.

After this healing, a man from Jairus' house came and said to Jairus, "*Thy daughter is dead: why troublest thou the Master any further?*" This was all in God's great plan, for now she would be raised from the dead. Jesus said to Jairus, "*Be not afraid, only believe.*" When He entered into the house, Jesus raised her from the dead by the power of God.

I remember the testimony of an African lady who had died. Upon her decease, her husband, who was an elder in their church, went



to his pastor. The two of them came rushing back into his house. They looked everywhere in the house for oil to anoint her and pray for her. All they could find was cooking oil, so they poured cooking oil all over her dead body and prayed that she would be raised from the dead. As those who have died or have had visions of death know, the spirit of the deceased person remains near the body for a short time. This woman watched her husband and pastor do all this from outside of her body. She said to herself, “Poor husband and poor pastor, this is one time when their prayers will not be answered because I want to go home to be with Jesus in heaven.” No sooner had she said this than Jesus came walking toward her.

With a smile on His face, Jesus said to her, “I want you to go back, because I want my people to know that I not only heal the sick, but I also raise the dead.” Jesus then gently took her by the hand and led her back into her prostrate body, and she was instantly revived. She, her husband, and the pastor all rejoiced in the Lord for this amazing miracle.

Beloved, Jesus is the same yesterday, today, and forever—the Resurrection and the Life—and He is able to heal the sick and raise the dead in our generation. As I have said again and again throughout this book, let us pray that God will restore His resurrection power to the Church.

### ***The Healing of Two Blind Men***

(Matthew 9:27-34)

After Jesus left the house of Jairus, two blind men followed Him beseeching Him to heal them. They acknowledged Him

as the Son of David, the Messiah. Turning compassionately toward them, Jesus asked them if they believed that He was able to heal them. They said, “Yea, Lord.” He then touched their eyes and said, “According to your faith be it unto you.” They were instantly healed and received their eyesight. Jesus ordered them not to tell anyone of their healing. The reason for this was so that He could move freely and without hindrance from the mobs of people that surrounded Him. However, they spread His fame all over the place.

Then, when a dumb man was brought to Jesus, He cast a demon out of him, and the man began to speak. The multitudes acknowledged that there had never been such miracles ever in Israel, but the Pharisees declared that His power came from the prince of devils. This was contrary to logic, for Satan could hardly use his power against his own kingdom to bring it down.

### ***His Last Visit to Nazareth***

(Mark 6:1-6, Matthew 13:54-58)

In Mark 6:1-6, Jesus made His last recorded visit to His hometown of Nazareth. In this very short visit, Jesus taught them in their own synagogue. The people marvelled at His wisdom and His mighty works. However, because of their unbelief, He was not able to perform many mighty miracles there except a few healings. You see, we can limit what the Lord can do for us by our unbelief. Psalm 78:41 says, “*Yea, they turned back and tempted God, and limited the Holy One of Israel.*”

The people of Nazareth were offended at Jesus because of their familiarity with Him. In their estimation, He was only the son of the carpenter Joseph, and they knew His brothers and sisters. As Jesus told them, a prophet is not without honour, except in his own country and among his own people.

This has ever been true, as the Lord said in Ezekiel 3:4-6: *“And he said unto me, Son of man, go, get thee unto the house of Israel, and speak with my words unto them. For thou art not sent to a people of a strange speech and of an hard language, but to the house of Israel; Not to many people of a strange speech and of an hard language, whose words thou canst not understand. Surely, had I sent thee to them, they would have hearkened unto thee.”* Therefore, it is for that reason that the Lord sends us away from our families to foreign fields, so that our ministry will be received by those to whom we are sent, causing us to be very fruitful.

### ***The Third Tour of Galilee***

(Mark 6:6-13, Matthew 9:35 - 11:1, Luke 9:1-6)

Now we come to what is known as *The Third Tour of Galilee*. Initially, we see the tremendous productivity of the Lord Jesus, as He went around all the cities and villages in the area teaching in the synagogues, preaching the gospel, and healing all manner of sicknesses. He was moved with compassion for the multitudes because they were like sheep without a shepherd. He said to His disciples, *“The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few”* (Mt. 9:37).

The manner in which Jesus chose to solve this real problem of not having enough labourers for the harvest demands our attention, as we are living in the days of the Church when we will see the greatest harvest of souls ever in the history of mankind. Jesus' solution was to commission His disciples to do the work of the ministry. The Lord's methods are an example for us. Therefore, we should train the young and prepare them to go out and start Bible schools and preach the Gospel. Part of their preparation comes through allowing them to walk alongside us as we minister to the needs of others.

The Lord Jesus commissioned the twelve disciples at this time to do the work of the ministry. Their names were: Peter, his brother Andrew, James and John (who were the sons of Zebedee and Salome), Philip, Bartholomew (or Nathanael as he was also called), Thomas, Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus, Simon the Zealot, Judas the son of James, and Judas Iscariot, who turned traitor.

Jesus' disciples were ridiculed by the sophisticated religious leaders of the nation as unlearned and uncouth. However, although they did not have the formal Rabbinical training as the Pharisees had, when we examine their character, talents, and background, we see that they were not ignorant men. With the exception of Judas Iscariot, they were all devoutly religious and well versed in the Scriptures.

Although they were not rich (with the possible exception of Matthew), they were not destitute. The families of James

and John, and Peter and Andrew owned their own fishing boats and nets, and had hired servants. John was apparently well connected, because he was able to gain entrance into the palace of the High Priest during the time of Jesus' trial. There is also no question that they had outstanding leadership qualities. Peter took the lead role among the disciples, but they were all excellent leaders in their own right. They were not given to passivity, for they all attained to mighty feats during their lifetimes and travelled widely for those days. Some of them may well have had homes both in their native town of Galilee and also in Jerusalem, where they retired after the crucifixion. The family of Jesus could well have been the poorest of the holy band.

### ***The Sending Forth of the Twelve***

(Mark 6:6-13, Matthew 10:1-15, Luke 9:1-6)

The Lord then sent forth His disciples into the needy areas of the cities and villages of Israel, but particularly warned them not to go into the houses of the Gentiles or the Samaritans (Mt. 10:5-6). This was to fulfil the commission that He Himself had received from His Father to raise up the lost tribes of Israel.

In sending them out, Jesus gave them the command and authority to preach the gospel, heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, and cast out devils. This is the same command that He gives to His ministers today. Jesus also insisted that because this power had been freely given to them without cost, they should give it freely to others.

This is a point that we should remember, too. We should not charge for our ministry. In other words, if we are invited to minister at a certain seminar or church, we must not say to them, "I will preach for a certain amount of money." However, if the congregation so desires to give us an offering, we are free to receive it. So that this statement would not be misunderstood, the Lord went on to say that the labourer was worthy of his hire. He was obviously indicating that those who were ministered to by His disciples should look after them.

The Apostle Paul develops this when writing to the Romans, *"It hath pleased them verily; and their debtors they are. For if the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister unto them in carnal things"* (Rom. 15:27).

Then Jesus said in Mark 6:10-11: *"In what place soever ye enter into an house, there abide till ye depart from that place. And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear you, when ye depart thence, shake off the dust under your feet for a testimony against them. Verily I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrhah in the day of judgment, than for that city."* Jesus told His disciples that if a house was worthy, they were to let their peace come upon it, but if it was not, they were to shake the dust from off their feet. I know of a village that rejected an evangelist, and he shook the dust from off his feet when he left the village. The result was that after more than five decades since this happened, no church has been able to open its doors there.

Christ's disciples were like sheep sent forth in the midst of wolves (Mt. 10:16). Even as Christ, the Lamb of God, was persecuted by the religious leaders, so would they be persecuted as well. As modern-day followers and disciples of Christ, we should expect the same treatment. Everything Jesus said to His disciples applies to us today, and even more so as we see the day of His Second Coming approaching. This day will be preceded by the abounding of iniquity and the appearance of the man of sin, the Antichrist.

### ***The Price of True Discipleship***

(Matthew 10:16-42)

The Lord Jesus Christ made it very clear that being His disciple requires a very high degree of dedication. We must forsake everything to follow Him, and must put Him first before everything and everyone—including our parents, our spouses, and our children. The price of true discipleship is very costly; it will cost us everything, but the rewards are infinitely greater than the sacrifice.

Jesus said in Matthew 10:34-38: *“Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household. He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me.”*

The Lord came to sever family ties that come before Him and His will. The life of a saint is truly a lonely walk, but we must remember the example of Jesus, who was also not understood by His own brethren (although two of them later became apostles). Let us “dare to be a Daniel and dare to stand alone.” It will be worth it all!

### ***Fulfilling the Ministry***

(Mark 6:12-13, Matthew 11:1, Luke 9:6)

After the Lord commissioned His disciples and gave them His power, both Jesus and His disciples apparently went their separate ways to preach and teach throughout the villages of Galilee. This was apparently a very fruitful ministry trip.

### ***The Account of the Slaying of John the Baptist***

(Mark 6:14-29, Matthew 14:1-12, Luke 9:7-9)

Now we come to the account of Herod's execution of John the Baptist, a prophet of God. John had his head cut off because he rebuked the king's wife for divorce and remarriage. The importance of a holy marriage relationship in God's eyes can be clearly seen from this incident. John was martyred for taking a righteous stand on divorce and remarriage. The act of divorce and remarriage is an abomination in God's eyes. Let us seek to follow in the footsteps of this great prophet of God, and be uncompromising in our stand against divorce and remarriage when the partners to the first marriage are still living.

At this time John had been ministering in the regions of the Jordan River, in the Tetrarchy of Herod Antipas, who was



called a king. He was the son of Herod the Great by Malthace. Herod imprisoned John because he had infuriated Herod's wife Herodias, in saying to Herod, "...*It is not lawful for thee to have her*" (Mt. 14:4.) Herodias had previously been married to Herod's brother Philip, the tetrarch of the northern territories. Therefore, when John condemned her second marriage to Herod, he incurred her wrath and venom.

When Herod heard of Jesus and the miracles that He performed, he was overcome with fear, for he thought that Jesus was in actuality John raised from the dead. Herod had a guilty conscience because he had given the order for John to be executed. We now have a detailed account of the events leading up to the execution of John. However, John had been beheaded sometime before, as is evidenced by the narrative.

On his birthday, Herod held a huge feast. At the party, Salome, the daughter of Herodias, danced before King Herod. He was very pleased with her dancing, and promised to give her whatever she asked for. Her mother, Herodias, instructed her to ask for John the Baptist's head on a platter. Herod was very saddened by her request, because he liked John, but in order not to go back on his word in front of his guests, he gave the order for John to be beheaded. John was executed in the dungeon of the fortress of Herod at Machaerus.

Herod was ensnared by the words of his mouth. We read in Proverbs 6:2, "*Thou art snared with the words of thy mouth, thou art taken with the words of thy mouth.*" He should never have made such a foolish promise. And yet, even after he had,

he should have admitted his error and spared John from death. The problem was that he cared more about what the people at his feast would think if he reneged on his promise than what God thought. Now he was not only guilty of making a foolish vow, but was also guilty of murder. This should be a lesson to us to be slow to speak and swift to hear, so that our words do not ensnare us, as they did Herod (Jas. 1:19).

What is amazing about this whole story is that Herod genuinely liked John and his teachings. We read in Mark 6:20, *“For Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just man and an holy, and observed him; and when he heard him, he did many things, and heard him gladly.”* Herod revered John as a just and holy man, and gladly heard him. What a paradox! Herod enjoyed listening to the preaching of John and hearing the Word of God, but those teachings never apprehended him and they never changed his life. In life, you will find that there are many people like Herod. They like to hear the preaching of God’s Word, but they do not have a love for the truth in their heart. As a result, God’s Word never penetrates into their hearts and their lifestyles are never changed.

## Chapter 9

### ***THE GREAT GALILEAN MINISTRY***

#### ***(Third Passover and After)***

Now we come to the third Passover during the ministry of Christ. This would have been around March/April of A.D. 29. This Passover took place about the time of the feeding of the 5,000. This begins the last year of Jesus' ministry. We read in John 6:1-4: "*After these things Jesus went over the sea of Galilee, which is the sea of Tiberias. And a great multitude followed him, because they saw his miracles which he did on them that were diseased. And Jesus went up into a mountain, and there he sat with his disciples. And the passover, a feast of the Jews, was nigh.*"

#### ***The Feeding of the Five Thousand***

(Mark 6:30-44, Matthew 14:13-21, Luke 9:10-17, John 6:1-13)

We now take up again the narrative of the life of Jesus after the interlude of the account of the martyrdom of John the Baptist. Christ is by the seashore of the Lake of Galilee. Having heard from His disciples concerning their ministry in the surrounding cities, Jesus tells them to come with Him to a desert place, where they all can rest for a while. Christ and His disciples were exhausted because they were constantly surrounded by a multitude of people and had not had a chance to rest.

We need to realise that we need rest, too. If Jesus had to take a break to get some rest and to relax, we need to do so as well. The pressures of the ministry can be exhausting. We need to be refreshed in our body, soul, and spirit; and this can only be done through getting away from everyone to rest.

To illustrate the importance of rest, let me recount a traditional story of John the Beloved. A certain Christian brother went to visit the Apostle John, and what he saw surprised him. John was playfully feeding his fish in a pond. When he expressed his amazement that such a godly saint like John would be involved in such trivial and unimportant things, John responded by saying that a bow that constantly remains taut will lose its resiliency. Therefore, as Christians we need to rest and relax on a regular basis and enjoy wholesome activities in order to keep our spiritual insight and strength.

Dr. Hudson Taylor, one of the most famous missionaries of yesteryear, would often relax by catching butterflies. While not everyone has his own fish pond or the time to catch butterflies, it is essential that we all take breaks and relax in the presence of God. Walks are highly recommended, and if possible, a change of climate or scenery.

Returning to the narrative, we see that Jesus and His disciples got into a boat and went across the lake to Bethsaida (known as Bethsaida Julius) on the north eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee in the Tetrarchy of Philip (Lk. 9:10). This is not to be confused with the Bethsaida mentioned in Mark 6:45 on the return journey, located on the north-western shores near Capernaum.

Many people saw Jesus and His disciples departing, and they followed them, arriving at Bethsaida before them. When Christ saw them gathered in this desert place that late in the day, He had compassion upon the people, for they were as sheep without a shepherd. This was during the time of the third Passover, just a year before His crucifixion, when He would institute the Last Supper and the communion service. At that time, He would declare that He would become broken bread for those who should hereafter believe on His name.

Jesus commanded the multitude, about 5,000 in number (not including women and children), to sit down in ranks of hundreds and fifties. Incidentally, 100 by 50 is the measurement of the Outer Court of the Tabernacle of Moses. Jesus then took the five loaves (which speak of enabling grace) and two fishes (which signify divine witness), blessed them and gave them to His disciples to give to the people. This reveals Christ as Jehovah-Jireh, the Lord our Provider. He met the needs of the multitude. The people testified, because of this miracle, that Jesus was indeed “that prophet that should come into the world,” spoken of by Moses in Deuteronomy 18:15.

Jesus also fulfilled the types and emblems of the Tabernacle of Moses during His earthly ministry. In particular, He fulfilled the truths contained in the loaves upon the Table of Shewbread in the Holy Place. He declared in John 6:35, “*I am the bread of life.*”

After the people had eaten all that they wanted and were full, Jesus told His disciples to gather the fragments that

were left. The disciples gathered 12 baskets full of all that remained. Twelve, of course, speaks of government in Biblical numerics. By this miracle, the Lord Jesus was showing that He is indeed Master and Governor of the whole universe (cf. Isa. 9:6).

### ***The Multitude That Wanted to Make Him King***

(Mark 6:45-46, Matthew 14:22-23, John 6:14-15)

Perceiving that the multitude was going to seek to make Him king because of the miracle, Jesus sent His disciples away by ship, while He went into a mountain alone to pray. As I have been writing this commentary on the Life of Christ, I asked the Lord if He wanted me to publish this book. The Lord showed me a vision of Himself clothed in white garments, sitting on the mountains overlooking the lake. Jesus looked so young in this vision, and the scene so peaceful and beautiful, I could not help but love Him more and more. This vision confirmed to my heart that I should indeed publish this little book on our wonderful Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

Jesus refused to be made king on the wrong premises. The multitude wanted to make Him king because He had met their physical needs and had provided for them. They wanted Him because of what He could do for them. It will be through these same means (economic provision) that the Antichrist will deceive many into making him their king.

Also, Jesus had not come to claim His rightful throne as king of the Jews, but rather to be the blameless and holy

Lamb of God that would fulfil the Passover offering. This should serve as a warning to us, even as Elisha reprimanded his servant Gehazi for seeking a reward from Naaman, the Syrian general, for his healing by Elisha. Elisha said to Gehazi in 2 Kings 5:26, *“Went not mine heart with thee, when the man turned again from his chariot to meet thee? Is it a time to receive money, and to receive garments, and oliveyards, and vineyards, and sheep, and oxen, and menservants, and maidservants?”*

The Apostle Paul wrote to the believers of his day in 1 Corinthians 4:8, *“Now ye are full, now ye are rich, ye have reigned as kings without us: and I would to God ye did reign, that we also might reign with you.”* Let those of us who are called to be kings and priests remember that at this moment in time we are to be like our Saviour—priests who offer themselves without spot unto God.

### ***Jesus Walks on the Water***

(Mark 6:47-52, Matthew 14:24-33, John 6:16-21)

The Lord’s disciples were in a boat out in the middle of the Sea of Galilee toiling because of the great wind that was beating against the boat. They were about three miles (24 or 30 furlongs) out from the shore and about halfway across the lake to Capernaum. Something that is very interesting here is that the disciples went out to sea in obedience to the Lord. He had told them to go. However, everything did not go smoothly; a violent storm came against them.

I think this is something that is very important for us to remember for our lives. When we obey the Lord, we cannot assume that there will not be any problems. On the contrary, we will be opposed, just as the disciples were opposed by the winds. Some people say, "If I am in the will of God, everything should be all right."

Well, very often when we seek to do the will of God, we will be faced with terrible problems and opposition. We must not give up or turn back, but press on to complete God's will. It is important to note, though, that the disciples were not alone. From His mountaintop vantage point, the Lord was watching His disciples. His ever-caring and ever-watchful eyes were upon them. The Lord watches over us, too, when we are trying to do His will; and yet we are faced with trials. The Lord has promised that He will never leave us or forsake us.

When Jesus came walking upon the sea toward them, it appeared that He was going to pass by them. They cried out in fear, thinking He was an apparition. Jesus said to them, "*Be of good cheer: it is I; be not afraid*" (Mt. 14:27). Peter, as usual, was the first one to speak, saying, "*Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water*" (Mt. 14:28). Here we must pause to take note of this truth. Even impetuous Peter realised that unless the Lord spoke the word, he would not have been able to walk upon the water.

The laws of nature dictate that man cannot walk on water. Therefore, in order to supernaturally bypass the laws of nature and walk on water, Peter had to have faith. Faith



comes from hearing a specific word from the Lord. Paul emphasised this in Romans 10:17, *“So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”* We cannot have faith unless the Lord speaks to us. Therefore, before we do something like Peter did, we must very clearly hear from the Lord first; otherwise there will be no faith to accomplish it.

I am reminded of King Canute. Being egged on by his flattering courtiers and being full of pride, he sat upon his throne on the seashore, commanding the sea come no further. Well it did, and he was obliged to relinquish his throne and run for safety. I have heard other people who have tried to walk upon water and have been unceremoniously drenched as they presumptuously tried to do what God had not told them to do. Therefore, let us heed this lesson beloved, so that we do not have an unwanted bath!

The Lord said to Peter, “Come.” By faith, Peter stepped out on the water and started walking toward the Lord. Faith enabled him to walk on the water, but when he felt the stormy winds and saw the waves, he became afraid and began to sink, crying out, “Lord, save me.” Immediately, the Lord stretched out His hand and caught Peter, chiding him for his lack of faith.

What happened here? Peter responded to a word from the Lord and started to walk on water, but why did he start to sink? When he began to look at the storm, fear came over him and he lost his faith. And that is exactly what fear will do—it will rob us of faith. Therefore, when we move out in

God, we need to keep our eyes focused on Jesus and not consider the outward circumstances or hindrances.

Once He entered the boat, the winds stopped blowing, and His disciples worshipped Him, saying, *“Of a truth thou art the Son of God”* (Mt. 14:33). Although the disciples worshipped the Lord, Mark’s Gospel tells us that there was still an element of unbelief in their hearts. We read in Mark 6:51-52: *“And he went up unto them into the ship; and the wind ceased: and they were sore amazed in themselves beyond measure, and wondered. For they considered not the miracle of the loaves: for their heart was hardened.”* The disciples were amazed by this miracle. You would think that after seeing Jesus feed 5,000 people with five loaves and two fish that they would have faith in the Lord’s miraculous power, but their hearts were hardened. This is an awesome warning for us. We can see miracles and have experiences with God, and yet still not believe. And of course, when we do not believe, our hearts become hardened (Heb. 3:12-13). Let us pray that when we see God’s power and miracles that our hearts will be softened and that faith will be rooted even more firmly within our beings.

We read in John 6:21, *“Then they willingly received him into the ship: and immediately the ship was at the land whither they went.”* The Apostle John notes that once Jesus came into the boat, the boat arrived instantly at their destination (a few miles from where they were). This is another miracle of supernatural travel that I am sure we shall see more of in these last days.

***Their Arrival at Gennesaret***

(Mark 6:53-56, Matthew 14:34-36)

Having moored the boat at the shore, Jesus and His disciples were soon surrounded by a crowd of people bringing their sick to be healed. The Lord was surrounded by those in need. It is an amazing testimony to His grace and stamina that He could minister in the realm of constant miracles for such a long period of time. Remember, Jesus did not have two or three hour services followed by a day of rest. Wherever He went the multitudes sought Him out. Often, after a time of preaching and praying for the sick, we ministers can become very tired and sometimes even short-tempered by the constant demands upon our time. Let us seek to have the same sweetness that Jesus did at all times.

***The Discourse on “The Bread of Life”***

(John 6:22-71)

The next day after Jesus walked upon the water, He was sought out by the people who had been recipients of the miracle of the loaves and fishes. Perceiving that the Lord was no longer on their side of the lake, they came across the lake to Capernaum in boats. When they asked Jesus how He crossed over the sea, He totally ignored their question and addressed their real motives for seeking Him. (Jesus knew that they would not have believed Him anyway.)

This is the same attitude that the Lord adopted when He spoke with Nicodemus. He did not waste time with “small

talk” or casual conversations. He immediately addressed the need in Nicodemus’ life. We would do well to follow Jesus’ example.

Summarising this dialogue, we may say that the people were not seeking Jesus for the miracles, but because He had fed them and met their physical needs. Therefore, He entreated them not to labour for the food that perishes, but rather for that which is eternal.

In the synagogue at Capernaum, the Lord gave the well-known discourse on “The Bread of Life.” Jesus said in John 6:32-33, 35: *“Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world...I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.”* Moses (through the power of God) gave the Israelites manna in the wilderness. But Jesus is the Bread of Life that came down from heaven. Those that believe on Him will have eternal life.

The Jews said in John 6:42, *“Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? how is it then that he saith, I came down from heaven?”* The Jewish community of those days was very tightly knit; everyone knew everyone. They had known Jesus from the time He was a boy and they knew His family. For this reason, they did not believe that He had come down from heaven. Their eyes were blind to the truth.

Jesus continued by saying that we must eat His flesh and drink His blood in order to have eternal life. This was too much for the Jews. They not only became offended at Him, but also angry with Him. Jesus was speaking in the spiritual sense. He is the Word of God incarnate, and we must partake of His Word. In essence the message of Christ is:

1. Believe on the Son and you will have eternal life.
2. Feed on Christ day by day, meaning that you must read and meditate in the Word of God daily.
3. Regularly attend church to hear the Word of God faithfully preached.

At this time, many of the Lord's own disciples became offended and stopped following Him. We read in John 6:66, *"From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him."* Instead of seeking to convince them to keep following Him, Jesus turned to His twelve disciples and said, *"Will ye also go away?"* (Jn. 6:67). Jesus was not affected by people at all. Nothing moved Him. Peter responded in John 6:68-69: *"Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God."*

At this crucial period of time in His ministry, many of the Lord's disciples and helpers forsook Him. He only had 11 men (because Judas would betray Him) whom He could count on to be faithful and loyal to Him. These were the only

ones He could entrust with continuing His ministry after His death and resurrection.

All of this happened because Jesus was not willing to compromise His message. He could have kept the crowds, the fame, and the honour of man if He had watered down His message, but He was committed to teaching everything that His Father gave Him to share. Jesus lost His popularity because of His uncompromising message—for telling the truth just like it is, without sugar coating the Gospel.

Every believer, and especially ministers, will be tested in this very same area—choosing God’s will or popularity. One of the biggest problems in the ministry occurs when ministers have a congregation that does not want to move on with God. The minister is faced with a tough decision: Does he satisfy and appease the people by keeping his messages simple, or does he seek to preach the truth and move on regardless of what the people in his church do? This is not easy by any means, but by God’s grace, we must make the decision to be wholehearted for Him and to move on with Him.

Years ago my wife and I pastored a church that did not want to move on with God. In fact, we had a battle with many people in the city over the baptism of the Holy Spirit. It was a tremendous struggle. The Lord appeared to me during this time and said: “I know what these people are like and what they are going to do, but I want to know what you are going to do. I want to know whether you will preach what I want you to preach or what the people want to hear.” By His

grace, I chose to preach the whole counsel of God, and we were greatly persecuted because of it.

I want to ask you, dear reader, are you willing to go down the path that Jesus chose—the path of rejection instead of the path of fame and popularity? God is looking for men and women in this hour who are willing to stand for the truth, and not dilute His Word. The key to pleasing God is to be Christ-centred and not people-centred. We want to be God-pleasers and not men-pleasers. This is a test that we will all go through. May we be those who are loyal to the truth!

I have noticed, just as in the ministry of Christ, that when you preach the elementary truths of God’s Word—such as salvation, water baptism, healing, the baptism of the Holy Spirit, and deliverance—many people love to listen. They get very excited about a simple message like this. However, when you start to preach the deeper truths of God’s Word, as Jesus did in John 6, they become offended as did many of Jesus’ followers at this time. This situation reminds me of those who received the seed into stony places. They embrace the Gospel with joy and gladly receive it, but because they are never rooted in the truth, eventually they are offended (Mt. 13:20-21).

Many people do not want to grow in their Christian life. They do not want to hear the “meat” (or the deeper truths) of God’s Word. They are content to remain at their current spiritual plateau, and refuse to go on and progress in God. However, everything in life must grow and progress. In the

secular world, there is a constant progression of knowledge. If you are in the medical field, you must constantly study to be up-to-date on the latest technologies and techniques. Several years ago when my wife was in the hospital, her cardiologists said to me, “We cannot do any operations Thursday.” When I inquired why, they replied, “Because we take off every Thursday to study to keep ourselves abreast of the latest developments in the realm of cardiology.” Those who work in the computer business especially have to study constantly and increase their knowledge because the technologies change so quickly in that profession.

Well, in the spiritual life, if we do not progress in knowledge of the Word of God, our growth will be stunted and we will remain spiritual babies all of our lives, and maybe even become offended and turn our backs on the Lord, as did some of the disciples in John 6. Some churches will only preach the salvation message every single service. There is no development or progression. We want to be those who press on to know all the mysteries of God that are hidden in His Word.

### ***Teaching on Defilement***

(Mark 7:1-23, Matthew 15:1-20)

In Capernaum, the Pharisees (who had come from Jerusalem) saw Jesus’ disciples eat without washing their hands, and were appalled. The Pharisees had very strict rules; they would never eat before washing their hands. Therefore, the Pharisees posed this question to the Lord, “*Why walk not*



*thy disciples according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with unwashen hands?"* (Mk. 7:5). In response to this critical question, the Lord gave a very profound discourse on true holiness and purity. The essence of His message is that it is not what goes into a man that defiles him, but what comes out.

You can eat something without washing your hands, and that food still will not defile you or your heart. What really defiles a person is what comes out from the inside, from within his heart—such as evil thoughts, fornication, foolishness, and all other evil things.

Holiness is not exterior apparel, but the interior covering of God's purity that cleanses our hearts and envelops us. In reality, as the Lord pointedly stated, those religious leaders taught exterior ordinances, but inwardly they were ravening wolves. They disannulled the commandments of God. For example, they taught that one could escape the filial duties of caring for parents by saying that they were given to God, and therefore not responsible for their parents' welfare. By this, they disannulled the commandment to honour one's father and mother.

The Lord summates His teaching by listing several of the things that defile a man. However, eating with unwashed hands does not defile a man. Beloved, let us not fall into this same trap of exterior holiness, thinking that *dos* and *don'ts* will purify us rather than spiritual circumcision of the heart, which cuts away the impurities of our fallen nature.

***Healing of the Syrophenician Woman's Daughter***

(Mark 7:24-30, Matthew 15:21-28)

Leaving Galilee, the Lord went into the region of Phoenicia and the cities of Tyre and Sidon. He entered into a house, hoping that He had not been seen, but the multitudes saw Him and came to Him. A certain Gentile, Syrophenician by race, implored the Lord to heal her daughter who was possessed with a devil. Jesus said to her, *"I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel"* (Mt. 15:24), and continued by saying, *"It is not meet to take the children's bread, and cast it to dogs"* (Mt. 15:26).

With great faith and humility, this Gentile woman responded, *"Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table"* (Mt. 15:27). This woman was not offended by Jesus' strong words, but persevered and pleaded for the healing of her daughter. Jesus said to her in Matthew 15:28, *"O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt."* Because of her faith, the Lord granted her request. Upon returning home, she found that her daughter was healed.

We see here that we must not be deterred from our rightful requests. Elijah tested Elisha to see if he would be offended or would continue following him. Because he wanted to receive the double portion, Elisha tenaciously refused to be deflected from staying with Elijah. At times, the Lord will seek to test us through discouragement, as Jesus did with this Gentile woman; and we, too, must hold on to receive all that the Lord has for us.

***The Healing of the Deaf and Dumb Man***

(Mark 7:31-37, Matthew 15:29-31)

With consummate care, Jesus left the borders of the city of Tyre and made His way northward through Sidon and then across the Tetrarchy of Philip, along the eastern part of the Sea of Galilee into Decapolis. *Decapolis* is a Greek word, which means “ten cities.” The ten cities of Decapolis, according to Pliny the Roman historian, were: Damascus (in the north), Philadelphia, Canatha, Scythopolis, Pella, Hippos, Gadara, Dion, Raphana, and Gerasa. Gadara is the only city of Decapolis mentioned by name in the New Testament.

By crossing through the Tetrarchy of Philip and then down through Decapolis, Jesus avoided the territory of Herod Antipas, the murderer of John the Baptist. Herod ruled a substantial part of Galilee, his capital being at Tiberias. Philip was governor of the districts east of the Sea of Galilee and of the Upper Jordan. Philip was a better man than Herod Antipas, and had no reason to fear Jesus.

Jesus sat down upon one of the mountains there, and the multitudes came unto Him. It was at this time that Jesus healed the man who was deaf and had a speech impediment. The Lord took him aside privately, put His fingers into his ears, touched His tongue, and cried out, “Be opened.” His ears were opened, his tongue was loosed, and he spoke normally. Although He charged the people to not tell anyone about this miracle, they proclaimed it everywhere, for they were astonished at His power. The people testified, “*He hath done all things well*” (Mk. 7:37).

This is a wonderful testimony that we should seek to follow—declaring that the Lord does all things well. We need to do well what He gives us to do, so that His testimony of us might be the same.

### ***The Feeding of the Four Thousand***

(Mark 8:1-9, Matthew 15:32-38)

There are two accounts of the Lord's feeding the multitudes—previously he fed 5,000 and now He feeds 4,000 (cf. Mk. 8:19-20, Mt. 16:9-10). Seeing the multitudes, which had been with Him for three days, He had compassion upon them, lest they should faint on the way, for many of them came from far away places. Having seven loaves and a few small fish, Jesus commanded the multitude to sit down. After giving thanks, He broke the bread and fed them. There were seven baskets full of bread and fish left over.

The question that is before us is this—Is there a spiritual significance in the feeding of the 4,000 as we have noted in the feeding of the 5,000? What spiritual truth can we deduce from this miracle? Certainly, the feeding of the 5,000 portrayed Jesus as the Bread of Life who fulfilled the truths of the Table of Shewbread in the Tabernacle of Moses. However, in this miracle we have different numbers and a different occasion. The feeding of the 4,000 is not mentioned in John's Gospel as a sign.

Therefore, we must conclude from the numerics of this miracle that Jesus was completely meeting the needs of all

people. The number seven represents completeness; four speaks of universality (the four corners of the earth); and 1,000 can speak of a multitude. The seven baskets that were left show that the Lord's supply to meet all our needs is complete.

**Let us be encouraged that He is all we need, and that all our sufficiency is in Jesus.** He has the means to meet our every need. We are always concerned about what we are going to eat and drink, but He tells us to seek the kingdom of God first, and all those things will be added unto us (Mt. 6:33).

*A Brief Visit to Dalmanutha*

(Mark 8:10-12, Matthew 15:39 - 16:4)

The Lord, sending the crowds away, got into a boat with His disciples and went across the waters to the other side into Galilee to Dalmanutha or Magadan (Magdala). There the Pharisees met Him, demanding a sign from heaven to tempt Him. Jesus refused, saying that no sign would be given to that evil and adulterous generation, except the sign of Jonah, and then He left.

*He Returns to Bethsaida Julias*

(Mark 8:13-26, Matthew 16:5-12)

In the boat crossing from Magdala to Bethsaida, the Lord warned His disciples of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees. Because they had brought only one loaf of

bread, they thought that He was saying that they had failed to bring enough bread. Reminding them of the miracles of the feeding of the 5,000 and then the 4,000 with just a few loaves, the Lord Jesus rebuked them for their hardness of heart. After seeing Him multiply the loaves for thousands of people, they did not even have enough faith to believe that He could multiply bread for Himself and His disciples.

Then the disciples realised that Jesus was telling them to beware of the false doctrines of the Pharisees and Sadducees. In Scripture, leaven represents false doctrine, hypocrisy (Lk. 12:1), and sin (1 Cor. 5:8). We must beware of these three things as well. Let me also mention the false doctrine of the Herodians. They used the Gospel for political purposes. In the Church today, there is a large political movement. We need to be careful that we do not get caught up in a *political Gospel* and make shipwreck of our faith.

Once Jesus reached the other side of the Sea of Galilee, a blind man was brought to Him. We read in Mark 8:23-26: *“And he took the blind man by the hand, and led him out of the town; and when he had spit on his eyes, and put his hands upon him, he asked him if he saw ought. And he looked up, and said, I see men as trees, walking. After that he put his hands again upon his eyes, and made him look up: and he was restored, and saw every man clearly. And he sent him away to his house, saying, Neither go into the town, nor tell it to any in the town.”*

When Jesus prayed for this man’s eyesight, he was partially healed. He could see men walking as trees. In other words,

his vision was still very blurred. Christ did not settle for a half-healing; He prayed again, and the man was completely healed. Many times we have to pray twice for people before they receive their complete healing. Let us persevere in prayer until we see the power of God manifested.

### ***On the Way to Caesarea Philippi***

(Mark 8:27-30, Matthew 16:13-20, Luke 9:18-21)

Leaving Bethsaida, Jesus and His disciples turned north on their way to Caesarea Philippi, situated to the north of Lake Huleh (which flows through the Sea of Galilee and eventually feeds the Jordan River in its southward flow). The distance between Bethsaida and Caesarea Philippi was about 25 miles. Along the route and nearing Caesarea, the Lord asked His disciples, *“Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?”* They replied, *“Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets.”* Then Jesus said to them, *“But whom say ye that I am?”* Peter answered, *“Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.”*

Jesus then said to Peter, *“Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.”* By this we understand that it is the sovereign gift of the Holy Father that we can know and acknowledge that Jesus is the Son of God. What a privilege to be known of the Father and for Him to reveal Jesus to us. Knowing this, we should walk in an attitude of deep gratefulness and humility toward the Lord the rest of our lives.

Then the Lord declared to Peter, *“And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven”* (Mt. 16:18-19). We know that Jesus referred to Peter as a rock at times, but would he be the foundation of the Church? Who was this rock?

In Scripture, the *rock* always refers to Jehovah in the Old Testament and Christ in the New Testament (cf. 1 Cor. 10:4, Deut. 32:4). Jesus was the solid rock upon which the Church was founded. Paul said in Ephesians 2:20, *“And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone.”* Christ is the chief cornerstone or rock upon which the Church is founded, and upon Him were the apostles and prophets resting.

Christ also promised that the gates of hell would not prevail against the Church. As the Church moves forward under the direction of the blessed Holy Spirit, the power of the enemy’s strongholds will fall before the mighty Church of the living God, and the gates of hell will not prevail against God’s people. Obviously, gates do not move; they are stationary. The Church of God is going to move like a mighty army against the kingdom of darkness and then the gates of hell will fall!



***Jesus Teaches His Disciples He must be Crucified***

(Mark 8:31-37, Matthew 16:21-26, Luke 9:22-25)

Now Jesus begins to prepare His disciples for His crucifixion and suffering at the hands of the elders and chief priests. However, Peter rebuked the Lord, saying, *“Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee”* (Mt. 16:22). Jesus turned to Peter, rebuked him, and said, *“Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men”* (Mt. 16:23).

Here we have an extraordinary lesson that we must not overlook. Just moments before this, Peter was speaking by the revelation of God, and now he has opened himself up to be a channel of Satan. It appears that Satan just came right up to Peter at this time, seeking to deflect Jesus from the cross through the premier apostle. If this was the case with the Apostle Peter, how much more could it happen to us if we do not guard our hearts, minds, and mouths? Let us ever humble ourselves before the Lord so that we do not fall into this same error. Through Peter, Satan spoke these words, seeking to discourage Jesus from hitting His mark and going to the cross. We must be very careful about prophecies or “words from the Lord” that people give us; we must make sure that they are from God.

***Discourse on the Second Coming***

(Mark 8:38 - 9:1, Matthew 16:27-28, Luke 9:26-27)

The Lord concludes this conversation with a discourse on His Second Coming, giving at the same time a warning that

when He appears, He will render to every man according to his works. He then said, “*There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom*” (Mt. 16:28).

This statement requires a very careful examination, since Christ was obviously not suggesting that some of His disciples would live until the Second Coming. The interpretation is actually quite simple. Jesus was alluding to the experience on the Mount of Transfiguration, when three of the Twelve saw the Lord transfigured with the glory of His Father just a few days after this incident.

### ***The Transfiguration***

(Mark 9:2-8, Matthew 17:1-8, Luke 9:28-36)

Matthew tells us that it was about *six days* after these words of Jesus that He took Peter, James, and John up into a high mountain with Him (Mt. 17:1). You will notice that Luke says that it was *eight days* afterward (Lk. 9:28). The discrepancy can be explained by the fact that Luke was referring to the time when they actually arrived at the summit of the mountain; whereas it is possible that Mark and Matthew were referring to their arrival at the bottom of the mountain slope.

The Holy Spirit recorded the timing on this significant event two different ways for a very real purpose. The number six (apart from the fact that it speaks of humanity) refers to the last dispensation. We know that there are approximately 6,000 years given to man, about 4,000 from the Creation to

Christ, and about 2,000 years for the Church Age. Therefore, the transfiguration has a special application for the Last Day Church.

The number eight speaks of a new day or resurrection life. This speaks of the fact that God's resurrection life and power is going to come down upon the Church in our days.

The mountain in question was undoubtedly Mount Hermon. Mount Tabor, which is the traditional site, could not be the place, for there was a fortress on the summit of that mountain. Mount Tabor also was in the territory of Herod Antipas, and we know that Jesus was avoiding his territory at this time. In addition, Tabor is far south of Caesarea Philippi, where the Lord Jesus had just come from. There would have been no sense in going to Caesarea Philippi in the first place, if He had intended to go to Mount Tabor. They would have had to re-cross the Sea of Galilee (of which re-crossing there is no record).

It is interesting that Jesus only took three of His disciples with Him—Peter, James, and John. These three men were the closest to the Lord and were part of the inner circle. They were privileged to witness the glorification of the Lord upon the mount, while the other disciples were not allowed to be present. You see, there are *degrees* of fellowship. There were certain things that Jesus could share with everyone; there were other things He could only share with His disciples; and there were still other things that He could only share with Peter, James, and John.

Consider this—you cannot talk about calculus or algebra with a little five-year-old boy. It is the same in the kingdom of God. The Lord can only share His most precious truths and secrets with those who are alike in character and close to His heart. The *secret* of the Lord is with those that fear Him (Ps. 25:14).

Fellowship is based upon common experience. If you are moving on with God and pressing on toward spiritual Mount Zion, you cannot have real fellowship with a believer who is content to remain in the Outer Court and know only the elementary truths of God's Word. I had such beautiful fellowship with a certain couple in Bible school years ago. We would talk about the Lord and have a wonderful time together. However, I saw them five years later, and there was not that openness to share with them anymore; we could not really fellowship together. They were still talking about the same things they were talking about five years before. They had not progressed in God or in their spiritual walk. May we pray that we will be privileged to be close to the Lord as Peter, James, and John were, that we might have similar experiences with God.

Let us return to the narrative. As the four of them prayed, the face of Jesus was altered and His raiment became whiter than any garment on earth can become. Jesus was glorified with the glory of the Father. Peter, James, and John had fallen asleep, but when they awoke they saw Moses and Elijah talking with Jesus.

Peter then suggested that they build three *tabernacles*: one for Jesus, one for Moses, and one for Elijah. Peter wanted to remain on the mountaintop. The fact that this remark is specifically recorded in Holy Scriptures links the transfiguration of Jesus with the spiritual outpouring during the Feast of Tabernacles in the Last Day Church. During the Feast of Tabernacles, the Israelites would build booths (or tabernacles) to dwell in during the feast. Therefore, we can expect to see the glory of God that Jesus experienced on this mountain be manifested in the Church in the last days, and in the faces of individual believers.

While they were talking, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and the Father spoke from the cloud, saying, “*This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him*” (Mt. 17:5). The Father gave testimony concerning His Son that He was well pleased with Him, similar to what He had said almost three years before when He was baptised by John in the Jordan River at the beginning of His ministry (Mt. 3:17). However, this time the Father said something else. He said, “Hear ye him.” The Father gave His seal of approval of His Son and gave Him a fresh *authority* upon His words. This is very significant for our lives.

I believe that each one of us has to prove himself faithful to God. If we remain faithful, there will come the time when the Father will anoint us and give us the authority to speak His words, even as He did not let any of Samuel’s words “fall to the ground” (1 Sam. 3:19). We want God to say of us: “Listen to My servants. Hear ye them.”

We humbly suggest the following reasons for this marvellous mountaintop experience:

1. It established Jesus as the Son of God in the eyes of the disciples, for they heard the voice of the Father from heaven saying, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him.” Toward the end of his life, Peter would write concerning this experience in 2 Peter 1:17: *“For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”*

2. Comfort and assurance was given to Jesus by these two anointed ones who had stood on His right and left side prior to His incarnation. These are the two olive trees spoken of in Zechariah 4:3. They also spoke of the Lord’s decease from this world at Jerusalem. Jesus was strengthened by Moses and Elijah in His resolve to go to the cross.

He knew that He was indeed the Lamb of God who would take away the sin of the world. Moses was the one by whom the Law had been given. The Law consisted of numerous types that would be fulfilled by Jesus, the Christ. Elijah, the prophet of repentance, who brought Israel back to the Lord, was now looking at the One whose ministry would eventually reconcile Israel to God at His Second Coming.

The Lord received solace, comfort, consolation, strength, and understanding from these two major prophets who had gone before Him, and who in their own way were His

forerunners. At times like this in our own lives (when we are misunderstood and opposed as Jesus was by the religious leaders of His day), we, too, need to be consoled and strengthened by those who have trod this way before us.

3. This experience also foreshadows the glory that will come upon the Last Day Church. As the days become more and more evil, the true believers will experience this same glory of God in their own lives, as we read in Isaiah 60:1-2: *“Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the LORD is risen upon thee. For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the LORD shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee.”* The Apostle Paul reiterates this same truth in 2 Corinthians 3:7-8: *“But if the ministration of death, written and engraved in stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not steadfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance; which glory was to be done away: How shall not the ministration of the spirit be rather glorious?”* The glory of the New Testament Church will far surpass the glory given in the Old Testament. I have seen many visions of the tremendous glory of the Lord that is going to come upon His Church in these last days, and I can tell you, it is worth waiting for.

### ***Questions During the Descent from the Mountain***

(Mark 9:9-13, Matthew 17:9-13, Luke 9:36)

On their way down from the mountain, the Lord enjoined His disciples not to speak of the transfiguration experience until He was risen from the dead. His disciples did not understand

what Jesus meant by His resurrection. They, in turn, asked the Lord, “*Why then say the scribes that [Elijah] must first come?*” (Mt. 17:10).

The Lord confirmed that Elijah must first come and restore all things. This teaching comes from the prophecy in Malachi 4:5-6: “*Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD: And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.*” Elijah will come in person along with Moses before the Second Coming of the Lord to restore all things. John the Baptist came in the spirit of Elijah before the First Coming of Christ to prepare the way for Him.

What precisely did Jesus mean when He said that Elijah would first restore all things? Well, Scripture interprets Scripture. Thus we read in Acts 3:21, “*Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began.*” All through Scripture the prophets have declared that at the end of the ages the Church will be triumphant and come into great glory. Specifically, Haggai 2:9 says, “*The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former, saith the LORD of hosts: and in this place will I give peace, saith the LORD of hosts.*” Spiritually, this means that the Last Day Church will be greater and more glorious than the Early Church.

Habakkuk 2:14 also confirms that there will be a great revival: “*For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of*



*the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.*” Paul also tells us that the Lord is coming for a glorious Church without spot or wrinkle (Eph. 5:27).

***The Disciples and the Demonic Boy***

(Mark 9:14-29, Matthew 17:14-20, Luke 9:37-43)

When Jesus and His three disciples arrived at the bottom of the mountain, a multitude was waiting for Him. Among the crowd there was a man whose son had a dumb spirit. After Jesus cast out the spirit, Jesus’ disciples (the other nine) inquired why they were not able to deliver this boy. Jesus replied in Matthew 17:20-21: *“Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you. Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting.”*

There is an important lesson to be learned here. We should not assume that all demons are the same. In actuality, they are of different sizes and dispositions. Some can be very stubborn, and require much prayer and fasting to cast out. Therefore, before casting out a demon from someone, it is wisdom to seek the Lord first and ask Him the nature of the particular enemy we are facing, so that our efforts are not futile.

***Jesus Returns With His Disciples to Galilee***

(Mark 9:30-32, Matthew 17:22-23, Luke 9:43-45)

Returning now privately to Galilee, Jesus spoke again to His disciples concerning His death in Jerusalem and His

resurrection three days afterward. However, the meaning of this was concealed from them. Herein we have a truth that we must ponder. There was a time for them to understand, and that was after His death and resurrection, *not before*.

Sometimes the Lord desires that we know things in advance, but understand only after or at the time of the happenings. The rationale for this is very clear. If they had all understood what was going to happen, they would certainly have acted differently at Gethsemane. They could have sought to be crucified with Him. This would have ruined God's purposes for the crucifixion of Christ. Also, the Lord needed them to remain to carry on the message of the Gospel after He died.

### ***The Payment of the Temple Dues***

(Matthew 17:24-27)

In Capernaum, those who were delegated to collect the Temple dues (a half shekel) asked Peter if his Master paid the Temple tribute. Peter replied, "Yes" (Mt. 17:25). We should pause here to note that this tax was for the support of the Temple, which was very costly to operate. The half shekel was approximately two day's wages for the workingman.

It was collected on the basis of Exodus 30:13-16, which says: "*This they shall give, every one that passeth among them that are numbered, half a shekel after the shekel of the sanctuary: (a shekel is twenty gerahs:;) an half shekel shall be the offering of the LORD. Every one that passeth among them that are numbered, from twenty years old and above,*

*shall give an offering unto the LORD. The rich shall not give more, and the poor shall not give less than half a shekel, when they give an offering unto the LORD, to make an atonement for your souls. And thou shalt take the atonement money of the children of Israel, and shalt appoint it for the service of the tabernacle of the congregation; that it may be a memorial unto the children of Israel before the LORD, to make an atonement for your souls.”*

Although the Temple tribute was supposed to have been a one-time collection, the Pharisees and elders apparently used these Scriptures as justification for collecting it yearly between the 15<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> of Adar, which would have been before the Passover. Booths were set up all over Palestine for this collection. However, people in remote areas and in other lands were permitted to bring their dues up until the Feast of Pentecost.

When the Jews sought to collect the Temple tribute from Jesus, it was considerably later in the year. There may have been an acknowledgment that Jesus was not in the land at the prescribed time, and that now was the opportunity to collect His dues. It was also an endeavour to tempt Jesus. Those who knew of His previous cleansing of the Temple, as well as His teachings on true holiness and religion, could have seized this opportunity to try to discredit Jesus.

After Peter had said “yes” to the tribute collectors, he entered into the house where Jesus was. Jesus said to him, “*What thinkest thou, Simon? of whom do the kings of the earth take*

*custom or tribute? of their own children, or of strangers?"* Peter replied, *"Of strangers."* Then Jesus said to him, *"Then are the children free. Notwithstanding, lest we should offend them, go thou to the sea, and cast an hook, and take up the fish that first cometh up; and when thou hast opened his mouth, thou shalt find a piece of money: that take, and give unto them for me and thee."* Jesus, as Creator and Governor of the universe and King of kings, was free from taxation. However, in order to have a good testimony and not offend the Jews, He decided to pay the tax through the means of a miracle. He told Peter to cast a hook into the sea. The first fish that he caught would have a shekel in its mouth, and Peter could pay the tribute with that money.

Therefore, this should settle once and for all the question of whether Christians should pay taxes. If Christ did (being King of the whole universe), so should we. The Apostle Paul confirms this in Romans 13:6: *"For this cause pay ye tribute also: for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing."* Thus it is very clear from Scripture that Christians should pay their lawful taxes to the appropriate authorities. Let us seek to be a good testimony in our communities by paying taxes, and not be a reproach to Christ's name.

### ***Who Is the Greatest in the Kingdom?***

(Mark 9:33-37, Matthew 18:1-5, Luke 9:46-48)

Coming again into the town of Capernaum, Jesus perceived that the disciples had been arguing among themselves about

who would be the greatest among them in the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, the Lord took a little child and said: *“Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven”* (Mt. 18:3-4).

Those who are greatest in the kingdom of God and in His eyes are those who are humble and have a child-like spirit. King David expressed this same humble, child-like attitude in Psalm 131:1-2: *“LORD, my heart is not haughty, nor mine eyes lofty: neither do I exercise myself in great matters, or in things too high for me. Surely I have behaved and quieted myself, as a child that is weaned of his mother: my soul is even as a weaned child.”*

This attitude is epitomised by the first beatitude, which says, *“Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven”* (Mt. 5:3). We need to realise that we are what we are by the grace of God.

### ***Relationships***

(Mark 9:38-50, Matthew 18:6-35, Luke 9:49-50)

Then Jesus develops several points concerning relationships.

**1. Our relationship with Christians who are not in our fellowship or church organization** - We read in Luke 9:49-50: *“And John answered and said, Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name; and we forbid him, because he followeth*

*not with us. And Jesus said unto him, Forbid him not: for he that is not against us is for us.*" John saw a certain person casting out devils in the Lord's name, and he forbad him, because he was not a part of the apostolic band.

What Jesus is addressing here is John's exclusiveness; this is something that we must beware of, too. Many times we feel superior to those who are not in our fellowship of churches or denomination, and the Lord wants to change this sectarian mindset in us. We need to have a love and appreciation within us for the whole Body of Christ and not just for our particular fellowship. The Lord wants us to cultivate healthy relationships with those of like precious faith.

**2. Rewards in the kingdom** - Jesus said in Mark 9:41, "*For whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink in my name, because ye belong to Christ, verily I say unto you, he shall not lose his reward.*" Every little gesture of goodwill shall be rewarded by the Lord in heaven. A certain lady once saw heaven and learned that every handshake, smile, and act of kindness is rewarded there.

**3. Little children** - The Lord warned of offending little children in Matthew 18:6-10: "*But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea. Woe unto the world because of offences! for it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh! Wherefore if thy hand or thy foot offend thee, cut them off, and cast*

*them from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life halt or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet to be cast into everlasting fire. And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire. Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven.*” The Lord said that it would be better for a millstone to be hanged around our necks, causing us to drown, than for us to offend a little child who believes on Jesus. Those who cause others to stumble incur God’s wrath and anger.

We would do well to remember the words of John the Beloved in 1 John 2:10, *“He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him.”* Let us pray that God will purify our hearts so that there is nothing in us that will offend others or cause them to stumble, especially little children.

**4. The Lost Sheep** - The Good Shepherd continued by giving the parable of the Lost Sheep: *“How think ye? if a man have an hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, doth he not leave the ninety and nine, and goeth into the mountains, and seeketh that which is gone astray? And if so be that he find it, verily I say unto you, he rejoiceth more of that sheep, than of the ninety and nine which went not astray. Even so it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish”* (Mt. 18:12-14). This shows us that God’s heart is toward the backslider, the lost sheep.

Let us seek to restore the lost who once were in the fold of God and see them restored to God.

**5. Proper treatment of a believer who has sinned or wronged another** - In Matthew 18:15-17, the Lord spoke of Church discipline and proper treatment of a brother or sister in Christ who has sinned: *“Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as a heathen man and a publican.”*

In this passage the Lord gives to us the correct method of addressing one who has sinned. First, we should privately tell him his fault. If then he will not give heed to this, we should take another believer with us to confront him. If he still will not listen, we should take the matter to our local church leadership. If at that juncture he will not listen to the church, he is to be treated as a heathen and an outright sinner.

**6. The power of unity in prayer** - Christ spoke of the power of unity in prayer in Matthew 18:18-20: *“Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as*



*touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."*

Whenever two or three (or more) are gathered together in the Lord's name, He is in their midst. This shows us the tremendous power of unity in prayer. There is power when one believer prays by himself, but when he is joined in prayer by other Christians, there is much more power in their prayers. This shows us the tremendous importance and value of church prayer meetings, when the believers can gather together and agree in prayer. This is important in marriage as well. Peter admonishes husbands and wives to dwell together in peace and harmony so that their prayers are not hindered (cf. 1 Pet. 3:7). If a couple is not living in harmony, or does not agree with each other in prayer, their prayers will be very ineffective. However, when a husband and wife have a good marriage and they agree in prayer, they are very effective prayer warriors. Let us seek to practice this so that the work of the kingdom may be advanced, and so that God's will may be accomplished on earth as it is in heaven.

**7. Forgiveness** - In response to Peter's question of how many times we should forgive fellow believers if they offend us, the Lord replied, "*Seventy times seven.*" The Lord was not saying that we only have to forgive someone 490 times and then we can hold a grudge against him. His point is that we should never stop forgiving others. The Lord continued by giving the parable of the Unmerciful Debtor to illustrate the

importance of forgiveness and the danger of unforgiveness. As in the story, if we do not forgive others, our Father in heaven will not forgive us. However, if we forgive others, the Lord will forgive us.

One of the greatest problems on the mission field is that the missionaries cannot get along with each other. I have known many missionaries who have endured great hardships on the mission field and terrible offences by the native people. Yet, so many of them cannot forgive their fellow missionaries, and they have lost their ministries because of it. Let us cry out that we will be a forgiving people whose hearts are free of any unforgiveness and bitterness.

### ***The Cost of Discipleship***

(Matthew 8:19-22, Luke 9:57-62)

A certain scribe came to Jesus and said, "*Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest*" (Lk. 9:57, Mt. 8:19). Jesus replied, "*Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head*" (Lk. 9:58). In other words, there is a price to pay in being Jesus' disciple. We will not always have a home of our own to live in, but the Lord promises to take care of us.

Another man wanted to follow Jesus, but asked if he could first go bury his father who had passed away (Lk. 9:59). Jesus said to him in Luke 9:60, "*Let the dead bury their dead: but go thou and preach the kingdom of God.*" In other words, Jesus was saying to him to let the dead (those who are

spiritually dead and do not have eternal life) attend to the task of burying others, for the Lord had a purpose for this man's life. It is an interesting reflection that heathen countries place great emphasis on the dead. Egypt is a perfect example of this. They enshrined their pharaohs in great monuments (the pyramids) filled with treasures for the afterlife. Obviously, the pharaohs never got the chance to enjoy the treasures.

When another man asked that he might bid farewell to his loved ones at home before following the Lord, Jesus responded by saying, "*No man, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God*" (Lk. 9:62). Following Jesus requires a wholehearted dedication that is only possible by His grace. In order to be pleasing in the Lord's sight, we must appropriate that grace. The Lord has never promised His disciples an easy path, but the rewards that come from following the Lord far outweigh any sacrifice that we will ever have to make for Him.

### ***The Feast of Tabernacles***

(John 7:2-9)

The preparation for the Feast of Tabernacles had now come. This feast was celebrated in the fall of the year, around October on our calendar. It took place only about six months before the Lord's crucifixion during the Passover (which was celebrated the following year in the month of April). Jesus' brothers, who did not believe that He was the Messiah, encouraged Him to go to Jerusalem and not hide Himself (Jn. 7:3-5). The Lord Jesus replied, "*My time is not*

*yet come*” (Jn. 7:6). This is a phrase that occurs many times in the Gospel of John. Jesus was always very conscious that His life was governed by the perfect timing of His Father. Therefore, He declined to go with them to the feast, tarrying still in Galilee.

### ***His Journey from Galilee to Jerusalem***

(Luke 9:51-56, John 7:10)

Jesus then journeyed from Galilee to Jerusalem with His disciples. He sent messengers ahead of Him to prepare a place for Him in a certain village in Samaria (Lk. 9:52). The Samaritans, however, refused to receive Jesus, because they could tell by the look on His face that He was determined to go to Jerusalem (Lk. 9:53), and the Samaritans and Jews did not have a friendly relationship with each other.

Angered by their refusal, James and John asked Jesus if He wanted them to call fire down from heaven to consume them, as did Elijah. Jesus rebuked them, saying in Luke 9:55-56: *“Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. For the Son of man is not come to destroy men’s lives, but to save them.”* Jesus told James and John that they did not realise the spirit that animated them. They had a spirit of harshness. We must control our spirit always by God’s grace and seek to be meek. Jesus reminded them that He had come to save people’s lives, not destroy them. We, too, should remember that we have not come to destroy, but to save people’s lives.

# Chapter 10

## ***THE LATER JUDEAN MINISTRY***

### ***His Arrival and Ministry at the Feast of Tabernacles***

(John 7:11-52)

There was great anticipation among the Jews at the Feast of Tabernacles in Jerusalem. They were all waiting to see if Jesus was going to come. The people were divided in their opinion of Him. Some thought He was a good man, but others thought that He was a deceiver. In the midst of the feast, Jesus appeared in the Temple and began to teach. Teaching is one of the foremost attributes of the Feast of Tabernacles. The people marvelled at His tremendous knowledge and teachings, because He had not attended the great rabbinical schools of that day. To this, Jesus replied, *“My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me”* (Jn. 7:16).

The Lord then gave the key to correct interpretation of the Holy Scriptures in John 7:17: *“If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.”* Understanding is a heart issue, not a matter necessarily of intellectual comprehension. It is those who desire to do God’s will, who will see clearly and be able to discern between truth and false doctrines. However, those who do not obey the Lord and do not keep His commandments will not be able to discern between good doctrines and false doctrines.

On the last day of the Feast of Tabernacles, Jesus stood up and said, *“If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water”* (Jn. 7:37-38). Jesus was referring to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit (Jn. 7:39). This has a general application for every believer and every generation, but it also has a special application for the Last Day Church, which is going to witness the greatest revival ever. The glory of God and the outpouring of God’s Spirit in the Church in our days will be far greater than what was experienced in the Early Church. Let us pray that God will keep us faithful so that we will be active participants in this new move of God.

When the chief priests and Pharisees sent officers to arrest Jesus, the officers returned and declared to them, *“Never man spake like this man”* (Jn. 7:46). Nicodemus, one of the Pharisees, warned them saying, *“Doth our law judge any man, before it hear him, and know what he doeth?”* (Jn. 7:51). The others replied in a mocking tone, *“Art thou also of Galilee? Search, and look: for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet”* (Jn. 7:52), and then everyone went to his own home.

Because Jesus was raised in Nazareth, people assumed mistakenly that He was born in Galilee, when in fact He was born in Bethlehem, the promised birthplace of the Messiah (Mic. 5:2). This and many other truths concerning Jesus had been shielded from their understanding by the Father so that they would indeed crucify the Lord of glory, according to His purpose.

*The Adulterous Woman*

(John 7:53 - 8:11)

As everyone departed to own house, Jesus went to the Mount of Olives to pray. Although the Scriptures do not specifically state that He prayed there, we have already seen that this was a way of life for Him. Undoubtedly, He wanted to pray to His Father to prepare Himself for the events of the next day.

Early in the morning of the next day, Jesus came to the Temple and began teaching the people again. Then the scribes and Pharisees brought to Him a woman caught in the act of adultery. They tempted Him saying: *“Master, this woman was taken in adultery, in the very act. Now Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned: but what sayest thou?”* (Jn. 8:4-5). Seeing right through their hypocrisy, Jesus acted as if He had not heard them, and stooped down and wrote upon the ground. There has been much speculation about what the Lord wrote upon the ground, but we do not know for sure. It is quite likely that He wrote the Ten Commandments, as most theologians feel.

Then Jesus stood up and declared, *“He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her”* (Jn. 8:7), and then stooped down and continued writing on the ground. Being pricked in their hearts and convicted by the Holy Spirit, one by one, starting with the eldest, they all left.

When Jesus stood up again and saw no one there except the adulterous woman, He said to her, *“Woman, where are those*

*thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee?"* (Jn. 8:10). There was no one left to condemn her, for the Law stated that no one could be condemned without two or three witnesses. Then Jesus said to her, *"Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more"* (Jn. 8:11).

We must be very clear about the fact that Jesus in no way, shape, or form contradicted the Law and condoned adultery. In fact, He said to her, "Go and sin no more," thus clearly calling adultery sin. All other Scriptures make it very clear that adulterers have their lot in the lake of fire. Without a shadow of a doubt, the Lord hates the terrible sin of adultery, but as the Judge of the whole earth, the Lord chose to show mercy to this woman, whereas the Law would have called for the death penalty.

### ***"I Am the Light of the World"***

(John 8:12-20)

Now back in the Temple near the treasury, the Lord declares to the scorning scribes and Pharisees that He is the Light of the World (Jn. 8:12). Those who follow Him will not walk in darkness, but in light. The light of Christ must shine through us as believers so that we are the light of the world, too.

Looking at many of the Lord's sayings, one has the feeling that they were not so much to instruct His hearers, but rather to teach His people in following generations. He was essentially speaking to non-believers who were not going



to receive His testimony. We must realise that Jesus did absolutely nothing except what His Father told Him to do and say. He was completely Spirit-controlled, and sought only to perform the will of His holy Father.

***The Altercation Between the Lord and  
the Scribes and the Pharisees***

(John 8:21-59)

Warning them plainly that they would die in their sins unless they believed on Him, Jesus said that they would know that He was sent from the Father after they had crucified Him. At this moment, many Jews believed on Jesus (Jn. 8:30). To them Jesus said, *“If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free”* (Jn. 8:31-32). The unbelieving Jews responded with a typical denial of their bondage: *“We be Abraham’s seed, and were never in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free?”* (Jn. 8:33). The Lord replied: *“Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin. And the servant abideth not in the house for ever: but the Son abideth ever”* (Jn. 8:34-35). There is a very important truth here that we must not miss.

Christians who permit sin to remain in their lives will eventually be cut off by the Lord after continual refusal to change. Ezekiel 3:20 gives a similar warning: *“When a righteous man doth turn from his righteousness, and commit iniquity, and I lay a stumblingblock before*

*him...*” When a righteous person turns from the paths of righteousness to commit iniquity and continues in that path, the Lord Himself will lay a stumblingblock before him.

This stumblingblock often takes the form of an offence or a teaching through which a person finds an excuse to justify leaving the church—not realising that it is the Lord who has put this stumblingblock before him. We would do well to meditate upon Psalm 84:4, which says, *“Blessed are they that dwell in thy house: they will be still praising thee.”* We want to find grace in God’s sight to remain in His house and in His paths of righteousness forever.

Then Jesus told them that they were not the children of Abraham in heart, but of the devil, for they were seeking to kill the Son of God. The Jews replied, *“Art thou greater than our father Abraham, which is dead?”* (Jn. 8:53). Jesus countered by saying, *“Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad”* (Jn. 8:56). Thus, we see that Abraham was privileged to have a revelation of the life of Christ. Bewildered by Jesus’ comments, the Jews said, *“Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham?”* Jesus, although only about 32 or 33 years old at this time, must have appeared relatively young. The Jews totally misunderstood what Jesus was saying; they could not comprehend the truth. They took up stones to kill Him, but because it was not His predetermined time to die, He was able to escape from them.

***The Healing of the Man Born Blind***

(John 9:1-41)

As Jesus was walking away from those who were seeking to take His life, He saw a man that had been born blind. His disciples asked, “*Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?*” (Jn. 9:2). Jesus responded in John 9:3, “*Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him.*”

The disciples’ question reveals an attitude that is prevalent among many people—that if a person goes through suffering or a tragedy, he must have sinned. Job’s friends made the same presumption about him when he was suffering. In actuality, Job was one of the most righteous men who ever lived and he suffered to be an example of patience for all generations (Jas. 5:10-11). Often, we pass through trials so that the glory of God can be manifested through us; after all, there can be no miracles of healing without sickness.

Jesus most graciously healed this blind man, but because it was on the Sabbath day, the Pharisees again objected to healing on the Sabbath. The Pharisees characteristically tried to discredit Him by saying, “*This man is not of God, because he keepeth not the sabbath day*” (Jn. 9:16). However, the people were divided over this miracle, for others said, “*How can a man that is a sinner do such miracles?*” After much discussion and talking to him and his parents, the Pharisees cast him out (or excommunicated him). Then the Lord met him and he gave his heart to the Lord.

Then Jesus said in John 9:39, “*For judgment I am come into this world, that they which see not might see; and that they which see might be made blind.*” Jesus came to open the spiritual eyes of those who were blind and lacked knowledge, and to close the eyes of those who saw (those who thought they saw, like the Pharisees, who were learned in the Scriptures).

Because the Pharisees claimed to be able to see and understand spiritual truths, their sin would be counted unto them (Jn. 9:41). The Lord Jesus was showing us by this statement that when we understand truth and do not walk in the light of that truth, our condemnation will be great.

### ***The Good Shepherd***

(John 10:1-21)

One of the best-loved and most well known roles in the life and ministry of Jesus is that of the Good Shepherd. It is a role that I believe He loves so very much indeed. Many years ago, I saw the Lord Jesus in a vision, clothed as the Shepherd of Israel, holding a little lamb in His arms. In this vision, looking after this little lamb gave Him much pleasure. By the Holy Spirit I understood that this lamb represented a member of the church that I was pastoring at the time. It gave me tremendous comfort to know that this particular soul was safe in the arms of Jesus.

The Lord Jesus also declared Himself to be the Door of the sheepfold, and therefore the only way by which man can be saved. Then Jesus discussed one of the foremost tasks of a good shepherd—that of laying down his life for the flock.

This is indeed the case, for a shepherd, especially in the days of Jesus, had to protect his sheep from robbers, lions, bears, and wolves. Many shepherds over the years have sacrificed their lives for the sake of their sheep. As the Good Shepherd, the Lord states that He will lay down His life for His flock through His death on the cross of Calvary.

*The Sending Forth of the Seventy*  
(Luke 10:1-24)

This is similar to the sending forth of the Twelve, but with a distinct difference—the 70 represent church elders, while the Twelve represent those in the five-fold ministry. Therefore, we should pray that God will raise up people in our churches who can go out as the 70 did. No mention is made of the names of these 70 disciples in Holy Scripture. They were endued with power and sent forth two by two to prepare the way of the Lord in the villages He was going to visit.

In a small way, they were performing a ministry similar to the ministry of John the Baptist by going before the Lord to prepare the people's hearts to receive the message of Jesus. Charles Wesley would often do this for his brother John Wesley. It is often a great blessing if elders can go before their senior pastors and ministers to prepare the way for them.

In these last days, I believe we will see many elders and lay ministers preach the Gospel in other places and visit other countries, perhaps for short periods of time. The harvest of souls will be so great that we will need every qualified

member in the congregation to help minister. Our duty as leaders is to prepare many people in our churches to be ready to help minister when revival comes.

When the 70 returned, they rejoiced that even the devils were subject unto them. Jesus warned them not to rejoice that Satan was subject to them, but rather that their names were written in heaven (Lk. 10:20).

This reminds me of Jesus' words in Matthew 7:21-23: *"Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity."* We must not focus on the ministry, but on the Lord. Let us at all times seek to cultivate assiduously our love relationship with Jesus.

Then Jesus told the 70 that they were privileged to witness the power of God in the person of the Son of God. Many righteous men had desired to see Him, but did not because they were not born in that particular generation. We, too, should realise the privilege that we have of knowing the Lord and living in the time when His power will be restored to the Church. Let us, therefore, walk worthy of Him so that our names will not be removed from the book of life.

*The Parable of the Good Samaritan*

(Luke 10:25-37)

A certain lawyer came to Jesus and asked him, “*Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?*” The Lord answered, “*What is written in the law? how readest thou?*” The lawyer, who apparently knew the Scriptures very well, replied by quoting the two greatest commandments from Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18: “*Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself*” (Lk. 10:27). The Lord commended the lawyer for answering rightly.

However, seeking to justify himself, the lawyer asked Jesus, “Who is my neighbour?” Then the Lord proceeded to give what has become a very beloved passage of Scripture, entitled “The Parable of the Good Samaritan.” In this parable, the Lord gave the illustration of a certain man who was attacked by robbers on his way to Jericho and was left to die.

A priest happened to walk by, but instead of helping the injured man, he moved to the other side of the road and kept on walking. Then a Levite walked by, and did nothing at all to help this man either. These two religious leaders failed in their duty to help their neighbour. Their religion was in word only and not in deed. They knew the Scriptures, but they did not live by them, for they had no love in their hearts for others.

A Samaritan, however, travelling on that same road, saw him and had compassion upon him. He bound up his wounds,

and poured in the oil and the wine. This Good Samaritan set him upon his own beast, took him to an inn, and paid the innkeeper to look after him.

The Lord then inquired of the lawyer which of these three men was a good neighbour to the man that had been attacked by robbers. The lawyer rightly answered, “He that showed mercy on him.”

There is a mighty lesson in this parable for each one of us. The word “neighbour” should not be just interpreted as one who lives nearby or someone we know, but anyone, even someone we do not know, who is in need and in distress. Our neighbour is our fellow man. Let us seek to be like the Good Samaritan, for loving our neighbour as ourselves is the fulfilment of the Law.

### *In the Home of Martha and Mary*

(Luke 10:38-42)

As Jesus journeyed on, He came to the village where Martha and Mary lived. These two sisters symbolise two kinds of Christians. Martha was a hard worker—a commendable characteristic—but she was distracted by so many things in life that she did not take time to be with the Lord. On the other hand, Mary sat at the feet of Jesus and received His teachings into her heart. Mary was commended for choosing the better part, which would never be taken from her, while Martha, because of her distractions, was rebuked by Jesus.



We must always remember this exhortation, as well as that of the Apostle Paul in 2 Timothy 2:4: “*No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier.*” Let us beware of needless distractions so that we may attend to those things that are eternal, and especially the most important thing, which is our relationship with the Lord.

I knew a pastor in France years ago who worked about 14 hours a day looking after the needs of his congregation. When someone in his church had a picture that was not straight, he would go straighten it up; when someone needed his lights changed, he would change them. He literally spent his whole day, usually almost 14 hours a day, taking care of the needs of others. Now, it is very good for a pastor to help the people in his church, but my point is that when service came on Sunday, he was completely exhausted; and because he had not had time to study, he did not have fresh truths to share with his church.

You see, Martha was doing a good work by serving in the natural. The problem was that in doing so, she neglected that which was more important—spending time with Jesus. This shows us the importance of being able to *compartmentalise*. The key is to compartmentalise, and to make the most important thing priority.

This has been one of the key words in my life. As a pastor and the leader of a worldwide fellowship, my day is spent on the telephone, reading e-mails and faxes, and trying to make

decisions. If I allowed myself to become overwhelmed with all of these things, I would never get anything done. When you are doing something, put all of your energy into it and do the best job you can. However, do not spend too much time on things that do not really matter. You must do the menial tasks that you have to do, and when they are done, put them out of your mind so that you can concentrate on the study of God's Word, prayer, and communion with the Lord. This is one of the most important lessons for ministers and leaders to learn.

***The Lesson of Importunity in Prayer***  
(Luke 11:1-13)

One of the main ministries of Jesus was prayer. This must have had an impact upon the disciples, for they wanted to pray as their Master did. Therefore, they implored Him to teach them how to pray (earlier, in Matthew 6). He had already taught them the *Pater Nostra* (the Lord's Prayer), which He repeats here. However, now He takes them further on in the realm of prayer by teaching on the need for importunity in prayer. He taught that we must persevere in prayer until we receive the answer to our prayer, and that we must pray in a way that does not accept any denial.

An importunate person is not one who would knock on a door once and then leave if no one answers; he would knock and keep on knocking until someone opens the door. This is how we must be in prayer—we must persist and not give up until God answers our prayers! To illustrate this, the Lord gave what is known as “The Parable of the Friend at Midnight” in

Luke 11:5-8: *“Which of you shall have a friend, and shall go unto him at midnight, and say unto him, Friend, lend me three loaves; For a friend of mine in his journey is come to me, and I have nothing to set before him? And he from within shall answer and say, Trouble me not: the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give thee. I say unto you, Though he will not rise and give him, because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will rise and give him as many as he needeth.”* Because of the persistence and importunity, the man would give his friend whatever he wanted.

Jesus then relates this to the need of importunity in prayer so that we may receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Many people say: “I prayed for the baptism of the Holy Spirit, but I never received it. So that must mean that it is not for me or God does not want me to have it.” Here the Lord instructs us that to receive the Holy Spirit, often we have to pray many times until we receive it.

We must not give up in prayer. Just think of Jacob, who wrestled with the Lord and said, *“...I will not let thee go, except thou bless me”* (Gen. 32:26). Therefore, let us pray until we receive that which is on the heart of God for us.

***The Blasphemous Accusation  
that His Power Came from Satan***

(Luke 11:14-19)

After casting a devil of dumbness out of a man, the dumb man began to speak, and the multitudes marvelled. Some of them declared that Jesus did this through Beelzebub, the

prince of devils. Knowing their thoughts, Jesus replied that if Satan were to cast out his own spirits, then his kingdom would be divided. Many continually spoke evil of the Lord's good deeds, including His teachings and His miracles.

### ***Discourse on the Ways of Evil Spirits***

(Luke 11:20-26)

Then the Lord proceeded to give a teaching concerning the ways of evil spirits. The Apostle Paul said in Ephesians 6:12 that we do not fight against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers in heavenly places. We are also told not to be ignorant of "Satan's devices" (2 Cor. 2:11).

Jesus warned that when an evil spirit is cast out of a person, it will look for another body to inhabit. If the person from whom it was cast out does not change, there is an open door in his life for the demon to return. And if it does, it will bring seven spirits more evil than itself with it, and the last state of the man will be worse than before. Therefore, in cases when we cast out a spirit from a person, we should take great care to lead him to salvation and water baptism, and pray for him to receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit, so that his heart might be cleansed and strengthened, and those spirits cannot return.

### ***Various Admonitions on True Blessings***

(Luke 11:27-36)

A certain lady pronounced a blessing upon the mother of Jesus, saying, "*Blessed is the womb that bare thee, and the*

*paps which thou hast sucked*" (Lk. 11:27). Jesus replied, "Yea rather, blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it." Again and again we see that Jesus did not give any special place of prominence to Mary. Therefore, the Catholic practice of worshipping Mary is totally contradictory to God's Word, and is considered idolatry by God.

Then Jesus went on to speak of the fact that the only sign that His generation would be given was the sign of Jonah, illustrating the fact that Jesus would be crucified and dwell in the heart of the earth three days before being resurrected. The Queen of Sheba will receive a greater blessing than Jesus' generation because she had travelled far to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and although Jesus was greater than Solomon, this generation would not hear Him.

The inhabitants of Nineveh, as well, will rise up in condemnation of His generation because they had repented at the preaching of Jonah; and yet Jesus was greater than Jonah—but His generation did not repent when they heard Him.

This section closes with an exhortation in Luke 11:34-36: "*The light of the body is the eye: therefore when thine eye is single, thy whole body also is full of light; but when thine eye is evil, thy body also is full of darkness. Take heed therefore that the light which is in thee be not darkness. If thy whole body therefore be full of light, having no part dark, the whole shall be full of light, as when the bright shining of a candle doth give thee light.*" Let us purge ourselves from all the darkness of the works of the flesh so that we may be single-hearted for the Lord and full of light!

***Dining With a Pharisee***

(Luke 11:37-54)

When Jesus accepted the invitation of a Pharisee to dine with him, the Pharisee was amazed that Jesus did not first go through the ritualistic washing of the hands that was prescribed by the elders. Jesus, knowing his thoughts, reprimanded the Pharisees because they were concerned with outward washings, but did not cleanse their hearts before God, and they were filled with all kinds of wickedness. The Lord exhorted them to cleanse their hearts first, and to give alms, and then all things would be clean. Giving, in the truest sense, does purify our souls from the love of money, which is the root of all evil.

When I was a schoolboy growing up in England, the gym instructor at my school was an old Army major. He was very particular about cleanliness. He always used to say to us, "Cleanliness is next to godliness." He would inspect us all over, including our fingernails, to make sure that we were clean. Outwardly, he was a very clean person, but inwardly he was a very impure person. This is why Jesus said that it is more important to cleanse the inside of a cup than the outside.

The Lord then went on to castigate the Pharisees because they ignored the most important things of the law, such as judgment and the love of God, while at the same time they were overly concerned with tithing the most minute portions of their garden produce. He called them hypocrites and said that they were spiritually dead.

In one sense, the Pharisees were seeking to do a good thing by preserving the law of God. However, the problem was that they were more concerned about the technicalities of the law and the traditions of the elders than they were about the love of God and the needs of the people. Seeking to be the keepers of the law, they became the biggest offenders of the law. The religious leaders of Jesus' day had made a god of their religion. They worshipped their religion, not the Lord, for here was the Son of God Himself, the One who had given the Law to Moses, and they wanted to kill Him. Our goal must always be Christ! Let us not make the same mistake that the Pharisees made.

Many ministers, pastors, and missionaries today have made this mistake. They have put their ministry above everyone—including the Lord and their family. I have seen the lives of so many ministers' children destroyed because their parents did not spend enough time with them or give them enough love (because they were too involved with the ministry). We must be Christ-oriented, not ministry-oriented. There is a fine balance here between being faithful to the ministry or task that God has called you to and also being a good spouse and a good father or mother.

I was reading some time ago about a pastor's daughter who fell into immorality when she was only about 16 or 17 years old. The reason was that her parents were so active in the church and the ministry that they neglected her. How tragic! The person who is Christ-centred will major on judgment and the love of God, as Christ told the Pharisees, and will have proper family relationships.

This was the whole problem with these Pharisees; they put emphasis on the wrong things. Instead of majoring on love and judgment, they stressed rules and regulations. They were caught up with ritualism, and as a result, they missed the Lord when He came.

### ***Jesus Denounces Lawyers***

(Luke 11:45-54)

Then a certain lawyer who was present said to the Lord, "*Master; thus saying thou reproachest us also*" (Lk. 11:45). Jesus then reprimanded the lawyers of His day, for they made up all kinds of legalistic rituals and rules, which they required others to perform, while they themselves did not do them. All of these legalistic regulations were a burden to the people and did not produce any spiritual fruit.

He called them the children of those who killed the prophets, for they, in turn, would kill Him of whom the prophets spoke. Then in no uncertain terms, Jesus declared that the lawyers had taken away the key of knowledge from the people; and not only were they not entering into the kingdom of heaven themselves, but they were also hindering others from doing so.

Let us heed this warning not to fall into the trap of outward forms of religion, as did the Pharisees and lawyers of Jesus' day. Remember the exhortation of the Apostle Paul in 1 Timothy 1:5: "*Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned.*"



*Instructions and Warnings to His Disciples*

(Luke 12:1-59)

During this time, the crowd became very large—too large, in fact, to count. The people were stepping on one another to get close to Jesus. Then the Lord addressed His disciples concerning the following points:

**1. Hypocrisy (Lk. 12:1-12)** - Jesus, first of all, warned them of the *leaven* of the Pharisees. By this He was referring to their hypocrisy, for outwardly they appeared righteous, but inwardly they were extremely wicked. They appeared to be lovers of God, but in reality, they opposed the Son of God and sought to kill Him.

The Lord then warned of the fear of man, which is a snare (cf. Prov. 29:25), saying in Luke 12:4-5: *“Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: Fear him, which after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear him.”*

We should not fear what man can do us, but what the Lord can do to us, for He will cast us into hell if we do not walk in His ways. Therefore, let us seek to perfect holiness in the fear of the Lord.

**2. Covetousness (Lk. 12:13-21)** - A certain man in the crowd asked Jesus to speak to his brother to convince him to divide the inheritance with him. Christ replied, *“Man, who made me*

*a judge or a divider over you? ...Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth” (Lk. 12:14-15). Therefore, we should not seek the uncertain riches of this world, which we cannot take with us into eternity.*

To address this problem of covetousness, the Lord gave the parable which has become known as “The Parable of the Rich Fool” in Luke 12:16-21: *“The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided? So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.”*

In this parable, a rich man wanted to live his life in ease, doing little more than eating, drinking, and being merry. However, one night God required his soul, and he would lose everything that he spent his whole life trying to obtain. This rich fool symbolises all those who are covetous and are not rich toward God. Let us seek to have the true riches, that we may be rich in heaven!

**3. Worldly cares (Lk. 12:22-34)** - The Lord then admonished His disciples not to worry about worldly cares—about what

they would eat or drink, or what they would wear. Just as the Lord feeds the birds of the air, He will feed His people, and just as He clothes the grass of the field, so He will clothe His people. The lesson here is that as we seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, God will look after all our natural needs, even as He cares for the grass and the birds, for we are of far greater value to Him than those. Granted, it takes time for us to learn to rest in the Lord and begin to trust Him with all of our necessities. Paul said in Philippians 4:11, *“Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.”* Even the Apostle Paul had to *learn* how to be content.

We need to learn to trust the Lord with our finances and provision. Once you begin not to worry about finances, your faith begins to increase, and you can rest in the Lord’s abundant provision. Ministers especially need to learn this lesson. I have known many pastors who try to raise money through church bingo games and other such ways; this is a lack of trust in God. Let us commit our way unto the Lord.

The Lord concludes this section by saying that we should give to the poor so that we may have treasures in heaven. Where our treasure is, there will our heart be also. In other words, we should not be attached to the things of this world, but rather to the world that is to come. The thinking of the world is to save as much as you can so that you can retire and enjoy the rest of your life. While I agree with saving money, I believe that we should seek to use all of our resources to further the kingdom of God, and not hoard them for ourselves.

**4. On watchfulness (Lk. 12:35-40)** - The Lord then exhorts us to be in a constant state of readiness, being busy and active in His service, for we do not know when the Lord will return. One thing is clear—the Lord will return again *after* the marriage feast of the Lamb, as seen in Luke 12:36: “*And ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding; that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately.*” Therefore, we need to be watchful and ready for the Lord at all times, whether we die and go home to be with Him today, or whether we are alive at His Second Coming.

**5. On faithfulness (Lk. 12:41-48)** - In this series of teachings the Lord is primarily addressing those who will be alive at the time of His Second Coming. The exhortation is to be faithful to the duty that God has entrusted to our care, so that when He comes He will find us faithfully doing what He has asked us to do. Martin Luther was asked, “If you knew the Lord was coming this week, what would you do?” He simply replied, “If God had given me the task of planting fruit trees, I trust that when He came, He would find me planting fruit trees.”

Those who are unfaithful are classified with unbelievers, and those who are not diligent in their duties will be beaten with many stripes. Let us seek to be found faithful in every area of our lives.

**6. Division in Households (Lk. 12:49-53)** - In this passage, the Lord develops the thought that He came to divide; to

bring division in households. This seems to be contradictory to the teachings of the Scripture. What Christ meant was that He came to sever family ties that come before Him. When certain family members refuse to walk in God's ways, obviously, there will be a certain degree of separation between them and those who want to walk with God.

**7. The Discerning of the Times (Lk. 12:54-57)** - The Jews could discern the weather patterns of their day, but they were totally ignorant of the times in which they lived. Most of them were totally oblivious to what was happening around them spiritually. How important it is for us to know when the Lord is visiting in revival power, so that we will respond to the Holy Spirit.

**8. Reconciliation (Lk. 12:58-59)** - The Lord then concluded this set of homilies by admonishing us to be quickly reconciled with our adversaries. We are told to "give diligence" to reconcile the situation before we are taken to court. The assumption here was that the defendant had a bad case, and that we should not seek the protection of the law when we are wrong. This could be taken in a spiritual sense that we need to be reconciled with God before we appear at the judgment seat of Christ, where all will be found guilty and every mouth will be closed.

### *The Tale of Two Tragedies*

(Luke 13:1-5)

In Luke 13:1-5 we have the tale of two tragedies. Jesus was told of the first tragedy by some of those who stood

by Him, namely the death of several Galileans whose blood Pontius Pilate, the Roman procurator, had mingled with the sacrifices. The background to this event is that there was an insurrection of the Jews against the decree of Pilate to build a new, much-needed aqueduct funded by Temple money.

The Jews considered this sacrilege, and they led an insurrection against Pilate. Pilate ordered his soldiers to mingle surreptitiously among the crowds with cloaks over their uniforms and with cudgels in place of weapons. Then they were to disperse the people with their cudgels, but some of the soldiers were overzealous and beat some notable, hot-headed Galileans to death.

This brings to light the belief held by many people in Jesus' day—they thought that a person was a sinner if tragedy struck his life. This was the view expressed many centuries earlier by Eliphaz in Job 4:7, when he said, "*Who ever perished, being innocent? or where were the righteous cut off?*" Jesus corrected this error by making it clear that they were not sinners more than anyone else, saying in Luke 13:2-3: "*Suppose ye that these Galilaeans were sinners above all the Galilaeans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.*" Jesus told them that unless they repented they would perish as well.

Then Jesus quoted another tragedy of that time—the death of 18 Galileans upon whom the Tower of Siloam fell. It was a locally known fact on which Jesus did not have to elaborate. The Pool of Siloam was situated near the place where the

eastern and southern walls joined, and the tower was obviously in this vicinity. It was probably a part of the ancient system of defence, which collapsed at about this time. Jesus again emphasises that they also were not sinners above all others. Unless we repent, we will perish eternally, too.

There is also an implied warning to the nation as a whole in these tragedies, for the Jews were rebelling at that time against the Romans. This attitude would lead to the complete decimation of the nation in A.D. 70, when Titus would destroy Jerusalem and the Temple and would carry the Jews off into captivity.

In fact, in the reign of Hadrian, when the Jews further rebelled, the nation was given the name of Caesarea Palistina. It was called Palestine until 1948, when the Jews returned to their own land. They were at that time accorded national identity, and the land was called Israel once again.

### ***The Parable of the Fruitless Fig Tree***

(Luke 13:6-9)

Then the Lord gave the Parable of the Fruitless Fig Tree in Luke 13:6-9: *“A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none. Then said he unto the dresser of his vineyard, Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and find none: cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground? And he answering said unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it. And if it bear fruit, well: and*

*if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down.*” In this parable, the owner of a vineyard wanted to cut down a certain tree that did not bear fruit for three years. The vineyard-keeper pleaded with him to give him one more year to see if it would bear fruit. The fig tree is often used symbolically of the nation of Israel (Hos. 9:10, Joel 1:7). Therefore, this parable represents the fact the All-Merciful God was giving Israel one more opportunity to repent. However, they refused Jesus, and therefore their national existence in the Promised Land ceased with the Roman wars of A.D. 66-70 and the final destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in A.D. 70.

This parable may also be applied to each believer in the context of John 15, where the Lord warns that if we do not bring forth fruit we will be cut down and discarded. Thus, this parable is an awesome warning to those who do not produce the fruits of the Spirit—love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance in their lives, nor produce fruit through being a good influence upon others.

### ***The Healing of the Woman Bound by Satan***

(Luke 13:10-17)

This was the last recorded time that Jesus preached in a synagogue, because after this event the hostility of the Jews became so great that He could not enter the synagogues any more. The reason for the hostility was that Jesus had healed a woman who had been afflicted by Satan for 18 years. She was so bent over that she could not stand up straight, but



Jesus completely healed her by the power of God on the Sabbath day. The ruler of the synagogue was infuriated by this and said, “*There are six days in which men ought to work: in them therefore come and be healed, and not on the sabbath day*” (Lk. 13:14).

The Lord responded by calling them hypocrites, for they would loose their ox or donkey on the Sabbath in order to water them, but they did not want this woman to be loosed of her infirmity on the Sabbath. His adversaries were put to shame by this statement, and the multitude rejoiced for the glorious things that were done by Jesus. Here we see a warning against legalism and outward forms of holiness, which neglect the true manifestations of a holy life—love, joy, peace, mercy, and justice.

### ***Parables of the Kingdom of God***

(Luke 13:18-21)

Jesus commences this section with a question, “*Unto what is the kingdom of God like? and whereunto shall I resemble it?*” (Lk. 13:18). He then described God’s kingdom with two parables.

**1. Parable of the Mustard Seed (Lk. 13:19)** - The mustard seed is the smallest seed known to farmers in Palestine, but it grows in a relatively short time to become the largest of the plants, and a shelter for the birds of the air. This is true of the kingdom of God, whose King was crucified in abject humiliation, rejected, and forsaken. The Church started

out very small, as a despised new religion, but then grew and multiplied to hundreds of thousands of people today in every country of the world. On the day of Pentecost, 3,000 were saved, but today there are nearly a billion people who profess Christianity. This should encourage us in the work that the Lord has given to us, even as it is written in Job 8:7, “*Though thy beginning was small, yet thy latter end should greatly increase.*”

**2. Parable of the Leaven Hid in Three Measures of Meal (Lk. 13:20-21)** - Secondly, the Lord likens the kingdom of God to leaven. Now, we have already noted that Jesus warned the disciples to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which represents false doctrine, hypocrisy, and sin. However, now the Lord uses leaven with a positive connotation. The primary attribute of leaven is that it will work its way throughout all the dough, causing it to ferment and rise (cf. Gal. 5:9). It only takes a little leaven or yeast to leaven a whole batch of dough. In this way, the kingdom of God and the Gospel are like leaven. When the Gospel enters into our lives, it will work its way through our whole being—body, soul, and spirit. Let us pray that His kingdom will be in us and permeate the whole of our being.

### *Jesus at the Feast of Dedication*

(John 10:22-39)

The Feast of Dedication had now arrived in Israel. This feast is known today as Hanukkah, a festival that began on the 25<sup>th</sup> day of Kislev and lasted eight days. This would have

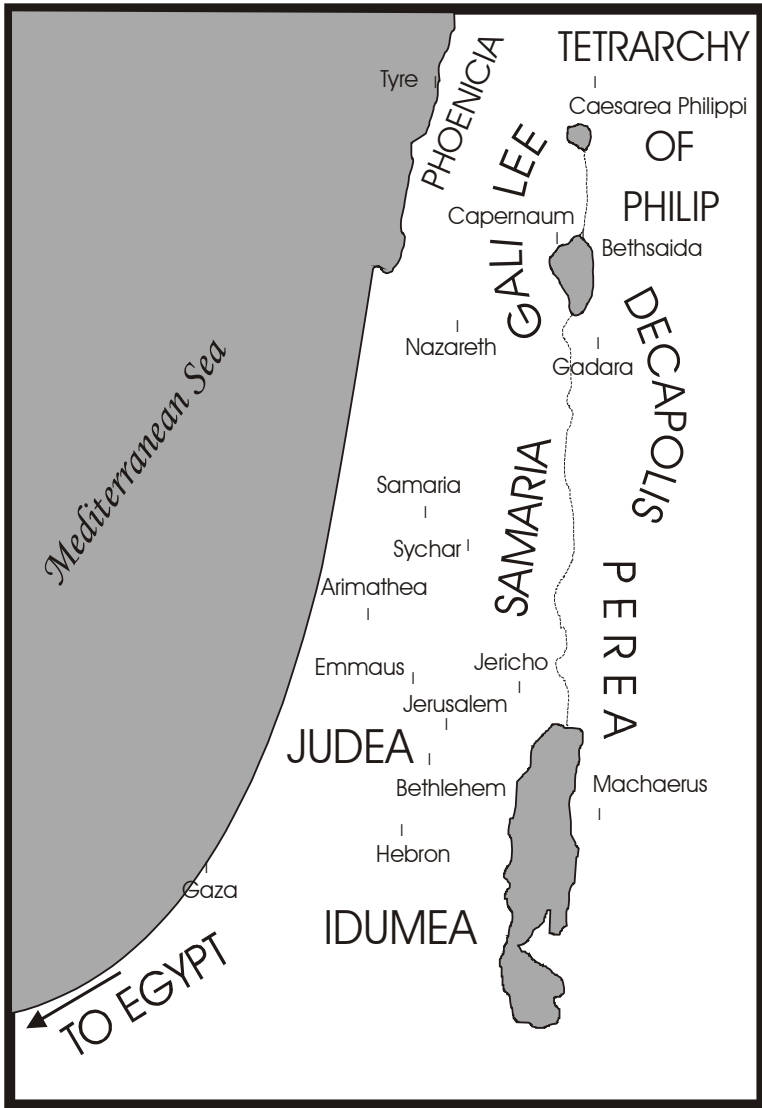
been in about December of A.D. 29, just three to three-and-a-half months before Jesus' crucifixion. Josephus referred to it as the Feast of Lights because a candle was lighted every successive day until a total of eight was reached. This feast commemorates the victories of Judas Maccabeus in 167 B.C. At that time, when Temple worship was reinstated after an interruption of three years, a celebration of eight days took place.

For emphasis, John notes that it was winter and that Jesus was walking in Solomon's porch, which was used by the scribes for their schools. Here, the One who is altogether wiser than Solomon was walking in this colonnade of Herod's Temple.

At this feast, the Jews encircled Jesus, seeking to force Him to tell them whether or not He was the Messiah (Christ). When Jesus affirmed that He was the Son of God, they picked up stones to stone Him for what they believed to be blasphemy, by claiming to be God. However, Jesus once again escaped from them, for His time had not yet come.

As I have been writing my comments on this section, I had a vision of the Lord at this point in His earthly life. It was so very beautiful. His robe was wrapped around Him because of the cold. He was in total control of this situation. He was in a way frustrated, because as He was answering the questions of these Jews, He knew they would not really listen to Him or accept what He said because they were not His sheep.

# Palestine in the Time of Christ



# Chapter 11

## ***THE LATER PEREAN MINISTRY***

### ***Withdrawal from Jerusalem to Bethany***

(John 10:40-42)

Jesus then withdrew to Bethany beyond Jordan. With precision, John declares that it was the place where John the Baptist first baptised. Many people came to Jesus at this time, and compared Him with John the Baptist. Although John was deeply revered as a prophet after his death, he could not compare with the Son of God. The people said, “*John did no miracle: but all things that John spake of this man were true*” (Jn. 10:41). Many believed on Jesus during this time He spent in Bethany.

### ***Jesus Teaches in the Cities of Perea on His Journey to Jerusalem***

(Luke 13:22)

According to Luke 13:22, the Lord Jesus went through cities and villages teaching and journeying on His way to Jerusalem. Then Luke gives us an account of events that happened along the way.

### ***A Question on Salvation***

(Luke 13:23-30)

One from the crowd asked the Lord, “*Are there few that be saved?*” (Lk. 13:23). In response to this, the Lord said that

the way is narrow, and there are few who find it, referring to the fact that it is the way of righteousness and holiness that leads to everlasting life. Then Jesus gave a solemn warning, saying that God puts a time limit upon how long we can take to respond to Him. *“When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; and he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence ye are”* (Lk. 13:25). Paul confirms this in Hebrews 4:7: *“Again, he limiteth a certain day, saying in David, To day, after so long a time; as it is said, To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts.”* Multitudes hear the Gospel at some point in their lives. Many even go to church, but never make a commitment.

Jesus said in Luke 13:26, *“Then shall ye begin to say, We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets.”* In other words, they would say to Him that they had eaten and drunk in His presence, either through attending a church banquet, or special service, or communion service. However, they had no personal relationship with the Lord. Therefore, the Lord Jesus will say to them, *“I know you not...depart from me”* (Lk. 13:27).

As a warning to the Jewish people, Christ then said that they would find themselves excluded from the kingdom of God, while others would sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. He said in Luke 13:30, *“And, behold, there are last which shall be first, and there are first which shall be last.”* In other words, if those who hold the

pre-eminent rank in the Church do not walk in God's ways, they will in turn be replaced by those who are last in the Church, and those who had been first will be relegated to the least important positions.

***Reply to the Warning Concerning Herod Antipas***

(Luke 13:31-35)

That same day a certain Pharisee came to Jesus and told Him to flee from the territory of Herod Antipas because Herod wanted to kill Him. Herod was a wicked man. He had killed John the Baptist, and now he wanted to kill Jesus. The Lord responded by saying, *“Go ye, and tell that fox, Behold, I cast out devils, and I do cures to day and to morrow, and the third day I shall be perfected. Nevertheless I must walk to day, and to morrow, and the day following: for it cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem”* (Lk. 13:32-33). Jesus was making it clear that He was the King of kings and that Herod had no power whatsoever to stop Him from performing the will of God.

This passage has given much room for speculation over the words of Jesus. What did Jesus really mean when He said, *“I cast out devils, and I do cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I will be perfected”*? From what we can deduce, Jesus was referring to the fact that there were two days of ministry left before He entered Jerusalem and Bethany, where He raised Lazarus from the dead. However, was there another hidden meaning to what He said? Some scholars feel that He meant that He was going to perform miracles through

His Church for *two days* (or 2,000 years), and on the third day (referring to the 1,000-year reign of Christ upon earth immediately after the Church Age) His body (the Church) would be perfected. This spiritual interpretation seems to agree with the flow of prophecy in Scripture.

Then Jesus said in Luke 13:34-35: *“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate: and verily I say unto you, Ye shall not see me, until the time come when ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.”*

The Lord wanted to protect the Jews from the devastation that would come upon them through the Romans in A.D. 70, but they would not come unto Him. However, the promise is given that at the Second Coming, the nation of Israel will turn unto the Lord and declare, “Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.”

### ***In the House of One of the Chief Pharisees***

(Luke 14:1-24)

At this epoch, generally speaking, the Jews only ate two meals each day, but on the Sabbath they ate three. The chief meal took place after the close of the morning service, and it was customary for guests to be invited. It was on such an occasion that Jesus was invited to dine with one of the chief



Pharisees. Upon entering the house, Jesus undoubtedly saw this man who had dropsy.

Before the meal began, Jesus challenged the lawyers and Pharisees who were present, saying, “*Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath day?*” (Lk. 14:3). The Pharisees knew they were caught. If they said “yes,” then it would have given Jesus license to heal, nullifying all of their previous arguments with Him over healing on the Sabbath day. However, if they said “no,” they would have been attacked by others there for their heartless attitude and lack of sympathy toward this sick man who was suffering greatly. They opted to remain silent, which in a sense condemned them for not doing the right thing. Jesus then healed the sick man.

The Lord could have avoided all of these confrontations with the Pharisees if He had not healed on the Sabbath day or at least not done so in public. However, again and again the Lord purposefully timed His healings so that they would take place on the Sabbath. All of this was intentional. He was trying to break the legalistic spirit of the Pharisees and set them free from the bondage of the letter of the law. By meticulously and scrupulously trying to keep every little letter of the law, they were breaking the spirit of the law. Jesus asked these hypocrites, “*Which of you shall have an ass or an ox fallen into a pit, and will not straightway pull him out on the sabbath day?*” (Lk. 14:5). Again they had no answer for the Lord. Then Jesus spoke three parables that sprang from the occasion of this feast:

The first parable regards the Pharisees' habit of seeking the most honourable seats in a feast (Lk. 14:7-11). Class-conscious guests always wanted to have the seats of honour in a feast. Jesus admonished the Pharisees to be humble, reminding them that in the kingdom of God all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, but those who humble themselves will be exalted. Let us seek to have the humility of Christ worked out in our hearts and lives, so that we will not be ashamed at His coming.

Continuing the theme of meals, the Lord urges those who have feasts not to invite their own friends and family members, who will return the favour, but to invite the poor and the needy who are not able to repay their kindness (Lk. 14:12-14). Those who do so will be recompensed at the resurrection of the just. This is something we must be very careful about in the Church. When we have banquets, we must not only invite those who are wealthy and big supporters of the ministry, but also those who are poor and needy. We must not be partial.

One of those who was eating with Jesus then exclaimed with obvious contentment, "*Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God,*" thinking that all of the religious people present would be included. The Lord gave the Parable of the Great Supper in response to this (Lk. 14:15-24).

As was customary in those days, a certain rich man would invite guests to a banquet that he intended to give some time later. At the time of the supper, he would send a servant to remind those who had accepted the invitation that the time for

the supper had arrived. However, in this parable all of those who were invited made excuses. The first man said that he had bought a field and needed to go see it. This was a ridiculous excuse, for no one buys a field without seeing it first.

Another man said that he had bought five yoke of oxen, and had to go try them out. It would not be logical for a person to inspect the oxen after he had purchased them. The third man also had an excuse—he had just gotten married and needed time to be with his wife. All of these excuses lacked veracity.

The truth of the matter is that those who had been invited did not want to attend the banquet. These parables were directed toward the Jews who were too attached to worldly things to accept the invitation to come into the kingdom of God and be a guest at the marriage supper of the Lamb (Rev. 19:9).

This parable concludes with the Lord saying to one of His servants, “*Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled*” (Lk. 14:23). The Lord desires that His churches be filled; it is to the glory of God that His church pews are filled to overflowing.

When my wife and I were in New Zealand, the Lord spoke to us that He wanted us to hold services in an auditorium that seated several thousand, but the church only had about 500 or 600 members at the time. God said, “It is to the glory of God to fill My house,” The Lord most graciously moved by His Spirit and that building was filled for the glory of God! It is interesting that the Lord told His servant to “compel them

to come in.” In other words, there is our part in seeing the lost won to the Lord.

Yes, it is true that God draws people to salvation, but we also must compel (or constrain) them. I would like to stress briefly the importance of evangelism. Without evangelism, a church will rarely grow. Therefore, we need to go out to the highways and byways and compel people to accept the Gospel.

Very often those who are first invited refuse for one reason or another. This opens the way for those who are the derelicts of mankind. Jesus said to the religious leaders of His day in Matthew 21:31, “...*The publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you.*”

### ***The Cost of Discipleship***

(Luke 14:25-35)

The multitudes then followed Jesus as He left the Pharisee’s house. Most leaders in this world would have welcomed such a following, but not Jesus. He turned to them and very pointedly told them that if they wanted to follow Him, they would have to pay an enormous price. He spoke to them of the cost of discipleship in Luke 14:26-27: “*If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple.*”

1. As the true disciples of Jesus, we must have a holy hatred of self, spouse, and parents in the sense that they must never be allowed to come first in our lives—a position that belongs only to the Lord (Lk. 14:26). This does not release us from our duties to our parents, spouses, and children, as prescribed in Exodus 20:12 and Ephesians 5:25.

2. As followers of Christ, we also must be willing to take up and carry our cross (Lk. 14:27). This can be interpreted in several viable ways. In the extreme sense, it means that we have to be willing to actually go to the cross and die for the Lord in the most inhumane and humiliating manner.

However, there is another aspect of daily taking up our cross—that is laying down our rights in order to do the will of God. Paul said in 1 Corinthians 15:31, “*I die daily.*” Therefore, we have to accept all things that come into our lives and die daily to our own desires.

3. We must forsake all for Christ (Lk. 14:28-33). In order to do so, we must first count the cost. A builder does not build a tower without first counting the cost to make sure that he has enough money to complete the building project. Also, before a king makes war, he first sits down to count the cost of the battle to see whether he will have enough armies and finances to win. In the same way, we are exhorted to count the cost before we decide to be followers of Christ. Dear reader, are you willing to forsake everything to follow Christ?

***The Salt of the Earth***

(Luke 14:34-35)

Finally, the Lord says in Luke 14:34-35: *“Salt is good: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be seasoned? It is neither fit for the land, nor yet for the dunghill; but men cast it out. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.”* Salt is a seasoning agent and also a preservative to keep food from spoiling. However, if salt loses its savour, it is not useful for anything. This idea contains in it a valuable lesson for Christians. The Lord Jesus said in His Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5:13 that we are “the salt of the earth.” Salt, therefore, represents Christians. We are to be preservatives of the world. However, if we lose our sweetness and purity, we will be good for nothing, and we will spend our eternity with those who are unbelievers and hypocrites. Then Jesus admonished the multitude to pay attention and hear what He had said, saying, *“He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.”* We would do well to hearken to these solemn lessons, too, so that we may be true followers and disciples of Christ, the Lamb of God.

***Three Great Parables Concerning  
The Lost and Found***

(Luke 15:1-32)

As Jesus was speaking, all the publicans and sinners were drawn to His teachings. The publicans were the hated tax collectors who had sided with the Roman Occupation Force against their own brethren and were made rich by overcharging the people. The sinners lived in defiance of the

Law of Moses. It was these kinds of people who were drawn to the message and who listened to it with an open heart. The self-righteous Pharisees criticised Jesus for accepting the company of such people. In response, He spoke three parables on the lost and found.

**1. The Parable of the Lost Sheep (Lk. 15:4-7)** - The Lord began by telling a story of a man who owned 100 sheep and had lost one of them. He naturally left the 99 to search for the lost sheep, and when he found it, he rejoiced. Sheep are the most unintelligent animals. They wander and get lost very easily.

This lost sheep speaks of one who through ignorance has gone astray from the ways of the Lord. Isaiah 53:6 tells us that we all have gone astray like sheep and have turned to our own ways. Jesus, as the Good Shepherd, seeks out all those who have gone astray. He has “compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way; for that he himself also is compassed with infirmity” (Heb. 5:2).

**2. The Parable of the Lost Coin (Lk. 15:8-10)** - Jesus then told another parable about a lady who had ten pieces of silver and lost one of them. She diligently looked everywhere until she found the lost coin (or piece of silver). This parable typifies a person who has been lost through the neglect of another, rather than through his own turning away.

There are those who are weak and are not able to resist the temptations of this world, and they need others to strengthen

them. To help a weak plant grow straight and increase in strength, a gardener ties the stem of the weak plant to a strong stick until it eventually becomes self-reliant. In much the same way, there are believers who need to grow by the side of others who are stronger in the faith.

When I was first saved, the Lord gave me spiritual fathers and mothers who strengthened me and guided me along life's journey. Without them it is very possible that I could have become like the lost coin, returning again to the darkness of this world from which I had once been rescued.

Both the parable of the lost sheep and the parable of the lost coin end with the same statement by the Lord in Luke 15:7, 10: *"I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance."* It is clear that the Lord places tremendous value on a human soul. There is unspeakable joy in heaven when a soul is saved from hell's abyss.

**3. The Parable of the Prodigal Son (Lk. 15:11-32)** - The third parable that Jesus gave is perhaps one of the most well known and best-loved of all the parables. It is called "The Parable of the Prodigal Son." It reveals the love of God the Father toward the backslider, the way to restoration, and the attitude that we should have toward backsliders when they are restored.

This parable concerns a father who had two sons. His younger son took his inheritance and left home; spending everything



he had on riotous living. He was brought so low that he had to feed pigs and did not have anything to eat. He would have gladly eaten the husks that he was feeding the swine.

Coming to his senses, he determined to return to his father's house, for he realised that even the hired servants in his father's house had plenty to eat. While he was still a long way from home, his father saw him coming and ran to him. He embraced him and kissed him. The father then told his servants to make a feast in honour of his youngest son.

We need to realise that the Lord's parables have a spiritual and heavenly meaning, as well as a natural meaning. The younger son represents backsliders, and even ministers who may have backslidden. The father did three things for the son when he was restored, as seen in Luke 15:22. He put the best robe on him, he put a ring on his finger, and he put shoes on his feet. These three things speak of the things that are restored to a backslider when he repents and meets with the Lord.

In Scripture, a robe represents salvation (Isa. 61:10). Therefore, when he was backslidden, if he had died, he would have gone to hell, but now that he turned back to the Lord, his salvation was restored to him. The ring speaks of his authority or position. Thus, his authority and position were restored. The sandals (or shoes) speak of one's ministry, for Ephesians 6:15 says, "*And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace.*"

Therefore, a complete restoration of a backslider includes the restoration of his salvation, his position and authority, and his ministry.

When we consider the elder son, we see two very important truths as well. The faithful elder son did not open his heart to the restoration of his backslidden brother (Lk. 15:25-30). This is the wrong attitude to have. We should welcome back those who have strayed from the path of God. Jeremiah 3:14 describes the attitude that we should have toward the backslider: *“Turn, O backsliding children, saith the LORD; for I am married unto you...”* The Lord loves backsliders and longs to see them restored.

Another truth that is very important is that although the prodigal son had been restored, he had wasted his inheritance. By contrast, the Lord said to the elder son who had always been faithful, *“Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine.”* In other words, those who are faithful will receive the inheritance of the Lord. Therefore, let us seek to always remain faithful and loyal to the Lord, by His grace. *It is wonderful to be restored, but it is even better not to fall!*

As I am writing this, I have just received a phone call from a prodigal who wants to return with his family to our church. Our hearts are literally singing with joy. The joy of Jesus is very real to us at this time as this backslider is being restored. We share in the joy of the holy angels around the heavenly throne as they, too, rejoice that this lost sheep is returning to the fold.

*Three Parables on Stewardship*

(Luke 16:1 - 17:10)

**1. The Parable of the Unjust Steward (Lk. 16:1-12)** - The Lord continues His teachings in the form of parables to His disciples by telling of a certain rich man whose steward had wasted his goods, and as a result, had to forfeit his office. When the steward realised that he was going to lose everything, he gathered his master's debtors and settled their debts for less than what they originally owed his master, so that they, in turn, would receive him into their houses after he was fired. The master commended his steward in that he had dealt prudently or shrewdly in looking after himself.

From this parable the Lord deduces two truths. The first truth is that those who fail to make heaven should seek to make friends of those who are in a condition similar to their own, so that these friends may receive them into their eternal dwelling places as Jesus says in Luke 16:9. The second truth is that we as believers should make friends, for true wealth is measured by the friendship of those men and women of God who will dwell eternally with God in the bliss of His kingdom. What joy it will be to meet in heaven those whom we have influenced for good during our earthly sojourn.

The essence of this is that the Lord is not commending this wicked and slothful steward, but rather showing us that he foresaw his own future needs and prudently prepared for them in advance. There is no doubt of the Lord's condemnation of this steward, for He closed by giving three admonitions:

***1. He that is faithful in the little things will also be faithful in the greater things of life.***

***2. He that is faithful in earthly things will be entrusted with that which is eternal.***

***3. He that is faithful in another man's vineyard will be given his own inheritance***

Let us remember the stages of life given in Revelation 17:14: *“They that are with [the Lamb] are called, and chosen, and faithful.”* Many are called, but few are chosen; and even fewer are found faithful. Usually, before God will give us a ministry or inheritance of our own, we have to be faithful and subordinate to someone else. If we are faithful, God will promote us. We need to be faithful and loyal to those who are in authority over us. Often a person has to be faithful as an assistant pastor before the Lord will give him a church of his own. Let us seek to be like King David, who was girded with faithfulness (cf. Isa. 11:5).

In Luke 16:13, the Lord then warns the covetous Pharisees, who thought that gain is godliness, that no one can serve two masters. We cannot serve or seek the things of this world and also serve God. The beloved Apostle John wrote in 1 John 2:15, *“Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.”* The wealth and honours of this world

are an abomination to God. Another accusation that the Lord made against the Pharisees was that they sought to justify themselves before men (Lk. 16:15). I have witnessed many times that when people are not right before God they seek the approbation of the world. But what is the use of this, since the world is not our final judge? All the world's plaudits will not save us on the Day of Judgment. Then Jesus reminds them that we must all press into the kingdom of heaven (Lk. 16:16). Paul said in Philippians 3:14, "*Press toward the mark of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.*"

Another truth is now interjected by our Lord concerning marriage. Divorce and remarriage constitutes adultery, and therefore, the breaking of the seventh commandment. Jesus condemned divorce in Matthew 19:6, saying, "*What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.*"

## **2. The Story of the Rich Man and Lazarus (Lk. 16:19-31)**

Jesus then recounted another story, the story contrasting the rich man and Lazarus. A certain rich man lived a very enjoyable and comfortable life. By contrast, there was a poor beggar who lay at his gates desiring to be fed of the crumbs that fell from the rich man's table. When they both died, the beggar was taken by the angels to Paradise, while the rich man was taken to hell.

Seeing Lazarus in Abraham's bosom, this rich man pleaded that Lazarus might come to alleviate his thirst. Abraham replied that there was no way that one could pass over the chasm between the saved and the lost. Then the rich man

pleaded that he send Lazarus back to earth to warn his brothers. Abraham responded that they had Moses and the prophets, and that if they did not believe them, they would not believe, even if one came from the dead.

Thus we see the tremendous obligation on our part to study the Word of God so that we might learn and comprehend His Word before it is too late, for “*where the tree falleth, there it shall be*” (Eccl. 11:3). In other words, the spiritual condition in which we die determines the rest of our eternity. How we die is how we will be for all eternity. Therefore, let us seek to redeem the time so that we may fulfil the Lord’s will and purpose for our lives.

**3. Offences (Lk. 17:1-4)** - It is impossible to live our lives without offensive circumstances happening. We will all be given the opportunity to be offended, and that opportunity is given to us by the Lord to see what we will do. We must not permit any offences to turn us from the path of God for our lives. Also, it is very important that we do not take up the offence of someone else. Many have done so, to their own detriment, and have been swept off the path of God’s purpose for their lives. A pastor once said to me that he had a church filled with offended people. However, the Lord said that they were those who had failed to appropriate the grace of God in their trials, and as a result, had become filled with self-pity.

The Lord in this teaching warns concerning those who cause the offences—the offenders—especially toward the young. We

should seek to walk in love toward others. In 1 John 2:10 we read, *“He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him.”*

We see in particular the Lord’s great love for the young (Lk. 17:2). It is a fact that many of God’s choicest servants have been apprehended by the Lord at an early age. Therefore, we should diligently apply ourselves to the instruction of children in the Sunday school classes and church services, that they may be kept from straying into the paths of the wicked and losing their purity.

Then the Lord spoke of having a forgiving spirit toward those who sin against us. This instruction comes from the heart of the loving Heavenly Father and our precious Saviour. Therefore, as we practice forgiveness toward others, then we shall in return receive that continual flow of forgiveness from above that we so need for ourselves.

The apostles then came to Jesus and asked Him to increase their faith (Lk. 17:5). Jesus replied, *“If ye had faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye might say unto this sycamine tree, Be thou plucked up by the root, and be thou planted in the sea; and it should obey you”* (Lk. 17:6). If we have faith, nothing will be impossible to us.

#### **4. The Parable of the Unprofitable Servants (Lk. 17:7-10)**

One of the truths that we must never forget in the ministry is that first we should do all that the Lord has ordered us to do; and then we should realise that even if we have done

what He has asked us to do, we are unprofitable servants because we have done only that which was our duty. This realisation will indeed be good for our souls and will clothe our spirits with humility.

### ***The Raising of Lazarus***

(John 11:1-54)

The Lord Jesus is now in Perea, outside of the country of Judea, about two days journey from Bethany, where perhaps the greatest miracle of His ministry took place. Bethany, meaning “the place of dates,” was itself situated on the Mount of Olives about two miles outside of Jerusalem, and is remembered as the home of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus (a Greek form of the Hebrew “Eleazar”).

The Lord received a message that Lazarus was very sick. However, instead of going immediately to pray for him, Jesus purposely waited until He knew that it was His Father’s perfect time for His appearance in Bethany. He was led by the Spirit at all times. The Lord knew that Lazarus was going to die, and had to wait so that He could raise Lazarus from the dead, a far greater miracle than if He had just healed him before he died. When Jesus arrived in Bethany, Lazarus had already died and been in the grave for four days. This was more than enough time for putrefaction to set in. Coming to the gravesite, Jesus ordered that the stone (which closed the cave where the dead were buried) be taken away.



As they obeyed Him, Jesus commanded in a loud voice, "Lazarus come forth." After he came out, the Lord told those standing by to remove his grave clothes and set him free. I met a pastor once who had seen a vision of the resurrection of Lazarus. He affirmed that prior to the appearance of Lazarus, he could be heard coming up the stairs, jumping from stair to stair. Then Jesus said, "*I am the resurrection and the life*" (Jn. 11:25), and He continued by saying in John 11:26, "*And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?*" May we be counted among those who believe on the Lord and obtain everlasting life.

The religious leaders were in turmoil over this miracle, and yet God spoke through the lips of the High Priest that it was necessary for one man to die for the nation (Jn. 11:49-51). However, they did not understand what was being said, for they took counsel together to try to put Jesus to death. Because of this, from then onwards Jesus did not walk openly among the Jews. He then went into a city called Ephraim that was in the wilderness.

***His Last Journey to Jerusalem  
by Way of Samaria and Galilee***  
(Luke 17:11 - 18:14)

In Luke 17:11 - 18:14, the Lord makes His last journey to Jerusalem, through Samaria and Galilee. Along the way, He healed the ten lepers, gave a discourse on the Second Coming, and spoke two parables on prayer.

***The Healing of the Ten Lepers***

(Luke 17:11-19)

We read in Luke 17:11, “*And it came to pass, as he went to Jerusalem, that he passed through the midst of Samaria and Galilee.*” This period opens with the healing of ten lepers in a certain village of Samaria. The Lord healed all ten of the lepers, but only one returned to give thanks to the Lord. Thankfulness is a spiritual exercise that we should practice. It is natural, right, and courteous, and it also opens the way for God to pour forth upon us additional blessings. Let us remember the admonition of the psalmist when he wrote Psalm 100:4, “*Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, and bless his name.*”

***Discourse on the Second Coming***

(Luke 17:20-37)

Upon being asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God was going to come, the Lord answered them saying, “*The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you*” (Lk. 17:20-21). In other words, the kingdom of God is within the hearts of the Lord’s believers. This, however, does not mean that there will not be a literal reign of the kingdom of God upon the earth.

Jesus then made it clear that His Second Coming would be as visible as lightning. However, before that would take place the

Lord had to suffer many things and be rejected by His generation. Thus, it is abundantly clear that the Lord understood perfectly the plan of His Heavenly Father for His life and ministry. The cross was central to His life, for He was the Lamb of God by whose vicarious death and shedding of blood, we can be saved.

Returning to the theme of His coming, Jesus explained that it would take the world by surprise, even as the flood of Noah and the destruction of Sodom in the days of Lot took their generations by surprise.

He continued by giving an additional warning that those who seek to save their lives will lose them, but those who will lose their lives for the Lord will gain them. Then He says that those who are on the housetop should not come down to take anything out of their houses. This should be read in the context of Matthew 24:15-21, speaking of the Great Tribulation that will come prior to the actual Second Coming. The thought Jesus is expressing here is that we should not be attached to our earthly possessions or the things of this earth. Lot's wife was destroyed because her heart was in Sodom. This was illustrated to me in a very awesome fashion by a young girl who had a vision of the Second Coming.

She saw the saints rising to meet the Lord Jesus in the air. However, as she was rising and well above the earth, she looked back, and she began to descend back toward the earth. Her desires were very worldly, not heavenly. Therefore, let us heed this warning and ask God to purify us of all desires for this world and its allures.

***Two Parables on Prayer***

(Luke 18:1-14)

Jesus was the Master Teacher—constantly repeating the same truths in new ways to instil them in the hearts of His listeners. Again He teaches on the necessity of perseverance in prayer. The key to effective teaching can be summed up by letters: *I.R.A.*—Impression, Repetition, and Association.

A good teacher will first make an impression in the minds and hearts of his listeners and readers. This is why Jesus gave so many illustrations and stories, so that the people would be able to remember very profound truths through simple illustrations. His stories made an impression on them that they would not forget.

The second aspect of a good teacher is that he constantly repeats things—not just boring his students with the same old information, but being creative in repeating the same truths. He says them in different ways to bring out different aspects and shades of the same truth. Experts say that you must use a new word about 35 times before it becomes yours.

Years ago when I was travelling with a certain missionary organization all over Central and South America doing pastors' and leaders' seminars, I became bored at first because some of the preachers would preach the same message in every seminar we went to, and the message got old after a while. I do things differently; I am constantly

seeking the Lord for new messages and new truths, and I would usually preach a different message in each country.

When we finished a seminar in Ecuador and went to Columbia, and again these ministers were preaching the same sermons, I thought that I had grasped everything that I could out of them. However, we then went to Costa Rica, and again they preached the same messages. But do you know that I began to receive new truths from their messages! The truths began to come alive to me. Thus, I realised the importance of repetition, especially with the Word of God.

The third aspect of a good teacher is that he associates the truths to help his listeners make the connection and application in their hearts and minds. Well, Jesus here, being the Master Teacher, again repeats the theme of prayer. We want to consider these passages and ask God to firmly establish them within our hearts and minds.

**1. The Parable of the Importunate Widow (Lk. 18:1-8)**

- In this parable the Lord gives an illustration of an unjust judge who feared neither God nor man. However, a certain woman consistently plagued the judge with her requests so that in the end he acceded to her petition because she wearied him. Likewise, we should bombard heaven's throne room until we receive the assurance that our petitions will be granted. Jesus said in John 16:23, "*And in that day ye shall ask me nothing. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you.*"

**2. The Parable of the Pharisee and the Publican (Lk. 18:9-14)** - The Lord Jesus then told a story of two men at prayer: a Pharisee who thanked God that he was not like other sinful men (after all, he fasted twice a day and gave tithes of all that he had), and a publican (whose profession was renowned for being filled with extortionists). This publican beat his breast, asking God to be merciful to him, a sinner. The Lord Jesus then observed that this man was justified, for every one who exalts himself shall be abased, while those who humble themselves shall be exalted.

Therefore, even in our prayer life let us come in all humility before the Lord, realising that it is by grace and grace alone that we are what we are, and that we all have a long way to go to reach that blessed state of being perfect even as He is perfect.

So in a sense, we have two illustrations of the glorious character of our God, who loves to dwell with the humble and contrite, for He Himself is the essence of humility. We also have a picture of His marvellous compassion for the sinner and those who have gone astray.

### *In Perea*

(Mark 10:1-45, Matthew 19:1 - 20:28, Luke 18:15-34)

In Perea the Lord gives several important teachings. We have included them under one title, "In Perea," because He was in the area of Perea when He gave them.

***Further Teaching Against Divorce and Remarriage***

(Mark 10:1-12, Matthew 19:1-12)

Now again in Perea, throughout the coasts of Judea and on the east side of Jordan, the Lord repeats with added emphasis His disapproval of divorce and gives a very strict command in Mark 10:9: “*What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.*” It is incongruous with the nature of God that He could condone divorce, because it is the result of hardened hearts and is an act of extreme cruelty.

Being myself a pastor, I have been broken hearted at the fruit of divorce—bitterness, anger, jealousy, guilt, and innumerable other sorrows which spouses inflict upon each other, not to mention the shipwreck they make of the lives of their children. How important it is for us to remain tender hearted, forgiving, and tolerant and to walk in love with one another. To a further inquiry from His disciples, Jesus stated in Mark 10:11-12: “*Whosoever shall put away his wife, and marry another, committeth adultery against her. And if a woman shall put away her husband, and be married to another, she committeth adultery.*”

***His Love for Little Children***

(Mark 10:13-16, Matthew 19:13-15, Luke 18:15-17)

In this episode the disciples were displeased because some people were bringing infants to Jesus. They no doubt thought that the parents were wasting the Lord’s time. However, the Lord used the occasion to teach a truth that emblazons many

a Sunday School wall when He said, *“Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God”* (Lk. 18:16).

He then continued by saying in Luke 18:17, *“Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child shall in no wise enter therein.”* He was illustrating the first beatitude, which states in Matthew 5:3, *“Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”* Children represent the humble, teachable attitude that the Lord loves. Jesus said in Matthew 18:4, *“Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.”*

### ***The Rich Young Ruler***

(Mark 10:17-31, Matthew 19:16-30, Luke 18:18-30)

This is perhaps one of the saddest stories in the whole of the Word of God. Here we are introduced to a fine young man whom Jesus loved. Although he had kept the commandments from his youth, he lacked one thing—he was not willing to sell everything that he had and follow Jesus. The love of money hindered him from following the Lord, and he became very sorrowful and turned back.

Discipleship demands our all, but the rewards are greater than our sacrifices. We see this in the response of Jesus when Peter said to Him that he and the other disciples had left everything and followed Him. Jesus replied that there was no one who had left house or family for the kingdom



of God's sake that would not receive many times more in this life and in the world to come. One of the maxims of the Christian life is that if we give, it will be given unto us, pressed down, shaken together, and running over (Lk. 6:38). We will never lack when we give up everything for the Lord, and our reward in heaven will be great.

***The Parable of the Labourers in the Vineyard***  
(Matthew 20:1-16)

The Lord closes His teaching on the demands and rewards of discipleship in Matthew 19:30 with a warning, saying, "*But many that are first shall be last; and the last shall be first.*" He then amplifies this teaching with the parable of a man who owned a vineyard. He hired different labourers throughout the period of a day, promising each of them the same wage—a penny each. When he paid his workers at the end of the day, those who had worked all day anticipated more than those who had only worked an hour. However, they all received the same pay. The Lord concludes by saying, "*So the last shall be first, and the first last.*" This is an awesome truth.

Often those who are the least likely to qualify are given the most opportunities. I have often seen that the Lord, knowing all things, even gives ministers the very message or teaching that is their weakest point, so that they continually teach the truths that can save them from their besetting sin. May we be those who seize all the opportunities that are proffered to us by the grace of God, and diligently apply ourselves to the work of the Master.

***Jesus Foretells His Death and Resurrection***

(Mark 10:32-34, Matthew 20:17-19, Luke 18:31-34)

Travelling toward Jerusalem, Jesus turned to His fearful disciples. He explained to them from the prophets that He must be delivered into the hands of the chief priests and scribes, who would mock, scourge, and kill Him, but that on the third day He would rise again.

It is clear that Jesus was immersed in the Holy Scriptures, and particularly in those which were relevant to His crucifixion. These Scriptures were the motivating force that drove Him to be the Lamb of God that would fulfil all the Old Testament sacrifices and take away the sins of the world. Therefore, in the Gospels we often see the Lord explaining this to His disciples, but they never understood until after His resurrection.

***The Selfish Ambition of James and John Rebuked***

(Mark 10:35-45, Matthew 20:20-28)

In this account we find that James and John, and also their mother asked Jesus if they could have the privilege of sitting on His right hand and left hand in glory. First of all, Jesus asked them if they could be baptised with the baptism that He was going to be baptised with, or drink the cup that he would drink of, speaking of suffering and death. Here we must realise that as we suffer with Him we shall also reign with Him (2 Tim. 2:12). As a certain lady told me in a letter not too long ago, when we get to heaven Jesus will not look

at our degrees, but at our scars. Jesus said that it was already determined by the Father who would sit next to Him. He then gave them a lecture on humility. It is the Gentiles who seek lordship, but as Christians, we should seek to serve others.

***The Healing of Blind Bartimaeus***

(Mark 10:46-52, Matthew 20:29-34, Luke 18:35-43)

Now the Lord crosses over the Jordan River for the last time and passes through Jericho. On the road outside of Jericho toward Jerusalem, He was hailed by two blind men who were saying, *“Have mercy on us, O Lord, thou son of David”* (Mt. 20:30). Matthew notes that there were two blind men, whereas Mark only mentions Bartimaeus. The reason for this is possibly that Bartimaeus was the one who cried more loudly and fervently than his companion. The crowds told these two men to be quiet, but they cried out even louder, for it was their heaven-sent opportunity and they were not going to let it slip away.

Jesus heard them and stopped, saying to them in Matthew 20:32, *“What will ye that I shall do unto you?”* They replied, *“Lord, that our eyes may be opened”* (Mt. 20:33). I have often used this text in sermons, as I am sure many other pastors, preachers, and evangelists have, to illustrate a very important truth. We need to be direct and specific when we pray. We shouldn’t just say, “O God, bless me,” but we should be specific. Tell the Lord what you need, and if you ask with faith, the Lord will give it to you. Jesus then said to these two blind men, *“Go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole”* (Mk. 10:52). Because they asked in faith, they received their healing.

***The Conversion of Zacchaeus***

(Luke 19:1-10)

Because the multitudes that followed Jesus were great, as He was leaving Jericho, a man of small stature ran before Him and climbed into a sycamore tree in order to see Him. When Jesus walked by that tree, He looked up and saw Zacchaeus and said to him, “*Zacchaeus, make haste, and come down; for to day I must abide at thy house*” (Lk. 19:5). Zacchaeus came down and invited Jesus to his house. Obviously being convicted of his covetousness, Zacchaeus offered to give back everything that he had wrongfully obtained from others, for he was one of the chief tax gatherers (or publicans) for Rome. When the multitude saw that Jesus had gone with him into his house, they murmured among themselves.

Jesus had to remind them that He had come to save lost sinners. Some time ago when I was praying to the Lord I said, “Lord, in the next revival, where are you going to draw people from?” I felt the Lord say to me very strongly, “From all walks of life,” and so we need to be equipped and prepared to meet the needs of people from all walks of life—those from the upper echelon of society, and also the homeless.

***The Parable of the Pounds***

(Luke 19:11-28)

There was great anticipation that the kingdom of God would soon appear. Also, the Lord was near Jerusalem, where He would be rejected, despised, and crucified, and so Jesus told

one of His two parables on productivity—"The Parable of the Pounds" (the other being "The Parable of the Talents"). Both of these parables emphasise the fact that a certain nobleman (representing the Lord Jesus) would be going away for a long time. Before he did, he called his servants and gave each one of them a pound, meaning that each was given *equal opportunity*.

This is something that the Lord really impressed upon me while I was ministering in Europe last fall. There I was reunited with several of my former students from a Bible college in Switzerland, whom I had not seen in nearly 40 years and others whom I have known for many years. What amazed me is how they all had done different things with their lives. Some were still serving the Lord, having an impact upon thousands of people through their ministries. However, others ended up not pursuing the ministry that God had called them to, and some had even compromised the truths that they had known.

One gentleman, in particular, was a very wealthy businessman. He told me that he was not happy because he was not in the call of God. He said to me, "I haven't been happy since I left the Bible school in Switzerland." The Lord quickened to me 1 Corinthians 10:3-5, which says: *"And did all eat the same spiritual meat; And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ. But with many of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness."*

The Israelites all had the same opportunity, eating of the same spiritual meat and drinking of the same spiritual Rock, but many of them wasted their opportunities, and as a result, the Lord was not pleased with them.

This is what the Lord spoke to me for those whom I had taught in Switzerland many years ago. We all drank of the same spiritual Rock; we all heard the same truths; we all experienced the anointing and the atmosphere of revival that was there—but many wasted their opportunities. It really broke my heart.

This is the same thing that happened in “The Parable of the Pounds.” All of the servants were given one pound (or equal opportunity). Some were very productive, but others wasted their God-given opportunities. The moral of this parable is that what we do with life’s opportunities in the work of the Master will determine our spiritual and eternal position and rank (cf. Eph. 5:16).

# Chapter 12

## ***THE LAST PUBLIC MINISTRY IN JERUSALEM***

Jesus is now moving rapidly toward Jerusalem with a large multitude following Him. He set His face as a flint (a mark of determination) to go to Jerusalem to finish the will of God for His life. He is now entering the last week of His earthly life.

### ***His Arrival in Bethany*** (John 11:55 - 12:1, 9-11)

About six days before the final Passover of His life, Jesus came to Bethany. You remember that Bethany was the home of Mary and Martha, and their brother Lazarus whom Jesus had raised from the dead.

### ***The Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem as the Messiah*** (Mark 11:1-11, Matthew 21:1-17, Luke 19:29-44, John 12:12-19)

This would have been Saturday, the 10th of Nisan, the first month of the religious calendar, when the Passover Lamb was chosen (see Ex. 12:3). (*Nisan correlates to March/April of our calendar.*) The One who fulfilled the Law, the spotless Lamb of God, was received with joy by the crowds at Jerusalem. While still a little way off from Jerusalem, Jesus

sent two of His disciples into Bethphage (which means “the house of unripe figs”), which was on the Jericho-Jerusalem road near Bethany. He told them that they would find there a donkey and a colt tethered (Mt. 21:2-3). They were to loose them and tell the owners that the Master had need of them, and they would release them to their care. When ridden by a king, the donkey is a symbol in the Scriptures of authority coming in an atmosphere of peace. David gave command that Solomon should be placed upon his own mule and proclaimed king (1 Ki. 1:33, 38). Therefore, here the One who was greater than Solomon, the true Prince of Peace, was preparing to enter His capital city to be proclaimed King, as was Solomon some 1,000 years before.

This episode was necessary in order to fulfil the Scriptures. Zechariah 9:9 says in the NIV, *“Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Zion! Shout, Daughter of Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.”* When the colt was brought with its mother to Jesus, the disciples threw their garments on the colt, which had never been ridden before, and Jesus rode upon the colt toward Jerusalem.

When hearing of the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, many of the multitude also spread their garments along the way. Others put down branches which they had cut down from the fields, for they had heard of the mighty miracle of the raising of Lazarus from the dead. Mark 11:9 says, *“And they that went before, and they that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna; Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.”* This too

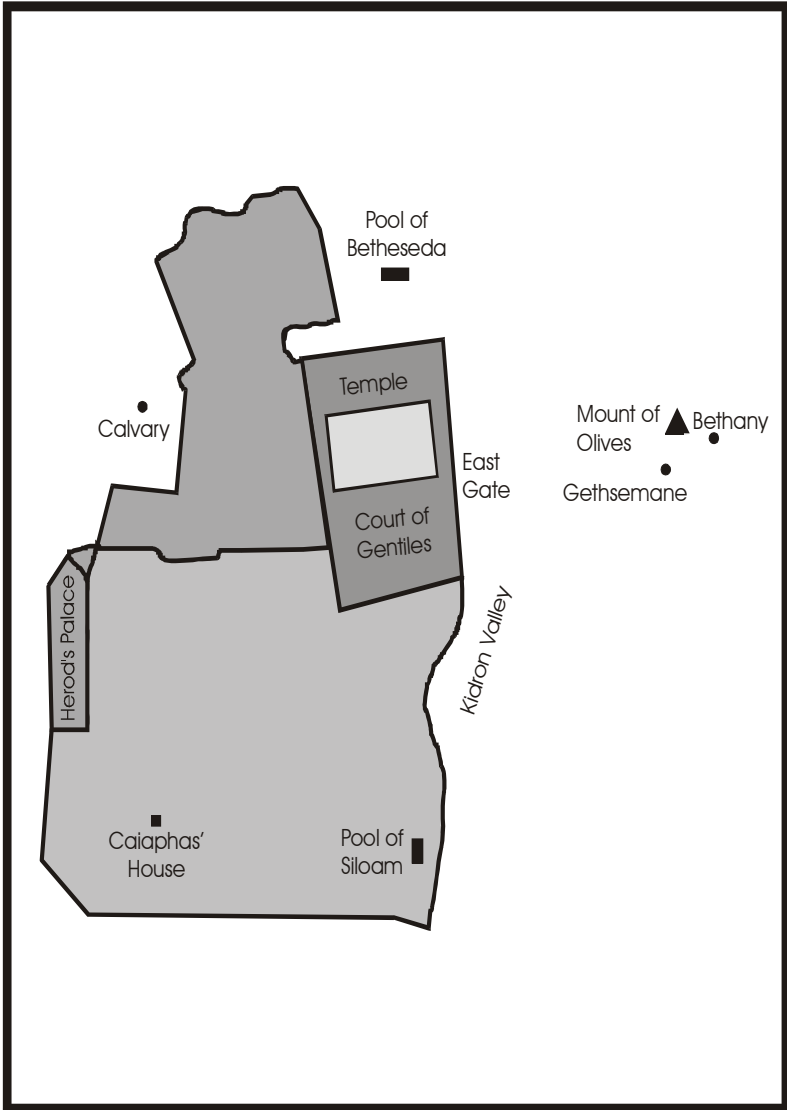


fulfilled the prophecy of Psalm 118:26, *“Blessed be he that cometh in the name of the LORD: we have blessed you out of the house of the LORD.”* As Jesus drew nigh, He saw the Holy City. The road curved around the Mount of Olives, and from the high vantage point that is afforded as one looks from the east, one sees the city below to the west. But there was no joy for Him that other pilgrims felt when they saw the Holy City at this time of the year.

During the Passover, the city would have been filled with approximately one million rejoicing, devoted souls seeking the presence of the God of Israel. Instead of rejoicing, Jesus wept in deep agony, beholding the city that would crucify Him in just a few days. He burst out through His sobbing and mourning heart into a prophetic lamentation in Luke 19:42, saying *“If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes.”* Here was the Prince of Peace Himself in their very midst, and yet they did not know the day of their visitation.

Therefore, He depicts the forthcoming siege and fall of Jerusalem to the Romans, which was accomplished in A.D. 70. The Lord Jesus said in Luke 19:43-44: *“For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, And shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation.”* Let us be wise and watchful so that we do not miss the Lord’s visitation to our own church and life.

# JERUSALEM IN THE TIME OF JESUS



Upon entering the city the crowds shouted, “Hosanna to the Son of David.” The Pharisees said amongst themselves that they could not prevail against Jesus, for it was as though the world had gone after Him.

When the Lord then entered the Temple precincts, the blind and lame came to Him, and He healed them. To the indignant Pharisees, the Lord responded, “*Have ye never read, Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise?*” Jesus was quoting Psalm 8:2, which says, “*Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength because of thine enemies, that thou mightest still the enemy and the avenger.*” Thus the Lord Jesus was saying that the spiritual babes were, by their praises, preventing His enemies (the Pharisees) from fulfilling their evil purposes. Jesus then returned to Bethany where He spent the night, which would have been Saturday night or Sunday morning, the 11th of Nisan.

### ***The Barren Fig Tree Cursed***

(Mark 11:12-14)

Coming out of Bethany in the morning (of the 11<sup>th</sup> of Nisan) and seeing a fig tree, Jesus desired to eat because He was hungry. However, finding only leaves on the tree, Jesus cursed the tree saying, “*No man eat fruit of thee hereafter for ever.*” Since their inception as a nation, Israel has been likened in Scriptures to a fig tree. So in type, here is the nation represented by a barren fig tree, cursed by the Lord—for when He came desiring to find a nation bringing forth

the fruit of the Spirit. Not only did He find no fruit there, but He also saw that the nation was bringing forth nothing but thorns and weeds—speaking of carnality and vanity.

### *The Second Cleansing of the Temple*

(Mark 11:15-18, Matthew 21:12-13, Luke 19:45-48)

Coming now to Jerusalem (this same morning of the 11<sup>th</sup> of Nisan), Jesus entered into the Temple. The previous evening, when He had been there healing the sick, he had also looked around and observed the people, as though summing up the situation in His mind. He had then returned to Bethany for the night, contemplating the situation, so that by the following morning He knew full well His course of action.

This provides a lesson for us, too. It is wisdom not to move hastily, but rather to sum up situations and then prayerfully determine one's God-appointed course of action. Thus Jesus' actions in the Temple were not out of reaction, frustration, haste, or rash judgment; His actions were calculated and done in obedience to His Father's guidance.

Jesus' cleansing of the Temple, in type, is the fulfilment of Malachi 3:1-2: *“And the Lord whom ye seek shall suddenly come to His temple, even the Messenger of the Covenant, whom ye delight in: But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' soap.* This scripture undoubtedly speaks of the Lord visiting His Church in revival power in the last days, and also His coming to Jerusalem at

His Second Coming. Nonetheless, it does have a historical fulfilment too.

The Lord proceeded to cast out all those who were buying and selling, and overthrew the tables of the moneychangers. A word of explanation is necessary here so that we understand who these people were. Basically, they were those who were working under the franchise of the High Priest Annas. They refused to accept the animals that the common people brought for sacrifice, and instead insisted that they buy, at inflated rates, animals that had been raised by those who were associated with the High Priest's family. Also, they refused to accept any currency except the shekel of the Temple, and were again charging inflated exchange rates. Thus, they were becoming very rich at the expense of the common people. These were the people that the Lord cast out of the Temple, quoting Isaiah 56:7: *"My house shall be called a house of prayer,"* and also Jeremiah 7:11: *"It has become a den of robbers."*

Let us be careful, dear ones, that we do not permit our churches to become places where the Gospel is merchandised. Rather, let us hearken to the Lord's admonition, "Freely have you received, freely give."

May we reiterate at this point: Jesus cleansed the Temple at the beginning and at the end of His ministry. Thus this signifies that the Early Church was renowned for its purity, as is evident from Acts 5:11, 13: *"And great fear came upon all the church, and upon as many as heard these things... And of the rest durst no man join himself to*

*them: but the people magnified them.*” Only wholehearted believers were added to the Church. Likewise, the Last Day Church will be purified by the spirit of judgment and burning (Isa. 4:4).

Returning to our narrative, we are told in Luke 19:47 that Jesus was teaching daily in the Temple. The chief priests sought to kill Him, but could not because the people all listened *attentively* to His words (Lk. 19:48).

### *The Greeks Desire to See Jesus*

(John 12:20-50)

Some Greek converts who had come to the feast desired of Philip that they might see Jesus, saying, “*Sir, we would see Jesus*” (Jn. 12:21). This phrase was on the pulpit of a certain church in which I had the privilege of ministering in Australia. As I preached, I could not help but look at the verse, “*Sir, we would see Jesus,*” meaning that the congregation wanted to see Jesus in the preacher. It had an awesome impact upon me as I ministered.

The response of Jesus was very interesting, for He now declared that the hour had come when He was to die (Jn. 12:23). He then proceeded to cite a principle of nature: “*Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.*” As is true of seed in the natural, Christ had to die in order to bear much fruit. The fruit of His death is that countless multitudes of people have come to salvation all around the world.

In the same way, we must lose our life for His sake that we may become fruitful, too—so that death works in us and life works in those to whom we minister (2 Cor. 4:12).

Then He said that His soul was troubled, but that He had come into the world for this very purpose—to die. Therefore, He asked the Father to glorify His name. A voice from heaven responded as a loud thunder saying, “I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again.” In His death upon the cross, our precious Lord stated that not only was this world judged, but that the prince of this world, Satan, was cast out.

In a very important statement, Jesus then said in John 12:32, “*And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.*” While this applied to His death on the cross, it is also true that if we ourselves would only exalt Jesus in our lives and churches, then He would draw all people unto Himself through our lives. Jesus then hid Himself, because although He had done all those miracles, most of the people did not believe in Him. The saying of Isaiah 53:1, “*Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed?*” was fulfilled, for they did not believe in Him. The reason was, as the prophet said in Isaiah 6:10 that He had blinded their eyes so that they could not see and closed their ears so that they could not hear.

***The Barren Fig Tree Withered***  
(Mark 11:19-24, Matthew 21:19-22)

Now Jesus was teaching in the temple every day, and at night He went back to Bethany. We are now at the morning

of Monday the 12th of Nisan. This was the last day of the Lord's public ministry, and the most well reported of all His days of teachings.

Jesus and the disciples passed by the cursed fig tree that has now withered. When questioned by Peter, Jesus responded by saying, *"Have faith in God. For verily I say unto you, That whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith. Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them"* (Mk. 11:22-24).

If we have God's faith, nothing will be impossible for us. We can even command a mountain to be cast into the sea. The Lord Jesus was presumably referring to the Mount of Olives as they walked by.

***The Formal Challenge by Chief Priests and Elders***  
(Mark 11:27 - 12:12, Matthew 21:23 - 22:14, Luke 20:1-9)

While Jesus was walking in the Temple, the chief priests came to Jesus and asked Him what authority He had to purify the Temple, for all ceremonies and control of Temple matters were the responsibility of the Sanhedrin. Legally, they had the right and perhaps even the duty to challenge the Lord. However, their motive was highly suspect, and in fact, it seems evident that they sought to discredit Him in the eyes of the people.



However, responding in the wisdom of God, Jesus countered their question with a question. He said in Mark 11:29-30: *“I will also ask of you one question, and answer me, and I will tell you by what authority I do these things. The baptism of John, was it from heaven, or of men? answer me.”* They were now trapped, for they knew that if they replied, “From heaven,” that Jesus would have replied, “Then why did ye not believe John?” However, if they said, “From men,” they feared the multitude who all acclaimed John as a prophet. Therefore, they responded, “We know not.” Jesus then replied, *“Neither do I tell you by what authority I do these things”* (Mk. 11:33). Having defeated them in their own trap, Jesus then reinforced His victory by three parables in Matthew 21:28—22:14.

### ***1. The Parable of the Two Sons***

(Matthew 21:28-32)

In this parable, Jesus spoke of a man who had two sons. He said to his first son, “Go work in my vineyard,” but he refused to. Afterward, however, he repented and went and worked in his father’s vineyard. The second son said that he would go, but did not. Jesus then asked the priests, “Which son did the will of his father?” And they said, “The first.”

Then Jesus said to them, *“Verily I say unto you, That the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you. For John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not: but the publicans and the harlots believed him: and ye, when ye had seen it, repented not*

*afterward, that ye might believe him”* (Mt. 21:31-32). Jesus, in effect, was saying that the Pharisees would not enter into the kingdom of heaven because of their unbelief. This is a solemn warning to religious leaders not to trust in their own righteousness.

## ***2. The Parable of the Wicked Tenants***

(Matthew 21:33-46)

In this parable, the Lord Jesus speaks of an owner of a vineyard who let (or rented) his vineyard out to tenants, and went into another country. When the time of harvest came the owner sent his servants to collect his share of the fruits, but the tenants beat some servants and killed others. Then the owner sent his very own son, thinking that they would reverence him. But the tenants killed him too, thinking that they would be able to take his inheritance.

When asked what the owner would do, the priests replied, *“He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen, which shall render him the fruits in their seasons”* (Mt. 21:41). Jesus then responds to them by quoting Psalm 118:22-23, *“The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner. This is the Lord’s doing; it is marvelous in our eyes.”*

His interpretation was that the kingdom of God would be taken from the priests and given to a nation (meaning the Church) who would bring forth the fruits of righteousness that God was seeking. Realising that Jesus had spoken this

parable against them, the priests sought to kill Him but feared the multitudes, who esteemed Him as a prophet.

### ***3. The Parable of the Wedding Feast***

(Matthew 22:1-14)

In this parable Jesus tells about a king who made a banquet for his son (representing the Marriage Supper of the Lamb). He sent his servants out to call the invited guests, but they paid no attention to the invitation. Some of them went off to their normal business, while others killed the servants. Then the king in anger killed them all and destroyed their city.

Then he said to his servants, *“The wedding is ready, but they which were bidden were not worthy. Go ye therefore into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage”* (Mt. 22:8-9). The servants went out and invited both good and bad, and the banqueting hall was filled. Entering the hall, the king saw one who did not have his wedding garment on, and commanded him to be cast out into outer darkness.

In this parable the Lord is showing that the scribes, Pharisees, and religious leaders were first invited to the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. However, they gave no heed to the Gospel message of repentance and treated it lightly (Mt. 22:5).

Then God turned to the common people and the poor who heard Him gladly. But then in the Marriage Feast there was one who did not have a wedding garment, which was issued to those who were invited to the feast. In reality,

this represents one who had not put on the garments of salvation, and was cast out into hell. So let us be found worthy, beloved, for Jesus said, “*For many be called, but few chosen*” (Mt. 20:16).

### ***On Paying Tribute to Caesar***

(Mark 12:13-17, Matthew 22:15-22, Luke 20:20-26)

Then the Pharisees sent their keenest students with some of the Herodians, a political party, seeking to catch Jesus by asking Him if it was lawful to pay taxes to Caesar. Seeing through their hypocrisy, Jesus asked them to show Him the tribute or tax money. When they brought a coin He asked them whose image was upon it.

They replied, “Caesar’s,” to which Jesus responded, “*Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar’s; and unto God the things that are God’s.*” All the people marvelled at the Lord’s wisdom and held their peace.

### ***The Question of Marriage***

(Mark 12:18-27, Matthew 22:23-33, Luke 20:27-40)

The Sadducees, who did not believe in the resurrection, asked Jesus a hypothetical question: “If a man marries several times, to whom will he belong in the resurrection?”

Jesus replied, “*Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God. For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in*

*heaven. But as touching the resurrection of the dead, have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living”* (Mt. 22:29-32).

### ***The Greatest Commandment***

(Mark 12:28-34, Matthew 22:34-40)

Then a certain lawyer of the Pharisees asked Jesus what was the great commandment of the law. He responded by quoting Deuteronomy 6:4-5: *“Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD: And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.”* We need to understand that God is our Father, and He has created us for His good pleasure, even as an earthly father brings a son into the world to give him pleasure. How do we please our natural fathers? By loving them. What is true love? It is always doing those things that please the one we love. It is the same with our Heavenly Father and the Lord Jesus—to show them that we really love them, we must obey them and do those things which please them.

The Lord said in John 14:21, *“He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.”* Then Jesus continued by quoting Leviticus 19:18: *“Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against one of your people, but*

*love your neighbor as yourself. I am the LORD*” (NIV). Let us take note of the admonition of the Apostle John who said in 1 John 3:18, “*Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth*” (NIV).

The lawyer then said to Jesus, “*Well, Master; thou hast said the truth: for there is one God; and there is none other but he: And to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love his neighbour as himself, is more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices*” (Mk. 12:32-33). Jesus said to him, “*Thou art not far from the kingdom of God.*” No one dared ask Jesus any more questions after this. May we be those who have the first and second commandments perfected in our hearts and lives.

### ***The Son of David***

(Mark 12:35-37, Matthew 22:41-46, Luke 20:41-44)

Then taking the offensive, the Lord Himself asked a question (while the Pharisees were gathering together in the court of the Temple), saying, “*What think ye of Christ? whose son is he?*” They answered, “*The son of David*” (Mt. 22:42). Jesus then quoted Psalm 110:1, “*The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool.*” Jesus asked the Pharisees, “*If David then call him Lord, how is he his son?*” It appears here that the Lord was intent upon showing that Christ was much greater than David, and in reality was the Son of God. We, too, must always exalt Jesus.

***The Denunciation of the Scribes and Pharisees***

(Mark 12:38-40, Matthew 23:1-39, Luke 20:45-47)

In this dissertation upon the evils of the scribes and Pharisees, the Lord first emphasises their authority. Jesus said in Matthew 23:3, *“All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not.”* In other words, Jesus told the common people to do what the scribes and Pharisees told them to do, but they were not to follow their example and lifestyle, because they did not practice what they preached. They are those who are also soundly condemned by the Apostle Paul in Romans 2:21: *“Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal?”* Let us also beware, for it is not our teaching or preaching that will save us but rather a life of obedience to the Word of God.

The Lord then condemned the Pharisees for the following reasons:

1. Because they imposed severe rules upon the people, but they themselves did not keep them.
2. Because they loved to wear religious clothing to impress others with their piety.
3. Because they loved the chief places at banquets and in their synagogues (or churches).

4. Because they loved to be addressed as “teacher” and “father.”

5. Because they confiscated the homes of widows while praying long and meaningless prayers.

Here the Lord pauses in His indictment of the Pharisees, and warns us to seek rather the lowly place and to become the servant of all. The Lord then pronounced six woes upon these religious leaders:

1. Because they took long missionary trips in order to gain more proselytes, but in reality were making of those people twice the sons of hell that they were.

2. Because they were spiritually blind and not able to see themselves, they could not lead others into the pathway of righteousness.

3. Because they were hypocrites. They tithed the most minute part of their garden produce, but ignored the weightier matters of the law—judgment and mercy.

4. Because they would clean the outside of the plates and cups, but not their own hearts.

5. Because they were hypocrites, appearing to be righteous outwardly, but inwardly they were full of iniquity.

6. Because they were the sons of those who killed the prophets.



The Lord then lamented over the city of Jerusalem, where the prophets had been killed, saying, *“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord”* (Mt. 23:37-39). Because of its great wickedness, Jerusalem would be made desolate and the Jews, as a nation, would not see the Lord again until His Second Coming.

### ***The Poor Widow’s Gift***

(Mark 12:41-44, Luke 21:1-4)

Looking now upon those who gave to the treasury in the Temple, Jesus observed a poor widow who put in two mites (or one farthing), which was all her living. Jesus commented, *“Verily I say unto you, That this poor widow hath cast more in, than all they which have cast into the treasury: For all they did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living”* (Mk. 12:43-44). This poor widow gave more in relation to what she had than those who were extremely wealthy; she gave out of her need, whereas they gave of their abundance. One dear saint had a vision of heaven and saw the beautiful house that this widow was awarded. So, beloved, let us not be slack in giving, for we shall reap tremendous eternal rewards.

***Mount of Olives Discourse on the Second Coming***

(Mark 13:1-37, Matthew 24 - 25, Luke 21:5-36)

As they were leaving the Temple, the disciples showed the Lord the beautifully adorned stones and offerings of the Temple. Instead of remarking on their beauty, Jesus said that the days would come when not one stone would rest upon another, speaking of the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple by the Romans in A.D. 70. Then they went up on the Mount of Olives where Jesus sat down. The disciples came unto Him and asked Him when this destruction was going to take place, what the sign of His coming would be, and when the end of the world would be. The Lord replied by saying that:

1. False christs would arise and lead many astray.
2. There would be wars and rumours of wars.
3. There would be famines and earthquakes in divers places, but they would be only the beginning of troubles.
4. His people would be hated of all nations for His name's sake.
5. Because iniquity would abound, the love of many would become cold.
6. The Gospel of the kingdom would be preached in the entire world and then the end will come. The last parable of the seven parables of the kingdom, the Parable of the Net, spiritually speaks of the fact that there will be a great

revival and ingathering of souls in the End Times. The Feast of Tabernacles will be spiritually celebrated by the Church. In Scripture, revival always precedes judgment. Therefore, after this great revival, the following judgments will ensue.

7. The abomination of desolation would take place in the Temple, spoken of by Daniel (Dan. 9:27; 11:31; 12:11). It will be erected by the Antichrist (the beast). Christ's reference to the holy place shows that the Temple in Jerusalem must be rebuilt.

8. The Great Tribulation will come after the abomination of desolation, but for the elect's sake those days will be shortened, otherwise no flesh would be able to endure it. This clearly indicates that the saints will go through the tribulation.

9. Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened and the moon will not give her light.

10. The Son of Man will then come in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory, a reference to His Second Coming.

11. The angels will gather the elect of God with a great sound of the trumpet (see 1 Th. 4:16-17).

The Lord then gave a parable of the fig tree. Jesus said, *“Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh: So*

*likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors” (Mt. 24:32-33). Therefore, when we see all of these things take place, we know that the end is very near.*

### **The Day of the Lord**

Much has been written declaring that our Lord will come on a certain date—a total disregard for the Lord’s words in Matthew 24:36: *“But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only.”* After His resurrection, Jesus again stated in Acts 1:7, *“It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power.”* Therefore, it is not given to mortal man to know the day or hour of the Lord’s return.

Jesus then likens the last days to the days of Noah, when the people did not realise the flood was coming until it was too late. The flood took them by surprise, and all but eight people perished. Jesus said, *“So shall the coming of the Son of man be” (Mt. 24:37).* He then added in Matthew 24:40-42: *“Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come.”* The admonition is to be ready, for the Lord will come at time when we do not expect Him.

The Lord then gave several admonitions on faithfulness, especially directed to pastors and ministers of the Gospel, exhorting them to be found caring for the flock when the

Lord returns. There will be many who say in their hearts that the Lord delayeth His coming, and they will begin to beat God's people and become drunk. The Lord will come in an hour when they do not expect Him, and He will appoint them their portion with the hypocrites in hell. From this it appears that it is the wicked who, in defiance of the Word of God, try to calculate the time of the Lord's coming. When proven wrong, they backslide in heart and become violent. The Lord then concludes His teachings for this day with three parables: "The Parable of the Ten Virgins," "The Parable of the Talents," and "The Parable of the Sheep and the Goats."

### ***1. The Parable of the Ten Virgins***

(Matthew 25:1-13)

In this parable, our Lord again develops the theme: "*Watch therefore for ye know not the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh.*" Jesus gave these teachings concerning His Second Coming while He was upon the Mount of Olives.

The Mount of Olives is indeed the place of His return, for we read in Zechariah 14:4, "*And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south.*"

He is intent on emphasising that no one can know when He will return, since the Father has reserved it in His wisdom as

His sole prerogative. If Jesus does not know, how may we mortal humans presume to know?

## ***2. The Parable of the Talents***

(Matthew 25:14-30)

To emphasise again that He was going to leave for a long period before He returned, in this parable Jesus speaks of a man who gives talents to his servants according to their abilities. Upon his return, the lord of these servants called them to give an account.

One who had received five talents had gained five more, and the Lord congratulated him by making him ruler over many things and saying, “*Enter thou into the joy of thy lord.*” Likewise, one who had received two talents gained two more talents, and he was likewise commended. However, the servant who had received only one talent buried it, and was soundly scolded by his lord, who called him wicked and slothful and commanded that he be cast into outer darkness.

Let us be forewarned of the basis of eternal judgments. We all will have to give an account for the works done in the flesh, and we should seek to be diligent, productive, and faithful in the work that the Lord has entrusted to us.

## ***3. The Parable of the Sheep and the Goats***

(Matthew 25:31-46)

In “The Parable of the Sheep and the Goats,” the Lord gave another view of eternal judgments. The nations will

be judged corporately at the Second Coming. They will be divided into sheep and goat nations. The **qualifications of the sheep nations** are as follows:

- 1. They feed the hungry.*
- 2. They give refuge to the stranger*
- 3. They clothe the naked.*
- 4. They visit the sick*
- 5. They visit those in prison.*

Therefore, let us do good, especially to those who are of the household of faith (Gal. 6:10).





**PART IV**

**CHRIST'S  
CRUCIFIXION**



# Chapter 13

## *THE UPPER ROOM*

In Part Four, Christ's last few days and His crucifixion are covered. This covers the Last Supper, the discourses in the Upper Room, His betrayal by Judas and arrest in the Garden of Gethsemane, His trials, and His ultimate crucifixion.

### *Jesus Tells of His Impending Crucifixion*

(Mark 14:1-2, Matthew 26:1-5, Luke 22:1-2)

At this point, Jesus and His disciples were still on the road to Bethany. The Lord again expounds on His crucifixion, saying that the Passover would take place in two days (this would be on Wednesday the 14<sup>th</sup>), and that He would be delivered up to be crucified. At the same time, the chief priests were gathered in the court of the High Priest plotting to kill Him.

Although not on the same scale, I have experienced betrayal by those whom I loved and trusted. My elders betrayed me and then expelled me from the church I was pastoring many years ago. While they were so doing, the Lord gave me a vision of their meeting in the house of one of the elders. Although they succeeded in expelling me from the church, their end was not good. One elder died soon after and his widow lost the house in which the meeting had taken place. Then another elder had terrible problems with his children.

Another died in misery, and one other sought me out to seek forgiveness about six months before he died of cancer.

***The Supper in the House of Simon the Leper***

(Mark 14:3-9, Matthew 26:6-13, John 12:2-8)

Jesus and His disciples arrived at the house of Simon the leper in Bethany. The supper there would have taken place on Monday evening, at the time of the commencement of the Jewish Tuesday (which begins at 6 p.m. Monday). At this supper, Lazarus (whom the Lord Jesus had raised from the dead) was there as well as Martha, who was serving. Mary took a pound of costly spikenard perfume, which speaks of peace, and anointed the beautiful feet of the Prince of Peace—the feet that brought good tidings and published peace.

Judas Iscariot objected to Mary's lavish anointing of Jesus, because Judas was a thief and he wanted the money for himself. The response of Jesus was that Mary had performed a good work, which would be remembered wherever the Gospel was preached, as a memorial to her. May God grant that our good works may also be remembered by many, as a testimony to our life. This also brings out a principle of God—when we are unjustly criticised by others, the end of the matter is that God turns their evil into good for us.

Therefore, let us remember that “Romans 8:28 works all the time or not at all,” as the Lord once reminded my dear wife. He spoke this gently to her when she was cradling the head of her father, as he died in her arms. This tragic situation

worked out for good, because it enabled her to be free to become a missionary overseas where she met me, her future husband. Had her father not died, we probably would never have met.

***Judas Goes to the Chief Priests to Betray Jesus***

(Mark 14:10-11, Matthew 26:14-16, Luke 22:3-6)

In rebuking Judas for having protested to the good work of Mary in anointing Him for His burial, Jesus evidently stirred up Judas to betray Him. Judas left the supper and communed with the chief priests and captains as to how he would deliver Jesus into their hands. They consented, and agreed to pay him 30 pieces of silver. This fulfilled the prophecy of Zechariah 11:12, which says, “*And I said unto them, If ye think good, give me my price; and if not, forbear. So they weighed for my price thirty pieces of silver.*” So in the absence of the multitude, Judas sought an occasion to deliver Jesus into the hands of the rulers.

***The Preparation for the Passover Meal***

(Mark 14:12-16, Matthew 26:17-19, Luke 22:7-13)

On the first day of unleavened bread, Jesus’ disciples asked Him where He wanted to celebrate the Passover. In response, He sent two of them into the city of Jerusalem. This would have been on the Jewish Wednesday. He instructed them to follow a man carrying a pitcher of water. When they came to the house they were to ask the goodman of the house where Jesus was to celebrate the Passover, and he would show them a guest chamber ready and furnished.

When one contemplates this scene, we realise that the Holy Spirit must have spoken to this goodman prior to the disciples coming, and he prepared the room in obedience. Of all the people in Jerusalem, this man had been singled out for this sublime honour. Only one of his good works is recorded in Scripture, but his life obviously was one of goodness. His goodness qualified him to have a role in this historic event. We need to realise that our lives might be remembered for only one act or deed. May we pray that we might be remembered for goodness, as was Hezekiah (2 Chr. 32:32).

### *The Last Supper*

(Mark 14:17, Matthew 26:20, Luke 22:14-16, John 13:1-2a)

We need to appreciate the events and teachings of Christ at the Last Supper, as it is called, where Jesus and His disciples ate the Passover together. In the first instance the Lord stated that with great desire He had desired to eat this Passover with them. Especially in Eastern cultures, a meal was a time when fellowship was established and cemented. Eating together was an act of friendship. Therefore, it was a time of final bonding between Jesus and His disciples before His crucifixion.

Thus in a very real sense this was to be a love feast, where they would enjoy one another's company for the last time. But even more than this, it was the time when the Lord consummated His final teachings. There was a separation between the faithful and the betrayer. Virtually everything would be finalised at this Last Supper, except for the trial

and actual death. Jesus would know that He had finished His course, and fulfilled His responsibility toward His disciples, having loved them to the end. Then the meal was solemnised by the humility of Jesus toward His apostles.

### ***The Foot Washing***

(John 13:1-20)

Now when they had sat down, there arose a contention among them as to who would be the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. To illustrate true greatness, the Lord rose from the supper table and laid aside His garments. He took a towel and girded Himself. After He poured water into a basin, He began to wash His disciples' feet. This was the action of the lowest of all servants. The Lord Jesus came to be the servant of all, and to minister to others, not to be ministered to.

The act of foot washing had a spiritual significance. When Peter told Jesus that he did not want Him to wash his feet, Jesus said to him, "*What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter*" (Jn. 13:7). Besides the obvious outward manifestation of the Lord's humility, there is a hidden spiritual meaning behind this act. The key to solving this lies in the response of the Lord to Peter: "*If I wash thee not thou hast no part with me.*" Clearly, the washing of the disciples' feet pointed to a deeper cleansing that the Lord wanted to do in their lives. Therefore, foot washing speaks of the spiritual washing by the water of the Word of God (Eph. 5:26-27).

The Lord said to His disciples, “Ye are not all clean,” a direct reference to Judas (Jn. 13:11). Although Judas had spent over three years with Jesus, along with the other disciples, and had heard the wonderful teachings that flowed from the Master’s lips, the words of Jesus never penetrated his heart, and he was never changed. He never allowed the Word to cleanse him of the love of money. What a warning to us not to be just *hearers* of the Word, but *doers* (cf. Rom. 2:13). Remember, Judas heard the Word, but he did not obey it.

Judas falls into the same category as the children of Israel in the wilderness journey. Paul refers to them in 1 Corinthians 10:1-12. They all drank of that same spiritual rock which was Christ, but the Lord was not well pleased with some of them, and they perished in the wilderness.

This is a very solemn warning to every believer. It is not enough to listen to the preaching of God’s Word at church and read our own Bibles, but we must allow the Word of God to change us and transform us into the image of Christ. May we conclude with the words of Jesus in John 13:17, “*If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.*”

### ***The Betrayer Revealed***

(Mark 14:18-21, Matthew 26:21-25,  
Luke 22:21-22, John 13:18-30)

All four Gospels mention that at this last supper with His disciples, Christ clearly declared that one of His disciples would betray Him. This event had already been set in motion



when Judas went to the chief priests the previous night. Although this matter will be treated in more detail in our companion book entitled "*The Cross*," there are some truths that should be mentioned at this juncture in our narrative of the life of our Lord.

King David prophesied in Psalm 109, about 1,000 years before the event, that Judas would betray Jesus. The Lord also quoted Psalm 41:9 in reference to Judas: "*Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me.*" Judas' betrayal was in the predetermined purpose of God for Christ. This is confirmed in John 6:70-71: "*Jesus answered them, Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil? He spake of Judas Iscariot the son of Simon: for he it was that should betray him, being one of the twelve.*"

The reason for Judas' betrayal was that Jesus had to know the fellowship of His Father's sufferings. The Father had suffered betrayal by the angel Lucifer, when he led a rebellion in heaven against Him. About a third of the angels in heaven aligned themselves with Lucifer in this dastardly act. In the same way, we have to know betrayal by those nearest to us, that we may be partakers of the fellowship of our Heavenly Father's sufferings and Christ's sufferings.

Returning to our narrative, we should examine the attitudes of the disciples toward Jesus' statement that one of them would betray Him. It was one of universal sorrow and, as is always the case with the righteous, self-examination, followed by

the question: "Is it I?" The doubts were then dissolved when Peter beckoned John, who was leaning upon the breast of Jesus, to ask Jesus of whom He spake.

The Lord Jesus replied, "*He it is, to whom I shall give a sop, when I have dipped it.*" And when he had dipped the sop, he gave it to Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon. And after the sop Satan entered into him. Then said Jesus unto him, *That thou doest, do quickly*" (Jn. 13:26-27). Although Jesus made it very clear who the betrayer was, the disciples did not perceive that it was Judas.

Judas himself hypocritically asked the question, "Master, is it I?" To which Jesus responded, "Thou hast said" (Mt. 26:25). Well was it written of this man that it would have been better if he had never been born. We cannot leave this scene without commenting upon the marvellous self-control of Jesus. Knowing from the beginning that Judas would betray Him, Jesus treated Judas with such gracious condescension that none of the disciples had any inkling of the true character of Judas, until the very end. Christ truly taught by His example!

### ***The Warning That All Will Forsake Him***

(Mark 14:27-31, Matthew 26:31-35,  
Luke 22:31-38, John 13:31-38)

After the departure of Judas, Jesus warned His disciples that they would all be offended in Him, and that the Scripture would be fulfilled. He was referring to Zechariah 13:7, which

says, *“Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the LORD of hosts: smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered: and I will turn mine hand upon the little ones.”*

We must never forget that this was a necessity, because the disciples could never have gone to the cross with Jesus. If they had, the message of the cross would have been blurred and confused, since only Jesus was the spotless Lamb who could die for the sins of the world. Peter responded by saying that he would remain faithful to the Lord even if all the other disciples deserted Him. Not only was Peter contradicting Jesus, but he was also challenging Scripture. Yet he did so with a good heart. Peter’s intentions were good—he desperately wanted to be loyal to Jesus to the end. However, in all this there was an element of pride in Peter, because he, in effect, was saying that he was better than the other disciples. He should have cried out to God for mercy and grace to remain faithful.

Jesus replied to Peter’s outburst of loyalty by saying, *“Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren”* (Lk. 22:31-32). After Peter again protested that he was willingly to go to prison and die for the Lord, Jesus said to him, *“Wilt thou lay down thy life for my sake? Verily, verily, I say unto thee, The cock shall not crow, till thou hast denied me thrice”* (Jn. 13:38). (Note: The accounts of Matthew and Mark took place shortly after the accounts of Luke and John.)

*The Institution of the Holy Communion*

(Mark 14:22-25, Matthew 26:26-29, Luke 22:17-20)

At this time of the year, during the celebration of the Passover, the Jews ate what is called the “paschal supper.” Jesus Himself stated that He would not drink of the festal cup again, indicating that this was His last meal upon earth. During this meal certain traditions were observed. A cup of wine was blessed and shared at the commencement of the meal, which accounts for the fact that Luke starts with this cup in his account in Luke 22:17-18.

Many commentators have expressed much difficulty in determining the time and nature of this supper. However, the Early Church fathers, who either knew the original apostles or knew their acquaintances, had no such difficulty. It appears to us that the first cup, which was blessed by the One who presided at the feast, clearly established this as the paschal meal. All the events that the Jews observed at the Passover meal are not mentioned in the Gospels’ account of the Last Supper because Scripture focuses on the interpretation that Jesus gave to the emblems.

We respect the fact that others may hold different views, but we hold (as do many theologians) that this meal was celebrated on our Tuesday evening. This would have been the beginning of the Jewish Wednesday, and therefore the day on which He was crucified. John 19:31 states that “*the sabbath day was an high day,*” and therefore not the usual sabbath. (A “high day” is a sabbath which is

associated with a religious feast, and does not fall on the seventh day of the week.) This would give enough time for the body of Jesus to remain in the grave for three days and three nights.

The one who presided at the meal would comment upon the significance of the emblems. During the supper, Jesus instituted the Holy Communion. He stated later in the meal that the bread represented His body, which was broken for us, and that the wine represented His blood that was shed for the sins of the world. Among devout Jews, it was customary to remain at the table for several hours discussing the spiritual significance of the history of the Jewish nation. This is the occasion Jesus used for what are termed “The Upper Room Discourses.”

### *The Upper Room Discourses*

(John 14)

These discourses flow from the previous chapter, and we assume that other commentators have concluded that the institution of the Lord’s Supper was taking place simultaneously with these other events. The precise chronology is obviously not so important as the truths that are contained therein. John 14:1 flows from the narrative of John 13. Jesus is here seeking to encourage His apostles that even though He is leaving, He is going to prepare a place for them in His Father’s house. (Then He promises to come for us again, speaking of His coming for us when we die, and not exclusively of His Second Coming.) Then

Jesus declares, *“I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me”* (Jn. 14:6). This truth must be firmly emblazoned upon our hearts, because today there are so many false religions purporting to be the way to eternal life. However, as Paul states, there is no other name under heaven by which we can be saved. Jesus said to Philip that he who has seen Jesus has seen the Father, because the Son is the express image of the Father (Heb. 1:3).

After this, the Lord gave to His followers a wonderful promise, which applies especially to the Last Day Church, *“Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do...”* Often, the disciple accomplishes more than his master. We know that Elisha performed twice as many miracles as his master Elijah, because he had a double portion of Elijah’s anointing. Then the Lord spoke of the power of prayer in John 14:14, saying, *“If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it.”* May we learn, as Jesus knew, that the secret to life is prayer! It will bring us into sweet union and communion with the Lord.

### ***The Promise of Another Comforter***

(John 14:15-26)

Prefacing the promise of another Comforter, the Holy Spirit, with the condition, *“If ye love Me, keep My commandments,”* Jesus causes us to realise that receiving

the Holy Spirit is predicated upon a right relationship with the Lord.

It is the Lord Jesus alone who can baptise us with the Holy Ghost and fire, as proclaimed by John the Baptist (Mt. 3:11). In Acts 5:32, Peter reiterates this point, saying that God gives the Holy Spirit to those who *obey* Him. Thus obedience is the primary condition to receiving the blessed Comforter in all His fullness.

The initial evidence that we have received the baptism of the Holy Spirit is speaking in other tongues. This was the way the disciples received the Spirit on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4). While some Christians might demur and suggest that one can receive the Holy Spirit without the initial evidence of tongues, to do so denies all biblical data on the subject. Everyone who received the Holy Spirit in the Acts of the Apostles spoke with other tongues.

The only instance where tongues is not specifically mentioned, is perhaps the greatest proof that speaking in other tongues is the initial evidence. In Acts 8:9-19, Simon the converted sorcerer, (who was accustomed to the supernatural) offered the apostles money to have the same power they had—to lay hands on people to receive the Holy Spirit. Simon would not have done this unless there had been an evident supernatural manifestation superior to that which he would have known as a sorcerer. Let us be honest, dear ones, to our own hearts, and let us not allow our unbelief to deter others from this glorious experience of the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

***The Manifestation of Jesus and  
the Father to the Believer***

(John 14:21-23)

In these verses there is a very clear-cut promise to the believer that if we will love Jesus by keeping His commandments, then He will openly show Himself to us. But even more so, the Father will manifest Himself to us, and both the Father and Son will abide in us. This speaks of a very blessed experience that is promised to the faithful in Christ. Travelling as I do around the world, it is truly amazing to meet so many of God's dear children who have been privileged to have received visions of the Lord and also of the Godhead. Praise His wonderful name!

***The Promise of Peace***

(Jn. 14:27)

There are several expressions of God's peace as revealed in Scripture:

- 1. Peace with God** - Romans 5:1 says, "*Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.*" Peace with God comes as we are justified. This is what happens at salvation.
  
- 2. The Peace of God** - There is also the ongoing peace of God that comes through the spiritual exercises and practices mentioned in Philippians 4:6-8.



**3. The Gift of God's Peace (or the Covenant of Peace)**

- The gift of God's peace is His peace that He bestows upon those whom He loves. It can be termed the "covenant of peace," which was given to Phineas. Numbers 25:12 says, "*Wherefore say, Behold, I give unto him my covenant of peace.*"

***The Singing of a Psalm or Hymn***

(Matthew 26:30a, Mark 14:26a)

As was the Passover custom, at the end of the meal the Israelites would sing the Hallel Psalms (Ps. 116-118), which were sung generally by the head of the feast, and the others would respond by intoning "Hallelujah." Therefore, as Jesus and His disciples concluded the feast, the words of Psalm 118:17-18 were probably on the lips of the Saviour: "*I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the LORD. The LORD hath chastened me sore: but he hath not given me over unto death.*" After this dissertation to His disciples, the discourses in the Upper Room close with these words of Jesus: "*Arise, let us go hence*" (Jn. 14:31).



# Chapter 14

## *Gethsemane*

### *The Teachings on the Way to Gethsemane*

(John 15-17)

As we have before mentioned, the rabbis had the custom of teaching while they were walking. Jesus adopted this manner as He left the Upper Room and made His way down from Mount Zion to the brook Cedron. As one contemplates this last discourse, one cannot help being overwhelmed by the greatness of our Lord. He was facing crucifixion at Calvary, yet He was still able to talk to His disciples about love, joy, and peace. Jesus was the Master of self-control! He utilised every minute of these last few hours with His apostles to give them His last instructions before He went to the cross. His thoughts were ever with those whom He loved so very much; and above all, He was consumed with doing His Father's will.

### *The True Vine*

(John 15)

These last teachings are devotional in character, meaning that they deal with our relationship with our blessed Lord. In this beautiful discourse the Lord gives the key to fruitfulness through the illustration of the vine and the branches. Jesus

states that His Father is the Husbandman, He is the Vine, and we are the branches.

The purpose of the vine is to produce fruit, more fruit, and much fruit. Branches that do not bring forth the fruit are therefore removed and cast into the fire. This is a solemn reminder that the doctrine of eternal security is so very wrong and diabolical.

Being born again is only the commencement of our life's journey. We are born again to bring forth fruit for the Master, and if we do not, we shall be discarded. The key to fruitfulness is to abide in Christ. Abiding in Christ means to keep His commandments. John 15:10 says, "*If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love.*"

Another aspect of abiding in Christ is that His words abide in us (Jn. 15:7). By abiding in Christ, we abide in His love, and His joy will remain in us. The Lord concludes this passage by reminding His disciples that they did not choose Him, but He chose them and ordained them that they should go and bring forth fruit that would remain.

### ***The Ministry of the Holy Spirit***

(John 16:7-14)

Now the Lord speaks of the work of the blessed Holy Spirit in our lives and hearts:

1. He will reprove the world of sin.
2. He will reprove the world of righteousness.
3. He will reprove the world of judgment.
4. He will guide us into all truth.
5. He will show us things to come.
6. He will glorify the Lord Jesus Christ.
7. He will reveal to us the things of Christ, giving us a clear revelation of the secrets of Christ.

### **The Ministry of Christ**

There are beautiful truths concerning the ministry of Christ that we should not gloss over. Because we have believed that Jesus came from God, the Father Himself loves us, and we will receive whatever we ask the Father in the name of Jesus. Moreover, Jesus will show us plainly of the Father.

Jesus also warns His disciples that they should not become offended when they are persecuted by the unbelieving world. Persecution is the normal consequence of being a Christian. To one degree or another, all of God's people will suffer for Him. That is our calling. Jesus suffered rejection; therefore, we too will suffer rejection for His name's sake. Then Jesus said in John 16:33, "*These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.*" Christ has overcome the world, and through Him, we can, too!

*The High Priestly Prayer*

(John 17)

In this prayer we find some of the most profound truths that have ever been uttered here upon earth. In the first instance, Jesus declares that the Father had given Him power over all flesh (Jn. 17:2). This flows with His declaration after His ascension that all power had been given to Him in heaven and upon earth (Mt. 28:18).

Then the Lord continues in John 17:2 to say that He will give eternal life to all those whom the Father has given Him. Thus it is the Father who has determined who will receive eternal life. Consequently, we should only do those things that please the Father, for it is He who determines whether or not we qualify for the land of hope and glory, the land of endless blessing and joy, which we call Heaven, the home of the redeemed.

Christ also emphasises that His sheep belong, in reality, to the Father. This same truth applies to ministers. The members of a church do not belong to the pastor, but to the Lord—they are His sheep. Then the Lord declares that He has finished the work that He was given to do upon earth. What a blessing it is to be able to say these same words at the end of our lives, even as Paul said just before his death: *“I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith”* (2 Tim. 4:7). It is also written of John the Baptist that he fulfilled his course (Acts 13:25). After we have finished a task, we

should always ask the Lord what other tasks He wants us to do.

One of the revelations that has had a profound impact upon my own life was when I died. I was shown that I was not only dying before the time, but that I had many things that I had not even started. Now toward the end of my life, the Lord constantly gives me new assignments, which amaze me and stretch me. I have to cry out to the Lord for the strength and wisdom to fulfil them.

The Lord said in His High Priestly prayer, *“I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine”* (Jn. 17:9). Jesus prayed for those whom the Father had given to Him, and none was lost except Judas. This brings again before us the awesome truth that one can be saved and then lose one’s salvation. Because He was leaving the world, Jesus asked His Father to keep His disciples from evil. Beloved, we are kept by the power of God, even as Peter states in 1 Peter 1:5. Therefore, it behoves us to remain in an attitude of communion and union with the Lord so that His everlasting arms will continually surround us. We also see another wonderful truth in this passage that is often overlooked. The Lord desires that His disciples see His glory. It is a facet of our nature that we want to share our joys with those whom we love—even as a child desires to show his father a good school report card. In the same way, the Lord wanted those who had been with Him during His time of humiliation to see the reward that was awaiting Him—the glory of His Father.

In a similar manner, if we fulfil God's will for us upon this earth, we will inherit glory in the life to come. Moreover, those whom we have ministered to upon earth will see us in glory. However, in the event that we do not fully follow the Lord, the Father in heaven will not exalt us. We should bear this truth in mind so that we might seek to excel here on earth. Obviously, the primary reason to excel is so that the Lord will be well pleased with us, but also we do not want others to be disappointed when they see us in our heavenly homes.

Then the Lord prays that His disciples might be perfected through His dwelling in them, with His Father dwelling in Him. This is the true perfection of unity; that the Godhead dwells in unfettered fullness in the saints.

### *The Garden of Gethsemane*

(Matthew 26:36-46, Luke 22:40-46, John 18:1)

Gethsemane, which means "the olive press," was a small walled garden where olive trees grew. It is situated on the west side of the Mount of Olives facing Jerusalem. It was a place that Jesus often resorted to, and for this reason, Judas would have had good reason to believe Jesus would be there when he brought the soldiers to betray Jesus. It is fitting that Jesus was betrayed in the Garden of Gethsemane (or the olive press) because He was the Anointed Messiah from whom the oil of the Holy Spirit would flow to all nations. It was in this garden that He came under tremendous pressure from the powers of darkness.



Jesus took Peter, James, and John with Him. Then He went to pray alone a short distance away from them. We read in Luke 22:41-44: *“And he was withdrawn from them about a stone’s cast, and kneeled down, and prayed, Saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done. And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him. And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.”* The Apostle Paul records this scene in Hebrews 12:3-4. He said that Christ endured such a terrible battle in His mind that He resisted unto blood, striving against sin. It was here that the sinless Son of God became sin by drinking of the cup, which contained the sins of the world.

Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 5:21, *“For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.”* We all know how much we hate to be contaminated with filth in any form. Whether it is mud or something worse that might splash upon our clothes or face when a car passes by, or eating anything that is filthy—we cannot stand even the sight of filth. We do not even like to drink from a cup that has not been washed.

Can you imagine then how the pure and sinless Son of God must have felt when His Father asked Him to partake of the sins of the world? Jesus could not have died for us and become our Saviour if He had not become sin for us. Therefore, in studying the life of Christ, we must never forget that Christ became sin and paid a tremendous price for us.

You will also notice that Jesus constantly spoke about the cross during His ministry, and never once did He pray to be delivered from that disgraceful and painful death. No, Jesus was not afraid of the cross! What He did not want to experience was becoming sin. His soul loathed and recoiled from sin. The Holy One of God thus abased Himself to become filled with all the filth of this sinful world. This was the agony that Jesus faced in the Garden, but He won the victory through prayer.

Jesus then lifted Himself from His position of prayer and came to the place where He had left His disciples, and found them sleeping. Gently chiding them for not having watched with Him during that crucial hour, Jesus returned to His place of prayer and said to His Father: *“O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done”* (Mt. 26:42).

Jesus returned again a second and third time and found His disciples sleeping. The third time Jesus said to His disciples: *“Sleep on now, and take your rest: behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us be going: behold, he is at hand that doth betray me”* (Mt. 26:45-46).

We should be understanding of the disciples and not criticise them. They were in the front line of battle with the Lord against all the forces of Satan. This was one of Satan’s last attempts to deflect Christ from the cross; therefore, all the might of hell’s forces were in the Garden to try to overthrow

the Lord. So great was this onslaught that an angel was sent to strengthen Jesus.

Those of you who pray know that one of the greatest struggles in prayer is overcoming wandering thoughts and falling asleep. The disciples succumbed to the heavy inducement to sleep that the enemy put upon them. Let this be an exhortation to us to be alert and not let our minds wander in prayer, but remain focused upon the Lord Jesus Christ.

### *The Betrayal*

(Mark 14:43-52, Matthew 26:47-56,  
Luke 22:47-53, John 18:2-12)

Before considering Judas' betrayal of Jesus, we first need to study the life of Judas as revealed in the Scriptures. In type, he can be understood throughout the Scriptures by such characters as Cain, Ishmael, Esau, Dan, Abimelech, Ahitophel, and Absalom—the wickedest of men. Psalm 109 is devoted to Judas, and we see in that psalm that Judas did not appreciate the anointing or the blessing of God, but loved cursing. Money was certainly his god, and for 30 pieces of silver he sold the Lord into the hands of His enemies. However, as we have already mentioned, Judas was a type of Lucifer who rebelled against the Father. Therefore, in order to know the fellowship of Christ's sufferings, we must experience betrayal and embrace it with a good attitude.

Judas knew that Jesus resorted quite often to the Garden of Gethsemane for evening prayer, and therefore anticipated

that He would also be there on this special Passover night. Judas arrived with a considerable number of soldiers—a testimony to Christ’s power and authority. By this act, the chief priests were acknowledging that Jesus possessed tremendous power.

Seeing them approach, Jesus went straight toward them without hesitation. There was no thought in His mind to try to save Himself, because He had come into this world in order to fulfil Scripture by being crucified on the cross of Calvary. Scripture had been written by holy men of old, moved by the Holy Spirit to reveal the will of God. In particular, they prophesied of the life and ministry of Jesus, the Son of God. You see, everything was done in order to fulfil Scripture. Therefore, when Peter used his sword to defend Jesus and cut off the ear of the High Priest’s servant, Jesus asked him how the Scriptures were going to be fulfilled if He was not taken prisoner.

Returning now to our narrative, we see that Judas had decided upon a sign with the soldiers beforehand. The one whom he kissed was the one they were to arrest. Judas walked up to Christ and kissed Him. Jesus said to him, “*Judas, betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?*” (Lk. 22:48). A kiss is supposed to be a sign of friendship and love, but Judas hypocritically used it to betray the Lord.

Judas did that for which he had been born. God forms us into either a vessel of mercy or wrath according to the disposition of our hearts. In Judas, the Father saw a man who was bent on evil—a willing vessel who would gladly betray the Lord.

As Jesus said before, it would have been better if Judas had never been born (Mt. 26:24).

I feel the same way about several people that I have known. They are extremely wicked, and they have an evil influence upon others, causing them to go astray as well. Certainly, it would have been best for them and mankind in general if their mothers had never given birth to them. Married couples should always pray before they have children to determine the Lord's will. It is not always God's will for a couple to have children. We should seek the Lord before we make this very important decision. Once a couple has a child, it is too late to change their minds. If it was not God's will, all they can do is pray that God will pour out His grace upon that child and transform him. As you study the life of Jacob, you will notice that each of his sons manifested a different characteristic of their father—some good and some bad. We need to realise that a child takes on the nature of his parents at the time of conception.

After Judas kissed Jesus, the Lord asked the crowd, "Whom seek ye?" (Jn. 18:4). They had come out with lights, no doubt thinking that Jesus would try to hide from them in the shadows. He must have amazed them with His boldness and commanding figure. They responded, "Jesus of Nazareth," and the Lord said, "I am" twice (*he* was not in the original Greek, but added by the King James translators). In other words, the Lord Jesus was saying, "I AM THAT I AM"—which was the revelation of the name of Jehovah that He had given to Moses at the burning bush (Ex. 3:14).

The wicked could not stand before that revelation of the Lord's name, and they fell to the ground. There must have been a tremendous release of the power of God when Jesus spoke. And then seemingly while they were on the ground, He again asked them whom they were seeking. Then He acknowledged that He was indeed the One whom they were seeking, and He commanded them to let His disciples go free. Jesus fulfilled His saying in John 17:12: *"Those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost."*

Then they laid hands upon Him. At that moment, tremendous courage came over Peter and he tried to rescue Jesus. Remember, there were about 1,000 armed soldiers there. Peter took his sword out of its sheath, and with a wild swing cut off the right ear of Malchus, the servant of the High Priest. He was the steward of the High Priest's house, and obviously a person of note and rank. After He had healed Malchus' ear, Jesus gently rebuked Peter and reminded him that he who lives by the sword will also die by the sword. The Lord said in Matthew 26:53-54: *"Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?"* Turning then to the multitudes, Jesus said, *"Are ye come out as against a thief with swords and staves for to take me? I sat daily with you teaching in the temple, and ye laid no hold on me"* (Mt. 26:55). Then all of His disciples fled from Him. Like a common criminal, the Lord of heaven was then led away bound by the Roman soldiers to the palace of Annas.

# Chapter 15

## *THE TRIALS OF JESUS*

There were six trials in all that the Lord had to face in a very short space of time:

### *The Jewish Trials*

1. Before Annas
2. Before Caiaphas
3. Before the Sanhedrin

### *The Roman Trials*

4. Before Pilate
5. Before Herod
6. The Second Time Before Pilate

### *The Trial Before Annas*

(John 18:12-14, 19-23)

We should pause here to consider the character of Annas. He was the former High Priest. Under Jewish law the office of the High Priest was for life. Therefore, although in reality Annas' son-in-law Caiaphas was the High Priest, the Jews still regarded Annas as the rightful ruler. The Romans had corrupted the office, which was bought for money and acquiescence to the Roman rulers.

Through his considerable wealth and conniving, Annas had held the post for seven years. Then five of his sons held the office, and then his son-in-law Caiaphas. The Talmud says of this evil man: "Woe to the house of Annas! Woe to the serpent's hiss! They are High Priests; their sons are keepers of the treasury; their sons-in-law are guardians of the Temple; and their servants beat the people with staves."

Annas was the real power, and had Jesus brought to him. The reason is that Jesus had threatened the vested interests of Annas, who exploited the sale of the Temple sacrifices by demanding that all worshippers buy animals at exorbitant prices in the stalls that he and his family owned in the Temple Court. Thus if we may say so, the chief judge and the most influential man in the religious hierarchy of Jesus' day had already condemned Him before the trial.

Peter and John followed Jesus into the palace. Because he was known to the High Priest, John was allowed to enter into the court of the palace. John, in turn, enabled Peter to be admitted. We must note here the courage, begotten of love, that these two disciples manifested.

Standing by the fire, which had been made because the night was cold, Peter was challenged by a damsel. He gave the first of his three denials that he was a disciple of Jesus. Annas then interrogated Jesus concerning His disciples and doctrine. Jesus, however, replied that He had taught openly in the synagogue and in the Temple and that the High Priest should ask those who had heard Him. The reason for this is



that under Jewish law a man could not incriminate himself. Therefore, the High Priest was wrong to question Jesus in this manner. Notwithstanding, one of the officers struck Jesus for answering the High Priest like He did. Jesus responded, *“If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil: but if well, why smitest thou me?”* (Jn. 18:23). After that comment, Annas sent Jesus bound to Caiaphas, who was the actual High Priest that year. This was the man who had openly plotted how the chief priests could kill Jesus. There was therefore no possibility of justice in these proceedings.

### ***The Trial Before Caiaphas***

(Mark 14:53, 55-65, Matthew 26:57, 59-68,  
Luke 22:54, 63-65, John 18:24)

Now at the house of the High Priest, Caiaphas, the chief priests and elders had gathered to petition Caiaphas to put Jesus to death. But the witnesses did not agree with each other, and gave contradictory statements. We see here that there was no question of an unbiased trial, for the very judges who should have been impartial were in actuality Jesus' accusers.

Frustrated, the High Priest arose and asked Jesus directly if He was the Son of God. The Lord Jesus Christ replied, *“Thou hast said: nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven”* (Mt. 26:64). Outraged by Jesus' comments, the High Priest rent his garments and said, *“He hath spoken blasphemy; what further need have we of witnesses? behold, now ye have heard his blasphemy”*

(Mt. 26:65). To those gathered around, he then put forth the question: *“What think ye?”* and they responded, *“He is guilty of death”* (Mt. 26:66). Then those who held Jesus mocked Him and struck Him with the palms of their hands, saying, *“Prophesy unto us, thou Christ, Who is he that smote thee?”* (Mt. 26:68).

### **Peter’s Three Denials**

The Gospels do not flow in chronological order with respect to Peter’s three denials. It is possible that all three denials took place in the house of Caiaphas, while it also seems possible from the Gospel of John that the first denial took place in the palace of Annas and the other two in Caiaphas’ palace. It is not critical to the narrative either way. However, the record is clear that the cock crew after Peter’s first denial and again the second time after his third denial.

The female doorkeeper first challenged Peter, and he vehemently denied that he was one of Jesus’ followers. Then another woman questioned him on the porch, and Peter again denied the Lord. About an hour later, one of the High Priest’s servants, who happened to be a relative of Malchus, the one whose ear Peter cut off, said to Peter, *“Did not I see thee in the garden with him?”* (Jn. 18:26). Peter denied the Lord again, and the cock crew again the second time. At that very moment, Jesus turned and looked at Peter, and Peter remembered the Lord’s words to him: *“Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice”* (Lk. 22:61). Peter rushed out of the palace and wept bitterly.

It is amazing and significant as well that John, the beloved disciple, was not challenged at the trial of Jesus as Peter was. The reason is that John did not challenge the Lord when He said that all of the disciples would forsake Him. Peter, on the other hand, said that he would never forsake the Lord, and in so doing, he set himself up for a big failure.

Several years ago when I was due to speak on the cross at a certain church, I did not sleep at all the whole night before the service. It was a terrible night! Although I was in a very nice hotel room and had a very comfortable bed, I did not sleep one bit. I felt completely drained the next day. I asked the Lord why this happened, and His response was that He did not sleep either before He went to the cross. In addition to that, the Lord was bound up like a criminal and was kept far from the fire that warmed the soldiers on that cold night. Therefore, Jesus was considerably weakened physically, prior to the main trials before the Sanhedrin and Pontius Pilate.

### ***The Trial Before the Sanhedrin***

(Matthew 27:1, Mark 15:1, Luke 22:66-71)

The next morning the chief priests, elders, and the whole council (the Sanhedrin), which was responsible for justice in the country, consulted together about how they could put Jesus to death. The Sanhedrin, composed of 70 members, had lost the right of the death sentence because of Roman rule. For this reason, they would have to persuade the secular authorities to carry out their fiendish plan of crucifying the

Lord Jesus. In order to obtain a guilty verdict, the Jews had to prove that Jesus had committed blasphemy. Therefore, they again asked Him if He was the Messiah. Jesus replied: *“If I tell you, ye will not believe: And if I also ask you, ye will not answer me, nor let me go. Hereafter shall the Son of man sit on the right hand of the power of God”* (Lk. 22:67-69).

Jesus confirmed that He was the promised Messiah, spoken of in Daniel 7:13: *“I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him.”* The Jews responded in Luke 22:71, *“What need we any further witness? for we ourselves have heard of his own mouth.”* They condemned the Lord Jesus Christ for the sin of blasphemy—for declaring that He was who He was. However, the Jewish leaders knew that a mere charge of blasphemy would not influence a pagan authority like Pontius Pilate. Their strategy was to try to convince the secular authorities that they had a case for capital punishment.

### ***The Suicide of Judas Iscariot***

(Matthew 27:3-10)

Upon learning that Jesus had been condemned, Judas was filled with remorse and brought back the 30 pieces of silver to the chief priests and soldiers, saying, *“I have sinned in that I have betrayed innocent blood.”* They refused to take the money back because it was the price paid for blood, but Judas threw the pieces of silver down at the treasury. The chief priests used Judas’ returned money to buy a

potter's field, which was known thereafter as Aceldama, the field of blood. All this happened to fulfil the prophecy in Zechariah 11:12-13: "*And I said unto them, If ye think good, give me my price; and if not, forbear. So they weighed for my price thirty pieces of silver. And the LORD said unto me, Cast it unto the potter: a goodly price that I was prised at of them. And I took the thirty pieces of silver, and cast them to the potter in the house of the LORD.*"

After Judas cast the silver down in the temple, realising that he had condemned himself, he went out and hung himself. Therefore, even before Jesus' crucifixion, Judas the betrayer got what he deserved. As we often see in Scripture, the righteous are permitted to see the Lord's judgment upon their enemies in the land of the living (cf. Ps. 52:5-6). Let this be an encouragement to us to live godly lives in this present world.

### ***The First Trial Before Pilate***

(Mark 15:1-5, Matthew 27:2, 11-14,  
Luke 23:1-5, John 18:28-38)

The chief priests and elders then bound Jesus and led Him from Caiaphas' palace to the palace of Pontius Pilate. Tradition states that this was the Tower of Antonia. It was Pilate's residence in Jerusalem; while his permanent residence was in Caesarea on the Mediterranean coast.

The Jews did not enter into Pilate's palace because they did not want to defile themselves by the pagan court so that they

would be “ceremonially” clean for the Passover. It is a sad indictment that a religious spirit can blind spiritual leaders into believing that outward ordinances are more important than justice. We see how the Lord Himself warned them in Matthew 23:23: *“Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithes of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.”*

Can you picture this scene! The Jewish religious leaders have wrongfully arrested the Lord Jesus Christ, the Creator of the universe, and accused Him of blasphemy. Also, they have brought Him to the court of the Roman ruler, seeking to have Him crucified. Yet they themselves will not enter into the Gentile court because it would make them defiled. This would have meant that, according to their tradition, they would have been unclean for seven days and thus disqualified from the Passover meal. They did not mind that they were trying to kill an innocent man, who was the Son of God, but they did not want to be ceremonially unclean. What hypocrites!

The Romans were very conscious of the troublesome Jews, and they tried very hard not to offend their sensibilities. For this reason, Pilate went out to them. In the manner of any judge, Pilate asked, *“What accusation bring ye against this man?”* (Jn. 18:29) The Jewish leaders replied, *“If he were not a malefactor, we would not have delivered him up unto thee”* (Jn. 18:30). Their response showed their confusion.

The Jews assumed that because the Romans had aided in the apprehension of Jesus, there would have been an automatic death sentence granted. So they began to hurl all kinds of accusations at Him. They accused Christ, saying, *“We found this fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Caesar, saying that he himself is Christ a King”* (Lk. 23:2).

None of these charges really merited the attention of Pilate, since they were basically religious in nature. Therefore, Pilate responded by telling them that they should judge Him according to their law. This was in accordance with Roman tradition, as we see in the case of Paul in Acts 18:12-15: *“And when Gallio was the deputy of Achaia, the Jews made insurrection with one accord against Paul, and brought him to the judgment seat, Saying, This fellow persuadeth men to worship God contrary to the law. And when Paul was now about to open his mouth, Gallio said unto the Jews, If it were a matter of wrong or wicked lewdness, O ye Jews, reason would that I should bear with you: But if it be a question of words and names, and of your law, look ye to it; for I will be no judge of such matters.”*

In the course of their accusations against Jesus, the Jews stated that He was from Galilee, which was the province governed by Herod Antipas the Tetrarch (Lk. 23:6-7). Knowing the king was also in Jerusalem at the time of the Feast of Passover, Pilate sent Jesus to Herod, seeking a way out of his dilemma. Thus the second of the Roman trials was underway.

*The Trial Before Herod*

(Luke 23:8-12)

This was in reality the fourth trial within hours of each other. The Lord's stamina through all of this was phenomenal. And let us never forget that it was within His power to overthrow His enemies with a single word. However, in perfect submission to the will of His Father, Jesus submitted Himself to all the indignities to which mortal man could subject Him.

Although the apparent reason for the trial by Herod was to help Pilate, in reality everything in the life of Jesus was being orchestrated by a wise and loving Heavenly Father. Herod represented the secular power of the Jews. Thus Jesus was being tried by the religious leaders of the Jews, their secular representative, and Pilate who represented the Roman Empire.

Having heard so much about Jesus and His miraculous power, Herod was delighted to see Jesus at first, hoping to see Him perform a miracle. However, the excitement faded as Jesus remained completely silent as Herod questioned Him. Jesus was truly the One who fulfilled Isaiah 53:7, which says, "*He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.*" Jesus was the epitome of self-control and true nobility. He manifested the qualities of a perfect man—He did not offend in word (Jas. 3:2). Peter



said of Him, “*Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously*” (1 Pet. 2:23). Realising the futility of questioning Jesus, because He would not answer Him, Herod and his soldiers mocked Jesus, as the chief priests continued to vehemently accuse Him. Arraying the Lord Jesus in royal apparel, Herod sent Him back to Pilate without a formal indictment for the things He was accused of by the chief priests.

Herod had bitterly resented Pilate because Pilate had killed innocent Jews in a revolt in the territory of Herod, but now because of Pilate’s deference to Herod in this matter, the one-time-enemies became friends. It is a terrible testimony that evildoers can reconcile over a crime against someone else. In a small way, I know how Jesus must have felt. Many years ago when I was the pastor of a certain church, there were two elders who were bitter enemies. However, when they both rose up against me they became friends. Their newfound friendship was founded upon their mutual hatred for their pastor—me.

### ***The Second Trial Before Pilate***

(Mark 15:6-15, Matthew 27:15-26,  
Luke 23:13-25, John 18:39 - 19:16)

Jesus was brought before Pilate again the second time. Pilate gathered the chief priests, rulers, and a multitude of people. He declared. “*...I, having examined him before you, have found no fault in this man touching those things whereof ye*

*accuse him: No, nor yet Herod...*” (Lk. 23:14-15). In view of this, he then should have immediately released Jesus. Instead, he proposed to scourge Jesus before releasing Him. This was actually contrary to the law, because Pilate had declared Him innocent. He obviously wanted to release Jesus, but thought that scourging Him would satisfy the people.

Pilate continued by citing the custom that the governor release one prisoner at the time of the Feast of Passover every year. He then offered them the choice of Jesus or Barabbas (who was a murderer and had incited an insurrection in the city). This act symbolised the ceremony that was celebrated on the Day of Atonement when two goats were presented before the High Priest. Lots were cast and the one chosen was slaughtered while the other goat had the sins of the people of Israel confessed over it. This goat was then taken into the wilderness and released. Thus Christ the Innocent One was killed, while Barabbas, the acknowledged criminal, was released at the insistence of the Jews.

Pilate’s own wife had warned him that he should have nothing to do with Jesus, whom she called “a righteous man.” She had suffered many things in a dream because of Him. It is remarkable that the Father granted this visitation to the wife of the judge. Yet still Pilate vacillated, inquiring of the multitude what he should do with Jesus. This was an untenable situation, for the judge placed himself in the hands of Jesus’ accusers. He was the one who should have decided whether Jesus was guilty or innocent and pronounced an appropriate sentence.

Let us pause here to consider three very important aspects of this event:

1. The character and life of Pilate
2. The act of scourging
3. The attitude and demeanour of Jesus

### **The Character and Life of Pilate**

Because some dear saints tend to feel compassion for Pilate, at this point we offer a brief account of his life. The Jewish Hellenistic writer Philo, who died in A.D. 50, described Pilate as a man of unyielding character, but nevertheless corruptible. Pilate was notorious for his cruelty and unbearable coarseness. He often ill-treated and executed people without a preceding judicial sentence. He was an arbitrary tyrant and did not respect anyone's feelings except when his own interests were imperilled.

Josephus, another famous historian, described the commencement of Pilate's governorship. Pilate ordered his Roman soldiers to march into Jerusalem with their military standards, which were regarded by the Jews as idolatrous and as such were not permitted in the city. When the Jews made a violent protest, Pilate threatened to have them murdered on a large scale, but the Jews still remained adamant. Then Pilate was forced to back down because he feared sanguinary insurrection, which would have brought him into disfavour with Caesar. In so doing, he showed the Jews that they could force his hand. They reported this act to Caesar, and Caesar reprimanded him.

The Father, who orchestrates all things in heaven and earth according to His infinite wisdom, had placed a wicked and corrupt man in the governorship at this time for a very specific reason—to condemn Jesus to be crucified. This was all in the plan and purpose of God, so that Jesus might become the Saviour of the world.

### **The Act of Scourging**

Scourging was such a cruel and painful act that no Roman citizen could be scourged, no matter what his crime was. The criminal was stripped of his clothing, and then his bare back was beaten with a whip which had several thongs with small pieces of bone or metal imbedded into them. Descriptions of scourging indicate that the back was flayed to such an extent that the arteries were laid bare. Only 39 stripes could be administered.

One dear minister, recounting a vision that he had of this event, stated that Jesus was first tied by His wrists to a pole in such a way that He could barely touch the ground with His toes. Then a fearsome Roman soldier wielded the whip with hateful fury and anger, delighting in the pain that he was inflicting upon the Saviour. Then with devilish pleasure, he dragged the whip through the dust after each stroke. The pain was so intense that the Lord's body literally curled up after each stroke of the whip.

This punishment was inflicted upon every malefactor before crucifixion, but in the case of Jesus, Pilate's intent was to save

Him from crucifixion. The scourging of Jesus was ordained in the wisdom of God to fulfil Scripture. Psalm 129:3 speaks prophetically of Jesus' scourging: "*The plowers plowed upon my back: they made long their furrows.*" It was by these stripes inflicted upon our Saviour that we are healed (Isa. 53:5).

### **The Attitude and Demeanour of Jesus**

In this book I have sought to portray some of the spiritual truths that were manifested in the life of Christ upon earth. We should ask the blessed Holy Spirit to reproduce these truths in our own lives. None is more important than the attitude of the Lord during the three-and-a-half years of His ministry. There was always a sense of mission that enveloped His very being.

Scripture describes it as the zeal of the Lord of hosts. Jesus' life was one of absolute surrender to the will of His Heavenly Father. After taking the cup filled with the sins of the world at Gethsemane, Jesus' face was set as a flint to go to the cross. Naturally, He would not respond to the religious leaders, Herod, or to Pilate except to acknowledge His deity and kingship. To defend Himself would have given Satan the opportunity to deflect Him from the cross. Jesus committed His defence to God, as Isaiah 49:4 says, "*...Yet surely my judgment is with the LORD, and my work with my God.*"

Because it was the Father's will for Him to go to the cross, the Lord's trials had to be corrupt and unfair. However, both

Herod and Pilate declared that Jesus was innocent, but they succumbed to the pressure of the Jewish religious leaders. In all of these unfair trials, the demeanour and attitude of the Lord Jesus was perfect. Let us seek to be like Him!

### ***The Soldiers' Mockery of Jesus***

(Mark 15:16-19, Matthew 27:27-30)

Not only was Jesus scourged and beaten, but He had to endure the mockery of Pilate's soldiers. They placed a crown of thorns upon His head. We must pause here to consider the torment of this indignity. These thorns would have pierced His head. In addition to the mental anguish Jesus felt at Gethsemane, where He sweated great drops of blood, He now suffered physical torment as the thorns pierced His scalp.

Then the soldiers put upon Christ a purple garment (indicative of royalty) bowed before Him, and saluted Him with a salutation reserved for royalty: "Hail, King of the Jews!" This was similar to the greeting that was accorded to the Roman Emperor: "Hail Caesar." Not content with this mockery, the soldiers smote Jesus with the palms of their hands.

Then they smote Him upon the head with a reed, which they had given Him to hold, presumably as a symbol of royal authority. The Lord must have been reeling from the throbbing pain of His head through the blows as well as the thorns that had penetrated His scalp. In addition to all this, His back was still bleeding. No normal man could have endured such pain and agony. This fulfilled the prophecy of

Isaiah 50:6: *“I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting.”* Isaiah 52:14 was also fulfilled, which says, *“His visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men.”* I once had a vision of the Lord’s face during His trial. The skin was ripped off His face. It was an awful sight! But that is the price He paid for you and me.

In this state, Pilate brought Jesus out before the people wearing the crown of thorns and a purple robe, and declared to the crowd, *“Behold, I bring him forth to you, that ye may know that I find no fault in him”* (Jn. 19:4). Then Pilate said in John 19:5, *“Behold the man!”* This itself was a fulfilment of Zechariah 6:12: *“Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, saying, Behold the man whose name is The BRANCH; and he shall grow up out of his place, and he shall build the temple of the LORD.”* The One whom they had so grossly mistreated was the Chief Cornerstone of the Temple, the Lord Jesus (Eph. 2:20).

Pilate presented Jesus to the people in this manner, hoping to evoke their sympathy, and thus be able to release the Lord Jesus. However, when the chief priests saw Jesus, they cried out, *“Crucify Him! Crucify Him!”* Pilate asked, *“What evil hath he done?”* They replied, *“We have a law, and by our law He ought to die, because He made himself the Son of God.”* This made Pilate even more afraid. Then Pilate returned into the palace and interrogated Jesus again, but Jesus did not answer Him one word. Pilate said to Him, *“Speakest thou not unto me? knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee,*

*and have power to release thee?” (Jn. 19:10). Jesus replied, “Thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above: therefore he that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin” (Jn. 19:11).*

Pilate then sought to release Jesus, but the manipulative Jews (who had forced Pilate’s hand on other occasions) said to him, *“If thou let this man go, thou art not Caesar’s friend: whosoever maketh himself a king speaketh against Caesar”* (Jn. 19:12). Because they had complained to Caesar before about his wrong doings, Pilate was afraid that he could lose his position if they complained to Caesar again.

Then Pilate brought Jesus out before the people and said, *“Behold your King!”* The Jews responded: *“Away with him, away with him, crucify him...we have no king but Caesar”* (Jn. 19:15). Pilate then washed his hands before all the people and said, *“I am innocent of the blood of this just person: see ye to it”* (Mt. 27:24). However, this act did not absolve Pilate in the eyes of God, because he should have released Jesus after he declared that He was innocent.

The people replied in Matthew 27:25, *“His blood be on us, and on our children.”* Therefore, the blood of Christ rests upon the children of Israel. They have been rejected by God since this time, and will not be restored until the Lord returns again and opens up a fountain for the cleansing of Israel (Zech. 13:1).



# Chapter 16

## *HIS CRUCIFIXION*

### *On the Way to the Cross (Via Dolorosa)*

(Mark 15:20-23, Matthew 27:31-34,  
Luke 23:26-33, John 19:16-17)

After Pilate pronounced the sentence of crucifixion, the soldiers stripped Jesus of the royal attire and His own garments that were on Him. The law required that the condemned had to carry his own cross.

The crucifix has been portrayed in very picturesque ways: in ornate silver or highly polished wood, but in reality the old hymn comes much closer to the truth when it speaks of the *old rugged cross*. The cross was extremely heavy and very hard to carry. History suggests that the accused only had to carry the cross bar because the stake was already at the place of execution. This would have been too much for Jesus to bear after everything He had suffered. The route taken was not the shortest. It wound around many little streets and alleys to serve as a warning to others.

Jesus carried His own cross as a type of our own call, which is to take up our cross daily and follow Him. Our cross may not necessarily be a crucifix, but is whatever burden or difficulty our Heavenly Father has ordained for us to endure. The crime

for which Jesus was crucified was written over His cross in three languages: Hebrew, Greek, and Latin. The reason for three languages is that Hebrew was the language of the Jews, Greek was the lingua franca (or common language of the day), and Latin was the language of the Roman Empire. (These three languages also represented the three capitals of the day: Jerusalem, Athens, and Rome.)

The sign over Jesus' cross read: JESUS OF NAZARETH THE KING OF THE JEWS. Jesus will be recognised by this title by the whole world when He returns. This infuriated the chief priests. They wanted it changed to say, "He said, 'I am the King of the Jews.'" But Pilate refused to change it. To Pilate, this was a means of revenge against the Jewish leaders who had pressured him into crucifying Jesus. Pilate knew that the chief priests wanted to kill Jesus because they were envious of Him.

As they came out of the city, the soldiers perceived that Jesus was considerably weakened by the brutality of His tormentors. They found a man, Simon of Cyrene, the capital city of Tripoli in North Africa, and compelled him to carry Jesus' cross. A tap on the shoulder from the spear of a Roman soldier was all that was required to impress a person into service. Soldiers were permitted to obligate people to carry their things for one mile, hence the teaching of "the second mile" (Mt. 5:41).

Thus we see that Golgotha was relatively close to the city walls. Simon followed Jesus and carried His cross. We are

told that Simon was the father of Alexander and Rufus, who must have been well known to the Early Church.

Alexander appears to have been a companion of Paul in Ephesus (Acts 19:33). Rufus is mentioned by Paul as being chosen in the Lord (Rom. 16:13). A great multitude of people followed Jesus, as well as several women who wept and made loud lamentations for Him. Jesus turned around and said to them, *“Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children. For, behold, the days are coming, in the which they shall say, Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the paps which never gave suck. Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us; and to the hills, Cover us. For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?”* (Lk. 23:28-31).

Jesus told these women to weep for themselves because of the terrible judgments that were going to come upon Jerusalem for crucifying their Saviour. Jesus used the analogy of a green and dry tree, inferring that if the Romans had been so cruel to the Innocent One, they would be even crueller to those who really were guilty. Anyone who has studied the Jewish-Roman wars knows how terribly the Jews suffered at the hands of the Romans in A.D. 70. Of the 600,000 who were in Jerusalem when Titus besieged the city, about 4,000 young men were crucified, in addition to those who died in battle. Jesus warned the Jews that many women would become childless by virtue of the slaughter of their men.

Then looking beyond the siege of A.D. 70, Jesus quoted Scripture that refers to the end times, when the wrath of God is poured out upon the earth prior to the Second Coming. The wicked will cry out to the mountains and rocks to fall upon them (cf. Rev. 6:16).

### ***On the Cross***

(Mark 15:24-37, Matthew 27:35-50,  
Luke 23:33-46, John 19:18-30)

Jesus was crucified between two criminals. This, too, fulfilled Scripture. Isaiah 53:9 says, “*And he made his grave with the wicked...*” and Isaiah 53:12 reads, “*And he was numbered with the transgressors.*” In Psalm 22, King David received an awesome revelation of the cross of Jesus. Under the anointing of the Holy Spirit, David graphically portrays not only the physical suffering of our Lord, but also the anguish of His soul and spirit.

David described those who surrounded Christ as “bulls of Bashan” (Ps. 22:12). These bulls were raised on the fertile hills of West Gilead, on the other side of Jordan, and were noted for being well fed. This was an apt description of the chief priests, who, with bulging eyes and well-filled stomachs, dined upon the fat of the land. While looking at Jesus hanging upon the cross, the priests wanted to tear Jesus into pieces as a ravenous lion devours his prey (Ps. 22:13). Then David described them as “dogs,” which pierced Christ’s hands and feet (Ps. 22:16).

The soldiers, rulers, and people mocked Jesus the whole time He was upon the cross. With coarse and brutish language, the

Roman Guard mocked the Lord as they divided His garments among themselves and cast lots for His seamless robe (Ps. 22:18). The chief priests railed at Jesus. Wagging their heads they said, “He saved others, but He could not save Himself.” Then they said to Him that if He came down from the cross they would believe Him, quoting Psalm 22:8, “*He trusted on the LORD that he would deliver him: let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him.*”

### **The Seven Sayings of Jesus on the Cross**

The last words of a dying person are usually very important. This was especially true in the case of the Lord Jesus. As He hung upon the cross, the Lord uttered seven last sayings, which are either direct or indirect quotations from the Old Testament. Let us now consider these seven sayings.

***1. “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.”***

Luke 23:34

From the Lord’s heart, which had been broken by reproach (Ps. 69:20), flowed love, mercy, and forgiveness to His tormentors. Jesus had come to show the love of God to a lost and dying world, and He manifested love until the very end. He did not come to condemn the world, but to save it. Therefore, He pleaded with His Father to forgive them. Then He said that they did not know what they were doing.

The Apostle Paul confirms this in 1 Corinthians 2:8, “*Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known*

*it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.”* In His infinite wisdom, the Father blinded the minds of the people and the rulers so that they would crucify Jesus, for unless they had crucified Him, the world would not have had a Saviour.

**2. *“Today shalt thou be with me in paradise.”***

Luke 23:43

At first, both of the criminals who were crucified with Jesus cursed Him. The one malefactor said, *“If thou be Christ, save thyself and us”* (Lk. 23:39). The other criminal had a change of heart and believed in the Lord. He was obviously touched by the inner beauty of Jesus. He rebuked the other criminal for mocking the Lord and said to Jesus, *“Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom”* (Lk. 23:42). Jesus said to him, *“Today shalt thou be with me in paradise.”* Even in His agony on the cross, the Lord won a soul.

**3. *“Woman, behold thy son!...Behold thy mother!”***

John 19:26-27

Jesus was not totally abandoned by those who loved Him. At the cross there were several women who had followed Him during His ministry. Four of them are mentioned by name:

1. Mary, His mother
2. Mary’s sister, Salome, the wife of Zebedee and mother of James and John (Mk. 15:40)
3. Mary, the wife of Cleophas (or Alphaeus), the mother of James the less and Joses (Jn. 19:25, Mt. 27:56)
4. Mary Magdalene

Looking down at His mother, Mary, and John the beloved, Jesus said to His mother, “Woman, behold thy son!” And to John He said, “Behold thy mother!” Jesus told Mary that John would be her son and told John that Mary would be his mother. Thus, even on the cross the Lord made provision for the welfare of His mother, for this was His duty as the eldest son. Jesus was also keeping the fifth commandment, to honour and care for His parents, in this case His mother.

It was about noon when this took place; and the light of the sun failed; and there was darkness over the whole land for three hours, until three o’clock. During this time the most sustained attack by the forces of darkness took place. Satan threw into the battle all of his most fearsome weapons: doubts, fears, and dreadful torments. This time of darkness can be likened to the darkness that fell over the land of Egypt during the ninth plague and the darkness that is associated with the fifth vial of judgment in Revelation 16:10. Our Lord endured the “horror of great darkness” even as did Abraham (Gen. 15:12). Having experienced this myself, I can assure you that it is the feeling of utter helplessness while God is working in us. While this darkness covered the earth, God was completing His work of redemption for mankind. The details are veiled from the eyes and understanding of mortal man.

***4. “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?”***

Mark 15:34, Matthew 27:46

After those terrible hours of darkness, the Father turned His face away from looking upon the Son, because He had

become sin. A holy God could not look upon sin. This was necessary in order to complete the work of redemption. Jesus cried out, “Eli, Eli, lamasa-bach-thani?” which means, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” This is a direct quotation from Psalm 22:1.

The Lord’s anguish was now heightened because He was now all alone. In order to comprehend the depths of the agony of this loneliness, there is a price we must pay. It is experienced when one’s spouse or a loved one passes from this world. You sense the loneliness of being bereft of that companionship that you have cherished for so many years. For Christ, losing (although momentarily) the presence of the Father was the worst thing He could experience. You can lose a loved one, but you still have the Trinity to comfort you; Jesus was forsaken by His Heavenly Father. In agony, Jesus cried out with a loud voice of sorrow that came from the very depths of His being.

### **5. “*I Thirst.*”**

John 19:28

The sufferings of the crucified are so intense that they extend virtually to every part of the body. The loss of blood deprives all the organs of the life-giving oxygen they desperately need. Loss of blood produces excruciating cramps in the legs and body muscles. And the tongue also cleaves to the roof of one’s mouth many times (cf. Ps. 22:15). We read in John 19:28, “*After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the scripture might be fulfilled,*



*saith, I thirst.*” Then a soldier filled a sponge with vinegar from a nearby vessel, put it on hyssop, and put it to Jesus’ mouth. This fulfilled Psalm 69:21, which says, *“They gave me also gall for my meat; and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.”* Hyssop was used in the sprinkling of the blood of the sacrifices in the Feast of Passover (Ex. 12:22). Jesus accepted the vinegar to moisten His tongue and lips so that He could utter the victor’s triumphant cry.

**6. *“It is finished.”***

John 19:30

After He received the vinegar, Jesus said, *“It is finished.”* We must realise that it was for this moment that Jesus had lived—to finish the work that His Father had ordained for Him from before the foundation of the world. Therefore, this was no sigh or whisper of resignation, but a loud cry which resounds throughout all ages and for all eternity. The mightiest of all warriors had triumphed over the world, the flesh, and the devil. Philippians 2:9-10 says, *“Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth.”* Praise His most wonderful name!

**7. *“Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.”***

Luke 23:46

Then, in an act of holy submission, Jesus’ final words were directed to His Heavenly Father: *“Father, into thy hands*

*I commend my spirit.*” Jesus surrendered His Spirit to the Father. Irrespective of what man has said against Him, it is the Father who will be the ultimate judge of His life (cf. Isa. 49:4).

By His resurrection, we know that the Lord Jesus obtained full approval of the Father of Glory. Here we see a preview of what will take place again at the end of the millennial reign of Christ upon earth. The Lord will deliver the kingdoms of this world up unto His Father. The Lord then bowed His head and gave up the ghost.

### ***The Events at His Death***

(Mark 15:38-41, Matthew 27:51-56, Luke 23:45, 47-49)

At His death, the veil of the Temple was rent in twain from top to bottom. This phenomenon is very important to understand. This veil separated the Holy of Holies from the Holy Place in the Temple. Originally, in the Tabernacle of Moses there were the three parts: the Outer Court, the Holy Place, and the Holy of Holies, into which only the High Priest could enter once a year on the Day of Atonement. Within the veil there was the Ark of the Covenant, and inside it were the two tables of stones upon which were engraved the Ten Commandments. The Mercy Seat covered the Ark.

In his epistle to the Hebrews, the Apostle Paul makes it abundantly clear that the death of Jesus brought in a better hope—namely, a new and living way into the Holy of Holies (Heb. 10:19-20). In the Old Testament era, it was impossible

for sinful man to enter into the literal presence of God in the Holy of Holies. The blood of bulls and goats could not cleanse man of his sin or purge his conscience. However, the blood of Christ which was shed for us has opened the way into the presence of God. God now sees us through the blood of Christ, washed by the blood of His dear Son.

There was a great earthquake when Jesus died. The centurion responsible for the soldiers at the crucifixion cried out, *“Truly this was the Son of God”* (Mt. 27:54). The multitude that had followed Jesus to Calvary began to beat their chests and weep (Lk. 23:48). Because it was the day of the preparation of the Passover, the Jews asked Pilate if he could have the legs of the crucified broken so that their bodies could be removed.

The soldiers broke the legs of the two malefactors, but when they came to Jesus, they found that He was already dead. Therefore, they did not break His bones. This was to fulfil Scripture too. Psalm 34:20 says, *“He keepeth all his bones: not one of them is broken.”* He was the Lamb of God, and only disobedient lambs have their bones broken by the shepherd.

One of the soldiers took his spear and pierced the side of Jesus, and blood and water came out. This was to fulfil Zechariah 12:10, which says that they will look upon Him whom they pierced. This also substantiates the fact that Jesus died of a broken heart, even as it is written in Psalm 69:20: *“Reproach hath broken my heart.”* Many of God’s choicest saints have likewise died of broken hearts because of partaking in the fellowship of His sufferings.

***The Burial of Jesus***

(Mark 15:42-46, Matthew 27:57-60,  
Luke 23:50-54, John 19:31-42)

Joseph of Arimathaea, who was a honourable and righteous man (as well as being a secret disciple of Jesus), asked Pilate for permission to take Jesus' body and bury it. This in itself was an act of great courage, since it openly aligned him with Jesus in the eyes of the Jews. Pilate marvelled that Jesus was already dead. He called the centurion to confirm it. Then he gave Joseph permission to take Jesus' body.

This was exceptional, because the crucified were often denied a burial because of their crimes. Nicodemus, who had come to Jesus by night (Jn. 3:1-2), brought a 100-pound mixture of myrrh and aloes, and helped Joseph bury Jesus. They embalmed Jesus' body with the spices and wrapped it in clean linen. Joseph buried Jesus in his own new tomb, which had never been used before (Mt. 27:60). This fulfilled Isaiah 53:9, which says, "*And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death...*"

We can see several spiritual truths in Jesus' burial. The amount of precious ointment was of a quantity befitting the embalming of a king, and Jesus was indeed a king, the King of the Jews. Myrrh represents meekness, which is the nature of a lamb. Jesus was the meek Lamb of God (Isa. 53:7). Aloes speaks of temperance (or self-control). What majestic self-control Jesus manifested before His accusers at the trials and also upon the cross. The linen cloth speaks of righteousness

(Rev. 19:8), and Jesus was the Righteous One. He surely is worthy to be praised!

Jesus was laid in the garden tomb of Joseph. This represents Jesus as the garden of the Father, filled with all the beautiful fruits of the Spirit. They laid Jesus inside the tomb, rolled a great stone in front of the opening, and then departed.

### ***The Watch by Jesus' Tomb***

(Mark 15:47, Matthew 27:61-66, Luke 23:55-56)

The women who followed observed where Jesus was buried. The day after the preparation of the Passover, the chief priests asked Pilate if they could send a guard to Jesus' tomb to ensure that His body was not removed by His disciples (Mt. 27:62-66). They remembered that Jesus had said that He would rise again after three days. Pilate granted their request and permitted them to seal the tomb and set a guard of Roman soldiers near the tomb.

### **The Lord's Whereabouts During the Three Days and Three Nights**

The Gospels do not reveal the Lord's whereabouts during the time that His body was in the grave. The Apostle Peter, however, gives us insight about where He was. *"For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit: By which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison; Which sometime were disobedient,*

*when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water” (1 Pet. 3:18-20).*

Peter makes it very clear that Jesus descended into the bowels of the earth during this time and preached to a certain group of people in hell from Noah’s time. There was evidently a company of people who had believed the messages of Noah, but because they were not totally committed and obedient, they did not qualify to enter into the ark and be preserved from the flood. However, we must differentiate between these people and those who were wicked and immoral, as was the majority of the population at the time of the Flood.

**PART V**

**CHRIST'S  
RESURRECTION**





# Chapter 17

## *HIS RESURRECTION*

### *The Visit of the Women to Jesus' Tomb*

(Mark 16:1-8, Matthew 28:1-8, Luke 24:1-8, John 20:1)

Before sunrise on that Sunday morn, the first day of the week, there was a mighty earthquake, and an angel descended from heaven, rolling away the stone that covered Jesus' tomb. His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing was as white as snow. The Roman guards were frightened by him and became as dead men (Mt. 28:2-4).

This earthquake opened many graves in Jerusalem. Many of the dead saints were resurrected. Coming out of their tombs after Jesus' resurrection, they entered into the city and appeared unto many. This fulfilled Isaiah 26:19, which says, "*Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust: for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead.*"

A number of women came to the tomb early on that Sunday morning while it was yet dark and saw the stone rolled away. When they entered in, they were confronted with two men arrayed in dazzling apparel. The angels instructed the women to tell His disciples and Peter that the Saviour had risen from the dead. Peter was singled out because the Lord's concern

was for Peter to be restored after his denial. The angels said to the women in Luke 24:6-7: “*He is not here, but is risen: remember how he spake unto you when he was yet in Galilee, Saying, The Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again.*”

### ***Peter and John Visit Jesus’ Tomb***

(Luke 24:9-12, John 20:2-10)

The women quickly departed and ran with great joy to the disciples. They told the disciples of their experience, but the disciples did not believe them. Peter and John arose and ran to the grave. John outran Peter and arrived first. He looked into the tomb and saw the Lord’s linen cloths, but did not enter the tomb.

Peter rushed into the tomb when he arrived. He saw the linen cloths and noticed that the napkin that covered Jesus’ head was rolled up in a place by itself. This reveals a very beautiful truth— the Head of the Church, the Lord Jesus Christ, had finished His ministry. Now the Body of Christ, the Church, had to finish her calling and purpose here upon earth.

### ***Jesus’ Appearance to Mary Magdalene***

(Mark 16:9-11, John 20:11-18)

We are told by Mark that Jesus appeared first to Mary Magdalene, from whom He had cast out seven devils. Mary had been redeemed from a life of sin by the Saviour. She beautifully illustrates His parable of the two debtors and

the principle that he who is forgiven much loves much (Lk. 7:41-43). Jesus, in His compassion, granted Mary the first appearance by the risen Saviour.

Let us remember that the Church is composed of basically two groups: the faithful and the restored backsliders. Song of Solomon 6:4 speaks of the Bride: *"Thou art beautiful, O my love, as Tirzah, comely as Jerusalem, terrible as an army with banners."* This is very interesting. Tirzah was the capital of the backslidden Northern Kingdom of Israel, and Jerusalem was the capital of the faithful Judah. You see, the Church is composed of both the faithful and the backsliders who have repented. We must remember that the Lord is married to the backslider (Jer. 3:14).

As Mary stood outside the Lord's tomb weeping, she saw two angels sitting where Jesus' body had been. They asked her why she was weeping and she replied, *"Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him"* (Jn. 20:13). Then Mary turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not recognise Him. She thought He was the gardener. Jesus said to her, "Woman, why weepest thou? Whom seekest thou?" She replied, "Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away."

Then Jesus called her by name, saying, "Mary." All He had to say was her name and Mary recognised the lovely voice of her Master, the voice that she knew so well. Then Mary said to Jesus, "Rabboni," which means "Master." Jesus then

said to her, *“Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God”* (Jn. 20:17). In other words, Jesus could not be touched by mortal hands because He had not ascended unto His Father yet. Jesus, the perfect sacrifice, had to first be received and accepted by His Father before He could be touched.

Amy Carmichael had a vision of the Lord’s ascension to the Father on resurrection morning. She saw the Father receive the Son again into His presence with outstretched hands. She saw the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit rejoice because They had completed the work of salvation for the human race. After this amazing encounter, Mary went and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord.

### ***Jesus’ Appearance to Other Women***

(Matthew 28:9-10)

The Lord’s second appearance on resurrection morning was to other women. We read in Matthew 28:9-10: *“And as they went to tell his disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, All hail. And they came and held him by the feet, and worshipped him. Then said Jesus unto them, Be not afraid: go tell my brethren that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me.”*

The women who had been at Jesus’ tomb and had seen the angel, left Jesus’ tomb and went on their way to tell the disciples. As they were on their way, the Lord appeared unto

them. This was after His appearance to Mary Magdalene. In between His appearance to Mary and this appearance, the Lord ascended into heaven, was accepted by the Father, and when He returned to earth, He allowed these women to touch His feet.

***The Guards' Report to the Chief Priests***

(Matthew 28:11-15)

*We read in Matthew 28:11-15: "Now when they were going, behold, some of the watch came into the city, and showed unto the chief priests all the things that were done. And when they were assembled with the elders, and had taken counsel, they gave large money unto the soldiers, Saying, Say ye, His disciples came by night, and stole him away while we slept. And if this come to the governor's ears, we will persuade him, and secure you. So they took the money, and did as they were taught: and this saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day."*

The guards that had been commissioned to watch Jesus' tomb left the tomb and told the chief priests everything that had happened. Instead of repenting and believing in the Lord Jesus, the rulers hardened their hearts further and bribed the guards to lie and say that Jesus' disciples had stolen His body. The Jews believed this false report, even unto this very day.

The depths of deceit to which an evil heart will go are beyond belief. The chief priests were intent on substantiating

their desires and doctrine to preserve their credibility in the eyes of the people. They did not care at all about the truth. Even today some of God's people will deny irrefutable evidence of certain truths in order to maintain their own position and denominational beliefs. We should heed the Lord's exhortation in Exodus 23:1-2: *"Thou shalt not raise a false report: put not thine hand with the wicked to be an unrighteous witness. Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil; neither shalt thou speak in a cause to decline after many to wrest judgment."*

***Jesus' Appearance to Two Disciples  
on the Road to Emmaus***  
(Luke 24:13-32, Mark 16:12-13)

The Lord's next appearance was to two disciples as they were walking on the road to Emmaus, which was a village about seven miles from Jerusalem. Only one of them is mentioned by name, Cleopas; the name of the other disciple is not recorded. As they were talking about everything that had happened to Jesus, the Lord drew near to them and walked along with them. However, they did not recognise Him because He veiled His real identity from them.

Jesus asked them what they were talking about and why there were so sad. Cleopas answered, *"Art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things which are come to pass there in these days?"* (Lk. 24:18). He went on to tell the Lord about His arrest and crucifixion, and how several women had seen His empty tomb. They were disappointed

because they thought Jesus of Nazareth was the Saviour. Jesus then reprimanded them for their unbelief, explaining to them from the Old Testament why it was necessary for Christ to die.

As they came near the village, Jesus acted as if He were going to keep walking, but the two disciples pleaded with Him to stay with them because it was evening time. While they were sitting down, Jesus broke bread, blessed it, and gave it to them. At that moment their eyes were opened and they realised that He was Jesus. But then He immediately vanished from their sight! They said to each other, "*Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?*" (Lk. 24:32). That very same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem. They told the 11 disciples that the Lord had appeared unto them.

### ***The Appearance to Simon Peter***

(Luke 24:33-35, 1 Corinthians 15:5)

Not much is known about the Lord's appearance to Peter except what is recorded in two passages. Luke 24:33-35 says: "*And they rose up the same hour, and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven gathered together, and them that were with them, Saying, The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon. And they told what things were done in the way, and how he was known of them in breaking of bread.*" We also read in 1 Corinthians 15:5, "*And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve.*"

***Jesus' Final Appearance on Resurrection Day***

(Mark 16:14, Luke 24:36-43, John 20:19-25)

The Lord's fifth and final appearance on Resurrection Day was to the disciples who were gathered in a certain place with the doors shut for fear of the Jews. All of the disciples were present except Thomas. Jesus appeared in their midst and said, "Peace be unto you." Instead of being filled with joy at seeing their Lord, they were frightened because they thought that He was a spirit. Then Jesus showed them His hands and feet, and said to them: "*Why are ye troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have*" (Lk. 24:38-39).

Then He asked them if they had any meat, and they gave Him a piece of broiled fish. Jesus ate the piece of fish in front of them. And He said to them in John 20:21, "*Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you.*" Then He breathed on them and said, "*Receive ye the Holy Ghost: Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained*" (Jn. 20:22-23). In a way, this was their salvation experience. They received the Holy Spirit into their hearts as we all do when we ask the Lord to come into our hearts.

As ministers of the Gospel, it was their prerogative (under the direction of the Lord) to forgive and retain people's sins. After the Lord left, Thomas came and the disciples told him that they had seen Jesus, but he did not believe them, saying, "*Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and*



*put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe” (Jn. 20:25).* This concludes the Lord’s appearances on Resurrection Day. The next five appearances took place after Resurrection Day.

***Jesus’ Appearance to the Disciples Eight Days Later***  
(John 20:26-31)

Eight days later, Jesus appeared to His disciples again, with Thomas present. Jesus said to Thomas, *“Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing” (Jn. 20:27).* This experience was enough to make Thomas believe. Then the Lord reprimanded him for his unbelief, *“Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed” (Jn. 20:29).*

The Lord made a distinction between those who have seen Him and those who have not. He said that there was a greater blessing upon those who had not seen Him and yet believed anyway. First Peter 1:8 says, *“Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.”* Let us be those who see through the eye of faith and rejoice in the hope of His salvation!

***Jesus’ Appearance to Seven Disciples***  
(John 21)

The Lord’s seventh appearance was to seven of His disciples by the Sea of Galilee. The disciples present were Peter,

Thomas, Nathanael, James, John, and two other unnamed disciples. The disciples had been fishing all night and had not caught anything. Standing on the seashore, Jesus asked them if they had caught any fish, and they said that they had not. He then told them to cast their net on the right side of the boat. Because a person on the seashore often had a better view than those on the ship, the disciples concluded that He could see some fish on the right side of the boat. They threw their net on the right side and drew in 153 fish. This miraculous draught of fish merits comment. The Scriptures use numbers to represent spiritual truths. The number 153 is a composition of  $17 \times 9$ . Seventeen is a composition of *ten* (which speaks of ordinal perfection) and *seven* (which speaks of spiritual completeness). The number nine represents fullness, being associated with the nine gifts and nine fruits of the Spirit.

Numerically, 153 is also the number that represents spiritual Mount Zion in Scripture. *Zion* occurs 153 times in Scripture. Zion, of course, is God's dwelling place and speaks of the mature sons of God. John 21:8 records that the disciples were 200 cubits from shore. The number 200 represents faithful servants.

Remember, this is not just an academic study of the life of Christ. We do not want to only know everything about Christ's life, but we want to experience it. Therefore, from the truths revealed through these numbers, we can say that we want to be faithful, mature servants who are filled with the gifts and fruits of the Spirit that qualify us to be among the precious sons of Zion.

After their miraculous draught of fish, John said to Peter, "It is the Lord." When Peter realised that it was Jesus on the seashore, he swam to shore and the disciples followed him in their boat. When they arrived at the shore, they found not only Jesus, but also a meal that He had prepared for them. Jesus is the epitome of perfection. In addition to all of His other beautiful traits, He is also the perfect host. He was very hospitable. Jesus made Himself the servant of all, and served the disciples dinner. This is only a prelude to the heavenly supper, as we read in Luke 12:37: *"Blessed are those servants, whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them."*

Who can fathom the humility of the Lord of Glory and His hospitable nature! He washed His disciples' feet at the Last Supper. On the road to Emmaus He humbly waited for the disciples' invitation to dine with them. In Revelation 3:20, the Lord graciously knocks on the door and waits to be invited in, rather than asserting His authority and power as Lord and King. May the Lord's graciousness and gentleness be an example to us, and teach us to be less assertive and forceful.

John 21:15-24 records Peter's restoration. The Lord gently but firmly restored the leader of the apostolic band. Jesus asked Peter three times if he loved Him. Jesus did not question Peter in a casual manner, but in the manner of a solemn judicial inquiry. It was almost as formal as an ordination or installation service.

The Lord addressed Peter by his full name—Simon, son of Jonas. The Lord said to Peter three times, “*Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these?*” Jesus asked Peter a very direct and pointed question: “Do you love me?” Jesus used the Greek word *agape*, which means “divine love.” His question was phrased in a similar manner to Peter’s boastful declaration in Matthew 26:33: “*Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended.*” Peter had proudly declared that even if all the other disciples forsook the Lord, he never would. By stating this, he was saying that he was more dedicated than the other disciples and that he loved the Lord more than they did.

Peter replied, “*Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee.*” Peter used the Greek verb *philo*, which is the love between friends. The first time, the Lord responded by commissioning Peter to feed His lambs. The second and third times He told Peter to feed His sheep. The third time the Lord asked Peter if he loved Him, He used the same word Peter used, *philo*, the love between friends. Thus, at this point, Peter’s love for the Lord had not been perfected.

The Lord’s three commissionings to Peter can be likened to the ministry of three levels of Christians found in 1 John 2:12-14: children (lambs), young men (sheep), and fathers (sheep). We want to have a ministry not only to newborn babes in Christ, but to young men and to spiritual fathers. We must not limit our ministry to one particular group of people. Then we read in John 21:18-19: “*Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch*

*forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not. This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God. And when he had spoken this, he saith unto him, Follow me."*

The Lord told Peter that when he was older he would be carried where he did not want to go, speaking of his death, presumably by crucifixion. According to Church history, Peter requested to be crucified upside down, because he did not feel worthy to be crucified in the same manner as his Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

Then Peter asked the Lord what was going to happen to John the beloved, and the Lord said to Peter very firmly, "*If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? Follow thou me*" (Jn. 21:22). Jesus was telling Peter that His plan for John's life was none of his business. In other words, He was saying that Peter should not focus on what other people were called to do, but concentrate on the plan that God had for his life and follow the Lord with all of his heart. Thus we must not become preoccupied with the will of God for others, for in so doing we could miss the all-important thing—God's plan and purpose for our **own** lives!

***Jesus' Appearance to Five Hundred  
and the Great Commission***

(Mark 16:15-18; Matthew 28:16-20)

The Lord Jesus then appeared unto the 11 disciples with about 500 other disciples on a mountain in Galilee (1 Cor. 15:6).

Jesus appeared unto them and they worshipped Him, but some doubted. Then the Lord gave what is called “The Great Commission.” We will include this commission from both Mark and Matthew, as there are a few differences between the two.

The first account is in Mark 16:15-18: *“And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned. And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.”*

We read in Matthew 28:18-20: *“All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.”*

### ***Jesus’ Appearance to James His Brother***

(1 Corinthians 15:7)

The Apostle Paul records in 1 Corinthians 15:7 that the Lord also appeared unto His brother James: *“After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles.”* What took place in this encounter is not recorded in Scripture.

***Jesus' Final Appearance and Ascension***

(Mark 16:19-20, Luke 24:44-53, Acts 1:3-12)

The Lord's final appearance was at Jerusalem. He opened their understanding concerning His death and resurrection (Lk. 24:45). He told them to wait in Jerusalem until they had received the Holy Spirit. He then led them out of the city to the Mount of Olives.

We read in Acts 1:9-11: *"And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven."* Then, just like that, the Lord ascended into heaven to be seated at the right hand of His Father, the Majesty on High. At His Second Coming, He will return again to the Mount of Olives (Zech. 14:4).

***Later Appearances***

(Acts 9:1-10, Acts 23:11)

After His ascension into heaven, the Lord made many appearances to the saints throughout the ages. He appeared to the Apostle Paul on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:1-9) and also in Jerusalem (Acts 23:11). Jesus also appeared unto Ananias in a vision (Acts 9:10).

We should not think it strange that the Lord appears from time to time to some of His precious saints, for He Himself promised in John 14:21-23 that He would reveal Himself to those who love Him. *“He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father; and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him. Judas saith unto him, not Iscariot, Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world? Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.”*

The Lord appears to those who love Him, at certain times in their lives in order to encourage them. May we pray that the Lord will be gracious to appear unto us as well, that we may behold His lovely face.



# Epilogue

In seeking to summate the lovely life of the Lord Jesus Christ upon earth, I have chosen the word *disciplined*. Jesus was consumed with the zeal of the Lord to fulfil every aspect and detail of the Father's will for His life and ministry. The fragrance of the fruits of a disciplined life were manifested in His character. Song of Solomon 1:9-17 gives a beautiful description of the Bride and the Lord Jesus Christ. In Song of Solomon 1:9, the Shulamite is likened to a company of horses in Pharaoh's chariots. Pharaoh had the best horses in the world, and they were disciplined and trained to respond to every command of their master. Then several virtues and traits are mentioned, represented by various spices: spikenard, myrrh, and camphire.

*Spikenard* speaks of the peace of God that passes all understanding. Jesus is the Prince of Peace. He maintained His peace and serenity in every situation. Nothing ruffled Him, not even His trial and crucifixion.

In Scripture, *myrrh* represents meekness. Jesus is the meek Lamb of God. When He was reviled, He did not react. Jesus never did anything out of *reaction*. He never allowed the taunts of others to provoke His spirit and cause Him to do or say something wrong.

*Camphire* speaks of joy. Joy was Christ's strength in the time of His greatest sorrow, knowing that His Father was in

control of everything. His life foreshadowed the victorious statement of the Apostle Paul in Romans 8:28: *“And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.”*

The Lord also has *dove’s eyes*, which speak of singleness of purpose (Song 1:15). Jesus had one purpose in life—to do His Father’s will. At the age of 12 in the Temple, He said to His parents, *“Know ye not that I must be about my Father’s business?”* Completing the will of His Father was the all-consuming force in His life. Song of Solomon 1:16 says, *“Our bed is green.”* The bed speaks of the union and communion of the Father and the Son. The colour green, which is the colour of grass, speaks of fertility, as seen in Job 5:25: *“Thou shalt know also that thy seed shall be great, and thine offspring as the grass of the earth.”*

We then read in Song of Solomon 1:17, *“The beams of our house are cedar, and our rafters of fir.”* Beams of cedar speak of strength—in this case, strength of purpose and vision. The Lord was determined to finish the work that His Father had given Him to do. Christ’s every movement was meaningful, like those of a master tradesman. To appreciate the beauty of the Lord’s character, observe a master chef at work, gracefully producing the finest meals. Christ’s every word, gesture, and action flowed from a life fully surrendered to His Father’s will.

In conclusion, as we have been considering the most blessed of all lives, let me say that we should seek to walk as He

walked when He was upon earth. First John 2:6 says, “*He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked.*” We want to be like Jesus, so that others may see Him in us!

In order for this to become a reality, we need to pray as David did in Psalm 27:4: “*One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to inquire in His temple.*” As we behold Christ in person, in a vision, or through the eyes of faith, we are transformed into His image (1 Jn. 3:2).

To the degree that we have an unfolding revelation of His beauty, to that same degree we will be changed from glory to glory into His image (2 Cor. 3:18). We pray that this book has been a blessing to you, and that it will encourage you to press on to know the Lord Jesus Christ in a very personal and intimate way, and that in so doing, you will be transformed into His likeness!



# Appendix

## Detailed Outline of the Life of Christ

### *I. CHRIST'S PRE-EXISTENCE*

#### **Chapter 1: Christ's Pre-Existence**

1. Christ Has No Beginning
2. Christ Is Eternally the Same
3. Christ Has Always Existed
4. Christ Existed Before the Creation
5. Christ Is the Co-Creator
6. Christ Was Before Abraham
7. Christ Is the Jehovah of the Old Testament

### *II. CHRIST'S BIRTH AND EARLY YEARS*

#### **Chapter 2: Preliminary Events**

1. The Annunciation of the Birth of John to Zacharias
2. The Annunciation of the Birth of Jesus to Mary
3. Mary's Visit to Elisabeth and the Song of Elisabeth
4. The Magnificat of Mary
5. The Birth of John the Baptist
6. The Annunciation of the Birth of Jesus to Joseph
7. The Two Genealogies of Jesus

#### **Chapter 3: The Infancy of Christ**

1. The Birth of Jesus
2. Visit of the Shepherds and the Praise of the Angels

3. The Circumcision of Jesus
4. Jesus' Presentation in the Temple
5. Simeon's and Anna's Homage to Jesus
6. The Visit of the Wise Men
7. The Flight of Joseph, Mary, and Jesus into Egypt
8. The Slaying of the Children at Bethlehem
9. The Return to Nazareth
10. Jesus' Childhood at Nazareth

#### **Chapter 4: His Youth**

1. His Visit to the Temple at the Age of Twelve
2. Eighteen Silent Years at Nazareth

### ***III. THE MINISTRY OF CHRIST***

#### **Chapter 5: Introduction to the Ministry of Christ**

#### **Chapter 6: The Beginning of Christ's Public Ministry**

1. The Baptism of Jesus
2. The Temptation of Jesus
3. The Presentation of Jesus as the Messiah
4. The Calling of the First Disciples
5. Christ's First Miracle
6. His First Sojourn at Capernaum

#### **The First Passover**

7. The First Cleansing of the Temple
8. Nicodemus' Night Visit
9. The Two Baptisms
10. Jesus Leaves Judea

11. Jesus in Samaria - The Water of Life
12. The Arrival in Galilee

## **Chapter 7: The Great Galilean Ministry**

*(Between the First and Second Passover)*

The Second Passover

1. The Healing at Cana of the Nobleman's Son
2. His First Rejection at Nazareth
3. His New Home in Capernaum
4. Calling of the Four Fishermen
5. The Synagogue Deliverance
6. In the House of Peter
7. The First Tour of Galilee
8. The Healing of the Leper
9. Christ's Return to Capernaum
10. The Call of Matthew (Levi)
11. The Lord's Three Parables on Fasting
  - a. Parable of the Bridegroom
  - b. Parable of the Old Garment
  - c. Parable of the Old Wineskins

## **Chapter 8: The Great Galilean Ministry**

*(From the Second to Third Passover)*

1. The Healing of the Lame Man on the Sabbath
2. A Sabbath Day in the Corn Fields
3. The Third Sabbath Controversy
4. The Healing of the Multitudes by the Sea of Galilee
5. The Choosing of the Twelve Apostles
6. The Sermon on the Mount

- a. The Beatitudes
- b. The Hypocrisy of the Pharisees
- c. Single-hearted Devotion Toward God
- d. Seek Ye First the Kingdom of God
- e. A Warning Against Criticism
- f. Prayer
- g. The Golden Rule
- h. Exhortation on Circumspect Living
7. Healing of the Centurion's Servant at Capernaum
8. The Raising of the Widow's Son
9. The Lord's Gracious Response to John the Baptist
10. Jesus' Proclamation of Woes upon the Cities
11. The Rest of God
12. Jesus Anointed by a Sinful Woman  
(Parable of the Two Debtors)
13. The Second Tour of Galilee
14. The Busy Day
15. The Afternoon of the Same Day
16. His Mother and Brethren Seek to Bring Him Home
17. The Parables of the Kingdom  
(Parable of the Sower)
18. At Eventide on the Sea of Galilee
19. The Healing of the Gerasene Demoniac
20. Jesus Returns to Capernaum
21. The Healing of Two Blind Men
22. His Last Visit to Nazareth
23. The Third Tour of Galilee
24. The Sending Forth of the Twelve
25. The Price of True Discipleship
26. Fulfilling the Ministry
27. The Account of the Slaying of John the Baptist



## **Chapter 9: The Great Galilean Ministry** *(The Third Passover and After)*

### The Third Passover

1. The Feeding of the Five Thousand
2. The Multitude That Wanted to Make Him King
3. Jesus Walks on the Water
4. Their Arrival at Gennesaret
5. The Discourse on “The Bread of Life”
6. Teaching on Defilement
7. Healing of the Syrophenician Woman’s Daughter
8. The Healing of the Deaf and Dumb Man
9. The Feeding of the Four Thousand
10. A Brief Visit to Dalmanutha
11. He Returns to Bethsaida Julias
12. On the Way to Caesarea Philippi
13. Jesus Teaches His Disciples that He must be Crucified
14. Discourse on the Second Coming
15. The Transfiguration
16. Questions During the Descent From the Mountain
17. The Disciples and the Demoniac Boy
18. Jesus Returns With His Disciples to Galilee
19. The Payment of the Temple Dues
20. Who is the Greatest in the Kingdom?
21. Relationships
22. The Cost of Discipleship
23. The Feast of Tabernacles
24. His Journey from Galilee to Jerusalem

## **Chapter 10: The Later Judean Ministry**

1. His Arrival and Ministry at the Feast of Tabernacles
2. The Adulterous Woman

3. "I Am The Light of the World"
4. The Altercation Between the Lord and the Scribes and Pharisees
5. The Healing of the Man Born Blind
6. The Good Shepherd
7. The Sending Forth of the Seventy
8. The Parable of the Good Samaritan
9. In the Home of Martha and Mary
10. The Lesson of Importunity in Prayer
11. The Blasphemous Accusation that His power Came from Satan
12. Discourse on the Ways of Evil Spirits
13. Various Admonitions on True Blessings
14. Dining With a Pharisee
15. Instructions and Warnings to His Disciples
16. The Tale of Two Tragedies
17. The Parable of the Fruitless Fig Tree
18. The Healing of the Woman Bound by Satan
19. Parables of the Kingdom of God
20. Jesus at the Feast of Dedication

### **Chapter 11: The Later Perea Ministry**

1. Withdrawal from Jerusalem to Bethany
2. Jesus Teaches in the Cities of Perea on His Journey to Jerusalem
3. A Question on Salvation
4. Reply to the Warning Concerning Herod Antipas
5. In the House of One of the Chief Pharisees
6. The Cost of Discipleship
7. Three Great Parables Concerning the Lost and Found

8. Three Parables on Stewardship
9. The Raising of Lazarus
10. His Last Journey to Jerusalem by Way of Samaria and Galilee
11. In Perea
12. The Healing of Blind Bartimaeus
13. The Conversion of Zacchaeus
14. The Parable of the Pounds

## **Chapter 12: The Last Public Ministry in Jerusalem**

1. His Arrival in Bethany
2. The Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem as the Messiah
3. The Barren Fig Tree Cursed
4. The Second Cleansing of the Temple
5. The Greeks Desire to See Jesus
6. The Barren Fig Tree Withered
7. The Formal Challenge by the Chief Priests and Elders
  - a. Parable of the Two Sons
  - b. Parable of the Wicked Tenants
  - c. Parable of the Wedding Feast
8. On Paying Tribute to Caesar
9. The Question of Marriage
10. The Greatest Commandment
11. The Son of David
12. The Denunciation of the Scribes and Pharisees
13. The Poor Widow's Gift
14. Mount of Olives Discourse on the Second Coming
  - a. Parable of the Ten Virgins
  - b. Parable of the Talents
  - c. Parable of the Sheep and Goats

## ***IV. CHRIST'S CRUCIFIXION***

### **Chapter 13: The Upper Room**

1. Jesus Tells of His Impending Crucifixion
2. The Supper in the House of Simon the Leper
3. Judas goes to the Chief Priests to Betray Jesus
4. The Preparation for the Passover Meal

#### The Fourth Passover

5. The Last Supper
6. The Foot Washing
7. The Betrayer Revealed
8. The Warning that All Will Forsake Him
9. The Institution of the Holy Communion
10. The Upper Room Discourses
  - a. The Promise of Another Comforter
  - b. The Manifestation of Jesus and the Father to the Believer
  - c. The Promise of Peace
  - d. The Singing of a Psalm or Hymn

### **Chapter 14: Gethsemane**

1. The Teachings on the Way to Gethsemane
  - a. The True Vine
  - b. The Ministry of the Holy Spirit
  - c. The Ministry of Christ
  - d. The High Priestly Prayer
2. The Garden of Gethsemane
3. The Betrayal

## **Chapter 15: The Trials**

1. The Trial Before Annas
2. The Trial Before Caiaphas
3. The Trial Before the Sanhedrin
4. The Suicide of Judas Iscariot
5. The First Trial Before Pilate
6. The Trial Before Herod
7. The Second Trial Before Pilate
  - a. The Character and Life of Pilate
  - b. The Act of Scourging
  - c. The Attitude and Demeanour of Jesus
8. The Soldiers' Mockery of Jesus

## **Chapter 16: His Crucifixion**

1. On the Way to the Cross (via Dolorosa)
2. On the Cross
3. The Events at His Death
4. The Burial of Jesus
5. The Watch by Jesus' Tomb
6. The Lord's Whereabouts During the Three Days and Three Nights

# ***V. CHRIST'S RESURRECTION***

## **Chapter 17: His Resurrection**

1. The Visit of Women to Jesus' Tomb
2. Peter and John Visit Jesus' Tomb
3. Jesus' Appearance to Mary Magdalene
4. Jesus' Appearance to Other Women
5. The Guards' Report to the Chief Priests

6. Jesus' Appearance to Two Disciples on the Road to Emmaus
7. The Appearance to Simon Peter
8. Jesus' Final Appearance on Resurrection Day
9. Jesus' Appearance to the Disciples Eight Days Later
10. Jesus' Appearance to Seven Disciples
11. Jesus' Appearance to Five Hundred and the Great Commission
12. Jesus' Appearance to James His Brother
13. Jesus' Final Appearance and Ascension
14. Later Appearances

# **Books by Dr Brian J. Bailey:** **Commentaries on the Old Testament**

**Genesis**

**The Journey of Israel**

**The Tabernacle of Moses**

**Feasts and Offerings** (*Leviticus*)

**The Book of Judges**

**The Gentile Bride of Christ** (*Ruth*)

**David and Solomon**

**The Kings of Judah**

**The Kings of Israel**

**The Restoration Era** (*Ezra and Nehemiah*)

**The Three Houses of Esther**

**Psalms I** (*Psalms 1 to 50*)

**Psalms II** (*Psalms 51 to 100*)

**Psalms III** (*Psalms 101 to 150*)

**Wisdom Literature** (*Proverbs and Ecclesiastes*)

**The Bride** (*Song of Solomon*)

**Isaiah**

**Jeremiah**

**The Book of Lamentations**

**The Chariot Throne of God** (*Ezekiel*)

**Daniel**

**Minor Prophets I** (*Hosea*)

**Minor Prophets II** (*Joel to Zephaniah*)

**Minor Prophets III** (*Haggai to Malachi*)

## **Commentaries on the New Testament**

**The Gospel of Matthew**

**The Gospel of Mark**

**The Gospel of Luke**

**The Gospel of John**

**More than Conquerors** (*Romans*)

**Soldiers for Christ** (*Ephesians*)

**Hitting the Mark** (*Philippians*)

**Colossians & Philemon**

**Within the Veil** (*Hebrews*)

**The Two Wisdoms** (*James*)

**The Epistles of John**

**The Revelation of Jesus Christ** (*Revelation*)

### **Topical Studies**

#### **Five-Fold Ministry Series:**

**The Apostle**

**The Evangelist**

**The Ministry of the Prophet**

**The Pastor**

**Teachers of Righteousness**

#### **Leadership Series:**

**Leadership Volume I**

**Leadership Volume II**

**Leadership Volume III**

**Angels**

**Contending for the Faith**

**The Comforter** (*The Holy Spirit*)

**The Cross and Resurrection**

**Divine Healing**

**Entering the Rest of God**

**The Glory**

**The Goodness and Severity of God**

**Heaven's Glories and the Untold Terrors of Hell**

**A History of Israel**



**Know Your Bible**  
**The Life of Christ**  
**Names of God**  
**Our Beloved Heavenly Father**  
**The Parables of Jesus**  
**Pillars of Faith**  
**Preaching and Speaking for God**  
**Preparing for Revival**  
**The Second Coming**  
**The Seven Dwelling Places of God**  
**Washed by the Word**

Please contact us for further information:

**Zion Christian Publishers**

**P.O. Box 70, Waverly, New York, U.S.A. 14892**

Tel: 1-877-768 7466 (toll-free within USA) or (607) 565 2801

Fax: (607) 565 2801

[www.zcpublishers.com](http://www.zcpublishers.com)