

THE SYNOPTIC GOSPELS

A Comparison of
Matthew - Mark - Luke



Paul G. Caram, Ph.D.

“The Synoptic Gospels—Matthew, Mark, Luke”

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Table of Contents

Introduction	Page 1
Summary of Matthew's Gospel	Page 2
Summary of Mark's Gospel	Page 4
Summary of Luke's Gospel	Page 6
Accounts Found Only in Luke	Page 8
Accounts Found Only in Matthew	Page 34
Accounts Found Only in Mark / John	Page 51
Accounts Found in All Three Gospels	Page 52
Outline - Harmony of the Gospels	Page 53
A Comparison of the Gospels	Page 65 - 132
Conclusion	Page 133
Appendix I	Page 134
Appendix II	Page 140

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- Numerous other sources gathered from
forty years of study and teaching.

Preface

The Gospels are the most important books of the Bible. They record the very words and life of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. In this study we will be comparing eighty-three of the same accounts recorded by Matthew, Mark, and Luke. Of these, twenty-four are also found in John.

In addition to this, we will be looking at 52 accounts found *only* in Luke's Gospel, and 27 accounts found *only* in Matthew.

There is a map at the beginning of the textbook. I recommend that you meditate upon it and absorb it carefully. It is very useful to have a picture in your mind of where each event is taking place. Especially you should visualize the five main areas in Israel where Christ ministered—Galilee, Samaria, Judaea, Decapolis, and Peraea.

Chronology is very important too. On pages 53-63 is an outline of the four Gospels. This must not be overlooked. On the contrary, it should be referred to often. Most of the Gospels are not in perfect chronological order. The outline helps to guide us accurately from one event to another in the order they occurred.

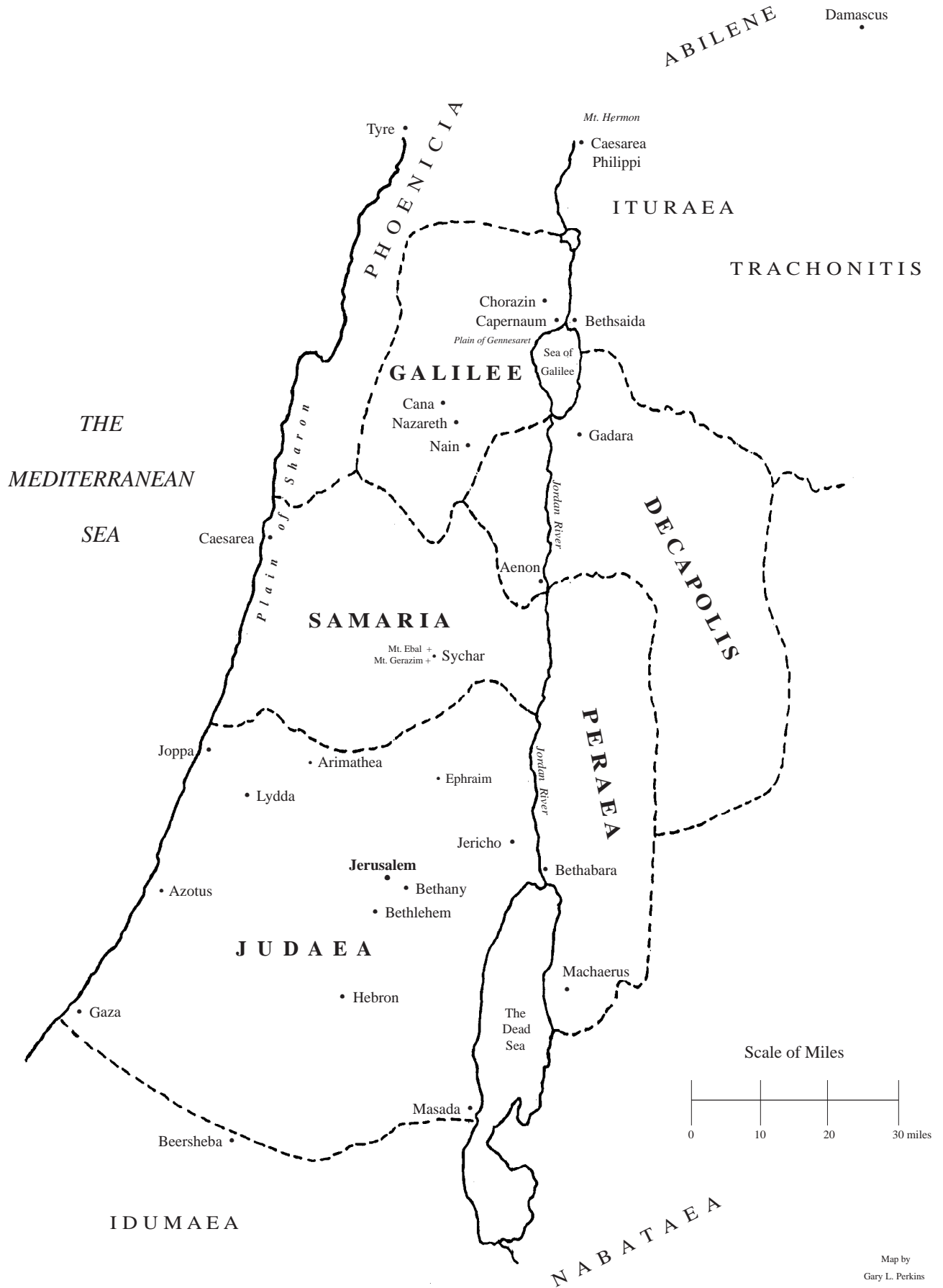
As we combine the Gospels (page 65 to 132), we get the full picture of each event. Each Gospel writer contributes something that the others omitted. Blending the narratives together, the scenes become vividly clear and new truths open up to us from the life of Christ.

This textbook should not be skimmed over like a newspaper. Of course, neither should the Scriptures. Go slowly through each paragraph, and ask God to make his Word alive to you. Underline those sections that the Holy Spirit quickens, and meditate upon them. Write down in a special notebook those things God illumines. Ask the Lord to write his Word upon your heart. For your own personal benefit, you should review your textbook over and over in the future. May the Spirit of the Lord be your Teacher now as you open the pages of this manual.

Every blessing in Christ Jesus:

Paul G. Caram

PALESTINE IN NEW TESTAMENT TIMES



Cities of New Testament Times

Find and memorize the location of each of the following:

- Aenon - a place where John baptized because there was much water there
- Arimathea - city of Joseph, the godly counsellor who buried Jesus in his own sepulchre (Lk.23:51)
- Azotus - the city to which Philip was translated, after being in Gaza (Acts 8:26-40)
- Bethany - the town of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus
- Bethsaida - in Galilee, hometown of Philip, Peter, and Andrew, near the place where Jesus fed 5000
- Bethlehem - where Jesus was born, the city of David
- Beersheba - the southern most part of Judea
- Bethabara - another place where John baptized
- Caesarea - Roman military base on the Mediterranean where resided Pilate, Cornelius, and others
- Caesarea Philippi - at the base of Mt. Hermon, where Peter confessed - "Thou art the Christ."
- Capernaum - Christ made his headquarters here (in Galilee) during his ministry, also Peter
- Cana - where Jesus performed his first miracle of turning water to wine at the wedding
- Chorazin - a city condemned by Christ because of the miracles they saw, but no repentance
- Damascus - oldest city on earth / place of Paul's conversion / 140 miles northeast of Jerusalem
- Decapolis - an area east of the Jordan River where Christ ministered
- Ephraim - a town northeast of Jerusalem (Jn.11:54) near the wilderness where Jesus abode awhile
- Gadara - a town near the Sea of Galilee where Jesus delivered the demon possessed man
- Galilee - a sea, also a large territory in northern Israel where Jesus and all the apostles came from
- Gaza - where Philip preached to the Ethiopian eunuch
- Hebron - one of the oldest cities on earth, yet never mentioned once in the New Testament
- Jericho - where Jesus healed blind Bartimaeus
- Joppa - where Peter had the vision at noon of God cleansing and accepting the Gentiles
- Jordan R. - beginning at the base of Mt. Hermon, going into the Sea of Galilee, to the Dead Sea
- Judea - This is southern Israel. Jerusalem was the capital. The temple was here - the center of Judaism
- Lydda - where Peter healed Aeneas, and all that dwelt in Lydda and Sharon turned to the Lord
- Machaerus - the site of Herod's castle where John was imprisoned and executed
- Mount Hermon - where Jesus is believed to have been transfigured
- Nazareth - hometown of Jesus, twenty miles southwest of Capernaum
- Nain - where Jesus raised the widow's son from the dead
- Peraea - the area directly east of Jerusalem, across Jordan, where Jesus ministered
- Phoenicia - area of Lebanon (Tyre) from which the Syro-Pheonician woman's daughter was healed
- Sycar - in Samaria, where Jacob's well was (Jn. 4:5-6) where Jesus spoke to the woman at the well

Especially fix in your mind the five main areas of Israel where Jesus ministered:

JUDEA

SAMARIA

GALILEE

DECAPOLIS

PERAEA

SYNOPTIC GOSPELS

(Matthew, Mark, Luke)

INTRODUCTION

The Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke are called *synoptic*. Synoptic comes from the Greek word “synoptikos,” which means: “to see the whole together, to take a comprehensive view.” *Together* the three Gospels present the life and teachings of Christ, each from a different perspective. It takes all three Gospels *together* to have the full picture.

We could liken this to being on the witness stand in a court hearing. Each person describes the same incident but from his own particular outlook. When John F. Kennedy was assassinated, some saw the scene from nearby buildings. Others were standing near the motorcade on either side of the highway. Several were in the motorcade. Each one described what he heard and saw from a different viewpoint. Such was the case in the writing of the Synoptic Gospels. They record many of the same events but from different angles. John's Gospel is uniquely separate from the other three.

Two Reasons for Differences in the Gospel Accounts

Why are the Gospels dissimilar? There are two main things that we have to consider when we compare the differences between the Gospels. Number one, the personalities of the Gospel writers were diverse. Number two, the audiences to whom they were writing were different. Matthew, an accountant, was writing to the Jewish world. Mark, an interpreter in Latin for Peter, wrote to the Roman world. Luke, a physician and scholar, wrote to the Greek world. But John is written to all.

Matthew, Mark, and Luke are inherently different. Yet, they all present the same Gospel and they were all inspired by the same Spirit. All three writers directed their messages to different audiences who had different needs. Each writer selectively recorded that teaching of Christ which would apply to his respective readers. Other teachings were purposely omitted. For example, Mark mentions women not divorcing their husbands (Mk.10:12), while Matthew did not include this in his Gospel to the Jews, since Jewish law did not permit a woman to divorce her husband anyway.

Uniqueness of John's Gospel

The Gospel of John is unlike Matthew, Mark, and Luke. John's Gospel deals chiefly with the words and discourses of the Lord Jesus Christ. John does not record *any* parables. Mark has four, Luke has nineteen, and Matthew has eighteen. The word “faith” is not found in John, although “believe” is frequently mentioned. One-third of the Gospel of John covers one day—the passover in which our Lord was crucified. Chapters 13 through 19 took place all in one 24 hour day.

Matthew, Mark, and Luke all foretell Jerusalem's coming destruction (70 A.D.), and were written before Jerusalem fell. John was written long after the city was plundered, and does not predict its fall. John uses Roman time, which is the same as ours. The Synoptic Gospels use Hebrew time. The Jewish day started six hours earlier, at 6:00 in the evening. Ours starts at 12:00 midnight. See time diagram on page 101.

SUMMARY OF MATTHEW'S GOSPEL

Matthew's Personality – An Accountant

Matthew, a former tax-collector, is the only one of the Gospel writers to record the story of Jesus paying the temple tax (Mt.17:24-27). A man's life-experience always comes out in his preaching. More inferences to money occur in his writings than from any other. Matthew makes reference to rarer coins, while Mark mentions three coins used by the poorest, (the mite, farthing, and penny). Luke refers to the mite, farthing and pound, whilst Matthew who was in the habit of handling money uses such terms as Tribute money (didrachmon) 17:24; Piece of money (stater) 17:27; and the Talent 18:24; 25:15, which was valued at about sixty times the pound mentioned by Luke. Matthew also speaks of gold, silver and brass, and financial terminology as *reckoning*, *debt* and *money changers* which would be familiar to an accountant.

Matthew is categorical. True to his “accountant” instincts, he constructed his Gospel under *headings*. He took fragments of the Lord’s sermons and put them together into one big sermon which we call, “The Sermon on the Mount” in chapters 5,6,7. Christ did not preach this sermon all at one time. Luke helps us better appreciate *when* Jesus preached these scattered messages (Lk. 6:20-49, 11:1-13, 11:33-36, 12:22-34). Matthew collected the Lord's parables of the kingdom and grouped them together in chapter 13. He also gathered other messages and important narratives and placed them under distinctive headings:

- Chapter 1-2 - The Genealogy and Birth of Jesus
- Chapter 3 - The Baptism of Jesus
- Chapter 4 - The Temptation and Commencement of Christ’s Ministry
- Chapter 5-7 - The Sermon on the Mount
- Chapter 10 - The Charge to the Twelve / The Command to Take Up Our Cross Daily
- Chapter 13 - The Parables of the Kingdom
- Chapter 18 - The Teaching on Greatness and Forgiveness
- Chapter 23 - The Denunciation of the Pharisees
- Chapter 24 - The Olivet Discourse / His Coming
- Chapter 25 - The Parables in Light of His Coming

Matthew Addresses the Jewish World

Matthew writes to the Jews. He is uniquely and thoroughly Jewish in his presentation. This is evidenced by the genealogy which traces Christ's ancestry back to Abraham through David (1:1), and his emphasis on the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy which the Jews would find very meaningful. Matthew has about 129 references to the Old Testament; Mark contains but a few. Mark's Gospel, written to the Roman world, had little background and appreciation for the O. T.

Matthew sought to convince the Jewish world that Jesus of Nazareth was the promised Messiah of the Old Testament. He repeatedly related Messianic prophecies to the life and ministry of Jesus, showing how they were fulfilled in Him. Because Matthew is writing to the Jews, he seeks to answer *three major questions* that were foremost in the minds of the Jews concerning the Messiah:

- 1.) COULD THE LINEAGE OF JESUS BE TRACED BACK TO DAVID?
- 2.) DID JESUS UPHOLD THE LAW?
- 3.) HAD JESUS COME TO ESTABLISH THE KINGDOM?

1.) THE LINEAGE OF JESUS COULD IN FACT BE TRACED TO KING DAVID! The first thing the Hebrews had to know about Jesus was his ancestral relation to David. They all knew and understood that the Messiah would descend from David's line. Therefore, Matthew clearly answered the Jews' first question when he opened his Gospel with the genealogy of Christ. "The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, *the son of David*, the son of Abraham" (1:1).

Jesus is called the "Son of David" repeatedly (9:27, 12:23, 15:22, 20:30, 21:9, 21:15). Jesus made it very clear that he was not only a descendant of David, but also David's Lord (22:42-45). Christ received his physical body from David's line (Rom.1:3). His spirit, of course, was eternal. The miracle of the incarnation made Jesus both God and man simultaneously.

2.) JESUS SURELY UPHELD THE LAW! He declared, "Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets: I am not come to destroy but to fulfill" (Mt. 5:17-18). Christ came to fulfill the Law in the truest sense of the word, bringing the Law into the heart by a new and better covenant. He came to bring redemption into the very core of man's being. Jesus taught that one's righteousness had to exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees (which was exterior) if he wanted to be worthy of the kingdom of heaven (Mt. 5:20). Christ held up a very high standard, commanding: "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your heavenly Father is perfect" (5:48). *See Appendix I - pg.134.*

For the benefit of the Jewish readers, Matthew was portraying Jesus as a new and greater Moses. This new and greater Moses gave higher implications to the Law. He taught: "Ye have heard that it was said of old ... but I say unto you" (5:21, 5:27, 5:31, 5:33, 5:38, 5:43). Each time he said, "but I say unto you", he was giving deeper interpretations to the Law. Jesus was going beyond *acts* to *attitudes* of the heart. The Sermon on the Mount (chapters 5 - 7) is a picture of the Law written in the heart. Christ, as the new and greater Lawgiver, was seeking to bring the Law into the hearts of his people. He spoke as one having authority, and not as one of the Scribes (7:28-29).

3.) JESUS HAD TRULY COME TO ESTABLISH THE KINGDOM! Matthew *alone* uses the expression "the kingdom of heaven", and he uses it 33 times. First and foremost, Christ came to establish an inward, spiritual kingdom in the lives of people. The principles for kingdom living were embodied in his Sermon on the Mount. Christ taught that the heart needed to be conquered (15:18-20). In order for society to change, people's hearts need to change. The real problems in life are spiritual. Thus, Christ spoke on the subject of the heart more than anything else. Politics are not the answer. Only a move of God's Spirit can change the way people live. Society never changes unless men and women have a divine change in their hearts. This spiritual kingdom that Christ came to establish is *an inner reality* of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit (Rom.14:17).

The kingdom of heaven, therefore, refers to three realms: 1.) It is heaven itself. 2.) This heavenly kingdom needs to come into our personal lives. Jesus taught, "The kingdom of God is within you." 3.) Eventually, there will be a physical kingdom brought to earth. "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven." This takes place in the Millennial Age, but it starts in the heart.

Matthew's Gospel is highly Jewish. Many of the statements of Christ have a special Jewish flavor: "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (15:24), and, "Go nowhere among the Gentiles, and enter no town of the Samaritans, but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (10:5-6). Matthew is the only Gospel writer who counters the Jewish charge that the disciples of Jesus had stolen his body (28:11-15).

SUMMARY OF MARK'S GOSPEL

Mark's Gospel was composed by John Mark, under the direction of Peter. When the Apostle Peter proclaimed the Word of God in Rome, there were a great number present as John Mark interpreted Peter's messages into Latin. Peter's audience requested Mark to reduce Peter's teachings to writing. The result was the Gospel of Mark. Under the Holy Spirit's guidance, Mark took of the words of Peter and created his Gospel, tailoring it especially to his Roman listeners (A.D. 65).

The early Church was unanimous about two things: Mark's Gospel was written by John Mark, and it presents the preaching of Peter. Early Church fathers such as Papias, Eusebius, Clement, and Origen ascribe this Gospel to Mark. Papias (140 A.D.) quotes the Apostle John as saying: "Mark being the interpreter of Peter, whatsoever he recorded he wrote with great accuracy ... he was in company with Peter, who gave him such instruction as was necessary, but not to give a history of our Lord's discourses."

Mark Writes to the Roman World

Mark geared his Gospel to the Roman world. The Romans were not religious, neither were they philosophers like the Greeks. They were impressed by physical strength and military might. The Romans respected authority, and they were people of action. Therefore, Mark's Gospel is very rapid and is filled with action. The words *immediately*, *straightway*, *forthwith*, *as soon as*, and *anon* are found 44 times.

Mark's Gospel Contains:

- Little teaching
- No Sermon on the Mount
- Few parables (4) - Matthew has 18, Luke 19
- No record of the Lord's birth or childhood
- No genealogy of Jesus
- Few quotes from the Old Testament (Matthew has 129)
- But nearly all the notable miracles of Christ

THEME: Christ is not presented to the Romans as the Teacher of Israel or a *greater Moses*, as Matthew portrayed to the Jews. Instead, Mark introduced Him as the mighty miracle worker. He could control nature - the winds and the sea obeyed Him. The spirit world trembled before Him. He had power over all manner of sickness and disease, and even death. Whole cities were healed by Him. He had power over the economy, feeding five thousand with just a handful of food. He spoke with an authority which none of his peers could gainsay. In spite of having such awesome authority, He was able to humble Himself before those who were far weaker and give His life as a ransom for many (Mk.10:42-45). This was a *challenge* to the Roman mind and thinking.

Christ taught that true greatness and true strength is not attained by asserting ourselves over others to reach the top. This is the way of the world. He told us that if we would be chief among the brethren, we must learn to be the servant of all. People who are truly great are servants. They can endure looking like a failure, but insecure people desperately need to look successful. Jesus could come into Jerusalem riding upon a donkey. Only someone *truly great* could ever do that! See Zech. 9:9.

Different Personalities / Different Calls

Why are Matthew, Mark, and Luke so alike, and yet so different? They are all presenting the same Gospel, and they are all inspired by the same Holy Spirit. However, all three writers had different personalities, and they were writing to people who had differing backgrounds and needs. Each writer, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, selected from the teachings of Jesus that which would apply to the needs of his respective readers.

God uses men with different personalities and gifts to reach certain kinds of people. Eloquent Luke was commissioned to write to the philosophical Greeks. Matthew Levi ministered to the Jewish world. Explosive Peter (through John Mark) ministered to the aggressive Romans.

God will also prepare you and send you to a people of his choosing. God knows and understands each of us intimately. He knows *precisely* which people we can minister to the most effectively. We might think we know the ones with whom we can best identify, but God may have another plan for our lives. You will be able to reach people that others could not. Others will be able to reach people that you could not. God will anoint us and flow through us in His own unique way, just as He did through Matthew to the Jews, Mark to the Romans, and Luke to the Greeks. Remember the word of the Lord to us in Psalm 47:4: "He shall choose our inheritance for us." It is God who determines which people we will minister to and claim for our spiritual inheritance (see Psa. 2:8).

Matthew and Mark Compared

Clement of Alexandria (A.D. 144 - 220) stated that the Gospels containing the genealogies (i. e. Matthew and Luke) were written first. The Gospels of Mark and John came later. Therefore, the supposition by some that Matthew had to borrow from Mark's content is probably wrong. Mark was written after Matthew. (Conjectured dates of writing: Matthew - 50's A.D. Mark - 65 A.D.)

- Matthew was written to the Jews and quotes extensively from the Old Testament.
- Mark was written to the Romans and quotes very little from the Old Testament.
- Mark explains certain Jewish traditions (cf. Mk. 7:2-4, 7:11, 14:12).
- Mark translates Aramaic words (Mk. 5:41, 7:34, 14:36, 15:22, 15:34).
- Mark explains the geographical relationship of the Mount of Olives to the temple (Mk.13:3).
- Mark explained Greek expressions by their Latin equivalents (Mk.12:42, 15:16).
- Mark mentions that women should not divorce their husbands.
- Matthew did not include this because women in Jewish society were not permitted to divorce their husbands anyway.

It is very clear that Matthew and Mark were writing to two different societies. Matthew would never have tried to clarify Jewish customs to the Jewish world as Mark did to the Romans (Mk. 7:2-4). Nor would Matthew have ever explained that the Mount of Olives was in plain view of the temple (Mk.13:3). Every Jew would know that. Matthew did not need to interpret Aramaic words to Jews; but Mark, who was writing to a non-Jewish society, found it quite necessary. Luke, who was writing to the Greek world, also explained that the feast of unleavened bread was called the Passover. Every Jew would have known this from his youth, but not a Gentile (cf. Lk. 22:1).

SUMMARY OF LUKE'S GOSPEL

Luke was a physician and travelling companion of the Apostle Paul (cf. Col. 4:14). Paul refers to him as “the beloved physician” indicating his sweetness of character. Many had deserted Paul at the end of his life. Nevertheless, Luke remained supremely loyal to the finish (cf. 2 Tim. 1:15, 4:16). Among Paul's last words were these—“Only Luke is with me” (2 Tim. 4:11).

Luke had unusual capacity for research. He was an accurate and able historian, possessing a polished vernacular no New Testament writer could supersede. Besides his medical knowledge, he had an interest in ships and had experience at sea. He was a traveller. This is evidenced in his narratives in the Book of Acts. In Acts he joined Paul on his missionary journeys (16:10), and continued in close contact with him until Paul's death. He never discloses his name in the Acts narrative, but includes himself inconspicuously, saying “we” or “us” (16:10-17, 20:5, 21:18, 27:1 - 28:16). This signifies his humility of mind and heart.

As a New Testament writer, Luke ranks number two in content, second only to Paul. Luke wrote almost as much as Paul. Combining the 24 lengthy chapters of Luke's Gospel with his 28 chapters of the Book of Acts, Luke contributed almost as much to the New Testament as Paul's fourteen epistles. The Apostle John ranks third.

Luke's two literary masterpieces (The Gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts) could be considered Volume One and Volume Two of one work. Acts continues where his Gospel leaves off. The Book of Acts was written *shortly after* his Gospel. (The Gospel perhaps in 62 A.D. and the Acts in 63.) Both books were written to Theophilus and those surrounding him. Theophilus was a high ranking Greek nobleman whom Luke entitles “Most Excellent Theophilus” (Lk. 1:3, Acts 1:1). Thus, Luke was writing to a cultured Greek society. His presentation of the Gospel was to the educated, the thinkers, and those who appreciated beautiful speech and intricate details.

Luke's Sources for Writing

For many years Luke had close contact with Paul and numerous Christian leaders such as Philip, Timothy, Silas, Mark, Barnabas, James the Lord's brother, the twelve apostles, and many of the five hundred brethren who were with Christ during his ministry and had witnessed His resurrection (cf. 1 Cor. 15:6). As a result of being in Jerusalem (Acts 21:17), Caesarea, and other places where Christ and his apostles ministered, Luke had splendid opportunities to obtain firsthand knowledge regarding our Lord, his teachings, his miracles, redemption, and the beginnings of the Church.

Luke declares in his prologue (Lk. 1:1-4) that he made an intensive research of the Gospel story in order to be able to write a reliable account. His prologue shows clearly that he had access to a number of written documents as well as oral testimonies from reliable eyewitnesses (Lk. 1:1-2). Luke had at his disposal the most intimate and direct sources of information. He knew James the brother of Jesus personally (Acts 21:18). Probably he knew Mary the mother of our Lord as well. He had direct dialogue with many of the men and women he describes in his Gospel and the Book of Acts. Luke was able therefore to accurately trace the history of all things regarding Jesus, so that he could write a Gospel that enabled believers to know with certainty “those things which are most surely believed among us” (Lk. 1:1, 1:4).

Luke's Devotional Life

Luke, more than any of the other Gospel writers, took special notice of how often Jesus prayed. This is an indication of Luke's own heart. Luke himself was a man of prayer and would naturally be attracted to this aspect of the life of Christ. Luke alone was the only writer to record that Christ was praying as he was being baptized. "... It came to pass, that Jesus also being baptized, *and praying*, the heaven was opened" (Lk. 3:21). Matthew and Mark omit the part of Jesus praying.

Only Luke includes the episode of Jesus praying all night when he had to select twelve apostles from his many disciples. "And it came to pass in those days, that he went out into a mountain to pray, and *continued all night in prayer* to God. And when it was day, he called unto him his disciples: and of them he chose twelve, whom also he named apostles" (Lk. 6:12-13).

When Jesus asked his disciples, "Whom do men say that I am?", Luke draws attention to the fact that Jesus had been in the spirit of prayer before he asked the question. "And it came to pass, *as he was alone praying*, his disciples were with him: and he asked them, saying, Whom say the people that I am?" (Lk. 9:18). Luke implies that the Father prompted Jesus to ask this when he was praying. Matthew and Mark do not include this.

In Luke 9:29, Christ was transfigured *as he was praying*. Prayer opens the heavens and brings us in touch with God's glory. Once again, Matthew and Mark do not include this facet of Christ's praying as He was transfigured. (See 1:10, 5:16, 6:28, 11:1-2, 18:1, 21:36, 22:32, 22:40, 22:44, 22:46.)

Luke's Style of Writing

Luke was a physician. He pointed out rare diseases in his Gospel, such as the man with the dropsy in 14:1-6. All four Gospel writers record that Peter cut off a man's ear with the sword, but only Luke includes that Jesus healed him (22:50-51). Luke is the only one to record that Christ's blood vessels in his forehead broke from the pressure against his mind in the Garden of Gethsemane (Lk. 22:44). Luke alone includes Christ's message in Nazareth when he began His ministry saying, "He hath sent me to heal" and concluded with, "Physician, heal thyself" (4:18,23). Luke alone records that "The power of the Lord was present to heal" (5:17). There is more mention of *healing* in Luke than in Matthew and Mark combined. Being a physician, it was natural for Luke to do case histories on those he writes about, using extravagant details. This is especially true of the births of John the Baptist and Jesus. Certainly a doctor who had delivered many babies during his career would be fascinated with the supernatural conception of the child Jesus (Lk.1:30-38). Luke alone includes this in his narrative. And when he recorded the genealogy of Christ, he traced it all the way back to Adam, and to God Himself in 3:23-38. Truly, the "beloved physician" believed in getting to *the source* of all matters. No writer is more thorough, precise, orderly, and scientific than Luke.

When Luke describes the birth of John the Baptist, again he performs a case history on the lives of John's parents (1:5-25). Zacharias and Elizabeth had been praying many years for a son but still remained childless. Suddenly, at a certain hour of the day, as Zacharias was ministering at the altar in a certain priestly course, a particular angel (Gabriel) appeared to him. Not only did Gabriel appear at the altar, but at the *right* side of the altar. Luke included every point. Yet, every detail was saturated with revelation and spiritual life. This was the man God chose to write to the Greek world. Although Luke was highly educated, his intellect was *surrendered* to God.

ACCOUNTS FOUND ONLY IN LUKE

Luke preserved many of the words and parables of Jesus which would have otherwise been lost. Some of the most beautiful and significant narratives regarding Christ are found only in Luke. Below is a list of accounts found only in the Gospel of Luke:

- 1:5-25 The announcement of John the Baptist's birth
- 1:26-38 The annunciation of Christ's birth to Mary by Gabriel
- 1:39-56 Mary's visit to Elizabeth; the leaping of the babe in her womb / Mary's song of rejoicing
- 1:57-80 The birth of John the Baptist / Naming of John / Tongue of Zacharias loosed to prophesy
- 2:1-20 Taxation by Caesar / birth of Christ in Bethlehem / the angels' glad tidings to the shepherds
- 2:21-38 Circumcision of Jesus; Mary's purification / Jesus in the temple; joy of Simeon and Anna
- 2:39-40 Jesus' childhood at Nazareth
- 2:41-50 Jesus' visit to the temple at age twelve / the confounding of the doctors of the law
- 2:51-52 The eighteen silent years at Nazareth
- 3:1-2 The political and religious scene
- 3:10-14 Answers John the Baptist gave to those who came to his baptism
- 3:19-20 The reason Herod imprisoned John the Baptist (John disapproved of his marriage)
- 3:23-38 Genealogy of Jesus traced back to Adam
- 4:16-30 Detailed description of Christ's preaching at Nazareth and the rejection that followed
- 5:1-11 The miraculous draft of fishes
- 6:24-26 The four woes (not included in Matthew's Sermon on the Mount)
- 7:11-17 The son of the widow of Nain raised from the dead
- 7:36-50 Jesus anointed by a sinful woman; (parable of the two debtors); the woman's salvation
- 8:1-3 The second tour of Galilee / The women who followed Jesus and ministered to him
- 9:51-56 The Samaritan towns who rejected Jesus / Desire of James and John to consume them
- 10:1-24 The sending out of the seventy / Their return
- 10:30-37 Parable of the good Samaritan
- 10:38-42 In the home of Mary and Martha
- 11:5-8 Parable of the friend at midnight
- 11:27-28 Blessedness of those who *obey* more than the blessedness of Mary
- 12:13-21 Warnings against covetousness / Parable of the rich fool

12:47-48 Many or few stripes (Judgment is determined by the light one has.)

13:1-9 Tale of two tragedies / Parable of the fruitless fig tree

13:10-17 Healing of the woman bound by Satan eighteen years

13:31-33 Christ's reply to the warning to flee because "Herod will kill thee."

14:1-6 Healing of the man with dropsy (edema - abnormal accumulation of body fluid)

14:7-15 Teaching on humility (taking the low place i.e. If you stay down you can't be put down.)

14:28-33 Parables on counting the cost

15:8-10 Parable of the lost coin

15:11-32 The prodigal son

16:1-13 Parable of the unjust steward

16:14-15 Hypocrisy of the Pharisees (not how we appear to men but to God)

16:19-31 The rich man and Lazarus

17:7-10 The servant's duty (After going the second mile we should say, "This is only my duty.")

17:11-19 Healing of the ten lepers (Only *one* healed leper used his healthy body to glorify God.)

17:20-21 Interpretation of the kingdom of God (It is spiritual; it is within you.)

18:1-8 Parable of the unjust judge (on importunity - I *insist* on having an answer.)

18:9-14 The self-righteous Pharisee versus the publican who had no plea

19:1-10 The conversion of little Zacchaeus

22:31-33 Peter's need of conversion (Peter was the wheat; his self-strength was the chaff.)

22:35-38 The two swords

23:6-16 Jesus stands before Herod

23:27-31 Jesus and the wailing women (They bewailed him because he was dying without seed.)

23:40-43 The repentant thief on the cross

24:13-35 The two Emmaeus Disciples

24:33-35 The news of Christ's appearance to Peter

24:44-49 Christ's appearance to open the scriptures / Command to preach but wait for the Spirit

On the following pages we would like to give several comments on each of the above accounts which are found only in the Gospel of Luke.

BACKGROUND OF THE BIRTH OF JOHN THE BAPTIST (1:5-25). Luke opens his Gospel record by doing a case history of John's parents. In verses 5-6, he makes several significant statements about their marriage. Zacharias was a priest, but was married to a woman who also descended from Aaron the high priest. In other words, she came from the priestly line and had the same priestly call. Zacharias and Elizabeth had unity in their vocations. This is so important for a successful marriage. "And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless" (1:6). What a statement!

How wonderful and how rare it is to see *both* parents totally committed to God and walking in all the commandments of the Lord. The children of such unions are usually very exceptional and godly. In this particular case, they produced John, the greatest man born among women. When there is love and unity between parents, the children have far fewer conflicts. Parents, love your spouses more and it will stop a lot of rebellion in your children!

"There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judaea, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the course of Abia [or Abijah]" (1:5). The priesthood was divided into 24 courses among the families of Aaron. Each course ministered for two weeks (cf. 1 Chron. 24:5-19). Zacharias was of the family of Abijah. This little fact may seem unimportant, but nothing in Scripture is without significance. The course of Abia [Abijah] was the *eighth* course (1 Chron. 24:10), and that is very significant. *Eight* is the number of new beginnings, and the number eight governed this family. John was going to be the messenger who introduced a new man with a new covenant, and a completely new order.

In verses 8-10, Luke is explaining the priestly customs to his non-Jewish readers. In verse 11, a mighty angel appeared to Zacharias, not at the altar, but specifically on the *right side* of the altar. This angel was Gabriel (v19). Why would the Spirit direct Luke to record that Gabriel stood on the right side of the altar? I believe it is to show us that Michael, the other archangel, stands on the left side. These two are depicted by the archangels who hover over the mercy seat of the ark of the covenant. There was a third archangel who fell, and his name was Lucifer. He also caused a third of the inhabitants of heaven to fall with him. The two who did not fall held on to the mercy of God. When there is a rebellion, only those who cling to the mercy of God are kept from rebellion. Only God's mercy keeps us from rebellion—from hardening our hearts, and going our own way.

In Luke 1:12-17, Gabriel announces the birth of John to Zacharias. This was startling because both Zacharias and Elizabeth were now "well stricken in years" (1:7). In verse 13, the angel said, "*Thy prayer is heard*; and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John." They must have prayed many years for a son, but had long ago given up hope. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob all had barren wives, too, and needed divine intervention to see the promises of God fulfilled.

1:17 "And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of [Elijah], to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord." John the Baptist had the same anointing as Elijah. This anointing was to prepare the hearts of the people for the coming of Christ. The preparation always has to start in the homes. God's Spirit cannot move in the Church if the wells of all the church members are blocked with bitterness at home. The Church is only a collection of homes. Today this same anointing will come again to clear up conflicts in the hearts and homes. John would *partially* fulfill the prophecy in Malachi 4:5-6. Its *fullest* fulfillment will happen in our times—before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord (see Mal. 4:5-6).

THE ANNUNCIATION OF CHRIST'S BIRTH TO MARY (1:26-38). Six months after Elisabeth had conceived, Gabriel was sent to Mary. Gabriel was the messenger who imparted understanding of God's purposes and mysteries (Dan.9:21-22). Michael is better known for being a mighty warrior (Dan.10:13, 12:1, Rev.12:7), while Gabriel imparts direction and understanding.

Mary was around 18 years of age when Gabriel appeared to her. At that time she was engaged to Joseph. Mary lived in the northern section of Israel, in Galilee, in the city of Nazareth. Her cousin Elizabeth was much older (probably in her fifties or sixties), and lived in southern Israel, in Judea.

What an exciting event! Four thousand years had lapsed since man fell in the Garden. Now the promised "seed of the woman" who would fatally crush the head of the serpent was about to come into the world. Mary was stunned by Gabriel's salutation, "Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women" (1:28-29). The respect God had for this teenage girl was amazing. Timothy was only around eighteen, yet he was "well reported of by the brethren" (Acts 16:1-2). The Lord said of seventeen-year-old David, "I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after my own heart, who shall fulfill all my will" (Acts 13:22). It is good to encourage our young people by showing them how God can have high regard for them, irrespective of their age. Mary had found favor with God and was "highly favored" among women, even in her youth.

1:31-33 *"And behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. 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."* Jesus was named by Gabriel before his birth. He would inherit the rights to David's throne because Mary (and Joseph) were descendents of David. Not only is Jesus the King of all kings, and King over all the earth, he is also the King of Israel. He will literally and physically reign over Israel upon the throne of David during the Millennial Age.

Luke the physician studied the body, and delivered babies. Luke in particular would be fascinated with the conception of a child without a natural father. He alone of all the Gospel writers records the dialogue between Gabriel and Mary concerning the supernatural conception of this holy child. *"Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man? And the angel answered and said unto her, 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"* (1:34-35). It was the working of the Holy Spirit in the womb of Mary that made Jesus both God and man simultaneously. The eternal Son of God became an embryo. His spirit was integrated with a human body that was made of Mary's substance. Thus, Jesus was one hundred percent *human* and one hundred percent *divine* simultaneously at the incarnation.

To bolster Mary's faith, Gabriel informed Mary that her cousin who formerly had been called "barren," was now six months with child. *"And behold, thy cousin Elisabeth, she hath also conceived a son in her old age: and this is the sixth month with her, who was called barren. For with God nothing shall be impossible."* Thus, the age of miracles had already begun.

Mary had a believing heart. Her response to Gabriel was, *"Behold the handmaiden of the Lord, be it unto me according to thy word"* (1:38). Mary did not logically understand everything with her mind, but she believed with her heart, and that brought a divine miracle to birth.

MARY VISITS ELISABETH / MARY'S SONG OF PRAISE (1:39-56). Upon hearing that her older cousin Elisabeth was already six months with child, Mary went with haste from Galilee unto an unnamed city of Judah to visit her. As soon as Elisabeth heard Mary's voice, the unborn John leaped in her womb and Elisabeth started to prophesy (1:39-45). The prophecy confirmed that Mary indeed would be the mother of the Lord, and that God would perform everything He had told her because she had believed. This inspired Mary to sing out a prophetic song of praise in verses 46-56. Her song is similar to Hannah's Song (1 Sam. 2:1-10) after she brought forth Samuel. In 1:56, Mary remained with Elisabeth another three months, probably long enough to witness John's birth.

THE BIRTH OF JOHN / TONGUE OF ZACHARIAS LOOSED TO PROPHECY (1:57-80).

When Gabriel announced to Zacharias that he would have a son whose name should be John, Zacharias did not believe him. In 1:18, he hesitated, saying, "Whereby shall I know this? for I am an old man, and my wife well stricken in years." In verses 19-20, Gabriel admonished Zacharias that he would not be able to talk until the birth of John, because he did not believe. After the birth of John, on the *eighth* day when John was circumcised, everyone attempted to name the child Zacharias, after his father. When Elisabeth protested, a writing board was handed to the father, who wrote, "His name is John." As soon as he wrote this, immediately his tongue was loosed (after being dumb for over nine months), and prophecy gushed from him.

The first part of his prophecy confirmed that God had already started to visit Israel by raising up "a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David" (1:68-69). At that very moment, the Christ child was already developing in the womb of Mary. In verses 76-80, the prophecy focused on his own son John who would be called "the prophet of the Highest:" for he would go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways, and give knowledge of salvation unto his people.

TAXATION BY CAESAR / BIRTH OF JESUS / ANGELS' GLAD TIDINGS TO SHEPHERDS (2:1-20). It was the decree of Caesar Augustus that all the empire should be taxed that caused Joseph and Mary to come to Bethlehem of Judea, from Galilee. The journey was probably 75 or 80 miles. While they were resident at Bethlehem, Mary gave birth to Jesus. This fulfilled the Scripture in Micah 5:2 that the Chief Ruler, whose goings forth have been from everlasting, would come from Bethlehem. God controls the rulers of this world, and uses their decrees to fulfill his purposes.

On the very same day of his birth, an angel of the Lord appeared unto local shepherds, proclaiming good tidings of great joy which would be to all people. "For unto you is born this day in the city of David [Bethlehem] a Savior which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger" (see 2:8-12). The real meaning of the word "gospel" is *glad tidings or good news*. We should preach a positive message. The good news is that our debt has been paid by the Savior. Anyone who ignores the good news is *cutting himself off* from everlasting life (cf. Acts 13:46). But there is another point we should consider.

God came into this world disguised as an ordinary infant. He was not born in a palace, but in a stable. God is trying to tell us something here that is a key for finding God and knowing God—we should look for him in the *ordinary* things of life. Some of life's most sacred treasures are wrapped in ordinary packages. Many Christians overlook the real treasures because they are looking for something with a sensational exterior. Elijah looked for God in the fierce wind, the devouring fire, and the earthquake, but God was speaking in an ordinary still, small voice (1 Kg.19:11-13). Elijah found himself in *serious trouble* because of his inability to hear God in the ordinary.

CIRCUMCISION OF JESUS / HIS PRESENTATION IN THE TEMPLE / SIMEON AND ANNA (2:21-38). Jesus was circumcised the eighth day. It was customary for the Jews, when they circumcised their children, to name them at the same time (cf. 1:59), because when Abram was circumcised God gave him a new name and called him Abraham (Gen. 17:4-16). Joseph and Mary did everything according to the law of Moses. The Age of the Law did not terminate at the *birth* of Christ. The Law ended and the Age of Grace began after the *death* of Christ when He rent the veil, some thirty-three years later.

2:22-24 “*And when the days of [their] 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.*”

After the birth of a son, the days of purification for the mother and child were 40 days (Lev. 12:2-4). The *firstborn* son belonged wholly to the Lord according to Exodus 13:2. It is quite clear by the offering they brought, that Joseph and Mary were very poor (Lev. 12:6-8). Normally they should have brought a lamb for an offering. The Law permitted the poorer people to bring two turtle doves or two young pigeons if they could not afford to bring a lamb. Mary confessed that the Lord had regarded her *low estate* (1:48). The Lord had high esteem for her in spite of coming from very humble surroundings. Thus, we see that Jesus was brought up in a low-income family.

In Luke 2:25-35, we have the account of Simeon. He was just and devout and waited for the consolation of Israel. This man had a fire burning in his heart. Why do some people continue to press on, even in their old age, while others have long ago fizzled out? It depends upon their *vision!* When a person has had a significant meeting with God in his youth and has received special promises from God, he has a defined mark to press towards, and a holy fear of coming short of it. Simeon had a promise from God that he would not die until he had seen the coming Christ.

When Joseph and Mary brought the infant Jesus into the temple, the Holy Spirit prompted Simeon to come to the temple also, and he *recognized* the Messiah immediately. Discernment is one of the blessings of living a devout life. As Simeon took the infant into his arms, he began to prophesy of Christ's double call—He would be “a light to the Gentiles, and the glory of Israel” (2:28-32). As Joseph and Mary marvelled at the wonderful promises, the Lord further spoke of the cost of these promises. Christ would be a sign whom many would speak against. Even the nation of Israel would stumble because of Him, but would rise again. God told Mary that a sword would pierce her own soul, a reference, not doubt, to the fact that her Son and His Truth would not be received by Israel.

Anna was a prophetess. Like Simeon, she was quite advanced in years. Luke said she was about eighty-four. God also rewarded Anna's devout life by revealing unto her that the infant held by Mary in the temple was the Messiah. Her whole life was consumed with being in God's presence. She had been reduced to one thing in her life: to behold the beauty of the Lord and to enquire in his temple. Don't feel sorry for single people like Anna who give their whole lives to prayer, fasting, and intercession. You may think they have a very unfulfilled life, but it is quite the opposite. David exclaimed, “In thy presence is fullness of joy; at thy right hand are pleasures for ever more” in Psalm 16:11. Paul said, “Ye are complete in him” (Col. 2:10), and he was single. Anna had a desire for the *full* revelation of God, and a longing to be completely freed from the bondages of the fall. Thus, she spake of Christ to all others who “looked for redemption in Israel” (2:38).

JESUS' CHILDHOOD AT NAZARETH (2:39-40). In Luke 2:39, the Gospel writer does not choose to insert the events of Matthew 2:1-22. After the birth of Jesus, the wise men came to visit the new born King. Joseph and Mary were warned to leave Jerusalem (probably after the events in the temple) because Herod sought to kill the Child. Therefore they fled to Egypt for several years, and when they heard that Herod was dead, returned to Palestine. Then they were directed by God to live in Galilee. Thus, the family returned to Nazareth in Galilee. "And the child grew and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him" (2:40). In Isaiah 7:15 it was predicted of Christ, "Butter and honey shall he eat, that he may know to refuse the evil, and choose the good." Butter represents the riches of the milk of the Word (1 Pet. 2:2) and honey speaks of revelation (1 Sam.14:27). The child Jesus grew in wisdom, grace, and discernment because he nourished himself daily with the Word of God and prayer.

JESUS VISITS THE TEMPLE AT AGE TWELVE / CONFOUNDS THE DOCTORS (2:41-50). The parents of Jesus faithfully went to Jerusalem every year to observe the Passover. Scripture does not mention the child Jesus going with them until he was age twelve. After the parents left Jerusalem to return home, they assumed Jesus was in company with the group that came from Galilee, but He had stayed behind. Three days later they "found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions. And all that heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers" (2:46-47). (Luke the scholar and his educated audience would especially be attracted to this section of the life of Christ.) This scene was actually prophetic of Christ's future three and a half year ministry as the Teacher of Israel. God gives us a preview of our future ministry, too. He takes us through many preliminaries, and then brings us to our ultimate call.

2:49 *"How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?"* These are the first recorded words of the incarnate Son of God. There had been an erasure of all knowledge of His pre-existence when He became an embryo and was born as an infant in Bethlehem. We do know, however, that at the age of twelve, Jesus fully understood that He was the Son of God.

THE EIGHTEEN SILENT YEARS AT NAZARETH (2:51-52). Jesus, at age twelve, was not ready for the ministry. Prophetically, He was the arrow of Isaiah 49:2. The Father was polishing Him as the shaft of an arrow, and would keep Him hidden in His quiver until the appointed time. Jesus was entirely man and God at the same time. Wood speaks of humanity. Thus, the Father was polishing the humanity aspect of Jesus and preparing Him for His ministry, and the cross. The Gospels are silent regarding those eighteen years between His appearance at the temple and the time He commenced His ministry at age thirty. His hidden life is found in the Psalms, Isaiah 49:2, Hebrews 5:7-9, and in other portions of Scripture. The fact that his preparation years were silent suggests that our preparation years will be obscure, too, and that people cannot see our secret struggles and heart cries.

ANSWERS JOHN GAVE TO THOSE WHO CAME TO HIS BAPTISM (3:10-14). Thousands came to John to be baptized of him. John, being an authority on spiritual matters, was asked by people from many walks of life, "What shall we do?" He was questioned by the common people, by the military, by those in government and those who controlled the economy—"What shall we do?" I am sure the religious leaders sought him for spiritual guidance and direction too. John was a man with answers for his generation. I believe God desires to enlarge the capacity of the spiritual leaders of our day, because many will come to us to prove us with "hard questions" as the Queen of Sheba did Solomon (1 Kg.10:1-3). Solomon was able to answer every question by God's wisdom.

THE POLITICAL AND RELIGIOUS SCENE (3:1-2). There were two emperors in Rome during the life of Christ. Octavius Augustus was emperor when Christ was born. He was very gentle and friendly toward the Jews. Tiberius Caesar, who followed him, was extremely cruel and treated the Jews harshly. He became emperor around A.D. 14. Locally, Palestine was governed by men who owed allegiance to Rome. These men were from the Herodian family. Also there were Roman procurators. Pontius Pilate was the last of five procurators. Pilate governed Judea. Herod Antipas was tetrarch of Galilee, his brother Philip, tetrarch of Ituraea. (A tetrarch was the ruler of a fourth part of a province.) Lysanias was the tetrarch of Abilene. Ituraea and Abilene were regions north of Galilee. That is the political scene. Annas and Caiaphas were high priests. This shows the confusion in the religious world. Normally there would only be *one* high priest. Annas was deposed by Roman officials, and Caiaphas, his son in law, was officially appointed. The Jews still recognized Annas, thus there were two high priests. After all was said about the men who ruled from thrones, palaces, and temples, “*the word of the Lord came unto John ... in the wilderness.*” God by-passed the established systems of the day, and revival started from someone who heard from God in the wilderness.

THE REASON HEROD IMPRISONED JOHN (3:19-20). “*But Herod the tetrarch, being reproved by him for Herodias his brother Philip's wife, and for the evils which Herod had done, Added yet this above all, that he shut up John in prison.*” Herod had done many evils which John had reproved him for, but the incident that angered Herod most was when John mentioned his wrong marriage. Herod had taken his brother Philip's wife. Nothing stirs up emotions and anger more than a minister who mentions the subject of marriage and divorce. This is the reason most ministers evade the issue. They would rather preach on subjects which are far less sensitive, and keep their churches overflowing with numbers, success, and finance. John lost his head over the matter. When you stand for the permanence of marriage, sometimes you will feel like you are going to lose your head, too.

GENEALOGY OF JESUS TRACED BACK TO ADAM (3:23-38). Luke traces Mary's genealogy all the way back to Adam, over eighty generations. Joseph's genealogy is given in Matthew 1:1-16. Joseph's father's name was *Jacob* (Mt.1:16). Mary's father's name was *Heli*, which is Greek for Eli. Why then does Luke 3:23 say that Joseph was the son of Heli? It would be better rendered that Joseph was the son [in law] of Heli. When Luke finally gets back to Adam in verse 38, he calls Adam “the son of God.” Thus, as Paul tells us in Acts 17:28, we are the offspring of God.

CHRIST'S PREACHING AT NAZARETH / SUBSEQUENT REJECTION (4:16-30). “Physician, heal thyself” (4:23). Sometimes the hardest place to preach is in your own home town, among those with whom you were brought up. This was so in the life of Jesus. He could not perform many mighty works there because of the atmosphere of unbelief. Faith releases God's power, but a hardened heart stops the flow. The word presented to Israel in the wilderness did not profit them because it was not *received* with faith in those that heard it (Heb. 4:2). Jesus preached from Isaiah 61:1. Then he “sat down” in a seat reserved only for the coming Messiah. “And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him” (4:20). Then Jesus gave two scriptural examples of how God bypassed the Jews and blessed the Gentiles instead, when they proved to be more honorable. There were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah when there was great famine, but he was only sent to a Gentile woman in Sidon. And there were many lepers in Israel, but Elisha cleansed none of them except Naaman, a Syrian. God is no respecter of persons, whether they are Jew or Gentile, male or female, bond or free. And when God's people continually reject what He is saying, He will look for others who will hear Him. The congregation became so enraged that they tried to murder Him.

THE MIRACULOUS DRAFT OF FISHES (5:1-11). Jesus sat down in Peter's boat when it was thrust out a little from the land. He taught from the boat because the winds of the sea blowing inland carried His voice and served as a natural sound system. After He was finished teaching He said to Peter, "Launch out into the deep." If we stay on the shoreline, we will not catch many fish. Only as we abandon our lives and launch out into the deep will our nets be filled. Then the Lord commanded Peter to let his net down for a draught. Peter's response was less than it should have been. He said, "Master, we have toiled all the night and have taken nothing." When God says it is going to rain, don't hold out a cup! Get all your pots and pans ready. God wanted to give Peter more than he made room for. When Peter obeyed, he enclosed a great multitude of fishes, and the net broke.

Fish represent people. Christ told the disciples, "I will make you fishers of men." This miracle speaks of multitudes coming to Christ as we cast out the Gospel net (Read Isaiah 60:1-5). In the last days when the conditions in the world are at their very darkest, God's light will *arise* upon those who have prepared their hearts, and the Gentiles and kings will come to that light. "The abundance of the sea shall be converted unto thee" (Isa. 60:5). When everything is very dark, the multitudes will come to those who have light. They will come to those messengers who have the answers.

John records a similar episode of a ship overflowing with fishes (Jn. 21:6-11). This was after the resurrection. The outstanding difference between Luke 5:1-11 and John 21:6-11 is that the net *broke* in the first catch, but the net did *not* break in the second one. If God were to give us a net full of converts today, would we be able to keep them, or would we lose them? Perhaps God has to strengthen our net before he sends an influx of people to our church. John records that there were one-hundred-and-fifty-three great fishes caught. Someone has suggested that there were one hundred-and-fifty-three nations at that time, and that these fish represented believers God had in every nation.

THE FOUR WOES (6:21-26). When you go God's way, at first you will do a lot of weeping, but you will end up laughing. After all, it is the end that counts. I always worry when I see people blossoming out too soon in their life and ministry. Allow God to develop your roots first. Let Him build a good foundation under you *before* you are fruitful. If you do not concentrate on your foundation first, your life will collapse later (and your home) and your fruit will not remain. If you choose the easy and quick way to success, you may start out laughing, but you will end up weeping. Woe unto you who are rich now, and are full now, and are laughing now, and are having all men speaking well of you now—everything will take an about-face later. Choose God's way (which is not the easy and popular way) and you will end up laughing. Your fruit will remain, too.

THE SON OF THE WIDOW OF NAIN RAISED FROM THE DEAD (7:11-17). In those days the whole city came to a funeral. Jesus must have seen many funerals, but here was one where he sovereignly chose to have compassion, saying to the mother, "Weep not." He then commanded the young man to arise. Jesus is the Resurrection and the Life. He is the one who sovereignly chooses which Christians will be in the First Resurrection. Not every believer is accounted worthy to participate in this resurrection, as Revelation 20:5-6 implies (cf. Phil. 3:11).

Smith Wigglesworth, Apostle to Africa, raised at least twenty-five people from the dead, though only about twelve cases are documented. That same resurrection power is available today, and we shall yet see the dead raised. The raising of the widow's son in Nain really shook the whole region. Christ was very popular in the second year of his ministry. His fame spread abroad everywhere. In his third year, he was very opposed. In our ministry we will be blessed and cursed, too.

JESUS ANOINTED BY A SINFUL WOMAN / HER SALVATION (Lk. 7:36-50). Luke gives more particulars regarding the redeeming and uplifting work which Jesus accomplished among women, than any of the other Gospel writers. He emphasizes the kindness with which Jesus acted towards women, in contrast with the unsympathetic and even harsh attitude revealed toward them by many Jews and Gentiles of those times. Jesus created women, and he understands them, and promotes them. Where Christianity is not preached, women usually do not come into prominence.

The unnamed woman mentioned in Luke 7 had a sinful lifestyle, but when she saw Jesus her heart was kindled with faith. Perhaps she had been born out of wedlock or molested when she was a child, or taken advantage of as a young woman, and was trapped in a lifestyle she did not want. Like so many women, she was looking for genuine love, and she perceived divine love and sincerity in the Master. It is clear from verse 50 that supernatural faith had been imparted to her heart by the Spirit. Divine faith causes our heart to have assurance that we are pardoned, loved, and accepted.

She brought with her an expensive alabaster box which represented a whole year's wages, and anointed the Lord with the costly ointment. The Pharisee sitting by watched with criticism in his heart. He said within himself, "This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner woman this is that toucheth him: for she is a sinner" (Lk. 7:39). We really have to be careful what we are saying in our hearts, because the Lord hears it (Num.12:2). God wants us to be *real* inside, not smiling outwardly and criticizing inwardly. "And Jesus *answering* said unto him, Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee" (7:40). Jesus was answering what Simon had uttered only within himself, not audibly. Jesus wanted to circumcize the heart of Simon with the Sword of his Truth, and He does so by giving a parable of two debtors.

A certain creditor had two debtors, one owing 500 pence, and the other 50. He frankly forgave both debtors. Which one would love and appreciate this act of grace the most? Certainly the one who owed the most! It is precisely the same way with the Lord. Those who love Him most are those who *realize* how much they have been forgiven. People who are self-righteous feel that they have little to be pardoned of; therefore, they love the Lord very little. Other people who have had a *revelation* of the depths of the depravity of their hearts understand how much they have been forgiven. Therefore they love the Lord much and feel they owe Him their all.

SECOND TOUR OF GALILEE / THE WOMEN WHO MINISTERED TO JESUS (Lk. 8:1-3). Christ went throughout every *city* and *village* of Galilee, preaching the glad tidings of the kingdom of God, and the twelve were with Him. The Gospel gives hope to man that he can be reformed and reconciled to God. Not only were the twelve attending Him, but also many women who "ministered unto him of their substance." Since Jesus and His apostles spent all their time preaching, they had to rely and live upon the gifts and kindnesses of their friends. This involved the sacrifices of *many* women, some of whom are mentioned by name, and many others who are not. Some of these women were Christ's *patients*, as Doctor Luke would bring out. They had been healed of evil spirits and other infirmities such as depression. Christ had been a physician of both their bodies and souls, and they enthusiastically rendered back to the Savior of their natural substance, and probably provided meals frequently. One of them was Mary Magdalene, out of whom went seven devils. Formerly she had lived a very evil life, but had been transformed by the Great Physician and became one of His most loyal followers. Mary Magdalene was the first one to whom Christ showed Himself alive after His resurrection (cf. Jn. 20:11-18). What a wonderful Savior!

JAMES AND JOHN DESIRE TO CALL FIRE DOWN ON THE SAMARITANS (Lk. 9:51-56). The Jews had no dealings with the Samaritans (cf. Jn. 4:9), and the Samaritans did not like the Jews either, as we can see in this account. The great controversy between the two parties concerned the place of worship—whether it should be at Jerusalem or on mount Gerizim in Samaria (Jn. 4:20). When Jesus travelled from northern Galilee to southern Judea, the fastest way was through Samaria. When He sent messengers before Him to prepare lodging in one of the villages, the watchmen would not receive Him into the village limits because He was set in the direction of Jerusalem. They probably lodged other Galileans who travelled to the feasts frequently, and made a profit from their commerce, but they refused a renowned teacher like Christ who taught in the temple at Jerusalem.

James and John (whom Christ called “the sons of thunder”) were infuriated when they learned of this deliberate insult to their Master. The brothers wanted the village to be burned up like Sodom. They asked, “Wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elijah did?” (Lk. 9:54). And they believed that Christ could have authorized them to do so, too. But the Lord turned and rebuked them. In the original Greek, it was a *mild* rebuke. Christ understood that their hearts were not wicked, but ignorant. They did not know “*what spirit they were of.*” This was not a scathing rebuke, but an enlightening admonition. I have learned that many times people are oblivious to their problems. They respond much better to a gentle exhortation, rather than a verbal thrashing. “Brothers, you just don't realize what you are doing.” “Oh! Thank you for directing my attention to that. I wasn't aware of the effect this was having on others!” Sometimes you have to be very firm with people, but sharp rebukes should be rare. All James and John needed was a change of mind and attitude. Just a few years later, John was laying his hands on the Samaritans to receive the baptism in the Holy Spirit (cf. Acts 8:14-17).

This unnamed village that rejected Jesus had *robbed themselves* of a great blessing. They were the real losers, not Christ. They had just closed their gates to a Heavenly Guest. They were refusing the greatest dignitary of all times. The main problem was ignorance and spiritual blindness. Christ put up with the injury and moved on to another village. After the day of Pentecost, God visited all the Samaritan villages and many of them came to Christ. We should not to be too quick to write people off as hopeless as James and John did at first.

THE SENDING OUT OF THE SEVENTY / THEIR RETURN (Lk.10:1-24). In the Gospel of Matthew, Christ sent out the twelve apostles to preach (Mt.10:1-11). By this time they had been with Him for almost two years of training. Later that year, in the fall of A.D. 29, He sent out another group consisting of seventy. Jesus had *hundreds* of disciples and interested listeners (Jn. 6:60-66), but many of them were offended and left Him when the tests of life came. The twelve apostles were the most intimate, but there was another notable group of *seventy* who were constant hearers of Christ's doctrine and witnesses of His miracles. Peter describes them as “men which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us” (Acts 1:21). Matthias, who replaced the fallen Judas, was one of the seventy, no doubt. Some believe that Luke could have been one of the seventy, but this cannot be proved or disproved. Many of these seventy were among the 120 who were visited by God in the upper room on the day of Pentecost.

The seventy were sent out to places that Jesus would eventually visit. First of all he told them to pray that the Lord of the harvest would send out laborers into the harvest field, because the harvest was plenteous, but the laborers were few.

In Matthew 10 and Luke 10, Christ instructed *both* groups of ministers to travel light, stay focused on their mission, heal the sick, proclaim glad tidings, be meek (as lambs among wolves), accept hospitality graciously, and stay in one house while they were in that particular city or village. They were not to go from house to house. There is wisdom in staying in *one* house, not several, if you are a guest speaker in a church. Those who host the visiting minister will want to spread stories or grievances they have against the pastor or church. It is best not to have your ears filled with this.

(10:17-20) When the seventy returned from their mission, they gloried in the new anointing and power that Christ had bestowed upon them, saying, “Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name.” Christ affirmed that indeed He had given them all power over the enemy, and that nothing would by any means hurt them. Yet, the Lord cautioned them in this matter of power, saying, “... Rejoice not that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven.” There is a reason why the Lord exhorted them concerning this matter. Many ministers rejoice in the wrong thing—they glory in their ministry and anointing and how God is using them. Some rely on their ministry and gifts to save them, while they practice iniquity. There is a subtle temptation to think that because God is using us mightily that He will excuse our sin. This is a terrible deception! Christ warns in Matthew 7:21-23 that *many* who have been used by God to cast out demons, prophesy, and do many wonderful works, will not make it into heaven. It is Jesus' blood and personal righteousness that saves us, not our ministry or gifts. God will not overlook our sin because we have a great ministry. We must be very clear on this point.

PARABLE OF THE GOOD SAMARITAN (Lk.10:30-37). This parable teaches us to be merciful, even to people we don't know. We are all members of the human race, we have all descended from the same parents, Adam and Eve. Therefore, we are all related to one another. Professionalism and religion can be empty and heartless, demonstrated by the fact that a *Levite* and a *priest* by-passed a dying man, but a Samaritan showed him mercy. Christ was also addressing prejudice here, showing that there were some decent people in Samaria, a lesson many of the Judeans needed to understand.

Now that we are on the subject of good works, I would like to interject another crucial point concerning humanitarianism. While it is important to help people with food, clothes, and medical attention, the most important aspect of the Gospel is the truth itself. It is the truth that sets men free. But if we seek to help people mainly with their physical needs while there is no moral change, we are actually doing them a disservice. For example, a village in Ethiopia was at the point of starvation. Aid was rushed there, and the tribe totally recovered from sickness and starvation. When they were strong again, they attacked and destroyed a neighboring village. There had been no moral change. Therefore, if we only minister to the natural needs of men without meeting their spiritual needs, we are going to make them even more evil. We will totally defeat our purpose. Our labor will be in vain.

IN THE HOME OF MARY AND MARTHA (Lk.10:38-42). Mary sat at Jesus' feet and heard His word. What was imparted into her heart by being in His presence would never be taken away. Martha, on the other hand, was typical of many housewives. She was “anxious and troubled about many things.” She was working so hard to have the house in order, and was fretting and tense, and perhaps a little angry because no one was helping. She was out of victory; there was no song in her heart. Make it your priority to spend time with Jesus. He will speak to you and give you peace. Then you can face the day with a song, with faith, and with the anointing. Be a perfectionist about your spiritual house rather than your natural house. Concentrate on the inner man first, not the outer man.

PARABLE OF THE FRIEND AT MIDNIGHT (Lk.11:5-8). In this parable, Christ taught on the subject of importunity. If we want something from God, we must have aggressive persistence or we will *not* receive those things we desire. Some people teach that if you ask God a second time, it shows you did not believe He heard you the first time; but this is unscriptural. We are commanded to ask, seek, and knock continually, and then we will receive. The truth is, prayer is hard work, and because we are *lazy* in our prayer life, we do not pray through until we have our answers. Let us not give in or give up. Only the *violent* in spirit will receive the blessings of the kingdom (Mt.11:12).

BLESSEDNESS OF OBEDIENCE MORE THAN BLESSEDNESS OF MARY (Lk.11:27-28). A certain woman said unto him ... “Blessed is the womb that bare thee ... But he said, Yea, rather, blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it.” Jesus took the attention away from Mary his mother, and concentrated on the only thing that can change people—hearing the Word of God and doing it. So many things in life are *distractions* that lead us away from the real issues. The real issue is Jesus, not the woman (or instrument) God used to bring Jesus into the world. When the wise men came to the place where the child Jesus was, with His mother, Matthew 2:11 says they fell down and worshipped *Him*, not them. Only God is worthy of worship, not any symbol or instrument He uses. See also Matthew 12:46-50, Mark 3:31-35, Luke 8:19-21.

WARNINGS AGAINST COVETOUSNESS / PARABLE OF THE RICH FOOL (Lk.12:13-21). Verse 13 records a contention over an inheritance. Arguments over wills are very common and usually bring out the worst in people, especially that wretched iniquity called *covetousness*. In this particular case, the Lord did not sympathize with the man who was complaining, but warned against covetousness, saying, “a man's life does not consist in the abundance of things he possesses.” Happiness is not found by amassing more material things. (Many Christians don't believe this.) Anyone who swindles family members of their rightful share of an inheritance will receive a curse. They will not enjoy what they have taken by fraud, and the riches they have finagled into their possession will desert them in the middle of their lives (Jer.17:11). In the end they will prove to be fools.

Then the Lord spoke a parable about a man who put his whole heart and trust in earthly treasures, but was *desperately poor* regarding the true and enduring riches. He is so typical of fallen man. Natural man has *no eternal vision*; therefore, he is living only for this life. Oh, how foolish! Everyone is going to die. This fleeting life will soon be history for everyone. Only those things which are invested for eternity will last. When the man's business began to soar, he said, “What shall I do? I need a bigger place to store up all my goods.” But I will tell you what he should have done. He should have given some of those goods to others who were destitute and starving. Instead he built bigger storage houses, as he continued to hoard and clutch his possessions. He thought he would have security and a very comfortable retirement. Instead, he died suddenly (probably of a heart attack), and left all those goods behind. Worst of all, he went into eternity *cursed* instead of blessed. May this be a warning to all of us to flee covetousness and be openhanded with our material goods.

MANY OR FEW STRIPES (Lk.12:47-48). The servant who had knowledge of his Lord's will but did not do it shall be beaten with *many* stripes. The servant who did not know the Lord's will shall be beaten with *few*. It does not say that the ignorant servant would be exempt from punishment, but that his punishment would be less. God judges people according to the light they have had. In Matthew 11:20-24, God held the cities of Galilee more accountable than Sodom and Tyre and Sidon, because they had greater light. People who have never heard the Gospel will have less judgment in hell.

TALE OF TWO TRAGEDIES / PARABLE OF THE FRUITLESS FIG TREE (Lk.13:1-9). In verses 1-5, Christ makes reference to two recent tragedies of His day of which history has little to note. In the first tragedy, Pontius Pilate had slain some Galileans when they were sacrificing in the temple in Jerusalem, and had mingled their blood with the sacrifices. It was an outrageous act. When Jesus was told the recent happening, He replied: “Suppose ye that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, Nay: but, except *ye* repent, ye shall all likewise perish.” Then the tower of Siloam collapsed in Jerusalem, and eighteen men died as a result. Jesus again asked: “Think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, Nay: but, except *ye* repent, ye shall all likewise perish.”

Jesus used these two current events to confront a problem that is deeply ingrained in man, and that is the problem of *comparing* ourselves with others. Man looks down upon others and concludes, “I am not nearly as bad as such and such a person; therefore, I am all right as I am.” This is like a man who is driving 70 mph in a 45 mph zone. He thinks he is all right because there are others who are zooming past him at 85 mph. His confidence, however, is founded upon very shaky premises, especially when he is summoned to the courtroom with a ticket and stands before the judge.

The Lord replied: “Never mind comparing yourself with others whom you think are much worse than yourself! Unless *you* repent, you will perish likewise.” We cannot measure ourselves by others. We must allign ourselves with the Chief Corner Stone. He is the only standard. In hell there will be wicked people, and other people who are not as wicked. Only those who repent and obey the Gospel will go to heaven. There will be many nice people in hell—ones who thought they were good enough as they were, without the Savior. Man *justifies himself* by comparing himself with others who are greater offenders, but the fact remains, judgment awaits *everyone* who is unrepentant. It is irrelevant how good or how bad we have been We *all* need to repent or we will all likewise perish.

In light of these two tragedies, Christ told a story about a fig tree that bore no fruit. It is fruit that God wants. Unless there is genuine repentance, a person will go into eternity fruitless, and worthless. In the parable, Christ was specifically indicting Jerusalem, and Israel in general, for bearing no fruit. For three years the Lord had taught in Israel, but there was little to show for it. Eventually Jerusalem was destroyed because she was fruitless. Christ said that the kingdom would be taken from Israel and given to a nation bearing fruit. That nation is the Church (Mt. 21:42-45, 1 Pet. 2:9). When Christ cursed the barren fig tree (Mk.11:12-14, Mt. 21:18-19), He was cursing barren Israel.

HEALING OF THE WOMAN BOUND BY SATAN EIGHTEEN YEARS (Lk.13:10-17). This woman was bowed over for eighteen years, and could not by any means lift herself up. The *root* of her *physical* problem was “a spirit of infirmity.” She needed deliverance from a spiritual power. Cancer, too, can be an evil spirit. The number *eighteen* has significance. It is the number of *strength* in Scripture, and this particular bondage had become very strong in her life. Our bondages get stronger and stronger as we grow older unless we have a meeting with God and they are dealt with.

The ruler of the synagogue was filled with indignation because Jesus healed her on the sabbath. Legalism is rigid adherence to a law, but it produces tremendous hypocrisy. In trying to observe the letter of the law, a legalist becomes the greatest violator of the law because he is not able to keep the most important commandment of the law, which is to *love* our neighbor. Christ reasoned that since even farmers have to untie and loose their cattle on the sabbath day to water them, should not this woman whom Satan had kept tied up for eighteen years also be loosed on the sabbath day?

CHRIST'S RESPONSE TO "FLEE BECAUSE HEROD WILL KILL THEE" (Lk.13:31-33).

Jesus was warned by certain Pharisees to get out of Galilee because Herod who governed Galilee allegedly planned to kill Him. But Christ would not be intimidated by that fox (Herod), or by the other foxes (the Pharisees) who feigned sincerity as they issued the alarm. Jesus was the Master of the situation. His hour to die had not yet come. He would continue to perform miracles today and tomorrow, and the third day (God's day) He would completely fulfill His work. The third day is a reference to His crucifixion when He would completely fulfill His mission. Jesus was not afraid of the threat because He knew Herod could do him no harm until His ministry was fulfilled, and because the place appointed for his death was Jerusalem, not Galilee. It cannot be that a prophet perish [outside of] Jerusalem. It is Jerusalem where the prophets are judged to be false by the Jewish Supreme Court (or Sanhedrin). It is Jerusalem that rejects and kills the prophets, and that stones those who are sent unto them by God (13:34-35).

HEALING OF THE MAN WITH DROPSY (Lk.14:1-6). Doctor Luke records special cases of sickness and disease. Here was a man with the dropsy, a condition of abnormal accumulation of fluid in body tissue or cavities. In verse 1, "they watched him." The Pharisees were trying to find something, that they might accuse Him (cf. Lk.11:53-54). Christ had many enemies, and some of His greatest opponents were Bible-quoting clergymen. I have found as a Bible teacher, that God confronts theological students and ministers about certain issues, and if they ignore Him, deception gains a stronghold in their lives. Instead of being a channel for God, they can become an instrument of the Adversary. Depending upon our response to God, we will either be part of the answer or *part of the problem* in our generation. There are many in the ministry today who are a major hindrance to what God is doing. Let us not be one of those, by God's grace.

TEACHING ON HUMILITY (Lk.14:7-15). In this parable, Christ teaches us to always take the low place. It is an honor to be promoted and to be beckoned to come up higher. But if we assume the high place, we might have to be demoted, an event which always causes great shame and embarrassment. You can never be put down if you always stay down. But if we have an exalted opinion of ourselves, we will be very humiliated when we are not treated with dignity. Humility begins in our thoughts. We must have a right opinion of ourselves. Stay low in your thoughts and in your actions, and then no one can ever put you down.

Christ also taught that we should honor the poor and help those who cannot repay us. He promises that we will be rewarded *at the time of the resurrection* (Lk.14:13-14). Our object is to invest in eternal matters. People are eternal; therefore, we should be kind to them. When we care for others, there is an eternal reward. Concentrate on those things that last for all eternity. There are only two main things we can take with us into eternity when we leave this world: 1.) Our character—what we have allowed God to deposit in our own lives; and 2.) What we have deposited in the lives of others to help them along life's difficult pathway. Remember, people are eternal, things are not. Concentrate on being good to people, and watch the condition of your own heart. See James 1:27.

PARABLE OF THE LOST COIN (Lk.15:8-10). Christ gave three great parables on "the lost and found" in 15:1-32. First, He spoke on the lost sheep, then the lost coin, and then the lost son. It is very upsetting to lose a valuable item such as a wallet or purse, or checkbook. How much more agonizing it is for parents to lose a child! This is how God feels about a son or daughter who has gone astray. He searches diligently to find him, and when he is restored, there is great rejoicing. There is more rejoicing over the restoration of the lost, than over those who are safely home.

THE PRODIGAL SON (Lk.15:11-32). Often the emphasis in this parable is placed on the bad attitude of the elder brother and his need for acceptance of his younger restored brother. However, something that is usually overlooked is the fact that the older faithful brother did not lose his inheritance, while the younger one did. When the wayward brother came home after squandering his inheritance and shaming the family name, the older brother struggled with ill feelings, especially when the father so readily accepted the younger brother. The father reasoned with his firstborn son, saying, “Son, thou art ever with me, and *all that I have is thine*” (15:31). The faithful elder son is usually defamed in most sermons, but we should remember that his faithfulness caused him to retain his full inheritance, while the younger son lost his. We must have a work done in our hearts so that when fallen brothers or sisters are restored to blessing, we are able to accept them. But remember, those who have not been faithful pay a high price for their unfaithfulness. They will lose part (or much) of their inheritance, and we should feel sorry for them rather than criticize them. Also, we should be very happy that they have been brought back into the ark of safety.

PARABLE OF THE UNJUST STEWARD (Lk.16:1-13). Verses 1-9 have been interpreted many different ways, but they bring us to the ultimate theme, “The Right Use of Money” in v10-13. If we are unfaithful in little things and natural things like money, then God will not commit to us the true riches. Unfaithful stewardship of money reveals that we would not be faithful with spiritual matters either. Many Christians disqualify themselves from the true riches and spiritual ministry because of their poor management of money. Money reveals our hearts. How we handle money reveals: the state of our conscience, our priorities, our deepest affections, where we place our security, how we use our time, whether we have idolatry in our hearts, if we have good or poor judgment, whether we have faith or unbelief, if we are a giver or grasper, selfish or unselfish, if we are a person of sacrifice, if we have discipline and self-control, if our job is more important than our family and God, whether we fear the Lord, and ultimately—how committed we are to the Lord.

HYPOCRISY OF THE PHARISEES (Lk.16:14-15). Christ taught on the subject of money and warned that we cannot serve two masters (God and money) at the same time. When the Pharisees heard Christ's teachings on money, they sneered at Him because they themselves were covetous and His message had convicted them. The Pharisees had a lust for money and took advantage of poor widows (Mt. 23:14, 27-28). He warned that although they appeared to be holy before men, God could see the wretchedness of their hearts. Christ had removed their cloke of covetousness and uncovered their sin (Jn.15:22). God hates hypocrisy and pretense. There is *no pretending* in the spiritual life. God sees people as they really are. Often some of the men who are the highest esteemed in the religious world are not respected by God at all. His eyesight is much better than ours.

THE RICH MAN AND LAZARUS (Lk.16:19-31). The story of the rich man and Lazarus is not a parable. Parables do not mention proper names. In this account, Jesus tells us a true story about two men in the hereafter and reveals what He saw in the lower parts of the earth. This is a revelation Christ had of the spirit world and some of the things people say after death. Actually, it is one of the most amazing stories in all of Scripture.

There was a certain rich man who had everything he wanted. Job 21:7-15 teaches that prosperity can be a curse because people feel they have no need of God. This is precisely how riches affected this rich man in Luke 16. He left God out of his life. Then there was a beggar named Lazarus. He was gaunt and sickly and felt privileged to eat of the crumbs that fell from the rich man's table.

Eventually, both men died and were buried. Their physical bodies were placed in the ground, but their departed spirits went into the lower parts of the earth. The rich man went into hell, and Lazarus went into “Abraham's bosom”, an expression used by the Jews to describe the resting place for the departed spirits of the righteous in the lower parts of the earth.

Before the cross, when the righteous died, they did not go to heaven. Their departed spirits went into a resting place in the lower regions of the earth. There was a great chasm between the resting place of the righteous, and the place of torment for the wicked. In the Old Testament, the word “hell” could include both places—the resting place for the righteous and the place of torment for the wicked. Hell comes from the Hebrew word “Sheol” which was translated “hell” 31 times, the “grave” 31 times, and the “pit” 3 times.

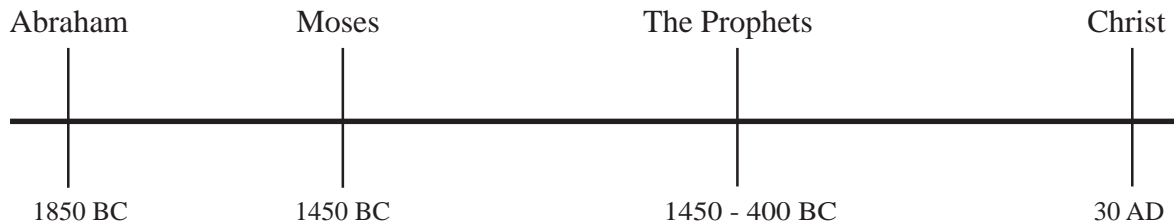
David said, “If I make my bed in hell, behold thou art there” (Psa.139:8). When Samuel died, his spirit went *down* into the earth (1 Sam. 28:11-15). When Hezekiah was about to die, he lamented going to the gates of the grave (or hell) (Isa. 38:10-11). Death was not something an Old Testament saint looked forward to. Today, a New Testament believer goes immediately to heaven. To be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord. Paul said, “To live is Christ, to die is gain” (see 2 Cor. 5:8, Phil.1:21). When Christ died on the cross, His spirit descended into the lower parts of the earth where the righteous spirits of the saints awaited His coming. When He rose from the dead He *led captivity captive* and released all the Old Testaments saints from “Abraham's Bosom” to go into heaven (Eph. 4:8-10). Let us come back to the story of the rich man and Lazarus.

The rich man was in torment but Lazarus was comforted. The rich man in hell had memory, reasoning power, speech, sight, hearing, pain, and unbearable regret. He had identity and a form also. For example, he “lifted up his eyes, being in torments.” He asked for *a little water to cool his tongue*. He was also aware of the blessed state of Lazarus, and there was a great gulf fixed between himself and Lazarus.

The rich man carried on an extraordinary dialogue with Abraham. This is interesting because Abraham had died nearly 2000 years before. Yet Abraham was more alive now than ever and he knew Moses and all the prophets who had followed him. This is because they were all down there with him. It is phenomenal to hear Abraham speaking again after his death in Genesis many centuries before (Gen. 25:7-8). Abraham's spiritual understanding is phenomenal too, for when the rich man requested that his five living brothers be warned about the horrors of hell, Abraham replied, “They have Moses and the prophets, let them hear them.” In other words they have the Scriptures to warn them. But the rich man pleaded, “No father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent.” To which Abraham replied: “If they hear not Moses and the prophets [the scriptures] neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.”

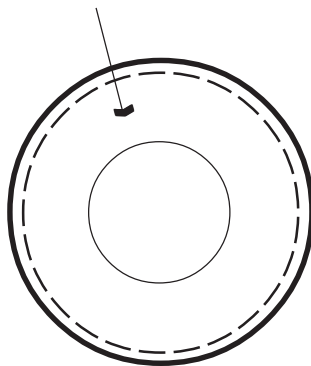
Abraham had tremendous spiritual understanding. Centuries after his departure from this earth he fully understood and explained that if people would not heed the warnings of Scripture about hell, neither would they believe, even if a man rose from the dead. In actual fact, one did rise from the dead but people still *refuse* to believe and accept Him.

To confirm the fact that Abraham was very much alive in the hereafter, the Lord said to Moses four hundred years after Abraham's departure from this life, “I am the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.” He is not the God of the dead but of the living (cf. Mk.12:26-27, Ex. 3:6).



Abraham died 400 years *before* Moses. Most of the other prophets lived after Moses. At death their spirits descended into the lower parts of the earth into a resting place. Abraham must have been acquainted with the other prophets in sheol because he refers to *Moses and the prophets* (Lk.16:29). This resting place for the departed righteous spirits was probably near the surface of the earth. It was not far down. But the place of the departed spirits of the wicked was deeper down in the earth. The more wicked, the deeper down they descend. Thus, there was “a great gulf fixed” between the spirits of the righteous and the spirits of the wicked.

There was a great gulf fixed between the two places.

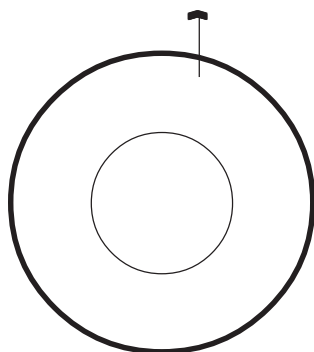


BEFORE THE CROSS

- There was a resting place for the departed righteous (Job 3:17-19). Undoubtedly, it was near the earth's surface.
- Samuel's spirit was here (1 Sam. 28:11).
- Abraham and the prophets were here, and Lazarus.
- Some who died in Noah's flood were here (1 Pet. 3:19-20).
- Jesus was acquainted with the underworld before He went there.
- Christ descended here for 3 1/2 days (Mt.12:40, Acts 2:27, 31)
- When Christ said to the repentant thief, “Today you will be with me in paradise,” it was in this place, not heaven (Lk. 23:43).
- People feared death in the Old Testament (Heb. 2:15).

Sheol is hell (translated, the *grave*, *hell*, or the *pit*). This was a place in the lower parts of the earth. It could refer *either* to the place of the departed righteous or the departed wicked (Acts 2:27).

When Jesus rose from the dead and ascended on high, He released all the departed spirits of the righteous, and took them to heaven.



AFTER THE CROSS

- Christ led captivity captive (Eph. 4:8-10). He released the departed spirits of the righteous, and opened heaven's gates.
- The place where they had waited is now empty.
- Now a believer goes immediately into heaven when he dies. “Absent from the body, present with the Lord” (2 Cor. 5:6-8)
- “To die is gain,” says Paul (Phil.1:21-23), and “to depart and be with Christ is far better.”
- Christ has taken away the sting of death (1 Cor.15:55-57). Also, He has taken away the fear of death, which is a terrible bondage (Heb. 2:15). He has the keys of death and of hell (Rev.1:18)

PARABLES ON COUNTING THE COST (Lk.14:28-33). Christ gave two parables concerning the high cost of being a disciple. He summarized the theme in verse 33: “So likewise, whosoever he be of you that *forsaketh not all that he hath*, he cannot be my disciple.” In both parables, Christ teaches that we should first sit down and count the cost before we enter the discipleship program. Otherwise, if we start but do not finish, we are going to bring disgrace upon ourselves and upon the Lord, too. There are multitudes of believers who start out well but get bumped out of the race because of pressure and discouragements. First of all we should determine within ourselves that there are *no alternatives* in life. God has a plan for my life and that is the only thing I am going to do!

Many Christians never burn their bridges behind them and they keep their ties with the past. We should settle it within our hearts beforehand that we are not turning back, regardless of the consequences. Also, we should fully understand that there are going to be many unforeseen obstacles—delays, misunderstandings, frowns from close friends and relatives, and much more. John 6:66 says that many of the Lord's disciples “went back, and walked no more with him.” They were offended. I am sure they said, “I never counted on this, and I am not going to put up with this.” These men had not forsaken all or *counted the high cost* of being a real disciple. The price is very high, but the price we pay for *not* following the Master is much higher.

THE SERVANT'S DUTY (Lk.17:7-10). The truths in this story will *save us* if we will truly hearken to them. The problem is, we know so many precepts, but often we do not obey them. Many truths have not been written in our hearts, and this is the reason we have so many struggles in life. Jesus tells a story of a servant who has worked hard all day long. When he comes home, his master does not pat him on the back and say, “Thank you so much! You have done such a good job. I know you have had a hard day. Sit down here and have something good to eat.” No! He mentions nothing at all of his laborious service but expects the servant to continue to serve him a good dinner as well.

How would you feel if you faithfully carried out all of your duties and went the extra mile too, and there was never a “thank you” or a kind word of appreciation. What is the typical response? Would there be pouting or anger? Would bitterness fester? Christ taught us that after we have done all these things, we should say: “We are unprofitable servants; we have done that which was our duty to do.” This *mind* that was in Christ Jesus must also be in us (Phil. 2:5-8). Virtually every problem we have stems from not obeying some part of the mind of Christ in the Word of God.

Jesus taught us to adopt the attitude that *we have done nothing extraordinary at all*, even when we have extended ourselves to the limit. Even when we feel unappreciated, unthanked, underpaid, unnoticed, and then criticized, we are to say: “It is only my reasonable service.” This is possible only when we recognize *Who* we are working for. If we are working for man, we are going to be hurt and offended. But if we are doing everything as “unto the Lord,” we will overcome, by God's grace.

Not many survive this test. I have seen one after another go to the wayside because they did not learn the lessons of this parable. Let's reiterate the highlights of this story because they are keys to real victory. Number one—Be a servant and do not expect a thank you, even when you have gone the extra mile. Say, “this is my reasonable service.” Number two—Remember *Who* you are working for. The Lord who sees in secret will reward you openly (Mt. 6:4, 6:6). Remember, you are not working for man, but God. Indeed you may be unthanked and unappreciated by man, but God has a record of everything, and He pays *very high wages* (Col. 3:22-24). These truths will save you.

HEALING OF THE TEN LEPERS (Lk.17:11-19). On the outskirts of a certain village (presumably in Samaria, v16), ten lepers saw Jesus from a distance and besought Him for mercy. Christ said to them: "Go shew yourselves unto the priests." He did not positively tell them that they would be cured. Therefore, this was a test of their faith and obedience. Jesus sent them to the priest to be inspected by him, for it was the priest who pronounced a person clean or unclean of leprosy (cf. Mt. 8:1-4, Lev.14:4-32). *As they went*, they were cleansed.

This is similar to the episode of Naaman the leper. Elisha told Naaman to go and wash in Jordan seven times and be clean. At first Naaman thought this was ridiculous. Later he yielded to the word of the Lord and was cleansed (2 Kgs. 5:9-14). Sometimes *the answer* to our problem does not come the way we expect it. Sometimes there are *steps* we have to take before our breakthrough.

Have you ever found yourself praying *against* the answer God gave you for your problem? One time a missionary woman had serious digestive problems, and she found herself all alone on the field for a month without any medical help. All she had to eat during that time was oatmeal. She prayed and prayed for a doctor to come, and for something different to eat. Neither came, and the woman grew very bitter against God. A month later, help did finally arrive. As she poured out all of her woes to the doctor, he replied: "Ma'am, Oatmeal was the very thing you needed for your ailment."

An evangelist from the northeast was in Florida holding revival services. One Sunday morning just before the meeting, his car and trailer became stuck in the sand. This was really troubling him because he feared that if it rained he would never get out. Someone else took him to the meeting, but he continued to pray desperately that it would not rain. After the service he returned to his car and tried to no avail to get out of the sand. A neighbor saw him struggling with his predicament and knew just what to do. He began connecting all his garden hoses and came over to the worried evangelist. "This will make the sand pack down. You will be out in a second" he explained. Sure enough, the vehicle drove out freely after the sand had been watered. Unwittingly, the frustrated man of God had been *praying against God's answer*. Often, God's answers and the means He employs are not what we expect, and not what we would choose. Naaman did not think washing in Jordan had anything to do with healing leprosy. The ten lepers had to go to the priest while they were still infected, but while they were going in the direction Christ gave, they were healed.

The most important point in the account of the ten lepers is the fact that *only one* returned to glorify God. *Only one* used his healthy body to glorify God. Certainly the others were happy to be healed, but only one came back to Christ and fell before him giving thanks. The others did not return to glorify God or serve Him. This is so true of many who are healed. They use their healthy bodies not to serve the Lord, but to serve *themselves* and to go their own way. Christ healed whole cities, yet many of them did not follow Him. What would you do if God healed you today? Would you use your healthy body for Him, or for yourself? Maybe God is waiting for a deeper commitment.

Exodus 4:23 - "Let my son go, that he may serve *me*." This was God's message to Pharaoh. God sets his people free from bondage so that they may serve Him, not themselves. What did Israel do when they were set free from Egyptian bondage? Did they serve the Lord? No! They served themselves. Only *one* of the ten lepers returned to glorify God. Christ said he was made "whole" (Lk.17:19). The others were healed physically, but never made *whole*. Only when we are healed in spirit are we made whole. Physical healing is only *partial* healing. Spiritual healing is even more important.

INTERPRETATION OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD (Lk.17:20-21). When it was demanded of Christ, “When shall the kingdom of God come?” He answered: “The kingdom of God cometh not with observation [or outward show]. Neither shall they say, Lo here, or, lo there! for behold, the kingdom of God is *within* you.”

The kingdom of God is in three realms. The kingdom of God is heaven itself. This heavenly kingdom needs to get inside us. It is an inner reality. It is righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit (Rom.14:17). It is deliverance from bondage (Lk.11:20, 10:9). It is heaven filling our soul. But, it is also an outward kingdom that comes to this earth in the Millennium. For today, however, it is within our hearts. It is not geographical (Jn. 4:20-24, 2 Cor. 3:17). It is having heaven inside of us—peace, joy, love, righteousness, liberty, power, and the presence of God. Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.

One woman wanted to go to Israel and be baptized in the Jordan River. She said, “Oh, to walk where Jesus walked.” The Lord spoke to her heart and said: “It is more important for you to walk where I am walking today.” The kingdom of God is not a geographical location. It is not *here* or *there*, or an outward thing. It is an inner reality. The realities of the kingdom of God are found in the center of God's will! This is also the *safest* place. Is the kingdom of self still reigning? How much territory are we still claiming as our own. Are we sitting on the throne, or is God?

Every outward kingdom always starts *inwardly*, in the heart. The Lord said to Rebecca, “Two nations are in thy womb” (Gen. 25:23). Jacob and Esau represented two tremendous kingdoms. Nimrod started the kingdoms of Babylon and Assyria (Gen.10:9-11). Before Babylon and Assyria were started, they were first conceived in the heart and mind of Nimrod. The computer kingdom, the music kingdom, the art kingdom, the clothing kingdom, the auto kingdom, the banking kingdom—all start in the hearts of individuals. The Disney Kingdom started in the heart of one man.

We should ask the Lord to subdue all the kingdoms of our hearts. Every kingdom is first conceived in the heart. It starts as a seed, a desire, a vision. May all the kingdoms of this world (our own world) become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ (Rev.11:15). The only good kind of abortion is when evil is put to death in our being before it grows and is birthed into an act. Remember, society never changes until people change. People never change until their hearts are changed. For this reason it is futile to try to change society by politics, marches, and demonstrations. The only hope for our society is a mighty revival. Judgment must first begin at the house of God (1 Pet. 4:17).

PARABLE OF THE UNJUST JUDGE / IMPORTUNITY (Lk.18:1-8). In this parable, Christ is teaching on importunity—not taking *no* for an answer. This is persistence in prayer that will not let up until the answer is given. We cannot allow ourselves to give up in discouragement. Our prayers must prevail until we have broken through. God purposely delays the answer in order to develop character in us. He bears long with us, and delays the answer. However, when the conditions are right and the qualifications have been met, He comes on the scene *speedily*. In Revelation 5:8, there is a golden vial [or bowl] *filled* with incense. This incense is “the prayers of the saints.” Sometimes there is a vial to *fill* before God gives the answer. God visited Cornelius after many prayers (Acts 10:1-4). The original Greek says: ask (and keep on asking), seek (and keep on seeking), knock (and keep on knocking). Those who persevere are the ones who *receive*.

THE SELF-RIGHTEOUS PHARISEE / THE PUBLICAN WITH NO PLEA (Lk.18:9-14). “And he spake this parable unto certain [ones] which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others” (18:9). This parable is about self-righteousness, which is rooted in pride (v14). God is not interested in what we can do in our own strength. When we can do something in our own strength, (without God) then we can boast about ourselves. However, this brings no glory to God.

What is self-righteousness? It is our own righteousness, not God's righteousness. It is something we can do in our own strength. Before his conversion, the apostle Paul never missed a feast day, never violated a sabbath day, and had memorized the whole Old Testament. Regarding the Law, Paul said he was “blameless” (Phil. 3:6). He had whereof to glory. Paul could rejoice in himself and praise himself endlessly for all the things he could do in his own strength. But self-righteousness brings no glory to God. It only brings glory to one's self. Self-righteousness (which is rooted in pride) also causes a person to look down upon others who have not worked as hard.

The Pharisee thanked God that he was so much better than others. First of all, he started his prayer by praising himself lavishly. He knew he was not an adulterer or an extortioner. Besides, he fasted twice a week, and faithfully tithed his income. We do not see him praising God for the grace that has kept him from evil. He is only worshipping *himself*. The publican was aware of his sinful state. His only plea was, “God, be merciful to me a sinner.” This simple, sincere, humble prayer pleased God. This man went home justified before God. The other man was an ill savor to God.

Humility is dependence upon God. When a man depends on God, this warms the heart of God. He *dwells* with those who have a humble and contrite spirit (Isa. 57:15) but *resists* the proud. Paul wanted to be found in Christ, not having his own righteousness, but the righteousness which is of God by faith (Phil. 3:9). When we have God's righteousness, it brings no glory to us. We are depending on Another One who paid our debt. We are leaning upon the One who sustains us daily with His grace. We are very sensitive to the temptations and torments others feel, and we are thankful for the power of God that has preserved us. We are well aware of God's intervention into our lives when we could have destroyed ourselves. We remember the bondages He broke in our lives so that we could walk uprightly before him. “Their righteousness is of me saith the Lord” (Isa. 54:17).

THE CONVERSION OF ZACCHAEUS (Lk.19:1-10). Zacchaeus was a publican. A publican was a collector of taxes for the Roman government. Of these there appear to have been two classes: The “chief of the publicans,” of whom Zacchaeus is an example. And then the ordinary publican, a lower class of servants engaged in the collecting of revenue. Matthew Levi was one of these. Often the publicans oppressed the people with illegal taxes in order to gain wealth for themselves. They were regarded as traitors and apostates to the Jews, and were classified with sinners, harlots, and the heathen (Mt. 9:11; 21:31; 18:17).

Zacchaeus was “the chief among the publicans, and he was rich.” When Jesus looked up and saw him in the tree, He called him by name. God saw his heart. (People did not.) Zacchaeus was overjoyed that the Master took notice of him and desired to come to his house. This brought about his conversion. One of the signs of true conversion is when a man releases the clutches he has upon his money. He promised to give half of his goods to the poor, and restore fourfold anything he had taken by fraud. *Real Christianity* is demonstrated when people seek to make right the wrongs they have done in the past. Christianity should not be viewed just as a convenience, but as a means of setting everything right and preparing ourselves for an eternal kingdom.

PETER'S NEED OF CONVERSION (Lk. 22:31-33). “And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath [asked] 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. And he said unto him, Lord, I am ready to go with thee, both into prison, and to death.”

Satan is allowed to test us, especially when we make bold, presumptuous declarations. Bold declarations are like waving a red flag before a raging bull. Satan saw some chaff in Peter and wanted to put him to the test. Peter asserted that he was ready, not only to go into prison but to die for the Lord. We see from the other Gospels that he vehemently argued with the Lord, proclaiming that he would not deny Him, even if everyone else did. In doing so, he was assuming superiority over his brethren. Even Christ could not dissuade him. The Lord had to stand back and let him fail. Jesus knew that Peter would be crushed with humiliation and guilt, and prayed that his faith would not be destroyed. With the destruction of his self-strength, Peter had a conversion of soul and was able to strengthen his brethren.

Remember, grace is only given to perform God's will, not our own. It was not the will of God for Peter to die for the Lord at this time. God still had another thirty-six years for Peter on this earth. Therefore, when Peter tried in his own strength to defend the Lord, God did not support his cause. There was no grace given to him, and he failed miserably. We should never forget this truth!

THE TWO SWORDS (Lk. 22:35-38). “He that hath no sword, let him sell his garment, and buy one... And they said, Lord, behold, here are two swords. And he said unto them, *It is enough.*” Certainly, the reason for mentioning a sword was not for the purpose of defending themselves. What would two swords among twelve brethren benefit them anyway? Around a thousand men armed with swords and staves came out to apprehend Jesus in Gethsemane (22:52). When Peter drew the sword and smote the servant of the high priest, Christ promptly said to Peter, “Put up thy sword into the sheath” (Jn.18:10-11). The Lord also healed the severed ear (Lk. 22:49-51). There is a warning given in Revelation 13:10 not to defend ourselves with arms. “He that killeth with the sword, must be killed with the sword.” See also Matthew 26:52-53, John 18:36.

JESUS STANDS BEFORE HEROD (Lk. 23:6-16). Herod's jurisdiction was over Galilee. Pilate's was over Judea. When Pilate understood that Jesus was a Galilean, he sent Jesus to Herod, who was also at Jerusalem at that time. Herod was delighted at the thought of seeing Jesus because he wanted to see him perform a miracle. He had no interest in changing his lifestyle; he was only interested in seeing some phenomena. This is so typical of the fallen nature. Some Christians will run across the country to see an evangelist do miracles, but have no desire to live lives of righteousness.

In the last days, the Man of Sin will ensnare many by means of mighty miracles (2 Thes. 2:9-10, Rev.13:13-14). The fallen nature has an immense curiosity to see the supernatural. Men and women seek to satisfy their spiritual appetites by delving into the psychic world, and trying to predict the future. Christians, too, fall into the snare of the pride of prediction. *Prediction* can be a golden idol.

Herod and Pilate were made friends that same day. Before, they had been enemies, possibly over the incident of Pilate's slaughter of Galileans, an act which was not in his authority to perform (Lk.13:1-2). What brought them together? Their common purpose was to destroy the righteous, to destroy Christ. This is *counterfeit unity*. In the last days, ten nations in Europe will unite, and will give their allegiance and support to the Beast to fight against Christ and His Church (Rev.17:12-14).

JESUS AND THE WAILING WOMEN (Lk. 23:27-31). Although Christ was rejected overall by the nation of Israel, there were a significant number of people who loved Him. Many of these had been touched in some way by His life and ministry. They knew that the Lord was being treated unjustly. “And there followed him a great company of people, and of women, which also bewailed and lamented him. But Jesus turning unto them said, Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but for yourselves and 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?”

It was customary for the women to bewail those who were dying without any offspring. Isaiah said, “Who shall declare his generation, for he was cut off out of the land of the living” (53:8). Jesus had no natural offspring to carry on His name. There was no natural seed to declare his generation. Thus, the women bewailed him. However, the Lord turned the focus from Himself, unto them. Jesus was not concerned about Himself. His concern was for the inhabitants of Jerusalem because the city would be destroyed by Rome in A.D. 70, and a million people would die. He told the women to weep for themselves and their children. Some of them would live to see the holocaust. Certainly their children would see it. The horrors that would come upon Jerusalem were unspeakable. The days were coming when it would be said, “Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare...” and they would wish for the mountains and hills to fall upon them to cover them.

For if they are doing these things to a green tree [the living wood - the Lord], what must happen to the dry wood [the nation of Israel]. These words may be applied more particularly to the destruction of Jerusalem which Christ had just foretold. The Jews would bring this judgment upon themselves by delivering Jesus to the Romans to be put to death. In abusing an innocent, excellent Man for His good works, how may they expect God to deal with them? If the Roman soldiers, unprovoked by Jesus, nailed him to a cross, how are the Romans going to deal with the inhabitants of Jerusalem who greatly provoked them in 66-70 A.D.?

The Olivet Discourse and several significant parables of the Lord were based upon Daniel 9:26-27. “...shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary...” (9:26). Jesus fully understood, that He, being the Messiah, would be *cut off* [rejected and crucified]. Consequently, as an act of God's vengeance, Jerusalem and the temple would be utterly destroyed by the people of the prince that should come. This was Titus and the Romans. In A.D. 70, Titus was only a prince, the son of Vespasian the emperor.

THE REPENTANT THIEF ON THE CROSS (Lk. 23:39-43). At first, this criminal joined in with the other one and railed against Jesus. However, during those hours upon the cross this man softened. God had given him the gift of repentance. The repentant thief rebuked the other criminal saying: “Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation?” [Since you are going to die, you should be getting your heart right with God]. Having the fear of God is an evidence of true repentance. Then he showed another *true evidence* of repentance. He acknowledged that he was getting what he deserved! This is remarkable evidence of genuine repentance. Many criminals never admit their guilt, but only that they have been “framed” by the court system, and unfairly sentenced. They are like Cain, who never clearly acknowledged the murder of his brother, saying only that his sentence was too severe (Gen. 4:8-13). True repentance says: “I am getting what I deserve.”

There were three crosses on Calvary's hill. (*Golgotha* is the Hebrew word for Calvary, Jn.19:17). Christ was in the middle, with a criminal on either side of Him. One man accepted Christ, and the other rejected Him. The unrepentant man was so close to everlasting life, yet he rejected it. This is the story of mankind. We can *choose* life or death, heaven or hell (Acts 28:24, Deut. 30:19). Peter said, "*Save yourselves* from this [perverse] generation" (Acts 2:40). Man has to reach out and take hold of the lifeline when he is perishing. If he does nothing, he will die.

The repentant thief said, "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom." Jesus replied, "*Today* you will be with me in paradise." There is no thought of purgatory or suffering first. *That very day* he would be in a place of comfort and rest, not torment. Christ paid our debt in full. When a person dies, he goes either to heaven or hell. There is no inbetween place to redeem one's self. At death, all decisions are final. Either a person is saved or lost. Ecclesiastes 11:3 implies this. When a tree falls, the tree is dead. In whatever direction it falls, it will remain there. If it falls toward the north or south, it will stay in that position.

THE TWO EMMAEUS DISCIPLES (Lk. 24:13-32). In this account, two disciples were walking home to Emmaeus, a village about seven miles from Jerusalem. One of them was Cleopas, (not to be confused with the Cleopas of John 19:25). The resurrected Christ joined them as they travelled. When Jesus questioned them about the subject of their anxious conversation, Cleopas replied, "Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?" Jesus asked them to explain.

It is obvious that the disciples were very downcast and ready to give up the cause. They had "trusted that it had been he [Jesus] which should have redeemed Israel" (24:21), but now he was dead. They proceeded to tell Him that some women had come to an empty tomb, and that angels told them He was alive. "And certain [ones] of them which were with us went to the sepulchre and found it even so as the women had said: but him they saw not." These two men must have been part of the "in-crowd" because of the way Christ opened His heart to them. Perhaps they were of the seventy that Jesus had sent out. By the Lord's response to these men, they definitely should have known better.

"*O fools, and slow of heart to believe* all that the prophets have spoken." This was not a very flattering reprimand. These men were called fools, and slow to believe. "And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them *in all the scriptures* the things concerning himself." We should understand that Jesus is *written* on every page of Scripture. He is THE WORD OF GOD. Look for him in Genesis, in the journey of Israel, in the tabernacle, in the feasts, in the offerings, in Job, in the Proverbs, and in all the prophets.

"And they drew nigh unto the village whither they went: *and he made as though he would have gone further*" (24:28). God wants to be wanted. Jesus was *testing* them. He had just opened up the riches of his Word, yet they did not recognize them. Were they hungry enough? Did they want the presence of Jesus enough? Then "...they constrained him, saying, Abide with us" (v29).

"And it came to pass, as he sat at meat with them, he took break, and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them. And their eyes were opened and they knew him; and he vanished out of their sight. And they said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us, and while he opened to us the scriptures." Altogether, Christ made five appearances to his followers that first Sunday.

THE NEWS OF CHRIST'S APPEARANCE TO PETER (Lk. 24:33-35). "And they [referring to the two Emmaeus disciples] arose up the same hour, and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven gathered together, and them that were with them, [Who said], The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared unto Simon [Peter]. And they [the two] told what things were done in the way, and he was known of them in breaking of bread."

It was a two hour walk from Jerusalem to Emmaeus. Jesus and the two disciples entered Emmaeus in the evening, and had a meal together. When Jesus revealed himself and then disappeared, quickly the two disciples returned to Jerusalem. It was getting late when they reached the eleven and their companions. The eleven apostles and company told them that the Lord was risen indeed, and had *appeared unto Peter*. While they were conversing, Jesus himself stood in their midst (Lk. 24:36-43, Jn. 20:19-24). This was Christ's first appearance to the eleven, although Thomas was absent.

Five times Christ was seen the same day that He rose. First, he appeared to Mary Magdalene alone in the garden (Jn. 20:14). Then He appeared to the women as they were going to tell the disciples (Mt. 28:9). Later, He appeared to Peter alone (Lk. 24:34, cf. 1 Cor.15:5). Then He appeared to the two Emmaeus disciples (Lk. 24:13-32), and now at night, to the ten, Thomas being absent.

Peter had needed a special encounter with the Lord after his miserable failure. The angels had told the women at the tomb, "He is risen; he is not here: behold the place where they laid him. but go your way, tell his disciples *and Peter...*" (Mk.16:6-7). Christ had prayed for Peter that his faith would not fail. When He rose from the dead, He wanted the apostles and especially Peter to know it. After showing himself to Mary Magdalene and then the other women, He appeared to Peter also. A number of days later, Christ appeared to seven of the disciples, including Peter, and publicly restored Peter before his brethren (Jn. 21:1-25). In charging Peter three times to "Feed my sheep", He was actually saying, "You are restored from your failure to fulfill your call to the ministry."

CHRIST'S APPEARANCE TO OPEN THE SCRIPTURES / THE COMMAND TO PREACH BUT FIRST TO WAIT FOR THE SPIRIT (Lk. 24:44-49). "And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me. Then opened he their [minds] that they might understand the scriptures" (24:44-45).

After being with Christ for three and a half years and hearing the finest teachings from the greatest Teacher, still the apostles needed the veil removed from their eyes. No matter how much we have learned, we still need our understanding illumined further. David prayed, "Open mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law" (Psa.119:18). Paul prayed that the eyes of our understanding would be enlightened (Eph.1:18, Col.1:9). There are divine moments when God imparts keys to us to unlock the mysteries of the Scriptures. We should pray always for new understanding, and we must *apply* our hearts unto wisdom. This involves hard work and study. Christ is written on every page. He is found in the Law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms.

In Luke 24:46-49, He commissions them again to evangelize. The good news of repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be preached in all nations. First, however, they were to *tarry* in Jerusalem *until* they were endued with power from on high. This is a reference to the baptism in the Holy Spirit which came on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4). We need this power also.

ACCOUNTS FOUND ONLY IN MATTHEW'S GOSPEL

Matthew, Mark, and Luke record eighty-three of the same accounts. Only twenty-four of these are found in *all four* Gospels. Luke has at least fifty-two accounts that are found *only* in his Gospel. Mark has two. Matthew gives twenty-seven unique accounts. They are the following:

- 1:18-25 Gabriel's annunciation of the birth of Jesus to Joseph
- 2:1-12 The visit of the wise men
- 2:13-15 The flight of Joseph, Mary, and Jesus into Egypt
- 2:16-18 The slaying of the children at Bethlehem
- 9:27-34 Blind men and dumb man healed
- 10:16-42 The price of true discipleship
- 11:20-24 Woes pronounced upon the cities of His time
- 11:25-30 The rest of God
- 12:38-45 The sign of the prophet Jonah
- 15:29-31 Many miracles performed
- 17:24-27 The payment of the temple tax
- 18:15-20 Proper discipline of an offending brother
- 18:21-35 Parable of the unmerciful servant
- 21:14 The lame and blind healed in the temple
- 21:28-32 Parable of the two sons
- 22:1-14 Parable of the marriage feast
- 25:1-13 Parable of the ten virgins
- 25:14-30 Parable of the ten talents
- 25:31-46 Parable of the judgment day / the sheep and goats
- 27:3-10 Judas commits suicide
- 27:19 Pilate's wife warned in a dream
- 27:24-25 Pilate washes his hands
- 27:51 A mighty earthquake
- 27:52-53 Graves opened / some resurrected
- 28:2-4 Fright of the Roman guards
- 28:9-10 Christ's appearance to the other women
- 28:11-15 The report of the Roman guards

Note: These 27 events are found *only* in Matthew. Some would say there are more than 27, others would say there are fewer. It all depends on how we divide up the events. For example: The Olivet Discourse (Matthew chapters 24-25) could be one heading. Or, we could make it *four*. The theme of the Olivet Discourse is the Second Coming of Christ. However, the Lord gave three parables in light of His coming—the ten virgins, the ten talents, and the sheep and goats. All of this was upon the Mount of Olives. We have made four accounts out of one long discourse. This is true in Luke's Gospel as well. Fifty-two accounts were mentioned, but they could be stretched into 64, or more. We can squeeze several accounts under one heading, or we can enumerate each account separately.

On the following pages, we would like to give several remarks on each of the narratives found only in the Gospel of Matthew.

GABRIEL'S ANNUNCIATION OF THE BIRTH OF JESUS TO JOSEPH (Mt. 1:18-25). These are very important verses. It would be easy to overlook several significant truths here, especially if we are not acquainted with Jewish customs. Matthew was writing to the Jewish society that fully understood the marriage customs of their times, but often these verses are not understood by the western world today. Because of this, the permanence of marriage is not stressed.

This section records the *engagement* of Mary and Joseph. During the time of their engagement they were called husband and wife. In the Jewish tradition, the engagement was esteemed almost as highly as the marriage itself. Usually the engagement lasted about one year. When Joseph “her husband” learned that Mary was expecting a child, surely he did not understand and was ready to “put her away.” It is easy to miss this! They were only *engaged*. They had not yet come together. Yet, they were called husband and wife in Jewish society. Matthew alone records this. This is not written to the Roman or Greek worlds. John does not mention this in his universal Gospel.

Joseph was “minded to put her away privily.” How can you put away a woman you are not even married to? The Jewish customs explain this. Jesus taught the Jewish society that they could put away *an espoused wife* for “fornication.” Fornication involves unmarried people. Adultery only involves those who are married. This “except for fornication” clause was only mentioned in Matthew (5:31-32, 19:9). It was directed only to the Jewish society. Jesus simply meant that if there had been “fornication” during the engagement period, they could put away their espoused wives.

While Joseph pondered the matter, the angel (Gabriel no doubt) appeared to him in a dream, and assured him that he had chosen the right girl to marry. Joseph was ready to put her away, but Gabriel said, “Fear not to take unto thee *Mary thy wife*; for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost” (1:20). You will notice that Gabriel also confirmed that she was his wife, even though they were only engaged. The Lord upheld their Jewish customs. Then Joseph awakened and “did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto him *his wife*.” Yes, she was his wife (espoused wife), even though they were not yet married. In verse 25, Joseph “knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son: and he called his name JESUS.” Even when they were married, Joseph had no physical relations with Mary until after Jesus was born.

THE VISIT OF THE WISE MEN (Mt. 2:1-12). Wise men came from the east, probably from Chaldea. Evidently they were men of God who knew the times. They were led by a star. The star “stood over where the child was” (2:9). Therefore, it must have been supernatural since a normal star would not do this. It could not have been an ordinary planet because the one cannot stand still while the others go on.

2:1 “Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem...” The reason Matthew mentions Bethlehem is because every Jew knew that it was in Bethlehem that the Messiah would be born (Micah 5:2). In verse 2, the wise men asked, “Where is he that is born King of the Jews?” Matthew includes this in his narrative because he is introducing Jesus as the King of the Jews. He was not only a Savior, but a King. Not only was he a King, He was also deity. Only deity is worthy to be worshipped. In verse 11, when they saw the young Child with Mary his mother, they fell down and worshipped *Him*, not *them*. Mary was not worshipped. Only God can be worshipped. The gifts they brought had prophetic significance. Gold speaks of divine nature, frankincense - suffering, and myrrh - death. These gifts portrayed deity who must suffer and die.

When Herod heard that a king had been born, he was troubled. Troubled, that is, with *jealousy*. He was an Edomite. Edomites are descendants of Esau, the one who sold his birthright. Spiritual Edomites have tremendous jealousy against those who have the blessings. Herod the Great did everything he could to have the blessings. For example, he embellished the temple and made it into a huge edifice. Spiritual “Edomites” often build the huge churches, but they have no glory.

Herod diligently enquired of the wise men the exact time the star appeared. Then he sent them to Bethlehem from Jerusalem to search for the Child, and requested that he be carefully informed when they found Him, so that he could come and worship Him also. However, they were warned of God in a dream not to return to Herod. Thus, they departed into their own country another way. Herod was full of jealousy, just as Satan is. His only wish was to murder the Child.

THE FLIGHT OF JOSEPH, MARY, AND JESUS INTO EGYPT (Mt. 2:13-15). An angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, warning him to flee to Egypt with Mary and the child Jesus, because Herod would kill the Child. Thus, they departed for Egypt before daylight. They remained in Egypt for at least two years, until the death of Herod.

The flight into Egypt was indicative of the history of the Israelites. Abraham, who had come to Canaan land, later fled to Egypt during a famine, and then returned. The Israelites also went into Egypt during the famine in the time of Joseph. Then, they came up out of Egypt into the land of promise. “Out of Egypt have I called my Son” (2:15, Hos.11:1). Christ was actually fulfilling the history of the children of Israel. He went down into Egypt for refuge, then returned to the land of Israel. Matthew's Gospel, written to the Jews, shows how Christ fulfilled Old Testament Scriptures.

THE SLAYING OF THE CHILDREN AT BETHLEHEM (Mt. 2:16-18). Herod was “exceedingly wrath” when the wise men did not return. Therefore, he slew all the male children in Bethlehem that were two years old and under, according to the time when the wise men had come. Every time a significant savior was born, all the children were slain. This happened when Moses was born. Satan seeks to devour the manchild when he is born (Rev.12:1-5). The manchild is a special group of overcomers who are birthed out of the Woman (Church) in the last days. Satan understands the times and seeks to slay all the deliverers whom he knows are going to destroy his kingdom. Jealousy is more cruel than the grave.

2:18 “*Rachel weeping for her children.*” (cf. Jer. 31:15). Rachel (wife of Jacob) was buried in Bethlehem (see Gen. 35:16-19). Most of the inhabitants in and around Bethlehem were descendants of Rachel. Metaphorically she was weeping for her slain generation. Rachel was the mother of Benjamin and there were many Benjamites in that area amongst those in Judah. In Matthew 2:19-23, Joseph and Mary and Jesus returned to Israel after Herod died. Then they were directed by God in a dream to return to Galilee. Thus, the child Jesus grew up in Nazareth of Galilee.

BLIND MEN AND DUMB MAN HEALED (Mt. 9:27-34). In the healing of the two blind men, Jesus had said, “According to your faith be it unto you.” Yet faith is totally supernatural. It is one hundred percent divine. Man is unable to pump up faith like a tire. Faith comes into a *soft* heart. The condition of our heart determines whether God's faith can operate in our lives. In the case of the dumb man, a spirit had to be cast out before he could speak. Sometimes deliverance from a spirit is necessary before a person can be made whole.

THE PRICE OF TRUE DISCIPLESHIP (Mt.10:16-42). These words followed the charge given to the twelve as they went forth to preach throughout all the cities of Israel. Christ exhorted: “Be wise as serpents, but harmless as doves.” We must be meek when people do not accept us. “Harmless as doves.” Neither should Christians bear arms to protect themselves. They are not to live by the sword. We are putting ourselves in God's hands. He is our defense. Yet we should not be gullible.

“Beware of men.” Christ taught us to love our enemies, not *trust* our enemies. There are people who are determined to destroy us if they could. If men are plotting our destruction, we should avoid them. Paul prayed to be delivered from wicked and unreasonable men (2 Thes. 3:1-2, Acts 23:12). Christ never promised an easy road. He did promise joy and peace, and many other blessings.

“They will deliver you to the councils and scourge you in their synagogues...and ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake for a testimony against them and the Gentiles. But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak. For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you.” (v17-20). If we are going to suffer persecution and even martyrdom, God will give us the grace and the words to speak *in that hour*. Do not expect God to give you the grace and the message beforehand. There is grace for tomorrow when tomorrow comes. God only gives us grace for *today*. Do not concern yourself with the future.

“And the brother shall deliver up the brother to death, and the father the child: and the children shall rise up against their parents, and cause them to be put to death. And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved” (v21-22). Here we see the treachery of *betrayal*, even from Christian brethren and family members. If this happens, will we be offended? Will we become hardened and bitter and turn from God? Matthew 24:9-12 states that many will be offended in our times. “Once in grace always in grace” is a teaching that says it is *not necessary* to endure to the end to be saved. This teaching, however, is without credence.

“But when they persecute you in this city, *flee* ye into another: for verily I say unto you, Ye, shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come (v23). When one city in Israel rejected them, it was good and right to leave that city and go to another one more worthy. Sometimes we have to depart by *flight* because of imminent danger. Christ said they would not have time to go through all the towns of Israel before the Son of man and His kingdom came. This is a reference to his death, resurrection, ascension, and the Day of Pentecost. These inaugurated a new Age.

“The disciple [student] is not *above* his Master [teacher], nor the servant above his lord.” We are not above our Lord, but we are called to be like him. If men have insulted our Lord and defamed His name, how much more are they going to defame those of his household. (v24-25). *Be ready!*

In verses 26-31, we are told: *fear not*. The expression, “Fear not” is found 365 times in Scripture. There are many people who live in a state of anxiety, but fear does not have to be the portion of a child of God. We are not to fear man who is able to kill the body. We are to fear God who is able to destroy both body and soul in hell. Believers are not to fear man, but God alone. Christians should be more concerned about what God thinks of them than what man thinks. The fear of man is a snare (Prov. 29:25). It causes us to sin. There is nothing hidden which shall not come to the light. Any injury done to us will be revealed and judged. Our heavenly Father sees when the sparrow falls to the ground. Every hair of our head is numbered. Certainly, God sees every injustice done to us, and He will judge it.

In verses 33-34, Christ addresses the subject of *shame* and *embarrassment*. These are terrible bondages. Some people are so ashamed of being identified with Christ that they will not make it into heaven. Whosoever confesses the name of Christ before men, Christ will confess him before the Father. But whosoever disowns Him before men, will be disowned by Christ before the Father. The fearful of Revelation 21:7-8 are in this category. See also John 12:42-43.

Christ came to bring division (Lk.12:50-53). Before there can be peace and unity, there must be a sword and there must be division (Mt.10:34-39). The Word of God divides soul from spirit, holy from profane, clean from unclean, and the sheep from the goats. Christ divides light from darkness, and the Church from the world. People in your own household often oppose God's highest purposes for your life. If we love father or mother and their wishes more than Christ, we are not worthy of Him. If we love son or daughter more than Christ, we are not worthy of Him. If we love our own life and our own comfort more than Christ, we cannot be His disciples. This is the high cost of being His disciple. I would rather pay the price and be a *real* Christian. I would rather make Christ number one and have God's approval more than man's, more than friend's, and more than family's.

Anyone who accepts and receives a disciple is receiving Christ (Mt.10:40-42). When we honor the godly, God honors us. In honoring God's representatives, we are honoring Him. Anyone who gives a cup of cold water to a disciple of low rank or influence shall be rewarded. Christ said, "Inasmuch as ye have done this to one of these the least of my brethren, ye have done it unto me" (Mt. 25:40).

WOES PRONOUNCED UPON THE CITIES OF HIS TIME (Mt.11:20-24). Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum were cities of Galilee in which Christ performed many mighty miracles. These cities did not respond with repentance. Christ reprimanded them and said that if Tyre and Sidon (cities to the north in Lebanon) had seen the same miracles, they would have repented. If Sodom had seen these works, Sodom would not have been destroyed with fire and brimstone, but would have remained to this day. He said that on the day of judgment, it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon and Sodom, than the cities of Galilee. We can see, therefore, that judgment is determined by how much light people have. In hell, there will be different levels of torment. Christian countries who hold the truth in unrighteousness will have greater punishment in hell than heathen countries who have little light. To whom much is given, much is required.

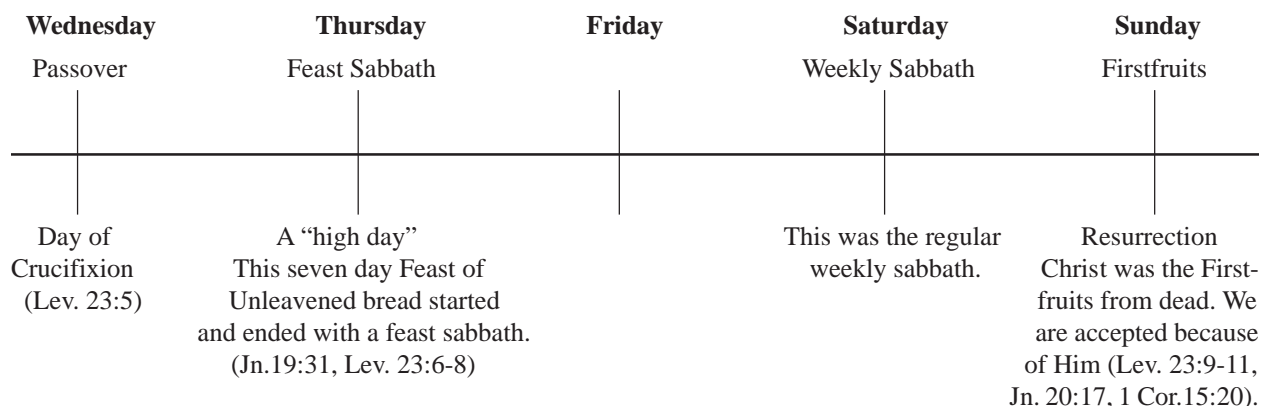
THE REST OF GOD (Mt.11:28-30). "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light" (Mt.11:28-30). Heavy burdens and yokes are bondages we have *in our minds*. Many pressures are self-induced, and stem from *pride*. Perhaps we are trying to be someone God did not intend us to be and we are driven by ambition. Maybe we have made unrealistic goals for ourselves and have set deadlines which are quite impractical. Possibly we have a high opinion of ourselves, and when people do not treat us royally, we are insulted and angry. Proud people are full of conflicts and take offense at small sleights. These are all heavy yokes. Christ had none of these. He was meek and humble.

Meekness is *holy acceptance* of circumstances. Many Christians will *not* accept their circumstances. Instead, they are very angry and filled with grievances. This is a burden. Humility is a holy dependence upon God. People who are meek and humble do not have touchy egos or torments in their hearts. They have learned meekness and humility from Christ, and have found rest for their souls.

THE SIGN OF THE PROPHET JONAH (Mt.12:38-45). “An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign: and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas.” This may seem strange, but adulterous people are always looking for a sign. They are always looking for prophecies and confirmation that assure them that what they are doing is all right and it is blessed of God. Adultery brings a *stupor* over people to the extent that they think God is making exceptions for their situation, and will overlook it. The fact is, they *love* what they are doing. God is not overlooking it; He is giving them space to repent (Rev. 2:20-21). If there is no repentance, God will have to judge severely, and even this is His mercy to save them from hell. This sin of adultery brings a multitude of other evils into the heart. Hypocrisy, deceit, lying, betrayal, and endless cover-ups are the way of the adulterer and adulteress. It is the pathway of deception, darkness, and hypocrisy; and it leads to hell (Heb.13:4, Mt. 24:51, 1 Cor. 6:9-10). Adultery sears the conscience (Prov. 30:20) and destroys the soul (Prov. 6:32). The only way people can get out of this trap is by learning to *hate* what they are doing. God's *exposure* of them is the first step. But then He may have to bring calamities into their lives and great pain to cleanse them of that immense love of iniquity and fantasy.

“And there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas: For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth” (v39-40). Jesus himself authenticates the episode of Jonah and the whale. The prophet was three days and nights in the belly of the fish. Jonah described this as being in “the belly of hell” (Jon. 2:2). This was prophetic of Christ being three days and nights in hell when His spirit descended into the lower parts of the earth after His death on the cross. After three days and nights, the fish vomited Jonah upon the shore and he went to Nineveh and preached to the Gentiles there. Again this was prophetic of Christ being resurrected and coming out of the belly of hell, and then being preached to the Gentiles. It is actually a very profound type.

Christ could not have been crucified on Good Friday, as traditionalists have taught. In that case, it would have been impossible for Christ to be in the lower parts of the earth for three days and nights. If He were crucified on Friday and placed in the tomb on Friday evening by 6:00, He would only have been in the grave for one day (Saturday) and two nights. He was three *full* days and nights in hell.



Christ was in the grave 3 1/2 days (cf. Rev.11:9). He did not complete Saturday evening. He arose a great while before sunrise. He was crucified on Wednesday, on Passover day. The Feast of Unleavened bread started the next day. This seven day feast started and ended with a feast sabbath. On “the morrow after the [weekly] sabbath” (Lev. 23:11), Jesus arose and presented himself to the Father as a “firstfruits” of the harvest. His acceptance made the rest of the harvest (us) acceptable.

MANY MIRACLES PERFORMED (Mt.15:29-31). In these passages, Jesus healed multitudes in Galilee—the lame, blind, the maimed, and the dumb. The multitudes marvelled, and glorified the God of Israel. In spite of the love of God that was shown to these cities of Galilee, many of them did not follow the Lord. Many people do not use their healed bodies to serve the Lord. Remember the story of the ten lepers. Nine of them went their own way. Only *one* returned to give thanks to the Lord and serve Him. I have heard people say, “If only people could see the power of God and the miracles, then they would believe.” Yes, they might believe, but this does not mean they will surrender their lives to Christ and follow Him.

The problem is not so much that man does not know the way. The real problem is that man wants to live for himself, not God. *Persuasion* is often not the issue. It is only an excuse. “If only God would show Himself and convince me, then I would follow Him.” No, this is often not the case. History has always proved this. Even during the Millennium when the Lord of glory is here on earth, still there will be rebellion against Him. Remember where sin began! It started in the presence of God, before His throne in the very presence of the Light. Someone wanted to do things *his* way, not God's. If you are in need of a miracle of healing, ask God to do a deep work in your heart so that when you receive your miracle, you will only follow Him and not go your own way.

THE PAYMENT OF THE TEMPLE TAX (Mt.17:24-27). Matthew Levi, who himself was formerly a tax collector, is the only one of Gospel writers to record this account. Christ made his headquarters in Capernaum in Galilee. It was here that Christ resided most often. The tribute (or tax) mentioned here was not any civil payment to the Roman powers, but a tax required from every person for the service of the temple, a half shekel, about fifteen pence. This was based on the commandment of Exodus 30:12-16. However, in the time of Christ this tax was not as strictly exacted, especially up in Galilee, away from Judea.

The tax was quite small. Undoubtedly the collectors stood in awe of Christ because of His mighty miracles, and they dared not ask Him about this matter. Thus, they spoke to Peter, whose house was in Capernaum. It was probably in his house that Christ lodged. Their question, “Doth not your Master pay tribute?” could have been an occasion by some to find fault with Christ. If the answer was no, then they might have accused Him of being disaffected to the temple-service, and labeled his followers as lawless. Perhaps they wanted to see if He would offer any special reasons for exempting himself. If so, they would not insist upon His payment.

Christ did not dispute with the collectors, but reasoned with Peter in the house. He said to Peter: “Of whom do the kings of the earth take tribute? Do they take it from their own children, or from subjects of the kingdom.” Peter answered, “From his subjects.” “Then the children are exempt,” said Jesus. Christ applied the illustration to Himself. He was the Son of God, the Heir of all things. He and his Father owned all things, including the temple. Therefore, he was free from paying taxes. However, because of men's ignorance of who he was, and to show that He Himself observed the law, He paid the tax so that these collectors would not be offended. He receded from his rights in order not to cause offence. Often we have to yield our rights simply to avoid offending others.

As the sovereign owner of all things, Christ then instructed Peter to go to the sea and take up the first fish. When he opened his mouth, he would find a piece of money to pay the temple tax. Peter went out, and these things happened, just as the Lord had said.

PROPER DISCIPLINE OF AN OFFENDING BROTHER (Mt.18:15-20). In these passages we are considering offenses between brethren. Christ is giving directions for preserving peace among brethren, and the purity and beauty of the Church. “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.” Trespasses include insulting remarks, blemishing the good name of another by false reports, and encroaching upon the rights of others. Of course, some offenses are more serious. Christ tells us to go and tell our brother his fault, rather than let the offense fester into grievous resentment. Leviticus 19:17 warns: “Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thy heart.” It is better to go to him alone and not rail against him behind his back. If a brother has done a considerable wrong to us, we should make him aware of it, but privately. We should keep it between ourselves. Otherwise, it will appear that revenge is being sought. Sometimes, the offender is unaware of his offense. If he sincerely hears us, we have gained our brother and the controversy will be settled.

“If he will not hear thee.” If the offender disclaims any fault, the matter can be presented to two or three other disinterested parties who can reason the case further with him. Perhaps their added influence and perspective can help him to see his error, and repent. If the offender will not hear them either, it should be taken to the pastor and elders of the church. We are referring here to more serious, scandalous trespasses. If the offending brother still will not listen, persists in doing wrong, and proceeds to do further wrong, he should be treated as a publican and heathen—as an unbeliever. Perhaps this means breaking off fellowship with him. At times civil law may be invoked, but as a last resort. Even secular authorities are God's ministers to enforce justice (Rom.13:1-7).

We can see from these instructions that Christ intended believers to be in a local body of believers. It is good for each believer to be accountable to others in a local assembly. Every flock should have a shepherd. And there should be order in the church. In light of the preceding verses, we see that prayer is the greatest key to changing matters of controversy and conflict (18:18-20). If we shall agree together in prayer, it shall be accomplished by the Father in heaven. “Agree” is a word that means harmony. As we are in *harmony*, the power is released. There is tremendous power in unity.

PARABLE OF THE UNMERCIFUL SERVANT (Mt.18:21-35). In these verses, Matthew continues the theme of forgiveness and forbearance with Christian brethren. Peter asked, “Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Til seven times? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven.” In other words, Jesus was saying: “Don't keep count.” For our own sake, we must forgive, and this includes our spouse. Even if the offender never repents, we must forgive him. We should tell our offender his fault, but regardless of his response, we must forgive him. Otherwise, we will be kept in prison with him.

Christ gave a parable about a servant who owed a king a huge sum of money. When he was unable to pay the king, the king had compassion upon him and flatly forgave him everything. But the same servant would not forgive a fellowservant who owed a far lower debt. In fact, he showed no mercy whatsoever. The king was angry with the actions of this servant and sent him to the “tormentors.” This is precisely what happens when we will not forgive. We are *tormented*. We become enslaved to the one we resent. Our minds become occupied with the one we have not released. We become his prison keeper. We are there in the prison with him. In addition to this, if we do not forgive, God will not forgive us. He means just what He says, too (Mt.18:35). “So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses.”

PARABLE OF THE LABORERS IN THE VINEYARD (Mt. 20:1-16). The theme of this parable can be summed up in verse 16: “So the last shall be first, and the first last: for many be called, but few chosen.” The parable could rightly include the last verse of chapter 19. “But many that are first shall be last; and the last shall be first” (19:30).

The parable of the laborers in the vineyard is focusing on *rewards*. Many who come into the kingdom last shall end up being first. And many who come in first shall end up last. (*Many* does not suggest *most*, but a significant number.) Christ is going to talk about eleventh hour believers. These are believers who come into the kingdom late, but outdo those who have sat in church for years and have not moved on in their spiritual life. It is not necessarily *how long* we have been in the kingdom, but how much we have responded to God. The parable is also directed against Israel, who was called first, but ended up last. The Gentiles who were called last, ended up first.

In the parable, the kingdom of God is likened to a man who owned a vineyard. He went out early in the first hour of the day to hire laborers to work in his vineyard. Then he went out again in the third hour, the sixth hour, and the ninth hour. About the eleventh hour he went out again and found others standing idly by. He asked them, “Why stand ye here all the day idle?” They answered: “Because no man hath hired us.” Thus, they were hired toward the end of the day to work along with the others. When it was time to be paid, those who had worked longest in the field expected higher wages, and murmured when the latecomers were given the same reward. What is the Lord endeavoring to teach us here? Does this mean that we will all have the same reward, no matter how we live? Does this mean that a person who has labored conscientiously for the Master all his life will have the same reward as someone who has squandered most of his life and time? *Absolutely not!* This is not the thrust of the parable. The theme is that *many* who come in last will be first. But how can this be?

It is not how long we have been saved, or how long we have sat in church. The question is, “How much have we applied our hearts to wisdom, and how much have we responded to God?” There will be many latecomers who surpass those who have come in earlier. Many who have been in the vineyard for years have offered little response to God, and therefore have little fruit to show. Others who come in later but respond wholeheartedly to God can have much fruit. Many who have been in the kingdom for a long time have failed the same old tests, year after year. They were called, but not chosen. Many who are first end up last, and some of the last will end up first.

It is amazing what God can do in a short period of time. Jonah had a half-million converts *in one day* in Nineveh—and he was hoping they would not receive his message. In spite of himself he had fruit immeasurable overnight. John the Baptist resurrected a dead nation in just six months. God can do much with a small handful of bread and fish. In the Welsh revival of 1904, tens of thousands of people were swept into the kingdom in several months. Wales had been divided with bitter labor strikes, but only in a matter of days, people who could not speak to each other for twenty years were holding hands and praying together in church. It is “by my Spirit saith the Lord.” The *true* anointing brings people together, it does not divorce them.

One man who had been in the refining fires of God for thirty years asked: “Lord, with time so short, how are we going to bring others into the deep things of God when it has taken us so long?” God showed him that the Word of the Lord would be so refined in these days that it would *rapidly* bring newcomers into maturity and glory. In that sense, these eleventh hour believers could have the same reward as those who had come into the kingdom much earlier.

THE LAME AND BLIND HEALED IN THE TEMPLE (Mt. 21:14). God's house is like a hospital. It should be a place of healing and instruction. The spiritually lame should be strengthened to walk on godly paths (Heb.12:13). The blind should receive vision and know where they are going. Many Christians have limited vision (Rev. 3:17-18). The reason people dwell carelessly is because they have no vision (Prov. 29:18). We need to know what the goal is and be afraid of coming short of it. In God's house, people should be trained to understand what is *available* in Christ, but must also understand their *accountability*. There is a rich inheritance offered to each one, but we must overcome our obstacles in order to secure it. There is a crown to be won or lost (Rev. 3:11, 21:7). We will give an account for how we have used our time, talents and substance, and for how we have treated others.

PARABLE OF THE TWO SONS (Mt. 21:28-32). This is another parable spoken against the Jews to whom Matthew was writing. The parable teaches that actions, not words, are what count. One son said *yes* to his father's wishes, but did not obey. The other son said *no* at first, but then he changed his mind and obeyed. The important thing is for a person to *do* the will of God, not *talk* about it. This perfectly sums up Israel. Israel talked about the things of God, but would not obey them. The religious Israelites did not obey John the Baptist, but the people of disrepute did. The publicans, harlots, and sinners hearkened to John. They made it into the kingdom of God, but many of the Bible quoting scribes and Pharisees did not. It is hypocritical to talk about the things of God and not practice them. Great darkness overtakes such a person! "For they say, and do not" (Mt. 23:3-4).

PARABLE OF THE MARRIAGE FEAST (Mt. 22:1-14). These parables were given just a few days before Christ was crucified. Christ had given a similar parable on the Great Supper several months earlier in Luke 14:16-24. (See outline). In this parable the Lord likened the kingdom of heaven to a certain king who prepared a wedding feast for his son. He sent many servants to call those who were bidden. The response in general was one of *indifference*. Again he sent more servants and affirmed their invitation to the marriage feast. Those who were invited made light of it. They had their own lives to live and did not want their materialistic lifestyles interrupted in any way. As the messengers continued their invitation, the response turned from indifference to defiance and even murder. When the king heard of this, he was wroth and sent his armies and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city. The interpretation of the parable is actually quite clear.

The wedding feast is the marriage supper of the Lamb. It is such an honor to be invited by the King to be a participant of this celebration. It is such a privilege to be called into the presence of the Father and his Son and to partake of all the blessings of heaven. It is a clear teaching in the Word of God that the redeemed are called to be Christ's Bride. The nation of Israel was called first. When God sent his servants (the prophets) to Israel, they were ignored, abused, and some were even killed. (See also Mt. 21:33-46). What was the King going to do in response to this?

"When the king heard thereof, he was wroth: and he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those *murderers*, and burned up their city." Israel was guilty of *murdering* not only the prophets but the Lord Jesus Christ. God was going to send the Roman armies against Jerusalem and burn their city. This happened in A.D. 70. When it says, "he sent forth his armies," it means that God chastens his people by the rod of men. He uses evil people as instruments of judgment (2 Sam. 7:14). Since Israel proved to be unworthy of the holy calling, the invitation has been extended to everyone. Even in the Church there are "the good and the bad" (v10). Not everyone is worthy of the wedding feast. Many are called but few are chosen (v14).

PARABLE OF THE TEN VIRGINS (Mt. 25:1-13). This parable was given on the Mount of Olives when Christ foretold the signs of His coming. There were three parables given at the same time. All three were in light of His coming. The parables are—the ten virgins, the ten talents, and the sheep and goats. This Olivet discourse was given just two days before the crucifixion (Mt. 26:1-2). It comprises all of chapters 24-25. (Jesus often taught by contrast - *See Appendix II, p.140*).

Christ's parable of the ten virgins is highly significant because the Church herself is made up of many *virgins* (Mt. 25:1-13). This parable does not concern unbelievers. The fact that they were “virgins” indicates they were all blood-washed believers. All of them were conscious of the Bridegroom's soon coming. (Unbelievers are void of faith and do not look for His coming.) The main thrust of this parable is not whether the virgins are saved or lost, but which ones are worthy to be at the marriage supper of the Lamb when the Bridegroom comes.

The virgins who were welcomed into the marriage feast had *oil* in their lamps and were burning brightly for Jesus. Oil represents the anointing. The anointing comes from intimate fellowship with the Anointed One. The virgins without oil had *neglected* their relationship with God, and they were denied entrance into the feast. The Lord said to them: “I know you not” (Mt. 25:12). In this passage, the word “know” is a Greek word which means “intuition, or to recognize immediately.” The Lord said to the foolish virgins that He did not know them intuitively. He was saying: “*I do not know you very well.*” The marriage feast is for intimate friends only, not those Christ scarcely recognizes.

Although there are millions of believers in the world, not every “virgin” (or blood-washed believer) will be a part of the many-membered Bride of Christ. The Bride of Christ is a smaller group within the Church who will come to glory and unity. To be Christ's bride we must fulfill the qualifications. The bridal relationship with the King of kings is for wholehearted believers only, not those who are lukewarm. When it comes to a matter of being Christ's bride, He demands in jealousy, “Be either hot or cold.” The lukewarm will be rejected.

Christ is coming for a mature and glorious Church whose garments are spotless and without wrinkle (Rev.19:7-8, Eph. 5:27). He will not be wedded to an immature bride. Christ will not share His throne with those who have refused to grow out of their spiritual infancy, or with those who do not bear His likeness. Not every believer has the privilege of reigning with Christ (2 Tim. 2:12). This is reserved only for the overcomers (Rev. 2:26-27, 3:21, 21:7). There were many fair virgins in the time of Queen Esther, but only *one* was selected to be the queen. Only one had the privilege of standing next to the king and issuing his authority from the throne. King Solomon had “virgins without number,” yet his undefiled was but one (Song 6:8-10). Remember, many are called to the wedding feast. Yet, few are chosen (Rev.19:9). May we be called, chosen, and found faithful (Rev.17:14).

PARABLE OF THE TALENTS (Mt. 25:14-30). In this parable Christ is making reference to the Day of Reckoning. There is an appointed time when God will reward every man according to his works. The Lord has made an investment in every one of His servants, and He expects a return. To each saint God has entrusted certain gifts, abilities, and blessings. Everyone will stand before God to give an account of his life. He will ask us how we have used our time, abilities, and opportunities. What will we have to offer Him in that day? Will our hands be empty? Will we have little or nothing to present to Him? Or will His investment be multiplied many times over so that we have much to return to Him?

God gave *five* talents of silver to one man. To a second He gave *two*, and to a third man He gave *one*. The first two servants used what God gave them, and both gained a *hundred fold*. The man with five talents had ten, and the man with two had four. Both were diligent to use their gifts and abilities, and they were willing to take risks. The third man was afraid and did not use his gift at all. He came to the Lord empty-handed. His life was fruitless. The Lord called him a “wicked and slothful servant.”

Why did God give the third servant only one talent? —because of his foreknowledge! God will not give more talents to people who He knows will not use them. He gives talents to those who are going to utilize them. Those servants who wholeheartedly use what God has given them will have tremendous joy. God said to those who gained a hundredfold, “Well done good and faithful servant, enter thou into the *joy* of thy Lord.” The industrious, fruitful worker for Christ is rewarded with *joy*, and this joy is not only in the life to come, but right now. Also, because of being faithful over a few things, God will make him ruler over many things. Proving ourselves *faithful* in the little things (both secular and spiritual) will qualify us to rule and reign with Christ in the Millennial Age. The Lord gave this parable in light of His coming and His thousand year reign.

Let's come back to the third servant whom the Lord terms unprofitable, wicked, slothful, and fearful. The excuse he gave for not using his gift was *fear*. Fear must be overcome or a Christian could be placed in the category of the “fearful and unbelieving” of Revelation 21:8. Fear caused the unprofitable servant to criticize God and call Him “a hard man, reaping where he had not sown, and gathering where he had not scattered seed” (25:24). He accused God of being *a taker* of what did not belong to Him. The fact is, the slothful servant was the taker. He took God's blessings, but never rendered anything in return. Therefore, this wicked servant was also a *hypocrite*. A few months earlier, Christ had given a similar parable on the Pounds in Luke 19:11-27. In that parable the Lord said to the unprofitable servant: “Out of thine own mouth I will judge thee, thou wicked servant” (Lk.19:22). A man accuses others of what he himself is most guilty. His judgment, therefore, came from his own mouth. We are judged by the same measuring rod with which we judge others (Mt. 7:1-2).

Fear paralyzed the unprofitable servant from doing *anything* for God. In the wilderness, Israel was immobilized by hysteria, and as a result, criticized God (Num.13:27 - 14:4). Fear led to murmuring, rebellion, and an evil heart of unbelief. Fear made them a fruitless generation, and they all died in the wilderness. Most of them were wicked and unprofitable servants.

The fearful, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, whoremongers, sorcerers, idolaters, and liars of Revelation 21:8 all have *one thing in common*—all are fruitless. All of these sins block up the well, poison the spirit, harden the heart, and destroy true faith. Surely, the fearful and unbelieving can be just as repugnant and insulting to God as the sorcerer, adulterer, and idolater. Often these sins are connected to one other.

God will never accept the excuse, “I was afraid.” Nor will He ever accept the accusation that He is a hard man, demanding what does not belong to Him. This wicked, slothful, unprofitable servant was cast into outer darkness where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth (v30). “Gnashing of teeth” is bitterness of anguish. It does not sound like heaven does it! God took the talent from the fruitless servant and gave it to the one who had ten. This teaches us something. People who are productive with what God gives them are given even more gifts. Those who do *not* use their gifts will lose them, and maybe everything else, too. God is a good economist. He requires fruit, a return on His investment. While we are speaking of fruit, may we never be without the fruit of the Spirit either.

PARABLE OF THE JUDGMENT DAY / THE SHEEP AND GOATS (Mt. 25:25:31-46). This parable concerns the judgment of the *nations* more than individuals. The Lord will separate the sheep from the goats. Sheep nations are those who manifest the character of God, and goat nations are those who rebel against God's laws. A sheep symbolizes submission. Goats represent rebellion. Each nation has its own particular mentality. Some nations are essentially good, and some are evil in general. The Church is a nation unto itself. It is a nation among all nations.

Actually, it is easy to tell sheep and goat nations apart. We know who they are by the laws of their land, *by how they treat their afflicted*. When aid was offered to help the starving in India, the government replied that “they would think about receiving it.” They did not care about their own people. In some countries, people walk past bleeding pedestrians who have been struck by a car. They leave them there to die on the street. The conditions in prisons in some nations is beyond description. It would be better to die. In Russia, the believers are shipped off to Siberia. Mentalities like this envelop whole countries. What will the Lord say to such nations on the day that He judges?

“Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand [the goats], Depart from me, ye cursed into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: For I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not. Then shall they also answer him saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison and did not minister unto thee? Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me. And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal” (25:41-46).

The greatest blind spot of man is not toward God, but toward man. In showing no mercy to man, no mercy is shown to God either. Whatever injures man, injures God. If we cannot love man whom we see, how can we love God whom we do not see? (1 Jn. 4:20). The royal law mentioned in James 2:8 is the second commandment. And the second command is equivalent to the first (Mt. 22:36-40). In showing mercy to man, we are showing mercy to God. God will show no mercy to nations who have shown no mercy to their fellowman, or Him. See James 2:13.

JUDAS COMMITS SUICIDE (Mt. 27:3-10). When Judas saw that Jesus was condemned to die, he was remorseful, but it was too late. He had crossed the line. There was no more repentance for him. Unless God gives the spirit of repentance, no one can change or have the Spirit's witness of pardon. Judas brought back the 30 pieces of silver and said, “I have betrayed the innocent blood.” They replied; “That's your problem.” He threw the money into the temple and went and hanged himself.

Judas was a major apostle. He had been with the Master for over three years, hearing the finest teachings, and having the greatest role model ever standing before him. Judas was anointed and performed many miracles. He helped feed five thousand, the bread multiplying in his hands as he gave it to the multitudes. He was in the ship when the Lord commanded the violent winds and waves to be still. Yet, he did not go to heaven. Judas held the truth in unrighteousness. He was in the category mentioned by Christ in Matthew 7:22-23. He did many wonderful works, but on Judgment Day the Lord sadly replies: “Depart from me, you that practices lawlessness, I never [got to know you very well.]” Remember, a great ministry and anointing does *not* save us. We must live a holy life. We prove that we do *not* love the Lord when we break His commandments (Jn.14:15, 24).

Suicide can occur for several reasons, but generally it is *lords*, not *servants*, who take their lives. A true servant lives for another. He is afraid of coming short of God's plan for his life. (Suicide is a destruction of that plan.) A servant realizes he is not his own, he belongs to another. On the other hand, a *lord* lives for himself. He is his own god. When he cannot have his own way or control his life and circumstances, he ends his life. His supreme goal is to please himself, not God. When *his* dreams are shattered, he has nothing to live for.

This is why jilted lovers kill themselves, and men jump out of buildings when the stock market fails. Their *expectations* are not centered in God but in themselves, *their* own plans and purposes, and *their* own works. (Psalm 62:5 can save your life and eternity.) Some athletes who are unable to attain to a gold medal and be number one, destroy themselves. People who cannot achieve the highest grades and have the acclaim of man, turn to suicide. To hide from shame or failure, to protect their pride and egos, people take their lives. I am so glad our Lord did not hide His face from shame and spitting (Isa. 50:6).

All of the suicides (or attempted suicides) in Scripture were by *lords*, not servants. Judas, Saul, Ahithophel, Zimri, Pilate, and Abimelech were lords. They loved their money, positions, and power. When these were lost and they could no longer control their circumstances, they killed themselves.

When Saul had his kingship revoked and was losing in battle, he attempted suicide (1 Sam. 31:4). When Abimelech was mortally wounded by a woman, he had someone else finish him off because of the dishonor of dying by the hand of a woman (Jud. 9:52-57). Lords are all very proud. When Ahithophel's counsel was not received, but the counsel of a peer, he hung himself (2 Sam. 17:23).

For a moment, let's consider the subject of "mercy killing." There is much disputation today about medically assisting the death of terminally ill patients. The rationale is very logical to a humanistic mind. After all, if a person is suffering and has no hope of recovery or quality of life, why not give him a lethal injection that allows him to die without pain? Let's put him out of his misery. I suppose this would be all right if a man were on the same level as an aging pet or a horse with a broken leg. If a man did not have a soul, and if there were no hereafter, or if there were no God and no one to be accountable to, or if there were no heaven or hell, I suppose I would allow myself to be put to sleep, too. But the fact is, we are not like animals who can be put to sleep by a veterinarian. We do indeed have souls, there is a hereafter, and there is a God to whom we must all give an account. And there is a heaven or hell awaiting us when we leave this earthly life. When a person is terminally ill, this is the time above all times *to prepare oneself to meet God*.

PILATE'S WIFE IS WARNED IN A DREAM (Mt. 27:19). Pilate's wife sent a message: "Have nothing to do with that just man: for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him." This was an act of grace. God spoke through Pilate's wife (though unconverted) to try to spare Pilate. Unfortunately, Pilate had no character to do the right thing, although he was a man who was supposed to judge character. Pilate knew he was taking actions that were contrary to the laws of Rome in delivering Jesus to be crucified. He knew that Christ was innocent, and he should have protected Him. Unfortunately, he was used to taking the path of least resistance. Pilate was deposed of his position six years later by Rome. "Wearied with misfortunes," he is said to have plunged from a precipice to his death in Lake Lucerne near a mountain now known as Mt. Pilatus. The site is in Switzerland. In conclusion, remember that God uses wives to speak to their husbands.

PILATE WASHES HIS HANDS (Mt. 27:24-25). “When Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing, but that rather a tumult was made, he took water, and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person: see ye to it. Then answered all the people and said, His blood be on us, and on our children.”

Jesus had been apprehended in Gethsemane, not by Roman soldiers, but by temple guards and a multitude of men sent by the chiefs priests and elders (Mt. 26:47). After a hasty trial before the high priest and the elders, Jesus was condemned to death. (The vote was not unanimous. Men like Joseph of Arimathea dissented. See Lk. 23:50-51.) Since the Jews were under Roman rule and did not have the power to execute the death penalty, they brought Jesus to the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate. Pilate knew that because of envy they had delivered Jesus to him (Mt. 27:18). He understood that the grievances were religious in nature, and that Jesus had not broken any civil laws. Therefore, the Jews resorted to political complaints: “We have found this fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Caesar (as if the Jews wanted to pay tribute), saying that he himself is Christ, a King” (Lk. 23:2).

There were three main complaints that the Jews used to pressure Pilate into executing Jesus: that Jesus was stirring up trouble among the people, forbidding to pay taxes to Caesar, and that He himself was king, replacing Caesar. Pilate knew that the problem was envy and jealousy. There was a custom (Jn.18:39) that a prisoner should be released at the Passover. Pilate, being a judge, should never have given the multitude a choice between a notorious criminal named Barabbas, and an innocent man, of whom Pilate said, “I find no fault in him.” When the multitudes insisted on Barabbas being released, Pilate then asked, “What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ? They all say unto him, Let him be crucified” (Mt. 27:22).

Pilate then took water and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person.” But he was *not* innocent. It was in Pilate's power to have Him crucified or released (Jn.19:10). Pilate had thousands of soldiers behind him. He knew Jesus was innocent. Pilate should have protected Jesus, and released Him while all of heaven was looking on. Pilate did not have the moral strength to do what was right *because he was not in the habit* of doing right. Pilate thought he could discharge himself of his responsibility by washing his hands. Many people think they can excuse themselves of their actions, but it is not so. He allowed himself to be pressured by the people. However, there was someone else who was even more responsible than Pilate.

John 19:11 - “Jesus answered [Pilate]... he that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin.” It was Caiaphas the high priest and the elders who had delivered Jesus unto Pilate. Jesus was already executing his ministry as Judge. “He that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin.” Caiaphas, the chief priests and elders, and the children of Israel had the greater sin. Yes, it was the Roman soldiers who crucified Jesus. The soldiers thought they were just executing another criminal. But *the Jews* were the ones responsible for His murder, not the Romans (Acts 2:22-23, 3:13-15, 7:52).

“*Then answered all the people and said, His blood be on us, and on our children*” (Mt. 27:25). The Jews have brought a horrible curse upon themselves. This is the reason the Jews have been reproached and persecuted over the centuries. They are under a curse for what they did to Christ. However, any Jew who accepts Christ is exempted from that curse. Joel 3:21 shows that Israel will be cleansed of that blood when Christ returns. There will be a national repentance in Israel.

A MIGHTY EARTHQUAKE / GRAVES OPENED (Mt. 27:51-53). When Christ died, the veil in the temple was rent from top to bottom. Mark and Luke also record the veil in the temple being rent, but only Matthew includes the fact that there was a mighty earthquake at the same time. The earthquake was showing the tremendous power that was being released when the Testator of the New Covenant died. There is a great release of power at death. At death, inheritances open up.

Christ had promised a new covenant to Israel (Jer. 31:31-34). This covenant or testament would make void any former testaments. A testament (or will) has no power until the one who makes it *dies* (Heb. 9:16-18). Therefore, it was at the *death* of the Testator that the testament came into effect. The earth shook when Christ died because of the power that was being unleashed. All the promises of ages past were coming into effect. A marvellous inheritance that had been willed to God's people was opening up. The veil in the temple was rent simultaneously. By the veil being torn, the Holy Spirit was showing that the way into the holy of holies was now opened. The blood of the new covenant gave man new access to God and to all of the blessings and promises. (See Hebrews 9:7-8, 10:19-22.) While the veil remained, there was no entrance into the holy of holies. The way had not yet been shown. But when the veil was rent, it was a sign that the new testament had come into force. The power released at the death of the Testator even caused graves to open and a few of the saints to rise from the dead. This was a sample of the resurrection power that was released that day upon the opening of the new testament.

FRIGHT OF THE ROMAN GUARDS (Mt. 28:2-4). Not only was there an earthquake at the death of Christ, there was also a mighty earthquake at his resurrection. A powerful messenger from heaven descended and rolled back the stone from the tomb and sat upon it. His countenance was as lightening. The Roman soldiers who guarded the tomb became like dead men from the splendor of the revelation. A few days earlier the Jews had requested a secure guard over the tomb from Pilate. They said; "Sir, we remember that that deceiver said, while he was yet alive, After three days I will rise again." The Jews feared that the disciples would come and steal the body of Jesus and claim that He had risen from the dead. See Matthew 27:62-66.

THE REPORT OF THE ROMAN GUARDS (Mt. 28:11-15). After the resurrection, when the Roman watch came out of their trance (28:11-15), they came into the city and told the chief priests what had happened. After a conference among themselves, the elders paid huge bribes to the Roman guards and told them to say that the Lord's disciples came by night, and stole away His body while they slept. The guards received the money, and this rumor was commonly reported among the unbelieving Jews to explain away the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.

CHRIST APPEARS TO THE OTHER WOMEN (Mt. 28:9-10). Christ's *first* appearance after the resurrection was to Mary Magdalene. At that time Jesus said to Mary, "Touch me not" or "do not detain me; for I am not yet ascended to my Father" (Jn. 20:17). It is believed that Jesus, as the firstfruits of the harvest of men, ascended to his Father. Then He quickly descended again. His *second* appearance was to other women who had come bearing spices. They were returning from the empty tomb with the angelic message that Christ was risen and to go quickly and tell His disciples (Mt. 28:5-8). As they went to tell his disciples, Jesus met them head-on, saying, "All hail! [or *Rejoice!*] And they came and *held him by the feet* and worshipped him." This is very personal and intimate. Human beings were allowed to touch the living, glorified Lord. Jesus was no longer a mortal man. This episode shows that God wants a very close relationship with mankind.

Appearances of the Lord after the Resurrection - Acts 1:3

- *To Mary Magdalene* (Jn. 20:14-18, Mk.16:9-11). Formerly she had been an evil person. Seven devils had been expelled from her. God cleansed this woman and made her honorable. Christ ascended to heaven after His appearance to her, and then returned. This was early in the morning.
- *To the Other Women* (Mt. 28:8-10). Christ met them as they were going to tell the disciples the angelic message that Christ had risen. He said, “Rejoice.” There was such joy in His heart. His mission was accomplished. Man had been given a tremendous victory. The fact that they held him by his feet shows that God desires an intimate relationship with his people. The resurrected Christ still appears to people today.
- *To Peter* (Lk. 24:34, I Cor.15:5). Probably in the afternoon Jesus appeared to Peter. Peter had suffered a serious failure. Christ must have had many things on His mind that resurrection morning, but He had a special concern for this young apostle who could not forgive himself. Christ sent word - “Go tell the disciples *and Peter*” (Mk.16:7). That afternoon, He appeared to Peter.
- *To the Two Emmaeus Disciples* (Lk. 24:13-33, Mk.16:12-13). Toward evening, Christ joined two disciples as they walked, opening the scriptures to them, and admonishing them for their unbelief. In these passages we see Christ's great desire to reveal Himself in *all* of the Scriptures. After Jesus had a meal with them, their eyes were opened and they recognized Him. Then the two traveled seven miles to Jerusalem in great haste to tell the other disciples what had happened.
- *To the Apostles, Thomas Absent* (Mk.16:14, Lk. 24:34-43, Jn. 20:19-25). When the two disciples came to Jerusalem, they found the eleven (Thomas absent), and while there, Christ appeared to them all. He beckoned them to “handle him.” These five appearances were all on the first day.
- *To the Apostles, Thomas Present* (Jn. 20:26-31). Eight days after the resurrection, Christ appeared to the eleven again. This time Thomas was present. Thomas was not with them the first time (Jn. 20:24-25) and had refused to believe. Jesus said to Thomas: “Blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed.” Jesus did many signs in the presence of His disciples during those forty days after His resurrection (Jn. 20:30, Ac.1:3). He probably made *many* other appearances.
- *To Seven Disciples by the Sea of Tiberias* (Jn. 21:1-23). In Galilee. Here, Christ restored Peter in the presence of his brethren. The Sea of Tiberias is the Sea of Galilee (Jn. 6:1).
- *To Five Hundred Brethren and the Apostles* (1 Cor.15:6). This was on a mountain in Galilee. It was here that Christ gave the Great Commission (Mt. 28:16-20, Mk.16:15-18).
- *To James the Lord's Brother* (1 Cor.15:7). Perhaps in the area of Jerusalem. Before the resurrection, James had been doubled-minded and wavered concerning his Elder Brother's deity (Jn.7:2-5).
- *His Appearance to Open the Scriptures* (Lk. 24:44-49). He commanded them to preach among all nations but to first wait for the empowering of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:3-8).
- *His Last Appearance and the Ascension* (Acts 1:9-12, Mk.16:19-20, Lk. 24:50-53).

ACCOUNTS FOUND ONLY IN MARK'S GOSPEL

- 7:31 Journey from Decapolis
8:22-26 Blind man healed at Bethsaida

BLIND MAN HEALED AT BETHSAIDA (Mk. 8:22-26). In this account, a blind man required a *second touch* from the Master. The first touch *partially* opened the eyes of the blind man, but his vision was still blurry. He saw men “walking as trees.” When Christ touched him a second time, he saw all men clearly. The moral of this lesson is that we often need more than one touch from God in order to see clearly. If any man think he know anything, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know (1 Cor. 8:2). Lord, help us to see matters, not only in part, but as You see them! Amen.

ACCOUNTS FOUND ONLY IN JOHN'S GOSPEL

John's Gospel is concerned with the *words* of Jesus more than His *acts*. John does not include many of the Lord's miracles. He focuses more on the discourses of Christ. The few miracles he records are for *signs* or messages. There is no record of Christ's genealogy or childhood, and there are no parables. There are no predictions of the destruction of Jerusalem, since that happened in A.D.70, some twenty-six years earlier. John wrote after 96 A.D. (The three Synoptic Gospels were written prior to 70, and all foretell Jerusalem's fall.) The following 41 accounts are found *only* in John's Gospel, and nowhere else:

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|-----------|---|------------|---|
| 1:19-34 | John's presentation of the Messiah | 9:1-41 | Healing of the man born blind |
| 1:35-49 | The calling of the first disciples | 10:1-21 | The good shepherd |
| 2:1-11 | Christ turns water into wine - a sign | 10:22-39 | Jesus at the feast of dedication |
| 2:12 | His first sojourn in Capernaum | 10:39-42 | Withdrawal - Jerusalem to Bethany |
| 2:13 | The first passover during his ministry | 11:1-44 | The raising of Lazarus |
| 2:14-25 | The first cleansing of the temple | 11:45-54 | Plot to kill Jesus / Caiaphas' prophecy |
| 3:1-21 | Discourse with Nicodemus - new birth | 11:55-12:1 | His arrival in Bethany |
| 3:22-37 | John turns all attention to Jesus | 12:9-11 | Six days before the passover |
| 4:5-42 | Jesus in Samaria - “The water of life” | 12:20-50 | Desire of the Greeks to see Jesus |
| 4:43-45 | The arrival in Galilee | 13:1-20 | Washing of the disciples' feet |
| 4:46-54 | The healing of the nobleman's son | 14:1-31 | Farewell address in the upper room |
| 5:2-16 | Lame man healed at pool on sabbath | 15:1-17 | Christ, the true vine |
| 5:17-47 | Discourse on His divinity | 15:18-16:4 | The world hates you / it hates Me |
| 6:22-59 | Discourse on the “Bread of Life” | 16:5-15 | The coming Holy Spirit |
| 6:60-71 | Many offended disciples forsake Christ | 16:16-33 | Christ's death and resurrection |
| 7:2-9 | The time of the Feast of Tabernacles | 17:1-26 | Christ's High Priestly prayer |
| 7:11-52 | His ministry at the Feast of Tabernacles | 18:12-14 | Jesus examined by Annas |
| 7:53-8:11 | The adulterous woman | 19:25-27 | Jesus entrusts his mother to John |
| 8:12-20 | Discourse - “I am the light of the world” | 20:26-31 | Christ appears eight days after res. |
| 8:21-59 | Discourse - “Which father are ye of?” | 21:1-14 | Miraculous draft of fishes |
| | | 21:15-25 | Public restoration of Peter |

ACCOUNTS FOUND IN ALL THREE SYNOPTIC GOSPELS

Below is a list of eighty-three accounts found in *Matthew, Mark, and Luke*. Twenty-four of these are also found in John's Gospel. Those accounts which are found also in John are identified with a (4) beside it, signifying it is found in all four Gospels.

John - The message and messenger	The second cleansing of the temple
John's picture of Christ before he saw Him	The barren fig tree withered
The baptism of Jesus (4)	Chief priests, elders, challenge his authority
The temptation of Jesus	Parable of householder demanding fruit
Reasons Jesus left Judea / John imprisoned (4)	On paying tribute to Caesar
The four fishermen called	The question of marriage in the resurrection
In the house of Peter	Christ, David's Son, but also his Lord
The first tour of Galilee	Solemn denunciation of the scribes / Pharisees
The healing of the leper	The Olivet discourse - the Second Coming
Christ's return to Capernaum	Jesus foretells his crucifixion two days hence
The paralyzed man healed	The plot of the Jews to apprehend / kill Christ
The call of Matthew (Levi)	Judas' bargain to betray Jesus
Parable of the bridegroom	The preparation for the passover meal
Parable of the old garment	The passover meal with the twelve
Parable of the old wineskins	The traitor identified (4)
A sabbath day in the corn fields	Christ institutes the last supper
Withered hand healed on the sabbath	Departure from the upper room (4)
Christ's true brethren, mother, and sisters	Arrival at Gethsemane / His agony (4)
The parables of the kingdom	Christ betrayed, arrested, forsaken (4)
Jesus stills the storm	Christ hastily tried / condemned / mocked (4)
The healing of the Gerasene demoniacs	Peter's denial of Christ (4)
Woman healed / Jairus' daughter raised	Christ officially condemned by council
The sending forth of the twelve	Christ before Pilate (4)
Fulfilling the ministry	Pilate attempts to release Christ (4)
Murder of John / Herod's guilty conscience	Pilate releases Barabbas (4)
The third passover (4)	Pilate's reluctant issue of the death sentence (4)
Feeding of five thousand (4)	Jesus enroute to the cross / on Golgotha's hill (4)
Peter's confession enroute to Caesarea Philippi	Simon the Cyrenian compelled to bear the cross
Jesus teaches on His coming crucifixion	From 9:00 to 12:00 on the cross (4)
Discourse on His coming	Lots cast for His garments (4)
The Mount of Transfiguration	Pilate's superscription KING OF THE JEWS (4)
Questions during descent from the mount	The two thieves on the cross (4)
The disciples and the demoniac boy	Mockery to "save thyself"
Again Christ foretells his sufferings / death	From 12:00 to 3:00 on the cross (4)
Who shall be greatest in the kingdom	Darkness over the earth
Not to offend weaker / rebuke of sectarianism	Jesus releases His spirit at death (4)
Christ's attitude toward children	Veil in temple rent when He dies
The rich young ruler	Conversion of the centurion
The rewards of forsaking all	Burial in tomb of Joseph of Arimathea (4)
Again Jesus foretells his death / resurrection	Watch of the women by Christ's tomb
Healing of blind Bartimaeus and companion	Message by angels of the risen Lord (4)
Christ's triumphal entry into Jerusalem (4)	

HARMONY of the GOSPELS

IMPORTANT!
Read this outline carefully!
(pages 53-63)

General Outline

I. THE BIRTH AND EARLY YEARS OF CHRIST

- A. PRELIMINARY EVENTS
- B. THE INFANCY OF CHRIST
- C. HIS YOUTH

II. THE MINISTRY OF CHRIST

- A. CHRIST'S FORERUNNER - JOHN THE BAPTIST
- B. THE BEGINNING OF CHRIST'S PUBLIC MINISTRY
- C. THE GREAT GALILEAN MINISTRY
- D. THE LATER JUDEAN MINISTRY
- E. THE LATER PEREAN MINISTRY
- F. LAST PUBLIC MINISTRY IN JERUSALEM

III. THE CRUCIFIXION OF CHRIST

- A. EARLY EVENING - THE UPPER ROOM
- B. FROM THE UPPER ROOM TO GETHSEMANE
- C. AT GETHSEMANE
- D. THE TRIAL - HEBREW / ROMAN
- E. THE CRUCIFIXION
- F. THE BURIAL

IV. THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST

- A. THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST
- B. THE APPEARANCES OF CHRIST
- C. THE ASCENSION OF CHRIST

I. THE BIRTH AND EARLY YEARS OF CHRIST

A. PRELIMINARY EVENTS	MATT	MARK	LUKE	JOHN
1. Luke's Acknowledgment of his Resources			1:1-4	
2. Gabriel's Announcement of the Birth of John to Zacharias			1:5-25	
3. The Annunciation of the Birth of Jesus to Mary			1:26-38	
4. Mary's Visit to Elisabeth and the Song of Elisabeth			1:39-45	
5. The Magnificat of Mary			1:46-56	
6. The Birth of John the Baptist			1:57-80	
7. Gabriel's Annunciation of the Birth of Jesus to Joseph	1:18-25			
8. The Two Genealogies of Jesus	1:1-17		3:23-38	
B. THE INFANCY OF CHRIST				
1. The Birth of Jesus			2:1-7	
2. Visit of the Shepherds and the Praise of the Angels			2:8-20	
3. The Circumcision of Jesus			2:21	
4. Jesus' Presentation in the Temple			2:22-24	
5. Simeon and Anna Pay Homage to Jesus			2:25-38	
6. The Visit of the Wise Men	2:1-12			
7. The Flight of Joseph, Mary, and Jesus into Egypt	2:13-15			
8. The Slaying of the Children at Bethlehem	2:16-18			
9. The Return to Nazareth	2:19-23		2:39	
10. Jesus' Childhood at Nazareth			2:40	
C. HIS YOUTH				
1. His Visit to the Temple at the Age of Twelve			2:41-50	
2. Eighteen Silent Years at Nazareth			2:51-52	

II. THE MINISTRY OF CHRIST

A. CHRIST'S FORERUNNER - JOHN THE BAPTIST

1. The Time of the Beginning		1:1	3:1-2	
2. The Message and the Messenger	3:1-6	1:2-6	3:3-6	
3. John's Preaching	3:7-10		3:7-14	
4. John's Picture of Christ Before He Saw Him	3:11-12	1:7-8	3:15-18	

The First Year - The Year of Inauguration

B. THE BEGINNING OF CHRIST'S PUBLIC MINISTRY	MATT	MARK	LUKE	JOHN
1. The Baptism of Jesus (October of A.D. 26, approx.)	3:13-17	1:9-11	3:21-23	1:32-34
2. The Temptation of Jesus	4:1-11	1:12-13	4:1-13	
3. The Presentation of Jesus as the Messiah				1:19-34
4. The Calling of the First Disciples				1:35-49
5. Christ's First Miracle - Water to Wine				2:1-11
6. His First Sojourn at Capernaum				2:12
* The First Passover (April, A.D. 27)				2:13
7. The First Cleansing of the Temple				2:14-25
8. Discourse with Nicodemus on New Birth				3:1-21
9. John Turns All Attention to Jesus				3:22-36
10. Reasons Jesus Left Judea / John Imprisoned	4:12	1:14	3:19-20 4:14	4:1-4
11. Jesus in Samaria - The Water of Life				4:5-42
12. The Arrival in Galilee				4:43-45
C. THE GREAT GALILEAN MINISTRY				
1. The Healing at Cana of the Nobleman's Son				4:46-54
2. His First Rejection at Nazareth			4:16-30	
<i>The Second Year - The Year of Popularity</i>				
3. His New Home in Capernaum	4:13-16		4:31-32	
4. The Four Fishermen Called	4:18-22	1:16-20	5:1-11	
5. The Miraculous Draught of Fishes			5:4-9	
6. The Synagogue Deliverance		1:21-28	4:31-37	
7. In the House of Peter	8:14-17	1:29-34	4:38-41	
8. The First Tour of Galilee	4:23-25	1:35-39	4:42-44	
9. The Healing of the Leper	8:2-4	1:40-45	5:12-16	
10. Christ Returns to Capernaum	9:1	2:1	5:17	
11. The Paralyzed Man Healed	9:2-8	2:2-12	5:17-26	
12. The Call of Matthew (Levi)	9:9-13	2:13-17	5:27-32	
13. The Lord's Three Parables				
- Parable of the Bridegroom	9:14-15	2:18-20	5:33-35	
- Parable of the Old Garment	9:16	2:21	5:36	
- Parable of the Old Wineskins	9:17	2:22	5:37-39	

* The Second Passover (April, A.D. 28) Jn. 5:1	MATT	MARK	LUKE	JOHN
12. Lame Man Healed at the Pool on the Sabbath				5:2-16
13. The Discourse on His Divinity				5:17-47
14. A Sabbath Day in the Corn Fields	12:1-8	2:23-28	6:1-5	
15. Withered Hand Healed on the Sabbath	12:9-14	3:1-6	6:6-11	
16. Healing of the Multitudes by the Sea of Galilee	12:15-21	3:7-12		
17. The Choosing of the Twelve Apostles		3:13-19	6:12-16	
18. The Sermon on the Mount	Ch. 5 - 7		6:17-49	
- The Beatitudes				
- The Hypocrisy of the Pharisees				
- Single-hearted Devotion Toward God				
- A Warning Against Criticism				
- Prayer				
- The Golden Rule				
- Exhortation on Circumspect Living				
19. Entry of Christ into Capernaum	8:5		7:1	
20. Healing of the Centurion's Servant	8:5-13		7:2-10	
21. At Nain: The Raising of the Widow's Son			7:11-17	
22. John's Question / Christ's Gracious Response	11:2-19		7:18-35	
23. Woes Pronounced upon the Cities of His Time	11:20-24			
24. The Rest of God	11:25-30			
25. Jesus Anointed by a Sinful Woman			7:36-50	
26. The Second Tour of Galilee			8:1	
27. The Women Who Ministered to Christ			8:2-3	
28. Demoniac Healed; Warning Against Blasphemy	12:22-37	3:19-30		
29. The Sign of the Prophet Jonah	12:38-45			
30. Christ's True Brethren, Mother, and Sisters	12:46-50	3:31-35	8:19-21	
31. The Parables of the Kingdom	13:1-53	4:1-34	8:4-18	
32. Jesus Stills the Storm	8:18,23-27	4:35-41	8:22-25	
33. The Healing of the Gerasene Demoniacs	8:28-34	5:1-20	8:26-39	
34. Jesus Returns to Capernaum				
- Woman With the Issue of Blood				
- Jairus' Daughter Raised From the Dead	9:18-26	5:21-43	8:40-56	
35. Blind Men and Dumb Man Healed	9:27-34			
<i>The Third Year - The Year of Opposition</i>				
36. His Last Visit to Nazareth; Rejected Again	13:54-58	6:1-6		
37. The Third Tour of Galilee	9:35-11:1	6:6-13		
38. The Sending Forth of the Twelve	10:1-11:1	6:6-13	9:1-6	

	MATT	MARK	LUKE	JOHN
39. The Price of True Discipleship	10:16-42			
40. Fulfilling the Ministry	11:1	6:12-13	9:6	
41. Murder of John the Baptist and the Fears of the Guilty King Herod Antipas	14:1-12	6:14-29	9:7-9	
* The Third Passover (April, A.D. 29)	14:13-14	6:30-34	9:10-11	6:1-4
42. The Feeding of the Five Thousand	14:13-21	6:30-44	9:10-17	6:1-13
43. Escaping Multitudes Who Tried to Make Him King	14:22-23	6:45-46		6:14-15
44. Jesus Walks on the Water	14:24-33	6:47-52		6:16-21
45. Jesus Heals Many at Gennesaret	14:34-36	6:53-56		
46. The Discourse on "The Bread of Life"				6:22-59
47. Many Offended Disciples Forsake Christ				6:60-71
48. Teaching on Inner / Outer Defilement	15:1-20	7:1-23		
49. The Tour of Phoenicia	15:21-28	7:24-30		
Daughter of the Syro-Phoenician Woman Healed	15:22-28	7:25-30		
50. Journey to Decapolis		7:31		
51. The Healing of the Deaf and Dumb Man	15:29-31	7:31-37		
52. Many Miracles Performed	15:29-31			
53. The Feeding of the Four Thousand	15:32-38	8:1-9		
54. A Brief Visit to Dalmanutha (Magdala) Sign Seekers Rebuked Again	15:39-16:4 16:1-4	8:10-12 8:11-12		
55. He Returns to Bethsaida Julias	16:5-12	8:13-26		
56. Blind Man Healed at Bethsaida		8:22-26		
57. On the Way to Caesarea Philippi / Peter's Confession	16:13-20	8:27-30	9:18-21	
58. Jesus Teaches He Must be Crucified	16:21-26	8:31-37	9:22-25	
59. Discourse on His Coming	16:27-28	8:38 - 9:1	9:26-27	
60. The Transfiguration	17:1-8	9:2-8	9:28-36	
61. Questions During the Descent From the Mountain	17:9-13	9:9-13	9:36	
62. The Disciples and the Demoniac Boy	17:14-21	9:14-29	9:37-43	
63. Jesus Returns With His Disciples Into Galilee Again He Foretells His Sufferings and Death	17:22-23	9:30-32	9:43-45	
64. The Payment of the Temple Tax	17:24-27			
65. Who Shall be the Greatest in the Kingdom?	18:1-5	9:33-37	9:46-48	
66. Warnings Not to Offend Weaker Ones and the Rebuke of Sectarianism	18:6-14	9:38-50	9:49-50	
67. Proper Discipline of an Offending Brother	18:15-22			
68. Parable of the Unmerciful Servant (duty of patiently forgiving a brother)	18:23-35			

	MATT	MARK	LUKE	JOHN
68. The Cost of Discipleship	8:19-22		9:57-62	
69. The Time of the Feast of Tabernacles				7:2-9
70. His Journey from Galilee to Jerusalem			9:51-56	7:10
D. THE LATER JUDEAN MINISTRY				
1. His Arrival and Ministry at the Feast of Tabernacles <i>(October, A.D. 29. Jesus was crucified six months later - April A.D. 30)</i>				7:11-52
2. The Adulterous Woman				7:53 -8:11
3. "I Am the Light of the World"				8:12-20
4. Discourse - "Which Father Are Ye Of?"				8:21-59
5. The Healing of the Man Born Blind				9:1-41
6. The Good Shepherd				10:1-21
7. The Sending Forth of the Seventy / Their Return			10:1-24 10:17-24	
8. The Parable of the Good Samaritan			10:25-37	
9. In the Home of Martha and Mary			10:38-42	
10. The Lesson of Importunity in Prayer / Parable of the Friend at Midnight			11:1-13	
11. Warning Against Blasphemy of the Holy Spirit			11:14-36	
12. While Dining With a Pharisee He Denounces the Externalism and Hypocrisy of the Scribes and Pharisees			11:37-54	
13. Christ Warns Against the Leaven of the Pharisees			12:1-12	
14. Covetousness / Parable of the Rich Fool			12:13-21	
15. Worldly Anxieties			12:22-34	
16. Watchfulness / Parable of the Waiting Servants			12:35-48	
17. Christ, The Divider of Men			12:49-53	
18. Discerning the Times			12:54-57	
19. Not Stirring Up Our Adversaries			12:58-59	
20. The Tale of Two Tragedies			13:1-5	
21. The Parable of the Fruitless Fig Tree			13:6-9	
22. The Healing of the Woman Bound by Satan			13:10-17	
23. Parable of the Mustard Seed			13:18-19	
24. Parable of the Leaven			13:20-21	
25. Jesus at the Feast of Dedication <i>(Dec, A.D. 29)</i> <i>(Christ had less than four months until the cross.)</i>				10:22-39

	MATT	MARK	LUKE	JOHN
E. THE LATER PEREAN MINISTRY				
1. Withdrawal from Jerusalem to Bethany				10:39-42
2. Teaching in Perea Cities on a Journey to Jerusalem			13:22-35	
- A Question on Salvation			13:23-30	
- Reply to the Warning Concerning Herod Antipas			13:31-35	
3. In the House of One of the Chief Pharisees			14:1-24	
- Healing of the Man with Dropsy			14:1-6	
- Parable of the Ambitious Guest			14:7-15	
- Parable of the Great Supper			14:16-24	
4. The High Cost of Discipleship			14:25-35	
5. Three Great Parables On the Lost and Found			15:1-32	
- The Lost Sheep			15:1-7	
- The Lost Coin			15:8-10	
- The Lost Son			15:11-32	
6. Three Illustrations on Stewardship				
- The Parable of the Unjust Steward			16:1-17	
- The Story of the Rich Man and Lazarus			16:19-31	
- The Parable of the Unprofitable Servants			17:7-10	
7. The Raising of Lazarus				11:1-44
8. Jews Plot to Kill Christ / Prophecy of Caiaphas				11:45-54
9. His Last Journey to Jerusalem Via Samaria / Galilee			17:11-37	
- Healing of the Ten Lepers			17:11-19	
10. The Unjust Judge			18:1-8	
11. The Pharisee and the Publican			18:9-14	
12. From Galilee Going Through Perea, He Teaches On:				
- Divorce	19:1-12	10:1-12		
- Christ's Attitude Toward Children	19:13-15	10:13-16	18:15-17	
- The Rich Young Ruler	19:16-30	10:17-27	18:18-27	
- The Rewards for Forsaking All	19:27-30	10:28-31	18:28-30	
- Parable of the Laborers in the Vineyard	20:1-16			
13. Again Christ Foretells His Death / Resurrection	20:17-19	10:32-34	18:31-34	
14. The Ambition of James and John	20:20-28	10:35-45		
15. Healing of Blind Bartimaeus and Companion	20:29-34	10:46-52	18:35-43	
16. The Conversion of Zacchaeus			19:1-10	
17. The Parable of the Pounds			19:11-27	
18. Christ Sets Out for Jerusalem			19:28	

	MATT	MARK	LUKE	JOHN
F. THE LAST PUBLIC MINISTRY IN JUDEA				
1. His Arrival in Bethany <i>(Thursday, Six days before the passover)</i>				11:55-12:1 12:1-11
2. Christ's Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem <i>(Saturday)</i>	21:1-11	11:1-11	19:29-44	12:12-19
3. The Barren Fig Tree Cursed	21:18-19	11:12-14		
4. The Second Cleansing of the Temple The Lame and Blind Healed in the Temple	21:12-13 21:14	11:15-17	19:45-48	
5. Desire of the Greeks to See Jesus / His Response				12:20-50
6. The Barren Fig Tree Withered	21:19-22	11:19-26	21:37-38	
7. Chief Priests / Elders Challenge His Authority - Parable of the Two Sons - Parable of the Householder Demanding Fruit - Parable of the Marriage Feast	21:23-27 21:28-32 21:33-46 22:1-14	11:27-33 12:1-12	20:1-8 20:9-19	
8. On Paying Tribute to Caesar	22:15-22	12:13-17	20:20-26	
9. The Question of Marriage in the Resurrection	22:23-33	12:18-27	20:27-40	
10. The Greatest Commandment	22:34-40	12:28-34		
11. Christ is David's Son, But Also His Lord	22:41-46	12:35-37	20:41-44	
12. Solemn Denunciation of the Scribes / Pharisees	23:1-39	12:38-40	20:45-47	
11. The Poor Widow's Gift		12:41-44	21:1-4	
12. Mount of Olives Discourse - the Second Coming <i>(Monday, two days before the crucifixion)</i>	Ch. 24-25	13:1-37	21:5-36	
13. Parables in Light of His Coming - Parable of the Ten Virgins - Parable of the Ten Talents - Parable of the Judgment Day (Sheep / Goats)	25:1-13 25:14-30 25:31-46			
14. Jesus Foretells His Crucifixion Two Days Hence	26:1-2	14:1-2	22:1-2	
15. Plot of the Jews to Apprehend and Kill Christ	26:3-5	14:1-2	22:2	
16. The Feast at the House of Simon the Leper Where Mary of Bethany Anoints Jesus for Burial <i>(This was Monday)</i>	26:6-13	14:3-9		12:2-8
17. Judas Bargains to Betray Jesus	26:14-16	14:10-11	22:3-6	

Christ and His disciples prepared for the passover, which would have been on Wednesday that year. The Jewish day started and ended at 6:00 o'clock. Ours starts at 12:00. Thus, the passover day started on Tuesday evening, and ended Wednesday evening at 6:00. Much of the Gospel narrative gives its attention to these 24 hours. It commences with the last supper on Tuesday evening and ends with Christ being taken down from the cross and placed in the grave on Wednesday evening. John's Gospel uses seven consecutive chapters to cover this event (John 13 - 19). Jesus himself was the Lamb of God who was crucified on the very day Israel was celebrating the passover.

III. THE CRUCIFIXION OF CHRIST

*** The Fourth and Final Passover (April 14, A.D. 30)**

A. EARLY EVENING - THE UPPER ROOM	MATT	MARK	LUKE	JOHN
1. The Preparation for the Passover Meal	26:17-19	14:12-16	22:7-13	
2. The Passover Meal With the Twelve	26:20	14:17	22:14-16	
3. Strife Regarding Who Should be Greatest			22:24-30	
4. Washing of the Disciples Feet				13:1-20
5. The Traitor Identified	26:21-25	14:18-21	22:21-23	13:21-30
6. Christ Institutes the Last Supper (1 Cor.11:23-26)	26:26-29	14:22-25	22:17-20	
7. Peter's Denial Foretold			22:31-38	13:31-38
8. Farewell Address to the Apostles in Upper Room				14:1-31a
B. FROM THE UPPER ROOM TO GETHSEMANE				
1. Departure from the Upper Room	26:30	14:26	22:39	14:31b
2. Discourses on the Way to Gethsemane (Jn. 15 - 17)				
Christ is the True Vine				15:1-17
The World Hates You Because it Hates me				15:18-16:4
The Coming Holy Spirit				16:5-15
Christ's Death and Resurrection				16:16-33
The High Priestly Prayer				17:1-26
3. All Shall Be Offended / Peter Warned Again	26:31-35	14:27-31		
C. AT GETHSEMANE				
1. Arrival at Gethsemane / His Agony	26:36-46	14:32-42	22:39-46	18:1
2. Christ Betrayed, Arrested, Forsaken	26:47-56	14:43-52	22:47-53	18:2-12
3. Healing of the Ear of Malchus			22:50-51	
D. THE TRIAL - HEBREW / ROMAN				
1. Jesus Examined by Annas, Former High Priest				18:12-14, 19-23
2. Christ Hastily Tried / Condemned by Caiphas and the Council Who Mock and Buffet Him	26:57, 59-68	14:53, 55-65	22:54, 63-65	18:24

	MATT	MARK	LUKE	JOHN
3. Peter Denies Christ	26:58, 69-75	14:54, 66-72	22:54-62	18:15-18, 25-27
4. Christ Officially Condemned by the Council	27:1	15:1	22:66-71	
5. Judas Commits Suicide (Acts 1:18-19)	27:3-10			
6. Christ Before Pilate	27:2,11-14	15:1-5	23:1-5	18:28-38
7. Christ Before Herod Antipas			23:6-12	
8. Christ's Second Appearance Before Pilate				
- Pilate Attempts to Release Christ	27:15-26	15:6-15	23:13-24	18:39-40
- Pilate's Wife is Warned in a Dream	27:19			
- Pilate Washes His Hands	27:24			
- Pilate Releases Barabbas	27:20-26	15:6-15	23:13-25	18:39-40
- Pilate Reluctantly Issues the Death Sentence	27:26-30	15:15	23:24	19:1-16
9. Christ Delivered to Romans Soldiers / Mocked	27:27-30	15:16-19		
E. THE CRUCIFIXION				
1. Jesus Enroute to the Cross and On Golgotha's Hill	27:31-34	15:20-23	23:26-33	19:16-17
- Simon the Cyrenian Compelled to Bear the Cross	27:32	15:21	23:26	
- Lamentation of the Women			23:27-31	
2. From 9:00 to 12:00 on the Cross	27:35-44	15:24-32	23:33-43	19:18-27
- They Cast Lots for His Garments	27:35-36	15:24	23:34	19:23-24
- Pilate's Superscription - The King of the Jews	27:37	15:26	23:38	19:19-22
- The Two Thieves - One Repents	27:38,44	15:27-28	23:33,39-43	19:18
- Mockery - "Save Yourself, You Saved Others"	27:39-44	15:29-32	23:35-37	
- Jesus Entrusts His Mother to John				19:25-27
3. From 12:00-3:00 - Three Hours of Darkness	27:45-50	15:33-37	23:44-46	19:28-30
- Darkness Over the Earth	27:45	15:33	23:44	
- Some Said He Called for Elijah	27:46-49	15:34-36		
- They Offered Him Vinegar for His Thirst	27:48	15:36		19:28-30
- He Released His Spirit at Death	27:50	15:37	23:46	19:30
4. Phenomena Surrounding Christ's Death	27:51-56	15:38-41	23:45,47-49	
- The Veil in the Temple Rent From Top to Bottom	27:51	15:38	23:45	
- A Mighty Earthquake	27:51			
- Graves Opened / Some Came Out	27:52-53			
- Conversion of the Centurion	27:54	15:39	23:47	

	MATT	MARK	LUKE	JOHN
F. THE BURIAL				
1. Burial in Tomb of Joseph of Arimathea	27:57-60	15:42-46	23:50-54	19:31-42
2. The Watch of the Women by Christ's Tomb	27:61-66	15:47	23:55-56	

IV. THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST

A. THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST

1. Women Visit the Tomb (before dawn)	28:1	16:1		
2. Earthquake, The Stone Rolled Away Fright of the Roman Guards	28:2-4			
3. Women Visit the Empty Tomb (at sunrise) The Message of the Angels of the Risen Lord	28:5-8	16:2-8	24:1-8	20:1
4. Mary Magdalene and the Women Tell the Apostles Peter and John Visit the Empty Tomb			24:9-12	20:2-10

B. THE APPEARANCES OF CHRIST

1. Jesus Appears to Mary Magdalene She Tells the Disciples		16:9-11		20:11-18
2. Christ Appears to the Other Women	28:9-10			
3. The Report of the Roman Guards	28:11-15			
4. Christ Appears to Two Emmaeus Disciples		16:12-13	24:13-32	
5. The Report of the Two Disciples and the News of Christ's Appearance to Peter (1 Cor.15:5)			24:33-35	
6. The Appearance to the Disciples, Thomas Absent		16:14	24:36-43	20:19-25
7. Appearance Eight Days Later, Thomas Convinced				20:26-31
8. Appearance to Seven Disciples By the Sea The Miraculous Draught of Fishes Public Restoration of Peter				21:1-25
9. The Appearance to Over Five Hundred (1 Cor.15:6) The Great Commission Given	28:16-20	16:15-18		
10. Appearance to James, Christ's Brother (1 Cor.15:7)				
11. His Appearance to Open the Scriptures (Acts 1:3-8) The Command to Preach / But Wait for the Spirit			24:44-49	

C. THE ASCENSION OF CHRIST

1. His Last Appearance and the Ascension (Acts 1:9-12)		16:19-20	24:50-53	
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SUMMARY

83 accounts are found in all three Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke).

24 accounts are found in all four Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, John). These are of the 83.

27 accounts are found only in Matthew

2 accounts are found only in Mark

52 accounts are found only in Luke

41 accounts are found only in John

19 accounts are found only in Matthew and Mark

6 accounts are found only in Mark and Luke

9 accounts are found only in Matthew and Luke

1 account is found only in Mark and John

2 accounts are found only in Luke and John

The above accounts could vary (more or less), depending on how you chose to divide up events. Some accounts could be stretched into several. Others could be narrowed into fewer by putting them under a heading. For example, the Olivet Discourse (Matthew 24 - 25) could be one long sermon. However, if the three parables in the discourse were listed separately, there would be four accounts in the one discourse.

Study the Outline on pages 53-63. This is a chronological guide to all the events of the four Gospels. You will find the order in which each event occurred, and often *where* it happened. The four passovers in John's Gospel help us find our dates during Christ's 3 1/2 year ministry. A total of seven consecutive chapters (John 13-19) cover the events of *one day*—the passover on which our Lord was crucified.

On the following pages, *eighty-three* narratives recorded in all four Gospels will be compared. We will consider whom the Gospels were written to, and the personality of the writers. Also, we will seek to find *the whole picture* as each Gospel writer supplies what the other one omitted. This study is by no means exhaustive. Our goal is to provoke thought and create a foundation for future study in each student of the Word.

A COMPARISON OF THE GOSPELS

Let us summarize some of the more obvious differences in the Gospels. Two notable reasons for differences are these: The personalities of the writers were unlike; therefore, their styles differed. The audiences to whom they were writing were dissimilar. Each society had differing customs and needs.

Matthew was writing to the Jewish world. He was very Jewish in his presentation. By occupation, he was an accountant. Therefore, he created his Gospel with headings, keeping his subjects together. Matthew was not concerned about chronology as much as keeping his themes together.

Mark is chronological, but he is very brief and to the point. He concentrates more on the *acts* of Jesus, than His *words*. Mark draws his material from the sermons of dramatic Peter. Mark is very rapid and descriptive, but not detailed, as he writes to the aggressive, less contemplative Roman world.

Luke is detailed. He is a highly educated physician writing to an educated Greek society that appreciated detail, beautiful speech, and scholarship. As a physician, Luke wrote from a doctor's point of view. He mentions *healing* (mental and spiritual health) more than all of Matthew and Mark combined.

John concentrated more on the *words* of Jesus, than His acts. He does not record many of the Lord's miracles. Those miracles which he does record are *signs*, and bear a message. John focuses on the discourses of Jesus, and emphasizes His deity more than any of the other Gospel writers.

John - The Message and Messenger

(Mt. 3:1-6 Mk.1:2-6 Lk. 3:2-6)

In these accounts, all three writers mention the theme of John's preaching—repentance. Mark and Matthew both stressed that the people “confessed” their sins. Confession is important. There is no release from sin until we acknowledge it. Sometimes we have to acknowledge our sin not only to God *but unto man* in order to be freed from bondage. Matthew and Mark both describe John's ordinary diet and clothing. Luke does not bring up John's food or clothes, but reveals the fact that the word of the Lord came to John, an ordinary-appearing man *in the wilderness* (Lk. 3:2). Revival started with a man hearing from God in the wilderness. God bypassed the established religious system of the day and spoke to a servant in the desert who was not steeped in tradition.

Only Mark records that John was fulfilling Malachi 3:1, “Behold I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee” (Mk.1:2). All three include the quote from Isaiah 40:3: “The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.” God wants the men he uses to only be a voice, an instrument, a vessel. We need to stay out of the picture. John later said, “He must increase, I must decrease” (Jn. 3:30). When men brag and boast that their church is “the fastest growing church in the country,” they have lost sight of the real purpose. They are no longer *just a voice* but a large, tangible picture of pride. The focus is upon their ego, not the Lord.

Only Luke quotes Isaiah 40:3-5. Before the glory of the Lord comes, we must prepare ourselves. The valleys in our lives (inferiorities and voids) have to be filled. Mountains (which speak of pride and haughtiness) must be leveled low. Crooked things like deceit and distortion of matters must be straightened. Rough areas (irritation, anger, harshness, and criticism) must be smoothed out. These four things precede God's visitation. They are also essential for good mental, emotional, and spiritual health.

John's Picture of Christ Before He Saw Him

(Mt. 3:11-12 Mk.1:7-8 Lk. 3:15-18)

All three Gospel writers record the words of John the Baptist. John stated that Another *greater than himself* was coming. Although John baptized with water, the One coming after him would baptize with the Holy Ghost. Matthew and Luke add “*and fire.*” Considering all the pertinent passages, it seems that Jesus and John did not know each other very well, while in fact they were related. Jesus grew up in Galilee, and John in Judea. John confessed, “I knew him not” (Jn.1:31,33).

It is interesting to note that Jesus did not baptize anyone with the Holy Ghost and fire during His three and-a-half year ministry. It was not until He was risen and ascended that He sent the Holy Ghost. Sometimes prophecy can baffle us. This prophecy was not fulfilled during His time on earth. It was fulfilled *after* He had returned to heaven. We have to realize these things and ask God for an understanding of the time element when we receive prophecies.

Both Matthew and Luke show the work of the Holy Spirit—He has a fan [winnowing fork] in His hand and will clear His threshing floor. He gathers the wheat into his barn, but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire. The explanation is clear. The Holy Spirit will make a separation in our lives. He will separate the good from the evil in our hearts. He will consume everything that is sensual with devouring fire. The Holy Spirit's flame can be very uncomfortable. When I was baptized in the Holy Spirit, I was in agony for a whole year because of the intense heat. Yet this process changed my life.

We see the *extreme humility* of John the Baptist in this account. In Matthew he said, “Whose shoes I am not worthy to carry.” Mark and Luke say, “Whose shoes I am not worthy to untie.” How do we account for the difference? I am sure John said *both*. Greatness is reckoned by one's humility. John was esteemed “the greatest born of women.” We can see, therefore, his tremendous humility.

John also stated that the One coming after him was “mightier” than himself. John had come in the spirit and power of Elijah. He had the same anointing as Elijah, and it was a tremendous anointing. Luke was the only writer to include that “the people were in expectation [or suspense], and all men mused in their hearts of John, whether he were the Christ, or no” (Lk. 3:15). The mantle of the Spirit was so mighty upon John that everyone wondered if he were the Christ. Yet John always deflected attention away from himself, unto the Lord. This is something we should always do. Let us turn the attention away from ourselves unto others, and unto the Lord. It will save us from a terrible fall (Prov.16:18).

The Baptism of Jesus

(Mt. 3:13-17 Mk.1:9-11 Lk. 3:21-23 Jn.1:32-34)

The baptism of Jesus is recorded by all four Gospel writers. All four state that the Holy Spirit (in the form of a dove) descended from heaven and lighted upon Jesus. Since the Holy Spirit is characterized as a dove, this means He is easily driven away. Ephesians 4:30 warns us: “grieve not the Holy Spirit of God.” Often we are so callous and insensitive that we are totally unaware when we hurt Him.

Only Luke tells us that Jesus was *praying* as He was baptized. Luke himself was a man of prayer and was attracted to this aspect of the life of Christ. Matthew and Mark show that the heavens were opened *immediately* as Jesus came up from the waters. Matthew, Mark, and Luke all mention the voice of the Father confirming, “This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.” John does not.

John's Gospel does *not* record the incident of the Father's voice from heaven. It only includes the testimony of John the Baptist as he baptized Jesus. John saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and He abode upon Christ. John the Baptist said, "I knew him not: but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost" (Jn.1:33).

Matthew is the only writer who tells of John's reluctance at first to baptize Jesus. When Jesus came from Galilee to Jordan unto John to be baptized, "John forbad him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?" (Mt. 3:13-14). Again we see the great humility of John. But Jesus, even more meek and lowly than John, insisted on being baptized. Christ explained that water baptism is an act of "fulfilling all righteousness."

In the baptism of Jesus, we see distinctly the three separate members of the Trinity. Jesus is not the Father, and He is not the Holy Spirit. We see the Son of God standing in the river Jordan. As He comes up from the waters of baptism, the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove descended upon Him. Then the voice of the Father declared, "This is my Son in whom I am well pleased." From that time onward, the heavens were opened. Christ could see into heaven and see the face of the Father. When he said, "I do nothing of myself but what I see my Father do" (Jn. 5:19), He was not speaking figuratively. He had an open vision of the Father. When He was upon the cross, the Father hid His face and the heavens closed. At this time the Son of God cried, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

The Temptation of Jesus (Mt. 4:1-11 Mk.1:12-13 Lk. 4:1-13)

Mark's Gospel offers only two verses on the temptation of Christ. He is the only writer to state that Jesus was *immediately* tempted after the momentous experience in the Jordan River. This is a very meaningful truth and it is something to remember. After a mountaintop experience, this is the time to watch out! Matthew and Luke say that Jesus was *led* by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. This was true of the children of Israel. The cloud (representing the Spirit) led them into the wilderness to be tested with ten trials. Mark is more emphatic in his presentation. Not only was Jesus directed of the Spirit to go into the wilderness, He was *driven* by the Spirit. He was with the wild beasts. *Wild beasts* might also include evil spirits who were trying to deflect Him from His course.

Tests are very important in the economy of God. Our whole purpose for being on earth is to be tested. The first thing we learn about Adam and Eve is that they were put to the test. When we pass our tests, there are tremendous blessings that follow. After Jesus passed the tests, the angels came and ministered unto him. Jesus had to be tested in body, soul, and spirit. He had to defeat Satan in all three areas. After He had silenced the Adversary, He came forth with power to commence His ministry.

Matthew and Luke are much more detailed in their narratives. While all three writers say that the period of temptation was forty days, only Matthew says forty days *and forty nights*. The Jews, to whom Matthew was writing, could appreciate this. Moses was in the mount for "forty days and forty nights."

The temptations Jesus faced were of enormous magnitude. The stakes were high. The issues involved kingdoms. The destiny of mankind—past, present, and future, depended on Christ's responses during this temptation. Satan did everything in his power to induce Jesus *to do miracles* out of the will of God. Then he could say: "You are no better than I am. You are just like me. You have no power over me."

Satan is not afraid of men who can do miracles. He can do miracles, too. Satan fears men who are obedient. These are the ones who will defeat him. Miracles are no proof that a man has God's approval. Many who perform wonderful works in the name of the Lord will be rejected on the day of judgment (cf. Mt. 7:21-23). The Antichrist himself will do many signs and wonders in our days (Rev.13:12-15).

Matthew was the only writer to call Satan "*the tempter*." He came to Jesus after He had fasted forty days. Hunger subsides after several days of fasting. Later it returns. At the time when Jesus was very hungry, Satan came to Him and said, "Command these stones to be made into bread." Another reason it was a temptation was the fact that Jesus had the power to do it. Satan wanted Jesus to use His power indiscriminately. Then he could accuse Him. Jesus always came back with the Sword of the Spirit, the Word of God. He replied, "It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth [present tense] out of the mouth of God" (Mt. 4:4, cf. Deut. 8:3). Jesus would only use His power at the command of the Heavenly Father. Jesus passed the temptation of bodily appetite. Now He would be tested in his soul.

After this, Satan brought Jesus from the wilderness into the city of Jerusalem. Matthew is the only writer to call Jerusalem "*the holy city*" (Mt. 4:5). This would have special meaning to the Jews. Again, Satan tried to make Jesus use His power indiscreetly. Bringing Jesus to the top of the temple he said to him: "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. 5:6). Now the Adversary is quoting scripture to Jesus (Psa. 91:11-12). We should understand that Satan is a master of Scripture, and he uses the Scriptures to ensnare others.

There was a Jewish tradition that said the Messiah would come from the sky and land in the temple courtyard. Thus, Satan was tempting Jesus to promote Himself and to show everyone that he was the Messiah. He was being tested in the area of the soul or emotions. "Get everyone all excited. Show them who You are and what You can do! It will bring glory to God. Nothing can hurt You. The angels are charged to watch over You. Go ahead and jump!" Again, Christ used the Sword of the Spirit, saying: "It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God" (Mt. 4:7, cf. Deut. 6:16).

Jesus had been tested in body and soul. Now He would be tested in spirit, in the area of worship. This section is very interesting. One of the greatest quests in man is the desire for *power*, and man will sell his soul to have it. Satan took Jesus up into an exceedingly high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them. Luke says he showed it to Him "in a moment of time." This "mountain" must have been in the spiritual realm because there is no mountain high enough to see all the world at once. Then he said to Jesus, "All these things will I give thee if thou wilt fall down and worship me" (Mt. 4:9). Luke adds several important insights that were omitted by Matthew. "And the devil said unto him, 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. If thou therefore wilt worship me, all shall be thine."

Satan desires worship! But he also has *something to offer* men who worship him and sell their souls to him. He has power and glory to give them. However, anyone who worships Satan is controlled by him. It is peculiar that Satan would offer Jesus power and glory! Jesus was the heir of all things. The nations and kingdoms of the world belonged to Him by inheritance anyway. Therefore, Satan was offering him *a shortcut* to His inheritance. This way, Jesus could avoid going to the cross. Satan tried to give Jesus His inheritance the quick way. If Jesus had accepted the shortcut and avoided the cross, Satan would still be reigning. We can see, then, that the end does not justify the means if the means is wrong.

Christ refused the offer! He knew that the fast, easy way was a baited trap. Jesus would not submit Himself to the Tempter to quickly obtain power, authority, and glory among the kingdoms. Unfortunately, some ministers gladly accept the shortcut. They are willing to compromise the truth and submit to another spirit to gain popularity and influence. In avoiding the cross, their inheritance at the end will come to nothing, though at first it seems to flourish. Christ our Captain did not choose the easy path. He defeated Satan during the temptation by *a denial of self*, and by the Word of God. He said: “Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve” (cf. Mt. 4:10, Deut. 6:13). Remember, *ministry* itself can be a golden idol, another god. Let us beware.

Summary of important points in the Temptation of Christ

- Only Mark records that Jesus was *immediately* tempted after the momentous experience in Jordan.
- Mark is the only writer to mention that Jesus was *driven* by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tested by the devil (also, that he was with the *wild beasts*).
- Mark is the most descriptive, the most brief. He is very rapid in presentation and focuses on *action*.
- The fact that Christ was *driven* by the Spirit signifies the urgency and importance of tests.
We were born to be tested and approved.
- Only Matthew mentions that the temptation lasted forty days *and forty nights*.
- Only Matthew calls Jerusalem “*the holy city*,” a fact that would be appreciated by the Jews.
- Christ was tested in body, soul, and spirit. He had to defeat Satan in all three areas.
- Satan tried repeatedly to induce Jesus *to do miracles*. He wanted Jesus to use His power foolishly and then be able to accuse Him of being no better than himself.
- Jesus had the power to turn stones to bread, but was *dead* to the need to perform miracles for show.
- Satan is not afraid of miracles. He can perform mighty miracles, too. He is afraid of obedient men and women who have God's approval. These are the ones who will defeat and dethrone him.
- Matthew is the only Gospel writer to call Satan “the tempter.”
- Satan knows scripture *very well*. He and his ministers can quote the Bible very convincingly.
- Christ defeated Satan by quoting the Old Testament scriptures (all three times from Deuteronomy).
We must not minimize the power of all scripture, whether Old or New Testament.
All scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable ... (2 Tim. 3:16).
- Satan's greatest desire is for worship and control. Those who worship him, he controls.
- Luke alone includes the claims of Satan, that he had the ability to give the power and glory of the kingdoms to whosoever he desired. Luke gave more details than the other writers.
- Satan was offering Jesus His own inheritance by taking a shortcut and *averting the cross*.
- There are ministers today who accept shortcuts and bow to another spirit. They compromise the truth and avoid the cross in their own lives (and in their messages). Many will preach prosperity and blessings without including the cross. This fills their churches and makes them look successful, but in the end their reign of glory will come to nothing and their works will not endure. Many large churches will dwindle almost to nothing when God shakes them with the winds of adversity.
- Christ defeated Satan not only by the Word of God, but *by a denial of self*. Jesus was willing to go to the cross and was willing also to *wait* for the Father's time to exalt Him (Rev.11:15).
- After the tests were passed, the angels came and ministered unto Him. Great blessings and ministry flow *after* we have passed our tests successfully.

Reasons Jesus Left Judea
(Mt. 4:12 Mk.1:14 Lk. 3:19-20 Jn. 4:1-4)

Matthew and Mark are very brief in this account. Matthew says, “When Jesus had heard that John was cast into prison, he departed into Galilee.” Jesus had been in *Judea*, perhaps several months (Jn. 3:22). Mark's account is similar. “Now after that John was put into prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God.” Luke is more explicit. He gives the reason John was imprisoned by Herod Antipas. John had reproved Herod for the many evils he had committed, but when John mentioned Herod's incestuous marriage to his brother Philip's wife, this enraged Herod (cf. Lk. 3:19-20). Even more incensed against him was Herod's new wife. Still, this does not explain why Jesus left Judea to go into Galilee. John's Gospel ties all the accounts together and gives them more clarity.

“When therefore the Lord knew how the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John, (though Jesus himself baptized not, but his disciples), He left Judea, and departed again into Galilee” (Jn. 4:1-3). It was rumored that Jesus had made and baptized more disciples than John, and this was very alarming to the jealous, hateful Pharisees. The Pharisees thought they had ridden themselves of John, who by this time was imprisoned in Peraea. (See Map). As they rejoiced in John's riddance, Jesus came to the forefront, as a greater vexation to them than ever John had been. Now Christ's enemies were even more exasperated. Therefore, to avoid unnecessary strife and persecution, Jesus departed from Judea, making his way through Samaria, into Galilee. About seventy percent of the ministry of Jesus was in Galilee.

The Four Fishermen Called
(Mt. 4:18-22 Mk.1:16-20 Lk. 5:1-11)

In this narrative, Christ calls Peter and Andrew, and James and John, to be with him. The four were two sets of brothers. These fishermen had had some acquaintance and conversation with Christ previously: at John's baptism (Jn.1:40-42); at Cana of Galilee (Jn. 2:2); and in Judea (Jn. 4:3). But as of yet, they were not called to attend Him *constantly*. It was *at this time* at the sea that they were called into a more intimate fellowship with Christ. Here they were *apprehended* by Christ for the full-time ministry. Matthew and Mark give very *abbreviated* versions of what transpired here on the Sea of Galilee (Mt. 4:18-22, Mk.1:16-20). Luke fills in the details (Lk. 5:1-11).

Matthew records that Christ said to Peter and Andrew, “Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.” Mark includes a prerequisite, “I will make you *to become* fishers of men.” The implication here is that it *takes time* to learn how to become a fisher of men. It means we must prepare ourselves first. When the Lord called James and John, immediately they responded, leaving their business and their father, and followed Him. This is an important point because *business* and *family ties* did not hold them back from the call of God as it does so many. Luke gives more background to the episode (Lk. 5:1-11).

Luke says that these events occurred by the lake of Gennesaret, Mark says by the sea of Galilee, and Matthew only says by the *sea*. Actually, there were four names given to the same body of water: the sea of Galilee, sea of Tiberias, lake of Gennesaret, and the sea of Chinnereth [or Chinneroth] (Num. 34:11, Josh.13:27, 12:3). The narrative of Luke 5:1-11 rightfully belongs *before* the last two miracles of chapter 4:38-43, because in those verses, Peter had already joined Christ. It is in Luke 5:1-11 that Peter and the brethren are *officially* called to be fishers of men. In chapter 4:38-43, it would appear that they were already with Christ. Therefore, Luke is not in chronological order here.

In Luke 5:1, vast crowds had attended Christ's preaching. The people pressed hard upon Him to hear the word of God. Jesus must have been standing on the same level as the crowd so that they could neither see nor hear Him. Fortunately, there were two fishing boats coming to shore. One belonged to Peter and Andrew, and the other to Zebedee and his sons. At first, Christ saw Peter and Andrew fishing at some distance. He waited until they came to land, and the fishermen and hired servants had gone out of them, having washed their nets. Probably it was at this hour that Jesus spoke to the two sets of brothers to follow Him.

Then Jesus entered the boat that belonged to Peter and asked him to “thrust out a little from the land.” There He sat down and *taught* the people. After that, He said to Peter, “Launch out into the deep and let down your nets for a draught.” James and John also set out with them in their own ship. When Peter's net enclosed a great multitude of fish, his net broke. He beckoned to James and John, who came quickly and filled their ships. Then both ships began to sink from the weight of the fishes. As all the brothers wondered with amazement, Christ reaffirmed their call, saying: “Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men. And when they had brought their ships to land, they forsook all, and followed him” (Lk. 5:10-11).

Christ was changing their vocation from the natural to the spiritual. Often our natural occupation is a clue or indicator of our spiritual vocation. John was found “mending nets” when he was called. John would be a mender of people's lives. He would bring peace to divided churches. He became the Apostle of Love. Peter was an evangelist. His net would catch 3000 souls on the Day of Pentecost.

One other point of interest is the fact that at the time when they left all to follow Christ, their occupation was prospering more than it ever had before. They were having uncommon success. We have seen this happen on numerous occasions. One man said that when he was leaving a lucrative job to go into the ministry, suddenly his manager doubled his salary. This created a real temptation to stay at his secular employment. Yet these are tests to see where we have placed our affections. Is our security in man, or is it in the will of God? There is no other place more secure than being in the center of God's will.

In the House of Peter **(Mt. 8:14-17 Mk.1:29-34 Lk. 4:38-41)**

Peter's hometown was Bethsaida. Later he relocated in Capernaum when Jesus made His headquarters there. Both towns were on the northern shores of the sea of Galilee, only several miles apart. Upon leaving the synagogue in Capernaum on a sabbath, they entered Peter's house and found his mother-in-law sick with a fever.

Matthew and Luke say they entered into *Peter's* house. Mark says it was “the house of Simon and Andrew.” It was Peter's house, but Andrew lived there too. Other residents of the home were Peter's wife and mother-in-law. Mark is the only writer to mention that *James and John* accompanied them into the house. Peter, James, and John became Christ's three closest followers.

Peter was married. Every good Catholic should understand that the first pope and the original apostles were not celibate (cf. 1 Cor. 9:5). The wives of the apostles had to have tremendous dedication to God. Many women would demand more time and attention from their husbands, and expect them to be home. We can see, then, the importance of a consecrated, dedicated wife. She makes or breaks the minister. Very few Christians (men and women alike) are “sold out” to Christ.

Matthew and Mark both say the mother-in-law had *a fever*; but Luke the physician noted that it was “a great fever.” Matthew says he touched her hand, Mark says he took her by the hand and lifted her up, but Luke includes “he rebuked the fever” and it left her. Thus, a fever can be a spirit which needs to be rebuked. Immediately the fever left and immediately “she ministered unto them.” This means she made them a good meal and washed their clothes or something to that effect. We see the *whole-hearted, industrious spirit* of Peter's mother-in-law here. If the daughter was like her mother, Peter undoubtedly had an energetic wife. This is the kind of woman God chooses for his sons. God selected Rebecca for Isaac because of her diligence (Gen. 24:16-20). He by-passes the unmotivated.

That evening the whole city gathered their sick together and brought them to Jesus to be healed. Only Mark mentions precisely where! It was at *the door* of Peter's house. They brought the sick and diseased, and those possessed with demons, and He healed them. Luke says “he layed his hands on every one of them and healed them.” Matthew says, “he cast out the spirits with his word, and healed all that were sick.” Mark says he cast out *many* devils. Putting all three accounts together, some were healed by the laying on of hands, and others were delivered by the casting out of evil spirits. A medical doctor is limited. He can only deal with the tangible, physical body, but often the root of sickness is spiritual and requires a miracle of healing or the casting out of the spirits of infirmity and sickness. Only Matthew, writing to the Jews, included the fact that Jesus was fulfilling the prophecy of Isaiah 53:4, “Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses” (Mt. 8:17).

I would like to make one more important point in this section. When Jesus healed the multitudes, many people did not use their healthy bodies to follow the Lord, but only to live for themselves. When Peter's mother-in-law was healed, the first thing she did was *minister unto the Lord* and His servants. What will we use our miracle for? Will we use it for ourselves to go our own way, or will we use our miracle to “minister unto Him” and support His cause?

The First Tour of Galilee (Mt. 4:23-25 Mk.1:35-39 Lk. 4:42-44)

Jesus went throughout all of Galilee teaching in their synagogues, and healing *all manner* of sickness and disease. This means *mental* disorders as well as physical problems. Matthew says he healed those with “torments” . . . and those which were lunatic. After the miracles at Peter's house in Capernaum, Jesus withdrew himself into a solitary place to pray. This was a great while before sunrise. Mark brings out this point. Jesus had to be re-energized with new power. Several hours later, Peter and the other disciples found Him and said: “All men seek for thee.” The multitudes did not want Him to leave the area of Capernaum. They wanted the blessings of His ministry to continue with them. But Jesus explained that He must go into the other towns of Galilee also. Therefore, from hence, He went throughout *all* of Galilee. This is emphasized by Matthew and Mark.

All three Gospel writers include that Jesus targeted the *synagogues* of Galilee. We, too, should first go to the established churches, then to people outside the church. Only Matthew focuses on the *fame* of Jesus. Jesus became very popular in the *earlier* part of his ministry when the blessings of healing and provision were flowing. After His message of the cross, many disciples turned back (Jn. 6:66). This substantiates the fact that there are very few *committed* Christians. In this section, Jesus was in *Galilee*. Yet “his fame spread through all Syria.” “And there followed him great multitudes of people from Galilee, and from Decapolis (a territory east of the Jordan River), and from Jerusalem, and from Judaea, and beyond Jordan (i.e. Peraea).” (cf. Mt. 4:24-25). Thus, many outsiders came to Galilee.

The Healing of the Leper (Mt. 8:2-4 Mk.1:40-45 Lk. 5:12-16)

While He was still in Galilee, a leper came to Jesus and besought Him to be cleansed of his leprosy. Matthew and Luke record the leper saying: “*Lord*, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.” In addressing Him as *Lord*, he is acknowledging clearly that Jesus is deity. Matthew says he *worshipped* Him. Mark says he *kneeled* down to Him. Luke says he *fell upon his face*. Only deity can be worshipped. Luke the physician notes that he was “full of leprosy.” He was covered entirely with leprosy, perhaps in the advanced stages. A physician would pay particular attention to the stage of a disease.

Jesus put forth His hand and *touched* him, saying, “Be thou clean.” All three evangelists include this saying. Mark adds that Jesus was “*moved with compassion*” as He said it. Jesus is moved with compassion when people are truly humble. Leprosy is representative of sin. Jesus is very willing to cleanse men of sin when they ask Him. No one ever touched a leper, but Jesus *touched* him. He had authority over both leprosy and sin. Thus, He is able to heal both body and soul.

Christ instructed the cleansed leper to *tell no one* about his miracle, but to go and show himself to the priest, and to offer the appropriate sacrifice prescribed by Moses for cleansed lepers. The reference is found in Leviticus 14:2-20. Instead, he went out and blazed the matter abroad to everyone. Mark and Luke bring out this point. Mark says Jesus could no more enter the city but had to remain in the desert places, and the people *came to Him* from every direction. Luke the physician said that his fame went abroad, and great multitudes came to be *healed* by Him. Luke alone says that Jesus withdrew Himself into the wilderness to pray.

Christ Returns to Capernaum (Mt. 9:1 Mk. 2:1 Lk. 5:17)

Matthew 9:1 says that “*Jesus came into his own city.*” Although He grew up in Nazareth, Christ presently made Capernaum His headquarters. The two cities were about twenty miles apart. Mark 2:1 confirms that “his own city” was a reference to Capernaum, and it was rumored abroad that He was in town. Luke 5:17 adds that His coming there drew Pharisees and doctors of the law from every town of Galilee, Judea, and Jerusalem to hear Him teach. During His time of teaching, “the power of the Lord was present to heal.” Only Luke the physician records this phrase about healing. When God's anointing comes into a service, it is always for a specific purpose. This time, it was for healing. Now we are introduced to the healing of a paralyzed man.

The Paralyzed Man Healed (Mt. 9:2-8 Mk. 2:2-12 Lk. 5:17-26)

These three accounts are similar. While Jesus was teaching in an overcrowded house, a man taken with the palsy was lowered by four men through the roof to the place where Jesus taught. Only Mark tells us there were four men. Jesus saw *their* faith. He saw the faith of the men who had brought the paralyzed man. It does not say the faith of the paralyzed man, but *theirs*. Sometimes people need to rely on the faith of *others*. How much faith did Lazarus have when Jesus raised him from the dead? Obviously none! Jesus said to the paralyzed man, “Son, be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee” (Mt. 9:2). Mark only includes, “Son, thy sins be forgiven thee.” Luke records, “Man, thy sins are forgiven thee.” The scribes and Pharisees reasoned in their hearts (not out loud), “Who can forgive sins but God only?”

Matthew says, “They reasoned within themselves.” Mark says they were “reasoning in their hearts.” This is important because sin *begins* in the thoughts and reasonings. Thoughts become words and actions. Therefore, sin can be nipped in the bud. When Jesus perceived in His spirit that they reasoned so, He said to them: “Why reason ye these things in your hearts” (Mk. 2:8). Matthew says, “...Jesus knowing their thoughts said, Wherefore think ye evil in your hearts?” (Mt. 9:4). In their thoughts they were accusing Him of blasphemy, and Christ heard it. He knows what is in man (Jn. 2:24-25), and he knows what we are thinking. Proverbs 23:7 says, “As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he.” If you want to know what kind of person you are, stop and listen to your thoughts.

The scribes and Pharisees reasoned, “Who can forgive sins but God only?” This is the whole point! Jesus was showing them that He indeed is God in the flesh. Only God can forgive sins, and only God can receive worship, and Jesus did both. It was just as easy for Christ to forgive sins as it was to heal the man of paralysis. Then He told the man to arise and take his bed and go to his house. Mark and Luke say he rose up *immediately*. All three writers record that everyone marvelled and glorified God. Only Luke mentions the healed man glorifying God. Matthew records that the multitude “glorified God who had given such power unto men.” Mark says the people “glorified God, saying, We never saw it on this fashion.” Luke says they “glorified God and were filled with fear, saying, We have seen strange things today.” I believe the greatest revival the world has ever seen is coming, and when it happens, men will testify with great astonishment of God's marvellous acts.

The Call of Matthew (Levi)
(Mt. 9:9-13 Mk. 2:13-17 Lk. 5:27-32)

After leaving the scene in Capernaum where the paralyzed man was healed, Jesus went to the Sea of Galilee and multitudes resorted unto Him, and He taught them. Only Mark records this.

As He was walking along the way, Jesus spotted Matthew, who was sitting at the “receipt of custom,” or the tax collectors office. Jesus said to Matthew, “Follow me.” Mark records his name as, “Levi, the son of Alphaeus.” Luke calls him “Levi.” Matthew calls himself “Matthew.” Matthew and Mark testify that “he arose and followed him.” Luke says “*he left all*, rose up, and followed him.”

In the next scene, Jesus and His disciples were sitting at a feast. Luke clarifies that it was Matthew Levi himself who made the feast, and in his own house. Matthew had invited many other fellow publicans (tax collectors) and other nonreligious people (sinners). They were all sitting and eating together; and the scribes and Pharisees, who were separatists, murmured. They complained to the disciples, “Why eateth your Master with publicans and sinners?” (Matthew 9:11, Mark 2:16). Also, they murmured against the disciples themselves (Luke 5:30).

When Jesus heard the complaint, He said to them, “They that are whole need not a physician, but they that are sick. For I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.” This is recorded by all three Gospel writers. Matthew, writing to the Jews, includes a quote from Hosea 6:6 - “I will have mercy and not sacrifice.” Jesus told the scribes and Pharisees to “go and learn what this meaneth.” The Lord desires his people to show mercy to those who are in trouble. He is not interested in a lot of empty rituals and religious forms. In quoting Hosea 6:6 to the scribes and Pharisees, He was pointing out their lack of true love and pity, and the shallowness of their spiritual lives. Love is the fulfilling of the law. People who are legalists are the greatest violators of the law. They are unable to love their neighbors as themselves. What does God really want from His people? “What doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God” (Mic. 6:8).

Parable of the Bridegroom
(Mt. 9:14-15 Mk. 2:18-20 Lk.5:33-35)

In this account, the disciples of John the Baptist, and also the disciples of the Pharisees asked Jesus why His disciples did not fast often and make many prayers, as they did. They reasoned that His disciples were not as strict as they were, insinuating that they were less spiritual. Here we see the problem of comparison, and of pride. They thought spirituality involved how much a man mortified and deprived himself. Christ taught that fasting and praying was to be done in secret anyway, and that we should not sound a trumpet (Mt. 6:5-6, 6:16-18). Therefore, how could they judge for certain how often the Lord's disciples prayed and fasted? Praying and fasting should be done out of love and devotion to God, not out of a spirit of competition and pride.

John the Baptist had already been cast into prison. Prior to his imprisonment, John stated that he was “the friend of the Bridegroom.” He pointed his followers to Christ, saying, “He must increase, I must decrease” (Jn. 3:28-30). The disciples of John should have followed Christ from that moment on. In defense of his own apostles not fasting often, Christ said it was *not the proper season* for them to fast. “Can the children of the bridechamber mourn, as long as the bridegroom is with them?”

Jesus Himself is the Bridegroom. The disciples of Christ had the Bridegroom with them. It was not proper for them to mourn and sorrow. They were the children of the bridechamber. The disciples of the Pharisees were not. They were not invited to the wedding feast. Unfortunately, John's disciples did not have the Bridegroom either because they were continuing to follow John, who was now imprisoned.

While the disciples were with Christ for three-and-a-half years, they were *very active*. This required natural strength from food. They did not live monastic lives, and could not go on long fasts. They had numerous cities to minister unto, and had to travel much by foot. It was not necessary to fast for revelation and direction from the Word, because they had the WORD with them. Nor did they need to fast in order to find God's presence. God was walking beside them and among them. Their duty was to be *with* the Bridegroom with bright and shining faces, and listen to His words. The day would come when the Bridegroom would be taken away—a reference to His ascension back into heaven. Then they would fast. For now, it was not the season to live monastic, mortifying lives.

Parables of the Old Garment and the Old Wineskins
(Mt. 9:16-17 Mk. 2:21-22 Lk. 5:36-39)

In both parables, the Lord is comparing the old with the new. The old cannot bear the new. I believe Christ's theme is the old and new covenants. The old covenant cannot be patched with part of the new. It only causes a greater rend or division. Old bottles [or wineskins] which have lost their elasticity are unable to have new wine poured into them. New wine (the message of the new covenant) must be poured into new bottles. Luke brings out another point: “No man also having drunk old wine straight-way desireth new: for he saith, *The old is better*” (Lk. 5:39). This is indicative of *traditionalists*.

The Lord selected all Galileans for his apostles. Only into these could he pour his new message. The Galileans were less cultured and educated than the Scribes and Pharisees, but they were *flexible* and *open for change*. Israel as a whole did not want to hear the message of the new covenant. They preferred the old covenant and their traditions. Many rejected the new covenant, but some tried to live under *both* covenants simultaneously. They tried to patch up the old covenant with the new, but it created numerous problems.

A Sabbath Day in the Corn Fields

(Mt.12:1-8 Mk. 2:23-28 Lk. 6:1-5)

“...On the second sabbath after the first ... he went through the corn fields ...” (Lk. 6:1). This episode took place during the feast of Unleavened Bread. Passover was on the 14th day of the month. From the 15th to 21st followed the seven-day feast of Unleavened Bread. The first and seventh days were *feast sabbaths* in which they could do no work (Lev. 23:6-8). Also, there was a weekly sabbath in between. Luke says, “the second sabbath after the first” to show us it was during this seven day feast.

The story is essentially the same in each of the Synoptic Gospels, except that each writer supplies small details the others omitted. Jesus and his disciples were going through the corn fields on the sabbath, and the disciples started to pluck ears of corn and eat them. This brought criticism from the Pharisees because, according to their legalistic rulebook, the twelve were engaged in illegal activity on the sabbath. Jesus reminded the Pharisees of several Old Testament examples in which men overstepped certain Levitical precepts at God's direction.

David, *when he was in need*, entered the house of God and ate the showbread which was only reserved for the priests. He also gave hallowed bread to his companions with him, an action which normally was not lawful. Mark focuses on two things left out by Matthew and Luke. David took the showbread only *when he was in need*. He did not make this a practice. Also Mark mentions that it was “in the days of Abiathar the high priest.” The story is clearly enunciated for us in First Samuel 21:1-6. David was a type of Christ. Therefore, at times he overstepped his limitations as a king and also intruded into the privileges only reserved for priests. He took the ark of the covenant and placed it on Mount Zion instead of placing it in the holy of holies in the tabernacle. David exercised the privileges of both king and priest because he was a type of the coming Christ, who was after Melchisedec's order (Psa. 110:4).

Christ is Lord of the sabbath, and He can do whatever He wishes on the sabbath. In Mark 2:27, He declared that the sabbath was made for man, not man for the sabbath. In other words, the sabbath was intended to serve man and bless man, not to be a bondage. The Pharisees had made the sabbath day a grievous yoke, an idol to be served and feared.

“Or have ye not read in the law, how that on the sabbath days the priests in the temple *profane* the sabbath, and are blameless? but I say unto you that in this place is one greater than the temple. But if ye had known what this meaneth, I will have mercy and not sacrifice (Hos. 6:6), ye would not have condemned the guiltless” (Mt.12:5-7). Ironically, the priests in the Old Testament had to work their hardest on the sabbath day when they offered sacrifices (cf. Num. 28:9-10). In that sense, they profaned the sabbath, yet were blameless. If only the *hard-hearted* Pharisees had possessed the love of God in their hearts, they would never have condemned the Guiltless One who owned the temple, who instituted the Law, who created the sabbath. It is *relationship*, not ritual, that God desires.

Healing of the Withered Hand on the Sabbath

(Mt.12:9-14 Mk. 3:1-6 Lk. 6:6-11)

On another sabbath shortly thereafter (Lk. 6:6), Jesus entered a synagogue and taught. In the assembly was a man with a withered hand. Luke the physician says it was his “right” hand. Mark and Luke testify that the scribes and Pharisees “watched him, whether he would heal on the sabbath day; that they might find an accusation against him.” Their legalistic stance on the sabbath was an obsession.

Jesus was fully aware of their motives to ensnare Him. Notwithstanding, He said to the man with the withered hand, “Stand forth.” He asked his accusers, “Is it lawful to do good on the sabbath days, or to do evil? to save life, or to kill?” (Mark 3:4). Matthew further records: “...What man shall there be among you, that shall have one sheep, and if it fall into a pit on the sabbath day, will he not lay hold on it, and lift it out? How much then is a man better than a sheep? Wherefore it is lawful to do well on the sabbath days” (Matthew 12:11-12).

“And looking round about on them” (Mark says, “*with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts*”), he said to the man, Stretch forth thine hand. And he stretched it out: and his hand was restored whole as the other.” Hardness of heart is the greatest problem in man.

Luke says, “they were filled with madness, and communed one with another what they might do to Jesus.” Matthew records that “the Pharisees went out, and held a council against him, how they might *destroy* him.” Mark includes that “the Pharisees went forth and straightway took counsel *with the Herodians* against him, how they might destroy him.”

The Herodians were a political party that wanted to keep the family of Herod in power. As long as Herod was in power they held offices. Here we see a political party and a dead religious system conspiring together to do away with Jesus. Both were of the same caliber. Today, seminaries that major in politics and philosophy are also spiritually fruitless and work against Christ.

Christ's True Brethren, Mother, and Sisters (Mt.12:46-50 Mk. 3:31-35 Lk. 8:19-21)

The three Gospels are very similar in this account. Christ's mother and brethren were seeking Him, but could not reach Him because of the surrounding crowds. When word reached the Master that His *flesh and blood* family was seeking Him, He asked, “Who is my mother and my brethren?” Then He stretched forth His hand toward His disciples and those who sat around Him and answered His own question: “Whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and my sister, and mother.” Luke gives a slightly different emphasis: “My mother and my brethren are these which *hear* the word of God, and *do* it.” The will of God involves the *Word* of God—hearing it and doing it.

The question arises - Who are true brethren? Paul warned against false brethren (2 Cor.11:26). Our true brothers and sisters are often not our flesh and blood brothers and sisters. Often there is limited communication and fellowship if they are not Christians, or *committed* Christians. One of the hardest tasks of a minister is to lead people into total commitment to Christ. There are *very few* committed believers. True brethren are those who are *sold out* to do the will of God. When we speak of minorities, the greatest minority of all is *real* Christians. Minorities are not black, yellow, or red. Real Christians are the true minority—those who are committed to doing the whole will of God.

Many believers attempt to serve two masters. They have a multitude of *alternatives* on the back burner. If the church does not suit them (or their spouse, or their circumstances), their minds drift to a large variety of other options. Conflict exists because there are *two* wills in our lives; but when the heart is united and the eye single, all our struggles cease. *Peace* and *unity* are the same in the original language. They are equivalent. Our soul comes into great peace only as a divided heart is united, and our will becomes one with God's. Practice saying: “I have no alternatives. I have come to do *thy* will O God. I have no other purpose for living!” We can only find true peace when we *abandon* our lives to Him.

The Parables of the Kingdom (Mt.13:1-53 Mk. 4:1-34 Lk. 8:4-18)

Matthew, an accountant, records seven parables together in chapter 13. These include: The Sower and the Seed, The Wheat and the Tares, The Mustard Seed, The Leaven in the Meal, The Hidden Treasure, The Pearl of Great Price, and The Drag Net. The first four parables seem to have been given outside the house where he resided, and the last three in the house (Mt. 13:1, 13:36). These parables were given at about the same time (cf. Mt.13:53).

Mark records the Sower and the Seed, The Parable of the Candle, The Parable of the Unconscious Growth, and the Parable of the Mustard Seed. Luke records the Sower and the Seed, and the Parable of the Candle. All three evangelists record *The Sower and the Seed*. Of all His parables, Christ only gave the interpretation to two: The Sower and the Seed, and the Wheat and the Tares.

The Parable of the Sower and the Seed (Mt.13:3-9, 18-23 Mk. 4:1-20 Lk. 8:4-15)

Jesus said if we did not understand this parable, we would not understand any other one (Mk. 4:13). This is the parable of all parables. It is the most important one because it reveals the condition of the hearts of men. In this parable we are given the secrets of life. The Sower is the Lord and His preachers. The seed is the Word of God. The soil is representative of the condition of the heart. Everyone is an individual garden. Each person has a different *degree of receptivity* to the seed, or Word of God. Out of the garden of our heart springs all fruit, whether good or bad. What are we allowing to be *sown* there?

In the Middle East the farmers sow by simply tossing a handful of seed in all directions, alternating with the right and left hands. The wind catches the seed and causes it to fall on every kind of ground. Some ground is very hard. It is like “the way side,” which is a beaten path that is packed down and hard. When the Word is preached, the heart is totally unreceptive and hard. The hearts of some are like that. The seed cannot penetrate. There is *no understanding* of the Word (Mt.13:19). It just lies there on a hard, *unprepared* surface. Then the fowls of the air (evil spirits) come and snatch away the seed.

The seed that fell upon stony ground are those who hear the Word and immediately receive it with gladness. But there is *no depth* (Mk. 4:5) and the roots are superficial. These people walk with God for a while, but afterward when affliction or persecution arises for the Word's sake, *immediately* they are offended and turn away from God. Stones also speak of areas of resistance and rebellion. God wants to take away our stony hearts (Ezek. 36:26). Like a farmer, the Lord must remove the stones, one by one.

The seed sown among thorns represents hearts who hear the word but after a time the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches and the lusts of other things *choke* the Word, and it becomes unfruitful. Thorns are a part of the fall (Gen. 3:17-19). They represent the works of the flesh. If we do not allow God to deal with these *thorns*, they will strangle the fruit of the Spirit that is growing in our hearts. Luke 8:14 says that these people “bring no fruit to perfection.” How much joy does a farmer have when his crop is doing so wonderfully well and then a terrible frost or blight comes and destroys it before it ripens? Some Christians go so far in their walk (maybe a number of years), then allow the *lusts* of other things to destroy them. How tragic to have light and then go against it for some fleeting whim or fancy. May we wait before God to soften our hearts, to remove stones and thorns, to plant the excellency of His knowledge within us, and to bring us to great fruitfulness. Now we will consider the fruitful hearts.

The seed that fell upon the good ground speaks of those with an *honest* and good heart (Lk.8:15). They not only *hear* the word, they also *understand* (Mt.13:23), cherish, and *keep* the Word. Luke adds that they have *patience*. Our true character can only be tested by *time* and delays. Many people give up when it takes a long time for the fulfillment of their promises. It is the faithful, patient, honest hearts that bring forth fruit—some a hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirty. We can see, then, that even those who are fruitful have *differing degrees* of fruitfulness. Let's be hundredfold believers.

In Summary:

- Seed by the wayside - Those with *no* receptivity to the Word (no understanding, no true conversion.)
The seed never penetrated the heart or germinated. Thus, it is stolen by Satan.
- Seed in stony places - Ones with *little* depth. Converted, but dying *quickly* when pressure comes.
- Seed in thorny places - hears the word, *some growth*, but the fruit is strangled from other “growths.”
- Seed on good ground - An honest, good heart that understands the word, keeps it, and faithfully waits for fruition. These bring forth — some a 100 fold, 60 fold, and 30 fold.

This parable depicts not only four different kinds of people, but also different conditions *within* an individual. All of these *conditions of soil* can exist in the heart of a Christian simultaneously. There can be areas where a person is totally closed, other areas that are stony and rebellious, other areas that are thorny, and other areas that are productive. May God deliver us from a hard, stony, thorny heart!

The Wheat and the Tares
(Mt.13:24-30, 36-43)

This parable is only found in Matthew but because its interpretation is given by Christ, we would like to look at the importance of it. Perhaps we could also term this parable “The Two Harvests.” The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man who sowed good seed in his field. While he slept, an enemy sowed tares among the wheat. These tares (or darnel) are weeds that resemble wheat. The seeds are poisonous to man, and produce sleepiness, nausea, convulsions, and even death. The plants can be separated out, but the custom, as in the parable, is to leave the cleaning out till near the time of harvest.

Jesus explained that the field is the world. The good seed are the children of the kingdom, sown by the Son of man, but the tares are the children of the Devil and were sown by the Devil. The harvest is at the end of the *age*. This is a reference to the end of the Church age. At the end of the Church age there will be a tremendous sorting out of the wheat and the tares. This is confirmed in Revelation 14:14-20, where we see two major harvests in the earth.

According to Revelation 14:14-16, there will be a tremendous harvest of souls for the kingdom of God. When this angelic power moves, it will unleash other powers upon earth. We are looking for a mighty revival that will thoroughly reap the earth. Revelation 14:16 says, “the earth was reaped.” It has already been established and decreed in the counsels of God that the earth will be entirely reaped at the end of the Church age. However, in verses 17-20 there is another harvest led by another angelic power. The “vine of the earth” is reaped, and these are the *unredeemed*. They are cast into the great winepress of the wrath of God.

God will allow Satan to present *his man* in the last days. The Antichrist will thoroughly sift the Church. Anyone whose heart is not right will be swept away by the power of his delusion. He will draw all the wicked unto himself. Today there are many tares mixed among the wheat in the Church.

There can be tares in your own church. A tare winds himself around the wheat and looks just like the wheat. Those who are false wind themselves around other people. Sometimes you cannot touch the tares. The tares wind themselves around others so that if they are yanked up, they will pull up the others with them. Often you cannot deal with the tares in your church or you could lose half your congregation. Let God do His work. At harvest time (i. e. when the situation is ripe), God will bind them and separate them from the righteous.

Only the true wheat will remain in God's barn. The tares will be taken out. God will gather the tares together in *bundles* to burn them. This is a reference to eternal judgment. Often they are brought together in *large bundles*. They are drawn into large false churches. "The Son of Man will gather *out of his kingdom* all things that offend, and them which do iniquity" (Mt.13:41). "Out of his kingdom" means out of His Church.

The Mustard Seed (Mt.13:31-32 Mk. 4:30-32)

"The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed which indeed is *the least of all seeds*: but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof." One time when a pastor returned from a tour of the holy land, he took out a mustard seed to show to the congregation. It was so tiny that it could hardly be seen. One dear old lady tried to move in a little closer to get a better look while the pastor held it in his hand. Suddenly she sneezed ... and they never found it again.

The kingdom of God is like this tiny mustard seed. The Word of God is so small but when it has grown within us, it will make us like a mighty tree. Others will find shelter under our covering. Birds find shelter in a tree. The kingdom of heaven is a shelter that everyone runs to. God wants to make us this tree. When the Word of God has grown within us, it will make us this mighty tree.

The Leaven in the Meal (Mt.13:33)

With parables we must realize that there is *a central theme*. It is unlike an allegory, where every part has a counterpart. Parables have *one main thrust*; every part does not have a meaning. We should let the Spirit of God interpret and apply the parables to us as He chooses. Be elastic with parables. In the parable of the Leaven in the Meal, the central thought is not the leaven, but the fact that the woman put it into meal and the whole thing was permeated by the leaven. Spiritually it means that a little truth permeates our whole being, even as Paul said in 1 Corinthians 5:6: "a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump." Generally, leaven in Scripture is a type of evil or sin. This is an exception to the rule. The kingdom of heaven is not leaven (a type of evil), but it has the characteristics of leaven in that it permeates our whole being, even though it is hidden.

The Hid Treasure (Mt.13:44)

Jesus is giving an illustration of a man of the kingdom. He finds a treasure in a field and hides it, because he cannot get the treasure until he buys the field. The main thrust of the parable is that the kingdom of heaven is worth everything. Will we give *everything* to have the kingdom of heaven and its treasures?

The Pearl of Great Price

(Mt.13:45-46)

This parable has the same idea as the previous one. We have to “sell out” completely in order to have God's best. The kingdom of God and presence of God are worth everything we have, and more. Are we willing to abandon our lives to God? We can sit in church for years and listen to the finest teachings, but when trials come, then we know if those truths are really in our hearts. Trials have an uncanny way of discovering the hidden needs in our lives. Do we want the presence of God more than anything else? This is the pearl of great price. Or would we rather find the easiest and quickest way out of our difficulties? Would we rather pay no price at all and lose the pearl of great price?

The Drag Net

(Mt.13:47-50)

When we preach the Gospel, it is like throwing out a large net into the sea. When we draw it in, it is filled with every kind of sea creature. There has to be a sorting out of the good from the bad. Your net brings in sharks and octopuses, and also good fish. Christ taught that this sorting out will be at the end of the age. There will be a tremendous revival at the end of this age. Many will come into the Church, the good and the bad. Then there will have to be a separation. The kingdom of heaven is like this net. It brings in the good and bad. There will be tares among the wheat. The wicked will be cast into hell.

The Parable of the Candle

(Mk. 4:21-25 Lk. 8:16-18)

The purpose of a candle is to bring light. No one lights a candle and then covers it. A candle is a light, and that light brings *exposure*. Christ is teaching us that nothing is hidden. Everything will come to the light, sooner or later. Not only will every secret thing come to the light, it will also be *spread abroad*. No one ever gets away with anything. Adulterers who think their clandestine affairs are well hidden are only fooling themselves. They may think that God is overlooking their sin or making special exceptions to their situation, but He is only giving them time to repent. If there is no repentance, He will bring their sin to the light and everyone will know it. This applies to other sins too. Actually, it is the mercy of God that He does expose. Exposure gives people an opportunity to repent. Otherwise they would carry their iniquity into eternity without having it purged.

While He is on the subject of light, Christ also warns about one's *response* to the light. If we hearken to the light, God will give us more light. But if we refuse it, we will lose the light we already have, or *seem* to have (Lk. 8:18). Mark 4:24 includes Christ's “unit of measure” here. In the measure we respond to the Word, more will be given us. If we are not faithful to the truths Christ has shown us, we will not be given any more. In fact, we will lose what we have. Delusion overtakes believers who are not faithful to the light they have, and they begin to doubt and question and redefine the truths they once embraced.

Parable of the Unconscious Growth

(Mk. 4:26-29)

The kingdom of God is likened unto a man who plants seed in the ground. Without any labor, the seed is growing day by day, even while he is sleeping. The seed is the Word of God. It grows in our hearts, even when we are *unaware*, and it produces the fruit of the Spirit—love, joy, peace. As we walk in the light, the divine Creator causes what is sown in our hearts to grow in proper stages. When it is ripe, He wants to share the fruit in our lives with others (cf. Song 4:12 - 5:1).

Jesus Stills the Storm

(Mt. 8:18, 23-27 Mk. 4:35-41 Lk. 8:22-25)

Mark's Gospel is the most chronological of all the Gospels. Mark brings out in 4:35 that it was *the same day* (the day in which Christ taught all the parables), in the evening, that Jesus said in the boat, "Let us pass over unto the other side." As they sailed, a furious storm arose, yet this storm was an ideal setting for a new revelation of Christ. The storm was so vehement that the ship was being filled with water. Luke says they were in jeopardy, or in danger of sinking. During this storm, Jesus was fast asleep. While the others were terrified, Jesus was enveloped with perfect peace. He is the Prince of Peace. The disciples awakened Him and said, "Lord save us, we perish" (Mt. 8:25). Luke records, "Master, master, we perish." But Mark says it all: "Master, *carest thou not* that we perish?" (Mk. 4:38).

More than any of the writers, Mark brings out the hardness of the human heart. "Lord, you don't care." This is an accusation. It is another way of saying, "Lord, you are irresponsible, unaware, and insensitive to my needs." Accusations of, "You don't care," cause deep wounds and they close the hearts of others toward us. (See also Mark 6:52, 8:17, 16:14).

Then Jesus arose and rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a *great calm* (Mt. 8:26). Both Matthew and Mark say there was *a great calm*. Matthew says he rebuked the winds and the sea. Mark says he rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, "Peace, be still." Again, Mark is more descriptive. Jesus was enshrouded with peace; therefore, He could decree peace. If we have peace, we can bring peace into situations. Sometimes when you hear someone preach, it is very soothing to your soul and it brings such peace. This is because the preacher himself has great peace. Peace is gained after passing through many raging battles and winning the victory in the midst of them.

Jesus admonished the disciples: "Why are ye so fearful? How is it that ye have no faith?" (Mk. 4:40). Matthew says "Why are ye so fearful, O ye of little faith?" (Mt. 8:26). Luke records, "Where is your faith?" Faith is the opposite of fear. The more faith we have, the less fear. Man is governed by fear. God wants to *enlarge* our faith. In doing so, our fears dissipate. A hardened heart cannot have faith. Faith works by love (Gal. 5:6), by a soft heart. Israel did not have faith in the wilderness because their hearts were so hard and filled with accusations against the Lord.

After the miracle, the men *marvelled* according to Matthew. They *feared exceedingly*, according to Mark. They *wondered*, according to Luke. All three said in the same tenor, "What manner of man is this, that even the winds and sea obey him." How great is our God! The next time we have a raging storm, let us invite Jesus into our boat. Implicit trust is *learned*. It takes time and experience.

The Healing of the Gergesene Demoniacs

(Mt. 8:28-34 Mk. 5:1-20 Lk. 8:26-39)

All three Gospels are in chronological order here. After the storm, Jesus and the disciples came to the other side of the sea. Here they met two demon possessed men in the country of the Gadarenes (or Gergesenes). This was a region east of Galilee. Matthew says there were two men possessed with devils. Mark and Luke only focus on one. Putting all three accounts together, the man was exceedingly fierce, dwelling among the tombs, and no man could bind him, no, not with chains. Often he had been bound with fetters and chains but he had broken them to pieces. No one could tame him. Night and day he was in the wilderness, crying out and cutting himself with stones. Luke says he had been possessed with devils for a long time, and he wore no clothes, neither did he live in any house, but among tombs.

Mark records that when he saw Jesus afar off, he ran and worshipped Him. Actually, it was *the demons* in this man who immediately recognized the Lord Jesus Christ. The demons in the man were controlling him, and they caused him to fall down and worship. The spirits were absolutely horrified at the sight of Christ. They had one thing on their mind! They asked: “Art thou come hither to torment us before the time?” (Mt. 8:29). They know there is an appointed time for their judgment, and they were in a panic because they did not want to be cast into hell before the set time. That set time is at the second coming of Christ when Satan is bound and all of his cohorts (Rev. 20:1-2). Certainly the demons “believe and tremble”, as the Scripture says in James 2:19.

Jesus replied, “What is thy name?” He was not asking *the man* his name, but the king demon who possessed the man. The demon replied, “My name is Legion, for *we* are many” (Mk. 5:9). There were several thousand spirits in the man, but there was one king demon in charge. Unless the strong man is bound first, you cannot spoil the rest of his goods. Sometimes the dominating prince has to be revealed before the others can be cast out. The main demon spoke up for the rest: “My name is Legion, for we are many.” A Roman legion had 6000 men. There had to be several thousand spirits in this man because afterwards the spirits entered 2000 swine. The demonic power in the man was astounding. He could break chains and fetters. Those spirits were hurtful and suicidal, making the man naked and causing him to cut himself with stones. The devil drove him into the wilderness. When a person has that many spirits, he has been possessed *for a long time* and the enemy has established a firm stronghold.

The devils begged Jesus not to cast them into hell (or the deep), as Luke 8:31 says. Instead, they asked to be cast into a herd of swine that were feeding nearby. Demons want to inhabit a body of some kind. And they want to be in a place that is unclean. Therefore they wanted to go into the swine. It is interesting that Mark says there were around 2000 swine. The number 2000 is significant because that number represents the Church Age. It is at the end of the Church Age that the demons are judged. I think it is noteworthy that the question, “Art thou come hither to torment us before *the time*” is associated with the number 2000. *The time* is at the end of the 2000 years of the Church Age.

At one word “Go”, the demons were expelled from the man and entered the swine that were feeding on the mountain. The demons fled in such a panic that when they entered the swine, the herd ran *violently* down a steep place into the sea and died in the waters. The demons today know their time is short. This is the reason there is so much unrest and panic in the spirit world today.

The men who kept the swine ran to the city and told everyone in the region what had happened. Then many came to see what was done and they saw Jesus and the man whom no one could tame, sitting at the feet of Jesus, *clothed*, and in his right mind. Then the multitude of the local city and whole country of the Gadarenes besought the Lord to leave the area because they were seized with great fear.

As the Lord was entering the ship to depart, the man out of whom went the legion begged to go with Jesus and be with Him. But the Lord, knowing *how* and *where* we can best serve Him, said, “Return to thine own house and show what great things God hath done unto thee. And he went his way, and published throughout the whole city what great things Jesus had done unto him” (Lk. 8:39).

Mark records: “Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee. And he departed, and began to publish in Decapolis how great things Jesus had done for him: and all men did marvel” (Mk. 5:19-20). Decapolis (meaning “ten cities”) was a large territory south of the Sea of Galilee, mainly to the east of Jordan. Gadara was one of the cities.

There is one final thought on the maniac of Gadara that we should consider. He was described as having no clothes. Why did he have no clothes? Because he was under the power of Satan! When you go to heathen lands and the natives have no clothes, it is because they are controlled by another spirit. As the natives come to Christ, you must teach them to wear clothes. We have heard missionaries rationalize: “This is their custom and lifestyle” or “Because of climate and humidity, their clothes would mildew. Therefore, we should just allow them to continue as they are.” No! No! No! Being unclothed is because of another spirit. God's moral laws are the same for every culture. Could they come to this country without clothes? The Gospel is the same for every country. Remember, when the maniac of Gadara was delivered from the power of Satan, he was “*clothed*, and in his right mind.”

Woman Healed / Jairus' Daughter Raised

(Mt. 9:18-26 Mk. 5:21-43 Lk. 8:40-56)

These two accounts are woven together. Jairus, a ruler of the synagogue, besought Jesus to come and heal his daughter. While moving slowly toward his house because of the throng of people, Jesus was touched by a woman with a serious bleeding problem, and she was immediately healed.

After the events in Gadara, Jesus crossed the Sea of Galilee again, landing, in all probability near Capernaum. The people were waiting in anticipation for Him (Mk. 5:21, Lk. 8:40). Soon He was met by Jairus, a ruler of the synagogue, who fell at his feet and humbly besought the Lord to come and heal his twelve year old daughter, for she was at the point of death. Matthew records that she was already now dead (Mt. 9:18). Perhaps she was in and out of a coma. Jairus knew that if Jesus layed His hands on her, she would recover. Jesus readily went with him but was slowed considerably because of the swarm of people pressing against him. Meanwhile, a woman who had suffered with a hemorrhage for twelve years, pushed her way toward the Great Physician. Mark says she had “suffered many things of many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was nothing bettered, but rather grew worse.” That statement is so indicative of the experience of many. They have gone from one doctor to another, and have had one treatment after another. Instead of the condition improving, it has only grown worse, and it has totally depleted all of their life's savings.

This woman had *faith* imparted to her heart. Remember, faith is *totally divine*. It is one hundred percent supernatural. It is not something we can manufacture. (I hope you really heard that!) Faith is imparted by God to a heart that is soft and open. The woman knew if she could only touch the hem of his garment, she would be made whole. Real faith works every time. Therefore, when she touched him, virtue [or power] was released from Jesus, and immediately the bleeding problem ceased. Many people touched Jesus, but this woman touched Him with divine faith in her heart. That released the miracle. Jesus said to her, “Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace, and be whole of thy plague.” While He yet spake, there came certain ones from Jairus' house, saying, “Thy daughter is dead, why troublest thou the Master any further?”

Immediately Jesus reassured the father, “Be not afraid, only believe.” When Jesus came to the house, taking only Peter, James, and John, already the mourners were sounding. Jesus told them, “Be silent, for the damsel is not dead, but sleepeth.” They responded with scornful laughter. When Jesus said she was *sleeping*, He meant that her spirit was not released from her body, though her heart had stopped. Death means separation. It is a separation of the spirit from the body (Jas. 2:26). The damsel's spirit had not yet departed. Jesus put out of the room all those with unbelief and said to her, “Damsel, I say unto thee, Arise.” Immediately her spirit and body revived. Praise the name of the Lord!

The Sending Forth of the Twelve (Mt. 10:1-42 Mk. 6:6-13 Lk. 9:1-6)

Over two years had lapsed since Jesus started his ministry (October, A.D. 26). The Lord was now beginning His third campaign in Galilee. This was perhaps February of 29 A.D. “Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom and healing every sickness and every disease among the people. But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd. Then saith he unto his disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the laborers are few; Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth laborers into his harvest” (Mt. 9:35-38).

The burden of the Lord was to raise up shepherds and harvesters. When Jesus declared, “I will build my Church,” He concentrated on the foundation stones of His Church during his three-and-a-half year ministry, namely, His twelve apostles. After being with them for nearly two years, He was now going to send them out and give them on-the-job training. Mark alone says they were sent out “two by two.” Jesus gave them power and authority over *all* devils, and to cure diseases (Lk. 9:1). Matthew 10:1 says He gave them power “to heal *all* manner of sickness and *all* manner of disease.” Only Mark includes that they anointed many with *oil*, and healed them. Matthew alone lists the names of the twelve apostles. Judas was among them, and he performed mighty miracles and cast out many devils, just like the others. He was anointed with the Spirit of God. Yet he did not make it to heaven. Also, they testified, saying, “The kingdom of God is at hand,” and they went out and preached that men should repent.

Christ instructed the twelve (and later that year the seventy) to travel light, stay focused on their mission, heal the sick, proclaim glad tidings, be meek (as lambs among wolves), accept hospitality graciously, and stay in one house while they were in that particular city or village. They were not to go from house to house. There is wisdom in staying in *one* house, rather than in several, if you are a guest speaker in a church. Those who host the visiting minister will want to spread stories or grievances they have against the pastor or church. It is best not to have your ears filled with this.

It will be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorra in the day of judgment, than for those who rejected the message of Christ's apostles, when he sent them out. The Gospel is *good news*. It is to save us from the judgment we deserve. When men and women reject God's goodness and provision of pardon, they are preparing themselves for eternal judgment that is worse than Sodom's. Sodom was not shown the miracles and power of God. They were not given the same opportunity. However, the cities of Galilee were very *accountable* because they had more light, and so are we.

Fulfilling the Ministry (Mt.11:1 Mk. 6:12-13 Lk. 9:6)

These verses tell us that the disciples went out as they had been instructed. They cast out *many* devils, and anointed with oil many that were sick, and healed them. They had extraordinary success. They also preached the glad tidings *everywhere*, that is, in Galilee. Jesus himself went out to *teach* and to *preach* in all their cities.

There is a difference between teaching and preaching. Teaching is explaining and opening up truths. Preaching is exhorting. Preaching is straightforward, and it demands a response. Often it involves warnings of impending danger or judgment if a different course of action is not taken.

Murder of John / Herod's Guilty Conscience

(Mt.14:1-12 Mk. 6:14-29 Lk. 9:7-9)

Luke's account is very brief. Herod heard about all the miracles Jesus was performing. Herod was perplexed because some said John the Baptist, whom he had beheaded, was risen from the dead. Others said Elijah had appeared. Still others said that one of the Old Testament prophets had come back. Therefore, he had a great desire to see him. Herod had an *avid interest* in the supernatural and wanted to see Christ do a miracle (Lk. 23:8).

Matthew and Mark give another hue to the account. "And [Herod] said unto his servants, This is John the Baptist; he is risen from the dead; and therefore mighty works do show forth themselves in him." It would seem that Herod, after hearing rumor that John was risen from the dead, began to say the same thing. Think of it?—"This is John whom I have beheaded." What a statement by an unbeliever! Herod believed that the man he beheaded was risen from the dead and was doing mighty miracles.

Herod was the younger son of Herod the Great (Mt. 2:1). He inherited the Galilean and Peraean portions of his father's kingdom. (See Galilee and Peraea on Map.) Formerly he had married the daughter of Aretas (king of Petrea of Nabataean), but divorced her in order to marry Herodias, wife of his brother Philip. When John said to Herod, "It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife," this displeased Herod, but it greatly incensed Herodias against John. "Therefore Herodias had a quarrel against him, and would have killed him; but she could not" (Mk. 6:19). Herodias was just like Jezebel who stirred up her husband to do evil (cf. 1 Kg. 21:25). Mark is the clearest on this point about Herodias, although Matthew says that Herod had laid hold on John and bound him, and put him in prison *for Herodias' sake*, his brother Philip's wife" (Mt. 14:3). It was "for Herodias' sake."

Herod probably would have let the matter go, but Herodias gave Herod no rest until he took action. She wanted to have John killed, but could not. Herod would not go that far. He knew what the opinion polls were saying. He fully understood that all the people liked John and considered him a great prophet. Herod feared that if he had John executed, it would cause an uproar and he would lose popularity. Popularity, of course, is the main goal of politicians. Herodias could not go directly against her husband's authority to have John killed. Therefore, she thought of ways to plot John's death.

It was Herod's birthday, and all of Herod's dignitary friends were invited to the party (Mk. 6:21). Herodias had a daughter from her previous marriage. During the birthday celebration, the daughter danced sensuously before Herod and the dignitaries, and pleased them well. Being in a mirthful mood, Herod made a rash and foolish promise to the wanton girl: "Ask of me whatsoever thou wilt, and I will give it thee. And he sware unto her, Whatsoever thou shalt ask of me, I will give it thee, unto the half of my kingdom" (Mk. 6:22-23). Immediately she went and asked her mother, "What shall I ask for?" Herodias said, "The head of John the Baptist on a platter." Mothers greatly influence daughters.

When she returned with her request to Herod, the king was *exceedingly sorry* (Mk. 6:26). Why was he sorry? Certainly, it was not because he loved John. Suddenly he found himself in a terrible dilemma. Both options would cause him great loss. He knew if he killed John, he would lose popularity from the multitudes, and maybe have a riot on his hands (Mt. 14:5). Also, he knew if he denied the request, all his onlooking dignitary friends might scorn him. He was caught. Both ways he would suffer loss. Herodias had trapped him! Therefore, in order to save face, he had John executed immediately. None of his friends had the honesty or integrity to interpose. Herod had four fears: he feared the multitude, he feared John, he feared the opinion of his friends, and he feared his nagging wife. He did not fear God.

Without a trial or public hearing, or law and justice, John was put to death. The greatest man born of women was beheaded. His innocent bloodshed is a sample or forerunner of many others who will be beheaded for the Word of God during the Great Tribulation (Rev. 20:4).

It is computed that John's imprisonment was at least a year-and-a-half, which was about as much time as he had spent in his public ministry. During his time in prison, John's disciples had the liberty to see him (Mt. 11:2-6). John must have had bouts of depression in prison and needed reassurance. Jesus did not despair of him but highly praised him. Conditions in Herod's prison in the fortress of Machaerus in Perea must have been horrible. John was executed in the same prison in Perea. (See Map.)

As we mentioned earlier, Herod Antipas had been married formerly to the daughter of Aretas, king of Petra. Herod divorced her in order to marry Herodias. Aretas resented Herod for putting away his daughter to make room for Herodias, and seized the opportunity a few years later to wage war against Herod (36 A.D.). The forces of Herod were heavily defeated. Josephus said that many regarded the defeat as divine retribution for killing John. In A.D. 39, Herod was denounced as a plotter to the Emperor Gaius by his own nephew Agrippa. He was deposed from his tetrarchy and ended his days in banishment along with Herodias in Spain. (One source says France.)

It was rumored of the daughter of Herodias, that while she was going over the ice in winter, the ice broke and she slipped in up to her neck, which was cut through by the sharpness of the ice. If this is true, it is a remarkable providence that God required her head for that of John's.

Another point to consider is this: the thing that *cut off the prophet's head* was the actions of the dancing girl who had the spirit of her mother. What is cutting off the prophetic flow today in our churches? Could the staged dancing girls be affecting the prophetic flow today, and the true word of the Lord? Is it possible that this could be a *distraction* from true worship and the true anointing? Should not our eyes be upon the Lord and not upon the worship leaders? Certainly there is genuine, spontaneous dancing before the Lord with joy as David did. This is very scriptural. However, the performance dancing could be *distracting*. It turns the focus upon the dancers instead of upon the Lord.

The Third Passover

(Mt.14:13-14 Mk. 6:30-34 Lk. 9:10-11 Jn. 6:1-4)

The miracle of the feeding of five thousand was “*nigh*” the time of the passover (Jn. 6:4). Jesus did not go to Jerusalem for this feast. Instead, He stayed in Galilee. The apostles gathered themselves together unto Jesus, having been sent out two by two. They told Him everything they *did* and *taught*. It is good to drill your students and see what they are teaching others. Make sure they have clearly understood what you taught them.

The Lord saw at this point that it was necessary to withdraw and rest. The disciples needed a complete break from everything (Mk. 6:31). They were so occupied with ministering to others that they did not even have time to eat. Therefore, they departed into a desert place by ship privately. Luke says that the desert place belonged to the city of Bethsaida. But as they departed, many recognized Jesus and multitudes flocked to him. Jesus was moved with compassion as He saw the thousands there in the desert place, and he healed their sick and taught them many things. Because the day was nearly spent, the disciples urged Jesus to send away the people, because the villages and towns were some distance away, and they needed to buy food. Now we have the setting for the miracle of feeding five thousand.

The Feeding of the Five Thousand
(Mt.14:13-21 Mk. 6:30-44 Lk. 9:10-17 Jn. 6:1-13)

Multitudes had gathered together unto Jesus in the wilderness. Matthew, an accountant, said there were about five thousand men, *besides* women and children. There may have been as many as twelve thousand. When it was evening (Matthew), when the day was far spent (Mark), when the day began to wear away (Luke), the twelve came and said to Jesus: “Send the multitude away, that they may go into the towns and country round about, and lodge, and get bread: for we are here in a desert place.”

Jesus replied, “They need not depart; Give ye them to eat.” Then He said to Philip, “Where shall we buy bread that these may eat?” (Jn. 6:5). (Jesus was only testing Philip here and had a plan in mind.) Philip answered, “Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may take even a little.” Then the others joined with Philip saying the same thing. Jesus asked, “How many loaves have ye?” “Then Andrew, Peter's brother saith unto him, There is a lad here which hath five barley loaves, and two small fishes: but what are these among so many.”

Here is the scenario: Jesus commanded that the apostles make the multitudes sit down in companies of fifties and hundreds, upon green grass. When He had taken the five loaves and the two fishes, He looked up to heaven and blessed, and brake the loaves and gave them to His disciples, and the two fishes divided He among them all. The disciples gave to the multitudes, and they did all eat and were filled. When they were filled, He said unto the disciples, “Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost.” Therefore they gathered them together, and filled twelve baskets with the fragments of the five barley loaves which remained over and above unto them that had eaten. Then those men, when they had seen the miracle that Jesus did, said, “This is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world.”

You will observe that all of the above is *a blend* of the four Gospels. Each Gospel supplied what the others omitted. Mark said the grass was green. John said there was much grass there. Matthew included the women and children. John mentions the Lord's question to Philip, and also how Andrew told Jesus about the lad with the loaves and fishes. John said the loaves were barley. Luke says the desert area belonged to Bethsaida, which was the hometown of Peter and Andrew and Philip (Jn.1:44). Mark said they sat down in ranks of hundreds and fifties. John alone mentions Christ commanding them to gather up the fragments, “that nothing be lost.” Only John includes the men saying, “This is that prophet that should come into the world”—a reference to Deuteronomy 18:15,18.

“Now when Jesus perceived that they would come and take him by force to make him a king, he departed again into a mountain himself alone” (Jn. 6:15). Jesus refused to be made king on these premises. The day following Jesus said to them, “Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled. Labor not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you:” (Jn. 6:26,27).

Christ refused kingship on the grounds that He could meet their natural needs and satisfy their stomachs. The coming Antichrist will use this very means to be crowned king. His emphasis will be the economy and financial security. To the materialistic mind, he will appear to have all the solutions. Mankind in general will flock to him. Jesus refused to be made king on these grounds. He told them to concentrate on the eternal food, the Word of God. Then Jesus gave a discourse on Himself, saying: “I am the Bread of Life.” Many disciples deserted Him (Jn. 6:22-59, 6:66). They followed Him when He met their natural needs, but when He asked them to *fully partake of Him*, “eating His flesh and drinking His blood,” they left Him.

En route to Caesarea Philippi / Peter's Confession
(Mt.16:13-20 Mk. 8:27-30 Lk. 9:18-21)

Caesarea Philippi was a beautiful locality at the foot of Mt. Hermon, the main source of the river Jordan. It was around 25 miles north of the Sea of Galilee (See map). It is not to be confused with Caesarea, a city on the Mediterranean coast. In this account, Matthew is the most elaborate. Christ and the apostles were coming into the coasts [parts, regions] of Caesarea Philippi. According to Mark, they went into the towns of Caesarea Philippi, and along the way He asked his disciples, “Whom do men say that I am?” Luke does not mention *where* He was, but *what he was doing* when He asked. Luke records that “as he was alone praying, his disciples were with him, he asked them, saying, Whom say the people that I am?” They answered Him, “John the Baptist, Elijah, or one of the prophets.” Matthew includes Jeremiah. Luke also records, “one of the old prophets is risen again.” John the Baptist, Elijah, Jeremiah, or one of the old prophets were men of the past. The expectations the people had of Jesus were amazing. To them, He was not just a great prophet, but a great prophet of the past who had come back.

Jesus asked, “But whom say ye that I am?” Peter stood forth and proclaimed, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.” Jesus replied: “Blessed art thou Simon [son of Jonas]: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter (a little stone), 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. Then charged he his disciples that they should tell no man that he was the Christ” (Mt.16:17-20).

Peter understood by *a revelation* from the Father who Jesus really was. It was not by any natural understanding. Upon this revelation, Christ would build his Church. Peter would be a foundation stone of the Church. The Church is “built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets.” This is referring to the Scriptures they wrote. Our faith is based upon *the Word of God* they recorded. Jesus Christ is the chief corner stone (Eph. 2:20, 1 Pet. 2:4-8). All measurements are taken from the Corner Stone. Peter was given *the keys* to the kingdom. He was used to open the door of the Church on the Day of Pentecost. Also, he opened the door of faith to the Gentiles (cf. Acts 10:1-48, 11:1-18, 15:7).

Jesus Teaches That He Must be Crucified
(Mt. 16:21-26 Mk. 8:31-37 Lk. 9:22-25)

Matthew 16:21 - “From that time forth began Jesus to show unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day.” Upon the revelation that Jesus was God in the flesh, Jesus began to emphasize that He was going to die at Jerusalem for the sins of the world. Jesus was not Jeremiah, or Elijah, or John the Baptist. As great as these men were, none of them could *die* for our sins. Only God (as a man) could suffer and die, and pay for our sins. He *alone* is the spotless sacrificial Lamb.

Then Peter rebuked Jesus, saying, “Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee.” In effect, Peter was saying, “No Lord, if you die, then all my dreams of power and grandeur will be ruined.” Peter still did not understand that a crown is *preceded* by a cross. Peter's motives were not purified. He was savoring the things of men, not God. This caused Satan to gain an entrance into his life, making Peter a conduit through whom he could speak. Christ proceeded to tell all of them that the way to *life* is by way of a *denial of self* and taking up our cross *daily*. Only Luke says “daily.” There is a special cross appointed for each of us. It is not fashioned by us, but by God. *Self-induced crosses* produce nothing.

Discourse On His Coming
(Mt.16:27-28 Mk. 8:38-9:1 Lk. 9:26-27)

- “For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works” (Mt. 16:27).
- “Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels” (Mk. 9:38).
- “For whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed when he shall come in his own glory, and in his Father's, and of the holy angels” (Lk. 9:26).

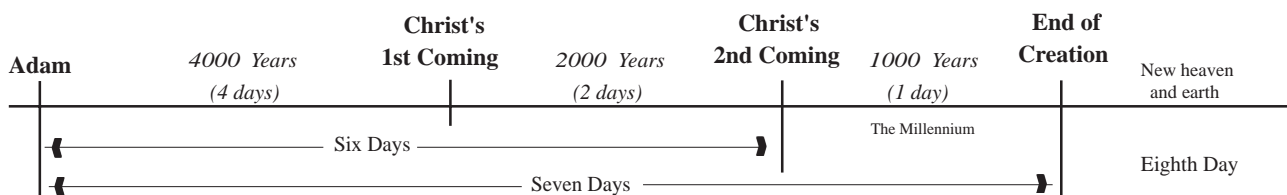
The theme of all three accounts is the coming of the Son of Man. When He comes, He shall reward every man according to his works. If anyone is ashamed of Christ, Christ will be ashamed of him. Being ashamed of *His words* is being ashamed of *Him*. We cannot separate Jesus from his Word. He is the Word of God (Rev.19:13, Jn.1:1). God wants to deliver all of us from the spirit of embarrassment. “In this adulterous and sinful generation.” An adulterous generation is a generation that does not honor the permanence of marriage. If we shun Christ's message on the permanence of marriage, He will be ashamed of us. Marriage is symbolic of Christ's relationship with His Church. There are special consequences for violating the marriage covenant and not protecting its lasting ties.

“But I tell you of a truth, there be some standing here, which shall not taste of death till they see the kingdom of God” (Lk. 9:27). Mark says, “till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power.” Matthew says, “till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom.” Jesus is here referring to the Mount of Transfiguration experience. This was a sample, a foretaste of the Son of man coming in his kingdom, glory, and power. *After these sayings* came the Mount of Transfiguration experience.

The Mount of Transfiguration
(Mt.17:1-8 Mk. 9:2-8 Lk. 9:28-36)

“And after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother up into an high mountain apart, And was transfigured before them...” (Mt.17:1-2). Luke 9:28-29 says: “...About an eight days *after these sayings*, he took Peter and John and James, and went up into a mountain to pray. And as he prayed, the fashion of his countenance was altered and his raiment was white and glistening.”

After Christ spoke of the coming glory, power, and kingdom, He was transfigured. Luke says the transfiguration was “*about eight days after these sayings.*” Matthew says “*after six days,*” *After six days* means the Millennium, which begins at Christ's second coming. *When* does his kingdom and glory come? *After six days!* “Six days” represents the six thousand years of man. “Eight days” speaks of *after* the Millennium. His kingdom and glory and power will *continue* into the new heaven and earth.



The mountain is Hermon which was next to Caesarea Philippi. Luke alone mentions Christ being transfigured *as he prayed*. Then two men from the past appeared unto them and talked with Christ. Matthew and Luke tell us the two men were Moses and Elijah. Mark says “Elijah with Moses” (Mk. 9:4). Only Luke tells us *the subject* of their conversation: “His decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem.”

Why had Elijah and Moses come? God the Father had sent them to strengthen the Lord in order for Him to go down into Jerusalem to die for the sins of the world. His *death at Jerusalem* was the subject of their conversation. In a technical sense, these two prophets had a part in our redemption. They are the two witnesses of Revelation 11:3-12. These are the two anointed ones who stand at Christ's right hand and left, and were appointed so of the Father (cf. Mt. 20:23). Moses had died 1450 years B.C. Elijah had been translated nearly 900 years B.C. Their appearance in glory to Christ on the mount proved the fact of *life after death*. Moses, who gave the law nearly 1500 years earlier, was alive and well. He had been resurrected by Michael the archangel (Jude 1:9). Elijah had never died. Moses represents those who are dead in Christ, and Elijah, those who are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord. Hundreds of years after their earthly pilgrimage, both Moses and Elijah appeared bodily and in glory.

Here is the sequence, putting all three Gospels together. Luke says the disciples were heavy with sleep, and when they were awake, they saw His glory, and the two men that stood with Him. As Moses and Elijah departed from them, Peter said to Jesus, "Master, it is good for us to be here. Let us make three tabernacles: one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah." He did not know what to say because he was sore afraid. As Peter was speaking, a voice out of the cloud of glory that overshadowed them said, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased, hear ye him." When they heard the voice, they fell on their faces in great fear. And Jesus came and touched them, saying, "Arise, and be not afraid." Suddenly Jesus was found alone when they looked round about. As they descended from Mount Hermon, Jesus charged them to tell no man what they had seen, till He was risen from the dead. And they told no man in those days any of those things which they had seen. Yet, they questioned one with another what the *rising from the dead* should mean.

Questions During the Descend From the Mount

(Mt.17:9-13 Mk. 9:9-13 Lk. 9:36)

Having just seen Elijah, as they were coming down from the mountain, the three disciples asked: "Why say the scribes that Elijah must come first?" (Mt.17:10). The reference is to the prophecy given in Malachi 4:5-6. God promised to send Elijah the prophet before the great and dreadful day of the Lord. However, the great and dreadful day of the Lord is the *second* coming of Christ, not the first. John the Baptist came "in the spirit and power of Elijah" to prepare the way for the first coming of the Lord. In that respect, John was "Elijah" because he had the same anointing and ministry. John had partially fulfilled Malachi's prophecy (cf. Lk.1:17), but he was not Elijah. When John was questioned whether he was Elijah himself (Jn.1:21), he confessed, "I am not." John was the son of Zacharias and Elizabeth.

"Jesus answered and said unto them, *Elijah truly shall first come, and restore all things*" (Mt.17:11). This is future. Elijah shall come and put everything right. He is one of the two witnesses in Revelation 11:3-12. "But I say unto you, that Elijah is come already, and they knew him not, but have done unto him whatsoever they [pleased.] Likewise shall also the Son of man suffer of them. Then the disciples understood that he spake unto them of John the Baptist" (Mt.17:12,13). Even as John came in the spirit and power of Elijah and was not recognized as the messenger (Mal. 3:1, Mk.1:2) to prepare the way for the Lord, but was rejected, so Christ would be unrecognized and rejected.

The Disciples and the Demoniac Boy

(Mt.17:14-20 Mk. 9:14-29 Lk. 9:37-43)

On the next day, Jesus came down from the mountain. And when He came to His *other nine* disciples, He saw a great multitude round about them, and the scribes were questioning them. Immediately, when the people saw Him, they were greatly amazed, and ran to Him and saluted Him.

Jesus asked the scribes what subject they were discussing with His disciples. While He was speaking, a man from the multitude said, “Master, I have brought unto thee my son who has a dumb spirit. I spake to thy disciples that they should cast him out; and they could not.” Matthew records, “Lord, have mercy on my son: for he is lunatick and sore vexed...and I brought him to thy disciples, and they could not cure him.” Luke added, “He is my only child.” Jesus replied, “O faithless and perverse generation.” The Lord's displeasure here is because of *unbelief*.

Was it *God's will* and was it *God's time* for this boy to be delivered? Yes! Yet the nine disciples were unable to bring deliverance because of unbelief. Sometimes the unbelief in the minister is the problem, and sometimes it is the unbelief in those who are being ministered to (cf. Mk. 6:5-6). Jesus rebuked the devil and he departed out of him, and the child was cured from that very hour. Then came the disciples to Jesus apart and asked, Why could not we cast him out? And Jesus said unto the nine, Because of your *unbelief*. For verily I say to you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed (which is very tiny), ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall removed, and nothing shall be impossible unto you. In Zechariah it says, *This mountain shall be removed by my Spirit saith the Lord* (see Zech. 4:6-7). Although the Lord mentions prayer and fasting, the main emphasis here is on faith. The three disciples (Peter, James, and John) who were on the Mt. of Transfiguration had greater power. We all need to have a greater experience of the power and glory of God, which increases our faith.

Christ Again Foretells His Sufferings / Death (Mt.17:22-23 Mk. 9:30-32 Lk. 9:43-45)

While the multitudes marvelled at the mighty power of God, Jesus said to His disciples, “Let these sayings sink down into your ears: for the Son of man shall be delivered into the hands of men. But they understood not this saying, and it was hid from them, that they perceived it not: and they feared to ask him of that saying” (Lk. 9:44-45). Mark says they departed from there and passed through Galilee. “And he taught his disciples and said to them, The Son of man is *delivered* into the hands of men, and they shall kill him; and after that he is killed, he shall rise the third day” (Mk. 9:30-31). It appears that Jesus reiterated His message again after leaving the foot of the mountain. Matthew says, “The Son of man shall be *betrayed* into the hands of men. And they shall kill him, and the third day he shall be raised again. And they were exceeding sorry” (Mt.17:22-23).

The disciples did not understand what Jesus was saying and were afraid to ask him. Really, they did not want to know what he meant. He said: “Let these sayings sink down into your ears.” It was something that had to be a gradual infiltration into their hearts, a gradual revelation. Jesus had begun (“*From that time forth* - at Caesarea Philippi - six days before the Mt. of Transfiguration), to show unto them how he must go unto Jerusalem and suffer many things...and be raised the third day” (Mt.16:21). The ministry of Jesus was getting more and more difficult, and dangerous (Jn. 7:1). Opposition was growing.

Who is Greatest in the Kingdom (Mt.18:1-5 Mk. 9:33-37 Lk. 9:46-48)

Luke says “there arose a reasoning among them, which of them should be greatest.” Matthew says the disciples came to Him saying, “Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?” Mark says that when Jesus came to Capernaum, “being in the house he asked them, What was it that ye disputed among yourselves by the way?...for by the way they had disputed among themselves, who should be greatest.” It appears that Jesus brought up the subject, and then the disciples further inquired. Ambition and competition were real problems among the young apostles.

“Jesus sat down and called the twelve and said to them, If any man desire to be first, the same shall be last of all, and servant of all. And he took a child and set him in the midst of them, and when he had taken him in his arms, he said to them, Whosoever shall receive one of such children in my name, receiveth me: and whosoever shall receive me, receiveth not me, but him that sent me” (Mk. 9:35-37).

A child is a symbol of humility. Unless a person is converted and becomes like a little child, he cannot see the kingdom of heaven. A child is trusting, teachable, and unpretentious. He simply accepts what he is told. He trusts his mother to feed him what is good. He has no preconceived fears of being poisoned. A child does not have suspicions, reasonings, and questions. He has not been hardened by life and by sin. Unless a man or woman accepts the Gospel message with childlike faith, he cannot be saved. After we are saved, the more we have these childlike qualities produced in our lives, the greater we are in God's sight. God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble. He gives grace to those with the spirit of a small child. As adults we learn to be pretenders. We program ourselves to be tough, to look successful, to appear to have everything under control, and to have no weaknesses. This is all false! No one wearing a mask and playing a role is truly great. A child is just himself, and real.

Warnings Not to Offend Weaker Ones / Rebuke of Sectarianism
(Mt.18:6-14 Mk. 9:38-50 Lk. 9:49-50)

Youthful John said, “Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name, and he followeth not us: and we forbad him because he followeth not us. But Jesus said, Forbid him not: for there is no man which shall do a miracle in my name that can speak evil of me. For he that is not against us is on our part” (Mk. 9:38-40). (Only Mark and Luke mention sectarianism.) The twelve apostles were the “in-crowd.” Yet Christ had many other followers. There were *the seventy* he had sent out (Lk. 10:1), and hundreds of others. The Lord does not want us to feel exclusive or think we are the only ones. Recognize that God has many others He is using. It is so human to have the attitude that if people are not in our fellowship, they are second rate. Perhaps others outside our circles are further along than we are in certain areas.

Jesus also warns against “*offending one of these little ones*” who believe in Him. To offend means “to cause to stumble.” It is a terrible thing to make weaker believers stumble by one's words, actions, attitudes, or sins. A number of years ago an elder in the church turned against me. He and his wife planted discord throughout the congregation and eroded confidence in my leadership. This caused many of the weaker ones to stumble and leave. Today, most of them do not go to church anywhere. Some are disillusioned with Christianity. This is an example of offending the little ones. Jesus said it is better for a millstone to be hanged about his neck and to be cast into the sea (rather than be cast into hell for destroying these little ones).

If our eye, hand, or foot offend us [or cause us to stumble], it is better to cut them off to save us, than to have all our members intact to be cast into hell. If a person would lose his soul through the lust of the eyes, it would be better to lose an eye in an accident, or a foot, or a hand, if it would bring repentance and keep him out of hell. Samson lost both eyes because of lust. If our tongue is causing others to stumble and go astray, it would be better to lose our voice. Christ is not telling us to literally cut off a hand or pluck out an eye. He is saying it would be *better* than to be cast into hell. Mark speaks of hell like this—“Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched” (Mk. 9:44,46,48). The Greek word for hell in these three passages is *gehenna*. This was a reference to a dump outside Jerusalem that burned continually. Under these perpetual smolderings were worms that were never consumed. Jesus likens these worms to our souls. “Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.” This dump (*gehenna*) is a perfect representation of hell. Jesus preached more on hell than He did heaven.

The Teaching on Divorce

(Mt.19:1-12 Mk.10:1-12)

(Lk.16:18)

Jesus left Galilee and made his way to Peraea, on the eastern side of Judea and the Jordan River. Soon after, He would head for Jerusalem to be crucified. It was now March, A.D. 30. The crucifixion would take place in April. With just several weeks to live, Jesus taught on one of the most controversial subjects of all, the subject of divorce. This is recorded by Matthew and Mark. Luke does not record the discourse. He inserts only *one verse* from Christ's teaching on the permanence of marriage (Lk.16:18).

Matthew and Mark are recording the same sermon, but each one omits certain aspects of the teaching because it did not apply to their respective listeners. Mark, writing to Romans, does not include the "exception clause" because the exception clause applied only to the Jewish world. (Neither does it apply to us.) Matthew, writing to the Jewish world, does not include the part where women are commanded not to put away their husbands, because in Jewish society, women could not divorce their husbands anyway. Therefore, Matthew left out this part.

Jesus was bringing in a new covenant, a covenant that offers us the *possibility* of having a new heart, a heart of flesh (Ezek. 36:26). Yet, this new heart can only be obtained if we are willing to go through the necessary processes to have it. The greatest problem in man (even redeemed man) is hardness of heart. This is the whole reason relationships fail. The heart becomes hard in moments when it is hurt and because of pride. How easily the heart closes, just from a misinterpreted word, look, or gesture. Therefore, Jesus goes straight to the root of divorce. He is not going to deal with side issues or be distracted with the rationalizations of men. He is going to cut through all of that. Unfortunately, the Pharisees were more concerned with a *concession* Moses gave in Deuteronomy 24:1-2, than the *command* God gave in Genesis 2:24 when He instituted marriage. Christ used the Scriptures to substantiate the permanence of marriage. The Pharisees used the Scriptures to substantiate grounds for divorce. The interpretation we give to the Scriptures depends ultimately upon what is in our hearts.

The Pharisees came unto Jesus, "tempting him, and saying, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife *for every cause*?" (Mt.19:3). They knew Jesus taught the opposite and they wanted Him to contradict the concession Moses gave in Deuteronomy 24:1-2. Thus, they were "tempting Him." Mark simply records, "Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife?" and omits, "for every cause." The Jews had many religious debates over what constituted grounds for divorce. The Romans did not.

In his answer, Christ directed them back to *the beginning*, back to the original purpose God had for man. Mark records that He first asked, "What did Moses command you?" (Mk.10:3). Christ was going to compare the concession Moses gave with the command God gave at the beginning. "And they said, Moses [allowed] to write a bill of divorcement, and to put her away" (Mk.10:4).

"And Jesus answered and said unto them, For the *hardness of your heart* he wrote you this precept. But from the beginning of the creation God made them male and female. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife; And they twain shall be one flesh: so then they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let no man put asunder" (Mk.10:5-8). Christ came to bring us back to the *original plan* God had for man before the Fall. Therefore, Jesus upholds the permanence of marriage over the concession Moses gave. The question now arises, "Why did Moses grant permission to divorce in the Old Testament?"

There are several things we have to consider here. The concession to divorce, given by Moses the Lawgiver, was because of “hardness of heart.” Hardness of heart never brings a blessing from God, but judgment. A hardened heart always has evil consequences. There is not one single instance in Scripture where a hardened heart brought a blessing. Therefore, permission to divorce under the Law was a judgment. It was God's displeasure. In addition to this, it was not Moses who gave permission, but the pre-incarnate Christ who was with Him on Mount Sinai. The Pharisees were not aware of the fact that they were questioning and *tempting* the One who had given the Law to Moses. In the wilderness Israel “tempted Christ” (1 Cor.10:9) and they were still tempting Him . Furthermore, Moses and Christ were good friends. Christ had talked with Moses on the Mount of Transfiguration several months earlier. Who was able to interpret Deuteronomy 24:1-2 better than Jesus? He was the One who had legislated the Law to Moses. The generation that sat at the foot of Mount Sinai while Moses was receiving the Law never made it into the land of promise *because of a hardened heart* (cf. Heb. 3:8-15).

Matthew alone records *the exception clause* (Mt.19:9, 5:32). It is found nowhere else in Scripture. It was written uniquely to the Jewish society that had special marriage customs. (See page 35 under - Gabriel's Annunciation of the Birth of Jesus.) The exception clause is explained below.

“Except for Fornication”

“And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, (*except it be for fornication*), and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery.” In our western society, many have taken this verse to be a license to dissolve a marriage for infidelity. However, this is not what Christ taught. Christ was addressing a Jewish society that considered an *engagement* as binding as marriage itself. They were called husband and wife, even while they were engaged (Mt.1:18-25). If during the engagement there had been fornication (not adultery), a man could put away his espoused wife. That is all it means.

Fornication involves unmarried people, adultery involves those who are married. In Galatians 5:19, a differentiation is made between fornication and adultery. “Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these: *Adultery, fornication...*” If Christ had meant *adultery*, He would have used that specific word. When Joseph and Mary were only engaged, they were called husband and wife. When Mary became pregnant, Joseph thought she had been involved in fornication and was minded to divorce her. How can you divorce someone you are not even married to? The key lies in the Jewish tradition that an engagement was equivalent to marriage. The exception clause does not apply to us.

One Law for the Saved and Unsaved

The two questions most commonly asked about divorce and marriage to someone else are these:

- 1.) If I was married and divorced before I was a Christian, am I at liberty to remarry today?
- 2.) The second question most commonly asked is the issue concerning the “exception clause” in Matthew's Gospel. We have already covered the second question. Let us try to consider the first one.

We will have conflict in our minds if we believe that God has one set of rules for the unbeliever, and another set of rules for the believer. He does not. God's moral laws are the same for everyone, saved or unsaved. Jesus gave the same moral standards to the unbelieving Pharisees as He did to anyone else. Remember, Christ was approached by *unbelievers* when He was asked: “Is it lawful to put away our wife?” The Pharisees were unbelievers. These Christ-rejecting men soon crucified the Lord soon after.

Exodus 12:49 is an important principle. “*One law* shall be to him that is homeborn, and unto the stranger that sojourneth among you.” God's laws and standards were the same for the Israelite and for the foreigner. His moral laws are the same for everyone. It is sin for an unbeliever to lie, steal, kill, and commit adultery, and it is sin for a believer. It is wrong for an unbeliever to break the marriage vow, and it is certainly wrong (and worse) for a believer. Actually, everyone knows down deep in his heart that divorce is wrong. Even an unbeliever knows it. A denial of this is because a crust of guilt and rationalization has built up around the heart, but underneath it all, everyone knows better.

The way to find release from guilt and bondage is by first acknowledging or admitting the truth about ourselves and our condition (Jer. 3:13). When anything contrary to the law of God is defended and justified, release from bondage never comes. Proverbs 16:6 says: “By mercy and truth iniquity is purged.” Not by *mercy* alone is sin purged—it requires truth also. Mercy is only given as we *acknowledge* the truth (Prov. 28:13). This is the only way to be freed from guilt.

God desires all of his children to be fruitful and productive, irrespective of their marital status or past. When Jesus said, “Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit,” He excluded no one. Only the unrepentant are excluded. The woman at the well had been married five times (Jn. 4:16-18). When she came to Christ and found the satisfaction human love could never bring, she ended up bringing a whole city to the Lord Jesus Christ. This woman is a perfect example of the fruitfulness God has for everyone who is repentant. Let's summarize Christ's teaching on divorce.

- Christ was questioned about divorce by *unbelievers*, not believers. Later, these men crucified Him. God's laws are the same for everyone, saved or unsaved. The idea that a marriage before conversion is not valid, is not true. God recognizes marriage, whether the individuals are saved or not.
- The “exception clause” only applied to the Jewish society that esteemed engagement almost as highly as marriage itself. Matthew alone, who was writing to the Jews, included *the exception clause*.
- Only Mark mentions women not divorcing their husbands. In the Roman world, women divorced their husbands. Jewish society did not permit this. Therefore, Matthew omitted this part of Christ's teaching.
- Divorce is always because of *hardness of heart*, the inability to forgive. While the one spouse may be charged with infidelity, the other one may be charged with a stony heart that will not forgive. Hardness of heart is the real reason for unhappiness. No one can have the joy of the Lord when the heart is hard.
- The concession to divorce given under Moses was not a good statute. It was given in God's displeasure to a hard-hearted people. Hardness of heart never brings God's blessing, but instead brings judgment.
- Although God tolerated divorce under the Law, divorce was not in the spirit of the Law because God said that he *hated* putting away in Malachi 2:16. In 2:14-15, He calls divorce *treachery*. It is betrayal.
- When Hosea's wife became an adulteress, God told him to take her back. In like manner, God was going to restore His adulterous wife Israel. God was married to adulterous Israel and promised her restoration. See Hosea chapters 1-3. This is a revelation of God's character. Divorce is not part of His nature. Even the priests of the Old Testament could not marry divorced women (cf. Lev. 21:7,14; Ezek. 44:22). The priests had to be examples to the people. God gave higher standards to ministers. He still does today.
- In the New Testament divorce is outlawed. Hardness of heart and unforgiveness is not permitted. Jesus brought us back to *the beginning* where man and wife are one and must never be put asunder.

Today the divorce rate is almost as high in the Church as it is in the world. There are several reasons for this. For one thing, it is the spirit of the age. We are living in an adulterous generation. Morals are falling and standards are being relaxed everywhere because the Lawless One is coming—the Man of Sin. The Church has been infiltrated by the world and has succumbed to its trends. The Body of Christ has become the tail and not the head. Instead of leading, the Church is following the world. Also, there is an element of ignorance. Many ministers are not sure or have had second thoughts about the permanence of marriage, especially because of a lax standard by many prominent Church leaders.

Marriage is difficult to analyze because everyone's situation is so different. Some were divorced and remarried before they came to Christ. Many who were raised in Christian homes backslid and made marriages to unbelievers, then came back to Christ unequally yoked. Others have been treacherously betrayed by their spouses, or were deserted. Some have done everything in their power to keep the union together, to no avail. Many Spirit-filled young people who met in Bible school, later break up after several years of marriage.

Often, ministers have not known what to do with the many varied marital situations in their churches. I believe it is always in order to treat every situation with kindness and tenderness. Yet, we must face this issue of marriage and divorce squarely. Since the divorce rate in the Church is getting as high as the world's, it is our obligation to understand the *consequences* of breaking the marriage covenant. When we face a situation of someone wanting to remarry, before we give our blessing, we should consider how this affects the heart of a believer. How does divorce and remarriage affect one's spiritual life?

- It brings guilt. Guilt diminishes faith and therefore, the anointing.
- It injures the struggling marriages of the onlookers.
- It encourages others to break up too, especially if that second marriage *appears* to be blessed.
- It limits one's service for Christ, for one cannot hold certain spiritual offices in the church.
- It affects the children. By example it teaches them: “If it does not work, end it, and try another.”
- It brings a loss of discernment and a spirit of rationalization when this is justified and defended.
- It is a broken covenant, a broken vow which God cannot bless. He can only bless a repentant spirit.
- It is against the testimony of Jesus (Lk.16:17-18, Rev.19:10) and the spirit of prophecy.
- It brings defilement and additional battles with lust (Mt.19:9, Mk.10:11-12, Rom. 7:1-3).
- It denies the message of forgiveness. Divorce is a public declaration of an unwillingness to forgive.
- It contradicts the message of forbearance—the ability to put up with obnoxious faults in others.
- It is against the message of love, which *suffers long, bears all things, and endures all things*.
- It denies the message of loyalty—loyalty can only be proven and tested in adversity.
- It disaffirms the message of the new covenant—which is to give us a soft, new heart of flesh.
- It is a denial of the message of grace—grace is divine enablement to help us in time of need.
- It contradicts the message of meekness, which is a holy acceptance of our circumstances.
- It denies the message of faith—saying that even God cannot change our situation (a giving up).
- It contradicts the message of being a servant who surrenders his rights. Lords do things their way.
- It denies suffering for righteousness—demanding swift vindication for injustices.
- It denies the message of humility. Arguments and impasses are because of pride (Prov.13:10).
- It contradicts the message of Christ and His Church—it destroys the symbol of our union with Him.
- It is against the fear of the Lord. The fear of the Lord is a holy fear that makes us afraid of coming short of God's purposes for our lives. Divorce hinders one from fulfilling God's purposes.
- It undermines, contradicts, and denies the *entire* Christian message.

Divorce and remarriage is much more than “a doctrinal issue” mentioned several times in Scripture. It strikes at the very heart of Christianity. It is a denial of all the major foundation stones of the Gospel. The ultimate goal of Christianity and the new covenant is to have a heart which is freed of all hardness and hatred. It is to fulfill the two great commandments of loving God with all our hearts and our neighbor as ourselves (Mt. 22:36-40), and that takes a lot of hard work and much grace. Divorce is the result of a heart that has grown hard because of hurts and disillusionment. Divorce is a heart that has been overcome with offenses and infected with bitterness, a heart that has failed to receive grace to help in time of need (Heb. 4:16, 12:15). Grace is always available when we are in need, but when bitterness overtakes a person, grace has been resisted, and offenses have been cherished.

The Church itself is simply a collection of homes, of couples. If Christianity does not work in the homes, it will never work in the Church either, for the home is the heart of the Church. If Christianity does not work at home and in marriages, the Church can never be the Light of the world that Christ intended it to be (Jn.13:35). And if marriages do not succeed, the children of these marriages are told by example: “If it does not work, just quit and start another one.”

In Summary:

- In the New Testament, God's standards on marriage are *much higher* than in the Old Testament.
- Remarriage to someone else is only right when one's first spouse has died.
- For those who have dissolved their marriages, this should be recognized as contrary to God's law, and acknowledged to God. Blessing and mercy is granted in proportion one has come to repentance.
- God wants every one of his children to be fruitful and productive.
There are a thousand ways to be fruitful without being behind a pulpit.
- People in a second marriage should not be told to break up, especially when there are children.
You cannot unscramble eggs. The past cannot be undone.
- There are consequences when any of God's laws are violated. Even so, God can do a special work of redemption in people's lives through the added afflictions.
Any evidence of blessing upon a second or third marriage is not an indication that God endorses divorce and remarriage. It is His mercy to those with a repentant spirit.

Christ's Attitude Toward Children (Mt.19:13-15 Mk.10:13-16 Lk.18:15-17)

A high percentage of the content in the Gospels is dedicated to the last month of Christ's ministry, especially the last week and the last day. In this account it was now March, 30 A.D. Jesus only had several weeks to live. Matthew says little children were brought to Jesus. Luke the Physician says “infants.” The disciples *rebuked* the people for bringing these children and infants to Jesus. They did not want the Master to be bothered. When Jesus saw this, He was much displeased [or moved with indignation]. Mark alone records the Lord's displeasure (Mk.10:14). Christ told them not to refuse these children, for the kingdom of heaven is made up of such (those with a child-like nature). Jesus again repeated His teaching that unless a person “becomes as a little child, he shall in no wise enter the kingdom of God.” Only Mark mentions Christ taking the children into His arms and blessing them.

According to statistics, people who do not make a commitment to Christ before the age of 25, seldom do later in life. Thus, while these little hearts are soft and tender it is imperative to plant the seeds of the Gospel. Children who ask Christ into their hearts in Vacation Bible school or Sunday school remember it the rest of their lives. Though many go astray, a goodly number return to the faith later in life.

The Rich Young Ruler
(Mt.19:16-30 Mk.10:17-27 Lk.18:18-27)

Only Matthew mentions the *age* of the rich ruler, saying that he was “young” (Mt.19:20). In this account we have to be careful to rightly divide the word of truth. When the rich young ruler enquired, “What must I do to inherit eternal life?” the Lord's counsel to this particular young man was to “sell all he had and give it to the poor.” Does this mean that *every one* with great possessions has to rid himself of *everything* in order to make it to heaven? Certainly not! There were a number of wealthy men in Scripture such as Abraham, Job, and David. Does God have a double-standard? Of course not! God saw the heart of this rich young ruler. Christ knew where he would end up if he continued in the direction he was headed. For this man, Christ said, “Sell all that you have and give to the poor...*and come, take up the cross, and follow me.*” Only Mark mentions taking up the cross. The young man was sad at that saying, and went away grieved: for he had great possessions. The Lord had touched his idol. Riches, power, and prestige were more important to him than following Christ.

There is a great temptation to forget God when people have wealth. Jesus warned, “How hard it is for them that *trust in riches* to enter into the kingdom of God. It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God” (Mk.10:24-25). “The eye of a needle” was an oriental expression for a small door fixed in a gate. To pass through, the camel had to be unloaded, hence, the difficulty of the rich man to get through the gates of heaven with all of his riches. Paul exhorts the wealthy not to be highminded or to *trust* in uncertain riches, but to invest in the eternal kingdom (1 Tim. 6:17-19). Paul did not command every rich person to sell *everything* and give it to the poor as Christ did to the young ruler.

At the saying of Jesus, the disciples were “astonished out of measure, saying among themselves, Who then can be saved?” Christ answered, “With men it is impossible, but not with God: for with God all things are possible.” Prosperity can be a curse to some. Many are not able to have riches without being ruined. The will of God differs for each individual. I remember a young man who was seeking to make a career in the major leagues, but this was not God's will for the fellow. God had to shorten his life because being in that career would have destroyed him. Others who are in that profession might be in the will of God. Moses was in the will of God when he numbered Israel, but when David did the same thing, he was judged. Both men numbered Israel, but one was blessed and the other cursed. All moral laws are absolutes, but with many other situations we cannot put everyone in the same category. Avoid being overly involved with *principles*. God may ask one family to educate their children at home but this does not mean you should. For some, it is the will of God to have eight children, for others it would hinder them from fulfilling their ministry. It is a matter of personal conviction between you and God.

The Rewards of Forsaking All
(Mt.19:27-30 Mk.10:28-31 Lk.18:28-30)

Immediately after the episode with the young ruler, Peter said: “Lord, we have forsaken all and followed thee; what shall we have therefore?” Lord, what reward shall we have for completely following you? Matthew alone includes the Lord's words *to the twelve*. In the [resurrection] they shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. The reference, of course, is to the Millennium when Christ comes again. Then he addresses *everyone*. “And everyone that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life” (Mt.19:29).

Christ is not literally teaching us to forsake our wives, children, brothers, sisters, and parents. That would be irresponsible (1 Tim. 5:8). Rather, He implies that no natural claim (earthly possessions, relationships, or attachments) can be allowed to stand between us and Himself if we are truly going to follow Him. This is the rock bottom thing Jesus was teaching here. Everything in the natural that we are and possess and aspire to must be subordinate to the claims of the Master.

Mark records that we “shall receive *an hundredfold* now in this time, houses and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life” (Mk.10:30). Luke says we shall “receive *more* in this present time, and in the world to come eternal life.” Any man who truly sells out to Jesus will have *far more* in return than he ever gave up. When I started out in my Christian walk it was a very lonely path. Former friends and acquaintances did not understand and really did not want to walk where I was walking. As I remained faithful to the Lord, he added countless brothers and sisters to my life, and fathers and mothers, and spiritual children.

Also when we go to the mission field, we have to forsake “houses and lands” for the sake of the kingdom. Certainly, God will make up for these sacrifices too. My wife and I travel to many lands around the world, and we stay in the houses of many wonderful brothers and sisters. God has given us a rich inheritance in many lands, and we feel very wealthy and at home wherever we go.

When people refuse to leave their attachments (family, friends, home, and other sentiments), they end up losing them. The joy of the Lord leaves them. The presence of the Lord and his joy are found in the center of God's will. If we do not move on with God, the enemy catches up and gets our children and all the other things we are clinging to. In losing our life, we will find it. But if we seek to save and protect our little world, we will lose it. We can have a full life *now* if we follow the Lamb wherever He goes (Rev.14:4b). Christ promises a full life to those who are *wholehearted*. Let go of the death-grasp of self-love and self-preservation and find true life in Christ through *abandonment* to Him.

Again Jesus Foretells His Death / Resurrection

(Mt. 20:17-19 Mk.10:32-34 Lk.18:31-34)

Jesus began heading toward Jerusalem. He fully understood *in detail* what was to befall Him there. “Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be betrayed unto the chief priests and unto the scribes, and they shall condemn him to death, And shall deliver him to the Gentiles to mock, and to scourge, and to crucify him: and the third day he shall rise again” (Mt. 20:18-19). Mark says the twelve were afraid as they followed him to Jerusalem. Luke records Jesus saying: “Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of man shall be accomplished” (Lk.18:31). Luke is the only one to mention that the disciples “understood none of these things: and...it was hid from them.” It is incredible how many times we can hear something and still it does not compute. Since the time in Caesarea Philippi, Christ repeatedly told them that He must suffer in Jerusalem and die, and be raised after three days. Yet, it did not register.

Jesus perfectly understood what was going to happen in Jerusalem. First of all, He would be betrayed. The traitor was among the twelve. He would be betrayed unto the chief priests and scribes, not the Roman soldiers. The chief priests and scribes would hold a mock trial for a few minutes, and condemn Jesus to death. Because they did not have the power to execute the death sentence, the Jews would deliver Jesus to the Gentiles, to the Romans, and pressure them into having the Lord crucified. The soldiers would mock and scourge Him, and kill Him, and after three days, He would rise from the dead.

Healing of Blind Bartimaeus and Companion

(Mt. 20:29-34 Mk.10:46-52 Lk.18:35-43)

On his way to Jerusalem, Jesus passed through Jericho. Matthew records that there were *two* blind men who cried out, “Have mercy on us, O *Lord*, thou son of David” (Mt. 20:30). Mark and Luke only focus on one—Bartimaeus. When Jesus heard them crying out, He asked what they wanted from Him. All three writers record, “*Lord*, that I may receive my sight.” All three show that Jesus is *Lord* (God).

Jesus said, “Receive thy sight: thy faith hath saved thee. And immediately he received his sight and followed him, glorifying God: and all the people, when they saw it, gave praise to God” (Lk.18:42-43). Both Mark and Luke say that He *spoke* the word and Bartimaeus was healed. Matthew says that Jesus had compassion on them and *touched* their eyes. Therefore, He must have spoken and touched their eyes.

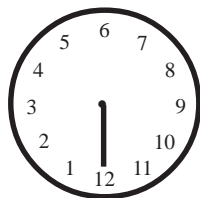
Matthew and Mark say that the healing took place as Jesus was *leaving* Jericho. Luke only records that “as he was come nigh unto Jericho, a certain blind man sat by the wayside begging: And hearing the multitude pass by, he asked what it meant.” The sequence of events could have been like this: Upon entering the city, the blind men heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth and they began crying out, “Jesus, son of David, have mercy on us” as the Lord went into the city. Later, as Jesus was leaving the city and they heard He was passing by again, they continued to cry out to Him. Then Jesus healed them. The main point here is importunity. Bartimaeus was more vocal than the other. His persistence attracted the Lord's attention. He would not be denied an answer for his serious need. Christ longs to heal our eyes. Our spiritual eyes need to be anointed with eyesalve (Rev. 3:18, Eph.1:18). Our greatest problem is *self-blindness*. When we can see what God sees in us, we will be delivered of all bondage.

Christ's Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem (Saturday)

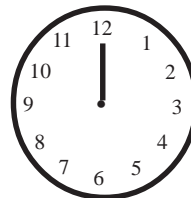
(Mt. 21:1-11 Mk.11:1-11 Lk.19:29-44 Jn.12:12-19)

Just four days later, Christ would be crucified. Jesus made His triumphal entry into Jerusalem on the weekly sabbath. That year the passover started on Tuesday evening at six. Jesus would be on the cross by 9:00 a.m. Wednesday. Remember, the Jewish day started at six in the evening (our time).

JEWISH TIME



OUR TIME



Thursday - FRIDAY	9th	Six days before the passover. (John 12:1)
Friday - SATURDAY	10th	The sabbath / His triumphal entry into Jerusalem
Saturday - SUNDAY	11th	Day after triumphal entry / Fig tree cursed / Second cleansing of temple
Sunday - MONDAY	12th	Parable of the vineyard / Olivet Discourse.
Monday - TUESDAY	13th	Possibly the anointing by Mary for His burial
Tues - WEDNESDAY	14th	The Passover (crucifixion) / Many things happened.

As Jesus and his disciples drew nigh unto Jerusalem, they came to Bethphage, a small village on the mount of Olives. Bethphage and Bethany were close together, just a little outside Jerusalem. Jesus instructed two disciples to borrow a donkey and her colt and to tell the owners, "The Lord hath need of them." Luke adds that no man had ever ridden him (Lk.19:30). They brought the donkey to Jesus and put their garments on the animal. Matthew and Luke also say they "set Jesus thereon." A very great multitude spread their garments on the pathway, and others cut down palm branches from the trees, and strewed them in the way.

"And when he was come nigh, even now at the descent of the mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works that they had seen; Saying, Blessed be the King that cometh in the name of the Lord: peace in heaven, and glory in the highest" (Lk.19:37-38). John records that when the multitudes heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, they took branches of palm trees and went forth to meet him, and cried, Hosanna: Blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord (Jn.12:12-13). Those who had witnessed the resurrection of Lazarus told the people that Jesus was coming, and this drew many others to see Him (Jn.12:17-18). Some of the Pharisees among the multitude said to Jesus: "Master, rebuke thy disciples. And he answered and said unto them, I tell you that, if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out" (Lk.19:40). The jealous Pharisees said among themselves: "Perceive ye how ye prevail nothing? Behold, the world is gone after him" (Jn.12:19).

The multitudes cheered many things as the Lord approached Jerusalem:

Matthew - "Hosanna *to the son of David*: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest" (Mt. 21:9). Mark - "Hosanna; Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord: *Blessed be the kingdom of our father David*, that cometh in the name of the Lord: Hosanna in the highest." Luke - "*Blessed be the King* that cometh in the name of the Lord: *peace in heaven, and glory in the highest*" (Lk.19:38). John - "Hosanna: *Blessed is the King of Israel* that cometh in the name of the Lord" (Jn.12:13). "Hosanna" is an exclamation of fervent praise.

Regarding Christ's entry by a donkey, Matthew says, "All this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet saying, Tell ye the daughter of Sion, Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass" (Mt. 21:4-5, cf. Zech. 9:9). John adds: "These things understood not his disciples at the first: but when Jesus was glorified, then remembered they that *these things were written of him*, and that they had done these things unto him" (Jn.12:16). Only someone truly great could ride into Jerusalem on a donkey. A proud person could never do this. This scene foreshadows the Second Coming of Christ when He will come again to Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives and the inhabitants will cry out, "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord" (Mt. 23:38-39, cf. Zech.14:4-5).

Luke records that when He was come near, He beheld the city and wept over it, saying, "If you had only known this day the things which belong to thy peace! But now they are hid from thine eyes." They had missed the day of their visitation. God Himself had visited them, but most of Jerusalem rejected Him. Therefore, the city was going to be destroyed; not one stone would be left upon another. Over a million Jews would die in A.D. 70 (Lk.19:41-44). Israel rejected Christ, saying, "We have no king but Caesar!" (Jn.19:12,15). Remarkably, it was Caesar who later came and destroyed them. Mark records that "Jesus entered into Jerusalem, and into the temple: *and when he had looked round about upon all things*, and now the evening was come, he went out unto Bethany with the twelve" (Mk.11:11). Perhaps Mark, more than any of the other writers, gives attention to the looks and gestures of the Lord (cf. Mk. 3:5).

The Second Cleansing of the Temple
(Mt. 21:12-13 Mk.11:15-17 Lk.19:45-48)

The next day Jesus went into the temple and cast out all them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the money changers. God's house is to be a place of prayer, but they had made it a den of thieves and a thoroughfare for traffic. The house of God should not be a place of commerce. It should not be a place for making money. The last person you want to touch is a person who loves money. A money lover has a ferocious spirit. It took amazing strength to cleanse the temple and to separate these Jews from their money.

“And he taught them, saying...” (Mk.11:17). *Before* God brings new instruction, there is often a great upheaval in our own personal lives, an overturning of things in our temple. Then, Christ brings new instruction and teaching. This was the second time Jesus had cleansed the temple. He had cleansed it at the beginning of His ministry also (Jn. 2:13-16). Sometimes God will turn us upside down and shake us mightily. He will shake our wilderness and then we will begin to bear fruit. “The voice of the Lord shaketh the wilderness” (Psa. 29:8).

The Barren Fig Tree Withered
(Mt. 21:19-22 Mk.11:19-25 Lk. 21:37-38)

Assuming that Mark is the most chronological in this account (which he probably is), the order of events would have been as follows: Jesus made His triumphal entry into Jerusalem on Saturday, the sabbath. He went into the temple, and looked around upon all things, and departed to Bethany because by then it was evening. On Sunday, they were returning from Bethany to Jerusalem. While journeying, Jesus was hungry and saw a fig tree but found it barren. Thus, He cursed the barren fig tree. *Presently*, it *began* to wither. He proceeded on to the temple and cast out the money changers. That evening, He went out of the city. On Monday morning, as they passed by, they saw the fig tree again, dried up from the roots.

Monday morning, it was *completely* withered. “And *Peter* calling to remembrance saith unto him, Master, behold the fig tree which thou cursedst is withered away. And Jesus answering saith unto them, Have [the faith of 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” (Mk.11:22-23).

Mark draws attention to *Peter's* words. Matthew does not. Mark, as you remember, recorded Peter's words when he was preaching at Rome. The Gospel of Mark is a collection of Peter's sermons. Jesus answering saith unto them, “Have the faith of God.” This is the literal meaning of the verse. It is not our faith, but divine, supernatural faith. When we have God's faith, it is impossible to doubt. We need to ask God for an impartation of His faith into our hearts. Also, *forgiveness* is very much connected to faith, according to Mark 11:24-26. If we have unforgiveness, it blocks our channel for God's faith to flow. A forgiving heart keeps our well unblocked and open for God's faith.

The fig tree is representative of Israel. In cursing the fig tree, Christ was cursing Israel. Because Israel was bearing no fruit, it was cursed of God. Israel would bear no fruit henceforth during the Church Age. The kingdom was taken from them and given to a nation bearing fruit (Mt. 21:43). That nation is the Church (1 Pet. 2:9).

The Chief Priests / Elders Challenge Christ's Authority

(Mt. 21:23-27 Mk.11:27-33 Lk.20:1-8)

The three accounts are very similar. The main issue here is *authority*. “By what authority do you do these things?” The religious leaders were jealous of the authority Christ had and did not want to yield their authority to His. *Authority* is one of the main problems in the Church. People do not like it when anyone touches their authority. When revival comes, the problem is not that ministers do not believe in the revival, but the fact that the revival sweeps away their authority. That is the one thing they do not want to release. We need to ask the Lord to keep us from being *a hindrance* to His Spirit when He moves.

Jesus promised that He would tell them where He received his authority if they would first tell Him where John the Baptist received his authority. The priests, scribes, and elders all knew that John's baptism was from God, but they would not admit it. If they acknowledged that John's baptism was from God, then Christ would ask them, “Why did you not yield to John's message?” If they said it was from man, all the people would stone them. Therefore, they took the easy way out. They were noncommittal and would not give Him a direct answer. These religious leaders were power-thirsty hypocrites.

We are only *instruments* of God and *servants* of God. We should only do *His* bidding, not our own, and then keep ourselves out of the picture. If God wants to intrude into our schedule and change the format of His own Church, let Him! When God moves, we will either be *part of the answer* or *part of the problem*. Let us relinquish our authority to *His*. Christ said in Revelation 3:20, “Behold I stand at the door and knock.” He was knocking on the door, asking permission to come into His own Church. Too often our programs, agendas, schedules, entertainment, and pride push Him out.

Parable of the Householder Demanding Fruit

(Mt. 21:33-46 Mk.12:1-12 Lk. 20:9-19)

The day is Monday, just two days before His crucifixion. While He was under the greatest pressure, Jesus produced His finest sermons. Now He continues to speak in parables unto those in Jerusalem. This parable involved a certain man who planted a vineyard. He set a hedge around it and dug a winepress in it, and built a tower, and entrusted it to husbandmen. Then he went into a far country and at the proper season he sent a servant that he might receive of the fruit of the vineyard. The men beat the servant, and sent him away empty. The lord of the vineyard sent other servants, and they too were treated shamefully. Some were beaten, wounded, and killed. Finally, the owner of the vineyard sent his son, but the keepers of the vineyard conspired against him, saying, “This is the heir, let us kill him and the inheritance will be ours.” And they caught him, and cast him out of the vineyard, and killed him.

Christ asked his enemies, “When the lord therefore of the vineyard cometh, what will he do unto those husbandmen? They say unto him, 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. 21:40-41). Now He applies the parable to Himself and the clergymen who were going to murder Him. “Jesus saith unto them, Did ye never read in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes? Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof. And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder. And when the chief priests and Pharisees had heard his parables, they perceived that he spake of them. but when they sought to lay hands on him, they feared the multitude, because they took him for a prophet” (Mt. 21:42-46).

The interpretation of the parable is obvious. The vineyard is the nation of Israel whom the Lord planted (cf. Isa. 5:1-7). Jeremiah 2:21 says, “Yet I had planted thee a noble vine, wholly a right seed.” When God says “wholly a right seed,” He is referring to the fact that all the nation of Israel descended from honorable Abraham. God expected fruit from Israel. He desired true worship and a people who would walk in His ways. Also, He wanted Israel to be an example to the other nations. Instead, Israel produced evil fruit. God sent His servants the prophets, and they looked for fruit but found none. The prophets were beaten, ill-treated, and some were killed. Finally, God sent His Son. The builders (religious leaders) conspired against Him and cast Him out of the vineyard and had Him crucified outside the gates.

What would God do in response to this? The answer came from the mouths of His own enemies. “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). God did precisely this! He took the kingdom of God away from Israel and gave it to others who would bear fruit. God demoted Israel as the spiritual leader of the nations, and gave that privilege to the Church. Israel will be restored in the Millennium.

The Stone which the builders rejected is become the head of the corner. The builders were God's ministers in the kingdom (the scribes, Pharisees, elders). It was the ministers who rejected Christ and had him crucified outside the gates. But that Stone is the chief cornerstone from whom all measurements are taken (1 Pet. 2:4-8, Eph. 2:20). Whosoever falls [in submission] upon this Rock shall be broken in humility, but on whomsoever it falls [in judgment], it will crush him to powder.

The householder who planted the vineyard - God the Father

The vineyard - the nation of Israel who descended from Abraham (a right seed that degenerated)

The servants who were sent to find fruit - the prophets

The son of the vineyard owner - the Lord Jesus Christ

The caretakers of the vineyard, the builders - the religious leaders

The kingdom taken from them - the anointing and authority removed

The nation bearing fruits - the Church

The stone - Jesus Christ Himself

Those who fall [in submission] upon this Rock - the ones who are broken in humility for their own good

Those upon whom the Rock falls [in judgment] - those who are utterly destroyed in eternal judgment

On Paying Tribute to Caesar

(Mt. 22:15-22 Mk.12:13-17 Lk. 20:20-26)

The Pharisees and Herodians sent forth spies which pretended to be just men, that they might entangle Jesus in his words (cf. Lk.11:54) in order to deliver Him unto the power and authority of the governor. Therefore, they questioned Him regarding paying taxes to Caesar. These men were looking for a political excuse, a technicality, to turn Him over to the Roman authorities. The Jews were under Roman rule and had no power to execute a sentence upon Jesus. Thus, they came from a political angle.

“Master, we know that thou art true, and teachest the way of God in truth, neither carest thou for any man: for thou regardest not the person of men” (Mt. 22:16). This is how we should be—true, preaching the truth, and regarding not the person of men. The praise of man is more dangerous to ministers than anything else, and is the leading cause of their destruction. Jesus perceived their wickedness and hypocrisy and answered them with wisdom that no one could gainsay or resist. He said: “Show me a penny...whose inscription is this?” They answered, Caesar's! He replied: “Well then ... render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's” (cf. Rom.13:6-7). It is very clear that Christ upheld civil laws. Read Romans 13:1-7.

The Question of Marriage in the Resurrection

(Mt. 22:23-33 Mk.12:18-27 Lk. 20:27-40)

The Sadducees were a religious sect that did not believe in the hereafter. In fact, they did not believe in angels, spirits, or anything supernatural (Mt. 22:23, Acts 23:8). The Sadducees were spiritually destitute. They read the Scriptures and quoted from them, but did not understand or believe them. This group represented the liberal clergy of the day. These were “professional” politicians, sociologists, and philosophers, but spiritually they were barren and hopeless.

The Sadducees asked Christ a hypothetical question about marriage in the next world. “Master, Moses said, If a man die, having no children, his brother shall marry his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother (cf. Deut. 25:5). Now there were with us seven brethren: and the first, when he had married a wife, deceased, and having no issue, left his wife unto his brother: Likewise the second also, and the third, unto the seventh. And last of all the woman died also. Therefore in the resurrection whose wife shall she be of the seven? for they all had her” (Mt. 22:24-28).

“Ye know not the Scriptures, nor the power of God.” Matthew and Mark both record this portion of the answer of Jesus, Luke does not. At this time, there were no New Testament Scriptures. Therefore, when Christ said, “Ye know not the Scriptures,” He was referring to the *Old Testament Scriptures*, which very clearly taught life after death. The New Testament Canon was not collected into one volume and used as a standard of orthodoxy until 396 A.D.

“For when they rise from the dead, they neither marry, nor are given in marriage; but are as the angels which are in heaven” (Mk.12:25). Luke is more elaborate in his account: “The children of this world marry, and are given in marriage: But they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage: Neither can they die any more: for they are equal unto the angels; and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection” (Lk. 20:34-36).

Those who are reckoned worthy to enter the heavenly kingdom will be equal to the angels of God. Death is forever abolished. Our bodies will take on a new form, exempt from all the infirmities of this flesh. Because our bodies will be different, there is no physical marriage in heaven. Yet, there is *perfect love* and joy everywhere. Our existence in the next life will be *far superior* to the one we now have. There will be no disappointments or disillusionments in eternity. Heaven has perfect love.

Mark and Luke are clearer than Matthew in their presentation of Exodus 3:6. The Jews (to whom Matthew was writing) understood well that the saying, “I am the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob” *was said to Moses at the burning bush*. To the Jews it was elementary. Therefore, it was omitted by Matthew. Mark and Luke needed to clarify this to their Gentile audiences. Luke continues: “For he is not a God of the dead, but of the living: for all live unto him” (Lk. 20:38). Death is not oblivion. When Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob died, their spirits went into the lower parts of the earth into a resting place. They were fully aware and conscious after their departure from this earthly life. (See pages 23-25.)

In actual fact, the One who appeared to Moses fifteen hundred years before was none other than *the pre-incarnate Christ himself*. Jesus himself was the One in the burning bush. “He is not the God of the dead but the God of the living: ye therefore do greatly err” (Mk.12:27). “And when the multitude heard this, they were astonished at his doctrine” (Mt. 22:33).

Christ is David's Son, But Also His Lord

(Mt. 22:41-46 Mk.12:35-37 Lk. 20:41-44)

“And Jesus answered and said while he taught in the temple, How say the scribes that Christ is the son of David? For David himself said by the Holy Ghost, The Lord said to my Lord, sit thou at my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool. David therefore himself calleth him Lord; and whence is he then his son? And the common people heard him gladly” (Mk.12:35-37).

Matthew presents a different setting. “While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them, Saying, What think ye of Christ? whose son is he? They say unto him, The son of David. He saith unto them, How then doth David in the Spirit call him Lord, saying, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool? If David then call him Lord, how is he his son? And no man was able to answer him a word, neither [dared] any man from that day forth ask him any more questions.” (Mt. 22:41-46). That day was Monday.

Christ is quoting from Psalm 110:1. This is the most quoted verse in the New Testament from the Old. It is quoted or alluded to at least twenty times. The miracle of the incarnation made Christ both God and man simultaneously. The eternal Son of God was given a human body in Mary's womb. His physical body, therefore, was from David's line because Mary was a descendant of David. His spirit was eternal. Jesus Christ was made of the seed of David *according to the flesh* (Rom.1:3). Christ was the “son of David,” but at the same time was David's Lord. Christ was before David and created David.

Solemn Denunciation of the Scribes / Pharisees

(Mt. 23:1-39 Mk.12:38-40 Lk. 20:45-47)

Matthew, writing to the Jews, uses *a whole chapter* to record Christ's denunciation of the religious leaders of Israel. Mark and Luke only use *three verses* each and are very similar. “Then in the audience of all the people he said unto his disciples. Beware of the scribes, which desire to walk in long robes, and love greetings [salutations] in the markets, and the highest seats in the synagogues, and the chief rooms at feasts; Which devour widows' houses, and for a show make long prayers: the same shall receive greater condemnation” (Lk. 20:45-47). Matthew repeats all of the above, and much more. He includes the Pharisees, not only the scribes. The rebuke is for hypocrisy. They pretended to be godly, but were superficial and false.

They sat in Moses' seat, teaching the law. Christ told the people to respect their office, but not to do according to their works, “for they say, and do not” (Mt. 23:3). We have to honor a minister's position but not necessarily his life. God honored Eli's office, but not Eli (1 Sam.1:17, 2:27-36, 3:12-14). Never attack a minister. God *never* blesses anyone for attacking a minister. That's God's business, not ours.

They put the people under hard bondage by enforcing strict rules. They had several hundred man-made ordinances, but they exempted themselves (v4). They wanted the honor of man, elaborate titles and positions, instead of the honor that comes from God alone (v5-12, cf. Jn. 5:44, 12:43). Furthermore, they hindered others from going to heaven (v13) and took advantage of poor widows, draining their finances (v14). They went great distances to convert a Gentile into a Jew, and made him worse than before by teaching him to be a hypocrite like themselves (v15). Thus, they were blind guides, majoring in things minor, and minoring in things major (v16-22, 24). They stressed tithing, but omitted more important issues such as mercy, justice, and faith (v23). They majored in externals, but inwardly were full of iniquity and hypocrisy (v26-28, cf. 5:20). Jesus summed up their wickedness, saying they murdered the righteous, just as their forefathers had murdered the prophets (v29-39).

The Olivet Discourse - The Second Coming (Mt. 24-25 Mk.13:1-37 Lk. 21:5-36)

Now begins the section known as the Olivet Discourse. It is so called because Jesus was on the Mount of Olives when He gave this prophetic sermon on His second coming. Jesus was prophesying as He taught. We, too, need a prophetic anointing as we teach and preach. He did not say, “Yea, my people” or “Thus saith the Lord.” He was prophesying as He talked to the apostles.

The Mount of Olives is very important because:

- 1.) This is where Jesus spoke of His second coming.
- 2.) This is where He ascended back into heaven (Acts 1:10-12).
- 3.) This is where He will return (Zech.14:4).

After much teaching, Jesus started to leave the temple. “One of his disciples saith unto him, Master, see what manner of stones and what buildings are here!” (Mk.13:1). “[the temple] was adorned with goodly stones and gifts” (Lk. 21:5). His disciples showed Him “the buildings of the temple” (Mt. 24:1). Herod, while he was alive, had made the temple an elaborate complex of buildings with courts. The sanctuary itself was surrounded with many other beautiful structures. By now, it had been over forty-six years in building, and still it was not finished (Jn. 2:20).

“And Jesus saith unto them, See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down. And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the [age]?” (Mt. 24:2-3).

After leaving the temple area, Jesus and His disciples went over the Kidron Valley and up to the Mount of Olives, which overlooked the temple site. Mark said that it was “over against the temple” (Mk.13:3). It was not very far away. In plain view of the temple, Peter, James, John, and Andrew asked Him privately, “Tell us, when shall these things be...?” (Mk.13:3-4). Matthew brings out the three specific questions they asked:

- 1.) Tell us, when shall these things be? (not one stone left upon another, etc.)
- 2.) What shall be the sign of thy coming? (signs leading up to his coming)
- 3.) And the end of the [age]?

Therefore, some things He spoke were for that generation, and some things were for today!

Matthew, Mark, and Luke only record *parts* of the discourse; so we must read all three accounts to get the whole message. Since there are several questions being asked, we must realize the following:

a.) Some things were going to be fulfilled in 70 A.D. (not one stone left upon another, the destruction of the city and temple, and the carrying away of Jewish captives into all nations in A. D. 70)

b.) Most things He says are for our time. The signs of His coming include major catastrophic events (wars, pestilences, famines, fearful sights). The generation of His coming will see a series of major disastrous events which will lead up to and include His second coming.

c.) Some things He said could have a fulfillment in both the first century and in our time as well. Warnings to get out of Jerusalem, times of unparalleled horrors, being brought before rulers for a testimony of our faith...all these could have a fulfillment in *both* the first century and in our time, too.

Jesus was prophesying as He was speaking to the disciples on the Mount of Olives. “Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many” (Mt. 24:4-5). *Deception* will be the hallmark of the last days. Anyone who does not walk close to the Lord will be swept away with the coming delusion (2 Thes. 2:3-12). The greatest revival the world has ever known will sweep through the nations. Then, when it seems that the Church has conquered Satan and evil, the Man of Sin will arise. The whole purpose of God's allowing Satan to produce his man is *to test the nations*. This man will draw all the wicked unto himself, including many from the Church. Therefore, it is not enough to preach - “Jesus is coming.” We must tell the people that before Jesus comes, the Man of Sin will appear (2 Thes. 2:3-12). Therefore, get grounded in Christ.

There will be many wars and troubles in the earth—famines, pestilences and disease. The world will live with fear and despair. Yet, Christ tells us not to be *troubled or terrified* (Mt. 24:6, Lk. 21:9). We are to have *perfect peace* in our hearts, and bring this peace to others. God has everything under control. He is the one who controls history. God is sovereign and has the last word in *everything*.

“Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be *hated* of all nations for my name's sake. And then shall many be *offended*, and shall *betray* one another, and shall *hate* one another. And many false prophets shall rise, and shall *deceive* many. And because iniquity shall abound, the *love* of many shall *grow cold*. But he that shall *endure unto the end* ... shall be saved” (24:9-13).

Christ clearly taught a coming persecution when some would even give their lives. There will be a growing hatred in the world for Christians. The result of persecution is that “many will be *offended*.” This is referring to *Christians* being offended. Many will turn back because they are not grounded or committed fully to Christ. They will even betray and hate one another. Over the years we have seen a number of Christians betray one another. Many will be offended because of the lack of depth in their Christian experience. The crowd can “sing along with the evangelist,” but when you preach the life of the cross and the true message, a lot of the fat will be trimmed off.

“The *love* of many will wax cold.” This is a reference more to believers than unbelievers. The nonbeliever has no love for Christ or the truth. Most Christians are not called to be martyrs for Christ. For those who are called, martyrdom is a great privilege, and there will be special grace given at that moment. Therefore, we have absolutely nothing to worry about.

It is *he who endures to the end that shall be saved*. The preaching of the Gospel today is very shallow. It says in effect, “Just believe in Jesus, confess your sins to Him, and you are saved for eternity.” Seldom do we hear about the necessity of *continuing* in the faith. Indeed there are temptations to overcome, battles to be won, misunderstandings and frowns from friends and family to endure, and deceptions to beware of, in order to make it to heaven. Jesus warns that many will be offended, and that the love of many will grow cold. Some Christian brethren will even turn against each other and hate one another. Therefore, we have to be grounded deeply in Christ if we are going to make it through the coming storm.

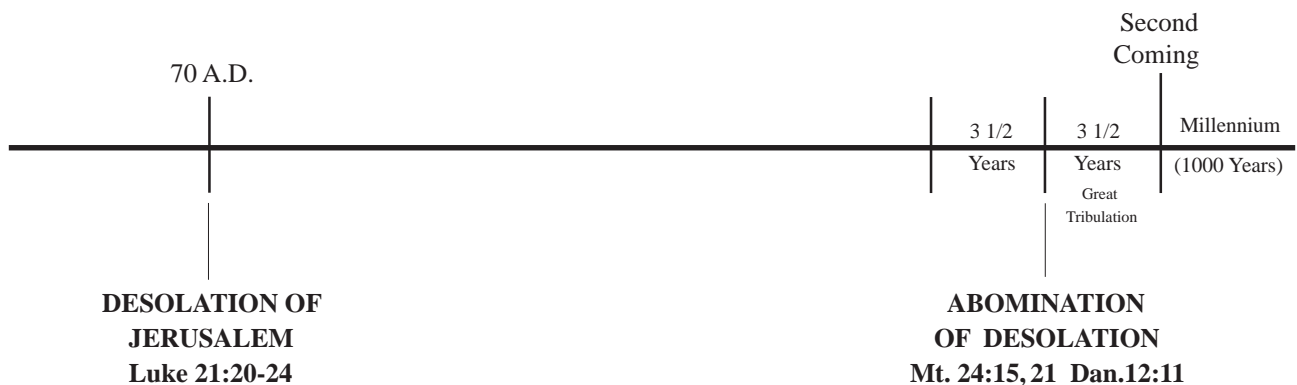
It is persecution that will purify the Church of Jesus Christ. In the time of the Bishop of Carthage, the Roman emperor gave a decree from Rome that all Christians would lose land and properties. At midnight, Christians were hammering on the gates of the local magistrates, disclaiming any relationship to Christ. We can see, then, that persecution separates the real Christians from those who are not committed to Him. In our times, when Christians cannot buy or sell, this will reveal who is who. To some, commerce and the economy are far more important than Christ. “The love of many shall wax cold.”

“When ye therefore shall see the *abomination of desolation*, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place (whoso readeth, let him understand): Then let them which be in Judea flee into the mountains: ... For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened. Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, Here is Christ, or there; believe it not. for there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that if possible, they shall deceive the very elect. Behold, I have told you before. Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold he is in the desert; go not forth: behold, he is in the secret chambers; believe it not. For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be” (see Mt. 24:15-27).

The “abomination of desolation” is the event that starts the great tribulation. It is something local around Jerusalem. Christ says, when you see it, get out of Jerusalem and Judea, for then shall be great tribulation such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. The great tribulation is climaxed by the Second Coming of Christ. Jesus was looking to something beyond the time of the apostles. We will discuss this abomination of desolation in a moment.

Many have confused the “abomination of desolation” (Mt. 24:15, Mk.13:14) with the “desolation” of Jerusalem mentioned in Luke 21:20-24. The desolation of Jerusalem happened in 70 A.D. Not one stone was left upon another. However, the abomination of desolation is something that happens in the last days, and it triggers the great tribulation.

Desolation of Jerusalem / Abomination of Desolation



Jerusalem was destroyed in 70 A. D. Christ warned them to flee Jerusalem. The survivors were scattered among the nations. Luke 21:20-23 could have a fulfillment in *both* the first century and our time, *but not v24*. Jerusalem will be *partly* destroyed in our time, but it will *not* be made desolate as in 70 A.D. *nor* will it be scattered throughout the nations.

The “Abomination of Desolation” starts the Great Tribulation. This happens in a literal, geographical place ... Judea. The *holy place* is the temple in Jerusalem. Jesus said we would see it. Once again, the inhabitants are warned to get out.

Do Not Confuse These Two Events:

- 1.) The desolation of Jerusalem (Lk. 21:20-24) - Jerusalem's total destruction in 70 A.D.
- 2.) The “abomination of desolation” which starts the great tribulation in our time.
Christ said we would see it. Watch Israel! It is a sign to the Church.

Daniel 9:24-27 is *the foundation* of the Olivet Discourse, especially verses 26-27. Jesus meditated upon these verses often as a young man. Many of His parables are also based on these verses.

Daniel 9:26b-27 - "...shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and [unto the end wars and desolations are determined.] And he [a coming prince] shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even unto the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the [desolator.]"

"Messiah shall be *cut off*." From Daniel 9:26 alone, Jesus understood that He was going to be rejected by Jerusalem. Consequently, Jerusalem and the temple would be judged by God and destroyed by a coming prince. That prince was Titus, who later became emperor. At that time he was only a prince, the son of the emperor Vespasian. Unto the end of the Church age, "wars and desolations are determined" upon Jerusalem. Then at the very end, a prince would make a seven year covenant with Israel. One "week" means seven years in Hebrew (cf. Jacob worked one week for Rachel in Genesis 29:27). In the middle of the seven years, this evil man would break the covenant and make Israel's sacrifices to cease, offering the abomination that makes desolate.

Abomination of Desolation

The abomination of desolation is mentioned by Matthew and Mark, but not Luke. Luke speaks only of the desolation of Jerusalem. This is the reason we have to put all three accounts together. Matthew and Mark both say: "When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place (let him who readeth understand) (Mt. 24:15, Mk.13:14). Then let them that are in Judea flee to the mountains." We must have a firm grip on *Daniel's prophecies* in order to understand what the abomination of desolation means. It is found in Daniel 8:11-14, 9:27, 11:31 and 12:11.

It happens in Judea (in the holy place, i. e. the temple in Jerusalem) and starts the great tribulation. It already happened in history, in 168 B.C. by Antiochus Epiphanes IV. It will happen again, and start the great tribulation. History repeats itself.

This abomination that makes desolate is not nearly as obscure as you might think. Every December, you hear Jews say to one another, "Happy Hanukkah." Hanukkah is a holiday that commemorates the cleansing and rededication of the temple that was defiled by the abomination of desolation. It is also called the Feast of Dedication (or Feast of Lights). Jesus was in Jerusalem while they celebrated the Feast of Dedication (cf. Jn.10:22). Let's look briefly at the history surrounding this feast.

A Syrian king named Antiochus Epiphanes IV (175-164 BC) captured and oppressed Jerusalem. He burned all the holy scriptures, outlawed circumcision, and compelled the Jews to eat swine's flesh. Those who did not comply were slaughtered. Above all these things, he went into the temple and offered swine's blood upon the altar. This was an outrageous abomination. Also he removed the daily sacrifice. The Jews, under Judas Maccabeus, led a revolt against him and prevailed. Then they cleansed and rededicated the temple. According to tradition, they only had enough oil to keep the candlestick burning for one day, but miraculously it burned for eight days. Therefore, this feast became known as the Feast of Lights, and also the Feast of Dedication (Hanukkah).

The prophecies of Daniel had a literal fulfillment when Antiochus Euphrosyne IV offered this abomination. To a certain extent, these verses in Daniel had a historical fulfillment, but this was only a type of something to come. Jesus predicted that this would happen again and would commence the great tribulation. Jesus said, "When you see it, get out." Daniel 9:27 suggests a strong man in the Mediterranean area will make a seven year covenant with Israel at the end of time. Then he will break it in the middle of the seven years and defile the Jewish temple in contempt. What happened in 168 B.C. is a type of what will happen again. Antiochus Euphrosyne IV is *a type* of the coming Antichrist. This means that the Jews must go back to sacrificing in our time, and have a temple. None of this could have happened before 1948 because up to that point, Israel had ceased to be a nation and there was no temple there. The people had been scattered around the world since Jerusalem's destruction in A.D. 70.

Jesus Foretells His Crucifixion Two Days Hence

(Mt. 26:1-2 Mk.14:1-2 Lk. 22:1-2)

Matthew 26:1-2 - "And it came to pass, when Jesus had finished all these sayings, he said unto his disciples, Ye know that after two days is the feast of the passover, and the Son of man is betrayed to be crucified." After Jesus had finished the Olivet Discourse, He told the disciples that in just two days, He would be crucified on the passover. Therefore, this was Monday. Mark explains customs to the Roman readers, saying it was "the feast of the passover, and of unleavened bread." Every Jew knows that the two feasts are intertwined. Luke also explains customs to his Greek audience, saying, "Now the feast of unleavened bread drew nigh, which is called the Passover" (Lk. 22:1). No Jew needed an explanation of this. Luke was also writing to a non-Jewish world.

The Plot of the Jews

(Mt. 26:3-5 Mk.14:1-2 Lk. 22:2)

Matthew records that the chief priests and scribes and elders assembled together in the palace of Caiaphas the high priest and consulted together how they, by craft, might apprehend and kill Jesus. They all agreed that it could not be done on the feast day, lest there be an uproar among the people.

The Feast at the House of Simon the Leper

Mary Anoints Jesus for Burial

(Mt. 26:6-13 Mk.14:3-9 Jn.12:2-8)

Luke does not record this account, but John does. During a meal, Mary of Bethany came with an alabaster box of ointment of spikenard, very costly. She broke the box and poured it on the head of Jesus. Mark records that some of the disciples "had indignation within themselves, and said, Why was this waste of the ointment made? For it might have been sold for more than three hundred pence, and given to the poor. And they murmured against her" (Mk.14:4-5, cf, Mt. 26:8-9). Jesus kindly defended her action and explained that she was anointing him for his burial. *Still* they did not understand that He was going to die. Furthermore, He said that wherever the Gospel was preached in the future, her act of kindness would be remembered. Now let us consider John's record of the account.

Between John 12:1 and 2 is a gap of several days. John 12:1 took place six days before the passover. This supper is only a day or two before the passover. John says that Mary used a whole pound of spikenard, and that she anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair: and the house was filled with the fragrance of the ointment (Jn.12:3). Now he is going to add something important that Matthew and Mark omitted.

Matthew and Mark state that there was murmuring and indignation among the apostles about the wasted spikenard which could have been sold and given to the poor. John is going to show us *where* the cancer cell started in this body of disciples. “Then saith one of the disciples, *Judas Iscariot*, Simon's son, which should betray him, Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor? This he said, not that he cared for the poor; but because he was a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein” (Jn.12:4-6).

Judas was the one who started this infection in the body, and his poison was spread to the others. He was a sower of discord so that the apostles *disdained* this woman. Mark says they had “indignation” against her. As long as Judas was among them, there could never be unity. This was Monday evening. Now Judas was going to seek out the religious leaders and bargain to betray Jesus unto them.

Judas Bargains to Betray Jesus (Mt. 26:14-16 Mk.14:10-11 Lk. 22:3-6)

Luke records that Satan entered into Judas, who came privately and communed with the religious leaders concerning how he might betray Jesus unto them. They were glad and covenanted to give him money. Matthew, an accountant, records the *amount* of money they agreed on in the transaction. “And he said unto them, What will ye give me, and I will deliver him unto you? And they covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver.” Judas sought opportunity to conveniently betray Jesus unto them “in the absence of the multitude.” Both Judas and the religious leaders determined to keep this matter private and away from the public. Why does Satan enter people? It is always because there is an open door, an invitation. Judas *loved* money. He was a thief (Jn.12:6). Judas was an apostle, but was covetous. He never allowed Christ to cleanse his heart. The *love* of money is a root of every evil (see 1 Tim. 6:6-10).

The Preparation for the Passover Meal (Mt. 26:17-19 Mk.14:12-16 Lk. 22:7-13)

This was now Tuesday evening. Their day started at 6:00 P.M. our time. “Now the first day of the feast of unleavened bread, the disciples came to Jesus, saying unto him, Where wilt thou that we prepare for thee to eat the passover?” (Mt. 26:17). The passover and the (seven day) feast of unleavened bread were separate feasts, yet they were one and the same (Lk. 22:1). The passover was celebrated on the 14th day of the month, and the feast of unleavened bread from the 15th to 21st. On the passover they also ate unleavened bread. Together there were eight days of unleavened bread. To say “Passover” included the feast of unleavened bread. To say “Unleavened Bread” included the passover.

Mark says Jesus sent two disciples into the city. Luke says it was Peter and John. “And he said unto them, Behold, when ye are entered into the city, there shall a man meet you, bearing a pitcher of water; follow him into the house where he entereth in. And ye shall say unto the goodman of the house, The Master saith unto thee, Where is the guestchamber, where I shall eat the passover with my disciples? And he shall show you a large upper room furnished: there make ready. And they went, and found as he had said unto them: and they made ready the passover” (Lk. 22:10-13).

Jesus knew from moment to moment what was going to happen next. “Now I tell you before it come...” (Jn.13:19). “The Spirit without measure” was upon Him, giving Him superhuman knowledge. Peter and John followed the man “and found as he had said unto them.” The fact that the man was bearing a pitcher of water shows humility. Humility exalts a man. What a privilege he had of guiding the group into the upper room where Christ had the last supper with His apostles.

The Passover Meal With the Twelve
(Mt. 26:20 Mk.14:17 Lk. 22:14-16, 24-30)

“Now when even was come he sat down with the twelve” (Mt. 26:20). Mark says essentially the same thing. Luke records: “And when the hour was come, he sat down, and the twelve apostles with him. And he said unto them, with desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer: for I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God” (Lk. 22:14-16). At that time there was a strife among them concerning who should be greatest. This account is only recorded by Luke (Lk. 22:24-30). After three years of teaching, still they had not learned their lessons on greatness. The Lord demonstrated true greatness as He washed their feet (Jn.13:1-20). Only John records the washing of feet. Then they continued eating. Now Christ is going to identify the traitor.

The Traitor Identified
(Mt. 26:21-25 Mk.14:18-21 Lk. 22:21-23 Jn.13:21-30)

As the meal continued, Jesus was troubled in spirit and testified saying, “One of you shall betray me” (Jn.13:21). Luke 22:21 records, “...Behold the hand of him that betrayeth me is with me on the table.” Then the disciples looked one on another, doubting of whom He spoke. Matthew says they were “exceedingly sorrowful.” Mark notes that they said to Him, *one by one*, “Lord, is it I?” While the apostles were wondering among themselves who the traitor could be, Peter looked over and saw John leaning upon the bosom of the Lord. Therefore Peter beckoned to John to ask Jesus who the traitor was (Jn.13:23-24). John was the one who received the revelation. He who rested upon the heart of the Lord heard the mystery. God does not have favorites. Any of the disciples could have leaned upon the Lord, but only John did. God wants all His followers to do the same.

John, leaning back upon Christ's bosom asked, Who is it, Lord? Jesus answered, “It is the one to whom I will give this piece of bread when I have dipped it in the dish” (Jn.13:26). Jesus continued: “The Son of man goeth as it is written of him: but woe unto that man by whom the son of man is betrayed; it had been good for that man if he had not been born” (Mt. 26:23-24, Lk. 22:22). “Then Judas, which betrayed him, answered and said, Master, is it I? he said unto him, Thou hast said” (Mt. 26:25).

“Then dipping the piece of bread, he gave it to Judas Iscariot, son of Simon” (Jn.13:26 NIV). As soon as Judas took the bread, Satan entered into him. Then Jesus said to him, “what you are about to do, do quickly.” Remember, Judas had already made prior arrangements with the religious leaders to betray Jesus for thirty pieces of silver. No one at dinner perceived why Jesus said this to him. The fact that Judas had charge of the money caused some to think that Jesus was telling him to buy what was needed for the feast, or to give something to the poor.

John 13:28 - Even until the very last moment the disciples did not know who Judas was. Christ was so gracious. He acted the same toward Judas as he did the others. It took great grace not to make any distinction, even when Christ knew from the beginning who Judas was. Judas sold his soul for money. Judas was a thief (Jn.12:6), a traitor (Mt. 26:14-16), the son of perdition (Jn.17:12), a devil (Jn. 6:70). He loved cursing (Psa.109:17). Judas “delighted not in blessing.” He had the privilege of walking side by side with the King of heaven. He saw and heard the mysteries others had longed to see and hear. Yet, he thought it was a light thing. Judas was a man without mercy. He persecuted the poor and needy man, and slayed the broken in heart, as it says in Psalm 109:16. Jesus said it would have been better not for Judas to be born. He ended up committing suicide and going to eternal judgment.

Why did God choose Judas to be one of the twelve, knowing all along what was in his heart. Christ knew what was in man (Jn. 2:24-25). The reason is this: it was necessary in the life of Christ to experience *betrayal*. In order to know God, we have to pass through similar experiences. The Lord was betrayed by His highest and most beautiful creature, Lucifer. When someone that dear turned against Him, it broke his heart. In the life of Christ, it was ordained that someone very close to Him should betray Him. Judas fulfilled the Scripture which said, “Yea, mine own familiar friend in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me” (Psa. 41:9, cf. Jn.13:18). Therefore, we will have the experience of betrayal too, in order to understand the fellowship of Christ's sufferings (Phil. 3:10). True fellowship is based upon having like experiences. Many Christians cannot appreciate God because they do not want to drink of the same cup—the cup of pain.

Christ Institutes the Last Supper
(Mt. 26:26-29 Mk.14:22-25 Lk. 22:17-20)

With Judas departed, Jesus instituted the last supper. Judas was not part of the body of Christ. “And as they did eat, Jesus took bread, and blessed and brake it, and gave to them, and said, Take, eat: this is my body. And he took the cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them: and they all drank of it. And he said unto them, This is my blood of the new testament [or covenant], which is shed for many. (Matthew adds, *for the remission of sins*). Verily I say unto you, I will drink no more of the fruit of the vine, until that day that I drink it new in the kingdom of God” (Mk.14:22-25).

The Apostle Paul confirms the words and emblems of Christ in First Corinthians 11:23-26. “For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took break: And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come.”

Peter's Denial Foretold
(Lk. 22:31-38 Jn.13:31-38)

With Judas departed, Jesus said, “Now is the Son of God glorified, and God is glorified in Him... Ye shall seek me... Whither I go ye cannot come” (See Jn.13:31-33). “Simon Peter said unto him, Lord whither goest thou? Jesus answered him, Whither I go, thou canst not follow me now; but thou shalt follow me afterwards. Peter said unto him, Lord, why cannot I follow thee now? I will lay down my life for thy sake. Jesus answered 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.13:36-38).

Luke 22:31-33 - “And the Lord said, 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. And he said unto him, Lord, I am ready to go with thee, both into prison and to death. And he said, I tell thee, Peter, the cock shall not crow this day, before that thou shalt thrice deny that thou knowest me.” Peter asserted, “I am ready to go with thee, both into prison and to death.” Self-strength and presumption were “chaff” in Peter. Satan is allowed to test us when we make bold, rash statements. Jesus knew that Peter would miserably fail and want to give up. Therefore, Christ was praying that his faith would not fail. When he learned to be humble, he could strengthen his brethren.

John 14:1-31 is a continued encouragement to Peter when he failed. "Let not your heart be troubled." Also, it was a farewell address to all the apostles in the upper room. Then they dismissed by singing a hymn (or psalm), and began moving toward the Mount of Olives. They would cross the Brook Cedron (Kidron) and come to the garden of Gethsemane. The garden lay at the foot of the Mount of Olives. On the way there, Christ gave his sermons on The True Vine, The World Hates You Because it Hates Me, The Coming Holy Spirit, and His Death and Resurrection (Jn.15-16). Shortly before arriving at the Garden, He prayed his High Priestly Prayer (Jn.17). Christ did not speak on unity and loving one another until Judas had made his departure. You cannot truly love a Judas or have unity with people like him in the group. Sometime between leaving the upper room and coming to the Garden of Gethsemane, He warned them that "All shall be offended this night because of me." This was to fulfill the scripture in Zechariah 13:7, "Smite the shepherd and the sheep shall be scattered." In actual fact, all the apostles were going to fail. All would flee. Never is a spiritual battle won by *natural* strength.

According to Matthew 26:31-35 and Mark 14:27-31, all the apostles insisted that they would not deny the Lord, especially Peter. Mark records that Peter was very *vehement* about it. Mark is recording Peter's words. "Peter answered and said unto him, Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended. Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, That this night, before the cock crow [twice - Mark] thou shalt deny me thrice. Peter said unto him, Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee. Likewise also said all the disciples" (Mt. 26:33-35). It appears that Christ spoke to Peter about his denial on *two separate occasions*. Once in the upper room, and now again He is reiterating it, probably as they approached the garden. Late in the evening they came to Gethsemane. Perhaps it was 11:00 or 12:00 according to our time, the fifth or sixth hour Hebrew time.

Arrival At Gethsemane / His Agony (Mt. 26:36-46 Mk.14:32-42 Lk. 22:39-46 Jn.18:1)

Matthew and Mark are similar. Jesus and His disciples came over the brook Cedron to Gethsemane. He said to eight of His disciples, "Sit ye here while I pray." He took Peter, James, and John apart from the others and began to be sorrowful and very heavy ["sore amazed," according to Mark]. Then, He said to the three, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here and watch with me." He wanted them to stay awake and pray. Then He went a little farther by Himself, "about a stone's cast" (Lk. 22:41). He prayed, "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me, nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt" (Mt. 26:39). Mark records His request that "if it were possible, the hour might pass from him."

Luke says, "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" (22:43-44). Mark records that when Jesus came back to the three and found them sleeping, He "saith to *Peter*, Simon, sleepest thou? couldest not thou watch one hour? Watch ye and pray, lest ye enter into temptation. The spirit truly is ready, but the flesh is weak" (Mk.14:37-38). Then Jesus went and prayed the second and third time using the same words. Each time He returned He found Peter, James, and John sleeping. Peter had just asserted that he was ready to die for the Lord, but now he could not stay awake one hour.

Jesus was not afraid of death or suffering. The cup He had to drink was *the cup of iniquity*. He had to take all the sins of the world upon Himself, and that was what He was dreading. Still, He was willing. Jesus was used to doing the will of the Father. Whenever there was a difficult issue to face, He always looked to His Father for the strength to do what was right. He always won the battle *by prayer*.

This particular battle was so fierce that the Son of man needed a mighty angel from heaven to strengthen Him. Hordes of demons from hell were coming against Him. The pressures against his mind were indescribable. Even the blood vessels in His forehead burst from the pressure. This hour was called “the power of darkness” (Lk. 22:53). Only Luke the physician records this aspect of Gethsemane. He connects the physical and mental pain with prayer. “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” (Lk. 22:44).

Jesus had won the victory in prayer. This is where we receive grace to help in time of need (Heb. 4:16). If we do not pray things through, we will succumb to temptation. Jesus came to His disciples the third time and found them sleeping. Then He told them to rise up. “He that betrayeth me is at hand.” While He yet spake, Judas, one of the twelve, came, and with him a great multitude with swords and staves, sent from the chief priests and the scribes and elders. There were about a thousand armed men.

Christ Betrayed, Arrested, Forsaken
(Mt. 26:47-56 Mk.14:43-52 Lk.22:47-53 Jn.18:2-12)

Judas knew where to find Christ: “...for Jesus often times resorted thither with his disciples. Judas then, having received a band of men and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees, cometh thither with lanterns and torches and weapons” (Jn.18:2-3). Judas was the one leading the band of men. The fact that the religious leaders would send an army this size attests to the fear they had of Christ's supernatural power. Jesus therefore, knowing all things that should come upon Him, went forth to meet them. Christ had no fear whatsoever. He was the master of the situation—the One who controlled the wind and the seas. Christ did not wait for them to come to Him but went forth to meet them.

In order to identify Christ, Judas had given them a token or sign beforehand. The One he kissed, they should take and lead away safely. Therefore, upon coming, Judas instantly stepped forward to Him and said, “Master, Master” and eagerly kissed him (See Mark 14:44-45). As he did so, Jesus said unto him, “Friend, wherefore art thou come?” (Mt. 26:50). Luke records: “Judas, betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?” (Lk. 22:47-48). Christ said both. Putting the two together He said: “Friend, for what purpose have you come? ... Judas, are you betraying the Son of man with a kiss?”

Then Jesus asked them, “Whom seek ye?” They replied, “Jesus of Nazareth.” When He answered them, saying, “I AM *he*,” they (and Judas) all fell down backward to the ground. Again He asked, “Whom seek ye?” While still lying on the ground, they said, “Jesus of Nazareth.” Jesus replied again, “I have told you THAT I AM.” His full name is I AM THAT I AM. This whole army could not stand before the Name of deity. They were facing God incarnate. Unless He had permitted it, none of them could have stood to their feet again. He was the Master of the situation. He taught: “I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again” (Jn.10:17-18).

“If you seek me, let these go their way” (Jn.18:8). Jesus told them, “If I am the One you are seeking, then let these others go their way.” Jesus was being a good shepherd here. He was protecting His sheep. Jesus asked them to let the eleven disciples go. Then they began to lay hold of Jesus to take Him. This was only because He allowed them. The disciples saw what was about to happen. They knew that the multitude was going to apprehend Jesus and take Him away. Therefore they said, “Lord, shall we smite with a sword?” (Lk. 22:49). “Then Peter drew a sword and smote the high priest's servant, and cut off his right ear. The servant's name was Malchus” (Jn.18:10).

“Then said Jesus unto Peter, Put up thy sword into the sheath: the cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?” (Jn.18:11). Matthew records: “Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword. 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?” (Mt. 26:52-54). Luke is the only one to record that Jesus healed the severed ear (Lk. 22:51). John is the only one to mention that *Peter* was the disciple who struck the servant, and that the servant's name was Malchus.

“In the same hour Jesus said to the multitudes [chief priests, captains of the temple, elders - Lk. 22:52], 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. But all this was done, that the scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled. Then all the disciples forsook him, and fled” (Mt. 26:55-56). “Then the band and the captain and officers of the Jews took Jesus and *bound him*, and led him away...” (Jn.18:12-13). Probably *after* Jesus was bound the disciples fled. “Smite the shepherd and the sheep will be scattered.” Mark records that an unnamed young man was following the band of men, having a linen cloth cast about his body, and that other young men laid hold of him, and he left the linen cloth, and fled from them naked (Mk.14:51-52).

Summary: (The order of events in this account is approximately as follows:)

- Praying a third time, Jesus came to his sleeping disciples, saying, “He that betrayeth Me is at hand.”
- While He was speaking, Judas came, leading a multitude *from the chief priests*, not Roman soldiers.
- Jesus went forth to meet them. He was the Master of the situation.
- Judas stepped forward and saluted Jesus with a kiss to identify Him to the enemies.
- Jesus said, “Friend, why have you come? Are you betraying Me with a kiss?”
- He asked the mob, “Whom seek ye?” They said, “Jesus of Nazareth.” When he replied, “I AM *he*” all of them were knocked to the ground by the impact of His Name.
- He asked again, “Whom seek ye?” While lying on the ground, they said, “Jesus of Nazareth.”
- Jesus replied, “I have told you “THAT I AM.” His full name - I AM THAT I AM.
- Then the Lord said, “If I am the One that you are seeking, then let these others go their way.”
- The crowd started to lay hold of Jesus and take Him (Mt. 26:50).
- The disciples, seeing what would follow, asked, “Shall we smite with a sword?”
- Peter drew a sword and struck off the right ear of Malchus, servant of the high priest.
- The Lord admonished him for this act, saying, “They who take the sword shall perish by the sword.”
- This was a cup from His Father that He had to drink. *It had to be* for the fulfillment of scripture.
- He could have asked the Father to send more than twelve legions of angels to rescue Him.
- Also, he healed the severed ear of Malchus.
- Then He said to the band, “Are ye come out as against a thief? I taught daily in the temple.”
- Then they bound Him - at which point all the disciples fled.
- An unnamed young man followed the multitude, but later fled.

Judas had *no shame whatsoever* in leading the adversaries to Jesus and his fellow apostles. He was also betraying the eleven. What hypocrisy to say “Hail Master” to the Messiah he was betraying, in whose Name he had performed miracles! The fact that he had worked side by side with his eleven brethren for three years meant nothing to him. Spiritual blindness is a horrible thing! Judas and the multitude were knocked to the ground at the revelation of the name I AM. Still, they continued to fight against Him. Malchus had a severed ear, yet Jesus picked up the severed ear and healed him in the presence of them all. “But though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him (Jn.12:37).

Jesus said to the multitude who had come to take Him, “*This is your hour, and the power of darkness*” (Lk. 22:53). Because these men (and Judas) had refused the Light of the world, they had been overtaken with darkness and were now the instruments of Satan and of darkness. Everyone has a choice to make: Either we will be instruments of God or instruments of evil. When men and women reject the Light and refuse what God is saying to them, they automatically come under the influence of darkness and become channels for evil. I am referring to people in the Church as well as those in the world. Judas came from the household of faith, not the world. He was a major apostle.

Deception and betrayal are hallmarks of the last days. In the last days, many will *betray* one another and become the enemies of Christ (Mt. 24:10-12). The scene in Gethsemane and the crucifixion that followed is similar in many ways to the Great Tribulation:

- It was suddenly night. John 13:30
- The powers of darkness were given a season to reign. Luke 22:53 (Mt. 24:21)
- Satan incarnate entered a man. John 13:27 (2 Thes. 2:3-10)
- There was betrayal. Mt. 26:46, (Mt. 24:10)
- The disciples were sleeping. Mt. 26:40-45, (Mt. 24:24, 48-51)
- Many were offended. Mt. 26:31, (Mt. 24:10)
- Many fled. Mt. 26:56, (Mt. 24:16)
- There was a false trial. Mt. 26:57-68, (Mt. 24:9-10)
- There were false witnesses. Mt. 26:59-62, (Mt. 24:9-10)
- There was persecution. Mt. 26:67-68, (Mt. 24:9)
- There was martyrdom. Mt. 27:35, (Mt. 24:9)

The above by Daniel G. Caram

Christ Hastily Tried / Condemned / Mocked
(Mt. 26:57, 59-68 Mk.14:53, 55-65 Lk. 22:54, 63-65 Jn.18:24)

There were no Roman soldiers involved in the arrest of Jesus. The mob was a band of men from the chief priests and Pharisees. Clearly, from the legal aspect, there were no Romans soldiers that took Jesus. Those who arrested Him were officers from the high priest. Here is a breakdown of the Hebrew trial:

- 1.) The Arrest (Jn.18:12) - We have already discussed this.
- 2.) Jesus Before Annas, a former high priest (Jn.18:13-14, 19-23)
- 3.) Jesus Before Caiaphas (Mt. 26:57-66)
- 4.) The Evidence (Mt. 26:59-61)
- 5.) The Solemn Adjuration (Mt. 26:63-64)
- 6.) The Conviction (Mt. 26:65-66)
- 7.) Spat Upon and Buffeted (Mt. 26:67)
- 8.) Peter's Denials (Mt. 26:58, 69-75)
- 8.) The Grand Consultation (Mt. 27:1, Mk.15:1, Lk. 22:66-71) - The whole council

After this was the Roman Trial. The only reason for the Roman side of the trial was that the Jews wanted to kill Jesus, but legally they could not. Therefore, with political charges, they delivered Jesus to Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor. For now, let us consider the hasty Jewish trial.

After his arrest, Jesus was brought before Annas, a former high priest (Jn.18:12-14, 19-23). Annas was not recognized by the Roman government, but was respected by the Jews as having the most authority. When Annas asked Jesus of His doctrine, Christ told him that everything He taught was open and in the light. He had taught frequently in the temple among the Jews and wanted Annas to ask the Jews what He had taught, for He had said nothing in secret (Jn.18:19-21). Jesus is the Light of the world. He always did everything in the light. People in cults never tell you what they *really* believe. Jehovah's Witnesses will not tell you their real beliefs—that Jesus is Michael the archangel, and not deity. Mormons spend millions of dollars advertising as a religion that focuses on family values. They would never tell the public that they believe in polygamy or that they believe that Adam is the father of Christ.

After the brief hearing, Annas sent Jesus bound unto his son-in-law, Caiaphas (Jn.18:24). Caiaphas was the high priest recognized by Rome. He was the one who prophesied that one man should die for the nation (Jn.18:14, 11:49-50), not realizing what he was saying. The high priest was the chief justice of the Jewish supreme court or Sanhedrin. Sanhedrin is usually translated *council* in Scripture. It consisted of seventy members and was patterned after Moses and the seventy elders.

Matthew, Mark, and Luke omit the episode before Annas. They go directly to the palace of the high priest where Jesus stood before Caiaphas. Caiaphas presided over the council. The Jews wanted to have Jesus put to death. Therefore, they sought evidence to substantiate crimes worthy of the death penalty. Many bore false witness against Him, but none of their testimonies agreed. The whole trial was illegal and filled with inconsistencies.

THE EVIDENCE: “At the last came two false witnesses and said, This fellow said, I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to build it in three days” (Mt. 26:60-61). Mark says: “There arose certain [ones], and bare false witness against him, saying, We heard him say, I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and within three days I will build another made without hands. But neither so did their witness agree together” (Mk.14:57-59). Even the testimony of the two men did not add up. They were perverting the words of the Lord. Jesus had never said this. He said that He would raise up the temple (referring to His own body) after three days, but not that He would destroy it (Jn. 2:19-21). Jesus did not defend Himself when He was faced with the false accusation.

THE SOLEMN ADJURATION: Matthew 26:62-63 - “And the high priest arose and said unto him, Answerest thou nothing? what is it which these witness against thee? But Jesus held his peace. And the high priest answered and said unto him, I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God.” Caiaphas had no right to ask this question. It was his responsibility to protect the accused. Instead, he was seeking to incriminate Christ.

“Jesus saith unto him, 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. Then the high priest rent his clothes, saying, He hath spoken blasphemy; what further need have we of witnesses? behold, now ye have heard his blasphemy” (Mt. 26:64-65).

The high priest should have examined whether there were grounds to prove or disprove that Jesus was the Son of God. A judge should have sought to prove or disprove Christ's statement. The court of law must prove a statement one way or the other, but the Jews were determined not to accept Christ. They could not have accused Jesus of blasphemy until they proved that He was not the Christ. They said He had blasphemed, yet they did not examine Him or disprove that he was the Son of God.

THE CONVICTION: "...Ye have heard his blasphemy. What think ye? They answered and said, He is guilty of death" (Mt. 26:65-66). After a short hearing, the council agreed that Jesus was worthy of death, and they began to mock Him grievously.

SPAT UPON AND BUFFETED: "Then did they spit in his face, and buffeted him; and others smote him with the palms of their hands, saying, Prophecy unto us, thou Christ, Who is he that smote thee?" (Mt. 26:67-68). Luke says the men who held Jesus mocked and smote Him. Then they blindfolded Him and struck Him on the face, and spoke many other blasphemous things against Him (Lk. 22:63-65).

Peter Denies Christ Three Times
(Mt. 26:58, 69-75 Mk.14:54, 66-72
Lk. 22:54-62 Jn.18:15-18, 25-27)

The scene of Peter's three denials was the palace of the high priest. It was here that Jesus was hastily tried by Caiaphas and the Jewish supreme court. Peter had followed "afar off." Another disciple (John) had also followed Jesus to the palace of the high priest. John entered the palace, and "went in with Jesus into the palace of the high priest. But Peter stood at the door without" (Jn.18:15-16). Peter only went as far as the courtyard, warming himself by the fire because it was cold. It should be noted in John 18:15-16 that the high priest recognized John.

- Denial # 1: Then John went out to the entrance and asked the girl who was the door keeper to open the door for Peter. When the damsel who kept the door recognized Peter, she asked: "Art not thou also one of this man's disciples? He saith, I am not" (Jn.18:15-17). Matthew and Mark record her saying, "Thou wast also with Jesus of Nazareth." Evidently in the brief dialogue with Peter, her question turned into a statement as others were listening. While others were looking on, she said, "You were with Him, too." Matthew says that Peter denied before them *all* saying, "I know not the man." Peter did not stay inside long. He went out into the porch and the cock crew (Mk.14:68). This was his first denial.

Peter was such a mixture. He had courage to draw a sword when they were outnumbered in the garden. He was courageous to walk on the water. But Peter had great moments of depression. He was very much afraid at the trial. Peter was inconsistent. His double mindedness made him unstable in all his ways (Jas.1:8). When everything is on the altar, there will be no up and down experience. But there is another point to consider here.

Peter was the one who had boasted, "Though all men forsake thee, I will never." This had invited an *unnecessary* test. Satan is allowed to put us to the test when we make bold, rash declarations. Satan saw the chaff in Peter's life and wanted to try him. John was not tested here. Peter was. John had not boasted of his superior loyalty and self-strength as had Peter. Therefore, John was spared from being tested, even though the high priest knew him. We should pray, "Lord, lead me not into temptation." Also, we should avoid foolish, daring statements.

- Denial # 2 Shortly afterwards, while Peter was on the porch warming himself by the fire, another maid saw him and said to them that were there, "This fellow was also with Jesus of Nazareth" (cf. Mt. 26:71, Mk.14:69). Isn't it amazing what the words of a woman can do to a big man! Women often recognize faces better than men do, and she began telling those on the porch that "this is one of them." This must have prompted a particular man to confront Peter and say, "Thou art also of them." And Peter replied, "Man, I am not" (Lk. 22:58). Matthew said that Peter "denied *with an oath*, I do not know the man" (Mt. 26:72).

• Denial # 3 About *one hour* later (Lk. 22:59), another man affirmed confidently, "...This fellow also was with him: for he is a Galilean." John 18:26 tells us that the man was a relative of Malchus, the servant of the high priest whom Peter had wounded with the sword in Gethsemane. He said to Peter, "Did not I see thee in the garden with him?" Matthew and Mark both record that there were a number of people saying, "You are one of them because your accent is that of a Galilean."

Then Peter began to curse and swear, saying, "I know not this man of whom ye speak." And immediately the cock crew the second time. This fulfilled the word of Jesus to Peter, that "before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice." Luke says, "Immediately, while he yet spake, the cock crew. And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter" (Lk. 22:61). The Lord had been inside the palace of the high priest. Peter was outside on the porch. It would appear that as Jesus was being led out of the palace, Peter was making his third denial, and the cock crowed. The Lord turned and looked upon Peter, and he remembered the word of the Lord. Then Peter went out and wept bitterly.

Human strength can never withstand the pressure of spiritual battles. This indeed was a bitter lesson for Peter. When Peter was converted, he would strengthen his brethren. John was inside the palace and was even recognized by the high priest, yet he was not put to the test. God protected John from temptation. Peter, on the other hand, had removed himself from God's protection when he had boasted, "Though all men forsake thee, I will never."

Christ Officially Condemned by the Council

(Mt. 27:1 Mk.15:1 Lk. 22:66-71)

"And when the morning was come, all the chief priests and elders of the people took counsel against Jesus to put him to death" (Mt. 27:1). At sunrise, all the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and scribes and the whole council. A few hours earlier Christ had stood before Caiaphas to be tried in the Jewish court. They had determined that He was worthy of death. Now the sentence was becoming official. Undoubtedly some of the members of the council were not present at the hearing before Caiaphas. Presently there was a vote among them, but it was not unanimous. It is clear that there were men like Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea who did not give their consent to this evil deed (Lk. 23:50-51, Jn.19:38-39). This should be a lesson to all of us. When we are in positions of decision-making, may we always cast our vote for the cause of righteousness. Even if we are unpopular and there are frowns to endure, may it be written in heaven that we stood for the right.

The only reason for the Roman trial was that the Jews wanted to execute Jesus, but were unable to do so because they were under the Roman government. Roman law did not recognize blasphemy. The law of the Romans was pagan, and with so many gods there was no such thing as blasphemy. If the Jews had brought a charge of blasphemy against Jesus in the Roman court, Pilate would have rejected it. Therefore, the Jews were about to bring Jesus to the Roman governor with *political* complaints.

What was Pilate doing in Jerusalem at this time? His capital was in Caesarea, the military headquarters for the Roman forces, and the residence of the procurators (or governors). Pilate and the other procurators had the responsibility of maintaining law and order, and this was the time of the Passover, when three million Jews came to Jerusalem to observe the feast. Therefore, at this time every year Pontius Pilate came prepared to Jerusalem with all his army to keep law and order. There were about *thirty thousand* troops at his command. While Pilate was stationed in Jerusalem, the Jews brought Jesus as a prisoner and criminal to Pilate and urged him to put Christ to death.

Christ Before Pilate
(Mt. 27:2, 11-14 Mk.15:1-5 Lk. 23:1-5 Jn.18:28-38)

THE ROMAN TRIAL

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| 1.) The Hall of Judgment (Jn.18:28) | 9.) The Verdict Assumed (Mt. 27:15-18) |
| 2.) The Charges (Lk. 23:2) | 10.) Pilate's Wife (Mt. 27:19) |
| 3.) The Interrogation (Jn.18:33) | 11.) Pilate Says He is Innocent (Mt. 27:24) |
| 4.) The Defense (Jn.18:36) | 12.) The Jewish Curse (Mt. 27:25) |
| 5.) The Interrupted Verdict (Jn.18:38) | 13.) The Scourging and Torture (Jn.19:1-6) |
| 6.) Jesus Before Herod (Lk. 23:8) | 14.) Interrogation Resumed (Jn.19:7-11) |
| 7.) The Mocking (Lk. 23:10) | 15.) The Threat to Pilate (Jn.19:12-13) |
| 8.) Christ Before Pilate Again (Mt. 27:15) | 16.) Closing Scenes |

After the council officially condemned Him to death, they bound Jesus and brought Him to Pilate. It was early in the morning, probably around 5:00 a.m. our time. John 18:28 says they brought Jesus to the hall of judgment, but they themselves would not enter the judgment hall because it would make them ceremonially defiled and unable to eat the passover. Therefore, Pilate went out to them and said, “What accusation bring ye against this man? They answered and said unto him, If he were not a malefactor [or criminal], we would not have delivered him up unto thee” (Jn.18:29-30).

Then they laid these charges against Jesus, as enumerated by Luke only: “And they began to accuse him, 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). Their complaints were political. “He is stirring up trouble, forbidding to pay taxes to Caesar, and claiming to be king Himself (i.e. replacing Caesar).” Pilate, perceiving their complaints to be religious, said: “Take ye him, and judge him according to your law. The Jews therefore said unto him, It is not lawful for us to put any man to death” (Jn.18:31).

“Then Pilate entered into the judgment hall again, and called Jesus, and said unto him, Art thou the King of the Jews? Jesus answered him, Sayest thou this thing of thyself, or did others tell it thee of me?” (Jn.18:33-34). Jesus knew that the Jews had put words in his mouth. Also, when many of the other charges of the chief priests were enumerated, Jesus answered nothing, insomuch that Pilate marvelled greatly at His control and peace (Mt. 27:11-14, Mk.15:3-5).

Pilate said to Jesus: “...Thine own nation and the chief priests have delivered thee unto me: *what hast thou done?* Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence. Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice. Pilate saith unto him, What is truth? And when he had said this, he went out again unto the Jews and saith unto them, I find in him no fault at all” (Jn.18:35-38).

When Pilate came out of the judgment hall and pronounced to the Jews, “I find no fault in him at all”, “Then they were the more fierce, saying, He stirreth up the people...from Galilee unto this place.” They insisted that He was causing trouble and unrest all over the country. (See Luke 23:4-5).

Pilate Attempts to Release Christ
(Mt. 27:15-26 Mk.15:6-15 Lk. 23:13-24 Jn.18:39-40)

The verdict was briefly interrupted when Pilate learned that Jesus was from Galilee. Galilee belonged to the jurisdiction of Herod Antipas. Therefore, Pilate sent him to Herod, who was also present at Jerusalem. When Jesus would not answer any of Herod's questions, he and his men mocked Him, arrayed Him in a gorgeous robe, and sent Him back to Pilate (Lk. 23:6-12). Jesus then made *a second appearance* before Pontius Pilate.

Pilate knew that Jesus was innocent of all charges, and wanted to free Him. He fully understood that the religious leaders had delivered Jesus to him because of *envy* (Mt. 27:18, Mk.15:10). Because it was customary to release a prisoner at the feast, Pilate asked them: “Will ye therefore that I release unto you the King of the Jews?” (Jn.18:39). The congregation could choose between Jesus and a *notable* prisoner named Barabbas (Mt. 27:17). Pilate had no right to give the people a choice. He knew Christ was an innocent man and was obligated to protect Him.

Barabbas was a thief, a murderer, and was the instigator of a rebellion. The chief priests and elders persuaded the people to ask for the release of Barabbas, and the death of Jesus. *Three times* Pilate said that he had found no fault in Jesus or reason for death (Lk. 23:14-22). Yet the crowd preferred a murderer (Acts 3:13-14). Pilate tried to *appease* the people by offering to chastise Jesus and release him. But Pilate had no right whatsoever to chastise or punish Him. He knew that Jesus was innocent.

Pontius Pilate was not accustomed to making right decisions. Therefore, when he was faced with this awesome situation of defending or condemning the Son of God, he had no moral fiber in himself to stand for the right. Pilate had conditioned himself to choose the easiest path. He had no moral character to do right when the biggest test of his life confronted him. This should be a warning to all of us. If we will practice doing the right thing in the smaller tests of life, it will create a pattern, a habit of choosing to do the right thing. We will then be strengthened to face the bigger tests and enabled to choose the right way.

Pilate Releases Barabbas / Reluctantly Issues the Death Sentence
(Mt. 27:20-30 Mk.15:6-15 Lk. 23:13-25 Jn.18:39-19:16)

God was gracious, warning Pilate through a dream He had given to his wife (Mt. 27:19). Pilate attempted to discharge himself of his responsibility by washing his hands before the public, saying, “I am innocent of the blood of this just person: see ye to it” (Mt. 27:24). However, he was not innocent. Pilate had the power to release Jesus (Jn.19:10). He had thirty thousand soldiers at his command. He was giving in to the pressure of the people. When the Jews wanted Jesus crucified, Pilate told *them* to crucify Him, because he found no fault in Him (Jn.19:6). Pilate was growing more and more *afraid*, especially when they said, “he made himself the Son of God” (Jn.19:7-8). Jesus was already acting as Judge: saying to Pilate, “He [Caiaphas the high priest] that delivered me to thee hath the greater sin” (Jn.19:11). The religious leaders further threatened Pilate: “Whosoever maketh himself a king speaketh against Caesar” (Jn.19:12). Pilate gave in. About the sixth hour (6:00 a.m.), “he saith unto the Jews, Behold your King! But they cried out, Away with him, away with him, crucify him” (Jn.19:14-16).

“And so Pilate, *willing to content the people*, released Barabbas unto them, and delivered Jesus, when he had scourged him, to be crucified” (Mk.15:15). Luke says it like this: “And Pilate gave sentence that it should be *as they required*. And he released unto them [Barabbas who] for sedition and murder was cast into prison whom they had desired; but he delivered Jesus *to their will*” (Lk. 23:24-25).

Jesus En route To the Cross / Simon Compelled to Bear the Cross / On Golgotha's Hill

(Mt. 27:31-34 Mk.15:20-23 Lk. 23:26-33 Jn.19:16-17)

Barabbas the criminal was released but Jesus was condemned. After scourging Him, Pilate delivered Jesus to his soldiers to be taken away and crucified. First they stripped Him and clothed Him with purple. Purple is the color of *royalty*. Matthew says that they put on Him a scarlet robe. Scarlet is the color of the *priest*. Jesus was both a king and a priest. To further mock Him, they platted a *crown of thorns* upon His head and said, "Hail, King of the Jews." Thorns are a result of the fall. Christ was bearing the curse of sin for us. The Father had laid upon Him the iniquity of us all (Isa. 53:6).

Also they placed a reed in His right hand, symbolizing the scepter of authority a king would possess. They bowed their knees as in worship to the King of the Jews. Then the soldiers took the reed out of His hand and broke it over His head, and spit in His face (Mt. 27:27-30, Mk.15:16-19). After removing the purple and scarlet robe, they put on Him his own raiment, and led Him away to be crucified.

Simon, a Cyrenian, was a passerby as Jesus was being led to the hill called Golgotha. Simon was *seized* by the Roman soldiers, and was *compelled* to carry the cross for Jesus. By this time, Jesus was undoubtedly too weak to bear it Himself, after being scourged and brutally beaten. I believe there is an important application to be made here. Simon was compelled or forced to carry the cross. It was not done willingly. We should remember that there is *no reward* for us if we bear our cross unwillingly. Paul said (with respect to his call): "If I do this thing *willingly*, I have a reward: but if against my will ... What is my reward then?..." (1 Cor. 9:16-18). Jesus testified, "I *delight* to do thy will O God." It is not only important to *do* the will of God. The *attitude* in which we do it is just as important (Psa. 40:8).

Luke alone records the great company that followed Jesus on the lonely road to Calvary's hill. Also many women followed Him and bewailed him. Christ turned and told them not to weep for Him but for themselves and their children because of the coming destruction upon Jerusalem (Lk. 23:27-31). Then they came to the hill of Golgotha. *Golgotha* is the Hebrew word; *Calvary* is Latin (Lk. 23:33, Jn.19:17). Both words mean *skull*, and refer to the hill where Christ was crucified.

"And when they were come unto a place called Golgotha, that is to say, [the] place of a skull, They gave him vinegar to drink mingled with gall [body waste]: and when he had tasted thereof, he would not drink." (Mt. 27:33-34). This was another act of mockery. Mark says they gave him "wine mingled with myrrh: but he received it not." They offered him *two* different drinks. The second was believed to be a pain-deadening mixture, offered before He was nailed to the cross. Christ refused to minimize his suffering for us. Later, *while upon the cross*, He was offered vinegar (Mt. 27:48, Jn.19:28-30, Psa. 69:21).

From 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. on the Cross

(Mt. 27:35-44 Mk.15:24-32 Lk. 23:33-43 Jn.19:18-27)

	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
- Casting of Lots for His Coat	27:35-36	15:24-25	23:34	19:23-24
- Pilate's Superscription - The King of the Jews	27:37	15:26	23:38	19:19-22
- The Two Thieves - One Repents	27:38,44	15:27-28	23:33,39-43	19:18
- Mockery - "Save Yourself, You Saved Others"	27:39-44	15:29-32	23:35-37	
- Entrusting of Christ's Mother to John				19:25-27

They Cast Lots for His Garments
(Mt. 27:35-36 Mk.15:24-25 Lk. 23:34 Jn.19:23-24)

It was the third hour of the morning when they crucified Jesus. This is 9:00 a.m. our time. The Roman soldiers stripped Him of his clothes and cast lots for His coat. The humiliation Christ suffered for us was absolute and total. Nakedness is the ultimate of all indignities. According to Matthew 27:35, this was to fulfill the words of the prophet. “They parted my garments among them, and upon my vesture did they cast lots.” (cf. Psa. 22:18, Jn.19:24). Matthew also records that following this, the soldiers sat down and watched him. Luke adds nothing further, but John gives more detail about the clothes.

Jesus had a seamless coat and other garments. The other garments were torn into four parts, and shared equally among the four soldiers who had crucified the Lord. Maybe they hoped to make a sizable profit from his clothes, having heard of the cures wrought by the touch of the hem of His garment. Perhaps they expected His admirers to offer any amount of money to obtain them.

The seamless coat was kept intact. To rend it would unravel it. A piece of it would be worthless. Therefore, the four men decided to cast lots for it. While Christ was dying in agony for the sins of the world, the soldiers were merrily dividing His spoils. The preserving of Christ's seamless coat has been preached often over the centuries. Its message is to show the caution Christians should take not to rend the Body of Christ with strifes and divisions. Unfortunately, the reason the soldiers did not rend Christ's coat was not out of respect for Christ, but because each one hoped to have it *for himself* in its entirety. In like manner, while some have cried out against schisms in the Church, it is only that they may gather all the wealth and power to themselves. Such was the case with those who opposed Martin Luther's separation from the Roman church. It is also the motive of *some* who preach unity today.

While we are on the subject of clothes, I would like to interject a question. What attire should Christians wear to church? In the Scriptures, much attention is given to clothes. For example, in order to come into God's presence, it was necessary for the priests to have the proper garments. Clothes indicate *attitudes*. Some circles of believers disdain others who come to church well dressed. They believe it is better to come to church in sneakers and jeans. However, this can be reflective of lax attitudes toward the Lord Himself. In effect it concludes: “Anything is good enough for God.” In actuality, it is bringing God down to man's level. I believe that we should honor the presence of God by presenting ourselves to Him with our very best attire. The opposite way reflects lawlessness, carelessness, and a sense that God has no standards or requirements. *Slackness* is not from the Spirit of the Lord, but is of the world.

Pilate's Superscription - THE KING OF THE JEWS
(Mt. 27:37 Mk.15:26 Lk. 23:38 Jn.19:19-22)

THIS IS JESUS *THE KING OF THE JEWS* (Matthew 27:37)

THE KING OF THE JEWS (Mark 15:26)

THIS IS *THE KING OF THE JEWS* (Luke 23:38)

JESUS OF NAZARETH *THE KING OF THE JEWS* (John 19:19)

The superscription written above the head of Jesus on the cross was in three different languages—Greek, Latin, and Hebrew. All four evangelists include THE KING OF THE JEWS. Putting all four together it would read: “This is Jesus of Nazareth the King of the Jews.” It was customary for criminals to have their crime written above their heads, but Pilate could lay no charge against Jesus. The Jews wanted Pilate to change it to a mockery, but Pilate refused. See John 19:21-22.

The Two Thieves - One Repents
(Mt. 27:38,44 Mk.15:27-28 Lk. 23:33, 39-43 Jn.19:18)

In this account we have a perfect presentation of *the power of choice*. Here were two dying thieves hanging on either side of the Lord. Both were within speaking distance of the One who could save them, and both had the same opportunity. One man said *yes* to the Savior, but unfortunately, the other said *no*. He was so close to everlasting life, yet so far, because he refused it. He had *judged himself* unworthy of heaven (cf. Acts 13:46). The unrepentant man hardened his heart and had no ability to believe. The heart of the other man softened, believed, and received the gift of repentance.

At first, both criminals verbally reproached Christ, along with all the others (Mt. 27:44). Luke records that one of them had a change of heart several hours later (Lk. 23:39-43). The repentant criminal had a revelation from God. He said to Jesus, “*Lord*, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom” (Lk. 23:42). Also, he had a sense of the fear of God and eternity (23:40). The heart of the other criminal remained hard and unbelieving. This account is a perfect summation of the Gospel. Some believe the message, and some do not believe.

Mockery - “Save Yourself, You Saved Others”
(Mt. 27:39-44 Mk.15:29-32 Lk. 23:35-37)

There were many women watching from a distance (Mt. 27:55). Numerous other spectators looked on while Jesus suffered on the cross—the multitudes, the rulers (chief priests, scribes, elders), the soldiers, the two criminals, and those who were followers of Jesus. Many mocked, saying: “He saved others, himself he cannot save.” “Let Christ the King of Israel descend now from the cross.” “Thou that destroyest the temple and buildest it in three days, save thyself. If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross.” “He trusted in God; let him deliver him now, if he will have him: for he said I am the Son of God.” This was a direct assault against God Himself. “He trusted in God; let him deliver him now.” These wicked men were fulfilling Psalm 22:8. Remember, Jesus could have called twelve legions of angels to deliver Him, but He refused to use His power. True strength is manifested when a person has the power but does not use it.

Also standing by the cross was the Lord's mother, and John, the disciple whom Jesus loved. When Jesus saw His mother and John standing close by, He said to his mother, “Woman, behold thy son.” Then He said to John, “Behold thy mother.” And from that hour John took her unto his own home. In all of His agony, Jesus was thinking of the welfare of others. He wanted John to take good care of His mother. Jesus told His mother, “John is your son.” And to John He said, “This is your mother.” Christ was the most unselfish Man who ever lived. This is what makes a person truly great—unselfishness! See John 19:25-27.

From 12:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. on the Cross

	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
From 12:00-3:00 - Three Hours of Darkness	27:45-50	15:33-37	23:44-46	19:28-30
- Darkness Covered the Earth.	27:45	15:33	23:44	
- Some Said He Called for Elijah.	27:46-49	15:34-36		
- They Offered Him Vinegar for His Thirst.	27:48	15:36		19:28-30
- He Released His Spirit at Death.	27:50	15:37	23:46	19:30

Three Hours of Darkness
(Mt. 27:45 Mk.15:33 Lk. 23:44)

From the sixth hour to the ninth hour there was great darkness over all the land. This would be from 12:00 noon to 3:00 p.m. Not only was it a time of darkness in the spiritual realm, it also affected the physical realm. The powers of darkness were rejoicing, but actually the powers of darkness were about to be doomed. What appears to be a great victory for the Evil One is always reversed by God and made his demise. “Now shall the prince of this world be cast out” (See Jn.12:31-33).

The Jews looked for a Messiah who would deliver them from the yoke of Rome, rid them of all their oppressors, and exalt them as head over the nations. But Christ came to deal with the real issues. He came to judge enemies that were *much greater* than Rome. He was sent to defeat *the unseen forces* that motivate evil governments and fallen man. He would master a fallen nature which man could never conquer, and defeat a tremendous archangel (Satan) and all his evil angels and demons. And He came to defeat sin and a sinful nature. This required *tremendous* strength! Spiritual battles require by far the most strength of all—against pressures of the mind, against sin, doubts, fears, temptations, and Satan.

Great spiritual strength, wisdom, and a pure heart are all needed to defeat Satan. Let us illustrate this: Satan was full of pride! To defeat pride and the Proud one, it required total humility and humiliation. Satan was self-willed. To overthrow the Self-willed One, it demanded One who could say with His whole heart, “Not my will but thine be done.” To conquer bitterness, Someone had to suffer tremendous injustices but then respond by saying, “Father forgive them.” To triumph over self-pity, there had to be a Man who could say, “Weep not for me but for yourselves and your children.”

Jesus defeated Satan on every point! He stripped Satan and the evil spirits of their power by *the way* He lived and died (Col. 2:15). Jesus died as a perfect Lamb—without bitterness. But remember, it was *not* the fact that Jesus died that defeated Satan. It was *the way* He died that defeated Satan. As a man, Jesus defeated man's sinful nature by never yielding to sin (Rom. 8:3; Heb. 4:15; 2:14). Christ has completely won the victory for man, yet man must totally rely on Christ to gain this total victory. Christ longs to show us the secrets of His strength and victory, through His available grace (2 Tim. 2:1).

Some Said He Called For Elijah
(Mt. 27:46-49 Mk.15:34-36)

“And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabathani? that is to say My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? Some of them that stood there, when had heard that, said, This man calleth for [Elijah].”

In this account we see the *humanity* of Christ. He cried out in anguish, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” We should never take away the humanity side of Jesus (nor should we ever try to take away our humanity). Christ was totally man as well as God. When He was baptized in the Jordan three-and-a-half years before, the heavens were opened. He could see directly into heaven and look upon the face of His Father. During His three years of ministry, He had an open heaven. However, at this moment upon the cross when the Lord had laid upon Him the iniquity of us all, the Father closed the heavens and hid His face from His only begotten Son (cf. Isa. 54:8). Then the Son of God cried out, “My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?” This event has actually been seen by some in visions.

They Offered Him Vinegar For His Thirst

(Mt. 27:48 Mk.15:36 Jn.19:28-30)

Immediately after Christ had said “Eli Eli, lama sabathani,” one of them took a sponge and filled it with vinegar, and gave it to Jesus to drink. Then they said, “Let us see if Elijah will come to save him.” According to John's account, Jesus had also said, “I thirst,” to fulfill scripture (cf. Psa. 69:21). There was a container filled with vinegar from which they drew, and put to His mouth. Jesus received the vinegar. He drank of the cup of bitterness for us. The first two drinks He had refused.

Jesus Releases His Spirit At Death

(Mt. 27:50 Mk.15:37 Lk. 23:46 Jn.19:30)

After Jesus had received the vinegar, He cried with a loud voice, “It is finished” (Jn. 19:30). Then He said, “Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit” (Lk. 23:46). The death angel did not take His life. He dismissed His spirit. He had power over death and defeated death. All four accounts say He “gave up or yielded up the ghost.” *Ghost* is old English for spirit. Jesus was releasing His spirit from His body. One time in a vision, a man saw Jesus coming out of His body with tremendous strength. He was tearing through the veil of His own flesh as a mighty conquering general. After dismissing his spirit from his body, He then descended into the lower regions of the earth for three-and-a-half days.

Below is a list of the seven sayings of Jesus upon the cross in the order they occurred:

- 1.) “*Father forgive them for they know not what they do*” (Lk. 23:34). Forgiveness is the very heart of the Gospel. Jesus died as a perfect Lamb; so did Stephen (Acts 7:60). We must guard our spirit. Though we may be right, we must not have a bitter spirit. Do not expect justice in this life. It is impossible to have the victory if we are always demanding justice for ourselves.
- 2.) “*Today thou shalt be with me in paradise*” (Lk. 23:43). There is no thought of purgatory here. The repentant thief was entirely cleared of all sins and transgressions by the sacrifice of Christ.
- 3.) “*Woman, behold thy son.*” Christ entrusted His mother to John's care. Jesus always thought of others, even when he was in great pain.

The above were spoken sometime between 9:00 a.m. and 12:00 noon; The last four after 12:00 noon.

- 4.) “*My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?*” (Mt. 27:46, Mk.15:34, Psa. 22:1). The Father hid His face from the Son briefly.
- 5.) “*I thirst*” (Jn 19:30, Psa. 69:21). The thirst and strangling sensation must have been indescribable. Jesus had lost a lot of blood. He was in terrible agony and yet found no comforter.
- 6.) “*It is finished*” (John 19:30, Psa. 22:31). Psalm 22:31 is better rendered: “They shall come, and shall declare his righteousness unto a people that shall be born, that *he hath finished.*” There is such a sadness if we go to heaven without finishing our mission in life. We must finish our course as did Paul.
- 7.) “*Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit*” (Lk. 23:46, Psa. 31:5, Isa. 49:4). On the cross Jesus must have fulfilled Isaiah 49:4: “Then I said, I have labored in vain ... yet surely my judgment is with the Lord.” In his humanity, Jesus must have felt like a failure at this point. Yet He commended His spirit and everything else to His Father. He knew God would justify Him.

The Veil in the Temple Rent When Jesus Dies

(Mt. 27:51 Mk.15:38 Lk. 23:45)

When Jesus died, the veil in the temple was rent in two from the top to the bottom. Luke adds that it was rent in the middle. This act of God has marvellous signification. Christ was the Testator of the New Covenant. A testament or will has no power until the one who made it dies (Heb. 9:16-17). Therefore, when Christ died, the power of the testament came into force. Upon His death all the promises of God came into effect. There was tremendous power released at His death. Under the Old Covenant, the veil that separated the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies signified that *the way* into God's presence in the Holy of Holies was not yet open or revealed (Heb. 9:3, 9:7-8). A rent veil meant that the way into God's full presence and promises was now opened and the way revealed. Paul further explained that the veil represented Christ's flesh. That new and living *way* into the Holy of Holies is *through* the veil of His flesh (Heb.10:19-20). The sacrifice of His body and blood (his flesh) now makes it possible to have full access to God.

Conversion of the Centurion

(Mt. 27:54 Mk.15:39 Lk. 23:47)

Centurions were commanders of one hundred soldiers in the Roman army. This particular centurion was very much affected by the way Jesus died. This is especially brought out in Mark's Gospel. "And when the centurion, which stood over against him, saw that he so cried out, and gave up the ghost, he said, Truly this was the Son of God" (Mk.15:39). Some doctors believe that it would have been medically impossible to cry out with a strong voice as Jesus did. Not only was there a great loss of blood, but his lungs should have been filling with fluid also. This greatly affected the centurion, who had witnessed many other executions. He had never seen a Man like this!

Matthew focuses on the men who were with the centurion. "Now when the centurion, *and they that were with him*, watching Jesus, saw the earthquake, and those things that were done, *they* feared greatly, saying, truly this was the Son of God" (Mt. 27:54). Not only was the sun darkened, there was also a mighty earthquake, and the veil in the temple was rent. Luke says "when the centurion saw what was done, he *glorified* God..." (Lk. 23:47). The centurion had a change in his heart and was moved with awe. Even in His death, Christ was the master of the situation, freeing men from the shackles of sin and softening hearts made hard by sin. Death did not have dominion over Christ. He dismissed His spirit. The death angel was afraid of Him.

Burial in the Tomb of Joseph of Arimathea

(Mt. 27:57-60 Mk.15:42-46 Lk. 23:50-54 Jn.19:31-42)

John gives the most details in this account. Evening was drawing near and the sabbath would start at 6:00 p.m. (our time). However, this was not the weekly sabbath. This sabbath was a "high day" (Jn.19:31). In other words, it was a feast sabbath. At 6:00, the first day of the feast of unleavened bread began. This feast started and ended with a sabbath. The Jews were concerned about the three men who were hanging on crosses. They did not want to violate Deuteronomy 21:22-23. These verses stated that anyone hanged on a tree was cursed, and commanded that they should not be left hanging all night. The Jews did not want to break the Law, even though they had just murdered the Lawgiver. Therefore, they besought Pilate that the legs of the three men be broken so that they would quickly bleed to death and be taken down before nightfall.

The soldiers came and broke the legs of the two men, but when they came to Jesus and saw that He was already dead, they did not break his legs. One of the soldiers took a spear and pierced His side, and forthwith there came out blood and water. The Apostle John was still standing there and was an eyewitness of this. “And he that saw it bare record, and his record is true” (see Jn.19:31-37). These things were done that the scripture should be fulfilled which said, “A bone of him shall not be broken.” Also fulfilled was the Scripture that said, “They shall look on him whom they pierced” (Psa. 34:20, Zec.12:10).

When a sheep continuously strays, the shepherd has to break his leg so that he can no longer go astray to be lost or devoured by a wolf. Christ, however, was not rebellious. He never needed any of His bones broken. He was the epitome of submission. Zechariah 12:10 clearly shows that Scripture can have double fulfillments. John applies this verse to the time Christ was speared in His side while still on the cross. However, the truest fulfillment of Zechariah 12:10 is when Christ comes again and every eye shall see Him, those also who pierced Him. Those who pierced Him are the Jewish nation.

Joseph of Arimathea came to Pilate and begged for the body of Jesus. Matthew describes him as *a rich man*, who also was a disciple of Jesus. Mark says he was an honorable counsellor, who also waited for the kingdom of God. He went in *boldly* unto Pilate and *craved* the body of Jesus (Mk.15:43). Luke says he was a good man and just and consented not to the counsel and deed of the others. Joseph of Arimathea must have been a member of the Sanhedrin, and undoubtedly refused to give his consent when the council voted on the execution of Jesus. John says he was a disciple of Jesus, but *secretly* for fear of the Jews. “This man went unto Pilate and *begged* [for] the body of Jesus” (Lk. 23:52).

Pilate could hardly believe that Jesus was already expired. Sometimes men were alive for two days upon a cross. Jesus had only been on the cross six hours. Therefore, Pilate marvelled. Undoubtedly, Jesus died of a broken heart. To verify that Jesus was dead, Pilate called unto him the centurion and asked him whether Jesus had been dead for any length of time. Only Mark records this. When the centurion confirmed that Jesus had died, Pilate commanded the body to be delivered to Joseph.

Nicodemus came with Joseph of Arimathea. Only John records this. He brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes for the body of Jesus. Together they took His body and wound it in linen clothes with the spices, as the manner of the Jews is when they bury someone (Jn.19:39-40). Mark says they used *fine* linen. Matthew says he laid the body of Jesus *in his own* new tomb which he had hewn out in the rock. Luke says He was laid in a sepulchre “wherein never man before was laid.” John records that there was a garden near to the place Jesus was crucified, and in the garden a new sepulchre wherein was never man yet laid. Because the sabbath day was rapidly approaching, they laid Jesus there because it was nigh at hand. It is possible that Joseph, being wealthy (as only Matthew the accountant stated), quickly purchased the sepulchre to insure that Jesus was honorably buried.

Up to this time, neither Joseph or Nicodemus had been very *vocal* about their belief in Christ. Nicodemus came by night to question Jesus (Jn. 3:1-12, 19:39). Joseph of Arimathea was a good and just man, and a disciple of Jesus, but *secretly* for fear of the Jews (Jn.19:38). Yet their commitment to the Lord was solid. Joseph would not join the others in voting against Jesus. Nicodemus involved himself in the burial of the Lord, and paid generously for the spices. Sometimes quiet people have deeper roots than others who are more verbal about their faith in Christ. Obadiah of 1 Kings 18:3-16 was a silent man in the political realm of his day. He was a godly man and under tremendous pressure because he was *protecting* one hundred prophets from Ahab and Jezebel. Yet he was the governor of Ahab's house. Because of his awkward situation, he had to be very discreet with every word and action.

Watch of the Women by Christ's Tomb
(Mt. 27:61-66 Mk.15:47 Lk. 23:55-56)

“And there was Mary Magdalene, and the other Mary (v56, Mother of James and Joses), sitting over against the sepulchre” (Mt. 27:61). It was a small company indeed who attended the funeral. There were no formalities to grace the ceremony, or family and friends present to mourn. Two good women came, who also had stood near Him at the cross.

The crucifixion was on Wednesday. Thursday started at 6:00 that evening. This was a feast sabbath. The women departed from the sepulchre “and prepared spices and ointments; and rested the sabbath day according to the commandment” (Lk. 23:56). They did not work on the feast sabbath (Thursday). On Friday they must have prepared the spices, and rested on Saturday, the weekly sabbath. Then they returned very early on the first day of the week, Sunday. Matthew 28:1 says: “In the end of the *sabbaths*, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulchre.” In the original language, *sabbath* was plural. “In the end of the *sabbaths*.” Matthew alone records the request of the Jews to set a watch over the grave, lest the disciples come and steal the body of Jesus, claiming that He had risen from the dead (Mt. 27:62-66).

Message of the Angels of the Risen Lord
(Mt. 28:5-8 Mk.16:2-8 Lk. 24:1-8 Jn. 20:1)

John 20:1 says it was *yet dark* when Mary Magdalene came to the grave and saw the stone taken away. Jesus had risen from the dead a good while before daylight. He did not complete that night. Christ had to be in the grave three days and three nights (Mt.12:40). This is the reason He could not have been crucified on good Friday, as tradition holds. If Christ had been crucified on Friday, He could only have been in the grave one full day, and one and a half nights. Because He was crucified on Wednesday, He was in the tomb Thursday, Friday, and Saturday—three days. Also three nights—Wednesday night, Thursday night, and Friday night. He did not complete Saturday night. He was in the grave three-and-a-half days, just as Christ's two witnesses will be dead three-and-a-half days (Rev.11:9-11).

Who were these angels who appeared to the women? Luke says “two men stood by them in shining garments” (Lk. 24:4). Mark focuses on one of them. “And entering into the sepulchre, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, clothed in a long white garment, and they were affrighted” (Mk.16:5). Matthew calls one of the messengers an angel. “And the angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not ye: for I know ye seek Jesus which was crucified. He is not here: for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay” (Mt. 28:5-6).

Luke says there were *two* messengers, and calls them *men*. Mark focuses on one of them, the speaker. He describes him as “a young man sitting on the right side, clothed in a long white garment.” Matthew calls him an angel. How do we rectify the differing accounts? For one thing, the word “angel” literally means *messenger*. Sometimes it can refer to a man or an angel. Since Mark and Luke both call them men, we can assume that they are men from the heavenly kingdom, considering their apparel. Most probably they were Moses and Elijah, the two who appeared to Christ on Transfiguration's mount a few months earlier. These are the two witnesses of Revelation 11:3-12. The young man on the right side would be Elijah. Of the two, Elijah's name is specifically mentioned in Malachi 4:5-6. These are the two who stand on the right and left hand of the Lord (Mt. 20:20-23). If our conjecture is correct, the mistaken cry from the cross “Behold, he calleth Elias,” actually came to pass.

CONCLUSION

The Gospels we have just studied are a summary of Christ's life. It is important to remind ourselves that God's purpose for every believer is to *experience* the life of Christ, not merely to be acquainted with all of the historical accounts of the Gospels. Each believer has been called to “follow his steps” (1 Pet. 2:21). The life of Christ is indeed a pattern, a road map for our lives. He is the Forerunner who went within the veil, and He beckons us to follow Him there.

Our study of the Gospels has three *objectives* in mind. The first objective is to know Christ in a very personal way. Intimate knowledge of Christ is not possible apart from the light of revelation. Only as the divine Spirit illumines the Scriptures to our hearts and breathes life into them can we truly *possess* the “excellency of the knowledge of Christ.” Only then can we be conformed to His image and likeness.

The second objective is to experience His resurrection power. The Holy Spirit came upon Christ when He was baptized and then remained upon Him for the duration of His ministry. He had the Spirit “without measure.” In similar fashion, God wants His people to be filled to overflowing with that same Spirit. Unless we understand His desire to fill His last-day Church with the Spirit without measure, we will miss the whole point of the life of Christ that is presented to us in the Gospels.

The third object is to fulfill our course in life. On the final day of the Lord's earthly life He declared to the Father: “I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do” (Jn.17:4). Jesus completely fulfilled His mission on earth. His goal was to hit the mark for His life which was the cross. The hallmark of the Lord Jesus Christ was to accomplish the will of God in its entirety. He had set His face like a flint to go to the cross and refused to be swerved off course. Not only had He come to do the will of the Father—He *delighted* to do His will. May that mind be in us too.

In closing, I would like to recommend that this textbook be reviewed on numerous occasions in the future as you study the Gospels. Review is one of the greatest keys to having “truth in the inward parts.” When we review the Scriptures, we are making good grooves in our minds and hearts. The Gospels (perhaps more than any of the other books of the Bible) show us the One to whom we are to model ourselves after. As we continue to gaze upon Christ, the Word of God, we will become like Him.

APPENDIX I.

The Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5,6,7)

The Sermon on the Mount deals with the most critical issues in man. It focuses upon the greatest problems man has—problems of the heart. Christ brought in a new covenant which would enable the believer to have the evil propensities in his nature changed and the laws of God written in his heart. These precepts of the Sermon on the Mount do not become an immediate reality upon our new birth. This requires time, growth, experience, wisdom, and many other factors.

The Need for Ongoing Conversion

Consider Peter and the apostles who walked with Christ for three-and-a-half years. They heard the finest teachings ever uttered by man. Not only did they hear the finest teachings, they interacted with the greatest role model of all times. Yet, all of them had a major problem! The truths that they understood logically in their minds had not infiltrated the inward parts of their being. Christ told Peter, “When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren” (Lk.22:32b). All of the truths Peter had heard from the lips of the Master had to be converted and assimilated into every cell of his inner life.

After three-and-a-half years of unleavened teaching and exercising the ministry gifts of Christ, what was in the hearts of the apostles? Luke 22:24 tells us that “there was [an argument] among them, which of them should be accounted the greatest.” Competition, ambition, comparing, and envy still resided in the bosom of the disciples. Several hours later Peter tried to murder a man when he swung a sword at the head of the high priest's servant. Simon asserted that if all men were offended, he would never be offended. While boasting of his superior dedication to Christ above his brethren and of his natural ability to withstand pressure, he ended up cursing and swearing and denying the Lord.

What was the matter with Peter and the apostles and the young Corinthian believers that Paul had ministered to? What is wrong with you? and what is wrong with me? We need a major conversion! The truths we know so well have to get into our hearts. Even the prophets had to “eat the book” and have the message permeate every part of their soul. They had to *become their message* before they could prophesy (Ezek. 3:1-3,14; Rev.10:8-11; Job 3:20).

The young Corinthians were not ready to reign with Christ at the time Paul wrote to them. In fact, they were violating all 33 precepts of the Sermon on the Mount. Yet, Paul did not despair of them. He believed they could become “blameless” as they continued to yield their lives to the workings of redemption (1 Cor.1:8). The Sermon on the Mount is a series of lectures on *major issues of the heart*. It deals with the real “me”. To the extent that we have this Sermon worked out in our lives, to that extent we will reign with Christ. Our eternal rewards will depend on how much this Sermon has become a reality in us. How we measure up to the precepts of this Sermon will determine our position in the eternal kingdom of heaven. (See Matthew 5:19).

“Whosoever therefore shall break [or relax] one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least [important] in the kingdom of heaven: but whoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven” (Mt. 5:19).

I want to repeat myself here: This Sermon is *not* a reality in our lives when we first meet Christ as our Savior or even after we are baptized in the Holy Spirit. We should view this Sermon as something God desires us to become. The outworking of this Sermon produces divine nature and qualities necessary for reigning with Christ. To reign with Christ we must be holy (Rev. 20:6). The Corinthians were “sanctified” or set apart for God (1 Cor.1:2), but certainly they were not holy. Paul terms them *carnal* (1 Cor. 3:1-3). The perfecting of godliness and true holiness takes time as the apostle later mentions in Second Corinthians 7:1:

“Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God” (2 Cor. 7:1).

There is hard evidence from Paul's two epistles that the Corinthian believers were falling short in every one of the 33 precepts of the Sermon on the Mount presented in Matthew chapters 5–7. At this stage of their spiritual growth, they were not yet prepared to rule and reign with Christ. The throne of authority is not granted to the carnal, and it is not given to undeveloped infants. The Corinthians had all of the gifts of the Spirit in operation. They danced and rejoiced, and there were numerous movings of the Spirit in their services. With all of this, Paul tells them that they were still “carnal” and “babes”.

In Summary

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT:

- 1.) Is a revelation of the new covenant standards.
- 2.) Is the law of God wrought out in our hearts.
- 3.) Deals with the greatest problems in the heart of man.
- 4.) Will determine our position in heaven.
- 5.) Is not an immediate reality—it takes time and growth.
- 6.) Is “the more excellent way” (1 Cor.12:31) — it is the love of God perfected in men. Is in fact Christian perfection.
- 7.) It was being violated in all of its 33 precepts by the Corinthian believers. Yet Paul believed they could become “blameless” and perfected in holiness. Paul was optimistic about the Corinthians, even in their present state. At this stage, the Corinthians were not ready to rule and reign with Christ.

On the next few pages, let's have a look at the spiritual condition of the young, Spirit-filled believers of Corinth, most of whom had known the Savior for less than four years.

The Sermon on the Mount — Matthew 5-7

The Corinthians were violating all 33 of its precepts
They were not yet made perfect in love

Precept of the Sermon	Violation of the Precept
<p>1. Matthew 5:3 A Grateful Heart - “Blessed are the poor in spirit” (One bankrupt, a beggar, thankful for the smallest kindness. Opposite of demanding)</p>	<p>1 Cor. 4:8 - They were reigning as kings 1 Cor. 4:18 - And puffed up 1 Cor. 8:2 - Who thought they knew it all 1 Cor.10:10 And guilty of murmuring</p>
<p>2. Matthew 5:4 A Tender Heart - “Blessed are they that mourn” (Not critical of those who are straying; a holy sadness for the sin and shame in the Church)</p>	<p>1 Cor. 5:2 - They had not mourned 1 Cor. 5:6 - No godly sorrow, but pride 1 Cor. 8:12 - Wounding the conscience of immature believers; insensitivity</p>
<p>3. Matthew 5:5 A Tamed Heart - “Blessed are the meek” (Does not seek revenge or retaliation for wrongs; accepts circumstances; the opposite of wrath)</p>	<p>1 Cor. 6:1-8 - Taking one another to court 2 Cor.12:20 - Wraths, swellings, tumults, backbitings, debates, whisperings, etc.</p>
<p>4. Matthew 5:6 A Disciplined, Hungry Heart - “Hunger and thirst for righteousness” (Abstaining from other fleshly appetites)</p>	<p>1 Cor. 3:2 - Had to be fed with milk because they were not hungry for meat 1 Cor. 4:8 - They were “full” and satisfied</p>
<p>5. Matthew 5:7 A Merciful Heart - “Blessed are the merciful” (Kindness in thought life and actions)</p>	<p>1 Cor. 1:10 - Had to cease from divisions 1 Cor. 16:10,11 - Timothy's ministry was “despised”, making him anxious</p>
<p>6. Matthew 5:8 A Clean Heart - “Blessed are the pure in heart” (No mixture, pure in motives and desires)</p>	<p>1 Cor. 5:8 - Terrible mixture 1 Cor. 6:6-11 - Had to remove the old leaven 1 Cor. 10:14 - Warned to flee idolatry 2 Cor. 7:1 - And be cleansed from filthiness</p>
<p>7. Matthew 5:9 A Peaceful Heart - “Blessed are the peacemakers” (A peacemaker must first have all conflict removed from his own life; <i>unity begins in me</i>)</p>	<p>1 Cor.1:10 - Divisions among them; 3:3 1 Cor. 1:11 - Contentions among them 1 Cor. 5:8 - Malice instead of sincerity 1 Cor. 6:5 - No one able to judge rightly 1 Cor.14:33 - Confusion among them, of which God was <i>not</i> the author</p>

Precept of the Sermon	Violation of the Precept
<p>8. Matthew 5:10-12 <i>An Unoffended Heart</i> - “Blessed ... persecuted for righteousness sake” (Realizing that offenses and injustices are ordained of God to draw us to his throne)</p>	<p>1 Cor. 4:8 They had not suffered enough. They thought they were reigning as kings 1 Cor. 4:10, 12 They were “distinguished” while Paul was dishonored and persecuted</p>
<p>9. Matthew 5:13 <i>A Sincere Heart</i> - “Ye are the salt of the earth” (Salt that remains salty, representing sincerity and genuineness that commends the respect of men)</p>	<p>1 Cor. 3:1-3 Carnal, acting like the unredeemed 1 Cor. 5:1 Allowed immorality that would even make the unsaved blush 1 Cor. 6:1-8 Quarrelled before unbelievers The world did not respect them</p>
<p>10. Matthew 5:14-16 <i>Enlightened, Consistent Heart</i> “Ye are the light of the world” (Letting our light shine without shame or embarrassment; having a life that backs up our words; being a star on course so that others can find their way)</p>	<p>1 Cor. 6:2,6 They were unworthy to judge the smallest matters. They would preach Christ, then make a denial of Him by their inconsistent lives. They were no example to the world</p>
<p>11. Matthew 5:17-19 <i>Wholehearted</i> - “Keeping all the commandments, teaching men so” (Rejecting no part of God's Word; despising no part of Christ. Christ is the WORD).</p>	<p>1 Cor.11:19 There were heresies among them 1 Cor.15:12 Some denied the resurrection and had their own ideas and agendas 2 Cor.11:3-4 Happy to receive false teachers and reject Paul (2 Cor.13:3)</p>
<p>12. Matthew 5:20 <i>A Transparent Heart</i> - “Righteousness must exceed that of the Pharisees” (no outward show or externalism to impress others as the Scribes and Pharisees)</p>	<p>1 Cor.1:31 They gloried in the flesh, in men 2 Cor. 5:12 And loved those who gloried in appearance, not in heart</p>
<p>13. Matthew 5:21-22 <i>A Harmless Heart</i> - “Whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca” (No slander or contemptuous name-calling. Hate leads to murder. Mercy begins in thoughts, words)</p>	<p>2 Cor.12:20 Needed to repent of debates, envyings, wraths, strifes, backbitings, whisperings, swellings, and tumults</p>
<p>14. Matthew 5:23-24 <i>A Heart Without Ought</i> - “First be reconciled to thy brother ” (Putting all things right with others where there is an offense or debt)</p>	<p>1 Cor.13:1-7 Possessing all the ministry gifts but treating people abrasively—this makes a man <i>nothing</i>. God does not accept one's service or offering</p>
<p>15. Matthew 5:25-26 <i>A Yielding Heart</i> - “Agree with thine adversary” (A belligerent attitude toward our enemy brings hardness into our heart and stirs up our enemy)</p>	<p>1 Cor.10:32 Give no offense to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the Church of God. They had not yet learned the blessings of meekness (1 Cor. 6:7)</p>

Precept of the Sermon

Violation of the Precept

16. Matthew 5:27-30 A Morally Clean Heart -
“Whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her”
(Refusing to desire what does not belong to us;
Adultery, impurity begins in the thoughts)

1 Cor. 5:1 There was fornication among them
1 Cor.10:6 They lusted after evil things
2 Cor.12:21 And had to repent of lasciviousness

17. Matthew 5:31-32 A Faithful Heart -
“Whoso putteth away his wife...committeth adultery”
(Will not divorce but keep vows and covenants)
God Himself is a covenant keeping God

1 Cor. 4:2 Stewards must be found faithful
1 Cor. 5:1 One had his father's wife
1 Cor. 7:10 Let not the wife depart from her
husband (1 Cor. 7:39)

18. Matthew 5:33-37 A Reverent Heart -
“Swear not at all”
(Will not swear by the Lord's name, assuming
to have His support and blessing)

1 Cor.10:9 The Corinthians were warned not to
tempt Christ as others

19. Matthew 5:38-42 An Non-Vengeful Heart -
“Whoso compels you to go a mile, go twain”
(Going the extra mile and not being bitter toward
those who take advantage; not demanding justice
for ourselves)

1 Cor. 6:7-8 “There is utterly a fault among you be-
cause ye go to law one with another. Why do ye not
rather take wrong? Why do ye not rather suffer your-
selves to be defrauded”

20. Matthew 5:43-45 A Praying Heart -
“Love your enemies, bless those who curse you”
(Hating no one; praying for those who persecute
and abuse us. Loving our enemies)

1 Cor. 13:4-8 The Corinthians were exhorted to *bear*
all things and *endure* all things. This is perfected
love, and they did not yet possess it. Thus, Paul ex-
horted them to have the love of God

21. Matthew 5:46-47 An Accepting Heart -
“If you love those who love you, what reward have
ye?” (A heart that is not exclusive or cliquish)
Even sinners can love those who love them

1 Cor. 3:4 “One saith, I am of Paul; and another, I
am of Apollos.” They had broken into camps, into
cliques. Each had their favorites and excluded oth-
ers from their inner circles
1 Cor.12:21 An attitude of “I have no need of thee”

22. Matthew 5:48 A Perfect Heart -
“Be ye perfect as your heavenly father is perfect”
(Perfection means being “entirely fit”)

1 Cor.1:10 Be perfectly joined together
2 Cor. 7:1 Perfecting holiness in the fear of God
2 Cor.13:9,11 We wish, even your perfecting

23. Matt. 6:1-11 A Heart Seeking God's Glory Only
“When you do alms or pray do not sound a trumpet”
(Our works must issue from right motives to glorify
God alone, and not bring attention to ourselves)

1 Cor.13:4-5 Love does not vaunt itself and is not
puffed up. Perfected love does not draw attention to
itself. Love *seeks not her own*. Many of the young
Corinthians had ulterior motives regarding the
gifts of the Spirit

Precept of the Sermon	Violation of the Precept
<p>24. Matthew 6:12-15 A Forgiving Heart - “But if ye forgive not men their trespasses” (Forgiveness is the foundation stone of Christianity)</p>	<p>1 Cor.10-11 Divisions, contentions 1 Cor. 3:3 Divisions, envy, strife, <i>infants</i> 1 Cor.11:18 Divisions are rooted in unforgiveness</p>
<p>25. Matthew 6:19-24 An Undivided Heart - “No man can serve two masters” (Our heart must be set on the right things; we must invest in eternal treasures, not the earthly; thus, we need to have an eternal vision)</p>	<p>1 Cor. 4:8 Thought they were rich, but were poor 1 Cor.10:14,20 Idolatry, inordinate affections 1 Cor.15:12 Some said there was no resurrection. They were not living for the eternal, but temporal 2 Cor. 6:15-18 Exhorted to be “separate”</p>
<p>26. Matthew 6:25-34 A Believing Heart - “Take no thought for tomorrow” (Seeking the kingdom of God first and not worrying about what we will eat, drink or wear)</p>	<p>1 Cor.10:5 Warned that Israel was overthrown in the wilderness because of unbelief 1 Cor.10:10 Again warned that Israel was destroyed for murmuring about God's provision</p>
<p>27. Matthew 7:1-5 An Non-Hypocritical Heart - “Judge not, that ye be not judged” (Do not be severe with others, judge your own heart; Harshness with others reveals we are guilty too)</p>	<p>1 Cor. 4:3-5 Judge nothing before the time 1 Cor.11:28 Let a man examine <i>himself</i> 1 Cor.11:31 Judge <i>yourself</i>, you won't be judged 2 Cor.10:12 Not to compare one's self with others</p>
<p>28. Matthew 7:6 A Wise Heart - “Neither cast ye your pearls before swine” (Do not share sacred things with mockers)</p>	<p>1 Cor. 2:6-8 Hidden wisdom is spoken to the perfect (or those faithful to light they have) 1 Cor.1:18-25 Wisdom of this world is <i>foolishness</i></p>
<p>29. Matthew 7:7-11 A Seeking Heart - “Ask, seek, and knock” (God will grant nothing to the passive)</p>	<p>1 Cor. 9:24 Run, that ye may obtain 1 Cor.12:31 Covet earnestly the best gifts 2 Cor. 6:2 Today is the day - do not put it off 1 Cor. 4:8 They thought they had it all (8:2)</p>
<p>30. Matthew 7:12 A Loving Heart - “All things ye would that men do to you, do to them” (This is the golden rule, the royal law)</p>	<p>1 Cor. 13: The need for unselfish love that bears, hopes, and endures all things, and does not rejoice at the calamity of others</p>
<p>31. Matthew 7:13-14 A Sold Out Heart - “Enter ye in at the strait gate” (One must go God's way, not the popular way)</p>	<p>1 Cor. 6:19-20 We are not our own; God owns us. 2 Cor. 6:14-18 We cannot compromise or be friends with evil people or yoked with them</p>
<p>32. Matthew 7:15-23 A Discerning Heart - “Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them” (By wisdom we know people by the fruit in their life)</p>	<p>2 Cor.11:13 Such are false apostles. The people were so dull, they needed to be told that! 2 Cor.13:5 Examine yourselves</p>
<p>33. Matthew 7:24-29 An Obedient Heart - “Whoso heareth these sayings... and doeth them” (Building one's life on the foundation of obedience)</p>	<p>1 Cor. 3:10 Let every man take heed how he builds 1 Cor.11:2 Keep the ordinances I delivered to you 1 Cor. 6:9-10 Unrighteous build on bad foundations</p>

APPENDIX II.

Jesus Taught by Contrast

The greatest Teacher of all time often taught by *contrast*. This facet of Christ's nature is especially brought out in Matthew's Gospel who presented Jesus as A Greater Moses. Consider the following:

- Fishers of men / Fishers of the sea. (Mt. 4:18,19)
- The five wise virgins / The five foolish virgins (Mt. 25:1-11)
- Water baptism / The Baptism in the Holy Spirit (Mt. 3:11)
- The narrow gate / The wide gate; *Few* who find eternal life / *Many* who seek eternal life (Mt. 7:13,14)
- New wine skins / Old wine skins (Mt. 9:17)
- The son who said yes but did *not* obey / The other son who said no but later *did* obey (Mt. 21:28-32)
- The sheep / goats (Mt. 25:31-46); The good fish / bad fish (Mt.13:47-49); The wheat / tares (Mt.13:24-30)
- The tree bearing good fruit / The tree bearing bad fruit (Mt. 7:16-20).
- True prophets and teachers / False prophets and teachers (Mt. 7:15-20)
- Children of the Kingdom / Children of the Wicked One (Mt.13:37-43)
- The great harvest / The few laborers (Mt. 9:36-38).
- Loving God more than family, friends / Loving family, friends more than God (Mt.10:37,38)
- Having the praise and honor of God / Having the praise and honor of men (Mt. 23:5-12, Jn.12:43)
- Desiring to seen of God only / Desiring to be seen of men (Mt. 6:2-6; 6:16-18).
- Losing our life to find it / Seeking to preserve our life (self) and losing it (Mt.10:38,39)
- The new garment / the old garment (Mt. 9:16)
- Confessing or denying Christ before men / Christ confessing or denying us before the Father (Mt.10:32,33)
- Loving truth and receiving more truth / Rejecting truth and losing even what we have (Mk. 4:24,25)
- Letting our light shine before men / Hiding our light under a cover (Mt. 5:14,15)
- Being the salt (symbolic of sincerity) of the earth / losing our saltiness, going corrupt (Mt. 5:13)
- Serving God / Serving Money (Mt. 6:24); Hearts filled with light / with darkness (Mt. 6:22,23)
- Treasures in heaven / Treasures on earth (Mt. 6:19-21) Rewards now / Rewards later (Lk. 6:20-26)
- Investing in our earthly house / Investing in our heavenly house (Mt. 6:19-21)
- The wise builder who builds on a rock / The foolish builder who builds on the sand (Mt. 7:24-27)
- One who hears and obeys / One who hears but does *not* obey (Mt. 7:24-27)
- One whose house stands the storm / The one whose house collapses from the storm (Mt. 7:24-27)
- Showing mercy to others / God showing mercy to us (Mt. 5:7, cf. Jas. 2:13)
- Judgment we mete out to others / The same judgment God metes out to us (Mt. 7:1,2)
- Forgiving others / God forgives us; Not forgiving others / God does not forgive us (Mt. 6:14,15; 18:21-35)
- Those who are *great* in the kingdom / Those who are *least* in the kingdom (Mt. 5:19)
- Offerings God accepts / Offerings God rejects (Mt. 5:23,24; 9:13; 12:7)
- Love of enemies / Hatred of enemies (Mt. 5:43,44,46,47)
- Exterior righteousness / Interior righteousness (Mt. 5:20)
- Sun that shines, rain that falls on the righteous / Sun that shines, rain that falls on the unrighteous (Mt. 5:25)
- When you say Yes, mean Yes / When you say No, mean no. Mean what you say (Mt. 5:27)
- Laughing now / Crying later; Riches now / Poverty later; Persecution now / Eternal rejoicing (Lk. 6:20-26)
- The servant who knew the Lord's will / The servant who did *not* know the Lord's will (Lk.12:47,48)
- His yoke which is easy / Our yoke which is heavy (Mt.11:28-30)
- Faith of the Centurion / The faith of all the other Israelites (Mt. 8:10-12)
- Naaman the Syrian healed of leprosy / None of the other Israelites healed of leprosy (Lk. 4:25-27)
- Gathering the harvest *with* Him / Gathering the harvest *our own way* and losing it (Mt.12:30; Lk.11:23)

ADD YOUR OWN. YOU WILL FIND MANY OTHER CONTRASTS IN CHRIST'S TEACHINGS.