

The life of Christ
(Chronologically Arranged)

Introduction

The life of Christ is the most important event in the history of the world. Every Bible student should obtain as clear an understanding of the leading events as possible and associate them with the places where they occurred. The chronological arrangement of these events is of inestimable value to any student.

There are about 150 events mentioned by the gospels. In about a hundred of these events there seems to be no difficulty as to their chronological order. In the remaining fifty there is some doubt. In arranging these events we have pretty much followed J. W. McGarvey's arrangement of events and dates. A number of maps have also been inserted to help visualize the location of our Lord at the time of these events. So often we read the names of cities and places in the Bible without any concept as to their location.

The enclosed material is adaptable for use in several ways. It can be used for one's personal study or it can use for a Bible class. The length of study can vary from three to twelve months according as to how detailed you want to be in the study. Lesson sheets can be reproduced and handed out to those in the class. It is useful as resource material for any teacher wanting to teach on some area of the life of Jesus. This is not intended to be a full blown commentary. Rather it is written as a story - the story of the real Jesus and not the Jesus so many of us have created in our minds of what the Lord was like. The notes supplied herein can be helpful in giving background material and suggested thoughts for discussion.

While I have used the spell checker and have tried to proof read this material there will still be some inversion of words and some misspelled words as I am not a good proof reader.

Jimmie Eaton

Lesson**Events**

1. The Four Gospels
2. Genealogy, John's Birth Promised, Jesus' Birth Promised, Birth of Jesus, Announcement to the Shepherds.
3. Circumcision of Jesus, Purification, Visit of Wise Men, Flight to Egypt, Return to Nazareth, Visit to Temple.
4. John Prepares Way, Baptism of Jesus, Temptation of Jesus, John's Testimony About Jesus, The Lamb of God.
5. First Disciples, Philip and Nathanael, First Miracle, Residence at Capernaum, Jesus Attends Passover, Nicodemus Seeks Out Jesus.
6. Judean Ministry, From Judea To Galilee, Jacob's Well, Fields White Unto Harvest, Galilean Ministry Begins, Jesus Begins Second Year of Work.
7. Miracles in Capernaum, Galilean Ministry, The Call of Matthew, Discourse on Fasting.
8. Feast of the Jews, Jesus Declares His Deity, Controversy Over Plucking Grain, Jesus Heals Withered Hand on the Sabbath.
9. Jesus' Fame Spreads, Selection of the Twelve, Sermon on Mount, Healing the Centurion's Servant, Raising the Widows' Son.
10. Questions from John, Jesus Describes Pharisees & Sadducees and Religious Leaders, Woes to Unrepentant Cities, The Great Invitation, In Simon's House.
11. Women Minister to Jesus, Blasphemy of H.S., Jesus Sought by Family, Pharisees Want Sign, Parables by Sea.
12. Miracles by Sea, Final Visit to Nazareth, Third Galilean Tour.
13. Execution of John the Baptist, Feeding the 5000, Jesus Walks on the Water, Sermon on Bread of Life, Conflict over Ceremonial Cleanness.
14. The Syro-Phoenician Woman, Healing in Decapolis, Feeding the 4000, Another. Confrontation with Pharisees and Sadducees, Two Step Healing of Blind Man, Peter's Confession.
15. Jesus Predicts His Death and Coming Kingdom, Transfiguration, Demoniac Boy Healed, Second Announcement of Death.
16. Temple Tax Money, [Who is the Greatest?](#) One Casting Out Demons, Causing Others to Stumble, Forgiveness.
17. Brothers Confront Jesus, Journey to Jerusalem, In the Temple, Leaders Attempt to Arrest Jesus. Questionable Text.
18. Jesus Continues to Teach in Temple Area, Jesus Will Return to the Father, True Freedom, Healing the Blind Man, Jesus is the Good Shepherd.
19. The Seventy Sent Out, The Good Samaritan, A Visit With Mary and Martha, Teaching On Prayer, Jesus Again Accused of Blasphemy, Dining with Another Pharisee.
20. Warnings About - Hypocrisy, Riches, Preparedness, Coming Trouble, Discerning Time. Opposition to Healing A Woman
21. Feast of Dedication, The Perea Ministry, Questions about Entering the Kingdom, Jesus Warned About Herod, Healing A Man With Dropsy, Counting the Cost.
22. Lost and Found, The Unjust Steward, Raising Lazarus, Sanhedrin Decides to Put Jesus to Death.

23. Delayed Journey to Jerusalem, Ten Lepers Healed, Questions about the Kingdom, Discussion on Prayer, Questions About Divorce, Childlikeness, Rich Young Ruler.
24. Approaching Jerusalem, Learning to be a Servant, Salvation Comes to Zaccheus, Parable of Pounds, Arrival in Bethany.
25. Monday: Barren Fig Tree, Greeks Seek Jesus, Triumphal Entry.
26. Tuesday: Authority Challenged, Parable of the Vineyard, Parable of the Wedding Banquet, Four Questions.
27. The Seven Woes, The Widows Mite, The Olivet Discourse.
28. Parables of: Ten Virgins, Talents, Sheep and Goats. Wednesday: the Calm Before the Storm. Judas and the Sanhedrin. Thursday: Preparation for the Passover.
29. Friday: Last Supper Feast, The Feast Begins, Jesus Washes The Apostles Feet, Betrayal Announced, Lord's Supper Instituted.
30. Final Discourse with Apostles, Lord's Prayer, Passover Supper Concluded, In Garden of Gethsemane.
31. Betrayal, Arrest and Trials: Before Annas, Before Caiaphas, Before Sanhedrin, Suicide of Judas.
32. The Roman Trials before Pilate and Herod. Preparation for Execution.
33. Crucifixion of Christ, Inscription above His Head, Verbal Abuse of the Lord.
34. Seven Sayings From The Cross, Miraculous Events.
35. The Burial of Christ, Confirmation of His Death, The Empty Tomb.
36. The Appearances of Jesus, Peter & John at the Empty Tomb, The Eleven Appearances.
37. Final Discourses of Jesus to His Disciples, Final Appearance of Jesus to the Apostles Near Jerusalem, Ascension from Mount of olives.
38. Integrity of Gospels # 1
39. Integrity of Gospels # 2

The Life of Christ
Lesson 1
The Gospel of Matthew

The Bible provides us with four accounts of the life of Christ called "The Gospels." The first one in the order arranged in our Bible is **Matthew**. It is said to be the most widely read book in the world because of its distinct position as the first book of the New Testament.

The word "gospel" is a translation of the Greek word "euangelion" which means, "good News." Very little is known about this Galilean Jew who lived in Capernaum. He is also called Levi. He is listed as an apostle. The only other mention of him is his call to follow Jesus.

We know that he was a Publican or a collector of taxes. These public officials were notorious as extortioners and were generally despised by the Jews. However there is every indication that he was trustworthy, competent and efficient. It is a credit that he loses sight of himself and devotes his attention to Christ.

There have been many false theories about Matthew and His gospel. One says he wrote his gospel in Hebrew or Aramaic and it was later translated into Greek. There is no evidence that such a text ever existed. Another theory is that Matthew copied from Mark's gospel.

As an eyewitness to the life of Christ **why would he have to depend on someone like Mark?** Some place the date of this book as early as AD 37 while others have it as late as AD 70. It makes very little difference as to when.

His purpose was to show that Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah foretold by the Old Testament prophets. He uses the word "fulfilled" 17 times quoting repeatedly from the Old Testament. There are about 40 proof passages from the Old Testament involving minor details of Christ's life which are cited to show Christ fulfilled these prophecies. He devotes more attention than the other three writers to these prophecies. Almost every chapter quotes from the Old Testament. In all there are 65 quotations.

For this reason it seems evident that he wrote specifically for the Jews, frequently translating into Greek, Hebrew words for the benefit of Greek-speaking Jews (**Matthew 1:23; 27:33, 46**). He also mentions Jewish customs without an explanation. It is as if his readers were already familiar with them.

He does not arrange events in chronological order. Instead there is an arrangement of His speeches, His parables and His miracles. He devotes more space to them than any writer of the teachings of Jesus. Emphasis is placed on the kingdom. The expression "Kingdom of Heaven" is found 32 times.

The Gospel of Mark

Mark was not an apostle but an evangelist, John was his Hebrew name and Mark (**common among the Romans**) was a name adopted later. He was the son of a woman in Jerusalem whose name was Mary, whose house was used as a meeting place for the disciples (**Acts 12:12**). He was a cousin of Barnabas.

He started out on the first missionary trip of Paul and Barnabas, but turned back (**Acts 13:13**). He was later associated with Peter (**1 Peter 5:13**) and then again with Paul (**Colossians 4:10**). It seems he became a beloved helper to Paul.

Since Christians assembled in Mary's house frequently it is logical Mark would have had much association with the apostles. He could have gained much knowledge about the life of Jesus from them. Also his close associations with Paul, Barnabas and Peter would have provided him with much information.

It is generally believed he wrote primarily for the Romans and more specifically for those who lived in Rome or he knew that most of his readers would be Gentiles. He omits the genealogy, accounts of the early life of Jesus, and quotes little from the Old Testament.

Mark introduces Jesus as "**the Son of God.**" This was his main purpose, to prove the divinity of Christ. This differs with Matthew's purpose which was to show the Messiahship of Christ. Mark devotes much more space to the miracles than do the other writers.

This obviously was done to prove the divinity of Jesus. One who had worshipped a heathen god, or had believed Caesar was divine, would see in Jesus someone who was far superior, and more powerful than any heathen deity. Jesus was the worker of miracles, the incarnation of power. This would appeal to the Roman mind.

Mark omits many events in the life of Christ but the events he gives seem to be chronological. His gospel can be **divided into two parts**. The **first part (1-9)** is concerned with the ministry of Jesus in Galilee. The Galilean ministry can be divided into three periods. The **second division (10-16)** covers the last six months with emphasis on the last seven days in the life of Jesus.

The Gospel of Luke

The Gospel is addressed to '**Theophilus**' a Greek name, thus it was probably written primarily for Greek readers. There seems to be no doubt the writer is "**Luke, the beloved physician**" (**Colossians 4:14**). Being a Gentile he is the only Gentile to write any part of the New Testament.

He did not write as an eye-witness but he obtained his information from eye-witnesses. He said he had traced everything accurately from the beginning from those who were eye-witnesses (**Luke 1:1-4**).

We meet Luke in **Acts 16:10, 11** where he joined Paul on his second missionary journey at Troas. He will become a constant companion with Paul in his travels. Luke's gospel was probably written around 60 AD. He is thought to be "**the brother whose praise is in the gospel throughout all the churches** (**2 Corinthians 8:18**).

Greek culture glorified man. The ideal was to be a perfect man. Luke emphasizes the humanity of Jesus showing him to be a perfect universal man. The expression, "**Son of man**" occurs 26 times. It is natural that if Matthew wrote to the Jews and Mark to the Romans, someone would write a gospel that would appeal to the Greeks who were quite different culturally.

Luke differs from Matthew and Mark in that his sentence structures are more elaborate and his style of composition more finished. He uses 614 more Greek words than the other two which shows Luke had a tremendous vocabulary. He is also unique in his use of so many medical terms. Being a physician this is to be expected. His education had been more extensive than that of Matthew or Mark.

Luke devotes considerable space to the early years of Jesus. He gives less space to the Galilean ministry of Jesus than Matthew or Mark. On the other hand he gives us information about Jesus' Perea ministry which the others do not give.

The last six chapters deal with the last six months of the Lord's life. No other gospel gives women anything like so large a place as Luke. A good portion of the first two chapters deal with women. Throughout the gospel there are numerous references to women.

These first three gospels have been called the **Synoptics**, because all three give a review of Christ's life. Luke's record is the fullest of all. About one half of Luke's gospel is in no other gospel.

It is interesting that none of the gospel writers give their names. There is strong evidence that this fourth gospel was written by John the apostle. (See John 21:211, 24). He is never called by name anywhere in the book. He was the son of Zebedee and Salome. Salome may have been a sister to Mary, the mother of Jesus. If so, then John and Jesus were cousins.

John and his brother worked with their father as fishermen until called by the Lord. They were among the first to be called apostles. Along with Peter they seem to have been nearer to the Lord than the other apostles.

James and John are called "Boanerges" (sons of thunder) by the Lord which may indicate vehemence and violence on their part (see Mark 9:38; Luke 9:34). On the other hand John is often referred to as the "apostle of love." He is probably the one who leaned on the bosom of Jesus at the Last Supper. The word love is found 57 times in his gospel.

There is evidence he moved from Jerusalem to Ephesus before Jerusalem's destruction in 70AD. It is believed it was here he wrote his gospel. A late date is usually assigned to his gospel. Thus it is assumed he meant for his work to be supplementary to the other gospels. His purpose was to give information which they had omitted.

Also, near the end of the first century a heresy arose which denied the divine nature of Jesus. Some feel John wrote to counteract and destroy this heresy. There is no doubt that he stresses the divinity of Jesus. It could be said that the theme of his gospel is the Deity of Jesus. The truth that He was the Son of God is given more prominence by John than the other writers. His purpose in writing is stated in John 20:21. His gospel was for no specific group or race but for all.

His gospel is chronological throughout. It consists chiefly of Christ's discourses and conversations. He gives things Jesus said rather than things He did. He mentions seven miracles and is void of the parables of Jesus. John begins with the profound statement of the eternal and divine existence of Jesus.

He records many of the discourses of Jesus in chapters 2-12. Chapters 13-17 record the teachings of Jesus to His disciples on the night before his crucifixion. Chapters 18-19 give an account of the trials, sufferings, death and burial of Jesus. Chapter's 20-21 tells of His resurrection and manifestations to the disciples.

Lesson 2

Genealogy (Matthew 1:11-17, Luke 3:23-30)

Two of the gospels give a genealogy. It is a commonly accepted view that Matthew gives Joseph's line and Luke gives Mary's. Matthew gives his in a descending order using the word "begat" while Luke's is ascending using the expression "the son of." Matthew says Joseph was the son of Jacob while Luke says he was the son of Heli.

When giving a genealogy where there was a daughter it was often ascribed to her husband. Thus, Joseph would have been the son-in-law of Heli. On the other hand Joseph's father could have had two names as did Paul and Peter.

The name Jesus means Savior and the word Christ means "anointed one." Christ is a Greek term and Messiah is a Hebrew word. Many think the genealogies are abridged. A grandson or great grandson is often called a son. "Son of David" etc. He was very much disliked by the Jews.

Birth of John Promised (Luke 1:5-25)

This account is found only in Luke. It happened in the days of King Herod. He was an Edomite by birth and the beginning of the Herodian family. A proselyte to Judaism he had the Temple rebuilt to please the Jews. He ruled from 37 BC to AD 4 and was known as "Herod the Great."

Zacharias, a priest was of the course of Abijah. David had divided the priests into 24 courses. Abijah's was the 8th. Each course would serve one week two times a year. His wife, Elizabeth was of the priestly tribe also. Levitical law stated that no priest should marry out of the tribe of Levi. Both were "well stricken in years." No priest was to serve after the age of 50 (Numbers 8:25), so they were not what we would call elderly but beyond the age of bearing children.

Priests had various duties at the Temple. They were to change the showbread, put fire on the altar, burn the incense, etc. They would cast lots each day to determine what service each one would perform (Exodus 30:7, 8). The lot fell to Zacharias to offer the burnt incense. It was called the hour of prayer in Acts 3:1 which may have been about 3 p.m. (See Acts 3:1). People gathered in the courts of the Temple to pray at this time.

The altar on which the incense was burned stood in front of the veil. It was made of acacia wood, overlaid with gold. An angel appeared to him telling him that Elizabeth would bear him a son and he was to be called John. These are the first inspired words since the close of Old Testament history as far as we know. He wanted a sign as proof. He was given one. Because of his unbelief he was struck deaf and dumb. This announcement broke 400 years of prophetic silence.

Jesus promised to Mary (Luke 1:26-38)

Six months later Gabriel appears to a young virgin, Mary of Nazareth, telling her she would have a son who would be named Jesus. She was very perplexed but she is assured that she had found favour with God.

Of all the descendents of David, God chose this humble teenager, in a lowly home, from an obscure village to be the mother of His Son. At the same time this speaks highly of Mary that God would choose her above all the women of Palestine to be the mother of Jesus.

All this would be difficult and frightening for Mary, for she knew she was a virgin. It would not be long until she would be labelled an adulteress, but Mary's faith in God drove her to say, "May it be to me as you have said." She "went with haste" to visit Elizabeth in the "hill country, to a city of Judah." This may have been Hebron. It was a logical place to go for the seclusion necessary for the first months of her pregnancy. It would take 3-4 days to travel from Nazareth to the hill country.

Elizabeth and Mary were related but how since they were from different tribes - Levi and Judah? It may have been on one of their mother's side. On the arrival of Mary, Elizabeth is filled with the Spirit and blesses her. Mary's response was a beautiful inspired poem. Mary's song of thanksgiving is similar to Hannah's in 1 Samuel 2:1-10.

She probably stayed three months up until the birth of John. Upon John's birth the entire community celebrates. Zachariah filled with the Spirit suddenly breaks his silence and delivers an inspired poem.

Mary is now beginning to show. It was a humiliating experience for Mary. Her reputation, honour, her very life was at stake. She knew she had done nothing wrong, but who would have believed her story. Under the law (Deuteronomy 22:23, 24) she could be put to death.

In order for Joseph to deny any involvement in her pregnancy he had two options. He can make a public and humiliating trial of her or he can give her a certificate of divorce in the presence of two witnesses without giving the cause so that she would not be exposed to public shame. He was about to take this second option and spare Mary public humiliation.

In a dream he is told three things. (1) Mary is not defiled; her pregnancy is due to the Holy Spirit, not fornication. (2) She is going to have a baby boy and as his adopted father he was to call him Jesus. (3) He was going to be a special child as he will "save His people from their sins." Immediately Joseph took Mary to be his wife.

Birth of Jesus (Matthew 1:18-25 Luke 2:1-7) (5 BC)

Caesar Augustus the nephew of Julius Caesar called for a census to be taken. A census was usually the first step in taxation. In order to register Joseph would have to go to Bethlehem where the genealogical records were kept. He, being the head of the house would have been the only one necessary to go to Bethlehem.

So why did he take Mary? Did he drag his pregnant wife along in order to spare her the disgrace of childbirth in her home village?

He would have known that her time for delivery was near at hand. He took Mary and travelled nearly 70 miles to Bethlehem. Upon their arrival, Mary was ready to deliver her child, but there was no place to stay. The place where they did stay was probably a house with an extra room.

Adjoining houses were stalls or rooms for animals where animals were kept in cold weather. There would be a feeding trough for the animals. It is here that Jesus was born. Jesus is wrapped in bands of cloth and laid to sleep in a feeding trough.

The year of Christ's birth was probably around 5 BC. Dionysius Exiguus an abbot in Rome was asked to make a new calendar using Jesus' birth as year one. He calculated the birth of Christ as 753 years from the founding of Rome. Years later it was discovered Herod died in March of 750. Jesus was born before Herod's death. Also Dionysius did not begin Jesus' birth with the year zero, but year one which was 12 months later. Thus he was off 4 or 5 years.

The date on which He was born is uncertain. Early Christians made no records of this date. Not until the fourth century was December 25th set as the date. The silence of the Scriptures is an indication that no one knows.

The celebration of Christmas, rhymed with carols, recited by children in plays, illustrated on cards, have become so familiar that most have missed the real message of this occasion. The supreme event here is God incarnate. "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us" (John 1:14).

God becomes a baby. God comes to live in the flesh. Yet there is no fanfare. God shrank down, down so small as to become an ovum that would divide and a fetus took shape, enlarging cell by cell inside a nervous teenager. God who created matter now took shape within it.

There is a great contrast between the birth of John the Baptist and Jesus. In Elizabeth's case there was great fanfare, complete with midwives, doting relatives, and the traditional village chorus celebrating the birth of a Jewish male. Six months later, Jesus was born far from home, with no midwife, extended family, or village chorus present.

Announcement To the Shepherds (Luke 2:8-20)

God did however, provide a celebration. Angels appeared to shepherds in the fields who were keeping watch over their flocks. They announce the coming of "a Savior."

The announcement was not made to kings, dignitaries or the High Priest but to shepherds. Being a shepherd was a common but a lowly occupation. When flocks were too far from a village to lead them to the fold, shepherds would abide with them in the field. It must have been an awesome experience. There is nothing said about their singing. They were told that a Savior was born.

The name Jesus means Savior. They were given a sign. "Ye shall find a babe wrapped in swaddling clothes and laying in a manger." The manger was actually a feeding trough for animals. After the visit of the angels Mary had a lot to think about as she "pondered these sayings in her heart."

How different are God's ways than man's ways. We would never have allowed the Son of God to be born under such circumstances. But God does not depend upon man's wisdom to accomplish his purposes. He can bring about His purposes under the most humbling circumstances. "But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong." (1 Corinthians 1:27)

Lesson 3

Circumcision of Jesus (Luke 2:21)

Eight days after the birth of a male Jew he was to be circumcised (Leviticus 12:1-8). This dates back to the days of Abraham. By this act Jesus was "made like unto his brethren" (Hebrews 2:16, 17). The act was probably performed by Joseph. The child usually received his name at this time. Thus, Joseph was carrying out what the angel had instructed before Jesus was even conceived.

Purification (Luke 2:22-39)

Purification took place 40 days after the birth of a male child and 80 days after a female child at the Temple. At this time Jesus was presented to the Lord. Also, until performed, a woman was considered unclean thus remaining secluded in her house.

The offering of two pigeons, instead of a lamb and a pigeon is an indication that Joseph and Mary were poor. This allowed the poor to substitute pigeons for the lamb (Leviticus 12:8).

An elderly man, Simeon, "just and devout" had been looking "for the consolation of Israel." This is the same as the "hope of Israel" (Acts 28:20). He was looking for the Messiah. The Holy Spirit had revealed to him that he would not die before seeing the Christ.

Upon seeing the babe he breaks into a poetic prayer. His statements were prophetic. Many would stumble and fall at the teachings of Jesus, yet, many would receive them. Mary's heart was pierced when she saw her son die on the cross.

Also present on this occasion was an elderly prophetess, Anna. A widow of 84 years she had remained at the Temple "serving God with fastings and prayers night and day." People today would consider her a fanatic. But not God. She speaks out in thanksgiving and tells about the child to those who looked for a Messiah.

Visit of the wise men (Matthew 2:1-12)

How many were there? We do not know. Only tradition says three, not the Scriptures. There were three gifts which may have led to this tradition. They were from the East. Obviously they were from a distant place. It seems obvious they were religious men.

How did they learn of Jesus' birth? Why were they interested in the "King of the Jews" above all other kings?

Some think they learned from the Jews who lived in their area (some think Persia) who lived pointed out the Old Testament prophecies concerning a Messiah. Something however prompted them to leave. Since the Temple was well known throughout the East. It was natural they would go there first in their search.

The star was some supernatural phenomenon. It was specially prepared to guide them to the exact place where Jesus lived. Mary has more to ponder in her heart.

The more she hears the various statements made concerning her son, the more she must have wondered about what he would be like.

Flight to Egypt (Matthew 2:13-18)

The wise men coming to Herod was to find out where they would find Jesus. This instantly got the attention of Herod. The purpose of their mission stirred him to immediately plan for the death of this child. Herod calls a meeting of the chief priests and scribes to find out where "the Christ was to be born."

They inform him that according to Micah 5:2 it was to be "In Bethlehem of Judea." Herod wastes no time. He first asks the wise men to find the place, and then inform him so he can go and worship too. After presenting their gifts they were warned in a dream they should not report back to Herod so they "departed for their own country another way."

An "angel of the Lord" appeared to Joseph in a dream saying, "Arise, take the young Child and His mother, flee to Egypt, and stay there until I bring you word." Knowing the character of Herod we are not surprised at his actions. These events were prophesied in Hosea 11:1 and Jeremiah 31:15. Herod had kept his throne by crimes of unspeakable brutality, murdering even his wife and two of his sons.

He was cruel, cunning and cold-blooded. The killing of the babes two years and under was not below his character. Bethlehem, being but a small village, this would not have involved more than 20 little ones. Regardless, it was a terrible and brutal deed.

Under the cover of darkness Joseph flees with his little family. [We wonder about where they stayed in Egypt?](#)

There were around one million Jews living in Egypt at this time. Joseph and his family would not have been among strangers. The gifts left by the wise men would bring a good price. The money received would have been of help in the upkeep of the family.

However Joseph being a carpenter may have found work among the Jews. We can be certain that the Lord took good care of them. They would remain in Egypt until after the death of Herod. We know Herod died in the 37th year of his reign. He was 70 years old. The family may not have stayed long in Egypt. Jesus may have been only about four months old when Herod died.

After Herod's death the kingdom was divided among his three sons. Archelaus was given Judea, Idumaea and Samaria. Another son Herod Antipas obtained Galilee and Perea. Philip another son received other portions of the area. When Joseph learned that Archelaus was reigning over Judea in Herod's place he was afraid to return to that area or Bethlehem.

Being warned of God in a dream he withdrew into Galilee. This is the fourth revelation Joseph has received concerning the child Jesus. Herod Antipas ruler over Galilee was a different man and governed with more leniency than did his brother Archelaus. In fact the two did not get along well with each other.

Return to Nazareth (Matthew 2:19-21, Luke 2:39, 40)

Nazareth was the former home of Joseph and Mary. "Nazareth" means a shoot or branch. This name is prophetically given to the Messiah in Isaiah 11:1.

The figure of a tree is given by Isaiah, and is applied to a descendent of Jesse. As David sprang from the humble family of Jesse, the second David would arise out of humble surroundings too.

The village of Nazareth was an insignificant place. Like all people in Galilee their speech sounded hillbilly-ish. They had a tendency to "swallow" their guttural vowels, thus giving them a dialect different from those who lived in Judea. They were not called upon to read from the Torah in synagogues in Judea.

Jesus probably spoke in the Galilean dialect which would cause scepticism about Him from the educated class of Jerusalem. Certainly worldly wisdom would not have the Messiah to come from such an insignificant and obscure place.

It is well to keep in mind that Jesus came into this world as an infant. He had to grow and develop in body and in mind. As a child He would have acted as a child. He would have played their games, sung their songs, gone to the synagogue school as this was the only education available to them.

He would have had the same childhood diseases and sicknesses as other children. He was as human as any child in the village of Nazareth. Like all Jewish boys He would have learned a trade from his father which in His case was carpentry.

No doubt He was a very intelligent child as we shall see in the next section. Luke tells us "And the child grew and became strong in spirit, filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was upon Him" (Luke 2:40).

Visit to the temple (Luke 2:41-50)

All Jews were required to attend the yearly Passover feast in Jerusalem. This was always an exciting time. When Jesus was twelve years old the family made their annual trip to Jerusalem.

This was special for Jesus because at age twelve a Jewish boy became a man. Today this event is called `bar mitzvah."

In a crowd of thousands of people Jesus would maybe see for the first time the priests offering sacrifices in their colourful robes. He would have observed the washings in the great basin before the Temple; He would see the animals being sacrificed and certainly the money changers. The Temple was an awesome edifice, especially for a child from a little village in Galilee.

Luke tells us that "when they had finished the days" they went back home to Nazareth. People from Galilee generally travelled in large groups of friends and family. It is not surprising that a mature twelve year old would not need constant watching. It would just be assumed He would be with family members or other boys his age.

After traveling for a day the caravan stopped for the night. Mary and Joseph look for their son. He was not to be found. It took a day to return to Jerusalem and another day to find Him "in the Temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions." It is said "all who heard Him were astonished at His understanding and answers." Jesus was not only asking mature questions and listening to the answers, He was also giving answers to their questions.

Jesus' answer as to why he was there; "I must be about My Father's business," was a powerful statement from a twelve year old boy. His parents must have been mystified by his answer. It is this writers' belief that it was on this occasion that Jesus fully realized that He was God's Son. Returning home it is said "Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men" (Luke 2:52). He will remain there the next 18 years until his public ministry.

Lesson 4

John prepares the way (Matthew 3:1-12, Mark 1:1-8, Luke 3:1-20)

Luke is a true historian. He does not refer to the birth of Christ to begin his story of the work of John and Jesus, as no such date had been established.

He dates it from the year of the reigning Roman emperor, Tiberius Caesar adding the name of the governor of Judea and the Tetrarchs of the adjacent provinces and then finally the high priests then in office.

The **"Word of God came to John"** and he begins his work of preparing the people for the coming of the Lord. His field of labour was the wilderness region which also encompassed part of the Jordan River. Isaiah spoke of him. **"The voice of one crying in the wilderness: prepare the way of the Lord, Make His paths straight"** (Mark 1:3). His message was **"Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."**

Change your will in reference to sin, resolving to sin no more. The motive was, the kingdom was near. He also preached the **"baptism of repentance."** This means that baptism was connected with repentance. Connected with repentance it was **"for the remission of sins."** This brought them into a state where God would forgive their sins.

Matthew tells us that his raiment was of camel's hair. This would be similar to sackcloth which is very coarse and rough and baggy. He had a girdle which was like a belt to bind the long, loose fitting clothes. His food was locusts and wild honey. Locusts were similar to grasshoppers.

They were considered clean and could be used for food. Sometimes roasted and sometimes boiled they were eaten by the poorer classes. Honey of wild bees was deposited in trees and rocks. Palestine was described in the Old Testament as a land **"flowing with milk and honey."**

Multitudes came to hear him preach. Some came out of curiosity but others were envious and jealous because he attracted large crowds. John addressed them as a **"brood of vipers,"** which described their character. If they were really sincere then prove it by actions that showed true repentance. They ought to show works that would indicate they had changed.

John's preaching pricked the hearts of many people. They wanted to know what they should do. He told those who had food and clothing to share and not hoard, but give to those in need. The Publicans who were collectors of Roman taxes were told to be honest. The soldiers were told not to give themselves to violence; neither accuses anyone wrongfully and learn to be satisfied with their wages.

Many people wondered if John were **"The Christ."** Being full of the Holy Spirit his teaching was far different to those of the scribes and Pharisees. John answered them by saying there was one who would come after him who would be greater. He was so great John said he was not worthy to unloose the latchets on His shoes.

He further tells them while he baptized them in water, Jesus would baptize them in the Holy Spirit and fire. The first was fulfilled on Pentecost upon the apostles. The second refers to destruction in Hell.

Baptism of Jesus (Matthew 3:13-17, Mark 1:9-11, Luke 3:21-23)

Jesus came directly to John to be baptized of him. He came because it was God's will for Him to be baptized. John at first refused but Jesus said, **"Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness."** The distance Jesus travelled indicates the importance of Jesus being baptized.

Now follows some of the clearest evidence pertaining to the Godhead to be found. When Jesus came up out of the water, The Spirit of God descended on Him as a dove and the voice of God said from heaven, **"This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."**

The voice from heaven said two things. Jesus was the Son of God and God was well pleased with Him. Thus all Three persons of the Godhead were present. This announcement by the Father was a formal divine approval His great mission.

Satan had heard the many statements made to Mary which she had stored up in her heart. Now it is evident Jesus is about to come out into the open. He is God, yet He is in human flesh. [What is He going to do?](#)

The temptations of Jesus (Matthew 4:1-11 Mark 1:12, 13, Luke 4:1-13)

The order in which the temptations occurred is different with Matthew and Luke. This in no way means there was conflict between the two, since the order given is not important. Matthew is generally accepted as the order of occurrence.

Since Jesus was led of the Spirit we conclude it was God's will that He be tempted. We do not understand why since God has not revealed this to us. This does seem to be the last step in preparation for His public ministry.

We do not understand why Jesus fasted for forty days. It may have been to devote Himself to prayer and meditation in solitude for the demanding work of the salvation of mankind which lay before Him. We are not told in what form the Devil appeared.

Each temptation begins with the word "if." It seems the devil wanted Jesus to prove His claim to be the Son of God by a miracle. A good motive is given on the **first temptation**. You are hungry and weak.

[Why not turn some stones into bread?](#) To turn stone into bread would be nothing at all. [Would not Jesus feed the 5,000 and the 4000?](#) [Would He not turn water into wine?](#) This was precisely the temptation Satan presented to Eve. [Why not take a bite?](#)

If Jesus starts using His power for selfish ends at the beginning of His ministry, there was no way He could avoid hardships and be victorious in Gethsemane and at the cross. Part of the temptation was to use miraculous means to escape from hardships which can't always be. Jesus' said, **"It is written, `Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God."**

The **second temptation** was a spectacular kind. Just throw yourself off from this high point of the Temple and the angels will take care of you as promised in the Old Testament Scriptures. This was appeared to be pride. Satan used it in Eden. He told Adam and Eve if they would eat the forbidden fruit they would be as wise as God. Satan was saying to Jesus; demonstrate you are the Messiah by placing yourself in a death defying act.

The problem is that he would have been completely misunderstood. He would have been hailed as a great and powerful leader, ready to end Roman occupation and ready to set Himself up over an earthly kingdom which was not His mission. Jesus' answer was **"It is written again, `You shall not tempt the Lord your God."**

God in His own way will do what He had to do to rescue Israel. Not from the occupation of the Romans but from sin which separates man from God. The text shows that Satan is clever, articulate, and even Biblically literate.

The **third temptation** was Satan's way of speeding up the way of accomplishing His mission. To have shown him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world would indicate a miraculous vision. However, from a high vantage point one could see for many miles in the direction of various kingdoms that existed at that time. This was an appeal to His sight. For Jesus to worship Satan was absolutely outrageous.

Satan is subtle in his request. The verb indicates a single action. Just this once! Jesus would establish a kingdom but not a carnal one.

It would be a spiritual kingdom. Jesus responds "Away with you, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only you shall serve' (Matthew 4:10). John lists these same three temptations in 1 John 2:15, 16 which Satan is still using today.

John's testimony about Jesus (John 1:19-28)

John's preaching attracted masses of people. The Jews in Jerusalem sent their priests and Levites to hear and see what he claimed for himself. Who was he? John immediately tells them he is not the anointed one of God.

He points out that it was foretold that a prophet would come before the anointed one. Was he Elijah then? He answers, "I am a voice of one crying in the wilderness, make straight the way of the Lord as Isaiah the prophet said" which was fulfilling the prophecy of Isaiah 40:3. Baptism was something new to them thus they wanted to know what was behind it if he was not the Christ, or Elias!

The Lamb of God (John 1:29-34)

Jesus returned to the place where John was baptizing. John testifies to his disciples that Jesus was the "Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world." This implies the eventual crucifixion wherein Jesus would literally be slain as a sacrifice for the sins of men.

Here is a good illustration of the fact that the full imports of the words of prophets were not always clearly comprehended by the prophets themselves. The prophets spoke as the Holy Spirit gave them utterance, not necessarily knowing the full and final import of their prophecies. John's inquiry from his prison cell later on indicates this fact. (See Matthew 11:2, 3)

From the context of John 1:29-34 it seems clear that John did not know Jesus. Although their mothers were cousins they lived far apart and it is possible they had not yet met. It could be that John did not know that Jesus was to be the Messiah but when he saw and heard the sign from heaven he testifies He is the Messiah.

Lesson 5

The first disciples (John 1:35-42)

The next day John saw Jesus and repeated the same statement he made the previous day, "Behold, the Lamb of God." Two of John's disciples followed Jesus. Who the second one was we do not know but Andrew was one of them and he went immediately and found Peter and brought him to Jesus.

Being impressed with the teachings of Jesus it is only natural that he would go to his family first and get Peter. Their home was Bethsaida, a city on the shore of the Sea of Galilee. This was also the home of James and John, the sons of Zebedee.

When Peter came the Lord said he would be called "Cephas" which means rock. Cephas is Hebrew and Peter is the Greek term. This name no doubt describes in some respects his character. The second disciple was in all probability John. It seems to be characteristic of John to omit his name when he is involved.

Some of John's disciples were jealous that Jesus was gathering followers at the expense of John, but John had none of these feelings. He came to make ready the people for Jesus. Without realizing it some of his disciples were being prepared to become apostles of Jesus.

Their inquiry as to where He lived indicates they sought to be taught by Him. He invites them to come and hear Him. It was 4 p.m. at the time, so they may have stayed up into the night.

(John 1:43-51)

Philip and Nathanael

The next day Jesus found Philip and admonishes him to follow Him. Philip then finds Nathanael. Nathanael's reaction was "can any good come out of Nazareth."

This may mean that Nazareth did not have a good name among the people of that area. Philip says he should come and see before making any final decision. It is so easy for prejudice to take over and distract us from the truth. Nathanael was from Cana of Galilee.

The first miracle (John 2:1-11)

Cana was four miles northeast of Nazareth the home of Jesus. Circumstances indicate Jesus' mother had taken a personal interest in a wedding and was directing certain matters. It may have been the home of a close friend or relative. She seems to have confidence in Jesus that He can do something about the problem that arose when they ran out of wine.

His response to His mother may sound harsh to us but considering the customs of the time it is not spoken with disrespect. "Woman" was a title of respect in that day. The point of his remark seems to be, "Suppose the wine is gone, what have I to do with it?" It is not my affair. My time to work miracles has not yet come."

A firkin is about eight gallons. There were six water pots of stone which could contain about 24 gallons each. These were filled with water. When they took it to the ruler of the feast, he called for the bridegroom saying this was contrary to custom to put the best wine last. The bridegroom furnished the banquet and was responsible for the wine.

There is no indication that the people were drunk. There seems to be no doubt that this would have been wine (fermented grape juice) and not just grape juice. Furthermore it was good wine. Many for fear think wine might not sound appropriate for Jesus to produce, attempt to make this grape juice.

According to Jewish custom fermented grape juice was used in weddings. In fact wine was the normal table drink which accompanied meals. The Jews mixed one part juice with three parts water. Thus the alcoholic content would have been at a minimum. One would have to consume a large amount in order to become intoxicated.

Present day wines bear no resemblance to the light wines of Palestine in the time of Christ. Wines today are infused with alcohol as to make them strong and intoxicating. Jesus would not have produced a wine which would produce intoxication, the very thing the Bible condemns. The miracle on this occasion produced a wine which was pleasant to the taste but not intoxicating. Its "goodness" was not found in its intoxicating ability but in its taste.

The result of this miracle was that His disciples believed on Him. This was the first of seven "signs" that John chooses to record in his gospel which were intended to produce faith in those who would read about them. He wrote, "These have been written so that you may believe." (John 20:31.)

Residence of Capernaum (John 2:12)

Following the events in Cana, Jesus went down to Capernaum along with His mother; His brothers, and His disciples where they stayed a few days. Jesus now moves from the hill country of Cana to the shores of the Sea of Galilee. Nine times the brothers of the Lord are mentioned. Six times they are directly connected with Mary and three times they are not.

This is proof that they were natural sons of Mary rather than nephews, or Joseph's sons by a previous marriage. This disproves the Catholic doctrine of the "Perpetual virginity of Mary." The fact that Jesus entrusts the care of Mary to John from the cross may indicate nothing more than his brothers' rejection of him at that time, (as to His claims) or the fact that being younger brothers, they were not as committed to her care as John would be.

Jesus attends the Passover (John 2:13-22) (April 9, AD. 27)

We determine the length of Christ's ministry from John's gospel. He mentions in all six feasts in connection with the public ministry of Christ. They are:

1. This First Passover (John 2:13).
2. Another Feast - Probably 2nd Passover (John 5:1).
3. Another Passover (John 6:4).
4. Feast of Tabernacles (John 7:2).
5. Feast of Dedication (John 10:22).
6. Passover (John 11:55).

If the feast of John 5:1 was the Passover Feast, then the length of Christ's ministry was a little over three years, otherwise it lasted a little over two years.

It is fitting that Jesus would launch His public ministry in Jerusalem as it was the centre of Judaism. The condition that Jesus found the Temple in was appalling to Him. His reaction was to make a whip (scourge) and drive the animals and money changers out, overturning their tables, spilling out the money.

He told them to stop making "My Father's house a place of business." Edersheim tells us that the priests alone received a kickback of \$300,000 a year from merchants for letting them use the area of the Temple. It is said a priest could find something wrong with an animal and it would be sold back to a merchant at a lower price than what was originally paid. Purchasing another animal would be more than the original price.

There would be a lot of haggling, red faces and anger. Besides this those who came from foreign countries would have to exchange their money into the currency of Jerusalem and the money changers would charge a fee for doing this. All of these things were being conducted in the Temple area.

We can understand why the Lord was so upset. The authorities were upset too. They wanted to know what sign he could show that gave him the authority to do this. Jesus' answer was, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up."

They misunderstood. It was the first prophecy Jesus made concerning his death and resurrection. Later on this would be brought up against Him in His trials before the Jews.

Nicodemus seeks out Jesus (John 3:1-21)

Nicodemus was a ruler, a member of the Sanhedrin. He was also a Pharisee which was the most strenuous sect of the Jews observing the traditions of the elders. Why he came by night, we do not know.

He is the only one of this group which sought the Lord out of sincere motives. This is not the only time we will meet this man. In John 7:50-52 we learn that he defended Jesus. We learn from John 19:38, 39 he brought spices for the body of the Lord following His death.

Nicodemus had difficulty understanding what Jesus meant by being born again, thinking of the natural birth of a child. Even today there is great controversy over what Jesus meant. In a birth there is a begetting or conception and nine months later a delivery. Jesus said the spiritual birth was composed "of water and of the Spirit." One of these must be the begetting action and the other the delivery action.

The word of God is a product of the Holy Spirit in that He inspired men as they wrote. Peter writes, "Having been begotten again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, through the word of God..... and this is the word of good tidings which was preached unto you" (1 Peter 1:23, 25).

In physical birth, water is always involved just before delivery. [Is there any mention in the Bible about water playing a part in a person's salvation?](#)

Baptism is a command in the New Testament and it always involved water. Paul wrote ["For in one Spirit were we all baptized into one body"](#) (1 Corinthians 12:13). Every New Testament example of conversion included baptism.

Thus the new birth is accomplished by the sowing of the seed [\(the word of God\)](#) in the hearts of men and their responding in faith to be baptized into Christ, ["for the remission of sins."](#) They arose to walk ["newness of life."](#) Early Christian writers unanimously interpreted the water of [John 3:5](#) as immersion.

Lesson 6

Judean Ministry (John 3:3:22-36) (Spring AD. 27)

John alone tells of Jesus' early Judean ministry which has been estimated as lasting from [April till December](#). Jesus leaving Jerusalem went into the rural area of Judea where he preached and baptized.

John was baptizing in Aenon because ["There was much water there."](#) This clearly indicates that immersion was the mode of baptism.

During these days, John's popularity was falling off as quickly as Jesus' was growing. John's disciples saw this as a setback. It is obvious that there was jealousy. These hard-core disciples of John were hanging on.

John again reminds them that he had told them, ["I am not the Christ,' but, `I have been sent before Him..... He must increase, but I must decrease."](#) This brief section is transitional. This shifts the emphasis from John to Jesus.

From Judea to Galilee (Matthew 4:12, Mark 1:14, John 4:1-3)

Jesus must move from Judea to Galilee for a number of reasons. John is arrested which closes his public ministry which is estimated as lasting 14 to 18 months. This creates a danger because of Jesus' close ties with John. He flees in order to avoid a premature arrest by Herod or the Sanhedrin. The influence of the Pharisees was less in Galilee than Judea. He would likely have been arrested had He remained in Judea.

Second, He must take up the void in preaching and baptizing left by John. Also Jesus is guided by the Holy Spirit. [Luke 4:14](#) says, ["Then Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee."](#) It is interesting that Jesus delegates the baptismal act to His disciples.

Galilee would become the most fruitful soil for the preaching of Christ. John had prepared the way and now Jesus moves in to begin reaping the harvest.

Jacob's well (John 4:4-26)

On His way to Galilee Jesus passes through Samaria. Most Jews refused to pass through this area choosing to return to Galilee through Perea by crossing over on the east side of the Jordan. This was due to their deep prejudice against the Samaritans and feelings of being unclean. Jesus does not avoid this area. He stops at Jacob's well.

Jacob dug this deep well. It went through rock and tapped into a natural spring deep in the ground. It was a great source of pure, cool water. During Jesus' day it was probably over one hundred feet deep. Today it has been filled with rocks and debris. Nearby was the little town of Sychar.

Just a few yards from this city was the tomb of Joseph whose mummified body was brought out of Egypt at the time of the Exodus. Jesus is alone at the well. A Samaritan woman comes to draw water. Jesus asks for some. This is a shocking request because she is a woman and more than this a Samaritan. Such a thing to a Jew would be inconceivable for "Jews have no dealings with Samaritans." Even the woman is shocked.

Jesus gets her attention by telling her He could give her living water. She takes Him literally. He tells her His water could permanently quench her thirst. She answers, "Give me this water so that I may not get thirsty."

Jesus suddenly shifts the conversation and asks her to "go, call your husband, and come here." Her answer was that she had no husband. Jesus recognizes this, telling her she had, had five husbands and the one she was presently living with was not her husband. Thus startles her. She says, "Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet."

She then shifts the conversation. She asks a question that was a most controversial issue between Jews and Samaritans. Where should they worship? According to the Jews it was Jerusalem. The Samaritans said it was Gerizim. Both were wrong in thinking that worship was a specific deed done with the body at a certain locale rather than a heart bent on glorifying and loving God.

Jesus introduces a new relationship with God. The emphasis will shift from a place to persons. "God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."

The teaching of Jesus on this occasion is some of the most important that we have on the subject of worship. Two ingredients are essential to acceptable worship. It must be in "In spirit and in truth." She said that when the Messiah comes He will tell such things.

Jesus responds by telling her, "I who speak to you am He." The woman leaves her water pot and goes into the city immediately. The disciples arriving back at this moment are shocked to discover Jesus has been talking with the woman.

A field white unto harvest (John 4:27-42)

The Samaritan woman goes immediately to the village of Sychar and tells the people, "Come, see a Man who told me all things that I ever did. Could this be the Christ?" The result was many came to believe on Him. They urge Him to stay, which He did for two days.

Jesus told the disciples "Lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest." Obviously they had been blind to the opportunity they had at Sychar. Part of this blindness was due to prejudice.

Often it is easier to reach the poor, simple-hearted, the sinner, than the self-righteous, who pride themselves upon their social position, or learning and who cover and hide their sins. These Samaritans were very receptive to His teachings. Even today it is difficult for us to see the opportunities to reach the lost even though they are all around us.

Galilean ministry begins

(Matthew 4:12-17, Mark 1:14-15, Luke 4:14, 15, John 4:43-45) (December A.D. 27 to April, A.D. 29)

This marks a new period in the public ministry of our Lord. Jesus was known as a Galilean. The people of Galilee will be much more receptive to Jesus than those in Judea.

It is said that "When He came to Galilee, the Galicians received Him, having seen all the things He did in Jerusalem at the feast, for they also had gone to the feast."

The first place He goes to is Cana where He had performed his first miracle. A "nobleman" who had a sick son at the point of death came from Capernaum to seek out Jesus. His title may indicate he was a servant of Herod Antipas and possibly a Gentile.

His Faith goes beyond asking for prayer for healing his son. He wants Jesus to come down to his house. Jesus rebukes him and also the crowd for seeking a sign. Jesus wants us to believe in Him for who He is, not just for what He does. The people would not believe His word and character they required miracles.

Jesus tells him to go and his son will live. He heals the child from 20 miles away. The father is met by his servants as he was returning to tell him the child is alive. When he inquires at what time he got better, they tell him it is was around 1 p.m. which was the time Jesus told him his son would live.

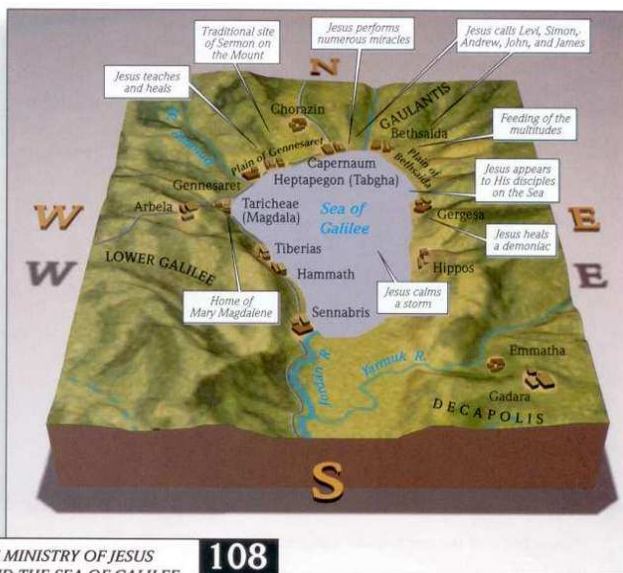
Jesus has been away from Nazareth for almost a year. Now He returns to the place where He lived and grew up in. As His custom, He goes to the Synagogue to worship. He is asked to speak. The speaker would always choose a Scripture to read and then would sit down and teach.

Jesus selects **Isaiah 61:1-2** which clearly describes the Messiah. Then He tells them this Scripture was being fulfilled before their very eyes. The people were amazed. **Where did He get all this wisdom and isn't this Joseph's son?** He reminds them that **"no prophet is accepted in his own country."**

Suddenly the people are filled with wrath. They wanted to kill Him leading Him to the brow of a hill where they could throw Him off the cliff. Jesus was able to pass through the crowd and escape. **How was he able to escape?** It would seem this had to be a miracle. It was not yet His time to die as His work on earth is just now underway.

Jesus begins his second year of work (Matthew 4:13-22, Mark 1:20, Luke 4:31-5:11)

This begins His Galilean ministry which will last from December, A.D. 27 to April, A.D. 29. It begins in Capernaum. This is a significant move for Jesus.



Capernaum is a larger city and offers Jesus more opportunity to preach. He has now completed His first year of work. For the next year or more, Capernaum will become **"headquarters"** for Jesus.

In Jesus' day it was about 50% Gentile. It was located on the northern shore of the Sea of Galilee (which was really a lake). It is pear-shaped and about 12 miles long and 7 miles wide.

It abounded with fish. Jesus is to spend much time around this sea speaking in the many villages near the shore. In this second year there are about 29 recorded events. This has been called the year of popularity.

It is now that He begins the formation of a special chosen group of men called apostles.

To begin with, two sets of brothers are called. All four were fishermen. We must keep in mind they had known Him since He returned from the wilderness and had been with Him throughout His Judean ministry.

This explains why when He calls them to follow Him they are ready to immediately give up their trade as fishermen and follow Him. These men were Peter, Andrew, James and John. After being with Jesus for a year they probably had returned to their trade once they arrived back in Galilee.

Jesus uses Peter's boat as a pulpit and uses the shore as in amphitheatre. Finishing His preaching, Jesus asks Peter to cast off into the deep and let his net down. When Peter pulls at the net, it is full of fish, he cannot haul them in.

A second boat with James and John come to the rescue. It takes both boats to bring in the net full of fish onto the shore. This brings Peter to his knees. He says. `Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord! Peter seems to be responding out of fear of being in the presence of the perfect purity, power and majesty of the Lord.

Lesson 7

Miracles in Capernaum (Matthew 8:14-17, Mark 1:21-34, Luke 4:31-41)

Luke says that Jesus taught on the Sabbaths. This allows room for several weeks of teaching as well as the calling of the four fishermen. Jesus taught with authority. There was a marked difference between Him and the scribes.

The common mode of teaching was to talk about traditions and then quote a long list of scribal authorities and what they said about these traditions. This was to give credibility to their teaching.

Jesus' teaching was in stark contrast in that He simply said, "But I say." Luke tells us that that His word was with "power." One Sabbath while teaching in a synagogue at Capernaum two miracles take place. The prophecy Jesus quoted in the synagogue at Nazareth begins to be fulfilled (Luke 4:18, 19; Isaiah 61:1, 2).

This miracle is the first of several times Jesus will be confronted by a demon. Luke calls it "a spirit of an unclean demon." A man was in a synagogue that had this demon. The demon begins to call out to Jesus, "what have we to do with You?" He then wants to know if Jesus is going to destroy them.

The interesting thing is that these demons seem to know more about Jesus' true identity than those in the synagogue. A demon said, "I know who you are." Jesus forbids them to speak. Why? Probably because He had not had time to teach the people who He was, the Messiah. This was too early for them to accept and comprehend this truth.

The demon reluctantly gives up his prey. Like a spoiled child who can't get his way, he throws the man down. However, Luke observes the man was not injured by this act. The crowd is shocked by the power of Jesus' word. Are demons active today? Certainly they are.

Satan is still active and would employ the aid of the demons (1 Peter 5:8) but not in the same miraculous manner as in New Testament times. With so much interest being shown in the occult we see those who claim they are exorcists. This kind of sensationalism appeals to many.

Since the age of miracles past away with the completing of the New Testament, God would not allow the demons to have an advantage over His people today. The coming of the kingdom marks the beginning of the end for Satan's dominion over man. The blood of Christ now binds Satan's power (Revelation 20:2).

Jesus now leaves the synagogue and goes to the home of Peter. Peter is caring for his wife's mother. She is in bed with a "great fever." It is interesting that Peter is married considering Catholic doctrine that a Pope cannot be married, yet they make the claim that Peter was the first Pope.

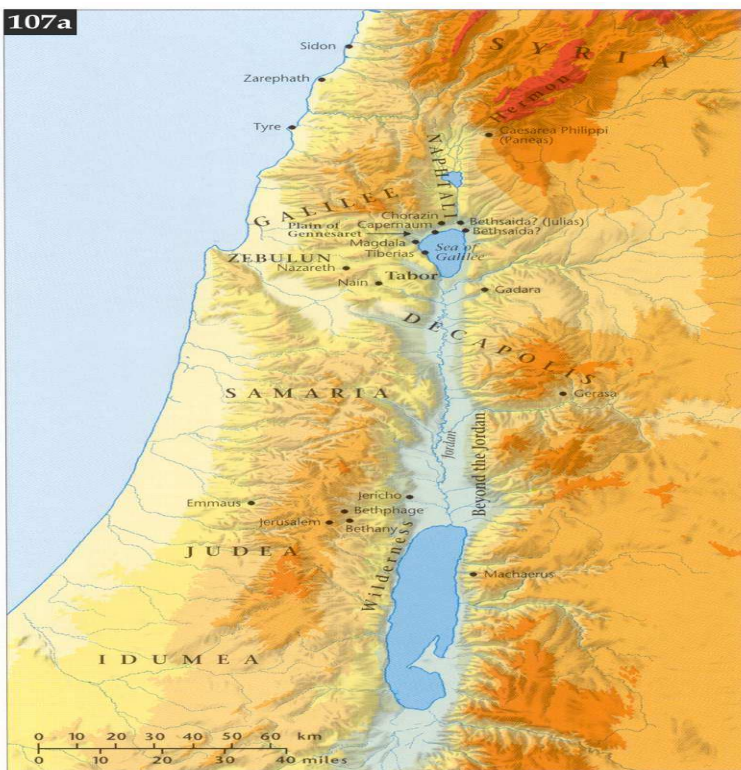
Peter's mother-in-law is so thoroughly healed that she gets up immediately and begins to wait on those present. Usually a fever leaves one very weak and without energy and it is some time before they can be active again. Yet she is able to do this.

As the sun sets the Sabbath is over. The people begin coming to Jesus bringing cots and stretchers with sick people all round Peter's house. Jesus laid His hands on them and healed them. As day breaks Jesus seeks to be alone to pray. Even the Son of God needed to talk with the Heavenly Father. The people follow Him wanting Him to remain there but Jesus told them He must preach the kingdom in other cities also.

Galilean ministry (Matthew 4:23, Matthew 8:14-17, Mark 1:35-45, Luke 4:42-44, Luke 5:12-16)

This tour will be conducted through the eastern part of Galilee near the Sea of Galilee. Jesus begins preaching in the many synagogues around Galilee and cast out devils. A very touching scene occurs.

A leper came asking Jesus to heal him, Jesus was moved with compassion. He reaches out His hand and touches the leper.



Jesus' Ministry in Galilee and Journey to Jerusalem

Matthew 4.12-21.1; Mark 1.14-11.1; Luke 4.14-19.27
 Jesus spent most of his ministry in Galilee, where he had grown up. He traveled mainly around Lake Galilee, with his home in Capernaum. He may have gone to Jerusalem by way of Perea to avoid going through Samaria.

Touching a leper would defile a person and make him unclean. Jesus does not hesitate to touch this man. This is probably the first time this man has been touched in years.

The word "leprosy" comes from "lepo" meaning to "peel off like scales." It is described two times in the Old Testament and in both instances it is described as being as "white as snow." Jesus realized this man had several needs.

- (1) He needed to be cleansed of leprosy.
- (2) He needed to feel the touch of another human hand.
- (3) He needs to be delivered from the social stigma of having leprosy.

Thus, his cleansing had **three parts: physical, emotional, and social**. Jesus admonishes him not to tell anyone about this, but the leper tells everyone. The crowds become so great Jesus can no longer enter their cities but had to stay out in the country side.

As Jesus draws His first Galilean tour to an end he comes back to Capernaum, most likely to Simon Peter's house (**Mark 1:29**). The people gathered there and there was no room for anyone else to get inside the room. People had come from everywhere (**Galilee, Judea and Jerusalem**) including some Pharisees and teachers of the law.

Suddenly four men carrying a stretcher with a paralytic man appear. It became obvious they could not enter through the door, so they went to the roof. People in Palestine used their roofs for various things. During the summer's heat they would sleep on the roof as it was cooler.

What seems strange to us is that they begin to break up the roof (**tile**) to make an opening so they could let the man down inside the room. It shows the strong determination of these men and also their faith in Jesus.

Upon seeing the man Jesus said, "Man, your sins are forgiven you." This really got the attention of the Pharisees. They huddle together and conclude He is guilty of blasphemy. "Who can forgive sins but God alone?" they said.

This will not be the first time Jesus is accused of blasphemy. To blaspheme means to insult or revile. You could blaspheme God by insulting Him, by refusing to give Him due honour or by raising yourself to the level of God. It was this third form of blasphemy that they accused Jesus of.

Jesus knew what they were thinking. He told them "Which is easier, to say, your sins are forgiven you, or to say, rise up and walk?" Immediately the man gets up from his stretcher and goes home. As he exits he begins to praise God. The people were amazed and they too begin to praise God. They said, "We have seen strange things today!"

This miracle contains three parts. (1) The forgiveness of sins. (2) Reading minds. (3) Healing paralysis.

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

Leaving the city, Jesus goes to the sea and begins teaching at the water's edge. Luke mentions Levi but Matthew calls himself Matthew. Probably he had two names. Being a tax collector he was sitting at a custom house.

Jesus told him, "Follow me." He does not delay when asked to follow Jesus. He probably had heard Jesus at some time and must have been impressed with his teachings and miracles. He made a feast for Jesus at his house. It seems a number of other tax collectors were there also. Being a tax collector, he had been excommunicated by the Jews and would be forced to associate with other outcast people.

The scribes and Pharisees saw this and asked why Jesus would allow himself to eat with such people who were sinners? The Jews deeply resented the large number of oppressive Roman taxes. Most of the resentment was because it represented Roman dominion over them. Anyone working in this occupation was viewed as a traitor of the worst sort.

Whereas the fishermen could have returned to their trade if things did not work out for them, Levi would never be able to do this once he left this position with the Romans.

In the eyes of the Pharisees Jesus was guilty by association. Jesus brings their murmuring to a conclusion with a very impressive statement. "Those who are well do not need a physician, but those who are sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance" (Luke 5:31, 32).

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

Fasting was common among the Jews. Even John's disciples fasted. Jesus is questioned as to why His disciples did not fast. This was another cause for opposition.

The Pharisees fasted twice a week (Luke 18:12) and John's disciples evidently imitated them. This shows that wicked men often are religious. The Jews fasted out of sorrow and humiliation. They thought that when they sinned God forsook or punished them. Under a sense of sin and sorrow they humbled themselves, fasted and prayed that they might be freed from sin.

While Jesus remained with His disciples there was no occasion for fasting. "The time would come He said when He would leave them and then they could fast". He illustrates this further by saying you don't sew new cloth on old. It is not appropriate. Neither do you put new wine into old wine-skins.

When wine begins to ferment it expands. Thus, it must be put into new skins. Just as these things do not mix it was not fitting that the disciples of Jesus fast at that time. There would be a suitable occasion for them to do this.

There is no direct command given in the New Testament for us to do this. We do see a number of examples after the church was established where Christians fasted such as in Antioch. Since in the beginning of the church most Christians were Jews they would have been accustomed to doing this and it may be that it was a natural thing for them to continue to do this after becoming Christians. Certainly there is nothing wrong in fasting as long as we do not try and force it on others as a law.

Lesson 8

Feats of the Jews John 5:1-16 (Spring A.D. 28)

The "feast of the Jews" is generally regarded as the Passover feast. If so it makes certain the length of the public ministry of Christ as being a little over three years. If not, then His public ministry was slightly over two years.

While in Jerusalem Jesus heals a man of a crippling disease at the pool of Bethesda which had five porches connected to it and was by the Sheep Gate. The sheep gate may have been the gate through which sheep were brought to be sacrificed. The pool is not mentioned by any other writer except **John**.

A multitude of sick people had gathered there believing that there was some healing power in the water. The word Bethesda means "house of mercy." Verse four which states an angel went down and stirred up the water was probably a popular perception at the time. This verse is not found in any manuscripts written before the fourth century. Some believe it was added later by some scribe.

This lame man had this infirmity for 38 years. Jesus asked him if he wanted to be healed. He explained his helplessness prevented him from entering the water. Jesus told him, "Rise, take up your bed and walk." Immediately the man was able to do this. This was characteristic of all Jesus' miracles - they brought immediate results. This is not what you see being done by the so called "faith healers" of today.

The Jews were critical because a man carried his bed on the Sabbath. Contrary to the law he was carrying a burden. Everything had happened so quickly he did not even know who it was that healed him. What a sorry lot they were. What greater depth of hypocrisy than this.

Here was man who had been lame 38 years and can now walk. Yet, his carrying his bed on the Sabbath was their only concern. They could not rejoice in his being healed, they could only criticize him for carrying his bed. The Jews began to persecute Jesus seeking to kill him for doing this on the Sabbath.

Later Jesus met the man in the Temple and warned him "Sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon you." Some have concluded the man's past sins were related to his infirmity. However, it could be that Jesus was saying to the man, don't go on sinning as a worse condition (condemnation) will come upon you which would be worse than being lame.

Jesus declares His Deity (John 5:17-47)

With Jesus being persecuted for healing on the Sabbath, He claimed His Father worked on the Sabbath and He had the same right. This angered the Jews even more because he called God His Father. Now they really wanted to kill him. By saying that God was His Father Jesus implied he was equal with God.

Jesus now launches into a sermon which is one of the clearest declarations of His deity. Jesus shows His relationship to the Father by making four comparisons in verses 19-23.

1. Jesus can do the same things, in the same way as the Father does. Thus He understands God's plans and priorities.
2. Because the Father loves the Son, He reveals His work to Him, and the best (more miracles) are yet to come.
3. As the Father raises the dead, so also will Jesus raise people from the dead.

4. The Father has given judgment over to the Son in order that the Son may be honoured. Those that do not honor the Son do not honor the Father.

The implications are clear and astounding. Jesus has the ability and the authority of the Father. **These verses** launch Jesus into a discussion of the resurrection; He can raise the dead either to eternal life or to a fearsome judgment.

The final phase of Jesus' sermon gives **five witnesses** that testify of Him. **First**, He is his own witness. However, the Jews would never accept Jesus' testimony about Himself. **Second**, the Father had already bore witness of who He was when He was baptized by John. This no doubt refers to the voice which spoke from heaven when Jesus was baptized by John.

Third, John himself has testified as to who He was on a number of occasions. **Fourth**, Jesus' works testified about Him. After one year he has already performed many miracles in Judea and in Galilee. **Fifth**, the Scriptures themselves testify about Jesus. The prophets and Moses spoke repeatedly of Him in their writings.

Controversy over grain picking (Matthew 12:1-8, Mark 2:23-38, Luke 6:1-5)

The Sabbath controversy, which started in Jerusalem, has moved to Galilee. Returning to Capernaum and Galilee from what is assumed to be the second Passover of His ministry Jesus and His disciples passed through some grain fields on a Sabbath. His disciples began to pluck some of the grain and eat it.

The grain fields come to maturity around April. The grain was probably barley or wheat Barley which usually was ripe one to three weeks before wheat at the time of the Passover. Their plucking was lawful. According to **Deuteronomy 23:25** eating out of someone else's grain field was permissible.

The Pharisees immediately voiced their objections on the ground that this was work on the Sabbath Day, thus, what they were doing was sinful. They were condemned for plucking and rubbing the grain. By plucking they were guilty of reaping and by rubbing the grain they were guilty of threshing. The Pharisees weighted down the Sabbath with the observance of many traditions. Plucking grain was just one of those traditions.

Jesus defends His disciples by using David as an example of one who ate the showbread while hungry and fleeing from King Saul. This was at the house where Abiathar who served as priest. Only priests were allowed to eat this sacred Showbread (**Leviticus 24:5-9**).

But David and his companions did so without sinning. **Why?** Because they were in desperate need of food. Jesus' disciples were only doing what David had done. Necessary life saving labor may always be allowed on a Sabbath. Getting an ox out of a ditch would be a primary concern of the Pharisees.

Jesus told them that the **"Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath."** The Sabbath was given for man's good - both physically and spiritually. Man was not made so God would have someone to observe the Sabbath. God gave man the Sabbath as a day to rest from his labours.

It was given for the welfare of man. When the welfare of a man was at stake the law was superseded by a higher principle of life. The law of the Sabbath was to bend to the higher interest and good of man. God can modify His laws when man's welfare and health is at stake.

The priests who worked on the Sabbath fulfilling their duties in the Temple were breaking the command to rest. But they were not sinning by doing this. **Why?** Because the laws and requirements pertaining to Temple worship took precedent over the law of the Sabbath.

Jesus heals a withered hand on the Sabbath (Matthew 12:9-14, Mark 3:1-6, Luke 6:6-11)

On another Sabbath Jesus enters a synagogue, probably in Capernaum. He finds a man whose right hand was withered. This man's muscles had shrunk and he was paralyzed in that hand. The scribes and Pharisees are watching closely to see if he would heal on the Sabbath.

Now they were looking for any occasion to find fault, thus, they watched every move the Lord made. The law did not forbid healing on the Sabbath but their traditions and the interpretations of the Pharisees did. This event takes the Sabbath controversy to a new level. Not only was the Sabbath for man's benefit; it was an opportunity to do good for other people.

Their traditions said that you could provide medical attention to save a life, but that was all. For example, if a man fell off a cliff and cracked his head, you could stop the bleeding, but you could not set a broken leg. Since a withered hand was not life-threatening, it would be illegal to heal this fellow on the Sabbath.

Jesus put the question to them. "What man is there among you who has one sheep, and if it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will not lay hold of it and lift it out? Of how much more value then is a man than a sheep? Therefore it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath." They could not answer without condemning themselves. It put them in a dilemma. They would rescue a sheep without hesitation.

What then would be wrong with healing a man?

Mark says, "When He had looked around at them with anger, being grieved by the hardness of their hearts, He said to the man, 'Stretch out your hand.' And he stretched it out, and his hand was restored as whole as the other" (3:5).

The Pharisees are furious. They begin plotting how they might kill Jesus. They even align themselves with the Herodians, a political group affiliated with Herod and hated by the Jews. But they are so intent on having Jesus killed they seek the aid of a hated political group in order to get rid of Jesus. This illustrates how mean and cruel religious people can become who are enslaved to a legalistic tradition bound religion.

Lesson 9

Jesus' fame spreads (Matthew 12:15-21, Mark. 3:7-12)

We now find Jesus at the Sea of Galilee, surrounded by a great multitude of people. By now His fame had spread far and wide bringing people from all parts of the land. So great was their eagerness to see Christ and to be healed that it almost became an uncontrollable mob that followed Him thus endangering His life.

The shoreline being crowded He got into a boat and taught them. Those who touched Him were healed. The demons having supernatural knowledge knew who Jesus was, but He forbids them to declare His identity.

Selection of the twelve (Mark 3:13-19, Luke 6:12-16, Matthew 10:2-4)

Luke records one of the most crucial moments in Jesus' ministry. It was so important He spent the night in prayer before appointing the twelve apostles. Of all the men who followed Him He chooses 12 in whom He can invest Himself. He will still teach the crowds but in private He will pour out His plans to the Twelve.

These men would be entrusted with the planting, organizing and training of the early church. They would have the tremendous responsibility of nourishing it along during its infancy state. Jesus would keep these chosen men with Him teaching and preparing them for the great task before them. The word "apostle" indicates "a messenger sent with a commission." They would carry with them the authority of Christ.

It was their job to preach the gospel of the kingdom after Jesus was gone. They were sent into all the world. It is likely some were related to each other. It also seems that **James** and **John**, the sons of Zebedee, were likely cousins of Jesus.

Judas Iscariot is the apostle who was not faithful to Jesus. While the rest were from Galilee he was from Judea. His motive remains a mystery. However, his acceptance of the thirty pieces of silver would suggest greed.

The sermon on the Mount (Matthew. 5-7) (Luke 6:20-49?)

This is the greatest sermon ever preached. It is also the most quoted. There is a possibility that the sermon recorded by **Matthew** and **Luke** were not the same sermons but delivered about the same time. It contains the very heart of Jesus' teachings.

We may think of this sermon as being to the New Testament what the Ten Commandments are to the Old Testament. Jesus begins His sermon by giving the Beatitudes. Blessed (**happy**) are the spiritually humble, the sorrowful over sins, the patient, the long-suffering, those who are spiritually hungry for righteousness, the merciful, the pure in heart, the peace makers and those persecuted for right doing.

His people are to be salt and light to the world. That is, preservers and examples by reflecting His light and glory. Jesus said He did not come to destroy the Law, but to fulfill it. God's moral law is the expression of God's own holiness and His people are obligated to keep it. In order to do this Christian must avoid those things that can arise in the heart that lead to disobedience of those Old Testament moral laws such as murder, adultery, swearing, revenge and hatred of enemies.

Matthew chapter six deals with false motives. Give to the needy as if you were giving to God. Do not make a show of it. Do not pray just to be heard of men but do it quietly and secretly. Jesus gives a model prayer to go by. When fasting do not show off in doing it. Do it only for God to see. Be careful about hoarding and being concerned about material things. Store up treasure in heaven which will endure.

Chapter seven begins with a warning about judging others. We too will be judged. He deals with casting pearls before pigs. Use common sense and tact in talking about religion. Be persistent in praying, God hears us. In everything treat others as you want them to treat you. Enter the narrow way because the broad way leads to destruction which many are entering. The greatest obstacle to the progress of Christianity has been its corruption at the hands of false teachers. You can recognize them by their fruits.

Jesus concludes His sermon with a warning to be wise and build your foundation on solid rock. This involves hearing and obeying the teachings Jesus has just delivered. Don't be foolish and build on sand. Utter destruction can only follow.

The book of Matthew revolves around **five speeches**, each of which ends with the phrase, "**When Jesus had finished saying these things.**" This sermon marks the end of the first section of **Matthew's book**.

At the conclusion of this sermon the people were "**astonished at His teaching, for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.**" It is no wonder they were amazed. They had never heard anything like it. At best their teachers quoted the rabbis and their traditions. Jesus quoted no rabbi. When he quoted Scriptures he would often he would add, "**But I say!**" He taught with authority which was different from the rabbis.

Healing the Centurion's son (Matthew 8:5-13, Luke 7:1-10)

Jesus now enters Capernaum. A centurion's servant was sick and at the point of death. Upon hearing of Jesus' reputation for healing He sends a delegation of the elders of the city to Jesus to plead with Him to heal the servant. This servant was highly valued. It seems the elder very much wanted him to do this.

Their motivation for healing the servant was that the centurion, "loves our nation, and he has built us a synagogue." The emphasis in this passage then is on the centurion and not on the sick servant. A centurion was a military officer in the Roman army which today would be equal to a lieutenant. "Centurion" means he was in charge of one hundred men.

At this time Palestine had been under Roman control for about 100 years. Roman officers were often brutal men. Some had been influenced by the Jewish religion and abided by the moral code of their law. The first Gentile to be received into the church was a centurion named Cornelius (Acts 10).

Jesus complies with their wishes. When He was not far from the centurion's house He was met by the centurion saying it was not necessary for Jesus to come to his house and furthermore he was not worthy that Jesus should "enter under my roof."

Jesus doesn't need to be present or touch the servant. He simply needs to command it to be done. There may be more behind this than we first see. If Jesus were to enter his house He would be criticized by the Jews for entering a Gentiles house. Thus, the centurion is looking out for best interests of Jesus.

Evidently the elders requested more than the Centurion asked for. He merely wanted Jesus to just "say the word, and my servant will be healed." We are told that Jesus was "amazed" at the incredible faith of this Gentile. He said, "I say to you, I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel!"

This is one of only two times that Jesus is spoken of as being amazed. At the same time he probably was amazed at the lack of faith of his own countrymen. When the elders returned they found the servant well.

Raising the widow's son (Luke 7:11-17)

The next day Jesus enters a city called Nain along with a large number of disciples. Nain means "The Pleasant." It was 25 miles southeast of Capernaum. This was near to Shunem where Elisha had raised the son of a Shunammite woman.

As Jesus approaches the gate of the city He is met by a funeral procession going out of the city. The dead were always buried outside their cities. This dead person was the only son of a widow. This means that she is now left without adequate financial support. The whole village must have felt for her as a large crowd followed the funeral procession.

Funeral processions were often surrounded by elaborate rituals of musical instruments, usually flutes and cymbals. The poorest Jews were expected to provide at least two flute players and one mourning woman. The body would have been washed and would have its hair cut and nails trimmed.

It would be placed face up on a wickerwork bier with arms folded across the chest. The body would be carried through the village with different ones sharing the honor of carrying the dead. Funerals were treated with great reverence.

We are told that Jesus seeing her "had compassion on her and said to her `Do not weep.'" The purpose of miracles was to produce faith in those who observed the miracle. However in this and in a number of other cases the motivation for the miracles was compassion on the part of Jesus.

Jesus now does the unthinkable for a Jew. He touched the open bier (coffin). To do so would make him unclean. There was no greater defilement for a Jew than to touch a dead body (Numbers 19:11, 16). Suddenly everyone stood still. Probably because he had touched the bier.

Jesus said, "Young man, I say to you arise." Immediately the dead man sat up and began talking. Jesus presents him to his mother. The crowds were literally filled with awe.

Luke says, "Fear came upon all, and they glorified God, saying, 'A great prophet has risen up among us'; and, 'God has visited His people.'" Suddenly their fear gives way to praise. The news spread immediately throughout the region.

Lesson 10

Questions from John (Matthew 11:2-11, Luke 7:18-30)

This is a dark time for John. He has now been in prison for several months. He had rebuked the adulterous and incestuous marriage of Herod. Herodias, his wife, took offence and urged her husband to shut him up. John had a lot of time to think while in his cell. Death seems imminent. He had plenty of time for depression and doubt to set in.

Jesus did not fit the contemporary expectations of a Messiah. At the same time Jesus was at the height of his popularity. John evidently was looking for a political Messiah too, just as did most of the Jews. He could not understand why Jesus was not taking proper action toward that end.

His questions are probably not so much from doubt as from a feeling of impatience. [Why is He waiting?](#)

The men sent by John said, "John the Baptist has sent us to You, saying, Are You the Coming One, or do we look for another?" The disciples of John arrive at a good time. Luke says, "And in that same hour He cured many people of their infirmities, afflictions, and evil spirits; and to many who were blind He gave sight."

Their questions come at a time when Jesus was performing many of His miracles. Not only were they able to witness many of these miracles but probably could have talked to a number of people who had already been healed by Jesus.

Jesus tells them to report back to John what they had seen with their eyes and heard from various ones. Jesus' answer indicates that He considered His miracles as sufficient evidence of His Messiahship. John's doubts in no way lowered him in Jesus' estimation.

Although there seems to be a mild rebuke of John as well as the crowd around him. "Blessed is he who is not offended because of Me." They should be willing to accept Jesus for who He is and not try to fit Him into a mold of what they thought a Messiah ought to be like.

After the messengers left, Jesus continues to speak of John. "Who do you think John was? He was not a weed shaken by the wind." John was no weakling. He was a man of strong convictions. As to looks, he was not a "man clothed in soft garments." Camels' hair is as far as you can get from fine clothes.

Jesus says that what they saw was a true prophet of God. Jesus then quotes from [Malachi 3:1](#). John served as the forerunner of Christ. He broke four hundred years of prophetic silence. He drew a large group of baptized disciples who crowded around him, but spoke of his popularity he exalted Jesus. He declared "He must increase but I must decrease" ([John 3:30](#)).

Jesus now pays John the highest compliment anyone could pay an individual. "For I say to you, among those born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist; but he who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he."

This is a significant statement considering the great prophets of the Old Testament such as [Moses](#), [Daniel](#), [Jeremiah](#), [Isaiah](#), etc. [But how can the least Christian be greater than John?](#)

Simply because Christians serve under a better covenant where their sins are covered by the blood of Christ. Also, they are citizens of a superior kingdom where they maintain a special relationship with God. Christians have greater privileges than John but also greater responsibility.

**Jesus describes the Pharrisees and Saducess and religious leaders
(Matthew 11:121-1'9, Luke 7:31-35)**

Jesus' description of John elicits **two responses** from the crowd. There were those including the tax collectors who were in agreement with what Jesus said. On the other hand the Pharisees rejected John's baptism and thus Jesus too. There is no way they will admit John was right. Jesus begins to compare this latter group with children playing games in the marketplace.

They try to play "**wedding,**" but the other children would not co-operate. Then they tried to play "**funeral.**" Still the other children would not play this game. This situation resembles the situation between Jesus and John vs. the Pharisees and Sadducees.

The religious leaders wanted to play games that Jesus and John would not play. It made them angry. So the leaders attacked them. They said John had a demon and Jesus was a drunkard. By labelling them in this way they didn't have to deal with their person and teaching.

The true analysis is found in **verse 35**, Jesus said, "**But wisdom is justified (proved right) by all her children.**" He and Jesus were right, regardless of the criticism and characterisation of their opponents. People would see and observe their deeds and thus see that they were righteous men. "**By their fruits you shall know them.**"

Woes to un-repentent cities (Matthew 11:20-27, Luke 10:13-15)

Cities which should have welcomed and responded to Jesus' miracles did not repent. On the other hand those you would expect to be left out do respond.

The cities where the most miracles had been performed rejected him Jesus said, "**Woe to you, Korazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes.**"

Korazin and Bethsaida were suburbs of Capernaum, which was the home base for Jesus' Galilean ministry. More than any other area they had been blessed by Jesus' presence and to witness His miracles. The crowds obviously delighted in seeing His miracles but they did not seem willing to repent.

Greater judgment will be brought upon those who had opportunity to repent than those who did not have that opportunity. With greater revelation comes greater accountability. So often the wise and highly educated resort to their own intelligence rejecting the simple gospel of Christ. Because of this arrogant attitude, God has hidden the simple truths from them and at the same time revealed them to those who are humble in attitude.

The great invitation (Matthew 11:28-30)

Jesus now delivers the great invitation, "**Come to me, all you who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and My burden is light**"

The word "**yoke**" often symbolized law. The Jews did not consider the Law cruel or oppressive but voluntarily placing yourself under the rule of God and working for Him. However, the Pharisees added so many rules to God's Law that it became an oppressive burden to them. Jesus offers to free them from all that by inviting them to be yoked with Him.

How can Jesus say His yoke is easy and His burden is light when in **Matthew 10:38** He asks us to take up our cross and follow him?

The word "easy" does not imply effortlessness but what is appropriate or suitable effort. It does not exempt Christians from difficulties or even sufferings. It is easy and light in that it is liberating. It would free them from the burdens, the traditions of the fathers placed on them.

We see this working in the incident of picking grain and healing a man's withered hand on the Sabbath. It also frees us from the bondage of sin. Because Jesus saves and restores us, in spite of our ugly sinful ways we can rest in His yoke. There is nothing more wonderful than having the knowledge that all our sins are removed.

In Simon's house (Luke 7:36-50)

Jesus is invited to a banquet at Simon the Pharisee's house. Luke only records this event. There is speculation as to who this woman was. Some say it was Mary Magdalene, others Mary the sister of Lazarus.

The custom was to recline at meals on your left side on a pillow. The table was just inches off the floor. Each person's head would be at the table with their feet pointing away from it. In walks this nameless woman with a bad reputation. We do not know what her sin was but most think it was prostitution. She carries with her an alabaster jar of ointment. This was an expensive ointment she had brought.

Four things occur. She begins to wash the feet of Jesus with her tears. She wiped them with her hair. She kissed His feet. She then anointed His feet with the fragrant oil she had brought with her. Simon thinks within himself, "If Jesus were really a prophet he would know what kind of woman she is and he would not let her touch Him."

Jesus knew what he was thinking and responds with a parable of two men who owed a money lender. One owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. Because they have nothing to pay the lender he forgives both of them their debt. Jesus asked "which one will love him more?" Simons knew the right answer.

Jesus now looks at the woman but speaks to Simon. Washing a visitor's feet was an important act of hospitality. Courtesy would have required a servant to wash Jesus' feet. This woman had not only washed Jesus' feet but had dried them with her hair. Simon had ignored a common courtesy. Anointing feet was a special sign of honor. It was often done with olive oil. This woman had honoured Jesus' feet with a very valuable oil. Simon had done nothing like this.



After making this comparison between Simon and the woman Jesus said, "Therefore, I say to you, her sins which are many are forgiven, for she loved much. But to whom little is forgiven, the same loves little. And He said to her, `Your sins are forgiven."

Embarrassment should have set in but instead Jesus becomes the subject of debate. Ignoring them Jesus tells the woman "Your faith has saved you. Go in peace." There are things she must still work out but her life is now changed forever.

**Lesson Eleven
Companions of Jesus (Luke 8:1-3)**

As Jesus begins His second tour of Galilee we find the twelve with Him Obviously all twelve men had been selected by now. They travel from one village to another "bringing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God."

Luke tells us that some women who had been healed of evil spirits ministered to them by providing the things they would have needed. They no doubt were grateful for the cures they had received. Luke says Mary had seven demons removed. This must have been a very extreme case. Three of the women are named - Mary Magdalene, Joanna and Susanna.

The ministrations of these women indicate the poverty of Christ and the apostles and explain how they were able to devote themselves entirely to the work of teaching without having to engage in secular work for support. Joanna was the wife of a man named Chuza who must have been a high ranking person since he was a manager of Herod's household. Her financial support was probably quite significant.

All financial contributions were placed under the care of Judas Iscariot and would go for food, clothes, supplies, lodging if necessary and taxes. Mary Magdalene was often associated with Jesus. She would be the first one to witness His resurrection (Mark 16:9).

Of more importance is the status given by Jesus to women. He included them in his conversations and work. No priest, rabbi, scribe, Pharisee or Sadducee would have done such. Jesus placed women on a higher level than ever before in the history of mankind.

Blasphemy of the Holy Spirit (Matthew 12:22-37, Mark 3:22-30, Luke 11:14-23)

Jesus came into contact with a man who was possessed with a demon. He was doubly cursed by this demon. He was both blind and dumb. The recovery was immediate. The man spoke and saw. The result was that the multitude was amazed. They asked, "Is this the son of David?" -thus the Messiah they expected.

The reaction of the Pharisees was just the opposite. They said it was by the power of Beelzebub, the prince of the demons that Jesus did these things. They admit to a miracle but they attribute this power to Beelzebub instead of God. Jesus employs two arguments in answer to their thoughts. If he is casting out demons by Beelzebub then He is in conflict with Beelzebub, thus, Satan is divided against himself.

Also, some of the Pharisees claimed to cast out demons and no one implied anything wrong about their doing this. [Whose power were they doing this by? If they could cast out demons why was it wrong for Jesus to do the same?](#)

Blasphemy is injurious and malicious speaking. They had just done this against Christ and God by attributing the miracles to Beelzebub. The question is [what will you do when the Christian age arrives with the coming of the Holy Spirit?](#)

If they reject the Holy Spirit and His teachings then they will reject their last hope. God's provisions of mercy are exhausted with the coming of the Holy Spirit. There will not be another age in which they can repent. It is now or never.

Blasphemy is not some specific words one may speak but is an attitude. The attitude that "I don't care what the Scriptures say, I will not change or accept its teachings" places a person in the position where he will never repent. The attitude of willful unbelief will condemn them. A high-handed rejection of God's purpose is the problem and not some specific words spoken.

Jesus further states that He has overpowered Satan by plundering his possessions. Jesus gives a parable where Satan is a strong man but Jesus has bound him. [Whose side do you want to be on?](#) Jesus is drawing a line in the sand and saying "Get on his side or mine!"

During Jesus' earthly ministry He plundered Satan's domain. He bound him (Matthew 12:29; Revelation 20:2), disarmed him (Colossians 2:15), destroyed his works (1 John 3:8), freed his captives (Hebrews 2:14-15), and judged Him (John 12:31; 16; 11). Satan took a severe fall. His only effective weapon now is his deception (Matthew 24:24; Revelation 20:8).

Jesus sought by family (Matthew 12:46-50, Mark 3:20-21, 31-35, Luke 8:19-21)

Again, Jesus is mobbed by the crowd. His family hears about this. Hearing about so many of His confrontations with the religious leaders they conclude He must be beside Himself from religious enthusiasm.

They no doubt were fearful for His life due to the animosity that had developed among the Pharisees and others against Him. Their visit no doubt was to persuade Him to quit His work. Perhaps there was some jealousy there also with His brothers. Joseph is not mentioned. Many think he was dead at this time. Jesus had four half-brothers:

James, Joseph, Judas and Simon (Matthew 13:55). He also had sisters. He uses this occasion to show that spiritual ties are far more important, binding and sacred than are fleshly ties. The connection of any saint with Jesus is greater than ties of blood relationship.

Jesus is not disregarding His own family. The Jews had deep respect for their parents. Rather, He is exalting those who hear and obey the word of God that their spiritual relationships will far exceed all physical relationships in eternity.

Pharisees still want a sign (Matthew 12:38-41, Luke 11:29-32)

Jesus has just claimed to cast out demons by the power of God. It is natural that the Pharisees again ask for some verification of such a bold claim Jesus says requesting such was wickedness on their part. **What was so wicked about seeking a sign?**

Jesus has already demonstrated time and again His claims to deity with signs. To seek a sign now is to disbelieve what Jesus has done before. They are seeking, but not wanting to find. They are not looking for evidence to believe in Jesus. They are looking for an excuse to criticize Him and thus dissuade the crowds from following Him.

The sign of Jonah is an obvious reference to His resurrection. Just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish so Jesus will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. The only thing is that the men of Nineveh repented where His skeptics would not repent.

Parables by the sea (Matthew 13:1-53, Mark 4:1-34, Luke 8:4-18)

Next comes a group of lakeside parables. Entering into a boat He taught a great multitude. By being in the boat a short distance from the shore they would all be able to see and hear Him as they stood on the beach. Jesus had taught parables before but this seems to be the first time he puts several together to form a discourse.

The word parable comes from a Greek word "parabollo." Which means to "place beside." Thus, a parable is placing a story describing an ordinary event beside a spiritual truth for the purpose of illustrating a spiritual truth. This was one of the most common modes that Jesus employed in His teaching.

Often His critics did not comprehend the application of His parables but Jesus so instructed his loyal disciples so that they did understand. The scribes and Pharisees were not interested in truth so Jesus often employed parables simply because of their disinterest in truth. Many times they were aware that he was talking about them but they could not understand. This confused and irritated them. These may be termed Kingdom Parables.

The parable of the sower reveals how the kingdom would be received. The parable of the lamp warns to watch how you listen. The parable of the seed reveals that God gives the kingdom its growth. The parable of the tares reveals that the good and evil in the kingdom will be separated in the end. The parable of the mustard seed shows the spontaneous growth of kingdom.

The parable of the leaven shows its quiet growth. The parable of the hidden treasure shows its great value. The parable of the costly pearl shows its priceless value. The parable of the dragnet shows that good and evil in the kingdom will be separated in the end.

Lesson Twelve

Miracles by the sea (Matthew 8:23-34; 9:18-34, Mark 4:35-5:43, Luke 8:22-36)

It has been a long and tiresome day for Jesus. He gave command to depart for the other side of the sea that He might rest. It seems that some of the multitude followed Him in other boats. Worn from the day of strenuous toil Jesus fell asleep in the stem of the boat on a cushion.

This is the only place we read of Jesus sleeping which is in a way amazing since the boat is being tossed about on the waves. A great storm can suddenly come upon this lake. It was a common occurrence. The lake is 685 feet below sea level, surrounded by hills 2,000 feet high. When the winds come across those hills they can sweep down and quickly with great force and cause the sea to become dangerous.

Thirteen men in a fishing boat would certainly be a crowd. As the waves lashed over the sides of the boat it would begin to sink. The disturbed disciples awake Jesus and say, "**Master, Master we're going to drown**" (Luke 8:245).

They are not only surprised that He is sleeping but also they seem a bit peeved. The elements obey Jesus and all is calm. Jesus' authority over nature made His disciples even more aware of His divinity. Mark records that Jesus rebuked their lack of faith.

Coming to the eastern shore they set foot on the land of the Gadarenes (**Gentile territory**) which was opposite Galilee. The area has a narrow bank, met abruptly by high limestone cliffs full of caves. Here Jesus is confronted by two men possessed by demons. Mark and Luke concentrate only on one of them. The man lived in tombs. No one could bind him. He would tare the chains apart when bound.

He was so violent no one dared pass near him. He runs and falls on his knees before Jesus. The demons cried out "**What have we to do with You, Jesus, You Son of God?** They seem to be deeply afraid of Jesus. They begged Jesus that He would not send them to the "**abyss.**" The word means "**bottomless.**" It refers to the place of the dead.

Evidently they were not ready yet to go there but wanted to remain on earth. Seeing a herd of pigs they re-requested that they be allowed to enter the pigs. He grants their request. Immediately the pigs being possessed rush down the slope into the lake and are drowned. **Why make such a request and then immediately bring destruction on themselves?** It may be they knew Jesus would be blamed for this and they are trying to cause trouble for Jesus.

Does this make Jesus guilty of destroying 2000 pigs? Jesus only permitted it, he did not cause it. This was Satan's work. Pigs were unclean animals to the Jews. Jesus considers the soul of one man more valuable than 2000 pigs.

Those who tended the pigs reported this to the city. Everyone came out to see what had happened. At the same time they find the demon possessed man "**sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in his right mind.**"

This brought even more fear to the people and they ask Jesus to leave. The man begged Jesus that he might with Him. Jesus sends him home. He can then tell all what Jesus had done for him.

Jesus now crosses over to the western shore and returns to Capernaum. A large crowd is awaiting Him. A ruler of the synagogue by the name of Jairus came pleading that he would heal his 12 year old daughter who was very sick. The crowd follows pressing very hard upon Jesus. Suddenly an unnamed woman brings everything to a halt. She had been bleeding for 12 years.

The Levitical law would have restricted her social activities as she would be considered unclean. She had spent all her money on doctors and had not gotten any better. She reaches out and touches Him. Jesus being aware that power left him asks [who touched Him?](#) Jesus would have known but he gives this woman a chance to express her faith. She immediately confesses. He removes her fear of touching Him and heals her.

While this event takes place men come from the house of Jairus that his daughter is dead. Jesus tells Jairus, **"Do not be afraid; only believe, and she will be made well."** Arriving at the house Jesus only allows Peter, James and John along with the parents to be with Him. Outside there is a big commotion. They would according to custom begin to make a wailing noise.

Jesus tells them to stop their mourning because she was not dead but only sleeps. They begin to laugh at Him. Jesus takes the child by her hand and said, **"Child, arise."** Her spirit came back and she arose. He then commanded that they give her something to eat. The parents were astonished but He **"Charged them to tell no one what had happened."** This is the second of three raisings Jesus performed. The third will be His personal friend Lazarus in Bethany ([John 11](#)).

Next occurs the healing of two blind men and a deaf-demoniac. Two blind men follow him crying out, **"Son of David, have mercy on us!"** Considering the large crowd they must have had had much difficulty in locating Jesus. Jesus asks [if they believed He was able to do this?](#)

They did and he touched their eyes saying **"According to your faith let it be to you."** Jesus tells them not to tell anyone as he does not need any more publicity at this time but they began to spread the news around the country.

A man possessed of a demon who is unable to talk is brought to Jesus. It seems the demon caused this man's physical disability. When the demon is driven out the man begins to speak. The crowd was amazed but the Pharisees said it was done by the prince of demons Jesus doesn't respond to the accusation of the Pharisees. He continues go from village to village teaching in their synagogues and healing the diseased.

Final visit to Nazareth (Matthew 13:54-58) (spring AD. 29)

Jesus again returns to his home village of Nazareth. He enters the synagogue and taught them from the Scriptures. This may have been the synagogue where Jesus would have received his early education and training. The synagogue served as a school where boys were taught to read and write Hebrew. They also were required to commit to memory many passages of Scripture.

The people's familiarity with Christ's humanity made it hard for them to believe His divinity. [Wasn't He the son of a carpenter? Where did He suddenly get all this knowledge?](#) Here the brothers of Jesus are named and mention is made of His sisters and His mother. We learn here also that Jesus had been a carpenter.

He would have learned the trade from His father Joseph although Joseph is not mentioned. So violent became the people in response to His teaching that they attempted to destroy Him but He escaped unharmed and returned to Capernaum.

Because of their unbelief He was not able to do many miracles there. It must have been very disappointing to Jesus to come back to His home village and to be received in such a hostile way. Jesus said that a prophet is without honor in his own country.

In this visit to Nazareth in the spring of A.D. 29 Jesus begins His third and final year of His ministry. There are at least 42 events mentioned as taking place in this third year. This has been called the year of opposition in contrast to the previous year of popularity.

Third Galilean tour (Matthew 9:35-11:1)

Matthew 9:35-11:1 is a discourse Jesus had with the disciples before sending them out to preach in Galilee. This is the second of Matthew's five great discourses. Mark and Luke give very abbreviated accounts. This will be the third tour of Galilee.

Jesus being overwhelmed by the needs of the people asks His disciples to pray for workers. The great need for helpless people combined with a lack of preachers was and still is a great need in our day. Jesus tells them that if they will acknowledge Him here on earth, He will acknowledge them before the Father. We cannot even put family before God.

Jesus will send them out in pairs. He empowers and commissions them to do two things. (1) Preach the Kingdom of God. (2) Heal every disease and sickness. It seems Matthew lists the apostles in the actual pairs that were sent out. There is no indication that Judas healed or preached any different than the rest

It is to be a short, quick trip. Therefore there is no need to take with them more than was essential. A host in each town would feed and house them for a few days. If they were not welcomed in a home or city then they were to leave it. Such people who have no interest in the gospel will receive a harsher judgment than even Sodom and Gomorrah.

Jesus also reflects further into the future after He is gone from the earth. He tells them there will be division and betrayal in families where some are Christians. They will be hated but if they stand firm they will be saved in the end when the "Son of Man comes." This probably refers to the coming judgment and fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70.

They are told "Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell." What we do for Jesus on earth (even a cup of water) he will do for us in heaven. Loyalty to God. We too are called upon to take up our cross and follow Him.

After hearing this discourse they go out in pairs and accomplish what Jesus sent them to do. Mark mentions the mode by which the sick were healed. They were anointed with oil. This is interesting in view of what James has to say (James 5:14).

Lesson Thirteen

Execution of John the Baptist (Matthew 14:1-12, Mark 6:14-29, Luke 9:7-9)

Galilee was ruled by Herod Antipas, son of Herod the Great. Word reached Herod about the great things being done by Jesus. Also, some were saying John the Baptist had come back from the dead. This made Herod nervous because he had beheaded John not long before. He had imprisoned Herod's wife a year before to appease his wife because John spoke out against Herod's illegal and illicit marriage.

John had said clearly "It is not lawful for you to have her." It seems however that he had been reluctant to have him put to death. Things changed when he decided to give himself a birthday party. It turned out to really be something. Probably people came from afar off. Female dancers in the east are still a part of birthday parties.

The dancer on this occasion was Salome the daughter of Philip, Herod's brother, and Herodias, now wife of Antipas thus, his stepdaughter. Her dance was sensual enough to cause Herod to make a rash promise.

Once an oath had been made a king could not go back on his word or else he would lose face in the sight of those who were present Salome prompted by her mother's demand for the head of John. Thus Herod has John executed. Later we learn that he was "grieved" by what he had done. John's disciples carry the body and place it in a tomb.

Withdrawal to Bethsaida and feeding the 5000
(Matthew 14:12-21, Mark 6:30-44, Luke 9:10-17, John 6:1-13)

This is the only event prior to the last week of Jesus' life that is recorded in all four gospels. With the need of rest and the return of the disciples from their tour through Galilee along with the news about John, Jesus proposed that they go to a secluded location. So they enter a boat and cross the sea to a small town called Bethsaida.

From this point on Jesus will spend little time in Galilee. He will return from time to time but His main work there is completed. As they departed the crowds saw which direction they were going and some ran ahead around the north side of the lake to the other side before Jesus did.

He is moved by their need of teaching and moves to a mountainside which would be suitable for teaching. Again this would have formed an amphitheater situation. It must have been quite a sight, 5,000 men plus women and children.

John tell us it was near the Passover Feast. This was likely April, A.D. 29 thus one year before Jesus' death. Jesus will not go to Jerusalem for this Passover, because on His previous visit they had attempted to kill him (John 5:1, 18).

The disciples come to him saying it was late. Let the people go to secure food and lodging. Jesus tells them to feed the multitude. They seemed stunned. It would take eight months wages to feed this crowd. They find a little boy's lunch of five loaves and two fish. The loaves and fish both would have been small. Jesus takes them and gives thanks and then distributed to those seated on the grass in groups of hundreds and fifties.

This must have been a very impressive scene with everyone seated on the grass and eating. As he was able to transform water into wine in Cana, so here he is able to multiply a boys' lunch so the 5000 plus could be fed. Remember the 5000 represented only the men.

We do not know how many women and children were present. So the number could have been well over 10,000. Jesus saw that nothing was wasted and has the disciples to gather up all that was left over. It filled 12 baskets full.

Jesus walks on the water (Matthew 14:22-36; Mark 6:45-56; John 6:15-21)

The crowd was so excited about being fed that they wanted to take Jesus and make Him king. He stops their ambitious effort by sending the disciples in a boat to the other side of the sea while he remained behind and dismissed the crowd and then disappears into the mountain. From this vantage point Jesus could see the disciples rowing their boat against the wind making little headway.

A full moon accompanied the time of the Passover so Jesus could see a good distance. They were about half way across the sea and were blown off course. It seems Jesus sets out across the middle of the lake. This is not some smooth surface. One moment he would on top of a wave and the next in the valley of the waves.

When they see Him they think He is a ghost but they are calmed by His voice, "Be of good cheer! It is I, do not be afraid." Peter now wants to walk to the Lord on the water and is granted permission. He begins, but is quickly distracted and begins to sink.

Matthew shows us both the faith and the failing of Peter. Suddenly they are at Gennesaret instead of their original destination near Capernaum. This was located by a fertile plain on the west side of the sea. Jesus is recognized and the crowds begin to gather bringing their sick and diseased with them.

Sermon on the Bread of Life (John 6:26-7:1)

Jesus tells them he had spent much time in serving their physical needs. He does some very plain talking to them. They were only seeking Him because of what they wanted out of Him rather than to receive His teachings. Even His disciples (those outside of the 12) were attracted to what he could do for them.

Instead of physical bread they should be seeking the bread of heaven, His real purpose of coming into the world was to save people's souls. They needed spiritual bread not physical. They wanted Him to be their king. It would be wonderful if they could have a king who would feed them miraculously every day as the children of Israel were fed in the wilderness.

Jesus said their main work was to believe in Him. But they wanted a sign before they were willing to believe on Him. He tells them, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst. But I said to you that you also have seen Me and do not believe." Jesus' claim to be "The bread of life" is the first in a series of "I am" statements in John's Gospel revealing His identity as God.

They begin to grumble which demonstrates a lack of trust. They could only see him as the son of Mary and Joseph - human - not the Son of God. How could it possibly be that He came down from heaven? They responded "This is a hard saying; who can understand it." Sadly we learn that many of His disciples went back and no longer followed Him.

This is perhaps the most unsuccessful sermon ever preached by Jesus. He started with thousands and finishes with a handful. Jesus turns to His disciples and asks, "Do you also want to go away?" Peter responded "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life And we believe and are sure that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

Jesus now remains close to Galilee to stay away from Judea because the Jews were plotting to take His life. He must be cautious as it will be another year before He will finish the work He was sent to do here on earth.

Conflict over ceremonial cleanness (Matthew 15:1-20; Mark 7:1-23)

The news of the feeding of the 5000 and the many other miracles creates a stir among the Jews. They send a delegation to check things out. Upon arriving they observe that some of His disciples were eating food with hands that were "unclean" which makes them to critical of the disciples.

Oral tradition had a very elaborate system about washing of the hands. Unfortunately their oral traditions became more important than the Word of God. They demand to know why Jesus' disciples were not abiding by the "tradition of the elders instead of eating their food with unclean hands?" The washing of hands was not for sanitary purposes, but was purely a religious ritual. It was not prescribed in the Law of Moses but was their own invention.

Jesus hits back with two arguments. First, they were hypocrites. They put on a mask of honoring God, but their true nature is self-serving. Second He quotes Isaiah 29:13 that they were teaching the rules (traditions) of men.

He illustrates by the avoidance of Moses' law, "**Honor your father and your mother**" by labeling something as Corban, - you had already promised to give it to God. They were putting their tradition above God's law. They could dismiss God's law by a human tradition.

Jesus saw no danger in becoming defiled by eating with unwashed hands. What makes a man unclean is what enters into his mind and comes out of his mouth via the heart. The disciples inform Jesus that the Pharisees were offended by what he had said.

Obviously they were afraid of what these Pharisees might do not only to Jesus but even to them. Jesus tells them to leave them alone. Don't follow them because they are blind guides and would only lead them to destruction. Some time later Jesus enters a house and Peter asks the Lord what the parable meant that Jesus had given to the Pharisees.

Jesus seems disturbed that they did not understand what he was saying. Jesus points out that it is what comes out of a man and not what goes into him that defiles. He says, "**But those things which proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and they defile a man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. These are the things which defile a man, but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile a man.**"

This issue of clean and unclean will come up again after the church is established. Even Peter has to be reminded of what is clean and unclean as we see in **Acts 10-11**. It's not about food it is all about what people say and do.

Lesson Fourteen

The Syro-Phoenician woman (Matthew 15:21-28; Mark 7:24-30)

Jesus now probably for the first time sets foot on foreign soil. With mounting opposition from the Jews He needs to be alone with His disciples. He goes to Phoenicia which today is Lebanon. It bordered on Galilee on the northwest. He is now surrounded by Gentiles.

His presence is immediately noted. A woman had a little girl who was possessed by a cruel demon. She pleads, "**Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David! My daughter is severely demon-possessed.**" The term, Syro-Phoenician distinguished Phoenicians from other citizens of the Syrian province of which they were a part. According to Matthew she kept shouting. She is very persistent. The conversation between them would appear that Christ deliberately insulted her.

First, Jesus ignores her, and the disciples tried to get rid of her. Nothing stops this woman from begging for help. Jesus says the children (**Jews**) must be fed first rather than give to the little dogs (**Gentiles**). Later the Gentiles will have their opportunity. Instead of becoming angry this mother gives a clever answer. "**Yes, Lord, yet even the little dogs under the table eat from the children's crumbs.**"

You wonder if a smile did not cross the face of Jesus. He replied, "**For this saying go your way; the demon has gone out of your daughter.**" Some seem puzzled at the way Jesus spoke to this woman. It would seem He is testing her faith. It is one of two times Jesus commended someone's faith. He wanted His disciples to see great faith, and of all places in a Gentile. They had demonstrated weak faith so many times they needed to see her faith.

Healing in Decapolis (Matthew 15:29-31; Mark 7:31-37)

To escape the crowds Jesus moves to the east shore of the sea. This is also Gentile territory. It was an area dominated by Greek culture and religion. He had been there once before when he healed the wild Demoniac. However, He is still unable to avoid the crowds. They brought their lame, crippled, blind, and mute laying them down at His feet.

This gave Jesus an opportunity to preach which He did by going up into a mountainside where he could be heard by all. They marveled at his miracles and glorified God. An unusual case of healing takes place. A man who seems to have a speech impediment which was no doubt a result of being deaf is brought to Him. They beg Jesus to place His hand on him.

Mark says, "He took him aside from the multitude, and put His fingers in his ears, and He spat and touched his tongue. And looking up to heaven, He sighed, and said to him, 'Ephphatha,' that is, 'Be opened.'" The Greek text does not indicate where He spit, nor does it say what He did with the saliva.

Why did Jesus put His fingers in the man's ears and why did He spit? We do not know. The "sigh" indicates the Lord did not heal without feelings. His heart was touched by every person who struggled with physical or spiritual problems.

Feeding the four thousand (Matthew 15:32-39; Mark 8:1-9)

The compassion of Jesus is once again extended when a large crowd gathered to hear Him. They were with Him for three days. Rather than send them away weak from not eating He turned to His disciples to supply them food. They are perplexed as they are in a desolate area where no food is available. Jesus asks. "How many loaves do you have?" They only had seven, but that is enough.

He commanded the people to sit down on the ground. He expressed thanks, broke the loaves with a few small fish and everyone was able to eat and be filled. This was four thousand men plus women and children which could have exceeded over 8000 who were fed. This time those being fed were Gentiles.

Another confrontation with the Pharisees and Sadducees (Matthew 15:39-16:12; Mark 8:10-21)

Jesus now goes to the opposite side of the sea to Magadan. The Pharisees and Sadducees came ready to argue with and test Jesus. These two sects were bitter enemies of one another but since they regard Jesus as a threat they suddenly become allied together. As usual they are demanding a sign.

According to Mark it caused Jesus to sigh "deeply in His spirit." No matter how spectacular a miracle might be Jesus knew it would not satisfy them. They really do not want to believe in Jesus. Their motive was to "test" Him. They hoped to find fault where they could accuse of some violation. They make it look as if they are asking for some reasonable evidence, not a miracle, but for a sign from heaven.

The weather in Palestine generally comes from the west, off the Mediterranean Sea. At dawn a thin cloud from the west, reflects a reddish color as a result of the morning sun. In the evening, that same reddish color would indicate the sky was clear in the west. While they could foretell the weather they could not see the signs of a Messiah. His miracles and teachings were clear evidence as to who He was. Because He did not fit their concept of a Messiah they rejected Him.

They hated Him because His preaching cut through their hypocrisy and traditions. They were also jealous that He drew a large following. They are more attentive to the weather than the Messiah although they have plenty of reasons to believe in Jesus.

Jesus sharply rebukes them with the statement . "A wicked and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah." Again Jesus says that the resurrection will be the only sign they will receive, even though it would be concealed from unbelievers. Leaving them behind Jesus gets into a boat to cross to the other side of the sea. The disciples had forgotten to bring bread except for one loaf. Jesus uses this as an opportunity to warn them against the teachings of the Pharisees and Sadducees. "Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees."

As usual they are unable to make any connection with what had just transpired- Jesus rebukes them. "O you of little faith." Leaven often refers to influence, especially any negative influence. Jesus had in mind the biased influence of the Pharisees and the Sadducees which kept many from accepting Jesus as the Messiah.

Two step healing of blind man (Mark 8:22-26)

Arriving at Bethsaida they are met by a group who request Jesus heal a blind man. What makes this miracle different is that it is a two step process of healing. Why, we do not know. Jesus takes him outside the village. Jesus' use of spit may sound strange to us. But in their custom spittle was supposed to have some healing powers.

The fact the man sees people as if they were walking trees may indicate he is nearsighted and not born blind since he can describe men as trees walking. Jesus lays His hands on his eyes and he can now see clearly.

Peter's confession (Matthew 16:13-20; Mark 8:27-30; Luke 9:18-21)

Jesus now withdraws north to Caesarea Philippi which was at the base of Mount Hermon. He is now well into His third year of ministry. To date His disciples still do not have a clear understanding of who He is. He asks them who people thought He was. They answered that some thought he was John the Baptist, Elijah, Jeremiah or one of the prophets.

Then he asked "But who do you say that I am?" Peter gives what has been called the "Great Confession." "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." Jesus commends Peter. He says it had not been revealed to him by men but by the Father. God had revealed this to Peter through the life, teachings and miracles of Jesus. (Peter's faith is now growing.) Jesus says further, "And I also say to you that you are Peter. And on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it."

Jesus uses two Greek words that are very significant "Peter" is petros, a small rock, while "upon this rock" is the word petra, a massive rock. The first word is masculine gender and the second is feminine gender. Jesus is making a play on words. Peter you are a little rock, but I am going to build My church on a large massive rock, that rock being the truth that I am the Son of God.

Some in an attempt to prove Jesus would build His church on Peter, argue that Jesus spoke in Aramaic and there is but one word for rock in Aramaic. The fact remains however, that the New Testament Scriptures were written in Greek and inspired by the Holy Spirit. There is no original Aramaic text. Why would the Holy Spirit makes this distinction between the rocks unless it was to illustrate the above truth that the church was to be built on Christ?

This is the first announcement of His intention to establish the church and is the first use of the word "church" in the New Testament. Jesus promises that the "Gates of Hades shall not prevail against it." Hades is the unseen realm of the dead. The death of Jesus would not destroy or prevent it.

Neither the death of church members cannot destroy it. Even if every member were killed, the seed of the church (the Word) remains so it can continue to exist. Jesus tells Peter, "I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven". Keys give access to some-thing. Peter had the privilege of preaching the first gospel sermon announcing the terms for entering the kingdom on the day of Pentecost. (See Acts 2::38, 41, 47.)

Those who say that Jesus substituted the church for the kingdom are unable to see that the words church and kingdom are used interchangeably by Jesus as he spoke to Peter. (See Matthew 16:18, 19; Mark 9:1; Revelation 1:9).

Lesson Fifteen

Jesus predicts His death and His coming kingdom (Matthew 16:21-28; Mark 8:31-9:1; Luke 9:22-27)

This event marks a change in the teaching of the Twelve. It seems the apostles are now more open to understanding that Jesus is the Messiah. He has just told them He is going to build His church. But that church could not come into existence without first His death. He had previously spoken in veiled terms about His coming death but now he will be more direct and plain as to what will happen.

They had been expecting an earthly kingdom with a human army which would liberate them from Roman dominion. Instead they are to receive a spiritual kingdom with a heavenly army and will be liberated from their sins through His death and resurrection. So He clearly tells them He will suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes. Then He tells them he will be killed and then will arise on the third day.

Peter has a problem with this. He had just confessed that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God. The concept of a dead Messiah was beyond his comprehension. Peter takes Him aside and actually rebukes Him. In a very adamant way He said, "Far be it from You Lord; this shall not happen to You!" Peter is going to take things into his own hands before things get out of control. His arrogance on this occasion stuns us.

There have always been those who think they know more than the Lord. Jesus now severely rebukes Peter. "Get behind me, Satan! You are an offense to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men." The "things of men," refers to their worldly concept of the kingdom. Peter the rock had now become a stumbling block.

Now comes some of the strongest teaching of Jesus. Calling the crowd to join with the apostles Jesus says, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me". To follow Christ will demand sacrifice and denial. It will mean changing priorities. It even includes the supreme sacrifice of giving up one's life if necessary.

Then comes the familiar words "For what is a man profited if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" One's soul is worth more than all the world put together. Yet, men will sell their soul for paltry material gain and the pleasures of this world.

The Lord concludes this discussion by assuring His disciples that the prediction of His death did not mean He would abandon His plans to establish His kingdom. He says that some standing before Him would not die before they would see the kingdom come "with power." It is important to notice this verse from **Mark 9:1**.

There are those who falsely teach that Jesus had not anticipated the rejection He would receive from the Jews and had to abandon His plans to establish His kingdom and substitute in its place the church until a future time when He would return again and establish it. Jesus plainly states some of those who were listening to Him would live to see the kingdom come with power.

A reading of **Acts 2** clearly reveals that the kingdom came with great power on the day of Pentecost. Just as Jesus has promised to give Peter the "Keys of the kingdom" we see Peter telling the crowd what they should do to enter that kingdom. It is inconceivable that the Lord would make a mistake then change His mind about when He would establish His kingdom. This denies, insults and limits our eternal, omniscient, omnipotent and sovereign God.

The transfiguration (Matthew 17:1-13; Mark 9:2-13; Luke 9:28-36)

According to tradition the transfiguration took place on Mount Tabor. However, this does not seem possible. Mount Tabor was in Galilee, yet, at this time Jesus was in the region of Caesarea Philippi.

Therefore, this probably took place on a spur of Mount Hermon near Caesarea Philippi. This would fit the description of a "high mountain" since Hermon is the highest mountain in Palestine whereas Tabor was not very high.

Jesus took Peter, John and James (the inner circle) with Him. We are not told why Jesus took these three, but on several occasions He separated them from the other apostles. Matthew says it was six days after Peter's confession. Mark also has six days. However, Luke says it was eight days. Matthew and Mark counted the days between the two incidents, while Luke included those two days (the day of the confession and the day of the transfiguration).

Jesus' main purpose in going up on the mountain was not to be transfigured but to pray. While He was praying He was transfigured. The Greek word (metamorphoo) translated as "transfigured" in our English versions is the word from which we get metamorphosis, a word indicating a radical change.

The transfiguration has been described as the pinnacle of Jesus' earthly ministry. It ranks as the principle event between His birth and His death on the cross. It was customary for Jesus to withdraw for prayer at night. It is at this time the transfiguration took place. The Lord's face was like the sun and it seems that His body became luminous and imparted its light through His garments.

Peter and the others were very sleepy but then became fully awake seeing the glory of the Lord. As to how the apostles recognized Moses and Elijah having never seen them before we do not know. It may have been revealed to them in some way or else they may have determined this from the conversation between the three. It is no wonder that they become afraid and fell on their faces.

Luke gives us the topic of discussion between Moses, Elijah, and Christ. They "spoke of His decease, which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem." This vision was for the benefit of the disciples. It confirmed the confession Peter had made and clearly confirmed the Lord's death.

Peter suddenly cries out without realizing what he was saying. "Master, it is good for us to be here, and let us make three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one of Elijah". This would be like a lean to Peter is interrupted when suddenly a cloud enveloped them and a voice out of the cloud said, "This is My beloved Son. Hear Him!"

The meaning of this event is clear. Moses represented the law Elijah represented all the prophets. The time would come when they no longer are to listen to Moses (the law) and the prophets (their teachings) but they are to listen to what Jesus said. Jesus' law will soon replace the Law of Moses. Today we are not bound by Old Testament law but we now serve the Lord and his law which is revealed in the New Testament.

As they came down from the mountain Jesus tells them not to tell anyone what they had seen, until He was raised from the dead In spite of the spectacular nature of this occasion they are able to keep this event a secret. Later many years after the resurrection Peter recounts this even.

"For we have not followed cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty For He received from God the Father honor and glory when such a voice came to Him from the Excellent Glory: `This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And we heard this voice which came from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain."

The demoniac boy healed (Matthew 17:14-20; Mark 9:14-29; Luke 9:37-43)

Descending from the mountain the next day Jesus finds a great multitude awaiting Him A boy with a dumb spirit had been brought to the apostles but they were unable to cast it out.

It seems the scribes may have been taunting the disciples because they were unable to do anything about the demon possessed boy. They no doubt were using this to discredit Jesus and His power.

The father falls on his knees and implores, "Lord, have mercy on my son, for he is an epileptic and suffers severely; for he often falls into the fire and often into the water. And I brought him to Your disciples, and they could not cure him."

The demon knows its time is up so he gets in one last attack. As the boy is brought to Jesus the demon "threw him down and convulsed him." Jesus rebuked the demon and he came out of the boy.

Later, when Jesus and the apostles were alone they wanted to know why they could not drive the demon out of the boy. He told them it was because they had little faith. Jesus seems to suggest it was because they did not pray. They may have been trusting in their own abilities. Jesus seems to further rebuke them by saying that if they had the smallest amount of faith (the size of a mustard seed) they could move mountains.

Second announcement of death (Matthew 17:22, 23; Mark 9:30-32; Luke 9:43-45)

It is critical Jesus' disciples understand His coming death and resurrection. During these final days of His earthly ministry, Jesus focused on preparing the apostles for His departure. We now have a clear prediction of His coming death and that He will arise on the "third day".

In this prediction Jesus also reveals that He would be betrayed before suffering death. Some think this refers to the betrayal by Judas while others think the word "paradidomi" can be translated as "to deliver up" or "handed over" which may suggest God's role in Jesus' death. Amazingly they still do not catch on. Luke says "It was hidden from them, so that they did not grasp". They still anticipate an earthly kingdom.

Lesson Sixteen

Temple tax money (Matthew 17:24-27; Mark 9:33)

The Law of Moses required that men between 20 and 50 support the Tabernacle (later the Temple) each year. An annual tax of half a shekel was required (Exodus 30:12-16; 2 Chronicles 24:5-6). This would have been equal to about two days' wages.

Arriving in Capernaum the tax collectors approach Peter wanting to know if Jesus was paying the Temple tax. It was probably known that Jesus did not attend the last Passover thus this raised some question about Him fulfilling His obligation to support the Temple.

When Peter approaches the house where Jesus was staying (probably Peter's house) Jesus already anticipates what Peter will say. Jesus could read his mind something He often did with others. With the use of a parable Jesus suggests that He was not obligated to pay it. Who do kings collect tax from? Peter had no problem answering it. The implication is that the Son of the King (God), Christ was exempt from the tax on His Father's house.

However, lest His action in this matter be misunderstood Jesus instructs Peter to go to the Sea of Galilee and catch a fish and he would find not only the amount for His part of the tax but also for Peter's part. This miracle demonstrated that all of nature was in subjection to Him who was the Son of the great King.

There is also another principle here. Christians who are the children of God are to be in submission to those in places of authority. Paul writes, "Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities" (Romans 13:1). The fact that Peter had to catch a fish may indicate the poor financial state Jesus and the apostles were in at that time.

Who is the greatest? (Matthew 18:1-5; Mark 9:33-37; Luke 9:46-48)

About ten days previous Jesus had promised the keys of the kingdom to Peter. On their way back to Capernaum from Caesarea Philippi the apostles began to raise the question of who would be the greatest in the kingdom. This led to a dispute as to who would occupy the most prominent positions:

Envy is an ugly thing and we are disappointed to see it among the apostles. They begin to argue among themselves about position, which were not even to exist in the kingdom. While Jesus was speaking of laying down His life they were concerned about was being raised to a high position. In Capernaum they actually come to Jesus to ask, **"Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven."**

Jesus knew why they asked this so he asks what they had argued about on their journey to Capernaum. They remain silent as they did want Him to know about their argument. Egoism is natural to most people. It drove the Jews to seek the best seat in the house, and the chief seats in the synagogue. Egoism is the cause of arrogance, selfishness, war, greed, corporate takeovers, jealousy, etc.

It was behind Eve's desire to eat the forbidden fruit If she partook she could be **"like God."** These twelve men were no different than the rest of humanity. Later on it would be who will get to sit on Jesus' right and left hand. In view of what Jesus had said to Peter about giving him the keys to the kingdom, Peter no doubt felt he could make a good case for himself being the most important person in the kingdom

It must have been astounding when Jesus answered them, **"If anyone desires to be first, he shall be last of all and the servant of all."** Jesus instructs these men in one of the most basic principles of His kingdom. Christianity is not about power and position. It is about humility not **"primacy."** His way is the way of service, not to be served. If Jesus had intended for Peter to be the head of the church (**Pope**) this would have been an opportune time to do it. Instead Jesus talks about being a servant

He illustrates this by placing a little child in their midst as a visual aid. He tells them that unless they become as a little child they can never enter the kingdom. Humility is the only way to be great. What a come down from their egoism of wanting to be the greatest. Unless they changed their attitude, even they might not make it into the Kingdom of Heaven.

And in fact, one of them will not make it. Jesus calls us to be childlike, not childish. Like children we are to be totally dependent upon our Father. Children are not turned off by ones clothes, or dirt, or color of skin. This is because they are not judgmental.

However, they are often excellent judges of character. The approval they want is primarily from their parents. If Christian only sought the approval of their Heavenly Father, how different our lives would be. We would find ourselves in the very center of the Kingdom of Heaven.

One casting out demons (Matthew 18: 6-35; Mark 9:38-41; Luke 9:49-50)

John saw a man who was driving out demons and was doing it in the name of Jesus. They told him to stop because he was not **"one of us."** We do not know the specifics about this man and his background. He obviously must have believed in Jesus because he was using His name to cast out demons.

That he was not **"one of us"** may indicate he was not following Jesus around as many of his disciples (**those not apostles**) did. Jesus tells them to leave him alone. He was not doing anything in opposition to Jesus. His work actually promoted the work of Jesus. Also, he was alleviating human suffering in the name of Jesus. Keep in mind this rebuke of the apostles must be considered in light of their jealous ambitions.

Unfortunately, some use verse 40 to teach that Christ accepts anyone who claims to be for Him and does good deeds in His name. They teach we should accept such even though they have not gained entrance into the kingdom by obedience to the gospel which requires that one repent, confess and be baptized for the remission of their sins. This interpretation would make the verse contradict **Matthew 7:21-23**.

Causing others to stumble (Matthew 18:6-14; Mark 9:42-50)

Jesus now returns to the theme of the "little ones." The word "millstone" referred to a millstone so large that it had to be turned by an animal. To be dragged under the sea by such would be a tragedy, but not as great as that which awaits all those who cause "little ones" to stumble.

We must strive never to do anything that would influence another to do wrong or to mislead them in the way of righteousness. The Lord calls upon Christians to cleanse the soul of anything that encourages evil. Jesus uses terminology which speaks of a crippling of the body. Anything that encourages evil in our lives must be cut off.

Jesus uses figurative language to describe hell. Literal worms do not live in a literal fire. These figures no doubt were derived from the garbage dump of Jerusalem called the valley of Hinnon. Worms may refer to the gnawing of a guilty conscience and fire to the agony of being eternally separated from God's presence and blessings.

To despise a little one is to look down on someone else. Never look down on a new convert or any child of God. The Lord concludes His teaching on "little ones" with an illustration of a shepherd who has lost one of his sheep. He goes immediately leaving the ninety-nine to hunt for the one that is lost.

Finding the lost sheep he rejoices more over it than the ninety-nine who are not lost. God does not want any "little ones" to be lost. This reminds us what Peter wrote, that God is, "longsuffering toward us, not desiring that any should perish but that all should come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9).

Forgiveness (Matthew 18:15-35)

Jesus' final discourse in Galilee was the result of an argument among the disciples concerning who would be greatest in the Kingdom. The first part of His teaching had to do with being childlike and this second part has to do with getting along with each other. What if your brother sins against you? Jesus discusses what a Christian should do. He must go to him.

If both parties act like Christians, they will both go at the same time and will meet each other somewhere in the middle. However, if one of the parties does not do what he or she should, that does not excuse the other party. Whether an offended or offender he is to go to the other person and try to work it out.

It is to be done in private and not talk about it to everyone else first. Hurts should not be maximized or publicized. Many little things have grown into big things because we do not follow these simple instructions of the Lord. The reason we don't do this is because we are afraid of confrontation and what might result. If we go with the right attitude we can usually work through whatever the problem may be.

If a brother won't listen to you then take some witnesses so they can establish what has taken place. Then if he refuses to still listen tell it to the church. Then if he will not listen to the church he is to be dis-fellowshipped. Jesus' use of the word "church" is significant.

Once before He used it in **Matthew 16:18**. Now He pictures the church as a body of people authorized to include or exclude individuals from fellowship with the church. The word church is found only in these two passages in the Gospels.

The **first** refers to the **universal church** and the **second** to a **local congregation**. Evidently Jesus' teaching about going to a sinful brother prompted Peter to ask how often he should forgive. The seventy times seven means there is no limit.

Jesus relates the parable of the unmerciful servant to illustrate His point. The application is obvious. God has forgiven us so much we should be willing to forgive others. The teachings of Jesus in **Matthew 18:15-35** are desperately needed today.

Lesson Seventeen

Brothers confront Jesus (John 7:2-9)

The Feast of the Booths, or Tabernacles was near. This was one of three major feasts of the Jews. It was celebrated in September or early October. It was about six months before the Passover. It was always a joyous occasion for the Jews. The brothers of Jesus urged Him to go up to Jerusalem. They wanted Jesus to openly reveal Himself and His miracles instead of avoiding the crowds.

As yet, they were not believers in Him. We detect some sarcasm in their words. Jesus replied by saying He would not go. Yet He does. **Was Jesus lying?** The answer may be found in the word **"yet"** He said, **"My time has not yet come."** In other words He was saying, **"I will not be going at this time with you."** But He will go a little later on.

Journey to Jerusalem (Luke 9:51-62; John 7:10)

After a few days Jesus leaves with the disciples for Jerusalem. He does not take the usual route but the shorter route through Samaria. According to John it was done in secrecy. From now on till His death (**six months**) Jerusalem is to become His headquarters just as Capernaum had served during His Galilean work. Jesus would no more return to Galilee until after His resurrection.

In going to Jerusalem His first stop is in Samaria where previously He had been well received but this time the village where he stopped must have looked upon Him as just another Jew on his way to Jerusalem and refused Him lodging. This arouses the anger of James and John.

They must have felt this to be an insult and were ready to bring down fiery destruction from heaven on this village. The **"apostle of love"** of later years is much different than this apostle who now is ready to call down fire upon the Samaritans.

This shows the immaturity of the inner circle of apostles and that they have a long way to go to attain the maturity that would be necessary for them to direct the early church. Jesus rebukes them saying that He did not come to destroy but to save.

In contrast to the many who had now turned back from following Him, a man announced that he wanted to be a disciple of Jesus. He said, **"I will follow You wherever You go."** Jesus could see into the heart of this man. It is obvious the man did not realize the hardships that were involved in being a disciple of Jesus. He is only seeing the popular side of being a disciple.

Jesus did not accept or reject the man's offer. He points out it would be a hard life with no place to sleep or rest. He needed to count the cost. A second man encounters Jesus' call to **"follow me."** This man wanted to follow but first he needed to bury His father. This sounds reasonable. In that culture to bury one's father took precedence over everything else.

Jesus' answer no doubt sounded harsh **"Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and preach the kingdom of God."** Jesus was saying let the spiritually dead bury the physically dead. Burying the dead could take several days under their customs. While burial of one's father was a sacred duty he must learn that the first duty that a man owes is his duty to God. The situation was such that Jesus did not consider his request reason for not following Him.

A third man really wanted to follow but requested that he first go and bid farewell to those in his house. Again this sounds reasonable but it seems he had difficulty in letting go of his family. In contrast when Jesus had previously called the four fishermen to follow him they followed without any hesitation. Jesus said a plowman must run a straight furrow.

Looking back would be fatal. He must look to the things which are in front. Jesus tells him that once you decide to follow, there is no turning back. The lesson we gather from the incidents of these three men is the word "**commitment.**" To be a disciple of Christ one must be totally committed. This is a fundamental teaching still needed today.

In the temple (John 7:11-51)

It has now been about eighteen months since Jesus had been in Jerusalem. However He had not been forgotten by His enemies for they were seeking Him out thinking He would be at the feast. This is His third visit to Jerusalem during His ministry. He goes about it quietly as they were already seeking ways to kill him He would not bring about His premature death as He had much to teach His apostles yet.

The crowds were buzzing with opinions about Jesus. There seems to be no clear consensus as to who He was. Many were afraid to speak out for Him for fear of what the leaders might do to them. The leaders had great power over the people. They could have someone excommunicated from the synagogue as a reprisal for believing in Jesus.

Half way through the fest Jesus came out from secrecy and began to teach the people in the very court of the Temple. As He taught they were amazed at his ability to know letters (**read and write**) having never been trained as a rabbi. He did not dress as a rabbi but He applied the Scriptures as no rabbi they had ever heard.

His teaching was authoritative because it originated with God which made it distinct and different from the teaching of the rabbis. Only those who wanted to know and do God's will would recognize Jesus for who He was---God's Son

Jesus said the leaders did not keep Moses' law. By enforcing their traditions about Sabbath keeping they had condemned Jesus for healing on the Sabbath and accused Him of blasphemy as a result they were about to break one of the Ten Commandments, "**You shall not murder.**"

This really stung them. They now blaspheme more by accusing Him of being demon possessed. He says He healed (**probably refers to the paralyzed man**) a man on the Sabbath but yet they will circumcise a child if the eighth day falls on the Sabbath. They allowed an exception in circumcision but not for healing a man who was paralyzed.

While it was known that the leaders wanted to kill Jesus, yet no one did anything. **Could this mean He was the Messiah?** They said they knew where Jesus was from but no one knew where the Messiah would be from. They seem to think no one was supposed to know. There was a tradition that the Messiah would just suddenly appear.

The Scriptures clearly predicted where He would be from (**Micah 5:2**). He replied that the important thing was that He was from God who had sent Him. This was all they could handle. They wanted to seize Him but they couldn't. **Why?** Because John says, "**His hour had not yet come.**" Many did believe in Him. Evidently people were openly taking sides.

Leaders attempt to arrest Jesus (John 7:32-52)

Jesus prophesies His death. He will remain alive a little longer then He will return to the Father who sent Him. They may look for Him but they will not find Him.

Even after his resurrection only a few chosen ones were allowed to see Him. Some of the Jews thought He might be speaking of going to teach the Greeks.

The Feast of Booths commemorated the memory of how God protected their ancestors in their travel through the wilderness. Every day except the last day of the feast a priest stood in front of the Temple and poured out water from a golden pitcher onto a rock. This commemorated the water that flowed from a rock when they needed water in the wilderness.

This was not done on the eighth day of the feast. So on this final day Jesus announces **"If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water."** He was referring to the Holy Spirit who would later come upon those who believed (**Christians**).

This generated faith in some of the people. Others still could not believe. They said the Messiah would come from Bethlehem but Jesus was from Nazareth. Little did they know Jesus was from Bethlehem (**born there**). The temple guard was sent to arrest Jesus but they could not do it. They must have believed in Him too. They report back to the chief priests and Pharisees who wanted to know why did not arrest Him.

They answered, **"No man ever spoke like this Man!"** The leaders accuse them of being deceived. They said that none of the Pharisees believe in Him and the common people were ignorant of the law, thus he must not be who He claimed to be.

Nicodemus defends Jesus by saying an accused person has the right to be heard before condemning him. Apparently at this time Nicodemus had become a secret believer. They skeptically rebuke him for his comments.

Questionable text (John 7:53-8:5)

These verses which tell of the woman taken in adultery are questionable. The earliest and most reliable manuscripts do not contain this event. In fact it is not found in any manuscript before the sixth century. It probably was not a part of John's original Gospel. It may have been a story that was well circulated about Jesus that some scribe later on added to the text.

However, we will treat it as a part of the original text. Here is a woman caught in the act. She stands condemned in the eyes of the Pharisees. She is publicly disgraced and there is no one to support her. Even the man is not present. **Where is he?** This shows their hypocrisy. Jesus is presented with what seems to be a dilemma. **What do you say?**

Almost as if He is uninterested in the situation Jesus stoops down and wrote on the ground. We would like to know what He wrote. They would not let up and kept asking Him. Jesus stands up and without disregarding either the Law of Moses or this sinful woman he simply says, **"He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first."** They can only walk away beginning with the oldest to the last.

Now Jesus is left alone with the woman. He treats her with gentleness. Christ's forgiveness is freely given, but it is not cheap. With grace comes the expectation of godliness. Jesus sends her away with an admonition to sin no more. If this story is not true it certainly reflects the character and beauty of our Lord's love for sinful and broken people.

Lesson Eighteen

Jesus continues to teach in the temple area (John 8:12-29)

Following the Feast of the Tabernacles Jesus moves about the Temple teaching.

His teaching is an expansion of what He had been teaching the previous week at the feast He declares, "I am the light of the world." This is the second "I am" statement Light represents truth. Darkness hates the light because it exposes its evil deeds.

When Jesus says He is "light" the Pharisees could not miss its Messianic implications thus they challenge Him as to who He was. Jesus gives Himself as testimony as to who He was and how His teaching were consistent with what God said.

So they are in a sad shape since they would not believe these two witnesses. Jesus is the only way to the Father but they have cut Him off therefore there remains for them only judgment and certain separation from God.

Jesus will return to the Father (John 8:21-30)

Jesus would go away, but He would return to the Father. They will look for Him but will die in their sins. In ridicule they ask if He will commit suicide. Why would they be looking for Him after His death? It may be they will still be looking for a Messiah who will never come, thus no opportunity would be left to them.

They because of the hardness of their hearts they would die in their sins. This world was not His world. They are unable to see His world thus they will miss out on His kingdom. They again ask, "Who are you!" He says He is who he has been saying to them all along.

Jesus tells them He will be lifted up. This has reference to the cross. The actual crucifixion by itself did not convince many but His resurrection did. After being "lifted up" many would come to know who He really is. We see this on the Day of Pentecost when the people cried out, "what shall we do?" in response to being pricked in their hearts because they had put the Son of God to death on the cross.

True freedom (John 8:31-59)

If they hold to the teachings of Jesus then they can be free. Anyone in bondage to sin is a slave of sin. But freedom in Christ means freedom from the penalty of sin, freedom from its practice, freedom from its power, freedom from fear of judgment. When Jesus sets us free we are truly a free people. This would be true of early Christians who were physical slaves or bondservants at the time they were Christians.

These unbelievers said they were descendants of Abraham and were never slaves to anyone. However this was not true. They had been slaves to the Egyptians, Syrians, and Babylonians and even at the time many were slaves to Romans. Even Jews had at times been slaves to other Jews. They certainly were slaves to sin.

Being a child of Abraham was a great honor. But there is a difference in being Abraham's descendants and being his children. Being a descendant was nothing more than a biological fact. Being his child required living as he lived-by faith. By seeking to kill Jesus they were seeking to destroy the very thing that Abraham was looking for (Genesis 12:1-3; Galatians 3:16-29).

Faith was the dominant characteristic of Abraham. They did not have his kind of faith. They said they were not illegitimate children because they had God as their father. Jesus told them "If God were your Father, you would love Me, for I proceeded forth and came from God, nor did I come of Myself, but He sent Me." He then tells them that their real father was the devil because they were doing what he does. Satan is not only a liar but the father of lies.

He is also a master of half truths and Scripture twisting. Satan could convince these Jews that Jesus was not the Messiah by misleading them into a false concept of what the Messiah would be like. This is some of the strongest words Jesus has yet spoken to them.

When Jesus said, "Before Abraham was, I AM," they know He was equating Himself with God. This is one of the clearest claims by Jesus of His deity. They are now prepared to kill Him. They begin picking up stones to stone Him but again Jesus slips away.

Healing the blind man (John 9:1-38)

This is one of the most interesting events of the New Testament as it demonstrates how arrogant and hard of heart people can be against plain evidence. This event takes place soon after Jesus' confrontation in the Temple court with the unbelieving Jews. A blind beggar is afflicted with congenital blindness. His disciples wanted to know what caused his blindness.

Was it his sins or the sins of his parents? It was a common belief at that time that physical illness was usually the result of sin. Jesus gives an answer they were not expecting. It was for the glory of God. This does not mean God ordained this man to be blind so this miracle could take place but rather his blindness will be used in a positive way to bring glory to God.

It was not a matter of why he became blind but God is about to be glorified through his healing. Also, Jesus now has a short time to live so He must do as much as He can while the opportunity prevailed. Mixing spittle with mud would not be surprising as the Jews believed that saliva had medicinal value. The man goes without hesitation to the Pool of Siloan to wash his eyes as Jesus had directed. This indicates the man feels something good will be the result. It was good. After washing he came home seeing.

As expected the neighbors become very excited. This man looks like the blind man and sounds like him but other thought it must be someone else that looked like him. They begin to ask questions. The man acknowledges that he is the one who was blind.

He tells how Jesus made mud and put it on his eyes. **Where is this Jesus?** The man had no idea as he never saw him so he could not recognize Him if he did see Him. They now take him to the Pharisees. **Why?** They too must not have been displeased that he had been healed on the Sabbath.

When told what happened the Pharisees were appalled that Jesus would do this on the Sabbath. Making mud and healing would be considered a violation of their traditions about the Sabbath. They can hardly believe this man can now see.

How was it a sinner could do such a thing. After all, "God does not hear sinners?" As they express their doubt the man reiterated that Jesus had opened his eyes therefore Jesus must be a prophet. They still refuse to believe.

Now they go to the parents to confirm that this man was their son and to verify he had always been blind. This they confirmed but they said they did not know who opened his eyes. They lied about this. The reason they didn't acknowledge Jesus was their fear of being put out of the synagogue.

Excommunication was a fearful thing as you lost all ties to those around you. You were completely ignored by everyone. The more questions the Pharisees asked the more it became obvious a miracle had occurred. Yet they as to hardened they refuse to believe it. They declare that the healed man was born in sins and how dare him to attempt to teach them. The man seems to tire of their relentless questioning asking them if they want to keep hearing the same answers he had been giving.

He asks. **"Do you want to become His disciple too?"** They could take it no longer, thus they had him cast out of the synagogue. This would leave the impression he could not be trusted in what he reported. The man lost nothing for as a blind beggar he had no important social or economic connections to begin with.

Jesus hears of what happened He found him and asked him, "Do you believe in the Son of God?" The man wanted to know who he was and then he would believe. When Jesus told him that he was speaking to Him at that time, the man replied, "Lord I believe." The Pharisees try to get in the last word, "Are we blind also?" Jesus tells them that if they had been blind they would have no sin, but because they said we see they remained in sin.

Jesus is the Good Shepherd (John 10:1-18)

The words of Jesus about the Pharisee's blindness are followed by a discourse on being the Good Shepherd. There were three main occupations of Palestine, fishing, farming and shepherding. Jesus said, a shepherd who does not enter by the gate but climbs over the wall is a "thief and a robber."

Several flocks were often kept in one sheepfold. They were put under the care of a doorkeeper who would lie down at night barring the doorway. In the morning the one in charge would open the gate. The shepherds would then call his sheep.

Each sheep recognized his shepherd's voice and followed him out into the pastures. Jesus is the door to those who will enter through Him. This person will go in and out and find eternal life. A thief comes to steal but the Lord came that they might have life eternal.

He is the good shepherd because a good shepherd will lay down his life for his sheep. Hired help will not do this. If they see a wolf coming they will run away. Jesus is a good shepherd because He knows His own and His sheep know Him. He has other sheep (Gentiles) not of this fold but they will all become one flock. The sacrificial nature of the Lord is contrasted with the self-serving religious leaders of His day.

They were supposed to be God's shepherds over the Jews, but they had failed miserably in their task. They were the thieves and robbers interested only in lining their pockets. They were indifferent to the people's spiritual needs. They were blind guides leading the blind into a pit. Their self righteous attitude kept them from ministering to those in need.

Those listening to Him became divided. Many were saying "He has a demon and is insane." Others said His words were not those of one who was demon-possessed because a demon could not open the eyes of a blind person. We are amazed that their own blindness.

Lesson Nineteen

The seventy sent out (Luke 10:1-24) (October A.D. 29)

Jesus is now working in the Judean countryside. We wonder which cities He visited. Did he go to Bethlehem where he was born? Did he go to such places as Beersheba and Hebron? We are not told the extent of his Judean preaching. Knowing the cities he planned to visit he appoints "seventy others" (other than the apostles) to precede him in each city he plans to visit. He is reaching out to new places preaching the same messages.

Time is now getting close to his crucifixion and he must reach as many people as possible. The instructions he gives to the seventy is very similar to those given to the twelve earlier. They were sent in pairs. He gave them power to heal and to cast out demons. Their message was the kingdom is near

This mission probably only lasted a few days. We are told they returned with joy and excitement. Part of this excitement was due to their ability to cast out demons. Jesus said he saw Satan falling from his lofty heights. The overthrow of Satan was taking place. Jesus tells them their rejoicing should not be that the demons were disposed but rather that their names were written in heaven.

The Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37)

One day as Jesus was teaching, a lawyer stood up to get his attention. A lawyer was not what we think of today as a lawyer. He was an expert in the Law of Moses. He asked the most important question anyone could ask. **“What shall I do to inherit eternal life?”** It wasn’t that the man was sincerely interested in salvation. His purpose was to test Jesus hoping to get him at an unguarded moment when he might catch him in some flaw.

Jesus simply turned the question back on the lawyer. **“What is written in the law? How do you read?”** To save face the lawyer must answer. He quotes **Deuteronomy 6:5** and **Leviticus 19:18** which was the correct answer. Jesus commends his answer and tells him to do what he has quoted and he will have eternal life.

Things all of a sudden are not going as the lawyer expected. He was caught up in the very trap he had set for Jesus. So he poses a second question to Jesus no doubt hoping to catch Jesus in yet another trap. He asked **“And who is my neighbor? Jesus responded with the parable of the Good Samaritan, telling of the priest and Levite who ignored an injured man and a Samaritan who helped him. Jesus asks the lawyer, “Which of these three do you think was neighbor to him who fell among the thieves?”**

It must have been difficult for the lawyer to say the Samaritan, so instead he said, **“He who showed mercy on him.”** Jesus finishes the dialogue by saying, **“Go and do likewise.”** Remember just a few months before Jesus had been rejected by the Samaritans on his way up to Jerusalem from Galilee. The lesson is perfectly clear. My neighbor is anyone, even an enemy, who is in need. This is still a difficult lesson for us to accept today.

A visit with Mary and Martha (Luke 10:38-42)

The setting for this event is in Bethany just about two miles east of Jerusalem on the other side of the Mount of Olives. Jesus is visiting in the home of Mary and Martha. They also had a brother named Lazarus. Jesus probably already knew this family. He may have visited them earlier when He was at the feast in Jerusalem. Or he may have been too busy to come during the feast but comes later on.

They have worked to prepare a meal for Jesus and his disciples. This would be a great task to prepare for so many. They must have had a house of some size to do this. After Jesus arrives Mary walks out and leaves her sister to do all the work while she sits at the feet of Jesus listening to him teach. Culturally this would have been inappropriate. Meantime, Martha is becoming more and more upset at her sister’s absence.

Finally she enters the room where Jesus is teaching and vents her frustrations. **“Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Therefore tell her to help me.”** It is interesting to note the different approaches of the women as they seek to honor Jesus. Jesus tells Martha she is making too much out of the situation.

Actually what Mary was doing was more important than what Martha was doing. Martha had the privilege of sitting at the feet of Jesus but she was worried about the meal. Jesus will be gone in five short months and she will miss out on this opportunity to hear him teach. We too often are so involved with trivial matters and miss out on spiritual opportunities.

Teaching on prayer (Luke 11:1-13)

On one occasion when Jesus had finished praying His disciples asked him to teach them how to pray. **Have you ever felt awkward when you prayed? Don’t we all want to know the “how” of praying to an Almighty God?** Jesus repeats essentially the same prayer he had given in the Sermon on the Mount. This is not a prayer that is to be memorized and then repeated over and over. It simply sets forth principles that can guide us when forming the structure of a prayer.

Consideration should be given to addressing and respecting God's name. They were to pray for the coming kingdom. We too should pray for the kingdom which is now in existence. Consideration should be given to asking God's will to be done about our personal wishes. It is proper to ask for those things that are needful for life. There is always the need to recognize the sin in our lives and ask for God's forgiveness and also to be willing to forgive others (a most difficult thing for most of us).

Satan is active trying to destroy us so we need God's providential help in leading us so we will not enter into situations that bring on difficult temptations. Jesus stresses the importance of persistence. He gives the parable of a host who knocks at the door of a neighbor because he needed bread for a friend who had arrived unexpected in the middle of the night. Because of the late he is refused but does not give up. He is persistent.

The lesson is very clear. If a reluctant friend can be persuaded how much more will a heavenly Father bless us? We should never be half-hearted in our praying. Earthly fathers do not return evil to the requests of their sons. Our heavenly Father is greater than our earthly fathers. Jesus specifically says God will give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him. This had reference to the gift of the Holy Spirit which soon would be bestowed on all who were baptized in His name. (Acts 2:38)

Jesus again accused of blasphemy (Luke 11:14-36)

The Jewish leaders can no longer deny Jesus has done great miracles. They can either admit Jesus' power is from God and submit to His Lordship or they can relegate His power to Satan. Jesus had cast a demon out of a mute man. Everyone is amazed except of course the religious leaders who level the charge made previously in Galilee that he was doing this by the power of Beelzebub.

So Jesus reminds them that if this were true then Satan is fighting Satan because every time a demon is cast out of a person Satan is losing his power. Some wanted further proof by a sign from heaven. The fact is that regardless of any sign they still would not believe. Jesus without question was driving out demons and performing other miracles which revealed the kingdom of God was eminently coming. There is no excuse for their rejection.

Jesus explains his words further with a parable. Satan is a strong man fully armed with demons guarding his house. Someone stronger (Jesus) overpowers him. Jesus overpowers Satan in the fact he takes away his armor and divides the spoils. Jesus is stronger than Satan. He will bind Satan and dispose of him for eternity (Revelation 20:2, 10).

He further illustrates the danger of being neutral. A reformed but complacent person can become an easy target for Satan. Demons need a resting place so they can return to a former dwelling place and bring other demons. Personal desires to reform are often short lives.

Dinning with another Pharisee (Luke 11: 37-54)

Jesus is asked to dine with another Pharisee. The first thing this Pharisee notices is that Jesus had not washed before eating. This was not for the purpose of cleaning dirt or some other substance from the body. It was a ceremonial ritual which was one of their many traditions.

It is completely ignored by Jesus. Thus the Pharisees considered Jesus as being ceremonially unclean. Jesus issues a strong rebuke. The Pharisees clean the outside but inside they were corrupt. They were scrupulous about tithing their herbs but ignored justice and love of God.

They loved to have the chief seats in the synagogues and wanted to be recognized and greeted in the market places. They were like concealed tombs which people walk over without realizing what was underneath. The people of that day were in danger as they came into contact with the Pharisees by being contaminated with their traditions rather than the teaching of God's Word.

This still occurs today. People get distracted with certain traditions and overlook some of the important teachings of God's word.

Lesson Twenty

Warning against hypocrisy Luke 12:1-12

We are getting close to the end of the Judean ministry. Large crowds were now following Jesus. Luke tells us thousands were following, "trampling on one another." Jesus begins to give a number of warnings. The first warning concerned the hypocrisy of the Pharisees.

The Lord had just dined with a Pharisee and knew exactly what he was thinking - seeking an opportunity to find fault with Jesus. He also knows about their death plots. So, he warns of the "leaven of the Pharisees."

They appear highly religious and devout, but they were very dangerous. The question to His disciples was, [will you give in to the Pharisees who can kill only the body or God who can cast into hell?](#) To help them in their decision He reminds them that God watches over them and knows all their trials. [If He watches over the sparrow how much more will he watch over his children?](#)

If they choose to deny Jesus on earth, He will deny them in heaven. He warns that faithfulness to Him will cause them to be brought before the synagogues and places of authority for trial. But do not worry for the Holy Spirit will instruct them what to say. The conclusion is, don't fear men who hate you. Rather fear the Father who loves you.

Warning about riches (Luke.12:13-34)

As Jesus is teaching He is suddenly interrupted by someone in the crowd. "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me." Moses had given instructions about this in [Deuteronomy 12:15-17](#). It was common practice for a rabbi to arbitrate disputes such as these. This man considered Jesus to be a rabbi who would help him in this matter.

Jesus rebukes the man. The man's mind was not on the sermon but inheritance. No doubt the Lord was grieved that His teachings had failed to penetrate the man's heart as well as the others. He then warns the crowd about greed and trust in wealth. Greed is the desire for more and more in a bad sense. Inordinate desire for more never brings satisfaction. The greedy person is concerned only with self, rather any good he might do for others. The Bible calls this "covetousness."

Jesus gives the parable of the rich fool. His focus was upon the things he possessed. This parable has been called the mistakes of a rich man. It teaches against materialism. Maybe more than ever before we today live in a world that emphasizes the material. Many are obsessed with possessions and financial success.

The land of a rich man was productive, so much so he began to reason how he could hoard up more and more grain by building greater barns. He envisioned a life of ease, eating, drinking and being merry. Yet, that very night he would die. There is nothing wrong with prospering but what about our attitude toward wealth. [What will we do with it?](#) This man obviously did not consider God or his fellow man. He thought he could feed his soul on corn and just live on and on. Life is short and uncertain.

James reminds us it is like a vapor which can disappear quickly and disappear. Jesus gives the theme He expressed earlier of laying up treasure in heaven. He warns against being obsessed with food, drink and clothing (material things). [If God takes care of the flowers and sparrows will He not also take care of us when we put Him first?](#) He also adds we should show charity toward the poor.

Warnings on preparedness (Luke 12:35-48)

The central theme here is "Be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect." While the disciples did not know it yet, this is a clear reference to the Lord's second coming. To stress the importance of being ready Jesus uses several illustrations. Some see four parables here. Peter certainly considered them as parables (v. 41).

There is the parable of the waiting servant, the parable of the thief coming in the night, the parable of the wise steward and the parable of the knowledgeable and ignorant servants. These illustrations teach the importance of being prepared for the coming of the Lord. He also stresses that privilege brings with it responsibility.

Warning of coming trouble (Luke 12:49-53)

Jesus will pay the price of the cross and this will entail hardships on the disciples. Jesus counts the cost for the disciples. He said, "I have come to send fire on the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled!" The fire must refer to the fiery consequences of His ministry. There will be hardships. He will be baptized (immersed) in suffering concluding with His death on the cross. He acknowledges that he lives in distress as he anticipates what will happen.

This gives us an insight into the emotions that were stirring inside our Lord's heart. Furthermore, it will mean alienation within families. Because there will be no neutral zone many will reject Him while others will believe in Him. It will cause division even among the most intimate families. While Jesus did not bring peace on the earth, he did bring an inner peace to the Christian. Unbelievers can never have this kind of peace.

Warning against not discerning the time (Luke 12:54-59)

Almost anyone in Palestine could discern from certain signs what the weather was going to be like. Why is it they were so good at observing weather patterns but yet so poor at understanding the spiritual signs of the times? The signs Jesus speaks of concerned His coming into the world and their recognizing Him as the Messiah.

They should make friends with the Lord (believe on Him) who will take them before the Father either for adoption or for judgment. Time is running short. They needed to reconcile quickly. It would be better to settle out of court than to be brought before the Judge in the end. This is still true with us today.

Warning to repent or perish (Luke 13:1-9)

We have no specific details about the massacre of certain Galileans except for what Luke records. We do know that Pilate governed Judea and that he was in constant conflict with the Jews. According to Luke, Pilate had executed some Galileans while they were in Jerusalem offering sacrifices. In some way they had done something that must have been rebellious.

They wanted Jesus to explain why good people have bad things to happen to them. Or, since many of them believed that a person suffered because of sin, does this mean these Galileans had sinned? Jesus does not buy into their thinking. These Galileans were not worse than all the Galileans.

Rather, judgment is universal and unless all men repent they will perish. Jesus then mentions an incident of a tower in Siloam falling on eighteen victims. They were not worse than anyone else who lived in Jerusalem. They were just in the wrong place at the wrong time. Those who lived in Jerusalem needed to repent too.

Jesus now gives the parable of the fig tree. A man had planted a fig tree in his vineyard maybe to supplement his grape crop. He waited for it to mature and bear fruit. But it didn't. He waited a second and also a third year but nothing was produced.

It is time to cut it down and replace it with something more productive. The farmer's hired hand who has been caring for the tree does not want to see the tree destroyed. He asks for one more year so he can fertilize it and then it may bear fruit but if doesn't then cut it down.

Many who heard Jesus preach were like that tree. They were a bad tree. They had been placed where they could hear Jesus. The Lord nourished them with His word. He also gave them many signs that He was the Messiah which was like fertilizing the tree.

He then waited patiently for them to believe (**produce fruit**). However, He will not tolerate them to remain unfruitful. So it was time for them to repent or else perish. Judgment is coming to the eighteen who died at the collapse of the tower and the Galilean rebels and everyone who bears no fruit.

Opposition to healing a woman (Luke 13:10-21)

Another Sabbath controversy takes place. Jesus is teaching in a Synagogue and notices a woman who was bent over. She had suffered this condition for eighteen years. He heals the woman. Immediately she straightened up and began to glorify God. The ruler of the synagogue reacts with indignation because this was done on the Sabbath. He yells at the crowd not Jesus.

It is as if he is blaming the woman for coming and being healed. Jesus reacts by calling him a **"hypocrites."** **Don't you lead your ox or donkey to water? Shouldn't this woman who is a daughter of Abraham who has been bound by Satan (probably demon possessed) for eighteen years be loosed from her bond on the Sabbath?**

If Jewish leaders could work to preserve an animal, certainly Jesus could work to restore the health of a daughter of Abraham. The result was that those who were so opposed to him were actually put to shame while at the same time the multitude rejoiced for what had been done.

Jesus now gives two illustration of the kingdom. Both refer to something little which grow big. He refers to mustard seed and leaven. Although these things are small they can multiply and grow tremendously. The Jews were expecting the Messianic kingdom to come with great power as an army. Instead it will come by way of dwelling in the hearts of men, quietly and imperceptibly spreading over the Roman Empire.

Lesson Twenty One

The Feast of Dedication (John 10:22-42)

This feast was celebrated on the 25th of Kislev and roughly would be around December 19th or 20th (A.D 30). It was an eight-day memorial celebration of the rededication of the temple in 165 B.C. It was not an official pilgrim feast but it did draw a good number of people.

He had been there just two months ago for the Feast of Tabernacles. Jesus is walking around the Portico of Solomon, which provided shelter from the cold winter wind and rain. It also provided an opportunity to gather a crowd to speak to.

Surrounded by Jewish leaders He is asked. **"How long do You make us doubt? If You are the Christ, tell us plainly."** The question was designed to get Him to say he was the Messiah thus they could accuse him of blasphemy. He had already stated who he was on other occasions. If He does, they will neither listen or understand. He is the Messiah but he is not what they conceived a Messiah to be.

Therefore, he chooses to let his miracles declare His identity rather than His words. He says, **"The works that I do in My Father's name, they bear witness of Me"**. He then responds with an allegory about sheep which is a rebuke. He is the true shepherd of God's people but they would not believe because they were not His sheep. His true sheep know Him and follow Him.

Furthermore, they are eternally secure in Him. No power on earth can separate us from His love. He knows us personally and leads us to eternal life. This was all they could take. They take up stones to stone him for blasphemy. But they can't kill Jesus legally since only the Romans could administer death but they were so mad they would do it regardless of Roman law.

He points them back to **Psalm 82:6**, where the judges of Israel were called **Elohim**. They acted on behalf of God's authority thus they were permitted to wear God's title **Elohim**. If they did not get angry at the judges for being called by God's title **why should they object if Jesus claims to be the Messiah?** He too was acting in behalf of the authority of God.



The Perea ministry

After the Feast of Dedication Jesus begins what is known as the Perea ministry. This three month period has also been referred to as the **"period of persecution."** Attempts to take the life of Jesus become widespread.

Much of His time during this period was spent in an area of land east of the Jordan River opposite Jerusalem and Jericho. There are about twenty four recorded events which take place. Jesus had done very little work in this area previous to this time.

This was the area where John the Baptist had done much of his work. The people there had an enduring affection for John which was naturally transferred to Jesus.

Here Jesus is safer among the crowds. It was also under the jurisdiction of Herod Antipas. Jerusalem leaders would not legally be able to arrest Him in Perea.

Question about entering the kingdom (Luke 13:22-30)

During this preaching tour someone asks the question: **Will few or many be saved?** Jesus admonishes them to make every effort to enter the narrow way. He says that many will try and will not be able to do so. It is no easy task. It takes extra effort.

It is a gift we do not merit but it is not a gift that is that is void of any effort. Many will be disappointed they did not make the effort. Jesus is that door because He is the only way to the Father (**John 14:6**). The Jews would fail greatly in this respect, yet, the Gentiles would respond. Such people like Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and the prophets will be there.

Many will not be able to attend the great banquet the Lord will provide. However, those the least expected to be there, will be there. These men of the past were not perfect, some of them were not very good, but they all trusted God for their salvation rather than their own works. We honor visible, tangible works. God honors pure hearts The Jews reject their own Messiah but the Gentiles flocked to Him. No wonder there will **"weeping and gnashing of teeth."** They lacked faith.

Jesus warned about Herod (Luke 13:31-35)

Herod Agrippa is the one who had John the Baptist executed. He was suspicious of Jesus. At one time he believed Jesus was the **"reincarnation"** of John. Some Pharisees said Herod wanted Jesus killed. **Why would they warn Jesus?**

Perhaps they wanted Jesus to move back to Jerusalem where they could seize Him and kill Him. It could have been some good Pharisees who were concerned about Jesus' safety. Jesus is not afraid to die. That is why He came to earth. But it must be in Jerusalem and not Perea.

He calls Herod a fox. He will continue with God's plans and part of the plan was that He die in Jerusalem where the prophets had died. He had no fear of any threats from Herod. Jesus begins a lament over Jerusalem. How pathetic was their situation. Time and again God had sent prophets to them and they stoned them. He would have gathered them as a hen gathers her chicks but they were not willing for this to happen.

All the hopes and aspirations of Jerusalem were lost. Their house will be left in a desolate condition. This no doubt refers to the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 by the Romans. He says they will not see him again until they cry "**Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord**" (Psalm 118:26).

In about three months the crowds outside Jerusalem will shout these very words as He makes His triumphal entry into the city. However, these words must ultimately refer to the second coming of the Lord when every knee shall bow and every tongue will confess that He is Lord (Philippians 2:9-11).

Healing a man with dropsy (Luke 14:1-24)

On a Sabbath, Jesus is invited to eat with a prominent Pharisee. This will be third time He has done this. While there he was being watched closely by the Pharisees. There in the crowd was a man with dropsy. Today this disease is called edema which is the body retaining water. It indicates a heart or liver condition. Likely he has followed Jesus there hoping to be healed. It is the Sabbath. **What will Jesus do?**

Jesus anticipates what their reaction will be. So, He asks them a simple question. "**Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath or not?**" The answer is obvious. But the Pharisees keep silent. Jesus then heals the man. He reminds them that if they had a son or an ox to falls into a well **would they not rescue them?** Jesus' logic overpowers them. They know they have been outwitted.

Jesus notices how the guests had been placed at the dinner table. He uses two parables to teach them that they should not seek the chief places but rather take the lowest place. They needed this lesson as they were like children wanting the front seat and to be recognized as being important. Next Jesus told His host that when giving a dinner, he should not invite just his friends and relatives or a rich neighbor.

If these are the only kinds of people you will have and associate with, then you have a big problem. Instead invite the poor, crippled, lame and blind and you will be blessed. Someone seated at the table exclaims, "**Blessed is he who shall eat bread in the kingdom of God!**" It was a good remark. Jesus replies with another parable. A man who has prepared a great banquet sends his servants to invite a number of guests but they all have excuses for not attending the banquet.

One has to check out some property. Another has to try out some oxen and a third one has just married and wants to spend time with his wife. They really had no excuse they just did not want to attend the banquet. God is giving a banquet for his Son Jesus. Invitations are extended The Jews rejected their own Messiah, so salvation only goes out to the Gentiles.

In the parable when the invitations to the guests are sent out and refused the host sends out invitation to the poor, crippled, blind and lame. Most of these would have been excluded from participation in Jewish worship because of their physical imperfections. These (Gentiles) are the ones who accepted the invitation. Today we are called by God. Just as then many will be excluded because of their callous rejection.

Counting the cost (Luke 14:25-35)

As Jesus moves along with the crowd following Him, He suddenly turns to them and gives them a stern admonition. This is in reaction to the shallow admiration of the crowd.

They were quick to follow after Him but they were not true disciples. Today it is popular to talk about him and follow Him to a minimal extent. It is quite another thing to be a true disciple. We must love Jesus more than even our families. This may sound harsh but we are talking about priorities. **Who is more important?** If anyone besides Jesus tops our list, we are not ready to be His disciple.

Furthermore, a disciple must take up his cross daily and follow Him he cannot be the Lord's disciple. Jesus gives two parables to illustrate the need for total allegiance. If a man plans to build a tower he will sit down and estimate what it will cost. He may get as far as the foundation and not have enough to finish. Many just get started in faith and run out of gas. If a king is going to war he will count how many soldiers he needs before a final decision. Many who follow Jesus do not count the cost and fail.

Lesson Twenty Two Lost and found (Luke 15:1-32)

Jesus tells three parables, back to back. These are lost and found stories. They resulted from the grumbling of the Pharisees that Jesus ate and associated with sinners. They are insinuating that because of this He is like them, therefore he is defiled. Jesus may have eaten with sinner but they did not defile Him; instead, He cleansed them as a result of their association with Him.

The first parable is about a lost sheep. As he gave this parable they could probably see sheep in the distance as sheep were all around the country side. They knew the joy of finding a sheep. Probably many in His audience had been on a **"sheep hunt."** They were like semi-pets.

If it was natural to look for lost sheep, **how much more should we expect the Lord to look for lost people?** Jesus is doing exactly that He told them He came **"to save that which was lost."** The shepherd leaves the ninety-nine and goes to search for the one. There is always great joy in finding what has been lost.

Next Jesus gives the parable of the lost coin. A woman who has ten silver coins loses one. The coin was a drachma, worth about a day's wage. It was a precious resource to her as it may have been part of her dowry. She does not hesitate. She lights a lamp to look for it. When she finds it she rejoices with her neighbors. Jesus said, **"There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents."** Again we see the value of one soul.

The third parable is the most familiar - the lost son. It is also the longest parable Jesus ever told. It has two parts. The first: part deals with a son who demanded his inheritance. The inheritance was divided according to the number of sons you had. If you had three sons, it was divided into four parts; four sons, five parts; etc. The oldest got the extra part, called the **"double portion" (Deuteronomy 21.17).**

The father divides it between his two sons. One travels to a far country, squanders his money and hard times come. He hires himself out to work on a pig farm. He is given the lowest job one could imagine for a Jew. He is so desperate that he ends up eating pods. He comes to himself realizing what a terrible mistake he had made. He returns home desiring to become a hired servant.

As he approaches home his father sees him and runs to greet him. He openly confesses he has sinned. The father throws himself on his son's neck and with many kisses ignores his filth and tattered clothes. The father brings out a robe, ring and sandals and puts them on him.

He calls for a celebration, a banquet, rejoicing that his lost son has returned home. He says, **"My son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found."** We come now to part two of the story. The older brother coming in from the field hears the music and dancing. The brother becomes angry chiding his father.

He is not willing to call the prodigal brother, his brother, but, "this son of yours." The response of the father is gentle. He assures him he will get his reward.

He should rejoice because his lost brother had come home. Again the emphasis is on the restoration of a lost person. These three parables are better appreciated when we consider how the Pharisees detested Jesus and his mixing and mingling with sinners and tax collectors. They well represent the older brother who despised his sinful brother. The Pharisees despised sinners.

The unjust steward (Luke 16:1-13)

Jesus proceeds to tell his disciples of a rich man whose manager was accused of wasting his possessions. It was his duty to distribute his master's goods. For some unknown reason he is about to lose his job. So he calls in two of his master's debtors. He finds out how much they owe and reduces their debt. This probably amounted to knocking off the interest they owed.

By reducing their debts he would make friends with them. The master commended the manager. He was not pleased in losing that owed to him, but he couldn't help but be impressed with the shrewdness of his servant. Jesus is not giving this man's deed as an example to follow but is showing the skill such people of the world have to work things out for their own benefit.

People of the world can be so skillful whereas Christians can be so naive, lacking in the use of their skills for the kingdom. We should use our resources and abilities to make investments into eternal things yet we can be so careless in this respect. Jesus admonishes us to be as wise as serpents and harmless of doves. But often we are not very wise. Also we should win friends (God), who can help us when we are helpless (judgment day).

As Christians, as well as being Americans, we have been entrusted with so much more than most nations. The wisest use of money is not in temporal things but rather invest in things which are spiritual in nature. If we are wise, we will store up treasure in heaven rather than here on earth (See Matthew 6:19-21).

Sickness, death and raising of Lazarus (John 11:1-44)

Jesus has already visited in the home of Mary, Martha and Lazarus according to Luke 10:38-42. Jesus receives a message from Mary and Martha that their brother Lazarus was sick. The close tie between this family and Jesus is indicated by the message itself and the expression "he whom you love is sick," and "Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus."

These women make no request but must have felt that upon hearing of Lazarus' sickness Jesus would surely come. This sickness was to bring about a great thing. Jesus would now show that even death was under his dominion.

After a delay of two days Jesus proceeds to Judea. His disciples had apprehensions about going back to Judea. They even urged that Lazarus would recover hoping no doubt that Jesus might decide not to make the trip. Thomas it seems felt that all would die if Jesus should go. He shows a lack of faith in the ability of Christ to cope with death. Jesus will now leave the district of Perea and begin what will end up being His fateful journey to Jerusalem

Upon their arrival in Bethany it was found that Lazarus had been in the tomb four days. The body was usually buried on the same day of death as in hot climates decay would set in immediately and there was no way of embalming the body as we have now. If so, Lazarus probably died on the same day that Jesus had received the message. Having waited two days Jesus would have departed for Bethany on the third day and arrived on the fourth.

The fact that Jesus wept allows us to see the human nature of our Lord. He was just as human as any other human being. He knew that Lazarus would be raised within the hour, yet when He saw the sorrow of his sisters He could not restrain His emotions. It is said that "He groaned in the spirit and was troubled." Today, as our Great High Priest, He still has great sympathy and compassion for each of us.

The raising of Lazarus won many over to Jesus from the ranks of His enemies. The miracle's main purpose was to prove the divinity of Christ. It was one of the most impressive miracles Jesus ever performed. It would be even more impressive than the raising of Jairus' daughter or the young man at Nain as Lazarus had been dead four days whereas the others had been dead only a short time.

Sanhedrin decides to put Jesus to death (John 11:45-54)

Many ran and told the Pharisees what had happened. A meeting of the Sanhedrin is immediately called to determine what should be done to prevent the Lord from winning the multitudes of people over to Him. It is interesting that no denial is made of the miracle and His power. They felt that Judaism was about to be undermined and all the people would then turn to Christ.

They feared for their positions of authority given to them by the Romans. Such large followings might upset the Romans resulting in their being relieved of the positions they held.

It had been their practice to change the High Priests frequently lest he become too entrenched gaining too much power. Taking the advice of Caiaphas the Sanhedrin decides to take steps which would bring about Christ's death.

Lesson Twenty Three

Delayed journey to Jerusalem (Matthew 19:1-20:34, Mark 10:1-52, Luke 17:11-19:27, John 11:54)

Knowing the intentions of the Sanhedrin rather than going straight to Jerusalem Jesus goes instead to Ephraim near the wilderness of Judea. If He had gone immediately He would have been in grave danger of being killed. His death was not to be until the Passover.

So He is avoiding a premature death. We do not know how long He stayed in Ephraim. At some point He and the apostles' travel further north. Luke says he passed between Samaria and Galilee which would indicate He traveled along the border of the two regions.

As the Passover feast drew near pilgrims started toward Jerusalem. Probably the Lord and His disciples joined a caravan of travelers moving south along the eastern bank of the Jordan River. We know that He was surrounded by a crowd and also some of the women who had ministered to Him in Galilee probably were there. (See Mark 15:41)

Ten lepers

In a certain village Jesus encountered ten Lepers. One was a Samaritan and the others were probably Jews. This was an incurable disease. All were commanded to present themselves to the priests. Only one returned to express his gratitude - the Samaritan. This was the least they could have done. How people long to be well from a sickness, and then when they do get well they seem to forget all those promises and good intentions they said they would do.

Questions about the kingdom

It seems there were always Pharisees around. These ever-present critics asked him [when the kingdom was going to come?](#) Jesus had promised earlier in His ministry that the Kingdom was near. Three years have gone by and there is no sign of it yet. This was probably their way of chiding the Lord. Like most of the Jews they expected a physical kingdom that would come with great pomp and power. Jesus asserts that the kingdom would not come in that way. Instead the kingdom would be internal, not external.

Turning from His critics he begins to talk about His second coming to His disciples. His coming will be visible and it will be a sudden coming without warning. What He says at this time is very similar to what He discussed later on in **Matthew 24** which deals with the destruction of Jerusalem when He came in judgment of that City. In retribution God allowed Jerusalem to be completely destroyed by the Romans in 70 A.D.

Discussion on prayer

Jesus now turns to the subject of prayer. He tells the parable of a widow who persistently came to a judge requesting that he grant her justice against her adversary. Each time he refused but finally he gave in and granted her wish.

If a hardhearted judge could be motivated by persistence, **how much more will a loving God respond to His children when they pray?** When they are oppressed they should trust in God. He will ultimately give them justice. But the question is, **will He find the kind of faith that keeps praying even when times get rough?**

Next He gives them a parable of two men who went to the Temple to pray. One was a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The self-righteous Pharisees who looked down on everybody else engages in a prayer of self-congratulations. Probably everything he said was true. But at the same time he was a sinner. Paul reminds us that **"all have sinned"** (**Romans 3:23**).

This Pharisee does not seem to feel he has done anything that was sinful. By contrast tax collectors were known for cheating people by making them pay more than what they actually owed. When a fellow countryman became a tax collector, he was considered a traitor and a thief, the very dregs of society. The tax collector said, **"God have mercy on me, a sinner."**

The difference between the two prayers is evident. The Pharisee **"trusted in himself."** He expressed no trust in God. The tax collector listed no virtues nor did he make any excuses for his sins. He simply asked for mercy. He had no other recourse for his sin than to cry out for mercy. It ended up this man was the one who was justified rather than the Pharisee.

Questions about divorce

By now Jesus had reached the region of Judea and large crowds are following Him and He is healing them. Pharisees appear again. This time to ask him another question. **"Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any reason at all?"** This question was intended as a trap. Moses had written that if a man found **"some indecency"** in his wife, he could send her away (**Deuteronomy 24:1**).

Experts on the Law were divided on what this indecency was. The school of rabbi Hillel taught that this allowed a man to divorce his wife for any trivial thing. The school of rabbi Shammai taught that divorce was only allowed for sexual immorality. The Pharisees assumed Jesus would have to align Himself with one position or the other, thereby alienating those who held the opposing view.

Jesus refused to fall into their trap. He did not side with any school of teaching on this subject. Instead, He went back to God's original plan for marriage as outlined in **Genesis 1 and 2**. He reminds them of what Moses had written, **"So they are no longer two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate"**

Frustrated, they asked **"Why then did Moses command to give her a certificate of divorce and send her away?"** If God intended that marriage should be permanent, why did Moses grant divorces? Jesus' response was, **"Because of your hardness of heart Moses permitted you to divorce your wives; but from the beginning it has not been this way."**

In His early dealings with the Israelites, God permitted that which He did not approve. While He permitted it, it did not change what was from the beginning. Marriage is a "cleaving to" for life. God hates divorce (Malachi 2:16).

Childlikeness

On His way to Jerusalem during a rest stop some mothers evidently brought their children to Jesus to be blessed by Him. It was a custom for the Jews to bring their children to the rulers of the synagogue in order that they might pray over them and bless them. The disciples rebuked the women but Jesus, but Jesus said, "Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God."

Furthermore he took them in His arms and blessed them. The disciples must have thought Jesus had more important things to do than to take time to hold little children. Jesus uses this occasion to teach on the need to be childlike (trusting, humble and teachable). He said in order to enter the kingdom of God one has to be like a child. He must have child like qualities.

Rich young ruler

Continuing His trip to Jerusalem Jesus is approached by a young man with a serious question; "What shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?" His manner of approach indicates that he was a very sincere person who was very anxious about salvation. He evidently feels that eternal life would be gained by doing some specific act. Jesus gives a brief summary of the last six of the Ten Commandments.

The man said he had done all of these things. What did he still need to do. Jesus no doubt saw a man with a good heart and it is said that Jesus loved him. The Lord could see great potential in this young man. So, he puts the young ruler to real test of discipleship. He told him to go and sell all that had and give to the poor.

The man left sorrowful because he had great possessions. His problem was covetousness. Thus, he had not kept all the law as he had told Jesus for one of the commandments was not to covet. Apparently covetousness stood between the ruler and eternal life.

Christ had earlier emphasized that a disciple should rid himself of anything that would keep him from being what he should be. Jesus uses this occasion to teach how difficult it is for a rich person to go to heaven. It is a great temptation to covet and hoard what one has and to look only inward to self.

The rich, young ruler would not have lost a thing if he had complied with Christ's requirements. Later on the Romans swept through Palestine wiping out fortunes and enslaving people. In the end he not only lost his possessions but he also lost "treasure in haven."

The possession and use of riches always presents a great problem to a Christian. To use them for others instead of self is a most stern test. A rich man can certainly go to heaven but he will have a difficult time. Riches demand so much of our time and energies that we often forget the spiritual. Money can soon become one's God and Christ is soon left completely out.

Peter must have picked up on the conversation Jesus had with the young ruler and points out that the disciples had given up everything and followed Him. What reward will there be for them? Jesus mentions several specific rewards. They will gain far more than what they may have to give up.

However, there was something else they needed to know. Jesus now give the parable of a landowner hiring people to work in his vineyard. When harvest time arrived it was important that the grapes be picked at once. The landowner probably went to the marketplace to find workers. He agreed to pay them a denarius for the day.

All day he kept looking for more workers up until about 5 o'clock in the afternoon. At the end of the day each man was paid the same amount (**one denarius**) to the dismay of those who worked all day. This parable was spoken to the apostles to remind them that their rewards and other early workers will not be given on the basis of "**so much work, so much paid.**" The Lord's rewards are not earned, but are bestowed on the basis of the mercy of a sovereign God.

Lesson Twenty Four Approaching Jerusalem (March, 29 A.D.)

Jesus and those He was traveling with were now near Jericho. Mark tells us Jesus was walking ahead of the crowd and those who were following were fearful. They knew the danger that awaited Him. Though death awaited Him, Jesus moved on without hesitation as He must fulfill His mission on earth. He takes the apostles aside and begins to explain to them in detail what awaited Him in Jerusalem. This is the third and by far the clearest prophecy yet concerning His death.

McGarvey says this announcement was for the purpose of checking any materialistic hopes which the apostles might entertain. Certainly the following days are going to be the most trying, yet for the apostles' sake they must be prepared in some way for the coming shock of His crucifixion.

However, they did not yet comprehend the words of the Lord. Not until after His resurrection would they really understand. Mark says, "**But the disciples understood none of these things.**" Luke wrote, "**the meaning of this statement was hidden from them.**" It was their preconceptions that prevented them from understanding, but it may have been a divine intervention to keep them from being overwhelmed.

Learning to be a servant

Still entertaining the concept of a material kingdom James and John with their mother approach Christ about receiving special positions in the supposed earthly kingdom He was to establish. Previous to this Jesus had mentioned thrones which would be occupied by the apostles. It may be this stirred them to ask for prominent positions. This request is made through their mother. The result was that it provoked the other apostles to jealousy.

Their specific request was that one might sit on the His right and one on His left. These would be the highest positions one could occupy. Earlier they had argued among themselves who would be the greatest in the kingdom. We look back on this as being very childish but we must keep in mind they had not yet had the opportunity to develop spiritually and in their knowledge of the kingdom.

Even unto this day men still are not able to grasp the nature of that kingdom. Many anticipate that Jesus will come and establish an earthly, temporal kingdom and that some of them will occupy high positions in that kingdom. They do not understand the kingdom has already come

Jesus uses this occasion to teach again on true greatness in His kingdom. It is not determined on the basis of being served, but on the basis of serving one another. He gives Himself as an example. He said, "**For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many**" (Mark 10:45).

Jesus now crosses the Jordan River into Judea and heads for the ancient city of Jericho. Here two blind men hear that He is passing by and begin to cry out to Him, "**Lord, have mercy on us.**" The crowd rebuked them. Evidently they did not feel these men deserved the attention of the Lord. This did not stop them for they continued to cry out "**all the more.**"

Jesus demonstrates what it means to be a servant. He took time to stop and heal them. The name of one was Bartimaeus which means the son of Timaeus. Both men now join the crowd following Jesus and join in "**glorifying God.**"

Salvation comes to Zaaccheus

Everyone has heard the story of the "wee little man." Zaaccheus, a chief publican, a rich man and a citizen of Jericho wants to see Jesus. Being small in stature he climbs into a sycamore tree in order that he might see the Lord.

The crowds were by now thronging Christ and we can understand this little man's plight. How surprised he must have been when Jesus looked up and spoke to him telling him that he would now come and visit in his house. This is the only case where Jesus ever invited himself.

It was a joyful occasion for Zaaccheus. But how disappointed was the crowd that followed Jesus. They (no doubt many Pharisees) just could not understand why He would go and eat in the house of a publican - a tax collector. Jesus constantly disappointed those who were looking for an earthly lung with pomp and kingly dignity.

Zaaccheus was among the lost and since Jesus came to seek and save the lost it was most fitting for him to visit in the home of this tax "sinner." The result of the visit was that the man was converted and salvation came to his house

Parable of the pounds

To the very end of His life Jesus was always teaching, correcting false ideas and presenting truths. Jesus has a moment alone with His disciples in the house of Zaaccheus. He tells them the parable of the pounds in order to correct some of their false concepts of the coming kingdom he was about to establish.

A nobleman had ten slaves to which he gave one pound each. He told them to take what they had and do business with it while he was gone. This represented the amount a man would make in about four months. The nobleman now goes to a distant country to receive a kingdom. Later on, he returns to reward the faithful and to punish the disobedient and rebellious. It is similar to the parable of the talents that Jesus would tell a few days later.

The parable was directed to those who were thinking He was on his way to Jerusalem to immediately set up His kingdom. Jesus is the nobleman and the distant country was heaven. Jesus must die, be raised from the dead and then ascent to His Father in heaven before He would be crowned King. There must be patient waiting and faithful work in order to receive any rewards. Many would not have the patience necessary when they would see things getting worse for Christ

Arrival in Bethany (John 11:55-21:1) (Match 31, 29 A.D.)

We are now coming to the last eight days in the life of Jesus. About forty per cent of the gospels are devoted to these closing days of Jesus. John, in particular, concentrates on this period in the life of our Lord. Almost half of his twenty-one chapters are devoted to events that occurred after the Lord's arrival in Bethany. This will be His last effort to turn the city and its leaders back to God. Never before has He spent as much effort and energy in that city as He will now.

John tells us that "the Passover of the Jews was near." The Passover commemorated the time when God passed over all the Israelites in Egypt who had the blood of a lamb on their door posts (Exodus 12:1-28). The ceremonially unclean were not allowed to eat the Passover, thus huge crowds poured into Jerusalem early for the purifying rituals which could take several days.

These early arrivals were looking for Jesus wondering if He would show up for the feast. The raising of Lazarus several weeks before had been well circulated and this along with all the other miracles of Jesus had raised excitement to a feverish pitch.

Also, this was of great concern to the chief priests and Pharisees. They had already plotted to have Him killed. They had given orders that if He were seen it was to be report so they might size Him. Public notices had probably been proclaimed throughout Jerusalem and even in the surrounding villages.

While the people in general longed to see Jesus they thought He might not come to the feast because of the danger of being sized by the Jewish leaders. According to John's gospel Jesus arrived at Bethany six days before the Passover (John 21:1). Bethany was about two miles from Jerusalem. This is where Mary, Martha and Lazarus lived. This is the Lazarus that Jesus had raised from the dead.

He probably arrived on Friday, maybe shortly before sundown at their house. This particular year, the date of the Passover fell on Friday; the day before the Sabbath Jesus would not have traveled on the Sabbath thus He must have arrived before the Sabbath, a week before the Passover meal.

He spends the Sabbath day in the little village of Bethany, then Saturday night (April 1), a supper was prepared for Him in the house of Simon the leper. We do not know who this Simon was but he probably was a former leper who had been healed by Jesus.

During the meal Mary took a jar of nard, and began to anoint the Lord. Nard was an expensive rose-red ointment imported from far off India. It was a mixture of oil and liquid perfume distilled from a rare plant. It is stated she anointed both His head and His feet.

Furthermore she wiped His feet with her hair. Critics who were observing all of this said it could have been sold for over three hundred denarii and then given to the poor. It seems that Judas initiated this criticism.

Jesus knew what they were saying He also knew something the others did not know. The hour of his death was near. Jesus sees her act of respect as preparing His body for burial. The fragrance from this broken alabaster box not only filled this house in Bethany but would fill' the whole world as the story would be repeated many times. Jesus remarked, "Truly I say to you, wherever the gospel is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done will also be spoken of in memory of her" (Mark 14:9).

Word spread that Jesus and Lazarus were at the feast, thus crowds came from Jerusalem to see them both. They could not resist the opportunity to see a man raised from the dead after four days in a tomb who was a living witness to the power of Christ. The result was that many of the Jews believed. However, this only intensified the Jewish leaders' desire to have Jesus put to death, and also to have Lazarus killed too.

Lesson Twenty Five

Monday (Matthew 21:12-19; Mark 11:12-19; Luke 19:45-48; 21:37, 38)

This will be a long day for Jesus. He again travels from Bethany to Jerusalem. Ordinarily Jesus would not have been hungry yet. The Jews normally ate two meals a day. The first was around 10 a.m. and the second around 6 to 7 p.m. It was still too early for breakfast when he left Bethany so He became hungry on the way. Some have suggested He may have missed His supper the night before since He left the Temple late in the day to return to Bethany.

The barren fig tree

Jesus notices a fig tree in full leaf. Mark explains that it was not the season for figs. But when the leaves became green this indicates the fruit has appeared but upon closer examination there is no fruit. The fact He did not know the tree had no fruit is an illustration of His giving up some of His divine prerogatives to come to earth (Philippians 2:6, 7). The tree begins to wither although the disciples will not recognize the result of the curse until the next day.

Some have wondered why the Lord would use His divine power to do this to an inanimate object. The Lord is not angry at the fig tree. However, this is an unusual miracle. Before His miracles were a result of mercy. This miracle was the result of judgment to come. There seems to be a parallel between the fig tree and the people Jesus was trying to reach in Jerusalem.

J. W. McGarvey wrote, "The reader can hardly fail to note how perfectly this fig tree, in its separation from the other trees, its showy pretensions; its barrenness of results and its judgment typifies the Jewish people." With all the great activity associated with their feasts, especially the Passover feast, and all their trips to the Temple each year, outwardly they appear very religious and devout, but inwardly they were spiritually barren.

As Jesus precedes further toward the Temple the first gate he comes to (**East Side**), leads directly into the Temple grounds. This is the outer court called the Court of the Gentiles. Immediately he sees pigeons, sheep, oxen, boxes, crates tables piled up with Roman coins and much haggling. He overturned the tables of the money changers. Furthermore, he would not allow anyone to carry any merchandise through the court.

It seems the merchants were using the Court of the Gentiles as a kind of shortcut to the road leading eastward toward the Mount of Olives. What a scene this must have been. You have businessmen down on their hands and knees, scrambling to collect their coins that had been scattered across the pavement.

Sheep and goats and pigeons were scattering everywhere with people trying to get out of their way. On the sidelines you have the Sadducees, upset that some of their financial gain is about to be lost. The common people support Jesus as they knew full well of the corruption that took place within the Temple area on such feast days. Quoting from Old Testament Scripture Jesus told them they had taken God's house of prayer, and had turned it into a den of robbers.

The chief priests and the teachers of the law were infuriated and begin to look for some way to kill him. But there was nothing they could do at the present, especially in broad daylight. If they had tried to take Jesus they were afraid of the people and what they might do. At night they did not know where he stayed.

Greeks seek Jesus

Now that the Court of the Gentiles was cleansed of all the animals and money changers those who were proselytes (**not Jews**) can now pray properly. It is no surprise then that a group of Greeks want to talk to Jesus. It is not clear that He actually spoke to them directly. However, He said what they needed to know. Jesus' reply was that like a kernel of grain He must die and rise again. Then the time will come when they can be a part of God's true people (**the church**).

He now offers a prayer to God. It is intense, full of commitment and very personal. It is as if He said, "**Father I know what is coming and I don't want to go through with it. However, I came to accomplish this so we must get on with it.**" God responds to His Son that He will be glorified. It seems while many heard the voice of God but they thought it was thunder.

We are told that many of the leaders believed on Him but because of the Pharisees they would not openly confess their faith in Him for fear of being put out of the synagogue. However, in **verse 41** we learn the real motive. They loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.

How sad! It is so easy to buckle under peer pressure. It takes strong faith to stand up for the truth. This is still true today. It is now late in the afternoon He and the Twelve now return to Bethany where He will spend the night.

The triumphal entry (Matthew, 21:1-11; Mark. 11: 1-11; Luke 19:29-44; John 12:1-19)
(Sunday, April 2, A.D. 30)

All four gospels tell of this event. It is Sunday, probably late in the afternoon. Jesus starts toward Jerusalem, which was two miles away. The Mount of Olives lay between Bethany and Jerusalem. As he reached the crest of the mount He can get a panoramic view of the city with the Temple and its courts.

He sends two of the disciples into the village of Bethphage to secure a donkey with its colt which they would find tied. If anyone asked why they were taking them, they were to tell them the Lord needed them. When the animals were brought to Him he chose the colt which had never been ridden. This would be a fulfillment of [Zachariah 9:9](#).

"Say to the daughter of Zion See, your king comes to you, Gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey."

As He mounted the colt the people made a carpet for Him to ride upon from their cloaks and cut palm branches. Then as Jesus begins the descent down the mountain the crowds break into jubilant shouts, which would echo from the mount to the city itself. Surely this means He will now seize control of the Nation and set up that glorious kingdom of which the nation had dreamed of.

People came out from the city to join in the celebration waving palm branches and joining in with the praise. They used such phrases as "[Hosanna to the Son of David; Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David; Hosanna in the highest! Blessed is the King](#)".

Much of this praise came from [Psalm 118](#), one of the psalms sung by pilgrims on their way to Jerusalem. All these phrases had messianic overtones. The word "[Hosanna](#)" was an expression of praise. It would be much like our word "[Amen](#)."

Obviously the Jewish leaders were very upset at what was happening. They admonish the Lord to "[rebuke your disciples](#)." Jesus tells them if they should become silent then the rocks would begin to cry out. Some have wondered [why did Jesus allow this enthusiastic demonstration to take place?](#) [Matthew 21:4](#) tells us He did it to fulfill prophecy. Another reason was that this was part of His final effort to compel Jerusalem ([its leaders](#)) to acknowledge Him as the Messiah.

As Jesus drew near to the city He is overcome with sorrow and begins to weep over the future of the city. They ([leaders](#)) had rejected Him as the Messiah. They would soon put Him to death. In His lament He utters a prophecy concerning the future of the city. This tragic prophecy would be fulfilled in less than four decades when the Roman armies encircled the city in AD. 70.

The city lay under siege by the Roman army for 143 days. Six hundred thousand Jews were slain and thousands more were captured and carried off to Rome into slavery. God gave Jerusalem amply time to repent, but they never did. He had come to the city in the person of His Son, but they stubbornly refused to accept Him, in spite of His many miracles and his fulfilled prophecy time and again. Ultimately, the city would suffer for their rejection of their Messiah.

As Jesus enters the city the blind and lame come to the Temple to be healed. When the chief priests and the teachers saw these people being healed and hearing the children shouting, "[Hosanna to the Son of David](#)," [They were indignant](#)." This was just too much. [Did He not hear what they were saying, they asked?](#) Jesus reminds them of [Psalm 8:2](#): "[From the lips of children and infants you have ordained praise](#)."

What a contrast. On the one hand you have the people praising the Lord along with the children, and the sick are being healed. On the other hand you have jealous, angry leaders, blind as to whom Jesus was. They want to put a stop to the whole thing. Instead of melting the hearts of the Jewish hierarchy with all the wonderful things He did they were more than ever determined to destroy Him.

They were frustrated with His popularity thus they were completely out of control and there was nothing they could do about it. Their resentment becomes even stronger. We still marvel at their blindness and stubbornness. In spite of all the evidence they could not see that He was the Messiah. It all goes to show that religious people can be very blind to the truth.

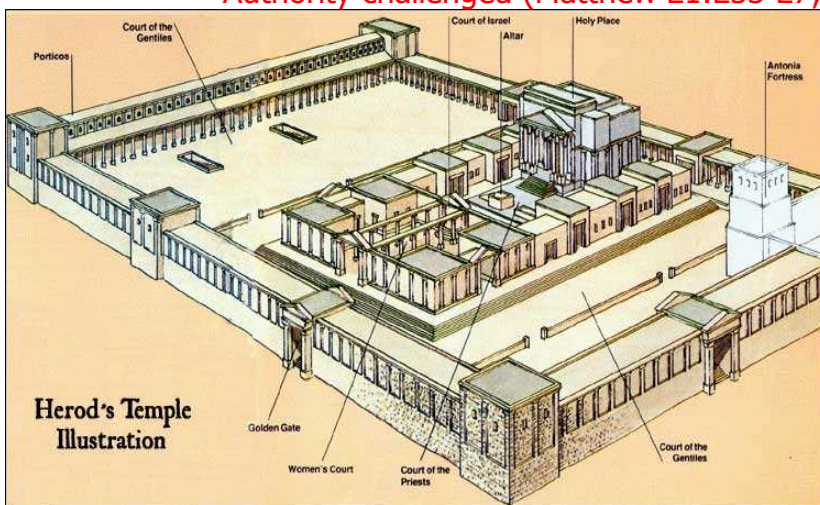
They may think He would now declare Himself as the Messiah. But it is not time yet for Him to be crowned King of kings. Jesus was in complete control. He knew exactly what He was doing. In God's own appointed time Jesus would be declared King of kings and Lord of lords. He merely "looked around at everything" and since it is now late in the afternoon He returns to Bethany where He spends the night with the Twelve.

Lesson Twenty Six
Tuesday (April 4, A.D. 30)

Tuesday morning Jesus and the apostles' head back to the Temple. As they pass the fig tree Jesus had cursed the day before Peter exclaims, "Rabbi look, the fig tree you cursed has withered." A dead tree usually takes days to be noticed. Peter is amazed it has withered so quickly.

Jesus uses their curiosity to declare they could pray and achieve great things. Even though the Jewish leaders were opposed to the gospel, such obstacles can be overcome through faithful prayer.

Authority challenged (Matthew 21:23-27; Mark 11:27-33; Luke 20:1-8)



Arriving at the Temple the crowds begin to gather around to hear Him. Also present are the chief priests (Sadducees), teachers of the law (Pharisees), and the elders (local leaders).

They have come to test and trap Him. They begin by asking "By what authority are you doing these things?"

No doubt their immediate thoughts are the cleansing of the Temple and Sabbath healing. Jesus answers their question with

a question. This was common practice in their discussions. Even in a synagogue service it would not be unusual to interrupt a speaker with a question.

Jesus' question was about the authority of John the Baptist, did his authority come from heaven or from men? They have a little private discussion before answering. If they say from heaven then why did they reject John and Jesus since John gave his stamp of approval on Jesus? On the other hand if they said from men they might find themselves being immediately stoned.

The common people believed in John and associated him with Jesus; So, they; do not answer Jesus' question. They said, "We don't know." Jesus responds in kind by saying "Neither will I tell you." Jesus does not let the matter drop however. He presents three appropriate parables.

Parable of the vineyard (Matthew 21:28-32)

A landowner planted a vineyard. It was well laid out. It had a wall around it, a winepress and a watch tower. He rents it out to tenants and goes on a long journey. At harvest time servants are sent to collect some of the fruit. He would collect from 25 to 30 per cent of the proceeds earned.

The tenants beat one, killed another and stoned a third. Other servants were sent but they were treated in the same way. Finally the owner decides to send his son. Surely they will respect him. Instead they kill the son taking his inheritance.

The behavior of the tenants was scandalous! Since the owner did not come but only his son they must have concluded he was dead so they will take this opportunity to get everything for themselves. Since no landowner will put up with this kind of behavior he will destroy them and replace them with tenants who will respect him.

One can hardly miss the meaning of this parable but evidently his critics missed its application. Jesus now introduces **Psalm 118:22**. "The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner." Jesus is the rejected stone. While the Jews would reject Him, He was God's precious corner stone. The wicked tenants who beat and killed the prophets sent to them are the Jews. Now God is sending His own Son but already they are plotting to kill Him.

Again they are unable to apply the parable but they knew He must be talking about them. God will give the kingdom to those who will repent and respect Him. (It would be the tax collectors and prostitutes who would believe and repent.) Eventually this will include the Gentiles. The implications of the parable are more than they can stand. They are insulted but can't do anything about it at the moment.

Parable of the wedding banquet (Matthew 22:1-14)

A king prepares a wedding banquet for his son. Servants are sent to invite guests, but they refuse to come. He sends more servants to explain all the good things that awaited them. However, they turned a deaf ear. One went to his field and another to his business. The rest seized the servants, mistreating and killing them. The king is enraged. It is no wonder the he sent his army to wipe out their city.

Other guests are invited. The king had a banquet hall and plenty of food waiting to be eaten. So all that could be found both good and bad came. This would include the tax collectors and the sinners. One guest did not have a wedding garment on. Kings often provided wedding garments for their guests.

He is cast out not because he is unworthy, because everyone else was unworthy too. He was cast out because he refused to honor the requirement for such an occasion. God's blessings can only be received on His terms and not on ours. **Verse 14** explains much. The messengers in the parable are the prophets who were rejected and killed. Their preaching was the invitation. Most refused to listen, but some hear and obeyed.

Four questions (Matthew 22:15-46; Mark 12:13-37; Luke 20:20-44)

Four questions are now asked. The first three are asked by Jesus' opponents representing the Herodians, Sadducees, and Pharisees. Each will try to formulate a question designed to trap Him. The Pharisees and Herodians (who don't like each other) do get together to present the first question. With flattery they appear to be sincere.

They say you are a man of integrity, you teach accurately and you are not swayed by men. "Should we pay taxes to Caesar or not?" If Jesus says no, the Herodians would have reported Him to the Roman authorities and he could have been declared a rebel against the Roman government. If He said yes, the people would resent Him as they hated Roman taxation. A Messiah is supposed to drive the Roman out of their country anyway. Certainly he would not tolerate taxation.

Jesus simply holds up a coin and asks whose picture is on it? His answer is simple. Give Caesar what belongs to him and give to God what belongs to Him. In less than fifteen seconds Jesus completely dismantles their question.

Next the Sadducees pose a question which involved the question whether there is a resurrection? Sadducees did not believe in a resurrection. They said seven brothers have all been married to the same woman. As each one would die the next in line would marry the widow of the former brother. So, if there is a resurrection whose wife will she belong to in the resurrection?

They hoped to cause Him to deny there is a resurrection by presenting a ridiculous situation. He told them they were in error because they did not know the Scriptures or the power of God. In the resurrection there will be no marriage. Our spiritual bodies will be different from our physical bodies. We will be like the angels who do not marry.

As to a resurrection Jesus tells them what Moses said that God had said to him. "I am the God of Abraham, the god of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. God is not the God of the dead, but of the living." This quotation is from Exodus 3:6. The Sadducees said dead men vanish into nothingness. But God said, "I am" (present tense). He is not the God of nothing. He is the God of living people. The people were astonished by what Jesus said. The Sadducees would not try any more trick questions on Jesus again.

Next, one of the teachers of the law poses a question. "Which is the most important commandment?" This was a common debate among the Pharisees. There were 613 Old Testament commands and innumerable oral traditions. Jesus gives a two part answer.

(1) He quotes Deuteronomy 6:5, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind." (2) He quotes Leviticus 19:18, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." The teacher commended Jesus on His answer agreeing with the Lord. Jesus told him he was not far from the kingdom.

Jesus now has a question for them. "What do you think about the Christ (Messiah)? Whose son is He?" They answered David, which was correct but it was incomplete. Jesus now follows the first question with a second. "How then does David in the Spirit call him `Lord' saying: The Lord said to my Lord, sit at My right hand till I make Your enemies Your footstool?" This quotation is from Psalm 110.

The first "Lord" mentioned was God, the Father. The Jews believed that the second "Lord" was the Messiah. Jesus now concludes "If David then calls Him "Lord" how is He his Son?" How can the Christ (Messiah) be both the son of David and his Lord? No one could answer. This must have been a serious embarrassment and a shock to these "Bible scholars," to realize how little they knew about the basics of their faith. They ask no more questions.

Lesson Twenty Seven

The seven woes (Matthew 23:1-36; Mark 12:38-40; Luke 20:45-47; Luke 11:37-54)

It is still Tuesday, probably late in the afternoon. Jesus has now concluded His discussion with His critics at the Temple. Probably some have left but the crowds continue to linger. Jesus turns to them and begins to rebuke the Pharisees. After warning the disciples about them he delivers a series of seven "woes."

Jesus said that the Pharisees and teachers of the Law sit in Moses seat. There was actually such a seat in each synagogue which represented Moses' seat. It was a prominent seat. The one in this seat represented Moses and the law. Jesus said that while you must do what they say, (Moses' Law), don't do what they practice. Their practice was to place heavy loads of traditions on others, but will not so much as lift a finger to help anyone.

The primary goal of a Pharisee was to get attention. They wore "phylacteries" which were small boxes worn on the forehead and left arm. Inside they held miniature scrolls of Scriptures. They made these boxes larger than usual so they would be noticed. They also enlarged the "borders of their garments." This has reference to the prayer tassels at the edges of their robes.

The Pharisees made them extra large so they would be easily recognized. They wanted to be recognized on the streets and saluted by titles, such as, "Rabbi," "Teacher," or even "Father". In six of the seven woes Jesus calls the Pharisees "hypocrites." A hypocrite, literally, was an actor who put on a false front.

In the **first** woe Jesus said they were not interested in entering the kingdom and they did everything they could to keep others out. They openly opposed Jesus - His teachings and even His miracles. They intimidated those who believed in Jesus even threatening to excommunicate them from the synagogues. This frightened many people away from the kingdom.

The **second** woe pertained to their practice of proselytizing pagans and then imposing their system of legalism on him. The result was that the proselytes became more extreme than their teachers - the Pharisees.

The **third** woe has to do with swearing. They could swear by certain things and not be held accountable. If they swore by other things then they were obligated to keep their oath. In His Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said not to use oaths at all. (Matthew 5:33, 37). Let your yes be yes and your no, no. The Christian is to be an honest person whose word can be depended on without any special oaths.

The **fourth** woe applied to their tithes. They even tithed the herbs from their gardens. While doing this they were leaving out the really important things such as justice, mercy and faithfulness. They would strain out a gnat and then turn around and swallow a camel.

The **fifth** woe involved their concern about their outward appearance. They were more concerned with what people saw on the outside than what God could see on the inside. The inner life which determines what we really are was totally ignored in order that they might outwardly appear pious and devout, receiving honor from their peers and followers.

The **sixth** woe has to do with how they could contaminate their followers. The Old Testament declared anyone unclean who touched a dead body (Numbers 19:16). They extended this beyond a dead body to coffins and even touching tombs. Before the Passover, crews would whitewash all the sepulchers so that an innocent pilgrim would not step on or touch a burial place.

Jesus calls the Pharisees "whitewashed tombs" which on the outside look attractive but inside were filled with the bones of dead men. They were meticulous with their outward show of piety and rituals of cleansing without feeling any obligation to love their neighbor or be merciful to the poor, help their aged parents, or the infirmed, etc. Thus, those who admired them would eventually end up in as bad a shape as the Pharisees.

The last and **seventh** woe pertained to their murderous ways. They said that if they had lived in the days of the prophets they would never have killed any of the prophets as their forefathers did. Yet at that very moment they were plotting to kill Jesus.

Jesus ends this discourse by calling them "snakes, brood of vipers!" Not only will they kill Jesus but they will seek to kill all those who will come after him preaching the Gospel. The book of acts testifies to the persecutions suffered by the early Christians beginning soon after the day of Pentecost.

Paul is a perfect example of this as he fled from Jewish mobs time and again who were intent on killing him. Jesus again laments over the city of Jerusalem. His words are almost identical to **Luke 13:34-35**.

The widow's mite (Mark 12:41-44; Luke 21:1-4)

Jesus commends a poor woman who is a widow for her giving. He had sat down opposite the place where the people put their offerings. This unassuming widow put in two mites which had very little value. There is more than meets the eye here. No doubt many passed by who put in much more than she did.

The difference was that she gave all she had. She may not have money to buy food with. But she is not afraid to give all she had because she was totally dependent on God's care for her. Thus, Jesus said she had **"put in more than all those who have given into the treasury,"** because she had given her very livelihood.

The Olivet discourse (Matthew 24:1-3; Mark 13:1-4; Luke 21:5-7)

Tuesday had been a good day for the Lord from the standpoint of His disciples. He had withstood the attacks by the religious leaders. He had stopped them in their tracts so that they were unable to further argue with Him. Perhaps His disciples were feeling good as they were leaving the Temple to return to Bethany. They envisioned Jesus setting up His kingdom. This would mean He would also be in control of the Temple with all its adjacent buildings.

Seemingly with pride they pointed out many of these buildings to Him. To their surprise, even shock, He told them that not one stone would be left upon another. The Temple was reconstructed by Herod the Great and was many years in rebuilding. Huge stones were used in re-building it and no doubt it appeared to be a strong building that would stand for a long time. When they reach the Mount of Olives they ask him two questions. **(1) When will the Temple be destroyed? (2) What will be the sign of Your coming and the end of the age?**

Jesus tells of certain signs which will precede the destruction of Jerusalem. There will be false teachers who would come in His name. There will be many wars, famine, diseases and earthquakes. Many Christians will be persecuted and killed. The gospel will also be preached throughout the world. Secular history verifies these events. Then will come the **"abomination of desolation."**

Daniel had prophesied many years before while in Babylonian captivity. This had reference to the coming of the Roman army which would destroy the city and desecrate the Temple area in A.D. 70. Seeing the approaching Roman army Jesus warns the disciples who lived in Jerusalem to get away immediately.

They are not to take time for trivial matters. Don't even return to your houses to collect things. Pray that it not happen in the winter when traveling would be difficult. History reveals that for some unknown reason there was a suspension of the siege of Jerusalem by the Roman General for a short period. This gave all Christians an opportunity to escape. They went to Pella in Perea and thus escaped the terrible destruction of the city and its people.

Jesus ends His answer to their first question with a warning. **"Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all these things are fulfilled."** He spoke these words in April of A.D. 29 and the Roman siege began August 10, A.D. 70 about 40 years later. The city was completely encircled by the Romans and starved out.

Thousands perished from starvation and thousands died in the terrible massacre when the walls of the city were breached.

The Temple was completely destroyed God's divine retribution came upon the city for its blatant rejection of the prophets and now Jesus, and finally their rejection of the gospel and the church.

Jesus next answers the second question about the end of time. He begins by saying "But of that day and hour no one knows, no, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only." Mark adds "Neither the Son" knows. This knowledge belonged to God alone while His Son was in the flesh. There would be no signs to let man know that the end of time is due. It will be like in the days of Noah.

It will be sudden and without warning. People will be working side by side and suddenly they will be parted. This obviously refers to the separation of the good and evil. (sheep and goats). See Matthew 25:31-40. He warns, "Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming."

Jesus employs a parable as to who is wise. The answer is he that is alert and ready. Weeping and gnashing of teeth denotes bitter agony, pain and rage that will be experienced by those who are unprepared. A terrible day for the unprepared, but a great day for all those who are ready for His coming.

Lesson Twenty Eight

Parable of the ten virgins (Matthew 25:1-13)

Jesus continues His emphasis on being ready when the end comes. He gives us the parable of the ten virgins. This is a typical Palestinian wedding. Following the wedding there would be a parade through the streets ending up at the home of the groom where there would be a big banquet.

The bridesmaids are at the groom's home waiting for the procession to come. They had their oil lamps with them. Such lamps only held a small amount of oil thus it was important to carry extra oil just in case the groom was delayed. Five of the virgins had brought extra oil with them but the others had only what was presently in their lamps.

They have fallen asleep. Unexpectedly, it is announced the groom is coming. The five foolish virgins beg for oil from the five wise virgins as their oil is running out. But they are refused. So they leave to buy more oil. While they are gone the groom arrives and the door has been shut. The foolish five beat on the door begging to come in but the groom said, "I do not know you."

This may sound calloused but their lack of preparation betrays their lack of love and respect for the groom and bride. When Christ, the bridegroom returns, there will be no shared preparation. I cannot prepare for you, and you cannot prepare for me. Each of us must give account of himself to God.

Parable of the talents (Matthew 25:14-30)

Again the emphasis is on being prepared for the coming of the Lord. A master entrusted three of his servants with his possessions. He gave one servant five talents, to a second, two and a third he gave one. The word talent refers to one's abilities. Each servant is endowed according to his ability. The first two servants lived up to their ability by earning 100% on what was entrusted to them. The last servant refused to do anything. He went out and buried his one talent.

This "wicked" servant lied when he told his master he was afraid of him. Had he really been afraid he would have earned interest with the talent he had. He hid the money thinking that the master would not return. Then he could dig it up later and use it for himself. His master referred to him as "You wicked and slothful servant."

The lesson is clear. When Jesus returns He will require that each must give an account of himself of his stewardship of life. Those who have prepared will be rewarded. Those who have counted on His delay, will be shocked, judged and punished.

Parable of the sheep and goats (Matthew 25:31-46)

The Olivet discourse closes with a graphic picture of the return of Jesus. Some think Jesus will return to set up an earthly kingdom and that He will reign on David's throne for a thousand years. Jesus however, teaches that His return will be sudden and it will be immediately followed by judgment. When He comes he will divide mankind as a shepherd divides the sheep from the goats.

The parable teaches the basis of that separation. Those who assist the unfortunate by helping the hungry, the homeless, the naked, the sick, and the imprisoned will be the sheep. Those who fail to do these things will be among the goats.

Those who were among the sheep seem surprised. Jesus points out that when they helped or mistreated a brother; they are helping or mistreating Jesus. Jesus makes it clear that those who did not do these things will go away into "everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."

With this parable Jesus completes his fifth and final discourse of the book of Matthew, as indicated by the words "when Jesus had finished saying all these things." These last discussions probably took place as Jesus and His disciples made their way back to Bethany.

Wednesday: The calm before the storm
(Matthew 26:1-16; Mark 14:1, 2, 10, 11; Luke 22:1-6; John 13:1)

Either late Tuesday evening (which according to Jewish reckoning would have already been Wednesday) or early Wednesday morning Jesus said to the apostles "You know that after two days is the Passover, and the Son of man will be betrayed to be crucified."

Other than this, we do not have any record of how he spent Wednesday or the first part of Thursday. Maybe this is the calm before the storm. Jesus must endure unbelievable suffering and pain in the coming hours.

Perhaps he is resting, gaining strength so that he can endure all that will happen in the next two days. So during Wednesday and most of Thursday Jesus must have continued to prepare His disciples, whom He loved, for what was ahead. No doubt he communed with His Father for strength.

Judas and the Sanhedrin (Matthew 26:3-5, 14-16; Mark 14:1, 2; 14:10, 11; Luke 22:1, 2, 3-6)

The Lord may have rested on Wednesday but the chief priest and elders were busy. This seems to be a secret meeting at the house of Caiaphas, the high priest. Caiaphas had presided over a previous meeting, when a decision was made to kill Jesus.

They had failed miserably on Tuesday when they tried to trap Jesus in a war of words. They are determined more than ever that He must die. The problem was they could not do this publicly because they feared the crowd. At night they did not know where He was staying.

Their dilemma was solved in a way they could not have anticipated. One of the apostles shows up with a solution. Judas Iscariot has the solution. Luke tells us that "Satan entered Judas." Evidently he had slipped away under some pretext. He found out where the council was meeting.

He bluntly asks, "What are you willing to give me if I deliver Him to you?" He then discusses with them how he might betray Jesus to them. Judas would be familiar with the schedule of Jesus. Also, if they wanted to do it at night he would know where He would be and could lead them to Him.

They weigh out thirty pieces of silver and gave it to him. It has been estimated this would have been worth about four months wages for a common laborer. Some think this may have only been a partial payment with the remaining amount to be given after Jesus was for sure delivered into their hands. His wicked act was spoken many years before in Zechariah 11:12.

There has been much speculation as to why Judas betrayed Jesus. Was he jealous of Jesus or disgruntled over the rebuke the Lord gave him when Mary anointed His feet? Some even think he was impatient and was trying to force Jesus to take action on establishing His kingdom.

Others think he became disillusioned that Jesus did not turn out to be the Messiah that he was expecting. He could have been trying to save himself as he evidently saw that the conflict between Jesus and the religious hierarchy was becoming serious and Jesus might be killed.

The fact that the first thing he asked the Sanhedrin was how much would they pay him for betraying the Lord, would certainly indicate there was greed connected with his wicked deed. His love of money is indicated by John at the time Mary had anointed the feet of Jesus.

John quotes Judas. "Why was this fragrant oil not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor? This he said, not that he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief, and had the money box, and used to take what was put in it."

The fact that Satan entered the heart of Judas does not mean it was in some irresistible way. Satan put the idea into his heart but he does that to all of us. We have the option of resisting what he puts in our hearts (temptation).

Considering how closely Judas had been associated with Jesus and had seen his miracles you would think he would have been afraid to do this. Why then was he so bold? Why was Satan able to influence him to do such a thing? Judas left himself open to the deceiver's control. To begin with Judas was a thief. So he was already under Satan's control. Betraying Jesus was just another step in submission to the devil.

Thursday: Preparation for the Passover (Matthew 26:17-19; Mark 14:12-16; Luke 22:7-13)

On Wednesday night, Jesus would go to bed for the last time on earth. On Thursday morning he woke up never to sleep again. Thursday was known as "the first day of Unleavened Bread." It was the day during which the people in Jerusalem would make preparations for the Passover feast. On this 14th day of Nisan the Passover lamb had to be sacrificed in preparation for the feast of the Passover.

The disciples came to Jesus and wanted to know where he wanted to have the feast. Jesus gave them some very unusual instructions. Peter and John were to go into the city and they would see a man carrying a pitcher of water. They were to follow the man, "And wherever he goes in, say to the master of the house, the Teacher says: Where is the guest room in which I may eat the Passover with My disciples?"

Just as Jesus had said they found the man and the place where it is said they (Peter and John) prepared the Passover. The Feast of Unleavened Bread began officially on the 15th day of Nisan and lasted for seven days.

It has been suggested that Jesus may have ordered this procedure so Judas could not reveal to the Sanhedrin where he was until late in the evening on Thursday. God's time table had to be worked out according to His precise schedule. Jesus had much to say to His apostles before He would be taken captive in the Garden of Gethsemane. He would also give instructions for instituting the Lord's Supper during the Passover supper.

Lesson Twenty Nine

The Last Supper (Matthew 26:20-35; Mark 14:17-31; Luke 22:14-38; John 13:2-17:26)

Judas must have listened with the utmost attention as Jesus gave instructions to Peter and John as to where He intended to observe the Passover. This would be the ideal time for him to keep his bargain with the chief priests. However, he learned little.

Even Peter and John would not know until a man led them to a house where they would secure permission to use the guest chamber for the Passover Supper. There were several things that were needed to fulfill the requirement for the supper.

(1) A roasted lamb. Care was to be taken that none of its bones were broken during preparation or during the feast which ties in with the fact that none of Jesus' bones were broken on the cross. (2) Unleavened bread. (3) Wine. In Jesus' day the ceremony used four cups of wine. (4) Bitter herbs to represent the bitterness of Egyptian slavery. (5) A thick, pasty dip made from crushed fruit and nuts moistened with vinegar or wine, representing the clay from which Israel made bricks in Egypt.

Worshippers gathered in Jerusalem from all over the Roman Empire. Some estimate as many as a million Jews packed the city, requiring some 100,000 sacrificial lambs. The Jews were only allowed to eat the Passover in Jerusalem. Each house celebrated this feast. They would gather enough people to consume an entire lamb.

During the meal four ceremonial cups of wine were passed around the table, separated by singing the "Hallel" (Psalm 113-118). After the second cup of wine, the youngest in the house was instructed to ask the meaning of the Passover. The patriarch of the family then explained the story of how God delivered Israel from their Egyptian bondage.

The feast begins

Shortly before sundown, Jesus came with the twelve to the place that had been prepared. The artists' pictures of the upper room and supper are in error. They gathered around a U shaped table which was about six or eight inches off the ground. The custom of the first century was for the guest to recline on cushions, resting on the left elbow with the right hand free to provide food.

It has been estimated that Jesus and the disciples sat down to eat the Passover about sundown or shortly afterward. This feast commemorated the great deliverance from the death of the first born in Egypt. By sprinkling the blood of a lamb on their door posts each first born was spared. How typical all this was of the great sacrifice made shortly by Christ (the Lamb of God) to deliver man from sin and death.

This was to be a night never to be forgotten. The evening started with the Passover feast. Each lamb was to be eaten by no less than ten people and not more than twenty. In the upper room there will be thirteen who will share the roasted lamb. It was cut into small pieces so it could be eaten by hand. No eating utensils such as knives and forks were used during this meal.

Jesus reclined beside the low table spread with the meal. John was on His right and Judas may have been on His left with the rest of the disciples scattered around the table. Suddenly a dispute arose again among the disciples as to which of them is the greatest.

It may be this argument was prompted by the seating arrangements. This childishness and selfishness must have broken Jesus' heart. Patiently He reminds them that greatness in His kingdom would be based on service and not on position. He assures them that their faithfulness to Him would not be forgotten.

Jesus washes their feet

In those days it was common courtesy to wash a guest's feet when he entered your house. Usually this was done by servants. People wore sandals and walked on dirt pathways. When they reclined to eat. The feet of one guest would not be far from the face of another.

The apostles probably had bathed in preparation for the Passover but in walking to the upper room their feet would be dirty from the dust in the streets. Interestingly, everything needed to wash feet was available in the upper room.

They had been arguing who was the greatest. Jesus demonstrates what it means to serve by doing the menial task of washing their feet. **Wonder what Judas felt as Jesus carefully washed his feet?** Jesus certainly demonstrated what it means to **"love your enemies."**

We know what Peter was thinking. Peter strenuously objects. In fact he orders Jesus to back off **"You will never wash my feet."** Jesus rebukes Peter saying **"If I don't wash your feet, you have no part with me."** So Peter goes to the other extreme asking that he be washed all over. Jesus was not instituting **"foot washing"** to be observed by the church later on.

Christ was not primarily interested in the dirt on their feet. He was more concerned with the selfish ambition of their hearts. Some think this may have been an effort on Jesus' part to reach Judas and change his evil heart before it was too late. Even though the Lord knew what he was going to do, he could change if he would. Although Satan entered his heart he was not forced to betray Jesus.

Betrayal announced

After washing their feet Jesus announced that **"one of you will betray Me."** They seem stunned and begin to discuss the matter as to who would do such a thing. It is said, **"Being deeply grieved, they each one began to say to Him, 'Surely not I, Lord?'"**

They may have thought one of them might unwittingly do something that would result in His betrayal. Jesus becomes more specific. He said it would be the one He would **"dip the morsel and give it to him."** Even Judas asked, **"Surely it is not I, Rabbi?"** Jesus replied, **"You have said it yourself."**

You would think this would have shaken Judas - that he knows Jesus has exposed his plot. Evidently it did not faze him. Jesus told him **"What you do, do quickly."** Judas then left. The others thought he was going to buy supplies for the feast.

Jesus now feels it is safe to let Judas go do his wicked deed. The Lord will still have time to say what needs to be said to the apostles before Judas can complete his plans to betray Him. It is probably at this time that Jesus predicted that Peter would deny Him. It seems this prediction was made twice, once during the supper and a second time after they left the room.

Peter strongly denies this. He declares he would lay down his life for the Lord. Jesus tells him that Satan wanted to sift him like wheat. He told Peter he had prayed for him that his faith would not fail him. Peter says he was willing to go to prison, even die for the Lord. Jesus tells him that before the rooster will crow that day Peter will have denied him three times.

Jesus now tells the others that they would **"all fall away (desert Him) because of Me this night."** Peter is even more adamant that he will not fall away. The apostles had no idea what lay ahead that night. It will become apparent they were not yet prepared for the hard times ahead. It is not until after His resurrection that we see a dramatic change in their faith.

The Lord's Supper instituted

As the Passover feast draws to a close, Jesus instituted the most enduring memorial of all time: the Lord's Supper. We are told that while eating Jesus took some unleavened bread and says a prayer of thanksgiving. He told the disciples to **"Take, eat; this is My body."**

He also took one of the four wine cups used in the Passover feast. Again giving thanks, He told them, "Drink from it, all of you; for this is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for forgiveness of sins." Thus Christ gave to us a perpetual memorial to continue until His return (1 Corinthians 11:26).

Jesus told them He would not partake Himself until that day He would drink it anew in the kingdom of God. This meant He would have communion with His disciples when they are eating the Lord's Supper in his church. It would be new in that the Passover elements would now be used in a different way than formerly.

When He told them to eat the bread, that it was His body He did not mean it was His literal flesh. He was using figurative language. The same is true of the cup which contained the fruit of the vine. It was not His literal blood but represented His blood.

Since Jesus was standing before His disciples with His body intact and the blood flowing through His veins, He could not have meant that the bread and wine were His literal flesh and blood. Jesus often used figures of speech to describe Himself. He said, "I am the vine, you are the branches." Once He said, "I am the door." He did not mean by these expressions that he was literally a vine or a door. He was comparing Himself to these things.

Of all the memorials that could have been chosen (marble, precious metals, jewels, etc.) the Lord chose two of the most common and most perishable items that one could choose. Yet, nothing could better represent his body and blood.

Leaven is often in the Bible to represent the influence of sin. Unleavened bread was a fitting symbol of Christ's sinless body. The fruit of the grapevine with its reddish tint seems most appropriate to represent the blood of Jesus.

There are four terms in the Scriptures which refer to this memorial: "the Lord's Supper," "the breaking of bread," "communion" and "the table of the Lord." Later on Paul said, "For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death" (1 Corinthians 11:26).

How often or frequent is this? In Acts 20:7 we discover that Christians partook "on the first day of the week." Every week has a first day. So, every Sunday. There is no biblical precedent for having it on any other day than the first day of the week.

Lesson Thirty

Final discourse with apostles (John 14–16)

In these three chapters from John's gospel we are given an insight into the emotional life of the Lord. John is the only one to give us this farewell speech. Jesus' heart is heavy with grief. He must now leave these men to finish the work He had been sent to do. Jesus will impress upon their minds three things. (1) He is leaving them. (2) In His absence they must continue His mission. (3) He will send the Holy Spirit to assist them in their work.

Since Jesus had told them that they would desert Him they were probably a little low. Now He is telling them He is going away. They are disturbed by this. Thomas wants to know how they can follow Him if they do not know where He is going. Jesus begins with words of encouragement. His entire discourse is filled with words of comfort.

He assures them of His love for them, calling them "friends." He promised their sadness would be turned into joy. They are not to worry. He gives them His peace. He is also going to prepare a place them He will come back to take them with Him to this prepared place.

He says His leaving was necessary. He must return to His father at which time he will be restored to His former glory. At God's right hand He could do more for them than if he remained on earth. He talks about praying in the His name. This had never been done before. He promised that whenever they asked anything in His name He would grant it to them.

He is not going to leave them as orphans. In fact one of the main reasons He was leaving was that He had to go, so the Holy Spirit could come. It seems the Holy Spirit could not come until Jesus left. He refers to the Holy Spirit as a "helper" or "comforter." They needed to know about the coming of the Holy Spirit. More is said in chapters 14 through 17 about the Holy Spirit than in the rest of the Gospels. Jesus had to die, be raised, and ascend to the Father before the Spirit could come.

He told them that those who believed in Him would do "greater works than these." These works may refer to the preaching of the gospel and the conversion of thousands. Converting souls is far greater (more important) than all the miracles that were performed. In that sense their works would be greater.

Jesus knew that the disciples would not remember everything He had said and taught them. Also, they would need additional information that they had not yet received. Thus, when the Holy Spirit comes, He will reveal to them everything God wanted them to know.

He would guide them "into all the truth." This would apply to what they spoke and also to what they wrote. The Bible is inspired because the Holy Spirit directed its writing so there would be no errors in it. The main thrust of the Holy Spirit's work would be to bear witness to Jesus.

When the Holy Spirit would come He would also do something for the unbelieving world. He would "convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment." The conviction would be through the Word. The gospel is so powerful that it can take the most hardened heart and change it so it can have eternal life.

He wants them to know He would be with them again. He spoke of returning in at least three ways: (1) After His resurrection, He appeared to them at different times and places over a period of forty days. (2) After His ascension, He would be with them spiritually. (3) Someday, He will return to claim His own. This will be at His second and only coming.

They must retain a close relationship with Him as a vine does to its branches. As life-giving nutrients flow through the grapevine into the branches, so one's spiritual life comes from the Lord who is our vine and we are His branches. As branches we must bear fruit. Thus, we are to lead fruitful lives and share our faith with others.

Jesus had much to say about love in His final discourse with the apostles. God loved Him, He loved the Father, He loved the disciples and they were to love Him. They were also to love each other. He said, "This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you."

So there would be no misunderstanding of what He meant by their loving as He had loved, He said, "Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends." Very shortly he would be laying down His life for them as He died on the cross. In doing this he was also laying down His life for His enemies.

He warned of the persecution that awaited them. The hatred of the world had focused on Him but after He leaves that hatred would be transferred to them. He warned "They will make you outcasts from the synagogue, but an hour is coming for everyone who kills you to think that he is offering service to God."

We often think of the model prayer Jesus gave to His disciples as the Lord's Prayer, but **John 17** is really the Lord's Prayer. This prayer has three parts to it. (1) Jesus prayed regarding His relationship with His father (**vv 1-5**). He only asked that He might be glorified. (2) He prayed for the apostles that God would protect them, sanctify them and love them. (3) Finally, He prayed for those who believe on Him through their word. He prayed for all future believers that they might **"be one"** like He and the Father were one.

The reason being that the world would believe He had been sent by the Father. There is nothing more destructive to the preaching of the gospel than for the world to see those who claim to be followers of Christ, are in a divided condition.

Passover Supper concluded (Matthew 26:30, Mark 14:26)

The upper room session now closes with a song. It is said, **"And when they had sung a hymn they went out to the Mount of Olives."** Traditionally, the Passover feast would conclude with the singing of the Hallel Psalms Hallel is the transliteration of a Hebrew word for **"praise."** They probably sang the final Hallel Psalm which begins, **"Give thank to the Lord, for He is good; for His loving kindness is everlasting."**

It may appear that what Jesus is about to endure in the next twenty four hours does not seem in any way the kindness of God. But actually it will be greatest show of loving kindness ever to be manifested toward mankind.

In the garden of Gethsemane (Matthew 226:36-46; Mark 14:32-42; Luke 22:39-46; John 18:1)

The Lord with His apostles now walk through the narrow streets of Jerusalem and pass through one of the gates of the city and then cross the Kidron valley over onto the slopes of the Mount of Olives. There they enter a place called Gethsemane.

There was a garden there where Jesus had often met with His disciples. The word **"Gethsemane"** means **"oil press."** Probably at one time an oil press was located there to be used to press the olives that came from the trees which gave it its name - Mount of Olives. The disciples may get a few hours of sleep but it will be a sleepless night for the Lord. At this point his thoughts were not conducive to sleep. Later on he will be forced to stay awake.

Arriving at the garden Jesus leaves eight of His disciples, admonishing them to **"Pray that you may not enter into temptation."** Then taking Peter, James and John He goes farther into the garden. He is overwhelmed with the physical and spiritual agony that lies ahead. We are told that He **"began to be very distressed and troubled."** He told His friends. **"My soul is deeply grieved remain here and keep watch with Me."**

Jesus now moves farther into the garden falling on his face and praying, **"My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless not as I will, but as You will."** The **"cup"** referred to all the trials he will go through and all the anguish, and suffering that He will have to endure on the cross. We cannot help but notice the humanity of Jesus here He is speaking as a human, just as human as anyone on earth.

He felt like we would have felt if we had faced such an ordeal. He was fully God, but He was also fully man. There is much we cannot fathom about the Incarnation. From time to time there must have been tension between Christ's Godhood and His manhood. This tension was never more evident than here in the garden.

When Jesus told the disciples that **"the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak"** He was not just talking about them. He was also talking about Himself. Yet He respects the Father's will.

So He prays that above all the will of His Father be done. Jesus returns to the three disciples and finds them asleep. He asks, "Could you not watch one hour?"

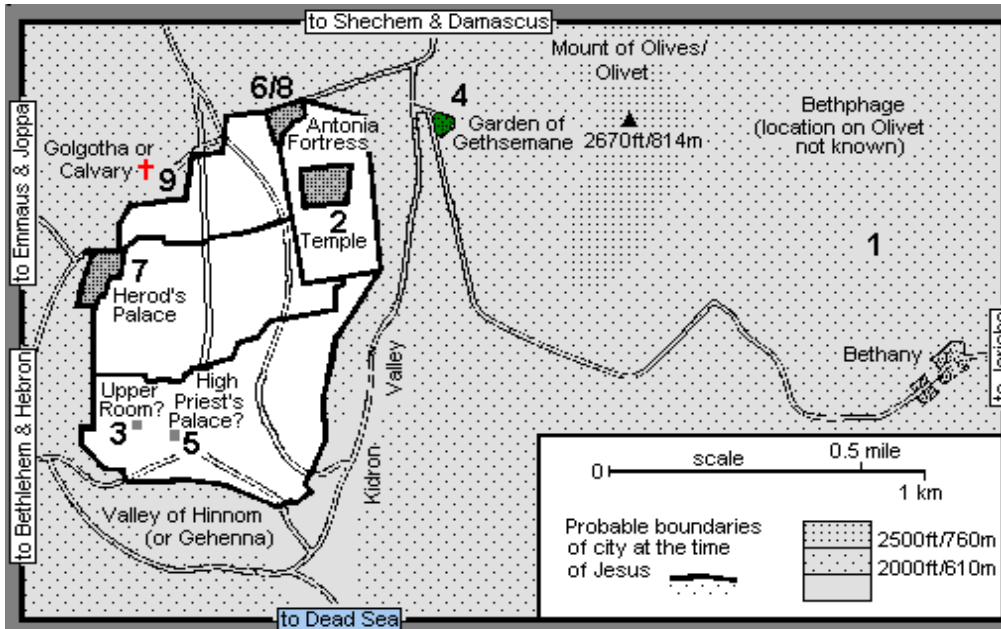
Jesus returns a second time and prays to the Father. "O My Father, if this cup may not pass away from Me unless I drink it, Your will be done." He returns to the three again and finds them asleep. It is said that their eyes were heavy. A third time Jesus goes and prays. Luke tells us, "And being in agony, He prayed more earnestly. And His sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground."

We are also told that an angel came to Him from heaven and strengthened Him. He returns to the disciples the third time. He said, "Sleep on now and take your rest, Behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us be going. See, he who betrays Me is at hand."

Lesson Thirty One

Betrayal, arrest and trials (Matthew 26:47-58; Mark 14:43-52; Luke 22:47-53; John 18:1-12)

Judas probably goes to the upper room first. Not finding Jesus and the apostles he seems to know where to go next.



Being late at night it would not be likely they would have tried to make their way to Bethany. So where is the most likely place they would go?

The garden of Gethsemane was a favorite place with Jesus. He often met and talked with His disciples there. It was not unusual for Jesus and His disciples to sleep out in the open.

In the summer months people who had houses often slept on their flat roofs because it was cooler there. Judas comes with a mob of people to arrest Jesus. There are some questions as to the composition of the mob. John tells us there was a cohort. This would consist of 600 men. It is doubtful that many would have been rounded up at night. The answer seems to be there were Roman soldiers and representatives of the high priests.

But why would Pilate dispatch Roman soldiers? Probably to stop any potential riot or revolts. He no doubt already knew about the conflict between the Jewish leaders and Jesus. This would explain why they were able to get Jesus before Pilate so early the next morning and why the Sanhedrin worked too hard to trump up charges to present to Pilate. It would also explain why Pilate's wife had a bad dream about Jesus while all these events were taking place.

Around midnight or later the mob led by Judas arrived at the garden. They were carrying torches, lanterns, swords, clubs and other weapons. Jesus asks who they were seeking. They reply "Jesus of Nazareth." Immediately Jesus identifies Himself. He says, "I am He." Why so many to capture one man? Perhaps of His reputation of being able to do such powerful miracles.

The first reaction of the mob was to fall back. They seem shocked to come upon Jesus so quickly and must be reacting out of fear of what He might do. It is obvious He is not going to offer any resistance.

Judas does not need to kiss Him now because He has already identified Himself. But he does anyway! He does it with great pretense. He may have kissed Him multiple times on each cheek.

This is the height of hypocrisy. The soldiers now move to bind Jesus as if He were a criminal. From this moment on Jesus' hands would seldom be free. The actions of the mob violated a law which clearly stated one could not be arrested without a clear charge. All of His trials will a travesty of justice.

Peter is ready to fight. He draws a sword. He and the other apostles evidently felt Jesus was ready to establish His kingdom. Knowing the powerful miracles He had performed they perhaps felt they would be victorious over the mob. In the process Peter cut off the ear of Malchus, the servant of the high priest. He probably meant to do more than this but Malchus ducked.

Some say the sword was a large butcher knife used to carve the Passover lamb. Jesus tells Peter to put the sword away because this is not the way His kingdom fights. He could have called for twelve legions of angels (72,000) if He had wanted, but it was necessary that He fulfill the Scriptures which said He must submit to this. The Lord then restores the ear to Malchus. It would seem this miracle alone would have made the mob back off, but it may be they were unaware of what the Lord did.

Immediately the disciples flee. Perhaps it has become apparent to them there will be no fight for the kingdom and [what else could they do?](#) Mark records an interesting incident. Among those fleeing was a young man who had on nothing but a linen garment.

As he flees a guard grabs his cloak and He runs away naked. Many speculate that this was none other than John Mark. Jesus is now left alone with only His enemies. He will now undergo six trials. Three of them will be before the Jews, and three before the Romans.

Before Annas

Jesus is now escorted from Gethsemane to the palace of Annas who had served as high priest before Caiaphas. However, the Romans had replaced him with his son-in-law Caiaphas, who was presently the high priest. Since it was considered that the high priest was to hold his office for a life time many would consider Annas as still being the high priest. To say the least he had a lot of control and influence among the Jews.

Annas begins asking Jesus about his disciples and His teachings. According to law it was not legal to be conducted a court at night, only in the daytime. Jesus pointed out that He had spoken openly both in the synagogues and the temple where all were able to hear.

[Why ask not ask those who heard Him speak tell Annas what he had taught?](#) One of the officials probably thinking Jesus spoke disrespectfully struck Jesus in the face. Jesus asks for an explanation from the guard, which He did not receive. This is only the beginning of the physical abuse Jesus would endure that day.

Before Caiaphas

Jesus is now transferred to the palace where Caiaphas lived. Caiaphas was the one who had said that one man must die to save their nation. So, it had already been determined Jesus must die. Looking for false evidence it seems a number of people volunteer to testify against the Lord. The only problem was they did not agree with each other in what they said. Then two come forward with the same story.

They remember that three years ago Jesus had said he could rebuild the temple. However, the witnesses said He said that He would destroy the Temple which was a lie. Jesus had said, "if you" destroy this temple (His body) He would raise it on the third day.

Caiaphas must have been embarrassed with all the conflicting lies of the witnesses. Frustrated, he asked Jesus to take an oath. "I adjure You by the living God that you tell us if You are the Christ, the Son of God." Jesus answered that He was and that they would see Him seated at the right hand of God. This was all they needed. He has now openly declared it before the Jewish leaders.

Caiaphas put on a great show as if He were in total shock He tore his robes which was a symbol of deep distress and said, "He has spoken blasphemy!" Jesus was then blindfolded, spit upon, hit with their fists, slapped, and then asked to tell them which one had hit Him if He were a prophet. The mistreatment of Jesus indicates they had lost any fear they might have of Him as He did not resist in anyway.

Before the Sanhedrin

While Peter along with other disciples had fled when Jesus was arrested by the mob, Peter had followed at some distance with another disciple, which seems to be John. John is able to enter into the court just below where the Sanhedrin met, but Peter is left outside. John talks to a girl at the door and then ushers Peter in.

On the way in she gets a good look at Peter. A fire has been built and Peter is warming himself by the fire. Jesus had told Peter a few hours before that before the rooster who crow two times Peter would deny him three times. The girl who had admitted Peter comes up to him and said, "You are not also one of this Man's disciples, are you?" He said, "I am not." This is denial number one.

The girl would not give up. Looking directly at Peter she says, "This man was also with Him." Again Peter denies. Why did Peter deny the Lord? He had proven his bravery when he drew the sword and cut off the ear of Malchus. Maybe he is struggling with doubt. The fact Jesus had been arrested and was now being tried by the Jews to be put to death did not match up with his concept of a Messiah who would be strong enough to overcome any opposition.

About an hour later a man insists, "Surely this fellow also was with Him, for he is a Galilean." Now comes the third denial. "Man I do not know what you are saying!" We are told that Peter even began to curse and swear saying, "I do not know the man." Immediately the rooster crowed. The Lord turned and looked at Peter and Peter remembered what He had told Him earlier that night. Peter left and began to weep bitterly.

It is probably around 5:30 to 6:00 a.m. when Jesus is led before the Sanhedrin. This was the high court of the land, very much like our Supreme Court Mark says the whole Council was present. This would have included Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea who no doubt were already believers in Jesus. Did they have anything to say or was it such a cut and dried matter, thus they had no opportunity to say or do anything?

The Council had a twofold purpose. (1) They needed formal confirmation of the sentence passed during the night. If Jesus had not said he was the Son of God, there would have been no testimony that morning. (2) They could not legally kill Jesus. Only the Roman governor could authorize this. So they had to concoct some political charge serious enough to warrant Jesus' death under Roman law. Jesus is now led to the Praetorian to face Pilate.

Suicide of Judas (Matthew 27:3-10; Acts 1:18-19)

At this point Judas commits suicide. The final verdict of the Sanhedrin had been officially announced. How Judas found out we do not know. Seeing that Jesus is going to be condemned to die, he feels awful at the terrible thing he has done. It may be he never expected things to go as far as they did. He says, "I have sinned in that I have betrayed innocent blood." What tragic words.

He seems to try and undo his deed by returning the thirty pieces of silver to the high priests but it is too late. The chief priests carried nothing about Judas nor did they care about the truth. In a spiteful way Judas throws the silver into the Temple. He goes to the potter's field and hangs himself. Since this was blood money, they decide to use the money to purchase the field where he hung himself as a burial place renaming it "The field of blood."

Lesson Thirty Two

The Roman trials (Matthew 27:11-31; Mark 15:2-20; Luke 23:2-25; John 18:28-19:16)

The Sanhedrin delivers Jesus to Pontius Pilate the Roman governor over Judea. The duties of a governor were to keep peace and to collect taxes for Rome. He was procurator of Palestine which gave him absolute power of life and death. The only higher court would be Caesar. Appeals to the emperor were reserved only for Roman citizens.

The "Praetorian" was the official residence of the Roman governor. It was occupied primarily by Gentiles. Therefore, the Jews did not go inside the compound for fear they would be defiled. Due to the deep resentment of the Jews toward Rome, Judea had been a trouble spot. If there were too many revolts Rome might decide to remove the governor.

So he had to be careful to keep down any disturbance. This definitely plays a role in his three trials that involved Jesus. Normally Pilate resided in Caesarea, but during the feasts he would often come to Jerusalem to keep a close eye on an explosive Jewish population.

First trial

Jesus is brought to Pilate early in the morning but the Jews would not enter the Praetorian. The scene is incredible! They ask Pilate to condemn Jesus without even presenting a charge against him. They expect him to accept their own conclusions of guilt. He does not fall for this at all. He would have already known of the arrest made the previous night as Roman soldiers had participated in the arrest.

Also he would have known of some of the antagonism between the Jewish leaders and Jesus. He was not aware they wanted him executed. So he tells them to "Take Him yourself." Their response was they could not do this as Rome had stripped them of any authority to execute a person.

This situation made possible the fulfillment of Jesus' words that he would die by crucifixion, by the hands of the Gentiles. If the Jews had executed Him it would have been by stoning. The Romans preferred crucifixion. They now bring three specific charges against Jesus. (1) He was perverting the nation. (2) He was teaching the people they should not pay taxes. (3) He claims to be their king. Pilate now interviews the defendant. He directly asks Jesus "Are You the King of the Jews?"

This is the only serious charge as far as Pilate is concerned. Christ replied in the affirmative. He then asks Pilate the source of the accusation. Pilate acknowledges that the charge came from the Jews and urges Jesus to explain why they were so provoked with Him Jesus replied that

His kingdom was not a worldly kingdom. He proves it by saying if it were of this world then His servants would be fighting to keep Him from being turned over to the Jews for execution. Pilate did not understand who Jesus was but he certainly knew He had done nothing worthy of death. So He goes outside and announces his verdict: "I find no fault in Him at all."

The crowd becomes very vocal. They said Jesus was stirring up the people all the way from Galilee to Judea. Pilate is in a dilemma He has pronounced Jesus as not guilty, but he did not want to antagonize the Jews. If a major disturbance were to happen he could be called back to Rome.

Thus, it was politically expedient for Pilate to keep the Jews happy. He must have recognize the Galilean accent of Jesus and asked if he were a Galilean. When he found out He was, then this put

Jesus under Herod's jurisdiction. So he sends him to Herod who was also in Jerusalem due to the Passover, no doubt to impress the Jews.

Second trial

Herod Antipas was eager to see Jesus. He had heard much about Him. He had heard all about the miracles of Jesus so he is hoping that Jesus will entertain him with a miracle. Also, Herod had killed the cousin of Jesus, John the Baptist. Being superstitious, he assumed John's spirit was somehow in Jesus and had empowered Jesus to perform miracles.

Herod questioned Him at some length, but Jesus did not answer him one word. He is the only person in the gospels that Jesus refused to speak to. When Jesus refused to entertain Herod, it infuriated him and he delivers Jesus to his guards to insult Him. Herod himself even joins in with the abuse and mockery. They put a robe on Him and ridiculed him. At the same time the chief priests and teachers of the law were screaming out accusations again Him. Jesus is then sent back to Pilate.

Third trial

Jesus is returned to Pilate wearing a royal robe of mockery. To Pilate's dismay Herod did not render any verdict. There remains only the accusation of the chief priests. He assembles the leaders saying that neither He nor Herod had found any substance to their accusations. He now takes a new position. He will punish Jesus and then let Him go.

Suddenly another crowd shows up. It was a custom to release one prisoner each year that the Jews were permitted to name. They have come to ask Pilate to do what he had been doing in the past. Barabbas, a notorious criminal, guilty of insurrection and murder was in custody and due for execution. Surely the leaders would choose Jesus over Barabbas.

Pilate offered them a choice. He puts the question to them. "Which one shall I release to you? The leaders urged the people to call for the release of Barabbas. Then, what about Jesus?" "They cried out again, `crucify Him!"

While Pilate is seated on his judgment seat his wife sent him a message. "Have nothing to do with that just Man, for I have suffered many things today in a dream because of Him." This probably means the night before she had a nightmare about Him. Also, how did she know Jesus was a just man? The crowds urged on by their leaders are told to ask for Barabbas.

Pilate continues to appeal to them. Again he asks which of the two they want released? They cried out Barabbas! Pilate asks: "What then shall I do with Jesus who is called Christ?" Their answer was: "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" The judicial process has now broken down and reason is completely gone.

Pilate now returns to an earlier plan, to beat Jesus badly as an act of punishment then maybe the mob will show some pity and let Him be released. Jesus is taken back inside the Praetorian by the guards where He is flogged. Flogging was so horrible that it was illegal to flog a Roman citizen without a direct edict from Caesar.

The victim was usually tied to a post or hung from a wall. This stretched the muscles across the victim's back. A soldier would use a flagellum; a wooden stick with thong strands attached to it. At the end of each strand were tied something sharp, like bone, metal, glass or even metal balls. In flogging a soldier would lash the back, buttocks and legs. The sharp objects literally shredded the muscles.

So severe was the lashing that the victim's vertebrae were often exposed and sometimes even his intestines. Flogging was so lethal that six out of ten would die. Those who survived were carried away on a stretcher with permanent mutilation.

In the case of Jesus they took the punishment even further. They find a thorny branch and weave it into a crown, then place it on his head pressing it down on His brow. The result would be a bloody mess that would mat His hair, fill His ears with blood and cloud His vision.

They perform a mock coronation. They strip Him of his clothes; put a purple robe on Him and a rod in His hand to imitate a ruler's staff. They kneel down before him mockingly saying, "Hail, king of the Jews!" They spit in His face, slap him upside the head, grab the rod and drive the crown of thorns deeper into his brow.

Pilate goes out and again affirms that Jesus is innocent. He calls for Jesus who is barely recognizable by now. Surely they will have pity on Him now. Nothing has changed with the mob. Pilate tells them they should crucify Him as he had not found anything to charge Him with. They answer that He must die because he claimed to be the Son of God.

The truth has come out. They wanted Him executed not for sedition but for blasphemy. So Pilate interrogates Jesus again. [How does he deal with such a charge?](#) He could care less that Jesus claimed to be the Son of God. Jesus remains silent. Pilate lashes out that he had the power to crucify Him. Jesus then tells Pilate he had no power, were it not given to him from above.

The leaders continue to shout for the crucifixion of Jesus. They bring up the issue of Jesus claiming to be a king. They say they have no king but Caesar. They intimidate Pilate with the charge that if he were to release Jesus he was no friend of Caesar for he is allowing a man to be set free who claimed to be their king. The mob prevails. Barabbas is released. Pilate took water and washed his hands saying, "I am innocent of this man's blood." The crowd responded, "Let His blood be on us and on our children!"

Preparation for the execution (Matthew 27:31-34, Mark 15:20-22, Luke 23:26-32, John 19:16-17)

Jesus is now prepared for execution. First the soldiers mock Jesus. They take the purple robe off of his back taking with it shreds of flesh that had been glued to his robe by the coagulated blood. He is handed over to the execution squad. This normally consisted of one centurion and four legionnaires. They put His clothes back on Him and begin the march to the place of execution.

Jesus is forced to carry the patibulum, the horizontal beam of the cross. It weighed around seventy-five pounds. Jesus is too weak from the flogging to bear it all the way to Golgotha. Thus, we are not surprised He falls to the ground.

They pull a man from the crowd. Simon of Syrene ([located on North Shore of Africa](#)) and forced him to carry it. A large number of people follow, including women who mourned. Freed from the cross Jesus turns to them and forewarns them that to weep for Him but they should be mourning for themselves and their children in view of the coming doom of Jerusalem. Two other men, criminals, are also led out with Jesus to be executed.

Lesson Thirty three

Crucifixion of Christ (Matthew 27:33-56; Mark 15:22-4; Luke 23:33-119; John 19:17-30)

The destination of the death march was Golgotha, which translates, "The Place of the Skull." In Latin it is translated "Calvary." It was located outside the city gate, but near the city. Some think it was just north of the city wall near the Damascus gate.

The upright post probably remained in place never being taken down. The crosspiece ([patibulum](#)) was what was carried by the victim to be crucified. His hands would be nailed to the crosspiece and then it would be lifted up and attached near the top of the post. From the description given it would seem the cross was + shaped although there were several types of crosses.

We do not know why the place was called. "The Place of the Skull." There is a hill north of the city that has two caves in it when viewed from a distance appears to look somewhat like a skull with two eyeless sockets. The cross was invented to make death as painful and lingering as possible. It was of Phoenician origin although the Romans adopted and improved on its torture. A victim could often linger for three or four days before death came.

Jesus is crucified

Arriving at Golgotha they stripped Jesus of His clothes. They offered a numbing drink made from sour wine mixed with a mild narcotic. It was offered as an analgesic to deaden the pain. After tasting the painkiller, Jesus declined to drink it. He refused to have His senses dulled choosing to suffer to the fullest extent the torture of the cross.

All four gospel writers do not give a detailed account of how the crucifixion was carried out. But from history we know that the crossbeam was placed on the ground. Jesus would be stretched out with His arms upon the beam. They used spikes five to seven inches long and tapered to a sharp point. They would be driven through the wrists. This would be a position that would lock the hand.

If the nails had been driven through the palms, His weight would have caused the skin to tear and He would have fallen from the cross. The wrist was considered a part of the hand in ancient times. Some think ropes were used to hold Jesus to the cross but there is no evidence of this.

It is important to understand the nail would have gone through and crushed the medium nerve which is the largest nerve going out of the hand. The pain would have been absolutely unbearable. They had to invent a new word to describe it, the word excruciating. Literally, the word excruciating means "out of the cross."

At this point Jesus being attached to the crossbeam would have been hoisted so the crossbar could be attached to the vertical post. Then nails were driven through Jesus' feet. Again the nerves in his feet would have been crushed, and there would have been a similar type of pain as with His wrists.

Have ever hit your "funny bone"? It's extremely painful when you accidentally hit it. Now just imagine taking a pair of pliers and squeezing and crushing that nerve. This would be similar to what Jesus experienced. The pain was absolutely unbearable.

The torture would now begin. First His arms would have immediately been stretched; probably about six inches in length and both shoulders would have become dislocated. This was a fulfillment of the prophecy of Psalm 22 which says, "My bones are out of joint." Once a person is hanging in the vertical position crucifixion is essentially an agonizing slow death by asphyxiation.

Stress on the muscles and diaphragm put the chest into the inhaled position; so that basically, in order to exhale, the Lord would have had to push up on His feet so the tension on the muscles would be eased for a moment. In doing this the nail would tear through the foot, eventually locking up against the tarsal bones.

Then after managing to exhale, the Lord would then be able to relax down and take another breath in. Over and over again He would have to push himself up, scraping His bloodied back against the coarse wood of the cross. This would go on until complete exhaustion would take place where the person would take place where the person would not be able to push up and breathe anymore. The breathing would slow down and He would go into what is called respiratory acidosis. The carbon dioxide in the blood is dissolved which leads to an irregular heartbeat. Jesus would have known that He was at the moment of death thus He could say, "Lord, into your hands I commit my spirit."

Actually Jesus dies of cardiac arrest. In this process fluid would collect around the heart and lungs. This explains why both blood and water came from the side of Jesus when the soldier thrust the spear into His side. John's description is consistent with what modern medicine would expect to have happened.

The soldiers assigned to the crucifixion would remain on duty and watch throughout the ordeal of suffering until the victim died. The four assigned to the Lord divided His garments, but gambled for the seamless robe in order not to tare it. Little did they realize they were fulfilling the prophecy of **Psalm 22:18, "They divide My garments among them and for My clothing they cast lots."**

Seemingly this is all the Lord owned that He could leave to this world. What a great lesson for us. **What will we leave?** We learn that the two thieves are crucified at the same time with one being on the right side and the other on the left side of the Lord. This probably was not by accident but done to bring ignominy on Jesus. It was to add insult to insult.

The inscription over His head

Over the head of the criminal was usually a board with an inscription telling who he was and his crime. Pilate wrote, **"Jesus of Nazareth, the king of the Jews."** This was written in three current languages of the day, which were Latin, Greek and Hebrew.



The Jewish leaders were enraged when they saw this title. It sounded too much like a statement of fact. They protested to Pilate but he refused to change. Pilate said, **"What I have written, I have written"**.

Verbal abuse of the Lord

The mob seems intent on seeing Jesus crucified. Their only recourse now was to station themselves in front of the cross and spew out sarcastic statements ridiculing Jesus. We are told that the chief priests, the scribes and the elders mocked Him. No matter how wicked a person has been as he dies people usually leave him alone while he dies if for nothing else than showing respect for the family's feelings.

They walk back and forth calling out to him in loud jeering voices. **"Ha, thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days."** **"He saved others, Himself He cannot save"**. They called on Him to come down from the cross offering to believe upon Him if He would do so. Little did they realize they were fulfilling prophecy.

Psalm 22:7, 8. "All those who see Me laugh Me to scorn; they shake the head, saying `He trusted in the Lord, let Him rescue Him; Let Him deliver Him, since He delights in Him." Solomon in Proverbs 24:17, 18 said, **"Do not rejoice when your enemy falls, and do not let your heart be laded when he stumbles; Lest the Lord see it, and it displease Him, and He turn away His wrath from him."**

Even one of the two thieves who were crucified with him railed on Him. **Why? What had Jesus ever done to him?**

Lesson Thirty Four The seven sayings from the cross

For about six hours Jesus would suffer agony indescribable by tongue or pen. His utterances from the cross reflect much concerning His sufferings. The first three were spoken in the full light of day before noon and the last four were spoken after noon in a mysterious darkness.

"Father, forgive them for they do not know what they do" (Luke 23:34)

This was uttered in the midst of the insulting taunts of the mob. Most of us would find revenge a natural reaction. He was thinking of others, not an injured pride. Because of the seriousness of their sin He could feel pity for them in the midst of the intense agony he was suffering at the moment.

The verb here is imperfect, thus **literally "Kept on saying, Father forgive them, they know not what they do."** We are left with the impression that with each indignity the Lord repeated His prayer on behalf of His tormentors. There is no greater example of forgiving love. Jesus taught His disciples to pray for their enemies and those that would persecute them (**Matthew 5:44**).

He has never asked us to do anything that He was not willing to do. We find it so hard to forgive. We carry grudges and anger against others, even fellow Christians. Surely if He could forgive the terrible atrocity that was committed against Him we can learn to forgive the petty grievances we hold against others.

"Today you will be with Me in paradise" (Luke 23:43).

One of the thieves ridicules Jesus as a false Messiah. The other thief finds himself strangely moved by the dying Savior. We marvel at the knowledge he has, which is revealed in his reply to the other thief who had been heaping verbal abuse on the Lord.

He said, **"For we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this Man has done nothing wrong."** **How did he know this?** His request to be remembered when Jesus would come in His kingdom is amazing for this thief. Some have suggested he may have heard Jesus teach on several occasions. He could have become a believer at the time; maybe even followed Jesus, but then got caught up in the crime of theft and insurrection.

He may have known Jesus well enough to know He was not a criminal and certainly not deserving death on a cross. Jesus tells him that he will be with Him in paradise. When confronted with death suddenly our whole way of thinking can change. Obviously this was true of the thief.

However, we cannot use this man as an example of how one is saved today (**faith, followed by asking the Lord to save you**). Many have used this event to prove one can be saved without baptism. We are dealing with a man who lived under the Law of Moses and not the law that we live under today. The New Covenant under which we live requires that one believe, repent of their sins, confess the name of Jesus and be baptized for the remission of one's sins.

"Woman, behold your son behold your mother" (John 19:26, 27).

Among the disciples there is a noticeable absence of men at the Cross. It seems that John is the only one who is there. He stands in the midst of a small group of women. John mentions four women. **(1)** There was Mary the mother of Jesus, **(2)** His mother's sister, Mary, wife of Zebedee and mother of James and John who would be cousins of Jesus. Then there was Mary the wife of Clopas, the mother of James the younger and Joses. Finally there was Mary Magdalene.

Jesus assigned His mother to the care of John. At this time Jesus' half brothers are not yet believers in Him, thus they may not have been anywhere near Jerusalem. Since His hands were nailed to the cross, He must have indicated to whom He was speaking of by a movement of either the head or eyes. The human side of Jesus is seen here. John accepts this responsibility. Tradition says John did take her under his care and eventually took her with him to Ephesus where both died and were buried.

"My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" (Matthew 27:46).

This cry of anguish is beyond our comprehension. It is too deep for us to fully appreciate. The depth of anguish expressed in this cry indicates the most excruciating suffering. Jesus quotes **Psalm 22:1** applying it to Himself as prophetic. **Could it be that Jesus Himself did not fully understand the demands of Divine Love Himself?** Jesus had never known what it was like to be alienated from God's presence.

At some level which we do not understand the Father turns His back on Jesus as He becomes the embodiment of sin (**2 Corinthians 5:21; Romans 3:26; Galatians 3:13**). Jesus is forsaken by God, left without any of God's resources or intervention to suffer and die alone. We must let His statement rest without too many assumptions.

A sudden mysterious darkness now comes over the city. The Jews had been crying for a sign from Jesus. **Was God using His power to add further proof of the divinity of His Son? Or was God veiling the dying moments of His Son from the reviling multitude?** Some misunderstood the word Eli, thinking that Jesus was calling Elijah. A swollen tongue and parched lips would have made His speech less intelligible.

"I thirst" (John 19:28)

Jesus asks for a drink. This shows the utter agony He suffered. It was real, it was excruciating. The vinegar offered Him was sour wine. It did not contain what had been offered to Him earlier to ease the pain. A reed or pole was used to lift a sponge full of the wine. Because they had misheard **"Eli"** for **"Elijah"** this provides them an opportunity to mock Jesus. They said to leave Him alone and let them see if Elijah would come to take Him down from the cross.

"It is finished" (John 19:30)

This is the voice of triumph not defeat Not that His life was finished but that His work which the Father had sent Him to accomplish was finished. He had come unto men, had ministered to them, had suffered on the cross and now all that remains is His coming forth from the grave. **What if Jesus had not conquered? What hope would we have today?**

"Father, into Your hands I commend My Spirit" (Luke 23:46)

There is complete submission and harmony with the Father. This is a prayer of resignation. Having accomplished His work here on earth He can now commend His soul unto God's keeping. The Scriptures simply tell us that He gave up the ghost or yielded up His spirit John says, **"He bowed His head, and gave up His spirit."**

Miraculous Events (Matthew 27:51-56; Mark 15:38-41; Luke 23:47-49)

Between noon and 3 p.m. darkness covers Judea. This is the first of three phenomena associated with Jesus' death. Thallus, a historian of that time is quoted as saying there was darkness but explains it as an eclipse of the sun. This could not be an eclipse for an eclipse does not last for three hours. Neither would it occur during the full moon of Passover.

According to Tertullian it was a worldwide event, witnessed in such cities as Rome, Athens and other Mediterranean cities. Phlegon, a Greek author reported that it became as night in the sixth hour of the day (**noon**), so that the stars appeared in the heavens.

Pontus Pilate wrote Emperor Tiberius that **"The moon, being like blood, did not shine the whole night, and yet at this time of the year there would have been a full moon"**. This is a fulfillment of a prophecy by Joel (**Joel 2:28ft**).

At the moment Jesus dies the veil of the temple was torn in two. This would be the curtain between the holy place and the holy of holies inside the Temple. Even though this would not have been seen

by the general public it would not have been kept a secret, especially by the priests who were later converted to Christianity. (Acts 6:7).

Edersheim says it was sixty feet wide by thirty feet high. It was thick as the breadth of the palm of a hand. Thus, it was rent by the hand of God rather than by some individual. This may have symbolized the coming destruction of the temple and the removal of all its sacrifices. Also, it could signify the open access of God's people to the very presence of God through Jesus of intercessor.

Seemingly at about the same time there was an earthquake. Rocks were split and graves opened and many bodies of departed saints were raised to life and after the resurrection they appeared to many people in Jerusalem. Not only did the earthquake in Jerusalem but as far away as places like Bithynia and Nicea.

A centurion was one of those assigned to be on duty during the crucifixion. It is said, "When the centurion and those with him, who were guarding Jesus, saw the earthquake and the things that had happened they feared greatly, saying `truly this was the Son of God!'" He seems to say that Jesus did not deserve this. He was the Jewish Messiah that He claimed to be.

Lesson Thirty Five

The burial of Christ (Matthew 27:57-66; Mark 15:42-47; Luke 23:50-56; John 19:31-42)

The Christian faith rests on the truth of the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. If this did not happen then our faith is vain and useless. Paul makes these three events the centerpiece of the gospel. It is important that we consider each of these events carefully to determine their validity.

The Sabbath began at sundown. It would be around 6 p.m. at that time of the year. This particular Sabbath was a very special day. Not only is it a Sabbath day, but it was The Sabbath, during the week of the Passover.

Confirmation of the death of Jesus

Because the Sabbath was approaching the Jews had asked Pilate that the legs of the three be broken and the bodies be taken away. According to their law, the Jews could not allow a body to hang on a tree overnight, especially on the Sabbath day. So a delegation is sent to Pilate to ask him to dispose of the three bodies. This involved breaking of the legs of the victims.

In this case six hours would not have been long enough for them to have died. In order to speed up death they would use a steel shaft of a Roman spear to shatter the victim's lower leg bones. This would prevent him from pushing up with his legs so he could breathe, and death by asphyxiation would result in a matter of minutes. This was called *crurifragium*. Jesus was already dead. Even if a victim was already dead they would go ahead and break his legs but for some reason His legs are not broken.

Little did they realize they were fulfilling the prophecy of Psalm 34:20, "Not one of His bones will be broken." It is interesting that the Passover Lamb was roasted whole so as not to break a single bone. (Deuteronomy 12:46). The lamb served as a type of the Messiah, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world (John 1:29). Also, the prophecy of Zechariah 12:10 which predicted that the Messiah would be pierced and that the Jews would eventually mourn when this wicked deed was fulfilled.

A soldier makes sure He is dead by piercing His side with a sharp spear by slipping it under his ribs. Out comes a flow of both blood and water.

In cardiac arrest which Jesus seems to have suffered, fluid would collect around the heart and lungs. Considering the position in which the spear entered the body we can see why both blood and water came from the side of Jesus.

There is less than three hours since the soldier pierced Jesus' side and the setting of the sun. So quick action must be taken to take the body of Jesus down from the cross and bury it. Joseph of Arimathea who was a member of the Sanhedrin took courage and appeared before Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus so that he might give it a proper burial.

Pilate seems surprised that Jesus would already be dead. He called a centurion and asked if He were already dead. Pilate probably wants to know if the centurion broke Jesus' legs and watched him die. The centurion could reply "I did not have to break His legs. He was already dead and to verify it I had his side lanced and both blood and water came forth." Assured that He was dead Pilate then granted Joseph permission to take the body down from the cross.

Joseph is assisted by Nicodemus. Nicodemus like Joseph had probably believed in Jesus from the beginning. While Joseph provides a tomb, Nicodemus provides the burial materials. Both, the tomb and the burial material would have been costly.

Myrrh was a gummy substance extracted from trees in Arabia. It had a very pleasant aroma to it. It could be mixed with aloes to make a sort of paste. Strips of linen cloth would be dipped in the mixture. Its purpose was to overpower the stench of the decomposing body. He brought seventy-five pounds which would have been very effective.

According to Jewish burial customs they would have first washed the bloody body of Jesus. They would lay the body on a long sheet of linen which was then folded over the top of the body. This was called the shroud. Then the linen strips would be wrapped around the linen sheet. There was a special cloth used for the head.

The Sabbath (6 p.m.) is soon approaching so the two men have to work quickly. They carry Jesus a short distance to Joseph's tomb, which was located in a nearby garden. The tomb had been cut out of solid rock. It had not been used. The body of Jesus is laid on a rock ledge which was carved for that purpose.

A huge stone which rested in a grove is rolled over the entrance to the tomb which was low enough that the women had to stoop to look into it. Two of the women, Mary Magdalene and Mary, mother of Jesus sat opposite the tomb and observed where the body of Jesus was placed. They want to pay their respects but keep their distance from the two men. They leave with the intention of returning on Sunday bringing additional spices to further anoint the body of Jesus.

Saturday morning the chief priests and some of the Pharisees come to Pilate asking that he provide a guard for the tomb. They remember that Jesus had said He would arise in three days. They are afraid some of His disciples would come to the tomb and steal the body and then tell the people that he had arisen from the dead. It seems Pilate gives them a Roman guard. Also, he has his seal put on the stone.

The empty tomb (Matthew 28:1-8; Mark 16:1-8; Luke 24:1-10; John 20:1)

The faithful women who stood at the foot of the cross have busied themselves preparing fragrant ointment for Jesus' burial. Although Nicodemus had already provided some 75 pounds of ointment these women will not be deprived of showing their love and devotion by further anointing the body of Jesus. To anoint a body was to show honor to the person. Sunday morning while it was still dark, they set out for the tomb. Suddenly there was an earthquake.

Matthew tells us that "an angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat on it. His countenance was like lightning and his clothing as white as snow. And the guards shook for fear of him and became like dead men" (Matthew 28:2-4).

What a sight this must have been. Seemingly the soldiers are the ones who saw what happened. The women ([Mary Magdalene, Mary, the mother of James and Solome](#)) have been wondering who would roll the stone away for them. About the time they arrive at the grave they find the stone has already been rolled away.

Two of the women enter the tomb and find that the body is gone. Inside the tomb stood two men in white garments. The women drop to their knees with their faces to the ground. One of the angels tells them "[Do not be afraid, He is not here! For HE IS RISEN](#)". He told them to, "[Come see the place where the Lord lay](#)" ([Matthew 28:5, 6](#)). The angels now instruct them to go and inform the men what had taken place.

What may go unnoticed here are the terrified guards at the tomb. Matthew tells us that they went into the city and reported what they had seen to the chief priests. [Did the chief priest believe them?](#) Obviously not. They call a meeting of the elders and discuss the matter. This idea of a resurrected Jesus must be stopped before it spreads around. The guards were given a large amount of money to say that Jesus' disciples had stolen the body while they were asleep.

Now it was a law that stealing a body was a crime punishable by death. Also, a guard could be put to death for going to sleep while on duty. It was also a crime to break a seal on a tomb. Considering the story the guards were told to tell; that the disciples had stolen the body was a "[tall one.](#)"

These men who deserted Jesus at His trials and crucifixion suddenly become very brave, so brave they decide to steal the body of Jesus from a tomb that was well guarded. They must quietly slip in past the guards; break the seal on the tomb as they silently roll the stone away without as much as a grunt. Then they carefully remove the graves clothes from the body of Jesus, fold them up into a neat pile, and silently slip past the guards again without being detected.

All the time these men did not even believe Jesus would arise from the grave. They were a discouraged and depressed band of men hid away in a room for fear that they would be hunted down and punished for being the disciples of Jesus. [What would they gain by stealing a dead corpse?](#) At the least persecution.

For sure they would be put to death for the crime of stealing a body from the grave, especially the body of the most hated man of the Jewish leaders. Not a single disciple was ever charged or punished. What an unbelievable story for these soldiers to tell. [Who would believe such?](#) Only the calloused hearted Jewish leaders who would not believe Jesus while alive in spite of all the wonderful miracles He performed.

We are told that at the time the angel appeared and rolled the stone away from the opening to the tomb that the "[guards shook for fear of him and became like dead men.](#)" You wonder how long they could tell this false story, especially to their friends. Such an awesome event could not be kept back very long.

It is interesting that on the day of Pentecost, fifty days later, Peter stood and charged the Jews with putting Christ to death but that God had raised Him from the dead. Not one single voice is raised in opposition to what Peter declared. If Jesus were dead there would have heard an uproar of objections.

Lesson Thirty Six

[The appearances of Jesus \(Matthew 28:9-20; Mark 16:9-20; Luke 24:12-53; John 20:3-21:53\)](#)
The resurrection of Christ is His crowning glory. The whole battle ground of Christianity is over the resurrection of Christ. Before His death He had claimed that He would come forth from the grave in three days. If He failed, His claim to be the Son of God would have proven false.

If He did come forth, then this would prove that He was truly the Son of God. The proof of His resurrection rests upon the testimony of those who saw, touched and heard Him speak after the tomb became empty.

Sharpe observes: "It is to be noted that Christ appeared only to close friends and followers. Had these Gospel records been faked, had they been written merely by men trying to prove a point, would not the writers have had Christ appearing to Pilate, to the high priest, to His enemies and in most spectacular places and manner? The naive straightforwardness of the gospel narratives add force to their strict truthfulness. These men related things as they were, not as they might have wished them to be." We turn now to the witnesses of His resurrection.

Peter and John visit the tomb (Sunday morning, April 9, A.D. 30)

The women who had visited the tomb early on Sunday morning finding it empty are in awe. They are told to report back to the disciples that "He has risen." The frightened women confused and at the same time joyful, run to tell the Eleven what had happened. Both Peter and John head for the tomb. John outruns Peter arriving first. He hesitates at the entrance to the tomb, but bends over to look inside. He sees strips of linen lying there but did not go in.

Peter arrives, but does not stop. Entering the tomb, he sees both the linen wrappings and the head cloth lying separately. John now enters the tomb and saw the clothes and believed. Peter however, is puzzled and will need more time and more evidence before he believes Jesus has risen. Peter and John return back to the other apostles to report what they saw.

Mary Magdalene seems to have become separated from the other women. She probably returned to the tomb after Peter and John left. She was devastated as she stands in front of the tomb crying. She too stoops to look in the tomb and sees exactly what Peter and John saw.

Suddenly two angels (maybe the same ones who were there earlier) are seated on the ledge where the body of Jesus had been laid. They ask Mary, "Why are you crying?" Now Jesus appears behind Mary. She does not recognize Him yet. She thinks He is the gardener and wants to know where the body of Jesus has been laid. She even offers to take the body herself. Then Jesus calls her name.

Instantly she recognizes Him. You can imagine her excitement upon discovering He is alive. She cries out "Rabboni" He grabs Jesus but he tells her to let go. There is much to do with no time to waste. She must go immediately and tell the Eleven she has seen the Lord alive.

She does, however, they did not believe her report. It is going to take time for them to fully comprehend what has happened. So Mary, out of whom Jesus had cast seven demons, is the first person to have the privilege of seeing Jesus after His resurrection, if we had been writing this story how different we would have made it.

The **second appearance** is to the other women who came early to the tomb to anoint His body with the spices they had prepared. It would seem while on their way back from the tomb to report to the apostles Jesus appears to them. They were so elated at seeing Him "they held Him by the feet and worshiped Him." He gives them the same instructions that he had given to Mary Magdalene.

His **third appearance** is to two of the Lord's disciples who were walking to the village of Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem. One of them was called Cleopas. It is Sunday afternoon when a stranger joins them in their walk. They did not know it was Jesus even though He conversed with them, teaching them about what the prophets had said concerning Him.

When they reached the village they asked Him to stay with them since it was very late in the day. While they were eating together their eyes were opened and they realized it was Jesus.

The news was too wonderful to contain. They could not wait any longer and thus returned to Jerusalem to tell the apostles "The Lord is risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon!" However, they did not believe them.

The **fourth appearance** is mentioned by the two men who returned from Emmaus. They reported to the apostles that Cephas (**Peter**) had also seen the Lord. We are not given any information when this happened and what was said or occurred.

The **fifth appearance** was Sunday evening in Jerusalem while ten of the apostles were eating. The doors were shut because they feared the Jews. Suddenly Jesus appeared and stood in their midst. They were frightened and thought that they were seeing a ghost. Jesus rebukes them for their unbelief, not believing the reports that had already been made that He was seen alive.

He then showed them His hands and His feet. He told them that ghost do not have flesh and bones. Even after observing Him closely they still did not grasp it was Jesus. He further proves who He is by asking for food. He eats a piece of broiled fish they had been eating for dinner. They are overjoyed. Disbelief and doubt no long linger. This is the Lord. Excitement must have reached a high pitch. Jesus reiterates his commission that He was sending them out into the world.

There was one apostle missing from this meeting. It was Thomas. We do not know why he was not there. When he is told of the appearance of the Lord he said, "Unless I see in His hands the print of the nails, put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe." One week later, on a Sunday the apostles are locked again in a room. This time Thomas is with them.

Jesus appears in their midst and called upon Thomas to put his finger on the print in His hands and to place his hand on His side. So great was the evidence that all Thomas could say was: "My Lord and my God." This is the first confession that Christ was God. This is the **sixth appearance** of Jesus.

We are rather hard on Thomas calling him "Doubting Thomas." But he was no different than the other apostles for they too would not believe for some time, in spite of the evidence that was presented to them.

The **seventh appearance** was to the disciples at the Sea of Galilee. After the Passover the apostles return to Galilee. The angel at the tomb said they were to wait for Jesus in Galilee. They may have been thinking that even though Jesus had risen from the grave their work had now terminated. Peter probably returns to his old boat that he had fished from many times and says to the others that he is going fishing. Six of the apostles got in the boat with Peter and they cast out to fish.

However, after fishing all night they had caught nothing. As they head back to the shore Jesus is standing on the beach early in the morning as their boat was approaching the shore. He called out to them if they had fish and they answered no. He tells them to cast their net on the right side of the boat. The result was they had such a great haul they were not able to draw the net.

John recognizes that it is Jesus who is standing on the beach. Peter could not wait for the boat to make it to the shore so he jumps into the water and swims ahead of the boat. The others follow in the boat. John observes there were 153 fish taken in the net. They must have counted them.

Another wonderful miracle had taken place. Attention to such a detail of how many fish points to the fact this was no fable. Three times Jesus asks Peter if he loves Him and three times Peter says that he does. Three times Jesus tells Peter "Feed My sheep." This rebuke was to remind Peter of his three denials which must have been very painful for Peter.

The **eighth appearance** of Jesus took place on a mountain in Galilee. Here the great commission of **Matthew 28:18-20** and **Mark 16:15-18** was probably given.

These instructions would begin a movement that would spread worldwide. When people begin religious movements, it's often not until many generations later that they begin to record things about the originator and his teachings. This is conclusive evidence that the Biblical story of Christ is not a myth. It usually takes several hundred years for a myth to develop into a system of teaching.

Many believe this was when the 500 mentioned by Paul in **1 Corinthians 15:6** met with the Lord. The book of First Corinthians is considered to be one of the earlier books of the NT to be written something like 20 years after Jesus' death. In **verses 5-9** Paul appeals to the many witnesses of the resurrection to prove the resurrection of Christ.

His reference to the five hundred brethren most of whom were still alive is striking, because it was written by one who knew that if it were not true, it could have been easily refuted by any number of the enemies of Christianity. Christians risked their lives to tell this story all over the world. **Why would they do this if it all was merely a myth?**

The **ninth appearance** was to James. When Paul listed the resurrection appearances after mentioning the 500 he said, **"then He appeared to James."** This no doubt was Jesus' half brother James, who would become a respected leader in the church in Jerusalem.

The **tenth appearance** of Jesus is on the Mount of Olives located outside the eastern wall of Jerusalem. It is described by Luke. He also records this in **Acts 1:9**. His ascension takes place in full view of the apostles. Jesus will later appear to Paul on the road to Damascus.

The many witnesses to the resurrected body of Jesus is something that cannot be lightly dismissed by saying the story is nothing but a myth. We accept other historical stories as fact which had far less witnesses than we have to the resurrection of Christ. Truly we can say, **"The Lord is risen indeed."**

Lesson Thirty Seven

The final discourses of Jesus to His disciples (1 Corinthians 15:6; Matthew 28:16-20; Mark 16:15-18) Just before His death Jesus told His apostle that He would go ahead of them into Galilee (**Matthew 26:7**). After His resurrection, the angels told the women that Jesus was going ahead of them into Galilee. Still later Jesus told the women to tell His brethren to meet Him in Galilee. From **Matthew 18:16** it is clear that the Eleven did go to Galilee to the mountain which Jesus had designated. This was to be a specific meeting at a specific place. Where this mountain was located we do not know.

Why did Jesus pick Galilee? Probably most of His disciples were from Galilee and also perhaps it was easier to find an isolated spot in Galilee. This meeting was not for everyone, only the disciples. Jesus wanted to put some distance between His disciples and His enemies.

Most writers think that the apostles were not the only ones who assembled there. Paul in listing the resurrection appearances referred to Jesus appearing to more than five hundred brethren at once and most of them were living at the times he was writing to the Corinthians (**1 Corinthians 15:6**). This epistle was written around AD 55 to 57, about 25 years after the resurrection. The appearance of this large group of disciples in all probability took place in Galilee. Such a large group would have attracted too much attention in Judea. Thus, it is at this mountain which Jesus had designated that He delivered one of his last discourses.

It seems when the disciples had reached the mountain Jesus was already there. Matthew tells us, **"And when they saw Him, they worshiped Him; but some doubted (Matthew 28:17)**. On first reading this account by Matthew it would appear that only the Eleven were present. But we read that **"some"** doubted. It does not seem that by now any of the apostles would have doubted.

The doubters were probably some of the 500 who had come to the mountain who were now seeing the Lord for the first time. There is another explanation in that at a distance when they first saw Jesus they were not sure that it was He.

It seems that it is in this meeting that Jesus gives the Great Commission as given by both Matthew and Mark. Certainly Jesus would have much to say to such a large audience and no doubt did. However, His primary purpose was to give them their marching orders. A reading of the commission given by Matthew and Mark differ in wording. This does not mean there is any conflict.

Jesus no doubt repeated these instructions many times as He preached and Matthew recorded one of the times Jesus mentioned it while Mark mentions the wording given at a different place in the discourse. Today preachers will repeat points several times during a sermon which will be worded differently each time. By combining them we can get the essential facts. There six outstanding points given.

The **first** is "All authority." Jesus tells them He has absolute authority both in heaven and on earth and this has been given to Him by the Father. The **second** is, "All nations." Before the crucifixion, Jesus had restricted their teaching to the Jews. Now the restriction is lifted. The disciples were to go to "all the nations" or "into all the world."

Third, they were to "preach the gospel." Before the kingdom was at hand, but soon they can say it had come. There is good news now. Jesus had arisen from the grave. They were to go and preach that the Messiah had come. He had been put to death on the cross offering Himself as a sacrifice for the sins of the world: He was buried but He had come forth from the grave. Paul makes the Death, burial and resurrections of Jesus the very heart of the gospel (1 Corinthians 15:13).

Fourth, they were to tell sinners what to do to have forgiveness of their sins and to enter the kingdom of God. They were to repent by changing their minds and their lives. They were to be baptized by being immersed in water in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit in order to be saved.

Fifth, each person after being baptized was to receive additional teaching which included all that Jesus had commanded His disciples. **Sixth**, Jesus promised that He would be with them as they carry out this commission. This commission not only applied to the 500 but to all succeeding generations of Christians.

Jesus promised them that certain signs would accompany them. They would cast out demons. They would speak with new tongues. They would pick up serpents and drink deadly poison without being hurt. They would lay their hands on sick people and they would recover.

The apostles had already been casting out demons and healed some sick. The purpose was to confirm that what they were preaching was from God. The **book of Acts** gives specific examples of most of these signs that accompanied the apostles and others. Later on various gifts were bestowed on Christian that enabled them to do these things. The deadly poison may refer to later attempts by some to kill some of the Christians.

**Final appearance of Jesus to the apostles near Jerusalem
(Luke 24:44-49; Acts 1:3-8; 1 Corinthians 15:7)**

As the day of Pentecost draws closer Jesus makes His way to the vicinity of Jerusalem. He purpose seems to be to make final preparations for the church to be established in Jerusalem and for the preaching of the gospel to have its beginning there. He said that "repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem." The Jews had divided the Old Testament into three parts: the Law of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms.

He says the teachings in these Old Testament books were permeated with teachings concerning Him and His coming. Thus he fulfilled all of those things which were spoken of Him.

It is said that "He opened their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures." As observed many times the apostles had been very slow to comprehend His teachings, especially as to the nature of the kingdom He would establish. They were still struggling with the true nature of the kingdom. To say the least the apostles still remained somewhat confused as to the future. In opening their understanding He may have done this in a miraculous way.

Again, He may have done this as he had "opened the minds" of the two disciples that He had joined on the way to Emmaus by taking the time to teach them in detail what they needed to know. He also reminds them as He was sending them out they had "the promise of My Father upon you." This had reference to the Holy Spirit which Jesus would send upon them shortly.

He told them "for John truly baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now." He instructs them not to leave Jerusalem but to remain there "until you are endued with power from on high."

It is interesting that they are still puzzled about the coming kingdom. They asked Him, "Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" This might indicate they still were thinking about an earthly kingdom. However, some think they just want to know when?

They knew it was coming, but when? Since their eyes had been opened to many truths surely by now they understood that the kingdom would not be an earthly materialistic kingdom. While they may not have not have known the full nature of this spiritual Kingdom they looked forward to it with great anticipation. So Lord, when will it come?

The ascension from the Mount of Olives (Mark 16:19; Luke 24:50-53; Acts 1:9-11)

The final words of Jesus were spoken on or near the Mount of Olives. It is said that He had led the apostles "as far as Bethany." No doubt the Lord chose a prominent spot on the southeastern slope of the mountain within the sight of Bethany, a town that had held many memories for the Lord. Luke says, "He lifted up His hands and blessed them."

While He was blessing them He began to float upward and disappeared as a "cloud received Him out of their sight." Mark says, "He was received up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God." Now He has returned to His former glory which He so richly deserved. He is now seated at the right hand of God.

Can you imagine the emotions that flooded through the hearts of the apostles of as they watched their beloved Jesus disappear into the sky? Then they are aware that there two men standing nearby in white clothing (angels). They reaffirm the Lord's promise that He would come again and that He would come in the same way they had seen His leave.

The Ascension is most significant for two reasons. First, it was the passing on of the mantel to the apostles. Jesus had told them that He was leaving and that they would have to carry on in His place. He told them, "as the Father has sent Me, I also send you." (John 20:21) The Second, the Holy Spirit would now come in His place to direct the establishment of the church and its great work of preaching the gospel.

After Jesus ascended back to heaven the apostles "worshipped Him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and were continually in the temple praising, and blessing God." John tells us "And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples which are not written in this book" (John 20:30, 31).

In the next chapter he writes, "And there are also many other things that Jesus did, which if they were written one by one, I suppose the even the world itself could not contain the books that would be written" (John 21:25). The work of our Lord was the greatest work ever performed. He did so much and He did it all in just a little over three years.

Lesson Thirty Eight Credibility of the gospels

The books of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John are referred to as "the four Gospels." Actually they are four different accounts of the life of Christ. The first three book are referred to as "the synoptic Gospels" The word "synoptic" means "to view at the same time," because they are similar in content. All date during the 50s and 60s.

The book of John is somewhat different in that it takes a different approach to the life of Christ. It is believed that John was the last of the gospels to be written. The question may be asked **why four books about the life of Christ?** Four accounts authenticate the story of Jesus better than just one. Four different writers also give us a well rounded picture of the nature of Jesus. Four accounts definitely show the importance of the story of Jesus to mankind.

Writing styles differ

Critics often refer to what they call the "synoptic problem." They argue that the writers do not always agree and in some cases there are conflicts between the accounts they give. The truth of this matter is, there are no conflicts. When we consider that each writers was different in personality and was allowed to use his own style of writing, then there will differences in the way they record a subject or event.

All four writers tell the same story but each is allowed to use his own writing style and vocabulary. In most cases, one account simply supplements another account. We know that the Holy Spirit guided them as they wrote. Peter writes, "Holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit." Thus, this would eliminate any mistakes.

If one has faith in the inspiration of the Scriptures then there is no so called "synoptic problem." Ironically, if the gospels had been identical to each other, word for word, this would have raised charges the authors had conspired among themselves to coordinate their stories in advance, and would have cast doubt on them.

Four people might witness a wreck involving two cars on a busy street. A person approaching in a car from the north may have paid attention to the speed of one of the cars Another witness coming from the south may have noticed which car was in the wrong lane A third person standing on the street east of the wreck may have noticed that one car swerved to miss the other.

A fourth observer on the west side of the street may have noticed a person being ejected from the impact. All four are credible witnesses but each one will report the story from the angle he or she observed the wreck. When all four witnesses give their account you have an accurate account of what happened.

The apostle Paul's conversion is reported three times in the book Acts. Each account is stated differently but each is true. In Acts 9, Luke is giving the account to his Greek reader. In Acts 22, it is Paul's defense before the Jews in Jerusalem. In Acts 26, it was a part of Paul's sermon to King Agrippa.

Paul wisely chose different words and emphasized different aspects to get his message over to his audience. There is no conflict between each account. It is delivered each time according to who he was speaking to.

In reference to the four Gospels, Matthew seems to be writing primarily to the Jews. He quotes over one hundred Old Testament passages and uses terms that were familiar to the Jews. He presents Jesus as a King who came to set up His kingdom. The Jews looked for the Messiah (God's anointed) to do this very thing although they wanted an earthly kingdom.

Mark appears to have written for a non-Jewish audience. He eliminates matters that would be of little interest to the Gentiles. When he mentions Jewish traditions he often add an explanation since Gentiles were not always acquainted with the Jewish customs. Many believe Mark wrote primarily to a Roman audience.

Luke also appears to write to a non-Jewish audience. Luke's account seems to be directed to a Greek audience. His gospel is address to a person with the Greek name Theophilus.

John's gospel was written later than the others. Various false teachings had arisen concerning the nature of Jesus as to His body. John clearly represents Jesus as coming in the flesh. He wrote, "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us." Thus Jesus was fully human, but at the same time He was "the Son of God" His deity is stressed along with His human nature. He was both God and the "Son of Man."

The gospels are not biographies

The four Gospels are not biographies even though they cover the life of Jesus. They are rather teaching narratives. There is no attempt to cover all the events in Jesus' life. Also, Chronology was not always important to the writers. They often grouped events together to emphasize certain truths.

There is no attempt to describe the physical appearance of Jesus which biographers usually do. John presents different information than the other three writers with great emphasis on the last twenty four hours of Jesus Other than the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus, only a few events are mentioned in all four accounts. But when all four deal with an event it is worth noting that the event must have special significance.

Seeming contradictions can be eliminated by careful study and proper knowledge

Contradictions may seem to exist simply because we do not always possess all the facts in the case being reported. For example we have the story of one or more blind men being healed near Jericho. Matthew says Jesus was leaving Jericho and that two men were healed. Luke says Jesus was approaching Jericho and mentions only one blind man being healed.

One writer may have paid more attention to one of the blind men while another writer may have put the spotlight on the fact there were two blind men. Also, we know there were two Jericho's. One was the old site of Jericho and the other was the new city of Jericho.

Therefore, one man could have been healed as he left one and a second as he entered the new Jericho. We don't always have all the facts to properly separate what might appear to be a conflict between writers.

Critics have made much over the argument that Mark wrote the first gospel and that Matthew and Luke merely copied from him. This does not make sense since Mark's gospel is shorter than the others. We know that Matthew was an eye witness to the ministry of Jesus.

It is more likely he would know more than Mark since we have no indication Mark was a witness to Jesus' ministry. Mark was associated closely with Peter and this may have been His source of information. In either case both men were inspired by the Holy Spirit thus eliminating any possibility of mistakes being made. Paul reminds us that "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God" (2 Timothy 3:16).

If one believes the gospels are the inspired Word of God then he or she will have no problem about their authenticity. Matthew's, Mark's, Luke's, and John's accounts of the life of Jesus have been considered part of the inspired New Testament since the early days of the church.

Those who oppose these books as true records are in the minority of Biblical scholarship. There is both internal and external evidence that conclusively proves that the gospels are part of God's inspired word.

Gospel writers stand out as credible witnesses

A great American lawyer, Simon Greenleaf wrote a book entitled **A Treatise on the Law of Evidence**. This book has run through sixteen editions. He used the same laws of evidence that are employed in our courts of justice to show that the gospels are absolutely trustworthy. The evidence presented by these writers can be proven true in any court of the land as it measures up to the qualities that must exist in a witness in order for him to qualify as a credible witness in a court of law.

Many Greek manuscripts date back very early

Skeptical German theologians in the 1800s argued that John's gospel was not composed until at least the year 160---too distant from the events of Jesus' life to be of much historical use. **(Thus John was not the author.)** They were able to influence later generations of scholars, who scoffed at the gospel's reliability. Yet in more recent years manuscripts have been found that date back very close to the time of the gospel writers.

We have copies made from of the original manuscripts that date within two generations. The earliest fragment of the gospel of John, containing material from chapter eighteen has five verses. It was purchased in Egypt around 1920 and sat unnoticed for many years. It has been proven it originated between A.D. 100 to 150.

F. F. Bruce author of **The New Testament Documents: are they Reliable?** says, **"There is no body of ancient literature in the world which enjoys such a wealth of good textual attestation as the New Testament."**

Sir Frederic Kenyon, former director of the British Museum said, **"In no other case is the interval of time between the composition of the book and the date of the earliest manuscripts so short, as in that of the New Testament."** He goes ahead to state that **"The last foundation for any doubt that the scriptures have come down to us substantially as they were written has now been removed."** We have more than 5000 Greek manuscripts now.

Lesson Thirty Nine

The credibility of Jesus

From the 1700s liberal religious scholars have argued that the gospels were written so far after the events in the life of Christ that legend developed and distortion was finally written down, turning Jesus into a mythological Son of God. Thus, the term **"demythising the gospels"** came into use. As an example, in recent years the news media has heralded reports about a group known as the Jesus Seminar.

This self-selected group of 75 scholars has taken it upon themselves to determine which words of the gospels were spoken and which were not spoken and are only parts of myths. They concluded that 82 percent of the words of Jesus were not actually spoken. For example in the Lord's Prayer the only thing in that prayer that He actually said was **"Our Father."** The rest of the prayer was not actually spoken by Him but is mere myth.

The remaining 18 percent they consider as somewhat doubtful with only 2 percent being authentic.

If such liberal scholars applied the same rules they use in rejecting Christ and the gospels to other historical people like Julius Caesar or Alexander the Great, they would be forced to reject all history as myth.

Unfortunately people will read about such groups and come to the conclusion that what they say is true. Liberal scholars represent a very small percent of New Testament scholars. Basically they've discovered what they set out to find, a Jesus who was a religious fanatic who performed no miracles. For the most part what we read about Jesus in the gospels is nothing more than myths.

Myths do not arise in a short period of time. When people begin religious movements, it is often not until many generations later that the myths develop and still later that people record the myths. Present day scholarship has established that the gospels were all written within 30 to 40 years after the time Jesus lived. Contrary to the claims of some the gospels were not written a hundred to two hundred years after Jesus' death, thus allowing time for myths to develop about Jesus.

Peter must have already encountered the myth arguments when he wrote his first epistle. He said, "For we have not followed cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty. For He received from God the Father honor and glory when such a voice came to Him from the Excellent Glory: "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And we heard this voice which came from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain" (2 Peter 1:16-18). Peter is writing as an eyewitness.

Luke prefaced his gospel with these words: "Inasmuch as many have taken in hand to set in order a narrative of those things which are most surely believed among us, just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word delivered them to us, it seemed good to me, also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write to you an orderly account, most excellent Theophilus, that you may know the certainty of those things in which you have been instructed" (Luke 1:1-4). Luke does not sound like someone repeating some myth but rather someone who has carefully checked out every-thing to be sure what he wrote about.

Then we have John's statement concerning Christ. "That which was from the beginning which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled." John was not only an eye witness; he was one of the inner circle, the one whom the Lord loved.

So here we have three men who were very careful in what they wrote about Jesus. They had nothing to gain by their preaching and writing except criticism, ostracism, and martyrdom. There were no financial gains to be made, no fringe benefits of any kind. [Why endanger their lives if what they preached and wrote was myth?](#)

Proofs from non-Christian sources

A famous Jewish historian by the name of Flavius Josephus was born in AD 37. He wrote four books of history. One of his books [The Antiquities of the Jews](#) is a history of the Jewish people from creation until his time. In the book he describes how a high priest named Ananias convened a meeting of the Sanhedrin and brought before them a man named James, the brother of Jesus who was called Christ and certain others.

He accused them of having ["transgressed the law and delivered them to be stoned."](#) He also mentions Pilate and John the Baptist. In a controversial passage which some deny he wrote, he mentions the trial of Jesus before Pilate, that He was condemned to be crucified, and that He arose from the grave.

Tacitus a Roman historian recorded something that is very interesting. In AD 115 he states that Nero persecuted the Christians as scapegoats to divert suspicion away from himself in AD 64. He says these people derived the name Christian from Christos which would be his spelling of the name Christ.

Pliny, governor of Bithynia, wrote in a letter to the Emperor Trajan about Christian worship, and how Christians honored Christ as if were a god.

Then there are the seven letters of Ignatius. He was martyred during the reign of Trajan before AD 117. In his writings he emphasized both the deity of Jesus and the humanity of Jesus. He wrote one letter as he was on his way to being executed, that Jesus was persecuted under Pilate, was crucified and raised from the dead, and that those who believe in Him would be raised too.

Thallus, who in AD 52 wrote a history of the eastern Mediterranean world made reference to the darkness that the gospels speak of as taking place on the day Jesus was crucified. Tertullian another historian said it was a world event, evidently visible in Rome, Athens and other Mediterranean cities.

Phlegon, a Greek author around AD 137 reported that around AD 33 there was a "great eclipse of the sun." and that "it became night in the sixth hour of the day (noon) so that stars even appeared in the heavens. There was a great earthquake in Bithynia, and many things were overturned in Nicaea". So here we have non-biblical historians reporting things which are in harmony with what the gospel writers reported.

Documentary evidence

It is important to remember that the books of the New Testament were not written in chronological order. For a fact we know that Paul had written most of his letters before any of the gospels were written. If the crucifixion of Jesus took place in or around AD 30 then Paul's conversion took place about three years later around AD 33.

Paul was taken into Damascus, where he met with a Christian named Ananias and was baptized. He then went into exclusion for a short period of time. It would be around AD 36 that he would have had his first meeting with Peter and James where he would have acquired additional knowledge about the life of Jesus.

Since he wrote most of his letters before the gospels then you have him setting forth some of the most basic and fundamental doctrines of Christianity within 25 years after the death of Christ. In **1 Corinthians 15** he gives the key facts of the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus plus a detailed list of those to whom Jesus appeared after His resurrection. In his letter to the **Philippians (2:6-11)** and his letter to the **Colossians (1:15-20)**, he gives his readers clear information about the divine nature of Jesus. All of his writings give information about Jesus.

Information was being proclaimed and circulated throughout the Roman Empire within a very few years of the death of Jesus because men like Phillip, Barnabas and the apostles were preaching the gospel before Paul preached it. These full blown doctrines do not fit the mold of a myth. Again religious myths take many years to develop and even more years before they are written down.

Paul reasons, "And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is vain and your faith is also vain. Yes, and we are found false witnesses of God, because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ, whom He did not raise up if in fact the dead do not rise. For if the dead do no rise then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins!"

It is interesting that Paul brings up the very things that liberal critics say did not happen and are only myths. **Why would Paul travel thousands of miles around the Roman Empire just to tell myths?** He suffered greatly for his preaching. Look at the list of things he suffered in **2 Corinthians 11:23-27**. No one would keep on enduring such if what he was teaching was not true. Some would say Paul was a religious fanatic, but a fanatic is not capable of writing a masterpiece on love as found in **1 Corinthians 13**.

In conclusion there is no "synoptic problem." Matthew, Mark and Luke did not have to quote from each other, or in any way make use of, each other's gospels. The events of Jesus life and His sayings were repeated orally for years by the apostles and others and were in common circulation among Christians. They were the substance of the daily preaching of the apostles as they were guided by the Holy Spirit.