Studies in the Scriptures

LUKE

In the Footsteps of the Savior

John T. Stevenson

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Dedicated to my
life-long friends
Paula
Norm & Terry
Bruce & Melanie
Tim & Divina
Lance & Sky

Table of Contents

The Gospel According to Luke (1:1-4) 1
The Announcement to Zacharias (1:5-25) 8
The Announcement to Mary (1:26-56) 20
The Birth and Circumcision of the Forerunner (1:57-80) 36
When God became Man (2:1-7) 46
Angels, Shepherds, and the Lamb of God (2:8-18 56
The Presentation in the Temple (2:21-40) 64
The Passover Incident (2:41-52) 77
John the Baptist (3:1-22) 86
The Genealogy of Jesus (3:23-38) 100
The Wilderness Temptations (4:1-13) 103
The Announcement at Nazareth (4:14-30) 103
The Ministry at Capernaum (4:31-44) 127
Fishers of Men (5:1-11) 136
Cleansing a Leper (5:12-16) 146
Healing the Paralytic (5:17-26) 152
Legal Liabilities (5:27-39) 160
Sabbath Controversies (6:1-11) 174
The Calling of the Twelve (6:12-16) 182
A Sermon to Live By (6:17-49) 200
The Healing of the Centurion's Servant (7:1-10) 218
The Raising of the Widow's Son (7:11-17) 227
John, Jesus, and Judgments on a Generation (7:17-35) 232
The Proud and the Penitent (7:36-50) 243
People of the Kingdom (8:1-21) 253
Stilling Storms (8:22-25) 266
Demons and Deliverance (8:26-39) 272
Deliverance from Disease and Death (8:40-56) 281
Sending forth the Twelve (9:1-10) 292
Feeding Five Thousand (9:10-17) 298
The Christ and the Cross (9:18-27) 304
The Transfiguration (9:27-36) 313
After the Fireworks (9:37-45) 322
Disciples of the Kingdom (9:46-62) 330
The Sending of the Seventy (10:1-24) 340
Samaritans and Sisters: A Lesson in Love (10:25-42) 33
Lessons on Prayer (11:1-13) 364
Evidence and Unbelief (11:14-54) 375
A Warning Against Hypocrisy (12:1-12) 393
The Pitfall of Prosperity (12:13-34) 400
The Readiness of the Righteous (12:35-59) 410
When Bad Things Happen (13:1-9) 420

Kingdom Controversies (13:10-35) 427
Dinner Invitations (14:1-24) 440
What it Means to be a Disciple (14:25-35) 453
Lost and Found (15:1-32) 461
Stewards, Scoffers, and Second Chances (16:1-31) 473
Stumbling Blocks and Stepping Stones (17:1-19) 489
The Coming Kingdom (17:20-37) 501
Prayer, Pride, and People of the Kingdom (18:1-17) 513
The Rich and the Blind (18:18-43) 524
Friends and Enemies of the Kingdom (19:1-27) 537
The Triumphal Entry (19:28-48) 548
The Authority of the King (20:1-47) 560
Future Things (21:1-38) 577
The Last Supper (22:1-38) 589
The Last Temptation of Jesus (22:39-46) 603
Betrayed, Denied, and Rejected (22:47-71) 611
The Civil Trials of Jesus (23:1-25) 622
The Cross (23:26-47) 632
Chronology of the Arrest and Trials (Chart) 649
The Report of the Women (23:48 - 24:9) 650
Resurrection (24:11-53) 662
Bibliography 673

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THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO LUKE

LUKE 1:1-4

> *In as much as many have undertaken to compile an account of the things accomplished among us, 2 just as they were handed down to us by those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and servants of the word, 3 it seemed fitting for me as well, having investigated everything carefully from the beginning, to write it out for you in consecutive order, most excellent Theophilus; 4 so that you may know the exact truth about the things you have been taught. (Luke 1:1-4).*

A long time ago, I stopped saying that this book or that book of the Bible was my favorite. I have played favorites far too many times and the truth is that whichever book of the Bible I happen to be studying at any one time becomes my "favorite." And yet, there is a special place in my heart for Luke. Perhaps it is because I identify with him in that he was a Gentile with a heart for Jews. Or maybe it was because he was a world traveler who brought his extensive knowledge of different places and cultures to bear on the subject at hand. Certainly one of his more delightful attributes is his ability as a master story-teller to relate to us all of the longer parables of Jesus. But most of all, I think it is because he helps us to relate to Jesus as a person. It is not that the divinity of Jesus is ignored. Angels will announce both His coming and His going. We will read in Luke that Jesus is the Son of God who conquered death, who ascended into heaven, and who one day will return in victory. But this is also an account that will speak to us of the Jesus who was reprimanded by his mother, who fell asleep in a rocking boat, and who sweated great drops of blood. Luke presents us a picture of Jesus "with skin on," one who interacts with Mary and Martha, who heals lepers and raises the dead, but who also takes the time to restore a servant's ear.

THE TITLE OF THE BOOK

The title in most Greek texts is *Kata Lucan*, "According to Luke." It is unique among the four gospels in that this is the only Gospel Account that is followed by a sequel. The Gospel of Luke and the book of Acts are written as companion volumes. They are part one and part two of the work of Jesus. Luke tells us of the earthly ministry of Jesus while Acts relates to us the heavenly ministry of Jesus and how that played out through His apostles.

IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

The Bible has four separate books which detail the life and ministry of Jesus. We customarily refer to these as the "Four Gospels." Luke is one of the four gospels. It is also a part of the Synoptic Gospels.

Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
Eye-witness	Associated with Peter and Paul	Associated with Paul	Eye-witness
Written to Jews	Written to Gentiles	Dedicated to a Greek official	Written to the World
Jesus is King	Jesus is a Servant	Jesus is a Teacher	Jesus is the Son of God
Sermons	Miracles	Parables	Doctrines
Synoptic Gospels			4th Gospel

The three Synoptic Gospels are called thus because of their similarity to one another. From the above chart, we can see that they are very different than the Gospel of John. At the same time, Luke is distinctive in several areas. He gives the most extensive treatment of the birth and childhood of Jesus. He gives us the closest look at the interaction of Jesus with his neighbors in the synagogue of Nazareth. He relates to us all of the longest parables of Jesus. He tells us of dinner with little Zaccheus and the healing of a crippled woman. The parables of the good Samaritan, the prodigal son, the rich man and Lazarus, and the justified tax collector are all exclusive to him.

THE SCOPE OF THE BOOK

1. Birth Narrative.

   Luke and Matthew are the only two accounts which contain the birth narratives of Jesus. While Matthew seems to focus on these narratives from the point of view of Joseph, Luke seems to give us Mary's perspective.

   - Matthew gives us a genealogy that begins with Abraham.
   - Luke gives us a genealogy that traces the line of Jesus all the way back to Adam.

2. Luke is unique in giving us the exact dates for the beginning of the ministry of John the Baptist. He does so by tying it into the reigns of the Roman emperors and to other magistrates of the day.

3. Luke does not speak much about Jesus having fulfilled Old Testament prophecies. Though a number of the prophecies are mentioned, they do not have the same emphasis of which we find in Matthew where we see the common formula: *"This took place that it might be fulfilled..."*

4. Luke presents the longest parables of Jesus.

   - The Parable of the Prodigal Son.
   - The Parable of the Unjust Steward.
   - The Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus.
   - The Parable of the Good Samaritan.

   Some of these extended parables have more than one major point and each of them is found only in Luke's Gospel. In each case, the parable is told in such a way that we find ourselves identifying with at least one of the main characters.

5. Luke tends to avoid the use of Hebraisms.

   - He uses "Master" or "Teacher" instead of "Rabbi."
   - He describes a "Lawyer" instead of a "Scribe."
   - He usually has Jesus say, "Truly" instead of "Amen."
   - He speaks of the "Lake" rather than the "Sea" of Galilee. Only

the Jews would have referred to a body of water eight miles across as a Sea.

This is not surprising. Luke is a Greek and he addresses his book to one who has a Greek name. It is not that he is ignorant of Hebrew culture; it will be remembered that he spent many years in the company of the Apostle Paul. But he is not writing to a Hebrew audience and so he writes in a way that they can catch all his major nuances.

AUTHOR

The Gospel of Luke and the book of Acts are written as companion volumes. They are part one and part two of the work of Jesus.

Luke	Acts
The ministry of Jesus as He was on earth	The ministry of Jesus from heaven
Teachings of Jesus	Teachings of the apostles
Introduction of the Gospel	Progress of the Gospel
Christ revealed historically	Christ revealed mystically
Christ for us	Christ in us
Begins with the events surrounding the coming of Christ to earth.	Begins with the ascension of Christ into heaven
Ends with the disciples in Jerusalem	Ends with the apostle Paul in Rome

This two-volume set makes up 28% of the entire New Testament and more than all of the epistles of Paul combined.

1. The Early Church Fathers are uniform in attributing the Third Gospel and the book of Acts to Luke.

> *Luke also, the companion of Paul, set down in a book the gospel preached by him. (Irenaeus, Against Heresies 3:1:1).*

2. Even a cursory reading of the Third Gospel with the book of Acts will show that they were written by the same hand.

   a. In Acts 1:1, the author makes reference to "*the first account*" he composed and which told "*about all the Jesus began to do and teach.*"

   b. Both Luke and Acts are dedicated to Theophilus. This is the only mention in the Bible of this man.

   c. There is a strong similarity of style and language in both books. They both utilize a very high vocabulary and command of the Greek language.

   d. They both have a similar world outlook. They reflect the same interest in Gentiles and the same interest in women.

   e. Luke was not Jewish. His name is a Latin name (short for Lucanus). He writes in the highest Greek of the New Testament.

   f. The end of Luke dovetails into the beginning of Acts. Acts begins where Luke leaves off. Acts is a sequel.

   g. Jesus only appears to his disciples in Jerusalem in Luke and Acts.

   h. Luke is the only Gospel which refers to the trial of Jesus before Herod Antipas (Luke 23:7-12). An allusion to this theme is made in Acts 4:27 and the book of Acts goes on to relate the stories of the later Herods as they related to the message of the Gospel.

3. Luke is described by Paul as the beloved Physician (Colossians 4:14). Both Luke and Mark relate the story of the woman with the longstanding issue of blood who was healed by Jesus.

Mark 5:21	Luke 8:43
She had suffered many things of many physicians, and had spent all that she had.	Had spent all her living upon physicians, and could not be healed of any of the symptoms.

It is amusing to note that Mark says the woman had "suffered many things of many physicians." Luke softens this to say that she had "spent all her living upon physicians" but does not speak of her suffering at their hands. Is this a case of professional courtesy?

When Luke speaks of the difficulty of a camel going through the eye of a needle, he uses a different word to describe the needle; one that is used elsewhere by Greek writers to describe a needle used for medical purposes.

LUKE'S PURPOSE IN WRITING

> *In as much as many have undertaken to compile an account of the things accomplished among us, 2 just as they were handed down to us by those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and servants of the word, 3 it seemed fitting for me as well, having investigated everything carefully from the beginning, to write it out for you in consecutive order, most excellent Theophilus; 4 so that you may know the exact truth about the things you have been taught. (Luke 1:1-4).*

Luke was not an eyewitness of the earthly ministry of Jesus. He came on the scene as a "2nd generation Christian." He evidently was permitted opportunity to interview some of those who had known Jesus personally.

There were others who had already written accounts of the life of Christ. Scholars have noted that nearly half of the events and statements found in the book of Mark can also be found in Luke. He makes no secret of having used these kinds of source documents in his research for writing his account.

Luke writes to Theophilus as well as to others *so that you may know the exact truth about the things you have been taught.* This is a setting forth of the facts of the life and ministry of Jesus.

LUKE'S RECIPIENTS

Both Luke and Acts are addressed to an unknown person by the name of Theophilus. Yet there is a distinct difference in the manner in which they are addressed. In Luke 1:3 he is called, *most excellent Theophilus*. In Acts he is addressed simply as *Theophilus*. Why the change?

The title *most excellent Theophilus* is an honorific. It indicates that this person held some official political position within the Roman Empire. We know both from the epistles as well as from other early church writings that honorifics were often dropped when a Christian addressed another Christian. You don't call your brother "mister" or "your Honor" and such titles were not used among believers. The implication here is that Theophilus read the book of Luke and became a Christian. Because of this, he is addressed at the beginning of the book of Acts simply as *Theophilus*.

This is a book that is designed to bring the reader to faith. It promises to share the fruits of the author's investigations so that *you may know the exact truth about the things you have been taught.*

THE ANNOUNCEMENT TO ZACHARIAS
LUKE 1:5-25

But when the fulness of time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law. (Galatians 4:4).

For four hundred years was no word from God. The prophet Malachi was the last voice to speak the Word of the Lord to Israel. Since that time, God had been silent. There had been a period of waiting. Four hundred years had passed. It seemed as though God was waiting for an appointed time before He would begin His program.

As we begin this chapter, we will see God breaking this four hundred years of silence as He begins a new program in His dealings with His people. The years of waiting are over. The appointed time is at hand. As we begin with the first two chapters of Luke's account, we will be impressed by the Jewish flavor of its style and structure. The literary Greek that Luke normally uses almost seems to disappear. In its place is the most Hebrew-sounding passage in all of Luke's writings. For this reason, many Bible scholars have suggested that Luke was using written documents as his primary source for these two chapters. Luke will record four songs in these two chapters.

a. Mary's Song (1:46-55).
b. Zacharias' Song (1:68-79).
c. The Song of the Angels (2:14).
d. Simeon's Song (2:29-32).

No other gospel account records these four songs. They are exclusive to Luke. They are songs of praise and of worship and they echo with Old Testament themes and phrases.

ZACHARIAS AND ELIZABETH

> *In the days of Herod, king of Judea, there was a certain priest named Zacharias, of the division of Abijah; and he had a wife from the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth.*
>
> *And they were both righteous in the sight of God, walking blamelessly in all the commandments and requirements of the Lord.*
>
> *And they had no child, because Elizabeth was barren, and they were both advanced in years. (Luke 1:5-7).*

Luke begins his narrative with a historical note. This will be a common feature of Luke. He begins by noting that these events took place in the days of Herod. This takes the narrative of Luke out of the realm of a "once upon a time" fairy tale and places it into real life history.

1. The Political Setting: *In the days of Herod (1:5).*

This is Herod the Great. He had served Rome as the governor of Galilee when he was still a young man. When his father died, the Jews had revolted and Herod had to flee for his life. He escaped to Rome where he was befriended by Marcus Antonius (Marc Antony). Under his sponsorship, Herod was appointed to be King of Judea by the Roman Senate. He returned to Israel at the head of a Roman legion and ruthlessly put down the rebellion. To secure his position on the throne of Judea, he had married Mariamne, the last of the Hasmonean Dynasty. During his reign, he began a great building program throughout his kingdom. He expanded the Temple area with a construction program that began in 20 B.C. and was still going on in the days of Jesus (John 2:20).

Herod proved to be a troubled man. He murdered his wife in a fit of rage. He later murdered two of his sons. It was this act that brought about the comment by Octavius:

> It is better to he Herod's *hus* [pig]
> than to be Herod's *huios* [son].

Herod would not kill a pig and eat it because he followed the Jewish dietary laws, but he had killed his own sons. Before his death, he would murder every young child in Bethlehem. The fact that our

story begins in the days of Herod tells us something. There was a degenerate king upon the throne of Judea. Thus, there was a political need for the Messiah to come.

2. The Religious Setting: *There was a certain priest named Zacharias, of the division of Abijah (1:5).*

This man was a priest of the division of Abijah. During the reign of King David, the priests had been organized into 24 divisions (1 Chronicles 24:1-6). Each of these divisions would take turns serving within the temple. The eighth division was the course of Abijah.

Zacharias was a priest. But he was not the high priest. The high priest was Mattathias, son of Theophilus. He had been appointed as high priest by Herod the Great. The high priest was Herod's man. Do you see what this means? There was a degenerate high priest in the temple of Jerusalem. Thus. there was a spiritual need for the Messiah to come.

3. The Family Setting: *A certain priest named Zacharias... and her name was Elizabeth (1:5).*

To be a priest was considered to be a great honor. However, to be a priest and to be married to the daughter of a priest was considered a double honor.

- The name *Zacharias* is the Greek spelling of the Hebrew name *Zechariah*. It means "Yahweh remembers."
- The name *Elizabeth* is from the Hebrew *Eli-shebah*. It means "the promise of Elohim."

When you place these two names together, you begin to see the truth that "God remembers His promise." What would this promise refer to? It is the promise of a Forerunner to go before the Messiah. In the very last prophecy of the very last book of the Old Testament, God gave this promise:

> *Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord.*
>
> *And he will restore the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their*

fathers, lest I come and smite the land with a curse. (Malachi 4:5-6).

This was the last promise that God had given. The last time that God had spoken to man, He had spoken these words. This is the promise of a prophet. He would have a special ministry. He would turn the hearts of the people to God.

However, Elizabeth and Zacharias had a problem. *They had no child (1:7)*. To make matters worse, they had no prospects of having a child. Elizabeth was barren. They were both advanced in years. The use of the perfect tense indicates that they had been advanced in years some time ago with the result that now they were very advanced in years.

What is wrong with being barren? In these days of birth control and abortion, it may be difficult to identify with their problem. The Jews thought of barrenness as a sign of God's disfavor. Fertility was one of the blessings that God had promised as a result of obedience.

You shall be blessed above all peoples; there shall be no male or female barren among you or your cattle. (Deuteronomy 7:14).

Zacharias and Elizabeth appear to be in a hopeless situation. There is a principle here. It is that God often places us into a hopeless situation so that we will turn to Him. You see, faith is dependence on God. That God-dependence only begins when self-dependence ends. God is the master of the impossible situation. When you throw up your hands and say, "I can't do it!" that is when He steps in and says, "I can!"

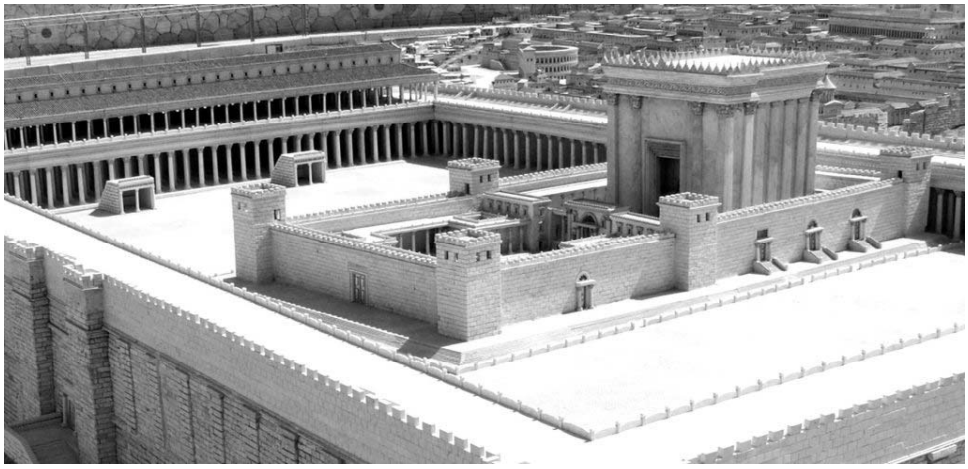
THE OFFERING OF INCENSE

Now it came about, while he was performing his priestly service before God in the appointed order of his division, 9 according to the custom of the priestly office, he was chosen by lot to enter the temple of the Lord and burn incense.

And the whole multitude of the people were in prayer outside at the hour of the incense offering. (Luke 1:8-10).

As we have mentioned previously, the entire priesthood was divided into 24 courses (1 Chronicles 24:1-6; 2 Chronicles 24:10). There were about 1000 priests in each course. Each course would be assigned to minister in the temple for one week every six months. After the week was over, another course would come in for its week of ministrations. It was during Zacharias' week of ministrations that this account begins.

He was chosen by lot to enter the temple of the Lord and burn incense (1:9). Each morning during this week, lots were drawn to determine which priest would be permitted to enter into the temple and burn the incense. According to the Talmud, a priest could only be chosen for this honor once during his lifetime. Therefore, this event was considered to be the greatest moment in the life of any priest.



Model of the temple in Jerusalem as it would have looked in the first century. The access to the two Hulda gates appear at the top of the picture leading out into the Court of the Gentiles.

Try to visualize the scene. It is the time of the morning sacrifice. The sun is just beginning to rise in the east, casting golden rays from behind the Mount of Olive. In the early morning light, the priests of the division of Abijah have assembled within the temple area. The lots are drawn and the lot falls to Zacharias.

The old priest has been coming to the temple once every six months for many years. This is the first time that he has ever been granted this privilege. He will never be allowed to do this service again. This is the most important moment in his life.

Once the morning sacrifice has been offered and its blood dipped on the horns of the great altar outside the temple, Zacharias climbs the steps leading up to the temple porch and passes through the great gold-leaved doors into the Holy Place.

With Zacharias are two other priests who have been chosen to assist him in this service. The first priest removes the old coals that have been left

from the previous evening's service. He then retires from the temple. The second priest now advances and spreads the live coals across the altar and then he also retires. Now Zacharias stands alone in the temple. A thousand priests stand outside, and thousands of worshipers have gathered beyond in the Court of Israel. But in here it is quiet.

Zacharias stands alone in the temple. To his left is the golden lampstand, bathing the interior of the temple in the soft glow of its burning lamps. To his right is the table of shewbread. Before him hangs a great woven veil which serves as the doorway to the Holy of Holies. In front of the veil stands the altar of incense. It is made of wood and completely overlaid with pure gold. Its hot coals glow dimly in the faint light of the temple. Zacharias steps up to the altar and begins to spread the incense over the altar. Suddenly he is interrupted.

THE ANNOUNCEMENT TO ZACHARIAS

> *And an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing to the right of the altar of incense. 12 And Zacharias was troubled when he saw him, and fear gripped him.*
>
> *But the angel said to him, "Do not be afraid, Zacharias, for your petition has been heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you will give him the name John. 14 And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth. 15 For he will be great in the sight of the Lord, and he will drink no wine of liquor; and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit, while yet in his mother's womb. 16 And he will turn back many of the sons of Israel to the Lord their God. 17 And it is he who will go as a forerunner before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers back to the children, and the disobedient to the attitude of the righteous; so as to make ready a people prepared for the Lord." (Luke 1:11-17).*

Just as Zacharias begins to sprinkle the incense upon the altar, an angel stands before him. We do not know what this angel looked like, but it seems obvious from the reaction of Zacharias that he recognizes this as an angel almost immediately.

1. A Fearful Response: *Zacharias was troubled when he saw him, and fear gripped him (1:12).*

Before we judge Zacharias too harshly, let's consider what he was and what he was doing. This is the most important event in his life. He is alone in the temple, giving service to the Lord. He is in the very presence of God. He is really on the spot.

Suddenly an angel appears before him. We can imagine what must have gone through his mind. He had goofed! He had committed some sacrilege and God is now going to kill him!

2. The Angelic Message.

a. *But the angel said to him, "Do not be afraid" (1:13).* This is usually the first thing that an angel says when he comes before a human (Daniel 10:12; Luke 1:30; 2:10; Acts 28: 24). It is likely written in the Angelic Training Manual under the chapter entitled: "Communicating With Humans."

b. *"Your petition has been heard" (1:13).* To what petition does this refer? Apparently, Zacharias and Elizabeth had been praying for something. They had been praying for a child. It is possible that they had been praying this way for 40 years or more. In all those years they had not had a child. Now it is humanly impossible. They are too old. Nothing short of a miracle will allow them to have a child. This is the way God works. He answers prayers according to His timing. He waits until it is humanly impossible and then He steps in.

- He did not give Abraham a son until he was too old to have one.
- He did not give prosperity to Jacob until he had made him a fugitive in a strange land.
- He did not make Joseph ruler over Egypt until he had placed him into slavery and into prison.
- He did not allow Moses to lead Israel until he had allowed the Israelites to reject him.
- He did not give Gideon the victory until He had first taken Gideon's army and reduced it to a small force of 300 men.
- He did not make David king until He had first made David an outlaw without a country.
- He did not make the disciples leaders of His church until He had first scattered them and brought them to the point where they denied His name.

Why does God work this way? Why does He wait until the situation is humanly impossible? I think that it is so we will be forced to give Him the glory.

c. *"And you will give him the name John" (1:13).* The name "John" is the Greek rendition of the Hebrew name "Yhohanan." It means "gift of Yahweh." It was a common name among the Jews of this period. However, I think that this is a name with meaning. "Gift of Yahweh." It is a name that describes what God is doing in the lives of Zacharias and Elizabeth. It is a name that describes what God is doing in my life and in your life.

d. *"It is he who will go as a forerunner before Him" (1:17).* Now I want to ask you a question. Who is John the Baptist going to go before? Historically, we know that he preceded Jesus as His forerunner. However if we look at the context of this passage, we see that the "Him" of verse 17 refers back to "the Lord" in verse 16.

- John will be the forerunner of Jesus.
- He will also be the forerunner of the Lord.

e. *"In the spirit and power of Elijah" (1:17).* Elijah was always considered to be one of the greatest prophets of the Old Testament. He was the world's best weather forecaster. He predicted that it would not rain for three years and it did not rain. He stood before the king of Israel and condemned him. He prayed and a dead boy came to life. He challenged the religious apostasy of the entire nation of Israel at Mount Carmel. He did not die; instead he was taken up alive into heaven. Four hundred years after Elijah was removed from the scene, a prophecy was made concerning him.

> *Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord.*
>
> *And he will restore the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the land with a curse. (Malachi 4:5-6).*

Malachi had been the last of the Old Testament prophets. This was the last of his prophecies. After this prophecy, there had been silence. Now, a son is going to be born to Zacharias who will go before God in the spirit and power of Elijah. The message that he will preach will be similar to that which Elijah preached. It will be a message of repentance.

f. *"To make ready a people prepared for the Lord" (1:17).* The primary reason for the ministry of John the Baptist will be to make people ready to receive their Messiah. They are to make ready for the coming of the Lord.

THE REACTION OF ZACHARIAS

And Zacharias said to the angel, "How shall I know this for certain? For I am an old man, and my wife is advanced in years." (Luke 1:16).

The reaction of Zacharias can be summed up in one word: Unbelief. Here is a man who has been praying for a child. An angel appears to him inside the temple and tells him that his prayer has been answered. What is his reaction? "How do I know that you are telling the truth?" Notice the reasons for his doubt.

- I am an old man.
- My wife is advanced in years.

The problem with Zacharias is that he had a very limited view of God. He did not really believe that God had the power to give him a son. We often have the same problem. It is reflected in our prayer life. Do we pray like we really believed that we were speaking to the God of the Universe? Here is the principle. There is a direct correlation between the reality of your faith and the perseverance of your prayers. If you believed better, you would pray more.

THE SIGN TO ZACHARIAS

And the angel answered and said to him, "I am

Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God; and I have been sent to speak to you, and to bring you this good news. 20 And behold, you shall be silent and unable to speak until the day when these things take place, because you did not believe my words, which shall be fulfilled in their proper time."

And the people were waiting for Zacharias, and were wondering at his delay in the temple. 22 But when he came out, he was unable to speak to them; and they realized that he had seen a vision in the temple; and he kept making signs to them, and remaining mute.

And it came about, when the days of his priestly service were ended, that he went back home. (Luke 1:19-23).

In his unbelief, Zacharias has asked for a sign. He has asked for some credentials. He has said in effect, "Who are you and how do I know that what you say is true?" The answer will come in two parts:

- The name of the angel (1:19).
- The sign of power (1:20).

1. The Name of the Angel: *"I am Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God" (1:19).* The name "Gabriel" is a compound. It is made up of two Hebrew words.

    - *Gabar* is the Hebrew word for "Soldier".
    - *El* is the word for "God." Thus, his name means "soldier of God."

    Zacharias had heard of Gabriel before. Gabriel had appeared twice to the prophet Daniel (Daniel 6:16; 9:21). The first time he had interpreted Daniel's vision of the Ram and the He-goat. The second time he had given Daniel the prophecy of the Seventy Weeks.

2. The Sign of Power: *"You shall be silent and unable to speak" (1:20).* Because Zacharias had spoken in unbelief when asking for a sign, he would now be silenced until this prophecy had been completely fulfilled. He had asked for a sign. He would now receive a sign. He had questioned the power of God. Now he was given a sample of God's power.

3. The Waiting of the People: *And the people were waiting for Zacharias, and were wondering at his delay in the temple (1:21).* All

this time, the 1000 priests and the multitude of morning worshipers have been gathered outside the temple. It is the time of the morning prayers. As the incense burns and fills the temple, seeping out and drifting into the sky, so their prayers will be ascending to heaven. But there has been a delay. Zacharias has gone into the temple. His two assistants have long since come out. The period of waiting lengthens.

This was highly unusual. The Talmud taught that it was customary for a priest who has offered incense to leave the altar as quickly as possible, lest he unwittingly commit some act of sin in the presence of God. A soft murmur begins to run through the crowd outside the temple. What has happened? Why does he linger? Something must be wrong. Maybe God has struck him down the way the sons of Aaron and the sons of Eli were struck down. Finally, they see a movement at the door of the temple. It is Zacharias. Everyone breaths a sigh of relief.

4. The Silence of the Priest: *But when he came out, he was unable to speak to them (1:22).* Zacharias emerges from the temple. The priests stand beneath him at the bottom of the steps, waiting for him to give the benediction. He opens his mouth to speak and his lips move, but no words come out. He tries again, but there is only silence. As he realizes that he has made no sound, he begins to move his arms in wild gestures. Gradually, the people begin to realize that something fantastic has happened in the temple.

5. A Quiet Home going: *When the days of his priestly service were ended, that he went back home (1:23).* Zacharias had to finish the remaining week of his priestly duties in silence. This was a constant reminder of the faithfulness of God. When his days of duty were over, he went home and listened to Elizabeth.

THE REACTION OF ELIZABETH

And after these days Elizabeth his wife became pregnant; and she kept herself in seclusion for five months, saying, 25 *"This is the way the Lord has dealt with me in the days when He looked with favor upon me, to take away my disgrace among men." (Luke 1:24-25).*

As was promised by the angel, Elizabeth became pregnant. God is always faithful, even when we are faithless. Zacharias had doubted the promise of God. God would have had every right to strike Zacharias down on the floor of the temple. But He did not. Instead, God acts in grace.

She kept herself in seclusion for five months (1:24). The Scriptures do not tell us why Elizabeth did this. We can only speculate.

- Perhaps she sought to be alone so that she could meditate and dwell on the angel's prophecy.
- Possibly she decided to keep her pregnancy a secret until such a time that it was obvious so that she could then show herself to be with child and thus dispel any who might doubt.
- Or perhaps she who had been looked upon for so many years with disgrace because of her barren condition determined that no one should see her until they could look on her with favor and see how the Lord had blessed her.

In any case, we see a contrast between Elizabeth and her husband, Zacharias. While he had doubted the word of God, she believed and rejoiced in the promise of God. How about you? Are you a Zacharias or an Elizabeth? Have you been doubting that God is able to do what He says He can do? Or have you been trusting in the promises of God? The good news is that the same God who answered the prayers of Elizabeth also answered the prayers of Zacharias. It did not depend upon the depth of faith of the one believing; it depended upon the grace of the One answering the prayer.

THE ANNOUNCEMENT TO MARY

LUKE 1:26-56

In that day the Branch of the Lord will be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the earth will be the pride and the adornment of the survivors of Israel. (Isaiah 4:2).

It seems fitting that the first announcement of the coming of Messiah should have been made in the temple. It was there that the sacrifices were made, their blood running red in the temple basins. It was there that the morning and evening offerings were made, along with prayers for the redemption of Jerusalem. And it was there that the high priest would go in once a year to atone for the sins of the people.

And yet, when the time comes for the announcement to be made to that one who shall bear the Divine Son, it is not to Jerusalem that we look, but to Galilee. There was a saying among the Jews that if you wanted to become spiritual, you went to Jerusalem; but if you wanted to become rich, go to Galilee.

It was a rich, fertile land with rolling hills and sun splashed meadows; a land of sparkling streams and peaceful villages. It was truly a land flowing with milk and honey. But more than that, it was in the days of Jesus a land of wealthy industry. The main roads of the Middle East ran through the hills of Galilee and a hundred cities and towns grew rich by trading with the merchants who traveled along these roads.

Traveling north from Jerusalem, you follow a high ridge of mountains which winds its way northward through the land of the Samaritans. Finally, you come to the wide plain of Jezreel. In the center of the plain lies the ancient city of Megiddo, a city that was already old in Solomon's day.

This is the Valley of Jezreel, the battlefield of the ancient world and known popularly today as Armageddon. It was here that Deborah and Barach defeated the Canaanites. This was the place where Gideon's 300 had vanquished the Midianites. The chariots of Thutmoses III and Amenhotep

II of Egypt fought the Canaanites here. It was here that Saul had been slain and it was here that the kings Ahaziah and Josiah of Judah each met their deaths. As you look across this lush, fertile valley, you would be hard-pressed to visualize all of the bloodshed that has taken place here. No longer can you hear the tramp of soldier's boots. Instead there is the singing of birds, the grazing of sheep, and the clank of a carpenter's simple tools.

Far to the north, you can barely make out the snow-tipped peak of Mount Hermon. To the west, the plain is dotted with cities and villages, beyond which rises the purple slopes of Mount Carmel, and beyond that the sea. To the east rises Mount Tabor, around which curves the bustling highway. Nestled in the low hills to the north of the plain is a tiny village. Nazareth. From this village will come the one who will give birth to the Savior of the world.

THE ANGEL'S APPEARANCE TO MARY

> *Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city in Galilee, called Nazareth, 27 to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the descendants of David; and the virgin's name was Mary.*
>
> *And coming in, he said to her, "Hail, favored one! The Lord is with you." (Luke 1:26-28).*

With these words our scene changes from Jerusalem and the temple to Nazareth. The name "Nazareth" has two possible meanings in the Hebrew language:

- *Naziyr* means "to be separated." This would be appropriate since Jesus would be holy, separate from the rest of humanity.
- *Netser* is the Hebrew word for "branch. It is used in Isaiah 11:1; 4:2; Jeremiah 23:5; and 33:15 to speak of the One who would be the branch from the root of Jesse.

Nazareth's claim to fame was the fact that it was one of the cities of gathering for the priests. In our last chapter, we stated that each of the 24 courses of priests would gather at a city prior to their week of service in the temple. Those who were able to would travel to Jerusalem. Those who could not would remain in the city for a week of prayer. Nazareth was one of those gathering-places.

1. The Time of the Angel's Appearance: *Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God (1:26).* This refers to the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy. She had kept herself in seclusion for the first five months. Now she has revealed herself and her condition to everyone. There is no doubt in anyone's mind that one who was once barren is now with child. It is only after this that Gabriel comes to Mary.

2. The Recipient of the Angel's Appearance: *To a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph (1:27).* The word "engaged" is translated from the perfect passive participle of *emnesteuo*. It means "to betroth." The betrothal was much stronger than an engagement. It was a legally binding promise of marriage. The woman who was betrothed was regarded as though she were already married. The only way to be released from a betrothal was to go through divorce proceedings. The betrothal often lasted for an entire year. Unfaithfulness on the part of the bride was punishable by death (Deuteronomy 22:23-29).

   And the virgin's name was Mary (1:27). The name *Mary* is an English rendition of the Hebrew name "Miriam." It was a common name among the Jews. It was reminiscent of the sister of Moses. There are at least four other women in the New Testament with this same name.

3. The Greeting of the Angel: *"Hail, favored one! The Lord is with you." (1:28).* We could translate this opening salutation literally as "Grace to you who have been graced..." The angel opens with a double reference to grace. This is the basis on which God is dealing with Mary.

   Many people have looked at Mary and thought that she is something special in her own right. It has even been taught that she was without sin. But this is not what we see here. She is the object of grace! What is grace? Grace is undeserved mercy. It is God giving us blessing when we deserve cursing. This is the way God deals with us. And this is how He was dealing with Mary.

MARY'S FIRST REACTION

But she was greatly troubled at this statement, and kept pondering what kind of salutation this might be.

> *And the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary; for you have found favor with God. 31 And behold, you will conceive in your womb, and bear a son, and you shall name Him Jesus. 32 He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; 33 and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever; and His kingdom will have no end. (Luke 1:29-33).*

Mary's first reaction was one of fear and wonderment. This is not surprising. She had never seen an angel before. Up to this point, she had been a very normal person living a very normal life in a very normal town. And yet, I don't think that it was the angel's appearance which troubled Mary as much as what the angel said to her. Mary is told that she has been picked out by God for some special purpose. Mary had no illusions about herself. She knew that she was not worthy of any special honor from God.

1. A Greeting of Grace: *"You have found favor with God" (1:30).* The angel does not say, "God has picked you out because you are so wonderful. He does not say, "We held a heavenly popularity contest and you won." He says, "You have found favor." This word "favor" is the same Greek word *charis* we mentioned earlier: "You have found *grace*." Grace is being given that which you do not deserve. If you have come to God, then it is only on the basis of grace.

2. Promise of a Son: *"You will conceive in your womb, and bear a son" (1:31).* The angel does not mention at this point how Mary is going to conceive. Up to now, there has been no mention of a virgin birth. Naturally, Mary is going to assume that the angel is referring to natural childbirth. This issue will come up in a moment.

3. His Name: *"And you shall name Him Jesus" (1:31).* The name *Jesus* is a Greek rendition of the Hebrew name "Joshua." It means "Jehovah saves." Names don't carry that much meaning these days. We give our children names because we like the way they sound. But in those days, the meaning behind the name often held a special significance. Your name told something about you. This is the case with Jesus. His name is a special name. It indicates the special purpose that God had for Him. He came to be the Savior.

4. His Inheritance: *"The Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David" (1:32).* The birth of Jesus marks the return of the

Davidic Dynasty. Israel had been without a king from the line of David for over 500 years. The last king from the line of David had been Zedekiah. He had been deposed by Nebuchadnezzar in 586 B.C. Now a foreigner is on the throne. His name is Herod the Great. He is not even Jewish. He is Idumean. But Herod's kingdom is going to end. The kingdom of Jesus will never end.

MARY'S SECOND REACTION

And Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?"

And the angel answered and said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for this reason the holy offspring shall be called the Son of God. 36 And behold, even your relative Elizabeth has also conceived a son in her old age; and she who was called barren is now in her sixth month. 37 For nothing will be impossible with God." (Luke 1:34-37).

Mary reacts to the angel's announcement with a question. Notice the question. "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" Mary is not questioning God's ability. She is not doubting the truthfulness of this prophecy. She is merely asking how it will be accomplished in light of the fact that she has never joined in sexual contact with a man. There is a contrast between her question versus the question that was asked by Zacharias in the previous narrative:

Zacharias	Mary
"How can I be sure?"	"I am sure that it is going to happen, but how?"

1. The Promise of the Spirit: *"The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you" (1:35).*

This is going to be the work of God. He is going to supercede the laws of nature in order to produce a child in the womb of Mary. Just as the Holy Spirit brings about the new birth in the life of a believer, so the Holy Spirit will bring about a physical life within the womb of Mary. This came as a complete surprise to Mary. Gresham

Machen points out that there was absolutely nothing in Jewish theology to make one think that the Messiah would ever be born of a virgin:

> There is not the slightest direct evidence... in support of the view that there was in the pre-Christian Judaism of the time subsequent to the Old Testament any expectation of a virgin birth of the Messiah." (1977:297).

Thus, the Jews were not expecting a virgin birth. This was something that the Jews did not understand and it was something that was unexpected to Mary. This brings us to a question. Is the virgin birth really all that important? It certainly is.

- If Jesus was not born of a virgin, then He was an illegitimate child.
- If He was an illegitimate child, then He was unqualified to be King of the Jews or to sit on the throne of David.
- If He was not born of a virgin, then He is just a man who died a long time ago.
- If He was not born of a virgin, then you and I have no hope for eternal life. We are going to judged by God and we are going to be condemned to an eternal death in hell.

2. The Sign of Elizabeth: *"Your relative Elizabeth has also conceived" (1:36).* It is not clear exactly what relation Elizabeth was to Mary. They are spoken of as being from different tribes, so they may have been cousins. The important point is that Mary is being given a sign. Her sign is Elizabeth's pregnancy. Zacharias had asked for a sign and was given one. Mary did not ask, but she also received a sign.

3. The Ability of God: *"For nothing will be impossible with God" (1:37).* This is a promise. We have a God who is the master of the impossible situation. Notice the tense. It is a future tense. There will never be a time in the future when there will be anything that will be impossible for God. Now Mary has a decision to make. Will she believe that God is in control? Is God more real to her than any problems that may arise?

MARY'S THIRD REACTION

> *And Mary said, "Behold, the bondslave of the Lord; be it done to me according to your word." And the angel departed from her." (Luke 1:38).*

Don't miss the implications of Mary's statement. She is going to become pregnant. She will have a child. But she will have a child without the benefit of a husband. What is wrong with that? These days it happens so often that one would hardly notice such a thing. Mary is betrothed. She has entered into a legal contract with Joseph to become his wife at the end of this betrothal period. The Law is very explicit as to what is to be done in the event that she is found to be unfaithful (Deuteronomy 22: 13-29). The penalty for unfaithfulness is death by stoning.

Mary is going to become pregnant. It will look as though she has been unfaithful. Nobody is expecting a virgin birth and nobody is going to believe that she is still a virgin. In spite of all this, Mary still submits herself to the will of the Lord. In conclusion, I want you to notice a distinct contrast between Mary and Zacharias.

Zacharias	Mary
Old man	Young girl
Lived in Judea	Lived in Galilee
Son of Levi (priest)	Daughter of Judah
Married to one who is barren	Betrothed, but still a virgin
Unable to have children because his wife was barren	Unable to have children because she was an unmarried virgin
Birth announced in the temple: An official announcement	Birth announced in the city of Nazareth: A personal announcement
Angel appeared: "Do not be afraid; your petition has been heard."	Angel appeared: Do not be afraid; you have found favor with God."
"Your wife will bear you a son, and you will give him the name John."	"You will conceive in your womb, and bear a son, and you shall name him Jesus."

"He will be great in the sight of the Lord."	"He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High."
"He will turn back many of the sons of Israel to the Lord their God."	"He will reign over the house of Jacob forever; and His kingdom will have no end."
Zacharias: "How shall I know this for certain? I am an old man" (1:18).	Mary: "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" (1:34).
Sign: "You shall be silent and unable to speak" (1:20).	Sign: "Your relative Elizabeth has conceived" (1:36).
Unbelief	Belief
Asked for a sign to be given	Submitted to the will of God
The birth of John	The birth of Jesus

Zacharias had all of the education of one of the priesthood, yet he still did not initially believe the promise of God. Mary was simply a young girl with no formal training that we know of, yet she readily believed and submitted herself.

MARY VISITS ELIZABETH

> *Now at this time Mary arose and went with hast to the hill country, to a city of Judah, 40 and entered the house of Zacharias and greeted Elizabeth.*
>
> *And it came about that when Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. (Luke 1:39-41).*

Why did Mary leave Nazareth and go to visit Elizabeth? Undoubtedly, it was to see for herself the sign of Elizabeth's pregnancy and to share her own good fortune with her relative. After all, no one would be able to identify with her situation as much as Elizabeth would.

1. A Moving Greeting: *When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb (1:41).* Elizabeth was at least in her sixth month by now (Luke 1:26). By this time, it would have been normal

to have the fetus moving within her womb. However, Elizabeth is going to interpret this movement as something quite out of the ordinary.

2. A Spiritual Filling: *Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit (1:41).* The filling of the Holy Spirit is a familiar concept within the Bible. It is rooted in the Old Testament (Exodus 31:3; Numbers 11:17-29; 24:2; Judges 3:10; 6:34; 14:6; 1 Samuel 10:6; 10:10; 11:6).

   - The filling of the Holy Spirit is described as a special and uncommon occurrence. It was only on special occasions that a believer was described as being filled with the Holy Spirit.

   - The filling of the Holy Spirit is a temporary phenomenon. This seems to be evidenced in David's request in the Psalms.

     > *Do not cast me away from Thy presence, and do not take Thy Holy Spirit from me. (Psalm 51:11).*

     Apparently, the Holy Spirit would come upon a believer to perform a particular task and then would leave him.

   - We are commanded to be filled with the Holy Spirit: *And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit,. (Ephesians 5:13).* This command is in the present tense. It indicates a continuing action in the present time. We are to continually be filled with the Spirit.

   This was a special moment in Elizabeth's life. She realizes the significance of what is taking place and she does not realize it merely on her own. It is the very Spirit of God that has shown her something and it is this same Spirit of the Lord that comes upon her in order to perform a special task - to compose a song.

   Steve Brown likes to say that when you see a turtle on a gatepost, you know it did not get there by itself. In the same way, you ought to ask yourself, what is there in your life that can only be explained in the terms of the supernatural? For Elizabeth, it was this song.

ELIZABETH'S SONG

> *And she cried out with a loud voice, and said, "Blessed among women are you, and blessed is the fruit of your womb!*
>
> *"And how has it happened to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?*
>
> *"For behold, when the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby leaped in my womb for joy.*
>
> *"And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what had been spoken to her by the Lord." (Luke 1:42-45).*

Elizabeth breaks forth in praise to the Lord. In the way of Hebrew poetry, this praise contains a threefold parallelism.

- *Blessed among women are you (1:42).*
- *Blessed is the fruit of your womb! (1:42).*
- *Blessed is she who believed (1:45).*

"Blessed among women are you" (1:42).

The word *blessed* is the Greek perfect passive participle of *eulogeo*, meaning "to speak well of, to bless." This is different from *makarios*, the word that is translated "blessed" in the Beatitudes of Matthew 5 and Luke 6.

- *Makarios* means "happy" and brings out the attitude of the individual who is being described.
- *Eulogeo* does not depend upon the attitude of the individual. The individual has nothing to do with it. This is a grace-oriented word.

I think that there may be a principle here. Mary is not blessed because of anything special that she has done. She is blessed because God has done something for her.

"The mother of my Lord" (1:43).

Elizabeth looks at Mary and she sees more than just a young girl. She sees the one who will give birth to the Messiah, the One who is

her Lord. This is reminiscent of David when he spoke of One who was his Lord.

> *The Lord says to my Lord: "Sit at My right hand, until I make Thine enemies a footstool for Thy feet." (Psalm 110:1).*

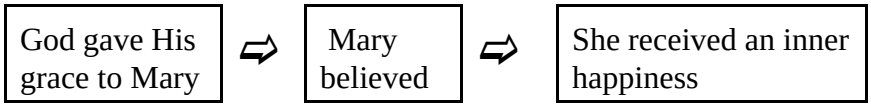
Elizabeth seem to realize that the One to whom Mary will give birth is to the same One of whom David spoke.

"The baby leaped in my womb for joy" (1:44).

Does this mean that the child within Elizabeth's womb had knowledge of the fact that the mother of the Messiah was in his presence? Although we do not want to read too much into this passage, this appears to be the case.

"Blessed is she who believed" (1:45).

This time the word "blessed" is *makaria*, meaning "happy." This time, it refers to Mary's attitude. Now she is blessed because of something that. she has done. What is it that she has done? She has believed. Notice the progression:



We could sum it up as an equation: Grace + Faith = Inner Happiness. Our tendency is to try to do it backwards. We think that if we believe enough and if we get happy enough, then maybe God will bless us. Such thinking makes it all about us instead of all about God.

MARY'S SONG

And Mary said: "My soul exalts the Lord,
"And my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior.
"For He has had regard for the humble state of His bondslave; for behold, from this time on all generations will count me blessed.

"For the Mighty One has done great things for me; and holy is His name.
"For His mercy is upon generation after generation toward those who fear Him.
"He has done mighty deeds with His arm; He has scattered those who were proud in the thoughts of their heart.
"He has brought down rulers from their thrones and has exalted those who were humble.
"He has filled the hungry with good things; and sent away the rich empty-handed.
"He has given help to Israel His servant, in remembrance of His mercy,
"As He spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and his offspring forever.
And Mary stayed with her about three months, and then returned to her home." (Luke 1:46-56).

The theme of Mary's song is the greatness of God. It is essentially a song of praise and glorification of God. It is interesting to note the similarities between Mary's song and the song of Hannah found in 1 Samuel 2:1-10.

The Song of Hannah	The Song of Mary
My heart exalts the Lord	*My soul exalts the Lord*
There is no one holy like the Lord, Indeed, there is no one besides Thee	*For the Mighty One has done great things for me; and holy is His name*
Boast no more very proudly, Do not let arrogance come out of your mouth For the Lord is a God of knowledge And with Him actions are weighed	*He has done mighty deeds with His arm; He has scattered those who were proud in the thoughts of their heart*
The bows of the mighty are shattered, But the feeble gird on strength	*He has brought down rulers from their thrones and has exalted those who were humble*

The Lord makes poor and rich; He brings low, He also exalts	*He has filled the hungry with good things; and sent away the rich empty-handed*
He will give strength to His king, And will exalt the horn of His anointed	*He has given help to Israel His servant, in remembrance of His mercy*

The one thing that is absent from both songs is any mention of the promised child. Hannah speaks of the fact that the Lord opens and closes wombs, but she makes no mention of her own situation in her song. Likewise, Mary speaks of how her hope is in the Lord, but her song contains nothing about the Son that is promised to her.

At the same time, there are several quotations from the Psalms found within this song, as well as quotations from other verses of the Old Testament Scriptures (1 Samuel 1:11; Job 12:19; Psalm 69:10; 98:1, 3; 103:1, 5, 17; 105:6-10; 107:9; 147:2, 19; Isaiah 53:1). This is not surprising when we realize that Mary was probably taught the Scriptures from the time that she was a little child. Mary's song can be outlined in four major points:

1:46-49	God is exalted because of what He has done for Mary, His humble slave	God's mercy is seen in that He has picked out one of humble origins to work through
1:50	God's mercy is seen to be directed to all generations	In the first four verses, we see God's mercy only in relation to Mary. Now, His mercy is seen in a wider framework, directed to the world
1:51-53	The mercy of God is seen and attested to in history	This is a further expansion of the previous point. Also presented here is a contrast; between the mercy of God and the judgment of God
1:54-55	God's mercy as seen in relation to Israel	God's mercy is seen in the promises which He has given to Israel and in the way that He has kept those promises

The two themes that run through this entire section are God's might

and God's mercy. With this basic outline in mind, we are now ready to examine some of the key phrases within this song.

"My soul exalts the Lord" (1:46).

The Greek word translated "exalt" is μεγαλυνω (*megaluno*). We use the term "mega" when we want to talk about something that is really big. Mary does the same here. She wants to make God big, to make Him great. How do you make God great? It is by recognizing who He is.

This is the essence of worship. It is to lift God up and recognize His greatness and glory. It is not that we can make God any higher or more glorious than He already is. Our worship does not add anything to God. What it does is to recognize the greatness of His position.

"My spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior" (1:47).

This is in parallel to the first statement. Mary is saying essentially the same thing, but is saying it in a slightly different way.

My soul	exalts	the Lord
My spirit	has rejoiced	in God my Savior

Mary does not try to set herself up as one who had no need of a Savior. She was in need of salvation just as every member of the human race is in need of salvation. What made Mary special? It was not anything on her part. It was something outside of her. It was the grace of God. There was nothing about Mary that set her apart from the rest of the human race. But God is going to set her apart for a special purpose.

"All generations will count me blessed" (1:46).

The word for "blessed" in this verse is *makarios* and can be translated "happy." It is the same word that is used in the Beatitudes. It describes an inner happiness. Remember that Mary is an unwed mother in the ancient middle east. There are those who would...

- not understand
- condemn her as an immoral woman

- attempt to put her son to death.

In the face of all of this, Mary has a confident assurance. More than that, she has a sense of God's blessing in her life.

This is a prophecy which has come true. Everywhere that the story of Christ has been preached, it has included the story of Mary. This does not mean that we are to worship Mary or pray to her. But it does mean that we are to consider her as one who was greatly blessed by the Lord and given a high and holy privilege.

"Holy is His name" (1:49).

The Greek word for "holy" is *hagios*. it is quite different from our modern definition of the idea of holiness. *Hagios* described something that had been set apart for a special use. There were certain utensils within the temple which were reserved for a special use. It was not that they were all that different from any other utensils. It was just that they were dedicated for this special use. God's name is like that. It has been set apart from all other names to describe the One who is the creator of all things.

"He has done mighty deeds with His arm" (1:51).

With this phrase, Mary introduces a contrast between the humble and hungry and the rich and powerful.

He has done Mighty Deeds	
Blessings	Cursings
He has exalted those who were humble	He has scattered the proud and brought down rulers
He has filled the hungry	He sent away the rich empty-handed

It should be pointed out that each of these verbs is in the aorist tense. This tense is used to describe a point in time. Mary is looking back to the points in history where God has been seen to work in a mighty way.

Mary points out that the God who worked so greatly in history is the same God whom we worship today. He has not changed. He is still at work in history as He brings His will to pass.

His promises are ever true and can be believed.

When we read of the story of Mary and how she responded to the announcement of the birth of Jesus, sometimes we are tempted to put our focus upon Mary and upon her faith and obedience. But she does not allow such a focus. She calls us instead, in her song, to focus upon the Lord and how He has entered time and space to do a great work on our behalf. This is the meaning of Christmas and it is the message we are called to proclaim to the world.

THE BIRTH & CIRCUMCISION OF THE FORERUNNER

LUKE 1:57-80

And it shall be said, "Build up, build up, prepare the way, remove every obstacle out of the way of My people." (Isaiah 57:14).

The ministry of John the Baptist was special. He was called to be the Forerunner of the Lord. It would be his task to go before the Lord Jesus and to prepare the hearts of the people to meet their King. And so it is fitting that. the birth of John the Baptist should precede the birth of Jesus.

THE BIRTH OF THE FORERUNNER

Now the time had come for Elizabeth to give birth, and she brought forth a son.

And her neighbors and her relatives heard that the Lord had displayed His great mercy toward her; and they were rejoicing with her. (Luke 1:57-58).

We are given very few of the details surrounding the actual birth of John. This will he seen in contrast to the birth of Jesus. There is a principle here. John's importance will be seen in his relation to Jesus. The same can be said to be true of us. Sometimes we get to thinking that we are very important. But it is the One whom we serve who is important.

1. A Promise Fulfilled: *She brought forth a son (1:57).*

This is one more example of the great truth that God always

keeps His word. He has a 100% record. He has never failed. This means that, when He makes a promise to you, that you can bank on it. If He was going to start breaking His word, He probably wouldn't be starting with you.

2. God Glorified: *They were rejoicing with her (1:58).*

The workings of God were obvious. I'm sure that Elizabeth had told her neighbors and friends the significance of her pregnancy. The result was that they glorified God at the birth of this baby.

THE NAMING OF THE FORERUNNER

And it came about that on the eighth day they came to circumcise the child, and they were going to call him Zacharias, after his father.

And his mother answered and said, "No indeed; but he shall be called John."

And they said to her, "There is no one among your relatives who is called by that name."

And they made signs to his father as to what he wanted him called.

And he asked for a tablet, and wrote as follows, "His name is John." And they were all astonished.

And at once his mouth was opened and his tongue loosed, and he began to speak in praise of God.

And fear came on all those living around them; and all these matters were being talked about in all the hill country of Judea.

And all who heard them kept them in mind, saying, "What then will this child turn out to be? For the hand of the Lord was certainly with him." (Luke 1:59-66).

Imagine the scene. Early on the morning of the eighth day following the child's birth, the family and friends of Zacharias and Elizabeth gather together at their home. Elizabeth greets each guest as they enter into the house. Zacharias smiles his greeting.

When all of the guests have arrived, Elizabeth takes her infant son and hands him to the priest. The priest takes this infant son of Abraham and speaks a benediction over the child. Then, he takes a knife and carefully cuts around the foreskin of the infant, marking this child as a son of Israel, the

sign of the Abrahamic Covenant now on his own little body.

The child has not been named. Since God had changed the names of Abraham and Sarah at the time that He gave them the Covenant of Circumcision, so the Jews would name a male child only after he had been circumcised. This rite of circumcision completed, the priest would now offer up a prayer: "Our God, and the God of our fathers - raise up this child to his father and mother, and let his name be called in Israel Zacharias, the son of Zacharias." Suddenly there is an interruption. It comes from Elizabeth. All turn in wonder and astonishment at the outburst of this aged mother. "What did she say? Did I hear her correctly?"

1. A Name of Promise: *"He shall be called John" (1:60).*

What's in a name? In my own American culture, the meaning of names are normally ignored. People are generally more concerned with how a name sounds and that it have no negative associations. For example, I don't know of too many parents who have named their child "Benedict Arnold" or "Judas Iscariot."

But names in the Hebrew culture were often very meaningful. Abram and Jacob had their names changed. In Abraham's case, it was to reflect the abandoning of his old pagan worship as he began to worship the Lord. In Jacob's case, it was to reflect the change that was to mark his character. He would no longer be the heel-grabber, the cheat, but now he would be Israel, the one who has struggled with God.

Abram ("father of high places")	Was changed to...	Abraham ("father of a multitude")
Jacob ("heel-grabber, cheat").		Israel ("one who has struggled with God")

When Elizabeth says, *"He shall be called John,"* this is a future passive indicative. The future tense indicates that it is not a present reality. The indicative mood means that it is really going to happen. This is the form of a prophecy.

The name "John" is a Hebrew name (Yhohanani) meaning "gift of Yahweh." This is going to be a very meaningful name. It will be this same John who will go out to proclaim the coming of the One who will be God's gift to the world.

2. A New Name: *They said to her, "There is no one among your relatives who is called by that name" (1:61).*

It was customary in that day to name a child after someone in the family. Thus, the people had assumed that this child would be named Zacharias Jr. When they heard a different name proposed, they wondered for whom the baby was being named. There was no one by the name John in the family of either Zacharias or Elizabeth.

3. An Appeal to Zacharias: *They made signs to his father (1:62).*

Zacharias had not uttered a word since that day nine months ago in the temple. As is often the case, the people had assumed that because he could not speak, he was also unable to hear. Thus, they try to communicate to him through the means of sign language.

4. An Affirmation of Faith: *"His name is John" (1:63).*

Notice the difference between the statement of Elizabeth and the written statement of Zacharias.

Elizabeth	*He shall be called John*	Future passive indicative
Zacharias	*His name is John*	Present active indicative

The words of Zacharias are given as a present active indicative. The present tense brings out a definite finality. Notice that Zacharias does not write that he is going to name the child. The child already has a name. God has named the child.

The last spoken words of Zacharias had been delivered in unbelief. As he speaks now, his words are going to reflect a steadfast and unwavering faith. Before he had spoken in doubt. Now he is going to speak with assurance.

5. A Loosened Tongue: *And at once his mouth was opened and his tongue loosed (1:64).*

Gabriel had promised that Zacharias would he dumb until the prophecy had been fulfilled. This promise had been fulfilled and, for the last nine months, Zacharias had been unable to talk. That is now

at an end and his speech returns as suddenly as it had first departed.

> *"And behold, you shall be silent and unable to speak until the day when these things take place, because you did not believe my words, which shall be fulfilled in their proper time." (Luke 1:20).*

Part of that prophecy had been that Zacharias would give his son the name "John" (Luke 1:13). It was not until that part of the prophecy had come to pass that Zacharias was given back his power of speech.

6. A Matter of Record: *All these matters were being talked about in all the hill country of Judea (1:65).*

When Zacharias had first been stricken dumb, it had occurred within the confines of the temple — the spiritual center of the Jewish race. We may conclude that the news of this event spread out from Jerusalem to the surrounding countryside. Now as the dumbness leaves Zacharias just as dramatically as it had come upon him, the word goes out again. The response to these events is described in verses 65-66.

a. It left the people with a fear and a reverence for the power of God. After all, if God can open and shut the mouth of this old priest, then I had better watch what I say. We get to thinking that God is the Master Architect who set everything in motion, but who has now gone off on a long journey and hasn't come back yet.

b. It led the people to begin to think and talk more about spiritual matters. When you have seen God work in a dynamic way, you begin to take Him more seriously. Part of the problem in our churches today is that people aren't recognizing the working power of God. This "gospel by gossip" was spontaneous. It did not take place as a result of an evangelistic crusade. No one delivered a message on how true Christians ought to be sharing their faith. There was no manipulation or coercion. It was a natural outgrown of people being excited about something they had witnessed. And if the church is ever to become involved in evangelism, it will only be as believers are excited about the Lord who has

saved them.

c. It would eventually give added credence to the ministry of John. There is coming a day when this little baby will grow to manhood and will begin a ministry of preaching. People are going to remember the miraculous circumstances surrounding his birth and they are going to listen to him. There is a principle in all of this. It is that God always prepares the way for a ministry. It will be over thirty years before .John begins his public ministry, but God is already preparing the hearts of the people to receive him.

THE SONG OF ZACHARIAS

And his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Spirit, and prophesied, saying:

"Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for He has visited us and accomplished redemption for His people,
"And has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of David His servant [70] — as He spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from of old [71] — salvation from our enemies, and from the hand of all who hate us;
"To show mercy toward our fathers, and to remember His holy covenant,
"The oath which He swore to Abraham our father,
"To grant us that we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies, might serve Him without fear,
"In holiness and righteousness before Him all our days.
"And you. child, will be called the prophet of the Most High; for you will go on before the Lord to prepare his ways;
"To give to his people the knowledge of salvation by the forgiveness of their sins,
"Because of the tender mercy of our God, with which the Sunrise from on high shall visit us,
"To shine upon those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death,
"To guide our feet into the way of peace." (Luke 1:67-79).

Zacharias has remained silent for the last nine months. He has had a lot of time to reflect of the ways of the Lord. Whereas before he could not speak, so now he cannot keep silent. He breaks forth into a beautiful song. The song of Zacharias can be divided into two parts, each consisting of one long continuous sentence.

1:68-75	Praise	Zacharias praises the Lord for having provided salvation for His people
1:76-79	Prophecy	Zacharias goes on to describe what the child's mission and ministry will be

As was the case with Mary's song, the song of Zacharias will be filled with quotes of phrases and whole verses from the Old Testament. In fact, each of these two sections will begin with a statement and then refer to the Old Testament Scripture to provide evidence for that statement.

1. A Divine Blessing: *"Blessed be the Lord God of Israel" (1:68).*

   The Greek word translated "blessed" is *eulogetos*. This is used as an adjective. In Luke 1:42 the same word was used as a verb. It does not describe a state of emotion. We do not have to depend upon God's state of emotions. We will never have to worry whether God is in a good mood or not. God never gets up on the wrong side of the bed. *Eulogetos* could be translated as "well spoken of" or "highly regarded."

2. A Divine Visitation: *"He has visited us and accomplished redemption for His people" (1:68).*

   The aorist tense is used in both of these verbs. The aorist tense indicates a point in time. Usually, it refers to past time. However, in this case, it refers to something that had not yet been completed.

   Redemption would not be accomplished until Christ died upon the cross (Hebrews 9:12). Thus, the aorist tense is being used to describe something in the future. The point of this tense is that God's visitation is bringing about the redemption of His people.

3. A Visitation according to Promise: *"As He spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets" (1:70).*

Now that Zacharias has stated the doctrine of redemption, he goes on to give evidence of that doctrine from the Old Testament Scriptures. There is a principle here. It is that the proof of any teaching must always come from the Scriptures. He does not merely use reason or logic. Neither does he depend upon feelings. The basis of his beliefs are that God has spoken.

Notice also the reference to inspiration. God spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets. When they spoke, the words of God came forth.

4. The Goal of Visitation: *"To grant us that we... might serve Him" (1:74).*

This is the end result of redemption. This is the final goal of God's salvation. It is that He shall acquire the redemption of those who shall be enabled to serve and to worship Him. If we were to summarize this entire sentence, then it would read like this:

> *"Blessed be the Lord God, for He has visited us and accomplished redemption and raised up a horn of salvation to show mercy and to remember the oath that we might serve Him." (1:68-75).*

Thus, we can see that God's visitation accomplished two initial purposes:

a. To show mercy to the fathers (1:72).
b. To remember His covenant with Abraham (1:72-73).

The Song of Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist, includes the phrases, "to show mercy to our fathers, and to remember his holy covenant, the oath he swore to our father Abraham. If we translate this into Hebrew, we find that it uses the verb *zachar* ("to remember"), which is the root of the name Zechariah; and also *shaba* ("to swear"), which is the root of the name Elizabeth; and *hanan* ("mercy"), which is the base for the name Yohanan (John). So that the names of the three principals are all worked into the Psalm.

5. The Forerunner of the visitation: *"And you, child, will he called the prophet of the Most High" (1:76).*

Now, we move to the second section of Zacharias' Song. The praise has set the stage for this prophecy. Zacharias addresses his infant son. He declares that John will be a prophet. This prophecy is fulfilled in Matthew 11:9-14;

14:5; 21;26; and Mark 11:32.

"For you will go on before the Lord to prepare his ways" (1:76).

"For" is a purpose clause. It introduces to us why John has been called to be a prophet. It is because he will be the one who will announce the coming of Messiah. Often in the ancient world when a king was traveling to a city, he would send his servant on ahead to announce his coming so that the people would make ready to receive him with proper honors. This is the picture presented here. The King is coming. His messenger will he sent on before Him. This has already been promised in the Old Testament.

> *Behold, I am going to send My messenger, and he will clear the way before Me. (Malachi 3:la).*

John is going to be that messenger that had been promised. He will go before the Lord.

"To give to his people the knowledge of salvation by the forgiveness of their sins" (1:77).

This will be the end result of John's ministry. People will learn of that salvation which only comes through the forgiveness of their sins. John will not give salvation. He will only give the knowledge of salvation.

"The Sunrise from on high shall visit us" (1:78).

This is another reference to Messiah. It also comes from Malachi.

> *But for you who fear My name the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings; and you will go forth and skip about like calves from the stall. (Malachi 4:2).*

There is coming One who will be able to heal the sick. He will lighten the hearts of the afflicted. He will be the instrument of the tender mercies of God.

"To shine upon those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death" (1:79).

Notice the vivid picture that Zacharias presents. We sit here in complete darkness, unable to see. Suddenly, there comes a light. It is the Light. This is not a new concept. The Old Testament prophet Isaiah had foretold of One who would come.

> *The people who walk in darkness will see a great light; those who live in a dark land. the light will shine on them. (Isaiah 9:2).*

Zacharias recognizes that the light Isaiah spoke of is now going to come into the world. It is the light of Jesus. It is the light for whom the son of Zacharias will serve as the forerunner.

CONCLUSION

> *And the child continued to grow, and to become strong in spirit, and he lived in the deserts until the day of his public appearance to Israel. (Luke 1:80).*

With this verse we shall dismiss John. This is the only record that we have of his childhood. This was the period of his preparation. We may surmise that, since his parents were already very advanced in age, that John became an orphan rather early in life. This was all a part of God's plan. God is molding a man for His own use. That molding process is sometimes rather painful. However. God has the finished product in mind.

This is the one outstanding feature that we have seen all throughout this chapter. It is that God has a plan and that He has provided for that plan. This is something that you can believe today. God has a plan for you and He will provide for that plan. The going will not always be comfortable. But in the end it will be worth it.

WHEN GOD BECAME MAN
LUKE 2:1-7

> *For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; and the government will rest on His shoulders; and His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. (Isaiah 9:6).*

The Lamb of God. For over four thousand years, the people of God had been coming to Him with sacrifices. The key element of the sacrifice was a lamb. This lamb was killed as an illustration of the substitute that God would someday send to pay for the sins of the world. Thus, it is fitting that our story of the birth of the Messiah — the Lamb of God — should take us to a stable.

THE TAKING OF THE CENSUS

> *Now it came about in those days that a decree went out from Caesar Augustus, that a census be taken of all the inhabited earth. 2 This was the first census taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. 3 And all were proceeding to register for the census, everyone to his own city. (Luke 2:1-3).*

Luke's account of the birth of Jesus does not begin with "once upon a time." It is neither a myth nor a legend nor a fairy tale. Instead, Luke begins his account by placing it solidly in the context of history. This is something that really happened in space and time. It is rooted in historical fact.

1. The Founder of the Census.

> *A decree went out from Caesar Augustus, that a census be taken of all the inhabited earth (2:1).*

Caesar Augustus is a reference to Gaius Octavius Augustus. This man was the nephew of Julius Caesar. He was the emperor of the Roman Empire. Augustus was famed as an administrative genius. His long reign was considered to be the golden age of Rome. Building projects abounded throughout the Empire. It was said that Augustus had "found Rome brick and left her marble."

This was known as the time of Pax Romana — the peace of Rome. It would be during this time that the Prince of Peace would be born. Under the rule of Augustus, the Roman Empire was reorganized and a regular system of taxation was instituted. The Romans believed that someone else ought to pay for all of the Roman legions and the Roman roads and the Roman palaces which now covered the ancient world. Rather than place this burden of taxation upon her citizens, it was decided that those who had been conquered by Rome should pay for the privilege through taxation. And so, Augustus instituted a census which would dictate the amount of money each province would be required to turn in. The plan of Augustus called for a census to be taken every fourteen years. This system of census-taking was to continue until 230 A.D.

2. The Time of the Census.

> *This was the first census taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria (2:2).*

Not content with the placing of the birth of Jesus merely in the days of Augustus, Luke goes on to point out that this was the first census taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. This is mentioned to distinguish this census from other censuses which followed. Quirinius seems to have been governor of Syria twice and both times he was in charge of taking the census for his area (see Appendix 1).

What is the significance of this census? Why is it entered into the pages of our Bible? I think that there are at least three reasons:

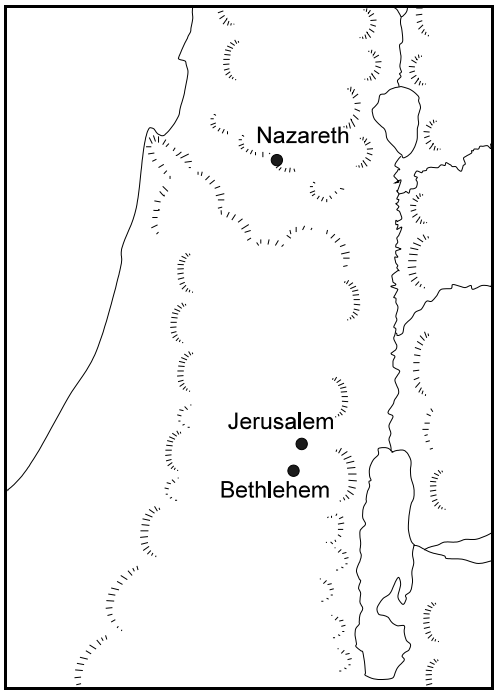
- It was given to provide a specific date of the events surrounding Christ's birth. We do not know exactly when

this census took place. But I have no doubt that Theophilus did. He would have known about all the census' that were mandated. And he would have understood Luke's words when he referred to a first census as opposed to a second one.

- It was given to show that the people of God were under the kingdom authority of Rome. The fact that this census mandated people to travel long inconvenient distances must have grated against the Jewish spirit. It was a reminder that they were a people under bondage.
- It is given because it reflects the guiding providence of God. We see this in the following verses.

3. The Result of the Census.

And all were proceeding to register for the census, everyone to his own city (2:3).



As a result of the decree of Augustus in far off Rome, two Jewish people who live in the village of Nazareth will be forced to pack their belongings and travel seventy miles south to Bethlehem.

It seems that the Roman law dealing with the census dictated that anyone owning property in another city must present his tax statement in that city.

The Jewish law of Jubilee further stated that all property reverted back to the possession of the original owners on the 50th year of Jubilee. This meant that Joseph and Mary, while perhaps not presently in possession of land in Bethlehem, still retained legal ownership of the land of their ancestors in that town. They were both descendants of David and could trace their ancestry back to that monarch.

Thus, we see God moving the Emperor of Rome so that two people are forced to travel from Nazareth to Bethlehem so that, a baby will be born there. God's providence works to the end that a prophecy which had been given 500 years before might now be fulfilled.

> *But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you One will go forth for Me to be ruler in Israel. His goings forth are from long ago, from the days of eternity. (Micah 5:2).*

The Jews in the days of Augustus understood Micah's prophecy to be a promise of the coming Messiah. When Herod asks his court scribes where Messiah is to be born, they will refer to this same prophecy as they point to Bethlehem (Matthew 2:4-6).

The prophet had long since spoken. His promise was that the Messiah — the One who was "from the days of eternity" — would come from the small town of Bethlehem.

And so, at the appointed time, God moves the Emperor of Rome to institute a census which will affect the entire civilized world. The result is that a young Jewish girl will be in Bethlehem when she gives birth to her firstborn son.

Luke makes no mention of Micah's prophecy. It is not that Luke was unaware of the prophecy, but rather that he is writing to a Gentile official who would not be familiar with the Old Testament.

Luke tells of the move to Bethlehem to show how God moved this family to a place where there would be shepherds waiting to hear the message of the Messiah.

Let us never loose sight of this truth. God is in control. Romans 13 tells us that it is God who has appointed and established each ruler who comes to power. He is in control of the principalities and powers and the governing authorities of this world. He is in control of those "chance happenings" that come about in our 1ives.

This ought to be a great source of comfort. Suppose that your father was the king of the mightiest nation of this whole planet. Would you be worried over small issues like a job or your rent or your car? Of course not! Our Father is the King of Kings! He is above all authority and power. Therefore, we can relax and trust Him in every situation. He was in control on that first Christmas so long ago. He is still in control today.

MARY AND JOSEPH COME TO BETHLEHEM

> *And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the city of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family of David,*
> *4 in order to register, along with Mary, who was engaged to him, and was with child. (Luke 2:4-5).*

Luke's account passes over the reaction of Joseph to the news of Mary's pregnancy and his revelation of its true source. The reason for this is that the birth of Jesus in Luke's account is given from Mary's perspective, while Matthew relates the same events from Joseph's point of view.

Matthew's Account	Luke's Account
Joseph's perspective • Joseph's dilemma • Joseph's dreams directing his marriage and their escape from Herod the Great	Mary's perspective • Announcement to Mary • Mary's visit to Elizabeth • Mary's reaction to the events surrounding the birth of Jesus (Luke 2:19).
Genealogy traces through Joseph back to Abraham	Genealogy traces another line (Mary's?) back to Adam

Notice the differences between the two accounts. Luke tells of the miraculous events which surrounded the pregnancy of Mary's cousin Elizabeth. He relates Mary's visit to Elizabeth. He relates the details of the birth of Jesus. And finally, he points out Mary's reaction to the events surrounding the birth of her Son (Luke 2:19)

On the other hand, Matthew tells the story of the birth of Jesus from Joseph's point of view. We are told of Joseph's dilemma when he first received the news that his betrothed was with child. We read of his dream from God that the Child was from the Holy Spirit. And we read of the warnings given to him of Herod's assassination attempt on the Child and their subsequent flight to Egypt. Even the genealogies within the two separate accounts are different, Matthew relating the legal genealogy through Joseph and Luke giving the physical genealogy through Mary.

Our passage begins with Mary and Joseph leaving their home in Galilee amid traveling south. It was a long tiresome journey for one traveling on foot, and it must have been especially so for the young virgin who was

with child. I can imagine them on the last day of their trip as they pass through the bustling city of Jerusalem gazing in reverent awe at the towering Temple of God and then southward toward Bethlehem. Their route takes them through lush fields and grassy meadows dotted with grazing sheep. Finally, as the sun begins to set into the western hills, their goal comes into view.

Bethlehem. The small town perched atop a ridge six miles to the south of the city of Jerusalem. Although politically insignificant, it possessed a rich history.

- It was near this village that Jacob had buried Rachel, who was often thought of as the mother of the Jews (Genesis 35:19). It is only fitting that the Son of God should be born where the mother of the Jews had been laid to rest.
- It was here that Ruth met Boaz and married him after he had paid the redemption price of the kinsman redeemer. So it is right that the Redeemer of the world should also be born here.
- It was in Bethlehem that David was born who would go on to be the king of Israel. By the same token, the One who is to sit on the throne of David, the Messiah of Israel, will also be born here.

Bethlehem. The name is Hebrew for "House of Bread." In this town would be born the One who is the Bread of Life. He will be the One to nourish the spiritual hunger of the world.

As Mary and Joseph approach the village, walking through rich and fertile fields of grain for which the ancient town has been named, they feel a sense of relief. Their long journey is over. They have arrived at their destination. Now they can rest. But as they enter the village, they are confronted with disheartening news. There is no room in the inn. The village is filled to capacity. Not only because of the people who have come to register for the census, but also because of the officials in charge of the census-taking, there are no more vacancies in the inn.

Caves in the area of Bethlehem

Christmas hasn't changed in 2000 years. As they are today, so then the roads must have been packed with people. Why was the inn full? We do not know. Perhaps it was due to the extensive traveling for the census. In the midst of this, a

baby is about to be born. Finding no room in the local inn, Joseph finally locates a secluded spot for his laboring betrothed. Justin Martyr tells us that it was a stable within a cave on the outskirts of the village that the virgin brought forth her child. You can go to Bethlehem today and see the hills and the caves in the area, so Justin's report may well be correct. Only the animals of the field would have been present as the lamb of God was born.

THE BIRTH OF THE CHILD

> *And it came about that while they were there, the days were completed for her to give birth.*
>
> *And she gave birth to her firstborn son; and she wrapped Him in cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn. (Luke 2:6-7).*

Some have taken the reference to Mary having *wrapped Him in cloths* to speak of rags. But such a view is unnecessary. This same term is used in the Septuagint of Ezekiel 16:4 where the prophet speaks of the lowly birth of the nation of Israel: *"As for your birth, on the day you were born your navel cord was not cut, nor were you washed with water for cleansing; you were not rubbed with salt or even wrapped in cloths."* Notice that a normal birth is described as one in which the infant was rubbed with salt and wrapped in clothes. What Mary does for her child was considered the normative care of a loving parent.

No more humble surrounding can be imagined. Instead of a palace, the King of Kings was born in a stable in an out of the way village. Instead of royal robes of silk and velvet, he was wrapped in plain cloths. Instead of an ornate bed, the infant was laid in a manger, a feeding trough for animals.

No greater example of humility can be found than when God left the glory of His position to become a man. This was the greatest gift. He came to offer Himself for us. He came to pay the ransom price for our sins. Just as the Old Testament priest would take an innocent lamb and slaughter it on the alter for the sins of the nation of Israel, so Jesus came to offer Himself for the sins of the world.

He was born in another man's stable.
He was laid in another man's manger.
He would preach in another man's boat.
He would ride into Jerusalem on another man's colt.
He would eat His last supper in another man's upper room.

He would die on another man's cross to pay for other men's sins.
He would be buried in another man's tomb.
He is the ultimate substitute (Author unknown).

The prophet Isaiah had foreseen His coming and had described Him as the lamb of Israel. The specific likeness to a lamb was in the area of His humility and His gentleness as He went to His death, but we see a measure of that humility even here in His birth.

> *He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He did not open His mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that is silent before its shearers, so He did not open His mouth. (Isaiah 53:7).*

For thousands of years God's people had been coming to Him on the basis of a sacrificed lamb. Such a lamb was taken and killed as an illustration of the substitute that God would someday send to pay for the sins of the world.

There is another point to be made. It is in the fact that Mary and Joseph even attempted to stay in the inn. You only stay in an inn when you are a stranger in town. Otherwise you stay with friends or relatives. This was especially so in that culture. Mary and Joseph's ancestral home may have been Bethlehem, but times had changed and they were now strangers here. This is reminiscent of the words of Jeremiah.

> *Thou Hope of Israel,*
> *Its Savior in time of distress,*
> *Why are You like a stranger in the land*
> *Or like a traveler who has pitched his tent for the night? (Jeremiah 14:8).*

The context of that passage speaks of the Lord's displeasure at having become a stranger in the land of His chosen people. He came to His own, but His own did not receive Him. This brings us to the question — have you received Him? Or is He a stranger to you?

SUMMARY

This is the Christmas Story. It is only seven verses in length. But in these few short verses there are several lessons that we learn.

1. The Lesson of God's Continuing Work in the World.

These seven verses are very "secular" in their appearance. There is no mention of God or the Spirit. Instead we read of the mandate of a pagan emperor that sets things in motion and that has the effect of two common people leaving their home in one small, isolated, backwoods town and traveling to another small, isolated, backwoods town. From all outward appearances, it is Rome rather than the Lord who is in control of these events. It is only when we look at these events through the eyes of faith that we realize that God is at work behind the scenes in bringing His will to pass.

Here is the principle. When you pick up tomorrow's newspaper and see what is taking place in the world, what you see will be determined by what kind of eyes you use to read. If you read through secular eyes, then all you will see will be secular events. But if you learn to see through the eyes of faith, then you will see that God is at work in the world bringing forth His kingdom.

2. The Principle of Suffering.

The census brought about hardships on many people. Joseph and Mary were not the only ones who had to travel long distances. This was an inconvenient hardship. I am certain that many people prayed and asked, "Why, Lord?"

Here is the principle. It is that God's purposes in our suffering are not always apparent. There is often no visible reason as to why God would let a hardship happen. But we can take comfort in the fact that He promises to work all things for good to those who love Him and are called according to His purposes (Romans 8:28). And we can learn from Mary and Joseph that those secular detours that are sent into our life are often sent for our ultimate salvation.

3. The Principle of Proportion.

The entire birth of Christ is related to us in a mere seven verses. Matthew contains a few verses at the end of chapter one. Mark and John make no mention of His birth. At the same time, all four gospel accounts relate several chapters to the events of Christ's death. It is evident from this that the gospel writers believed that the most significant aspect of Jesus was His death, burial and resurrection.

Our secular culture tends to make more of the birth of Christ.

Why is this? It is because everyone loves a baby. A baby doesn't threaten. A baby doesn't convict you of your sins. A baby does not bring with him the stumbling block of the cross.

The baby in the manger is sweet and cuddly. He seems to be "controllable." The baby in the manger is a kind of "God in the box." He is a God whom we are comfortable to approach, to think about, and even to worship.

You need to know that the baby Jesus did not stay that way. He did not remain a baby. He was born to die and His death demands a response on your part. You cannot leave Him in the manger. You must see Him at the right hand of the Majesty on High. You must bow the knee before Him and confess that He is Lord.

ANGELS, SHEPHERDS, AND THE LAMB OF GOD

LUKE 2:8-18

> *"Return, O faithless sons," declares the LORD; "For I am a master to you, And I will take you one from a city and two from a family, And I will bring you to Zion."*
>
> *"Then I will give you shepherds after My own heart, who will feed you on knowledge and understanding." (Jeremiah 3:14-15).*

Silver starlight gleaming down from the velvet vault of heaven onto the rolling hills of Judea. The bare ghost of a breeze gently stirring the chilly night air. The occasional bleat of the sheep. Throw another log on the campfire. Its crackling flame casts long jumping shadows. Simple country shepherds gathered around the blaze in an effort to warm themselves as they keep their midnight vigil.

> *And in the same region there were some shepherds staying out in the fields, and keeping watch over their flock by night. (Luke 2:8).*

When we first read this, we are tempted to romanticize these shepherds. We think of pristine Christmas cards and church nativity scenes. But being a shepherd had a different connotation in that day. Shepherds were rather low on the social scale. Because they were out watching their sheep, they did not often make it to the various religious services. Because of the constant duty, they were not often invited to share a meal or to partake in social occasions. Being a shepherd in that day might have been similar to being a trucker today -- always on the go, irregular hours, constantly away from home.

Yet these are the ones to whom God chose to announce the birth of

His Son. Not the priests in the temple. Not the rabbis in the synagogues. Not the kings in their palaces or the emperor seated in Rome. The message was given to a group of sheep herders.

Can you imagine that fateful night? One of the shepherds breaks away from the hypnotic flickering of the campfire to check the sheep. Satisfied that his charges are safe, he lets his gaze sweep upward to the midnight sky and its vast array of stars. Perhaps he remembers the familiar words of the Psalmist as he ponders the glory and majesty of the God of creation who has wrought the cosmos with His fingertips.

Yes indeed, the heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament of the sky shows forth His handiwork. But on this night as these simple shepherds gaze into the heavenly expanse, they are about to experience that which is beyond their wildest dreams.

There is a beautiful significance in the fact that the first announcement after the birth of Jesus should be made to shepherds. It seems fitting that the arrival of the Lamb of God should first be made known to shepherds - and that shepherds should be the first to learn of the birth of the Great Shepherd.

Furthermore, it is possible that these shepherds were keeping the flocks which had been designated for the Temple sacrifices. The Mishnah (the oral collection of Jewish interpretations of the Scriptures) states that only the Temple flocks were to be kept within the land of Israel. All other sheep must be kept in the wilderness areas.

If this is true, then these shepherds take on an even deeper significance. The sheep which they are watching on this fateful night are destined to be sacrificed in the Jewish Temple. Each morning and each evening a sacrifice is offered. A lamb is taken and is killed to provide the forgiveness of sins. Day after day. Month after month. Year after year. For over a thousand years, this unending ceremony had taken place. And it was never enough. Today's sacrifice must again be repeated tomorrow. With an endless succession of tomorrows. Endless observances. Endless sacrifices.

There was a promise. It was a promise which had come down from the Hebrew prophets of One who would put an end to sin. One who would be like a Lamb led to slaughter. One who would have laid upon Himself the iniquities of all. On this night...

- These simple shepherds are going to see the beginnings of the fulfillment of that promise.
- Heaven will touch earth.
- God will draw near.

God had dealt with men in the past. In many times and in many ways He had spoken to the fathers through the prophets. But now He was going

to draw near in a new way. Now He would become a baby. A baby! The picture of helplessness. The Creator held in the rough hands of a humble carpenter. The Creator to be suckled at the breast of a young peasant girl.

There is something appealing about a baby. Everyone loves a baby. And so, when God desired to draw near to men, He came as a baby. God has drawn near and that has made all the difference in the world.

FEAR AND JOY

> *And an angel of the Lord suddenly stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them; and they were terribly frightened. (Luke 2:9).*

Can you picture the scene? The shepherds are gathered around their campfire, trying to warm themselves against the chilly night air. Suddenly there is a light. The shadows and blackness of the night give way to a sudden brilliance. Before them in the blazing light stands an awesome creature — an angel. The shepherds are terrified. In the penetrating light of the majestic spectacle, they suddenly realize what sinful and lowly beings they really are. And then the angel speaks.

> *And the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of a great joy which shall be for all the people; 11 for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord." (Luke 2:10-11).*

The angel begins by telling the shepherds not to be afraid. This is usually the first thing an angel says when speaking to a mortal man. In the angelic handbook under the chapter heading under "Bringing Messages to Humans" it says that the angels are to begin all conversations with the words "Don't be afraid."

Why is that? Because angels are different. And the presence of an angelic being forces me to recognize that there is an even more powerful God who sent that angel. And when I am confronted with the reality of the reflection of God's holiness in His messenger, my reaction is fear. But the good news is that I do not have to be afraid. I do not have to be afraid because the awesome messenger of God has brought a message of salvation.

When I am confronted with the wondrous holiness of God, the result

is fear. But when I hear the message that the holiness of God has drawn near in the form of a baby, then the result is joy. After all, no one was ever afraid of a baby. When God spoke through a burning bush, Moses was afraid. When God spoke from Sinai and the earth trembled and the mountain quaked and the people fell down and pleaded for an intercessor lest they die. When God spoke in dreams and in visions, men had reason to fear because He was mysterious and holy. But when God wanted to dispel all fear, He came as a baby. Because He has come as a baby, fear has been replaced by joy. Because He has come as a baby, we can come with confidence before the throne of God.

PROMISE AND FULFILLMENT

Because God has drawn near, the promise has been replaced by the fulfillment. The promise given in the Old Testament saw its fulfillment in the birth of Jesus. That is what the message of the angel was all about.

> *"For today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord." (Luke 2:11).*

Jesus was not born into a vacuum. His birth had been promised from the very beginning. At the dawning of human history, the promise had been given. As the crunch of the forbidden fruit echoed through the Garden of Eden, the prophecy was told that a Deliverer would come, one who would...

- Overturn the works of the Serpent
- Defeat death.
- Save men from their sins.

The shepherds understand this. When they are told that the identity of this newborn Savior is "Christ the Lord" they need no further explanation. Even though they are relatively ignorant and unlearned men, they have been taught from childhood that there is coming one who would be anointed by God -- a Messiah. They may even have been familiar with the prophecy from the book of Micah that the Messiah was to be born in nearby Bethlehem, the ancestral home of King David. But how are they to recognize the newborn King? Will he be found in a palace, perhaps clothed in rich purple silks and lying in a golden cradle? The shepherds need a sign.

DOUBT AND CERTAINTY

> *"And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in cloths, and lying in a manger." (Luke 2:12).*

Because God has drawn near, doubt is replaced by certainty. The birth of Christ was replete with signs which were designed to dispel any doubts. We see this, not only in the Gospel of Luke, but also in the parallel passage in Matthew.

- When Zacharias doubted, he received the sign of dumbness.
- As Elizabeth trusted, she received the sign of her own pregnancy.
- When Mary submitted, she received the sign of Elizabeth's pregnancy.
- As Joseph struggled, he received the sign of a dream from God (Matthew 1).

Now these shepherds are also given a sign. It is a twofold sign. First, they will find the Baby wrapped in cloths. The Chosen King and Savior will be found, not in rich purple silks, but wrapped in simple and common cloth devoid of any great worth or significance. [1]

The second sign is that the Baby will be found lying in a manger. These shepherds may not know a lot about babies, but they know all about mangers. A manger is a tool of their trade. The last place that they would ever think to look for a newborn baby, much less a newborn King, is in a manger. I don't think they could have been more surprised than if you had been told to look for the Messiah in a dumpster. A feeding trough for animals. No more humble surroundings could be imagined. Majesty in the midst of the mundane. Holiness entering the world...

- On the dirty floor of a stable.
- Through the womb of a teenager.
- In the presence of a poor carpenter.

The world today is looking for a sign. Astrology is at an all-time high. Religious charlatans abound. Hucksters can even be found in the House of God. Although God sometimes works through the dramatic -- the

[1] There is a popular urban legend that suggests the Greek term for these cloths makes reference to burial wrappings. There is no justification to such an idea and the same Greek word (σπαργανοω) and its related cognates are used in the Septuagint of Job 38:9, Wisdom 7:4 and Ezekiel 16:4 to speak of the wrappings of a baby.

pillar of fire, the parting of the sea, the making of the sun to stand still -- more often than not, His signs are like the one which is seen here. A baby in a manger. You can miss it if you are not careful. There were a lot of people in and around Bethlehem who did not see the sign. It is not that they weren't looking for Messiah. They were. They were looking for a great and mighty prophet like unto Moses. They were looking for a great high priest who could make the final sacrifice on their behalf. They were looking for a conquering King on a white charger. A prophet. A priest. A King. Jesus was all of that. But because He came in the midst of humility, people didn't recognize Him when He came.

You can still miss Him if you are not careful. What have you been going through lately? Think of your most difficult situation. Did you see Christ in that? Did you see Him in the mundane and in the murkiness of your difficulty? He is there. When you realize that He is, then your doubt will turn to certainty, too.

THE PROCLAMATION

Before the birth of Christ, heaven had been silent and it had been silent for a very long time. The prophets had received no word from the Lord for 400 years. But because God has drawn near, silence has been replaced by the sharing of a proclamation. There are two proclamations which are recorded within this passage.

1. An Angelic Proclamation.

> *And suddenly there appeared with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men with whom He is pleased." (Luke 2:13-14).*

As though the heavens were unable to contain the excitement of this glorious moment, the entire sky breaks forth and is filled with a manifestation of heavenly bodies praising and proclaiming the salvation of God.

By the way, I want you to notice what the passage does not say. It does not say that the angelic army came down from heaven. Rather, it says they appeared. This indicates that they were already there, but could not be seen by the shepherds.

There are spiritual forces which surround us all the time. The Scriptures tell us that we are in the midst of a spiritual war. But most people aren't even aware that there is a war going on. We need discernment if we are to be aware of the spiritual reality around us.

Do you realize that right now there are all sorts of sounds and colors moving around you that you are unable to see and hear? And you will never be able to see or hear them... until you turn on a television and suddenly these sounds and colors which are traveling over the airwaves are revealed to you. By the same token, it is not until you take the Bible and read it and "plug" into its truths that the spiritual world is ever revealed to you.

This is important. We are people of a proclamation. We have a message to proclaim. It is the gospel. But this message did not originate with mankind. It is not merely a human philosophy. It is a proclamation from heaven. And because it came from heaven, we can believe it. And if we believe it, we ought to also proclaim it. This is what the shepherds did.

2. The Proclamation of the Shepherds.

The shepherds heard the message and they acted on it. They made their way to Bethlehem and came to find Mary and Joseph and the Child.

> *And it came about when the angels had gone away from them into heaven, that the shepherds began saying to one another, "Let us go straight to Bethlehem then, and see this thing that has happened which the Lord has made known to us."*
>
> *And they came in haste and found their way to Mary and Joseph, and the baby as He lay in the manger. (Luke 2:15-16).*

Can you imagine them running through the town, knocking on doors and waking everyone up while trying to search each barn and manger in the village? At last, they come to the place where Joseph and Mary and the Child are staying. There they are! And there is the Child, just as the angel promised.

What now? There is a "what now." The confirmation of the message produces a reaction on their part. The reaction is that they begin to proclaim the news. No one had to tell them that they ought to witness. They didn't enroll in Evangelism Explosion. They didn't

memorize the Four Spiritual Laws (they already knew about the Ten). What they did do is to tell everyone who would listen about what they had heard and seen.

> *And when they had seen this, they made known the statement which had been told them about this Child.*
>
> *And all who heard it wondered at the things which were told them by the shepherds. (Luke 2:17-18).*

Their reaction was spontaneous. They would have found it difficult not to spread the news. You see, true faith always brings about action. It is as simple as the law of physics which states that every action produces a corresponding reaction. This has been called a law of nature, but it is really a law of God who created nature. As God's law is true in the physical realm, so it is also true in the spiritual realm. Faith always brings about a corresponding reaction.

How about you? I know that you have the ability to witness. If you have come to faith in Jesus Christ, then you have the ability to tell others of the One in whom you have believed. But have you come to the point where it is a spontaneous reaction? If you have not, then I am not going to try to lay a guilt trip on you or to tell you that you need to share the gospel with 5 people this week. What I am going to do and what I have been doing this morning is helping you to see the wonder of it all. Once you see the beauty of God's gift, you will not be able to do any less than those shepherds did. You will not be able to hold still without telling someone else of that same beauty.

A few years ago I got a telephone call from Paula. She said to me, "John, stop what you are doing and go outside and look at the sunset." I did it and I have to admit that it was spectacular. What was it that motivated her to call me? Was it that she felt a wifely duty to make such a call? No. It was because she had seen a picture of great beauty and she had to share it with someone. I am sure you have had a similar experience. When you come to see the beauty of Jesus, you will not be able to refrain from sharing that beauty with others.

THE PRESENTATION IN THE TEMPLE
LUKE 2:21-40

> *He says, "Is it too small a thing that you should be My Servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved ones of Israel; I will also make You a light of the nations so that My salvation may reach to the end of the earth." (Isaiah 49:6).*

We normally think of the Christmas Story as the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem and the coming of the shepherd and the wise men. But there were other events that took place during these early days. The following chronological chart might be helpful in seeing the flow of events:

Day 0:	Jesus is born in Bethlehem; the shepherds are told and they come to see
Day 8:	Jesus is circumcised
Day 40:	Jesus is brought to the temple in Jerusalem and presented to the Lord
Day 41+:	The Wise Men come to worship Jesus; Joseph and his family flee to Egypt but later return to Nazareth.

In the days in which Jesus was born, there were four legal ordinances which were required by every Jewish parent that had given birth to a firstborn son. It is within the setting of these ordinances that our story will take place. The first of these ordinances was the rite of circumcision. This took place eight days after the birth of the son.

THE CIRCUMCISION OF JESUS

> *And when the eight days were completed before His circumcision, His name was then called Jesus, the name*

given by the angel before He was conceived in the womb. (Luke 2:21).

This is the second circumcision recorded in Luke. The first was the circumcision of John the Baptist (Luke 1:59). Why is it so significant that Jesus was circumcised? It is because this rite identified Him with the Abrahamic Covenant — the promise that God had made to Abraham concerning an eternal kingdom.

Circumcision was the sign of the Abrahamic Covenant (Genesis 17:9-14). It marked Jesus as a member of that covenant community. It was a personal covenant. It was made between God and the family of Abraham. Outsiders were excluded.

Because this was a personal covenant, the sign of the covenant was also of a personal nature. It was carried upon the body of each Jewish man. It was not the sort of sign you displayed publicly to others. It was very private.

His name was then called Jesus (2:21). Just as Abraham and Sarah had received new names at the time circumcision was first instituted, so the Jews always waited until the day of circumcision to name their male children.

COMING TO THE TEMPLE

And when the days for their purification according to the law of Moses were completed, they brought Him up to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord 23 (as it is written in the Law of the Lord, "Every first-born male that opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord"), 24 and to offer a sacrifice according to what was said in the Law of the Lord, "A pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons. (Luke 2:22-24).

Now we come to the other three ordinances which were required after the birth of a firstborn son. While the first would take place privately, these other three ordinances would take place in the temple in Jerusalem.

1. The Ordinance of Purification: *When the days for their purification according to the law of Moses were completed (2:22).*

   This ceremony of purification goes all the way back to the Old Testament. It was given by God to the Jews as a part of the Mosaic Law. It is found in Leviticus 12.

> *Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, 2 "Speak to the sons of Israel, saying, When a woman gives birth and bears a male child, then she shall be unclean for seven days, as in the days of her menstruation she shall be unclean.*
>
> *"And on the eighth day the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised.*
>
> *"Then she shall remain in the blood of her purification for thirty-three days; she shall not touch any consecrated thing, nor enter the sanctuary, until the days of her purification are completed." (Leviticus 12:1-4).*

According to the Mosaic Law, the mother of a child was considered to he unclean. Why is this? I'm not sure. Perhaps it was to serve as a reminder that she had just given birth to a sinful, fallen creature. Thus, in the case of the birth of a son, the mother was banned from performing any religious duties for a period of 41 days (8 days prior to the circumcision plus 33 days following the circumcision).

2. The Sin Offering.

> *And when the days of her purification are completed, for a son or a daughter, she shall bring to the priest at the doorway of the tent of meeting, a one year old lamb for a burnt offering, and a young pigeon or a turtledove for a sin offering.*
>
> *Then he shall offer it before the Lord and make atonement for her; and she shall be cleansed from the flow of her blood. This is the law for her who bears a child, whether male or female.*
>
> *But if she cannot afford a lamb, then she shall take two turtledoves or two young pigeons, the one for a burnt offering; and the other for a sin offering; and the priest shall make atonement for her, and she shall be clean. (Leviticus 12: 6-8).*

After the 41 days had elapsed, then it was necessary for the mother to go to the temple and offer up a sin offering and a burnt offering for an atonement;. Why were these offerings so important? They were to teach that one must deal with sin. Any uncleanliness

demanded separation from God. The only way that fellowship with God could be restored was through the death of an innocent substitute.

This sacrificial system was really an illustration of what Jesus would do for us on the cross. He became our sacrifice for sin. He substituted Himself on the cross on our behalf. He died instead of us.

3. Presentation to the Lord: *They brought Him up to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord (2:22).*

This was the third ordinance that was commanded in the Law for the birth of a firstborn son. This ordinance dated all the way back to the time of the Exodus. It was the command of God to Moses.

> *Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, 2 "Sanctify to Me every firstborn, the first offspring of every womb among the sons of Israel, both man and beast; it belongs to Me." (Exodus 13:1-2).*

In the days when God had brought judgment down upon Egypt, the greatest plague had been the death of the firstborn. God had killed the firstborn of every man and animal in the entire land of Egypt. The only way to escape had been to slaughter an innocent lamb and to smear its blood upon the doorposts of the house.

When the angel of the Lord came to a house with blood on the doorposts, the firstborn within that house was reckoned to have already been dead. On this basis, the angel passed over that house. Because of this, God states that each of the firstborn of Israel are His: They are reckoned to have forfeited their lives. Therefore, they must be bought back. They must be ransomed. They must be redeemed.

> *Now it shall come about when the Lord brings you to the land of the Canaanite, as He swore to you and to your fathers, and gives it to you, 12 that you shall devote to the Lord the first offspring of every womb, and the first offspring of every beast that you own; the males belong to the Lord.*
>
> *But every first offspring of a donkey you shall redeem with a lamb, but if you do not redeem it,, then you shall break its neck; for every first-born of man among your sons you shall redeem." (Exodus 13:11-13).*

The male firstborn of every man or animal belonged to the Lord. If they were to be allowed to live, then their lives must be purchased from the Lord. This was also an illustration of what Jesus would do on the cross. He would redeem us who were dead in sin in order that we might have His righteousness reckoned to our behalf. The purchase price would be His own blood. A life would be paid for a life.

The Child has been born in Bethlehem. Joseph and Mary decide to wait in Bethlehem and reside there for the next month until that can make the trip to the temple for the purification and presentation ceremonies. On the eighth day, the child is circumcised and named Jesus. The next four weeks pass swiftly for the small family. They are no longer in a stable, having found suitable, yet humble lodgings.

Finally, it is the appointed day. Mary and Joseph and the Child rise up early in the morning. They do not pack all of their belongings, for they will be returning to Bethlehem in the evening. Then they set off for Jerusalem, five miles to the north.

Jerusalem. This is the religious center of their world. It is the city of God. Today they bypass the crowded marketplace where merchants are selling their wares. Today they are going to the temple. It stands on the eastern edge of the city, atop a sharp ridge which gives a commanding view over the rest of the city. There is hardly a place in all Jerusalem where you cannot look up and see the temple.

Mary and Joseph climb the broad stairway and enter through the Huldah Gate into the vast Court of the Gentiles. Carrying the infant Child, they come to a stone wall on which is written a solemn warning in Greek and Latin forbidding all Gentiles from passing any further. They pass through the narrow gate and climb the 14 steps up to the Gate Beautiful. Moving through this gate, they find themselves in the Court of the Women.

Court of the Women in the foreground with the 15 steps leading up to the Nicanor Gates and the Temple beyond.

Mary places money into one of the offering chests. It is the

price of a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons. This is the poor man's offering. This is for the purification ceremony. Now she climbs the 15 steps up to the majestic Nicanor Gate and stands at the threshold. She is permitted to go no further. But from here, she can see into the Court of the Priests and the temple itself. One of the officiating priests comes to her, sprinkling her with the sacrificial blood and declaring her to be cleansed. She will now offer up her infant Child, and then pay the ransom price to receive the Child back again. As she is about to offer up the Child, she is interrupted. It is an old man.

THE PROMISE TO SIMEON

> *And behold, there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; and this man was righteous and devout, looking for the consolation of Israel; and the Holy Spirit was upon him.*
>
> *And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. (Luke 2:25-26).*

Although the Levitical ceremony in the temple is the setting for this narrative, our focus is not brought to its details, but rather to the two people who interrupted that ceremony. God did not use the officiating priest, but rather a couple of people who were "in the church pew" to deliver his message.

This man was named Simeon. It was an Old Testament name. It was a name of one of the sons of Jacob. The original Simeon had been an answer to Leah's prayer. She had prayed that she would have a son and the Lord had answered her prayer. Therefore, she had named her son "Simeon" (hearing) because God had heard her prayer.

Here is a man with the same name. We know very little about him. But we do know that God had answered his prayers. He was looking for the "consolation of Israel." The reference to a "consolation" implies the presence of a problem. You look for consolation where there is a problem over which you need to be consoled.

When a child comes to his mother for consolation, her first words are to ask, "What is wrong?" A child comes for consolation because he has skinned his knee or broken a toy or because something wrong has taken place and he is seeking to have someone make it right. Simeon had a sense that all was not right in the world and that all was not right with Israel. There was a need of consolation. It was a need that could only be fulfilled by the

promised Messiah. Simeon was looking for the Messiah and God had answered his prayer with a promise.

> *It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. (Luke 2: 26).*

Here was a man who could not die until the appointed time. He would not die until he had seen the Messiah. Does this surprise you? Do you wish that you had a similar promise from God? Well, I have good news for you. You have one.

> *See now that I, I am He, and there is no god besides Me; it is I who put to death and give life. I have wounded, and it is I who heal; and there is no one who can deliver from My hand. (Deuteronomy 32:39).*

This is more than just a promise to the nation of Israel. This is a description of the character of God. God's character has not changed. He still puts to death and gives life. There is a principle here. It is that you will not die until God's plan in your life has been completed, and that when it is completed, you will not live a moment longer (I Samuel 2:6).

However, the promise given to Simeon was more specific. He was told that he would not die until he had seen the Lord's Christ. The word "Christ" is a Greek word. It literally means "the anointed one." It is the term which is translated in Hebrew as "Messiah.

THE SONG OF SIMEON

> *And he came in the Spirit into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to carry out for Him the custom of the Law, 28 then he took Him into his arms, and blessed God, and said,*
>
> > *"Now Lord, Thou dost let Thy bond-servant depart in peace, according to Thy word;*
> > *For my eyes have seen Thy salvation,*
> > *Which Thou hast prepared in the presence of all peoples,*
> > *A light of revelation to the Gentiles,*
> > *And the glory of Thy people Israel ." (Luke 2:27-32).*

The Spirit moves Simeon into the temple in Jerusalem at the very moment that Mary and Joseph and the Child are there. Immediately, Simeon recognizes the Child for who He really is. Here is a man with spiritual perception. None of the temple priests recognize this Child as the Messiah. No rabbi has stopped to determine that this Child is the Holy One of God. None of the other worshipers have paused to discover the true identity of this Child. But this one old man saw the Child and recognized Him for who He was — God's Anointed One.

1. A Warm Embrace: *He took Him into his arms (2:28).*

   Can you imagine how Simeon felt to hold the Messiah in his arms? This little baby was the promised Redeemer! Upon this tiny infant hinged the salvation of the world! It is no wonder that. Simeon breaks into song and praises the Lord.

2. A Contented Entreaty: *"Now Lord, Thou dost let Thy bond-servant depart in peace" (2:29).*

   These are striking words. We normally take them to be spoken by an old man at the end of his life. But the passage does not actually tell us that Simeon was an old man. It only tells us that it had been revealed to him that he would not die until he had seen the Lord's salvation. And now that had happened. This little baby is the embodiment of God's salvation of men.

   Simeon is really saying, "Okay, lord, I'm ready to die." Here was a man who had lived his life looking to the day when he could see the Messiah. In his mind, nothing greater could ever happen in his life. This is the climax of his life. Nothing else can ever compare to this one moment. No matter what else takes place, it will be anticlimactic for him.

3. A Divine Endorsement.

   The words of Simon force us to take another look to see exactly who this baby really is. It is interesting to note that every time we see Jesus in the role of His humanity, we also see the glory of His divinity shining forth.

   - When He was born to a humble peasant girl of Nazareth, an angel pronounced His birth.
   - When His first crib was a manger, an army of angels from

heaven announced it with praises to the Lord.

- When He submits to the baptism of John, a voice from heaven proclaims His sonship.
- When He hungers and is tested in the wilderness, then angels will come and minister to Him.
- When enemies threaten Him and try to kill Him, He will be able to pass through their midst unharmed.
- When He travails in the Garden of Gethsemane, angels will come to minister to Him.
- When He is nailed to a cross, the sun will become black and the earth will quake.
- When He is laid in a tomb, angels will herald His rising.

So it is here in the temple. Mary and Joseph make the "poor man's" offering in the temple. It seems just another insignificant child of the Jews. And yet, the Holy Spirit brings this man to the temple to bear witness that this Child is the Messiah.

THE PROPHECY OF SIMEON

And His father and mother were amazed at the things which were being said about Him.

And Simeon blessed them, and said to Mary His mother, "Behold, this Child is appointed for the fall and rise of many in Israel, and for a sign to be opposed 34 *and a sword will pierce even your own soul — to the end that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed." (Luke 2:33-35).*

Simeon now turns from singing His praise to the Lord to speak to Mary and Joseph. He has been blessing the Lord. Now he blesses them. And he gives a special word of prophecy to Mary.

1. A Destined Appointment: *"This Child is appointed for the fall and rise of many in Israel" (2:34).*

Depending on whether the Jews accepted or rejected Jesus as their Messiah and King, they would decide their future destiny. Those who rejected Jesus as their King would fall. One of the greatest

Jesus is also the determining factor in your fall and your rise. Whether you rise or fall depends entirely upon what you do with Him.

examples of this fall would be in 70 A.D. when the Roman general Titus would sack Jerusalem and carry off its inhabitants into slavery. On the other hand, those Jews who accepted Jesus as their King will find themselves as heirs of the kingdom.

2. A Distressful Adversity: *"And a sword will pierce even your own soul" (2:35).*

To whom is Simeon speaking? He is speaking to Mary. Something will happen that will bring her inner pain. It will strike deep. It will be a sorrow so sharp that it will be as though a sword has cut through her. Mary is going to witness the death of Her Son. She is going to see Him rejected, tried, mocked, beaten, and crucified like some common criminal.

THE WITNESS OF ANNA

> *And there was a prophetess, Anna the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was advanced in years, having lived with a husband seven years after her marriage,*
> *37* *and then as a widow to the age of eighty-four. And she never left the temple, serving night and day with fastings and prayers.*
>
> *And at that very moment she came up and began giving thanks to God, and continued to speak of Him to all those who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem. (Luke 2: 36-38).*

This woman's name was Anna. It is a Hebrew name. The Hebrew form of this name, Hanniah, was the name of the mother of Samuel the prophet. This woman in our passage had been a widow for many years. She is now 84 years old. Now I want to ask you a question. Does God use women in the ministry? Absolutely. This woman had a wonderful ministry.

- She was a prophetess.
- She fasted regularly.
- She was constantly in prayer.

The realm of her ministry was within the temple. The temple, with its symbolic testimonies to the promised Messiah, was something on which

Anna had spent many hours meditating. Thus when the Messiah-Child actually appeared in the temple, she was quick to recognize Him.

1. A Thankful Recital: *She came up and began giving thanks to God, and. continued to speak of Him (2:38).* The direction of Anna's reaction was twofold.

    - She gave thanks to God.
    - She witnessed to man.

    Notice which came first. Her relationship with the Lord preceded her testimony before men. We tend to do it backwards. We start talking and witnessing and planning and doing, and then we take it all to God and ask Him to rubber-stamp it. We need to talk to the Lord about men before we talk to men about the Lord.

2. A Message of Redemption: *She... continued to speak of Him to all those who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem (2:38).*

    There were many Jews who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem. Simeon had been such a man — we saw that he was looking for the "consolation of Israel" (Luke 2:25). Zacharias had praised God for accomplishing redemption for His people (Luke 1:68). Now we see that there were many who were looking for the "redemption of Jerusalem."

    Do you see what is happening? God is already preparing people for the ministries of John the Baptist and Jesus. It will be thirty years before their ministries actually begin, but God is already at work preparing people's hearts.

    There is a principle here. It is that God prepares the way. Maybe you are going through hard times. Maybe you are facing a dry period in your life. Maybe you are journeying through the valley of the shadow of death. I have a message for you. It is a message of comfort and encouragement. God has prepared a way. You may not be able to see it. Your situation may look hopelessly tangled. But God has prepared a way.

Simeon and Anna were both looking for something. It is described in two different ways, but I think it was really two sides of the same coin. They were both looking for the One who would bring salvation to the people of God.

Simeon	Anna
He was *looking for the consolation of Israel*	She represents *all those who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem*
Consolation speaks of the healing of a hurt.	Redemption suggests the bringing of freedom from that which binds.

Does one of these describe you? Is there a hurt in your life from which you need to be healed? Is there a bondage in your life from which you need release? The coming of Jesus provides the answer to both. You can come to Him today and find both healing and freedom for your soul.

RETURN TO NAZARETH

> *And when they had performed everything according to the Law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own city of Nazareth.*
>
> *And the Child continued to grow and become strong, increasing in wisdom; and the grace of God was upon Him. (Luke 2:39-40).*

Notice that Luke does not say that after they had performed everything according to the Law, they returned immediately to Galilee. He omits the story of the Magi and the flight of the family to Egypt. It is only after those events that the family would eventually return to Nazareth.

The question naturally arises — why did Luke leave this story out of his account? We cannot know for certain. But perhaps it is because it was not crucial to Luke's theme. Luke does not dwell on any of the ministry of Jesus that took place outside of Palestine. He does not mention the ministry in Decapolis or Samaria or Phoenicia. Although he records the events which took place in Caesarea, he does not mention it by name.

You see, Luke will describe the progress of the ministry of the gospel in those other countries when he writes the book of Acts. At that time he will deal with the gospel going from Jerusalem to Judea and then to Samaria and to the uttermost parts of the earth. But for now his focus is upon the Lord's covenant community who live in the land of Israel. This is because, by design, the gospel came first to the Jews.

LESSONS OF APPLICATION

1. This passage is a reminder of what is really important in life. Simeon's words underline the point that there is nothing more important than in seeing and experiencing the salvation of God.

2. God works, not just through priests and preachers, but often through the folks who merely sit in the pew. We get no sense that Simeon was in full-time Christ service. But he was available for the Lord.

3. These two people saw what God had provided because they were looking. The Lord tells us that it is those who seek who shall find (Matthew 7:7). Are you looking for the Lord's plan in your life? Do you see His hand in the circumstances in which you find yourself?

4. How eager are you to see the Lord face to face? Is this your abiding passion? It was for Simeon. And you are given such a promise that one day you will also see your Lord (1 John 3:1-2).

THE PASSOVER INCIDENT
LUKE 2:41-52

Did you ever stop to wonder what it would be like to be the parents of Jesus? To teach carpentry to the One who had fashioned the universe? To instruct in the Law the One who had written and who embodied the Law? How was He accepted by the other children of the village? Did the little girl who lived down the road have a crush on Him?

I do not know. The Bible tells us nothing of the life of Jesus from the time of His infancy to the beginning of His public ministry at the age of thirty. There is only one exception. It comes from the pen of Luke. It took place at the time of the Passover.

A PASSOVER PILGRIMAGE

> *And the Child continued to grow and become strong, increasing in wisdom; and the grace of God was upon Him.*
>
> *And His parents used to go to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of the Passover.*
>
> *And when He became twelve, they went up there according to the custom of the Feast (Luke 2:40-42).*

At the age of 12 or 13, a Jewish boy would receive his "Bar Mitzvah" and so become a "Son of the Commandment." As such, he was now required to keep the Law of Moses as a legal and responsible adult. This included the responsibility of attending the Passover in Jerusalem.

This seems to have been the case with Jesus. Each year, He had stayed behind in Nazareth as His parents made the pilgrimage to Jerusalem. For the first time, He was going with them to Jerusalem to keep the Passover.

On an appointed day, the little family packs some food and blankets and joins a caravan made up of other Galilean families. It is an 80-mile journey from the hill country of Galilee. Their route takes them down along the meandering bank of the Jordan River.

After several days, they arrive at the ancient city of Jericho. From here, they take the western road up into the hills of Judea. On this last leg of their journey, they begin to sing the "Songs of Ascents" — the ancient songs of worship found in Psalms 120-134. Finally at the end of the day, they stand on the peak of the Mount of Olives and look down upon their final destination, Jerusalem and the Temple. The flaming sun sinking into the west seems only to frame the magnificence of the Temple as it shines like a great gem dropped from the heavens. This is the house of the Lord. His people have come to worship Him.

In the days that follow, the family prepares for the Feast of the Passover. A lamb is purchased and brought before the priest in the Temple. He examines it to make certain that it has no spot or blemish. It is then taken to the great altar that stands before the Temple and it is killed along with thousands of others like it, their blood flowing freely on the pavement of the Temple steps. The lifeless lamb is then taken and prepared for a meal. As evening falls in Jerusalem, the family sits and partakes of the Passover Meal.

All too soon, the day comes when it is time to leave. Joseph and Mary gather with their friends and relatives who are making the homeward trip back to Galilee. Farewells are given and returned. Finally, the travelers make their way out of crowded Jerusalem and set their path for home. The day passes in happy memories. By nightfall, the caravan has reached Jericho. Each family gathers together for the evening meal. All but one.

A PANICKED LOSS

> *And as they were returning, after spending the full number of days, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem. And His parents were unaware of it, 44 but supposed Him to be in the caravan, and went a day's journey; and they began looking for Him among their relatives and acquaintances. (Luke 2:43-44).*

It is only now that Mary and Joseph discover that young Jesus is missing. Up to this point, they had assumed that He was in the caravan, accompanied by either friends or family. I can imagine their growing panic as they realize that He has been left behind. There is nothing more to be done but to turn their steps once more back to Jerusalem.

Left behind. It is bad enough for a child, but the sense of panic is much worse for the parent. There is a sense of self-recrimination. And to have lost a child in a major metropolis and in the midst of all of the traveling that was going on at this time of year made it all the worse.

Paula and I were in a store once when Sky was only a few years old. Paula was looking at something on a shelf and turned around and Sky was gone. She had merely wandered to another section of the store. I can still recall the panic in her voice at the thought that she had lost her daughter.

A POSTPONED REUNION

> *And when they did not find Him, they returned to Jerusalem, looking for Him.*
>
> *And it came about that after three days they found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them, and asking them questions.*
>
> *And all who heard Him were amazed at His understanding and His answers. (Luke 2:45-47).*

Jesus has already been missing for a day when Mary and Joseph discover that He is not with their caravan. It takes a second day to return to Jerusalem. A third day is taken in searching through the city. Three days. The number seems to hold a special significance within the Scriptures.

- It took three days for Abraham and Isaac to travel to the mountain where Abraham was to sacrifice his son (Genesis 22:4).
- Jonah was in the belly of the great fish for three days (Jonah 1:17).
- Jesus promised that He would rise from the dead after three days (Matthew 27:63).

For three days, the Christ Child is lost to Mary and Joseph. Certainly they fear the worst. Maybe He has been taken and sold into slavery. Or perhaps He has been beaten or killed. They look through the bazaars. They question the inn keepers. And finally, they return to the Temple.

As they enter the Court of the Gentiles, they notice a large crowd that has gathered among the colonnades. Making their way through the throng, they push forward to inquire whether anyone has seen their Son. And there, surrounded by the most notable scribes and rabbis of Israel, sits Jesus. He is not a teacher, but a learner. After all, His is only a young child. But as a learner, He is asking questions of these rabbis. And such grown-up

questions! They reflect an understanding that is quite extraordinary. They are impressed by this young child prodigy who seems to have an amazing grasp of spiritual matters.

Mary and Joseph are astonished. Their son has been missing for three days and they have feared the worst. And now to find Him calmly sitting here in the temple, seemingly uncaring of the panic that He has caused. The emotions which rush through both of them are indicated in Mary's question.

A PROVOKED OUTBURST

> *And when they saw Him, they were astonished; and His mother said to Him, "Son, why have you treated us this way? Behold, your Father and I have been anxiously looking for You." (Luke 2:48).*

Can you hear the overflowing emotions of this outburst? There is such a rushing relief that it gives way to this sharp retort. Her words tell us that she has taken Jesus' absence as a thoughtless action on His part. "How could you treat us this way?" Her reaction is understandable. Any parent would have done the same. I can almost hear Joseph saying, "You're grounded for the rest of your life, young man."

Mary says literally, "Your father and I have been *tormented* in looking for you." The root word ὀδυναω (*odunao*) is the same that is used in Luke 16:24-25 to describe the torment the rich man experienced in hell.

This brings up an interesting question. The words of Mary to Jesus clearly imply an assumption of His wrong-doing. They contain an obvious rebuke. Was Jesus wrong in His actions? Does this constitute a sinful action on His part? It would if He had been any other 12 year-old. But He was not. And because He was not, He had to be obedient to a higher authority.

In the heat of the moment, Mary and Joseph had made the mistake of forgetting just who Jesus really was. After all, He didn't walk around with a halo on His head all the time. He seemed to them to be just an average boy. True, he was bright and exceptionally well-behaved. They probably attributed that to their own good parenting skills, although I wonder if such thoughts may have been challenged by his younger brothers.

There is a repetition of amazement in this passage. Those who heard Jesus in the temple were amazed at His knowledge and His parents were amazed at the whole scenario.

Perhaps they had forgotten His true heritage and now he gently reminds them.

A PARENTAL APPEAL

> *And He said to them, "Why is it that you were looking for Me? Did you not know that I had to be in My Father's house?" (Luke 2:49).*

These are the first recorded words of Jesus. They are words which indicate His unique mission in life. There are two aspects that we should note from His statement.

1. The Uniqueness of His Heritage: *"Did you not know that I had to be in MY FATHER'S house?"*

Jesus had an awareness of his true heritage. This awareness did not come fully formed. When the shepherds came to see Him, He did not say, "Hello guys, I see that the angels gave you the announcement concerning my birth." He did not thank the magi for the gold, frankincense and myrrh. But as He grew and developed, there also grew within Him a gradual understanding of who He really was — the Son of God.

Scholars have wrestled with this narrative and have come up with a number of suggestions.

- Jesus was wrong in his actions. To this we must point out that the Scriptures affirm that He was without sin.
- Jesus was merely an "absent-minded Messiah."
- The parents of Jesus were negligent.

The answer of Jesus teaches us that Jesus was right and deliberate in His actions because He was acting in obedience to His Heavenly Father.

It is perhaps especially significant that Jesus said these words at this time of his life. We know that it was customary for a boy his age to take his place in the world. This would involve him taking an apprenticeship, usually learning the trade of his father. In the case of Jesus, it would be assumed that he would take up the trade of being a carpenter and, indeed, He seems to have done so. Yet there was still the truth that He had come to do the work of His heavenly Father.

Mary had come on the scene saying, Your **father** and I were tormented as we looked for you." And Jesus replied, "I had to be about the work of **My Father**."

2. The Necessity that was laid upon Him: *"I HAD to be in My Father's House."*

This is only the first of a long line of events in which Jesus will have to do certain things and go certain places.

> *"I MUST preach the kingdom of God" (Luke 4:43).*
> *"Zaccheus... I MUST stay at your house" (Luke 19:5).*
> *"And He HAD to pass through Samaria" (John 4:4).*
> *"Jesus Christ began to show His disciples that He MUST go to Jerusalem, and suffer..." (Matthew 16:21).*
> *"The Son of Man MUST be delivered up into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again" (Luke 24:7).*
> *"He MUST rise again from the dead" (John 20:9).*

Do you see the implications of this? The entire life of Jesus from His birth to His death and resurrection was foreordained. He was born to die. The Child King was destined for a cross. He was the Son of God, but He came to be a Suffering Servant. The Lion of the tribe of Judah came to be the sacrificial lamb that was to be slain. And even as He stood here in the Temple at the age of 12, He knew of this mission. It was why He had been born. It was His destiny.

A PASSIVE OBEDIENCE

> *And they did not understand the statement which He had made to them.*
> *And He went down with them, and came to Nazareth; and He continued in subjection to them. (Luke 2:50-51a).*

Even though Jesus realized that He was the Son of God, He did not use this realization to circumvent the authority of His parents. He continued in subjection to them. This obedience was not conditional. He did not say, "I'll go back to Nazareth with you as soon as you come to understand the

doctrine that I have been teaching." Instead, He responds in complete subjection to their authority.

Just think, the God of the universe became obedient. When His parents sent Him to bed, He did not argue. He took out the garbage without being told eighteen times. He had a bedtime and observed it accordingly. And one day, He would be obedient to the point of death - even the death of the cross.

This is the last time that Joseph is mentioned in Luke's narrative. He seems to have disappeared from the scene by the time Jesus enters public ministry. We can only surmise that he had died at sometime during the interim.

The point that we must see here is that Jesus had been obedient, not only in returning with His parents to Nazareth, but in remaining behind in Jerusalem in the first place. He had been obedient to the calling and the direction and the business of His Heavenly Father.

We are called to the same kind of obedience. We are called to be in subjection to the governing authorities. For some this might mean parental authority. For wives this means the authority of a husband. For students this means the authority of a teacher. For employees this means the authority of an employer. For citizens this means the authority of their government. We are all under some type of authority.

But there also comes a time when we are called to obedience to a higher authority. The call of God supersedes all earthly authority. When earthly authority calls us to do something contrary to the Word of God, then we are to obey God rather than men in that specific area.

A PERCEIVED TREASURE

> *...and His mother treasured all these thing in her heart. (Luke 2:51b).*

This is the second time that we have seen this formula. The same thing was told to us when the shepherds came from the fields with their story of and angelic host and an announcing sign of the birth of a Savior. The shepherds had demonstrated an immediate reaction. They had spread the news all throughout the country side of what they had heard and what they had seen. But Mary did not. In Luke 2:19, we read that she *treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart*.

Twelve years have passed and now she is doing the same. She is not running about Nazareth bragging about her son. She is quietly treasuring up

these truths and meditating upon them. And when the appropriate time comes, she will share them with a Greek physician by the name of Luke.

A PERSISTENT GROWTH

> *And Jesus kept increasing in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men. (Luke 2:52).*

We believe that Jesus was deity incarnate; God become flesh. And yet, He was born as a helpless baby and now had to learn and grow and develop. The Bible calls this a mystery. Theologians have tried to ponder its depths. Paul explains it in this way.

> *Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, 6 who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, 7 but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men.*
>
> *Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. (Philippians 2:5-8).*

What does it mean that He "emptied Himself"? On the one hand, it cannot mean that He ceased to be God, for throughout His life He demonstrated the divine attributes. At the same time, He did things that God does not do.

- He was limited in time and space - God is omnipresent and has no such limitations.
- He grew in both knowledge and stature - God does not grow and God never learns a new fact.
- He suffered the limitations of mortality. He became hungry and tired. He suffered death.

It these things we can see that He emptied Himself of the glory that was rightfully His own. He became obedient and He who was fully God also became fully man. What does this mean for us? It means that we pray to One who experienced all of the things that we experience. Pimples. Jealous siblings. The schoolyard bully. Having to learn a difficult concept. Nosey neighbors. Being the subject of gossip or slander. Weariness of body and

soul. Betrayal.

> *For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. (Hebrews 4:15).*

The story is told of a man who applied for a job in a zoo. The manager said, "We don't have any normal job openings, but our gorilla died recently and we haven't been able to obtain another one. You can have a job if you are willing to wear a gorilla suit and stay in the gorilla cage." The man realized that this wasn't much of a job, but he had been out of work for a while and it did provide all the bananas he could eat and he decided to take it. Over the next few days, it got to be rather fun, climbing the tree that was in the cage, shaking the bars and roaring at the people who came to look at him.

One day, as he was climbing up the tree in his cage, the branch on which he was swinging broke. To his horror, he fell into the lion cage. As he scrambled to his feet, he saw the lion leap across the cage toward him. Terrified, he began clawing at the bars and screaming, "Let me out! Let me out!" As the lion loomed over him, it leaned over and whispered, "Be quiet or we'll both be out of a job."

You need to know that the Lion of the Tribe of Judah has put on flesh and blood and entered into the cage of man. He experienced everything that we experience (minus the sin). And that means He understands and empathizes with you in whatever you are going through. Go to Him. He has been there and done that. And He is able to hear and to understand. But that is not all. We also need to learn from His experience with growth that we share a similar growing experience. Just because you have trusted in Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior and are a Christian does not mean that you are at the end of your growing journey. You are only at the beginning. The Christian life involves growth. We are to grow as He grew — *in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men*.

JOHN THE BAPTIST
LUKE 3:1-22

All four of the gospel accounts tell us something of the early ministry of John. This in itself is significant, for there are very few events apart from the Passion Week that are found in all four Gospels. But this is one of them. It is instructive to note the emphasis given in each of those accounts.

<table>
<tr><th>Matthew</th><th>Mark</th><th>Luke</th><th>John</th></tr>
<tr><td>Presents Jesus as the King</td><td>Presents Jesus as the Servant of the Lord</td><td>Presents Jesus as a Teacher</td><td>Presents Jesus as the Son of God</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Mentions John's clothing and diet, reminiscent of Old Testament prophets</td><td rowspan="2">Tells the specifics of John's teachings to the people, to the tax collectors and to soldiers</td><td rowspan="2">Emphasis on John's disciples turning to follow Jesus</td></tr>
<tr><td>John confronts religious leaders</td><td>Begins with Old Testament prophecy</td></tr>
</table>

Of the four Gospel writers, only Luke has given us any details about the events surrounding the birth and naming of John the Baptist. As he first went into the wilderness, our attention was drawn to Jesus. Now, for a time, it comes back to John.

THE TIME OF JOHN

> *Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, and Herod was tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip was tetrarch of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias was tetrarch of Abilene,* 2 *in the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John, the son*

of Zacharias, in the wilderness. (Luke 3:1-2).

Luke sets the stage for the remainder of his account by telling us a bit about the times in which John and Jesus began their ministries.

1. Tiberius Caesar: *In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar (3:1).*

   Tiberius was the Emperor of Rome. He inherited a vast empire from Octavius Augustus. As time went on, he became more and more paranoid, cutting himself off from others and putting anyone to death on the slightest pretext. He eventually retired to Capri and ruled the empire from there.

2. Pontius Pilate: *When Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea (3:1).*

   Pilate was appointed to the position of Procurator by Emperor Tiberius. His area of jurisdiction was Judea and Samaria. During his term of office, he had several serious conflicts with the Jews.

   - Pilate created a stir among the Jews when he had the Roman military standards brought into Jerusalem. The Jews saw this as idolatry and rioted.
   - Pilate appropriated the corban money from the Temple to finance the construction of an aqueduct. A number of Jews were killed in the ensuing riot (Luke 13:1-2).
   - When a Samaritan claimed that there was a golden treasure which had been hidden by Moses on Mount Gerizim, a great crowd assembled. Pilate interpreted this as a rebellion and ordered his soldiers to attack. There were so many killed that a complaint was filed in Rome for Pilate's removal. He was ordered to return to Rome and was banished to Gaul where he is said to have eventually committed suicide.

3. Herod: *Herod was tetrarch of Galilee (3:1).*

   This "Herod" is a reference to Antipas, one of the sons of Herod the Great. Nearly all of his children and grandchildren went on to call themselves "Herod." Antipas was given Galilee on the west and Perea on the east bank of the Jordan River. His title was that of a Tetrarch (literally, "ruler of a fourth part"). He built his palace at Sepphoris, only 4 miles to the northeast of Nazareth. He

also built the city of Tiberius on the southeastern shore of the Sea of Galilee.

4. Annas and Caiaphas: *In the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas (3:2).*

The office of high priest was originally supposed to be held for life. But the office carried too much political prestige and so the Romans had made certain that the high priest was changed occasionally. Annas had been the high priest in the days of Valerius Gratus, the procurator who ruled prior to Pontius Pilate. When Annas was deposed, he made certain that one of his sons was chosen to the office in his place. Later another son and then a grandson held the offices. Caiaphas was his son-in-law and held the office at the start of the ministry of John the Baptist.

Luke is unique in giving us the exact date of the beginning of John's ministry. There was not a uniform dating method as is used throughout the western world today. Dates were commonly established by the advent of the reigning monarch. Another method of dating was to use the founding of the city of Rome.

Tiberius became the Emperor of Rome on August 19, 14 A.D. Fifteen years from this date would bring you to 28-29 A.D. depending upon whether you reckoned the first four months as the first year.

THE MESSAGE OF JOHN

And he came into all the district around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins;
4 *as it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet, "The voice of one crying in the wilderness, 'Make ready the way of the Lord, make His paths straight.* *5* *Every ravine will be filled, and every mountain and hill will be brought low; the crooked will become straight, and the rough roads smooth;* *6* *and all flesh will see the salvation of God.'" (Luke 3:3-6).*

The district around the Jordan was not a small area. The Jordan River flowed from the Sea of Galilee down to the Dead Sea. From one end to the other is a distance of 70 miles. This entire area became John's parish. This

was the major travel route for Jews who were traveling from Galilee to Jerusalem. They would typically make a long detour around the area of Samaria - that was the bad part of town.

1. John's Baptism: *He came... preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins (3:3).* The term "baptism" and its corresponding concept was not an invention by John the Baptist. It is an old word with a rich history.

    - The Greek word βαπτιζω (*baptizo*) is an old word, going all the way back to the days of Homer who used it of a sinking ship. Much is made by Baptists who claim that βαπτιζω always refers to immersion, but its use in 1 Corinthians 10:2 and the "baptism with Moses" shows that this is not always the case.

    - The Greeks came to use βαπτιζω of ritual washings. Thus, it could sometimes refer to a washing of purification. However, the most common ritual usage came to be that of identification. The Athenian general Xenophon described soldiers baptizing a sword and a spear in blood before entering into a military alliance *(The Persian Expedition, Book 2, Chapter 2).*

    - This concept of identification is found in every usage of βαπτιζω in the New Testament.

Usage	Significance of Baptism	Passage
John's Baptism	Identified people as repentant	Luke 3:3
Baptism of Jesus	Identified Jesus with preaching of John and Kingdom of God	Luke 3:21
Baptism of Believers	Identifies us with Father, Son and Holy Spirit	Acts 2:39-41
Spirit Baptism	Identifies us with Christ	1 Cor 12:12-13
Baptism of Moses	Identified Israelites as people of God apart from Egypt	1 Cor 10:1-2

John's baptism included this concept of identification. Those whom he baptized were identifying themselves with the coming King. But it was also a rite of purification. The water symbolized a cleansing washing of repentance. And this was not a new concept. It had been promised in the Old Testament.

> *"Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols.*
>
> *"Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.*
>
> *"And I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances." (Ezekiel 36:25-27).*

Although John had a ministry with water, it merely foreshadowed and prepared the way for Jesus who had the ability to bring a new heart and a new spirit.

2. A Baptism of Repentance: *He came... preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins (3:3).*

Repentance was a common Old Testament theme. The word is translated from the Greek word μετανοια (*metanoia*). This is a compound word made up of μετα (*meta*, "with") and νοεω (*noeo*, "to think"). But the resulting compound word refers more than a mere change of mind. Biblical repentance describes a change of attitude and is reflected by a changed life. This will be seen in verse 8 when John calls for people to *bear fruits in keeping with repentance*.

3. A Promised Message: *As it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet (3:4).*

This ministry of John had been promised 700 years earlier in the days of Isaiah. This tells us something about John and his message. It was not something new and separate from the Older Testament. John was a part of something that went back a long time before the first century. It had its roots in the family of God. You have that kind of heritage, too. If you are a believer in Jesus Christ,

then you are part of something that is older that this planet.

4. A Symbolic Fulfillment: *Every ravine will be filled, and every mountain and hill will be brought low; the crooked will become straight, and the rough roads smooth (3:5).*

Luke gives us a portion of this quote from Isaiah to show how the prophecy was fulfilled by John. The symbolism of these words is taken for the practice of preparing the way for a visiting dignitary. All efforts would be made to ascertain that the roads were in a state of repair.

However in John's case we are not talking about literal ravines and mountains and hills. He didn't come on the scene with a bulldozer or a bridge-building company. These things were merely symbolic for the way in which God would work in men's hearts as He prepared them to receive His messiah.

This tells me something of how I ought to interpret Old Testament prophecy. I am not always to look for literal fulfillments. I am to understand that the Old Testament writers often spoke in symbols to describe spiritual realities.

THE WARNING OF JOHN

So he began saying to the crowds who were going out to be baptized by him, "You brood of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?

"Therefore bear fruits in keeping with repentance, and do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham for our father,' for I say to you that from these stones God is able to raise up children to Abraham.

"Indeed the axe is already laid at the root of the trees; so every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire." (Luke 3:7-9).

These words were not spoken to those who showed no interest in John or his ministry. They are not spoken to the fellow who would rather play golf on Sunday morning than go to church. These words are addressed to the very ones who were coming to John and seeking to be baptized by him. They wished to be identified with John and with his ministry. They wished to be accepted by John, but John was not so certain that he wanted to accept

them. He called for them to do two things.

1. Evidence a Changed Heart: *Bear fruits in keeping with repentance (3:8).*

   Repentance itself is not achieved through self-effort. Repentance takes place within the heart. But real repentance always brings about a changed life. Only God can see the heart. But we are able to see the fruits of repentance.

   Your body does not follow where your heart does not first lead. If your heart and soul have turned to the Lord, then there will be a resulting change in your life. True repentance will produce a corresponding fruit.

2. Abandon a Proud Dependence upon Spiritual Ancestry: *Do not begin to say to yourselves, "We have Abraham for our father" (3:8).*

   The Jews were a proud people. They were proud of the fact that they were descendants of Abraham. They were the chosen people. God had chosen them for special blessings. Their problem is that they had come to depend upon their own physical heritage rather than trusting in the Lord. God does not need them merely because they are physical descendants of Abraham. This is the same God who made Adam from the dust of the ground. What he did in the case of Adam, He is also able to do in their case.

   Do you see what this would have meant to these Jews? All their lives they had thanked God that they were the chosen people; that they were not sinners like the Gentiles. They thought of themselves as being free of God's condemnation simply because they were Jews. John is telling them something different. They are in mortal danger of coming under the wrath of God. They need to repent and be saved.

John uses a metaphor in this warning. He tells them that *the axe is already laid at the root of the trees* (3:9). It is a vivid illustration. The point of this illustration is the proximity of this coming judgment. The picture is of a woodsman who is already on the scene. He has placed the head of his axe against the root of the tree. His is measuring the distance for his first swing. Judgment is about to fall. There is no time to wait.

> *And the crowds were questioning him, saying, "Then what shall we do?"*

> *And he would answer and say to them, "The man who has two tunics is to share with him who has none; and he who has food is to do likewise."*
>
> *And some tax collectors also came to be baptized, and they said to him, "Teacher, what shall we do?"*
>
> *And he said to them, "Collect no more than what you have been ordered to."*
>
> *Some soldiers were questioning him, saying, "And what about us, what shall we do?" And he said to them, "Do not take money from anyone by force, or accuse anyone falsely, and be content with your wages." (Luke 3:10-14).*

The teaching of John had some very specific applications. It was not mere dry theoretical theology. It could be taken out of the classroom and lived in the workplace.

3:10-11	The Crowds	Share your food and clothes with those who have none
3:12-13	Tax Collectors	Only collect what has been ordered
3:14	Soldiers	Be content with your wages and do not take from others or falsely accuse them

The two specific groups that Luke mentions are those who would have been the most hated by the Jews.

- Tax Collectors were considered to be renegades. They had typically purchased from the Roman government a franchise that allowed them to collect taxes. They were permitted to overcharge people on their taxes and they used this to make an enormous profit.
- Soldiers would likely have been considered to be Roman soldiers. Their presence here would be remarkable since John's ministry was primarily to the Jews.

A Roman soldier had all of the rights of a conquering victor. He was permitted to take whatever he chose from the vanquished peoples. John does not tell these soldiers to resign their commission. Instead he tells them to live properly within that profession.

THE IDENTITY OF JOHN

> *Now while the people were in a state of expectation and all were wondering in their hearts about John, as to whether he was the Christ,* 16 *John answered and said to them all, "As for me, I baptize you with water; but One is coming who is mightier than I, and I am not fit to untie the thong of His sandals; He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.*
>
> *"His winnowing fork is in His hand to thoroughly clear His threshing floor, and to gather the wheat into His barn; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire."*
>
> *So with many other exhortations he preached the gospel to the people. (Luke 3:15-18).*

As John's ministry continued to grow, so also grew the speculation as to what might be the true nature of John and his ministry. Specifically people began to wonder whether he might not be the Messiah who was promised in the Old Testament Scriptures. It was not long before John himself became aware of this thinking. He responds by pointing to another who is coming.

John's ministry was not centered around himself. He was a forerunner, announcing the coming of One to follow. John was not the main attraction of his ministry. He understood that his purpose was to point to another. When we become the main attraction to our ministry, then we have lost sight of what ministry is all about.

There was an old rabbinic exhortation that says, "Every duty that a slave performs for his master, a disciple shall do for his teacher, except for the removing of his sandals." This was a duty that only a slave would perform. This was the most lowly duty of all. And John says that he is not worthy to perform this lowliest of duties for the One who is coming. Here is the principle. You cannot comprehend the grace of God until you first come face to face with your own unworthiness.

I baptized you with WATER	(But)	He shall baptize you with the HOLY SPIRIT and FIRE

It is one thing to be baptized in water. It is a much greater thing to be baptized in the Holy Spirit and fire. I would suggest that these are two different baptisms:

1. Baptism with the Holy Spirit.

To be baptized in the Spirit means that the Spirit of God has come upon us and has identified us with the person and with the ministry of Jesus. We have been united with Christ.

- Because He has eternal life, we also possess eternal life.
- Because He is the Son of God, we are also children and sons of God.
- Because He is the heir to the kingdom of God, we are co-heirs with Him.
- Because He died, we are considered to be death to sin.
- Because He rose from the dead we will also rise - indeed, we are already risen to a new life.

2. Baptism with Fire.

John has already made mention of fire in his preaching. He warned that *every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire (3:9).* Now he goes on to clarify that the Lord will soon *gather the wheat into His barn; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire (3:17).* It is very clear in this context to what this fire represents. It is a fire of judgment. It is a fire of the wrath of God.

Baptism of the Spirit	**Baptism of Fire**
Pictured as a tree bearing fruit	Pictured as the burning of an unfruitful tree
Identification with Christ	Identification with judgment
Trusting in the One to come	Trusting in Abrahamic lineage
Wheat gathered into the barn	Chaff burned with unquenchable fire
Was fulfilled at the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4).	Fulfilled at the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. and ultimately fulfilled in Christ's Second Coming

Here is the point. John is baptizing with water. His is a baptism of

repentance. But there is coming One who will perform a real baptism. All will be baptized with His baptism. Either you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit or else you will be baptized with fire.

We have already seen the illustration of the woodsman who is about to start chopping down the tree. Now John uses a different illustration. It is of a farmer whose *winnowing fork is in His hand to thoroughly clear His threshing floor (3:17).* The winnowing fork was a rake-like instrument which was used by farmers to separate the wheat from the chaff.

The sheaves of wheat would be brought to a threshing floor - a wide open space where the wind could blow unabated. The bundles would be untied and the sheaves would be spread out across the floor. An ox or other beast of burden would be used to role a millstone over the sheaves. This had the effect of breaking the hard kernels of grain from the stalks.

The farmer would now use the winnowing fork to throw the wheat into the air. The heavier wheat would fall straight to the ground while the chaff, which was much lighter, would be blown away by the wind.

Wheat	Chaff
Gathered together into the barn	Thrown into the fire and burned up
Represents those who bring forth fruit of repentance	Represents those who reject John's message
Believers	Unbelievers

Once again, we are struck by the fact of the proximity of the judgment. The farmer has already picked up his winnowing fork. He is ready to begin the process of separating the wheat from the chaff.

There will be no stopping of this judgment. There will be no suspension of sentence. Either you will be found to be wheat or else you will be found to be chaff, but you WILL be found. The judgment will be thorough. It will be unstoppable. It will be irreversible. He will burn *with unquenchable fire* (3:17).

THE ARREST OF JOHN

> *But when Herod the tetrarch was reprimanded by him because of Herodias, his brother's wife, and because of all the wicked things which Herod had done,* 20 *Herod also*

added this to them all: he locked John up in prison. (Luke 3:19-20).

Luke does not tell us any of the details surrounding the arrest of John. We learn of those in Mark's account (Mark 6:17-29). John's preaching did not remain on "safe" subjects. He spoke out against sin even when it was dangerous to speak out against sin. His preaching ultimately led to his arrest and his death.

THE MESSIAH OF JOHN

Now when all the people were baptized, Jesus was also baptized, and while He was praying, heaven was opened,
22 *and the Holy Spirit descended upon Him in bodily form like a dove, and a voice came out of heaven, "You are My beloved Son, in You I am well-pleased." (Luke 3:21-22).*

The arrival of Jesus is described in very matter-of-fact terms. There were no trumpets or fanfare. One day, He simply arrived from his home in Nazareth and was baptized like anyone else who had come to be baptized.

Why? Why was Jesus baptized? I would suggest that He was baptized for the same reason that everyone else who came to John was baptized. Remember that the primary emphasis of baptism is identification. By His baptism, Jesus was identifying Himself with the ministry and the message of John.

Jesus did not need to repent. He had committed no sin. His heart needed no changing. His was not a baptism of repentance. It is an identification. What made this baptism significant was what accompanied that baptism. There were three aspects to this accompaniment.

Jordan River

1. The Opening of Heaven: *Heaven was opened (3:21).*

Nature itself participates in recognizing the significance of the baptism of Jesus. Indeed, it is through His identification with us that

heaven is made open to us.

2. The Holy Spirit's Descent: *The Holy Spirit descended upon Him in bodily form like a dove (3:22).*

This is an amazing thing. The Holy Spirit took on bodily form. He appeared *like a dove*. This presents an interesting problem. The dove was not an accepted symbol of the Holy Spirit among the Jews at this time. If anything, the dove was used to represent the nation of Israel.

- *O my DOVE, in the clefts of the rock,*
  In the secret place of the steep pathway,
  Let me see your form (Song of Solomon 2:14).

- *I was asleep, but my heart was awake.*
  A voice! My beloved was knocking:
  Open to my, my sister, my darling,
  My DOVE, my perfect one! (Song of Solomon 5:2).

Furthermore, this symbolism of a dove representing the Holy Spirit is never again repeated in the rest of the Bible. Because of this, I suggest that this was no mere symbolism. The Holy Spirit did not merely come like a dove. He actually came in the form of a dove as He descended upon Jesus. This was the fulfillment of a prophecy that Isaiah had given nearly 800 years earlier.

> *Then a shoot will spring from the stem of Jesse, and a branch from the roots will bear fruit.*
> *And the Spirit of the Lord will rest on Him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and strength, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord. (Isaiah 11:1-2).*

Do you know where the first mention is of a dove in the Bible? It is found in Genesis. It takes place while Noah and his family are in the ark. The great flood has come and has destroyed all life. They alone remain alive. And they have been shut up in the ark for a very long time. Will the waters ever recede? They do not know. So they take a dove and it goes forth to search out dry land. Three times it goes forth.

The first time it comes back having found no resting place.

The second time it returns bearing a freshly plucked olive leaf as if to signify the presence of new life. And the third time it does not return at all.

Now the dove is back. Its presence signifies the presence of the Spirit of God. And again there is the promise of new life and a salvation that God has provided.

3. The Voice: *A voice came out of heaven (3:22).*

We have seen the Son. We have seen the Spirit. Now we hear from the Father. His voice comes down out of heaven.

"You are My beloved Son, in You I am well-pleased."

We have seen John's voice to the people. It was a message of condemnation and warning. Now by contrast we hear the voice from heaven. It bears a message of affirmation.

John's Voice in the Wilderness	**Father's Voice from Heaven**
A voice of condemnation warning of a coming judgment.	A voice of affirmation describing the pleasure of the Father for His Son.

This is a fulfillment of the prophetic words of the angel Gabriel to Mary. Luke has already recorded those words for us. They were given when the angel first told Mary that she would have a son.

- *He shall be great, and will be called the SON of the Most High (Luke 1:32).*
- *The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you, and for that reason the holy offspring shall be called the SON OF GOD (Luke 1:35).*

Now the promise has been fulfilled, not only in the birth narrative, but also in the divine recognition from heaven. As had been prophesied, Jesus was called the Son of God.

THE GENEALOGY OF JESUS
Luke 3:23-38

And when He began His ministry, Jesus Himself was about thirty years of age, being supposedly the son of Joseph, the son of Eli, 24 the son of Matthat, the son of Levi, the son of Melchi, the son of Jannai, the son of Joseph, 25 the son of Mattathias, the son of Amos, the son of Nahum, the son of Hesli, the son of Naggai, 26 the son of Maath, the son of Mattathias, the son of Semein, the son of Josech, the son of Joda, 27 the son of Joanan, the son of Rhesa, the son of Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel, the son of Neri, 28 the son of Melchi, the son of Addi, the son of Cosam, the son of Elmadam, the son of Er, 29 the son of Joshua, the son of Eliezer, the son of Jorim, the son of Matthat, the son of Levi, 30 the son of Simeon, the son of Judah, the son of Joseph, the son of Jonam, the son of Eliakim, 31 the son of Melea, the son of Menna, the son of Mattatha, the son of Nathan, the son of David, 32 the son of Jesse, the son of Obed, the son of Boaz, the son of Salmon, the son of Nahshon, 33 the son of Amminadab, the son of Admin, the son of Ram, the son of Hezron, the son of Perez, the son of Judah, 34 the son of Jacob, the son of Isaac, the son of Abraham, the son of Terah, the son of Nahor, 35 the son of Serug, the son of Reu, the son of Peleg, the son of Heber, the son of Shelah, 36 the son of Cainan, the son of Arphaxad, the son of Shem, the son of Noah, the son of Lamech, 37 the son of Methuselah, the son of Enoch, the son of Jared, the son of Mahalaleel, the son of Cainan, 38 the son of Enosh, the son of Seth, the son of Adam, the son of God. (Luke 3:23-38).

I have to confess that, when I first came to this section, I was tempted to pass over it completely and to move on to the next chapter. After all, what is so exciting about a bunch of names? But I submit that there is a significance to this genealogy.

First of all, we note that it is given, not at the birth of Jesus, but at the beginning of His public ministry. We are told that He was "about thirty years of age." Why is this significant? It is significant because this was the age at which a Jewish man was permitted to minister in holy things. This goes back to the Old Testament law. In Numbers 4:2-3, Moses and Aaron were directed by the Lord to take a census of the descendants of Kohath from among the sons of Levi, of those who did work within the tabernacle, but that only those between the ages of thirty to fifty were to be numbered.

David was thirty years old when he first became king (2 Samuel 5:4), so it fitting that the Son of David will also begin His ministry at this same age. Luke has already shown that Jesus was born in Bethlehem, in the city of David, and that His birth was announced to shepherds, a profession originally held by David.

GENEALOGIES IN MATTHEW AND LUKE

Both Matthew and Luke contain genealogies of Jesus. When we compare this genealogy of Jesus with the one that is given in Luke's narrative, we find that they are very different, not only in form and structure, but also with regard to the listing of names that make up the family of Jesus.

Matthew	Luke
Begins with Abraham and moves forward to Jesus	Runs the opposite way, beginning with Jesus and going back to Adam
Divides his genealogy into three groups of fourteen	Contains no divisions
Omits certain names in order to keep the pattern of fourteen names	Omits no names of which we are aware and adds the name Cainan from the Septuagint
Traces the line of David through Solomon	Traces the line of David through another of David's sons—Nathan

It has been suggested that Matthew records the legal genealogy down through Joseph, the legally adopted father of Jesus, while Luke presents the actual genealogy of Jesus through His mother Mary. This would make the first genealogy the legal line of Jesus while the second genealogy would be the physical line of Jesus. If this is correct, then the New Testament proves

that Jesus is both the legal as well as the physical heir of David. At the same time, the emphasis here is not of Jesus being the son of David or even of His being the son of Abraham. This genealogy takes us all the way back to Adam.

FROM JESUS TO ADAM

Luke's portrait of Jesus takes us back to Adam, the first man. This should come as no surprise. Paul described Jesus as the "last Adam" in 1 Corinthians 15:45. He is the counterpart to Adam.

Adam	Jesus
Born without sin, but he fell into sin through rebellion and disobedience.	Born without sin and, though he was tempted, He resisted the devil and did not sin.
By his action, he plunged the world into sin.	By His action on the cross, He redeemed the world from sin.

Just as Adam serves as the founder and head of the human race, so also Jesus is the founder and head of an entirely new race of beings. Those who trust in Him are both declared to be righteous through their faith and also are transformed into His spiritual likeness. Neither is that an end unto itself, for this genealogy points out that Jesus is ultimately descended, not from Adam, but from God. He is the ultimate Son of God.

THE WILDERNESS TEMPTATIONS
LUKE 4:1-13

One of the most desolate places on the face of the earth is the arid desert wilderness between the mountains of Judea and the Dead Sea. The elevation drops over 3000 feet from the mountains down to the shores of the Dead Sea, the lowest spot on the planet. This is not an ordinary desert of sandy dunes, but rather a broken and twisted mass of rocky gorges and jagged limestone cliffs. The shimmering heat of day turns it into a burning oven while the freezing night drives shrieking winds over the fractured ravines.

So terrible was the parched land that the Jews of the ancient world called it by the name *YeShimon*, "Place of Desolation." This contorted nightmare of jagged ridges and narrow defiles was to be the scene of one of the greatest battles of all time. Against the backdrop of the wilderness, isolated and remote, two figures would come to do battle.

On the one side was his royal highness, the prince and power of the air, the ruler of this world whose name is Satan. On the other side came Jesus, the Messiah, the Son of God and promised King of Israel.

This is the first time in thousands of years that a man has stood upon the earth who is without sin. Ever since the Garden of Eden, Satan's claim to the earth and all of her inhabitants has been undisputed. Since the days when Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden, Satan has reigned over the earth.

Adam	The Second Adam
Created by God	Supernaturally conceived by God
Created without sin	Born without sin
Created in the image of God	God manifested in the flesh
Tempted and fell into sin	Tempted but was victorious over sin

Battled Satan in a garden	Battled Satan in the wilderness

The battle will take place on Satan's ground. Here in a land that shows the full fruits of Adam's sin, these two will engage in a titanic struggle. The conflict will not take place in a garden, but in the desert wilderness. It will not take place when Jesus is filled with the fruit of many trees, but after He has fasted for 40 days. The surroundings of Jesus are to His disadvantage, but even so, He will win the victory.

THE SETTING FOR THE TEMPTATIONS

> *Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led around by the Spirit in the wilderness 2 for forty days, being tempted by the devil. And He ate nothing during those days, and when they had ended, He became hungry. (Luke 4:1-2).*

In the previous chapter we saw the baptism of Jesus. Now He moves out from the Jordan River into the wilderness. One event follows immediately on the heels of the other. No sooner does Jesus come out of the water and receive the affirmation of His Heavenly Father, then He is instantly led by the Spirit into the wilderness where He will be tempted. What is the significance of this?

The baptism of Jesus launched Him into His public ministry. Up to this moment, He has been living quietly in Nazareth. The world has been virtually unaware of His presence. It almost seems as though the spiritual world has been lulled into a sense of complacency.

Suddenly Jesus appears at the Jordan River to be baptized with John's baptism. It is not a baptism for repentance, for Jesus has no need to repent. It is a baptism by which Jesus identifies Himself with the ministry and the message of John. As He comes out of the water, the heavens open and the Spirit of God descends and a voice from Heaven announces the Father's satisfaction. This must have been a high point in the life of Jesus. It was a great spiritual experience.

Now Jesus moves out into the wilderness. He will be alone. He will contemplate the work that is before Him and meditate upon all that is going to happen. It is at this time that Satan comes.

This is how Satan works. When a person is not actively engaged in the work of God, Satan will often leave him alone. But when that person begins to have an active ministry, then Satan soon comes upon the scene.

Notice something else about Satan's tactics. He is a great counter-puncher. His attack invariably comes after you have experienced a spiritual high. Immediately after that moment of spiritual victory, you can expect Satan's attack.

- So it was with Noah after he had come off the ark.
- So it was with Abram after he first entered Canaan.
- So it was with the Israelites after they had crossed the Red Sea and escaped from Egypt.
- So it was with Joshua after the city of Jericho had fallen.
- So it was with Elijah after the revival on Mount Carmel.
- So it was with Peter after he confessed Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God.

It has been said that in order to defeat an opponent in warfare, you must anticipate his tactics. We are involved in a spiritual war. Our enemy is Satan. We need to be aware of his tactics. In this chapter we shall see Jesus in combat with Satan. We shall see the weapons that Jesus uses to defeat His opponent. We shall become aware of the strategies of Satan.

1. The Sovereignty of the Spirit: *Jesus...was led around by the Spirit in the wilderness (4:1).*

   It was the Spirit of God who led Jesus into the wilderness. God Himself brought about the setting for the confrontation. Though God did not do the actual tempting, He allowed it to take place and set the forces into motion that would bring Jesus and Satan face to face.

   Why? I think that it is to prove that Jesus could not be made to sin. It is as if God is saying, "Satan, do your worst. Bring your greatest temptations forward. They will not avail." The first Adam was tempted and succumbed to that temptation. The Last Adam shall now be tempted and He shall not yield.

2. The Time of the Temptation: *For forty days (4:2).*

   Jesus was in the wilderness for forty days. This number seems to carry a special significance within the Bible.

   - Moses was on Mount Sinai for 40 days while receiving the Law of God (Deuteronomy 9:9).
   - In the days of Noah, the rains fell for 40 days and 40 nights

(Genesis 7:4).

- Israel was in the wilderness for 40 years (Acts 13:17-18).
- The spies were sent into Canaan to spy out the land for 40 days (Numbers 13:25).
- Jonah's message to Nineveh was that the city would be destroyed in 40 days (Jonah 3:4).

In each of these examples, the number 40 seems to imply a time of testing, a probation or a trial. This was also the time of the testing of Jesus.

3. The Fact of the Temptation: *Jesus...being tempted by the devil (4:2).*

The statement that Jesus was tempted brings us to a crucial question. How can we say that Jesus was tempted when the Scriptures plainly state that "God cannot be tempted by evil" (James 1:13)? If Jesus was God in the flesh, then how could He have been tempted?

The Greek word which is translated "tempted" in this passage (the perfect participle of πειραζω, *peirazo*) can have two possible meanings:

To solicit to sin	*Stop depriving one another, except by agreement for a time, so that you may devote yourselves to prayer, and come together again so that Satan will not **tempt** you because of your lack of self-control (1 Corinthians 7:5).* *I also sent to find out about your faith, for fear that the tempter might have **tempted** you, and our labor would be in vain. (1 Thessalonians 3:5).* *But each one is **tempted** when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. (James 1:14).*
To put to a test.	*This He was saying to **test** him, for He Himself knew what He was intending to do. (John 6:6).* *Now therefore why do you put God to the **test** by placing upon the neck of the disciples a yoke which neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear? (Acts 15:10).* ***Test** yourselves to see if you are in the faith (2 Corinthians 13:5).*

I want to suggest that it is the first usage which is in view here in Luke's account. We can see this by observing what Satan is trying to do. I think that it is obvious. He is trying to get Jesus to sin.

However the temptation of Jesus had one fundamental difference from any temptation that we have ever experienced. It was not a temptation from within.

> *Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone.*
>
> *But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust.*
>
> *Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death. (James 1:1-15).*

Here is the difference. When you are tempted, that temptation may be originated by Satan, but he uses your own lusts and sinful desires to bring you into sin. Jesus had no sin (Hebrews 4:15). Temptations were thrown at Jesus, but could not find a single weak spot in that Righteous One.

Were the temptations real? I don't think that there can be any doubt but that they were very real. But there was nothing sinful within the nature of Jesus that would answer to any sinful temptation. Jesus was more than just sinless. He was righteous.

Adam	Jesus
Was in the Garden in an untested innocent state with the possibility of falling into sin	Lived with complete and eternal righteousness that did not entertain sin

THE FIRST TEMPTATION

> *And the devil said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread."*
>
> *And Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'man shall not live on bread alone.'" (Luke 4:3-4).*

Notice that right at the outset Satan freely recognizes the deity of

Jesus. When he says, "If You are the Son of God," he uses a Greek form that assumes the condition to be true. We could even translated this as, "Since you are the Son of God..."

The Father had proclaimed the Jesus was His Son at His baptism. Satan is too smart to deny that pronouncement. His attack will be more subtle. He will play on that pronouncement. He will say, "Since you are the Son of God and since you have been given all of the authority in the universe, why are you going hungry?"

1. An Inappropriate Command: *"Tell this stone to become bread" (4:3).*

John the Baptist had said that God could make sons of Abraham from stones. Now Satan suggests something similar. He suggests that Jesus turn stones into bread. You might be thinking to yourself, "What's wrong with that?" What is wrong with turning stones into bread? On the surface, there seems to be nothing harmful in this suggestion. But we need to look carefully at its implications.

Satan is saying, "Use Your divine power independently of God. Don't worry about the Father's will or that the Spirit of God has brought you here for a special purpose. Just use what You have for Your own comfort."

This is not the only time that Satan will use this temptation. We will see this temptation again at the end of the ministry of Jesus when He is about to be taken by His enemies and crucified. Throughout this time of pain and agony, Jesus will have the power to stop it with a single word. The temptation will be to avoid the cross. But He will not do so.

We have a similar temptation today. We haven't been out turning stones into bread, but we are all tempted to act independently of God. We succumb to this temptation every time that we show a lack of faith. The opposite of independence is faith. Satan was attacking the faith of Jesus. Jesus answers with the Word of God.

2. A Biblical Response: *"It is written, 'man shall not live on bread alone'" (4:4).*

In his epistle to the Ephesians, Paul describes the spiritual weapons of the believer. There is the shield that is to be used to protect ourselves from the attacks of Satan. It is the shield of faith. We also have a sword, a weapon used both to parry the enemy's blade as well as to counterattack. The sword is the Word of God.

Jesus uses these same spiritual weapons. He answers Satan with the Word of God. He quotes from the Law of God.

> *"You shall remember all the way which the Lord your God has led you in the wilderness these forty years, that He might humble you, testing you, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not.*
>
> *"He humbled you and let you be hungry, and fed you with manna which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that He might make you understand that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of the Lord." (Deuteronomy 8:2-3).*

Do you see the parallel? Just as Israel was brought through the Red Sea, so Jesus has come up from His baptism in the Jordan River. He has been in the wilderness for 40 days. And He is being tested by a lack of food. Will He continue to rely upon the Lord as Israel was forced to rely upon the Lord?

Israel	Jesus
Was delivered through the Red Sea	Was baptized in the Jordan River
Wandered in the wilderness for 40 years	Was in the wilderness for 40 days
Tested by a lack of food	Tested by 40 days of hunger
Had to rely upon the Lord for manna	He must rely upon the Lord in his hunger

This was the purpose of Israel's test -- to see whether she would rely upon the Lord. Jesus underwent a similar testing. By His answer, He demonstrated that He would continue to rely upon the Lord and not upon His own abilities.

There is a sense in which Jesus passed the test, not only for Himself, but also for us. We have failed God's test. We have not trusted in the Lord in the way we ought. We are condemned for having failed God's test. But all is not lost. The success of Jesus has been credited to those who believe in Him.

THE SECOND TEMPTATION

> *And he led Him up and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time.*
>
> *And the devil said to Him, "I will give You all this domain and its glory; for it has been handed over to me, and I give it to whomever I wish. 7 Therefore if You worship before me, it shall all be Yours."*
>
> *Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God and serve Him only.'" (Luke 4:5-8).*

At this point, we might notice that the temptations recorded here in Luke's account are not in the same order as they are found in Matthew. There is nothing wrong with this. Neither account is specific about an orderly arrangement. The important point is not about the order of the temptations but that Jesus was tempted and He successfully withstood those temptations.

1. A Kingdom Offer: *"I will give You all this domain and its glory; for it has been handed over to me, and I give it to whomever I wish. Therefore if You worship before me, it shall all be Yours" (4:6-7).*

   Don't miss the implications of this offer. Satan is offering Jesus the Messianic Kingdom. He is saying in effect, "You don't need to go to the cross. Just worship me and I will give you the very thing for which You have come to earth. I will give You the Kingdom."

   Was this a legitimate offer? I don't know. Satan claims that it was given to him and that it was his right to give it to whom he wished. It is interesting that Jesus did not dispute Satan's ownership of the kingdoms of this world. 1 John 5:19 says that *the whole world lies in the power of the evil one*.

2. A Demonic Desire: *"If You worship before me, it shall all be Yours" (4:7).*

   Satan wants to be worshiped. He wants to take God's place. He wants to be God instead of God. Once again Jesus answers with a quote from the Old Testament. Again it is taken from the book of Deuteronomy, this time coming from Deuteronomy 6:13 and 10:20.

THE THIRD TEMPTATION

> *And he led Him to Jerusalem and had Him stand on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down from here;* 10 *for it is written, 'He will command His angels concerning you to guard you,'* 11 *and, 'On their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.'"*
>
> *And Jesus answered and said to him, "It is said, 'You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.'"*
>
> *When the devil had finished every temptation, he left Him until an opportune time. (Luke 4:9-13).*

Now Jesus is taken by Satan to a familiar place. It is to the city of Jerusalem. It is to the Temple. We have already had numerous glimpses of the Temple in Luke.

- The announcement of John the Baptist's impending birth took place in the Temple.
- Jesus was brought as an infant to be dedicated in the Temple.
- Jesus came as a 12-year old to the Temple.

Now He is back. But this time He is brought to the pinnacle of the Temple. This seems to be a reference to the extreme southeast corner where a tower rose 450 feet over the Kidron Valley. Each morning a priest would come to the pinnacle where there were steps leading to the top. He would climb the steps to the top and wait at this vantage point. When the first morning rays of the sun broke over the Mount of Olives to the east, the priest would sound a trumpet, signaling that the offering of the morning sacrifices could commence.

The author in Jerusalem by a replica of one of the temple stones that has recently been discovered bearing the inscription, "To the place of trumpeting."

This tower was known as the pinnacle of the Temple. It was one of

the most visible places in all Jerusalem. It was a place that was in plain view of all who had come to worship. This would be the scene of the final temptation.

1. A Call for the Spectacular: *"If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down from here" (4:9).*

   Once again we see the assertion by Satan that Jesus is indeed the Son of God. This temptation will be based upon that assumption. Satan wants Jesus to jump from the pinnacle of the Temple. And he wants Him to do it without the benefit of a parachute. Why? Because if He jumps and is rescued by angels, then this will be such a spectacular sign to the Jews that they will have to believe.

   Do you see what Satan is saying? "Give the Jews a sign that they cannot deny. Be acknowledged as the Messiah at once. Do something sensational that will make people believe. Since you are the Son of God, perform such a fantastic miracle that all will come to recognize You."

2. A Misuse of Scripture: *For it is written, 'He will command His angels concerning you to guard you,' 11 and, 'On their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone'" (4:10-11).*

   Satan had learned something about Jesus in the first two temptations. He had learned that Jesus used Scripture to resist temptation. And so Satan takes up the same tactic. Satan quotes Scripture, too. The quote is taken from Psalm 91:11-12. The quote is used to imply that such an act will have God's approval.

   Do you see what Satan has done? In the first two temptations, Jesus showed His trust in the Lord. Now Satan tries to use that same faith of Jesus to tempt Him. He is not saying, "Don't trust in the Lord anymore." Instead he says, "Jump and then have faith that God will not allow you to be hurt."

   Satan backs up the temptation by quoting Scripture. There is a lesson here. Scripture quoted out of context can be used to promote anything.

3. A Biblical Response: *"You shall not put the Lord your God to the test" (4:12).*

   Once again Jesus avoids Satan's temptation with a quote from

the book of Deuteronomy.

> *You shall not put the Lord your God to the test, as you tempted Him at Massah. (Deuteronomy 6:16).*

What happened at Massah? The incident is recorded in Exodus 17:1-7. The Israelites had just come through the Red Sea. As they traveled southward into the Sinai Peninsula, they discovered that there was no water. They complained to Moses about the situation and finally began to question whether the Lord was really with them and why He had brought them here. It was this questioning of God's purpose and of His intentions that brought them this rebuke.

Now the same rebuke is passed to Satan. He is questioning the purposes and intentions of God. He is implying that the purposes of God are not in Jesus' best interest. He is trying to get Jesus to act outside of the plan of God.

Temptation Stated	Satan's Offer	Old Testament Parallel
Turn stones into bread	Satisfy hunger	Manna in the wilderness
Worship Satan	Grant the Kingdom	Worship of golden calf
Jump off Pinnacle of the Temple	Provide a sign to Israel	Testing God in the wilderness

This was not the end of the temptations of Jesus. But it was the end for a time. It has been said that peace is that brief moment when everyone stops to reload. Satan is like that. His attacks sometimes cease, but that is only because he is awaiting a more opportune time.

Meanwhile, we can take comfort in knowing that we are held by the One who faced every temptation that we face, yet did so without sin. It is by His faithfulness that we stand before the Lord, not having a righteousness of our own, but through the righteousness of the perfect Son of God.

THE ANNOUNCEMENT AT NAZARETH
LUKE 4:14-30

He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him. (John 1:11).

The truth of these words echo throughout the entire life of Jesus. At His birth, it was not the king of the Jews who came to worship Him, but Magi from a foreign land. His parents were forced to flee to Egypt because no place within His own country could protect Him.

- His people, the Jews, came to see the miracles that He performed, but then as a nation they rejected Him. That rejection continues even to this present day.
- The Scribes and the Pharisees who had spent years studying the Law which presented the righteousness of God now rejected Him who was the only righteous One.
- The priesthood which ministered daily in the temple never recognized Him as the One to whom all of the rituals and sacrifices within the temple pointed.
- Even the Sanhedrin, the Supreme Court of Israel, declared Him to be guilty of blasphemy and sentenced Him to death.
- His own family did not believe in Him and He was betrayed by one of His own disciples.

In this chapter, the pattern continues. For thirty years the people of Nazareth had seen Jesus grow up, leading a perfect and sinless life. Now, as He returns to his hometown, His own neighbors will reject His message and then seek to put Him to death.

There is an interesting contrast that can been seen between this proclamation at Nazareth and John's account of the first presentation of the Messiah in the temple (John 2:13-21).

John 2:13-21	Luke 4:16-30
Jesus presents himself in Jerusalem	Jesus presents Himself in Nazareth
Marks the beginning of the Early Judean Ministry	Marks the beginning of the Galilean Ministry
The Temple	A Synagogue

In each case, the result of the presentation of Jesus is the same. In each case, Jesus confronts the people on the area of their sin, refusing to perform a miracle in their midst. In each case, He is met with rejection and opposition.

THE RETURN TO GALILEE

> *And Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit; and news about Him spread through all the surrounding district.*
>
> *And He began teaching in their synagogues and was praised by all. (Luke 4:14-15).*

Our passage opens with the return of Jesus to Galilee. Luke is not going to discuss the early ministry that Jesus had in Judea. He wishes to focus upon the ministry that Jesus had in Galilee.

Luke 1-2	Luke 3:1 - 4:11	Luke silent about Wedding Feast at Cana, Early Judean Ministry & woman at well.	Luke 4:12-ff
Birth & Childhood narratives of Jesus	John the Baptist and the Baptism of Jesus		Galilean Ministry

1. The Manner of His Return: *And Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit (4:14).*

   I think that the manner in which Jesus returns to Galilee is significant. It is in the power of the Spirit. You see, this was always

the case. Everything that Jesus ever did while He was on the earth, He did by the power of the Spirit. He never acted upon His own. He never acted independently of God. The miracles that He performed were done by the power of God. The teaching which He taught was given to Him by God. And even the places that He went were a reflection that He was being led by the Holy Spirit. That is the way Jesus lived. And that is the way we are to live, too.

2. The Ministry of His Return: *And He began teaching in their synagogues and was praised by all (4:15).*

The initial reception which Jesus received in Galilee appears to be very positive. All who heard Him teach were praising Him. This initial popularity was really very shallow. These people were not recognizing Jesus as the Messiah, God in the flesh, and worshiping Him on that basis. For the most part, they were not repenting of their sins and turning to God in faith. Rather, they were merely impressed by His miracles and His bold manner.

I think that it was a little like the two old ladies who sat in awe through a preacher's sermon and then commented to each other, "Isn't he wonderful? I couldn't understand a thing he said, but he had such a nice way of saying it." It will be this same type of attitude that we shall initially see in Nazareth.

THE READING IN THE SYNAGOGUE

And He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up; and as was His custom, He entered the synagogue on the Sabbath, and stood up to read.

And the book of the prophet Isaiah was handed to Him. And He opened the book, and found the place where it was written, 18 *"The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor. He has sent Me to proclaim release to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free those who are downtrodden,* 19 *to proclaim the favorable year of the Lord."*

And He closed the book, and gave it back to the attendant, and sat down; and the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed upon Him.

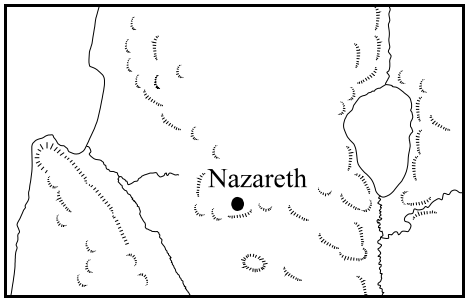
And He began to say to them, "Today this Scripture

has been fulfilled in your hearing." (Luke 4: 16-21).

As Jesus comes to Nazareth, there is an air of expectancy. The news of His miracles and His teaching has spread throughout all of Palestine. It is the gossip of the day. And, if He did all of those things in those other places, what shall He do when He comes to His own town?

1. Nazareth: *And He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up (4:16).*

The village of Nazareth lay tucked within a wide natural amphitheater, surrounded on all sides by high sloping hills except for the south where a narrow gorge leads its winding way out onto the Valley of Megiddo. The peaceful town was several miles from the major trade routes and in those days the town would not have numbered more than one or two hundred families.



Today the town is alive with the news. Jesus has returned! No doubt, the people have heard of the latest miracle, the healing of the son of the royal official. Speculation runs high throughout the village as people come from afar to witness what Jesus shall do in His own town. What new wonder awaits their eyes? If He has done such wonders in Cana and Capernaum, how much more will He do for His neighbors?

2. The Synagogue: *And as was His custom, He entered the synagogue on the Sabbath (4:16).*

The Sabbath had actually begun at sundown on the previous evening. In each home throughout the village, the festive Sabbath Lamp was lit as a trumpet blast from the roof of the synagogue marked the advent of this special day. Now, as the early morning sun cast its first light down into the quiet hamlet, people from all over the village and the surrounding farms began to gather to the synagogue.

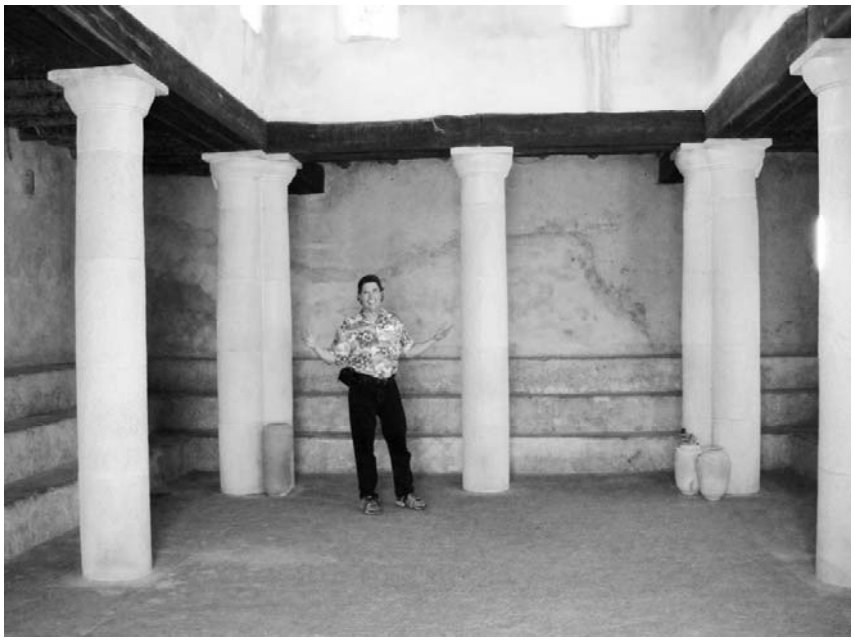
The synagogue itself would have been a fairly large structure, built of stone and located near the marketplace. As you entered through the front door, you would find the wooden seats arranged in long rows. To one side a lattice partitioned off a section of the hall

for the women. From here they were permitted to observe the service, shrouded in their long veils.

Against the far wall was the *TEBAH*, an ornate chest which contained all of the scrolls which made up the Holy Scriptures. Just before the Tebah were the Seats of Honor, reserved for the rulers of the synagogue and other honored men.

3. The Reading of the Scriptures: *And stood up to read (4:16).*

The synagogue service began in prayer and with a quotation of the Shemah: *Hear, 0 Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord is one! (Deuteronomy 6:4).* Then a passage from the Torah would be read. Next, a passage from the Prophets would be read, followed by a sermon or a word of exhortation. Prior to the beginning of the service, Jesus would have been invited to read from the Prophets and to give this word of exhortation.



The author in a reconstruction of the first century synagogue in Nazareth.

Now, at the proper time, Jesus stands up and moves to the front of the synagogue. He comes to the Bema Seat, a raised wooden chair which stands before the congregation. The scroll which contains the book of Isaiah is handed to Him and He moves behind the lectern to the side of the Bema. Carefully unrolling the scroll, He begins to read. The passage which Jesus reads from is Isaiah 61. It contains a prophecy of the kingdom and the peace and the prosperity which

shall reign when the Lord comes.

> *The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the afflicted; He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and freedom to prisoners; 2 to proclaim the favorable year of the Lord. (Isaiah 62:1-2a).*

The Jews recognized this passage as a prophecy of the Messiah, the One whom God would anoint to bring in His kingdom. They looked to the One who would preach the good news of deliverance to the poor, the One who would release them from their bondage to Rome, the One who would heal the diseased and set free the afflicted. And yet, they had failed to recognize that each of the points of this prophecy had been fulfilled in the ministry of Jesus.

- John the Baptist had bore witness of the manifestation of the Holy Spirit descending upon Jesus at the very outset of His ministry.
- The good news of the kingdom had been preached to the poor throughout all the land.
- The release that He had pronounced had not been just to those who were slaves , but to all who were captives to sin and to Satan.
- He did not only heal the physically blind, but also those who were spiritually blinded He brought into the light.
- He brought eternal redemption to those who were down-trodden, proclaiming the mercy and the grace and the favor of God.

I believe this description is used by Luke as a window into the mission statement of Jesus. It becomes the framework for the rest of the gospel account as Jesus is seen fulfilling each of these areas of ministry. Luke in particular shows Jesus reaching out to...

- A demon-possessed man (4:33).
- A sinful fisherman (5:1-11).
- A leper (5:12).
- A paralytic (5:18).
- A tax collector (5:27).
- A Gentile Centurion (7:2-10).

- A widow's son (7:12).

Luke's focus both in these passages and throughout the rest of his book will be about how Jesus ministers to the afflicted, the broken-hearted, the down-trodden and the rejected. He reaches out to those to whom no one will reach. He touches the untouchables.

4. An Appropriate Stopping Point: *And He closed the book, and gave it back to the attendant (4:20).*

Right in the middle of verse 2 of Isaiah's 61st chapter, Jesus stopped reading. In mid-sentence, He suddenly stops and rolls up the scroll and hands it back to the attendant.

The next phrase from Isaiah would have been, *"And the day of vengeance of our God..."* But we are not told that Jesus read that. It seems that He stopped before getting to the second part of the verse. There was a reason for this. Jesus had come to fulfill only the first part of this prophecy. He did not come to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him (John 3:17).

But there is coming a day when the rest of the prophecy will be fulfilled. There is coming a day of vengeance. And on that day, He shall judge the world.

5. A Moment of Expectancy: *And sat down; and the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed upon Him (4:20).*

Located in the front of the synagogue by the lectern where the Scriptures were read was an ornate seat. It was called the *BEMA*, the Seat of Judgment. When the Scriptures were read, the reader would stand behind the lectern. But when a Rabbi would teach or exhort from those Scriptures, he would sit on this Bema Seat.

And so, having handed the Isaiah scroll back to the attendant who reverently places it within its proper space within the Tebah, Jesus now sits in this Seat, signifying that He is going to teach from the passage which He has just read. It is a dramatic moment. All are waiting to hear what He shall say.

6. A Proclamation of Fulfillment: *And He began to say to them, "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing" (4:21).*

This is startling. He does not begin His discourse by reminding His audience of the golden days of Israel's history when

the Lord stretched His mighty hand to protect His covenant nation. Neither does He look to the future to the glories that shall be revealed when God overthrows the kingdoms of this world to set up His eternal kingdom.

Instead He speaks of what is here and now. He announces that they are witnesses of the fulfilled prophecy. It is coming to pass in their very midst.

THE REACTION OF THE PEOPLE

> *And all were speaking well of Him, and wondering at the gracious words which were falling from His lips; and they were saying, "Is this not Joseph's son?" (Luke 4:22).*

At first glance, the reaction of the people of Nazareth seems very favorable. They speak well of Him, astounded at the words which He speaks in comparison with His social and educational status. And yet, by the time we get to verse 28, we shall see a very different reaction altogether. The entire synagogue will be filled with rage against Him. What happened to cause this change?

We are inclined to think of this situation in purely human terms. Jesus has them in awe at His sermon and then He turns around and offends them so badly that they want to take Him out and stone Him.

We might have said, "Jesus, you have it all wrong. If they are speaking well of you when you tell them that this prophecy is being fulfilled, then you need to cultivate their respect and take care not to offend them or cause them to stumble." But the truth is that the reaction of the people was not the type of reaction that Jesus sought.

1. A Reaction of Wonderment: *And all were speaking well of Him, and wondering at the gracious words which were falling from His lips (4:22).*

   No doubt, the people were impressed by what Jesus had said concerning the dawning of the Messianic kingdom. This type of preaching was completely different than anything that they had ever heard. Never had a teacher proclaimed that a prophecy was being fulfilled before them.

   However, there was a part of this message that they found

difficult to accept. It was that Jesus Himself was the promised Messiah.

2. A Reaction of Doubt: *And they were saying, "Is this not Joseph's son?" (4:22).*

You see, they could accept the fact that the kingdom was about to be revealed before them. They could even accept that Jesus was the One who was announcing the advent of that kingdom. But to believe that Jesus was the Messiah, the Anointed One of God, was just too much. After all, they had watched this same Jesus grow up from the time He was a small boy. They had known His parents all these years. They were nothing special. His father had been the town carpenter. He hadn't even been a ruler in the synagogue. Perhaps if the son of the village rabbi had been chosen to be the Messiah, they could have more readily believed. But this was just too much.

They were ready to believe that He was a teacher. They were ready to accept Him as a good man. They could even believe that He was a miracle worker, as long as He did a few miracles in their presence. But it was just too much to ask them to believe that this was Messiah, the Son of God.

THE REBUKE AGAINST NAZARETH

And He said to them, "No doubt you will quote this proverb to Me, 'Physician, heal yourself.' Whatever we heard was done at Capernaum, do here in your home town as well."

And He said, "Truly I say to you, no prophet is welcome in his home town. 25 But I say to you in truth, there were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the sky was shut up for three years and six months, when a great famine came over all the land; 26 and yet Elijah was sent to none of them, but only to Zarephath, in the land of Sidon, to a woman who was a widow. 27 And there were many lepers in Israel in the days of Elisha the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian." (Luke 4:23-27).

It is evident that Jesus knows exactly what they are thinking and their

objection to His claim. Notice His response. It is one of rebuke. He will not allow men to accept Him as only a teacher or a good man or a miracle worker. You must accept Him on His own terms, or else you cannot accept Him at all.

1. An Insolent Proverb: *"No doubt you will quote this proverb to Me, 'Physician, heal yourself!'" (4:23).*

   This was a familiar proverb in the ancient world. Jesus uses it here to describe how the people of Nazareth were expecting Him to provide evidence of his Messiahship by performing a miracle. If He is the One who will release captives and give sight to the blind and set free the downtrodden, then let Him demonstrate it here in His own home town.

2. An Irreverent Demand: *"Whatever we heard was done at Capernaum, do here in your home town as well" (4:23).*

   What miracle was done at Capernaum? Luke has not told us of any. It is not that he is unaware of them. But he has not focused upon any of the parts of the ministry of Jesus that took place prior to this time. We know from the other gospels that the healing of the son of the Royal Official had taken place in Capernaum, even though Jesus had been 18 miles away in Cana when the miracle took place (John 4:46-53).

   The implication is that Jesus has an obligation to do even more miracles here in His home town of Nazareth. After all, they are His neighbors and ought to have some special privileges as a result of their status.

3. The Inoculation to the Familiar: *"No prophet is welcome in his home town" (4:24).*

   This saying of Jesus is found in all four of the gospel accounts (Matthew 13:57; Mark 6:4; John 4:44). There is something about home-grown prophets that are hard to take. We are perfectly willing to listen to the Word of God when it comes from someone we don't know. But when it comes from a familiar source,

When Jesus speaks of how a prophet is not WELCOME in his home town, he uses the same word (δεκτος) that is used in verse 19 to describe *"the ACCEPTABLE year of the Lord."*

there is something within us that resists.

I can remember the trouble my own mother had listening to me teach the Bible for the first few times. She has long since gotten over it, but there was a time when she did so with difficulty. After all, this was not a Bible teacher. No matter that he had a couple of degrees in theology or that he was acquainted with the Greek and Hebrew texts. This was her little boy. What could he teach her?

Are you guilty of the same thing? If you are a husband, do you listen to your wife when she speaks to you? If you are a wife, do you get to thinking that your husband can't teach you anything? You may be missing out on a special truth that the Lord is giving you, but you just won't accept the messenger because it is too close to home.

4. Two Interracial Illustrations: *"There were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah... and yet Elijah was sent to none of them" (4:25-26).*

Jesus quotes two examples to show that the workings of God's mercy and miracles overlap national and racial and geographical barriers. The people of Nazareth had thought that they would be granted certain special privileges due to the fact that they were the neighbors of Jesus.

The two examples which Jesus uses each describe a time when great miracles were performed. In each case, the recipient of the miracle was a Gentile.

- The first example is the case of Elijah and the Phoenician widow (I Kings 17:9-24). When Elijah was forced to flee from the king of Israel, he was sent by God to the house of a Phoenician widow. When her son became sick to the point of death, Elijah went in and healed him. This was the only person ever healed during Elijah's ministry.
- The second example is the case of Elisha and Naaman, the Captain of the Syrian Army (2 Kings 5:1-16). Naaman had contracted leprosy, a terrible disease. He heard of Elisha, the great prophet of God, and he came to him and asked that he might be healed. He was told to wash in the Jordan seven times and, when he obeyed, he was cured. This was the only case of leprosy to be cured during the entire ministry of Elisha.

Do you see the point of the illustrations? It is that the Jews

of Nazareth can expect no special privileges just because Jesus is from their town. If God was not under obligation to cure all of the sick sons of Israel in the days of Elijah and if God was not under obligation to cure all of the lepers of Israel in the days of Elisha, then God is not obligated to do anything in Nazareth, either.

This is a lesson that you need to learn. We often tend to fall into the same sort of thinking as the people of Nazareth. After all, we are the church. We are the people of God. That gives us a special position. And if we have a special position, then it isn't long before we reason that God is obligated to do what we want Him to do.

It isn't so. God is not obligated to do anything for you. When He does act on your behalf, it is the direct result of His love and mercy and grace.

THE REJECTION OF THE MESSIAH

> *And all in the synagogue were filled with rage as they heard these things;* 29 *and they rose up and cast Him out of the city, and led Him to the brow of the hill on which their city had been built, in order to throw Him down the cliff.* 30 *But passing through their midst, He went His way. (Luke 4:28-30).*

What was the reaction of the people who heard this message? Did they repent from their arrogant attitude and praise God for His sovereign mercy? They did not.

1. A Mob Mentality: *And all in the synagogue were filled with rage (4:28).*

The people were furious. To think that they are no better than Phoenician widows and Syrian lepers! Their arrogance had been insulted. Their house of prayer and worship quickly becomes a place of anger and confusion.

They realized that they had been likened to apostate Israel which had rejected the words of the prophets. Instead of worshiping other gods as their forefathers had done, these Jews had come to the point of giving worship to a religious system. Just as Ahab and Jezebel had sought to have Elijah put to death, so also the people of Nazareth now seek to put Jesus to death.

2. A Murderous Intent: *And they rose up and cast Him out of the city, and led Him to the brow of the hill... to throw Him down the cliff (4:29).*

There is murder in their hearts. There has been no trial. No legal charges have been brought forth. And these Jews who pride themselves on being Sons of the Torah are about to break the Law by murdering the Son of God.

3. A Mystifying Departure: *But passing through their midst, He went His way (4:30).*

How was Jesus able to escape from the clutches of this angry mob? We are not told. But it was a simple thing for the One who had parted the Red Sea and the Jordan River. The simple truth was that His time had not yet come. The hour of His death had not yet arrived and no power on earth was able to take His life from Him.

We have the same guarantee today. God has determined what is to be the length of our lives and there is no power that can thwart the plan of God.

> *Man, who is born of woman, is short-lived and full of turmoil...*
>
> *Since his days are determined, the number of his months is with Thee, and his limit Thou hast set so that he cannot pass. (Job 14:1; 14:5).*

We can take comfort in this fact. If it is not your time to depart from this earth, then you can be completely safe in the midst of a raging mob.

These Jews had sought a miracle. They got more than they bargained for. They found themselves completely powerless in the presence of the One who could calm a raging storm with a single word. And so, He departed from their midst. He had presented Himself to those who had witnessed His sinless life and they had rejected Him. He had come to His own, and those who were His own had not received Him.

> *But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name. (John 1:12).*

THE MINISTRY IN CAPERNAUM

LUKE 4:31-44

Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you. (Isaiah 60:1).

Located on the northwestern shore of the sun splashed Sea of Galilee lay the small hustling fishing village of Capernaum. From its shores on the placid waters of the Gennesaret — known by the Rabbis as the Gardens of Princes, you could look to the north and see the snow-capped peak of Mount Hermon, towering over 9,000 feet into the sky. Just a mile or so to the east, the cool waters of the Upper Jordan flowed into the Sea of Galilee.

The name "Capernaum" is from the Hebrew 'Kaphar Nacham, meaning "Village of Nahum" or "Village of Comfort." The village was located on the frontier between the domains of Antipas and Philip. As such, it was known as something of a resort. The Royal Official had his residence here, as well as a Roman garrison with its commanding centurion, (Luke 7:1-10; Matthew 8:5-13), making it one of the more important towns in Galilee.

TEACHING ON THE SABBATH

And He came down to Capernaum, a city of Galilee. And He was teaching them on the Sabbath; 32 and they were amazed at His teaching, for His message was with authority. (Luke 4:31-32).

Leaving His home of Nazareth, Jesus moves down to Capernaum. Just as He had taught in the synagogue in Nazareth, so now as He comes to Capernaum, He begins teaching in the synagogue there. The reception which He received is one of amazement.

Why were they amazed? The reason given here is because He taught with authority. You see, the Rabbis didn't teach that way. Their sermons would consist of dry commentaries on what other Rabbis before them had thought. These interpretations were collected and kept and handed down from generation to generation. We know them as the Mishnah and the Talmud. But Jesus did not teach that way. He taught with authority. He said, "Truly, truly, I say to you...

We can teach with authority, too. When God has said that salvation is a gift of His grace, we can speak forth that message with confidence and authority. When we witness concerning Jesus, we don't come sharing religious opinions. We have truth. And because we have truth, we can speak with authority.

Now, I want to ask you a question. What is your reaction when you are confronted by the new? Does it make you uncomfortable? Or are you able to look at change objectively? I tend to be one of those people who seem to think that nothing should ever be tried for the first time. A long time ago, I came across a delightful prayer of confession which spoke directly to me about this tendency.

But Lord,
I've always bought brown sugar in square boxes with brown letters on the box.

I saw the plastic bags of sugar in the grocery store yesterday.
I could tell by looking that this was a better way. The strong, air-tight bags would keep the sugar soft and usable.
But I've always bought brown sugar in boxes. And I reached for the box.

Now, back at home, I wonder why.

Lord, why are we; why am I... so reluctant to change old ways?
Some old ways are valid, but some need changing.
And I cling to square boxes with unthinking tenacity, just because I've always bought square boxes.

That is not reason enough.
Times have changed — and are changing
so fast it makes my head swim.
I am obligated to face my days intentionally!
The container that brown sugar comes in is no great thing.
But there are other, weightier matters that require rethinking — and

perhaps revising. If I am going to live significantly,
I must make my decisions purposefully,
intentionally,
comprehensively.
Forgive my square boxes.
Amen.
(Jo Carr & Imogene Sorley, 1969, cited in Gene Getz's "Sharpening the Focus of the Church").

Do you have any brown boxes? They might look quite traditional. Perhaps they involve the kind of music in your church service. Or they might be your attitude toward another person. You take them and lay them before the feet of Jesus.

TOSSING OUT A DIRTY DEMON

And there was a man in the synagogue possessed by the spirit of an unclean demon, and he cried out with a loud voice, 34 "Ha! What do we have to do with You, Jesus of Nazareth? Have You come to destroy us? I know who You are — the Holy One of God!"

And Jesus rebuked him, saying, "Be quiet and come out of him!" And when the demon had thrown him down in their midst, he came out of him without doing him any harm.

And amazement came upon them all, and they began discussing with one another saying, "What is this message? For with authority and power He commands the unclean spirits, and they come out."

And the report about Him was getting out into every locality in the surrounding district." (Luke 4:33-37).

As Jesus came to the synagogue to teach, He was confronted with a terrible specter — a man who was possessed by a demon. Demons are often described within the Bible, but they arc not necessarily defined.

- First of all, they are spiritual beings. Mark 5:2; 9:25 and Luke 10:17, 20 refer to demons as "spirits." You will remember that after His resurrection, Jesus appeared to His disciples and they initially thought that they were seeing a spirit. He dispelled this, saying to them, "Touch Me and see, for a spirit does not have

flesh and bones as you see that I have" (Luke 24:39).

Thus, we may conclude that demons, being spirits, do not have physical bodies. However, they seem to have a strange passion for possessing living organisms, whether human or animal, as seen by the incident in the country of the Gerasenes (Luke 8:26-33).

- Second, they are personal beings. They are described as having the power of thought, speech, and action. They are seen pleading for their freedom (Luke 8:31) and asking questions (Acts 19:15).

- Third, they are intelligent beings. We see an indication of this in this passage where a demon recognizes the reality of who Jesus really is.

- Finally, they are powerful beings. You will remember the time certain Jewish exorcists attempted to use the name of Jesus as a magic amulet to cast out a demon. Suddenly, the demon-possessed man went berserk, attacking the exorcists and ripping their clothes off. However, as powerful as they are, there is One who is more powerful. He is seen in this chapter.

1. A Demonic Confession: *"I know who You are - the Holy One of God!" (4:34).* I think that it is fascinating that the very first one to recognize and declare the true identity of Jesus was a demon.

   - Not a Rabbinical student.
   - Not a priest.
   - Not even one of the disciples.

   This should not surprise us too much. James tells us that the demons believe that God exists (James 2:19). There are no atheists in hell.

2. A Divine Exorcism: *And Jesus rebuked him, saying, "Be quiet and come out of him!" (4:35).*

   This demon had just testified as to the true identity of Jesus. but He would not accept praise from the demon. And so, He orders the demon to be quiet — literally, to "be muzzled." When we come to verse 41, we shall see that Jesus would not allow the demons to speak "because they knew Him to be the Christ."

   There is a point here that I want you to see. It is that you need

to be careful from whom you accept praise. Jesus would not allow this demon to praise Him. And when the world begins to praise us, we better look out.

3. A Popular Amazement: *And amazement came upon them all, and they began discussing with one another (4:36).*

I want you to notice something that you might have missed. Jesus did this miracle on the Sabbath. And yet, no one challenged Him. Later on, the Pharisees would challenge Jesus because He healed on the Sabbath day. They would say that He was working on the day of rest and so He must be in sin. But there is no such challenge here. The opposition to the ministry of Jesus hadn't started yet. And so, there was no one nit-picking concerning the actions of Jesus.

It seems as though when we were new Christians we didn't nit-pick so much. All we knew was that we loved Jesus and we wanted other people to love Jesus, too. We didn't spend a lot of time arguing over doctrine. And we weren't particularly concerned that the pastor's sermon went a little too long. We didn't care that the bulletin had been changed or that the carpet in the Fellowship Hall wasn't particularly eye-catching. But somewhere along the line, those things began to become important to us. And before too long, we began to take up a Pharisaic attitude.

Have you gotten more critical? Do those little things bother you? Are you starting to nit-pick? Maybe it's time for a return to Capernaum.

TREATING A MOTHER-IN-LAW

And He arose and left the synagogue, and entered Simon's home. Now Simon's mother-in-law was suffering from a high fever; and they made request of Him on her behalf.

And standing over her, He rebuked the fever, and it left her; and she immediately arose and waited on them. (Luke 4:38-39).

Following the service in the synagogue, Jesus goes with His disciples to the home of Peter and Andrew. Remember that Capernaum was only a

small village; the distance from the synagogue to Peter's home would have only been a few yards. Here, they are confronted with a problem. Peter's mother-in-law is sick.

In his letter to the Corinthians, Paul alludes to the fact that Peter and the rest of the apostles were married men (1 Corinthians 9:5). Indeed, the Jews considered it to be rather abnormal not to be married. And so, Peter was married.

But now, as he returns home with Jesus and the other disciples, there is a problem. His wife's mother is sick. She has a fever. And it is not just a fever; Luke, the physician calls it a "high fever." Now some men might be rather glad to find that their mother-in-law was sick with a fever. But that was not the case with Peter.

I suppose that, if there is a principle here, it is this. Before you seek to minister to the world for Christ, minister first to your mother-in-law. You see, if your Christianity doesn't work in your home, then it doesn't work — don't export it.

1. An Intercessory Request: *They made request of Him on her behalf (4:38).* Up to this point, the faith of the disciples had not grown very much. But at least it had grown to the point where they knew to take their problems to Jesus. They realized that He was the sort to whom you can bring any problem.

2. An Immediate Healing: *And standing over her, He rebuked the fever, and it left her; and she immediately arose and waited on them (4:39).*

   This healing was immediate. She did not have to spend a certain amount of time in rest and recuperation. She was both healed and strengthened, with the result that she could go right to work. Notice that she was healed in order that she might serve. Our healing is the same way. We have been healed spiritually. We have been saved in order to serve.

TOUCHING THE SICK

> *And while the sun was setting, all who had any sick with various diseases brought them to Him; and laying His hands on every one of them, He was healing them.*
>
> *And demons also were coming out of many, crying out*

and saying, "You are the Son of God!" And rebuking them, He would not allow them to speak, because they knew Him to be the Christ. (Luke 4:40-41).

As the sun set that evening, marking the official end of the Sabbath, people began flocking to the home of Peter, seeking to have their sicknesses healed and their infirmities removed. Mark's account tells us that "the whole city was gathered at the door" (Mark 1:33).

And laying His hands on every one of them, He was healing them (4:40).

Have you ever stopped to wonder why Jesus laid His hands on these people to heal them? He touched the eyes of the blind. He touched the skin of the leper. He touched the legs of the crippled. Why? Many of these people must have been unsanitary as well as unattractive. Some were considered to be unclean.

Jesus could have easily healed them by merely waving a magic wand or a staff or just by pointing to them. People could have been healed in mass just by His passing a hand over a crowd. But He chose not to. You see, Jesus was not merely on a crusade against disease. His was a ministry to individuals. He wanted people to meet Him one-on-one. He wanted them to experience His love. Love is hard to demonstrate in a crowd. Love requires a one-on-one relationship.

How are you on your personal relationships? Are you reaching out to people. The phrase "Reach out and touch someone" ought to be more than just a television advertisement. It ought to be reflective of our Christianity.

TAKING TIME TO RECHARGE

And when day came, He departed and went to a lonely place; and the multitudes were searching for Him, and came to Him, and tried to keep Him from going away from them.

But He said to them, "I must preach the kingdom of God to the other cities also, for I was sent for this purpose."

And He kept on preaching in the synagogues of Judea. (Luke 4:42-44).

Mark's account tells us that Jesus arose and left town before the sun

had even come up (Mark 1:35). As the dark velvet of night begins to pale in the east and the twinkling stars wink out one by one, Jesus makes his solitary way up into the rolling hills of Galilee. He walks until He cannot see another town or a farmhouse or a living being. And then, He stops and waits for a while in the silence. And here, watching the golden rays of the sun cast their shimmering bands over the sleeping hills and slumbering valleys, He sits with His Father.

There is something special about a quiet time. There is something special about getting alone in a place where you can't see another soul and where you can be alone with the Lord. Our problem is that we are too busy. We have schedules to meet and places to go and things to do. And even when we do try to get quiet, it isn't long before the outside world is hammering at our door.

1. In Interrupted Respite: *And the multitudes were searching for Him, and came to Him (4:42).*

   What is He doing? Why has He come here for? There is work to be done in Capernaum. He has healed the sick, but there will eventually be others who get sick, too. His ministry in Galilee is only just getting started. It is too early for Him to go on vacation or take a day off. He has made a good impression at Capernaum and, unlike the incident at Nazareth, no one wants to throw Him off a cliff.

2. In Insistent Program: *And tried to keep Him from going away from them (4:42).*

   As the multitude finally caught up to Jesus and the disciples, they tried to persuade Jesus to return to Capernaum with them. They seem to have the idea that they can keep Jesus all to themselves. But He has other plans.

3. A Divine Purpose: *But He said to them, "I must preach the kingdom of God to the other cities also, for I was sent for this purpose" (4:43).*

   The Jews had a history of taking the truth and sitting on it. You remember the story of Jonah, the reluctant prophet. He was sent by God to preach to the city of Nineveh. Instead, he took a long trip on a ship going the other way. After a short detour via a divine submarine, he finally got back on the road to Nineveh. But even when he got there, his attitude was one of reluctance. He proclaimed to the people, "In forty days God will destroy your city." And the

Lord had to add, "Don't forget to say, 'Unless you repent.'" Jonah's attitude was reflective of the Jewish people. They had been entrusted with the oracles of God. And they determined to keep those oracles to themselves.

But before you start passing judgment on them, take a look at your own life. When was the last time you shared the message of the gospel with someone? It has been said that, instead of being fishers of men, most of us have become keepers of the aquarium. You ask the Lord to send someone to you this week that you can introduce to Jesus. And when He does, you be faithful.

FISHERS OF MEN
LUKE 5:1-11

Bind up the testimony, seal the law among my disciples. 17 *And I will wait for the Lord who is hiding His face from the house of Jacob; I will even look eagerly for Him.*

Behold, I and the children whom the Lord has given me are for signs and wonders in Israel from the Lord of hosts, who dwells on Mount Zion. (Isaiah 8:16-18).

If there is one thing that is true of Jesus and His ministry among men, it is that He came to make men different. He did not offer neatly packaged sermonettes once a week which you could hear and then go back home as if nothing had happened.

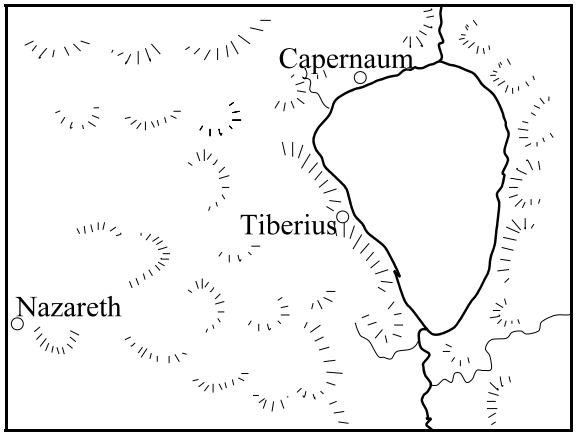
When you came in contact with Jesus, you could do one of two things. You could reject Him. Or you could follow Him. He did not allow a third option. And humanity ever since that time has been divided into those who have taken one of these two options.

Jesus called men to be His disciples. Indeed, His last words on earth would be an injunction to His followers to go forth and make disciples of all men. In this passage, we see the beginning of that call. It is a call to discipleship.

THE MESSAGE TO THE MULTITUDE

Now it came about that while the multitude were pressing around Him and listening to the word of God, He was standing by the lake of Gennesaret; 2 *and He saw two boats lying at the edge of the lake; but the fishermen had gotten out of them, and were washing their nets.*

And He got into one of the boats, which was Simon's, and asked him to put out a little way from the land. And He sat down and began teaching the multitudes from the boat. (Luke 5:1-3).



The scene is the Sea of Galilee. The name "Galilee" (literally, HaGalilee) means "the circle." The name probably reflects the circular shape of the lake. But Luke does not refer to it as the Sea of Galilee. He does not refer to it as a "sea" at all. Luke has had opportunity to travel throughout the ancient world and he has seen real seas. He cannot bring himself to call this small body of water a "sea." Instead he refers to it as *the lake of Gennesaret.* This seems to be a Greek rendition of an ancient name for this lake from the time when it was known as the Sea of Chinnereth (Numbers 34:11; Joshua 13:27). The waters of the Sea of Galilee lie 680 feet below sea level. The Sea measures some 13 miles from north to south and is surrounded by mountains. This ring of mountains is broken by the Jordan River in the south and in the north by a narrow gorge which winds its way 30 miles to the snow-capped heights of Mount Hermon.

Western shore of the Sea of Galilee

There was a saying among the Jews that went, "If you want to be spiritual, go to Jerusalem; if you want to be rich, go to Galilee." This is because Galilee enjoyed a booming economy. Fishermen plied its lake. Farms lay scattered across its rolling hills and upon the fields of Jezreel. It

was to this area that Jesus came to begin his ministry.

The morning sun has risen over the rolling hills and now the calm surface of the sea mirrors the serene reflection of several fishing boats drawn up to the shore. Most of the fishermen are sitting on the shore, washing their nets out after a long, fruitless night on the sea. On one of the boats, two brothers are laboring in the hot sun with a casting-net, throwing it out into the calm waters and drawing it back in as they fish for bait. Into this scene comes Jesus. The news goes out like wildfire through the small fishing community. In no time at all, a crowd has gathered.

1. An Open Parish: *The multitude were pressing around Him and listening to the word of God (5:1).*

   There was no microphone or public address system available. The larger the crowd got, the closer they were forced to pack together in order to hear the words that Jesus was speaking. As they pressed closer and closer, Jesus found Himself pressed back to the water's edge. Either He was going to have to walk on water (certainly not an impossibility for Him), or else He was going to need the use of a boat.

   He chose to use the boat. This is the way that God works with us. He does not need our abilities. He could just as easily spread the gospel and teach His people and comfort the sick and give to those in need through supernatural means. But He chose to use US and our abilities to do His work.

2. An Available Pulpit: *And He got into one of the boats, which was Simon's (5:3).*

   Simon was no stranger to Jesus. It had been nearly a year earlier that he had first met Jesus. His brother, Andrew had been a disciple of John the Baptist. Andrew had heard John point out Jesus as the Lamb of God and, from that point, he began to follow Jesus. Not content with this, Andrew had brought his brother Simon to the Lord.

   Peter had been present with Jesus when He turned the water into wine at the wedding feast of Cana. He had been involved in His ministry in Judea and he had baptized many. He had returned with Jesus through the land of the Samaritans and he had been with Him as He spoke to the woman at the well and he had participated in the harvest at Sychar. But now, as he returns with Jesus to Galilee, he assumes that his time on the mission field is completed. His tour of

duty is up. He has put his time in. Now he is ready to get back into the "real world." Now he is ready to retire.

He is about to learn an important lesson. Disciples do not retire. They may stop accepting money for their work, but there is no retirement from Christian service. it is an eternal commitment. If you are the servant of the Lord, then you are His for all eternity.

You see, our relationship with the Lord does not end when we trust in Christ as out Savior. It only begins there. At that moment, we enter into a new position. We are declared to be righteous. We are called sons of God. We become heirs of the kingdom. We are possessors of eternal life. We are holy — set apart for service to the Lord.

But with this magnificent position comes a great responsibility. As we have been declared to be righteous, so now we are to live a righteous life. As we have become sons of God, so now we are to live as befits a son of God. As we have become heirs of the kingdom, so now we pronounce the good news of that kingdom. As we have eternal life, so we now live to make our lives count for eternity. As we have been pronounced holy, so we are to live in service to our Lord and Master.

Thus it was not by chance that Jesus came to use Simon's boat on that morning by the sea. God had chosen him to do a special work. Peter does not yet know that he has been chosen. But very shortly, he will be called into service.

THE MASTER'S REQUEST

> *And when He had finished speaking, He said to Simon, "Put out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch."*
>
> *And Simon answered and said, "Master, we worked hard all night and caught nothing, but at Your bidding I will let down the nets." (Luke 5: 4-5).*

I think that I know what Jesus was speaking on that day. I am certain that He was speaking concerning repentance in light of the coming kingdom. How do I know that? Because that is what He was always speaking on. That was the thrust of His ministry. Peter had already heard this message. He had heard it for the last six or eight months. He had seen miracles to back it up.

I wonder if he felt just a bit uneasy as he sat there that day listening

to Jesus. Was the Holy Spirit already convicting him, preparing his heart for what was about to happen?

Finally, the sermon was finished. As the crowd began to disperse, Jesus turned to Simon and suggested that they go fishing.

1. The Nature of the Request: *He said to Simon, "Put out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch" (5:4).*

   This was no small request that Jesus was making. These men had just spent several hours washing their nets and drying them and arranging them so that they would he ready for use when they went out again. These nets were enormous. They would lay the net out in a large "U" pattern and then draw the two ends together and then draw it in, trapping the fish within.

   They have been fishing all night and have not caught anything. These men have only just come in from the sea. They are tired and hungry and discouraged. And now, Jesus is asking them to go right back out again.

2. A Positive Response: *Simon answered and said, "Master, we worked hard all night and caught nothing, but at Your bidding I will let down the nets" (5:5).*

   Peter's response is positive. It is one of obedience. He does not obey because he expects to see a miracle. I think that he obeys because he has grown to love Jesus and he wants to please Him. We should notice that his response is whole-hearted. He does not try to compromise with the Lord. He does not try to offer Jesus something less in return. He does not suggest that they only use the small casting net that he and Andrew have been using (Matthew 4:18).

   He does exactly what Jesus asks. He and his brother and the rest of the crew of the boat move out into the deep water and begin the arduous task of spreading out the long net in a wide arc.

THE MIRACULOUS CATCH

And when they had done this, they enclosed a great quantity of fish; and their nets began to break; 7 and they signaled to their partners in the other boat, for them to come and help them. And they came, and filled both of the boats, so

that they began to sink. (Luke 5:6-7).

The miraculous nature of this catch is evidenced by the fact that these same men had used these same nets from this same boat all the previous night without catching a single fish. The fishermen hadn't changed. The boat hadn't changed. They were using the same net and they were fishing in the same sea. The only difference was that Jesus was now in the boat.

Christian ministry is like that. We can build a lofty organization, speak words of eloquence, develop a set system of training, and still never accomplish anything of true significance. It is the Lord who builds a ministry.

These were professional fishermen. This is what they did for a living. They were experienced in the art of catching fish. But they were absolutely helpless without the blessing of the Lord.

1. The Size of the Catch: *They enclosed a great quantity of fish (5:6).*

   It was a simple matter for the God who formed the oceans and who filled them with life in a single day to direct several thousand fish into the nets of these fishermen.

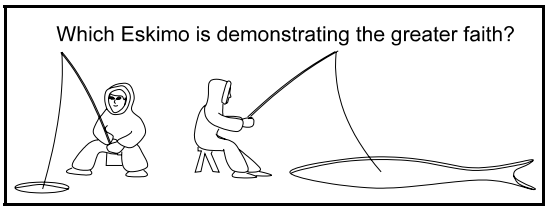
   But this raises a question. Why did the Lord bring about this miracle? Was it because He wanted to see Simon's fishing business prosper? Was it merely to supply a physical need? I don't think so. The primary reason was to teach Simon and the others something about who Jesus is. Only God has this kind of power over nature that can tell hundreds of fish to climb into a net and have them obey. This miracle, as well as every other miracle that Jesus performed while He was on earth, served this same purpose. That is why miracles were given. They were His credentials. He didn't have an identification card with "Messiah" stamped on it. The only way that they could possibly come to know that He was really the promised Messiah sent from God was by listening to His words and watching His miracles. Every miracle that He performed was an open declaration that He was sent from God.

2. The Disciples' Readiness for the Catch: *They signaled to their partners in the other boat... And they came, and filled both of the boats, so that they began to sink (5:7).*

   It seems as though the other boat that is described here had not been placed in a position where it could gather the fish from the net. It is possible that this other boat had been left back on shore. It

may have stayed behind while Peter launched his boat out into deep water with Jesus.

If this is the case, then it tells me something about Peter's attitude. It tells me that he was acting from obedience, but not from faith. He was doing what Jesus told him to do out of respect for the Lord, but he really didn't expect to catch anything. After all, Jesus was only a carpenter. He did not have Peter's experience in fishing. True, He knew a great deal about spiritual matters, but fishing was a little out of His line.



And so, Peter was not prepared for the full catch that now entered his net. Maybe he thought that the Lord might bring a few fish his way, but he was totally unprepared for- a catch of this magnitude.

Before we so quickly judge Peter, perhaps we need to examine our own lives. How often do we limit our prayers in order to make things "easier for God." How often do we pray for something, but then make no preparation to receive it? If you pray for rain, do you remember to bring an umbrella?

The result of this miracle was that both boats were filled to the point where they were on the verge of sinking. Indeed, had they not come back to shore with their load of fish, they eventually would have been sitting on the bottom of the Sea of Galilee.

There is a vital lesson here for us to learn. It is that the Lord is able to bless more abundantly than we can ever guess. What does He require of us? Obedience. Obedience in the face of circumstances that make it look as though no blessing is in sight. Obedience even after a long fruitless night of toil out on a lonely sea. Obedience even in the area of our secular employment. Obedience in all things.

THE MANDATE TO THE DISCIPLES

But when Simon Peter saw that, he fell down at Jesus' feet, saying, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!"

For amazement had seized him and all his companions because of the catch of fish which they had taken; 9 and so also James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. And Jesus said to Simon, "Do not fear, from now on you will be catching men."

And when they had brought their boats to land, they left everything and followed Him. (Luke 5:8-11).

The miracle of the great catch of fish resulted in more than financial prosperity for these fishermen. It brought about a change in their lives. This is seen especially on the part of Peter.

There is an interesting comparison to be made in Peter's reaction here with that of Isaiah when he has his vision of heaven (Isaiah 6:1-10). In both cases, they come to see their sinful condition and testify of it in a graphic pronouncement. In both cases, they are subsequently given a commission to preach the gospel.

1. A Confession of Sinfulness:

Simon Peter... fell down at Jesus' feet, saying, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!" (5:8).

Simon Peter had been brought face to face with the power of God and it really shook him up. While it is true that he had just witnessed the healing of his mother-in-law in the previous chapter and had likely witnessed other similar miracles, this particular miracle had a special impact on his life.I think that it was because this particular miracle took place within the realm of that in which Peter considered himself to be a specialist — in the realm of fishing.

What was Peter's response? It was an admission of his own guilt as a sinner. It was an admission of his own unworthiness to be a disciple of Jesus. And it was a recognition of the holy and righteous character of Jesus.

This is what the Lord requires of all who would come to Him. They must admit their own guilt. They must see that they stand condemned before God as a guilty sinner. They must also see the results of that sin of which they are guilty. They must realize that the wages of sin is death. They must see that they are unworthy to be used by God as a result of their sin. And finally, they must recognize the holy character of Jesus. They must come to the realization that Jesus was no mere man. He was not just a good teacher. He was the Son of God. Only if He was God in the flesh did He have power to take our sins away and give us eternal life.

Everyone who would come to God must come in this same way. There must be a realization that there is a need for salvation

and that this need is met in Jesus.

2. A Converted Profession: *And Jesus said to Simon, "Do not fear, from now on you will be catching men" (5:10).*

Peter is now changing professions. In the past he has been a fisherman. Now, he will fish for men. His tools have been the net and the boat. Now they will be the Word of God and the Holy Spirit. He has been catching in order to kill. Now he will he catching in order to impart life.

	Peter's Former Life	**Peter's New Life**
Profession	A fisher of fish	A fisher of men
Tool of his Trade	Net and boat	Word of God and Holy Spirit
Purpose	Catching to kill	Catching to impart life

Now I want you to notice something. Peter and his companions were totally unqualified for the job of catching men. Although there are some similarities between fishing for fish and fishing for men, the two professions are really very different. These men knew all about catching fish. They knew nothing about catching men. They were totally unqualified for the job at hand.

This teaches me something about the kind of man that God uses. He uses unqualified men. That is the only kind of man that God ever uses. And that means that He can use me. And that means that He can use you.

3. A Complete Commitment: *They left everything and followed Him (5:11).*

I want you to notice that there was a cost involved in following Jesus. There was a cost involved in becoming one who catches men. It cost them everything. These men left their boats, their nets, their fish and their families to follow Jesus. This is the cost of discipleship. It is the cost of one who fishes for men. The cost is the same for every believer.

> *"So therefore, no one of you can be My disciple who does not give up all his own possessions." (Luke 14:33).*

If you want to follow Jesus, then you must do so on His terms. He demands nothing less than total commitment. The cost is high. The cost is everything that you have and everything that you are. It involves giving up the person that you are to become the person that God is going to make you.

This takes faith. These men had already believed in the Lord. Their faith had been growing for several months. They had seen the miracle at Cana and had believed. They had seen Jesus turn the moneychangers out of the temple and they had believed. They had heard the words of Jesus and they had believed. But now they are confronted with a new question. Are they willing to trust the Lord for the care of their families while they leave to follow Christ?

They believed. They saw that the One who had supplied such a tremendous catch of fish could be relied upon to care for their needs and the needs of their families. And so, they left everything and they followed Him. As we see them go, we would do well to remember the words of Os Guinness:

> Jesus is not a "religious leader" but Lord of all of life. Responding to his call touches the world of fishing as well as preaching, the depths of the lake, not just the shore. All that we are, all that we do, all that we have, and even all that we think and dream is called into question by this demand. (1998:158).

CLEANSING A LEPER
LUKE 5:12-16

There was no more feared disease in the ancient world than that of leprosy. Our word "leprosy" is taken from the Greek word *lepros*, which comes from a root describing a scale or an incrustation. The Hebrew word for leprosy (*Tsara'ath*) comes from a root word meaning "to scourge or strike." Most of the classical writers agreed that leprosy originated in Egypt. Perhaps the Israelites brought it with them when they came out of Egypt in the Exodus. Leprosy has been found in at least one mummy.

Leprosy is a disease which attacks the nervous system. In its early stages, it produces a numbing of the fingers and the toes. Once you lose all sensation, you can rub your extremities right off without realizing it. In his fictional book *Lord Foul's Bane*, Stephen Donaldson gives a graphic representation of a man in the advanced stages of leprosy:

> His hands were swollen stumps, fingerless stumps of pink, sick meat marked by cracks and ulcerations from which a yellow exudation oozed through the medication. They hung on thin, hooped arms like awkward sticks. And even though his legs were covered by his hospital pajamas, they looked like gnarled wood. Half of one foot was gone, gnawed away, and in the place of the other was nothing but an unhealable wound. His dull, cataractal eyes sat in his face as if they were the center of an eruption. The skin of his cheeks was as white-pink as an albino's; it bulged and poured away from his eyes in waves, runnulets, as if it had been heated to the melting point; and these waves were edged with the tubercular nodules." (1977:15).

I didn't give you that quotation merely for its shock value. I had a very specific reason. I want you to see how God views sin. You see, leprosy was the most graphic illustration that there was of sin. Sin defiles the whole body. Sin is ugly and loathsome. It is incurable. It contaminates the entire

body. And it brings about eventual death. There was a terrible stigma connected to leprosy. The leper was excluded from worship within the temple. He was shunned by his family and friends. When traveling down a road, he was required to call out, "Unclean! Unclean!"

A HUMBLE REQUEST

> *While He was in one of the cities, behold, there was a man covered with leprosy; and when he saw Jesus, he fell on his face and implored Him, saying, "Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean." (Luke 5:12).*

Jesus has been going from city to city throughout Galilee, teaching crowds of people. Suddenly, from the back of one such crowd, there is a commotion. There are shouts of surprise and disgust as the people surge apart and give way before a hooded figure. Mutterings of "Dirty leper!" move through the crowd.

As the people move back, giving the afflicted figure a wide berth, Jesus stands His ground. Instead of hatred or fear, an expression of compassion crosses His features. The leper comes forward and makes his request.

1. Notice the Humility of the Request.

   He did not demand a healing. Neither did he complain that it was unfair that he was afflicted in this way. He did not talk about his civil rights. He only stated a fact. He said that Jesus was able to heal him. This brings us to our second observation.

2. Notice the Faith of the Request.

   This man came in faith. His words indicate that he was confident that Jesus was able to heal him. The question is not a matter of the ability of Jesus, but rather of the will of Jesus.

3. Notice the Lordship reflected in the Request.

   The leper came and fell upon his face. He took a position of worship (Matthew's account says that he worshiped Jesus). It is popular among certain Christian circles to teach that you need to

claim you healing and that, if you have enough faith, you will be healed. This man had faith. But his faith did not negate the Lordship of the healer. The issue to him was not whether Jesus could heal, but whether He would heal.

This man's leprosy gave him the gift of insight. He saw in a short time that which would take Peter several years to see. He saw that Jesus was the Christ. Abraham Lincoln told a story of how he was plowing a field when his brother happened by and noticed that there was a horsefly on the flank of the mule, biting him. The brother reached out and flicked off the horsefly. Lincoln asked, "What did you do that for? That horsefly was the only thing making this mule go." Sometimes it takes the bite of a horsefly to make a mule go. And sometimes it takes the bite of affliction to bring us to God.

My most intense prayers have been in the times of deepest need. It is when I have been knocked flat on my back that I begin to look up. The truth is that we just won't go to Jesus apart from the leprosy.

A HEALING TOUCH

> *And He stretched out His hand and touched him, saying, "I am willing; be cleansed." And immediately the leprosy left him. (Luke 5:13).*

Luke is very specific to note that Jesus *stretched out His hand and touched him.* You cannot know the full impact of what this meant to a Jew without growing up in a Jewish culture. To touch a leper meant that you could no longer enter into the temple to worship.

Jesus touched him. He was probably the first non-leper to have touched him since he had contacted the disease. What is more, Jesus didn't have to touch him. Jesus could have healed this man without touching him. Elsewhere in the New Testament, we read of Him healing a royal official's son from a distance of 18 miles. He could have simply said the words and this man's leprosy would have vanished. But instead, He reached out and He touched him.

That is what the incarnation is all about. It is the pure and holy God who reached down to touch our dirty world and to walk our dirty streets and to die on our dirty cross. It is about touching. If we are going to change our world for Christ, we need to be incarnational. We need to reach out and touch someone with the love of Jesus..

Jesus did not become unclean. Instead, the leper became clean. When we touch a disease, we become contaminated. When He touched a disease, the disease went away.

This tells me something about Jesus. No matter how bad you are, you can't get Jesus dirty when you come to Him. You can't shock Jesus. He has seen it all. He knows how bad you really are. He knows all of those secret sins. And He is compassionate and able to make you clean.

Furthermore, Luke tells us that the healing was immediate — *And immediately the leprosy left him.* This was not a gradual healing process in which there was a slow remission of the disease. It was immediate and sudden. One moment the man was full of leprosy and the next moment there was not a bit of the disease left.

A COMMAND TO SILENCE

> *And He ordered him to tell no one, "But go and show yourself to the priest and make an offering for your cleansing, just as Moses commanded, as a testimony to them." (Luke 5:14).*

Now Jesus gives this man a command. The command is just the opposite of what we would have expected. We would have expected to hear Jesus say, "Now I want you to go out and tell everyone you see the good news of the power of God. Bear witness of Me to all of the nations that you were a leper and that now you have been healed." Instead, Jesus gives the man a very different command. Actually, there are two.

- He is to say nothing to anyone.
- As he continues to say nothing, he is to travel down to Jerusalem to the temple and show himself to the priest.

Why is he to go to the priest? Because this man is going to be a personal witness to the high priesthood in Jerusalem. There was a very specific ritual that was prescribed in the Old Testament Scriptures which dealt with what you do when a man is healed of leprosy.

> *Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying,*
> *"This shall be the law of the leper in the day of his cleansing. Now he shall be brought to the priest.* 3 *And the*

priest shall look, and if the infection of leprosy has been healed in the leper, 4 then the priest shall give orders to take two live clean birds and cedar wood and a scarlet string and hyssop for the one who is to be cleansed." (Leviticus 14:1-4).

The passage goes on to relate very specific rituals through which a man was required to go in order to be brought back into the worship of the temple. This formula had not been utilized for over a thousand years. The last recorded instance of a Jewish person being healed of leprosy had been that of Miriam, sister to Moses.

Can you imagine the priests being confronted by this man? They have to go in and dust off the scroll of Leviticus which deals with the Law of the Leper. They remember studying this passage in rabbinical school, but they haven't had any need to refer to it since graduation. And so, they must brush up on the prescribed rituals.

They will check him thoroughly and they will pronounce him clean of any infection. And then, their curiosity will get the better of them and they will ask him how he came to be cleansed of this dreaded disease. And they will learn that they have just confirmed the power of Jesus by their own testimony.

A SPREADING NEWS

But the news about Him was spreading even farther, and large crowds were gathering to hear Him and to be healed of their sicknesses.

But Jesus Himself would often slip away to the wilderness and pray. (Luke 5:15-16).

In spite of the exhortation of Jesus not to spread the word of this healing, it was spread anyway. Part of this was because it is always difficult to suppress the dynamic. But there is also another reason. Mark's account lets us know that it was because the healed leper did not obey the words of Jesus.

But he went out and began to proclaim it freely and to spread the news around, to such an extent that Jesus could no longer publicly enter a city, but stayed out in unpopulated areas; and they were coming to Him from everywhere. (Mark 1:45).

This man has a decision to make. Is he going to be obedient to Jesus and to the Mosaic Law? Or is he going to do what feels right? Moses commanded that if a leper were cleansed, he must go through this very specific ritual. Jesus did not come to destroy the law, but rather to fulfill it. Jesus commanded the man in accordance with the Mosaic Law. The man responded in zeal and excitement and a willingness to spread the news of the work of God. Unfortunately, he also responded in disobedience.

There is a lesson here. It is that zeal and excitement and enthusiasm are no substitute for obedience. When you do God's work, you need to do it in God's way. And if you don't do God's work in God's way, then you aren't doing God's work.

The result of this man's disobedience had an impact upon the ministry of Jesus. It meant that *"Jesus could no longer publicly enter a city, but stayed out in unpopulated areas."* The synagogue ministry of Jesus was stopped for a time. We live in an age of situational ethics. You are often tempted to do a wrong thing in order to bring about a right result. But it is never right to do wrong. Christian ethics are hardly ever situational; and when they are, it is the situation which is wrong, not the ethics.

HEALING THE PARALYTIC
LUKE 5:17-26

The clock in the back of the big church was well-known for its inability to keep time accurately. Sometimes it would go too fast, and other times it would go too slow. People were always fiddling with the hands of the clock, pushing them ahead or pulling them back. Finally the preacher placed a sign over the clock which read, "Don't blame the hands, the trouble lies deeper."

There are a lot of problems in the world today, but the real reason lies deeper than all of the outward circumstances. The problem with the world today can be summed up in one word: Sin.

What is sin? The Bible defines sin as that which misses the mark of God's perfection. The Westminster Catechism says that sin is *any want of conformity to or transgression of the law of God*. It is that which is contrary to the holiness and the justice of God. It is missing the standard of righteousness set forth by a holy and just God.

One of the most distinctive things about Christianity is that it claims that sins can be forgiven. This is the life-blood of the Christian message. This is the message that was presented by Jesus. And this is the message set forth in this chapter.

SETTING FOR A SIGN

> *One day He was teaching; and there were some Pharisees and teachers of the law sitting there, who had come from every village of Galilee and Judea and from Jerusalem; and the power of the Lord was present for Him to perform healing. (Luke 5:17).*

In the previous verses, Luke describes how Jesus healed a leper by touching him. The news of that miracle had been spread

Matthew and Mark both relate this same incident, but only Luke mentions that Jesus was **teaching** at the time.

abroad to the point that people are coming from all over to see Jesus, to hear him teach, to see a possible miracle, and in some cases, to be healed.

They were not only coming from the villages of Galilee, but also from as far away as Judea and Jerusalem. This was a distance of 70 miles as the crow flies and they were not crows. They would have had to come the long way, following the popular route down to Jericho and up the banks of the Jordan River. They had come a long way to see and hear Jesus and they were not going to be disappointed.

<table>
<tr><th>Luke 5:1-11</th><th>Luke 5:12-16</th><th>Luke 5:17-26</th><th>Luke 5:27-39</th></tr>
<tr><td>Jesus calls Peter to follow Him</td><td colspan="2">Healing Miracle</td><td rowspan="2">Jesus calls Matthew to follow Him</td></tr>
<tr><td>Miracle of the catch of fish</td><td>Jesus heals a leper</td><td>Jesus heals a paralyzed man</td></tr>
<tr><td>Issue: Follow Me</td><td>Issue: Touching the unclean</td><td>Issue: Your sins are forgiven</td><td>Issue: Socializing with sinners</td></tr>
</table>

Each of these instances is spotlighting Jesus as the Lord, the One who...

- Rules nature and therefore must be followed.
- Can cleanse the unclean.
- Can forgive sins.
- Comes to call sinners to repent.

A SICK MAN AND SOME STUBBORN SEEKERS

> *And some men were carrying on a bed a man who was paralyzed; and they were trying to bring him in and to set him down in front of Him.*
>
> *But not finding any way to bring him in because of the crowd, they went up on the roof and let him down through the tiles with his stretcher, into the middle of the crowd, in front of Jesus. (Luke 5:18-19).*

As Jesus is teaching within the house, there comes down the street

four men. They are carrying a portable bed on which lies a man. He has a debilitating medical condition. He is paralyzed. The Greek text says that he was παραλελυμενος (*paralelumenos* - the perfect passive participle of παραλελυομαι). This is a compound word made up from the joining of two Greek roots together.

- Para (παρα): Along side.
- Luo (λυο): To loosen or destroy.

The resulting compound was a general word describing one who had lost control of his body (see Hebrews 12:12 for a figurative use when describing *"the knees that are FEEBLE"*). This man could have been the victim of a stroke or some type of nerve disorder.

I cannot read this passage without thinking of my own father who suffered for years from a loss of bodily motor control. He could not walk. He could not dress himself. His disability reached the point prior to his death where he could not feed himself. He was totally dependent upon others to care for him.

This man was in the same predicament. He could not even go to Jesus without help. And so, his friends had placed him upon this pallet and had bound him securely in place so that he would not fall off and hurt himself.

Their excitement mounts as they move through the city streets and approach the house where Jesus is. But their anticipation is dampened somewhat as they reach the house and find people already packed at the doorway, straining to hear the words of the Master within.

1. These men dared to do the difficult.

> It was not easy to bring this man to the Lord. They had to carry both him as well as his bed. And when they found the doorway blocked, they had to carry him up an outside stairway to the roof. I know what it is like to maneuver a litter up narrow stairs. I worked for many years in the fire-rescue arena. I know what it is like to lower a patient on a stretcher without dropping him onto the floor. These are difficult tasks. Yet these men did not quit. It isn't easy to bring someone to Jesus. In fact, it is often difficult. But the rewards are worth the effort.

2. They dared to do the unorthodox.

It was not customary in that day to do what they did any more than it would be an acceptable action today. The acceptable thing would have been for them to wait outside until the crowd dispersed. The action they took was completely out of the ordinary.

The remarkable thing is that Jesus never rebuked them, either for their interruption of His teaching or for the damage to the roof. He seems to have approved of their unorthodox methods.

How about you? Are you so tied into the status quo that you are bound to doing things "because we've always done it that way"? Nothing is more deadly in a church than such an attitude.

3. They dared to do the costly.

Somebody was going to have to pay for roof repairs (I doubt that the homeowner's policy covered it). And that somebody was going to be those four men. When you do something for Christ, it will cost.

Imagine the surprise of those within the house. They are sitting and standing wall-to-wall to hear Jesus. He has been speaking to them of sin and repentance and the kingdom of God. Suddenly, there is a noise above their heads and a portion of the ceiling is removed. They look up to see several faces staring back down. The hole in the ceiling widens and then, a pallet is lowered to the floor. On it lies a man. He may not even have been able to speak. We are not told that he made any request. He has only been placed at the feet of Jesus.

We probably should not imagine the cutting of a hole in a wooden roof so that those beneath were exposed to falling debris and sawdust, but rather the removal of thatch and perhaps some boards.

We are like that man. We have been paralyzed with sin. It affects everything that we do and everything that we say. We are helpless in its grip. The only way that we can even come to Jesus is in a state of complete helplessness. We must be brought. And we have been brought. We have been brought by the ministry of the Holy Spirit. And we have also been brought through the ministry of the bearers of the bed.

If you have come to Christ and have received spiritual healing in the forgiveness of your sins, then you have been given this commission. You have been called to be a bearer of the bed. You have been commissioned to bring other helpless people to Jesus. You may not have to dig through someone else's ceiling to do it. But it will take effort. And it will require you to do the unorthodox. And it will cost.

A STARTLING STATEMENT

> *Seeing their faith, He said, "Friend, your sins are forgiven you." (Luke 5:20).*

In those days, there was something of a social stigma against anyone who was afflicted with a disease. It was a common feeling of that day that if you were sick or suffering with some disease, it was because of some sin in your life. You remember the time that Jesus was in the temple with His disciples and they saw a man who had been blind from birth.

> *And as He passed by, He saw a man blind from birth.*
> *2 And His disciples asked Him, saying, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he should be born blind?" (John 9:1-2).*

The disciples thought that someone must have sinned to cause this blindness. They were right to a certain extent. There is a sense in which all disease and sickness in the world is caused by sin. It has come about because of that first sin in the Garden of Eden. If there were no sin, then there would be no sickness and no disease. However, this does not mean that everyone who becomes sick is sick because of some specific sin in their life.

That was the mistake Job's friends made. They saw that he was sick and that bad things had happened to him and so they went to him and advised him to confess the hidden sin in his life. Job responded, "I haven't done anything!" If you read through the rest of the story, you will find that God ultimately came and rebuked the three friends of Job for their baseless accusations against him.

Here is the principle. Bad things don't necessarily happen to someone just because they have been bad. And the corollary to that principle is just as true - that good things don't happen to people just because they are good.

Nevertheless, the ultimate reason that suffering and pain and sickness and death are in the world today is because of sin. Thus as Jesus moves to minister to the needs of this man, He first moves to the root of his problem - his sin.

He says in verse 5, *"My son, your sins are forgiven."* This is the reason that Jesus came to the earth. It was so that He could provide a way of forgiveness of sins. A righteous God cannot allow sin to go unpunished. We wouldn't think too much of a judge who had a murderer or a rapist brought

into his court if he said, "Well, I know that you are guilty, but I want to be a nice guy and so I am going to let you go." Such a judge would be unjust.

God is not an unjust judge. He came forth with a plan that would provide a just judgment for sin, and yet still provide salvation for men. That plan was the cross. When Jesus died upon the cross, it was as our substitute. He died in our place and suffered the penalty that we deserved. And because of that, Jesus could say to this man, "Your sins are forgiven." This brings us to a problem. Only God can forgive sins.

THE QUESTION OF THE SKEPTICS

> *The scribes and the Pharisees began to reason, saying, "Who is this man who speaks blasphemies? Who can forgive sins, but God alone?" (Luke 5:21).*

There are two groups who are spotlighted here as manifesting their skepticism over the words of Jesus.

- The scribes were those whose duty it was to copy the Scriptures. In verse 17 Luke described them as *the teachers of the Law*. They were entrusted with the Law of God. They thought of themselves as guardians of the truth. And they took their duties very seriously. This is why they had come to hear Jesus. They wanted to see if He was speaking the truth. They wanted to make certain that His ministry was in compliance with the Law of God.
- The Pharisees were the spiritual conservatives of the day. They rejected the liberalism of the Sadducees, holding instead to the inspiration and authority of all of Scripture. They believed in angels. They believed in the supernatural. They believed in a future resurrection. And they were right to believe in all those things.

To tell you the truth, I find myself identifying with these men. They loved the word of God and they hated false teaching. They had stood firm against all of the false religions of a pagan world. And when they heard a man saying, "Your sins are forgiven," it bothered them because they knew that only God is able to forgive sins. They were familiar with the words of the Lord as recorded in the prophet Isaiah.

> *"I, even I, am the one who wipes out your*

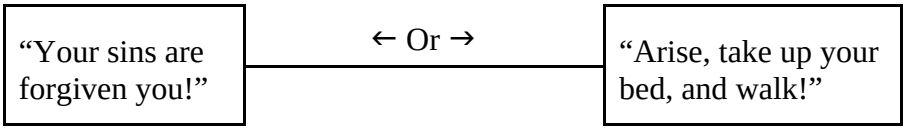
transgressions for My own sake; and I will not remember your sins." (Isaiah 43:25).

These Scriptures were right. Only God can forgive sins. And for a mere man to say what Jesus was saying is blasphemy. Don't miss this! You cannot listen to what Jesus has just said and conclude that He is only a good man. He is either committing gross blasphemy or else He is the Lord. There is no other choice.

A QUESTION OF AUTHORITY

But Jesus, aware of their reasonings, answered and said to them, "Why are you reasoning in your hearts? 23 Which is easier, to say, 'Your sins have been forgiven you,' or to say, 'Get up and walk'? 24 But, so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins," He said to the paralytic, "I say to you, get up, and pick up your stretcher and go home." (Luke 5:22-24).

We are not told that these scribes and Pharisees spoke their thoughts or voiced their disapproval. But it made no difference to Jesus. He could read their hearts. This is something else that only God can do. Jesus asks them a question. It is a question regarding the easier of two feats.



This is a rhetorical question. The truth is that neither is easier. Both are equally impossible for men to do. Both are possible only with God. On the other hand, it is possible for a man to claim that he can forgive sins when you can't prove whether or not it had really come to pass.

It is for this reason - that there might be evidence of the forgiveness of sins - that Jesus healed this man of his physical ailment. By doing the visible, He proves that he has the power to do the invisible. There is an interesting contrast between the healing of this man versus the healing of the leper just a few verses earlier.

Luke 5:12-16	Luke 5:17-26
Healing of the leper.	Healing of the paralytic.
His disease made him unclean.	His disease made him helpless.
He came to Jesus.	His friends brough him to Jesus.
He voiced his faith.	His friends demonstrated their faith.
Jesus told him to go and show the priest.	Jesus told him to take up his pallet and walk.

A SENSATIONAL CURE

> *Immediately he got up before them, and picked up what he had been lying on, and went home glorifying God.*
>
> *They were all struck with astonishment and began glorifying God; and they were filled with fear, saying, "We have seen remarkable things today." (Luke 5:25-26).*

The scribes have not said a word. Nobody has spoken except Jesus. Now He tells the man on the pallet to stand up. Suddenly the man moves. He rises from his cot on sturdy legs, picks up his cot, and makes his way from the crowded room. The crowd opens up around him in amazement. Outside, his four friends meet him. He doesn't even need their help in carrying his bed. Where before there had been skepticism and unbelief, now there is a sense of amazement and awe.

There is a principle here. It is that People will always laugh at what we say until they are amazed at what we do. It will only be as they see evidence of the supernatural lived out in our lives that they will be touched. What is there in your life that can only be explained in terms of the supernatural? If you can't think of anything, then go to the Lord and ask Him for a miracle in your life.

LEGAL LIABILITIES
LUKE 5:27-39

Imagine going to a doctor's office seeking to be treated for flu symptoms, but when you get there, you instead find a sign on the door. It reads: "Due to recent changes in the HMO policy, this office will no longer treat patients who are sick. If you are not ill, we will continue to treat you as before." Sounds rather silly, doesn't it? After all, if you don't like to be around sick people, then you shouldn't be a doctor.

Every so often I run into someone who tells me that he doesn't go to church because it is full of hypocrites. My standard answer is to reply, "Don't let that stop you, we can always take one more." And then I go on to explain that a Christian isn't someone who claims to be better than everyone else, but rather, one who is willing to admit that he is a sinner and is in need of a savior.

Too many people today have the idea that religion is just for good people. But Christianity is for bad people who realize that they cannot approach a holy God on the basis of their own merit. That is the type of person we are going to see in this section.

It has been said that Jesus had a tendency to make hamburgers out of sacred cows. He was never afraid to upset the status quo. He touched an untouchable and had an afternoon conversation with a woman of ill repute. In this section He does the same.

This passage and the surrounding passages are organized into a large chiastic parallel which features a number of questions and answers. At the pivotal centerpoint of this series of parallels will be two parables about things old and new. Both parables will be talking about the same thing, but you will not understand the parables unless you have been following the events that lead up to them and which lead away from them.

Notice that this section will begin and will end with Jesus showing mercy and compassion and in both cases the scribes and the Pharisees will be ready with a complaint.

Levi called.
Scribes & Pharisees ask: "Why eat & drink with sinners"
Jesus answers: "I have come to call sinners to repentance."

Jesus' disciples & Pharisees: "Why not fast?"
Jesus: Example of attendants of a bridegroom (5:34-35).

Parable: Old cloth on new garment (5:36).

Parable: Old wine in new wineskins (5:37-39).

Jesus' disciple & Pharisees: "Why pick grain on Sabbath?"
Jesus: Example of David (6:3-5).

Man with a withered hand.
Pharisees watching Jesus to see what He would do.
Jesus asks: "Is in lawful to heal on the Sabbath"? (6:9).

The common theme throughout this entire section is the legalism of the scribes and Pharisees contrasted with the grace presented by Jesus. To use our earlier analogy, the Pharisees did not want to be around a doctor. Why? Because they did not think that they were sick.

THE CALL OF LEVI

> *After that He went out and noticed a tax collector named Levi sitting in the tax booth, and He said to him, "Follow Me."*
>
> *And he left everything behind, and got up and began to follow Him. (Luke 5:27-28).*

It is no accident that the call of Levi takes place on the heels of the healing of the paralytic. All three of the Synoptic accounts give this same order of events. All three describe the healing of the paralyzed man and then immediately follow it up with the call of Levi. There is a reason for this. It is by way of a contrast. The contrast is between those who did not follow Christ versus this one man who did.

You remember the miracle. Jesus had been teaching before a packed house. The scribes and the Pharisees were present as was nearly everyone else in town. Even the standing room taken. Four men had brought a paralytic to be healed. When they could not approach Jesus because of the

crowds, they had gone up onto the roof and had broken up the roof and had lowered the man down. And Jesus had healed the man. This man who had been unable to even move had stood up, thrown his stretcher over one shoulder, and had jogged back home.

There was a response to that miracle. The negative response was on the part of the scribes who sat and reasoned in their hearts. But the positive response is seen in a sinful tax collector.

1. Levi.

This man had both a Jewish name and a Greek name. His Hebrew name was Levi. This was a name with a tremendous heritage. He had been named after one of the sons of Jacob. If was from the tribe of Levi that the priesthood was descended.

He also had a Greek name, mentioned in Matthew 9:9. His Greek name was "Matthew" (Gift of God"). He might have taken this name after his conversion.

I imagine that when Levi was born his parents had high hopes for him. Perhaps he would be a rabbi or a scribe. But somewhere along the way he went astray and he became a tax collector.

2. A Tax Collector.

As Levi is introduced to us, he is sitting at his tax booth. Tax-collectors don't necessarily rate at the top of my list of favorite people, but they do not have the stigma today that they had in that day.

Levi was not merely working for the I.R.S. He was an agent for the Romans. He had purchased a franchise from the Roman government which gave him the authority to collect taxes within this district. He was working for the very people who had subjugated his country.

His contract with Rome required that he collect a certain amount of taxes. Anything over that amount he could keep for himself. This meant that he made a profit by overcharging people on their taxes. There was a great deal of abuse involved. He took bribes from the rich and he extorted money from the poor. He was hated by everyone. He was considered to be a turncoat - a traitor to his country. The only people who would have anything to do with him were other tax collectors and prostitutes. He was excluded from the synagogue and the temple. He was forbidden to speak in a court of law. His word would not be believed. There were two types of tax

collectors. They were both hated, but one was despised even more than the other.

a. The first was the general tax collector. He collected three general taxes.

(1) A land tax on property.
(2) An income tax on earnings.
(3) A poll tax that everyone had to pay for the privilege of living in a country that was ruled by Rome.

b. The second type of tax collector was the way-side collector. He was able to collect taxes on imports and exports, on anything bought or sold, on roads, bridges and harbors. He could even invent taxes. He might charge a tax on the axles on your wagon, the number of wheels on your cart, or on your animals. He could even charge a pedestrian tax if he saw you walking on a road. He could tax the fish you caught and he even had the right to open your packages or private letters to see if they dealt with any business that might be taxed. The abuses were unlimited.

Levi was this second type of tax collector. And as Jesus comes up, he is sitting by the road, waiting for people to come by so that he could tax them.

3. A Call to Follow.

If I were looking for a qualified man to be a disciple of Jesus, to be one of His biographers and to be one of the preachers of the gospel, I never would have considered Levi. But then, I probably wouldn't have considered you, either. Or me. If you can find one sufficient reason for Jesus calling you to Himself, then you haven't understood what it means to be called by Him.

There were a lot of surprised people that day. The crowd was surprised. And the disciples were surprised. But the most surprised person of all must have been Levi.

4. A Motivated Response: *And he left everything behind, and got up and began to follow Him (5:28).*

The call which Jesus gave to Levi was probably the shortest,

least motivated speech ever given to anyone except for one thing - Levi followed. Sometimes we forget about the supernatural power of the message that we preach. We get so involved in the packaging of that message that we forget the absolute power of the message itself.

> *For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. (Romans 1:16).*

James Rand, at the beginning of his career, worked as a salesman for a banking equipment firm. He went to see Frank Muntzy, a publisher and financier who was opening some banks in Washington and Baltimore. In their meeting, Rand was so persistent and so persuasive that Muntzy wrote him a letter of introduction and sent him to his Washington office.

Rand was so excited about his product that, by the time he got to the head of the Washington office, he forgot all about the letter. Exercising that same persistent zeal, he went on to sell $25,000 worth of bank equipment without ever once bringing out the letter. It was only when he got home that he remembered the letter and opened it. This is what it said: "Learn all you can from this man, but don't buy anything from him." We carry a letter from the Father and it is a positive letter. But sometimes we spend so much time trying to give our sales pitch that we forget to give the letter.

Levi's response was whole-hearted. He didn't stop to grab a few bags of gold. He didn't even try to talk to Jesus about helping to finance His ministry. He merely obeyed. Our problem is that we try to take all of our baggage with us when we follow Jesus.

> *Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance, and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us. (Hebrews 12:1).*

Did you ever see a track star carrying a suitcase? You don't win races when you carry baggage with you. The only way you win races is by getting rid of anything that slows you up. This is what Levi did. He had a great business going. All he did was sit around and take money from people. But he left it all to follow Jesus.

IN THE COMPANY OF SINNERS

> *And Levi gave a big reception for Him in his house; and there was a great crowd of tax collectors and other people who were reclining at the table with them.*
>
> *The Pharisees and their scribes began grumbling at His disciples, saying, "Why do you eat and drink with the tax collectors and sinners?"*
>
> *And Jesus answered and said to them, "It is not those who are well who need a physician, but those who are sick.* 32 *I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance." (Luke 5:29-32).*

Levi is so happy with his new life that he throws a big party. Jesus is the guest of honor. Invited to the party are all the friends of Levi. Of course, the only people who would attend a party at Levi's house would be tax collectors and other social outcasts. This was not the most socially acceptable group. These people were in a category known as "sinners."

Jesus was notorious for His tacky taste in friends. He ate with renegades and traitors. He spoke with prostitutes. It is one thing to pass out tracts to this kind of person, it is another thing to associate with them. Jesus was accused of being a drunk because He associated with drunks.

1. The Scribes and the Pharisees.

   We have already seen the scribes. They were the guardians of the law. It was their duty to make the handwritten copies of the Scriptures. The word "Pharisee" seems to be taken from a root that describes "the separated ones." The Pharisees were separatists. They were the Jewish equivalent of the Puritans. They were orthodox in their beliefs. They held to the Hebrew Scriptures and they attempted to obey the laws of God. They held the law in such high esteem that they had invented their own laws as a hedge around the law of God. And number one in their legal system was the separating themselves from anything or anyone who was sinful.

2. They Spoke to His Disciples.

   They did not go to Jesus with their criticisms. They have a sneaking suspicion that, if they do, Jesus will rebuke them. And so,

they will go behind His back to speak to His disciples. If they can't attack Jesus personally, then they will attack His disciples. Satan does this today. He really wants to attack Jesus, but Jesus is too difficult a target. So he goes after you instead.

3. Their Question: *"Why is He eating and drinking with tax collectors and sinners?"* I don't think that they were really trying to find an answer to this question. This is really a rebuke.

   - "Why on earth is He doing that?"
   - "How could He think of doing such a thing?"
   - "Isn't He more spiritual than that?"

4. The Answer of Jesus: *"It is not those who are healthy who need a physician, but those who are sick; I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners."*

   Jesus uses the analogy of a doctor. Healthy people don't need a doctor. They do not make hospitals for healthy people. You don't get up in the morning and say, "My, I'm feeling good this morning! I think that I shall go check into the Emergency Room."

   This is an indictment against the scribes and Pharisees. They are claiming that the tax-collectors and sinners are the sickest sort of people. By their own reasoning, it is these people who need a physician.

   The analogy is simple. It is the job of a physician to work with sick people. By the same token, it is the job of a forgiver to work with people who need forgiveness. Jesus went to people who had the deepest need.

   The words of Jesus are a rebuke. If effect, He is asking, "Are you a doctor who has no desire to cure the sick? Are you a physician who only accepts appointments with healthy people?" They have come to point out the disease, but they want nothing to do with the cure. They thought that their job ended with the delivery of a diagnosis.

   All too often, this thinking has invaded the church. We see churches which have doctors who don't want to treat sick people. Can you imagine going to a hospital and having them say, "You can't come in here! This place is only for people who have overcome their sicknesses. You go home and get healthy and then you can come back."

The church is supposed to be a place where you come to find help for your hurts. It is the place where you can find strength for your weaknesses. And it is the place where you find forgiveness for your sins.

Jesus did not come for healthy people. He did not come for righteous people. He came for sinners. This is good news. If He had only come for the righteous, then He wouldn't have come for you. Or me. The problem is that there are many who think that they are righteous. They will not see their need. And because they can't see their need, they will not come to the One who can help.

This is the negative aspect of the gospel. The gospel is good news. But before you can appreciate the good news, you have to hear the bad news. The bad news is that you are lost in sin. You are under the condemnation of a righteous God. You are without hope. And it is only when you believe the bad news that you will come to the Great Physician to be healed.

THE QUESTION OF FASTING

And they said to Him, "The disciples of John often fast and offer prayers, the disciples of the Pharisees also do the same, but Yours eat and drink."

And Jesus said to them, "You cannot make the attendants of the bridegroom fast while the bridegroom is with them, can you? 35 But the days will come; and when the bridegroom is taken away from them, then they will fast in those days." (Luke 5:33-35).

The next question brought up by the scribes and Pharisees is the issue of fasting. Fasting was an important part of their religion. It was their practice to fast twice a week. Monday and Thursday were their special days of fasting. There is nothing wrong with such a practice. The Bible teaches and encourages fasting.

Consecrate a FAST, proclaim a solemn assembly; gather the elders and all the inhabitants of the land to the house of the Lord your God, and cry out to the Lord. (Joel 1:14).

> *Blow a trumpet in Zion, consecrate a FAST, proclaim a solemn assembly. (Joel 2:15).*

Fasting was used in times of crises. In times of emergency prayer, a fast would be proclaimed. It was at such a time that David fasted when his son was sick to the point of death. Likewise, the people of Nineveh entered into a fast at the preaching of Jonah when they were told of a coming judgment. Furthermore, fasting is not limited to Old Testament times. It was also practiced within the early church.

> *And while they were ministering to the Lord and FASTING, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them."*
>
> *Then, when they had FASTED and prayed and laid their hands on them, the sent them away. (Acts 13:2-3).*

> *And when they had appointed elders for them in every church, having prayed with FASTING, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed. (Acts 14:23).*

In each of these cases, fasting is linked with prayer. I believe it to be a sacrifice of comfort given to God as a part of prayer and worship. It involves a type of worship that impacts the entire body.

The scribes and Pharisees knew about fasting. It was a part of their religious life. And they noticed something. They noticed that Tuesday and Friday had come and the disciples were still eating. They compared notes and found that these disciples were not in the habit of fasting at all. And while Jesus had fasted for 40 days in the wilderness at the beginning of His ministry, He did not participate in a regularly scheduled fast. This stood in stark contrast to the disciples of John the Baptist. His disciples did fast regularly.

"John's disciples fast"	and...	*"The disciples of the Pharisees fast"*	but...	*"Your disciples do not fast"*

Do you see what the Pharisees are saying? "Everyone who is spiritually minded is fasting, so why aren't you?" This is religious peer pressure. Peer pressure makes people do funny things. If you don't believe

that, then visit your local high school. Kids are notorious for trying to conform to the expectations of their peers. I grew up in a generation of non-conformists and we struggled to be exactly alike in our non-conformity.

But peer pressure isn't limited to the young. It is just as evident among the old. And all too often, it is seen in the church. It is seen when we dress alike and talk alike and act in a manner that is expected of us - when we raise our hands alike or don't raise our hands alike.

Spirituality is not to be measured in conformity to outward appearances. It is to be measured in our conformity to the person and character of Jesus Christ. Anything less is merely a cheap substitute. Jesus didn't bow to peer pressure. He didn't care that "everyone else is doing it." And we shouldn't, either.

AN ILLUSTRATIVE ANSWER

> *And He was also telling them a parable: "No one tears a piece of cloth from a new garment and puts it on an old garment; otherwise he will both tear the new, and the piece from the new will not match the old.*
>
> *"And no one puts new wine into old wineskins; otherwise the new wine will burst the skins and it will be spilled out, and the skins will be ruined.* 38 *But new wine must be put into fresh wineskins.* 39 *And no one, after drinking old wine wishes for new; for he says, 'The old is good enough.'" (Luke 5:36-39).*

The answer to the Pharisees' question is given in the form of two illustrations. They are short parables.

Verse 36	Verses 37-39
New Patches on Old Clothes	New Wine in Old Wineskins
Illustrates scribes and Pharisees verses Jesus They are the old, He is the new	

1. Illustration of a Patch: *"No one tears a piece of cloth from a new garment and puts it on an old garment; otherwise he will both tear the new, and the piece from the new will not match the old (5:36).*

When I was growing up, my family did not have much money. When clothes began to wear out, my mother would take a patch and put it on the place where the hole was. And there were times when she was putting patches on patches.

How are we to understand this parable? Remember that Jesus is explaining why His disciples do not fast. He is illustrating His answer through this parable. In those days, clothes were made either from cotton or from wool. Both of these fabrics would shrink. If you had an old robe with a big hole in it and patched it up with a piece of new cloth, then the next time you washed it, the patch would shrink and rip the robe. The result would be an even bigger hole. If you wanted to patch an old robe, then you had to patch it with an old patch.

Here is what Jesus is saying. There is no way that the things which He is teaching can fit into the ritualistic systems of the Pharisees. His message of an internal holiness and a repentance from sin is like a new patch being placed upon an old garment. It will tear apart their system of legalism.

2. Illustration of a Wineskin: *"And no one puts new wine into old wineskins; otherwise the new wine will burst the skins and it will be spilled out, and the skins will be ruined. 38 But new wine must be put into fresh wineskins. 39 And no one, after drinking old wine wishes for new; for he says, 'The old is good enough'" (5:37-39).*

This is a different illustration, but it is still teaching the same truth. It illustrates it with new wine and old wineskins. The Jews used to take wine and place it into the skin of an animal. The neck of the animal would be used as the spout and the rest of the skin would be sewn shut. Once the skin had been emptied and then left without anything in it, the skin would begin to dry out and crack. If you then tried to put wine back into it, the cracks would become greater until the entire skin would burst, spilling the wine onto the ground and ruining it.

Old wineskins are a hazard. They become thicker and harder and eventually they will crack. They cease to be flexible. They lose their elasticity. They become brittle. And as a result, when fresh wine is poured into them, they cannot contain it.

Jesus is the new wine. He is fresh and new in His approach. He comes on the scene, threatening to break asunder the old forms. The Pharisees are the old wineskins. They are already

leaking. They cling to their traditional hand-me-downs.

There is a principle here. Old structures cannot hold Jesus. The church must be ready to deal with change. Our outward forms must never be so rigid that they cannot hold people who are different. The structures are not bad in themselves. They are merely meant to hold reality. But when they become too rigid, then they begin to strangle reality.

There are things which are essential - the wine. And then there are things which are useful, but not primary - the skins. What is more important, the wine or the container which holds the wine?

The Pharisees had come to the place where their focus was on the wineskin. They loved the fancy exterior, old and faded though it had become. They had lost sight of the reality behind the form. The church has both reality and ritual. It has both faith and form. Faith is the gift from God; it doesn't change. Form is the packaging; it does change.

- There are people who have the packaging, but who don't have the gift. You can tell them because they are only concerned that we never change the packaging.
- Others have the gift, but they are focusing upon the packaging and want to hold onto the old packaging.
- Still others want to bring up new packaging, but they have nothing to put into it. They want change, but there is no real content to their change.

Check out your wineskins. Are they looking a little worn around the edges? Stop patching up old wineskins. Come to the new wine.

We have seen four parables in this passage. They have been presented in rapid succession. They form a common thread.

- Healthy people do not go to a physical.
- Attendants do not fast when the bridegroom is with them.
- New patches are not put on old garments.
- New wine does not go into old wineskins.

What do these four parables have in common? They each point out the fact that you match things that go together.

- Doctors go with sick people

- Bridegrooms go with rejoicing
- New patches go with new clothes
- New wine goes with new wineskins

There is a necessary correspondence and a spiritual appropriateness. Jesus is the doctor and the bridegroom and the new patch and the new wine. His coming demands a new response. If you do not respond accordingly, the result will be disastrous. There are four principles that we can draw from this passage:

(1) The law of spiritual congruity dictates that the old categories we have known are incongruent.

A number of years ago, there was a fad in the Christian business world that had businessmen wearing a lapel pin that read, "Try Jesus." The folks who wore this meant well, but there was something wrong with that message. Jesus is not someone that you "try." He is not merely an option. He demands a unique response of total surrender. He wants complete and full access to every part of your life.

(2) One of the keys to the Christian life is to see things as they really are. Christ as the physician belongs with sick souls. It makes sense. But it only makes sense if you see your need. It is only as you see your need for Christ that you will run to Him and find grace to help that need.

We need to pray for ourselves the way in which Paul prayed for the Ephesians when he said, *I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints,* 19 *and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe (Ephesians 1:18-19).*

(3) There is a perpetual newness offered to the believer in Christ. He is described in the Scriptures as the "new and living way" (Hebrews 10:20). This ongoing newness must be accompanied by ongoing change.

We often do not like change. I know that I don't. I'm one of those people who thinks that nothing should ever be done for the first time. I tend to like the adage, "If it isn't broken, don't fix it." I don't like

change. But the Christian life is all about change.

(4) There is a tension between the dirge and the dance, between mourning and rejoicing, between the sorrow of repentance and the joy of forgiveness. But the emphasis of the Scriptures is upon the joy. It is good to look at your sin and to see that you have a great need. But it is not good if you stay there. Take up residence instead in the shadow of the cross that you might live in the light of the joy of your salvation.

SABBATH CONTROVERSIES
LUKE 6:1-11

One of the most important rituals observed among the Jews was the keeping of the Sabbath. The word "Sabbath" is the Hebrew word for "rest." The Lord had commanded Moses to observe the seventh day of each week as a day of rest to commemorate the day in which He had rested from His work of creation. The Sabbath was to be a day in which all men ceased from their labors and gave themselves to a remembrance of the Lord.

However, the Pharisees in the days of Jesus had changed the Sabbath into something it was never meant to be. In their desire to protect and to uphold the law, they built a hedge around the keeping of the Sabbath. They had written up chapter upon chapter concerning what it meant to keep the Sabbath.

- They taught that you should not look in a mirror on the Sabbath because you might be tempted to pluck out a grey hair and that would be reaping.
- They said that you could only eat an egg which had been laid on the Sabbath if you killed the chicken for Sabbath-breaking.
- A donkey could be led out of the stable on the Sabbath, but the harness and saddle had to be placed on him the day before.
- An egg could not be boiled on the Sabbath, either by normal means or by putting it near a hot kettle or by wrapping it in a hot cloth or by putting it in the hot sand outside.
- If the lights were on when the Sabbath came (Sabbath began at sundown), you could not blow them out. If they had not been lit in time, then you could not light them.
- It was unlawful to move furniture on the Sabbath. There was an exception to this in that you were allowed to move a ladder on the Sabbath, but you could only move it four steps.
- It was unlawful to wear any jewelry or ornaments on the Sabbath, since this might be construed as carrying a burden.
- It was not permitted to wear false teeth on the Sabbath (that must have been a hit in the synagogue services).

- You were allowed to eat radishes on the Sabbath, but you were warned against dipping them into salt because you might leave them in the salt too long and pickle them and this was considered to be Sabbath-breaking. The Pharisees actually had discussions as to how long it took to pickle a radish.
- It was fine to spit on a rock on the Sabbath, but you could not spit on the ground, because that made mud and mud was mortar, and that was work.
- If a woman got mud on her dress, she was to wait until it had dried and then she was permitted to crumple the dress in her hands one time and crush it and then shake it out once. If that did not do the trick, then she had to wear it.

It is against this cultural and religious backdrop that we have two specific events in the ministry of Jesus. Both of these events are found side by side in all three of the Synoptic Gospels (Matthew 12:1-14; Luke 6:1-11).

The First Sabbath Incident	The Second Sabbath Incident
Took place in a grainfield.	Took place in a synagogue.
The disciples picked grain and ate it - this was considered harvesting.	Jesus healed a man with a withered hand.
A verbal accusation was made against the disciples.	No verbal accusation made, but Jesus speaks to the accusations which they held in their hearts.

In each of these two cases, Jesus shows that He and His disciples have not really been guilty of breaking the Sabbath - that their actions are completely consistent with the Law of the Sabbath.

This is important. Jesus is not doing away with the Sabbath. He is not saying, "Forget about worshiping God one day a week." His actions and His teachings are in complete accord with God's command to remember the Sabbath and keep it holy. The issue is not whether one should or should not keep the Sabbath. The issue is the nature of the Sabbath.

THE FIRST SABBATH INCIDENT

Now it happened that He was passing through some grainfields on a Sabbath; and His disciples were picking the

heads of grain, rubbing them in their hands, and eating the grain.

But some of the Pharisees said, "Why do you do what is not lawful on the Sabbath?"

And Jesus answering them said, "Have you not even read what David did when he was hungry, he and those who were with him, 4 how he entered the house of God, and took and ate the consecrated bread which is not lawful for any to eat except the priests alone, and gave it to his companions?"

And He was saying to them, "The Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath." (Luke 6:1-5).

It was the season of the harvest in Palestine. As Jesus and His disciples walked through one of the many grainfields, some of the disciples began to pick kernels of grain, rub them in their hands to break open the husks, and then eat them.

This was perfectly legal. They were neither trespassing or stealing. The Mosaic Law specifically allowed you to go through a man's field and pick of the fruit and eat it as long as you ate it on his land and did not try to carry such fruit away with you in a basket or in a wagon. Likewise, you could pluck the heads of grain with your hands, but you could not bring in heavy equipment to begin your own harvesting operation on his land.

When you enter your neighbor's standing grain, then you may pluck the heads with your hand, but you shall not wield a sickle in your neighbor's standing grain. (Deuteronomy 23:25).

The purpose of this law was so that those who were poor and who were traveling a long way would have a means of eating. It served as a public welfare system to make certain that no one would ever go hungry.

Farmers were prohibited from harvesting their entire fields. They were required to leave the outer edges of their fields untouched to provide for needy people. And so, on this particular day the disciples were grabbing an afternoon snack.

1. A Pharisaical Objection: *"Why do you do what is not lawful on the Sabbath?" (6:2).*

The Pharisees do not accuse the disciples of stealing grain. Stealing would have been wrong on any day of the week. But that is not the issue here. The issue is that they are doing this activity on the

Sabbath day. The Pharisees are accusing the disciples of harvesting and threshing - of working on the Sabbath.

The Mishnah listed 39 different categories of work that was forbidden on the Sabbath and reaping ranked third on the list. Even to pluck a grey hair was an infraction of this prohibition.

Now I want to ask you a question. Are there rules with which you are comfortable and which would bother you if they were not imposed? What would be your reaction if someone walked into your church service wearing a T-shirt and a pair of cut-offs? How about if the music director came up with a radically different style of music one Sunday? The truth is that we tend to become polarized to that which we are accustomed.

2. A Biblical Precedent: *"Have you not even read what David did when he was hungry, he and those who were with him, 4 how he entered the house of God, and took and ate the consecrated bread which is not lawful for any to eat except the priests alone, and gave it to his companions?" (6:3-4).*

Notice that Jesus does not comment on the rabbinic rituals. He turns instead to the Scriptures. He refers to an incident described in 1 Samuel 21:1-6. David and his men had been on the run. They were being pursued by King Saul. And if that were not bad enough, they were without food. It was in this condition that they came to one of the cities of the priests of Israel. It was here that David met with one of the priests and requested food for himself and for his men. There was no available food except for the old bread which had been taken from the Table of Shewbread inside the Tabernacle of the Lord.

This was special bread. It had been set apart for a special purpose. It was considered to be holy. It had sat in the Tabernacle before the presence of the Lord. It had been designated as "the bread of the presence." No one was allowed to eat of this bread except for the descendants of Aaron - those of the priesthood (Leviticus 24:9). This was no mere rabbinic ritual - it was the unabridged law of God. David and his men were given this bread to eat. They partook of that which only the priests were supposed to eat.

Why? Because they had a need and because they were God's people and because the needs of God's people transcend religious rituals, even when those religious rituals are right and proper.

Do you have a problem with that? Do you tend to think that religious rituals ought to be observed, no matter what? It is because

you have failed to understand the true purpose of those rituals. They are not designed for God's welfare. They are designed for you. This is made clear in verse 27.

3. The Lord of the Sabbath: *And He was saying to them, "The Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath." (6:5).*

Here is the point. The owner of a thing has the right to do with that thing as He wishes. Jesus is the Lord of the Sabbath. And that means He is free to do with it as He desires.

It is because of this principle that the church throughout the past two millennia has worshiped on Sunday instead of on Saturday. This mode of Sunday worship was brought about to honor the resurrection of Jesus. It went against an entire era of Saturday worship among the Jews.

Now I personally do not care what day of the week you worship. I typically go to church on Sunday morning because if I went on Tuesday I would be the only one there. What the Bible does make clear is that I should not be judging the one who regards a different day for worship.

> *One person regards one day above another, another regards every day alike. Each person must be fully convinced in his own mind. 6 He who observes the day, observes it for the Lord, and he who eats, does so for the Lord, for he gives thanks to God; and he who eats not, for the Lord he does not eat, and gives thanks to God. (Romans 14:5-6).*

How can this be when God clearly commanded in the Older Testament that men were to keep the Sabbath? It is because the Son of Man is the Lord of the Sabbath.

THE SECOND SABBATH INCIDENT

> *On another Sabbath He entered the synagogue and was teaching; and there was a man there whose right hand was withered. 7 The scribes and the Pharisees were watching Him closely to see if He healed on the Sabbath, so that they might find reason to accuse Him. 8 But He knew what they*

were thinking, and He said to the man with the withered hand, "Get up and come forward!" And he got up and came forward.

And Jesus said to them, "I ask you, is it lawful to do good or to do harm on the Sabbath, to save a life or to destroy it?"

After looking around at them all, He said to him, "Stretch out your hand!" And he did so; and his hand was restored.

But they themselves were filled with rage, and discussed together what they might do to Jesus. (Luke 6:6-11).

Luke's account tells us that this second incident took place on a different Sabbath. It was sometime later that Jesus came to a local synagogue. These events are not meant to be in chronological order. Luke is giving us a topical arrangement of events. He is telling us about different controversies that arose at different times of the issue of the Sabbath.

1. A Critical Congregation: *The scribes and the Pharisees were watching Him closely to see if He healed on the Sabbath, so that they might find reason to accuse Him (6:7).*

Imagine the scene. The synagogue consists of a large room with a double colonnade down the central aisle. Behind a partition is the place where the women are permitted to assemble and to listen to the services. At the front of the synagogue is a large raised dias on which rests the Bema Seat. Next to it is a lectern. It is from here that the Scriptures are read and taught.

On either side of the Bema Seat and slightly behind it are placed several chairs. These are the "chief seats" and are reserved for the rabbis and distinguished Pharisees. From their vantage point, they can see that Jesus has entered their synagogue service. And they can also see something else. There is a man present who has a crippled hand. They know the reputation of Jesus as a healer. They have also heard his untraditional views on the Sabbath. Will He move to heal this man? They already know the answer. And they are already framing their accusations. There is nothing more deadly to godliness than a critical spirit. It is poison to the people of God.

The story is told of a man who was known for his critical nature and with finding fault with everything and anything. He was going out hunting with a friend and, upon seeing the friend's new

hunting dog, he remarked, "Doesn't look like much of a dog." They were walking through the forest, when they came to the edge of a lake. As a flock of birds flew overhead, the hunters cut loose with their guns and one of the birds fell out of the sky and into the lake.

Immediately, the dog ran forward, not swimming, but running on top of the lake, his little paws barely touching the top of the water. He crossed the lake, picked up the dead bird in his mouth and brought it back, still running on top of the water to lay the bird at the feet of the hunters. "What do you think of my dog now?" asked the friend. "Dumb dog," replied the fault-finder. "He can't even swim."

Critical people are like that. You cannot make them happy, no matter what you do. Given the opportunity, they would even find something in the Son of God about which to criticize.

2. A Legal Question: *"I ask you, is it lawful to do good or to do harm on the Sabbath, to save a life or to destroy it?" (6:9).*

Jesus takes charge of the situation. He tells the man with the withered hand to stand before those who sit in the chief seats of the synagogue. He is going to perform a miracle and He is going to do it where everyone can see. But before He does, He poses a question to the synagogue leaders. It is a question that deals with activity during the Sabbath.

Is it lawful...	
To do good on the Sabbath?	To do harm on the Sabbath?
To save a life?	To kill?

This is not a mute question. These leaders have murder in their hearts. Before this day is over, they will be seeking how they can put Jesus to death.

In the days of the Maccabean Revolt, nearly 200 years earlier, the Jews had dealt with the question of whether it is permissible for a Jewish soldier to fight on the Sabbath. The enemies of the Jews had hit upon a simple strategy. They would wait until the Sabbath and then they would launch their attack and the Jews would not defend themselves because it was the Sabbath. As a result of some terrible massacres, the rabbis had declared that it was permissible for soldiers to fight to protect themselves and to save lives on the Sabbath.

Jesus is asking a related question. If it is okay to fight to

protect yourself on the Sabbath, then isn't it also permissible to cure a man of his disease on the Sabbath? If it is okay to kill a man on the Sabbath, then isn't it okay to cure a man on the Sabbath?

3. A Miraculous Healing: *After looking around at them all, He said to him, "Stretch out your hand!" And he did so; and his hand was restored (6:10).*

The healing of this man is almost anticlimactic. The Pharisees and the rulers of the synagogue are past the point where they are even impressed by the supernatural work of God in their midst. They can only see the infraction of their own petty rules. But they are powerless to do anything about it. And so, by this healing, Jesus shows not only that He has power over disease, but also that he has authority over the Sabbath.

THE CALLING OF THE TWELVE
LUKE 6:12-16

The primary method of Jesus' ministry was men. The first thing we saw Him doing following His baptism and temptation was to call a few men to follow Him. There were initially four: Simon and Andrew and James and John. Levi was called later. Now there will be a total of Twelve.

Why twelve? Because these will correspond to the twelve tribes of Israel. God originally called out these tribes to be a separate people and a holy nation. Now He is doing it again, this time through these twelve men.

This is significant. By choosing these twelve men, Jesus is making a statement. He is saying in effect, "I am the head of the tribes and the true King of Israel." The fact that this comes on the heels of the scribes and the Pharisees plotting to do away with Jesus is also significant. Those who saw themselves as the spiritual leaders of the nation are to be rejected as Jesus appoints twelve new leaders of what will eventually be the new Israel.

A PRAYERFUL CALL

> *It was at this time that He went off to the mountain to pray, and He spent the whole night in prayer to God. (Luke 6:12).*

Just as Moses had gone up onto Mount Sinai to receive the Law, so now Jesus goes up onto a mountain to choose those to whom He will entrust His teachings.

Moses	Jesus
Goes up onto a mountain	Goes up onto a mountain

Returns with the law and plans for the Tabernacle	Returns with the sermon on the mount and plans for building God's spiritual temple - the church

Jesus did not call all men at this time. He only summoned and chose these particular men. There is a lesson here. It is that Jesus was under no obligation to choose all men. Neither is He under any obligation to save all mankind. The fact that He freely offers salvation to all men is a matter of grace.

Notice that this selection was made after spending an entire night in prayer. When was the last time that you spent an entire night in prayer? That sounds like a long time to spend in prayer, but it really isn't. I'm sure that you have spend an entire afternoon talking to someone, especially if you had a lot to talk about.

I can remember when Paula and I were dating. To spend six or eight hours talking together was nothing. The time seemed to fly by. Why? Because there was a love relationship. I think that the reason we don't spend more time with the Lord in prayer is because we don't love Him more.

Now I want to ask you a question. Why do you think Jesus went to a mountain to pray? Couldn't God hear Him just as well in Capernaum or in the synagogue or in a house? Of course He could. The reason Jesus went to a mountain to pray was so that this time could be uninterrupted.

We live in a world of interruptions. You cannot spend an evening in my house without the telephone ringing half a dozen times. I am not saying that all interruptions are bad. God can still work in the midst of our interruptions. But every once in a while it is good to get away for a season to be alone with the Lord.

A REPRESENTATIVE CALL

> *And when day came, He called His disciples to Him and chose twelve of them, whom He also named as apostles (Luke 6:13).*

Jesus had a lot of disciples. It was out of this group of disciples that Jesus chose twelve men. They had a special calling. They were to be apostles. This tells me something about these two terms. All of the apostles were disciples, but not all disciples were apostles.

The word disciple describes a student, a learner. It is one who sits at the feet of another and who learns. The word is used synonymously in the

New Testament with believers: *The disciples were first called Christians in Antioch (Acts 11:26).* There were a lot of people who had come to learn from Jesus. They came for all sorts of reasons. Some came because they were impressed by the miracles that He could work. Others came because they liked the way He put the scribes and the Pharisees into their place. Some came because they had an inner longing that they could not explain. And still others came because they were frustrated by the military dominion of Rome and were hoping for a leader around whom they could rally. It was from this mixed group that Jesus chose out 12 apostles.

What is an apostle? Our word apostle comes from the Greek word *apostolos*. It is a compound word made up from the joining of two Greek words together.

- *Apo*: From.
- *Stello*: To send.

But the resulting compound means more than merely one who is sent out. It was used among the Athenians earlier in their history to designate the admiral of the fleet who would be commissioned and sent out with authority. That is the idea here. These men were sent out with the authority of Jesus. They were to be His deputies.

Twelve of these disciples are about to become more than disciples. For nearly a year, and even longer in some cases, these men have been following Jesus and learning from Him. Now there will be a change. These twelve disciples are commissioned as apostles. They are being commissioned with the authority of heaven. They will have authority over the church of God. They will have the keys to the Kingdom. They will have power to speak a thing upon earth and it will be done in heaven.

There are twelve of these apostles. This is no accident. They correspond to the twelve tribes of Israel. They are to be the leaders of the new Israel - a kingdom of God's people called out from every nation under heaven.

A SPECIFIC CALL

> *Simon, whom He also named Peter, and Andrew his brother; and James and John; and Philip and Bartholomew;*
> *15 and Matthew and Thomas; James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon who was called the Zealot;* *16 Judas the son of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor. (Luke 6:14-16).*

The New Testament contains four different lists of the disciples of Jesus. It is noteworthy to compare those lists.

	Matthew 10	Mark 3	Luke 6	Acts 1
First Group	Simon Peter Andrew James John	Simon Peter James John Andrew	Simon Peter Andrew James John	Peter James John Andrew
Second Group	Philip Bartholomew Thomas Matthew	Philip Bartholomew Matthew Thomas	Philip Bartholomew Matthew Thomas	Philip Thomas Bartholomew Matthew
Third Group	James Thaddaeus Simon Judas Iscariot	James Thaddaeus Simon Judas Iscariot	James Simon Judas Judas Iscariot	James Simon Judas

Simon Peter is always mentioned first. Judas Iscariot is always mentioned last when he is mentioned at all. There are three distinct groupings of disciples. Those who were with Jesus the most are mentioned in the first group. Those who are mentioned less often are in the second group. Those in the third group are hardly mentioned at all (with the exception of Judas Iscariot). The same person always heads up each group.

- Simon Peter always heads up the first group.
- Philip always heads up the second group.
- James the son of Alphaeus always heads up the third group.

It has been suggested that each of these three groups had a natural leader. We know that Peter tended to lead his group and, in fact, provided leadership for all of the disciples.

1. Simon Peter.

   There is no disciple of Jesus with whom we are more familiar than the person of Simon. We are told here that Jesus gave him a nickname - Peter (*Petros*), "Rock." Simon was a leader. He could not help it. Sometimes he led in the right direction and sometimes he led in the wrong direction, but he was always a leader. When he was right, he could have incredible insight and faith. And when he was wrong, it could have tragic consequences.

There is something loveable about Peter. We can hardly read about him without having our imaginations stirred. This was a man who did great things. Like all men of high magnitude, both his victories as well as his failures were great.

Great Success	Great Failure
It was Peter who first declared Jesus as the Son of God	And it was Peter who was rebuked by Jesus for trying to talk Him out of going to Jerusalem to be crucified
Only Peter left the boat to walk on the water of the raging sea during the storm	It was this same Peter who began to sink when he took his eyes off the Lord
Peter was ready to take on the whole Roman cohort when they came to arrest Jesus	Within a few hours Peter was denying that he even knew Jesus.
Peter stood up on the Day of Pentecost and proclaimed the gospel, refusing to stop preaching even when he had been beaten and throw into prison	This same Peter was later intimidated by legalists when they came to Antioch and saw him eating with Gentile Christians

If you had been called to pick the most qualified candidate on which to build the church of Jesus Christ, Peter wouldn't even have been in the running. There was nothing in his background to suggest that he could succeed in fulfilling the commission that Jesus gave him. He had received no formal seminary training. He had no management background. He was only a simple fisherman.

Don't miss this! The fact that Peter was unqualified to be a disciple of Jesus teaches us something about the kind of man God uses. He uses men who are unqualified. This is good. It means that He can use me. It means that He can use you.

What kind of man was Peter? His real name was Simon. It was a common name among the Jews, looking back to Simeon, one of the fathers of the 12 tribes of Israel. He seems to have been a practical, down-to-earth sort of man. He stayed home in Capernaum to watch over the family fishing business while his brother, Andrew,

went off to become a follower of John the Baptist.

It was Andrew who was first introduced to Jesus by John the Baptist. Andrew went on to follow Jesus, but not before he had gone and first brought his brother Simon.

> *One of the two who heard John speak, and followed Him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother.*
>
> *He found first his own brother Simon, and said to him, "We have found the Messiah" (which translated means Christ).*
>
> *He brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, "You are Simon the son of John; you shall be called Cephas" (which translated means Peter). (John 1:40-42).*

Can you imagine Andrew dragging his brother out to meet Jesus? I can just hear Simon grumbling about how the work never gets done because his brother always wants to follow some religious teacher.

It reminds me of the first time I tried to get my older brother to go with me to a home Bible Study. He agreed to drive me there and, when I suggested that he come inside and listen, he made up excuse after excuse. Reluctantly, he finally gave in. The result was electrifying. He went on to attend Bible College and then to go out as a missionary pastor to Germany.

This initial meeting with Jesus changed the course of Simon's life. No longer would he be the simple fisherman. We never again read of him catching a single fish unless directed by the Lord. From now on, he was going to be a new man. He was even given a new name. Peter. It is the Greek word for "rock." Its Aramaic form is *Cephas*. His name would stand for stability. He would be the solid foundation on which Christ would build His church. But this would take time. It would take time for God to transform this vacillating fisherman into the mature writer of the epistles that bear his name. Many experiences combined together to make this man into the rock of God.

2. Andrew.

Andrew was a Greek name. It is the common Greek word for "man." Andrew's claim to fame was that he was Peter's brother. Luke makes no further mention of him in this gospel account. I can't

help but wonder if he ever got tired of being identified as "the brother of Simon Peter." I wonder if he ever felt like yelling out, "Hey, I'm more than merely the brother of Peter!"

Like his brother Peter, Andrew had started out as a fisherman from the lakeside village of Bethsaida. But he had left the fishing business to follow after John the Baptist. And because of this, he became one of the very first disciples of Jesus. It was he who brought his brother Peter to meet Jesus. Every time we see Andrew, he is bringing someone else to meet Jesus.

- He brought Peter to Jesus (John 1:40-42).
- He brought a boy with the five loaves and two fish (John 6:8-9).
- He brought some Greek-speaking Jews who wanted to meet Jesus (John 12:20-22).

Andrew was one of those behind-the-scenes people. He was not always speaking up. He was not the one who would stand up on the day of Pentecost and preach to the multitude. But he was doing something equally important. He was bringing people to Jesus.

We aren't all called to be a Peter. We are not all destined to be leaders in the church. But that is okay. We can always be an Andrew. We can always point people to Jesus. You remember that it takes an Andrew to bring a Peter to the Lord.

3. James.

James is never mentioned in the gospels apart from his brother, John. Of the two, James is always mentioned first, indicating that he might have been the elder of the two. He was destined to be one of the early martyrs of the church (Acts 12:1-2).

James and John worked for their father, Zebedee, in the family fishing business. Their family was in a partnership with Simon and Andrew. The business was fairly prosperous, as evidenced by the fact that they were able to hire servants (Mark 1:20).

James and John had a nickname. You know what a nickname is. It is a name given to you for some personal characteristic. In my years working for the fire department, I have seen and heard a lot of nicknames.

- Blind Frank

- Squeaky
- The Preacher

Each of these was given because of some personal characteristic. The nickname that James and John had was given to them by Jesus. He called them *Boanerges* (Mark 3:17). It is an Aramaic term. It means, "Sons of Thunder." It sounds as though these two brothers were a couple of hell-raisers. Perhaps Jesus gave them this nickname because of the time they came to Him and asked Him to call fire down from heaven upon certain cities of Samaria that had not been very receptive to their preaching.

> *And He sent messengers on ahead of Him. And they went, and entered a village of the Samaritans, to make arrangements for Him.*
>
> *And they did not receive Him, because He was journeying with His face toward Jerusalem.*
>
> *And when His disciples James and John saw this, they said, "Lord, do You want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?" (Luke 9:52-54).*

Can you imagine this kind of request? It would be like me coming into church and asking the congregation to pray that the Lord would destroy the city of Fort Lauderdale because they didn't grant our request for a building permit. James and John had a zeal and a boldness for God, but they still had to learn about the love and the tenderness of God.

We know that James continued to be bold and outspoken for Christ because he was the first of the apostles to be martyred (Acts 12:2). Church tradition tells us that when James was being taken out to be beheaded, the soldier in charge of his execution was so impressed by his courage and his zeal that he declared himself to be a Christian and was beheaded alongside of James.

4. John.

John describes himself elsewhere as "the disciple whom Jesus loved." Because of this, people sometimes picture someone who is weak and effeminate who sat around meditating all day while leaning up against the bosom of Jesus. That is a false picture. John was one of the "sons of thunder." He may not have been as explosive as his

brother, but he was still involved in the fire-from-heaven incident.

The Synoptic Gospels each refer to John by name. But the Gospel of John does not. Instead he refers to himself as *the disciple whom Jesus loved* (John 13:23; 19:26; 20:2; 21;&; 21:20; 21:24). This was not a title that John used boastfully. He was astounded by the fact that Jesus loved him. He was amazed that the Lord loved the one who had wanted to burn up the Samaritans. He went on to serve the Lord in Ephesus for many years, taking care of Mary, the mother of Jesus. He was finally banished to the island of Patmos, a slave-labor camp.

5. Philip.

This is also a Greek name. It was the same name as the father of Alexander the Great. It means "horse-lover." Philip may have also had a Hebrew name, but we don't know what it was. For some reason, Philip always went by his Greek name. It is noteworthy that when some Greeks wanted to come and speak to Jesus, they first went to Philip (John 12:20-22). Because his name was Greek, perhaps they thought that he would be more willing to help them.

One insight into the personality of Philip is seen in the time Jesus fed the 5,000. While Andrew was bringing the boy with the loaves and the fish, Jesus asked Philip a question.

> *Jesus therefore lifting up His eyes, and seeing that a great multitude was coming to Him, said to Philip, "Where are we to buy bread, that these may eat?"*
>
> *And this He was saying to test him; for He Himself knew what He was intending to do.*
>
> *Philip answered Him, "Two hundred denarii worth of bread is not sufficient for them, for everyone to receive a little." (John 6:5-7).*

Jesus and Philip are standing on the hill watching a great crowd of people gathering. Jesus turns to His disciple and asks him a question. "How are we going to feed this mob, Philip?" The question is for Philip's benefit. Jesus knows that He is going to perform a miracle. But Philip cannot read ahead to verse 11 to see that this is the case because it hasn't been written yet. He doesn't know the answer. And so, he pulls out his pocket calculator and does some quick figuring.

5,000 men + 5,000 women + twice that number of children = A lot of hungry people

Multiply that number by the price of bread and even if he had a small fortune it would not be enough to feed this group even a child's portion. To make matters worse, there is no local Burger King to which they can turn.

Philip's problem is that he did not figure in the supernatural power of God into his calculations. And that is encouraging to me. It means that God can use a pessimistic, analytical realist who can't see faith beyond the facts. It means that He can use me.

6. Bartholomew.

The name "Bartholomew" is made up of two Hebrew words. *Bar* is the Hebrew word for "son." This man was the son of Tolmai (Ptolemy). He is known elsewhere as Nathanael Bar Tolmai. Nathanael was from the village of Cana of Galilee (John 21:2). If possible, this village was even more obscure than Nazareth. Nathanael was brought to the Lord by his friend, Philip.

> *Philip found Nathanael and said to him, "We have found Him of whom Moses in the Law and also the Prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph."*
>
> *And Nathanael said to him, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" Philip said to him, "Come and see." (John 1:45-46).*

I am sure that Nathanael perked up a bit when Philip came on the scene, saying that he had found the Messiah. Nathanael had read about the Messiah all his life. But when Philip said that He is Jesus of Nazareth, Nathanael had an immediate problem. Messiahs do not come from Nazareth. Nazareth is a little too close to home.

Nathanael was prejudiced. He might be willing to believe in a Messiah that came from some exotic location, but he could not accept one that came from Nazareth. Nazareth was only a little village. Nobody of any importance ever came from Nazareth.

Fortunately for Nathanael, his willingness to come to the truth overcame his prejudice. When Philip asked him to come and see for himself, he could have refused. But he didn't. He came and he met

Jesus and all of his objections were answered.

What kind of man does God choose? He chooses even a hardened, prejudiced Jew like Nathanael as long as he is willing to have those prejudices overcome.

7. Matthew.

This is the Greek name of Levi whose call we read of in Mark 2:14. He had both a Hebrew name and a Greek name. This was not so unusual. There are a number of people in the New Testament who had both a Hebrew as well as a Greek name.

- Cephas and Peter.
- John Mark.
- Saul and Paul (Latin).

Luke has already introduced us to Matthew in Luke 5:27-29 where he used his Jewish name - Levi. Now he switches to Matthew. This seems to have been the name by which he was identified in later years.

Matthew's former occupation had been that of a tax collector. He had purchased a franchise from the Roman government that gave him the authority to set and collect taxes. He had paid a vast sum of money for this privilege. He was then able to recoup his investment by collecting taxes from his fellow countrymen. Obviously, the more he collected, the more profit he would make. Since he had gone into this profession for the sole purpose of making money, he probably made it a point to charge people as much as possible. He was permitted to set taxes on all sorts of things. He could tax you on how many axles were on your wagon or how much baggage you were carrying or even how much money you were carrying.

It doesn't take too much imagination to see how this man must have been hated by the Jews. He was one who had turned his back on his country to work for the Roman conquerors. He was a traitor to his people. He was doing work that the Romans considered to be too demeaning to dirty their own hands. He was an outcast, banished from the synagogue and the Temple. No self-respecting Jew would even sit down at the same table with him.

All that changed the day Matthew met Jesus. He was sitting by the side of the road that day collecting taxes and extorting money from people who passed along. Then Jesus came by and called him to follow. Matthew did not hesitate. He left his money and his

taxing district and he got up and followed Jesus.

The first thing that Matthew did after he had begun to follow Jesus was to throw a party with Jesus as the guest of honor. Matthew invited all of his tax-collector friends. When Jesus and His disciples attended, the Pharisees were horrified. How could one who claimed to be a man of God associate with such people? They had not learned the principle that Matthew had come to see -- that Jesus comes to save sinners.

What kind of man does God call? He calls sinners who commit real sins. He even calls a renegade extortioner like Matthew.

8. Thomas.

Thomas has gotten a lot of bad press over the years. By the way most people talk of him, you would think that his first name is "Doubting." I think that he has gotten a bum rap. Thomas left family and friends to travel with Jesus. He made a commitment that was to change his whole life. When the disciples resisted the plan of Jesus to go to Bethany and from there to Jerusalem, it was Thomas who was ready to go and to die with Jesus.

> *Thomas therefore, who is called Didymus, said to his fellow disciples, "Let us also go, that we may die with him." (John 11:16).*

Thomas was low on faith, but he was high on loyalty. He thought that Jesus would be killed if He came near Jerusalem, but that did not deter Thomas. He said that he would follow Jesus and he meant it, even if it meant following Him to the death.

After the crucifixion of Jesus, Thomas and the other disciples were left in despair. When Thomas went out for hamburgers and returned to find the other disciples talking excitedly about the risen Jesus, he met their report with skepticism.

> *But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came.*
>
> *The other disciples therefore were saying to him, "We have seen the Lord!" But he said to them, "Unless I shall see in His hands the imprint of the nails, and put my finger into the place of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe." (John 20:24-25).*

Thomas listens to the claims that Jesus is again alive. But he knows better. There must be some other explanation. Perhaps they have suffered a hallucination. Maybe they have been drinking too much wine. He resolves to demand proof. Visual testimony will not be enough. He wants the kind of evidence that you can measure in a laboratory. It is not long before Thomas is offered the very evidence that he has requested.

> *And after eight days again His disciples were inside, and Thomas with them. Jesus came, the doors having been shut, and stood in their midst, and said, "Peace be with you."*
>
> *Then He said to Thomas, "Reach here your finger, and see My hands; and reach here your hand, and put it into My side; and be not unbelieving, but believing." (John 20:24-25).*

A week later the scene is much the same. Once again the disciples are gathered together. Once again the doors are secured. The only difference is this time Thomas is present. There are ten disciples present who believe that Jesus has risen from the death. There is one who is still skeptical

Suddenly Jesus stands before him and He gives Thomas the exact opportunity for the physical evidence that he had required. Thomas can not only see, but feel with his hands the living body of the resurrected Jesus. He can believe.

> *Thomas answered and said to Him, "My Lord and my God!" 29 Jesus said to him, "Because you have seen Me, have you believed? Blessed are they who do not see, and yet believe." (John 20:28-29).*

Doubting Thomas became Believing Thomas when he saw the risen Lord. The cobwebs of his uncertainty and doubt were blown away. What kind of man does God use? He uses a doubter and a skeptic like Thomas, as long as that man is willing for his doubt to be turned into certainty and his skepticism to be turned into belief.

9. James the son of Alphaeus.

Mark 2:14 tells us that Levi was also the son of Alphaeus. This was a fairly common name and is probably of no relation to James.

In Mark 15:40 he will be called "James the

Less." That is an unfortunate translation. He was known as "Little James." My younger brother is named Dennis. My older brother's son is also named Dennis. For many years, it was the custom within our family to refer to them as "Little Dennis" and "Big Dennis." The problem is that Little Dennis eventually grew up to be bigger and taller and heavier than Big Dennis. But the designation has managed to stick through the years, much to the chagrin of Little Dennis.

I think that is what happened among the disciples. It became inconvenient to distinguish between James the son of Zebedee versus James the son of Alphaeus, so the other disciples took to calling them Big James and Little James.

Aside from his name and the name of his father, we know absolutely nothing about James. But that is okay. The Bible never tells us to do a study on the Twelve Disciples and pick out the one who had the best homiletical method or preaching and focus upon him. When we look at the disciples, our goal is not to learn something about the disciples. Our goal is to learn something about Jesus. He is the object of our study. He is the object of our worship. And when we look at the disciples, we learn what kind of a man that Jesus chooses. He chooses little people. He chooses the unknown. He chooses those who seek no glory for themselves.

The story is told of a famous artist who painted a picture of the Last Supper. When the painting was finished, he brought it to a friend to see it. The friend looked at the painting for a long time and then remarked, "It is wonderful! It has such detail! Those are the most magnificent cups I have ever seen." To the utter astonishment of the friend, the artist picked up his brush and in great sweeping strokes proceeded to paint over the cups. "What are you doing that for?" exclaimed the friend. "I failed," replied the artist. "I wanted you to see Jesus, but instead you only saw cups." What kind of man does God use? He uses one who will call attention to Jesus rather than to himself.

10. Simon the Zealot.

The Zealots were a political party within Judaism. They were the nationalist party. They were intent on driving the Romans from the land and restoring an independent state. A revolt had been organized under a Galilean Zealot named Judas (Acts 5:37). Judas had been killed and his followers scattered, but the Zealots lived on.

They would finally bring about another revolt in 66 A.D. which would slaughter the Roman garrison in Jerusalem and defeat

a Roman legion from Syria. The Romans would respond by sending a total of four Roman legions and Jerusalem would be destroyed and her temple burned. The last of the Zealots would flee to the south where they would find temporary refuge in the desert fortress of Masada. It would be here that 930 men, women and children would commit mass suicide rather than fall into the hands of the hated Romans.

Simon was from this movement. He had looked earnestly for the coming of a military Messiah who would lead the Jews to revolt against Rome. Perhaps he initially came to Jesus for this reason. But somewhere along the line, he would fall in love with Jesus.

One of the intriguing things about Simon is that he joined the same group of disciples to which Matthew belonged. No two people could be more opposite.

Simon	Matthew
Roman-hater	Sold out his people to work for the Romans
A patriot and a freedom-fighter	Traitor to his people

These two opposites would have been natural enemies. But they became comrades-in-arms when they became one in Christ.

11. Judas.

This is the Greek form of Judah, the son of Jacob who became an ancestor of the Messiah. This was a common name among the Jews. Two of the disciples had the same name. Judas had several nicknames.

- The name "Thaddaeus" means "breast baby." This might have been a term of endearment given to the baby of a family.
- He is known elsewhere as Lebbaeus, meaning "heart child." It is a nickname for someone who is courageous.

We only see Judas Lebbaeus pictured one time in the New Testament. It was on the night of the Last Supper. Jesus was giving His disciples a special promise.

> *"He who has My commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves Me; and he who loves Me shall be loved by My Father, and I will love him, and will disclose Myself to him."*
>
> *Judas (not Iscariot) said to Him, "Lord, what then has happened that You are going to disclose Yourself to us, and not to the world?" (John 14:21-22).*

Judas Lebbaeus had been thinking of the manifestation of the Messiah as an outward manifestation with trumpets and shouts and an earthly kingdom that would be visible to all. But Jesus taught that the kingdom would not be an external happening. He taught that the kingdom was already present in the hearts and lives of men (Luke 17:21).

12. Judas Iscariot, who became a Traitor.

Judas is the Greek form of "Judah." This was a common name among the Jews. The name "Iscariot" is made up of two words:

- *Ish* is the Hebrew word for "man."
- *Kerioth* was the name of a town in Judea; located near Hebron.

This designation merely tells where Judas was from. He was the "Man of Kerioth." As far as we can tell, Judas was the only one of the disciples who was not from Galilee.

Judas was initially attracted to Jesus. There was something about Him that attracted him as a follower. Even when others fell away, Judas was one of those who remained. He didn't start off any worse than the other disciples. Matthew was an extortioner. Simon was a rebel terrorist. The whole group of disciples were a motley group of sinners. But something happened to Judas. He turned from a disciple to a betrayer. He stopped loving the Lord and he began loving himself and the money which he could get for himself. And he ultimately sold his soul for thirty pieces of silver.

One special insight that we have into the character of Judas comes to us several days before the crucifixion. Jesus and His disciples had been invited into the home of Lazarus and his sisters, Mary and Martha.

> *Mary therefore took a pound of very costly perfume of pure nard, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped His feet with her hair; and the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume.*
>
> *But Judas Iscariot, one of His disciples, who was intending to betray Him, said, 5 "Why was this perfume not sold for three hundred denarii, and given to poor people?"*
>
> *Now he said this, not because he was concerned about the poor, but because he was a thief, and as he had the money box, he used to pilfer what was put into it. (John 12:3-6).*

Notice that Judas was already intending to betray Jesus. The betrayal was not a spur-of-the-moment decision. It was not a matter of falling into temptation in a moment of weakness. Judas plotted his actions over the course of several weeks.

Also notice that Judas was only interested in what he could get for himself. He had been chosen to be the treasurer of the ministry of Jesus and it was his practice to keep two sets of books - one for Jesus and one listing what he stole for himself.

But that is not all. Judas hid all of his false motives under a mask of self-righteous hypocrisy. He looked at Mary's act of worship and he denounced it with a pious declaration of the needs of the poor. If he was really so concerned about the poor, then he would not have been stealing from the ministry. It was not long after this that Judas found an opportunity to make some more money at the expense of the ministry of Jesus.

> *Then one of the twelve, named Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests, 15 and said, "What are you willing to give me to deliver Him up to you?" And they weighed out to him thirty pieces of silver.*
>
> *And from then on he began looking for a good opportunity to betray Him. (Matthew 26:14-16).*

Judas had become a cheap crook. He was willing to sell Jesus for a relatively small sum of money. He had decided to cut his losses and run. There is a principle here. When avarice is your sin, the amount doesn't matter. The sign of a Christian is an open hand. When you start closing your hand, you will close it on anything, as long as it's there. We need to pray to the Father to help us to keep

our hands open. To what are you holding? What is there in your life that you are reluctant to release? I guarantee that it is the one thing that God is pulling at. Your reaction to His pull is what makes you either a disciple or a Judas.

A SERMON TO LIVE BY
LUKE 6:17-49

Tough love. It has become something of a byword in our culture. We normally take it to refer to that time when you are dealing with a difficult person whom you love and you must take some action against that person in order to bring discipline against them.

This chapter is about tough love. But it isn't the kind of tough love that is meant by our modern day expression. This chapter is about a love that is so difficult because it means that you must take action on behalf of one whom you really don't want to love in the first place. In this chapter, you are going to be called to serve your enemy in ways that many of you are unwilling to even serve your spouses.

SETTING FOR A SERMON

> *Jesus came down with them and stood on a level place; and there was a large crowd of His disciples, and a great throng of people from all Judea and Jerusalem and the coastal region of Tyre and Sidon, 18 who had come to hear Him and to be healed of their diseases; and those who were troubled with unclean spirits were being cured. 19 And all the people were trying to touch Him, for power was coming from Him and healing them all. (Luke 6:17-19).*

In the previous verses, Jesus had gone up into a mountain to pray. After a night spent in prayer, He chose out 12 of His disciples who were now commissioned to be apostles. They would be sent out with a very special message. Now that they have been chosen, he proceeds back down to a level area where He shall now tell them what that message is.

We must understand the mixed nature of His audience. His disciples are there, both those who have been named as Apostles as well as those other disciples. But there are also other people gathered. There are Jews from Judea and Jerusalem. And there are Gentiles from Tyre and Sidon.

Notice why they have come. It is seen in verse 18. They came to be healed of their diseases. They came for the healing and they stayed for the preaching. They came for the miracles and stayed for the sermon. There is a principle here. People will never be that interested in what we say until they see what we do. It is only when they see Christ living in us and the power of a transformed life that they will come to hear our message.

Luke 6:20-23	Luke 6:24-26	Luke 6:27-30	Luke 6:39-49
Four Blessings	Four Woes	Four Ways of Showing Love	Four Parables
• Poor • Hungry • Weeping • Persecuted	• Rich • Well-fed • Laughing • Popular	• To the unlovable • As you want to be loved • To your enemies • As you want God to show you His love	• Blind leading the blind • Speck and the Log • Trees and the fruit • Two houses

FOUR BLESSINGS

> *And turning His gaze toward His disciples, He began to say, "Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. 21 Blessed are you who hunger now, for you shall be satisfied. Blessed are you who weep now, for you shall laugh. 22 Blessed are you when men hate you, and ostracize you, and insult you, and scorn your name as evil, for the sake of the Son of Man. 23 Be glad in that day and leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in heaven. For in the same way their fathers used to treat the prophets." (Luke 6:20-23).*

The sermon as recorded by Luke starts off in much the same way as the account recorded by Matthew. Its starts off with a series of blessings. The first thing that you need to know is that the word "blessed" can be translated "happy" (the New American Standard gives it this translation in Romans 14:22). That means we could subtitle this section: "How to be Happy."

Blessed are you who ...			
Are poor	Hunger now	Weep now	When men hate you
Yours is the kingdom of God	You shall be satisfied	You shall laugh	Your reward is great in heaven

1. Blessed are you who are Poor (6:20).

We know all about poverty. That is when you don't have something. That is the lower end of the "have's" and the "have nots." Of course, we know that poverty can be a bit relative. When I say that, I'm not speaking of family relatives: "Where there's a will, there's a relative." I'm referring to the truth that not all poverty is created equal. I see that when I travel to Eastern Europe. What we call poverty, they call normal. We call poverty when you have to do without certain luxuries. They call poverty when you have no food for an extended period of time.

Matthew's account contains an additional phrase. He says, *"Blessed are the poor **in spirit**" (Matthew 5:3).* Luke does not add this phrase, but I want to suggest that it is implied. What does it mean to be "poor in spirit"? That is a quality of which we do not speak. But if you take the words apart, it is really very simple to understand.

The Greek language has a word to distinguish between the two types of poverty. In Greek, you can speak of someone who is poor and they have no money for any extra things (πενης – *penes*). Or you can speak of someone who is completely impoverished and who is without even the basic necessities (πτωχος, *ptochos*). The πενης is a pauper; he is poor and has very little to his name. The πτωχος is a beggar; he has nothing and must live on what others give to him. It is the second type of poverty that Jesus describes in this verse. Happy is the one who is not merely spiritually lower middle class. Rather happy are those who are spiritually bankrupt and destitute.

This goes beyond all normal reason. Why would Jesus say such a thing? Because it is only when you come to terms with the fact that you are spiritually bankrupt that you can even be saved. It is only then that God gives to you all of the riches that are in Christ Jesus.

On what are you depending for your salvation? If you were to stand before God this morning and He were to ask you why you

should be allowed into heaven, to what would you point? If your answer was to have anything to do with your own goodness and spiritual worth, then you are lost. The only one who ever gets to heaven is the one who realizes that he doesn't deserve to be there. Christ didn't come to save good people. He came to save the lost. And you can only find His true happiness and blessings when you come to understand that you are spiritually impoverished.

Jesus is saying, "Happy is the man who is spiritually destitute, who has to come and plead for mercy, because it is that kind of man who enters the kingdom of heaven." You will never enter the kingdom of heaven unless you have a sense of your own spiritual bankruptcy. You will never become a citizen of the kingdom unless you realize that you are unworthy. The kingdom is not for the self-sufficient. They have no reason to trust in Christ. God does not save the self-sufficient. He only saves those who have found their sufficiency in Christ.

God is looking for people who are poor in spirit. He seeks to bring forth this quality in our lives. A broken spirit is a spirit that He can use. This process is not very pleasant. It is often painful. We cry out, "Why is the Lord putting me through this?" The answer is that God is preparing us. He is making us to be poor in spirit.

God is doing a work in you. He is at work within you, bringing to the place where you will recognize your spiritual poverty. And when you come to that point, then you have become someone whom He can use.

> *The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise. (Psalm 51:17).*

There are blessings to the one who is poor in spirit. But the fact that Luke does not include the specific indicator "in spirit" suggests that there is a correlation between poverty versus spiritual poverty.

The temptation of financial wealth is that you begin to focus upon that wealth and that you lose sight of your spiritual poverty. This is a constant theme throughout the Scriptures. James warns of the pitfalls of wealth. Jesus said that you cannot love God and money.

Financial poverty is no guarantee of spiritual poverty. But financial prosperity is often a pitfall to the realization of spiritual poverty. When things are going good, we tend to forget the spiritual

realm. At such a time, we need to repent and recognize our spiritual poverty.

What happens when we experience such a broken spirit and such a contrite heart? At such a time, we mourn over our lost condition. That brings us to our next point...

2. Blessed are you who Hunger now (6:21).

In the same way that verse 20 spoke of spiritual poverty, I want to suggest that verse 21 speaks of a spiritual hunger. This is indicated in Matthew's account.

> *"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied." (Matthew 5:6).*

Notice what this passage does not say. It does not say, blessed is the man who is righteous. That is the way that the Pharisees would have worded it. The Pharisees taught that it would make you happy to be righteous. Their entire religious system was centered around becoming righteous by doing good works and abstaining from bad works.

But Jesus did not say that. He said, "Happy is the man who hungers and thirsts for that spiritual quality that he doesn't have." It is only the one who realizes that his own righteousness is lacking who has reckoned to him the righteousness of another. This is the doctrine of justification. It can be summed up in three points.

(1) God is righteous.
(2) God demands righteousness.
(3) God freely provides in Christ what He demands.

If you have come in faith to Jesus, trusting Him alone as your Lord and as your Savior, then something wonderful has taken place. Your sins were credited to Jesus upon the cross. He was judged as a guilty sinner. This does not mean that He began to sin, but rather He was credited with your sins. God looked upon Him and judged Him in your place.

But that is not all. That is only the beginning of justification. The other part is that the righteousness of Jesus was credited to you. That does not mean that you actually became righteous any more than that He became a sinner. But you have been reckoned with and

credited with the very righteousness of Jesus. God looks upon you and judges you as though you had the very character of Christ. And on the basis of that judgment, God makes a declaration about you. He says, "You are hereby righteous."

3. Blessed are you who Weep now (6:21).

Notice the tense of this verse. It is present tense. It doesn't say: "Blessed are those who used to weep but are now over it." No. It says, "Happy is the one who is weeping now, for he will eventually laugh."

What kind of weeping is this? In the same way that verse 20 spoke of spiritual poverty and verse 21 spoke of a hunger after righteousness, I want to suggest that this section speaks of a weeping over one's spiritual condition.

	Poverty	**Hunger**	**Weeping**
Luke's Account	*Blessed are you who are poor*	*Blessed are you who hunger now*	*Blessed are you who weep now*
Matthew's Account	*Blessed are the poor in spirit*	*Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness*	*Blessed are those who mourn*

Notice the flow of these verses.

A man comes to recognize his spiritual poverty ⇨ He hungers for the spiritual life that he does not have ⇨ Because of his spiritual poverty and his hunger for spiritual things, he weeps

This is not the sorrow of the world. The sorrow of the world is usually sorry only about getting caught. The world says, "I didn't do anything wrong and I promise never to do it again." This is a godly sorrow that brings about repentance.

> *For the sorrow that is according to the will of God produces a repentance without regret, leading to salvation; but the sorrow of the world produces*

regret. (2 Corinthians 7:10).

The sorrow of the world produces death. This is illustrated in the case of Judas Iscariot. He betrayed the Lord and then became sorry for his sin. But it was not a sorrow that produced repentance. It was not a sorrow that brought him back to God. Instead it drove him to commit suicide.

Godly sorrow is a sorrow over sin that brings us to the point where we turn to God and accept His forgiveness. This is a sorrow that brings life. And as a result, we find comfort in the arms of a Savior.

I love the story of the Prodigal Son. You know the story. He went from the love of a father to the stench of a pigsty. An inheritance squandered. A life wasted. Forlorn and dejected. And then he resolved to return home. We read about the speech he had prepared. He would recount his own unworthiness. He would offer to take the position of a humble servant. He would make amends. He must have recited that speech a hundred times on the road home. He never got a chance to use it. His father was waiting and watching and came running to meet him. Before he could say a word, the father's arms were around him and calling for a party.

The Christian is one who weeps over his lost condition. But he doesn't remain in that attitude of weeping. Sorrow is turned to joy in the light of forgiveness. The result is described by Jesus as happiness.

4. Blessed are you when Men Hate You (6:22).

Once again, we must remember that we are focusing upon spiritual qualities. That means the hate that is mentioned here is a hatred that comes about because you are standing for the cause of Christ. Jesus said that all of His followers would experience this kind of persecution.

> *"If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you." (John 15:18-19).*

The world cannot help but to hate those who are in Christ. Why is this? I think that it is because the Christian who is filled with

the Spirit is manifesting righteousness before an unrighteous world. You see, the world likes to think that it really is not all that bad. It has adopted a standard of relative righteousness. It grades itself on the curve. It says that as long as you are not too bad then your sins do not matter. When it finds itself involved in certain sins, it merely redefines sin so that it will remain acceptable to its own standards.

But the Bible never lowers the standard of righteousness. God sets the standard. He is the standard of His own demands. And the Christian is one who accepts God's standards, who recognizes that he can never meet them in himself and who trusts in Jesus Christ as a Savior who met the standard in our place. The world and its false set of standards is condemned by this. Faced with condemnation over its sinful condition, it can do one of two things:

- Repent and turn to the Lord for forgiveness.
- Reject God's truth and try to deny it and to destroy it.

The history of the church is a history of persecution. Sometimes that persecution is verbal or social and sometimes it goes to the point of shedding blood. But whatever the form, there will be persecution.

> *Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among, you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you; 13 but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing; so that also at the revelation of His glory, you may rejoice with exultation.*
>
> *If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are **blessed** [happy], because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. (1 Peter 4:12-14).*

Notice what is said in verse 14. You can be happy [*makarios*] when you are persecuted for the sake of Christ. Why does this make you happy? Because this is one of the evidences that the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you.

> *Blessed [happy] is the man who perseveres under trial, for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life, which the Lord has promised to those who love Him (James 1:12).*

What is the crown of life? You might be thinking that it sounds a lot like a reference to eternal life. And you would be correct. Do you want the crown of life? The way is difficult. It involves seeing yourself as God sees you. It involves recognizing your spiritual poverty. And hungering over that which you do not have. And weeping over your lost condition. And that will result in persecution.

We've been looking at the various ways in which happiness comes. But we could sum it all up in one single statement. Happiness comes in Christ. He is the answer to your soul's desire. I like the bumper sticker that says, "Jesus is the answer, but what is the question?" The truth is that it doesn't matter what is the question. He is the answer to all of the major questions of life.

A rather vain student went to his professor and asked him a very technical theological question. The professor thought for a moment and then replied, "Jesus is the answer to your question!" "Jesus!" exclaimed the student. "What kind of answer is that? That doesn't answer my question at all!" "That," replied the professor, " is because you are asking the wrong question."

Do you know Him? If you don't then maybe it is because you've been asking the wrong question. Until you do come to know Him, you will never know true and lasting happiness. The delight of deliverance. The romance of the redeemed. The song of salvation. And the happiness of the holy.

FOUR WOES

"But woe to you who are rich, for you are receiving your comfort in full. 25 Woe to you who are well-fed now, for you shall be hungry. Woe to you who laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep. 26 Woe to you when all men speak well of you, for their fathers used to treat the false prophets in the same way." (Luke 6:24-26).

Now Jesus changes gears. Instead of pronouncing blessings, He pronounces a series of woes. They are in direct contrast to the blessings that He has just given. This is significant. What is the antithesis of a blessing? Normally we tend to think that the opposite of blessing is a curse. After all, the Law contained both blessings and cursings. But Jesus proposes a

different antithesis.

Blessings	↔	Woes

Do you see the significance? It points to the compassion of Jesus. He takes no delight in pronouncing the judgment of the wicked. Instead he pleads their case with the word that could be translated, "Alas!"

FOUR WAYS OF SHOWING LOVE

This sermon makes no mention of the Law of Moses. But it does point to the foundational force behind the Law. It points to love. What is love? This is a question that has eluded philosophers and poets through the ages. We tend to define love by what love does. This has led some to state that love is always a verb. Love does. And it is true that this is often the case. But the word is also used as a noun. The famous love chapter, 1 Corinthians 13, gives a number of adjectives that describe love and this tells me that love is also a noun.

1. Showing Love in the Face of the Unlovable.

> *"But I say to you who hear, love your enemies,*
> *do good to those who hate you,* 28 *bless those who*
> *curse you, pray for those who mistreat you.* 29
> *Whoever hits you on the cheek, offer him the other*
> *also; and whoever takes away your coat, do not*
> *withhold your shirt from him either.* 30 *Give to*
> *everyone who asks of you, and whoever takes away*
> *what is yours, do not demand it back." (Luke 6:27-*
> *30).*

Notice the way in which Jesus introduces this section. In verse 27 He starts, "But I say to you who hear..." This may be another way of saying, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear." Jesus is telling those who would follow Him what practices are required of them.

All of these commands (love, do good, give) are given in the present tense, indicating a continuing command. We could translated it, "Continue to love. Continue to do good. Continue to give..."

Jesus is going to tell us how we ought to treat our enemy, the one who hates, curses, mistreats, attacks, and takes advantage of us. This is the one who is diametrically opposed to your best interest. He is the one whom you love to hate. He is the one who offends you and seeks to bring you down.

How do you respond to such a person? The responses for which Jesus will call are supernatural responses. They go against common logic. Logic would say, "Defend yourself; fight back!" But the Lord says, "Love such a one and serve him, even if he remains your enemy throughout."

The list of practices which Jesus laid down here is suggestive, not all inclusive. Matthew, for example, gives us additional matters to consider, which were a part of this same sermon. Jesus did not intend for this list of required responses to be considered complete, but rather suggestive. These are only some of the examples of the way in which we can walk in the way of our Lord.

The practice of these commands may lead to your own physical detriment. Doing as Jesus commands may make us poor. You may object, "But I'd go broke doing this!" And that is why Jesus started this sermon by saying, "Blessed are you who are poor..."

The teaching of Jesus went contrary to the popular thinking of the day. The rabbis said, "Love your neighbor and hate your enemy." They took this from their interpretation of Leviticus 19:18.

> *You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the sons of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself; I am the Lord. (Leviticus 19:18).*

The rabbis changed the emphasis of that passage from "love" to "the sons of your people" and concluded that it was okay to hate others who were not "sons of your people.". A wall of separation had been built up between the Jews and the Gentiles. They were to love other Jews but they could freely hate all Gentiles. Another wall of separation was built up between good Jews and bad Jews, the latter being those who did not know the Law or who did not obey it. Jesus came to break down those barriers. He came to show that all men are under sin and that all men need a Savior.

2. Showing Love as You Want to be Loved.

> *"Treat others the same way you want them to treat you." (Luke 6:31).*

The Jews had this same principle stated in the negative. Hillel was quoted as saying, "What is hateful to you, do not do to your neighbor." This same principle can be found in the writings of Plato and Aristotle. It can also be found in the teachings of Confucius: *Do nothing to your neighbor which afterward you would not have your neighbor do to you (Mahabharata 13:5571).*

Jesus seems to be unique in stating the principle in the positive. He looks not only to forbid certain negative treatments, but He also seeks to bring about certain positive actions. He is seeking to have love demonstrated.

3. Showing Love, Not only to Your Friends, but to Your Enemies.

> *"If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. 33 If you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. 34 If you lend to those from whom you expect to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners in order to receive back the same amount.*
>
> *"But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High; for He Himself is kind to ungrateful and evil men." (Luke 6:32-35).*

If you love those who love you...	If you do good to those who do good to you...	If you lend to those from whom you expect to receive...
What credit is that to you? Even sinners do the same.		
Love your enemies	Do good	Lend, expecting nothing in return

Most people show love to those who love them. There is a certain natural law at work. Most people love those who love them. Let's face it. We love to be loved. We are like the woman who,

when asked why she loved her husband so much, replied, "I love him because of his excellent tastes; he picked me!" There is nothing wrong with loving those who love us. But Jesus calls us to do something more. He calls us to love our enemies.

How is this possible? How can I love the person that I love to hate? I think that the answer is found in verse 35. We can bring about that kind of love by doing outward acts of love toward those people whom we love to hate.

Is this hypocrisy? No, I don't believe that it is. It is an honest attitude that says, "I don't feel loving, but I want to be obedient to what the Lord has commanded and I want to bring about the love that I don't feel. So I am going to do the action of love even though the feeling of love is not present."

Notice the reason that Jesus gives for showing love to our enemies. We are to show love to our enemies because God had shown love to His enemies. If we are His children, then we should follow in the footsteps of our Father. He is the pattern. We are to love as He has loved us.

4. Showing Love as You Want God to Show You Love.

> *"Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.*
>
> *"Do not judge, and you will not be judged; and do not condemn, and you will not be condemned; pardon, and you will be pardoned.*
>
> *"Give, and it will be given to you. They will pour into your lap a good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over. For by your standard of measure it will be measured to you in return." (Luke 6:36-38).*

Be merciful...	Do not judge...	Do not condemn...	Pardon...	Give...
As your Father is merciful	You will not be judged	You will not be condemned	You will be pardoned	It will be given to you

Now we move from love to mercy. Mercy involves compassion. It speaks of the withholding and the removal of judgment. Notice how mercy and judgment are contrasted in this passage.

Be merciful	↔	Do not judge

The statement of Jesus that we are not to judge has become the source of all sorts of imbalanced teaching. There are those who use this passage to teach that Christians should never pass any sort of judgment upon sin. But this is contrary to those Scriptures that teach on the importance of church discipline.

When verse 37 says, "forgive, and you will be forgiven," it uses a different word for "forgive than is normally used. Here it is ἀπολυω ("release") instead of the normal ἀφίημι.

That does not mean there is no application of this passage to church discipline. I believe that there is. Indeed, this passage sets forth the entire tone of what church discipline is all about. Church discipline always has as its goal the restoration of the sinner. We are seeking to restore the sinner to his proper position in Christ. This does not mean that we ignore sin. It means that we work to do away with sin in the life of the sinner. Sometimes this involves judgment. But it is not the judgment that delights in condemnation. It is the judgment that seeks to do away with the sin so that the sinner can be restored to the full enjoyment of his fellowship in Christ.

FOUR PARABLES

The word "parable" comes from a compound word made by the joining of two Greek words together. The two Greek words are παρα (*para*, "along side of") and βαλλω (*ballo*, "to throw"). A parable is a story that is "thrown along side of" a spiritual truth to further illustrate it. This means that a parable must always be interpreted in the context of the spiritual truth that has been presented.

Jesus gives four parables in the closing segment of His sermon. It can be tempting to divorce these parables from the context in which they have been given, but to do that will mean that we miss the main point of the parable.

1. The Parable of the Blind Guide.

> *And He also spoke a parable to them: "A blind man cannot guide a blind man, can he? Will they not both fall into a pit? 40 A pupil is not above*

> *his teacher; but everyone, after he has been fully trained, will be like his teacher." (Luke 6:39-40).*

When I was a little boy, there was a television cartoon that was popular called Mr. Magoo. It was about a man who was blind. He was always bumping into things and knocking things over and mistaking one thing for another. Picture a blind man. He cannot see where he is going. He cannot see the obstacles in his path. He needs someone to lead him. He needs someone who can see. Can you imagine anything more silly than a blind man being led about by a blind seeing-eye-dog?

Here is the principle. Guides for the blind need to see better than those whom they are leading. And teachers need to know more than those pupils whom they are teaching. The purpose for a teacher is that the teacher may teach the student something so that the student will be like the teacher who is teaching it.

Why is Jesus telling this parable? Look at the context. Jesus has been talking about love and forgiveness. God's children can be known because they demonstrate love, even to their enemies. God's children show mercy and are slow to judge.

Here is the point. Those who set themselves up as leaders over God's people must be those who show love and mercy and who do not jump to making judgments of others. People who are loved by God show love to others. Forgiven people forgive. You cannot really love others until you have known the love of God given on your behalf and you cannot really forgive until you know how much you have been forgiven.

2. The Parable of the Speck and the Log.

> *Why do you look at the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? 42 Or how can you say to your brother, 'Brother, let me take out the speck that is in your eye,' when you yourself do not see the log that is in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take out the speck that is in your brother's eye. (Luke 6:41-42).*

This parable is related to the previous parable. The previous parable spoke of blind guides. This parable speaks of the removing of that thing that causes a measure of blindness.

Parable of the Blind Guide	Parable of the Speck and the Log
Guides must be able to see better than those whom they are leading	Eye inspectors must have better vision than those on whose vision they are trying to correct
A teacher must first demonstrate in his own life the truths he is trying to teach to another	A speck-remover must first remove the log from his own eye before trying to remove it from the eye of another

The contrast has a clear implication to those who were teachers among the Jews of that day. It points to those who set themselves up as teachers of God, but who were themselves blinded to their own lack of the very same qualities that God shows to us, His love and His mercy.

Here is the principle. Before you try to pass judgment upon others, first pass judgment upon yourself. Only when you have gone through an honest self-judgment of your own sins will you be able to assist others who are in their sins.

The basic requirement for the exercise of church discipline is self-discipline.

3. The Parable of the Tree and the Fruit.

> *For there is no good tree which produces bad fruit, nor, on the other hand, a bad tree which produces good fruit.* 44 *For each tree is known by its own fruit. For men do not gather figs from thorns, nor do they pick grapes from a briar bush.* 45 *The good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth what is good; and the evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth what is evil; for his mouth speaks from that which fills his heart. (Luke 6:43-45).*

There is a fundamental law of nature that says, "Things produce after their own kind." It is something that the Lord set in order at the creation. Throughout Genesis 1 we read the continuing refrain: "After its kind." This means that watermelon seeds to not produce apple trees. They produce watermelons. In the same way, a good tree produces good fruit and a bad tree produces bad fruit.

What is true of trees is also true of men. They are known, not by what they say, but by what is produced in their lives. What is on the inside will make itself known by what comes out.

In the context of this sermon, this means that you can know one of God's people by how they are manifesting in their own lives the truths of this sermon.

The Parable	The Interpretation
Good trees produce good fruit; bad trees produce bad fruit	God's people show love to others (even their enemies) as they have been loved by God
The fruit manifests the nature of the tree	A man's works manifests the nature of what is in his heart

The Bible tells us that only the Lord is able to see the heart. We look at outward appearances (1 Samuel 16:7). But we can tell some things by outward appearances. Outward actions are a barometer of what is going on inside the heart.

My wife can tell certain things about my heart by how I treat her. Do I say nice things to her? Do I make an effort to be with her and to romance her? Am I physically affectionate? (and I don't just mean sex). These things are an indication of what is going on in my heart.

4. The Parable of the Two Houses.

> *"Why do you call Me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say? 47 Everyone who comes to Me and hears My words and acts on them, I will show you whom he is like: 48 he is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid a foundation on the rock; and when a flood occurred, the torrent burst against that house and could not shake it, because it had been well built. 49 But the one who has heard and has not acted accordingly, is like a man who built a house on the ground without any foundation; and the torrent burst against it and immediately it collapsed, and the ruin of that house was great." (Luke 6:46-49).*

It is not enough to say the right thing; real disciples are those

who do the right thing. This is an important message for the evangelical church today. We are often very caught up in having the correct theology and we ignore the importance of having the correct obedience. This is illustrated by the contrast to two builders.

Good Builder	Bad Builder
Dug his foundation deeply and laid it on the rock	Did not bother to build a foundation for his house
When the flood came, the house could not be shaken	When the flood came, the house collapsed
Illustrates the man who hears the words of this sermon and who acts according to them	Illustrates the man who hears the words of this sermon and who does not act according to them
His life backs up his beliefs	He says, "Lord, lord," but does not do what Jesus says

William Hendricksen makes the following excellent observations from this passage:

- Everyone is a builder. To build is merely to live. You are building. The question is on what foundation are you building.
- There are only two kinds of builders. There are those who are building upon obedience to the teachings of Christ and there are those who are not. All other foundations are shifting sands. All other foundations lead to eventual ruin.
- The wise builder is one who builds his life on Christ. He hears and he believes and he attempts to live accordingly.
- The hour of crisis is unavoidable. This is not an insurance program against something that just might take place. The storm will come. The only question is whether you will be ready.

THE HEALING OF THE CENTURION'S SERVANT

LUKE 7:1-10

There existed between the Jew and the Gentile the greatest possible gulf. A Jew would not enter the home of a Gentile or sit at a table with him. A Gentile was considered to be unclean. He was dirty. If there had been buses in ancient Palestine, then the Jews would have made the Gentiles sit in the back of the bus.

The story of Jonah depicts the depth of this gulf. The prophet is sent to minister to the Gentile city of Nineveh. In rebellion, he boards a boat going in the other direction. After a short detour in God's divinely appointed submarine, he arrives in Nineveh.

He begins by announcing that God is going to judge the city in 40 days. When he has spent 39 days repeating the proclamation, he moves out of the city to a nearby hill to watch the fireworks display. Meanwhile the king of Nineveh has declared a fast and is leading his people in repentance and prayer. The 40th day comes and goes and no fire falls from heaven. Jonah is furious. How dare God have mercy on these repentant Gentiles!

As Jonah is sulking outside the city, God comes with an object lesson. He allows a leafy vine to grow up and to provide shade for Jonah as he waits in his lonely vigil. But then He sends a worm to destroy the vine. Jonah is saddened and mourns over the loss of his vine. God presents him with a penetrating question — should not the God of the universe mourn over the loss of people whom He has created, even if they are Gentiles?

We are not told whether Jonah learned his lesson. But we do know that the anti-Gentile feeling continued to run deep in Jewish thinking. Even the Apostle Peter would think twice before accepting an invitation to go to the house of Cornelius.

And yet, there was a time when a Jewish carpenter-turned-rabbi was ready to go to the home of a Gentile, and a Roman soldier at that, in order to bring help in time of need.

A RESIDENTIAL RETURN

When He had completed all His discourses in the hearing of the people, He went to Capernaum (Luke 7:1).

Jesus had just completed His Sermon on the Mount/Level Place. Now He comes down to Capernaum, the fishing village by the sea that has served as His base of operations. With Him are His newly appointed apostles .

The news quickly spreads through town. Jesus is coming back! A royal official and his healthy young, son take a day off to greet the returning Rabbi. Peter's family breaks out the guest room for the return of the Lord and His disciples. A man and his four friends recount the story of how his paralysis was removed at the touch of the Master's hand. A new tax-collector wonders what could have persuaded his predecessor to leave his wealth and to follow an itinerant preacher. Meanwhile in another part of town, a worried soldier prepares a message.

The original Semitic name of the settlement is Kefar Nahum, i.e. the village (*kafar*) of Nahum (Nahum means "consolation"). The composite name Kefar Nahum is always rendered in non-Semitic languages as a single name, and the guttural "h" has been dropped altogether.

In contrast to Nazareth, the population of Capernaum was highly stratified: fishermen, farmers, artisans, merchants and publicans lived in the same village, but apparently without any strident economical inequality. Even the relations between the inhabitants of Capernaum and the Romans were surprisingly cordial. From the same community Jesus chose many of his apostles either among fishermen (Peter, Andrew, James, John - Mt 4:12-22) or publicans (Matthew - Mk 2:13).

A REPRESENTED REQUEST

And a certain centurion's slave, who was highly regarded by him, was sick and about to die.

And when he heard about Jesus, he sent some Jewish elders asking Him to come and save the life of his slave.

And when they had come to Jesus, they earnestly entreated Him, saying, "He is worthy for You to grant this to him; 5 for he loves our nation, and it was he who built for us our synagogue." (Luke 7:2-5).

We are now introduced to a new character. We do not know his name. He know very little about him. We only know his occupation. He is a centurion. A centurion was a commander of a *centuria* — a company of 100 men. If he were living today, we would call him a Master Sergeant, since he was a non-commissioned officer. This man was a centurion under the service of Herod Antipas. Roman legions were not assigned to Galilee, but Antipas had organized his own military force along the same lines as that of the Roman army. Most of the troops in his army had been recruited from Samaritans and Gentiles. This man was probably of the latter category.

1. His Sick Slave: *And a certain centurion's slave, who was highly regarded by him, was sick and about to die (Luke 7:2).*

   Slavery was a common institution in the ancient world. What was not so common was that a master should be so concerned about his slave. A slave was normally thought of as a mere commodity, though an expensive one. He could be bought or sold and had no personal rights.

   But this man's concern seems to be more than just the concern that a man might have over a piece of property. This centurion was genuinely concerned about the welfare of his slave.

2. His Familiarity with Jesus: *When he heard about Jesus (3:3).*

   Capernaum was serving as the base for the ministry of Jesus. It was here that He had come after turning the water into wine. It was here that He first called His disciples. It was at the synagogue in Capernaum that he cast a demon from a man. It was here that He healed the mother-in-law of Peter. It was here that He healed the paralytic. The news of these activities would have spread throughout the town and had eventually come to this centurion.

   We are going to see in a few verses that this centurion recognized the authority of Jesus. But this is not why he came. He came because he had a need. His need drove him to Jesus. This is always the case. Jesus came for those in need. He said, "Those who are whole do not need a physician." Do you have a need? Perhaps the Lord is speaking to you in the midst of that need. Perhaps He is doing the same thing that He did to this Centurion. Perhaps He is drawing you to Jesus.

3. His Sending of the Jewish Elders: *He sent some Jewish elders asking Him to come and save the life of his slave (7:3).*

The Centurion resolves to seek the help of Jesus. But instead of going himself, He decides to go through the intermediary of the elders of the Jewish synagogue. His reasoning was twofold.

Matthew's account does not mention that the Centurion used an intermediary to come to Jesus. We often do the same thing when we describe a conversation that we had with someone but neglect to mention that it was done over the telephone. Likewise, when we read that Pilate scourged Jesus, we do not imagine that he took the whip in hand and did the task himself. It is not a case of inaccuracy; it is merely that Luke's account gives us a little more detail.

- First of all, he reasons that Jesus might be more inclined to answer the request of fellow Jews, particularly if they are the leaders of the synagogue in which Jesus has been known to preach.
- An even greater reason was his own unworthiness. He has been living in Galilee long enough to know the disdain with which the Jews look upon the Gentiles. And so, he approaches Jesus through the representation of these elders.

There is something appropriate in this. We have all approached the Lord through the mediatorial ministry of the Jews. All of the Bible was written, either directly by Jews, or else by those who were themselves trained by Jews. Each of the apostles were Jewish. A Christian can never afford to be anti-Semitic because he will find that he is biting himself. Christianity is Jewish.

4. An Assumption of Worthiness: *"He is worthy for You to grant this to him; 5 for he loves out nation, and it was he who built for us our synagogue" (7:4-5).*

Although the Centurion had not himself proselyted to Judaism, he had come to love the Jewish people. He had even financed the building of the synagogue in Capernaum. You can go to Capernaum today and walk through the ruins of the synagogue there. It is not the original structure. The one there today was built in the 4th century. But it was built on the same place as the original synagogue with more or less the same design.

The Centurion had a servant whom he held in high esteem. And the Jews held the Centurion in high esteem. And the Centurion held Jesus in high esteem.

Notice the basis of this request. The Jews feel that "He is worthy." They had decided that this Centurion was worthy of the help of Jesus because of the good works that he had done. This tells me something about these Jews. They operated under a works concept. They thought that the more works you do, the more worthy you are. As a result, they spent their lives trying to do enough good works to be considered worthy.

There was only one problem with this. It is that no one can be good enough or do enough good works or stop sinning enough to be worthy of God's grace. God only gives His grace to unworthy people.

A story is told of Frederick the Great visiting one of the prisons of his realm. Each prisoner he encountered would loudly protest his own innocence, explaining that he had been falsely accused and unfairly judged. Frederick finally came to a man who, when asked about his crime, replied, "Yes, I really did commit that offense and received the punishment that I deserved." At this, Frederick called for the guards and issued an order. "Quick! Release this man at once! We cannot allow him to remain here corrupting all of these innocent men!"

The truth is that there are no innocent men or women. We have all gone out of the way. We have all gone our own way. We have all sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

A RECOGNIZED AUTHORITY

Now Jesus started on His way with them; and when He was already not far from the house, the centurion sent friends, saying to Him, "Lord, do not trouble yourself further, for I am not worthy for You to come under my roof; 7 for this reason I did not even consider myself worthy to come to You, but just say the word, and my servant will be healed. 8 For I, too, am a man under authority, with soldiers under me; and I say to this one, 'Go!' and he goes; and to another, 'Come!' and he comes; and to my slave, 'Do this!' and he does it." (Luke 7:6-8).

Jesus agrees to the request of these elders and begins to make His way to the Centurion's house. The man may have lived on the outskirts of the town on the road from Capernaum to Tiberius. As Jesus and the crowd

approach the house, some men come out to meet him. They have a message from the Centurion. It is a message that is in contrast to that which was delivered by the Jewish elders.

- The Jewish elders had said that this was a worthy man.
- These friends bring a message from the Centurion himself saying that he is unworthy.

This Centurion had come to two conclusions. They are two conclusion to which everyone must come who is to be a true Christian.

1. He concluded that he was Unworthy.

Jesus had just finished a sermon in which He announced, "Blessed are the poor." This Centurion recognized his own spiritual bankruptcy. He realized that he was unclean and undeserving. He understood that there was a wall of separation between Himself and the Lord. Even though the Jews had deemed him worthy, he deemed himself to be unworthy of the grace of God.

When you went to the Temple in Jerusalem and walked through the Court of the Gentiles, you would come to a low stone wall surrounding the Temple structure. There were small gates in this wall with signs that Gentiles were not permitted to enter upon pain of death. This was a man who was removed from the place of worship. Jesus came to break down the middle wall of partition. He came to open the way for all men to come to the Father.

2. He concluded that Jesus had Authority from God.

This was a man who lived a life of discipline. It was a life of authority. He was under the authority of his commanding officer. And he had authority over his centuria, the 100 men under his command. He would give an order and those 100 men would jump to obey. Because he was used to authority, he understood real authority when he saw it.

Notice the faith in his statement. He does not say, "Heal him if you are able." Instead he says, "Just say the word and my servant will be healed." The question in this centurion's mind was not whether Jesus could heal, but whether He would choose to heal.

AN AMAZED REACTION

> *Now when Jesus heard this, He marveled at him, and turned and said to the multitude that was following Him, "I say to you, not even in Israel have I found such great faith." (Luke 7:9).*

There are two things over which the New Testament says Jesus marveled: Faith and unbelief. Jesus marveled when He saw great faith and He marveled when He saw spiritual blindness.

This is one of the few times that we ever read in Scripture that Jesus marveled. It took a lot to surprise Jesus. He was not surprised by sin. But this show of faith amazed Him. And what equally amazed Him was that it should come from a Gentile. Not from a leader in the synagogue. Not from a priest in the temple. Not from a scribe who worked with the Holy Scriptures, but from a heathen soldier. Matthew's parallel account tells us the rest of what Jesus said. It tells us of a prophecy He made.

> *"And I say to you, that many shall come from the east and west, and recline at the table with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven; 12 but the sons of the kingdom shall be cast out into the outer darkness; in that place there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." (Matthew 8:11-12).*

Abraham, Isaac and Jacob represent the people of the covenant of faith. They represent the people whom God has chosen to be His people. The Jews prided themselves on being the seed of Abraham. It was on this basis that they expected to be a part of God's kingdom. They also expected that kingdom to exclude anyone who was not of the seed of Abraham, except for those who had proselyted to Judaism and who had partaken of the physical rite of circumcision. "To recline at the table with Abraham" was a reference to the prophecy of Isaiah which described the coming of the kingdom in terms of a party.

> *And the Lord of hosts will prepare a lavish banquet for all peoples on this mountain; a banquet of aged wine, choice pieces with marrow, and refined, aged wine.*
>
> *And on this mountain He will swallow up the covering which is over all peoples, even the veil which is stretched*

over all nations.

He will swallow up death for all time, and the Lord God will wipe tears away from all faces, and He will remove the reproach of His people from all the earth: for the Lord has spoken. (Isaiah 25:6-8).

The Jews taught that, just as the weekly Sabbath was marked by a feast, so also the world would have a final Sabbath that would be marked by a great feast. Tony Campollo captured this same thought when he wrote a book entitled, "The Kingdom of God is a Party."

The Jews thought that they would sit down at this grand feast with the Lord while all of the Gentiles would sit on the outside. This would be the fulfillment of the prayer of David:

Thou dost prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies... (Psalm 23:5).

The kingdom would be a time when the Jews sat down with the Lord while the Gentiles had to go stand in the corner. But Jesus said that many who are not Jews shall come and sit down in the kingdom. People like this centurion will have a place in the kingdom.

The Jews didn't like this. They believed that when the kingdom came all of the Gentiles would be destroyed. They never thought that Gentiles would be permitted to sit at a table with Jews in the kingdom. After all, such a table would no longer be kosher.

Jesus says that just the opposite is true. It will be many of these "sons of the kingdom" - a reference to the Jewish people - who will find themselves on the outside of the kingdom. The reference to "outer darkness" is obvious. It is a reference to the judgment of God upon those who are not His people.

The question with which we are faced is what distinguishes between these two? What determines whether you enter the kingdom? What allows one to the party of God? It is not how religious you are. The sons of the kingdom were a lot more religious than this Gentile centurion. They studied the Scriptures and they tithed their money and they worshiped in the Temple. They were lacking in one thing. They had no faith. And this made all of the difference.

It is not that faith is so worthy of merit. There is nothing about faith that makes us righteous before God. Faith is simply the empty hands accepting God's gift. It is the realization that we can do nothing of our own merit to win God's approval. It is the acceptance of our own spiritual bankruptcy. It is only then that God can begin to work in us.

A RESPONSIVE RECUPERATION

And when those who had been sent returned to the house, they found the slave in good health. (Luke 7:10).

The friends who had delivered the message to Jesus now retraced their steps back to the home of the centurion. Here they were met with some wonderful news. The health of the sick slave had returned.

The healing of the slave is almost anti-climactic. There is a reason for this. There were two healings that day. The slave was not the only one healed. The centurion was also healed. The soldier became a soldier in another army. He who realized his own unworthiness became a true son of the kingdom. There is an interesting contrast to be drawn between this centurion and the royal official who came to Jesus in John 4:46-54.

Royal Official	Centurion
He was Jewish	He was a Gentile
His son was sick	His slave was sick
He came himself to Cana where Jesus was	He sent synagogue elders to ask Jesus to come
He asked Jesus to come back to Capernaum to heal his son	He sent friends to Jesus saying that He need not come into his house to heal his slave
He seems to have concluded that Jesus had to come personally in order to heal	He believed that Jesus could heal at a distance.

Had the faith of the Centurion grown because he had already heard the story of the Royal Official? Perhaps. Both men did live in the same town and it was a very small town. And both healings took place without Jesus being physically present.

There is an important lesson here for us. It is that the Lord is not limited by distance. That is important for you to know because Jesus is not physically here today. He is sitting at the right hand of the Father. He is not physically present. But that makes no difference because distance is no barrier to Him. He has overcome every barrier at the cross. And you can come to Him today.

THE RAISING OF THE WIDOW'S SON
LUKE 7:11-17

This next miracle takes place in *a city called Nain*. This town was located a good 25 miles away from Capernaum on the edge of the Plain of Esdraelon. The name Nain in Hebrew meant "Pleasant Place" and was said by the rabbis to be a reference to the promise given to Issachar that he would inherit a land that was pleasant (Genesis 49:14-15).

As Jesus traveled up from the Sea of Galilee, He came at last to this small town. As he approached the city with his disciples and others who were following, his party coming into the city met another group that was coming out of the city. It is here that life would meet death. A mourning woman who once brought a son into the world is mourning the departure of that son. And the Son of God who brought all things into being would now intervene.

A TRAGIC MEETING

> *Soon afterwards He went to a city called Nain; and His disciples were going along with Him, accompanied by a large crowd.*
>
> *Now as He approached the gate of the city, a dead man was being carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow; and a sizeable crowd from the city was with her. (Luke 7:11-12).*

Notice how the passage begins: *Soon afterwards*. It takes place on the heels of the account of the healing of the Centurion's servant. We are meant to notice a contrast between the two accounts.

Luke 7:2-10	Luke 7:11-17
The Centurion was... • A man • A Gentile • From the ruling class of society • Powerful	The Widow Woman was... • A woman • Jewish • At the bottom of society • Powerless
Takes place in Capernaum.	Takes place in Nain.
What was it that moved Jesus to heal? It was the centurion's faith.	What was it that moved Jesus to heal? It was His compassion.
Jesus healed a slave.	Jesus healed an only son.

Here is the point of the comparison. Jesus did not play favorites. He was willing to reach out to every spectrum of society. Rich and poor. Men and women. The high and the low. He came for all.

Verse 12 says that there was a LARGE crowd accompanying Jesus. The Greek word used to describe the size of the crowd is ἱκανος (*hikanos*), the same word that is translated "worthy" in verse 6 where the Centurion sent messengers to Jesus saying, "I am not **worthy** for You to come under my roof."

Can you imagine the scene? There are two crowds approaching the gate of the city. They are coming from opposite directions and they are characterized by two entirely different moods. The crowd with Jesus is joyful and jubilant. They have seen the power of God at work in a very mighty way. Not only has the Lord been glorified among the Jews, but even Gentile Centurions have also come to pay Him homage and to recognize His authority.

The other crowd is made up of the people of Nain. They have come for a different purpose. They are mourners accompanying a widow and the body of her son. They are headed for a tomb. Leading the procession would be the women. Tradition had it that they would lead because Eve had led the human race into sin. Behind would come the other mourners and finally the funeral bier on which lay the deceased.

The Crowd with Jesus	The Crowd with the Widow
They are joyful	They are mournful

They are following Jesus because of His ministry of life.	They are accompanying the woman because of a tragic death.
Full of hope	Full of sorrow

A COMPASSIONATE ENTREATY

> *When the Lord saw her, He felt compassion for her, and said to her, "Do not weep." (Luke 7:13).*

Being a widow is difficult in any age. The woman had lost both her husband as well as her only son. There was no social security in that day and employment opportunities for women were virtually non-existent. In losing her son, this woman had lost everything.

We do not read anything about this woman's faith. There is no mention of any entreaty she might have made. She had done nothing to merit a miracle. Instead Jesus took the complete initiative. Why? What motivated Him to act? Luke says that he felt compassion for her. She had a deep need and He moved to fill that need.

"Do not weep." This has been said far too often at funerals. It is the wrong thing to say. Grief at a funeral is entirely appropriate. Death is an enemy and the death of a loved one is a great loss. Nevertheless, Jesus told her not to weep. He alone had every right to tell her this because only He could remove the cause for her grief.

AN ASTOUNDING ACTION

> *And He came up and touched the coffin; and the bearers came to a halt. And He said, "Young man, I say to you, arise!"*
>
> *The dead man sat up and began to speak. And Jesus gave him back to his mother. (Luke 7:14-15).*

The actions of Jesus were highly unusual. First of all, He touched the coffin. This would have made Him ceremonially unclean. For a Jew to touch the dead was to come into contact with that which defiled. Jesus is going to

The word translated "coffin" is a general term used to describe that on which a corpse is laid. This was probably more of a funeral bier.

take the deadness that defiles and turn it into life.

Now He addresses Himself, not to the mother or to those bearing the coffin, but to the one in the coffin. He tells him to arise. The healing seems to have been immediate. This was no comatose patient. He came to life and began to speak. I wonder what he had to say.

What Jesus did for this young man, He will one day do for all of His people. There is coming a day when the Son shall command all to arise and they shall come from the grave.

A FEARFUL RESPONSE

> *Fear gripped them all, and they began glorifying God, saying, "A great prophet has arisen among us!" and, "God has visited His people!"*
>
> *This report concerning Him went out all over Judea and in all the surrounding district. (Luke 7:16-17).*

Jesus had performed a number of miracles up to this time, but this was the first time he had ever raised the dead. There are only three occasions where Jesus is described as having performed such a miracle.

The raising of the Widow's son	Luke 7:11-17
The raising of the Daughter of Jarius	Luke 8:41-56
The raising of Lazarus	John 11

The response of the people to this miracle was that *fear gripped them all*. A lot of commentators want to pass this fear off as being merely awe and reverence. It certainly included those emotions. But there were other terms that could have been used to describe those things. Instead we read that they experienced fear.

Why fear? Because they realized that Jesus was someone who was different. They realized that God had drawn near. They realized that the supernatural was at work in a way they could not possibly understand. And the result was awe and reverence and fear.

Just over the hill from Nain was located the Old Testament town of Zerepath. A great prophet, Elijah, performed a similar miracle there in restoring another widow's son to life (1 Kings 17:17-24).

That will always be our response when we come into contact with the presence of God. That was the response of Isaiah. You remember his experience. He was given a vision of the Lord sitting upon a throne with Seraphim standing about Him.

> *Then I said, "Woe is me, for I am ruined! Because I am a man of unclean lips, And I live among a people of unclean lips; For my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts." (Isaiah 6:5).*

Do you see his reaction? It was one of fear. Here is the point. If you have come into the presence of the Lord and have not felt just a bit of fear, then you have not come into the presence of the Lord. In C. S. Lewis' classic Narnia Chronicles, he introduces Aslan, the Christ-figure, when the children ask whether Aslan is a man:

> "'Aslan a man?' said Mrs. Beaver sternly. "Certainly not. I tell you he is the King of the Wood and the son of the great Emperor-Beyond-the Sea. Don't you know who is the King of Beasts? Aslan is a lion - the Lion, the great Lion."
>
> "Ohh!" said Susan, "I'd thought he was a man. Is he - quite safe? I shall feel rather nervous about meeting a lion."
>
> "Then he isn't safe?" said Lucy.
>
> "Safe?" said Mr. Beaver. "Don't you hear what Mrs. Beaver tells you? Who said anything about safe? Course he isn't safe. But he's good."

That is a fitting illustration of the Lord. He cannot be accused of being "safe." But He is good and holy and just and gracious and full of compassion. When you have come to the point of fearing Him, you have taken the first step toward true wisdom.

JOHN, JESUS AND JUDGMENTS ON A GENERATION
LUKE 7:17-35

One of the greatest prophets of the Old Testament was Elijah. His prayers shook the world. He stood before kings and queens and condemned their sinful lifestyle. He confronted a multitude of false prophets upon Mount Carmel, calling down fire from heaven in the presence of all.

And yet, our picture of Elijah would be incomplete if it did not also include the period of disillusionment and discouragement as he hid in a lonely cave, praying that God might end his miserable life. As we come to this section of the book of Luke, our story opens with a similar picture of a discouraged prophet. This time it is John the Baptist.

DOUBTS FROM THE DUNGEON

> *This report concerning Him went out all over Judea and in all the surrounding district.* 18 *The disciples of John reported to him about all these things.* 19 *Summoning two of his disciples, John sent them to the Lord, saying, "Are You the Expected One, or do we look for someone else?"*
>
> *When the men came to Him, they said, "John the Baptist has sent us to You, to ask, 'Are You the Expected One, or do we look for someone else?'" (Luke 7:17-20).*

The ministry of John the Baptists had started out strong. He had come on the scene, proclaiming that the kingdom of heaven was at hand and people had flocked to hear him preach and to be baptized by him.

When Jesus appeared at the Jordan River, John had pointed Him out as the Messiah, the Lamb of God who was come to take away the sins of the

world. As the ministry of Jesus grew and He gained in popularity, there seems to have been some professional jealousy on the part of John's disciples. But John had never taken part in this and he had been quick to point out that his whole purpose in ministry was to announce the coming of another.

Then John's ministry had taken a serious turn for the worse. After he had denounced the sinful lifestyle of the local ruler, Herod Antipas, John had been arrested and was now in prison. Luke assumes that we are aware of this and makes no mention of these facts. John was in prison and had apparently been there for some time. Josephus tells us that the place of his imprisonment was the Fortress of Macherus, located on the eastern shore of the Dead Sea. It was a lonely, desolate place.

Humanly speaking, John's ministerial career has ended in disaster. His followers have gone. He is no longer able to pronounce the coming kingdom to anyone. Only a small handful of his original disciples remain.

Can you imagine what he must be feeling? He has proclaimed to Israel that the kingdom of God is at hand. And now he is waiting. Weeks go by and weeks turn into months. Still there is no kingdom. Questions begin to creep into John's mind. Things tend to look very dark from the inside of a prison cell and though John is a prophet, he is only too human.

> Don't doubt in the darkness that which you learned in the light.

Why hasn't the kingdom come yet? Could John have been mistaken? What has gone wrong? Is this to be his reward from the Lord? Where is the kingdom? Didn't Isaiah promise that the Messiah would set loose the prisoners and free the captives?

John's disciples come to visit him. They bring news from the outside world. John hears of some of the things that Jesus has been doing. The problem is that they do not completely parallel all of the things that people think the Messiah ought to be doing.

Messiah is supposed to get rid of the Romans, isn't He? He will bring judgment upon the unbelieving world and then He will set up His unconquerable kingdom for His people. He will pour out all of His blessings upon His people and they shall never suffer want again. Each man will have his own vine and his own fig tree. Furthermore, the Messiah is supposed to come and set prisoners free, yet here is John and he is in prison and he has not been set free.

Do you see what has happened? John has become a victim of the thinking of the day. Incidentally, the disciples of Jesus suffer from these same misconceptions. They are looking for a physical kingdom with its capital at Jerusalem. Even when the time comes for Jesus to ascend into

heaven, they will still be asking if it is now time for the kingdom to come.

People today often have the same problem. Have you ever been asked, "If God is so loving, then why is there so much suffering and pain and disease?" John is going to learn some important lessons. We can learn those lessons with him.

<table>
<tr><td>7:1-10</td><td>7:11-17</td><td>7:18-23</td><td>7:24-35</td></tr>
<tr><td>Healing of the Centurion's servant</td><td>Healing of the Widow's son</td><td>Messengers from John: "Are you the One?"</td><td>Jesus speaks on the ministry of John</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">The Power of Jesus</td><td colspan="2">The Messiahship of Jesus</td></tr>
<tr><td>Centurion's faith</td><td>People's fear</td><td>John's question</td><td>Pharisees' antagonism</td></tr>
<tr><td>Capernaum</td><td>Nain</td><td colspan="2">Not mentioned</td></tr>
</table>

When the men came to Him, they said, "John the Baptist has sent us to You, to ask, 'Are You the Expected One, or do we look for someone else?'" (7:20). "The Expected One" is a title for the Messiah. John's entire ministry had been to announce that Jesus was the Messiah, the coming King of Israel. Now as he sits in prison, he begins to have his doubts. Perhaps he was mistaken. Maybe he misunderstood the prophetic word given to him from heaven. He believed, but now he was not so certain that he should be believing what he believed. His faith was facing difficulty.

The question John asks is the question of a seeker. It is a prayer that can be prayed by a seeker. You can go to the Lord and you can ask, "Are You Him or should we look for another?" I believe it is okay to pray that prayer as long as you pray it the way in which John prayed. It was not a smoke screen for unbelief. It was not a way to delay in making a decision. It was not because he was afraid to make a commitment. John prays this prayer from prison. He was ready to die for the answer. Are you?

NEW ANSWERS FROM OLD PROPHETS

> *At that very time He cured many people of diseases and afflictions and evil spirits; and He gave sight to many who were blind.*
>
> *And He answered and said to them, "Go and report*

> *to John what you have seen and heard: the blind receive sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, the poor have the gospel preached to them. 23 Blessed is he who does not take offense at Me." (Luke 7:21-23).*

Notice the attitude of Jesus toward John's doubt. He could have said, "You tell John that I am absolutely shocked that someone who claimed to be a prophet from God would doubt his own message. What's wrong with him, anyway? Just tell him to repent and to read his Bible." But Jesus did not do that.

Do you ever doubt? Are you afraid to admit your doubt to others because you think that you will be rejected by them? There is an important lesson here. It is that God is accepting of us even when we doubt.

A young mother was trying to cook her very first Thanksgiving Day Turkey. In the past their family had always gone to grandma's house but now they were going to start a new tradition. She was a bit nervous about the outcome and so she said to her family, "If we taste the turkey and it doesn't taste good, we will just put on our hats and coats and we will go out to eat." She came out of the kitchen with the platter of turkey and her family was standing there, all dressed up in their coats and hats. I do not think that God honors that kind of doubt. But He does accept the doubt of one who has already committed himself.

> *If we are faithless, He remains faithful; for He cannot deny Himself. (2 Timothy 2:13).*

Are you having problems with doubt? It is okay. God hasn't changed just because you are doubting. You continue to follow Him with your doubts and you will find that He is ready to meet you where you are.

A second thing that I want you to see from this passage is that Jesus did nothing to change John's outward circumstances. Jesus could have said the word and the chains would have fallen off and an earthquake would have opened the cell doors and an angelic escort would have broken John out of prison. But it didn't happen.

There is a lesson here. It is that suffering is sometimes a part of the divine agenda. God never promised that His people would not suffer. To the contrary, He said that His people would suffer persecution. But He also said that they would not suffer alone. When you suffer, you remember that Jesus suffered, too. He knows what you are going through because He went through the same thing. And knowing that will make it better.

The third thing I want you to notice is that Jesus did not answer the

question of John in the affirmative. John's question called for a simple "yes" or "no" answer and Jesus didn't give it to him. Why not?

Jesus could have said, "Yes, I am the Messiah." But had he done that, John would always have wondered whether Jesus had been telling the truth. It is very easy to mouth the words. And so, Jesus gives evidence. We are not called to believe without evidence. Some people seem to think that Christians have a big basket at the entrance to the church with a sign on it that says, "All thinking is to cease, so leave your brain here. Don't forget to pick it up on the way out or you might lose your mind." But that isn't so. We are commanded to have reasons for our faith. And so, Jesus gives evidence. The evidence that He gives comes from the Old Testament. His words are taken from the book of Isaiah.

> *Encourage the exhausted, and strengthen the feeble.*
> *Say to those with anxious heart, "Take courage, fear not. Behold, your God will come with vengeance; the recompense of God will come, but He will save you."*
> *Then the eyes of the blind will be opened and the ears of the deaf will be unstopped.*
> *Then the lame will leap like a deer, And the tongue of the mute will shout for joy. (Isaiah 35:3-6a).*

Jesus points to the miracles that He was performing as His credentials. He says to John's disciples, "Look around you and see what is happening." Seeing eye dogs were wandering aimlessly about. The stocks on wheelchair companies had suffered a drastic decline. Hearing aid companies were going out of business. Funeral homes were being asked about refunds.

These miracles pointed to who Jesus really was. They were signs that were promised in the Old Testament. Isaiah's prophecy had been for those who were discouraged and who were beginning to doubt. The works of Christ are the answer to that discouragement and doubt.

- If your circumstances have you discouraged, then look at His works, for they prove that He cares for those who are in difficulty.
- If your troubles have you doubting, then look at His works, for they show that He is in control.
- If you question the validity of the Christian faith, then look at His works, for they show who Jesus really is.
- If you are suffering from unfulfilled expectations, then look at His works and see what He has already done for you.

A ROUSING VIEW OF A DECLINING MINISTRY

> *When the messengers of John had left, He began to speak to the crowds about John, "What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind? 25 But what did you go out to see? A man dressed in soft clothing? Those who are splendidly clothed and live in luxury are found in royal palaces! 26 But what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I say to you, and one who is more than a prophet."*
>
> *"This is the one about whom it is written, 'Behold, I send My messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way before you.'*
>
> *"I say to you, among those born of women there is no one greater than John; yet he who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he." (Luke 7:24-28).*

As the disciples of John leave to make their way back to the prison at the Fortress of Macharus, Jesus takes the opportunity to affirm the person and ministry of John. This is significant because John is still in the midst of his doubt. We usually hold up someone as an example after they have proven themselves. But Jesus affirms John while he is still in the midst of his doubt. He holds up John as a model, even though John is still discouraged. He begins this section with a series of rhetorical questions: *"What did you go out into the wilderness to see?"*

The fact that people went out into the wilderness to look at John was an indication that they were looking for something that they could not find in the comfort of their temple or their synagogues. There was something about the ministry of John that attracted people. What was it?

Was it because he was so agreeable that he was flexible like a reed shaken by the wind? No. If they had wanted someone like that, they could have stayed home and listened to the teaching of their own rabbis. They would not have had to journey out into the wilderness to hear such a man.

Was it because he was such a sharp dresser? Was it because he purchased his suits from Gordon Taylors and always picked the right color suit with the tie that did not clash? No. Fashion statements do not live out in the wilderness. They live in king's palaces.

Was it because he was a prophet? Was it because John had a Masters degree in propheteering from the Jerusalem Baptist Seminary? Was it because he had joined the right denomination and had graduated from the

right school and belonged to the right doctrinal camp? No. John did not fit into any of these categories. And yet, John was a prophet. He was a prophet about whom other prophets had prophesied.

> *"This is the one about whom it is written, 'Behold, I send My messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way before you.'" (Luke 7:27).*

Jesus is alluding to the words of the prophet Malachi: *"Behold, I am going to send My messenger, and he will clear the way before Me. And the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple; and the messenger of the covenant, in whom you delight, behold, He is coming," says the Lord of hosts (Malachi 3:1).*

Malachi wrote about the coming of the Lord. The coming of the Lord takes on different aspects to different people. To those who are keepers of the covenant, His coming is a delight. But to covenant breakers, the coming of the Lord brings judgment.

Before the Lord came, He was to be preceded by a messenger. The duty of the messenger was to clear the way before the Lord. John was that messenger. He was the prophet of the Lord. He was the man of God.

1. The Greatness of John: *"I say to you, among those born of women there is no one greater than John" (7:28).*

   The designation *among those born of women* is a Hebraism found in the Old Testament (Job 14:1; 15:14). It refers to one who is of the human race. Jesus is saying that John the Baptist is the greatest man who ever lived.

   - Not Alexander the Great
   - Not Julius Caesar
   - Not Hammurabi
   - Not even Moses or Abraham or Daniel

   This brings us to a question. Why is Jesus speaking of the greatness of John the Baptist? Does He merely want to glorify John for a little while? Is it "Be Kind to John Week"? No. Jesus is going to make a point. The point is found in the latter part of this verse.

2. The Least in the Kingdom: *"Yet he who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he" (7:28).*

Here is the point. When it comes to human talent, there has never been anyone greater than John the Baptist. But when it comes to the spiritual dimension, the least person in the spiritual dimension is greater than the greatest person in the human dimension.

History books talk about Alexander the Great and Herod the Great and Frederick the Great, but that is not how God counts greatness. As Christians, we tend to think of such men as John Calvin or Martin Luther or John Wesley or Billy Graham as being great. But the position that is held by one who is a citizen of the kingdom of God is greater than any human position, whether prophet, priest or king.

Who is great? God is great. And we have been made sons of God. We have been united with Jesus Christ, sharing the same relationship with God that Christ shares. That is what makes us great.

TWO REACTIONS TO THE BAPTIST

> *When all the people and the tax collectors heard this, they acknowledged God's justice, having been baptized with the baptism of John.*
>
> *But the Pharisees and the lawyers rejected God's purpose for themselves, not having been baptized by John. (Luke 7:29-30).*

There are two reactions described by Luke to the evaluation that had been given of John's ministry.

All the People and the Tax Collectors	The Pharisees and the Lawyers
Acknowledged God's justice	Rejected God's purpose for themselves
Having been baptized with the baptism of John	Not having been baptized by John

The point that Luke makes is that those who followed John were following the Lord while those who rejected John were also guilty of rejecting *God's purpose for themselves*. This is significant because if anyone

ought to have known and accepted the purposes of God, it should have been the Pharisees and those who were experts in the Law of God.

JUDGMENTS ON A GENERATION

> *"To what then shall I compare the men of this generation, and what are they like?*
>
> *"They are like children who sit in the market place and call to one another, and they say, 'We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we sang a dirge, and you did not weep.'*
>
> *"For John the Baptist has come eating no bread and drinking no wine, and you say, 'He has a demon!'*
>
> *"The Son of Man has come eating and drinking, and you say, 'Behold, a gluttonous man and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!'* 35 *Yet wisdom is vindicated by all her children." (Luke 7:31-35).*

We have just read about how John the Baptist was rejected by the Pharisees and the experts in the Law of God - the two groups who should have been the first to accept his ministry. Now Jesus goes on to deliver a blistering rebuke against those who had partaken in this rejection.

Did you ever stop to think that there are types of criticism that, when you consider the source, ought to make you feel good about yourself? I recall a man saying to me once, "John, you are a religious fanatic. You have devoted your whole life to religion. It is okay to do it a little, but you have gone too far." I thought about this for a moment and then I thanked him for what I considered to be one of the highest compliments I had ever received. You see, he was an unbeliever. He was an atheist. He had rejected God. And the criticism which was meant to put me down had exactly the opposite effect.

That is what happened to John and Jesus. When we look at the criticisms that were leveled against them, we see that the critics were judged by their own criticisms.

I have been criticized by a lot of people. I have expected to be criticized by some of them, In fact, if I were not being criticized by some of them, then I would start to worry. You can tell what kind of person I am, not only by looking at who are my friends, but also by looking at what kind of people do not like me. Here is the principle. If you are standing for Jesus, then you will be criticized by those who aren't.

1. A Parable at Play: *"To what then shall I compare the men of this generation, and what are they like? They are like children who sit in the market place" (7:31-32a).*

In the Midrash, this is the most common formula for introducing a parable. Jesus is going to present an analogy. It is an analogy of children at play. Children would often come to the marketplace with their parents. As people were milling around, going about their business, the children would be running in and out, playing children's games among themselves. In these games, they would pretend that they were adults, doing things that adults do.

One game might be the wedding game. Another might be the funeral game. Why these? Because they were both public and social events. These are the things that children had seen adults doing (they didn't have television back then, so they couldn't play Cowboys and Indians or cops and robbers or whatever kids play these days).

2. A Picture of Fickle Children: *"They are like children who sit in the market place and call to one another, and they say, 'We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we sang a dirge, and you did not weep.' (7:32).*

Jesus paints a picture of sulking children who are never happy with anything. There is just no pleasing them. Do you see the point of the parable? Jesus and John have been condemned because they do not dance to the tune of the religious systems of the day.

- John is ascetic. He has led an austere lifestyle. He fasts and he doesn't drink and he has lived most of his life out in the wilderness. We would characterize his life as the "funeral mode." The religious establishment concluded that he was demon possessed.
- Jesus leads a more normal lifestyle. He eats with people and He attends wedding parties and He does not refrain from drinking wine. He has even been questioned by the disciples of John as to why He and His disciples do not fast (Matthew 9:14). The answer that Jesus gave to that question is that you don't fast at a wedding feast. Jesus is in the "wedding mode." The religious establishment concluded that He was a glutton and a drunk.

There is a lesson here. It is that you will never be able to please

everyone. There are some people who don't want to play the game, no matter how it is played. They just want to sit on the sidelines and criticize.

3. Authenticating Offspring: *"Yet wisdom is vindicated by all her children" (7:35).*

I have already suggested that one of the tests of truth is that it is opposed by the right people. But another test for truth is that it works. It brings about a change in people's lives.

- Critical people criticize.
- Spiritually wise people accept the truth and demonstrate a changed life to substantiate that truth.

Which one are you? Your choice will determine whether or not wisdom is vindicated by you. And your choice will also determine whether you are vindicated by wisdom. It is not enough to know about spiritual wisdom. If you are truly a child of wisdom, it will bear a parental resemblance in your life.

THE PROUD AND THE PENITENT
LUKE 7:36-50

Jesus took a lot of dinner invitations. We saw just a few verses earlier that He was accused by His critics of being *a gluttonous man and a drunkard* (Luke 7:34). At times he accepted dinner invitations to the homes of sinners and tax collectors. But He also accepted invitations to dine at the homes of those who were respected in the community. This was one of those times.

A PHARISAIC INVITATION

> *Now one of the Pharisees was requesting Him to dine with him, and He entered the Pharisee's house and reclined at the table. (Luke 7:36).*

Simon was a Pharisee. Named after one of the sons of Jacob, he was a Hebrew of the Hebrews, holding to all of the Jewish traditions of the rabbis. He prayed twice a day. He owned a regular seat in the synagogue. He read the words of the prophets. He kept himself pure from the defilements of the Gentiles, guarding himself from all contact with pagans.

If he noticed the woman at all, it was only with the utmost disdain. After all, she wasn't his social equal. And with the reputation that she had, it was a shame that stoning of sinners was no longer fashionable.

And then one day, Simon heard that Jesus had come to town. This strange young rabbi from Nazareth had been growing in popularity as the fame of His teaching and His miracles spread throughout the land. It was the perfect opportunity. Jesus would make the perfect dinner guest. He would certainly be impressed by the kind of table that Simon could set. Perhaps they could sit and compare notes on how righteous they are. Maybe they could even have a theological discussion on various rabbinical views of the Law.

A WEEPING WOMAN

> *And there was a woman in the city who was a sinner; and when she learned that He was reclining at the table in the Pharisee's house, she brought an alabaster vial of perfume,*
> *38* *and standing behind Him at His feet, weeping, she began to wet His feet with her tears, and kept wiping them with the hair of her head, and kissing His feet and anointing them with the perfume. (Luke 7:37-38).*

It seems to be no mistake that this event is related immediately following the words of Jesus about John the Baptist (Luke 7:24-35). The Pharisees rejected both the baptism of John and the words of Jesus (7:30). We will now see an example of that rejection.

Jesus had been accused of being a glutton, a drunk, and a friend of sinners (7:34). As He sits at dinner in the house of this Pharisee, we shall see Him befriending one who is a sinner.

Some scholars have suggested that this event is the same as that which is described in Matthew 26:6-13, Mark 14:3-9, and John 12:1-8. There are several similarities between those accounts and this one in Luke.

- They each take place in the home of a man named Simon.
- They each have a woman coming into the house with an alabaster vial of perfume.
- In each case, Jesus is reclining at meal when the woman comes to bestow her gift.

In spite of these similarities, I do not think that these are the same events. This takes place near the center of the ministry of Jesus, while the event described in the other three Gospels takes place at the close of the ministry of Jesus on the week before His death.

The fact that it takes place in the house of Simon is not significant because it was a very common name. Indeed, there were three different people in that same house who were named Simon (Simon the Pharisee, Simon Peter, and Simon the Zealot).

Matthew 26:6-13, Mark 14:3-9, and John 12:1-8	**Luke 7:36-50**
Simon is referred to as a leper whom Jesus had healed	Simon is described as a Pharisee

There is no indication that the woman suffers from a poor reputation. Her purpose in coming is to anoint Jesus for His death.	This woman came because she was a sinner in need of forgiveness. She came weeping over her sin.
John's account identifies the woman as Mary, the sister of Lazarus	There is nothing to indicate that Jesus had prior contact with this woman
The woman anoints the head of Jesus	This woman anoints the feet of Jesus
The actions of the woman are questioned by the disciples of Jesus	The presence of this woman is questioned by Simon

Imagine the scene. The table would have been much lower than we are used to. Instead of sitting in chairs to eat, the guests would recline on soft divans which were arranged so that they could dine in comfort. The dinner is going very nicely when there is an interruption.

1. The Profile of the Woman: *There was a woman in the city who was a sinner* (7:37).

   The fact that this woman had a reputation for being a "sinner" indicates that she lived an immoral lifestyle. Other women in the town would not speak to her. She was barred from the synagogue. She was excluded from all social activity.

   And then one day, something happened in her life. Perhaps she heard some of the preaching of Jesus. She became aware of her own sinfulness. She began to mourn over her lost condition. And when she hears that Jesus is in town, she is compelled to go see Him.

2. The Penitence of the Woman: *She began to wet His feet with her tears, and kept wiping them with the hair of her head, and kissing His feet, and anointing them with the perfume* (7:36).

   This woman was evidently a woman of ill repute - a prostitute. The tools of her trade included her lips and her hair and this bottle of expensive perfume. These are the things that she brought to Jesus.

   She comes to the feet of Jesus. He is reclining upon the divan with His feet directed away from the table. She does not presume to approach the table. She

does not try to approach Jesus as an equal. Instead, she will take the role of a servant. She comes to the feet of Jesus. She has been weeping. Her tears splash upon His feet. Loosening her hair, she uses it as a towel to wipe the moisture from His feet. [1]

She has brought with her a vial of perfume. The vial is made of alabaster. The precious container holds an expensive perfume. Perhaps she has used it in the past to try to seduce men. But now she uses it in an act of worship of the Son of God.

She has no towel, so she uses her own hair. It was considered socially unacceptable among the Jews for a woman to let down her hair in public. But she will make no pretense as she kneels before the feet of Jesus.

There is something important here that I do not want you to miss. This woman is bowing at the feet of Jesus. This is a position of worship. This is not the only time that such worship of Jesus took place (See also Matthew 8:2; 9:18; 14:33; 15:25; Mark 5:1). Worship is only to go toward God. The fact that Jesus received and commended this woman's worship is one of the marks of his divinity. It also tells us something about worship.

- Worship is for sinners. She had apparently earned her reputation. God came to save real sinners who commit real sins. He saves us just the way we are and then He changes us into something else.
- Worship involves the emotions. This woman came weeping tears of sorrow over her sin. In our desire for doctrinal purity, we sometimes are guilty of emphasizing the intellectual aspects of faith to the exclusion of the emotions. When we worship the Lord, we do so with body, soul, mind and spirit as well as with our emotions.
- Worship need not involve speaking. We do not know if this woman actually said anything. Luke does not record any of her words. What he tells us is enough for us to know that she came and she worshiped.
- Worship is not so much concerned about receiving something from God as it is about giving something to God. This

[1] There have been some who have suggested that she brought a bottle of tears, collected throughout her past in keeping with the reference in Psalm 56:8 where David asks that the Lord put his tears in a bottle. While it is true that this had become a custom, there is no reference here to such a bottle and we need not read such a practice into the text.

woman came to do something for Jesus. It was an act of worship. All too often, we come to the Lord seeking only to get something from Him. It is not wrong to ask and to bring our intercessions before Him. But worship involves bringing to Him our adoration.

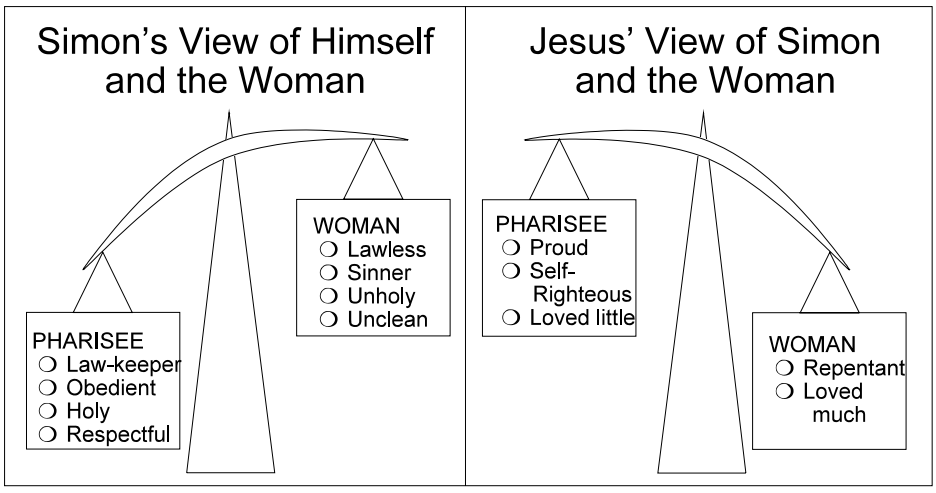
A JUDGMENTAL SPIRIT

> *Now when the Pharisee who had invited Him saw this, he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet He would know who and what sort of person this woman is who is touching Him, that she is a sinner." (Luke 7:39).*

The Pharisee is indignant when he sees what is happening. Righteous men of God do not associate with women of this caliber. To even have her touch him would render him ceremonially unclean. He immediately jumps to some conclusions:

- If Jesus were a prophet, then He would know this woman's character.
- If Jesus knew that this woman was a sinner, then He would have nothing to do with her.

The Pharisee reasons that the fact that Jesus had made no remonstrance against her must indicate that He is not aware of what kind of person she is. Perhaps He has been overrated as a prophet. But it is not Jesus who has been overrated. It is this Pharisee who has overrated his own righteousness.



Simon the Pharisee had looked at all of his good works and his law-keeping and his obedience to the traditions and he assumed that his works had obtained a good standing in the eyes of God, especially when compared to this sinful woman. His religious refrain would have stated: "I know I'm not perfect, but I'm better than..."

A PERCEPTIVE PARABLE

> *And Jesus answered him, "Simon, I have something to say to you." And he replied, "Say it, Teacher."*
>
> *"A moneylender had two debtors: one owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. 42 When they were unable to repay, he graciously forgave them both. So which of them will love him more?"*
>
> *Simon answered and said, "I suppose the one whom he forgave more." And He said to him, "You have judged correctly." (Luke 7:40-43).*

Jesus now proceeds to tell a story. It is a story about two people who were in debt. They did not have banks in those days. When you needed to borrow money, you would go to a moneylender. Perhaps today we would call him a loan shark. These two men had borrowed money. They had each incurred a debt.

One owed five hundred denarii. The other owed fifty denarii A denarii was a small coin, about the size of a dime, but a lot more valuable. It was considered to be a day's wages for a common laborer (Matthew 20:2). Both of these amounts were quite a bit of money. But one was ten times that of the other. One was high. The other was astronomical.

And yet, there was a similarity in these two debts. The similarity is that the men who had incurred the debts were unable to pay them. We are like that. Some of us had to be forgiven for a lot. And others have had to be forgiven for a whole lot more. But we are all the same, because we are all unable to satisfy the debt which is against us.

- God is righteous.
- His righteousness is infinitely righteous.
- There is an infinite gulf between His righteousness and your sin. That means that your sin is infinitely sinful in God's sight (and that is the only sight that counts).
- There is an infinite barrier between God and you in your sin.

- It took the death of an infinite person to pay for your sins.

This means that we are all equal before God. I cannot take pride that I am less of a sinner than some one else because my sin is just as infinitely removed from God's righteous ness as the worst sinner that ever lived. At the same time, I cannot think of myself as unable to approach the grace of God because the sin of the holiest saint is just as infinitely removed from God's righteousness as my own.

1. A Forgiven Debt: *"When they were unable to repay, he graciously forgave them both"* (7:42).

   The moneylender was under no obligation to forgive either of these debts. The fact that he did was a matter of grace. It was completely undeserved. Also notice that the moneylender forgave the entire debt. He did not say, "I will forgive 90% of your debt if you pay the other 10%." His forgiveness of the debt was unconditional. He did it with no strings attached.

2. A Question of Gratitude: *"Which of them therefore will love him more?"* (7: 42)

   Now we cone to the point of the parable. It deals with the gratitude of the forgiven. The man who is convinced of the greatness of his own debt is going to be more grateful over his forgiveness than the one who feels his debt is not that bad.

   Simon the Pharisee was not aware of the great debt that he owed. After all, he is far above this sinful woman. He is a Pharisee. He is doctrinally correct. His lifestyle reflects a devotion to the Lord. He prays twice a day. He fasts twice a week. He gives money to the Temple. He attends the synagogue on a regular basis. On the other hand, this woman has lived a sinful lifestyle. She has been barred from the synagogue and from the Temple. Respectable people will not even speak to her. She has no illusions over her standing before God. She knows that she is undeserving. She is spiritually bankrupt. She has come mourning over her sin. She hungers and thirsts for the righteousness that she does not possess. And in doing so, she has demonstrated that she is ready to become a citizen of the kingdom.

   Here is the principle: He who is forgiven the most will also love the most. Are you having problems in your spiritual love life? Go back to the cross and see how much you have been forgiven.

A HEARTFELT CONTRAST

> *Turning toward the woman, He said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave Me no water for My feet, but she has wet My feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair.*
>
> *"You gave Me no kiss; but she, since the time I came in, has not ceased to kiss My feet.* 46 *You did not anoint My head with oil, but she anointed My feet with perfume.*
>
> *"For this reason I say to you, her sins, which are many, have been forgiven, for she loved much; but he who is forgiven little, loves little." (Luke 7:44-47).*

Jesus brings Simon to the point of the parable. The story that he told spoke of two people. There are two people that Jesus is comparing. Jesus is comparing Simon and this sinful woman. He is a Pharisee - a very religious man. She is an immoral woman.

He has been trying to attain a righteousness of his own by keeping the Law. She knows that she is a law-breaker. He thinks that he has very little need for forgiveness. She is aware that she is in desperate need of forgiveness. In each case, the attitude of the heart has been demonstrated by the outward actions.

Simon	The Sinful Woman
I entered your house upon your invitation	The woman is under no obligation to treat Jesus as a houseguest
You have me no water for My feet	She wet My feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair
You gave me no kiss	She has not ceased to kiss My feet
You did not anoint My head with oil	She anointed My feet with perfume

Simon had not even treated Jesus with common courtesy. There were certain customs of courtesy that he had neglected in having Jesus come to be his guest.

- It was customary to either have a servant wash the feet of a guest or at least to provide water for him to wash his own feet (Genesis

18:4; Judges 19:21). But Simon had not even done that.

- When a guest came into your home, it was a sign of respect to greet them with a kiss (Genesis 29:13; 45:15; Exodus 18:7).
- A welcome guest would be anointed with oil (Psalm 23:5; 141:5). Since olive oil was one of the chief commodities in Palestine, this was an inexpensive show of hospitality.

Simon had done none of these things. He had not even demonstrated the ordinary manners given to a guest. On the other hand, instead of using a washbasin to clean the feet of Jesus, this woman had used her own tears — that which Luther called "the water of her heart." Instead of a kiss upon the cheek, this women had kissed His feet. Instead of cheap olive oil for His head, she brought an expensive perfume for His feet (the Greek word here is "myrrh")

"Her sins, which are many, have been forgiven, for she loved much" (7:47).

Notice what Jesus is saying. There is a correlation: between the measure of your love and the measure of your forgiveness.

Pharisee ⇨	Sins little ⇨	Forgiven little ⇨	Loves little
Woman ⇨	Sins much ⇨	Forgiven much ⇨	Loves much

Do you love the Lord? Does your life reflect the gratitude of your heart for the forgiveness of your sins? If it does not, then it is because you have not been forgiven.

A PROMISE OF FORGIVENESS

> *Then He said to her, "Your sins have been forgiven."*
> *Those who were reclining at the table with Him began to say to themselves, "Who is this man who even forgives sins?"*
> *And He said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace." (Luke 7:48-50).*

Now Jesus turns and, for the first time, addresses himself to the woman. He makes a simple statement of fact. He does not say that her sins were not that bad. He doesn't say that God isn't concerned about her sins.

He says that her sins are forgiven. There is only one problem with this. Only God can forgive sin. Men cannot. do this. Not even the pope can do this.

1. An Objection to Forgiveness: *Those who were reclining at the table with Him began to say to themselves, "Who is this man who even forgives sins?"* (7:49).

   We are not told who were the other guests. Apparently, they were people who fit the mold of respectability which Simon thought would befit his table. There were no tax-collectors there. There were no people of ill repute.

   Notice also that these guests were theologically sophisticated. They knew that only God is able to forgive sins. And they wonder to themselves at the words of Jesus.

   Jesus is in the forgiving business. It is true that only God can forgive sin, but it is also true that Jesus and the Father are one. If you want your sins to be forgiven, you will have to come to Jesus.

2. The Correlation of Forgiveness: *He said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace"* (7:50).

   This is the first mention that Jesus has made of faith in this passage. Up to this point, He has only spoken of love. We would have expected Him to say to the woman, "Your love has saved you." Why this change? I want to suggest that it is because there will always be a correlation between your faith and your love. You cannot trust in the Lord without loving Him. And you cannot love the Lord without also believing in Him.

   This woman left that house with her perfume vial empty. But with her heart full of joy and peace. Her sins had been forgiven. At the same time, there were others who sat in that same house, secure in their own reputations, who remained in their sins. They had been with Jesus, but they had never knelt at His feet.

The passage ends without us ever being told what happened to Simon. Did he repent? Did he harden his heart and reject Christ? We don't know. That isn't the point of the passage. What is the real question is what is going to happen with you. You are in the role of Simon. What will be your attitude toward Jesus the Messiah? Will your heart be filled with Him or will you remain in your sins? It will only be when you have looked at yourself and seen the greatness of your sins that you will be able to be forgiven much and that you will be able to love much.

PEOPLE OF THE KINGDOM
LUKE 8:1-21

What kind of people did Jesus use in ministry? As we look at those who interacted with Him in ministry, we quickly see that the pattern is that there is no pattern. Jesus used all kinds of people in His ministry. There were fishermen and a tax collector and a rebel against authority. There were the extroverted and the introverted. There were the rich and the poor. There were men and women.

<table>
<tr><td>8:1</td><td>8:4</td><td>8:9</td><td>8:11</td><td>8:16</td><td>8:19</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">Women in the ministry of Jesus</td><td colspan="3">Parable of the Sower</td><td>Parable of Light</td><td rowspan="2">Family and the ministry of Jesus</td></tr>
<tr><td>The story told</td><td>Reason for Parables</td><td>Parable Explained</td><td>Seeing & Hearing Truth</td></tr>
</table>

This section will begin by looking at the women who were in the ministry of Jesus. It shall then move to several parables and shall be concluded with the question of who is to be considered as the family of Jesus.

THE WOMEN IN THE MINISTRY OF JESUS

> *Soon afterwards, He began going around from one city and village to another, proclaiming and preaching the kingdom of God. The twelve were with Him, 2 and also some women who had been healed of evil spirits and sicknesses: Mary who was called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out, 3 and Joanna the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others who were contributing to their support out of their private means. (Luke 8:1-3).*

By opening with the phrase, "Soon afterwards," we are drawn back to the events of the previous chapter where an unknown woman washed the feet of Jesus with her tears. She was a woman who ministered to Jesus and now we are told that she was not the only woman who did so. Three are mentioned here by name.

- Mary who was called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out. Some have mistakenly thought that Mary had been a woman of ill-repute, but there is nothing in the Scriptures to indicate this.
- Joanna the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward. This would have likely been a reference to Herod Antipas, the Tetrarch of Galilee.
- Susanna. Nothing more than her name is known to us.

These three women provided financial support to the ministry of Jesus. They were each women of financial means. They utilized their means to provide for those needs that were not provided by the miraculous works of Jesus.

Satan in the wilderness had tried to tempt Jesus into making "miracle bread." He refused then and He continued to refuse throughout His ministry. Instead He depended upon the giving of God's people for His daily bread. There were times when He fed great multitudes through miraculous means, but He normally was fed by others.

- This was a part of what it means when the Bible says "He emptied Himself" (Philippians 2:5). Jesus emptied Himself of His manifested glory so that He felt hunger and He depended upon others to provide for Him.
- This dependence upon others allowed them to partake in the earthly ministry of Jesus. They could not preach as Jesus preached and they could not heal as Jesus healed, but they could participate in His ministry in other ways.
- This provides a pattern for financial support of ministries today. The precedent has been set that those who proclaim the gospel are to be supported by those who benefit from that preaching (1 Corinthians 9).

It is noteworthy that, while women played an integral part of this ministry of Jesus, they were not assigned to roles of leadership in the ministry of Jesus. He did not choose six men and six women to be His apostles. When He sent out the seventy disciples, He sent out seventy men. This same principle is reflected throughout the epistles.

At the same time, Jesus did not permit culture to dictate how women were to be used in ministry. He was not afraid to buck the trend of culture, even if this meant talking to a Samaritan woman by a well. This is important for us to know, for today culture has gone to the other extreme of attempting to break down all distinction between genders. We as Christians are not to allow culture to dictate doctrine.

THE STORY OF THE SOWER

> *When a large crowd was coming together, and those from the various cities were journeying to Him, He spoke by way of a parable:*
>
> *"The sower went out to sow his seed; and as he sowed, some fell beside the road, and it was trampled under foot and the birds of the air ate it up.*
>
> *"Other seed fell on rocky soil, and as soon as it grew up, it withered away, because it had no moisture.*
>
> *"Other seed fell among the thorns; and the thorns grew up with it and choked it out.*
>
> *"Other seed fell into the good soil, and grew up, and produced a crop a hundred times as great." As He said these things, He would call out, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear." (Luke 8:4-8).*

The word "parable" comes from the Greek term παραβολη (*parabole*), describing a story that is "thrown alongside" of a real truth to illustrate it.

This is not the first parable that Luke has related to us. And there will be many more to follow. Luke relates many of the longest of the parables of Jesus.

The recipients of this parable were made up of a variety of cities. They were also made up of different types of people. The parable is going to speak of different types of seeds and I believe that every type was evident in the crowd to whom Jesus spoke.

The story that Jesus tells is of a farmer going forth to spread his seed upon the ground. He did not have to explain this process. His story was familiar to everyone listening. There were no doubt many in the crowd who were farmers themselves. It was common practice to scatter the seed first and then to come back and plow the earth to cover the seed.

The initial character described in the story is the farmer. But the

focus of the story quickly changes. The sower will not be mentioned again. Instead, our attention is focused upon the seed and its deportation. The seed falls onto four different types of ground.

1st Seed	2nd Seed	3rd Seed	4th Seed
Beside the road	Rocky ground	Among thorns	In good soil
Not much soil	No roots	Bad company	Growth
Eaten by birds	Scorched by sun	Choked by thorns	Bore fruit
No life	Temporary life		Eternal life
No fruit			Fruitful

The same sower sowed all the seeds. The seeds themselves were all the same. The only difference was in the ground where the seeds landed. Certain types of soil brought about certain results.

- Seed beside the road had no protection. It was eaten by birds even before it had a chance to grow.
- Seed in rocky ground had no chance to establish roots. Although there was some initial growth, it quickly withered and died under the heat of the sun.
- Seed among thorns also saw an initial period of growth. But the thorns grew at the same time and soon the good seed was choked.
- Finally, seed was sown on good ground. This grew up into plants which produced an abundance of fruit.

The story that Jesus is telling is being acted out before them. He is doing what He is describing. He is the sower. He is sowing the word. The sowing takes place over four different types of ground and with four different results. The point of the story is that, although the sower does his job and the seed is sufficient, it is only when it falls upon good ground that there is growth.

THE PURPOSE OF THE PARABLE

His disciples began questioning Him as to what this parable meant. 10 *And He said, "To you it has been granted to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God, but to the rest*

> *it is in parables, so that seeing they may not see, and hearing they may not understand. (Luke 8:9-10).*

I imagine that as the disciples heard the parables, they nodded their heads as if in understanding. But as soon as they were out of earshot of the crowds, they asked Jesus what their meaning might be.

Unspoken is the question behind the question: Why is Jesus speaking in parables when the meaning of those parables is not immediately clear? It is one thing to give an illustration so that everyone can understand. It is another thing to give illustrations in such a way that no one understands. And yet, this is exactly what Jesus was doing. Even His disciples did not understand the meaning of these parables.

1. Mysteries Revealed: *"To you has been given the mystery of the kingdom of God..." (8:9)*

   When we think of a mystery, we usually imagine an Agatha Christie novel and a suspicious butler. But we must understand that the word "mystery" is a transliteration of the Greek word *musterion* and carries the idea of something that has been previously hidden but which is now being revealed to the initiated. The Greek cults described their cultic rites as the *musteria*, the rituals which only the initiated were permitted to observe.

   These parables are going to reveal a number of truths which had previously been hidden. Those truths will continue to be hidden to those who are not disciples of Jesus.

   The word "parable" (from *parabole*) means "to throw up along side." It is an earthly story thrown up along side a heavenly truth which is being taught. But the way Jesus used parable did more than illustrate truth. It also hid truth.

   Have you ever watched an unbeliever hear the parables? They don't get it! They listen to the story, but they do not understand what it is trying to teach.

2. Mysteries Hidden.

   > *"...but to the rest it is in parables, so that seeing they may not see, and hearing they may not understand. (Luke 8:9-10).*

   The words of Jesus hail back to the Old Testament book of Isaiah where that prophet has his vision of the glory of God. It is a

glorious vision with angels and the majesty of God and a call to be a spokesman for heaven. Isaiah answers the call, "Here am I. Send me!" And the very next thing that we read is a commission to speak to a people who will not listen.

> *And He said, "Go, and tell this people: 'Keep on listening, but do not perceive; keep on looking, but do not understand.'*
>
> *"Render the hearts of this people insensitive, their ears dull, and their eyes dim, lest they should see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts, and return and be healed." (Isaiah 6:9-10).*

Jesus alludes to this passage and likens it to His own situation. In the same way that the people in Isaiah's day did not listen to him, so also the religious leaders of Israel had now rejected Jesus. In the same way that the Israelites of that day had been condemned, so now Jesus issues a condemnation against those who have rejected Him. In the same way that judgment had come upon Israel in the form of the Assyrian conquest, so now judgment would come at the hands of the legions of Rome. The immediate manifestation of this judgment is in different teaching modes utilized by Jesus.

To You	To Those on the Outside
Disciples	Unbelievers
Given the mysteries of the kingdom of God	Given everything in parables

Here is the principle. God's truths are not given to those who do not want God's truths. The secrets of the kingdom are family secrets. There are things that my family knows that no one else knows. The only way that you would know these things is if you became a part of our family. The kingdom of God is like that. It has family secrets and only those who are a part of the family are entitled to those secrets.

Now you are probably thinking, "I've always been taught that we are to give God's truths to everybody. Didn't Jesus tell us to go out and make disciples of every nation?" Yes, He did. But when people hear the gospel and then decide that they want no part of it,

we are to stop presenting the gospel to them.

That is what Paul did during his missionary journeys. He would go into a city and he would preach to the Jews. If the Jews rejected him, then he would turn to the Gentiles. If the Gentiles also rejected him, then he would move to another city.

The same principle can be applied today. Are you a wife with an unbelieving husband who wants no part of the gospel? Don't talk to him about the gospel; instead, live the gospel.

> *In the same way, you wives, be submissive to your own husbands so that even if any of them are disobedient to the word, they may be won without a word by the behavior of their wives, 2 as they observe your chaste and respectful behavior. (1 Peter 3:1-2).*

There are times when, in my zeal for the gospel, I have not followed this principle. In those instances, I have seen unbelievers hardened to the gospel in a dramatic way. On the other hand, I have also seen times when I was obedient; when I stood back and allowed the Holy Spirit to do His work, with the result that a new brother eventually came into the kingdom.

THE MEANING OF THE PARABLE

> *"Now the parable is this: the seed is the word of God.*
>
> *"Those beside the road are those who have heard; then the devil comes and takes away the word from their heart, so that they will not believe and be saved.*
>
> *"Those on the rocky soil are those who, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no firm root; they believe for a while, and in time of temptation fall away.*
>
> *"The seed which fell among the thorns, these are the ones who have heard, and as they go on their way they are choked with worries and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to maturity.*
>
> *"But the seed in the good soil, these are the ones who have heard the word in an honest and good heart, and hold it fast, and bear fruit with perseverance. (Luke 8:11-15).*

Unlike most parables which teach only one major point, this parable has a number of points. Let us begin by identifying the elements of the

parable.

Parable	Spiritual Truth
The Sower	The One who sows the Word - Jesus
The Seed	The Word of God - the message of Jesus
The Soil	The hearts of men

The Sower is Jesus Himself. He has been preaching to the people. He has been sowing the Word among them. We have also been given a ministry of sowing the word. Jesus gave His disciples a charge to go out and make disciples of all men. The Sower commissioned others to continue the work of sowing. We share in that commission.

As the disciples have been watching Jesus sow the word, they have also been watching the reaction of the crowd. Though there has been some opposition, much of the reaction has seemed to be positive. And yet, this parable will serve as a warning that not all who initially react in a positive manner to Jesus will bear fruit. There are four specific types of ground upon which the seed falls.

Type of Ground	Initial Response	Type of Response	Final Result
Ground beside the road	Does not understand	Casual reception	Satan takes it away
Rocky places	Receives it with joy	Shallow reception	Falls away in the face of affliction
Among the thorns	Heard the word	Worldly reception	Choked by the things of the world
Good ground	Understands and accepts	Responsive reception	Bears fruit

Notice that there is a progression in each of these four cases. The first sees no growth at all. The second sees initial growth, but the roots have nothing onto which to hold. The third grows strong roots, only to be strangled by the surrounding thorn bushes and weeds. Only the fourth makes it to maturity.

1. The First Instance.

This is the seed which was sown beside the road. It represents the casual receiver of the word. He is like the hard, beaten-down path that is well traveled. He hears the word of God and it has no impact at all upon his life. It is like water off a duck's back. He is an unbeliever and he wants to go on being an unbeliever. He will get his wish.

What made the path hard? The fact that it was well-traveled. The habit of continued walking on it had pressed down the soil. This brings up a question. What habits are you cultivating in your life? Take care lest you are forming a habit that hardens into an eternal destination.

2. The Second Instance.

This one represents the shallow receiver of the word. He hears the gospel and his immediate reaction is positive. He has an emotional high and gets a case of the "warm fuzzies." He jumps onto the Jesus bandwagon. But something is wrong. There is no root.

Paula and I have some fake flowers. They are very bright and cheerful and Paula has set them into a planter just as if they were real flowers. They have leaves and petals and look just like the real thing. There is only one problem. They are fake. They have no roots and no life. This person is like that. He has leaves, but no roots and no fruit. He is spiritually dead.

It is easy to be spiritual on Sunday morning. It is harder to be faithful where you live and work. When the going gets tough, the fake fall away. This is why persecution so often has a purifying effect upon the church. All those people who are false on the inside fall away.

3. The Third Instance.

This was the seed that fell among thorns. What are the thorns in real life? The thorns are real life. They are the worries and the riches and the pleasures of this life. This is the worldly receiver of the word. This is the man who hears the word and who wants to receive it, but something gets in the way. He is the double-minded man. He wants to live for God but the details of life just get in the way.

Do you remember the story of the rich, young ruler? He had

too much stuff. His material possessions got in the way of following Jesus. Just as the rocky soil represents someone who cannot handle adversity, so the thorny soil represents the one who cannot handle prosperity. We are tempted to say that this is merely a Christian who has his priorities messed up. But Jesus came to alter our priorities.

4. The Fourth Instance.

This is the responsive receiver of the word. He is the Christian - the one who hears the word and believes it and whose life is changed by it. The evidence of this change is that he bears fruit. You know what fruit is. Fruit is the natural outgrowth of a living plant. The fruit of the Spirit is the supernatural outgrowth of the presence of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer.

Good Seed + Good Ground = Good Fruit

There are some important lessons in this parable.

- The lesson of universal evangelism.

  The sower sowed his seed everywhere. He did not only place it upon the good ground. Our field is the world. We have been commanded to take the gospel to all the world and to make disciples of the nations. That means the gospel must not remain in the church. It is God's method to spread the story of Jesus everywhere through the promiscuous preaching of the gospel.

- The lesson of false beginnings.

  Two of these instances saw an initial period of growth, only to have the plants die. These represented an initial commitment to Christ that did not last. They ultimately fell away. And by doing so, they showed that they were not a part of the kingdom.

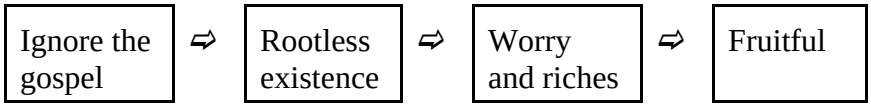
- The lesson of an effectual seed.

  Ability does not negate the effectiveness of the seed. I have already suggested that

The seed has not changed in 2000 years. It has not lost its potency in that time. It will always produce what it is supposed to produce.

you have a ministry to sow the word. But you might feel that you are not skillful at presenting the gospel. That is okay. Even the unskilled sower will manage to get some of the seed on the good soil where it will bear fruit. The response of the soil does not depend upon the skill of the sower.

There is a sense in which every Christian goes through this progression. As you first hear the message of the gospel, it is the first scenario which presents the greatest danger. This is the point where you might walk away from the gospel and ignore its message. Once you pass that point, it is the vulnerable rootless existence that is the most dangerous. The next pitfall is that of worry and riches.



Where are you? If you tell me which danger you have overcome, then I can tell you which one lies ahead.

LESSONS FROM LIGHT

> *"Now no one after lighting a lamp covers it over with a container, or puts it under a bed; but he puts it on a lampstand, so that those who come in may see the light.*
>
> *"For nothing is hidden that will not become evident, nor anything secret that will not be known and come to light.*
>
> *"So take care how you listen; for whoever has, to him more shall be given; and whoever does not have, even what he thinks he has shall be taken away from him." (Luke 8:16-18).*

The purpose of a lamp is to give light to an area in darkness. A lamp belongs on a lampstand. It is only there that it accomplishes its purpose. When you cover up a lamp by placing it in an inappropriate place, it cannot perform that function for which it was designed.

The kingdom is like that. It is meant to be seen before a watching world. Its message is meant to be proclaimed to the nations. This will involve taking it beyond the borders of Israel. The truth will be heard. The kingdom will not be able to be suppressed. Truth is like that. It always finds a way to be revealed.

The problem is not a matter of the truth being heard. The problem is whether or not you are listening to that truth. And so Jesus gives a warning: *"Take care how you listen."* This parable has a direct connection to the previous parable. They both relate to how you listen.

Parable of the Sower	Parable of the Light
Growth will take place if the ground is good	Light is evident if you will look
You must listen to the gospel in order to benefit from the gospel	

To what do you give your attention? Most Americans are more familiar with popular television commercials than with the Scriptures.

A FELLOWSHIP OF FAMILY

> *And His mother and brothers came to Him, and they were unable to get to Him because of the crowd.* 20 *And it was reported to Him, "Your mother and Your brothers are standing outside, wishing to see You."*
>
> *But He answered and said to them, "My mother and My brothers are these who hear the word of God and do it." (Luke 8:19-21).*

As we come to this paragraph, it seems at first glance to have no bearing on what has come before. Jesus has been relating a parable of a sower and his seed and of the different types of growth that were produced. Now the family of Jesus arrives on the scene. What kind of fruit will they produce? Will their proximity to the Sower bring special privileges? Will the fact that they have grown up with the Light and have been exposed to the Light mean that they will better be able to see? It does not.

You see, the brothers of Jesus did not believe in Him (John 7:5). They had grown up with Him and had lived with Him for many years and they did not believe that He was the Messiah of Israel. That is amazing. I can understand the scribes from Jerusalem hearing and not understanding, but his own brothers?

There is a lesson here. Sometimes there is a correlation between proximity and distortion. People who grow up in a religious home often have a harder time coming to know the Lord because they are too close to the

subject. They never really come face to face with their need.

I grew up in a religious home. We went to church every Sunday morning and Sunday night and Wednesday night. My brothers and I were made to read the Bible every night and we hated every minute of it. I went for years without any reality of God in my life until I moved away from the Lord and from the church in a period of real rebellion. It was then, for the first time, that I began to be really aware of my need.

Jesus is going to remove Himself from His family. They are seeking to approach Him on the basis of their physical relationship. He will not allow it. He is establishing a new relationship - one based on faith and obedience to Him.

Who is the true family of Jesus? It is those who bear kingdom fruit. It is those who come to the light and utilize it to see their lost condition and who repent and then become reflectors of that light. Who is the true family of Jesus? It is made up of a number of diverse disciples and it is made up of men and women who determine to become co-workers with Him. That is His true family. And there is room in that family for you.

STILLING STORMS
LUKE 8:22-25

What kind of person was Jesus? He was the kind of man you could invite to a wedding, even when things didn't go right at the reception. He was the kind of man to whom you could come with questions in the middle of the night. He was the kind of man with whom you could share your deepest secrets without worrying that you might shock Him. He was the kind of man who went fishing with a boatload of rowdy Galileans, who accepted a dinner invitation to the home of a known swindler, and who could sit at ease talking to a woman of ill repute.

And yet, there was another side to Jesus that was not so familiar. It was a side that tended to make people uncomfortable when they saw it. It is that side that we shall see in this passage.

THE REASON FOR THIS STORY

> *Now on one of those days Jesus and His disciples got into a boat, and He said to them, "Let us go over to the other side of the lake." So they launched out. (Luke 8:22).*

We are not told the chronological setting of this event. It is not said to follow on the heels of the relating of the parables in the previous paragraph. This means that the placement of this narrative is deliberate to Luke's purpose. He is not saying, "This is what happened next," but rather, "Here is something else that you need to know about Jesus that relates directly to what I have just told you."

> Luke does not refer to the "Sea" of Galilee. He has traveled across the Mediterranean and he recognizes this only to be a small lake. It is the other three gospel writer who speak of the "Sea of Galilee."

Luke 8:19-21	Luke 8:22-25
The mother and brothers of Jesus come to see him. He states that all who believe in Him are His true mother and brothers	The disciples awaken Jesus during a storm on the lake. He stills the storm with a command.
Relationship with Jesus.	The Power and Authority of Jesus.

In the previous verses, Luke has related how the mother and brother of Jesus came to speak to Him and He replied that it is those who believe in Him who are truly His mother and brothers. This is a picture of the nearness of Jesus. We refer to that quality as His *Immanence*. It points to the fact that I can go to Him and that I can be comforted by His presence.

The two extremes that are commonly held by unbelievers are to see God as either removed from His creation to the point of being unknown versus His being identical to His creation. These two extremes are the result of emphasizing either God's transcendence or His immanence. It can be charted out like this:

	Christian Position	Non-Christian Position
Transcendence	God is the head of the Covenant	God is infinitely far removed from the creation
Immanence	God is involved as Lord with His creatures	God is identical to the creation

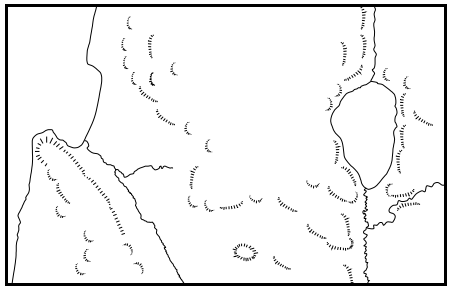
The Christian, on the other hand, sees the Lord as our covenant head. He is the head of this covenant (emphasizing His transcendence). But He is also the head of a covenant relationship which emphasizes His immanence.

Luke has been showing our relationship with Jesus and depicting it as members of a divine family. But he also wants to show another side of that relationship. He wants to show that Jesus is more than merely a "big brother." And so, he tells this story.

A PERILOUS STORM

But as they were sailing along He fell asleep; and a

fierce gale of wind descended on the lake, and they began to be swamped and to be in danger. (Luke 8:23).



The waters of Galilee lie 680 feet below sea level. The lake measures some 13 miles from north to south and is surrounded by mountains. This ring of mountains is broken by the Jordan River in the south and in the north by a narrow gorge to the north which winds its way 30 miles to the snowcapped heights of Mount Hermon. This gorge acts as a funnel for the winds that blow off the surrounding mountains. When cool air currents from the mountains rushing down the gorge collide with the heated air over the lake, the result is sometimes a violent storm. Luke calls it a *"fierce gale of wind."*

This boat had not been designed to weather a storm. It was not a sea-going vessel. It was a freshwater fishing boat. It was designed for fishing upon the lake. And when it began to take on water, the disciples became afraid. Most of them probably did not know how to swim. And those that did were too far from shore to be able to make such a distance.

A ROYAL REBUKE

They came to Jesus and woke Him up, saying, "Master, Master, we are perishing!" And He got up and rebuked the wind and the surging waves, and they stopped, and it became calm. (Luke 8:24).

All this time, Jesus has been asleep in the back of the boat. He isn't faking it. He is truly exhausted. And He has been sleeping throughout the entire storm. The disciples should have taken their cue from Jesus. He is sleeping. He is relaxed in this situation. He is not pacing the deck. He is not biting His nails. He is completely relaxed. And the disciples should have known that they could relax, too.

What are the storms in your life? Are you facing some major problem? You need to know something. God is not worried about your situation. He is not biting His nails. And you don't have to, either.

You see, it had been Jesus' idea to get into the boat and to sail across the sea. Now that the storm has come, the disciples have forgotten that they

were following Jesus. When you follow Jesus, you don't have to worry about where you are going. If He is leading you, then He will make certain that you get there. By the way, if you have a storm in your life and you are not following Jesus, then you have every reason to be scared to death. If you are not following Jesus, then death is the most terrifying thing in the world.

The One who created land and sea now stood up and rebuked His creation. Why did Jesus do that? I think that it was so that He might fulfill a prophecy from the Old Testament.

> *Those who go down to the sea in ships, who do business on great waters; 24 they have seen the works of the Lord, and His wonders in the deep.*
>
> *For He spoke and raised up a stormy wind, which lifted up the waves of the sea.*
>
> *They rose up to the heavens, they went down to the depths; their soul melted away in their misery.*
>
> *They reeled and staggered like a drunken man, and were at their wits' end.*
>
> *Then they cried to the Lord in their trouble, and He brought them out of their distresses.*
>
> *He caused the storm to be still, so that the waves of the sea were hushed.*
>
> *Then they were glad because they were quiet; so He guided them to their desired haven. (Psalm 107:23-30).*

Notice who it was who stilled the storm. It was the Lord - the God of Israel. This is an evidence for the deity of Jesus Christ. It is one thing to command the storm to be stilled. It is another thing for the storm to obey such a command.

A QUESTION OF FAITH

> *And He said to them, "Where is your faith?" They were fearful and amazed, saying to one another, "Who then is this, that He commands even the winds and the water, and they obey Him?" (Luke 8:25).*

This is not a mere rhetorical question. Jesus was pointing out that there was no need to be afraid. Once you believe in the love and the power of God, then you can weather any storm. These disciples had seen an abundance of miracles. They had seen the power of God. And they had seen

the love and the compassion of God. But they still lacked faith.

Before we judge the disciples, perhaps we should examine our own lives. After all, we have seen the power of God and the love of God. Isn't it amazing how we can see that power and that love, but then when our storms come we then forget about it altogether?

Notice the reaction of the disciples. They were fearful and amazed. I have no doubt but that they had been fearful in the midst of the storm, but Luke does not tell us that. He tells us that they were fearful now. The disciples had a sudden attack of xenophobia - the fear of the unknown. They realized that Jesus is not a normal human being. He is different than the disciples. He is other than the rest of mankind. He is holy. He is set apart and different from the rest of His creation.

Man's reaction to the holiness and "otherness" of God is always fear. Do you remember the reaction of Isaiah when he had his vision of the holiness of God?

> *In the year of King Uzziah's death, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted, with the train of His robe filling the temple.*
>
> *Seraphim stood above Him, each having six wings; with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew.*
>
> *And one called out to another and said, "Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord of hosts, the whole earth is full of His glory." (Isaiah 6:1-3).*

This was a glorious vision. It was a vision which took Isaiah into heaven - into the very throne room of God. We are not told the details of how Isaiah came to see this vision. Perhaps he had come to the temple in Jerusalem to worship and, while here, was given a glimpse of what the true temple in heaven looks like. He sees God sitting upon the throne. All around the throne are angels. They comprise a royal bodyguard. They proclaim the holiness of their Creator. What was Isaiah's reaction to this vision? It is seen in verse 5.

> *Then I said, "Woe is me, for I am ruined! Because I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts." (Isaiah 6:5).*

Isaiah was filled with fear. When he was confronted with the greatness of the gulf between himself and his Creator, he felt a heaviness

within him. For the first time in his life, he realized what it was to stand in the presence of God.

These disciples in the boat in the middle of the lake felt the same thing. Before they had been afraid of the storm. Now as they gaze upon the One who has stilled the storm, they are filled with a different kind of fear. It is a fear of the Lord. And they do not know it, but they have just taken a step toward a higher wisdom. Have you ever stopped to think about what Jesus said about Himself?

He said, "I am the vine."
He said, "I am the light."
He said, "I am the way."
He said, "I am the bread."
He said, "I and the Father are one."

No one else in history has ever made such claims as Jesus made. This means that you cannot view Jesus as merely a good man. He refused to be called that. He said that only God is good. Either Jesus is God, or else Jesus is not good.

Jesus broke up every funeral He ever attended. He healed the sick. He gave sight to the blind. He restored hearing to the deaf. He stilled the raging storm. But there were also things that Jesus never did. He never confessed sin. He never apologized. He never admitted that he was wrong. He never asked for advice. He never corrected any of his teachings. In any other person, this would have been the height of arrogance. But for the One who could still the storm, it was right.

The disciples were afraid. Why? They had seen miracles before. They had seen healings and they had seen demons being cast out. But this was different. This time it involved them directly. This time they were in the boat and in the storm. And it happened to them!

It is one thing to hear the gospel and to see the power of God at work. It is another thing to personally be a part of the gospel through faith and to have God work in your life. One is simple knowledge about God. The other is to known Him personally.

The passage ends with a question: *"Who then is this, that He commands even the winds and the water, and they obey Him?"* It ends this way for a reason. It ends this way because you have to answer the question. Who is Jesus? If He is just a man, then you can safely ignore Him. But if He is the Son of God, then you must believe in Him as your Lord and Savior.

DEMONS AND DELIVERANCE
LUKE 8:26-39

There are four specific instances recorded by Luke where Jesus cast demons out of someone who had been previously possessed.

Luke 4:33-35	Luke 8:26-39	Luke 9:37-42	Luke 11:14
Jesus casts out a demon in the synagogue of Capernaum, commanding the demon to be silent.	Jesus casts out a legion of demons, permitting them to enter a herd of pigs.	Jesus delivers a man's son from his demon possession after the disciples tried and failed.	Jesus cast out a demon which was causing a man to be mute. He was subsequently accused of being in league with Satan.
Emphasis upon the authority of Jesus.	Emphasis upon the fear of Jesus.	Emphasis upon the faith required.	Emphasis upon rejection of Jesus.

Why this emphasis upon the casting out of demons? If Jesus is the One who will remove the curse of sin and overthrow the forces of Satan, then He must be able to break the power of the supernatural world.

The initial confrontation between Jesus and Satan took place in the wilderness (Luke 4:1-2). Satan tempted Jesus. Luke told us in detail how Jesus overcame that temptation. But throughout the following chapters, it becomes evident that the power of Jesus goes far beyond just being able to resist the temptations of Satan. It is not what Satan can do to Jesus, but what Jesus can do to Satan.

> *The one who practices sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The Son of Man appeared for this purpose, that He might destroy the works of the devil. (1 John 3:8).*

The reason that Christ came to earth was so that He might destroy the works of the devil. The works of Satan began in the garden of Eden. They began when Satan tempted Adam and the woman and the human race plunged into sin. Jesus came to remove sin from man. He came to purchase men from their slavery to sin. He came to destroy the works of Satan. And in the casting out of demons, He was giving samples of this principle. This chapter will contain four miracles. It will show the power of Jesus over nature, over the supernatural, and over life and death.

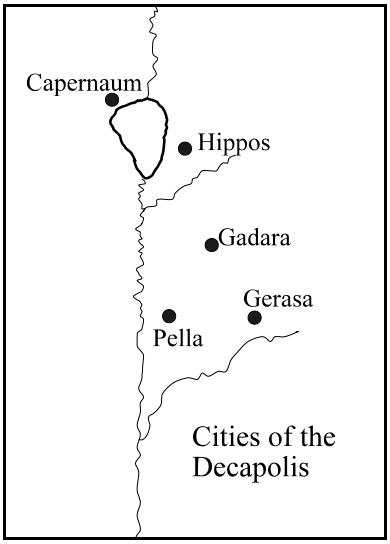
<table>
<tr><td>8:22</td><td>8:26</td><td>8:40</td><td>8:43</td><td>8:49</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">Stilling the storm on the Lake</td><td rowspan="2">Casting a legion of demons into swine</td><td colspan="3">Healing of the 12- year old daughter & woman of 12-year illness</td></tr>
<tr><td>Healing requested</td><td>Healing of woman with issue of blood</td><td>Healing accomplished</td></tr>
<tr><td>Power over nature</td><td>Power over the supernatural</td><td colspan="3">Power over life and death</td></tr>
</table>

THE COUNTRY OF THE GERASENES

Then they sailed to the country of the Gerasenes, which is opposite Galilee. (Luke 8:26).

The city of Gerasa was one of the cities of the Decapolis, one of the ten cities which made up a loose federation to the east of the Sea of Galilee. The problem is that Gerasa was located 35 southeast of the Sea of Galilee on the Jabbok River while this passage makes it clear that the events took place by the edge of the Sea.

On the other hand, there is a much smaller town located on the eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee named Gergesa. Origen, one of the early church fathers, stated that this was the site of this miracle. It contains both the steep cliffs and the caves mentioned in the passage.



The previous paragraph ends with Jesus stilling the storm. This section now begins as their boat lands on the eastern shore. The coming of Jesus to this area would result in the lot of one man being made better and in the lot of many men being made worse.

THE PLIGHT OF THE DEMONIZED MAN

> *And when He came out onto the land, He was met by a man from the city who was possessed with demons; and who had not put on any clothing for a long time, and was not living in a house, but in the tombs. (Luke 8:27).*

Matthew's account indicates that there were two demon-possessed men (Matthew 8:28).

As Jesus and his storm-drenched disciples depart from the boat, they are confronted with a terrifying spectacle. It is *"a man from the city who was possessed with demons."* Though he was from the city, he had not been living in the city for some time. Instead he had made his abode in the tombs. This would be a good opportunity to review what the Bible has to say about the subject of demons:

1. Demons are real. They are described under a number of different terms.

   - Demons.
   - Unclean spirits.

2. They were especially evident during the ministry of Jesus.

3. They seek to indwell mankind. Many people like to make a distinction between being oppressed, obsessed, possessed, and influenced by demons; but the Bible never makes such distinction.

4. The Bible does not tell us of the origin of the demons, though some have seen Revelation 12:4-9 as an allusion to their career. 2 Peter 2:4 speaks of angels that sinned and who were cast down to hell.

5. There seems to be many of them.

6. They are under the leadership of Satan. He is given the title of *prince of the powers of the air* in Ephesians 2:2.

7. Christ is superior to Satan and any of his demons.

It is interesting to note that of all the instances of demon-possession recorded in the New Testament, not one of them took place within Jerusalem. It seems as though most cases took place in rural settings. Why is this? Perhaps it is because Satan adapts himself to the sophistication of the level of society in which he is working.

Demon activity of this sort seems to be more frequent in the less sophisticated societies where pagan religions are honored. In more sophisticated settings, Satan usually uses other methods.

THE LEGION AND THE LORD

> *Seeing Jesus, he cried out and fell before Him, and said in a loud voice, "What business do we have with each other, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg You, do not torment me."*
>
> *For He had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. For it had seized him many times; and he was bound with chains and shackles and kept under guard, and yet he would break his bonds and be driven by the demon into the desert.*
>
> *And Jesus asked him, "What is your name?" And he said, "Legion"; for many demons had entered him. (Luke 8:28-30).*

As we read through this passage, we are left with no doubt as to who is in charge. Even though Jesus may have been numerically out-numbered, He will demonstrate power and authority over the demons.

The demons begin by asking a question: *"What business do we have with each other, Jesus, Son of the Most High God?*" The implication is that, since Jesus is so very different from the demons, that He should ignore them.

Satan often uses that message. He tells the Christian, "What does the world have to do with you." And as a result, the Christian abandons the world to Satan. He says to the Christian, "What does the public school system have to do with you?" And soon the public school system is teaching only Satan's lies. He says, "What does the government have to do with

you?" And soon, the government is becoming atheistic in nature.

The people of Gergesa did not know who Jesus was. The multitude which Jesus had left back on the seashore had not recognized Him as the Son of God. Even the disciples were asking themselves, "Who is this, that the wind and the sea obey Him?" But the demons knew beyond question the true identity of Jesus. James 2:19 says that the demons believe in God. And they believe in Jesus, too.

There is a lesson here. It is that you can believe all kinds of facts about Jesus and it won't do you one bit of good. You are not saved by believing facts about Jesus (although it is true that you cannot be saved without believing certain facts about Him). You are saved as you trust in Him and acknowledge Him as your Savior and as your Lord.

The demons have identified Jesus. Now He calls upon them to identify themselves. *And he said, "Legion"; for many demons had entered him.* There were 6000 men in a full Roman legion. This does not necessarily mean that there exactly 6000 demons inside of this man, but it does mean that there were a lot of them.

THE SWINE IN THE SEA

> *They were imploring Him not to command them to go away into the abyss.*
>
> *Now there was a herd of many swine feeding there on the mountain; and the demons implored Him to permit them to enter the swine. And He gave them permission.*
>
> *And the demons came out of the man and entered the swine; and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and was drowned. (Luke 8:31-33).*

Notice the request of the demons that they not be sent away into the abyss. According to Jewish tradition, there were three doors to Gehenna:

(1) The desert: *So they and all that belonged to them went down alive to Sheol; and the earth closed over them, and they perished from the midst of the assembly.* (Numbers 16:33).

(2) The sea: *And he said, "I called out of my distress to the LORD, And He answered me. I cried for help from the depth of Sheol; You heard my voice"* (Jonah 2:2).

(3) Jerusalem: *"His rock will pass away because of panic, and his princes will be terrified at the standard," declares the LORD, whose fire is in Zion and whose furnace is in Jerusalem* (Isaiah 31:9).

The demons did not fear Jewish tradition, but they did fear Jesus. They recognize His power over them and so they ask permission to enter into a nearby herd of pigs. The implication is that, without His permission, they would have been powerless to accomplish this. Do you see what this means? They were bound!

You might be thinking, "They don't look very bound." Satan doesn't look very bound, but that is because he is out on bail. Jesus bound Satan with every demon that was cast out and with every soul that came to faith and repentance. He is still binding Satan today.

That does not mean that Satan is inactive. 1 Peter 5:8 tells us that he goes about as a roaring lion, seeking someone to gobble up. We have a promise in James 4:7 that if we submit to the Lord and resist the devil, he will flee from us. However, that promise is made on the condition that we fulfill the rest of that verse: *Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.* 8 *Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded* (James 4:7-8). It is only true that the devil will flee from us as we are submitting to God and drawing near to Him.

THE REACTION OF THE PEOPLE

> *When the herdsmen saw what had happened, they ran away and reported it in the city and out in the country.*
>
> *The people went out to see what had happened; and they came to Jesus, and found the man from whom the demons had gone out, sitting down at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in his right mind; and they became frightened.*
>
> *Those who had seen it reported to them how the man who was demon-possessed had been made well.*
>
> *And all the people of the country of the Gerasenes and the surrounding district asked Him to leave them, for they were gripped with great fear; and He got into a boat and returned. (Luke 8:34-37).*

Pigs were considered by the Jews to be an unclean animal. The Jews were forbidden to eat pork and they had nothing to do with pigs. But these

people are not Jewish. These people are from the cities of the Decapolis. They are Gentiles. Their culture is the culture of the Greeks. And the pig was a holy animal to the Greeks. The pig was to the Greeks what the lamb was to the Jew. It was the animal of sacrifice. The miracle that Jesus performed in the casting out of these demons was witnessed by three groups of people.

- The herdsmen of the pigs.
- The disciples.
- The man who had been demon-possessed.

We are not told the reaction of the disciples. I don't think they had gotten over the miracle of the stilling of the storm. But we do read of the reaction of the herdsmen. They ran back to report it to the people in the country and in the city. They told everyone.

This is a natural reaction to witnessing the power of God. The reason more so-called Christians do not witness is because they have never really experienced the power of God in their lives. They have nothing of which to witness.

The news brought out a crowd. The crowd saw Jesus and the disciples and the formerly demon-possessed man. And no pigs. Their response was one of fear. And because of their fear, they invited Jesus to leave.

This is not the kind of fear that is the beginning of wisdom. This is not a fear that draws men closer to the Lord. It is a fear which asks for a separation. It is a fear stemming from unbelief and from superstition. It is a sinful fear. We have not been called to be superstitious. We have been called to be confident before the Lord. We need to replace fear with faith.

I think that there was a second reason that they had in asking Jesus to leave. They didn't want to lose any more pigs. The loss of the pigs represented a significant dollar value and, if Jesus remained in the area, who knew what they might lose next? It made no difference to them that a man had been healed. It made no difference to them that One was in their midst that held that kind of power in His hands. They had lost their pigs. And they were more interested in pigs than in people.

Are there any pigs in your life? I'm not talking about someone with a messy habit. I'm talking about something in your life that is keeping you from Jesus. Maybe you wouldn't say it the same way these people did, but do you secretly wish that Jesus would go away and leave you and your pigs alone?

What is it that you value more than people? Whatever it is, you need to know that it is only a herd of pigs and that it is going to end up some day

in the depths of the sea. Ask the Lord to take your pigs, and He will give you something a lot more valuable in their place.

THE REACTION OF THE MAN WHO HAD BEEN HEALED

> *But the man from whom the demons had gone out was begging Him that he might accompany Him; but He sent him away, saying,*
>
> *"Return to your house and describe what great things God has done for you." So he went away, proclaiming throughout the whole city what great things Jesus had done for him. (Luke 8:38-39).*

In contrast to the people of the area who were afraid of Jesus and who wanted Him to leave, there was one man who wanted to remain with Jesus and follow Him. It was the man who had been healed. Jesus refuses. The man will not be permitted to accompany Jesus. There is an interesting contrast.

The Demons	The Man who had been Healed
Requested permission to enter into the herd of pigs	Requested permission to follow Jesus
Request granted	Request denied

The request of the demons was granted while the request of the man was refused. There is an interesting lesson here. An answered prayer does not necessarily mean that you are in God's will. And an unanswered prayer is not necessarily a sign of God's disfavor.

This man was given a commission. He will serve Jesus, but he will do so without leaving his home. He will be a witness of Jesus to his own people. Here is the principle. You need not leave your home to be a missionary. Jesus had called the Twelve to leave their homes and to follow Him. But He told this man to stay home and spread the word. He will have a significant ministry right where he is. The principle is one of obedience. When Jesus says, "Go!" then you go. And when He says, "Stay!" you do that, too.

Can I tell you the rest of the story? Luke doesn't do that, but when

we read Mark's account, we find that this man became a missionary to the entire Decapolis - this region with its ten major cities. And the next time that Jesus came to this region, they did not ask Him to leave. Mark 7:31 tells us of Jesus returning to the Decapolis. And this time the people are ready to listen. A crowd of 4000 people will gather to hear Him preach.

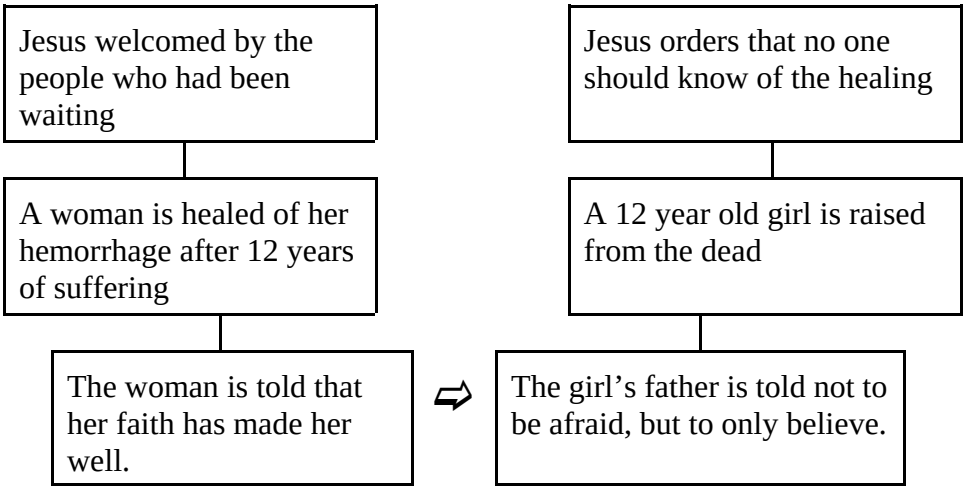
We are like that man. We have been cleansed from the impurity which once polluted us. And now, we have been left behind. Our job is to prepare the way so that, when Jesus comes this way again, people will be ready to meet Him.

DELIVERANCE FROM DISEASE AND DEATH
LUKE 8:40-56

We live in a world that has been cursed by sickness and sorrow and death. Since the fall in the Garden of Eden, man's history has been the story of a dying race. The one inescapable fact that every man must face is the reality of death. The Old Testament promised that in the day of the kingdom, the effects of this curse would be overthrown.

> *He will swallow up death for all time, and the Lord God will wipe tears away from all faces, and He will remove the reproach of His people from all the earth; for the Lord has spoken. (Isaiah 25:8).*

The truth of these promises was seen in Jesus Christ. He fulfilled the promises of the kingdom by healing the sick, giving sight to the blind, and even raising the dead. He banished disease from first century Palestine to demonstrate that He was the King who had brought His kingdom.



Notice the "divine coincidence" that the disease of the woman had

begun to afflict her on the same year that this girl had been born. Each situation had been carefully prepared by God to be a special vessel of honor which would demonstrate the power and the compassion of Jesus.

WELCOME OF THE PEOPLE

And as Jesus returned, the people welcomed Him, for they had all been waiting for Him (Luke 8:40).

Several things had taken place since Jesus had last been on the western shore of the Lake. A storm had been stilled. A herd of pigs had been agitated. Jesus had been asked to leave and now He is being welcomed back.

<table>
<tr><td>8:22</td><td>8:26</td><td>8:40</td><td>8:43</td><td>8:49</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">Stilling the storm on the Lake</td><td rowspan="2">Casting a legion of demons into swine</td><td colspan="3">Healing of the 12- year old daughter & woman of 12-year illness</td></tr>
<tr><td>Healing requested</td><td>Healing of woman with issue of blood</td><td>Healing accomplished</td></tr>
<tr><td>Power over nature</td><td>Power over supernatural</td><td colspan="3">Power over life and death</td></tr>
</table>

Throughout this section, we have been witnessing the power of Jesus. In this section, the power becomes much more personal as it touches the lives of people. You might think at this point that Jesus would have said to the people, "I'm sorry, I've had a rough night and a long day yesterday and now I'm going to go and play golf." He doesn't do that. He has time for people. He has time both for the crowds and for individuals.

There is an interesting contrast between the reception of Jesus at Gerasa and the request that is made of Him here. They had asked Him to leave. A man now approaches Jesus and asks Him to come.

AN EARNEST REQUEST

And there came a man named Jairus, and he was an official of the synagogue; and he fell at Jesus' feet, and began

> *to implore Him to come to his house; 42 for he had an only daughter, about twelve years old, and she was dying. But as He went, the crowds were pressing against Him. (Luke 8:41-42).*

I want you to notice something about Jesus. He was accessible. You didn't have to go through five secretaries and a vice president to get to him. He didn't stay in an office on the 48th floor. He wasn't in a monastery. He moved among the people. He was in the villages and streets. He was in people's homes. He was even available for little children. He was often in a crowd. This tells me something about God. God is always available. I never have to worry about getting a busy signal when I pray. I will never get a voice-mail. Jesus is going to meet two different people in this passage. They are given by way of contrast.

Jarius	The Woman with a Hemorrhage
Up and in	Down and out
A man	A woman
A leader in the synagogue	Considered ceremonially unclean and unable to enter either temple or synagogue.

Jesus was available to each of these people. And He was available not only so that you could go to Him, but also so that He could come to you. He made house calls!

The name of this man was Jairus. He was an official within the synagogue. This would have made him a respected member of the community, a man of prestige. But power and wealth and prestige are irrelevant when your little girl dies.

One of the deceptions of our culture is that bad things do not happen to respectable people. But position and influence are no guarantee against tragedy. There is a lesson here. It is that respectable people and religious people suffer tragedy just like anyone else. And tragedy often makes one turn to the Lord.

This man was a part of the religious establishment. From where had most of the opposition to Jesus come up to this time? From the religious establishment! But this man did not care about social pressures. His little girl was dying. He had a need and he didn't care about anything else. This is why people always come to Christ. If you don't have a pressing need to come to Him, then you probably won't.

This man came in desperation. His motives may not have been the best. He did not come simply because he loved Jesus and wanted to get to know Him. He came because he was hurting. His heart was crushed. But even though his faith is inadequate and his motives are selfish, Jesus is going to meet his need.

We are like that man. We did not come to Jesus until we realized our need. We are still like that. It often takes a "divine two-by-four" over the head to get our attention. There is a story of a farmer who went to town to buy a mule. The salesman said, "I have a great mule. All you have to do is to sit on him and say, 'Go mule,' and you will find that he is very obedient." The farmer bought the mule and got up on him and said, "Go mule!" The mule didn't move. The farmer kicked his heels into the mule's side and said, "Go mule!" The mule didn't move. The farmer got down off the mule and led it back to the salesman, complaining, "I spoke to the mule just like you told me and the mule wouldn't budge." The salesman instructed the farmer to get back up on the mule. Then he picked up a two-by-four and hit the mule over the head and the mule began to go. "I thought you only had to say, 'Go mule!'" protested the farmer. "That's right," replied the salesman, "But first you have to get his attention." We are often like that mule. God often has to do something drastic to us just to get us to pay attention.

A MIRACLE OF HEALING

> *And a woman who had a hemorrhage for twelve years, and could not be healed by anyone, 44 came up behind Him and touched the fringe of His cloak, and immediately her hemorrhage stopped. (Luke 8:43-44).*

The entire crowd was following Jesus as He made His way to the house of Jairus. Most followed from mere curiosity. But there was one woman in the crowd who had a special reason for being there. She had a need.

Notice the contrasting needs. The daughter of Jairus was 12 years old. She had enjoyed 12 years of life. This woman had endured 12 years of suffering. She had a hemorrhage. Under the ceremonial laws, she was considered to be perpetually unclean. Mark's account adds that she *had endured much at the hands of many physicians, and had spent all that she had and was not helped at all, but rather had grown worse (Mark 5:26).* I find it interesting that Luke the physician does not mention this fact. Was it a case of professional courtesy?

She had spent all of her money on doctors and was worse than ever. She was unclean. Her clothes were considered to be unclean. Any furniture which she touched would become unclean. And any person with whom she came into contact would become unclean. Her husband was entitled to divorce her. She was shunned by the community. She was excluded from the temple and the synagogue.

She comes up behind Jesus and she reaches out to Jesus as He passes and touches His cloak. Why? Luke does not tell us, but he does not have to. Her action was very deliberate. She had a reason for doing so (8:47). Do you see it? She had faith. It may not have been a mature faith. It seems to have been more on the order of superstition. But God honors it. God takes an inadequate faith and causes it to grow. If the Lord were to wait until we presented Him with a mature faith in order to save us, then no one would ever be saved.

FAITH IN THE FACE OF DISEASE

> *And Jesus said, "Who is the one who touched Me?" And while they were all denying it, Peter said, "Master, the people are crowding and pressing in on You."*
>
> *But Jesus said, "Someone did touch Me, for I was aware that power had gone out of Me."*
>
> *When the woman saw that she had not escaped notice, she came trembling and fell down before Him, and declared in the presence of all the people the reason why she had touched Him, and how she had been immediately healed.*
>
> *And He said to her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace." (Luke 8:45-48).*

Jesus was on His way to heal the daughter of Jairus. Suddenly there is an interruption. Jesus knew how to handle interruptions. Sometimes important things happen when you are going somewhere else. How do you handle interruptions? You need to learn something. Your spouse is not an interruption. Your children are not interruptions.

From the time my daughter was a little girl, she used to come into my study and I always made it a point of trying to stop what I was doing and give her my attention. Sometimes her interruption was not very important. Sometimes it was rather trivial. But it was not trivial to her.

John Lennon once said that life is what happens to you while you are planning something else. As you make up your agenda, be aware that God

has His agenda and that at first it seems to be only an interruption.

This interruption took place when Jesus perceived that something special had happened. *"Who is the one who touched me?"* This says something about the perception of Jesus. He was aware of people. And He was aware that something special had just taken place. He was aware that He had been a source of healing power. His question does not seem to be rhetorical. It seems as though He actually did not know who had touched Him. And so, He asks,*"Who is the one who touched me?"* The woman comes forth and confesses what she has done. In doing so, she bears witness of the power of God.

There is another lesson I want you to see here. It is that Jesus did not play favorites. He did not turn around and say, "Look lady, if you'll stop touching Me, then I can get to this VIP's house and, if we can win him over to our side, then we will really have a celebrity who can push our cause." Jesus did not play favorites on the basis of social position. He did not cater to those who were the most popular or the most respected or the most handsome or the most wealthy.

> *For consider your calling, brethren, that there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble; 27 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, 28 and the base things of the world and the despised; God has chosen, the things that are not, that He might nullify the things that are 29 that no man should boast before God. (1 Corinthians 1:26-29).*

We are a pretty motley crew. Not the wise, but the foolish. Not the mighty, but the weak. Not the noble, but the base and the despised. To be sure, it does not say that there are not any wise, or that there are not any mighty, or that there are not any noble. But the majority of the members of the church do not fit into those categories.

Jesus said to the woman, *"Daughter, your faith has made you well*." This is striking. There were many people who were healed who had no faith at all. Healing is always a sovereign act of God. How then can it be said that this woman's faith has healed her?

The phrase *"has made you well"* is translated from the perfect tense of the Greek word *sozo*, "to save." This woman was saved by her faith. In this context, Jesus is referring to her salvation from her physical illness. But the same application can be made to her spiritual salvation.

On the one hand, it is God who saves people. On the other hand, they

are saved through faith. Such faith is given by God. This woman was saved as a result of her faith. But what she does not realize is that her faith has been given to her by God.

She has not realized that. She has thought that there might be something magical about the clothing of Jesus. Jesus does not say, "First you need to get your theology straightened out, and then I can heal you." He isn't nearly so interested in her theology as He is with her heart. When the heart is right, the theology will take care of itself.

FAITH IN THE FACE OF DEATH

> *While He was still speaking, someone came from the house of the synagogue official, saying, "Your daughter has died; do not trouble the Teacher anymore."*
>
> *But when Jesus heard this, He answered him, "Do not be afraid any longer; only believe, and she will be made well." (Luke 8:49-50).*

There is a point when circumstances seem to pass beyond the realm of hope. This is where real faith begins. This happened to Jairus as he and Jesus approached his home. He had believed that Jesus could heal his daughter, even though she was at the point of death. But what about someone who has already died?

This was the line beyond which some were unwilling to venture. They came to Jairus with advice which seemed sound from a strictly humanistic point of view.

"Your daughter has died; do not trouble the Teacher anymore." After all, you don't ask the doctor to make a house call when the patient is already dead. However, if the physician is One who has power over death, then it is another case entirely.

Jesus speaks words of hope. *"Do not be afraid any longer, only believe."* Just as Jesus had told the woman that her faith had saved her, so now He tells this man that he must have faith. He had just seen a living object lesson on the result of faith. Now he has a decision to make. He can listen to the advice of his friends. Or he can trust in Jesus.

You have the same choice. Friends from the world will tell you not to bother God right now because He has plenty to do and your situation is irrelevant to Him. They will advise you that faith is a nice thing to have, but there comes a time when you must put your faith aside to face "reality." God says that He is reality. His is there and He has not been silent. And He calls

you to believe in Him.

RESURRECTION!

> *When He came to the house, He did not allow anyone to enter with Him, except Peter and John and James, and the girl's father and mother.*
>
> *Now they were all weeping and lamenting for her; but He said, "Stop weeping, for she has not died, but is asleep."* 53 *And they began laughing at Him, knowing that she had died. (Luke 8:51-53).*

It is quite a scene as Jesus arrives at the home of Jairus. The culture of the ancient world called for loud commotion at the death of a loved one. In the case of those who were wealthy, professional mourners were often hired. The bereaved would rend their garments. The Talmud contains 39 different regulation on how you were to rip your clothes in such situations.

- You had to do it while you were standing.
- You had to do it over your heart and then leave it ripped for several days.
- There were special rules on how women were to do this so that they did not expose themselves.

> *"The husband is bound to bury his dead wife and to make lamentation and mourning for her after the custom of all countries. And also the very poorest among the Israelites will not allow her less than two flutes and one wailing woman." (Mishna Ketuboth 4:4).*

Can you imagine what a mess this must have been? A great crowd has gathered and they are making a racket. It is into this scene that Jesus comes. The Prince of Peace raises His voice and calls for an end to the racket. In the previous chapter He had ordered the storm to be silent. Now he calls for the mourners to be silent.

"Stop weeping, for she has not died, but is asleep." What does Jesus mean by this? Were the people mistaken? Had the girl really died? I believe that she had. Luke's account makes it very clear that she was really dead (Luke 8:53). But God has a different perspective on death than we do. We tend to view death as permanent. He views death as temporary. To Him, it

is like falling asleep.

Have you ever noticed the reaction that children have when you tell them to go to sleep? They usually do not want to . When we fear death, we are acting as children. There is a lesson to learn here. It is that we have no reason to fear death. We have been joined to the One who has conquered death.

Did you ever stop to think that Jesus never preached a funeral sermon? Every time He attended a funeral, He broke it up by raising the dead. Perhaps were we to understand the true nature of death, we would be able to rejoice. A Christian funeral has been described as a procession of solemn caterpillars dressed in black, carrying the corpse of a cocoon to its final resting place. The poor, distressed caterpillars continue on their way, never noticing the fluttering butterfly above them.

Now I want to ask you a question. Why did Jesus keep the crowd out? I think that it was because there are some things which the crowd is not meant to see.

The professional mourners move quickly from mourning to laughter and mockery.
Their mourning was hypocritical.
The definition of a hypocrite is a sympathetic funeral director at a $20,000 funeral.

The people on the outside were those who had been so arrogant that they had laughed at Jesus. They will not be permitted to witness this miracle. It will be kept from them. This is not a new principle. Jesus taught it in His Sermon on the Mount.

> *"Do not give what is holy to dogs, and do not throw your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you into pieces" (Matthew 7:6).*

You don't give pearls to pigs. And there as some things that you don't share with pagans because they just won't understand. You can share the gospel with pagans. But when they laugh and mock and reject the gospel, then you can stop.

Thus, as Jesus enters the room in which the child lies, He takes with Him the parents and several of His own companions. Verse 51 says that these were Peter, James and John. Why did Jesus take these three disciples? Under the Mosaic Law, the testimony of two or three witnesses was required to confirm an event (Deuteronomy 19:15).

This is the first time that Jesus has selected these three specific disciples to be singled out. It will not be the last time. In the next chapter they shall accompany Jesus up the mountain to witness the transfiguration (Luke 9:28). Though Luke does not mention it, these same three shall

accompany Jesus into the Garden of Gethsemane (Mark 14:33). Each time, they shall serve as witnesses. They shall witness His power, His majesty and His agony.

Passage	Instance	Manifests
Luke 8:51	Raising of daughter of Jairus	Power of Jesus
Luke 9:28	Transfiguration	Majesty of Jesus
Mark 14:33	Gethsemane	Agony of Jesus

> *He, however, took her by the hand and called, saying, "Child, arise!"* 55 *And her spirit returned, and she got up immediately; and He gave orders for something to be given her to eat. (Luke 8:54-55).*

The healing took place immediately. There was no gradual recuperation process. Life returned to the lifeless body and the girl got up immediately and wanted something to eat.

> *Her parents were amazed; but He instructed them to tell no one what had happened. (Luke 8:56).*

Why did Jesus order this? Why did He tell them to keep quiet about the miracle? It was obvious that the news would get out about the raising of this girl. The family could not keep the news silent. So why did Jesus give this command? I think that there are several reasons.

First, Jesus knew that people would take the words that He had spoken to be some kind of magical formula. He didn't want people running into funeral homes yelling the words, "Arise!" Indeed, this later took place in the days of the book of Acts as people tried to use the words of Paul as a magical formula to cast out demons (Acts 19:13).

A second reason may have been concern over the child's continued welfare. Jesus did not want the girl to be the object of people's undue attention. You will remember that after Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, the Jewish Sanhedrin went so far as to plot the murder of Lazarus in order to cover up the miracle of his resurrection (John 12:10).

However, I think that the primary reason Jesus commanded silence is because of the unbelief of the multitude. Until they believed, no more signs would be given to them.

> *"For whoever has, to him more shall be given; and whoever does not have, even what he has shall be taken away from him." (Mark 4:25).*

Here is the point. You have been given truth from God. You now have a decision to make. What are you going to do with that truth? If you merely take it and place it on the shelf to be dusted off each Sunday, then there will come a time when that truth will be taken from you.

SENDING FORTH THE TWELVE
LUKE 9:1-10

When Jesus set out to build His kingdom upon earth, there were many different strategies which He could have used. He could have waved His hand and erected a giant city with streets of gold and mighty ramparts. He could have sent forth His holy angels to announce the news in every tongue and in every land. He could have written His message upon the clouds for all to see. But He did none of these things. He had a different strategy.

Men were His method. We have already seen in Luke 6:13 how Jesus has selected a small handful of men through whom He would change the world. He chose them and he called them "apostles." The word "apostle" means "one who is sent." He called them apostles, but He did not immediately send them out. Instead, these twelve apostles have been traveling with Jesus and watching Him preach and teach and heal and minister. Now it is their turn. This is their first commission. It serves as "on the job training."

They had followed Him. They had watched Him do the work of ministry. Now it is their turn. Like a mother eagle pushing her babies out of the nest, Jesus is going to send forth the Twelve on a short-term mission trip.

After this mission trip is over, the Twelve shall come back to spend a great deal more time being personally taught by Jesus. Indeed, they are going to learn better after this time because they are going to get a taste of what they really need to know.

There is nothing like experience to teach you what you don't know. That is why high school kids think that they know everything. They haven't had the experience to teach them what they don't know.

A COMMISSION TO MINISTRY

> *And He called the twelve together, and gave them power and authority over all the demons, and to heal diseases. 2 And He sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God, and to perform healing. (Luke 9:1-2).*

The Twelve were about to be given their marching orders. They were going to be sent out to do a job. But before they are given their orders, they are given the tools by which they will be able to carry out those orders.

He... gave them POWER and AUTHORITY...	⇨	Over all the Demons
		To heal diseases

Notice that they were given both power and authority. They have the legal right to do the work for which they are commissioned and they also have the practical ability and the power to do that work. There is a lesson here. It is that God never calls us without giving us the power to accomplish the task. Do you remember the last thing that Jesus ever did before ascending to heaven? He gave a final commission to His disciples. And in that commission was a promise of power. They would receive power from the Holy Spirit.

We have the same promise of God's Spirit. And we have the same resource for God's power. What is it that God is calling you to do? Whatever it is, God will also provide the power to do it

A HUMBLE PREPARATION

> *And He said to them, "Take nothing for your journey, neither a staff, nor a bag, nor bread, nor money; and do not even have two tunics apiece." (Luke 9:3).*

The term "bag" can refer to a collection bag used by priests to collect offerings.

Rabbinic law ordered that when a man entered the Temple courts he was to put off his staff and shoes and money belt. As Jesus sends His disciples out to do a holy work, He gives similar instructions to them - but allows them to wear sandals. They were to travel lightly. And their wallet was to travel lightly, too. They were not to be in the ministry for the money. They

were not sent out to do deputation work, raising money for their support on the mission field. Instead they were to depend upon the Lord and upon the hospitality of His people for their upkeep. They were to limit their support. Even though they might possess greater resources, they were to limit that which they took with them.

There is a principle here. Whatever you own owns you. Most of us have too much stuff. All that stuff hinders us. We spend altogether too much time taking care of our stuff. What would happen if you lost all of your stuff? Would you still be able to praise God? If you would not, then you have become enslaved to your stuff. This is true of all Christians, but it is especially true of those whom God has called to shepherd His church.

A DETERMINING RECEPTION

> *And whatever house you enter, stay there, and take your leave from there. 5 And as for those who do not receive you, as you go out from that city, shake off the dust from your feet as a testimony against them." (Luke 9:4-5).*

Oriental culture dictated that it was the duty of citizens of a town to offer hospitality.

The rabbis were never to place a price upon their teaching. This did not mean that their teaching was considered to be worthless. Rather it was to be considered priceless. The physical needs of the rabbis were to be met by the people to whom they ministered. The Talmud speaks of the blessings given to those who meet the physical needs of the rabbis.

> *"If a man entertains a rabbi in his house and lets him enjoy his possessions, Scripture accounts it to him as if he had sacrificed the daily burnt offering." (Berakoth 10b).*

Paul would later set forth this same principle for the church, teaching that "*the Lord directed those who proclaim the gospel to get their living from the gospel" (1 Corinthians 9:14).* The principle is that the minister of the gospel is not to be concerned with the meeting of his material needs. Those needs should be met by those to whom he is ministering.

Rabbinic Law stated that when an Israelite left the land of Israel and traveled abroad and then returned, he was to stop at the borders of the land and shake the Gentile dust from his clothes. The implication in this passage is that anyone who did not accept the message of the apostles was to be

considered on the same level as a pagan Gentile.

A MULTIPLIED MINISTRY

> *And departing, they began going about among the villages, preaching the gospel, and healing everywhere. (Luke 9:6).*

The ministry of the Twelve is a mirror to the ministry of Jesus. They did exactly what they had seen Him do throughout His ministry.

Preaching the Gospel	**Healing Everywhere**
The Message	Credentials of the Messengers
What they are to say	What they are to do

1. Preaching the Gospel.

   The disciples were to go forth and make an announcement. It is not really an evangelistic crusade. They are not to engage in apologetics. It is not their job to convince the world how wrong it is. They are not reformers. They are announcers.

   We have not been called to win arguments or to get people to dress like we dress or to talk like we talk. We have been called to proclaim a message.

   The message is described here as the gospel. The term means "good news." Luke has used this term to describe both the preaching of Jesus as well as the preaching of John (Luke 3:18; 4:18; 7:22). It is the good news that God has drawn near. That was the message John preached. And it was the message that Jesus preached. And it was preached by the apostles. And it is proclaimed by us today.

2. Healing Everywhere.

   The healing ministry was to serve as the credentials of the Twelve. They have no credentials from an accredited university. They have no degrees behind their name. Their degrees are from the Lord.

   There is something significant about these particular

credentials. After all, Jesus could have given the disciples the ability to leap tall buildings with a single bound or to be faster than a speeding bullet. But these particular credentials were people-oriented. They were credentials which met real physical needs.

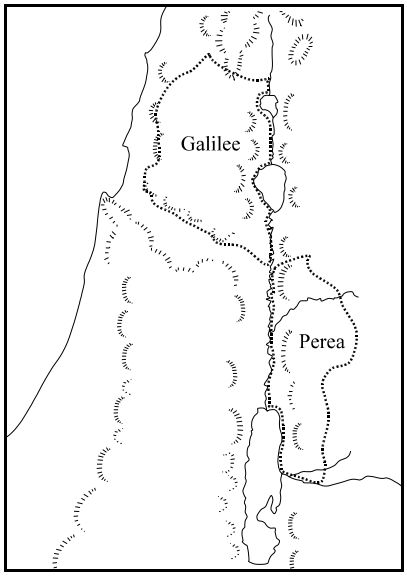
Now let's make this personal. What are your credentials? I don't mean what kind of degree you have received from an academic institution. And I don't mean that you have some ability to heal the sick or to cast out demons. I mean what is there in your life that can only be explained in the terms of the working of the Holy Spirit? Do you have credentials from the Lord? And are they people-oriented?

It matters not in the long run what degrees you may be able to hang on your wall or what letters you can place along side your name. What matters are your heavenly credentials. And the people whose lives you have touched with the gospel of Christ.

THE PERPLEXITY OF UNBELIEF

Now Herod the tetrarch heard of all that was happening; and he was greatly perplexed, because it was said by some that John had risen from the dead, 8 and by some that Elijah had appeared, and by others, that one of the prophets of old had risen again.

And Herod said, "I myself had John beheaded; but who is this man about whom I hear such things?" And he kept trying to see Him. (Luke 9:7-9).



It had been one thing for Jesus to go around teaching and preaching and healing. But suddenly His ministry was multiplied by the order of twelve. This soon attracted the attention of the civil government of Galilee. That government rested in the hands of Herod Antipas.

Antipas was one of the sons of Herod the Great. The kingdom of Herod had been divided among the sons of Herod, though in these days the province of Judea was now under a Roman Procurator. Antipas had only a quarter of the kingdom - those areas known as

Galilee and Perea. That is what it meant to be a Tetrarch - the term means, "ruler of a fourth."

Antipas had been familiar with the ministry of John the Baptist. It was Antipas who ordered John arrested and it was Antipas who condemned him to death. He had thought that this would be the end of the story, but instead it was only the beginning. Now instead of John, there were twelve preachers traveling through Galilee. To make matters worse, there were conflicting stories being circulated.

- John the Baptist risen from the dead.
- Elijah, whose coming had been promised in Malachi 4:5.
- A prophet from the Old Testament era.

Herod seems to have been troubled over these rumors. He was troubled because of his own guilty conscience. His guilty conscience made him overly superstitious. There is a proverb that says, "the wicked flee when no one is pursuing" (Proverbs 28:1). Such was the case with Herod. Perhaps he feared that John the Baptist might be returning to haunt him.

A TIME OF DEBRIEFING

> *And when the apostles returned, they gave an account to Him of all that they had done. And taking them with Him, He withdrew by Himself to a city called Bethsaida. (Luke 9:10).*

What a wonderful time this must have been! To go out and to minister and then to come back together to be encouraged in all of the things that God had accomplished through them. That is what the church is all about. It is when we come back together to share and to worship and to be encouraged in the continuing work.

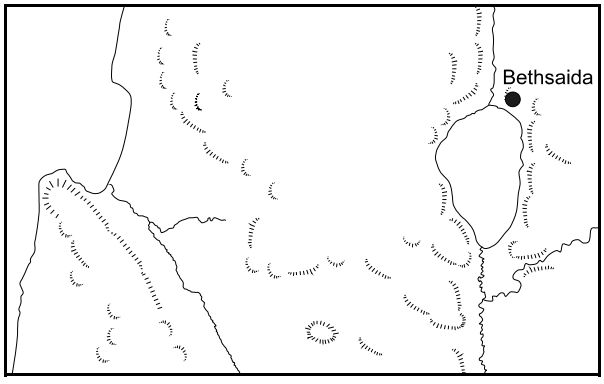
This tells me something about this particular sending forth of the apostles. This was not so much for the benefit of the ministry as it was for their benefit. This was a part of their training and their growth. When you do the work of ministry, it not only helps those to whom you minister, but it also helps you.

FEEDING FIVE THOUSAND
LUKE 9:10-17

Of all of the miracles which are recorded during the ministry of Jesus, only one is described in all four gospel accounts. It is the one which we find in this chapter - the feeding of the five thousand. This was an especially significant miracle. It was significant because it involved the most number of people. It had the most eye-witnesses. It also had the most volume. The only other miracle that ever came close to it was the turning of water into wine. Bread to the multitude; wine to the wedding guests. Bread and wine - He still offers it to us. The setting for the story took place in a time of retreat - a time when Jesus was seeking to get away from it all.

WITHDRAWAL TO BETHSAIDA

> *And when the apostles returned, they gave an account to Him of all that they had done. And taking them with Him, He withdrew by Himself to a city called Bethsaida. (Luke 9:10).*



Bethsaida was a small town located on the northeastern shore of the Sea of Galilee. Its name was appropriate for a group of fishermen - it meant "house of fishing." It was home to Simon, Andrew and Philip (John 1:44).

It had been a time of great activity. There

was a growing intensity to the ministry of Jesus that reached its culmination as He sent the Twelve out on a short-term mission trip. Now they are back. They have done a good job and they are tired. And so, Jesus determines to take them away from the crowds. They go home to Bethsaida so that they can recharge.

Have you ever suffered from burn-out? You can come to the point when you are tired and just can't get the emotional energy to go on. At such a time, you need to find a place to which you can withdraw. You will find Jesus waiting for you there.

MINISTRY TO THE MULTITUDES

> *But the multitudes were aware of this and followed Him; and welcoming them, He began speaking to them about the kingdom of God and curing those who had need of healing. (Luke 9:11).*

It was one thing for Jesus and His disciples to make plans to get away from it all. It was another thing to accomplish it. They got away from the crowds, but the crowds did not get away from them.

Jesus could have gotten angry at the multitude. After all, they were intruding at a time when they were not wanted. The office was closed and Jesus and His disciples were going on vacation. Couldn't they make an appointment? Instead, the reaction of Jesus was one of welcome. He saw their needs and He felt for them. He cared.

The Christ event is the evidence that God cares. He did not stand aloof from humanity. He became involved. He was involved in the discipleship of the Twelve. And He will be involved in a ministry to the masses.

THE INSTRUCTIONS OF JESUS

> *And the day began to decline, and the twelve came and said to Him, "Send the multitude away, that they may go into the surrounding villages and countryside and find lodging and get something to eat; for here we are in a desolate place."*
>
> *But He said to them, "You give them something to eat!" And they said, "We have no more than five loaves and*

two fish, unless perhaps we go and buy food for all these people." 14 *For there were about five thousand men. (Luke 9:12-14a).*

Imagine the scene. Jesus and His disciples have long since left the crowded cities and have made their way to the eastern shores of the Sea of Galilee. They were followed by the crowds, so instead of spending the day in rest and relaxation, Jesus and His disciples have a day of teaching.

Now at the end of the day, the disciples are tired and hungry. And they aren't the only ones. The people are getting hungry as well. And so they come to Jesus with a suggestion. It is that He send the multitude away to surrounding areas where they will be able to purchase food. The plan of the disciples is entitled: "Every man for himself." But Jesus has another plan. He says to them, "You feed them."

God uses human needs as an avenue for teaching and testing our faith.

This was an impossible request. I can picture their consternation. They assemble all of their possible resources and they come up with five loaves of bread and two small fish. We know from the other gospel accounts that even this was provided by someone else and had not originally been theirs. How can they possibly hope to feed this multitude? There are no nearby grocery stores and they haven't got the money in any case. After all, Jesus had told them back in verse 3 not to take any money for their journeys and they had taken Him at His word.

This was an impossible situation. But Jesus has the answers to those kinds of situations. He is trying to teach you something in the midst of your impossible situation. And it is in the understanding of that lesson that impossible situations become bearable.

What is your situation? No matter what it is, don't forget to look for the lesson. Listen for the instructions of the Christ. Listen, because Jesus has the answers to the questions that trouble you. You see, this situation did not come about by mere chance. It was brought about purposefully. It was brought about to manifest the power of God. The same is true of your situation.

There is a lesson here. It is that a lack of the means to do something is not necessarily proof that God does not want us to do attempt that thing. Having only a little food is no justification for sending the crowd away hungry. Having only a little money is no excuse for not helping the poor. You look to serve God with what you do have and then watch Him provide for that service.

THE MIRACLE PROVIDED

> *And He said to His disciples, "Have them recline to eat in groups of about fifty each." 15 And they did so, and had them all recline. 16 And He took the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, He blessed them, and broke them, and kept giving them to the disciples to set before the multitude. (Luke 9:14b-16).*

The grass is green. The sun is low in the sky. The cool breeze is blowing off the Sea of Galilee. The disciples are quietly obedient in organizing the people into groups. They may have been weak in faith, but they still obeyed. And as a result, God will do something wonderful.

Having problems believing? Have a difficult time in the faith department? Welcome to the crowd. There is a lesson here for you. It is a lesson for when you find it difficult to believe. When you are having trouble believing, obey anyway. Obey as though you believe, and eventually you will find strength for your faith. The disciples obeyed the words of Jesus. He has them divide the people into workable groups. There is a prayer of blessing.

I cannot help but think that the disciples were peeking during the prayer to see where the delivery trucks were going to come from. And yet, when the miracle takes place, we are struck by its simplicity. The heavens did not open. Trumpets did not sound. We are not told how Jesus did it.

We simply read that the disciples begin to disperse the food. And there is more food. And still more. And people are getting seconds. And there is still more. It isn't that Christianity has been tried and failed, it is that it hasn't been tried.

"God's blessings are dispensed according to the riches of His grace, not according to the depth of our faith." - Max Lucado

Are you...

- afraid?
  - His courage is sufficient for you.
- alone?
  - His presence is sufficient for you.
- in sin?
  - His grace is sufficient for you.
- in need?
  - His abundance is sufficient for you.

Notice also that this food was conveyed to the multitude through the agency of the disciples. Once again, men were the method used by the Master. He didn't have to do it that way. He could have fed them all Himself. Manna could have rained from heaven. Or it could have all just appeared in the laps of the people. But instead, it was the disciples who distributed the food.

This was a part of their training in ministry. They had recently gone out and had been preaching and teaching and healing the sick. But now they are learning that they can only be effective as they are being supplied by Jesus.

There is a lesson here for us, too. God wants to feed a world that is spiritually hungry and He wants to do it through us. He has the resources, but He desires our involvement. It is not our ability that He desires, but our availability.

God delights in using the little that we have to do great things. He uses the shepherd staff of Moses to divide the Red Sea and to conquer the Pharaoh of Egypt. He uses the little stone in the sling of David to bring down Goliath. He whittles down Gideon's army to a little band of three hundred to defeat the hosts of Midian. He is ready to use your little things, too.

> The Lord teaches us to trust Him by commanding us to do that which is beyond our means to do.

THE EVIDENCE OF ABUNDANCE

> *And they all ate and were satisfied; and the broken pieces which they had left over were picked up, twelve baskets full. (Luke 9:17).*

When it is all over, the disciples begin cleaning up. Twelve disciples. Twelve full baskets of food. One for each disciple. Do you see the lesson? It is a lesson in abundance. Jesus is not just sufficient for our needs. He is abundantly sufficient.

The reason that the disciples are assigned this cleanup duty is so that they will learn this lesson. They had wondered earlier where they would get enough food to feed the multitude when there was barely enough food to feed themselves. They may have thought, "If we give what we have to everyone else, then we will have to go hungry." Instead of going hungry, each disciple will end up with a load of food. The disciples were being taught a lesson. It is the same lesson that we need to learn. It is the lesson that Jesus is

sufficient for our needs.

The story is told of Dr. David Livingston, the famous missionary-explorer to Africa having a medical condition which required a regular diet of milk. He kept a goat which supplied the necessary milk. Dr. Livingston was praying one morning and he told the Lord, "Everything I have is Yours, Lord."

I've been a Christian long enough to know that when you tell God something like that, He is going to bring something into your life to test that resolve. Livingston was visited that same week by the tribal chief and he noticed that the chief was eyeing his goat. Desiring to show God's love, he took the goat and gave it to the chief. In return, the chief presented him with the staff which he was carrying.

Later that day, Livingston confided in one of his friends, "I don't know why I was so stupid as to give my goat away. All I have to show for it is this stupid stick." His friend replied, "You don't understand. That isn't just a stick; it is a scepter. You no longer own one goat. Now you own all the goats in the village."

When we come to the Lord in faith, giving Him our lives, we find that He has given us a scepter in return. And we have been walking around, thinking that it was just a stick.

THE CHRIST AND THE CROSS
LUKE 9:18-27

When we first read through this passage, we are struck by the fact that it tells us who Jesus is. The passage does do that, but that is not all it does. It also goes on to tell us who we are to be. You see, when you come to the place in your life where you finally see Jesus for who and what He really is, then you will be different. Knowing Jesus changes you.

9:18	9:21	9:23
Confessing the Christ	The Christ and His Cross	Christ's Followers and their Cross

The focus on this section of Scripture will start on Jesus, but it will not end there. It will culminate by looking at the effect that knowing Christ has on His followers. This means that, if I really know Jesus, then there ought to be some visible result of that knowledge in my life. Otherwise, my knowledge of Him might not be a real and experiential knowledge.

A KEY QUESTION

> *And it came about that while He was praying alone, the disciples were with Him, and He questioned them, saying, "Who do the multitudes say that I am?"*
>
> *And they answered and said, "John the Baptist, and others say Elijah; but others, that one of the prophets of old has risen again." (Luke 9:18-19).*

There comes a turning point in your life which brings a chain reaction

that changes your entire life. Marriage is like that. It changes your whole life. Priorities change. You reorient your entire approach to life as you become one with another person.

The disciples had gone through such a change. They had come to know Jesus. They had followed Him and had heard Him and had ministered with Him. And now they are brought to a climactic conclusion. Things will never be the same after this. It all begins with a question.

Who is Jesus? I'm not talking about His address and social security number (Jesus of Nazareth, SS: 777-03-0001). The question that the author is presenting is who is Jesus really?

Men in that day had come up with a number of theories to explain this miracle-working rabbi from Nazareth. Three such views are mentioned by the disciples.

> *And they answered and said, "John the Baptist, and others say Elijah; but others, that one of the prophets of old has risen again." (Luke 9:19).*

All three of these views have already been reported by Luke earlier in this chapter. We saw in Luke 9:7-8 that Herod Antipas had heard these same three views.

- This first theory was that Jesus was John the Baptist. John the Baptist had come before Jesus. And as the ministry of Jesus had grown, the ministry of John the Baptist had waned until he was finally arrested by Herod Antipas and murdered. Driven by pangs of guilt, Herod Antipas had lately begun to wonder whether Jesus was really John the Baptist come back to life to haunt him.
- Another theory was that Jesus was Elijah come back from heaven. After all, Elijah had not died and it had been promised that Elijah would return prior to the coming of the Lord.
- Other theories looked to other prophets as the identity of Jesus.

These were favorable responses. Public opinion was favorable toward Jesus. But it fell short of eternal truth. And to fall short in such a manner is an insult to God.

A CONFESSION OF THE CHRIST

> *And He said to them, "But who do you say that I*

am?" And Peter answered and said, "The Christ of God." (Luke 9:20).

The first question was merely introductory. It was to get them thinking. But now Jesus asks of them the key question. It matters not what other people think. What do you think? Jesus does not allow them to sit on the fence. He forces them to a decision. Have you made that decision? There comes a time when you have to get off the fence. To make no decision is to make a decision.

The fact that Jesus asks this question of His disciples at this point in His ministry is significant. This was a time of growing pressure. Antipas was seeking out Jesus. The religious leaders were beginning to mobilize against Jesus. This would naturally cause His disciples to wonder whether they had made the right decision in following Him. After all, they were going against the religious experts of the day.

I think that I will scream the next time I hear some well-meaning saint say, "I don't think that we should focus on theology; we ought to just love Jesus." But which Jesus do you love? Peter loved Jesus and that was good. But what made it especially significant was the content of that love.

When Peter says, "The Christ" he is using the Greek word for the Hebrew term "Messiah." This is significant, especially in light of the fact that for all of the miracles and for all of the teaching of Jesus that we have heard up to this point, He had never yet publicly announced Himself to be the promised Messiah of Israel.

Why not? It was because He determined not to be a self-proclaimed Messiah. It was His actions and His person that made this proclamation on His behalf. For three years, the disciples lived with Him, ate with Him, traveled with Him and their conclusion at the end of that time is recorded here. It is a conclusion of identity.

Christ - Messiah!!

There is a principle here. It is that intimacy and knowledge go together. If you can get people next to Jesus, then Jesus will get them to the truth. Intimacy and knowledge go together.

I have a friend that rubs people the wrong way. He can walk into a group and immediately make ten enemies. He is abrasive. He is like the fingernail scratching on the chalkboard. But I know him. And it is because I know him and understand him that I can be a close friend to him. I used to spend a lot of time explaining him to others. But I found a better way. I found that, if others will just get to know him, they will usually come to like him, too.

A PROMISE OF THE CROSS

> *But He warned them, and instructed them not to tell this to anyone, 22 saying, "The Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised up on the third day." (Luke 9:21-22).*

Jesus warns them to silence. Why did Jesus give such a warning? I think that there are two reasons.

1. Jesus was not a self-proclaimed Messiah.

   You can count on one hand the times that Jesus announced Himself as being the promised Messiah from the Old Testament Scriptures. Nearly all of those times that He did so announce Himself, it was in a private setting and to a very small audience.

   This made it all the more significant when others recognized Him as Messiah. Even at His trial before Caiaphas, it would be the Council of elders, the high court of Israel who would ask the unbidden question: *"If You are the Christ, tell us."* (Luke 22:67a).

   > *But He said to them, "If I tell you, you will not believe; 68 and if I ask a question, you will not answer. 69 But from now on the Son of Man will be seated at the right hand of the power of God."*
   >
   > *And they all said, "Are You the Son of God, then?" And He said to them, "Yes, I am." (Luke 22:67b-69).*

   This was the only occasion where Jesus publicly affirmed that He was both Messiah and the Son of God. It was an affirmation that led to His crucifixion.

2. It was not yet time for Peter and the disciples to proclaim the Messiahship of Jesus because they had not yet learned what being "Messiah" was all about. Peter knew nothing about the cross. But he is about to find out.

This is the first of three times that Jesus tells His disciples of His impending death. All three of the Synoptic Gospels record all three instances

where Jesus revealed this to His disciples.

	Matthew	**Mark**	**Luke**
1st Time	*Jesus Christ began to show His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised up on the third day* (16:21).	*He began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again* (8:31).	*"The Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised up on the third day."* (9:22).
2nd Time	*"The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men; and they will kill Him, and He will be raised on the third day."*(17:22-23).	*"The Son of Man is to be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill Him; and when He has been killed, He will rise three days later."* (9:31).	*"...the Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men"* (9:44).
3rd Time	*"Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem; and the Son of Man will be delivered to the chief priests and scribes, and they will condemn Him to death, and will deliver Him to the Gentiles to mock and scourge and crucify Him, and on the third day He will be raised up"* (20:18-19).	*"Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be delivered to the chief priests and the scribes; and they will condemn Him to death, and will deliver Him to the Gentiles. And they will mock Him and spit upon Him, and scourge Him, and kill Him, and three days later He will rise again"* (10:33-34).	*"Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and all things which are written through the prophets about the Son of Man will be accomplished. For He will be delivered to the Gentiles, and will be mocked and mistreated and spit upon, and after they have scourged Him, they will kill Him; and the third day He will rise again"* (18:31-33).

You would think that, after three times, they would get it. But after each of these revelations, the disciples will demonstrate a lack of understanding. And each time, Jesus will summon them and teach them of how they should live in light of the cross.

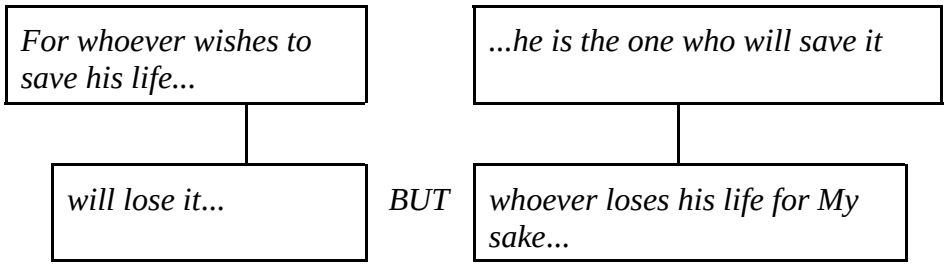
Even at the end, when the crucifixion actually takes place and is followed by the report of the women from the empty tomb, there will be a serious lack of faith on the part of the disciples. They will hear, but they will not believe.

THE DISCIPLES OF THE CROSS

> *And He was saying to them all, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me. 24 For whoever wishes to save his life shall lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it. 25 For what is a man profited if he gains the whole world, and loses or forfeits himself? 26 For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words, of him will the Son of Man be ashamed when He comes in His glory, and the glory of the Father and of the holy angels.*
>
> *"But I say to you truthfully, there are some of those standing here who shall not taste death until they see the kingdom of God." (Luke 9:23-27).*

The call to discipleship is a call to follow Jesus. We read that in the last two words of verse 23 where Jesus says, "*Follow Me.*" The good news is that, if you follow Jesus you will never walk alone. The fact that you are following Him indicates that He is with you and is leading the way. He is no armchair general. He never called men to go where He did not first go Himself.

This call is to death. When Jesus calls a man, He calls for him to come and to die. His words concerning a cross had no implications of salvation to the ears of the disciples that day. To them, a cross was simply the instrument of execution. It was like saying, "He who wishes to follow Me must bring his own hangman's noose." Verse 24 is presented in the form of a chiasm.



The only way to save your life is to lose it for the sake of Jesus and for the sake of His message. Does this mean that only martyrs are saved? In a sense, it does. It does not mean that you must be nailed to a literal cross. But it does mean that you must be willing to renounce all that was your former life to become all that God has called you to be.

There is a corollary here that deals with physical death. I haven't died yet, so I can't speak from experience, but I think that there is a truth here. The level of difficulty in dying is inversely proportional to how much you have already died.

Are you still trying to hold on to your life? There is a natural human tendency to do so. We are called to give it up. And He will give you HIS life in return.

1. The disciple's cross is directly related to the cross of Christ. The rejection and suffering of Christ's followers is the consequence of their following Him. It is for choosing to follow Christ that His followers will have a cross to bear.

   Jesus said to His disciples, "They hated Me; they will also hate you. They crucified Me; they will also seek to crucify you."

   > *"If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you.* 19 *If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.* 20 *Remember the word that I said to you, 'A slave is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you" (John 15:18-20a).*

   There is a direct correlation between the reception that one accords to Jesus with the reception that one accords His people. If you love Jesus, then you will of necessity also love His people. It is for this reason that Jesus tells us that the final judgment will be based upon how one treated the people of God.

   > *But when the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne.* 32 *And all the nations will be gathered before Him; and He will separate them from one another, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats;* 33 *and He will put the sheep on His right, and the goats on the left.*
   >
   > *Then the King will say to those on His right, "Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.* 35 *For I was hungry, and you gave Me*

> *something to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger, and you invited Me in; 36 naked, and you clothed Me; I was sick, and you visited Me; I was in prison, and you came to Me."*
>
> *Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, "Lord, when did we see You hungry, and feed You, or thirsty, and give You drink? 38 And when did we see You a stranger, and invite You in, or naked, and clothe You? 39 And when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?"*
>
> *And the King will answer and say to them, "Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, even the least of them, you did it to Me." (Matthew 25:31-40).*

When you first read this, it sounds as though Jesus is saying that salvation is obtained on the basis of your works. But that isn't the case. It isn't that you are saved by doing good works, but it is that the sign of your salvation will be seen in your attitude toward God's people because of the truth that people who love Jesus also love people who love Jesus.

2. The disciple's cross entails more than just external persecution, and occasionally martyrdom — it entails death to self-will, self-interest, and self-seeking. In the words of Jesus, it involves denying self (Luke 9:23). The "way of the cross" is the way of death to our own interests. As Jesus set aside His glory and the prerogatives of deity in order to come to earth and "bear His cross," so the disciple of Christ are called to do likewise (Philippians 2:1-8).

3. The disciple's cross is taken up daily; it involves a way of looking at life and of living the life of Christ.

> *I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me. (Galatians 2:20).*
>
> *And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. (Galatians 5:24).*

There is both an active and a passive voice used to describe this crucifixion. The active voice means that we are the ones doing the crucifying; the passive voice is an indication it is being done to us and for us. Both are seen in these two verses:

Galatians 2:20	**Galatians 5:24**
We have been crucified with Christ	We crucify our old nature
Our freedom from condemnation of the law	Our freedom from the power of the flesh
Passive	Active

The one is based on the other. Our attitude toward our life today is based upon how we have seen our death in Christ in the past. Don't miss this! The "juice" to live the Christian life is not based upon what you feel that you ought to do. It is not based upon your sense of obligation or even solely upon your love. It is based upon your identity in Christ. It is based upon the cross.

THE TRANSFIGURATION
LUKE 9:27-36

I am told that almost every event in the life of Jesus is portrayed in early Christian art except this one. If you look through the art museums of the world, you will find tremendous paintings of the resurrection, the crucifixion, the walking on the water. But until the 16th century, no art form depicted the event which is described in this chapter. In the 16th century, Raphael began a work on this event. However, before he completed it, his brush was stilled in death. There is something so holy about this event, so majestic, so grand, that it is difficult to portray.

A KINGDOM PROMISE

> *"But I say to you truthfully, there are some of those standing here who shall not taste death until they see the kingdom of God." (Luke 9:27).*

It all started when Jesus told His disciples that they would see the coming of the kingdom of God. Some of them might have thought, "Yeah, right! You mean after 2000 years at the Second Coming." But Jesus said, "No, it will happen in your lifetime. Indeed, some of you who are standing here will see it."

This tells me something about the Transfiguration. It is a manifestation of the kingdom of God and its arrival upon planet earth. All too often when Christians speak of the kingdom of God, they think of something that is going to come in the future. But in this passage we see something different. The kingdom came 2000 years ago. And it came with power.

KINGDOM COMPANIONS

> *And some eight days after these sayings, it came about that He took along Peter and John and James, and went up to*

the mountain to pray. (Luke 9:28).

When it came time to manifest His heavenly glory, Jesus picked out three of His disciples. This was in keeping with the Old Testament Law that mandated that any legal proceedings were to be established in the presence of two or three witnesses. Why did Jesus pick these three men?

Luke is careful to say that this was *"**some** eight days"* later, using the term ωσει to indicate that this is not necessarily an exact time.

- James was to be the first apostle to die for the faith. He would have to be courageous. He would need this vision to sustain him through what was to come.
- John would be the last apostle to die. He would write the gospels and epistles of John as well as Revelation. Perhaps Jesus wished to give him something that would endure for a long life.
- Peter was to be the one on whom the church would be built. He would be the one to stand up on the Day of Pentecost and proclaim the significance of the gift of tongues. And he would open the doors of the kingdom to the Gentiles. He would need the lessons of this vision.

These three men are going to be with Jesus during the Gethsemane experience. They will be the pillars of the church. But perhaps there is another reason why Jesus took these men. Perhaps He needed someone to be with Him. He is getting ready to go to Jerusalem to die. The time is drawing closer. It will be the most awful time of His life. And He needs a friend.

Being a Christian doesn't mean that you can go it alone. Jesus needed friends and He knows that we need a friend, too. And that is why He has given us the church.

A KINGDOM APPEARANCE

> *And while He was praying, the appearance of His face became different, and His clothing became white and gleaming. (Luke 9:29).*

Four people climbing a mountain. We aren't told which mountain it was. There were several in northern Galilee from which to choose. Perhaps

it was Mount Hermon, whose snow-capped peak rises to a height of 10,000 feet above sea level. Or it might have been Mount Tabor, the traditional location of the Mount of Transfiguration which lies on the western edge of the Valley of Jezreel. It doesn't really matter which mountain it was. What matters is what happened when they got to the top.

Can you imagine it? The trip has been long. The hour is late. They reach a level place on the slope and they sit down. They are tired. Their muscles hurt. Three of them talk softly among themselves. The fourth sits still. His conversation is with the Lord. He speaks to His Father. And out of the quietness, His Father answers.

The face of Jesus became different. His clothing takes on a life of its own as it struggles to keep pace with the One whom it covers. He explodes with light, bursting forth with a radical radiance that is nuclear in its intensity. Jesus becomes as He once was and the disciples get just a glimpse of the force that created the universe, the big bang that put the galaxies into place. For one, brief shining moment, the veil of His humanity is lifted. In that glorious homecoming, there are suddenly two other figures. They are the two most famous of the prophets of the Old Testament.

KINGDOM WITNESSES

> *And behold, two men were talking with Him; and they were Moses and Elijah, 31 who, appearing in glory, were speaking of His departure which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem. (Luke 9:30).*

Why the appearance of these two prophets? Because under Old Testament Law, the truth of a matter must always be established by witnesses. And a single witness was not enough. There must be at least two. And so, the two greatest possible witnesses are sent to testify of this little Galilean rabbi.

Moses was the great Lawgiver. Elijah was the great prophet. The Law and the Prophets - and they both bear witness of Jesus. Did you ever stop to think that Moses finally made it into the promised land? It only took him an extra 1400 years.

Notice what was their topic of conversation. They *were speaking of His departure which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem*. The Greek is even more striking. It says they were speaking of His *exodus* (ἐξοδον). Remember that one of these prophets was Moses. Here is Moses speaking to One who is greater than Moses about a greater exodus. Instead of merely

traveling through the Red Sea, He would take mankind through death to life. This was to be a crossing that would make the Red Sea look like a child splashing in a bathtub by comparison. This tells me something about the Transfiguration event. It is not given to us as an end in itself. It is given to point us to the cross.

PETER'S IRRELEVANT SUGGESTION

> *Now Peter and his companions had been overcome with sleep; but when they were fully awake, they saw His glory and the two men standing with Him.*
>
> *And it came about, as these were parting from Him, Peter said to Jesus, "Master, it is good for us to be here; and let us make three tabernacles: one for You, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah" -- not realizing what he was saying. (Luke 9:32-33).*

Don't you just love Peter? The most solemn and wondrous and unique and holy occasion in the history of planet earth has just taken place and he has to put in his two cents worth. Luke tells us that he was *not realizing what he was saying*, his lips were moving, but his brain had not yet engaged.

> "Lord, it's a good thing we happened to be here!"
> "No one else would have believed this!"
> "Those other disciples at the bottom of the hill wouldn't have had a clue what to do with such a revelation, but I've got a plan!"
> "We'll build a couple of three tabernacles and we'll start our own church. We can call it Mount of Transfiguration Tabernacle. We can feed multitudes and You can take turns preaching with Moses and Elijah."

Peter is just getting started when suddenly there is an interruption. It doesn't come from the other two disciples. It doesn't even come from Jesus. It comes from the Father Himself.

> *And while he was saying this, a cloud formed and began to overshadow them; and they were afraid as they entered the cloud.*
>
> *And a voice came out of the cloud, saying, "This is*

My Son, My Chosen One; listen to Him!" (Luke 9:34-35).

God interrupts Peter. He says, "Peter, shut up and listen!" He says the same thing to us sometimes. Sometimes He says, "Slow down! Be still! Listen to Me!" That is what the Sabbath is all about. Once every seven days we are to slow down and be still and listen for a still, small voice and the soft sound of sandaled feet. Have you heard Him today? Are you listening to Him now? Or is your mind on other matters? Is your attention divided?

God gets Peter's attention. He does this by overshadowing Peter with a cloud. This wasn't any old cloud. This cloud was special. In the Older Testament, Exodus 16:10 says how the whole congregation of the sons of Israel *"looked toward the wilderness, and behold, the glory of the Lord appeared in the cloud."*

> *And the Lord said to Moses, "Behold, I shall come to you in a THICK CLOUD, in order that the people may hear when I speak with you, and may also believe in you forever" (Exodus 19:9).*

> *And it came about when the priests came from the holy place, that the CLOUD filled the house of the Lord, so that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud, for the glory of the Lord filled the house of the Lord. (1 Kings 8:10-11).*

Why was there a cloud? Because mortal man cannot look upon the glory of God without being destroyed. The cloud was for their protection. The cloud was to keep them alive. The cloud was so that they might hear the voice of the Lord and live through the experience. Because there was an important message given to them that day - a message that has been entrusted to us. What is this message?

"This is My beloved Son!" You are impressed by prophets and visions and clouds and bright lights. And God says, "You're being impressed by the wrong things!" Moses is impressive. And Elijah is impressive. And a bright cloud overshadowing a high mountain is impressive. But if that is all you see here, then you've missed the most impressive thing of all.

You've missed the fact that God became a fetus and was born to a Hebrew peasant girl. You've missed the fact that the splendor of heaven was poured into a human body. You've missed the One who was older than time and greater than death. You've missed the Son of God.

Peter speaks of building tabernacles. God says, "I've already

prepared a tabernacle and His name is Jesus!" That is what the Bible says in John 1:14 - *"And the Word became flesh and tabernacled among us..."*

By the way, if you go to Israel today and climb the traditional Mount Tabor, the traditional location of the Transfiguration, when you get to the top you will find three shrines - three memorials.

One to Moses.
One to Elijah.
One to Jesus.

Religion has missed the lesson of this passage. Jesus is not just a good man or a godly teacher or a miracle worker or even a prophet. You cannot even compare Him to such lofty prophets as Moses and Elijah, for they are mere men. He is the unique Son of God.

This brings us to the reason for this entire event. Why did it take place? What is the significance of the transfiguration? Why is it recorded in three out of four of the gospel accounts? Here is the reason. It is because the transfiguration underlines and proves the confession made by Peter the week before. Do you remember Peter's confession? Jesus had asked, "Who do people say that I am?" The disciples had checked their latest copy of the Gallup Poll and cited the responses...

52% - John the Baptists
41% - Elijah
7% - Other

Then Jesus asked, "But who do you say that I am?" And Peter replied, "You are the Christ." Since that time, a week has passed. And I would bet that during that time Peter has asked himself, "Why did I say that? Am I really certain that He is the Messiah?" And so, he and these other two disciples are given the testimony of two witnesses and the very voice of God as evidence that Jesus is indeed the Christ, the Son of the Living God. Many years later, Peter would look back on this event as the evidence for the claims of Jesus.

> *For we did not follow cleverly devised tales when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty.*
>
> *For when He received honor and glory from God the Father, such an utterance as this was made to Him by the Majestic Glory, "This is My beloved Son with whom I am well pleased" -* 18 *and we ourselves heard this utterance made*

from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain. (2 Peter 1:16-18).

This was not a vision or a dream. This was not merely a philosophical stance. Something happened in history. Heaven reached down and touched the earth. God came near. And nothing will ever again be the same.

A SILENCED REPORT

And when the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone. And they kept silent, and reported to no one in those days any of the things which they had seen. (Luke 9:36).

Only three of the disciples witnessed the Transfiguration. But they did not tell the other disciples what they had seen. They realized that they had stood on holy ground, but they did not yet understand the full implications of what they had seen. There are several lessons that we ought to learn from this passage:

1. The Transfiguration teaches that the Cross and the Crown are a part of One Unified Plan.

   Some people seem to get the impression that Jesus came to offer a physical kingdom and only went to the cross as a result of the rejection of the people. But the plan of God always included both the cross as well as the crown. It always included a suffering Savior who would at the same time be the victorious King.

2. The Transfiguration teaches that Jesus is the fulfillment of the Old Testament.

   You are supposed to read this event and be reminded of the giving of the Law at Sinai. There was a mountain and a cloud. Moses was changed by the encounter and had to wear a veil over his face, but the change in Jesus came from within.

   After Moses came down from the mountain, he had the Law written on tablets of stone. What did the disciples have to show for their experience after they came off the mountain? They had Jesus. He is the counterpart to the Law. The Law points to Him.

3. The Transfiguration teaches that Jesus is indeed the Christ of God.

It serves as God's affirmation of Peter's confession of faith given in the preceding paragraph. When Jesus asked, "Who do you say that I am," Peter answered, "You are the Christ of God." And now in the transfiguration, God says, "YES!!!!"

People had wondered whether Jesus might really be Elijah or some other prophet. This event shows that He is a unique person, not to be identified with any of those people.

4. The Transfiguration teaches us that the Kingdom is both Now and Not Yet. This passage started out with a promise from Jesus that some of these disciples would see the coming Kingdom.

> *"But I say to you truthfully, there are some of those standing here who shall not taste death until they see the kingdom of God." (Luke 9:27).*

It is not by accident that all three Synoptic Gospels record this promise immediately prior to their relating of the Transfiguration. That event is the fulfillment of this promise. There is a wonderful truth here. It is that the Kingdom is both in the here and now and that it is also in the future.

Kingdom Here Now	**Kingdom Coming in the Future**
"...the kingdom of God has come near" (Luke 10:11). *Now having been questioned by the Pharisees as to when the kingdom of God was coming, He answered them and said, "The kingdom of God is not coming with signs to be observed; 21 nor will they say, 'Look, here it is!' or, 'There it is!' For behold, the kingdom of God is in your midst." (Luke 17:20-21).*	*And while they were listening to these things, He went on to tell a parable, because He was near Jerusalem, and they supposed that the kingdom of God was going to appear immediately. (Luke 19:11).* *"I will not drink of the fruit of the vine from now on until the kingdom of God comes." Luke 22:18).*

5. The Transfiguration teaches us that because Jesus is the Messiah of God and not merely another prophet, we must Listen to Him.

That is what God said at the end of the Transfiguration event. He commanded us to listen to His Son and to hear what He had to say. The Bible places a great deal of emphasis upon hearing. The central verse of the Old Testament was known as the *Shema* – it is a call to hear of the essence of God.

There is a prophecy that was given by Moses in the Old Testament. It was a prophecy of One who would come who would be a prophet like Moses.

> *The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your countrymen, you shall listen to him. (Deuteronomy 18:15).*

What did it mean that he would be a prophet like Moses? Moses spoke to the Lord face to face. There were no intermediaries between Moses and God. Moses spoke directly with God and communicated God's truths to the people.

Notice what would be the trademark of this coming prophet. He would speak and people would listen. This means the Father's command to Peter to listen is a fulfillment of that Mosaic prophecy.

If you come to this event and see only Moses and Elijah, then you have missed the real significance of this event. It is about Jesus. It is that you might listen to Him. It is that you might come to the point of recognizing His true identity and believing in Him.

AFTER THE FIREWORKS
LUKE 9:37-45

The passage to which we come today is anticlimactic when compared to the events of the previous verses. The ministry of Jesus and the speculation that ensued was brought to a thundering crescendo when He asked His disciples, "Who am I?" It was Peter who rose to the forefront with his bold assertion, "You are the Christ of God."

As if to crown and affirm this proclamation, a week later the Lord was on a mountain with three of His disciples when heaven touched earth and the glory that was His burst forth in blinding whiteness. The voice from heaven called to them, "This is My beloved Son, listen to Him!"

What an experience! A true "Mountain-top" Experience. The trouble with a mountain-top experience is that eventually you have to come down off the mountain.

Have you ever had a mountain-top experience? Perhaps it was that special time when you heard the gospel and you said, "That's for me!" And you gave your life to the Lord. Or perhaps it was at a camp or a retreat when everything just came together.

We've had some mountaintop experiences in our family. For Paula it was the time we served on a short term mission trip to Mexico and we had opportunity to teach and to preach the gospel and to see the Lord move in a wonderful way. For Sky, it was on a mission trip to Jamaica on a literal mountain where she saw heaven move and the earth shake and the powers of darkness fall.

I can think of several times that I've ascended to a spiritual mountain top and had that experience with the Lord. But then, you come back down off the mountain. The fireworks end. Monday morning comes and it's back to work as usual. And that's what happened to the disciples, too.

> *And it came about on the next day, that when they had come down from the mountain, a great multitude met Him. (Luke 9:37).*

I love the poster that says, "It's hard to soar with the eagles when you have to work down here with the turkeys." That is how the disciples must have felt the next day. They had seen some incredible things on the previous day. But now they are back to work as usual.

A FATHER'S DESPERATION

> *And behold, a man from the multitude shouted out, saying, "Teacher, I beg You to look at my son, for he is my only boy, 39 and behold, a spirit seizes him, and he suddenly screams, and it throws him into a convulsion with foaming at the mouth, and as it mauls him, it scarcely leaves him. 40 And I begged Your disciples to cast it out, and they could not." (Luke 9:38-40).*

A need arises. A man with a troubled son. It is his only son. The boy is demon-possessed. This is no passive experience. There are screams and convulsions and foam and tearing and it never seems to let up. The father first brings him to the disciples. After all, they'd done this sort of thing before. They had cast out demons. And now they were even more experienced. But they failed. They tried to cast out this demon and he would not budge.

Can you imagine how they must have felt? At the outset of the request, there would have been a confident bravado. "Cast out a demon? Of course we can do that. We've had quite a bit of experience as of late in the demon removal business. Just call us the Ghostbusters." But that bravado is quickly replaced by a helpless frustration as their attempts fall flat in failure. Perhaps one after another of the disciples try, each giving it his best shot, but to no avail. The final blow is when Jesus comes on the scene. Instead of speaking words of encouragement, He delivers a stinging rebuke.

A FAITHLESS GENERATION

> *And Jesus answered and said, "O unbelieving and perverted generation, how long shall I be with you, and put up with you? Bring your son here." (Luke 9:41).*

To whom is Jesus speaking? Who is this "faithless generation?" Is it the father? Is it the crowds? Is it the disciples? I believe it is all three.

Each had experienced to a varying degree a failure of faith.

Can you hear the exasperation in the voice of Jesus? There is an important lesson here. It is that your unbelief exasperates the Lord in a way that nothing else does.

> *And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him. (Hebrews 11:6).*

You cannot please God without faith. Not by being a good person. Not by church attendance. Not by anything that you do. And that tells me something of the nature of faith. Faith involves reliance upon someone other than yourself. Faith involves trusting in Christ instead of upon yourself.

You are involved in a spiritual battle and the battleground is your own soul. The issue of the day is what you will believe. Will you believe in the power of God?

A FANTASTIC CESSATION

> *And while he was still approaching, the demon dashed him to the ground, and threw him into a convulsion. But Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit, and healed the boy, and gave him back to his father. (Luke 9:42).*

At the approach of Jesus, the demonic activity became all the more frenzied, throwing the boy to the ground and inducing a series of convulsions. This was a continuing test of faith. The disciples had tried to heal the boy to no avail. Now Jesus comes up and the boy seems to get worse instead of better.

But then Jesus speaks and there is power in His words. The power and authority of Jesus in casting out this demon is all the more striking in light of the recent failure of the disciples.

A FICKLE ADMIRATION

> *And they were all amazed at the greatness of God. But while everyone was marveling at all that He was doing, He said to His disciples, 44 "Let these words sink into your ears; for the Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of*

men." (Luke 9:43-44).

The reaction of the crowd was one of amazement. And it was amazement in the right direction -- they were amazed at the greatness of God. You would think that this would bring words of delight to the lips of Jesus. Instead, He responds with a warning. The warning is an echo of the message that had been given on the previous day.

Luke 9:35	Luke 9:44
This is My Son, My Chosen One; listen to Him!	Let these words sink into your ears

It has been suggested that the phrase, *Let these words sink into your ears*, is a Hebraism taken and translated very literally into the Greek. This same Hebraism is found in Exodus 17:14 where the Lord has just given Israel a victory over the Amalekites. The Lord tells Moses, *"Write this in a book as a memorial, and recite it to Joshua* [literally, set it into the ear of Joshua], *that I will utterly blot out the memory of Amalek from under heaven."* In the same way that God had given a great victory to Israel over the Amalekites, so now God has given a great victory to His people over the powers of darkness. Just as Israel was to learn a lesson from this, so we are to also learn a lesson.

What is the lesson? It is the lesson of the cross. It is the lesson that Satan is going to be defeated, but the means of his defeat will come at a time and in a way that is unexpected by the people at large.

Defeat of the Amalekites	Defeat of Forces of Darkness
God brought about victory through Joshua	God brought about victory through Jesus.
This initial victory was accompanied by the promise of an eventual victory that would be perpetual (Exodus 17:14).	The victory of Jesus was accompanied by the promise of an eventual victory that would be eternal .

Though there was a promise of perpetual victory, the Israelites would continue to fight the Amalekites before seeing the final culmination of that promise.	Though Christ has won for us a great victory, we continue to struggle and resist the power of Satan before seeing His eventual defeat at the hands of our Lord.

Though the crowd was exhibiting an amazement and a wonderment at the greatness of God, it would not be too long before that same crowd was clamoring for the death of Jesus.

A FAILED INTERPRETATION

> *But they did not understand this statement, and it was concealed from them so that they might not perceive it; and they were afraid to ask Him about this statement. (Luke 9:45).*

The disciples didn't get it. They were not certain of what Jesus was speaking. And instead of asking, they kept quite. Have you ever done that? Perhaps you were sitting in a Bible study and something was taught and it went right over your head. Did you raise your hand and speak out and admit that you were lost? Or did peer pressure get the better of you?

It had not been a good day for the disciples. First they failed to cast out the demon. Then they failed to understand the words of Jesus. And finally they failed to admit that they did not understand.

What do you do when you come down off the mountain and the first thing you face is your own failure? Sometimes it is taught that you can do something to get the fireworks back. Follow these 12 steps and send me $50.00 and you will partake of that experience again. It isn't so. You weren't meant to live on the mountain.

Jesus didn't say, "Okay, this isn't going too well so let's go back up the mountain." Instead, He said, "There''s another mountain ahead and it's got a cross on it" (Matthew 17:22-23). You were never called to live on a mountain. You were called to carry a cross. And yet, I want to suggest to you that there is strength that you can bring from the mountain. There are some things that you can do that will help after you have come back down. There are some principles that will carry you after the fireworks.

1. PRINCIPLE #1: Remember the Reality of the Past.

Peter was one of those who stood on the Mount of Transfiguration. Years later, he wrote about the importance of remembering.

> *For he who lacks these qualities is blind or short-sighted, having FORGOTTEN his purification from his former sins. (2 Peter 1:9).*

Peter's focus is that there is a reality which we dare not forget.

> *For we did not follow cleverly devised tales when we made known to you the power and the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty.*
>
> *For when He received honor and glory from God the Father, such an utterance as this was made to Him by the Majestic glory, "This is My beloved Son with whom I am well-pleased."*
>
> *And we ourselves hear this utterance made from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain. (2 Peter 1:16-18).*

Peter says, "Look guys, we didn't make this up. Christianity isn't just a nice philosophy of love that we put together. God really came down and said that Jesus was His Son." Don't miss this! Christianity is not merely a philosophy or a set of good teachings. Christianity is a historical religion.

Have you ever noticed that the Apostles' Creed doesn't say a thing about how you ought to live? When we affirm the Apostles' Creed, we are reciting a listing of historical events. Take away those events and there is no Christianity.

We must never loose sight of that fact. The world likes to say, "It doesn't matter if Jonah was really swallowed by a whale or if Moses really parted the Red Sea or if Jesus really got up from a tomb and walked around. The important thing is that you teach love and kindness." No! No! NO!!!

Christianity without the historical events of the Scriptures is not Christianity. If God lied about those things, then He might lie about other things, too. But God has not lied. He is the God of truth. And when you are tempted to doubt him, you go back and remember the reality of the past.

2. PRINCIPLE #2: Be diligent in your walk in the Present.

> *Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you; for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble. (2 Peter 1:10).*

Live for today! Don't worry about how you failed in the past - you can't change it. But you can make a difference today. One of the dangers of Christianity is that, as we look back to the cross and, as we look forward to the Second Coming, that we ignore the present. Have you ever stopped to look at all the riches of heaven that are yours right now?

- You have become a partaker of the divine nature (2 Peter 1:4).
- You are a child of God.
- A saint - set apart by God for a special purpose.
- You have been declared to be righteous - justified.
- You are the temple of the Holy Spirit.

Our problem is that we don't stop to look at what we already have. You've probably heard about the man who was in the path of an oncoming flood and a police car came by and the police told him, "You had better come with us, we are evacuating everyone from the path of this flood." But he refused to go, claiming that the Lord would save him. A bit later, a rescue boat came by. The waters had risen to the man's porch and the rescuers called out, "Get into the boat and we will save you." He called back, "I'm waiting for the Lord to save me!" An hour passed and a helicopter came by. The waters had risen even further and now the man was on his roof. The rescuers dropped a rope ladder down and called out, "Climb up the ladder to safety." He called back, "I'm waiting for the Lord to save me!" The helicopter continued on its search but when it returned, the man's house had been swept away.

He got up to heaven and he stood before St Peter and said, "I'm really happy to be here and I'm not complaining or anything, but I can't help but wonder why the Lord didn't save me?" Peter answered, "What do you mean? He sent you a car, a boat and a helicopter."

We strive to return to the mountain and the experience which we once had there, all the while neglecting the still, small voice that

was with us all along. Here is the point. The God of the mountaintop isn't only on the mountaintop. He is here today. And you can speak to Him today.

3. PRINCIPLE #3: Look to the Lord in the Future.

> *For in this way the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be abundantly supplied to you. (2 Peter 1:11).*

A number of years ago we went camping up into the mountains of North Carolina. My idea of camping is a Howard Johnsons with A/C and color TV. But I was over-ruled. And so, we got this big tent and we camped out for nearly three weeks.

One night, as we were on our way to North Carolina, we stopped for a night in a national park in South Carolina. We were tired and it was dark and we set about putting up the tent. As Paula set about driving the stakes into the ground for the tent, I called out, "Don't drive them in too deeply, we're leaving in the morning." Are you driving your stakes too deeply? This world is temporary, but all too often we live as though it is permanent.

Now I know that we Christians are often accused of only living for the future - of looking for pie in the sky by and by. But that is not the significant question. The real question ought to be whether there really is any pie in the sky by and by.

We've been invited to a supper. It is a marriage supper of the Lamb of God. We're the bride. And we're sending out wedding invitations. You see, the mountaintop experience was only a preview of things to come. Whatever special experience you ever had with the Lord in the past will not compare to what lies ahead. The best is yet to come. This brings us to a final principle. It is the principle of the preview.

When you go to the movies, you will often first see a Preview of Coming Attractions. They will show you short clips of a coming movie which you might want to see. It is designed to motivate you to come back and see the whole thing. That's our job! We have been called to be a preview of a coming attraction. Jesus is coming. He is the Producer, Director, Author, and Star. But in the meantime, all people see is us.

DISCIPLES OF THE KINGDOM
LUKE 9:46-62

The Kingdom. The word itself conjures up all sorts of mental images of thrones and banners and castle walls and crowns. Such images are not exclusive to us. When Jesus promised in Luke 9:27 that some of His disciples would not taste death until they have seen the coming kingdom, I am certain this brought all sorts of speculation to the forefront.

The promise of the coming Kingdom was rooted in the Old Testament. In Exodus 19:5, God had promised His people that they would *"be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation."* They were to be an entire kingdom of priests. This promise became more specific when it was passed on to David and he was told *your house and your kingdom shall endure before Me forever; your throne shall be established forever* (2 Samuel 7:16). Finally in the book of Daniel there was a vision given of a mighty stone cut without hands that would roll down and shatter all of the kingdoms of the earth.

> *"And in the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which will never be destroyed, and that kingdom will not be left for another people; it will crush and put an end to all these kingdoms, but it will itself endure forever." (Daniel 2:44).*

The Jews looked forward to that promise with an eager expectancy. And then Jesus came on the scene preaching the good news that the kingdom was at hand. It was close. It was ready to be revealed. So close was it that some of His disciples would see it in their own lifetime.

Then there was that wondrous experience. Peter, James and John saw Jesus literally burst forth in heavenly glory. What were they to make of this? What would happen next? If this was a preview of things to come, then what would the fulness of the Kingdom entail?

You recall their reaction. They were ready to open up shop on the spot. Peter volunteered to assemble three booths from which they could

publicly manifest the official arrival of the Kingdom. Instead, he receives a divine, "SHHHH!!!!" and a mandate to listen to the Son.

It is at this point that Jesus begins to focus His effort in teaching the disciples about the Kingdom. In doing so, a great many of their misconceptions will be overturned. And as we read along with them, perhaps some of our own misconceptions will be dropped by the wayside, too.

KINGDOM GREATNESS

> *And an argument arose among them as to which of them might be the greatest.* 47 *But Jesus, knowing what they were thinking in their heart, took a child and stood him by His side,* 48 *and said to them, "Whoever receives this child in My name receives Me; and whoever receives Me receives Him who sent Me; for he who is least among you, this is the one who is great." (Luke 9:46-48).*

I recall when the professional boxer Mohammed Ali raised his clenched fists above his head and loudly proclaimed, "I am the greatest!" It is a measure of the way the world views greatness. Strength. Position. Power. Influence. These are the ways in which we normally measure greatness.

The disciples of Jesus were not immune to such ideas. This came to a head one day when they began to speculate who might be the best disciple. James and John might have thought they were better because they had been with Jesus for longer than had Thomas or Matthew. Or perhaps Bartholomew looked at Peter and thought, "At least I'm not known as the apostle with the foot-shaped mouth."

Soon an argument ensued. The text seems to indicate that they were reluctant to bring Jesus into the argument. They knew enough to know that they shouldn't be arguing about this subject. Did you ever have an experience like that when you were a child? I did. There were times that my younger brother and I would start to argue, but we knew enough not to argue in front of our parents because we knew that they would put a stop to our arguing.

What was at the root of their argument? It was jealousy and selfish ambition. Jealousy is poison to a church. It can split a church faster than anything. The disciples were ready to split off and start their own denomination. And so, Jesus called them together. Their argument and their petty jealousy was no secret to Him.

1. A Substituted Reception: *Jesus, knowing what they were thinking in their heart, took a child and stood him by His side, 48 and said to them, "Whoever receives this child in My name receives Me; and whoever receives Me receives Him who sent Me"* (9:47-48).

The disciples had been playing a game of one-upmanship. They had been taking shots at each other in order for each one to elevate himself. Seeking status. Protecting their prestige. Coveting kudos. Grasping for glory.

Jesus responds with an object lesson. It is a child. There is nothing pretentious about the kid that lives down the street. He is just a kid. Snot-nosed. Knobby-kneed. Unsophisticated. Unimpressive. No one ever rolled out the red carpet for a kid. You don't leave him your business card and you don't trot out your resume. Why? Because brown-nosing is reserved for bosses, not for boys.

But Jesus says, "You treat such people as though they were Me... because they are Me." Of whom is Jesus speaking? He is speaking of how you treat the unimportant person. The poor. The downtrodden. The underdog. The child. The unborn.

If Jesus came to your church today, how would He be received? We would be ready to roll out the red carpet and to bend over backwards to serve Him. He says, "That is how I want you to treat everyone; even the most lowly and the most despised, for that is how you are treating Me."

2. An Inverse Superiority: *"He who is least among you, this is the one who is great"* (9:48).

The key to Kingdom greatness is in direct inverse proportion to the world's model of greatness. Jesus demonstrated this in Luke 6 where He said, "Blessed are the poor; blessed are the hungry; blessed are those who mourn; blessed are those who are hated and despised and ostracized."

The church was never called to model the world. They are to have two separate and opposing styles of greatness. The world looks at greatness as the enjoyment of power and wealth and pleasure. But greatness in the Kingdom is identified as servanthood.

Francis of Assisi is said to have visited St Peter's Cathedral in Rome where his guide showed him the wondrous architecture and the priceless treasures, noting, "The church can no longer say, 'Silver and gold have I none.'" Francis agreed, adding, "The church is also unable to say, 'In the

name of Jesus, rise up and walk.'"

KINGDOM CO-WORKERS

> *And John answered and said, "Master, we saw someone casting out demons in Your name; and we tried to hinder him because he does not follow along with us." 50 But Jesus said to him, "Do not hinder him; for he who is not against you is for you." (Luke 9:49-50).*

This section is related to the previous verses. Jesus had been speaking of how you receive those who are despised and rejected. That brings to mind one who had recently been rejected by the disciples during their recent short-term mission trip.

They were out preaching and healing and casting out demons when they came across someone else who was also casting out demons. The problem is that he was not one of the Twelve. And when the apostles invited him to join with them and to try out as the 13th apostle, he refused.

They had a problem with this. Here was an unordained man doing the work of the ministry. They could not allow this. It would not do at all! He did not have the right kind of credentials. He had not been to the right kind of seminary. And so, they had ordered him to cease and desist. Jesus corrects their misplaced zeal: "*Do not hinder him; for he who is not against you is for you" (9:50).* This is obviously given for our edification. What is the lesson that we are to learn from it?

I think that it is a lesson in unity. It is a lesson that we are not called to be "cookie cutter Christians." We come in all sorts of shapes and sizes and we need to take care to accept one another. This relates back to what Jesus said in the previous verses:

Luke 9:46-48	Luke 9:49-50
"When you accept a lowly and despised and insignificant child, you are accepting Me"	*"When you reject a man's ministry because he is not in your particular denomination, you are rejecting Me"*
Stated in the positive: What you accept.	Stated in the negative: What you reject.

A KINGDOM GOAL

> *And it came about, when the days were approaching for His ascension, that He resolutely set His face to go to Jerusalem. (Luke 9:51).*

Up to this point, we have seen the primary location of the ministry of Jesus taking place in the area of Galilee. But now marks a turning point. Now He sets His face to go to Jerusalem. For the next ten chapters, we will see Jesus moving closer and closer to Jerusalem.

- He comes to a city of the Samaritans (9:52).
- He passes from village to village on his way to Jerusalem (13:22).
- He will be passing between Samaria and Galilee (17:11).
- He approaches Jericho (18:35).
- He passes through Jericho (19:1).
- He was near Jerusalem (19:11).
- He approaches Bethphage and Bethany on the Mount of Olives(19:29).
- He comes down the descent of the Mount of Olives (19:37).
- He enters the Temple (19:45).

Why is He going to Jerusalem? He is going there in order to die. He is going there because He knows that it is there He will be arrested and crucified. He is going there to become the sacrifice for sins. It is to this end that He *set His face to go to Jerusalem.* This is fraught with significance. Throughout the Old Testament, when one spoke of the presence of the Lord, one spoke literally of being before His face.

- When Adam and the woman first sinned in the garden, the immediate result of their sin was that they sought to hide themselves from the presence of the Lord, literally, from His face.

> *And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the **presence** of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. (Genesis 3:8).*

- The presence of the Lord brings blessings to His people.

> *The Lord bless you, and keep you; the Lord make His **face***

shine on you, and be gracious to you; the Lord lift up His ***countenance*** *on you, and give you peace* (Numbers 6:24-26).

Sin removed us from before the face of God. And it is for this reason that Jesus set His own face to go to Jerusalem that we might be restored to the presence of God.

A KINGDOM SPIRIT

And it came about, when the days were approaching for His ascension, that He resolutely set His face to go to Jerusalem; 52 and He sent messengers on ahead of Him. And they went, and entered a village of the Samaritans, to make arrangements for Him. 53 And they did not receive Him, because He was journeying with His face toward Jerusalem.

And when His disciples James and John saw this, they said, "Lord, do You want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?"

But He turned and rebuked them, and said, "You do not know what kind of spirit you are of; 56 for the Son of Man did not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them." And they went on to another village. (Luke 9:51-56).

The distance from Galilee to Jerusalem was about 70 miles as the crow flies. But Jesus and His disciples were not crows. They would have to walk this entire distance. There were two routes from Galilee to Jerusalem.

- The first route would be the direct path through Samaria.
- The more popular route would be to take a detour around Samaria by following the course of the Jordan River to Jericho and then making the ascent up to Jerusalem.

There was no love lost between the Jews and the Samaritans. They had parted ways many years earlier. The Samaritans were looked upon by the Jews as faithless half-breeds. Two hundred years earlier, the Jews had fought against the pagan king Antiochus Epiphanes when he attempted to set up a statue of Zeus in their temple. But the Samaritans had allowed a similar statue to be erected in their temple on Mount Gerizim. After the Maccabean Revolt, the Jews had destroyed the Samaritan temple. In the days following

the death of Herod the Great, the Samaritans had crept into the Jewish Temple in Jerusalem by night and defiled it.

It is in this setting that Jesus and His disciples approach one of the villages of Samaria. Their reception was not a favorable one. Jesus was headed toward the city of their enemy and, if that was the case, then they wanted no part of Him.

> James and John had recently seen Elijah appear with Jesus and perhaps they recalled the way fire had come down from heaven to consume the enemies of Elijah in 2nd Kings 1. They may have reasoned that it would be appropriate for such a sign to be repeated by the One who was greater than Elijah.

What do you do when you encounter hostility? James and John had a solution. They came to Jesus with a plan. It is called, "Operation Fallout." They come and they ask: *"Lord, do You want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?"* (9:54).

What is the response of Jesus? He tells them that they are speaking out of ignorance. They don't realize the implications of what they are saying. They are speaking with the wrong spirit. They are speaking with a spirit of vengeance and of retribution and being a disciple of Jesus means to be filled with the spirit of a servant and a Savior: *"The Son of Man did not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them."* (9:56).

This is not a denial that there will someday be a final judgment. It means that Jesus first came to save. That is what His first coming was all about. The judgment will not take place until the Second Coming of Christ.

A KINGDOM CALL

Up to this time, we have seen a number of failures on the part of the disciples. They have failed in their faith and in their understanding. The story of their failures is given so that we might learn from their mistakes.

9:37	9:49	9:51	9:57
Their lack of power	Their lack of unity	Their lack of compassion	Their lack of commitment
Reflected in their inability to cast out a demon	Reflected in their arguing over who was the greatest	Reflected in their desire for the destruction of a Samaritan town	Reflected in men's reasons for not following Christ

During the next few verses, we see three people with varying levels of commitment. Each has a limited desire to follow Jesus. Each wants to become a disciple. But the real question is whether they are each willing to count the cost of that discipleship.

1. The Hasty Disciple.

> *And as they were going along the road, someone said to Him, "I will follow You wherever You go."*
>
> *And Jesus said to him, "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head." (Luke 9:57-58).*

This first man was ready to follow Jesus anywhere. At least, he thought he was. The reply of Jesus seems to indicate that he had not counted the cost of that decision. He was ready to follow Jesus anywhere, but was he ready to follow Jesus if it meant having no place to go?

2. The Hesitating Candidate.

> *And He said to another, "Follow Me." But he said, "Permit me first to go and bury my father."*
>
> *But He said to him, "Allow the dead to bury their own dead; but as for you, go and proclaim everywhere the kingdom of God." (Luke 9:59-60).*

Jesus calls the second man to follow. But the man attempts to evade the cross with an excuse. He has a more pressing priority. There are family matters to which he must attend.

At first reading, we have a tendency to sympathize with him. The poor man has just lost his father and wants to attend the funeral and to pay his last respect. Certainly Jesus could be sympathetic to his plight.

Some commentators have pointed out that there is no mention of a recent death in the family and that this man is really saying, "Let me go home and attend to my family and await my father's eventual death and then I will come into my inheritance and then I will be ready to follow you." However, such a reading is not specifically mentioned in the text. If we are to understand the words of Jesus, we must read what they do say, not what they do not say.

The point of this passage is that there is an urgency that will brook no delay. Jesus is calling this man to follow and He is calling Him to follow now.

3. The Undeciding Candidate.

> *And another also said, "I will follow You, Lord; but first permit me to say good-bye to those at home."*
>
> *But Jesus said to him, "No one, after putting his hand to the plow and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God." (Luke 9:61-62).*

This man is ready to embrace Christ, but he has a problem with divided loyalties. He will continue to look back, regretting what might have been. He is the counterpart of Lot's wife who longed for the pleasures of the previous life.

> If we are meant to contrast Jesus with Elijah, then this might call to mind the way Elisha was permitted to go home and say his farewells to his family before following Elijah. The point is that what was permissible for Elijah is inadequate for following Jesus because He is greater than any prophet.

The point here is that there is a continuing danger. This was not a man who moved too quickly or too slowly. It is entirely possible from the text that, for a time, he was doing it right. But then came the temptation. It was a temptation to look back. It was a temptation to return to the old ways. It was a temptation to forsake the quest for the Kingdom of God and to return to business as usual in the kingdom of men.

The Hasty Disciple	**The Hesitating Disciple**	**The Undeciding Disciple**
Too quick	Too slow	Too easy
He did not count the cost of discipleship.	He did not want to put Jesus first.	He wanted to follow only as long as it was under his own terms.

Which candidate are you? Have you counted the cost? Are you ready to give everything that you have to Jesus? Are you ready to be His disciple? Until you are, you are not fit for the kingdom of God.

At this point, I'd like to stop preaching and merely speak frankly with you. Not about you, but about myself. I was 17 years old and fresh out of high school when I gave my life completely and unreservedly to Jesus Christ. My prayer to Him at that time was, "Lord, whatever I have and whatever I am is Yours."

It is easy to say that when you are young and you don't have a penny to your name. As you get older and you begin to accumulate stuff, it isn't long before all that "stuff" begins to own you. I would be lying if I did not admit to feeling the pull of materialism.

The older I've gotten, the greater has been my ambition to get rid of all my stuff - those things that serve to weigh down my soul. I'm learning to travel lightly and I'm learning to understand the words of Jesus when He said, *"For whoever wishes to save his life shall lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it. 25 For what is a man profited if he gains the whole world, and loses or forfeits himself?"* (Luke 9:24-25).

There is a great deal at stake in this passage. These are teachings of life and of death. There is potential for great gain and for great loss. The question that you must ask is this — to what are you holding? Choose life. Choose Christ.

THE SENDING OF THE SEVENTY
LUKE 10:1-24

Luke 10:1 begins with the words, *"Now after this..."* This takes us back to the events of the previous chapter where we saw several different men who were called to follow the Lord.

The Hasty Disciple	The Hesitating Disciple	The Undeciding Disciple
Too quick	Too slow	Too easy
He did not count the cost of discipleship and that the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.	He did not want to put Jesus first, but let family serve as his excuse for procrastination.	He wanted to follow only as long as it was under his own terms.

In contrast to those three negative examples, Jesus now chooses seventy men who will be sent out as His forerunners.

> *Now after this the Lord appointed seventy others, and sent them two and two ahead of Him to every city and place where He Himself was going to come. (Luke 10:1).*

Some manuscripts indicate 72 men; others indicate 70. These same two numbers are indicative of how many nations were thought by the Jews to be represented in Genesis 10.

At the beginning of Luke 9, we saw Jesus sending out the 12 apostles on a short-term missions trip throughout Galilee. Now there is another group that is sent out. The instructions that are given to this second group are closely paralleled to those that were given to the Twelve.

LUKE 9:1-6	**LUKE 10:1-14**
The sending of the Twelve	The Sending of the Seventy
And He called the twelve together, and gave them power and authority over all the demons, and to heal diseases (9:1)	*Now after this the Lord appointed seventy others, and sent them two and two ahead of Him to every city and place where He Himself was going to come (10:1)*
"Take nothing for your journey, neither a staff, nor a bag, nor bread, nor money; and do not even have two tunics apiece" (9:3).	*"Carry no purse, no bag, no shoes; and greet no one on the way" (10:4).*
"And whatever house you enter, stay there, and take your leave from there" (9:4).	*"And whatever house you enter, first say, 'Peace be to this house.' 6 And if a man of peace is there, your peace will rest upon him; but if not, it will return to you. 7And stay in that house, eating and drinking what they give you; for the laborer is worthy of his wages. Do not keep moving from house to house (10:5-7).*
"And as for those who do not receive you, as you go out from that city, shake off the dust from your feet as a testimony against them" (9:5).	*"But whatever city you enter and they do not receive you, go out into its streets and say, 11 'Even the dust of your city which clings to our feet, we wipe off in protest against you; yet be sure of this, that the kingdom of God has come near.'" (10:10-11).*
And He sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God, and to perform healing (9:2).	*"...heal those in it who are sick, and say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you.'" (10:9).*

At first glance, it seems as though the author has merely used the "cut & paste" option on his computer to recopy the instructions that were given

to the Twelve in chapter 9 and repeats them verbatim to the Seventy in chapter 10. But upon closer examination, there are a number of important differences.

LUKE 9:1-6	LUKE 10:1-14
Twelve are sent out	Seventy in addition to the Twelve are sent
Their names are given to us	They are unnamed
They are sent throughout Galilee	They are sent as forerunners to those places where Jesus would come
Concludes the ministry of Jesus in Galilee	Introduces Jesus' movement toward Jerusalem
They were sent only to the Jews and not to Samaritans or Gentiles	Their ministry seems to include those places where they would be given food other than the normal kosher variety

A final point of emphasis might be mentioned. In chapter 9, the Twelve were sent throughout all of the villages of Galilee (9:6). In chapter 10, we see a repeated mention of cities.

- *Now after this the Lord appointed seventy others, and sent them two and two ahead of Him to every **city** and place where He Himself was going to come (10:1).*
- *"And whatever **city** you enter, and they receive you, eat what is set before you" (10:8).*
- *"But whatever **city** you enter and they do not receive you, go out into its streets and say, 11 'Even the dust of your **city** which clings to our feet, we wipe off in protest against you'" (10:10-11).*
- *"I say to you, it will be more tolerable in that day for Sodom, than for that **city** (10:12).*

This emphasis should not surprise us. The story of missions is largely a story of taking the gospel to the cities of the world. That is not to say that evangelism efforts among tribes and native villages are inappropriate. This is a strategic emphasis. When you are fishing, you go to where there are a lot of fish. Jesus was fishing for men. And so He initially sent His followers to go and to preach in the cities.

THE NEED FOR LABORERS

> *And He was saying to them, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest." (Luke 10:2).*

The seed had long since been planted. It had been planted by the preaching of John the Baptist and by the preaching of Jesus and, most recently, by the preaching of the Twelve. Now was the season of harvest and Jesus calls for them to pray for laborer. In the very next verse, He sends them out as laborers.

10:2	10:3
Jesus calls His followers to pray for laborers	Jesus answers the prayer by sending them out as laborers

There is a lesson here. When you pray for God to move, the first person that He moves is you. Are you praying for missions? You should be. But don't be surprised if, in the process, the Lord makes you a missionary.

THE CHARACTER OF THE LABORER

> *"Go your ways; behold, I send you out as lambs in the midst of wolves." (Luke 10:3).*

As I read this, I'm not sure that I like it. I cannot help but to ask the question, "Why didn't God send us out as wolves in the midst of lambs?" The answer is the we are called to be as Christ was. He did not come to earth as a wolf, but as the lamb of God who gave Himself. And that means we are called to give ourselves, too. We are called to be lambchops to a hungry world.

There can be no bigger contrast than that of lambs versus wolves. One is the picture of gentleness and harmlessness. The other is the picture of savagery and danger. What do wolves do to lambs? They eat them. On the other hand, those who hear the message of the kingdom and who repent and believe will be manifested as they feed these disciples.

Are you a wolf or a lamb? One way to determine which you are is seen in how you treat God's people. Do you seek to feed them or do you seek to gobble them up? Do you seek to serve them or do you seek to be

served by them? Your response to God's laborer is a measure of your own character.

INSTRUCTIONS TO THE LABORER

> *"Carry no purse, no bag, no shoes; and greet no one on the way. 5 And whatever house you enter, first say, 'Peace be to this house.' 6 And if a man of peace is there, your peace will rest upon him; but if not, it will return to you. 7 And stay in that house, eating and drinking what they give you; for the laborer is worthy of his wages. Do not keep moving from house to house. 8 And whatever city you enter, and they receive you, eat what is set before you; 9 and heal those in it who are sick, and say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you.' (Luke 10:4-8).*

The instructions given to these Seventy fledgling preachers are specific to their particular circumstances. Jesus makes this clear later in His ministry when He says, "Remember when I told you to carry no purse or no bag or no shoes? But now I am going to give you a different sent of instructions" (Luke 22:35-36). In spite of these being specific instructions to a specific situation, there are continuing lessons that we can learn.

What application are we to make of these instructions? Some have taught that these are only temporal instructions that were given for these particular men and that it has nothing to do with us today. But that stance ignores the fact that Luke was writing this passage in order that his readers might read it and understand it and apply it to their own lives.

1. Faith in God's Provision: *"Carry no purse, no bag, no shoes" (10:4).*

   These laborers were to travel lightly. Theirs was a short-term mission trip. They were not to raise funds or carry extra luggage. They were depending upon the Lord. That does not mean it is necessarily wrong for missionaries to collect their support prior to going out on the mission field. But it does mean that they should bear in mind that it is the Lord who is providing for them. In later chapters, Jesus will point these disciples back to this time and say, "Remember when you went out without prior financial preparation? God was faithful then and He will continue to be faithful."

It was over 30 years ago that my older brother felt that the Lord was directing him to pick up and move to Germany to minister the gospel. I recall that he was speaking to the pastor of a local church in the states and was asked about the level of his support. I recall thinking how his reply demonstrated a great measure of faith when he replied, "I am going to Germany and that has been settled. The only question is whether or not you are going to participate in that ministry."

2. Following God's Priority: *"...greet no one on the way" (10:4).*

The instructions of Jesus emphasize the priority of their mission. I served for many years as a fire fighter. Over the years, I have had a number of friends and family members visit me at the fire station and I frequently was able to take out time and visit and show them around. But that all changes when an alarm comes in. There is no more time for greetings or conversation. Something else now has priority. In the same way, Jesus is telling His disciples that the gospel is to be their first priority.

Do the epistles carry that same sense of urgency? I believe that they do. In his epistle to the Ephesians, Paul says, *"be careful how you walk, not as unwise men, but as wise, 16 making the most of your time, because the days are evil" (Ephesians 5:15-16).* This is one place where I prefer the old thundering diction of the King James Version, not only because it sounds better, but also because it more accurately conveys the sense of the Greek text when it speaks of *redeeming the time, because the days are evil.* The same emphasis and even the same Greek word [ἐξαγοραζω] is used in Colossians: *Conduct yourselves with wisdom toward outsiders, making the most of the opportunity (Colossians 4:5),* literally, "redeeming the time."

There is a sense of urgency that we ought to derive. Jesus has called the church to go and to make disciples of all the nations. We ought to embark upon that mission with a sense of urgency. We have only limited lifetimes in which to accomplish our goal. It is a big goal and the laborers are few. We need to pray and then be willing to go ourselves.

3. Facilitation of God's Partnership: *Stay in that house, eating and drinking what they give you; for the laborer is worthy of his wages (10:7).*

The instructions that Jesus gives to these disciples have

ramifications, not only for them, but also for those who would hear their message. It was the duty of the hearers to provide for the needs of those who proclaimed the message. The New Testament is clear in teaching that those who proclaim the Word are to be supported by those who receive the Word.

William Barclay tells the story of a shoemaker who sponsored a young man for the ministry. When the young man was licensed to preach, the shoemaker came to him and said, "It was always my desire to be a minister of the gospel, but the circumstances of my life made it impossible. You are achieving what was closed to me. And I want you to promise me one thing--I want you to let me make and cobble your shoes--for nothing--and I want you to wear them in the pulpit when you preach, and then I'll feel you are preaching the gospel I always wanted to preach standing in my shoes." That is a Biblical principle and it comes from this passage. All Christians are to be involved in ministry, but for some, that means that they are involved in supporting others.

4. Forbearance in the area of Palatability: *"Whatever city you enter, and they receive you, eat what is set before you" (10:8).*

There is a problem with this instruction. The problem is that Jesus has not sent this group exclusively to Jewish homes. They are going to be in the homes of all sorts of people. They are going to be in homes that may not practice the kosher dietary regulations of the Jews. Perhaps this is a hint of things to come, for we know from our own perspective that the day came when those dietary regulations of the Old Covenant were removed. Here is the point. They are to be more concerned with people than they are what is put on their plate.

5. Faithfulness to God's Preaching and Pastoral Ministry: *Heal those in it who are sick, and say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you'" (10:8).*

Once again, we see that this ministry of proclamation was to be accompanied by a ministry of healing. It was a ministry that ministered to the whole man -- body, soul and spirit. We are not truly ministering to people unless we are ministering to the whole man. That includes more than just preaching the gospel. It includes living out the gospel before the watching world.

THE LABORER AND REJECTION

Up to this point, the focus of Jesus has been with regard to those who accept the preaching of His missionaries. Now the focus changes as He directs His words concerning those who reject the gospel.

10:1	10:4	10:10	10:13
The positive face of evangelism		The negative face of evangelism	
A mandate to the seventy	Methods given to the seventy	Response to rejection	Rebuke to the rejecting cities

> *"But whatever city you enter and they do not receive you, go out into its streets and say, 11 'Even the dust of your city which clings to our feet, we wipe off in protest against you; yet be sure of this, that the kingdom of God has come near.' 12 I say to you, it will be more tolerable in that day for Sodom, than for that city." (Luke 10:10-12).*

Notice that to both those who believed and those who rejected, the messengers were to speak the same message and to be sure to tell them that *the kingdom of God had come near*.

Luke 10:8	**Luke 10:10-11**
Spoken to those who accept them	Spoken to those who reject them
"Say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you'"	*"Go out into its streets and say... yet be sure of this, that the kingdom of God has come near.'"*

There is an important principle here. The coming of the kingdom does not depend upon you or your reception. It depends upon God. When the Kingdom comes, it comes close both to Christians as well as to non-Christians. Some folks seem to think that Christianity is only true if you believe that it is true and if you want God to go away, then just stop believing in Him and He will go "poof" and disappear. But truth doesn't stop being truth just because you don't believe in it. It goes on its way whether you believe or not.

The proximity of the Kingdom that brings blessings to those who believe also brings cursing to those who do not believe. You cannot reject the Kingdom with impunity.

> *"Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the miracles had been performed in Tyre and Sidon which occurred in you, they would have repented long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. 14 But it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the judgment, than for you. 15 And you, Capernaum, will not be exalted to heaven, will you? You will be brought down to Hades! 16 The one who listens to you listens to Me, and the one who rejects you rejects Me; and he who rejects Me rejects the One who sent Me." (Luke 10:13-16).*

Notice that there is a corresponding relationship between light and liability. Those who are given the light of the gospel are correspondingly more liable and more responsible to accept that gospel. Have you been given a great amount of the truth? That is a measure of your responsibility before God.

THE LABORERS RETURN

> *And the seventy returned with joy, saying, "Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name." 18 And He said to them, "I was watching Satan fall from heaven like lightning. 19 Behold, I have given you authority to tread upon serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall injure you. 20 Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are recorded in heaven." (Luke 10:17-20).*

Luke quickly moves to the return of the Seventy. He does not tell us how long they were gone, but it seems evident that some time had passed between verse 16 and verse 17. As they return, they are excited about the way their ministry has been manifested in its domination over the realm of Satan.

1. The Fall of Satan's Kingdom: *And He said to them, "I was watching Satan fall from heaven like lightning" (10:18).*

What is Jesus describing? Some commentators seem to think that Jesus is speaking about what he saw in heaven prior to the fall - as though He is referencing the fall of Satan into sin. But that makes no sense in the context of this passage. The remark of Jesus is said in response to what has just taken place on the mission field.

- This is not a reference to the fall of Satan into sin before the Garden of Eden.
- This is not a prophecy of some future fall of Satan.
- It is a reference to a present reality that was taking place in Jesus' day.

The words of Jesus describe the victory that the Seventy have just recently brought about as the demons were subject to their commands. It is this victory that has brought about the fall of Satan.

There is a principle here for us today. When you preach the gospel to your friends and in your workplace, Satan's kingdom crumbles. When you lead someone to the Lord, Satan falls from heaven like lightning. As the church is faithful in being the church, the gates of Satan's city will be burst asunder and we will pillage His domain.

2. Kingdom Authority: *"Behold, I have given you authority to tread upon serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall injure you." (Luke 10:19).*

What are we to make of this reference to "serpents and scorpions"? It is one of those catch phrases from of old that brings to mind things of long ago. In today's culture, we might refer to "lions and tigers and bears, oh my!"

> *"He led you through the great and terrible wilderness, with its fiery serpents and scorpions and thirsty ground where there was no water; He brought water for you out of the rock of flint" (Deuteronomy 8:15).*

The children of Israel had passed through a land where there were very literal serpents and literal scorpions. Many years later, Ezekiel makes reference to sitting on scorpions in such a way that shows it had become a figure of speech.

> *"And you, son of man, neither fear them nor fear their words, though thistles and thorns are with you and you sit on scorpions; neither fear their words nor be dismayed at their presence, for they are a rebellious house." (Ezekiel 2:6).*

In much the same way, the concept of treading on a serpent can be traced all the way back to Genesis 3:15 where God first gave a promise of two seeds. This explains to us what Jesus is saying. He is not merely speaking of literal biting and stinging animals, but He is also promising that the Lord will protect His messengers from the attacks of this fallen world.

3. Kingdom Rejoicing: *Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are recorded in heaven" (10:20).*

We saw the Seventy rejoicing when they first returned. They were all excited about what they had been able to do. They had accomplished something with some very visible results and they are happy about it. They are rejoicing.

But now we see that they were rejoicing about the wrong thing. In doing so, they were missing the big thing about which they should have been rejoicing. They were like the child who receives a wonderful present, but who is more impressed with the outside of the box and the wrapping paper than with the wonderful present contained within.

We are like that, too. We are like that when we are impressed with miracles and signs and tongues. We are like that when we are excited about signs and wonders. Or perhaps we get excited about what we can do for God; that we can build a bigger church or get better press coverage. Jesus describes this phenomenon in the Sermon on the Mount.

> *"Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' 23 And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.'" (Matthew 7:22-23).*

Look at all the things that they are able to do. Prophecy.

Exorcism. Miracles. From the surface, it looks as though they have a tremendous ministry. But there is an absence of relationship.

Here is the principle. Without relationship, all success is counterfeit. But when there is a relationship being manifested, then God's plan and purpose is being accomplished, even though the visible results may not be immediately apparent.

THE LABORER'S REVELATION

> *At that very time He rejoiced greatly in the Holy Spirit, and said, "I praise Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that Thou didst hide these things from the wise and intelligent and didst reveal them to babes. Yes, Father, for thus it was well-pleasing in Thy sight.* 22 *All things have been handed over to Me by My Father, and no one knows who the Son is except the Father, and who the Father is except the Son, and anyone to whom the Son wills to reveal Him."*
>
> *And turning to the disciples, He said privately, "Blessed are the eyes which see the things you see,* 24 *for I say to you, that many prophets and kings wished to see the things which you see, and did not see them, and to hear the things which you hear, and did not hear them." (Luke 10:21-24).*

Having told the Seventy that over which they should be rejoicing, Jesus now proceeds to model that kind of rejoicing Himself. He rejoices that the gospel is not grasped solely by smart people. Indeed, it is often hidden from the wise and from the intelligent. A high I.Q. is often a hindrance when it comes to the kingdom. Why is this? Is there some sort of merit in being ignorant? No. But the person who is ignorant and who knows it is ready to accept the knowledge that God gives. This person who is blind and who is aware of his blindness is ready to have his eyes opened. There is none so blind as one who only thinks that he can see.

Have you ever thought how much more we see? We have the completed Bible. We can see the culmination of the revelation of the plan of God regarding the cross and our salvation. We have a far greater perspective than was ever had by any of the Old Testament prophets.

There is also a warning here. We are responsible for what we have seen. It is a higher responsibility than that of *many prophets and kings*. That was what we saw back in Luke 10:13-16. We saw that there is a

corresponding relationship between light and liability. Those who are given the light of the gospel are correspondingly more liable and more responsible to accept that gospel. You have been given a lot of light. And that means you have an awesome responsibility.

SAMARITANS & SISTERS
A LESSON IN LOVE
LUKE 10:25-42

The passage to which we come is a part of a larger context. It is given in the context of Jesus having sent out messengers to announce His coming. They returned, having proclaimed the message of the Kingdom and Jesus responded with a prayer of praise in which He thanked the Lord, *"I praise Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that Thou didst hide these things from the wise and intelligent and didst reveal them to babes. Yes, Father, for thus it was well-pleasing in Thy sight"* (Luke 10:21). As this passage opens, we see one of those wise and intelligent coming to Jesus.

A LEGAL QUESTION

> *And behold, a certain lawyer stood up and put Him to the test, saying, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" (Luke 10:25).*

Our story begins one day with a question being asked. Now I want you to know that there is nothing wrong with asking questions. But this was an improper question. It was improper because it had improper motives. This man is described as *a certain lawyer*. That is enough to bring up all sorts of lawyer jokes, but this was not that kind of lawyer. He was a νομικος, a student of the Torah. His profession was not in lawsuits and litigation, but in studying and in teaching the Law of God. He is sophisticated. He prides

This man was an expert in the law. He had a string of seminary degrees behind his name. Notice that he is careful NOT to call Jesus "rabbi." He has an earned degree which he is proud of and he is not interested in what Jesus knows or does not know if He does not have a similar degree behind His name.

himself on being an expert. He has thought through every possible response. He says, "I am a theologian and I've written a few books and had my name placed in Who's Who, but don't let that intimidate you, Jesus." He is a theologian -- a seminary professor. Like a professor, he wants to give a test. He wants to put Jesus on trial. He wants to test the knowledge of Jesus.

This lawyer is determined to take Jesus down a notch or two. He has not come to learn from Jesus. He has come to put Jesus to the test. He is heresy-hunting. Accordingly, his question comes with its own preconceived notion. He asks, *What shall I do to inherit eternal life?* This assumes that he is able to do something in order to inherit eternal life.

A LEGAL ANSWER

> *And He said to him, "What is written in the Law? How does it read to you?" 27 And he answered and said, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself." 28 And He said to him, "You have answered correctly; do this, and you will live." (Luke 10:26-28).*

Jesus answers the legal expert's question with one of His own. This man thinks of himself as an expert in the Old Testament Law; what does the Law say? Jesus gives a very simple answer. He sends this expert in the law back to the Law. He says, "You're the expert. You tell Me!" Jesus is not interested in teaching this man new facts. He wants the man to act upon the truth that he already knows. "What does the Law say?" This was a question that any Jewish boy could answer.

The fact that Jesus points us to the Law tells us something about Christianity. It is not something new or recent. It is something that is very old and which is rooted in the Old Testament. As Christians living in this age, we do not ignore the Old Testament or relegate it to some past and unrelated dispensation. God is the same in every age and salvation is also the same in every age.

The Lawyer answers by quoting two Old Testament passages. The first of these is Deuteronomy 6:5. It was customary to have this verse written on a phylactery and bound to the wrist or to the forehead. This lawyer merely pulls up his shirt sleeve and reads the answer.

- Love God: *Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is*

one! 5 And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. (Deuteronomy 6:4-5).

"Love the Lord your God." He is not just any God. He is the Lord. He is Yahweh. Notice the extent of this love. It is all-consuming. It is a fanatical love.

- Love Man: *You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the sons of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself; I am the LORD. (Leviticus 19:18).*

"Love your neighbor as yourself." This is a quote from Leviticus 19:18. It is found in a passage that forbids oppressing the poor. It commands, not only the loving of the Jew, but the loving of the stranger and the foreigner as well (Leviticus 19:34). The Jews in the days of Jesus had perverted this passage to say, "You shall love your neighbors and hate your enemies" (Matthew 5:43). But the Scriptures did not contain these words. God's commandment has always been one of love.

Jesus does not contradict the man's answer. Instead, he tells him that he has answered correctly. If you will love God with all of your being and you will love your neighbor as yourself, then you will gain eternal life.

A SELF-RIGHTEOUS MOTIVE

But wishing to justify himself, he said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" (Luke 10:29).

This man's words indicate that he realized that he fell short of the demands of the law that he had only just verbalized. You don't have to justify yourself when you are already just. The very fact that he was wishing to justify himself indicates that he had some awareness that he was lacking in the law's demands.

That is what the Law is supposed to do. It teaches us that we cannot perfectly and persistently keep the demands of the Law. Furthermore, it binds those who do not perfectly and persistently keep those commands to a curse.

> *For as many as are of the works of the Law are under a curse; for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who does not abide by all things written in the book of the law, to perform them". (Galatians 3:10).*

This man has come testing Jesus and seeking to condemn Him. Instead he has found himself condemning both himself and the entire world. At this point he has a decision to make. He can throw himself upon the mercy of the Lord and seek that which was undeserved. Or he can try to justify himself and continue to stand upon his own good works and perhaps "lower the bar" of God's righteousness. He chooses the latter. He does this by seeking to limit who might be his neighbor. It is easy to love someone you already like. It is another matter entirely to love the one you love to hate.

And so, he looks for a legal loophole. You see, this man was not prepared to love some insignificant neighbor. He was too proud for that. He wanted to interpret "neighbor" as one of whom he approved. Perhaps an orthodox Jew. Perhaps one of his own religious and social and economical equal.

"Who is my neighbor?" The question calls for an abstract answer. The Lawyer wanted to leave this discussion in the abstract. But Jesus never does. He is always specific. And so, He tells a story about a specific act of "neighborliness."

THE PARABLE OF THE GOOD SAMARITAN

> *Jesus replied and said, "A certain man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho; and he fell among robbers, and they stripped him and beat him, and went off leaving him half dead.*
>
> *"And by chance a certain priest was going down on that road, and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. 32 And likewise a Levite also, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side.*
>
> *"But a certain Samaritan, who was on a journey, came upon him; and when he saw him, he felt compassion, 34 and came to him, and bandaged up his wounds, pouring oil and wine on them; and he put him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him.*
>
> *"And on the next day he took out two denarii and gave*

them to the innkeeper and said, 'Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, when I return, I will repay you.'" (Luke 10:30-35).

Jericho was the pleasure city of Palestine. It enjoyed a warm climate and it housed Herod's winter palace. It was the Beverly Hills of Palestine.

The setting for this parable was a familiar one. It was the road that ran from Jericho up to Jerusalem. Jericho lies six hundred feet below sea level while Jerusalem is 2500 feet above sea level, so the 18 miles of intervening road is uphill all the way. It winds its way up a deep, treacherous wadi -- a dried, rocky, craggy canyon. Traveling the Jericho road was like walking through a dark alley in the worst part of a city.

The man in our story was traveling from Jerusalem to Jericho. The fact that he had come from Jerusalem seems to imply that he was Jewish, but the passage does not specifically say that this is the case. He is merely a man who fell into desperate times. While traveling this road, the man was beset by robbers. They beat him and they robbed him and they left him for dead. Were he not to get medical attention, his death would be an actuality.

1. The Two who Walked By.

Micah 6:6-8 delivers an indictment against the Jews who were ready to come and sacrifice thousands of rams in ten thousand rivers of oil, but neglected justice and kindness and humility before God.

In the course of the story, two different men happened by. The first was a priest. Luke is careful to tell us that this priest was on the way down. He had completed his week of service in the Temple and he was on his way home. It was not a matter of choosing whether to worship in the Temple or whether to stop and help this man. He had the time and the means to help. He even had the motivation. He had been worshiping the Lord. But that act of worship had not touched his heart. How easy it is for us to be like that priest - to come and play church on Sunday morning and then to go back down to Jericho for the rest of the week.

The second man to come by was a Levi. He was permitted to serve in and around the Temple. We could liken him to the deacons of the church. Both were men of ministry. Both were looked upon with great respect as men who served the Lord.

In both cases, their response to the suffering man was the same. They avoided him and his pain and they continued on their

way. What went through their minds?

- There might be other robbers waiting to pounce on me.
- He looks to be beyond help and if he is dead, then I might become ceremonially unclean and unfit for service in the temple.
- I am to love my neighbor as myself, but does that apply to this man? After all, who is my neighbor?

We are not told their thoughts, but we are told their actions. They passed by on the other side. No help. No words of encouragement. The ironic thing about this is that a part of their ministerial function involved helping those in need. A part of the priestly duty was to serve as the public health official. A part of the duty of the Levi was the distribution of funds to the poor and the needy.

2. The One who Stopped: *"But a certain Samaritan, who was on a journey, came upon him; and when he saw him, he felt compassion"* (10:33).

There was no love lost between the Jews and the Samaritans. They had been enemies for a very long time. The Jews had gone in and had burned the temple of the Samaritans to the ground. The Samaritans had responded by sneaking into the Jerusalem temple and defiling it. Back and forth had gone the insults, the derogatory remarks and the hatred. The very reason that the Jericho road was so well traveled is because Jews commonly used it as a detour so as not to have to travel through the land of the Samaritans.

Furthermore, the Samaritans were not doctrinally "correct." They did not recognize all of the Old Testament and they had rewritten some of those portions of the Bible that they did accept as authoritative. This Samaritan was not doctrinally correct. But he was correct in his love. He had a love that was ready to take action.

- The activity of mercy.

  The Samaritan's mercy was active rather than passive. He did not merely say, "Poor fellow, I hope that you are feeling better and I will mention you in my prayers this evening." He got actively involved in the demonstration of mercy.

This story tells us something about mercy. It is not defined in a mushy sentiment. It is not sentiment at all. It is defined in action. Jesus had a Theology of Action. It was not enough to believe in a certain doctrinal statement. It must also be reflected in your life.

- The cost of mercy.

  This act of mercy cost this Samaritan. It cost him in time and in effort and in supplies and in his own money. Mercy is not mercy until it costs.

- The motivation of mercy.

  What prompted the actions of the Samaritan? Was he doing his deed in order to work his way into heaven? Was he striving to meet some religious standard? No. He acted because he felt compassion. The mercy of God was the most costly thing in the universe. It cost God the life of His own Son. It cost Jesus the cross.

- The endurance of mercy.

  The Samaritan went further than the meeting of the immediate need. He looked ahead to see what this stranger's long-term needs would be and then he provided for those needs.

THE POINT OF THE PARABLE

> *"Which of these three do you think proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell into the robbers' hands?"* 37 *And he said, "The one who showed mercy toward him." And Jesus said to him, "Go and do the same." (Luke 10:36-37).*

Do you remember what was the original question that brought about this parable? The lawyer had come face to face with the Law and its command to love your neighbor as

From our point of view, Jesus blew it in this parable. He forgot to tell this man that He was the Son of God or about salvation by grace through faith.

yourself. This brought up the question, "Who is my neighbor?" Instead of answering the question, Jesus told this story and then He followed it up with a question of His own: "Who proved to be a neighbor; who acted neighborly?"

Original Question	The Question Jesus Answers
"Who is my neighbor?"	"What does it mean to act neighborly?"
Puts the emphasis on the object of love as though he must be deserving of that love.	Puts the emphasis upon the one who loves.
What Jesus has done is to put the emphasis back where it belongs.	

Do you see the point? The question is not who is your neighbor. The real question is whether you are going to act neighborly to all men - even those from whom you would be otherwise alienated.

How can you accomplish this? How can you forgive the unforgivable? How can you love the one you love to hate? Only by first seeing how much you have been forgiven and by seeing how much you have been loved.

You see, the story of the Good Samaritan is the story of Jesus. He is the One who has come and who has rescued you at great personal cost. He is the Savior who saves. He has found you helpless and He has carried you to a place of safety. And now He calls you to be Jesus to the world, not in the sense of saving from sins, but in the showing of mercy. There are three views presented in this parable.

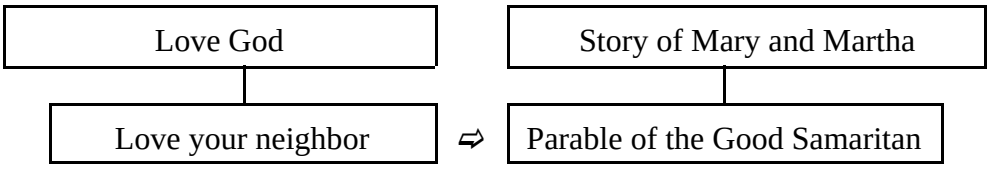
The View of the Thief	"What's yours is mine and if I want it, then I will take it."
The View of the Religious Leaders	"What's mine is mine and if you need it, you can't have it."
The View of the Good Samaritan	"What's mine is yours and if you need it, I will provide it for you."

Everyone in the world adopts one of these three views. Only one is appropriate to Christianity. Which one are you?

THE STORY OF TWO SISTERS

> *Now as they were traveling along, He entered a certain village; and a woman named Martha welcomed Him into her home.* 39 *And she had a sister called Mary, who moreover was listening to the Lord's word, seated at His feet.* 40 *But Martha was distracted with all her preparations; and she came up to Him, and said, "Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to do all the serving alone? Then tell her to help me."* 41 *But the Lord answered and said to her, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and bothered about so many things;* 42 *but only a few things are necessary, really only one, for Mary has chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her." (Luke 10:38-42).*

As we come to this narrative of Jesus and the two sisters, it seems at first to have nothing to do with the preceding section. But this is not really the case. To the contrary, it has everything to do with the earlier verses. We saw the legal expert coming to Jesus and asking what was necessary for eternal life and the answer was the two-pronged responsibility of the Law: To love God and to love your neighbor. Then followed a parable to illustrate who is one's neighbor. Now follows a living parable. It is the story of two sisters. Their story will illustrate what it means to love God.



Jesus came to the home of Mary and Martha. Martha rolled out the red carpet. Verse 38 says that she is the one who had issued the invitation to Jesus to come and to stay with them. This meant extra work, for with Jesus came 12 disciples.

Jesus had just told the legal expert to be a good neighbor. Now we see Martha being a good neighbor to Jesus. However there was a problem. It wasn't too long before *Martha was distracted with all her preparations* (10:40). She began to get frazzled. She is working hard to serve Jesus and soon she realizes that she is the only one working hard to serve Jesus. Mary, her sister, is sitting and listening to Jesus. Emotions start to boil.

- She is distracted.
- She is hurt by the thought that no one cares.
- A bit of jealousy creeps in.
- She is *worried and bothered* (10:41).

Martha has not learned the lesson that is fundamental to the Westminster catechism. That catechism asks the question: "What is the chief end of man?" Martha was only concerned that Mary get up off her chief end and help her. But she needed to learn that "the chief end of man is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever." There is a lesson here. If you are not enjoying God, then you are not glorifying Him.

Martha was in conflict with...	
With Mary	Martha was frustrated over trying to do everything on her own while her sister did nothing to help. She felt that she was the only one serving the Lord.
With Jesus	This comes out in her question, "Lord, do you not care?" She questioned the love and the compassion of the Lord. She thought that Jesus had His priorities wrong.
With Herself	She was distracted and worried and bothered. She is the picture of a person trying to juggle all of the details of life and who no longer enjoys that life.

Martha comes and wants to serve the Lord. Mary wants to come and receive from the Lord. Jesus tells us that it is Mary who has chosen the better part. The lesson here is that you must receive from God before you can give to God. You can only serve Him as you have first been served by Him.

We often try to serve before we have been served. We try to minister in the power of the flesh. We take classes on evangelism and learn techniques for ministry and then wonder why it doesn't work.

What gets in the way of our loving God? It is our agenda. We each have a list of things that we want to do. It is filled with all of the details of our life. The problem is that our priorities are not God's priorities. There is a prescription here for busy believers. It is a prescription to spend time with God.

- Seize the opportunity to be with the Lord.
- Refuse to be distracted.

- And then you will be ready to obey.

Jesus says to her, *"Martha, Martha, you are worried and bothered about so many things; 42 but only a few things are necessary, really only one" (Luke 10:40-41).* I am reminded of the movie City Slickers in which Billy Crystal, a modern man going through a mid-life crisis, meets the wise, hardened cowboy played by Jack Palance. Crystal is asked whether he would like to know what is the secret of life and, upon admitting that he would, Palance holds up a single finger and says, "This is it."

"What?" asks Crystal, "Your finger is the secret of life?"

"No," replies Palance, "It is one thing."

"But what is the one thing?" queries Crystal.

"That is what you have to decide for yourself."

While the dialogue is compelling, it really is not satisfying. The problem is that people often do decide for themselves what is important, only to find out at a later date that it is not. It is the sad story of the man climbing the ladder of success, only to find that it is leaning against the wrong wall.

Jesus does not do that here. He does not tell Martha, "You determine what is important." Instead He tells her, there is something that is a lot more important than that which you have been deeming as important. That one thing is the same thing that Mary has found. If you have that one thing, then everything else will fall into place.

LESSONS ON PRAYER
LUKE 11:1-13

But Zion said, "The Lord has forsaken me, and the Lord has forgotten me."
Can a woman forget her nursing child, and have no compassion on the son of her womb?
Even these may forget, but I will not forget you.
Behold, I have inscribed you on the palms of My hands..." (Isaiah 49:14-16a).

When things are going bad (and that was certainly the case in Isaiah's day), we are prone to wonder whether the Lord has forgotten us in the shuffle. But that is not the case. The Lord says that He has inscribed us on the palms of His hands.

That is not a promise which was given long ago but which has now been forgotten. Indeed, if you could look for a moment into heaven itself, you would see that the hands of the Lord still bear the marks of His great love for us. That being the case, it is appropriate that we persevere in the art of prayer.

A PATTERN FOR PRAYER

And it came about that while He was praying in a certain place, after He had finished, one of His disciples said to Him, "Lord, teach us to pray just as John also taught his disciples."

And He said to them, "When you pray, say: 'Father, hallowed be Thy name, Thy kingdom come,
Give us each day our daily bread.
And forgive us our sins, for we ourselves also forgive everyone who is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation.'" (Luke 11:1-4).

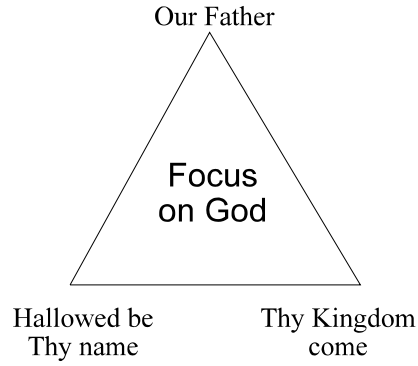
This chapter begins with the disciples coming and asking Jesus how they ought to pray. Notice that Jesus did not have to tell them about the importance of prayer. He had not lectured them on prayer. Instead, they saw it in His life. They watched Him pray. And they realized that their prayers were inadequate.

As we read over this prayer, it is immediately obvious that there are some differences from the one in Matthew 6. The general outline is the same, but there are differences in the details. That tells me something about this prayer. It is actually an outline on how to pray. Each clause teaches us something about the God to whom we pray.

1. *Father.*

The first recorded words of Jesus deal with God as His Father (Luke 2:49). The Jews did not normally pray to God as their Father. They would address God by one of His titles, but not as Father. Every prayer that Jesus ever prayed began with "My Father" except for one. On the cross, He cried out, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" On that day, God was dealing with Him, not as a Father, but as a Judge.

This gives us a hint as to what is contained in the idea of calling God, "Our Father." This is different from what Paul describes in Acts 17:29 where all mankind can be describes as "the offspring of God." This is a more specific sense of fatherhood. All men have God as their Creator. Only those who have entered into a spiritual relationship with God can legitimately call Him "Father" in the sense of this prayer.



2. *Hallowed be Thy Name.*

The word translated "hallowed" (ἁγιασθήτω) is from a root simply meaning "holy." God is holy and His name is holy. He is set apart. He is special. This is the third commandment - His name is holy and should not be taken in vain.

The name of a person in the ancient world had to do with the character of that person. We speak in a similar way when we talk about someone who has a good name in the community. God's name

is holy because He Himself is holy. He is not like us. He is exalted and apart from us. R.C. Sproul calls this quality God's "otherness."

3. *Thy Kingdom Come.*

In Luke 17:20-21 Jesus warned the Pharisees not to be so concerned with the kingdom that was coming with signs to be observed as much as the kingdom that was in their midst.

In the last chapter, we saw Jesus sending out 70 forerunners. They went out healing and preaching and proclaiming that the kingdom of God was come near. But now the disciples are told to pray that God's kingdom would come.

This is not just looking to the future and some apocalyptic revelation. It is not merely asking that God would return and overturn governments and clean up all of this mess. It is asking for a present dynamic. It is a call for God's present reign in your heart and in my heart.

Wouldn't it be nice if we came to know the Lord and commit ourselves to Him and then all of the details of our life would fall into line? It doesn't usually happen that way. The problem with a living sacrifice is that it keeps crawling off the altar and our problem is that we give our lives to God and then we start making exceptions.

This is a prayer that God's kingdom might come in my life and in the life of my church. It is a prayer that my life and my church might reflect the sovereignty of God.

4. *Give us each day our daily bread.*

Notice the use of the plural pronoun. This is not a covetous prayer. It is not just a prayer for my own personal needs. There are no singular personal pronouns in this prayer. It is a collective prayer for the needs of all of God's people.

Do you remember the manna in the wilderness? God provided food for the people. But He only provided for one day at a time. Those who tried to hoard the manna found that it spoiled the next day. They were being taught to trust God each day.

God has provided for Christians their daily bread. You might say, "I know Christians who have not been provided for!" That is because God has given more to others so that they might share among those with less. It could be that the way God has supplied for the needs of your neighbor is by giving to you more than you actually need.

In the early church, we read that *there was not a needy person among them* (Acts 4:34). It was not that there were no poor people allowed within the church. It was that the church became a place for meeting needs.

5. *And forgive us our sins, for we ourselves also forgive everyone who is indebted to us (11:4).*

Sin in our lives is the blockage in the artery of our relationship with God. It is that which separates us from God. We are in need of forgiveness. Forgiveness is a reciprocal phenomena. We forgive because we have been forgiven. God says, "You remember your forgiveness and I'll forget your sin." This does not mean that we earn or deserve forgiveness because we have forgiven others. Rather, it is a forgiving heart that is prepared to accept forgiveness.

6. *And lead us not into temptation (11:4).*

This is a recognition of the sovereignty of God. He is stronger than temptation. He can overcome Satan. And so, He is able to overcome Satan's trap. This does not mean that God actively tempts us. God isn't in the tempting business.

> *Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone. 14 But each one is tempted when he is carried away by his own lust. (James 1:13-14).*

God doesn't tempt. But He is able to stop you from being tempted. That means that you can't avoid temptation on your own. There are temptations that are bigger than you are so that you need His help.

This prayer seeks to deal with sin at its very roots. It looks to root out sin at the temptation level. That is the best place to stop sin -

before it has had a chance to tempt us. What tempts you? Whatever is your area of weakness, you will do well to avoid that which tempts you.

SOME LESSONS FROM THE LORD'S PRAYER

1. Jesus tells us to Pray this Prayer: *And He said to them, "When you pray, say: 'Father, hallowed be Thy name...'" (11:2).*

   It is good and appropriate for us to actually pray this prayer upon occasion. Not all of the prayers recorded in the Scripture are meant for us to pray verbatim. There are prayers in the Scriptures from which we can learn principles of prayer but which are not necessarily meant as a prayer for us to pray.

   - I don't think that we are called to pray for God to deliver the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah if there are at least 10 righteous people to be found in those particular cities.
   - I don't think that we are necessarily to pray as Elisha did for those who have died so that they will immediately rise from the dead (2 Kings 4:33).
   - We are certainly not to pray as Jonah did that God would destroy a repentant city (Jonah 4:2).

   There has been a little book that came out a few years ago entitled *The Prayer of Jabez*. It is taken from 1 Chronicles 4:9-10 where a little-known character by the name of Jabez calls upon the Lord and prays, *"Oh that Thou wouldst bless me indeed, and enlarge my border, and that Thy hand might be with me, and that Thou wouldst keep me from harm, that it may not pain me!"* The author of the book goes out of his way to say that this should be the pattern for our prayers. Jesus could have said to His disciples, "When you pray, just look up 1 Chronicles 4:9-10 and pray that prayer." But He didn't do that. Instead He gives them this prayer. And we would do well to pray it.

2. This Prayer is given as a Skeletal Structure of Prayer.

   If we look at the parallel passage in Matthew 6, we see the same general outline for this prayer, but there are a few parts of the

prayer that are fleshed out in greater detail.

Matthew 6:9-13	Luke 11:2-4
Our Father who art in heaven	Father
Hallowed be Thy name	Hallowed be Thy name
Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven	Thy kingdom come
Give us this day our daily bread	Give us each day our daily bread
And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors	And forgive us our sins, for we ourselves also forgive everyone who is indebted to us
And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil	And lead us not into temptation
For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen	-

The fact that one account fleshes out and builds upon parts of the general outline that is given in the other account is an indication that we can do the same. We can use this prayer as a general outline for our prayers.

3. This is an Appropriate Prayer for our Corporate Prayers.

There is a corporate emphasis to this prayer. Jesus doesn't say that you should pray, "Lord meet my own needs but I have absolutely no concern for the fellow who sits in the next pew." Each aspect of this prayer takes on a corporate significance. We pray this prayer as a part of a unified body.

That marks quite a difference in the popular book, "The Prayer of Jabez." I think that one of the attractions of that prayer is that it is very self-centered. Even those aspects of the prayer that are mirrored in the Lord's prayer have a self-centered focus instead of a

corporate focus.

Matthew 6:9-13	Luke 11:2-4	Prayer of Jabez
Our Father who art in heaven	Father	-
Hallowed be Thy name	Hallowed be Thy name	-
Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven	Thy kingdom come	Oh that Thou wouldst bless **me** indeed, and enlarge **my** border...
Give us this day our daily bread	Give us each day our daily bread	...and that Thy hand might be with **me**...
And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors	And forgive us our sins, for we ourselves also forgive everyone who is indebted to us	-
And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil	And lead us not into temptation	...that Thou wouldst keep **me** from harm, that it may not pain **me**!
For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen	-	-

Don't get me wrong. I am not saying that it is always wrong to pray with the personal pronoun. But I think it is significant that when Jesus taught His disciples to pray, He taught them a corporate prayer.

4. This Model for Prayer has a Focus both on our Devotion to God as well as on our Life among Men.

Looking at the previous chart, one immediately notices something that is grievously lacking in the popular prayer of Jabez. Missing is the God-ward emphasis of our prayer. Instead, the focus is upon me. Jesus taught us differently. He taught us to make the Lord a priority in our prayers.

Do you remember the context of this passage? In the last chapter we saw how that a person who has eternal life is one who loves God and who loves his neighbor as himself. That was illustrated with the parable of the Good Samaritan and with the living parable of Mary and Martha where one sister demonstrated her love and devotion to God instead of being preoccupied with the details of this life. This prayer is an application of that teaching.

PARABLE OF THE PERSISTENT FRIEND

And He said to them, "Suppose one of you shall have a friend, and shall go to him at midnight, and say to him, 'Friend, lend me three loaves; 6 for a friend of mine has come to me from a journey, and I have nothing to set before him;' 7 and from inside he shall answer and say, 'Do not bother me; the door has already been shut and my children and I are in bed; I cannot get up and give you anything.'

I tell you, even though he will not get up and give him anything because he is his friend, yet because of his persistence he will get up and give him as much as he needs." (Luke 11:5-8).

This parable is an explanation of the prayer that Jesus has just taught His disciples. We could title it, "How to Have Answered Prayer." The reason that we do not pray more is because we do not really believe that our prayers will be answered.

This man had a "Do Not Disturb" sign on his door handle. Has anyone ever called you for something at 3:00 in the morning? My initial response in such a case will be to tell you to call me in the morning. But there have been times when a persistent call has resulted in my getting up. This was such a case. This man does not want to get out of his warm bed to help his friend. But he does anyway. Why? Because of the persistence of

the petition. The word which is translated "persistence" in verse 8 is from the Greek word *anaideia* (ἀναίδεια), a compound using the *alpha* privative (like putting "un-" in front of a word) and *aidos*, the old word for shame. This describes one who is without shame in his asking. It is like Abraham bargaining God down over the life of Lot, asking first on behalf of 50, then 40 and so on until God agreed to spare Sodom if there were even 10 righteous within the city.

THE INTERPRETATION OF THE PARABLE

> *"And I say to you, ask, and it shall be given to you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you.*
> *10 For everyone who asks, receives; and he who seeks, finds; and to him who knocks, it shall be opened." (Luke 11:9-10).*

Asking implies a consciousness of need. You do not ask for that for which you have no need. This means that when we do not ask of the Lord, we are saying in effect that we do not want what He has to offer. Seeking is asking plus acting. It adds to it a certain earnestness. Knocking is asking plus acting plus persevering. We are to continue to ask.

Actually, all three of these verbs are in the present tense. In the Greek language, a command in the present means to continue to do something.

Keep on asking.
Keep on seeking.
Keep on knocking.

If the same command had been in the aorist tense, it would be translated, "Ask once and for all."

You need to know that the householder is not being likened to God. God is not sleepy or too busy or uninterested in answering our prayers. To place God in the role of the householder is to try to make the parable stand on all fours.

This is even more obvious when we look at the parable of the unjust judge (Luke 18:1-5). There the story is of a widow who continues to make appeals to an unrighteous judge who only dispenses justice because it is convenient to him.

Neither the householder or the judge are being likened to God. Rather, they are being contrasted to God. If continual prayer causes even such as these to respond, how much more will our loving Father provide for our needs if we continue to ask Him? What this parable is teaching is the

necessity of persisting in prayer.

Baroness Blixen was a Danish noblewoman living on a coffee plantation in Kenya. On her plantation lived a portion of the Kikuyu Tribe. Because of financial reverses after World War One, she lost her land, including the property on which the Kikuyu lived. When she learned the plans of the new owners to evict the Kikuyu from the land where they had lived all their lives, she began a crusade to save it for them. She had no money to buy it back, and so she tried to go through government channels.

After failing at every turn, the Baroness attended a large reception for the new governor of Kenya. She made her way to the receiving line and, as the governor and his wife passed by, she fell on her knees before the governor, holding onto both his hands and pleading on behalf of her Kikuyu. Shocked guests tried to pull her up, but she continued to beg the governor to give his word to look into the matter. Suddenly the governor's wife said, "You have mine!" Why was she successful? It was because of her unashamed persistence and her willingness to humble herself. You could say that she asked so much because she loved so much.

Now I want to ask you a question. Is this a blank check on prayer? Can I keep asking God for a solid gold Cadillac and expect to get it on the basis of this promise? No. The prayer mentioned here is the same one that is given in verses 1-5. When we pray for the things in the Lord's Prayer, then we will receive them. Within these parameters, we ought to expect an answer from God.

ILLUSTRATION OF A FATHER'S RESPONSES

> *"Now suppose one of you fathers is asked by his son for a fish; he will not give him a snake instead of a fish, will he?* 12 *Or if he is asked for an egg, he will not give him a scorpion, will he?" (Luke 11:11-12).*

Jesus asks two rhetorical questions. It is clear in the Greek text that these questions expect a negative answer. Fathers don't give intentionally evil gifts.

If a son asks his father for...	A fish	That father will not respond with a...	Snake	Will he?
	An egg		Scorpion	

Our problem is that so often we go to the Father and ask for things

that are not to our spiritual benefit. We go asking for snakes and for scorpions and wonder why our prayers go unanswered.

This brings me to another question. What is the purpose of prayer? If God knows all of my needs even before they arise, then why doesn't He head them off at the pass? Why does He allow them to arise in the first place? It is so that I will be forced into a relationship of dependency upon Him. You see, when everything is going well, my impulse is to stop trusting God. Therefore, my needs become the calling card of heaven.

THE POINT OF THE ILLUSTRATION

> *"If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him?" (Luke 11:13).*

The point of the illustration is that God answers prayer perfectly. It is an argument from the lesser to the greater. If the lesser is true that sinful fathers are able to give good things to their children (and it is), then how much more will the greater be true that a holy and righteous Father be that much more faithful to give good gifts to His children?

By the way, did you notice the prerequisite for answered prayer? It is the prerequisite of relationship. I don't buy birthday presents for the kids who live down the street. They aren't my kids. And in the same way, the Lord doesn't guarantee to answer all of the prayers of all men. On the other hand, He does offer "family status" to all men. You have been invited to join in the family of God.

There are a lot of people who want God to be there to answer their petitions, but do not want to enter into the commitment of a permanent relationship with Him. They are like the man who wants a woman to meet his sexual needs but does not want to commit himself to a permanent marriage relationship with her. The Lord will not allow Himself to be cheapened by such a non-committal relationship. Notice how God answers this prayer. He does not give...

- money.
- cars.
- material possessions.

He gives the Holy Spirit. He gives Himself. He is the bread of life. And that is the greatest gift of all.

EVIDENCE AND UNBELIEF
LUKE 11:14-54

When meeting Jesus, one is always confronted with a decision. You cannot meet Him and remain neutral. Once you meet Him, you will either decide that He is the Son of God and the Savior of the world, or else you will decide that He is either a legend, a liar, or a lunatic on the level with a poached egg. What you cannot do is to merely pass Him off as a good man. He will not allow that. No man can do and say the things that Jesus said and merely be a good man.

THE RESPONSE OF UNBELIEF

> *And He was casting out a demon, and it was dumb; and it came about that when the demon had gone out, the dumb man spoke; and the multitudes marveled.* 15 *But some of them said, "He casts out demons by Beelzebul, the ruler of the demons."* 16 *And others, to test Him, were demanding of Him a sign from heaven. (Luke 11:14-16).*

Our story opens when Jesus healed a man. The man had physical ailments - he was unable to speak. But the cause of his physical problems was because of an underlying spiritual problem. He was demon-possessed.

One of the wonderful things about Jesus is that He did not just talk. He was more than a mere teacher. We are living in a world where everyone seems to be promising something. Jesus didn't just talk; He delivered. That tells me something about Christianity. It is not just talk; it is life-changing. If your life has not changed, then you have no business talking.

What has happened in your life that can only be explained in terms of the supernatural? When people look at you, do they see a supernatural love at work? Are people amazed by your supernatural patience? Are you characterized by supernatural compassion?

When Jesus acted, the result was amazement. He healed this man by going to the root of his problem. Jesus cast out the demon. The healing was apparent to all who were present. The man who had been unable to talk was now speaking. Such a miracle demanded a response from the people and the response was soon in coming. It was a twofold response.

- *Some of them said, "He casts out demons by Beelzebul, the ruler of the demons."*
- *Others, to test Him, were demanding of Him a sign from heaven*

These were responses to an obvious miracle. A man had just been healed. There was a very obvious supernatural agent at work. The miracle could not be denied and there seems to have been no attempt to do so. People who have been lame are throwing away their crutches. People who have been deaf can now hear a pin drop. Seeing-eye dogs are being put out of work. People are asking for refunds from funeral homes. And then Jesus comes and does still another obvious miracle in their presence. Even the most die-hard skeptic can't laugh off that kind of power. They cannot deny that the supernatural is taking place. Thus when people responded to the miracles of Jesus, one thing they did not do was to say that a miracle had not taken place. What they did do was to question the source and the significance of the miracle.

- The Source of the Miracle: *Some of them said, "He casts out demons by Beelzebul, the ruler of the demons."*

  The name "Beelzebub" refers to an old Canaanite deity. *"Baal"* is the Canaanite word for "lord." *"Zebub"* was a reference to "flies." He was known as Baal-zebub, the "Lord of the Flies" in 2 Kings 1:2-6. He was the god of diseases. The Jews had taken this name and changed it to Baal-zebel which meant "Lord of the Dung." It was a term of derision. And they eventually came to use it as a title for Satan.

  Do you see what they are doing? They are pointing to Jesus and they are saying, "He is Satan in the flesh! He is only able to cure diseases because he is the demon of diseases!" They have seen the power of God's Holy Spirit at work and they deliberately and knowingly reject that Spirit.

  Have you ever been unjustly accused of something? Take heart, because you are in good company. Jesus was also unjustly accused.

- The Significance of the Miracle: *Others, to test Him, were demanding of Him a sign from heaven*

This was an unreasonable request in light of the fact that Jesus had only just given them a sign from heaven. Jesus will address this request in verse 29 when He speaks of this generation being a wicked generation that seeks for a sign.

Response of People	*"He casts out demons by Beelzebul, the ruler of the demons."*	*Others, to test Him, were demanding of Him a sign from heaven*
Answer of Jesus	Satan does not fight Satan; you have to bind Satan before you can rob him (Luke 12:17-26).	This evil generation looks for a sign, but no sign shall be given except the sign of Jonah (Luke 12:29-36)

Both of these responses were responses of unbelief. It might be argued that one was not as rebellious as the other, but they were both enough to elicit the condemnation of Jesus. The rest of this chapter will consist of Jesus addressing these two responses.

JESUS ANSWERS HIS CRITICS

But He knew their thoughts, and said to them, "Any kingdom divided against itself is laid waste; and a house divided against itself falls. 18 *And if Satan also is divided against himself, how shall his kingdom stand? For you say that I cast out demons by Beelzebul.* 19 *And if I by Beelzebul cast out demons, by whom do your sons cast them out? Consequently they shall be your judges.* 20 *But if I cast out demons by the finger of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.*

"When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own homestead, his possessions are undisturbed; 22 *but when someone stronger than he attacks him and overpowers him, he takes away from him all his armor on which he had relied, and distributes his plunder.*

> *"He who is not with Me is against Me; and he who does not gather with Me, scatters.*
>
> *"When the unclean spirit goes out of a man, it passes through waterless places seeking rest, and not finding any, it says, 'I will return to my house from which I came.' 25 And when it comes, it finds it swept and put in order. 26 Then it goes and takes along seven other spirits more evil than itself, and they go in and live there; and the last state of that man becomes worse than the first." (Luke 11:17-26).*

Jesus proceeds to give a number of reasons whereby it can be demonstrated that the charge of being in league with Satan is unwarranted.

1. Division is Detrimental: *"Any kingdom divided against itself is laid waste; and a house divided against itself falls. 18 And if Satan also is divided against himself, how shall his kingdom stand? (11:17-18).*

   When there is civil war in a nation, that nation does not prosper. When a husband and wife set themselves against one another, it is not long before their marriage begins to collapse. By the way, the same is true of the church. The quickest way to destroy the church is to allow division to exist in our midst.

   Now we come to the application. Jesus has been casting out demons. He has been in a war against Satan. If he is fighting Satan, then He is obviously not on Satan's side and not receiving His power from Satan.

2. The Devil has been Defeated: *For you say that I cast out demons by Beelzebul (11:18b).*

   These critics have already conceded this point. They could not deny the obvious outward miraculous power that Jesus manifested. Satan has plainly been cast out. And they have observed and agreed that there are supernatural forces at work. The only question that they have raised are the identity of these forces. If it can be demonstrated that Jesus is not in league with Satan, then the obvious conclusion is that He must be sent from God.

3. Sons are Determinative: *And if I by Beelzebul cast out demons, by whom do your sons cast them out? Consequently they shall be your judges (11:19).*

Apparently attempts at exorcism were not a new thing. Others had attempted to cure such cases of demon possession, probably with varying degrees of results. Josephus, the Jewish historian, describes the methods used by one well-known exorcist in attempting to cast out demons.

> *He put a ring that had a root of one of those sorts mentioned by Solomon to the nostrils of the demoniac, after which he drew out the demon through his nostrils; and when the man fell down immediately, he adjured him to return into him no more, making still mention of Solomon, and reciting the incantations which he composed. (Antiquities 8:2:5).*

The book of Acts tells us about a similar though unsuccessful attempt to remove a demon from an afflicted person (Acts 19:13-16). What made the ministry of Jesus so significant was that He never failed. We read of instances where His disciples attempted to cast out demons and failed, but that was never the case with Jesus.

This is an argument from the less to the greater. If the accusation against Jesus is true and He is a false healer, then how can it be said that anyone else is a true healer since Jesus has demonstrated so much greater effectiveness in battling the forces of darkness? The very fact that others have attempted to cast out demons and have met with less than perfect results is an indictment to all those others who attempted exorcism.

4. The Kingdom has Come: *But if I cast out demons by the finger of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you (11:20).*

The fact that God's power has been manifested in such a mighty way in defeating the devil and his minions is a sign that God is doing something that He has never done before. He is establishing His reign upon the earth. The kingdom has come.

Do you know where the Bible first mentions the finger of God? It is in the book of Exodus where the magicians of Egypt were confronting Moses. He had performed a very obvious miracle and they had duplicated it. He turned the waters of the Nile River into blood and they duplicated it by making more blood. He brought up a plague of frogs and they were able to produce more frogs. But there was a limit to their power and when they came face to face with that limitation, they reported to the Pharaoh, "*This is the finger of*

God" (Exodus 8:19). What was recognized by the pagans priests of Egypt had been missed by these people of Israel. Those who should have recognized the finger of God did not.

5. Delegation is Limited: *"When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own homestead, his possessions are undisturbed; 22 but when someone stronger than he attacks him and overpowers him, he takes away from him all his armor on which he had relied, and distributes his plunder" (11:21-22).*

You cannot delegate more than you already have. Satan cannot delegate more power than he already has. If the power that is being used against Satan is greater that what Satan has himself, then he cannot be the source of that power.

This is illustrated by a strong man who is about to be robbed. If you want to rob a strong man, you do not go into his house and ask him to help you. He will throw you out on your ear. You must first tie him up.

Here is what Jesus is saying. He has been tying up Satan. He has been robbing the kingdom of Satan. We all once were the property of Satan. We used to belong to his kingdom.

> *For He delivered us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son. (Colossians 1:13).*

When we came to Christ, we were taken from Satan's domain. We have now become a prized possession of the Son. Jesus is in the business of tying up Satan. When He cast a demon out of a man and Satan was powerless to do anything about it, that was a demonstration of the fact that Satan had been bound. Every time that you see a man or a woman turn from their sin and come to Christ, you are seeing an example of Satan being bound.

6. Neutrality is Not Possible: *"He who is not with Me is against Me; and he who does not gather with Me, scatters" (11:23).*

It is impossible to remain spiritually neutral. You are either on God's side or you are against Him. You will always be moving in one of these two directions.

A preacher was once asked how many people in his church were active. He replied, "All of them. Half of them are active for me

and the other half are active against me." There is a spiritual war going on and you are an active participant. The only question is one whose side you are.

Here is the point. Jesus has already noted that He and Satan are on opposite sides of the spiritual struggle. He has been fighting Satan and binding Satan and robbing Satan. Now we see that if you are not with Jesus, then you must be on the other side. And we know what side that is. It is Satan's side.

7. Emptiness is Inviting: *"When the unclean spirit goes out of a man, it passes through waterless places seeking rest, and not finding any, it says, 'I will return to my house from which I came.' 25 And when it comes, it finds it swept and put in order. 26 Then it goes and takes along seven other spirits more evil than itself, and they go in and live there; and the last state of that man becomes worse than the first" (Luke 11:24-26).*

Neutrality to Jesus equates to hospitality toward Satan.

Jesus is continuing the thought that was begun in verse 23. There we saw Him say that *"He who is not with Me is against Me; and he who does not gather with Me, scatters."* Now we see why this is the case. It is because there is no such thing as spiritual neutrality. That is why you can never be spiritual merely by avoiding certain sins. If spirituality were to be determined upon avoiding certain things, then your dog would be the most spiritual person in your household.

When someone is delivered from a demon or a temptation or a sin, the danger has not immediately been removed. When you take away something from your life, it leaves a vacuum. It is a fundamental law that nature abhors a vacuum. And so, when there is a vacuum in your life, you cannot help but to fill it. If you fill it with anything other than the Spirit of God, the results will be a return to sin.

I've seen this process take place time and again. Someone wrestles with a particular sin and for a time, they are delivered from that sin. This is the point of greatest danger. It is the point at which the vacuum in their life demands to be filled. With what shall you fill it? Will it be with the Spirit of God? Anything else is an idolatrous substitute.

A MISGUIDED BLESSING

> *And it came about while He said these things, one of the women in the crowd raised her voice, and said to Him, "Blessed is the womb that bore You, and the breasts at which You nursed."*
>
> *But He said, "On the contrary, blessed are those who hear the word of God, and observe it." (Luke 11:27-28).*

A woman from the crowd calls out words of blessing. It is a blessing directed toward Mary, the mother of Jesus. The words of the blessing are true as far as they go. They are an echo of the blessings that Luke has already recorded regarding Mary.

In that culture, a woman would find her significance in mothering and in the outcome of her mothering. The formula was: *You are a significant woman if your children turn out well*.

In our culture, it is almost the opposite. The formula we often hear is: *If you are only a mother, then you are not very significant.*

Jesus is teaching that your significance is not based upon your vocation in life, but upon whether you receive God's word and treasure it in your heart.

- Elizabeth said that Mary was blessed: *And she cried out with a loud voice, and said, "Blessed among women are you, and blessed is the fruit of your womb!" (Luke 1:42).*
- Mary also bore witness that she was blessed: *"For He has had regard for the humble state of His bondslave; For behold, from this time on all generations will count me blessed. 49 For the Mighty One has done great things for me; And holy is His name." (Luke 1:48-49).*

Jesus is not denying that Mary has been blessed. What He is doing is shifting the focus. He is saying in effect, "Don't be so caught up in Mary's blessing that you miss out on your own."

Have you ever thought that you would like God to bless you and work through you and in you the way He blessed and worked in and through some of the great saints in the Bible? The point that Jesus is making is that the same God who worked in Mary will also work in you if you *hear the word of God, and observe it*.

This brings us to another point. It is that, while Jesus came as a baby, He didn't stay that way. Christmas is a popular holiday. And even the image of a baby in a manger is well-received by the world because nearly everyone loves a baby. But if you come to Christ and only see the baby and never

seen the Sovereign Savior who sacrificed Himself, then you have missed the whole meaning of Christmas.

THE SIGN OF JONAH

> *And as the crowds were increasing, He began to say, "This generation is a wicked generation; it seeks for a sign, and yet no sign shall be given to it but the sign of Jonah.* 30 *For just as Jonah became a sign to the Ninevites, so shall the Son of Man be to this generation.*
>
> *"The Queen of the South shall rise up with the men of this generation at the judgment and condemn them, because she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and behold, something greater than Solomon is here.*
>
> *"The men of Nineveh shall stand up with this generation at the judgment and condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and behold, something greater than Jonah is here. (Luke 11:29-32).*

Back in verses 14-16 we saw two reactions to the healing ministry of Jesus. First there were those who accused Jesus of being in league with Satan. Then there were those who wanted to see another sign. Jesus has already addressed the first group in verses 17-26. Now He addresses those who are requesting a sign.

11:14		11:17	11:29
Jesus casts out a demon	Two reactions: • Charge of being in league with Satan • Request for a sign	Jesus answers those who think He is in league with Satan	Jesus answers those who want to see a sign

This section began when Jesus healed a man who was demon possessed and who was unable to speak. He performed an obvious miracle. It was a miracle that could not be explained away. There were no mirrors or strings. It was not a trick. It was an obvious supernatural miracle.

I've heard people say, "If only God would do a miraculous sign before me, then I would believe." Others say, "If I lived in the time of Jesus and saw the things that He did, then I would be able to believe." Maybe that

is true. And maybe it is not.

These people had seen signs. They had seen discarded crutches. They has seen the blind watching sunsets. They had seen the dead raised. And in this context they are seeking after a sign. Jesus refuses.

1. An Only Sign: *No sign shall be given to it but the sign of Jonah (11:29).*

Do you remember Jonah? He was the prophet who took a short ride in a long fish. God told him to go to Nineveh and he instead took a boat in the opposite direction. God sent a storm and then a submarine to turn him around.

What is the sign of Jonah? It is the sign of death and burial and resurrection. Jonah is a type of Christ. He can be seen in comparison to Jesus.

Jonah	Jesus
He was swallowed by a great fish	He was buried in the earth
He was in the fish for three days and three nights	He was dead and buried for three days and three nights
He was vomited up onto dry land	He rose from the dead

The resurrection is the ultimate apologetic. A man who was dead came back to life and was seen by eye witnesses who gave their own lives to testify of the reality of what they had seen.

2. A Historic Sign: *For just as Jonah became a sign to the Ninevites, so shall the Son of Man be to this generation (11:30).*

Nineveh was the city to which Jonah was sent. It was the capital city of the Assyrian Empire. The people of Nineveh had been pagan idol worshipers. What kind of sign was Jonah to the people of Nineveh? He was a sign that God has power over nature. He was also a sign of God's love to men and His offer of forgiveness through faith and repentance.

3. Condemning Sign #1: *The Queen of the South shall rise up with the*

men of this generation at the judgment and condemn them (11:31).

The story of the Queen of Sheba is told in 1 Kings 10. She was incredibly rich. Her country was on the southern end of the Arabian peninsula. Her ships brought trade from India and Egypt. Her country was protected by the impenetrable desert. She came from the farthest parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon.

Here is the point. The people of Israel did not have to travel very far at all to hear the preaching of Jesus. But they would not recognize Him even though He was in their very midst.

4. Condemning Sign #2: *The men of Nineveh shall stand up with this generation at the judgment and condemn it (11:32).*

This is an argument from the lesser to the greater. Both the Queen of Sheba and the men of Nineveh responded in a positive manner when hearing from someone who was considerably less than the Son of God.

Queen of Sheba	Men of Nineveh	This Generation
Actively came from the ends of the earth to hear Solomon	Heard the preaching of Jonah	Heard someone greater than either Solomon or Jonah
Repentance and faith		Unbelief

Here is the point. How much more responsible will those be of this generation who rejected One who was of considerably greater importance than either Solomon or Jonah?

LESSONS FROM LIGHT

"No one, after lighting a lamp, puts it away in a cellar, nor under a peck-measure, but on the lampstand, in order that those who enter may see the light.

"The lamp of your body is your eye; when your eye is clear, your whole body also is full of light; but when it is bad, your body also is full of darkness. 35 *Then watch out that the light in you may not be darkness.*

"If therefore your whole body is full of light, with no dark part in it, it shall be wholly illumined, as when the lamp illumines you with its rays." (Luke 11:33-36).

Jesus now turns to the illustration of light. We normally think of these verses in sort of a "stand alone" manner, but they should not be divorced from the context of this passage. The point has already been made that Jesus is speaking to a generation who is being condemned for its unbelief, even though they have had great exposure to the light.

1. A Light is Meant to be Seen: *"No one, after lighting a lamp, puts it away in a cellar, nor under a peck-measure, but on the lampstand, in order that those who enter may see the light" (11:33).*

   This first point is rather obvious. Light is being used as an analogy for the truth of the gospel; the message that God has sent to earth that men might see and believe and live. Light is not only meant to be seen, it is that which enables sight, for without light, there is no sight.

   I've had the opportunity to go into some caves and caverns that were deep enough so that when you turned out the light, there was total darkness. At such times, it does not matter if your vision is 20-20 of if it is blurry, in both cases you cannot see. Light exists in order that you might be able to see.

2. You can only see the Light when your Eyes are working properly: *"The lamp of your body is your eye; when your eye is clear, your whole body also is full of light" (11:34).*

   Light by itself does not cause sight. If you are to see, then you must have eyes that are able to take in that light. Jesus is the Light. He has come to a people who have been living in darkness. Now the question is whether they will be able to see. The point being made here is that they will be able to see as long as they have spiritual eyes with which to see.

3. If you can't see the Light, the fault isn't in the Light, it is in You: *"The lamp of your body is your eye; when your eye is clear, your whole body also is full of light; but when it is bad, your body also is full of darkness (11:34).*

   These people are in the presence of Jesus. They are in the

presence of the Light. If they hear the gospel and then do not believe the gospel, it is not the fault of the gospel. The fault lies in their own spiritual blindness.

- They had asked for a sign (11:29).
- They had been told that no sign would be given except for the sign of the resurrection.
- The Queen of Sheba and the people of Nineveh would condemn this generation for not having seen the sign that was given.

Quite a number of years ago, Josh McDowell wrote a book entitled, "Evidence that Demands a Verdict." It is replete with evidences demonstrating that the Bible is authoritative and that Jesus is who He said He was and that He is indeed risen from the dead. Given that great weight of evidence, why don't people believe? The fault lies, not in the evidence, but in the eyes. They don't see because they have been spiritually blinded.

4. The result of Light and Vision is that you can See: *"If therefore your whole body is full of light, with no dark part in it, it shall be wholly illumined, as when the lamp illumines you with its rays" (11:36).*

God has already provided the light. You go to Him and ask Him for the spiritual vision and He will supply that, too.

- Are you having problems seeing?
- Are you having problems understanding?
- Are you having problems with doubt?
- Are you having problems believing?

You go to the One who is known as the Father of lights and you ask Him for spiritual 20/20 vision and that He will remove the blinders and that He will work faith in you.

INWARD AND OUTWARD CLEANLINESS

Now when He had spoken, a Pharisee asked Him to have lunch with him; and He went in, and reclined at the table. 38 *And when the Pharisee saw it, he was surprised that*

He had not first ceremonially washed before the meal.
But the Lord said to him, "Now you Pharisees clean the outside of the cup and of the platter; but inside of you, you are full of robbery and wickedness. 40 *You foolish ones, did not He who made the outside make the inside also?* 41 *But give that which is within as charity, and then all things are clean for you." (Luke 11:37-41).*

Jesus accepted all sorts of dinner invitations. I cannot think of a single time when He was invited to someone's home where He did not accept the invitation. In this case, the home belonged to a Pharisee. The term "Pharisee" has come to have negative connotations in recent times. But this was not the case in the days of Jesus. The Pharisees were the evangelicals of Judaism.

- They believed in one God.
- They believed in the supernatural.
- They held to the Scriptures as being authoritative.
- They believed in angels.
- They believed in a future resurrection.

The problems they had were not so much in what they believed but in the attitude with which they held to those beliefs. They were a people who prided themselves on their great spiritual insights, but who were spiritually blind. There is an important principle here. It is that there are none so blind as those who think that they can see and are therefore unaware of their blindness.

The issue here was one of cleanliness: *The Pharisee saw it, he was surprised that He had not first ceremonially washed before the meal (11:38).* Jesus responds by pointing out that real cleanliness must begin on the inside.

Luke 11:33-36	**Luke 11:37-41**
The issue of Vision	The issue of Cleanliness
The problem with vision is that you cannot see the light if your internal eyes are not working	The problem with cleanliness is that you are not really clean unless you are clean on the inside
Real vision begins on the inside	Real cleanliness begins of the inside

It can be seen from this table that the issue has not changed. Only the elements of the analogy have changed. The point is that true spiritual life must begin on the inside. It begins at the point of faith.

Note that the Pharisee was surprised by the actions of Jesus. God does that sometimes. He surprises us and acts in a way we did not expect. That is how you can tell He is really God. You hear people say, "I like to believe that God is like this or that He is like that." They are not describing the God who is there. They are describing their own idol they have made. They are thinking of a god of their own making that acts just the way they want him to act and who changes to suit popular opinion.

Why would you treat God as being any different from the rest of reality? If you were driving down a winding country road that skirted a steep ravine, you would not say, "I prefer to think of this road as being straight." You conform your driving to the reality of the road. You do not make demands of the road; it makes its demands on you.

Here is how you can know if your God is real or imaginary. The real God does not act according to your wishes. He confronts you and he surprises you and He disturbs you and He makes His demands upon you.

SIX WOES AGAINST UNBELIEF

This entire chapter has been dealing with the issue of faith versus unbelief. We have already seen that there is no other position. Neutrality is merely another word for unbelief.

1. Woe of an Inconsistent Lifestyle: *"But woe to you Pharisees! For you pay tithe of mint and rue and every kind of garden herb, and yet disregard justice and the love of God; but these are the things you should have done without neglecting the others" (Luke 11:42).*

   The Pharisees were known for their meticulous law-keeping. When they paid their tithes, they made sure that nothing was left out. They gave attention to the smallest detail. Jesus does not condemn them for this. But there was something missing. They had overlooked justice and the love of God. Love and justice are what the Law was all about. To ignore love and justice was to ignore that which was at the very heart of the Law.

   I don't think that they started out that way. They had started out real. They had started out with a desire to separate themselves from sin and devote themselves to the service of the Lord. But

somewhere along the line they began taking more interest in what people thought than what God thought.

I make this point because it is possible for us to lose the reality of our relationship. We can get so involved in the ritual of our Christianity that we can lose sight of the reality behind the ritual. There is nothing wrong with ritual. Jesus isn't putting down the Law or tithing or ritual. But ritual without reality makes for empty religion.

2. Woe of Pride: *"Woe to you Pharisees! For you love the front seats in the synagogues, and the respectful greetings in the market places" (Luke 11:43).*

The Pharisees had an inordinate fondness for their own status. They loved it when people looked at them and said, "Isn't he wonderful?" The problem with receiving compliments and honors from men is that you begin to think that you deserve them. After a while, you begin looking for them.

3. Woe of a Hidden Contagion: *"Woe to you! For you are like concealed tombs, and the people who walk over them are unaware of it" (Luke 11:44).*

To understand this figure of speech, you need to remember the Jewish customs regarding cleanliness. One of the things that would make you ceremonially unclean was physical contact with a dead body. For this reason, the Jews in general and the Pharisees in particular took great pains to avoid walking over tombs. You never knew whether an old cover stone might crack and you would inadvertently break through and step onto an old decaying carcass.

Jesus likens the Pharisees to concealed tombs. They look very nice on the outside. But inside there is rot and decay and it is just waiting to infect the one with whom it comes into contact.

4. Woe of Hypocrisy: *And one of the lawyers said to Him in reply, "Teacher, when You say this, You insult us too." 46 But He said, "Woe to you lawyers as well! For you weigh men down with burdens hard to bear, while you yourselves will not even touch the burdens with one of your fingers" (Luke 11:45-46).*

The lawyer here is not a legal litigator. Rather he is one who was an expert in the Mosaic law. He was a seminary professor. And

he must have felt a bit of the sting in the words of Jesus, for he took them personally. As far as he was concerned, Jesus had gone from preaching to meddling.

Does Jesus apologize and back off? To the contrary, Jesus addresses Himself to those who were experts in the Law of God in such a way as to give the harshest condemnation.

When David spoke of the Law of God in Psalm 119, it was a blessing, a delight. When the experts of the Law were done with it the law was a burden. They had turned the Law inside-out. What God had graciously given they had perverted by their teaching to be an unbearable code of conduct, one which was so complicated they could not even understand it, let alone obey it.

5. Woe to the Enemies of God: *"Woe to you! For you build the tombs of the prophets, and it was your fathers who killed them. 48 Consequently, you are witnesses and approve the deeds of your fathers; because it was they who killed them, and you build their tombs. 49 For this reason also the wisdom of God said, 'I will send to them prophets and apostles, and some of them they will kill and some they will persecute, 50 in order that the blood of all the prophets, shed since the foundation of the world, may be charged against this generation, 51 from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah, who perished between the altar and the house of God; yes, I tell you, it shall be charged against this generation'" (Luke 11:47-51).*

There is a sense of irony in the words of Jesus. He says, "You guys take pride in building great tombs to honor the prophets when it was your selfsame ancestors who put them to death." The implication is that if those same prophets were alive today, these same Pharisees and experts in the Law of Moses would be putting them to death again.

There were three different ways in which these religious legalists were guilty of the blood of prophets whom their forefathers had slain.

- They had rejected the teaching of the prophets, just as their forefathers had done.
- They were presently rejecting Jesus' teaching, which was consistent with the teaching of those prophets. They would soon put Jesus to death in fulfillment of the teaching of those same prophets.

- Those prophets and apostles who are yet to come after the death and resurrection of Christ, will be rejected, persecuted and killed by them.

6. Woe to those who Hinder others: *"Woe to you lawyers! For you have taken away the key of knowledge; you did not enter in yourselves, and those who were entering in you hindered." (Luke 11:52).*

What is this "key of knowledge" that these legalists had taken away? It is the Old Testament Scriptures that bore witness to Jesus as the Messiah of God. These experts in the Law had the key to seeing Jesus as the Messiah and they were attempting to use that same key to reject Jesus and even to put Him to death. They took away the Law of God and substituted it with laws of their own making and, in doing so, they took away and hid the gospel.

THE RESPONSE OF UNBELIEF

And when He left there, the scribes and the Pharisees began to be very hostile and to question Him closely on many subjects, 54 plotting against Him, to catch Him in something He might say. (Luke 11:53-54).

This was a turning point in the opposition of the Pharisees. They had already demonstrated unbelief and now they show that the reaction of unbelief to the gospel is hostility. How about you? What is your response to the gospel? One thing is for certain, it will not be neutral. You are either for Christ or you are against Him. Which is it?

A WARNING AGAINST HYPOCRISY
LUKE 12:1-12

Hostility toward the person of Jesus was on the rise. The last chapter closed with the enemies of Jesus coming together to plot His demise. But they were not open about such plans. They recognized His popularity among the people and so they hid their true motives beneath a mask of hypocrisy. Luke draws us to this situation with his opening verse:

> *Under these circumstances, after so many thousands of the multitude had gathered together that they were stepping on one another, He began saying to His disciples first of all, "Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy" (Luke 12:1).*

What are the circumstances to which Luke refers? He refers to the previous verses where the scribes and the Pharisees began to plot against Jesus as to how they might catch Him in something He said (11:53-54).

Luke 11:42-52	**Luke 12:1-13**
Jesus speaks to the Pharisees and experts in the Law	Jesus speaks to His disciples about the Pharisees and experts in the Law
Six woes	Six warnings

Jesus has already addressed the scribes and Pharisees in the preceding chapter. He gave them six woes. Now He addresses His own disciples. Why? Because they run the danger of being caught in the middle of the storm. They are going to be hearing accusations and they are going to be seeing the traps that are set forth to trip up Jesus. The temptation that will face them will be to fall into the trap into which the scribes and the Pharisees have already fallen - the trap of hypocrisy.

IN BOTH HYPOCRISY AND LEAVEN, A LITTLE GOES A LONG WAY

> *Under these circumstances, after so many thousands of the multitude had gathered together that they were stepping on one another, He began saying to His disciples first of all,"Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy." (Luke 12:1).*

Leaven is something that you use in baking. I'm not much of a cook and I know little to nothing about baking, but I understand that leaven is that little bit of yeast that is added to bread to make it rise. You put in the leaven and it influences the bread. For this reason, the Bible regularly uses leaven to describe the idea of influence. Influence can be good and influence can be bad. The Bible uses the idea of influence in both ways.

- The Israelites were to remove leaven from their homes on the week of the Passover (Exodus 12:15). This was symbolic of how they were leaving the pagan influences of Egypt behind when they went out into the wilderness.
- Jesus also used leaven to picture the kingdom of God and how it comes very small to influence the entire world (Luke 13:20-21).
- Paul uses leaven to describe those old influences of our past life and how we are to put them aside now that we have come to Christ (1 Corinthians 5:6-8).

What was the leaven of the Pharisees? Jesus tells us. It was hypocrisy. Our word "hypocrisy" is derived from a compound word in the Greek. It comes from the joining of two words together.

a. *Hupo* (ὑπο) is the Greek word for "under."
b. *Krino* (κρινω), "to separate or judge."

The resulting word was used in the Greek theater of the actors who would speak their parts behind a mask. When used in that regard, it had a positive idea of one who answers a dialogue. But when used in the negative sense, it describes one who says one thing while believing another.

One of the charges that I often hear against the church is that it is full of hypocrites. This is something that unbelievers say and it often has a certain element of truth. My standard response is that we can always use one more.

But the truth of the matter is that Christianity is diametrically opposed to hypocrisy. The reason this is the case is because Christianity strips away the mask. It says that you are a guilty sinner who is not worthy of the grace of God. It says that you are a real sinner who commits real sins. It suffers from no illusions as to any inherent goodness on the part of its members.

A hypocrite is a person who pretends to be good when he is not. A Christian is one who has confessed that he is a sinner and who has agreed with God that he is deserving only of death and who has then cast himself upon the mercy of the court and has found such mercy at the cross.

The problem arises once we come into the church and get around all of these other nice-looking Christians. It is at that moment that we face the temptation of the leaven of the Pharisees. It is at that time when we are tempted to pretend that we are not quite so bad any longer. We are tempted to conform on the outside and to let it stay there and to go no further.

HYPOCRISY DOESN'T STAY HIDDEN

> *"But there is nothing covered up that will not be revealed, and hidden that will not be known. 3 Accordingly, whatever you have said in the dark shall be heard in the light, and what you have whispered in the inner rooms shall be proclaimed upon the housetops." (Luke 12:2-3).*

Christianity is all about truth revealed. A part of that revelation involves who you are and what you are really like. This is stated as a simple truism -- everything hidden eventually becomes known. Anyone with kids knows this principle. Secrets never stay secret. Trying to conceal the truth is a bit like trying to conceal a pregnancy. It will eventually be known.

> *The sins of some men are quite evident, going before them to judgment; for others, their sins follow after. 25 Likewise also, deeds that are good are quite evident, and those which are otherwise cannot be concealed. (1 Timothy 5:24-25).*

It doesn't matter what you do, it will eventually become known. This applies to the good that you do as well as to the sin that you commit. It even applies to the things that you say. It applies to that which you yell from the rooftops and it applies to that which you whispered in a back room.

Do you remember Adam and Eve in the garden? They had no sooner tasted of the forbidden fruit than their eyes were opened and they were hiding

from the presence of God. But you cannot hide from the presence of God. Soon there was an insistent call, "Adam, where are you?" It was not as though God had lost track of Adam. Rather, He asks the question to bring Adam face to face with his own sin. God does that with us, too. He asks, "Where are you and what are you doing?" But when He does, He isn't asking for His own benefit, but for yours.

HYPOCRISY IS AFRAID OF THE WRONG THING

> *"And I say to you, My friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do.* 5 *But I will warn you whom to fear: fear the One who after He has killed has authority to cast into hell; yes, I tell you, fear Him! (Luke 12:4-5).*

At the root of hypocrisy is fear. It is a fear that someone might think poorly of you. That is why people play the "mask" game. We put on our masks while thinking that people will be impressed with the mask that we wear instead of seeing the real person behind the mask. In doing so, we are being afraid of the wrong person.

1. A Proper Fear: *I will warn you whom to fear (12:5).*

   Fear is not necessarily a bad thing. A proper fear can keep you out of trouble. Little children are often in danger because they are not properly afraid of the right thing. We have to keep them away from the stove or the oven or sharp objects because they do not have a proper fear of these things.

   The Bible tells us that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. It is appropriate to have a proper fear of God -- not a fear that drives us away from Him, but a fear that draws us close. This has a specific correlation to the previous verses. If we are not afraid of the wrong thing, then we will also not be afraid to speak that which is to be revealed -- the Gospel.

2. The Authority over Hell: *Fear the One who after He has killed has authority to cast into hell (12:5).*

   The word translated "hell" is the Greek word γεεννα (géena).

It is actually a transliteration of the Hebrew name for the Valley of Hinnom. This was the deep ravine on the southwest side of Jerusalem that served as the city garbage heap. In the dark days of Israel's history, it had been used as a place to sacrifice babies to pagan gods (2 Chronicles 28:3; 33:6). The name had come to have reference to the place of future divine judgment.

HYPOCRISY IS UNNEEDED

> *"Are not five sparrows sold for two cents? And yet not one of them is forgotten before God. 7 Indeed, the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Do not fear; you are of more value than many sparrows." (Luke 12:6-7).*

Hypocrisy wears a mask so that people will see the mask and will be impressed and will come to like the mask and will think that the mask is a true representation of the person wearing it. When you come to Christ, you find that you need no mask. You find a God who has already seen you the way you really are and who loves you and values you anyway.

That is what happened to the Samaritan woman. She came to the well that day with her mask firmly in place. When Jesus stripped off her mask, she must have been terrified at the condemnation that she thought would follow. But instead she found love and forgiveness and acceptance.

This passage does not say that bad things will never happen to you. It does not say that sparrows will never be hurt. It only says that they are not forgotten by God. You can be assured that God is aware of your situation.

The references to sparrow and the hairs of your head is an argument from the lesser to the greater. If God is concerned with such minor things such as sparrows and hair, how much more shall He show concern and demonstrate His love for those who are His people?

HYPOCRISY CAN BE SEEN BOTH IN SILENCE AND IN SPEAKING

> *"And I say to you, everyone who confesses Me before men, the Son of Man shall confess him also before the angels of God; 9 but he who denies Me before men shall be denied*

before the angels of God.

"And everyone who will speak a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him; but he who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven him." (Luke 12:8-10).

In the last chapter, we saw the Pharisees accusing Jesus of casting out demons by the power of Satan. They saw the miraculous power. They could not deny that it was supernatural. So they did the next best thing. They attacked the source of that power.

It was a hypocritical attack. They were hiding behind a mask because they had been confronted by One who had exposed their own weakness and sinfulness. Their attack was a smoke screen. It was a mask behind which they could hide. And in formulating this mask, they had not only spoken against Jesus, but they had also spoken against the Holy Spirit of God.

Why does Jesus make a distinction between one who speaks *a word against the Son of Man* versus one who *blasphemes against the Holy Spirit*? It is because it is possible to see the man Jesus and to initially not recognize Him for who He is. But when you see the power of God's Spirit at work and reject that power, there is no higher realm of evidence or influence that can guide you to the truth.

Every once in a while, I meet someone who is afraid that they may have committed the unpardonable sin. The solution to such a fear is to direct such a one to the cross. If you are one who is believing the gospel and seeking the regeneration that the Spirit provides in the new birth, then it is clear that you have not committed the unpardonable sin.

WHILE HYPOCRISY HAS NO DEFENSE, GOD'S PEOPLE NEED NO DEFENSE

"And when they bring you before the synagogues and the rulers and the authorities, do not become anxious about how or what you should speak in your defense, or what you should say; 12 for the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say." (Luke 12:11-12).

When you come to Christ, you find that you are relieved from worry about what God is thinking of you. But that is not all. You also find that you are relieved from worry about what people are thinking of you. Why is this? It is because you have a new advocate. You have someone who will be with

you. It is the very Spirit of God.

Scribes and Pharisees	Followers of Christ
Blasphemed the Holy Spirit	The Holy Spirit serves as their Helper
Spoke those things against God that they should not have said	Will be taught by the Holy Spirit that which they should say

The words of Jesus here were not theoretical. They were prophetic. The book of Acts tells us of the early Christians being brought before both synagogues and rulers to answer for their faith. A great deal of the book of Acts takes place within various law courts of the ancient world. The book of Acts is the official account of those who were witnesses for the defense in those courts of law.

Does this mean that preachers should never prepare before they preach or that Bible teachers should avoid studying that on which they plan to teach? No, I don't believe it does. But it does mean that when you are caught by surprise the Lord hasn't been similarly surprised and that He is able to stand by you and to speak on your behalf. It means that when you have opportunity to speak in the name of Christ, you can do so with confidence, for you do not speak alone.

The story is told of a famed concert pianist who was scheduled to play for a packed concert hall. All of the seats had been sold out for weeks and everyone who was anyone had gathered to hear the recital. At the appropriate time, the lights dimmed and the curtain rose and everyone was horrified to see a little boy who had wandered away from his parents and who had taken his seat at the grand piano. Not noticing the crowd, he began to play "Chopsticks." The concert pianist strode out onto the stage and saw this little upstart performance. The audience was hushed as he stepped up behind the little boy and could see him bend over and whisper, "Keep on playing." Then, before an amazed audience, he added his own two hands to the playing of the little boy and he filled in the base and treble parts. Together, they played through the rest of the piece and then were met with the thunderous applause of the crowd.

That is what God does for us. He comes and He gives us the message and the means by which to speak it and then He allows us to share in the applause of heaven.

THE PITFALL OF PROSPERITY
LUKE 12:13-34

The teachings of Jesus as presented in the Gospel of Luke are set within a particular context. It is not always a chronological context. Sometimes these accounts are topically arranged. But sometimes the arrangement is also chronological. The setting for this story is found back in Luke 12:1.

> *Under these circumstances, after so many thousands of the multitude had gathered together that they were stepping on one another, He began saying to His disciples first of all, "Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy." (Luke 12:1).*

Notice the opening phrase: "Under these circumstances..." What circumstances are these? They are the circumstances found in Luke 11:53-54 where the scribes and the Pharisees began to plot how they might attack Jesus.

Have you ever had the experience of knowing that someone was out to get you? That they were watching your every move and doing their best to try to trip you up? Such a circumstance would worry anyone. And thus it is in this context that Jesus speaks on the subject of worry and anxiety. The entire first part of the chapter is taken up with this theme.

12:4	*Do not be AFRAID of those who kill the body...*
12:5	*But I will tell you who to FEAR; FEAR the One who after He has killed has authority to cast into hell; yes, I tell you, FEAR Him.*
12:7	*Do not FEAR; you are of more value than many sparrows.*

12:11	*...do not become ANXIOUS about how or what you should speak in your defense...*
12:22	*...I say to you, do not become ANXIOUS for your life...*
12:25	*And which of you by being ANXIOUS can add a single cubit to his life's span?*
12:26	*...why are you ANXIOUS about other matters?*

It is in the midst of this theme of anxiety that Jesus deals with a certain type of anxiety - financial anxiety.

SETTING FOR THE PARABLE

> *And someone in the crowd said to Him, "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the family inheritance with me."*
> *But He said to him, "Man, who appointed Me a judge or arbiter over you?" (Luke 12:13-14).*

This passage begins with an interruption. Jesus has been teaching about the importance of fearing the spiritual over the physical. But there was a man in the crowd who was so preoccupied with his material inheritance that he hadn't heard a word that Jesus said.

The world has a way of doing that to us. It is easy to get so concerned about the immediacy of your particular circumstances or situation that you cannot see anything else. When you find yourself holding a hammer, it is easy to see everything as a nail. But Jesus didn't give us a hammer. He gave us a cross.

The request of this man was not without warrant. It was the custom for the rabbis to mediate in such disputes. He is coming to Jesus as one would come to a rabbi of the day. He looks at Jesus as a way to get what he wants. Notice the specific request which this man makes. He does not ask Jesus to hear the merits of the case and make a decision. He asks Jesus to pre-judge the case in his favor.

This man thinks too much of money. He is more concerned with money than in the spiritual truths that Jesus has been sharing. On the other hand, this man thinks too little of money. He has failed to realize that the use and abuse of money is an indicator of where your heart is.

WARNING AGAINST GREED

> *And He said to them, "Beware and be on your guard against every form of greed; for not even when one has an abundance does his life consist of his possessions." (Luke 12:15).*

Jesus capitalizes on this man's interruption to teach a spiritual truth. This spiritual lesson will be focused upon the sin of greed. We don't hear many sermons on greed. But one of the Ten Commandments deals with this specific sin. Think about that. If you were being asked to write down the most significant laws for a nation, what would you write?

> The word "greed" is translated from the Greek word *pleonexia*, a compound made up of two separate words:
> - *Pleon* is "many."
> - *Echo* is the verb meaning "to have."
>
> Greed is the thirst to have more.

- Against murder.
- Theft.
- Morality.

What about greed? God considered it to be very important.

> *"...for not even when one has an abundance does his life consist of his possessions." (Luke 12:15).*

I am not a suit of clothes. I am not a house or a car. My identity is not in those things. And my self-worth should not be tied to those things. The problem with greed is that it comes in all different shapes and sizes. It is a shape-shifter. It can come across as thriftiness or as fairness or as diligence. There are many ways into the greed trap. This is why Jesus warns against *every form of greed*. Greed takes on many forms. One of the primary forms is that of materialism. This sin involves the excess concern for money and for possessions.

THE PARABLE

> *And He told them a parable, saying, "The land of a certain rich man was very productive. 17 And he began reasoning to himself, saying 'What shall I do, since I have no*

place to store my crops?'

"And he said, 'This is what I will do: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. 19 And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years to come; take your ease, eat, drink and be merry."'

"But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your soul is required of you; and now who will own what you have prepared?'

"So is the man who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God." (Luke 12:16-21).

This was a man who had a big harvest with a small storage space. The answer to his dilemma was rather obvious: Build bigger storage spaces. What was wrong with this? After all, there is nothing particularly wrong with building bigger barns.

The problem is that God has been left out of the picture. This man was a practicing atheist. He may well have attended the synagogue every Sabbath, but God was not a part of his everyday world. It isn't that he says the wrong thing about God. It is that he doesn't give God any thought at all.

Notice the use of the personal pronoun. He had "I" trouble. The word "I" and "my" are used 12 times in this passage. That does not mean it is always wrong to use the personal pronoun, but in this case, it is a description of a man who lives for the moment. He does not take God into account. Indeed, he does not even take himself into account. He does not realize that his own life is limited.

1. A Philosophy of Pleasure: *Take your ease, eat, drink and be merry (12:19).*

   This was the philosophy of the Epicureans. Luke, as a Greek physician, would have been familiar with them. They rose to prominence in the years following Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle. They engaged in the pursuit of pleasure. Their motto was the maximum amount of happiness for the minimum amount of effort.

2. True Foolishness: *But God said to him, "You fool!" (12:20).*

   This is not speaking of His intellectual capacity. It is an evaluation of his life. He was living his life as though there was no God.

The FOOL has said in his heart, "There is no God."
They are corrupt, they have committed abominable deeds;
There is no one who does good.
The Lord has looked down from heaven upon the sons of men,
To see if there are any who understand,
Who seek after God.
They are all turned aside; together they have become corrupt;
There is no one who does good, not even one.
(Psalm 14:1-3).

The fool is one who acts as though God does not exist. I know a lot of people who claim to believe in God, but who act as though He had taken a long walk and wasn't coming back. They are practicing atheists. Indeed, I act like that whenever I sin.

Here was a man who acted as though God were not there. He had ignored the fact that his very material possessions over which he lavished so much attention were a gift from God. Therefore he ignored what was the very purpose of his wealth. He treated wealth as an end unto itself rather than as an opportunity to use it to glorify and honor the Lord.

3. The Requirement of God: *But God said to him, "You fool! This very night your soul is required of you" (12:20).*

This literally says, "In this night *they* demand your soul from you." This was a common use by the Jewish rabbis to speak of God. It was known as a "plural of majesty." This man made two incorrect presumptions:

- He presumed that he would continue to possess his wealth in the future.
- He presumed that he would be alive in the future to enjoy whatever possessions he had.

The man thought that he was in control of his life. But it is the Lord who determines the length of a man's days. The man looked to his wealth as his security and was unmindful that our security is only in the Lord.

4. The Point of the Parable: *So is the man who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God" (12:21).*

It is a fatal act of folly to do as this man did. If you are going to accumulate riches, make them eternal riches. Make them riches "toward God." This brings me to a question. What does it mean to be rich toward God? It is salvation! The believer is the possessor of all of the riches of Christ Jesus.

By the way, did you see the correlation between the situation in the parable and the situation of the man who had come to Jesus? The fact that he is coming and arguing over an inheritance indicates that someone has died and left a lot of money. What good did it do them? They could not take it with them. They could only leave it behind. And, even then, it only led to a family feud.

5. The Question of Work.

Before we leave the parable, I want to ask you a question. What does this parable say about the value of work? Is this an excuse to stop working and providing for the needs of my family? Does this mean that I should not plan for the future? No, it does not.

The Bible has quite a lot to say about the importance of work and of planning. Jesus told a parable about the foolishness of one who set out to build a tower without first counting the cost of what it would take to finish it (Luke 14:28).

"Go to the ant, O sluggard, observe her ways and be wise." (Proverbs 6:6).

"...make it your ambition to lead a quiet life and attend to your own business and work with your hands" (1 Thess. 4:11).

"...if anyone will not work, neither let him eat." (2 Thess. 3:10).

There is nothing wrong with planning for the future. But those plans ought to include all of the future. They should not stop with my death. They should be concerned with the life after death. To plan for anything less is to sell short your own soul.

THE INTERPRETATION OF THE PARABLE

Jesus begins this section with the words, "For this reason..." This is an explanation of the parable which He has just told.

1. A Warning Against Anxiety.

> *And He said to His disciples, "For this reason I say to you, do not be anxious for your life, as to what you shall eat; nor for your body, as to what you shall put on.* 23 *For life is more than food, and the body than clothing." (Luke 12:22-23).*

Anxiety is the counterpart of greed. Greed can never get enough. Anxiety is afraid that it may not have enough. If you are going to worry, at least be smart enough to worry about the right thing. If you are going to worry, then worry about that which lasts. Worry about eternity. But better yet, come to Christ and trust in Him as Lord and Savior and be able to cease from worry altogether.

2. Three Illustrations.

All three of these illustrations are seen in contrast to the rich fool of the previous passage.

a. Illustration #1 - The Ravens.

> *"Consider the ravens, for they neither sow nor reap; and they have no storeroom nor barn; and yet God feeds them; how much more valuable you are than the birds!" (Luke 12:24).*

The raven was on the Levitical list of unclean animals. If ever an animal could be considered worthless, it was the raven. And yet, they are pictured as a part of God's consideration. If God is concerned about ravens, how much more will be His concern for you?

b. Illustration #2 - Life Span.

> *"And which of you by being anxious can add a single cubit to his life's span?* 26 *If then you cannot do even a little thing, why are you anxious about other matters?" (Luke 12:25-26).*

It is not quite clear in the Greek text whether this has reference to the length of one's life or to his height (the word "life" is added by the translators and does not appear in the original). It doesn't really matter. Both are equally true.

The same Greek word describes the height of little Zacchaeus (Luke 19:3) as well as the age of Sarah (Hebrews 11:11).

Anxiety doesn't make you live longer. On the contrary, it makes you life shorter. Here is the principle: Anxiety does not produce positive results. Anxiety also cannot make you taller or shorter, slimmer or plumper (I should know, I've tried).

c. Illustration #3 - Field Lilies.

> *"Consider the lilies, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin; but I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory did not clothe himself like one of these. 28 But if God so arrays the grass in the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, how much more will He clothe you, O men of little faith! (Luke 12:27-28).*

If God arrays the lilies, He is able to clothe you. If God provides for short-lived grass, then He will provide for you.

We worship a God who provides. He provides for birds and for flowers. And He is able to provide for you.

3. Conclusion.

> *"And do not seek what you shall eat, and what you shall drinks, and do not keep worrying. 30 For all these things the nations of the world eagerly seek; but your Father knows that you need these things. 31 But seek for His kingdom, and these things shall be added to you. 32 Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has chosen gladly to give you the kingdom.*
>
> *"Sell your possessions and give to charity;*

> *make yourselves purses which do not wear out, an unfailing treasure in heaven, where no thief comes near, nor moth destroys. 34 For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." (Luke 12:29-34).*

This is a strong statement. Jesus calls His people to give their money to Him. But this is not necessarily a call to give to the church building fund. This is a call to give to those in need. It is a call to *give to charity* (12:33). The word there is normally translated as "alms." The point is that when we give to the poor, we are giving to Jesus.

He wants everything that you have and everything that you are. Does this mean that I am sinning if I have a savings account or own my own house? I do not think so. But it does mean that I am to be generous to those in need.

> *Instruct those who are rich in this present world not to be conceited or to fix their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy.*
>
> *Instruct them to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, 19 storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is life indeed. (1 Timothy 6:17-19).*

In this passage, the rich are not told to get rid of all of their riches. But they are told...

- Not to trust in their riches.
- To share and be generous.

This is what Jesus is describing. If you are working to gain the wealth of the world, you will lose the wealth of God. What are you seeking?

I want to conclude this section with several principles.

- Your view of the future will determine your present conduct. If you really believed that you were going to die tomorrow, would you do anything different today? By the same token, what are you doing today that reflects the truth that you will one day stand before the

Judge of the Universe?

- Your view of what is most important in life is crucial to how you life your life. Where are your priorities? What is that one thing that you are careful to make first place in your life, no matter what? The principle here is that you need to make the first thing first in your life.

- Life does not consist in material possessions. It is not what you have that is important, but whose you are that will be eternally significant. Have you given yourself over to the one who gives true meaning to life? You are invited to do so today.

THE READINESS OF THE RIGHTEOUS
LUKE 12:35-59

Have you ever had visitors drop by unexpectedly? Perhaps there were dirty dishes in the kitchen or the laundry was out or the ironing board was in the middle of the living room. In our household, when we know that visitors are coming, it causes us to straighten up the house to a state of readiness. The point that Jesus is going to make in this passage is that there are visitors coming. Because of this, we are to live lives of readiness.

THE PARABLE OF THE WATCHFUL SLAVES

> *"Be dressed in readiness, and keep your lamps alight.*
> *36 And be like men who are waiting for their master when he returns from the wedding feast, so that they may immediately open the door to him when he comes and knocks.*
> *Blessed are those slaves whom the master shall find on the alert when he comes; truly I say to you, that he will gird himself to serve, and have them recline at the table, and will come up and wait on them.* *37 Whether he comes in the second watch, or even in the third, and finds them so, blessed are those slaves. (Luke 12:35-38).*

This passage begin with a command to be dressed in readiness. The thundering diction of the King James Version is closer to the Greek text -- "Let your loins be girded about..." Men in that day wore long, flowing robes. When they wanted to get some work done, they would tuck these robes into a belt around their waist so that they would not get in the way. Today we would say, "Let your sleeves be rolled up."

1. The Service of the Master: *"...truly I say to you, that he will gird himself to serve, and have them recline at the table, and will come up*

and wait on them" (Luke 12:37).

Notice what the master does on behalf of the faithful slaves. He takes the place of a servant. The master takes on the clothing of the servant and has the servant sit at the table and then the master waits on the servant. He has the right to demand that we wait upon him and serve him. But he does not use that right. Instead he becomes the servant.

Do you remember what Jesus did on the night of the Last Supper? He took the role of a servant, washing the feet of the disciples. He was demonstrating the role that He would soon be playing on the cross as He washed away our sins.

In his delightful book, *And the Angels were Silent*, Max Lucado calls you to imagine what it would be like if there is a knock at your door tomorrow and you go to open it and several men are standing there in business suits. They show you their identification cards indicating that they are White House Staff. They hand you an envelope. In it, written on expensive-looking stationary is a letter - an invitation. It is an invitation to dinner at the White House.

On the appointed day, a plane takes you to Washington. A limousine meets you at the airport and takes you to the White House. There you are met by more black suits and ushered into the presidential dining room. You sit in the dining room amidst all of the splendor of the residence.

And then, in comes the president. He is just the way you have seen him on television (perhaps a bit shorter). The square jaw, the flashing eyes, the blue suit, the apron. The apron. The president is wearing an apron and he begins to serve you dinner. Sounds a little far-fetched? The most exalted VIP in the nation serving a meal? Not really. He says, "This is My body," as he breaks the bread. You thought that is was just...

a ritual.

an observance.

a memorial of something that happened way back then.

It is much more. It is a meal that He has with us. We serve a King who has put on an apron. Think about that the next time you go to the Lord's Table.

2. An Unexpected Return: *"Whether he comes in the second watch, or even in the third, and finds them so, blessed are those slaves" (Luke 12:38).*

The Romans divided each night into four watches (The Jews divided them into three watches, Judges 7:19). Both Matthew and Mark utilize the Roman system (Matthew 14:25; Mark 13:35) and it is likely that Luke does the same.

The important point is that we do not know when Christ is going to return. We are assured that it will take us by surprise. People who speculate on the nearness or remoteness of the date of His return are lessons in futility. What is important is that you always be ready. This brings us to the next parable.

THE PARABLE OF THE THIEF

"And be sure of this, that if the head of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have allowed his house to be broken into. 40 You too, be ready; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour that you do not expect." (Luke 12:39-40).

This second parable is directly related to the one that preceded it. Both of these parables make a point of an unexpected visit.

Luke 12:35-38	Luke 12:39-40
Watchful slaves waiting for the coming of a Master from the Wedding Feast	The watchful Head of the House waiting for the coming of the Thief
A Joyful Occasion	A Sorrowful Occasion
The slaves do not know exactly when the Master is coming	The Head of the House does not know when the Thief is coming

The coming of Jesus is likened to the coming of a thief. Thieves do not make reservations or RSVP's. The nature of the work of a thief is that he gives no forewarning. If he did, then you would be ready with the police.

The main point of this parable is the unexpectedness of the coming of the Lord. He is going to come with the unexpectedness of a thief in the night. This assertion is repeated throughout the New Testament (Matthew 24:42-44; 1 Thessalonians 5:2; 2 Peter 3:10).

FAITHFUL & UNFAITHFUL STEWARDS

> *And Peter said, "Lord, are you addressing this parable to us, or to everyone else as well?"*
>
> *And the Lord said, "Who then is the faithful and sensible steward, whom his master will put in charge of his servants, to give them their rations at the proper time? 43 Blessed is that slave whom his master finds doing so when he comes. 44 Truly I say to you, that he will put him in charge of all his possessions.*
>
> *"But if that slave says in his heart, 'My master will be a long time in coming,' and begins to beat the slaves, both men and women, and to eat and drink and get drunk; 46 the master of that slave will come on a day when he does not expect him, and at an hour he does not know, and will cut him in pieces, and assign him a place with the unbelievers.*
>
> *"And that slave who knew his master's will and did not get ready or act in accord with his will, shall receive many lashes, 48 but the one who did not know it, and committed deeds worthy of a flogging, will receive but few. And from everyone who has been given much shall much be required; and to whom they entrusted much, of him they will ask all the more." (Luke 12:41-48).*

Don't you just love Peter? He asked the question that everyone else was thinking but was too afraid to voice: "Is this a warning for us or only for the pagans out there?" You see, Jesus had started out at the beginning of Luke 12 speaking to the multitudes. But since verse 22, He has been addressing Himself to His disciples. Peter is saying, "Lord, are you preaching to the choir?"

I've noticed that whenever the teaching of Jesus begins to hit a little too close to home, the tendency is to try to apply it to someone else. We hear a convicting sermon and we think, "My wife really needed to hear that sermon!" And then Peter shows up and asks the question that we were hoping would go away.

Jesus does not answer the question directly. Instead, He answers it with another parable. This parable presents both the faithful and the unfaithful. What He is saying to Peter and to us is that we are one of these two slaves. He does not say which one we are. That choice is left up to us. Let us look at the contrast presented:

The Master leaves his servants in charge of other servants with instructions to care for the household until his return		
The Faithful Steward	**The Unfaithful Steward**	
He follows the instructions of the master	He knew the master's will and did not follow it	He did not know the master's will
As a result, he is put in charge of all of the master's possessions	He will receive many lashes	He shall receive few lashes

The first slave is faithful. One definition of faithfulness is doing the right thing even when no one is looking. His master goes on a long trip, possibly to Rome or some other distant city. The faithful slave does not know when his master will return. But that does not matter because he works faithfully, no matter where his master is.

The second slave is not faithful. He begins to act in an irresponsible manner. When the master returns, this slave will be punished. Notice that there are two types of unfaithful slave. They are both unfaithful. They are both deserving of punishment. But one receives a greater punishment because he had greater knowledge of what he ought to be doing. Do you see the point.? God judges you according to how much you know.

> *You only have I chosen among all the families of the earth; therefore, I will punish you for all your iniquities. (Amos 3:2).*

> *...And yet I was shown mercy, because I acted ignorantly in unbelief. (1 Timothy 1:13).*

Now, it might be argued: Why should the servant who did not know his master's will be punished at all? The answer is that all men are given a measure of knowledge about the will of God (Romans 1:20; 2:14-16).

A PROMISE OF JUDGMENT

1. A Fire to Cast: *"I have come to cast fire upon the earth; and how I wish it were already kindled!" (Luke 12:49).*

Fire is an awesome thing. It can destroy a home in just a few minutes. It can destroy an entire forest in just a few hours. The Bible tells us that *"our God is a consuming fire"* (Deuteronomy 4:24).

What kind of fire is Jesus talking about? What kind of fire has He come to cast upon the earth? I want to suggest that it is a fire of judgment.

Verses 49-50 are an example of Semitic poetry, not with a rhythm of the same sound, but an echoing of the same parallel thought.

> *"And also the axe is already laid at the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the **fire**." (Luke 3:9).*
>
> *John answered and said to them all, "As for me, I baptize you with water; but One is coming who is mightier than I, and I am not fit to untie the thong of His sandals; He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and **fire**. 17 And His winnowing fork is in His hand to thoroughly clear His threshing floor, and to gather the wheat into His barn; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable **fire**." (Luke 3:16-17).*

Every time that Luke has spoken of fire, it has been a reference to the fire of judgment. James and John had already picked up on this in Luke 9:54 when they asked whether they should pray for fire to fall from heaven and consume those Samaritan cities that had rejected their message.

This brings us to a question. Why would Jesus wish that the fires of judgment were already kindled? I think that it because He knows that once the fires of judgment are kindled, it will mark the end of sin.

2. A Baptism to Undergo: *"But I have a baptism to undergo, and how distressed I am until it is accomplished!" (Luke 12:50).*

Having used the metaphor of fire, Jesus now turns to a second metaphor - that of baptism. The Greek text says, "I have a baptism with which to be baptized." When we hear the word baptism, we tend to naturally think of water. But the baptism mentioned here has nothing to do with water or emersion. Indeed, the Scriptures speak

elsewhere of a baptism of fire and if there is one thing that I have learned as a fire fighter, it is that fire and water are mutually exclusive.

The primary idea behind baptism is always identification. Jesus is describing a coming identification that shall take place. This verse should be seen as the parallel to the previous verse.

Luke 12:49	**Luke 12:50**
I have come to cast fire upon the earth	*I have a baptism to undergo*
...and how I wish it were already kindled!	*...and how distressed I am until it is accomplished!*
Fire represents the judgment of God	Baptism represents Jesus' identification with the wrath of God

There is a parallel between...

- Fire & Baptism.
- Baptize & Cast.
- "How I wish it were already kindled" & "How distressed I am until it is accomplished."

These two verses are talking about two elements of the same thing. They are both speaking of the cross. Both the fire and the baptism point to the cross.

- The fire is the fire of judgment and is seen in part when Jesus took upon Himself the judgment and the condemnation that was due us for our sins.
- The baptism is a reference to His identification with our sins.

The cross serves two purposes. To the believer it is the source of salvation. But to the unbeliever it is a stumbling block and a source of judgment. This means it is possible to speak of both fire and baptism in a way that looks both to the salvation provided upon the cross as well as to the judgment upon those who reject the grace that is offered in the gospel. This is brought out by the closing phrase of verse 50. It is a phrase which points to the cross.

"...until it is accomplished!" (Luke 12:50).

This literally says, "...until it is FINISHED." It is the root word *telos*. It is the same word that Jesus spoke on the cross when He said, "It is FINISHED!" As far as the Christian is concerned, God's judgment against sin was finished upon the cross. The penalty demanded of that sin was paid in full. But those who reject Christ await a future and everlasting penalty.

3. A Division to Bring.

> *"Do you suppose that I came to grant peace on earth? I tell you, no, but rather division; 52 for from now on five members in one household will be divided, three against two, and two against three. 53 They will be divided, father against son, and son against father; mother against daughter, and daughter against mother; mother-in-law against daughter-in-law, and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law." (Luke 12:51-53).*

Jesus came to cause division. He always divides. It is impossible to be neutral toward Jesus. He demands that you must take sides. You are either with Him or you are against Him.

Do you remember the time that Joshua was getting ready to lead the army of Israel against Jericho? As he was going out to look at the city, he was confronted with the Captain of the Lord's army. Not one to run from a confrontation, Joshua goes up to meet Him and asks, "Are you for us or are you against us?" The Captain of the Lord's army replies, "You have the question wrong. It is not a matter of whether I am on your side, but rather a question of whether you are on my side." Does that sound familiar? It should. That is the same thing that Jesus says. Perhaps that tells us exactly who is this Captain of the Lord's army.

By the way, when you join with Christ, you do not have to worry about dividing and separating from the world. If you are really following Christ, then they will divide and separate from you.

STORM WARNINGS

And He was also saying to the multitudes, "When you

> *see a cloud rising in the west, immediately you say, 'A shower is coming,' and so it turns out.* 55 *And when you see a south wind blowing, you say, 'It will be a hot day,' and it turns out that way.*
>
> *"You hypocrites! You know how to analyze the appearance of the earth and the sky, but why do you not analyze this present time?* 57 *And why do you not even on your own initiative judge what is right?*
>
> *"For while you are going with your opponent to appear before the magistrate, on your way there make an effort to settle with him, in order that he may not drag you before the judge, and the judge turn you over to the constable, and the constable throw you into prison.* 59 *I say to you, you shall not get out of there until you have paid the very last cent." (Luke 12:54-59).*

Now Jesus turns back to the multitudes. He has a message to speak to them. It is a message of warning. There was both a political and a spiritual storm on the horizon and He warns them that they have seen the signs and have been ignoring them.

1. Vital Judgments.

> The people were in the habit of examining the sky and the wind to determine what the weather would be like. We have similar armchair forecasting. When we see a wind blowing from the north, we say that it is going to get cold. The Jews were able to do the same. But they had missed the changes in the weather of history. They had seen the coming of Jesus and they had missed its significance. Why was this the case? Why had they missed Him?
>
> I am not talking about the scribes and the Pharisees and the religious leaders. They missed Him because they had a vested interest in things remaining the same. But why did the multitudes miss Him? It was because they had fallen into the trap of letting the religious leaders do their thinking for them.
>
> > *"And why do you not even on your own initiative judge what is right?" (Luke 12:57).*
>
> We often fall into the same trap. Our faith is not based upon the Word of God or the Spirit that teaches us, but from upon the last good sermon we heard or the last good commentary we read. As

such, we have become unfaithful servants, not utilizing the gifts which were entrusted to us.

2. A Charge of Hypocrisy: *"You hypocrites! You know how to analyze the appearance of the earth and the sky, but why do you not analyze this present time? (12:56).*

This chapter opened with Jesus charging the scribes and Pharisees with hypocrisy. Now that same charge is leveled against the multitudes. Their hypocrisy was essentially the same as the scribes and the Pharisees. They had knowledge, but they did not live in a way that was consistent with that knowledge.

- They had the Scriptures.
- They had the prophets.
- They had the Son of God in their midst.

They had all of that and they did not live in a manner that was consistent with that which had been revealed to them. Before we jump to condemn them, we need to pause and ask whether we are guilty of the same hypocrisy. Have I lived my life in a way that has been totally consistent with that which has been revealed by the Scriptures and the prophets and the Son and the indwelling Spirit?

This passage has taught us that the Master will come unexpectedly. We are to expect Him so that we will not be caught unawares. The unaware are usually unaware of their unawareness. This passage acts as a divine alarm clock and calls us to repentance.

3. A Call to Repentance: *"For while you are going with your opponent to appear before the magistrate, on your way there make an effort to settle with him, in order that he may not drag you before the judge, and the judge turn you over to the constable, and the constable throw you into prison." (Luke 12:58).*

We do things a bit differently in our modern system of lawyers and courts and jurisprudence, but in the ancient world, once you went before the judge, it was too late to settle out of court. There is coming a day when we shall stand before the Judge of the Universe. In that day, it will be too late to settle out of court. But today there is still time.

WHEN BAD THINGS HAPPEN
LUKE 13:1-9

Have you ever been asked by an unbeliever, "Why does God let bad things happen to good people?" Perhaps you've wondered the same thing yourself. For quite a number of years, one of the best selling books on the secular market has been a book by Rabbi David Kershner asking this same question. The book is appropriately titled: *"Why Do Bad things happen to Good People?"* He wrote the book after the tragic death of his son. In the book, he suggests one of two possibilities.

1. God is all-powerful and He is able to stop bad things from happening to good people, but He is not all-good and so therefore allows bad things to happen to good people. Rabbi Kershner rejects this view. And so do I. The Bible teaches that God is righteous and good and that He is a just judge over the earth.

2. God is good and He does not want bad things to happen to good people, but He is not all-powerful and He is not able to handle the heavy workload which confronts Him. After all, God is overworked and underpaid and He just isn't up to the task of averting tragedy and so bad things will continue to happen to good people. This is the view to which Rabbi Kershner subscribes. It is not a Biblical view.

As we come to Luke 13:1-9, we see Jesus dealing with this same issue. Let's look at it.

> *Now on the same occasion there were some present who reported to Him about the Galileans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices.*
>
> *And He answered and said to them, "Do you suppose that these Galileans were greater sinners than all other Galileans, because they suffered this fate? 3 I tell you, no, but, unless you repent, you will all likewise perish. 4 Or do you suppose that those eighteen on whom the tower of Siloam fell*

were worse culprits than all the men who live in Jerusalem?
5 I tell you, no, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish."

And he began telling this parable: "A certain man had a fig tree which had been planted in his vineyard; and he came looking for fruit on it, and did not find any.

"And he came to the vineyard-keeper, `Behold, for three years I have come looking for fruit on this fig tree without finding any. Cut it down! Why does it even use up the ground?'

And he answered and said to him, `Let it alone, sir; for this year too, until I dig around it and put in fertilizer;
9 and if it bears fruit next year, fine; but if not, cut it down.'" (Luke 13:1-9).

The popular folk religion of the day said that bad things only happen to bad people. They had a "prosperity theology." They reasoned that, since God is always good and God is all-powerful, then when someone is prosperous it is because he has been good and when something bad happens, it is because there is some sin that had taken place. What is more, this was no mere theory. This discussion came on the heels of news that a tragedy has taken place. And not just one tragedy, but two...

1. The first was a political tragedy.

> *Now on the same occasion there were some present who reported to Him about the Galileans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. (Luke 13:1).*

Pilate was the Roman governor. He was not at all popular among the Jews. There was a saying in those days about Roman governors. It was said that a Roman governor spent his first year in office collecting taxes to pay off the bribes that got him into office. His second year was spent collecting taxes to pay off the bribes to keep him out of jail once his term of office was up. And the rest of his term was spent in collecting taxes for his retirement fund.

Pilate had been governor for several years and he was planning a very big retirement fund. To this end, he helped himself to the Temple offerings. This brought about an immediate reaction among the worshipers in the Temple and a number of Jews were killed. This may have been the incident which is described in this verse.

Think about it. These people had gone to the Temple to worship the Lord and instead of being blessed by the service, they had been killed. Why?

2. The other incident was an "act of God."

On the southeast side of Jerusalem was a tower. It overlooked the pool of Siloam where spring waters flowed to bring water to the city. This tower had collapsed, killing eighteen people who just happened to be in the wrong place at the wrong time. Why? They hadn't been doing anything particularly wrong. They had just come to get water. Why these particular people and not some more deserving of such a fate (a gambling house or a place of prostitution)?

What shall we say to these? Why do bad things happen to good people? Notice the answer of Jesus. He doesn't answer the question. Instead, He says that they are asking the wrong question. They are asking, "Why did these men die?" They should have been asking, "Why didn't I die, too?"

It is not that bad things happen to good people. It is that you aren't qualified to ask about good people because that doesn't concern you and you don't fit into that category. There are no good people. All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. That is the bad news. But the good news is that God sent His own Son into the world to be a sacrifice, to die in our place for our sins.

> *For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life.* 17 *For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world should be saved through Him.* 18 *He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. (John 3:16-18).*

Do you remember the movie, "The Sound of Music?" It's a wonderful story full of splendid songs. There is one in particular that caught my attention. It is where the Captain first expresses his love for Maria. She sings a song about how, in the midst of her wicked childhood, she must have done something good. It is a pretty song, but it is not Biblical. God doesn't bless us because we did something to earn His blessing. He blesses us in spite of the fact that we are undeserving. He blesses us on the basis of His

own grace. We enter into the blessing of His salvation through repentance and faith. This is what Jesus says.

> *And He answered and said to them, "Do you suppose that these Galileans were greater sinners than all other Galileans, because they suffered this fate?*
>
> *"I tell you, no, but, **unless you repent**, you will all likewise perish.*
>
> *"Or do you suppose that those eighteen on whom the tower of Siloam fell were worse culprits than all the men who live in Jerusalem?*
>
> *"I tell you, no, but **unless you repent**, you will all likewise perish." (Luke 13:2-5).*

When you see bad things happening in this world, the question isn't "why did this happen?" The real question is, "Why didn't it happen to me?" For unless I approach God in genuine repentance, then there is a governor or a tower out there with my name of it.

Now you might be thinking to yourself, "Wait a minute, John. I did this a long time ago. When I was nine years old, I walked down an aisle in my church and made a profession of faith, trusting in Him as my Lord and Savior. That's over and done with. I don't need to hear any more about repentance." What you need to understand is that repentance is an ongoing occurrence in the heart of the Christian and that true repentance bears a continuous fruit. Jesus illustrates this with a parable in verses 6-9.

> *And he began telling this parable: "A certain man had a fig tree which had been planted in his vineyard; and he came looking for fruit on it, and did not find any.*
>
> *"And he came to the vineyard-keeper, `Behold, for three years I have come looking for fruit on this fig tree without finding any. Cut it down! Why does it even use up the ground?'*
>
> *And he answered and said to him, `Let it alone, sir; for this year too, until I dig around it and put in fertilizer; 9 and if it bears fruit next year, fine; but if not, cut it down.'" (Luke 13:6-9).*

Once upon a time there was a landowner. The Landowner owned a vineyard. I imagine that there were a lot of trees and vines in his vineyard, but we are only concerned with one. You see, this isn't written to the person sitting next to you. It isn't about your wife or your husband or your neighbor

down the street. It is about you. You are the tree. And the question is this: Are you bearing any fruit?

Not...
Are you a member of this Church?
Or are you Presbyterian?
Or have you been baptized?
Or did you walk down an aisle and make a confession of faith?
Or did you put money into the plate?
Or do you hold to proper Reformed Doctrine?
Or even, did you bear some fruit a number of years ago?

Another year has passed. And for most of you, the governor has not called for your execution and no towers have fallen on you (perhaps some little ones). But you are still here. And you are alive. And you are called to ask of yourselves, "Am I bearing any fruit for the Kingdom?" I'm not talking about church attendance. After all, you're here! I'm asking whether your life is producing the fruit of God's Spirit. Is the Holy Spirit producing within you love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control? And are those qualities in your life being used by God to draw people into the Kingdom?

The Lord of the parable had a certain tree in his garden. And when he came to sample some of the fruit of his tree, there wasn't any. It had branches. And a trunk. And roots. And leaves. Yes, it was dressed in its finest Sunday fig leaves. It had all of the right religious trappings. But no fruit. Such a little thing! But the Lord of the parable is not concerned with...

Branches.
Trunk.
Roots.
Leaves (remember Adam and Eve in the Garden?).
Or all of the right religious trappings.

He is only concerned with one thing. Is the tree bearing fruit?

1. The Lord of the Vineyard requires Fruit.

> *"...and he came looking for fruit on it, and did not find any" (Luke 13:6).*

That is why we are here. We have a purpose for living and a goal to our lives. It is to bear fruit for the Lord of the vineyard.

> *We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them." (Ephesians 2:10).*

2. Unfruitful Trees will be cut down.

> *And he said to the vineyard-keeper, "Behold, for three years I have come looking for fruit on this fig tree without finding any. Cut it down! Why does it even use up the ground?" (Luke 13:7).*

There is coming a day of reckoning. The Lord has demanded fruit from His tree and when that fruit is not forthcoming, the result is a cutting down and a casting forth. You can't play games with God. You can't pretend at religion or "play church." He is looking for real fruit, not mere wood, hay and stubble.

I saw a bumper sticker a while back that said, "If you aren't living on the edge, then you're taking up too much space." The Lord says something similar. He says, "If you aren't producing fruit, then you're taking up too much ground - ground that could be used for fruit-producers."

3. There is a Season of Grace.

> *And he answered and said to him, `Let it alone, sir; for this year too, until I dig around it and put in fertilizer; 9 and if it bears fruit next year, fine; but if not, cut it down.'" (Luke 13:1-9).*

Winston Churchill was being interviewed by a reporter and Churchill mentioned that he had been twice through the tenth grade. "You failed the tenth grade?" asked the incredulous reporter. "No," replied Churchill, "I had a second opportunity to do well."

You are here for another day, another month, another year. The judgment of God has not yet fallen. You have not yet been cut down. For many of you, the past year has been one of spiritual fruitfulness. You've walked with the Lord, trusting in His grace and His mercy and He has produced the fruit of His Spirit within your life. To you, I have a word of commendation and encouragement.

As you have received Christ, continue to walk in Him

(Colossians 2:6).

Abide in Him, so that when He appears, we may have confidence and not shrink away from Him in shame at His coming (1 John 2:28).

For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you shall continue to perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus (Philippians 1:6).

I fear that perhaps there are some reading this who are on borrowed time. If you were honest, you would have to describe yourself as a "fruitless tree." You have roots and a trunk. You come to church each Sunday morning in your finest fig leaves. You look acceptable in every way. But there is no fruit. For you, there is a warning. You have "another year." Judgment has been postponed, but not canceled. You are living in the postponement era.

Today there has been some digging at the roots of your heart and the application of the nutrients of the Word of God. What will be the result? Shall you bear the fruit of a repentant heart? Or shall you continue on the path of unfruitfulness that leads to the woodcutter's axe?

Don't wait until it is too late. You see, one of these days, tragedy is going to strike. I guarantee it. If the Lord delays His coming, then one of these days you are going to die. That is the tragedy you face. But you can be prepared for it.

The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance. (2 Peter 3:9).

You have a call from God today. It is a call to repentance. It is a call to turn from yourself and all that you have ever been and to turn to the Living and True God. Trust in Him as your Lord and your Savior.

KINGDOM CONTROVERSIES

LUKE 13:10-35

This chapter began with bad news. The disciples had been watching CNN when they heard of terrorist attacks and building collapses and this brought up the question of why do some people suffer? Jesus took the opportunity to teach the necessity of repentance.

13:1	13:6	13:10	13:18	13:22
Why do some people suffer tragedy?	Parable of a Fruitless Fig Tree	Healing a woman on the Sabbath	Kingdom Parables	Are just a few being saved?
You must repent or your end will be tragic	If it remains fruitless it is cut down	Should not God set free on the Sabbath?	• Mustard seed • Leaven	If you are not one of those few your end will be tragic

As we come to verses 10 and following, this passage appears to have nothing to do with the verses that have gone before. But closer examination reveals that this is not the case. The subject has not changed. It is still repentance in the light of the coming Kingdom.

When we hear preaching about repentance, we are inclined to evoke pictures of a drunkard or a murderer or a fellow who smokes, chews and runs around with girls who do. It was this kind of mental picture that made Peter ask, "Lord, are you preaching at us or at them?"

The problem isn't that sinners are too bad to be saved. The problem is that religious people think that they are good enough not to need saving. That was seen in this first account.

A MIRACULOUS HEALING

> *And He was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath. 11And behold, there was a woman who for eighteen years had had a sickness caused by a spirit; and she was bent double, and could not straighten up at all.*
>
> *And when Jesus saw her, He called her over and said to her, "Woman, you are freed from your sickness."*
>
> *And He laid His hands upon her; and immediately she was made erect again, and began glorifying God. (Luke 13:10-13).*

This central section of Luke is filled with the teachings of Jesus. Those teachings did not take place in a vacuum. They were given in response to real life situations. This tells me something of the teachings of Jesus. They are practical. They apply to real life where you live and breathe.

We have already seen a number of different miracles wrought by Jesus. They were given as signs to point to His true identity. They were His credentials. But now that we have had such an extensive look at His bona vides, why does Luke tell us about still another miracle?

It is because of where and when this miracle took place. The setting for this miracle was in a synagogue. This is quite different from the Temple. There was only one Temple and it was located in Jerusalem; but there were many synagogues. Any town or village that had at least ten Jewish men could boast a synagogue. This was the place where the people would come together each Sabbath day to worship and to pray and to sing praises and to hear the Scriptures.

Jesus made it His practice to attend the synagogue on the Sabbath. Because He was known for His teaching and preaching ministry, He was asked to teach on this particular Sabbath. We do not know the subject of His sermon. We do not know what Jesus said. What we do know is what Jesus did. There is a lesson here for preachers and teachers. Your students are more likely to remember what you do over what you say. This is a lesson for parents, too. Your children will recall a lot more of what you do than what you say to them.

In the midst of His teaching, Jesus noticed a woman who was suffering from an ailment. She *was bent double, and could not straighten up at all*. She had been suffering from it for a very long time -- 18 years. I do not know for certain that the number is especially significant, but I could not help but to notice that in the previous paragraph Jesus spoke of eighteen people upon whom a tower had fallen.

In both cases, bad things happened to people. In both cases, this was

the result of living in a fallen world. In both cases, the affliction had not come as a result of any particular sin on the part of the people or the woman. But in this particular case, Jesus determines to do something about it. He calls her over and he pronounces her to be free and then He lays His hands upon her and He brings to pass what He has pronounced. The result is that God is glorified.

Jesus moves to intercede. He calls her over and He gives her a promise of healing and then He takes away the affliction. Notice the progression.

He called her over and said to her, "Woman, you are freed from your sickness."	⇨	*He laid His hands upon her*	⇨	*Immediately she was made erect again*

Do you see it? He said to her, "You are free from your sickness," before she actually stood up. At this point, she was still bent over. She had not straightened up. She was acting as though she was still afflicted, even though Jesus had said, "You are free." We are like that. We walk around bent over with our troubles and our loads and our legalism, never realizing that we have been made free.

A LEGALISTIC COMPLAINT

> *And the synagogue official, indignant because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath, began saying to the multitude in response, "There are six days in which work should be done; therefore come during them and get healed, and not on the Sabbath day." (Luke 13:14).*

This is not the first time that Jesus has had a run-in with Jewish leaders over the Sabbath. The complaint came from *the synagogue official* - ὁ ἀρχισυνάγωγος (*ho archisunagogos*). He was the head of the synagogue. His was a position of honor and leadership. His complaint was not that Jesus had healed, but that He had healed on the Sabbath day. He was more focused upon his rules than upon the power of God.

There is a contrast here between the woman who was delivered from her burdensome ailment versus the synagogue official who wished to maintain the burden of his legalism upon others.

The Woman	The Synagogue Official
Bent over with her ailment and unable to straighten	Insisted upon making the Sabbath a burden instead of a blessing
She is bent and twisted physically	He is spiritually bent and twisted
She was healed by Jesus	He rejected the ministry of Jesus
She glorified God	He blasphemed by his rejection of God's Messiah

The synagogue official's comment that there are six days available for healing sounds very pious. But this woman had evidently been coming to the synagogue for 18 years and had found no relief there. She had found only the burdens of a hypocritical judgmentalism.

Notice that he does not address Jesus or the woman. He is speaking to the crowd. He is trying to turn public opinion away from Jesus and this healing. He sees the action of Jesus as being disruptive to the order of the worship service and he wants to make it plain that this is not what we do in the synagogue.

INDICTMENT AGAINST HYPOCRISY

> *But the Lord answered him and said, "You hypocrites, does not each of you on the Sabbath untie his ox or his donkey from the stall, and lead him away to water him? 16 And this woman, a daughter of Abraham as she is, whom Satan has bound for eighteen long years, should she not have been released from this bond on the Sabbath day?"*
>
> *And as He said this, all His opponents were being humiliated; and the entire multitude was rejoicing over all the glorious things being done by Him. (Luke 13:15-17).*

This synagogue official and those who were siding with him claimed to be defenders of the sanctity of the Sabbath. It wasn't that Jesus had performed a miracle. It was that He had done so on the Sabbath. The

This is the last recorded instance of Jesus speaking within a synagogue.

Pharisees had determined that it was allowable for a physician to treat someone on the Sabbath only if it were a matter of life and death.

But there was hypocrisy in their judgment, for their own code of conduct allowed them to take care of the needs of their animals. This isn't merely a matter of kindness to animals. The issue is that they were more interested in caring for their personal possessions than they were in seeing a woman's suffering come to an end.

Let's face it; you fix your flat tire on the Sabbath. You call the tow truck and have it towed out of a ditch on the Sabbath. Do you see the point? People are more important than donkeys.

Here is the principle. Legalism always wants to make rules for someone else to follow. How often do you hear someone say, "We need to pass this rule or this law so that I will stop doing something that I should not be doing"? Legalism always has its focus upon others. In this case, this man wanted his rules to limit the power and the grace of God.

There is a wonderful play on words that is used by Jesus as He points out this hypocrisy. He says to the synagogue official and to all who would pass a similar judgment, "Each of you on the Sabbath *loosens* your ox or donkey. How much more should this daughter of Abraham be *loosened* from Satan's bond?"

Notice the result of the healing: *The entire multitude was rejoicing over all the glorious things being done by Him (13:17).* This is what the Sabbath is all about. It is to be a time of rejoicing over the works of God. The Pharisees wanted the Sabbath to be a time when no one had any fun. But it can be fun to worship the Lord.

The woman had glorified God at the healing. The multitude was now rejoicing over the glorious things that were happening. There was only one person who was not rejoicing – the synagogue official. Legalism is not known for its rejoicing. Legalism says, "Don't have any fun; it's time to be religious." But God delights in the laughter of the redeemed.

KINGDOM COMPARISONS

Jesus is going to say something about the kingdom. Luke sees fit to give us these statements upon the heels of the contrast we have just seen between the healed woman and the synagogue official. A principle is going to be derived from that narrative. It is going to be used to teach us something about the Kingdom.

The woman's healing seemed in the eyes of the synagogue official to be a little thing. She was not important in his eyes. What he considered to be important was that his idea of the Sabbath be upheld. In this, he had taken

a wrong view of the Kingdom. The reality is that the Kingdom would begin with things considered to be very small, but which would grow to fill the world.

Question: What about those who have died in tragic circumstances? (13:1)
Answer: Unless you repent you will also perish (13:2-5).

Parable of the fig tree: Fruitfulness is required (13:6-9).

Jesus heals a woman on the Sabbath (16:10-13).

Jesus rebukes the Synagogue Official for his Sabbath legalism (13:14-17).

Two Parables of the Kingdom (one of which is a seed growing into a tree): The Kingdom will grow in its season (13:18-21).

Question: Are there just a few who are being saved? (13:23).
Answer: Strive to be one of those few.

Here are two riddles asked by Jesus. How is the Kingdom like a mustard seed? How is the Kingdom like leaven? The answer is the same in both cases. The Kingdom starts very small and then it grows very big and when it has fully grown it influences all with whom it comes into contact.

1. The Kingdom in like a Mustard Seed.

> *Therefore He was saying, "What is the kingdom of God like, and to what shall I compare it?*
> *19 It is like a mustard seed, which a man took and threw into his own garden; and it grew and became a tree; and the birds of the air nested in its branches." (Luke 13:18-19).*

It is a simple fact of nature that large trees grow from small seeds. That is the way creation was designed. That is the way of organic life. And because the Kingdom is an organic organism, it also grows that way.

Notice the actions of the man in this parable. He throws the seed into his garden. The NIV reads that he "planted" the seed, but that is incorrect. He merely threw the seed and it landed in his garden. Similarly, the synagogue official had thrown away and cast

off and rejected the ministry of Jesus, but it had landed nevertheless in his own garden and it was bearing fruit.

2. The Kingdom is like Leaven.

> *And again He said, "To what shall I compare the kingdom of God? 21 It is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three pecks of meal, until it was all leavened." (Luke 13:20-21).*

The Rabbinic Talmud uses a similar illustration when it says, "Great is peace, for as peace is to the earth, so is leaven in the dough."

Luke has already made reference to the leaven of the Pharisees (12:1). We saw in that passage that leaven always carries the idea of influence. You take a little piece of leaven and you place it into the dough and it eventually influences the entire loaf. In the context of Luke 12:1, leaven was seen as a bad thing. But here, leaven is likened to the Kingdom of God.

The kingdom begins very small. It is so small in its beginning that it can be characterized as being hidden. But eventually it will grow to permeate and to influence the entire world. There was one particular offering that was designated as containing leaven. It was the offering of first fruits.

> *"You shall bring in from your dwelling places two loaves of bread for a wave offering, made of two-tenths of an ephah; they shall be of a fine flour, baked with **leaven** as first fruits to the LORD." (Leviticus 23:17).*

When was this offering to be offered? It was to be fifty days following the Passover. It was to be at the Feast of Pentecost. It would be on that day when the leaven which had been placed into the bread would now be brought forth for all to see. Do you see what the leaven represents? It is God's kingdom. It is God's people. It is us -- the church.

Small beginning leading to great growth and influence. That is the underlying message of these two parables.

Kingdom in like a Mustard Seed	Kingdom is like Leaven
A tiny seed is thrown into a garden to become a large tree	A small portion of leaven is placed into a large portion of meal to leaven the entire portion
What starts small grows to become very large	What starts small eventually infiltrates all
This growth takes time	This growth takes time

The church started with twelve disciples minus one. Twelve little men. They were not mighty warriors. But they were placed on this planet as the foundation of the church. And it grew and it grew and it grew. If the Gospel of Luke is the record of the planting of the leaven, then the book of Acts is the record of its growing influence.

The disciples are with Jesus and they have been watching as the opposition against Him grows. They might be thinking, "This isn't much of a kingdom. After all, there are only 12 of us." The book of Acts had not been written yet. The words of Jesus are a promise that it would be.

The Kingdom has inevitable growth. However, there is a danger here. It is that we try to hurry the growth of the Kingdom of God by manual means. The growth of the Kingdom is not as a result of organizational ability. It is not brought about on the basis of a good Sunday School program or the right kind of seeker service. God can and does use these things to His own ends. But real kingdom growth is the result of the Spirit of life that God's Spirit brings.

Does this mean we should not evangelize? To the contrary, this should be an impetus for evangelism, for it guarantees the results of your evangelistic efforts.

NUMBERS IN THE KINGDOM

> *And He was passing through from one city and village to another, teaching, and proceeding on His way to Jerusalem.(Luke 13:22).*

Back in Luke 9:51 we saw that Jesus had resolutely set His face to go to Jerusalem. But since that time, we have not heard much about Jerusalem. Jesus has been traveling from village to village, but there has been no

mention of the exact itinerary. We might even be tempted to wonder whether Jesus had forgotten all about Jerusalem. This verse reminds us that it was still on His agenda. There is a cross on the horizon and everything that Jesus says and does is said and done in that shadow of that cross.

> *And someone said to Him, "Lord, are there just a few who are being saved?" And He said to them, 24 "Strive to enter by the narrow door; for many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able.*
>
> *"Once the head of the house gets up and shuts the door, and you begin to stand outside and knock on the door, saying, 'Lord, open up to us!' then He will answer and say to you, 'I do not know where you are from.' 26 Then you will begin to say, 'We ate and drank in Your presence, and You taught in our streets'; 27 and He will say, 'I tell you, I do not know where you are from; depart from Me, all you evildoers.'*
>
> *"There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth there when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, but yourselves being cast out. 29 And they will come from east and west, and from north and south, and will recline at the table in the kingdom of God. 30 And behold, some are last who will be first and some are first who will be last." (Luke 13:23-30).*

This is one of those types of questions that you hear from unbelievers: "What about the man in Africa?" Jesus doesn't immediately answer it. He says, "Instead of worrying about the man in Africa, you should be worrying about the man who is standing in your sandals." Do you see it? The man asks, "Lord, are there just a few who are being saved?" And Jesus answered, "Make certain that you are one of those few." There are several points made throughout this passage.

- The door is narrow and not everyone enters (13:24).
- The door is only open for a short time and then it will be shut (13:25).
- The door will only be open to those who know Jesus and who are known by Him (13:26).
- There is time for you to know Him today, but tomorrow may be too late (13:27-28).
- The door will be opened to many rather than just a few (13:29-30). This was the original question. Now it is finally answered. But it is not answered in the way that the question anticipated.

Remember the context. Verse 22 says that they were going to Jerusalem. This is told for a specific reason. It has direct bearing upon our understanding of the rest of the passage. Jesus is headed to Jerusalem in order to die. There is a cross with His name on it waiting for Him there.

From a strictly human point of view, going to Jerusalem does not seem the smart thing to do. Jesus has seen a successful ministry everywhere else except in Jerusalem. It would seem as though He is throwing it all away by going there.

Jesus is going to His death. Instead of new converts, there will be a cross. And it is in this context that the question is asked, "Are there many that are being saved?" The question expects a negative answer, especially if Jesus continues upon this road. It does not look as though there are many that are being saved and it appears as though there shall be even fewer saved if He continues upon this path. But the reality is that there are many more to be saved than anyone can imagine. It will not be merely the Jews who are saved as a result of Jesus going to Jerusalem. By His death, salvation shall come to men of all the nations.

I want you to notice that Jesus does not answer the question. Instead of answering the question, Jesus turns this man's attention to the really important question.

- Not, "Are a lot of people being saved?"
- But, "Am I being saved?"

Pagans always want to ask about the man in Africa. But the real question is what about the pagan that lives at your home address. The real question is what about you.

Notice the image that is used of the kingdom. It is an image of a party. It is not a new image. It is an image from the Old Testament.

> *6 And the LORD of hosts will prepare a lavish banquet for all peoples on this mountain;*
> *A banquet of aged wine, choice pieces with marrow,*
> *And refined, aged wine.*
> *7 And on this mountain He will swallow up the covering which is over all peoples,*
> *Even the veil which is stretched over all nations.*
> *8 He will swallow up death for all time,*
> *And the Lord God will wipe tears away from all faces,*
> *And He will remove the reproach of His people from all the earth;*
> *For the LORD has spoken. (Isaiah 25:6-8).*

Notice who is to be at the banquet. It is all peoples (verse 8). The Jews had figured that if all people were going to be there, then they would be there, too. On the other hand, they had plenty on their list whom they assumed would not be permitted into the kingdom.

Jesus says something quite different. He calls upon His questioner to strive to enter the Kingdom because there is coming a day when the door will be shut and it will be too late. In that day there will be some who are left out and there will be some who have been allowed in and it will be the complete opposite of what is expected.

> *And behold, some are last who will be first and some are first who will be last." (Luke 13:30).*

Who is the first and who is the last? The answer is found in the previous two verses. Those who are cast out of the Kingdom shall now be last. But they were originally the first. They were the first to hear the Law of God. They were the first to see Jesus. They were the first to have the gospel preached to them. They are the people of the nation of Israel. When Israel rejected her Messiah, the gospel would go out to the nations.

From this point on, the last shall be first. Those who formerly sat in darkness shall see a great light (Isaiah 9:2). The people who were not God's people shall now be known as the people of God (Hosea 1:10). Outsiders will come in and insiders will be left out. There is a warning here. It is that you need to enter while the door is open because, if you wait, the door will be shut.

KINGDOM INTIMIDATIONS

> *Just at that time some Pharisees came up, saying to Him, "Go away and depart from here, for Herod wants to kill You."*
>
> *And He said to them, "Go and tell that fox, 'Behold, I cast out demons and perform cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I reach My goal.' 33 Nevertheless I must journey on today and tomorrow and the next day; for it cannot be that a prophet should perish outside of Jerusalem. (Luke 13:31-33).*

Jesus has warned the Pharisees of their legalism. Now they warn Him of Herod. But they do not do this out of concern for His safety. They do it because they want to intimidate Him.

Intimidation. After all, Herod Antipas has already put John the Baptist to death. Things might become dangerous for Jesus. But Jesus refuses to be intimidated. He has a cross-shaped goal and beyond that there will be an empty tomb.

You do, too. What is the worst thing that anyone can do to you. Kill you? That is not so bad, because you have the promise of God of a new life to come. When you know this, you can never again be intimidated.

> *"...it cannot be that a prophet should perish outside of Jerusalem" (Luke 13:31).*

Jesus is headed for Jerusalem. He knows what will happen there. It saddens Him, not so much for His own sake, but for the sake of the city and its people. This entire chapter has served as a backdrop of Israel's rejection of her Messiah. In Luke 13:5-9 Jesus told a parable of an unfruitful fig tree and how it would be cut down if it remained unfruitful. The very next thing we saw was a woman who was healed by Jesus (13:10-13). He was thereby demonstrating what it meant to be a fruitful fig tree. But He is contrasted over against the attitude of the synagogue official who was more interested in his Sabbath-observance than in the power of God (13:14-15). By his attitudes, he was showing himself to be an unfruitful fig tree who was only interested in his own leaves rather than in the bearing of kingdom fruit. Finally, there is a parable given of a mustard seed that is planted and which grows to become large enough to hold the birds of the air.

Do you see the point? Israel was initially called to be a fruitful tree that would grow from the seed of Abraham to be a light to the Gentiles so that the Gentiles would come and find refuge in her branches. But instead of being a fruitful tree, Israel turned in unto herself and would not reach out to the world with the gospel. That kind of attitude led to a spiritual blindness so that when Messiah finally came He was unrecognized.

THE KING'S LAMENT

> *"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, just as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not have it!* 35 *Behold, your house is left to you desolate; and I say to you, you shall not see Me until the time comes when you say, 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!'" (Luke 13:34-35).*

There is great pathos here in the words of Jesus. It reflects a similar pathos in the heart of God concerning the lost. God is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance (2 Peter 3:9). He is the same God who declares His compassion upon the people of Nineveh and even their animals (Jonah 4:11). He is the same God who calls you to faith and repentance.

DINNER INVITATIONS
LUKE 14:1-24

And the Lord of hosts will prepare a lavish banquet for all peoples on this mountain; a banquet of aged wine, choice pieces with marrow, and refined, aged wine.

And on this mountain He will swallow up all the covering which is over all peoples, even the veil which is stretched over all nations.

He will swallow up death for all time, and the Lord God will wipe tears away from all faces, and He will remove the reproach of His people from all the earth; for the Lord has spoken.

And it will be said in that day, "Behold, this is our God for whom we have waited that He might save us. This is the Lord for whom we have waited; let us rejoice and be glad in His salvation." (Isaiah 25:6-9).

The words of Isaiah call to mind the promise of a wonderful dinner invitation. This was not a new concept to the Jews. The birth of their nation had been instituted with a dinner. The Passover was more than just a ritual of putting blood on doorposts. It also involved the eating of a meal. Those who were delivered were delivered through blood but they were also identified through the eating of a meal. Luke 14 opens, not with a Passover, but with a Sabbath meal.

A SABBATH SUPPER

"Guess who's coming to dinner?" It was the name of a Broadway play that was made into a 1960's movie. It follows a series of dialogues surrounding a dinner event. This chapter does the same thing.

1. Setting for the Supper.

> *And it came about when He went into the house of one of the leaders of the Pharisees on the Sabbath to eat bread, that they were watching Him closely. (Luke 14:1).*

The events of this chapter take place in the home of one of the leaders of the Pharisees. This was not the first time Jesus had been invited to the home of a Pharisee.

- In Luke 7:36 He been at the table of a Pharisee named Simon when an immoral woman had come in and had washed His feet with perfume. She had been forgiven her sins and then compared favorably to Simon.

Luke has given us more of the Sabbath incidents of Jesus than any other of the gospel writers. The last one we saw was in chapter 13 where Jesus healed a woman in the synagogue on the Sabbath. This time, the setting is not in the synagogue, but within the home of a Pharisee. The man is not only a Pharisee, he is a leader of the Pharisees.

- In Luke 11:37 He had accepted a lunch invitation and had shocked His host by not going through a ceremonial rite of purification before eating.

Jesus had accused the Pharisees of cleaning the outside of the cup while leaving the inside "full of robbery and wickedness." He had then proceeded to preach a sermon of woe against the Pharisees and experts in the law. The Pharisees were already openly hostile to Jesus (Luke 11:53-54).

a. They had rejected John the Baptist (Luke 7:30).

b. They had spoken against Jesus when He openly ate with tax-collectors and sinners (Luke 5:30).

c. They accused Jesus of breaking the Sabbath (Luke 6:2).

d. They watched Jesus carefully on the Sabbath to see if He would break their interpretation of the Law by healing, and they were filled with rage when He complied by openly healing a man with a withered hand (Luke 6:6-11).

Now Jesus is being invited into the home of a Pharisee. And he is not just any old Pharisee - he is one of the leaders of the Pharisees. This invitation was to the Sabbath Meal. The most important meal of the week was the Sabbath Meal. It would have been carefully prepared the day before so that there would be no work involved on the Sabbath.

Nearly every time that Jesus collided with the Pharisees, it was over the issue of the keeping of the Sabbath. They were rigid in their Sabbath-keeping and they wanted everyone else to be equally rigid. Jesus relaxed on the Sabbath, but He did not relax from doing good. This is the fourth instance in which Luke has related a controversy between Jesus and the Sabbath-keepers.

SABBATH CONTROVERSIES IN LUKE'S GOSPEL		
Passage	**Sabbath Situation**	**What Jesus said**
Luke 6:1	Disciples eating grain on the Sabbath	The Son of Man is lord of the Sabbath
Luke 6:6-11	Jesus healed man with withered hand	Is it lawful to do good on the Sabbath?
Luke 13:10-17	Jesus healed woman bent double	Don't you take care of your animals on the Sabbath?
Luke 14:1	Jesus healed a man of dropsy	Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?

Luke mentions a total of four different Sabbath controversies. This is twice as many as are mentioned in the other three gospel accounts.

2. The Diagnosed Disease.

> *And there, in front of Him was a certain man suffering from dropsy. (Luke 14:2).*

The guest list for this meal had been carefully prepared to include a man who suffered from a physical disease. He is described as suffering from dropsy. The Greek word is *hudropikos*.

- The Greek word ὑδωρ (*hudor*) is the word for "water" (it is from this word that we get our English prefix, "hydro."
- Πικρος (*pikros*) means "bitter."

Dropsy is an abnormal accumulation of fluids in the body due to a faulty heart or kidneys. It manifests itself in the bloating of the face and can also cause swelling in the arms and legs. Discomfort can be only temporarily relieved by puncturing the patient with a hollow needle and syphoning off the excess fluid. Every time the man did this, he would become ceremonially unclean. It was the teaching of the rabbis that a man who had this kind of disease had committed a grievous sin.

3. Jesus Questions the Pharisees.

> *And Jesus answered and spoke to the lawyers and Pharisees, saying, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath, or not?" 4 But they kept silent. (Luke 14:3-4a).*

Before healing the man, Jesus puts the question to the Pharisees. They are in a dilemma. Their teaching is that a physician is not permitted to practice his profession on the Sabbath unless the life of the patient is in danger. But Jesus is no doctor. He is going to perform a miracle. It will be the power of God at work. And they have no rules that can dictate when a miracle can take place. Their problem is that Jesus does not fit into their nice, pre-packaged theological system.

> The fact that Jesus asks their opinion and they are silent means that they will have no grounds to stand if they attempt to accuse Him of Sabbath-breaking at a later date.

They have no answer. They see it as a trick question. After all, what right do they have to dictate when the power of God is allowed to be manifested?

4. A Miraculous Healing.

> *But they kept silent. And He took hold of him, and healed him, and sent him away. (Luke 14:4).*

The fact of the healing is almost incidental to the narrative. We have

no elaborate description. There is only a simple statement that Jesus healed the man.

5. Double Standards.

> *And He said to them, "Which one of you shall have a son or an ox fall into a well, and will not immediately pull him out on a Sabbath day?" 6 And they could make no reply to this. (Luke 14:5-6).*

Notice the connection of Jesus' words with the man whom He had just healed. He had healed a man who suffered from an overabundance of water. His body retained water. Jesus had saved him from drowning in his own body water. In so doing, he had done for the man what any of the Pharisees would have done if their son or their ox fell into a well of water.

The Essenes of the Qumran Community said that a man was not permitted to help an animal which had fallen into a pit (Damascus Document 13). But the Pharisees were not so extreme. They allowed for such a case.

Some manuscripts read "donkey" instead of "son" (*onos* instead of *huios*). This might be due to the similarity of this passage to Luke 13:15 where Jesus accuses Sabbath-keepers of taking care of their donkeys and oxen on the Sabbath

Do you see what Jesus is saying? They were more concerned with helping animals than with helping people. They were more concerned with pits than with the power of God.

PARABLE OF THE PLACES OF HONOR

> *And He began speaking a parable to the invited guests when He noticed how they had been picking out the places of honor at the table; saying to them, 8 "When you are invited by someone to a wedding feast, do not take the place of honor, for someone more distinguished than you may have been invited by him, 9 and he who invited you both shall come and say to you, 'Give place to this man,' and then in disgrace you proceed to occupy the last place.*
>
> *"But when you are invited, go and recline at the last place, so that when the one who has invited you comes, he may say to you, 'Friend, move up higher'; then you will have*

> *honor in the sight of all who are at the table with you. 11 For everyone who exalts himself shall be humbled, and he who humbles himself shall be exalted." (Luke 14:7-11).*

At first glance, Jesus seems to be giving instructions on guest protocols for seating arrangements at a wedding feast. But verse 7 tells us that this is a parable. A parable is a story given to illustrate a spiritual truth. The story is not an end unto itself. It has a point that goes beyond the story. That is the case here.

The story is taken from the actual situation of the meal to which Jesus had been invited. Was He the guest of honor? I do not know. But there were those who were jostling for the better seats in the house. Jesus urged them to instead be satisfied with the lower seats. That way, they would not be embarrassed if asked to move to a lesser seat by the host.

The guests had played a social game of musical chairs. They were a little more dignified than grade school children. But the immaturity level was the same.

Proverbs 25:6-7 warns against taking the place of honor lest you be told to take a lower place.

Remember that this is a parable. It is more than merely a lecture on good manners and proper table etiquette. It is designed to teach us a spiritual truth. That truth involves pride and humility.

What does this parable illustrate? It illustrates a general truth of God's kingdom. The way in which to enter the kingdom of God is through humility. It is through recognizing that you are unworthy to enter God's kingdom. It is by confessing that you are a guilty sinner and that you cannot be good enough to merit any good thing from the hand of God.

The point of the parable is given in verse 11: "Everyone who exalts himself shall be humbled, and he who humbles himself shall be exalted." This is not a new concept. The teachings of the Scripture are that God gives grace to the humble.

> *Thus says the Lord, "Heaven is My throne, and the earth is My footstool. Where then is a house you could build for Me? And where is a place that I may rest? 2 For My hand made all these things, thus all things came into beings," declares the Lord. "But to this one I will look, to him who is HUMBLE and CONTRITE OF SPIRIT, and who trembles at My word." (Isaiah 66:1-2).*

God glorifies the humble. Why? Because the humble man does not try to take God's place. The humble man is willing for God to be God. Pride

is an easy trap into which to fall. The more you grow as a Christian, the more apt you are to do something right and then say, "Hey, I did a good thing!" And that is when pride comes.

INSTRUCTIONS TO THE HOST

> *And He also went on to say to the one who had invited Him, "When you give a luncheon or a dinner, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors, lest they also invite you in return, and repayment come to you.* 13 *But when you give a reception, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind,* 14 *and you will be blessed, since they do not have the means to repay you; for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous." (Luke 14:12-14).*

Jesus has just given a living parable. I think that this section is another parable that grows out of the one given in the previous verses. This one is directed to the host who had invited Jesus to the table. He was a leader of the Pharisees. He had prestige. The people who had been invited to the meal were evidently also prestigious. The guest list was a "Who's Who" of the religious circle of the day.

The lesson is one of giving. The point is that when we give to those who are able to reward or repay us in some way, we are not really giving. We are only making a self-centered investment. Real giving involves giving to one who is unable to ever repay in any way.

Do you see how this has tied in with the first part of this chapter? We saw Jesus healing a man who was crippled with the dropsy. We do not know whether or not he had been invited, but he had been the only one present who was afflicted in such a way. Everyone else who had been invited was hale and hardy and respected.

Here is the point. Repayment in this life negates repayment in the next. When you do something to be rewarded in this life, it does not translate into a reward for the future. But when you give to the Lord with no expectation of any other compensation in this life, then your heavenly reward is secure.

This is a pressing question: What are your motives in doing good? Is it to have good returned to you? It is easy to do good to good people. It is easy to invite cultured people to cultured events. It is easy to accept

religious people into the church. But Jesus reached out to the outcasts and the misfits. He invited the unchurched. And He shook things up when they came.

The "resurrection of the righteous" infers that there is also a resurrection of the unrighteous.

When the Son of God was made flesh and visited planet earth, He was accused of not being religious enough. He did not conform to religious standards. He went around talking to prostitutes and hugging lepers. He not only mingled with sinners, but He seemed to enjoy their company. Jesus did not die between two cathedrals. He died...

- between two thieves.
- on the town garbage heap.
- amidst cursing and gambling.
- within a metropolitan area.
- in an area whose international culture mandated that the sign above His cross be written in three different languages.

Why? Because that is what He is all about. He came as the only One who was totally clean and perfect and He came into a dirty world to make us clean again. Jesus was holy. But He was also approachable.

Tony Campolla tells the story of a trip which he took to Hawaii. Jet lag kept him awake late into night and he went for a walk on the streets of Honolulu. At 2 in the morning, he found himself in a doughnut shop. Sitting at the counter, he overheard several prostitutes who were sharing a booth. One of the girls whose name was Agnes mentioned that it was her birthday. After she had left, Tony turned to the cook and the other prostitutes and said, "Let's throw a party for Agnes." The other girls agreed to bring decorations and the cook said that he would bake a cake.

The next night, they all gathered at the shop and when Agnes walked in, they brought out the cake and began to sing, "Happy Birthday." Tears streamed down Agnes's face and, when it came time to cut the cake, she just stood there. Finally, she said, "Could I buy another cake and we eat that one? I want to take this one home and show it to my mother."

With that, she took the cake and left. In the sudden silence that filled the shop after she left, Tony bowed his head and began to pray. "Lord, we thank you for Agnes and for Your love for her. You loved her enough to send Your Son to die for her on the cross. We thank you for the best present of all - the present of Your own Son. Amen." When he raised his head, he saw that all of the prostitutes had their heads bowed and had been praying with him.

The cook looked at him and said, "You're a preacher!" When Tony admitted that he was, the cook asked, "What kind of church do you have?"

In a sudden flash of insight, Tony replied, "The kind that throws parties for prostitutes and gives invitations to sinners."

PARABLE OF REJECTED INVITATIONS

> *And when one of those who were reclining at the table with Him heard this, he said to Him, "Blessed is everyone who shall eat bread in the kingdom of God!"*
>
> *But He said to him, "A certain man was giving a big dinner, and he invited many; 17 and at the dinner hour he sent his slave to say to those who had been invited, 'Come; for everything is ready now.'*
>
> *"But they all alike began to make excuses. The first one said to him, 'I have bought a piece of land and I need to go out and look at it; please consider me excused.' 19 And another one said, 'I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to try them out; please consider me excused.' 20 And another one said, 'I have married a wife, and for that reason I cannot come.'*
>
> *"And the slave came back and reported this to his master. Then the head of the household became angry and said to his slave, 'Go out at once into the streets and lanes of the city and bring in here the poor and crippled and blind and lame.'*
>
> *"And the slave said, 'Master, what you commanded has been done, and still there is room.'*
>
> *"And the master said to the slave, 'Go out into the highways and along the hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled. 24 For I tell you, none of those men who were invited shall taste of my dinner.'" (Luke 14:15-24).*

As Jesus sits at the banquet table, He is going to tell a story of another banquet table. This is the third parable that He has told concerning a banquet.

14:7	14:12	14:15
Invitational Parables		
A parable of humility		A parable about excuses

To Guests: Don't take the first place	To Hosts: Don't invite the rich	Those from afar come in place of those who rejected

The people who have gathered around this table have accepted an invitation. They have come for different reasons. Some have come because they heard that Jesus would be there. For others it may have been a social obligation. Some wanted to hob-nob with people of a high social status. They only had one thing in common. They all came.

Everyone who was present that day had received a dinner invitation and everyone who was present had responded in the affirmative. They had all come to partake of a meal. The question before the house is whether they shall respond to the Lord's invitation to partake of His heavenly meal.

1. An Exclamation of Pious Presumption.

Jesus has just finished making everyone present feel uncomfortable. First, he spoke to the guests and their pride in seeking the best chairs. Then he spoke to the host about his guest-list.

Then, there is a moment of uncomfortable silence. It is finally broken by one of the guests. He is a Pharisee. He does not want to be confronting, so he makes what he considers to be a "safe" statement.

> *And when one of those who were reclining at the table with Him heard this, he said to Him, "Blessed is everyone who shall eat bread in the kingdom of God!" (Luke 14:15).*

The Jews assumed that they were on the inside. Before we look down our noses at them, we need to ask ourselves if we are guilty of the same kind of presumption. This man makes a statement about his destiny. Jesus does not disagree with the statement. Rather, he challenges the attitude behind the statement.

2. Invitations to a Banquet: *"A certain man was giving a big dinner, and he invited many" (14:16).*

This man was throwing a "mega-dinner" (that is literal from the Greek). It was not merely a fancy luncheon. It was a feast that would last for several days. It demanded a commitment of time.

The man giving the dinner in the parable represents the Lord (14:16). Tony Campollo wrote a book entitled, "The Kingdom of God is a Party." I like that title. It reflects the truth that is presented here. When we were invited to come to Christ, we were invited to something joyous and wonderful. We Christians have no right to be sour and dour. We have been invited to a party and we have opportunity to invite others, too. The Kingdom is a joyous occasion. We ought to express that joy.

3. Many have been invited: *"A certain man was giving a big dinner, and he invited many" (14:16).*

In the previous chapter, the question was asked whether there are just a few who are being saved (13:23). The answer was that there are going to be a lot more who are saved than anyone ever dreamed.

4. A Response was Expected: *"...at the dinner hour he sent his slave to say to those who had been invited" (4:17).*

The invitation having gone out earlier, there came a time when the guests were expected to respond with their presence. The Old Testament is the invitation. It was issued repeatedly by all of the prophets. They proclaimed the coming of the Messiah. And then the day came when He arrived. He was now in their midst and He was calling them to come.

5. The Excuses of the Invited.

The invitation was met with empty excuses (14:18-20). There were all sorts of reasons given and none of them was a good reason. The details of life had taken priority. This brings us to a question. What are the details in your own life that are preventing you from answering God's invitation? It might not be an evil thing: The purchase of some property; business dealings; even family obligations. But if these things get in the way of your response to the Lord's invitation, then you have a misplaced sense of priorities.

This is a parable of Israel's rejection of the kingdom. The invitation to enter the kingdom had been given for a thousand years. The Jews had replied that they would come. Now at the appointed time, they are called to the feast. They respond with excuses. And they aren't even good excuses.

- What kind of man buys some land without looking at it? If it is bought already, then it isn't going anywhere.
- Another man had married a wife. He refers to the law of Deuteronomy which says that a man is to stay home for the first year of marriage. But it only means that he is not to go to war.

These were invalid excuses. They were cardboard excuses. You've used that kind of excuse before. You have been invited somewhere that you really didn't want to go and so you used an excuse.

A lot of people use excuses why they don't attend church. Are you making excuses to God? It is a dangerous thing. It is one thing to say "no" to a banquet feast. It is another thing to say "no" to God.

6. Invitation Redirected to Others: *"'Go out at once into the streets and lanes of the city and bring in here the poor and crippled and blind and lame'"* Luke 14:21).

Notice the recipients of this redirected invitation: The poor and crippled and blind and lame. Does it sound like a familiar list? It should. It is the same list that Jesus gave back in verse 13 when He told his host who should be invited. Do you see the point? The invitation to the Pharisees and to the experts in the Law and to the high and the mighty had already been given and the excuses were already registered. The parable reflects what had already taken place. And now, Jesus was reaching out to the poor and crippled and blind and lame. That is what He had just done by healing the man with dropsy.

The Pharisees would not come. The learned would not come. The wealthy would not come. The religious would not come. And so, God called the...

- Gentiles.
- Ignorant.
- Poor.
- Pagans.

The call goes out to the homeless and the street people and the down and outers. Jesus is sitting in a wealthy home as He tells this parable. He is surrounded by the cream of the social strata. These people had it all. And they have accepted an invitation to attend this feast. But they have not accepted the invitation that Jesus has extended. Why?

Because they have not recognized that the future feast is His feast.

7. Commission to the Gentiles: *"And the master said to the slave, 'Go out into the highways and along the hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled'" (Luke 14:23).*

The servants are first sent into the streets and lanes of the city. They are then sent outside the city to the highways and hedges.

The words "Compel them to come in" were used by the Crusaders and by the Inquisitors.
But the compulsion that we use is the one found in 2 Corinthians 5:14 - "the LOVE of Christ compels me."

- The first call is to the Jew.
- The second is to the Gentile.

This pictures the Great Commission. It is that every effort be made to bring in every person. We have been charged with filling the house of God. Notice that the kind of people that God invites have nothing to commend themselves. They have nothing to give to God. This is what Jesus taught in verses 12-15. It is what God has first done to us. God does exactly what He calls us to do!

8. The Point of the Parable: *"'For I tell you, none of those men who were invited shall taste of my dinner'" (Luke 14:24).*

Jesus came to offer a feast. Indeed, He is the feast. He is the Bread of Life. There is coming a day when God will gather His people to eat of His feast. Do you remember what Jesus said to His disciples at the Last Supper? "I will not again drink of the fruit of the vine until I sit in the kingdom." When we partake of the Lord's Supper, we not only look back, but we also look forward.

What is the point of the parable? It is that it is not enough to be invited. You must respond to the invitation. And many of those who took the invitation for granted will be as though they were never invited at all.

WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A DISCIPLE
LUKE 14:25-35

The story is told of how Mohammed Ali, the three time heavyweight boxing champion, was on an airplane and the flight attendant came by and told him to put on his seat belt. With his trademark bravado, he quipped, "Superman don't need no seatbelt!" She came right back, "Superman don't need no airplane."

Needful things. It has become customary in certain Christian circles to speak of discipleship as something that, while good and desirable, is not needful or necessary to Christianity. This teaching is one that says sanctification and Christian growth are optional to the Christian life and that there are some who live their entire lives as "carnal Christians" and who never exhibit any of the fruit of the Spirit or any growth in Christ, yet nevertheless are saved.

The teaching of the Scriptures is completely antithetical to this view. The Scriptures use the term "disciple" as an exact equivalent of the term "Christian." This is seen in Act 11:26 where *the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch*.

What is a disciple? The term is translated from the Greek word *mathetes*, a "learner" and comes from the word *manthano*, "to learn." But the idea here is not merely rote learning of fact. As we shall see in this passage, the discipleship to which Jesus calls men and women involves a life commitment.

BEING A DISCIPLE MEANS COMMITMENT

Now great multitudes were going along with Him; and
He turned and said to them, 26 *"If anyone comes to Me, and*

> *does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple." (Luke 14:25-26).*

Take note of the setting in which Jesus spoke these words. It was at a time when *great multitudes were going along with Him* (14:25). There were a great many people who had come to Jesus and they had come for a great many reasons. Some were merely curious. Others wanted to see a miracle. Perhaps some had heard of His feeding of the 5000 and were looking for a free meal. The point is that they had come for many different reasons and they were willing to follow Him to a point as long as it did not cost them too much.

Just a few verses earlier, Jesus had told a parable of the excuses given by people who had been invited to a wedding (14:16-20). In each case, the real reason involved a lack of commitment. As a result, we read that none of those who had been invited would taste of the master's dinner.

If you had asked them, "Are you following Jesus?" most of them would have replied, "Of course! Jesus is out here and we are out here and we have left our normal routine to come out here and to follow Him." A lot of people think that they are Christians because they are *going along with* Jesus. But you don't become a disciple by merely going along with Him.

It is in this setting that Jesus turns and addresses the crowd. They might have been anticipating that He would pronounce some blessing upon them. After all, they had come to see and hear Him. What more would He want? They must have been quite surprised to hear His charge.

"If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple." (Luke 14:25-26).

The story is told of a kamikaze pilot who wished a commendation for having flown 17 missions. The truth was that he lost his focus. We do the same thing when we let other things become more important to us than Jesus.

Does Jesus really and truly call us to hate our family? No. To the contrary, the Scriptures are quite explicit when they tell husbands to love their wives as Christ loved the church (Ephesians 5:25); mothers to love their children (Titus 2:4); and for children to honor father and mother (Ephesians 6:2). Indeed, we are even taught to love our enemies and those who persecute us (Matthew 5:44). So then what does Jesus mean when he says that those who wish to be He disciple must hate *father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters*?

This is a figure of speech known as *hyperbole*. It is a deliberate overstatement used to make a point. We use hyperbole when we make deliberate exaggerations. Jesus was using hyperbole when He spoke of how the Pharisees would strain at a gnat and swallow a camel. We are not meant to take such statements with a rigid literalism. Neither are we meant to actually hate various members of our family.

Jesus is calling for a commitment that is so great that anything by comparison will be deemed as hatred. This is in contrast to the parable in the previous verses where one of the invited guests declined the invitation because he had recently married a wife (14:20). That was a story of a man ignoring the call and using his recent marriage as an excuse. The point here is that there are no legitimate excuses for failing to follow the Lord.

What is the most important thing in your life? Is it family? It would have been in that culture. Family was everything. Family provided status and significance and security. It told you who you were and it told you that you would be taken care of. Family served as the ancient version of social security and family gave you your identity. The temptation was to put family in a place of preeminence.

This is a hard passage. If you read this and it does not bother you just a little, you haven't read it. For Jesus to say these words would be blasphemy if He were not God. He demands to be the center of attention and the object of complete loyalty.

Do you want to be a disciple of Jesus? You must give Him preeminence. You must recognize His sovereignty and His Lordship. You must give Him your devotion and your love.

Do you want to be a disciple of Jesus? You might be thinking, "Of course I do! After all, I go to church on Sunday morning and I could be at home in bed. Doesn't the fact that I am a regular in church show that I want to follow Him?" Not necessarily. To be a disciple of Jesus incurs a cost.

You say, "Wait a minute, John! I thought that salvation is a free gift of God. How can there be a cost?" The cost is seen in the fact that salvation involves making you into a different person and the cost involves the loss of the old person that you were.

- If salvation involves saving you, not only from the penalty of sin but also from the presence of sin in your life, then the corresponding cost of that salvation is the very sin from which you have been saved.
- If discipleship involves making you to be like Christ, then the corresponding cost of that discipleship is the former image that you will no longer resemble.
- If Christianity means becoming a new creature in Christ Jesus, then that means of necessity that the cost of Christianity is the existence

of that old creature that was apart from Christ.

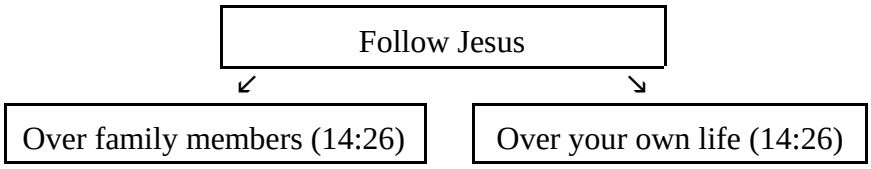
BEING A DISCIPLE INCURS A COST

There is an old saying that goes: "Anything that is free is worth what was paid for it." This even applies to our salvation. While it is freely given to us, it was the most expensive gift ever given. It cost God the death of His Son. In a similar vein, there is a corresponding cost to discipleship.

1. The Cost of a Cross: *"Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple" (14:27).*

When we hear the reference to a cross, we are perhaps inclined to think in stained glass terms. There was no religious significance as yet attached to the cross when Jesus spoke these words. Any reference to a cross would point to death. And not just a death, but a slow and painful and humiliating death. The cross was the instrument of torture and death used by the Romans. Putting these words into today's language would contain references to seating yourself in your own electric chair or tying your own hangman's noose, but it would go beyond those quick and sudden deaths. Here is the point. When Jesus calls a man, He calls Him to give his entire life.

The issue is one of loyalty and commitment. Jesus is really saying the same thing that He introduced back in verse 26.



Jesus calls for a level of commitment and loyalty that surpasses any you have for your family and even that which you have for your own life. A cross is a sign of death. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the German theologian who found himself living under the Nazi government, said in his book, *The Cost of Discipleship*, "When Christ calls a man, He bids him come and die." Those words took on a special meaning for Bonhoeffer whose stance led to his death at the hands of the Nazis in a day when most of the clergy had submitted to the Third Reich.

A cross is also final. There is no turning back from a cross. It is like jumping out of an airplane. My younger brother used to do that for fun. He was one of those who would engage in skydiving acrobatics. I personally find it a bit foolish to jump out of a perfectly good airplane. It isn't so much the danger as much as the finality of it. You have nowhere else to go but down. Carrying a cross is like that. It contains an aspect of finality from which there is no turning back. It is for this reason you are called to count the cost.

2. Counting the Cost: *"For which one of you, when he wants to build a tower, does not first sit down and calculate the cost, to see if he has enough to complete it? 29 Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation, and is not able to finish, all who observe it begin to ridicule him, 30 saying, 'This man began to build and was not able to finish.' 31 Or what king, when he sets out to meet another king in battle, will not first sit down and take counsel whether he is strong enough with ten thousand men to encounter the one coming against him with twenty thousand? 32 Or else, while the other is still far away, he sends a delegation and asks terms of peace" (14:28-32).*

Jesus has just made a very strong statement that discipleship involves a willingness to come and die. This is a great cost. Jesus goes on to picture this willingness with two illustrations.

First Illustration	Second Illustration
A man building a tower	A King going to war
Before he lays the foundation, he considers whether he has the resources to complete the project	Before he encounters the enemy, he considers whether his forces will be able to outnumber the enemy

- Both the building and the king are in danger of committing themselves to a course of action without having first counted the cost.
- The question they both face is whether or not they have the resources and the will to complete what they have started.
- If they fail to finish what they have started, the result will be humiliation and shame.

The point of these two illustrations is the same. It is that you are

called to count the cost of discipleship and to make a determination as to whether you will see it through to the end. This is quite different than the easy-believism invitation that suggests that you "give Jesus a try" in much the same way that you test-drive a sports car. Jesus says, "Only come if you are going to come for keeps."

Evangelists often come across as a used car salesman: "Don't read the fine print; we'll get to that later." But Jesus tells unbelievers to count the cost before coming to Him. Jesus calls you to recognize Him as the Lord of your life. He wants it all. He refuses to be sectored off to a small portion of your life. He refuses to be a weekend God. And so, He calls for you to count the cost. If you are going to be a Christian, be a real one.

There is a familiar and probably apocryphal story told of Alexander the Great. After each battle, there would be a tribunal where he would sit in judgment to reward those who had done well and to punish those who had done poorly. One day a young man was brought before him who had shown fear in the face of the enemy. For the first time that anyone could remember, Alexander's face softened and he appeared to show compassion for the youth. Perhaps he thought of his own infant son as he looked upon the young man. In a gentle voice, he asked him, "What is your name?"

"Alexander," came the reply.

"What did you say?"

"Alexander."

With a roar, the king jumped from his throne, took the shaken youth by his cloak and hurled him to the floor. "Either change your actions or change your name!" When we come as disciples, we come to take the name of the King. It is not a thing to do lightly. We are called to count the cost of bearing that name.

3. The Question of Possessions: *"So therefore, no one of you can be My disciple who does not give up all his own possessions" (14:33).*

There is an old hymn that says, "Jesus paid it all." There is a great truth to that. The debt of your sin was paid by Christ on the cross. The payment for that redemption price cost Him His very life. He gave up all for you. And He calls you to do the same thing. He calls you to give up everything you have and everything you are and to commit your very being to Him.

At this point, you might be thinking to yourself, "I want to follow Jesus but I've asked myself if I have the resources to see this through to the end and I don't know that I have what it takes." There

is hope for you. The point is not that you are rich in spiritual resources. The point is that you give up what you have and He provides what you need. You give up that which is producing death in your life and He gives that which is life eternal. You give up that which wars against your soul and in its place He gives that which saves your soul.

- Jesus wants you to know in advance that the price of discipleship is high.
- He calls you to choose purposefully to follow Him.
- He is not looking for those to follow Him who have the resources to do so, but rather those who after reflection realize that they do not and who are ready to give up their inadequate self-reliance to trust in Him.

The issue is not how spiritually strong you are. Rather the issue is whether you will realize and accept your spiritual bankruptcy and will determine to receive and rest solely upon the riches of Christ. At the same time, the words of Jesus bring us back to the stark reality of the truth that whatever you own has a tendency to own you. I own a car. It isn't a new car -- in fact, it is about 11 years old. Do you know how I spent a part of my week this last week? I spent it taking that car to the mechanic's shop. The thing that I owned in order to bring into my life the convenience of transportation demanded that I take time and resources to have it repaired.

Whatever you own owns you -- until you give it to Christ. It is only at that point that you can truly become a disciple of Jesus. And it is only then that you truly and lastingly own anything.

BEING A DISCIPLE NECESSITATES PURITY

"Therefore, salt is good; but if even salt has become tasteless, with what will it be seasoned? 35 It is useless either for the soil or for the manure pile; it is thrown out. He who has ears to hear, let him hear." (Luke 14:34-35).

The theme has not changed. Jesus is still talking about discipleship. But He now does so through the illustration of salt. Salt was a valued commodity in the ancient world. It served for a variety of uses. It was a purifier. It was a preserver. But the only use that is mentioned in our passage is its use in seasoning food.

Jesus elsewhere says that we are the salt of the earth (Matthew 5:13). We have been sent out to provide a seasoning for the kingdom. We are salt on the sacrifice. We are not the meal -- Jesus is that. But we do have a role to play in seasoning and in glorifying our Lord.

We call ourselves Christians. We label ourselves as salt. But the true test of salt is not whether it resides in a saltshaker. The true test of salt is whether or not it is salty. How can salt become tasteless? How can salt lose its saltiness? There is only one way of which I am aware. It is by being diluted with other elements. How do Christians lose their salty quality? I believe that one way is when they dilute their desire to follow Christ by attempting to hold onto the things of the world. There is a contrast here.

Examples of One who has not counted the cost of discipleship		
The man building a tower who does not finish it	The king going to war who is overwhelmed by his enemy	The salt that loses its saltiness and is only fit to be thrown out

There is nothing more useless than salt that is not salty. It is only fit to be thrown out and discarded. That is the picture of the person who says that they are going to follow Jesus but who does not follow through on that commitment. It is the picture of the would-be disciple who then begins to be sidetracked and compromised by the cares of this world and the details of life and the difficulties that come his way.

Is there sand in your saltshaker? It may not have happened all at once. A few grains here; a few grains there. It might not have been something that was in itself sinful, but it diverted your attention from the Lord. Before you knew it, that which reflected the presence of Christ in your life began to be diluted. Because it happened gradually, you hardly even noticed. The result is a tasteless, bland life that is Christian only in name and in external trappings. If that describes you, then it is time to come back, but before you do, you are called to count the cost. Have you counted the cost? Have you determined to follow through to the end, to be salty salt? Your call is to hold to a faith of the heart, not merely of the attendance role. Jesus calls you to do that which He first did on your behalf. He put you before...

- Family
- Possessions
- His own life.

And He calls for you to do the same.

LOST AND FOUND
LUKE 15:1-32

I recall watching with the rest of the world in July of 1999 when the United States Coast Guard conducted an extensive search for the lost plane of John F. Kennedy, Jr. No expense was spared. No stone was overlooked. The resources of a nation were utilized in this search. Tragically, what was found were only remains which were eventually buried at sea.

In this chapter, we will see three stories about an all-out search for that which has been lost. They are stories that Jesus told. But we must begin by setting the stage. He told these stories because of some grumbling and murmurings which were taking place.

In the previous chapter, Jesus had told a parable of a man sending out dinner invitations. But when it came time for people to come, they instead sent their excuses. Jesus was speaking to the Pharisees and the religious leaders of the day who had not answered the call to come to Jesus. As a result, the invitation went out to the multitudes. And sure enough, in Luke 14:25 the multitude began to come. But as they came, Jesus challenged them with what it meant to be a disciple. It meant that they must give up all of their own self-righteousness and standing to depend solely upon Jesus.

What was their reaction? We do not know. But the next thing we read is that tax-gatherers and sinners were coming to Him. They were the people who had no self-righteousness or spiritual standing and they knew it.

Luke 14:1-24	Luke 14:25-35	Luke 15:1-2
The Pharisees were invited to the kingdom, but they offered excuses	Multitudes begin to go along with Jesus	Tax-gatherers and sinners were coming to Him
Jesus tells a story of turning to the poor, crippled, blind, and lame and inviting from the highways and byways	Jesus tells them to count the cost of discipleship	The Pharisees and Scribes begin to grumble

As the tax-collectors and sinners began coming to Jesus, it was not long before verbal opposition arose. It came from those who had received the initial invitation and who had disdained it. They had not wanted to accept the invitation of Jesus, but they were visibly annoyed when that same invitation was extended to those whom they thought to be unworthy.

GRUMBLINGS OVER GRACE

> *Now all the tax-gatherers and the sinners were coming near Him to listen to Him.*
>
> *And both the Pharisees and the scribes began to grumble, saying, "This man receives sinners and eats with them." (Luke 15:1-2).*

This sets the stage for the entire chapter. There were two groups coming to hear Jesus. They were the tax-gatherers and the sinners.

1. Tax-gatherers.

   This described the man who had sold out his country to Rome in hopes of making a profit by overcharging people on their taxes. Such a man was considered a traitor and a turncoat.

2. Sinners.

   We are all sinners in that we have all sinned and fallen short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23). The term used here indicates something more. This term was commonly used for prostitutes and those who regularly engaged in sexual sins.

These two groups were considered to be the very lowest strata of society. They were excluded from worship in the Temple and the synagogue. They had come to hear Jesus. They would not have gone to hear a Pharisee or a scribe, since they would have only suffered rebuke and criticism from such a one. But Jesus had something to give them. And so, He received them and even ate with them.

This gave rise to criticism on behalf of the scribes and Pharisees. The scribes and the Pharisees were the religious elite. They represented the conservative, Bible-believing evangelicals of the day. They were religious and they were good at it and they were proud of the fact. It bothered them that Jesus, a popular rabbi, was consorting with sinners. It did not seem to

be a very good testimony. They didn't hang around with sinners and prostitutes and they couldn't see why Jesus ought to.

Luke the Physician records the words of Jesus: *"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). The truth is that Jesus didn't come to make good people better. He came to heal the sick. He came to sinners who commit real sins. If you don't see yourself as a sinner, then He didn't come for you.

PARABLE OF THE LOST SHEEP

> *And He told them this parable, saying,*
> *"What man among you, if he has a hundred sheep and has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the open pasture, and go after the one which is lost, until he finds it?* 5 *And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing.* 6 *And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and his neighbors, saying to them, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost.'*
> *"I tell you that in the same way, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents, than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance." (Luke 15:3-7).*

This is the first of three parables that Jesus is going to tell. They each have essentially the same theme. They each describe something that has been lost and is now found.

Luke 15:4-7	Luke 15:8-10	Luke 15:11-32
A Lost Sheep	A Lost Coin	A Lost Son
When it is found, there is rejoicing.		When he returns, the Father throws a party.

1. The Story.

The story was a familiar one in the countrysides of antiquity. It is the story of a lost sheep. Sheep are excellent about getting lost. Little Bo Peep got bad advice. The truth is that they won't come home on their own. You have to go and get them. In our story, the shepherd leaves the 99 sheep that are not lost and he goes out in

search of the one that is lost. When he finds it, he celebrates.

2. The Interpretation of the Parable.

Verse 7 gives the interpretation of this parable. Jesus came to save those who would admit that they were lost. On the other hand, those who claim to be righteous in their own deeds reject any need for a savior. Who is Jesus addressing in this parable? The Pharisees and the scribes. They are the "Ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance."

This is divine sarcasm. The Pharisees claim that they do not need repentance. They think that they are righteous on the basis of their own good works. And because they do not view themselves as being lost, they cannot be found. There is no rejoicing in heaven over them. Heaven is utterly indifferent to them. Heaven only rejoices over the one who knows that he is lost but now is found.

3. An Anti-statistical Approach.

> *"I tell you that in the same way, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents, than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance." (Luke 15:7).*

You would think that basic math would preclude leaving ninety-nine sheep to look for one. You would think that there would be more joy in heaven over ninety-nine righteous people. One critic of the Bible called this an anti-statistical approach to people. He was right. Jesus did not have a statistical approach to people. He saw them as more than mere numbers on a computer printout. He saw them as individuals. And He still does.

PARABLE OF THE LOST COIN

> *"Or what woman, if she has ten silver coins and loses one coin, does not light a lamp and sweep the house and search carefully until she finds it?*
>
> *"And when she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbors, saying, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin which I had lost.'*
>
> *"In the same way, I tell you, there is joy in the*

presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents." (Luke 15:8-10).

This second parable is a parallel to the first. Luke often uses double stories of both a man and a woman. Why does he do this? It is because the kingdom is for outsiders. It is for those who do not see themselves as worthy. Matthew speaks of the Magi coming to see Jesus at His birth, but Luke relates the shepherds coming to see Him. Shepherds were not highly esteemed in that day. In the same way, he now pictures a woman.

This next parable has the same message as the first. It is a parallel to the first. In both parables...

- Sinfulness is not stressed (in going astray, getting lost), but lostness.
- The owner takes the initiative, seeking the lost.
- The owner seeks diligently and persistently.
- The owner rejoices and invites and expects his neighbors to do likewise.
- The rejoicing of the one who has found the lost item is likened to the rejoicing of heaven to the salvation of one sinner.

As in the first parable, so also now, the point is made that there is corresponding joy in heaven over one sinner who repents. It is the repentance of the sinner that brings rejoicing in heaven. There is a principle here. As long as you are never lost, you can never be found. Salvation is only for the lost.

PARABLE OF THE LOST SON

This third parable tells the same story as the first two. There is something or someone who is lost and who will, by the end of the parable, be found. Why is this same story told three times? It is because God wants to tell His story again and again and again. We should never tire of telling it. This is the purpose for which the church exists. It is to tell His story.

As we come to this third parable, it will have exactly the same point which was made in the first two parables. It is the point that only one who is lost can be found. Only one who is dead can be raised. Only one who is sick can be healed.

1. The Son who wanted it Now.

> *And He said, "A certain man had two sons; 12 and the younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of the estate that falls to me.' And he divided his wealth between them." (Luke 15:11-12).*

The story begins with two sons. One was older and one was younger. The older son would eventually receive two-thirds of the inheritance. But the attention of the story is turned first to the younger son as he comes to his father and asks for the unthinkable. The younger son wanted his inheritance now. He was more concerned with his father's money than with his father's welfare. This was the height of disrespect. This son had no concern for his father. He was saying in effect, "I don't want to wait until you die to receive my inheritance." The underlying idea was, "I wish you would hurry up and die."

The father was under no obligation to grant this request. He could have rejected the request. He did not have to give in to it. But he did anyway. Though this is not a major point in this story, perhaps there is a lesson here. It is that obedience comes through freedom, not freedom through obedience.

We have a freedom in Christ. It is a freedom that is not based on obedience. God did not say, "If you obey me and keep all my rules, then I will give you salvation." Instead, He gave salvation freely and then He says, "Because you are now my child, I want you to obey."

2. A Squandered Inheritance.

> *"And not many days later, the younger son gathered everything together and went on a journey into a distant country, and there he squandered his estate with loose living." (Luke 15:13).*

Why did he go to a distant land? Because no one would know him there. He could do what he wanted and no one would say anything. He wanted to get away from the influence of his father and he wanted to go to a place where no one would correct him or hold him accountable. Temptation often comes when you travel to a distant land.

- Businessmen on trips.
- College students away at school.

Here is the principle. Sin isn't defined so much as by what you do as it is by where you live. Jesus called you to live a resurrected life in the heavenly places with Him. We are called to live in fellowship with the Father. When we turn to sin, we are turning to a distant land. We are going to a place that is not our home.

3. Reversal of Fortunes.

> *"Now when he had spent everything, a severe famine occurred in that country, and he began to be in need.*
>
> *"And he went and attached himself to one of the citizens of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine.*
>
> *"And he was longing to fill his stomach with the pods that the swine were eating, and no one was giving anything to him." (Luke 15:14-16).*

Johnny Cash was once asked by a reporter, "Do you believe in hell?" He answered in the affirmative and was then asked, "How do you know?" He replied, "Because I've been there." It may not be theologically correct, but there is a point to be made. Living for God is not only the right thing to do; it is also the more rewarding thing to do. Here is the principle. Judgment isn't defined so much as by how God responds, but by what you experience.

A lot of people view God as waiting with a bolt of lightning to zap you when you step out of line. But the reality is that one of the laws built into the very fabric of the universe is that you reap what you sow.

It is the law of cause and effect. It is the lesson you learn from jumping off a cliff. It isn't the fall that hurts; it's the sudden stop at the bottom. This was a young man who hit rock bottom. It was only then that he "came to his senses."

4. A Repentant Resolve.

> *"But when he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired men have more than enough bread, but I am dying here with hunger!*
>
> *"'I will get up and go to my father, and will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven,*

and in your sight;

"'"I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me as one of your hired men."'" (Luke 15:17-19).

The phrase "he came to his senses" is literally, "he came to himself." This is an Aramaic expression. It is the language of repentance. The unbeliever is one who has lost himself. He views the world through the eyes of unreality. He doesn't see things the way they really are.

The same thing happens to you when you sin. When you sin, you are not thinking clearly. Sin is blinding. But there comes a time when you come to your senses. You see what you have done. And the result is repentance. Notice that this repentance takes responsibility for its own actions.

"...Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in your sight" (Luke 15:18).

All too often, we seek to blame others for our own sin. A true repentance does not do this. This young man realizes that his sin was twofold. It was against God and it was against his own father. That repentance drives him home.

5. A Forgiving Homecoming.

"And he got up and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him, and felt compassion for him, and ran and embraced him, and kissed him.

"And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.'

"But the father said to his slaves, 'Quickly bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet; 23 and bring the fattened calf, kill it, and let us eat and be merry; 24 for this son of mine was dead, and has come to life again; he was lost, and has been found.' And they began to be merry." (Luke 15:20-24).

The father was waiting. His eyes were upon the horizon, awaiting the return of his lost son. And when he saw him, he ran to meet him. He did not insist that his son first grovel and beg forgiveness. This is a picture of a father who is eager to forgive.

It is said that when Lincoln was asked what the punishment would be like against the southern states, he replied, "It will be as though they had never left."

The son is not expecting this kind of reception. He has a speech prepared and memorized. He begins to give it by rote. But his father interrupts him. The interruption is one of joy and a call for rejoicing.

Tony Campollo wrote a book a number of years ago entitled: *The Kingdom of God is a Party*. I don't endorse everything he said in the book, but I like the title. It is a reminder of the truth that is seen in the reaction of this father. The Bible tells us that there is rejoicing in heaven over the repentance of a single sinner.

PARABLE OF THE OLDER BROTHER

Whenever you want to know what the main point of a parable is, look at how it ends. Look at the punch line.

Remember that this whole series of parables began because of a dinner party. They began because Jesus was eating with tax-gatherers and sinners. The Pharisees and scribes are pictured in the elder son. The name "Pharisee" means "separated one." They were separatists. They claim to have never transgressed. They think that they have kept the law. And they are angry because sinners are being forgiven. They are contrasted with the wayward son. This man realized that he was a sinner. He recognized that he was undeserving. His self-righteousness was completely broken. And as a result, he found repentance and forgiveness.

1. The Anger of the Older Brother.

> *"Now his older son was in the field, and when he came and approached the house, he heard music and dancing. 26 And he summoned one of the servants and began inquiring what these things might be.*
>
> *"And he said to him, 'Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fattened calf, because he has received him back safe and sound.'*

> *"But he became angry, and was not willing to go in; and his father came out and began entreating him.*
>
> *"But he answered and said to his father, 'Look! For so many years I have been serving you, and I have never neglected a command of yours; and yet you have never given me a kid, that I might be merry with my friends; 30 but when this son of yours came, who has devoured your wealth with harlots, you killed the fattened calf for him.'" (Luke 15:25-30).*

Most people realize that when they come to Christ they have to repent of their badness. But you also need to repent of your goodness. Otherwise the result is the Older Brother's spirit of pride.

The older brother was resentful. He was keeping score. He had accounted certain things that were owed to him and he now felt that his younger brother was getting more than he deserved. He was jealous. And so, he throws a temper tantrum. After all, he had never asked for his inheritance. He had never left home or squandered his money. He had stayed home and had worked the fields. He felt that he deserved the father's blessing. He had earned the father's goodwill. There is quite a contrast between these two brothers:

The Younger Brother	The Older Brother
Left home	Stayed home
The Prodigal Son (Wasteful)	The Productive Son (Worker)
No longer felt worthy of his father's blessings	Felt that his father owed him blessings
Realized his sins	Assumed an attitude of self-righteousness
Repented	Resented

In verse 30, he calls the younger brother "this son of yours" instead of "this brother of mine." When Sky would misbehave, I used to say to Paula, "Look what that daughter of yours did!" And yet, in spite of the older brother's self-righteousness, these two

brothers were a lot more alike than they realized.

a. They both wished a celebration - they wanted to party.

b. They both wanted to party without their father. The older brother had a secret wish to celebrate with his friends.

c. Both sons had a problem with Materialism. In the one son it was manifested by a lifestyle of licentiousness. In the other son, it was manifested by petty jealousy. But the root of the problem was the same. Each of the sons loved money more than they loved their father.

Notice that the father came out after this son, too. He lets his son speak his peace. And then he answers him with words of love.

2. The Father's Response.

> *"And he said to him, 'My child, you have always been with me, and all that is mine is yours.*
> *"'But we had to be merry and rejoice, for this brother of yours was dead and has begun to live, and was lost and has been found.'" (Luke 15:31-32).*

The father's response toward the older brother was loving and gracious. He could have said, "You get in there and we will talk about this later!" Don't miss the grace of the father. The older brother was jealous of the single lamb. But the father was ready to give him the entire flock. He underscores this when he says, *"All that is mine is yours."*

The father also reminds the older brother that he has a younger brother. He calls him "this brother of yours." It is a reminder to us that when we came to Christ, we found ourselves connected to one another, whether we wanted that connection or not. We are a part of a family and that includes all of its members.

If Jesus were here, with whom would He be eating?
- AIDS patients.
- Homosexuals.
- Ex-convicts.
- Divorced.
- Single parents.
- Drug addicts.

Are we reaching out to these? Or have we developed an "older brother mentality?"

Now let's look at the application of this parable. Remember this was given to the scribes and the Pharisees, the religious people. It was given to people who had made a career out of being religious. They expected that if God were going to do anything, it would surely be on their behalf. It bothered them that Jesus had been socializing with sinners. Like the older brother, they thought that the party should have been for them and no one else.

I believe that there is a little bit of the older brother in all of us. We want the party to be for us. We want what is in it for ourselves. Our problem is that we have not realized that we are the real prodigal. The good news is that we have a better older brother who gave up His inheritance and went out Himself after His younger brother to bring us home.

STEWARDS, SCOFFERS AND SECOND CHANCES
LUKE 16:1-31

Do not weary yourself to gain wealth,
Cease from your consideration of it.
When you set your eyes on it, it is gone.
For wealth certainly makes itself wings,
Like an eagle that flies toward heaven. (Proverbs 23:4-5).

The setting of this chapter is carried over from the previous chapter. Jesus had just told the parable of the Prodigal Son who squandered his estate. Now He moves directly into a story of a servant who has squandered the possessions with which he was entrusted. The entire chapter will have some themes running through it. They will be the themes of...

- Money.
- The Law and the Prophets.
- Being faithful in that with which you have been entrusted.

THE PARABLE OF THE UNFAITHFUL STEWARD

This is a difficult parable. It seems to commend unrighteousness. It teaches you how to rip off your employer.

1. The Situation of the Steward.

Now He was also saying to the disciples, "There was a certain rich man who had a steward, and this steward was reported to him as squandering his possessions. 2 And he called him and said to him, 'What is this I hear about you? Give an account of

> *your stewardship, for you can no longer be steward.'" (Luke 16:1-2).*

This steward learns that he is going to be fired. He is going to be fired because he has done a poor job of stewarding. He is going to go from being the manager of an estate to being in the unemployment line. He has the authority of the rich man. But now he is facing an impending dismissal.

Our situation is similar. We have been alerted to an impending termination. We are all going to die. Woody Allen was once asked, "Do you hope to achieve immortality through your work?" He replied, "Actually, I was hoping to achieve immortality through not dying." We are all under the sentence of death. If the Lord delays His coming, we will all end up dead.

2. The Scheme of the Steward.

> *"And the steward said to himself, 'What shall I do, since my master is taking the stewardship away from me? I am not strong enough to dig; I am ashamed to beg. 4 I know what I shall do, so that when I am removed from the stewardship, they will receive me into their homes.'" (Luke 16:3-4).*

The first thing that this steward did was to start talking to himself. He comes up with a plan. It is not a righteous plan. It is a plan to ingratiate himself with his master's debtors. He decides, "If I take care of them now, perhaps they will take care of me later."

Why did Jesus choose an unrighteous man to teach us about a righteous way? Because all truth is God's truth. You can look at any detail of life and you can see spiritual truth there. It is either a lesson by way of comparison or it is a lesson by way of contrast.

3. Carrying out the Plan.

> *"And he summoned each one of his master's debtors and he began saying to the first, 'How much do you owe my master?'*
>
> *"And he said, 'A hundred measures of oil.' And he said to him, 'Take your bill, and sit down quickly and write fifty.'*
>
> *"Then he said to another, 'How much do you*

> *owe?' And he said, 'A hundred measures of wheat.' He said to him, 'Take your bill, and write eighty.'" (Luke 16:5-7).*

The steward begins using what little authority he has left. He uses that authority to lower the various amounts of money due to his master. By so doing, he is trying to ingratiate himself to these debtors at the expense of the master. There are two observations that we ought to make with regard to this man's actions. He acted decisively. And he took a big risk.

4. The Praise of the Master.

> *"And his master praised the unrighteous steward because he had acted shrewdly; for the sons of this age are more shrewd in relation to their own kind than the sons of light." (Luke 16:8).*

You would think that we would read that the master scolded the unrighteous steward. But it doesn't say that. The steward was praised. Why? Not because of his dishonesty, but because he looked ahead and made provision for his future needs.

The praise of the owner is a bit like when you watch a movie about a jewel thief. You would never do such a deed yourself and you don't approve of the deed, but you might admire his ingenuity. The master does the same thing here.

Here is the point. The people of this world will commit themselves to obtaining worldly wealth and they will bend themselves to the task until they have accomplished their goal. The people of heaven often just seem to drag along. The parable teaches the principle of planning ahead. Are you planning for the future? How far ahead do your plans go?

> The Principle of the Steward says that all you have is not yours. If it were yours, then you could take it with you when you die.
> Instead, you are merely a steward. The only question is what kind: Faithful or unfaithful?

- 20 years?
- 50 years?
- 100 years?

You need to plan for the future. For all of the future. Everything that you own will eventually end up in the garbage heap. Don't live for garbage. Don't live for stuff. Take a longer view. By the end of this chapter we shall see a parable about a rich man and a beggar named Lazarus. The point is seen here in that the rich man failed to plan ahead.

THE INTERPRETATION OF THE PARABLE

"And I say to you, make friends for yourselves by means of the mammon of unrighteousness; that when it fails, they may receive you into the eternal dwellings.

"He who is faithful in a very little thing is faithful also in much; and he who is unrighteous in a very little thing is unrighteous also in much.

"If therefore you have not been faithful in the use of unrighteous mammon, who will entrust the true riches to you? 12 *And if you have not been faithful in the use of that which is another's, who will give you that which is your own?*

"No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one, and love the other, or else he will hold to one, and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon." (Luke 16:9-13).

The number one rule in interpreting parables is the context. Jesus often explains the meaning of the parable either just before or just after He gives it. While Jesus does not actually explain the parable, He does draw four principles from the parable that He has just told.

1. There is a Correlation between what you do with Material things versus the condition of your Spiritual Life: *"And I say to you, make friends for yourselves by means of the mammon of unrighteousness" (16:9).*

The word *mammon* is an Aramaic term. It could refer to wealth or it could refer to property. We would call it "material riches." Money itself is amoral. It is without morals. It is not in itself good or bad. But it can be used badly.

And if we have food and covering, with these we shall be content. 9 *But those who want to get rich*

> *fall into temptation and a snare and many foolish and harmful desires which plunge men into ruin and destruction.* 10 *For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith, and pierced themselves with many a pang. (I Timothy 6:8-10).*

What is wrong with loving money? It becomes a form of idolatry. We begin to worship money instead of worshiping God. Instead of chasing money, we need to chase after righteousness.

There are no pockets in a shroud. You don't see a U-haul behind a hearse. You can't take it with you. The story is told of a man decided that he wanted to take his money with him when he died. Each time danger would threaten, he would grab his wallet. And each night that he went to bed, he would put his wallet on a table in the attic over his bed. Sure enough, he died in his sleep and, the next morning, his wife saw that he had passed away and she ran upstairs to the attic to find everything where he had left it the night before. As she collected his wallet and belongings, she muttered, "I knew he should have put these in the basement."

When John D. Rockefeller died, someone asked his lawyer how much he had left. The lawyer answered, "All of it."

2. There is a Correlation between how you use your Resources Today and where you will be Tomorrow: *"Make friends for yourselves by means of the mammon of unrighteousness; that when it fails, they may receive you into the eternal dwellings." (Luke 16:9).*

This verse teaches us to use money to "make friends" - not in the literal sense but in the spiritual sense. We usually try to do just the opposite. We want to use our friends to make money.

Jesus calls us to use all of our resources to prepare for the time of our future termination. Does this mean that our money can get us into heaven? No. But it does mean that our money can keep us out of heaven. You can love God. Or you can love money. But you cannot love both.

3. There is a Correlation between the Little things that you do versus the Big things that you do: *"He who is faithful in a very little thing is faithful also in much; and he who is unrighteous in a very little thing is unrighteous also in much." (Luke 16:10).*

Have you ever heard someone say, "If I had a lot of money, I would use it for the Lord"? My question to such a person is what they are doing with the money that they have now. If you aren't using what you have for Him now, then you will not in the future, no matter how much you have.

The same principle applies to more than just money. It also applies to talents and abilities. Do you think you would share the gospel more if you were able to speak better? It isn't true.

The same principle applies to age. I tell high school kids to be careful what they make of themselves, for that is the way they will be in the future. What do you want to be ten years from now? Be that way today. It is like the old country road that had a sign at its entrance:

> Choose your rut carefully, you'll be in it for the next 50 miles.

Here is the point. There is a correlation between your use of finances and your standing in the Kingdom.

Finances	**The Kingdom**
Entrusted with little things.	Entrusted with much.
Unrighteous mammon.	True riches.
That which belongs to another.	That which is given as your own.
TWO MASTERS	
Either love one...	And hate the other.
Or hate this one...	And love this one.

If you will be faithful in the worldly things, then you will have the opportunity to demonstrate faithfulness in kingdom things.

4. There is a Correlation between Ownership versus Stewardship: *And if you have not been faithful in the use of that which is another's, who will give you that which is your own? (16:12).*

Our problem is that we have not come to the point of realizing that

we own nothing. People arguing over earthly possessions are like two fleas arguing over who owns the dog. We are merely stewards. Everything that we have is only given to us on loan.

You are a steward. The question is whether you will be a wise steward or a foolish steward. The answer to that will determine whether you eventually receive that which lasts.

THE UNFAITHFUL STEWARDS OF ISRAEL

This passage is the bridge that spans the gap between the parable of the unfaithful steward and the parable of the rich man and Lazarus.

1. The Reaction of the Pharisees.

> *Now the Pharisees, who were lovers of money, were listening to all these things, and they were scoffing at Him.*
>
> *And He said to them, "You are those who justify yourselves in the sight of men, but God knows your hearts; for that which is highly esteemed among men is detestable in the sight of God." (Luke 16:14-15).*

The reaction of the Pharisees was to scoff. There is a lesson here. Whenever unbelievers have no answer to the truth, they will try to cover their unbelief in ridicule. If they are making fun of you, it is because they have no real answers and they must resort to mockery. Why did they mock? Because they had no answers and because they wanted to justify themselves.

2. Unbelievers and the Kingdom.

> *"The Law and the Prophets were proclaimed until John; since then the gospel of the kingdom of God is preached, and everyone is forcing his way into it." (Luke 16:16).*

The Pharisees viewed themselves as protectors of the Law and the Prophets. But when John the Baptist came along preaching the gospel of the kingdom, they found themselves set against it.

What does Jesus mean when He says of the kingdom that "everyone is forcing His way into it?"

This literally can read "and everyone is with violence going into it." This Greek word is used only one other time in the New Testament. It is also a passage which is speaking of John and the Kingdom.

> *"And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven **suffers violence**, and violent men take it by force." (Matthew 11:12).*

There have been two interpretations suggested of these passages:

(a) If men are to enter the Kingdom, they must be vigorous in their striving. Entrance into the Kingdom requires self-denial and energy and exertion and a spiritual passion. A similar aspect is seen in Luke 13:24 where Jesus urges men to strive to enter through the narrow door (*Hendricksen, A.T. Robertson*).

(b) It is a reference to persecution against the Kingdom. Those who come into the Kingdom come in through the door marked "violence" and they destine themselves to be attacked by the world. Violent men attempt to overthrow ("take") the Kingdom.

Both of these statements are equally true. Furthermore, the second of these interpretations fits the passage in Matthew 11:12. But here in Luke, the context seems to favor the first interpretation.

3. The Law and the Prophets.

The Pharisees prided themselves on upholding the Law. But what they had really done was to separate the letter of the Law from the spirit of the Law.

They had built a great hedge around the Law. This hedge was made up of interpretations and additional ordinances. They reasoned that, if you did not go through the hedge, then you would not be in danger of breaking the Law. But their traditions had come to the point of replacing the Law. They were now keeping the letter of their own laws while breaking the Law of God. And so, instead of a hedge

around the Law, their traditions had become a series of legal loopholes by which men could break the Law and still be self-righteous.

> *"But it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one stroke of a letter of the Law to fail." (Luke 16:17).*

The word which is translated "stroke of a letter" is the Greek word *keraian*. It literally means "horn." It seems to refer to the small tail which stuck out from the Hebrew letter *beth* (B) to distinguish it from the *koph* (K). It would be the equivalent of the little slash that distinguishes the "O" from the "Q."

The Bible has not failed. And it will not fail. It is eternal. This means that the Bible is not out-dated. It is not merely an ancient book about ancient people that lived long ago and far away. It is as relevant as tomorrow's newspaper. It is relevant because God has not changed. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

4. The Instance of Divorce.

> *"Everyone who divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery; and he who marries one who is divorced from a husband commits adultery." (Luke 16:18).*

Jesus has been teaching that the Law will not pass away. Now He moves to illustrate this teaching with one specific example. It is an example which the Pharisees had filled with loopholes.

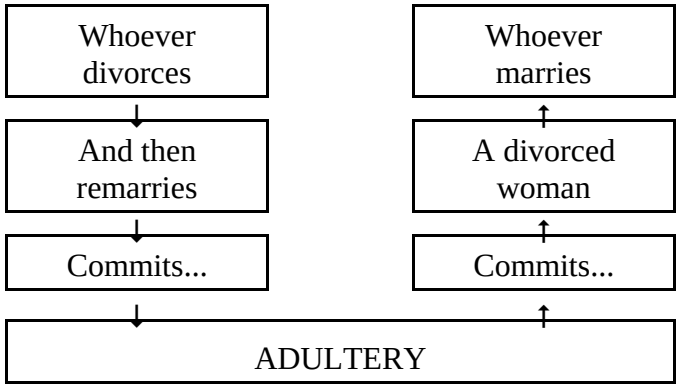
The command against divorce also has a spiritual application. The nation of Israel enjoyed a marriage relationship with the Lord and was now seeking to be divorced from the Lord's Anointed One.

You see, divorce among the Jews was commonplace in the days of Jesus. Josephus describes many of his own marriages and subsequent divorces. There were two schools of thought among the Jews regarding divorce:

a. The School of Hillel taught that a man could divorce his wife for any reason at all. If she burned the toast or nagged at her husband or if he saw someone better looking, he had suitable grounds for divorce.

b. The School of Shammai taught that a man was to divorce his wife only in the case of some moral impurity.

The School of Hillel was the more popular among the Jewish men, especially those who wanted a divorce. The Talmud goes to great lengths to outline the proper format of a bill of divorce; that it must be written in twelve lines and follow a specific protocol. But it failed to speak on the importance of the permanence of marriage. Jesus turns our attention back to the Law by pointing out that marriage is binding for life.



Whenever a divorce takes place for any reason, the vows of the marriage have been broken and sin has taken place.

PARABLE OF THE RICH MAN AND LAZARUS

The story of the rich man and Lazarus is a parable. It is an illustration of a spiritual truth. The spiritual truths that are being illustrated are those lessons that Jesus was teaching in the previous verses.

The Lessons in Luke 16:1-18	The Parable in Luke 16:19-31
The utilization of earthly riches to prepare for a heavenly future (16:1-9)	The rich man who took no thought for a life after death
The Pharisees who were lovers of money (16:14)	The rich man who was a lover of money

The Law and the Prophets were proclaimed until John (16:16).	"If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be persuaded if someone rises from the dead" (16:31).

This parable is directed to the Scribes and Pharisees who were "highly esteemed among men," yet "detestable in the sight of God" (Luke 16:15). The parable contrasts two men and their esteem on earth versus that in heaven.

1. The Cast of Characters.

> "*Now there was a certain rich man, and he habitually dressed in purple and fine linen, gaily living in splendor every day.*
>
> "*And a certain poor man named Lazarus was laid at his gate, covered with sores,* 21 *and longing to be fed with the crumbs which were falling from the rich man's table; besides, even the dogs were coming and licking his sores." (Luke 16:19-21).*

This is the story of two men. One was a rich man and one was a poor man. Remember that this story is told in the context of Jesus having taught on the subject of money.

This parable begins with the exact phrase of the previous parable: "There was a certain rich man..."

a. The Rich man.

> The Jews held to a prosperity theology. They believed that God loves rich people more than poor people. They said that God blesses everyone He loves and because rich people are blessed with their riches, God must love them a lot.
>
> This man lived like a king. He regularly dressed in king's clothes. And he lived like a king every day. Dyed cloth was expensive. Most people wore white. Some wore dark white because their clothes hadn't been washed for several days. Only the very rich possessed colored clothes.

b. Lazarus.

> Have you ever wondered why Jesus gave the name of Lazarus in the parable? It was so that the Pharisees would not be able to identify with him. They were to identify themselves with the rich man who went unnamed. They were to look at him and fill in their own name.

This is the Greek form of the Hebrew name Eleazar. It is a name that means, "helped by God." But to look at him, it did not seem as though God had helped him at all. Lazarus was a beggar. He was dependent upon everyone else for his survival. His only request in this parable was for the garbage which came from the rich man's leftovers.

The passage does not say that he was given the table scraps. It says that he wanted them. Instead, he received the company of dogs. Dogs were viewed differently in that day than they are today. Today we shampoo dogs. We have collars for them. We walk them and pamper them. But dogs in that day roamed in wild packs and were considered a nuisance. It was considered to be an extreme slur to call someone a dog.

What you need to know is that the Law gave specific commands regarding the treatment of the poor in Israel.

> *If there is a poor man with you, one of your brothers, in any of your towns in your land which the Lord your God is giving you, you shall not harden your heart, nor close your hand from your poor brother; 7 but you shall freely open your hand to him, and shall generously lend him sufficient for his need in whatever he lacks. Deuteronomy 15:6-7).*

> *For the poor will never cease to be in the land; therefore I command you, saying, "You shall freely open your hand to your brother, to your needy and poor in your land." (Deuteronomy 15:11).*

There were to be no starving people in Israel. They did not need a system of food stamps or welfare. Those who had money were to share with those who were poor.

This tells me something about the rich man of our parable. He was more interested in his money than in his obedience to the Law.

This parable is directed back to the Pharisees of verse 14 who were "lovers of money."

2. Two Deaths and Two Destinies.

> "*Now it came about that the poor man died and he was carried away by the angels to Abraham's bosom; and the rich man also died and was buried.* 23 *And in Hades he lifted up his eyes, being in torment, and saw Abraham far away, and Lazarus in his bosom." (Luke 16:22-23).*

The one thing is common that both of these men had is that they both died. Death is no respecter of persons. Rich or poor, smart or silly, weak or strong, everyone dies. But after that, all similarity ceases.

a. Abraham's bosom.

We learn here that there are no second chances after death. *It is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment* (Hebrews 9:27).

Lazarus had an entourage of angels. They accompanied him to a place referred to here as "Abraham's bosom." This is the language of a feast. The image seems to be taken from the Hebrew custom of reclining around a table on the Passover. At most meals, the Jews would sit upon mats around a common table. But at Passover and upon special occasions, they would recline around the table on low couches or pillows, leaning upon one elbow as they fed themselves with their free hand.

It was traditional for the guest of honor to be placed so that his head rested against the breast of the host. This is illustrated in John 13:25 where the Disciple whom Jesus loved is seen leaning back upon the breast of Jesus.

Abraham is pictured here as the host (after all, he is the spiritual father of all of us who believe) and Lazarus is pictured as the guest of honor. The scene is one of a dinner celebration, much like the ones which Lazarus had been shut out of as he sat outside the gate of the Rich Man's home.

b. Hades.

This is the Greek word for hell. It is described as "torment" and the further description in the passage goes on to describe a burning thirst.

Why did the rich man go to hell? Was it because he was rich? Was it because he did not give money to Lazarus? I do not believe so. I believe that the reason he went to hell is because he was an unrepentant sinner.

3. The First Request of the Rich Man.

> *"And he cried out and said, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool off my tongue; for I am in agony in this flame.'" (Luke 16:24).*

Have you ever heard someone say, "I want to go to hell so that I can be with all my friends"? Hell will not be fun. If you don't believe this, I have an experiment for you. Go to a stove, turn it on, wait five minutes and sit on it. Now party. Lots of fun, isn't it?

Who is the beggar now? Notice his request. He still wants Lazarus to play the part of the servant. He asks that Lazarus be sent with a single drop of water. When I am thirsty, I ask Paula to get me a glass of water. I don't ask for a single drop of water. That brings me to a question. Is this literal or is it merely symbolic language? I do not know. But I do know that when you have a symbol, the reality is much more intense than the symbol.

4. The First Answer.

> *"But Abraham said, 'Child, remember that during your life you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus bad things; but now he is being comforted here, and you are in agony.* 26 *And besides all this, between us and you there is a great chasm fixed, in order that those who wish to come over from here to you may not be able, and that none may cross over from there to us.'" (Luke 16:25-26).*

Notice what this passage teaches. It teaches that the decision you make here affect where you live over there. It teaches that there are no second chances. It teaches that there is no purgatory.

There has been an emphasis on money throughout this chapter. I can tell what you think is important by how you spend your money. And that decision has a direct effect on your future.

There is a great gulf fixed between heaven and hell. It took the Cross to span that gulf. You can only pass over it by coming to the cross. You don't have to go to hell. Jesus suffered hell for you when He paid the penalty for sins upon the cross.

5. The Second Request of the Rich Man.

> *"And he said, 'Then I beg you, Father, that you send him to my father's house - 28 for I have five brothers - that he may warn them, lest they also come to this place of torment.'" (Luke 16:27-28).*

There are no atheists in hell. This man suddenly became very religious. He suddenly has a driving desire to see the gospel preached to his family.

Funeral for an Atheist: All dressed up and nowhere to go.

6. The Second Answer.

> *"But Abraham said, 'They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.'*
>
> *But he said, 'No, Father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent!'*
>
> *"But he said to him, 'If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be persuaded if someone rises from the dead.'" (Luke 16:29-31).*

In John 11 there was another man named Lazarus. He died and Jesus raised him from the dead. Did this cause the Jews to believe? It did not. They were even more resolved to kill Jesus. They even talked about murdering Lazarus.

Remember that this parable began with Jesus proclaiming that the Law and the Prophets would never fail. This will be a

condemnation against the Pharisees. They have been watching the One whose coming was foretold in the Law and the Prophets. They have seen the miracles of Jesus and they have rejected Him. They will see Him raise Lazarus from the grave and their reaction will be to try to put Lazarus back in the grave. And even when Jesus Himself rises from the dead, they will not believe it.

> Do you take Hell seriously? What is there in your life that shows that you really believe in Hell?

As we come to a close in this chapter, I want to make some concluding observations:

1. Lazarus is named while the rich man is not.

   I think that there is a reason for this. The parable is told to the Pharisees and the story is told in such a way that they will identify with the rich man. You, as the reader, are also to slip your feet into the sandals of the rich man and ask whether they fit, not only with regard to riches, but with regard to your eternal destiny.

2. There are no second chances after death.

   Today there is a chance for repentance. But the Scriptures give every indication that once you die your fate is sealed. *It is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment* (Hebrews 9:27).

3. Whenever you want to see what is the big idea of a parable, look to see how it ends. The climactic focus of this parable is about the importance of heeding the message of the Scriptures and especially of ignoring the One whom God raised from the dead. We dare not live our lives as though the cross and the resurrection never took place. This parable points us to the cross. It calls us to come in faith to the cross where Jesus suffered the agony and the torment and even the thirst in our place.

STUMBLING BLOCKS AND STEPPING STONES
LUKE 17:1-19

The previous chapter has seen Jesus speaking to the subject of being a money-lover. He closed that passage with the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus. The rich man had been blinded to his eternal poverty by his present wealth. That wealth had served as a stumbling block to his faith. It is in this context that Jesus now takes up the topic of stumbling blocks.

Throughout most of the book of Luke, we have seen the Pharisees set themselves up in opposition against Jesus. They seek to discredit Him. In essence, they seek to make of themselves a stumbling block to prevent others from following Him.

THE DANGER OF STUMBLING BLOCKS

> *And He said to His disciples, "It is inevitable that stumblingblocks should come, but woe to him through whom they come!* 2 *It would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck and he were thrown into the sea, than that he should cause one of these little ones to stumble." (Luke 17:1-2).*

A millstone was a heavy rock used for grinding grain. It was to the ancient world what the anvil was to the modern world.

We live in a fallen world. In a fallen world, sin happens. A number of years ago Steve Brown wrote a book about the way bad things happen and he wanted to give it the title, "Crud Happens." But the publishers wouldn't hear of it and so it was retitled, "When Your Rope Breaks." The premise of the book is that we live in a fallen world where bad things happen. Jesus says the same thing when He says, *"It is inevitable that stumblingblocks should come."*

The term *stumblingblock* is translated from the Greek word

skandalon, from which we derive our word "scandal." The original term described a bent stick and referred to the stick that springs the trap or sets the bait. It also was used for a stumbling block, something that people trip over

In the Bible, sometimes a *skandalon* is good - such as the way that people "trip" over Jesus, and are offended at the gospel (Romans 9:33; 1 Corinthians 1:23; Galatians 5:11). But when it comes to tripping up other believers, a *skandalon* is bad. Jesus is saying, "People are going to take the bait - but woe to you if you offer the hook. People are going to trip up - but woe to you if you set the stumbling block in their way."

It is bad enough to stumble over a stumbling block. But it is a worse thing to be the stumbling block over which others stumble. Jesus says, "People are going to stumble; but don't you be the cause of their stumbling."

There is a principle here. It is that I am responsible for you. And you are responsible for me. Cain asked the question, "Am I my brother's keeper?" And the answer is, "Yes, you really are." To quote Dickens from *The Christmas Carol*, "Mankind is our business." This theme was introduced in the last chapter where the Rich Man ignored this principle to his eternal destruction.

1 John 2:10 explains the solution to being a *skandalon* to others. It is love: *The one who loves his brother abides in the light and there is no cause for stumbling in him.* If we love our brother, we will not be bringing an offense into his life

THE HIGH STANDARD OF FORGIVENESS

> *"Be on your guard! If your brother sins, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him.* 4 *And if he sins against you seven times a day, and returns to you seven times, saying, 'I repent,' forgive him." (Luke 17:3-4).*

One of the ways in which we can become a stumbling block to others is by our refusal to forgive those who have wronged us. This is a supernatural standard. But as I read this, I am thankful for this standard. I am thankful because this tells me that I have a supernatural God who has met this standard.

Luke 17:1-2	Luke 17:3-4
The importance of not causing your brother to stumble	What to do when your brother stumbles and sins against you

A woe	A warning: "Be on your guard!"
Pictures the man who causes stumbling	Pictures the man who brings about restoration from stumbling

This is a continuation of the idea that was introduced in the first two verses. Instead of being a source of stumbling, we are to be a source of restoration.

1. Forgiveness is to be granted to those who have sinned against us.

   Has someone done wrong against you? Has someone caused you hurt or pain? This passage is written to you. It is a call to forgive as you have been forgiven. This is the key to forgiveness. Instead of focusing upon the hurt or the pain that you have experienced, Christ calls upon you to look upon the hurt and the pain you have inflicted upon Him and how much He has forgiven you. When your focus is upon the cross, you will find it easier to forgive others.

2. Forgiveness is to be granted on the basis of a verbal confession alone.

   God is able to see a person's heart and He judges accordingly. But you are only able to see a person's actions and hear their words. When someone asks for forgiveness, you are called upon to take it at face value.

3. Forgiveness is to be granted even to those who sin against us repeatedly and habitually.

   The Lord is our pattern. He did not forgive you and then say, "You now have salvation and are declared to be righteous and are one of my beloved children -- until you slip up and commit a sin and then I am throwing you out."

   God forgives and He keeps on forgiving. That is a good thing because I continually need forgiveness. I continually need forgiveness because I continue to sin real sins that need real forgiving.

Have you been forgiven by God? Then you are called to show that same forgiveness to others. Here is the principle: Forgiven people forgive. Those who are not forgiven hold grudges.

A PLEA FOR FAITH

> *And the apostles said to the Lord, "Increase our faith!"*
>
> *And the Lord said, "If you had faith like a mustard seed, ye would say to this mulberry tree, 'Be uprooted and be planted in the sea;' and it would obey you." (Luke 17:5-6).*

In verse 1 Jesus was speaking to the disciples. Now we see a request from the apostles. It is possible that this was a smaller group of men?

The teachings of Jesus regarding forgiveness are hard words to hear. They were hard for the disciples to hear. In response to that teaching, the disciples asked Jesus to increase their faith. It seems to me that this was a good prayer. It is a prayer that I have often prayed myself. And yet, it presupposes a wrong premise. It presupposes that I will only be able to obey if I have a lot of faith.

Jesus says in effect, "You don't need a great deal of faith to accomplish great things. Even a little faith will do if it is real faith." Don't miss the context in which this is said. It is said in a context about stumbling blocks and forgiveness. This isn't about moving mulberry trees. It is about moving your own hardened heart. It is about moving you.

The apostles were under the impression that they would need a great quantity of faith to accomplish the forgiveness demanded by God. They already had faith. After all, they had gone out preaching the gospel and they had cast out demons and performed miracles. They had faith. But they were not so sure that they had enough faith to accomplish this kind of forgiveness.

Notice that Jesus does not grant their request. Instead He corrects their request. He tells them, "You are asking for the wrong thing." They wanted faith. What they needed was a lesson in gratitude.

The Apostles' Request	**Jesus's Response**	
Give us more faith and then we will be able to forgive as we ought.	Parable of a slave who serves his master.	Living parable of 10 lepers and one who showed gratitude.
	The master is not obligated to thank the slave	Only one of the lepers whom Jesus healed returned to thank Him

Jesus is going to give two parables. The first will be a parable of a slave who

serves his master. The second will be a living parable of the healing of 10 lepers.

THE SERVICE OF SLAVES

> *"But which of you, having a servant plowing or tending sheep, will say to him when he is come in from the field, 'Come immediately and sit down to eat'? 8 But will he not say to him, 'Prepare something for me to eat, and properly clothe yourself and serve me until I have eaten and drunk; and afterward you will eat and drink'? 9 He does not thank the slave because he did the things which were commanded, does he? 10 So you too, when you do all the things which are commanded you, say, 'We are unworthy slaves; we have done only that which we ought to have done.'" (Luke 17:7-10).*

The word translated "servant" in verse 7 is the basic Greek word for "slave." Rather than describing a hired hand or a contractual worker, it describes a slave. Because we do not live in a culture that utilizes slavery, some of the force of this illustration is lost on us. The duty of a slave was to serve his master and not the other way around. The point is that when a slave does that which he has been commanded, it is not worthy of some special mention or merit.

The Illustration	The Truth Illustrated
The slave comes in from the field and is ordered to further serve the master. In all of his service, the slave receives no thanks as he is only doing what he is supposed to do.	When you do all the things which are commanded, you are still an unworthy slave who is only doing what you are supposed to be doing.

How does this apply to the previous passage? It means that when we forgive someone who has wronged us, we are not deserving thereby of some special merit or praise. We are merely doing that which we are supposed to do. Likewise, when we avoid causing someone else to stumble, that does not make us super spiritual or worthy of commendation. It is merely what is expected of us.

This is a lesson in grace. It is a lesson that teaches us that when we

receive anything at all from the Lord it is unearned and undeserved. The gospel is the story of the Lord of the universe taking on flesh to come and live and die as a servant to men, not because we earned it or deserved it, but because of His wondrous love and grace toward us.

SETTING FOR A MIRACLE

> *And it came about while He was on the way to Jerusalem, that He was passing between Samaria and Galilee. (Luke 17:11).*

Luke is careful to tell us that Jesus *was passing between Samaria and Galilee* (17:11). Since chapter 9 we have seen Jesus on His way to Jerusalem. There is a cross in Jerusalem and He is headed there to keep a divine appointment. The purpose of the cross will be to provide the ultimate service for men. But in the meantime, Jesus performs another service.

The fact that Jesus was on the border of Samaria will come out in the story. There is going to be a mixed group of lepers. At least one of those lepers will be a Samaritan. The implication will be that others among the group are Jewish.

There was a deep prejudice which existed between the Jews and the Samaritans. It was a prejudice rooted in racial pride. For hundreds of years the Jews had prided themselves upon their racial purity. They were the seed of Abraham and they could trace their lineage back through the tribes of Israel. The Samaritans, on the other hand, were half-breeds. They were part Jewish, descended from a time when Israel had been invaded by foreign armies.

This prejudice was also political in nature. The split in the nation of Israel had taken place a thousand years earlier. Since that time, Judah and Samaria had been a divided peoples. Even when the land was united under the reign of the Maccabees, the people themselves were divided.

This prejudice was also a religious conflict. The Samaritans had their own places of worship and their own Bible which was limited only to the first five books of Moses. When the Maccabees had destroyed the place of worship in Samaria, the Samaritans had responded by sneaking into the Temple in Jerusalem and defiling it.

There was bad blood between the Jews and the Samaritans. And yet, it is interesting to see how that prejudice fell away in the face of calamity. When the tragedy of this disease struck, these men banded together in spite of their racial and political and religious differences. They had nothing in common except an overwhelming need. That is one of the things that draws

the church together.

A REQUEST FOR MERCY

> *And as He entered a certain village, ten leprous men who stood at a distance met Him; 13 and they raised their voices, saying, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!"(Luke 17:12-13).*

As Jesus comes to this border village between Samaria and Galilee, he encounters *ten leprous men*. They are standing at a distance. The reason they are standing at a distance is because they are afflicted with a disease that was considered to be highly contagious. Their disease has separated them from their fellow man. They are at a distance from their families and loved ones. They are at a distance from all that is healthy and whole.

They call out to Jesus, calling Him "master." This takes us back to the previous passage where Jesus gave an illustration of how a slave does not expect to be served by his master, but rather is expected to serve.

Luke uses a word for "master" that is found only in the Gospel of Luke. It is the Greek word ἐπιστάτα (as opposed to κύριος which is used in the other Gospel accounts). It conveys the idea of a rabbi or teacher or one in authority.

The point is that Jesus is under no obligation to heal these ten lepers. All they can do is to cry out for mercy. And that is all we can do. The Lord is under no obligation to save us. When He does act to save, it is an act of mercy.

"Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!" This should not be read in a calm voice. It was a cry of desperation. Their dreams and ambitions have failed. Their life is overwhelmed by the magnitude of this disaster. The stigma of A.I.D.S. is nothing to that which was attached to one who had leprosy.

Leprosy was a dreaded disease. It attacked the nerve ending in the victim so that he could feel no pain. He might be eating and bite off his finger without realizing it. It was also a disease which was considered to be highly contagious.

Those who had contracted it were driven away from their homes and their families. They became outcasts, waiting only the final release of death.

Notice that they *stood at a distance*. This was because rabbinic law mandated lepers keeping a certain distance from people. They were not even

allowed to draw near to Jesus.

There are three things that I want you to see about these men.

- First, notice that they had a right recognition. They recognized Jesus as more than a mere man. They called Him...
  - Jesus.
  - Master, using a title which is usually used by disciples.

  There was both an urgency and an accuracy to their call. They saw Him as One who had the power to deliver them.

- Secondly, notice that their need drove them to Jesus. That is one of the reasons that the Lord allows bad things to come into our lives. It is to draw us closer to Himself.

- Third, notice that it was only their need which drove them to Jesus. I believe that we do Jesus a disservice when we see Him only as "the answer" to our problems. If we follow Jesus only because He helps us with our problems, then what do we do when things are going well? And if we follow Him for this reason only, what happens when I turn to Jesus and the problem doesn't immediately go away?

A SIGNIFICANT COMMAND

> *And when He saw them, He said to them, "Go and show yourselves to the priests." (Luke 17:14a).*

Jesus does not immediately heal these lepers. He is able to. He has already healed a number of people. But instead He gives them some instructions. He tells them to *"Go and show yourselves to the priests."*

One of the duties of the priest was to act as the local health official. The priest was authorized to examine a person and to declare him either clean or unclean. This was a duty that had been given to the priesthood back in the book of Leviticus.

There was no cure for leprosy. It was a disease that would damage the nervous system so that the one afflicted would lose all feeling in his limbs. If he was not very careful, he might cut off a finger or a toe and not even notice.

Leviticus 14 gives some very explicit instructions as to the sacrifices and rituals that were to be invoked in the case of a leper that had been healed. But this was not a common occurrence. The last time that anyone could

remember a leper being healed had been in the days of Elisha. But now Jesus was on the scene and He was healing lepers. They are told to go and to show themselves to the priests.

Can you imagine the reaction of the priests? They have to go back to the Scriptures and look up Leviticus 14 to check and see what are the sacrifices and rituals to be used for a healed leper. This would not be a passage that they utilized on a regular basis. And the fact that they have to do so now is a mute testimony to the coming of Jesus.

Jesus is headed to Jerusalem where He will present Himself in the Temple, but before He gets there, He will be preceded by ten healed lepers who will bear testimony of His power. The priests will not be able to ignore that testimony. They will have to look up the appropriate passages in Leviticus 14 and they will have to oversee the required sacrifices and rituals. They will have to bear testimony that these men have truly been healed.

A GRACIOUS HEALING

> *And it came about that as they were going, they were cleansed. (Luke 17:14b).*

I want you to notice something about these men. They all exhibited a measure of faith. They did not argue with Jesus that He must touch them the way He had touched a leper back in Luke 5. They all exhibited faith. Their faith was demonstrated by the fact that they went to show themselves to the priests. Normally you would not go to the priest unless you were already healed. They walked by faith, not by sight. They went as they were. And as they went, they were healed.

A GRATEFUL RESPONSE

> *Now one of them, when he saw that he had been healed, turned back, glorifying God with a loud voice, 16 and he fell on his face at His feet, giving thanks to Him. And he was a Samaritan.*
>
> *And Jesus answered and said, "Were there not ten cleansed? But the nine -- where are they? 18 Was no one found who turned back to give glory to God, except this foreigner?" (Luke 17:15-18).*

As the ten left to obey the injunction of Jesus, they were healed. They acted in obedience and they received grace. They were healed as they exercised the obedience of faith. It was not that they deserved or merited this healing. It was a work of grace. But it was a healing that came as they believed.

At this point, one of the ten stopped and turned back and returned to Jesus to give thanks. He happened to be a Samaritan. They were all undeserving, but he was even more undeserving.

Do you see what has happened? Ten lepers were given instructions from the master and they obeyed. As a result they were all healed. Now one comes back. He is not told to come back. He is not acting out of obedience because they were all obeying the command. He is not just acting out of obedience; he is acting out of gratitude.

The Other Nine Lepers	**The Samaritan Leper**
They were all told to go and to show themselves to the priest	
They all obeyed	
They were all healed	
They continued to obey the command, but showed no further initiative	He took the initiative to return to thank the Lord
They were obedient but they demonstrated no gratitude	He was obedient and he went a step further to express his gratitude

Jesus says something to this man that He does not say to the other former lepers. He says, *"Your faith has made you well."* This is not said of the other lepers. And that tells me something about saving faith. It suggests that saving faith includes a measure of gratitude. We can learn something of the nature of thanksgiving from this Samaritan.

1. Thanksgiving Begins with Perception.

   Being thankful involves not just having things happen, but how you see those things. All too often when things happen in our lives, we do not see God's hand.

   It is like the way an artist and a cow each look at a beautiful green

meadow. The artist sees the radiant colors in the shimmering grasses. The cow only sees lunch.

2. Thanksgiving Continues with Proclamation.

When we go to a football game, we yell and cheer and make a loud noise. But then we come to church and give thanks quietly. It wasn't the case with this Samaritan. He used a loud voice. He was excited about the gift of God. When was the last time you became excited about the Lord? When you spoke about Him with the same zeal and the same zest that a sports fan speaks about a great game or a young man speaks about his first love?

3. Thanksgiving Culminates in Prostration.

I am told that the Masai Tribe of Africa has a way of expressing thanks. You convey the idea of "thank you" by saying, "My head is in the dirt." This man came before Jesus and bowed down before Him. That is an attitude of worship.

A GENUINE CONVERT

And He said to him, "Rise, and go your way; your faith has made you well." (Luke 17:19).

The other nine men were probably glad to be rid of their Samaritan companion.

This story does not emphasize the thankless nine as much as the thankful one. Ten men went away cleansed of their leprosy. But if I understand what Jesus is saying here, then only one went away cleansed of his sins.

The man who only seeks the hand of God and not the heart of God is only a spiritual consumer, not a worshiper. There is a danger in a theology which does not also become a "Thankology."

The nine went to the right source. They made the proper request. They even acted on faith. But in the end it was in vain because there was no thanksgiving in their hearts. It is easy for us to sit back and judge the nine, but we are often guilty of the same ingratitude.

- Children giving thanks for their parents.
- Men and women giving thanks for their jobs.

- Husbands giving thanks for their wives.
- Wives giving thanks for their husbands.
- Christians giving thanks for their church.

Most of all, we are guilty in not being thankful to the Lord of the salvation which we have received. And if we are not thankful for that, then perhaps it is because we have not really received it after all.

THE COMING KINGDOM
LUKE 17:20-37

Throughout the book of Luke, we have heard Jesus speak on numerous occasions about the Kingdom. Even before the birth of Jesus, the angel told Mary that her son would reign over the house of Jacob forever and that His kingdom would have no end (Luke 1:33).

- Jesus described His message as the preaching of the Kingdom of God (Luke 4:43; 8:1).
- To His disciples He spoke about the mysteries of the Kingdom (Luke 8:10) - those truths that were now being revealed for the first time about God's workings on earth.
- He sent His disciples out proclaiming the coming Kingdom (Luke 9:2, 60; 10:9).
- He even went so far as to say that there were some who would not taste death until they had seen the kingdom of God (Luke 9:27).
- He taught His disciples to pray, "Thy Kingdom come" (Luke 11:2).
- And finally, when confronted by the religious leaders of Israel who watched the power of God at work and who went so far as to accuse Jesus of casting out demons by the power of Satan, He said, "If I cast out demons by the finger of God, then the Kingdom of God has come upon you" (Luke 11:20).

By now you might be asking the same question that the Pharisees were asking: "Jesus, you've been talking about the coming kingdom for your entire ministry. When exactly is it going to come?"

THE DANGER OF MISSING THE KINGDOM NOW

> *Now having been questioned by the Pharisees as to when the kingdom of God was coming, He answered them and said, "The kingdom of God is not coming with signs to be*

> *observed; 21 nor will they say, 'Look, here it is!' or, 'There it is!' For behold, the kingdom of God is in your midst." (Luke 17:20-21).*

Jesus was on his way to the Holy City where he would be finally rejected as the Messiah by the chief priest (John 19:14,15) and crucified. Since chapter 13, he had been speaking to both open-hearted sinners and closed-hearted Pharisees.

Earlier in this chapter we have seen Jesus warning against being a stumblingblock. Now our attention comes back to the Pharisees. They are the ones who have been trying to dissuade people from following Christ. They have been trying to play the part of a stumblingblock to the nation of Israel. It is ultimately they who will stumble and fall. One of the signs of their fall is their failure to recognize the King and His Kingdom.

The Pharisees had all sorts of ideas as to what the Kingdom of God would be like. They envisioned a conquering king coming and overthrowing the Romans and setting up Jerusalem as their capital city and reigning over the nations while they received a front row seat. But they missed the fact that the Kingdom was already in their midst.

> The leaders of the conservative Qumran community who lived on the western shores of the Salt Sea (they were the keepers of the now famous Dead Sea Scrolls) hoped that God would come in kingly power to lead them to victory over their oppressors (1 Qm. 6:6; 12:7).

We are going to talk in a moment about what that means. But first we should ask what is meant by these words "the kingdom of God." The Old Testament declares that God, the eternal King of the Universe, rules over the whole earth and all the kingdoms of men. Kings and kingdoms rise and fall at his command. As the Judge of all the world, God reigns in righteousness and justice over the affairs of mankind.

If that is the case, then why do the Pharisees speak of a future coming of the kingdom? They did so because the Bible also promised a future coming kingdom.

> *"And in the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which will never be destroyed, and that kingdom will not be left for another people; it will crush and put an end to all these kingdoms, but it will itself endure forever."* (Daniel 2:44).

There would come a kingdom that would be an abiding kingdom. A kingdom that would arise and not fall. We speak of the rise and the fall of

the Roman Empire, but the kingdom that would come would never be destroyed. Instead it would crush and put an end to the kingdoms that preceded it. Jesus tells the Pharisees several things about the Kingdom.

1. God's Kingdom does not come with observable signs: *"The kingdom of God is not coming with signs to be observed" (17:20).*

   The Pharisees were always looking for a sign. They seemed to glory in the dramatic. Paul said that the Jews seek for signs while the Gentiles seek for wisdom (1 Corinthians 1:22). And while Jesus elsewhere speaks of signs that take place within this age, the Kingdom does not come *with signs to be observed*.

2. God's Kingdom is not universally recognized: *"...nor will they say, 'Look, here it is!' or, 'There it is!'" (17:21).*

   You can miss it if you try. You can look at it and you can see it with your own two eyes and you can still miss the reality of its presence in the same way that the Pharisees could look at Jesus, they could see His miracles, they could even eat the bread and the fish that He had supernaturally provided, and yet still miss the fact that God had come near.

3. God's Kingdom has a present reality: *"For behold, the kingdom of God is in your midst" (17:21).*

   The Greek text literally says, *The kingdom of God is in you* (ἐντος ὑμων ἐστιν). But Jesus is certainly not saying that the Kingdom of God was evident within the lives of the Pharisees. Rather He is pointing out that it had been brought before them. It was in their midst.

   The Pharisees were eagerly awaiting the coming of a kingdom yet future. In looking for that which was future, the Pharisees were missing that which was set before them.

THE DANGER OF OVERZEALOUS EXPECTATIONS

And He said to the disciples, "The days shall come when you will long to see one of the days of the Son of Man,

and you will not see it. 23 And they will say to you, 'Look there! Look here!' Do not go away, and do not run after them. 24 For just as the lightning, when it flashes out of one part of the sky, shines to the other part of the sky, so will the Son of Man be in His day. 25 But first He must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation. (Luke 17:22-25).

The Pharisees were looking for a future Kingdom and missing the fact that the Kingdom had a present reality. The disciples, on the other hand, need to know that this is not all there is -- there is a future coming kingdom for which they must wait. They need to know the before the crown comes the cross. They need to know that they are going to be living in the "between times" and that there will be days when they *long to see the days of the Son of Man* and they will not see it.

1. Jesus Projected a time of Absence: *"The days shall come when you will long to see one of the days of the Son of Man, and you will not see it" (17:22).*

   Jesus started out this passage by addressing the Pharisees. But now His audience has changed. Instead He is addressing His disciples. They are the ones who will *long to see one of the days of the Son of Man*. They are the friends of the bridegroom who will mourn the absence of the bridegroom (Luke 5:34-35).

   One of the signs of a Christian is that he is one who waits and looks with eager anticipation the return of the Lord. He is one who is *looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus (Titus 2:13).*

2. Jesus Predicted False Prophets: *And they will say to you, 'Look there! Look here!' Do not go away, and do not run after them (17:23).*

   Our age is filled with people who would have us "look here" or "look there" for the coming of the Lord. False prophets and false date-setting seems to abound. Unfortunately, too many of these are from the ranks of Christians who ought to know better.

   - Tim LaHaye has recently co-authored a series of fictional books set in a futuristic prophetic scheme. I have no problem with Christian fiction, but I do have some serious reservations about the accuracy of Mr LaHaye's false prophecies. In one

of his older books, he outlined how the second coming was to take place within the generation who had seen the onslaught of World War One. Quite a number of years have passed since Mr LaHaye made that prediction and he no longer says that. But he is still in the prediction-making business and the words of Jesus still apply: *Do not go away, and do not run after them (17:23)*.

- Hal Lindsey is another modern Bible Teacher who went on record as believing that Christ would likely come by the year 1988 (a generation after the recognition of Israel as a nation), but that was proven to be in error. He has continued to write prophecy books and he continues to make predictions about the future and many of these continue to be in error.

Don't go chasing elusive prophetic butterflies. Jesus said that no one knows the day or the hour -- that no one knows when He will return.

3. Jesus Promised an Unmistakable Appearance: *For just as the lightning, when it flashes out of one part of the sky, shines to the other part of the sky, so will the Son of Man be in His day (17:24).*

One of the most spectacular fireworks displays I have ever seen was at the Bicentennial Celebration of 1976. Paula and I were living on Hollywood Beach and we had a grandstand view of those fireworks. They burst in the air and they sparkled and they crackled.

When the fireworks were over and the crowds had left the beach, a thunderstorm moved in. There was no rain. It was one of those dry storms. The lightning lit up the sky in great, jagged streaks that ran from horizon to horizon. It was as if the Lord were saying, "You think that your little fireworks display is impressive; look what I can do."

I believe that is what Jesus is going to do when He returns. There will be no missing Him and there will be no question about His authenticity. There is a popular teaching going around today that there shall be two separate comings of Jesus in the future. It is claimed that before the Second Coming of Christ, there will first be a secret "rapture" in which Jesus will quietly come and take all believers from the earth and then at a later date He will return in His Second Coming. The words of Jesus in this passage are in direct opposition to this teaching.

4. Jesus Presupposed the Cross before the Crown: *But first He must*

suffer many things and be rejected by this generation (17:25).

The cross did not mean that the kingdom of God had failed or that it would go unrealized. Neither is the church some alternate plan that was brought about because of some failure in God's planning. After his death, burial and resurrection, Jesus would tell His disciples that: *"All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go, therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo I am with you always, even to the end of the age."* When you say the word "authority," you naturally think of a King and his Kingdom.

THE DANGER OF WORLDLY PREOCCUPATIONS

"And just as it happened in the days of Noah, so it shall be also in the days of the Son of Man: 27 they were eating, they were drinking, they were marrying, they were being given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all.

"It was the same as happened in the days of Lot: they were eating, they were drinking, they were buying, they were selling, they were planting, they were building; 29 but on the day that Lot went out from Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all.

"It will be just the same on the day that the Son of Man is revealed. 31 On that day, let not the one who is on the housetop and whose goods are in the house go down to take them away; and likewise let not the one who is in the field turn back. 32 Remember Lot's wife. 33 Whoever seeks to keep his life shall lose it, and whoever loses his life shall preserve it." (Luke 17:26-33).

We have seen the danger of missing the Kingdom now in our quest and our overzealous expectations for the future. Now we see that there is an equal and opposite danger -- the danger of being so casual about the future that it catches us unawares. What are the events of which Jesus speaks in this passage? There are two primary views:

The Second Coming of Jesus in the Future	• The days of the Son of Man (17:26). • The day when the Son of Man is revealed (17:3).
The Fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70	

The second view is known as the Preterist View. It states that all of the prophecies of the Bible were fulfilled by the end of the first century including the Second Coming of Christ. There is also a moderate view known as "partial preterism" that says the A.D. 70 destruction of Jerusalem was "a" return of Christ, but that He shall come again in the future. R.C. Sproul is a representative of this position. I believe both of these to be in error.

In Matthew 24:34 Jesus says, *"Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place"* and Sproul takes that to be a reference to the specific people who were living in the days of Jesus and feels that this is a promise that they would see *"all these things"* described in Matthew 24. The reason I mention this here is because a number of things found in that chapter are paralleled here in Luke's account.

Matthew 24	**Luke 17**
"For just as the lightning comes from the east, and flashes even to the west, so shall the coming of the Son of Man be" (24:27).	"For just as the lightning, when it flashes out of one part of the sky, shines to the other part of the sky, so will the Son of Man be in His day" (17:24).
"For the coming of the Son of Man will be just like the days of Noah. 38 For as in those days which were before the flood they were eating and drinking, they were marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, 39 and they did not understand until the flood came and took them all away; so shall the coming of the Son of Man be" (24:37-39).	"And just as it happened in the days of Noah, so it shall be also in the days of the Son of Man: 27 they were eating, they were drinking, they were marrying, they were being given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all" (17:26-27).

"...then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains; 17 let him who is on the housetop not go down to get the things out that are in his house; 18 and let him who is in the field not turn back to get his cloak" (24:16-18).	"On that day, let not the one who is on the housetop and whose goods are in the house go down to take them away; and likewise let not the one who is in the field turn back" (17:31).
"Then there shall be two men in the field; one will be taken, and one will be left. 41 Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken, and one will be left. (24:40-41).	"I tell you, on that night there will be two men in one bed; one will be taken, and the other will be left. 35 There will be two women grinding at the same place; one will be taken, and the other will be left. 36 Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other will be left" (17:34-36).
"Wherever the corpse is, there the vultures will gather" (24:28).	And answering they said to Him, "Where, Lord?" And He said to them, "Where the body is, there also will the vultures be gathered" (17:37).

The question that we must ask is whether this passage in Luke is speaking of the events of A.D. 70 or whether it is speaking of a still future return of Christ. I believe that the answer is both.

It was prophetically significant when, in A.D. 70, Jerusalem was surrounded by her enemies and when the Temple was burned to the ground amidst much destruction and slaughter. Josephus was an eyewitness of those events and he described them in great detail. Regarding the judgment that took place in Galilee, he said:

> *"...one might then see the lake all bloody, and full of dead bodies, for not one of them escaped. And a terrible stink, and a very sad sight there was on the following days over that country; for as for the shores, they were full of shipwrecks and of dead bodies all swelled; and as the dead bodies were inflamed by the sun, and putrefied, they corrupted the air..." (Wars of the Jews 3:10:9).*

Describing the final fall of Jerusalem, he went on to say..

> *"...the entire nation was now shut up by fate as in a prison, and the Roman army encompassed the city when it was crowded with inhabitants. Accordingly, the multitude of those that therein perished exceeded all the destructions that either men or God ever brought upon the world." (Wars of the Jews 6:9:4).*

I believe that this was a prophetic judgment from God. But it is not the last judgment that shall ever take place and it is not the Second Coming of Christ and I do not see in the Scriptures were it is even described as "a" return of Christ. At the most, we can say that it perhaps prefigures a future universal judgment. If this is a correct assessment, then it means that the teachings of this passage were able to be applied in that day and they are just as applicable for today, yet still look for a future culmination.

1. Worldly Occupations do not necessarily appear to be Evil.

Look at the list of things that are said to characterize the days of Noah and the days of Lot.

Days of Noah	Days of Lot
• They were eating • They were drinking • They were marrying • They were being given in marriage	• They were eating • They were drinking • They were buying • They were selling • They were planting • They were building

None of these things are bad in themselves. Most of us have been involved in most of these things at one time or another. The problem is not in these activities. The problem is when we get to thinking that these activities comprise our life.

2. Worldly Occupations Drain our Expectancy.

The one thing that we see in the days of Noah and in the days of Lot is that it was business as usual. When we get caught up in all of the business of daily living, there is a temptation to forget that there remains a promise of the Lord's coming.

Few Christians are overcome in the sudden falling away. For most of us, it is more of a case of gentle erosion that gradually laps

at our faith and draws our attention from the Lord.

3. Worldly Occupations will lose their Significance when Christ returns.

> "*On that day, let not the one who is on the housetop and whose goods are in the house go down to take them away; and likewise let not the one who is in the field turn back." (Luke 17:31).*

One of the worst fires I ever experienced in my career as a firefighter was in the summer of 1988 when a chemical warehouse went up in flames. The giant plume of smoke and flames could be seen 20 miles away. Instead of being 20 miles away, I was leading a hose team into the building. As we were getting ready to go in, I recall the owner standing nearby asking if we were able to get his briefcase while we were inside.

I suppose he was still in a state of shock. I don't think he realized how close he had come to death before getting out of the building. A minute or two later, we were inside when the whole place was rocked with explosions and a blinding fire that knocked us out the door. I landed outside, still holding onto the fire hose.

I have to tell you that this fellow's briefcase was the furthest thing from my mind. When the whole world is ending, the last thing you should be thinking about is your worldly Possessions. Save yourself!!!!

That is what Jesus is saying here. I am not certain, but I think that it may well have application for both His day and our own.

- Within 40 years the judgment of God is going to fall on Jerusalem. The Romans will land on the shores of Palestine with four Roman legions and will surround Jerusalem and put her to the sword. Jesus is saying, "When that day comes, you save yourself and get out of town and don't let your possessions slow you down!"
- I think this has applications for us, too. Jesus says to us, "Don't let your earthly possessions get in the way of your salvation."

4. Worldly Occupations can result in the Loss of that which is Truly Significant.

> "*Remember Lot's wife. 33 Whoever seeks to*

keep his life shall lose it, and whoever loses his life shall preserve it" (Luke 17:32-33).

Did you hear about the man who was traveling through India by train? He had a large amount of money in his suitcase and forced himself to stay awake day and night for three days lest someone should sneak in and steal the case. On the third day, his eyes grew heavy and he dozed off. When he awoke a minute later with a start, it was to find that the treasured suitcase was gone. "At last," he said to himself with a yawn, "I can finally get some sleep."

There is a place of rest for you today. It is in Christ. Don't be holding so tightly onto something else that you cannot hold onto Him.

TAKEN OR LEFT BEHIND?

"I tell you, on that night there will be two men in one bed; one will be taken, and the other will be left. 35 There will be two women grinding at the same place; one will be taken, and the other will be left. 36 Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other will be left."

And answering they said to Him, "Where, Lord?" And He said to them, "Where the body is, there also will the vultures be gathered." (Luke 17:34-37).

We have already seen that judgment is coming. It was coming in Jesus' day in that the Temple would be destroyed within 40 years. And it is still coming because the God of this world will one day return to judge the world in righteousness.

When it comes, it will not matter whether you are grinding or whether you are at work or whether you are sleeping; it will not matter in which of the details of life you happen to be occupied at the time. Do you see it?

- Two will be sleeping
- Two will be grinding grain
- Two will be in the field

Each of these are a part of those details of life. But that is not the issue. One is taken while another is left behind. Which is judged and which is saved from judgment? Some maintain that it is those who are taken away who are taken away to judgment. Others say, "No, the context of Matthew

24 shows that it is the elect who are being gathered." Which is it?

It doesn't matter because that is not the point of the statement. The point is that there is going to be a separation and you want to be ready for it. How do you get ready?

- Come to the cross
- Worship under its shadow
- And learn to hold loosely to the things of this world.

There is an old hymn that calls you to...

Turn your eyes upon Jesus
Look full in His wonderful face,
And the things of this earth will grow strangely dim
In the light of His glory and grace.

There are several lessons that we can learn from the teachings of Jesus. First, we learn that God is active in history. The Kingdom of God points to the fact that God is the King who acts in history to bring that history to His divinely directed goals.

Secondly, we see that there is both a now and a not yet to the Kingdom. On the one hand, there is a present aspect to the Kingdom. God is ruling today over the affairs of men. But there is also a not yet aspect of the Kingdom in which sin continues to manifest its presence.

Finally, we should note that both the now and future aspects of the Kingdom are supernatural in their character. Jesus said that He would build His church and He does so in His own manner and after His own design.

PRAYER, PRIDE AND PEOPLE OF THE KINGDOM
LUKE 18:1-17

As this chapter opens, Jesus is speaking to His disciples. This is part of a dialogue which started in the middle of the previous chapter. In Luke 17:20, the Pharisees came and asked Jesus when the Kingdom of God was coming. Jesus replied that it would not be coming with observable signs, but rather that it was already in their midst. And yet, there would be a future day - a day of the coming of the Son of man which would be like lightning and like the day of the Flood and the day in which Sodom was destroyed.

Kingdom not coming with signs to be observed (17:20-21)	⇨	Return of the Son preceded by rejection of Messiah (17:25)	⇨	Pray persistently and do not lose heart (18:1-8).

In the meantime, His followers should continue to pray and not lose hope. But will those prayers do any good? To answer such a question, Jesus tells a series of parables.

PARABLE OF THE UNJUST JUDGE

This is a parable about persistent prayer. Winston Churchill was asked once to speak at Eaton, the school he had attended as a boy. Everyone anticipated the great orator. He came up to the podium and delivered the simple injunction, "Never give up," and sat down. That is the point of this parable. It is that we should not give up when it comes to prayer.

1. The Purpose of the Parable.

> *Now He was telling them a parable to show that at all times they ought to pray and not to lose heart. (Luke 18:1).*

Luke tells us at the outset what this parable is about. It is a parable about continuing prayer. How much do you pray? How much of your time is spent in prayer? Perhaps this parable is for you. It is for all those who feel like throwing in the towel when it comes to prayer.

2. The Parable.

> *Saying, "There was in a certain city a judge who did not fear God, and did not respect man. 3 And there was a widow in that city, and she kept coming to him, saying, 'Give me legal protection from my opponent.'*
>
> *"And for a while he was unwilling; but afterward he said to himself, 'Even though I do not fear God nor respect man, 5 yet because this widow bothers me, I will give her legal protection, lest by continually coming she wear me out.'" (Luke 18:2-5).*

The first character in this parable is the judge. He is an unrighteous judge. He does not fear God. He does not even care about men. He is only concerned about himself. He could care less about this woman or the legality of her plea.

The second character is a woman. She is a widow. She has lost her husband and has no one to care for her. What is more, she is being wronged by an unknown adversary. And so, she takes her case to the judge.

When the judge anticipates that "by continually coming she wear me out," he uses the Greek word *hupopiaxe*, literally, "she will hit me under the eye."

Why does he finally act upon her case? It is not because he is a good judge or because he wants to do the right thing. It is because of her persistence.

3. The Meaning of the Parable.

> *And the Lord said, "Hear what the*

> *unrighteous judge said; 7 now shall not God bring about justice for His elect, who cry to Him day and night, and will He delay long over them? 8 I tell you that He will bring about justice for them speedily. However, when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?" (Luke 18:6-8).*

God and the unjust judge are opposites. Although there are similarities between them, the main point of the parable are that they are different. They are not only different, they are opposites.

THE UNJUST JUDGE	THE LORD
He is unrighteous.	He is righteous and holy.
He does not know the woman.	God knows us completely.
He does not care about the needs of the woman.	He cares for all of His creation.
He *finally* grants the needed help only because of the inconvenience caused by the woman.	He will not be slow, but will grant justice *speedily* to the elect.

Do you see the point? If an unjust judge answers a persistent plea of a woman whom he cares nothing about, how much more will the righteous God answer the prayers of those whom He loves. There are two points to this parable which are brought out here:

a. God will bring about justice for His people who ask for it: *"...now shall not God bring about justice for His elect, who cry to Him day and night?" (18:7).* There is coming a day when God will balance His books and when all that is wrong will be made right.

b. He will not delay too long in answering this prayer: *"...and will He delay long over them?" (18:7).*

Now, you might argue that this prayer has been two thousand years in the waiting. But you would not be taking into account that the Lord is patient regarding His promise of judgment.

> *The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance. (2 Peter 3:9).*

God is patient. This patience is oriented toward a specific goal. This patience is for our benefit as the elect of God. This is seen by the fact that this promise is not to all men. It is to God's elect (*shall not God bring about justice for His elect* - Luke 18:7). It is to His people.

Does this mean that God does not answer the prayers of unbelievers? No. But it does mean that He does not promise to answer those prayer. There is one prayer that God will always answer, no matter who prays it. It is the prayer of repentance. If you seek the Lord, then you will find Him.

Notice what this prayer consists of, both in the parable and in the explanation. It is a prayer for justice. Our problem is that we are usually asking for the wrong thing. We pull out our Christmas wish list and we think of God as a giant gift certificate. God will answer our prayers when that which we pray for is a proper thing for which we ought to pray.

4. A Question of Application: *However, when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?" (Luke 18:8).*

This is the application of the parable. It answers the question: "So what?" It is given in the form of a question. Like the previous two questions in verse 7, it is somewhat rhetorical. Having pointed out that God is going to balance His books and that He will not wait overly long to do so, Jesus asks whether we will do our part. Will we respond in faith? When the Son of Man finally does come to balance the books, will He find faith on the earth?

The question is rhetorical because the answer is not given. You must supply the answer. And I must supply the answer. We supply the answer by continuing in the faith so that faith will be found on the earth when Christ returns.

PARABLE OF THE PRIDEFUL PRAYER

Jesus moves from the first parable to a second parable. The first flows into the second. Once again, Luke begins by telling us why Jesus is

relating this parable.

1. The Purpose of the Parable.

> *And He also told this parable to certain ones who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and viewed others with contempt (Luke 18:9).*

As Christians, we are apt to read this and look down our nose at the Pharisees who were looking down their nose at others. We need to be careful that we do not fall into this same trap.

Are there certain classes of sinners at whom you are inclined to turn up your nose? Do you ever think to yourself, "I'm so much better than so-and-so?"

2. Two Men.

> *"Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee, and the other a tax-gatherer." (Luke 18:10).*

We have just finished a parable about prayer. Now we see a parable where two men come to pray. These two men were as different as two men could be.

Cartoonists are commonly masters of characterization. You see it in political cartoons where some outstanding feature of the one being characterized is exaggerated. Jesus uses that kind of characterization in this story. This is a story about self-esteem. One man will have a very high view of self while the other will have a very low self-esteem.

a. The Pharisee.

> The Pharisees were the spiritually elite of their day. They held to the authority of the Scriptures. They believed in the supernatural and the resurrection. The name 'Pharisee' comes from the Hebrew word *parash*, "to separate." They had separated themselves from the Gentiles and from the Hellenistic way of life. When it came to the keeping of the Law, the Pharisees were careful to dot their i's and cross their t's. Righteousness was this man's profession. He saw himself as the last bastion of morality.

b. The Tax-gatherer.

All tax-gatherers were viewed with contempt. They were men who had paid the Roman government to purchase a franchise to collect taxes. They would then show a profit by overcharging people on their taxes.

Imagine France after the Nazi takeover. A French townsman volunteers to take taxes from the people and takes a cut for himself. How would he be viewed? He is a traitor and a collaborator with the enemy.

Pharisee	**Tax-Gatherer**
A member of the religious elite.	Social outcast; not even permitted into the synagogue.
Held to a strict interpretation of the Law.	Had rejected the Law and sold out his country for profit.

We have already seen the disdain with which the Pharisees held for tax-gatherers. In Luke 15:1-2 we saw that they had a problem with Jesus because He ate with tax-gatherers and sinners.

3. Their Prayer.

> *The Pharisee stood and was praying thus to himself, 'God, I thank Thee that I am not like other people: swindlers, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax-gatherer. 12 I fast twice a week; I pay tithes of all that I get.'*
>
> *"But the tax-gatherer, standing some distance away, was even unwilling to lift up his eyes to heaven, but was beating his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, the sinner!'" (Luke 18:11-13).*

We read that the Pharisee was praying to himself. Quite frankly, I think that reflects the god whom he was worshiping. He certainly was not praying to God. What we are given is a glimpse into his soul.

He is sincere. He is religious. He fasts regularly. He is a

tither. But in all of his good works, there is a problem. The problem is that there is no humility. He is puffed up with pride. He feels that his right standing before God is based upon comparing his righteousness with that of someone's worst.

- Fasting is given to remind us of our spiritual hunger. But this man used fasting to try to spiritually fatten himself.
- Tithing involves giving to God a portion of what He has first given to us. But this man makes a show of giving so that God might be obligated to repay him with blessings.

With his words he makes it sound as though he is worshiping God, but the truth is that he is really worshiping himself.

Standing nearby was the tax-gatherer.

- His posture is different. He is unwilling to even lift his eyes up to heaven.
- His heart is different. It is a heart full of sorrow and repentance.
- His prayer is different. His is a prayer of repentance. The words of his prayer are significant. *Have mercy on me* -- literally, "See me in the light of propitiation. Be appeased with me on the basis of the sacrifice which has been made here in the Temple."

His prayer is short and to the point like a telegram:

Message:	Be Merciful!
Signed:	The Sinner

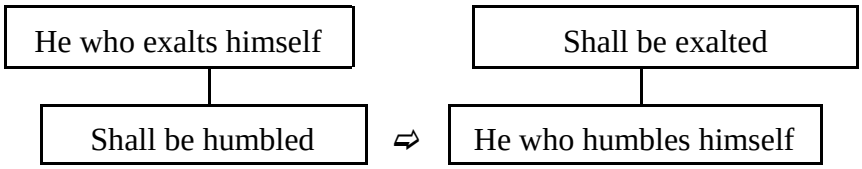
One man came on the basis of his own righteousness. The other ceased to compare his best with the worst in others. Instead he looks at the righteousness of God and how his own righteousness is so far removed. He comes on the basis of a sacrifice that has been made on his behalf.

4. The Results of their Prayer.

> *"I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself shall be humbled, but he who humbles*

himself shall be exalted" (Luke 18:14).

Jesus pronounces judgment upon these two men. One man goes home justified. But it is not the good man, but the sinner who is justified. This is given in the form of a chiasm.



What does it mean to be justified? It is not that the tax-collector was now righteous. He was a self-confessed sinner. But God had declared him to be righteous.

This brings up an important question. How can a righteous God declare that someone is righteous when they are not really righteous? It is only through the crediting of the righteousness of another. This truth is known as imputation. When Jesus was upon the cross, the guilt of your sin was imputed or credited to Him. He was judged in your place as though He were a guilty sinner. That does not mean He started to sin or have evil thoughts. Rather it means that your sin was reckoned to His account. It was credited to Him.

In the same way, when you come to Christ in faith, you find that His righteousness has been credited to you. You have been reckoned to be righteous with the very righteousness of Christ. This is not affected by how good you try to be. It is not your own personal righteousness that is in view, but rather the righteousness of Jesus Christ who is the basis for your justification. God looks at the righteousness of Christ that has been credited to you and He accounts you as being righteous with that perfect standard of righteousness.

How do you see yourself? What is your self-image? If you see yourself as righteous, then I have some bad news for you. You have disqualified yourself from the gospel. The only qualification for accepting the gospel is that you see yourself as unworthy of it.

LIVING PARABLE OF THE CHILDREN

As we come to the incident of Jesus and the children, you will notice

that there is no time indication mentioned. Luke does not say that this was the next thing that happened. Neither does he tell us where this narrative took place.

There is a reason for this. It was not necessarily the next thing that took place. But Luke sees a topical connection and so he places them together. He sees in this incident with the children a living parable of the truths which he has just described.

1. Rebuke from the Disciples.

> *And they were bringing even their babies to Him so that He might touch them, but when the disciples saw it, they began rebuking them. (Luke 18:15).*

I think that the disciples were well-intentioned. After all, Jesus was a busy man. He was on an important mission. The disciples had been enlisted to assist in that mission. And they were certain that there was no time for children.

The word translated "children" is the plural of *brephos* and refers to "infants."

The disciples intervened. After all, there was work to be done and miracles to be performed and sermons to be preached and demons to be cast out. They thought that only "important people" should see Jesus. Certainly there was no time for something as mundane and as useless as a bunch of soiled diapers and running noses.

By the way, that is one of the lies of the feminist movement. It says to women, "You don't want to limit your life to something as mundane and as insignificant as taking care of a child, do you? Not when you can have a career and independence and a life that really counts!" What it is saying is that the raising of children isn't very important. I'll bet you never thought of the disciples as being feminists. But in this regard, they were. And Jesus rebukes them for it.

2. Rebuke from Jesus.

> *But Jesus called for them, saying, "Permit the children to come to Me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. 17 Truly I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of*

God like a child shall not enter it at all." (Luke 18:16-17).

The disciples had been saying in effect that there was no room in the kingdom for children. Jesus turned it around by saying that there was no room in the kingdom for anything but children.

To what quality of children is He referring? He says that it is the particularly unique way that they have of accepting things. It is the manner in which they receive the kingdom of God.

This passage has been called the Magna Charta of children. It reflects their "bill of rights." In this age where abortion is a common phenomenon, it teaches us the high value of children. But that is not all that it teaches. It also teaches us about the Kingdom.

Have you ever seen a child at Christmas? A child has no difficulty in accepting a gift. And that is what the kingdom is. It is a gift. You do not enter it by being righteous, even by being as righteous as the Pharisee of the previous parable. You enter it by realizing that you are unrighteous and in need of grace. You enter it by acting the part of the repentant tax-gatherer who saw only his need. You enter it through taking on the quality of a child.

In what way must we receive the kingdom like a child? What is it that draws the Lord to a child? I want to suggest several things:

- A Quality of Trust.

  Have you ever seen a child leap into his father's arms? That child doesn't say, "Are you certain that you have the right timing and motor control to catch me in a safe manner in accordance with OSHA Standards?" There is complete trust and abandonment.

- A Quality of Powerlessness.

  There is nothing so powerless as a baby. The smaller the child, the more helpless that child is. And the more that parent takes an active role in feeding and changing and nursing and burping that child.

- A Quality of Teachableness.

  The mind and soul of a child is a sponge, ready to soak up

> knowledge. You know the familiar saying, "You can't teach an old dog new tricks." We grow up and we become set in our ways and we become unteachable. And if we ever become unteachable, then we cease our spiritual growth.

Jesus looked at the disciples with their growing sophistication and their doctrinal knowledge and He pointed to these children and said, "You need to be like that."

THE RICH AND THE BLIND
LUKE 18:18-43

My wife introduced me to the television show "Star Trek" when we were in college and I have been a regular fan ever since. Set far in the future, it is peopled by all sorts of alien races including the Ferengi. The Ferengi are the capitalists of the Star Trek Universe. Their philosophy is simply stated in their second rule of acquisition: *You can't cheat an honest customer, but it never hurts to try*. They are in it for the money and nothing else matters. Someone sent to me a copy of the Ferengi Rules of Acquisition. Here are a few:

- If you can't break a contract, bend it.
- A dead customer can't buy as much as a live one.
- Anything worth selling is worth selling twice.
- Anything worth doing is worth doing for money.
- A bargain usually isn't.
- If the profit seems too good to be true, it usually is.
- When someone says "It's not the money," they're lying.
- Peace is good for business.
- War is good for business.
- Profit has limits. Loss has none.
- Employees are the rungs on your ladder to success - don't hesitate to step on them.
- Friendship is seldom cheap.
- Free advice is never cheap.
- Enough is never enough.
- If it works, sell it. If it works well, sell it for more. If it doesn't work, quadruple the price and sell it as an antique.

Does it sound familiar? The Star Trek writers have merely taken the Wall Street mentality and placed it in a galactic setting. When you look at the Ferengi, you ought to realize that you are looking in a mirror. At the very least, you ought to realize that this is the way Americans are perceived around the world.

Our passage opens with a rich man. He was rich and he had political power. He had everything our society tells us that a man could want. But in spite of all that he had, he came to Jesus with a question.

THE QUESTION OF THE RICH RULER

> *And a certain ruler questioned Him, saying, "Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" (Luke 18:18).*

It is no accident that this event is given to us on the heels of the preceding paragraph. They are meant to be a study in contrasts.

Luke 18:15-17	Luke 18:18
Babies are brought to Jesus	A certain ruler questions Jesus
Helpless and trusting	Depending upon his own good works
They are blessed by Jesus	He turns away from Jesus
"Whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it at all"	*"What shall I do to inherit eternal life?"*

Notice how this man addressed Jesus. *"Good teacher!"* That sounds good, but it reveals some erroneous thinking. This man thought that he was a good man talking to another good man. He was wrong on both accounts.

- He was wrong in thinking that he was a good person. He may have been good in the eyes of his community. But God doesn't grade on the curve. He had not recognized the depth of his need.
- He was also wrong in thinking that Jesus was merely a good teacher. He had not yet seen Jesus as Savior or Lord.

Jesus will move to correct both of these misconceptions. First He will deal with the man's conception of Jesus, showing the man that Jesus cannot merely be a good man. He is either the perfect God-man or else He is a liar. Then He will deal with the man's conception of his own worthiness.

1. A Theological Clarification.

> *And Jesus said to him, "Why do you call Me good? No one is good except God alone." (Luke 18:19).*

Some have taken the words of Jesus to be a denial of His divinity. But I would suggest just the opposite. He is taking the man's opening presupposition and moving him to its obvious conclusion.

If Jesus is good	and...	No one is good except God alone	then...	Jesus is God

Do you see what He is doing? He is probing this young man to see whether he is teachable. He is pushing his faith and his teachableness and his sense of his own powerlessness. He is checking to see if this man will come the way a child comes.

2. A Lawful Answer.

> *"You know the commandments, 'Do not commit adultery, Do not murder, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Honor your father and mother.'"*
> *And he said, "All these things I have kept from my youth." (Luke 18:20-21).*

Jesus quotes the Law to this man. But He doesn't quote all of the Law. There are some of the Laws which He does not mention. He says nothing of coveting. Or of worshiping God above all other things.

As a result, the young man claims to have kept all these things. Do you see what he is doing? Jesus said that there is none who is good but God alone and the man is claiming to be good in the eyes of the Law.

Jesus	**Young Man**
"There is none who is good but God alone"	"I have been good according to God's Law"

In spite of this, Jesus does not call the man out or question his sincerity. To the contrary, Jesus feels love for him.

3. A Sacrificial Call.

> *And when Jesus heard this, He said to him, "One thing you still lack; sell all that you possess, and distribute it to the poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me." (Luke 18:22).*

Mark's account adds something that Luke does not mention. Mark tells us that when Jesus looked at this man, He *felt a love for him (Mark 11:21).* We do not often read in the Scriptures of Jesus feeling love for a particular individual. But he did here. Why? I think that it is because this man had a desire to follow God. He loved the Lord. But he had a stumbling block. The stumbling block was his wealth.

You need to know that what Jesus says next, He says out of a heart of love for this man. He is speaking the truth in love. That does not always mean that what is said is what we want to hear, but rather it is what we need to hear.

This brings us to a key question. Why didn't Jesus simply say, "Give up your quest for personal goodness and believe only in Me"? He did. Following Jesus is what faith is all about. Rest and receive. An essential element of this kind of faith is surrender. If something is standing in the way of following Jesus, then I must choose.

I am told that hunters used to trap monkeys with a simple, yet effective trap. They would take a hollowed-out gourd and drill into it a hole. Inside the gourd they would place an orange. The monkey would come along and reach inside to get the orange. But once he had the orange in his hand, he was unable to withdraw it from the hole. The monkey had a choice to make. He could let the orange go and withdraw his hand and be free. Or he could hold onto the orange and remain a captive.

Many people today are holding on to that which has trapped them. And it is not until they let go that they can experience the freedom that is in Christ Jesus. Here is the principle. What you own owns you. And you cannot own Christ unless you have renounced your ownership of all else that owns you.

As you look at this passage, remember that there were actually two rich young rulers that day. After all, Jesus was still considered to be a young man in his thirties. And He was rich with all of the riches of heaven. And He was a ruler over all of the

cosmos. He is essentially saying, "You give up your little riches and I will give to you all of my infinite riches."

4. A Sorrowful Departure.

> *But when he had heard these things, he became very sad; for he was extremely rich. (Luke 18:23).*

This man made his choice. He was saddened. He wasn't just sad -- he was very sad. But his choice was still to hold onto his possessions rather than to hold onto Christ. Jesus did not chase after the man. He does not say, "I didn't mean to make things too difficult for you. Come on back and give me just a little bit of faith and it will be enough and then you can go and live as you please." By the same token, the solution to Christian problems is not for the church to preach a cheap grace. When the church begins to preach cheap grace, then people stop surrendering to Christ. They become merely unconverted professors.

5. A Difficult Lesson.

> *And Jesus looked at him and said, "How hard it is for those who are wealthy to enter the kingdom of God! 25 For it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God." (Luke 18:24-25).*

Jesus uses the retreat of the rich man to teach a lesson to his disciples. He has already used a child to show them what kind of man does enter into the kingdom. Now he uses the rich man as an example of the kind of man that does not enter into the kingdom.

The disciples were amazed at this teaching. It went completely contrary to the popular theology of the day. The theology of the day was prosperity theology. They reasoned that rich people are rich because God has blessed them. Therefore someone who was rich was a demonstration of the

There is a popular urban legend that says this reference to the "eye of a needle" was speaking of a small gate in Jerusalem through which a camel would have difficulty navigating. It simply is not true. Jesus is not describing a difficult feat, but one that is impossible.

blessings of God. There was a saying, "God loves the poor, but He helps the rich."

But Jesus said that it is hard for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God. Paul says the same thing in 1 Corinthians, that there are not many wise or mighty or noble who enter the kingdom (1:26).

Jesus compares it with a camel trying to go through the eye of a needle. I have a hard enough time trying to get a piece of thread through the eye of a needle. But a camel! It is not only difficult. It is impossible. And that is okay, because God delights in doing the impossible.

6. The God of Impossibilities.

> *And they who heard it said, "Then who can be saved?"*
>
> *But He said, "The things impossible with men are possible with God." (Luke 18:26-27).*

Salvation is impossible in human terms. There is nothing that a man can do to save himself, be he rich, poor or middle class. That is the bad news. But the good news is that God is the God of the impossible.

7. A Rewarding Promise.

> *And Peter said, "Behold, we have left our own homes, and followed You."*
>
> *And He said to them, "Truly I say to you, there is no one who has left house or wife or brothers or parents or children, for the sake of the kingdom of God, 30 who shall not receive many times as much at this time and in the age to come, eternal life." (Luke 18:28-29).*

Don't you just love Peter? He picks this opportunity to open mouth and insert foot. Watching this sincere man turn away from Jesus made Peter uncomfortable. And he grew even more uncomfortable as he listens to the teaching of Jesus on how impossible it is for a rich man to be saved. Finally, he can be silent no longer. He declares that he and the other disciples are not like the rich man who refused to give up his riches.

- Peter and Andrew gave up their boat and their nets.
- James and John did the same.
- Matthew gave up his tax collecting business.
- Simon the zealot gave up his rebellion.
- Every one of the disciples gave up something to follow Jesus.

Jesus replies that they shall not go unrewarded. Not only in this life, but in the life to come. The promised rewards are both in the now and the not yet. Notice the things that are promised.

> *"... house or wife or brothers or parents or children, for the sake of the kingdom of God, 30 who shall not receive many times as much at this time."*

In what manner are these things promised? Let me suggest that they are fulfilled in the church. It is there that we enter into the house of God. It is there that we find a spiritual family made up of *brothers and sisters and mothers and children*. It is there that we are able to bear fruit for the kingdom.

Did you notice who was included in this group? Judas Iscariot! The same promise was given to him. If he would follow Jesus to the exclusion of all else, he would be blessed along with the other disciples. There is a lesson here. It is the lesson of the long haul. The reward is not given to the one who starts the race, but to the one who finishes it.

We are called to offer ourselves as a living sacrifice. The problem with a living sacrifice is that it has a tendency to crawl off the altar. Judas made an initial commitment to follow Jesus. But something got in the way. Somewhere along the line, he began to treasure things more than he treasured the Lord. How about you? Perhaps you made a good start, but where is your heart now? What is first place in your heart?

UNPERCEIVED PROMISES

And He took the twelve aside and said to them, "Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and all things which are written through the prophets about the Son of Man will be accomplished. 32 For He will be delivered to the Gentiles, and will be mocked and mistreated and spit upon, 33 and after they have scourged Him, they will kill Him; and the

third day He will rise again."

And they understood none of these things, and this saying was hidden from them, and they did not comprehend the things that were said. (Luke 18:31-34).

This is the third time that Jesus has plainly told the disciples what is about to happen as they come to Jerusalem. Prophecies are going to be fulfilled. The day for which all have looked is now at hand. The plan is finally going to be accomplished. You need to see that the words of Jesus are directly relevant to what He has just been saying to them in the previous passage.

You will receive future blessings from the Lord if you endure in the present	⇨	The present is about to get very difficult -- there is a cross on the horizon

The good news is that after the cross there will be an empty tomb. Death will not be the end of the story. Sunday is coming and all the forces of hell will not be able to keep Him in the tomb.

The disciples didn't get it. They heard the words of the prophecy, but they did not understand. This tells me something about prophecy. It tells me that prophecy is a lot easier to understand after it has been fulfilled.

I am amazed that so many Christians are so dogmatic in their interpretation of future prophecy. They come armed with their timelines and their charts and they think that they have everything completely figured out. I find that rather arrogant, for the Scriptures tells us that even the prophets themselves did not fully understand the words of their prophecies and how they would be fulfilled: *As to this salvation, the prophets who prophesied of the grace that would come to you made careful search and inquiry, 11 seeking to know what person or time the Spirit of Christ within them was indicating as He predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow. 12 It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves, but you, in these things which now have been announced to you through those who preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven -- things into which angels long to look (1 Peter 1:10-12).*

The disciples heard the words of Jesus and they did not understand. Their understanding was blinded. But there was a man who heard and who did understand. Oddly enough, he was a blind man.

THE BLIND MAN WHO SAW

Blindness is a terrible thing. To go through life and never to be able to see a golden sunset or to watch a baby's cheery smile or an ocean wave crashing down on a sandy beach. Blindness was an especially terrible ailment in the days of Jesus. A blind man had no hope. There were no operations that could take place. There were no books or tapes for the vision impaired. There were no jobs available for the sightless. The only thing that a blind man could do was to beg. And as this story opens, there is a blind beggar doing exactly that.

1. The Plight of the Blind Beggar.

> *And it came about that as He was approaching Jericho, a certain blind man was sitting by the road, begging. (Luke 18:35).*

Throughout the last 9 chapters, we have seen Jesus on His way to Jerusalem. At first He was in Galilee, then He was passing through the border between Galilee and Samaria, and now He comes to Jericho. He and His disciples evidently were following the normal Jewish road from Galilee to Jerusalem which took a detour around Samaria.

There was accompanying Jesus and His disciples a large crowd. This is no surprise. It was the season of the Passover and the roads to Jerusalem would have been thronged with pilgrims coming to observe the Feast.

There are some major differences between the account as it is recorded here in Luke and the way in which it is given to us in the other two Synoptics.

<table>
<tr><th>Matthew 20:20-28</th><th>Mark 10:46-52</th><th>Luke 18:35-43</th></tr>
<tr><td>Two blind men</td><td colspan="2">Only one blind man is mentioned</td></tr>
<tr><td>No name is given for either of the men</td><td>Blind man's name is given as Bartimaeus</td><td>No name given</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Takes place "as He was leaving Jericho."</td><td>Described as prior to coming to Jericho (see Luke 19:1).</td></tr>
</table>

- In all three cases, the blind are sitting beside the road.
- In all three cases, the crowd relates that Jesus is coming.
- In all three cases, the blind asks for mercy from "the Son of David."

The fact that only one blind man is mentioned here in Luke's account is not significant. Luke does not say that there was only one blind man. He merely wishes to focus upon the healing of a single man. I think that there is a reason for this. It is by way of a series of contrasts.

Rich Man	Blind Beggar
Luke 18:18-30	Luke 18:35
Self-satisfied	Wishing to see
Addresses Jesus as "Good Teacher"	Addresses Jesus as "Jesus, Son of David."
Asks for approval	Asks for mercy
He riches caused him to remain lost	His faith made him whole

2. A Persistent Request.

> *And it came about that as He was approaching Jericho, a certain blind man was sitting by the road, begging.*
>
> *Now hearing a multitude going by, he began to inquire what this might be. 37 And they told him that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by. 38 And he called out, saying, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!"*
>
> *And those who led the way were sternly telling him to be quiet; but he kept crying out all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!" (Luke 18:35-39).*

This blind beggar heard the movement of the multitude. He asked what was going on (after all, he didn't want to get trampled in a stampede), and was told that it was Jesus of Nazareth. It is evident

that this blind beggar had heard of Jesus. Blind people can't do much, but they can listen. And this man had listened. He had heard the repeated accounts of this miracle-worker from Galilee. And as he heard that Jesus was nearby, he began calling out to Him. What is more, he calls out to Jesus is a very striking way.

- He is told that Jesus of Nazareth is nearby.
- He cries out to Jesus, the Son of David.

Imagine yourself in his sandals. You are blind. You cannot know anything about what is going on around you except that people tell you things. They have told you about Jesus. They have told you about His wonderful miracles. The lame walk. The deaf hear. The demon-possessed are in their right mind. And yes, He has even healed those who were blind. Wouldn't it be wonderful if He were to come and to heal you?

Then one day you hear a commotion. What is happening? You are told that it is Jesus. Jesus? The One who has healed blind people? They say that it is Jesus of Nazareth. But even through the blindness, something more about Jesus can be seen.

Do you see it? He doesn't cry out, "Jesus of Nazareth!" He uses a different title. That is a special cry. He is not addressing Jesus as merely a good man. He isn't making the mistake that had been made by the rich, young ruler. He calls Him the "son of David." That is a Messianic title.

Notice the reaction of the crowd. They were *sternly telling him to be quiet*. Of what does that remind you? It reminds me of 12 stuffy disciples saying, "You can't bring those children to Jesus! Don't you know that He is much too busy to be bothered by a bunch of runny-nosed children?"

The blind beggar would not be put off. When the crowd said, "Shhhhh!!!" he cried out all the more. And there is something in his persistence of which I think Jesus approved. I think that Jesus smiled at his persistence. And I believe that the reason we do not have more of our prayers answered is that we do not persist in our prayers.

3. An Insightful Question.

> *And Jesus stopped and commanded that he be brought to Him; and when he had come near, He questioned him,* 41 *"What do you want Me to do for you?" And he said, "Lord, I want to regain my*

sight!" (Luke 18:40-41).

Notice the question that Jesus asks the blind man. It is a rather silly question to ask of a blind man. But Jesus asks it nonetheless. He asks it to bring the man face to face with his need.

This man was physically blind and he knew it. He stands in contrast to the Pharisees and the rich man and perhaps even the disciples who were spiritually blind and did not know it. The first step in healing is diagnosis. Too often the reason we cannot see is because we think that we can.

There are two kinds of people that Jesus will not help. The first kind is those who do not want His help. The second kind is those who do not know that they need help.

If you are blind, then you know that you have a problem. You know that you are lacking in something. You know that you cannot help yourself. And you know that you have to depend upon someone else. There is a corollary here. The greater the problem, the greater is the perceived need.

Have you ever noticed that when things are going well you aren't so fervent in your prayer life? I don't know about you, but when things are going well, I have a tendency to forget that I have needs. And when the focus upon my needs is dimmed, it is not long before my focus upon my Lord is also dimmed.

What am I saying? I am saying that affliction is important. I am saying that affliction is designed by God to keep me from straying. At the end of every road of adversity, you will find Jesus.

4. An Answered Prayer.

> *And Jesus said to him, "Receive your sight; your faith has made you well."* 43 *And immediately he regained his sight, and began following Him, glorifying God; and when all the people saw it, they gave praise to God. (Luke 18:42-43).*

The need of the man was answered. He was healed. But his need for Jesus did not end. Indeed, his healing was only the first step in a long journey. At this point, this retired beggar began to follow Jesus.

- To Jerusalem.
- To a cross
- To an empty tomb
- To an infant church.

I don't believe that this man ever did go back to begging. He never again sat by the side of a road to ask for alms. Instead he followed after Jesus. How do I know that? It is because Mark tells us his name. Mark tells us his name was Bartimaeus. And I don't think Mark would have done so except for the fact that Bartimaeus was known to the early church.

Are you following Jesus? You are if you have been truly healed by Him. You are if you now have spiritual sight.

FRIENDS AND ENEMIES OF THE KINGDOM
LUKE 19:1-27

Friendship is a wonderful thing. The Proverbs speak of a friend who is closer than a brother (Proverbs 18:24). It is a truism that a man is known by his friends. That is why it is so amazing to read of Abraham that he was called the friend of God (James 2:23; 2 Chronicles 20:7).

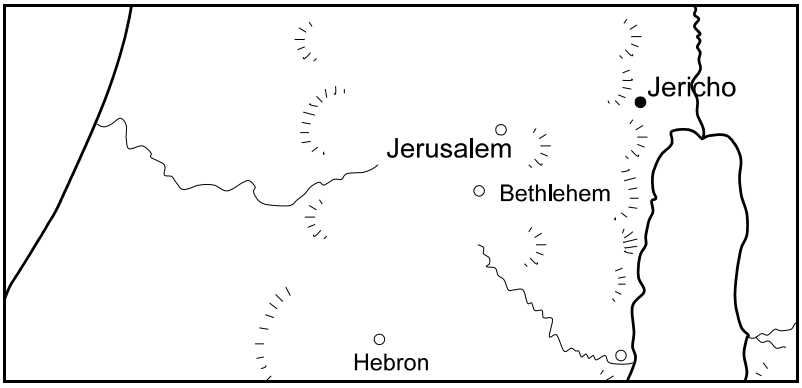
In this chapter we are going to read of those who were both friends and enemies of God. And yet, the one who is pictured as God's friend isn't necessarily the one you would have chosen to be your friend. And the one who is pictured as the enemy of God may surprise you.

THE SETTING FOR THE STORY

> *And He entered and was passing through Jericho. (Luke 19:1).*

At first glance, we might take these words to be on a plane with "once upon a time" or "long, long ago and far, far away." But that isn't the case at all. Since the ninth chapter of Luke, we have seen Jesus on a journey. We read back then that He "resolutely set His face to go to Jerusalem" (Luke 9:51). We saw Him move through Galilee and we saw Him pass through the boarders of Samaria and now we see Him passing through Jericho on the last leg of the long journey.

Jericho. The name harkens back to ancient stories of blaring trumpets and tumbling walls and a great victory that God once gave to His people. It was known as the "city of the palms" because of its subtropical climate. It had the reputation for being one of the lowest cities in the world, residing hundreds of feet below sea level in the Jordan Rift Valley.



The old city of Jericho that had been destroyed in the days of Joshua was a thing of the past and had been replaced by a new city located nearby to the old mound. It was here that Herod the Great had kept his winter palace. It was a resort area boasting a warm climate in the winter and an even hotter climate in the summer. In this day, a system of aqueducts brought water down from the Judean Mountains, making the plain of Jericho lush and fertile.

ZACCHEUS

> *And behold, there was a man called by the name of Zaccheus; and he was a chief tax-gatherer, and he was rich. (Luke 19:2).*

The name Zaccheus is merely a Greek rendition of the Hebrew name Zacchi (Ezra 2:9) and seems to be derived from a word describing that which is clean or pure. Perhaps the parents of Zaccheus had high hopes for him as a child and hoped that he would be one who exhibited a pure life. If this is so, then their hopes were soon dashed, for Zaccheus became known as one who had dirtied his name.

Zaccheus was a tax-gatherer. He was not just a tax-gatherer; he was a chief tax-gatherer. He was not the type of tax-gatherer that Matthew had been. He was not the type of tax-collector who sat by the side of the road and collected taxes from those

Zaccheus is seen in contrast to the poor, blind beggar of the previous chapter. One was poor, the other was rich, but they both sought out Jesus.

traveling on it. Zaccheus was a *chief tax-gatherer*. He hired others to do his dirty work for him. He had other people who worked under his franchise.

He had purchased this franchise from the Roman Empire. The agreement was that he would pay a certain amount to Rome and he got to keep the rest. He had gotten rich by overcharging people on their taxes.

Zaccheus was materially rich but socially poor. He was considered a social outcast and classed with thieves and robbers. He was shunned by all decent people and excluded from worship in the synagogue. He was a man who had tried to climb the ladder of success, no matter what the price. It had cost him his self-respect. He was used by the Romans and hated by the Jews, but he wasn't liked by anyone. And if it was not already bad enough that people looked down on him for his chosen profession, people also looked down on Zaccheus because of his size. Verse three tells us that *he was small in stature*. He was a little fellow in a big world.

THE PLIGHT OF THE VISUALLY AND VERTICALLY CHALLENGED

> *And he was trying to see who Jesus was, and he was unable because of the crowd, for he was small in stature.* 4 *And he ran on ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree in order to see Him, for He was about to pass through that way. (Luke 19:3-4).*

Because Zaccheus was short in stature, he had a difficult time in getting close to Jesus. We can imagine him standing on his toes and even jumping up into the air to see over the heads of the taller members of the crowd. But all to no avail. And then he has an idea. Down at the end of the block is a large sycamore tree with branches overhanging the road where Jesus will pass by. Off he goes and soon this rich little tax-collector is perched in the tree as Jesus passes below.

He looks a little silly up there, doesn't he? His fine clothes are probably a bit wrinkled. His perch is unsteady -- certainly not very dignified. But there is something winsome about him. When was the last time you were willing to look silly for Jesus?

There is a wonderful contrast evident between the person of Zaccheus and the two characters who were introduced in the previous chapter:

The Rich Ruler	The Blind Beggar	Zaccheus
Luke 18:18-30	Luke 18:35	Luke 19:1-4
Materially wealthy	Materially and physically impoverished	Materially wealthy with ill-gotten gains
Self-satisfied	Wishing to see	Wishing to see Jesus
Goes away without Christ	They both receive Jesus and seek to follow Him	
He riches caused him to remain lost	His faith made him whole and he began to follow Jesus	His faith led him to give up half his possessions and return that which has been taken wrongly.

Both the blind beggar and Zaccheus wanted to see Jesus. Neither would be stopped by their circumstances. They both had a physical disability and they both had to deal with the crowds. They both persisted in their attempts to meet Him and they were both rewarded. As we saw in the parable of the unjust judge and the persistent widow, it was not the casual seeker who was rewarded, but the persistent petitioner who found Christ.

We all come to Christ in the same way. We come in our need. Sometimes that need is more obvious. But you cannot come to Christ and gain anything from him without recognizing your need.

GRUMBLINGS OVER GRACE

> *And when Jesus came to the place, He looked up and said to him, "Zaccheus, hurry and come down, for today I must stay at your house."* 6 *And he hurried and came down, and received Him gladly.*
>
> *And when they saw it, they all began to grumble, saying, "He has gone to be the guest of a man who is a sinner." (Luke 19:5-7).*

This must have shocked Zaccheus so much that he nearly fell out of the tree. It is striking because Jesus does not merely say, "Today I am going to stay at your house." Rather, He says, "*Today I must stay at your house.*"

Jesus had to stay at the house of Zaccheus. Why? What was the compulsion that brought Him into the home of this greedy little tax-collector? It was the compulsion of grace and of love. It was the same compulsion that was taking Him within a few days up the Jericho road to Jerusalem. It was the same compulsion that would take Him to the cross.

The words of Jesus brought about a response. First they brought about a response from Zaccheus. Jesus said, *"Hurry and come down"* and the very next thing that we read is that *he hurried and came down.* The words of Jesus also brought a response from the crowd. It was a negative response. It was a response of grumbling: *And when they saw it, they all began to grumble, saying, "He has gone to be the guest of a man who is a sinner."*

Who did this grumbling? Who is the "they"? Who were these grumblers? We are not told. I suspect that it included everyone except Zaccheus. Maybe even the disciples. Maybe even a converted tax-collector named Matthew.

What is it that causes people to grumble over grace? I think it is because, deep down where we do not admit it to others, we have a feeling that we are at least a little deserving of God's kindness. I want to tell you about that feeling. It is wrong. You are not deserving at all. That is what makes God's grace so wonderful. The whole point of grace is that it is undeserving. There are two types of people presented in this narrative.

- Those who recognize that they are undeserving.
- Those who don't and who therefore look down on others.

It is only the first type who find that Jesus comes and stays with them. It is only the first type who are healed by the Great Physician. It is only the first type who are among the company of the redeemed.

THE SIGN OF A CHANGED HEART

> *And Zaccheus stopped and said to the Lord, "Behold, Lord, half of my possessions I will give to the poor, and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will give back four times as much."*
>
> *And Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because he, too, is a son of Abraham.* 10 *For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost." (Luke 19:8-10).*

We are told that Zaccheus stopped. Apparently, this took place even before Jesus actually came to his house. He hears the grumbling and he sees the grace of Christ and he realizes that a response is required. There are several observations that we can draw from this passage.

1. Zaccheus offered to give a great deal to the poor, but he does not give all of his possessions to them. Why did he limit himself to only half? One thing that comes to mind is that he would need the other half to repay all those whom he had previously defrauded.

2. The offer of Zaccheus is completely voluntary. Jesus does not tell him to give up all of his possessions as He had told the rich ruler. Neither does Zaccheus make any attempt to bargain God down from a previously set command. His offer is a response to grace. It is an act of gratitude.

3. The offer to repay fourfold those who had been swindled is an act of generosity. This is a sign of a changed heart. When God changes someone, He does it radically.

Did you notice how Jesus described the salvation of Zaccheus? He says that *"he, too, is a son of Abraham."* I don't think that Jesus is talking only about his physical ancestry. He is also speaking of his spiritual heritage. Zaccheus is a son of Abraham in the physical sense because he was born as a Jew and he is a son of Abraham in the spiritual sense because he has demonstrated the same kind of faith that Abraham demonstrated: *Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness. 7 Therefore, be sure that it is those who are of faith who are sons of Abraham. (Galatians 3:6-7).* Salvation has not come to Zaccheus because he is a physical son of Abraham but because he has become a spiritual son of Abraham.

Here is the point. We are also sons of Abraham. It isn't through physical ancestry. It is through faith. And that means that we have entered into something that started a long time before Pentecost. And it means that there are promises that we can claim all throughout the Scriptures.

> *There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. 29 And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise. (Galatians 3:28-29).*

A KINGDOM PARABLE

As we move to this section, it seems at first glance to be unrelated to what has just happened. But I do not think that this is the case. Jesus is about to tell a parable. The parable will serve to illustrate the significance of the events of the past two chapters.

1. The Setting for the Parable.

> *And while they were listening to these things, He went on to tell a parable, because He was near Jerusalem, and they supposed that the kingdom of God was going to appear immediately. (Luke 19:11).*

Throughout the last several chapters there has been a steadily growing expectancy regarding the revelation of the kingdom. For the past three years, first John the Baptist and then Jesus have been preaching that the kingdom of God is at hand. The disciples know that they are on a fateful pilgrimage to Jerusalem and that something significant is going to happen when they get there. Even though Jesus has spoken plainly, they still do not understand. They are anticipating that the kingdom of God is going to appear immediately.

This parable is going to deal with that anticipation. The kingdom will indeed appear, but it will not be in the sense in which they are expecting. Instead of taking His throne in the city of Jerusalem, the King is going to depart.

2. The Departure of the Nobleman.

> *He said therefore, "A certain nobleman went to a distant country to receive a kingdom for himself, and then return. 13 And he called ten of his slaves, and gave them ten minas, and said to them, 'Do business with this until I come back.'" (Luke 19:12-13).*

The nobleman represents Jesus. He is headed with His disciples for Jerusalem and there is a cross on the horizon. It will be followed by a resurrection and that will be followed by a departure. Jesus is going to leave them and He is going to leave them for a very long time.

The purpose of his leaving is *to receive a kingdom for himself*. He will receive that kingdom and then He will return. Notice that it is not when He comes back that He is going to get the kingdom, but it is while He is away. Do you see it? He receives the kingdom during the "away time." It is today that Jesus is receiving the kingdom. His kingdom is growing like a small seed that is growing into a great tree. It pictures the growth of the church in this age.

In his departure, there is left a promise of his return. In the light of that eventual return, a responsibility is left to the slaves of the noblemen. They are given a certain amount of money and they are to *do business* until his return.

A *mina* was a considerable sum of money and equivalent to close to a hundred days' wages. At this, it was still only 1/50th of a talent.

What is the business with which the church is to be involved? It is the business of making disciples and the business of teaching the things that Jesus taught and it is the business of proclaiming the coming kingdom. It is the business of Jesus.

3. The Rebellion of the Citizens.

> *"But his citizens hated him, and sent a delegation after him, saying, 'We do not want this man to reign over us.'" (Luke 19:14).*

This introduces a second group of people. They are not the slaves of the nobleman. Instead they are the citizens. Their citizenship is of the kingdom which the nobleman is destined to receive. What do these people represent?

The Nobleman	Jesus who is soon departing to receive the kingdom	
The Slaves	Followers of Christ who are charged with doing His work until He returns	• The disciples • The blind beggar • Zaccheus
The Rebellious Citizens	Enemies of Christ who want no part of His kingship	The Pharisees

We have seen the Pharisees as the major opponent against the ministry of Jesus. They have opposed Him at every turn. They have rejected Him as the King and this will become very evident later in this chapter when He makes His triumphal entry into Jerusalem and it is the Pharisees who will speak out against the praises that are accorded Him.

Incidentally, there is a teaching making its way in Christendom that it is possible for one to trust in Jesus as Savior without recognizing Him as Lord. This parable teaches differently. When we come to the end of the parable, we shall see what happens to those who *"do not want this man to reign over us."*

4. The Return of the Nobleman

> *"And it came about that when he returned, after receiving the kingdom, he ordered that these slaves, to whom he had given the money, be called to him in order that he might know what business they had done.*
>
> *"And the first appeared, saying, 'Master, your mina has made ten minas more.' 17 And he said to him, 'Well done, good slave, because you have been faithful in a very little thing, be in authority over ten cities.'*
>
> *And the second came, saying, 'Your mina, master, has made five minas.' 19 And he said to him also, 'And you are to be over five cities.'" (Luke 19:15-19).*

The nobleman returns after receiving the kingdom. Those who are opposed to his kingship are not able to prevent it. But the first order of business concerns those slaves who were left with a charge to continue in the business ventures of their master.

Each slave is rewarded according to what he has done with what he has been given. The slave who brought a 10-fold increase was rewarded by being given ten cities over which to rule. The slave who brought a 5-fold increase was rewarded by being given five cities over which to rule. The other slaves were evidently rewarded accordingly.

5. The Judgment of the Worthless Slave.

> *"And another came, saying, 'Master, behold your mina, which I kept put away in a handkerchief;*
> *21 for I was afraid of you, because you are an exacting man; you take up what you did not lay down, and reap what you did not sow.'*
>
> *"He said to him, 'By your own words I will judge you, you worthless slave. Did you know that I am an exacting man, taking up what I did not lay down, and reaping what I did not sow?*
> *23 Then why did you not put the money in the bank, and having come, I would have collected it with interest?'*
>
> *"And he said to the bystanders, 'Take the mina away from him, and give it to the one who has the ten minas.'*
> *25 And they said to him, 'Master, he has ten minas already.'*
>
> *"I tell you, that to everyone who has shall more be given, but from the one who does not have, even what he does have shall be taken away." (Luke 19:20-26).*

This slave had acted differently than the first two slaves to be mentioned and the master's response was correspondingly different. He had packed away that which was given to him and had stored it away for safe keeping. In doing so, he had disregarded the command of the master to do business until his return.

Notice this slave's description of his master. He calls him *an exacting man* -- an avnqrwpoj auvsthroj (*anthropos austeros*), from which we derive our term "austere". This is not a very flattering picture. It seems that the opinion of this slave was not much different that the opinions of the rebellious citizens.

In any case, while he had not necessarily engaged in outright rebellion, he had not obeyed him master. His had been a passive rebellion, but a rebellion nevertheless. As a result, that which had been accorded to him is now taken away and given to one who had shown faithfulness.

6. The Judgment of the Rebellion Citizens.

> *"But these enemies of mine, who did not want me to reign over them, bring them here and slay them in my presence." (Luke 19:27).*

The enemies of the King are taken away and slain. This appears in the parable as almost an afterthought. But I am not so certain that this is the case. I thing that this parable portrays two kinds of rebellion.

- The active sort of rebellion as had been evidenced by the Pharisees who sought to put Jesus to death.
- A more passive sort of rebellion as demonstrated in the last chapter by the rich ruler who did not utilize that which had been given to him for the advancement of the kingdom.

The parable does not specifically tell us what happened to the unfaithful slave beyond the fact that what had been entrusted to him was now taken away. But the parable does tell us what happens to the enemies of Christ and I have a feeling that this end is also the end to which the unfaithful slave is destined.

How do I know this? Because Jesus told a very similar parable in Matthew 25. The names are changed. Instead of minas, we are now dealing in talents. But the story is essentially the same. At the end of the story, the master gives the order to *"cast out the worthless slave into the outer darkness; in that place there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matthew 25:30).*

How do you fit into this parable? Perhaps you have been taking comfort in the fact that you are not openly antagonistic to Jesus. After all, you go to church and put money in the offering plate. But are you a worthless slave? Are you utilizing what has been entrusted to you to do the work of the Kingdom? If not, then you are not notably different from the enemies of the king. Are you a citizen or a slave? And if you are a slave, then are you a faithful one? The question has eternal dimensions, for it determines your destiny. There is only salvation for those who recognize Jesus as their Master and King.

THE TRIUMPHAL ENTRY
LUKE 19:28-48

Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion!
Shout in triumph, O daughter of Jerusalem!
Behold, your king is coming to you;
He is just and endowed with salvation,
Humble and mounted on a donkey,
Even on a colt, the foal of a donkey. (Zechariah 9:9).

It is the week of the Passover. There is a holiday season in the air. The city of Jerusalem is crowded with pilgrims who have traveled from all over the world to be here. Every inn is filled to capacity and even the open ground around the city is covered with tents of Jewish pilgrims who have come to join in the celebration.

Jewish Law said that anyone within 20 miles must come to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover. The actual practice was that Jews would come from much greater distances.

It is in this setting that Jesus arrives. Josephus says that 250,000 lambs were slain for the Passover. Before the week is out, the blood of those lambs will stain the cobblestones of the Temple. Before the week is out, the blood of the Lamb of God will be shed.

THE ROUTE OF THE KING

And after He had said these things, He was going on ahead, ascending to Jerusalem. (Luke 19:28).

Ever since chapter 9, Luke has traced the steps of Jesus as He set His face to go to Jerusalem. We have seen Him leave Galilee, passing through some of the lands of the Samaritans, coming down to Jericho. It was there

we saw the healing of the blind man and His visit with Zaccheus, the little tax collector. Now He and His companions begin the final leg of their journey. It is a distance of 18 miles and it is uphill all the way.

During this time, it was traditional for the pilgrims who were making this final leg of their Jerusalem pilgrimage to sing from a collection of the Psalms known as the Songs of Ascent. There were fifteen of these Psalms and they are made up of Psalm 120-134. They were said by the rabbis to correspond to the 15 steps that ascended from the Court of the Women to the Nicanor Gate that led to the inner court of the Temple.

PREPARATION FOR THE KING'S ARRIVAL

> *And it came about that when He approached Bethphage and Bethany, near the Mount that is called Olivet, He sent two of the disciples, 30 saying, "Go into the village opposite you, in which as you enter you will find a colt tied, on which no one yet has ever sat; untie it, and bring it here. 31 And if anyone asks you, 'Why are you untying it?' thus shall you speak, 'The Lord has need of it.'"*
>
> *And those who were sent went away and found it just as He had told them. 33 And as they were untying the colt, its owners said to them, "Why are you untying the colt?"*
>
> *And they said, "The Lord has need of it."*
>
> *And they brought it to Jesus, and they threw their garments on the colt and put Jesus on it. 36 And as He was going, they were spreading their garments in the road. (Luke 19:29-36).*

There were two villages which lay on the slopes of the Mount of Olives. The first was Bethphage. It was near the summit, actually located on the southern slope of the "Mount of Olives. The name is Hebrew and means "house of figs." The Talmud speaks of Bethphage as a suburb of Jerusalem. The rabbis said that you could walk from Jerusalem to Bethphage on the Sabbath.

Bethany was located further down the eastern slope of the Mount of Olives. The meaning of its name is not so certain, but it seems to be similar to its sister village - house of dates or figs. This was the home of Lazarus and his two sisters, Mary and Martha.

Jesus had been spending some time with these friends in Bethany and now He sends some of His disciples on ahead to Bethphage with some

careful instructions.

1. Instructions to the Disciples.

They are going to go into a nearby village and they are going to get a donkey. The problem with this is that it is not their donkey. It is someone else's donkey. But that is okey because if they are challenged by the owner, they are told what to say.

> *"And if anyone asks you, 'Why are you untying it?' thus shall you speak, 'The Lord has need of it.'" (Luke 19:31).*

This is the language of a royal levy. In the ancient world and from time past remembering, it has been the privilege of a king to commandeer the possessions of his subjects. If the king had need, he could merely take what was needed as everything belonged to him. That is what is said here. "The Lord has need of it" and that is enough. By the very nature of the command, Jesus is claiming lordship.

The application for us today is obvious. Jesus is our Lord. He has the right to command anything of ours of which He has need; not only of our possessions, but of us. And that is exactly what He does. He says, "I have need of you." But He does not stop there. We are not only His subjects. We are also His co-heirs. He calls us to be subject to Him but He also calls us to reign with Him. We become the beneficiaries of His rule.

2. The Instructions Obeyed.

Sure enough, the disciples were challenged in the midst of what would have appeared to be a case of horse thieving. And when they gave the response which Jesus had commanded, they were permitted to go.

Was this a miracle? The passage doesn't say. I don't believe that it is. Jesus had made a number of trips to Jerusalem. Many people had heard Him preach there. And some had believed. I think that one of those who had believed was a man with a donkey. I think that Jesus had made arrangements with this man, telling him that one of these days He would be coming to Jerusalem and that He would have need of his donkey.

The disciples did not have any idea of who this man was.

They did not recognize him. They only knew that he was providing a need. There are a lot of God's people who are unknown. There are a lot of Christians who aren't a Billy Graham or a James Kennedy. There are a lot of believers who are out there and who are faithful where God has put them, but they don't get a lot of attention. We don't know this man's name. We don't know anything about him except that he gave something that he had to Jesus. We are called to do the same.

3. The King on a Colt: *And they brought it to Jesus, and they threw their garments on the colt and put Jesus on it (19:35).*

What was the significance of this? When you think of a conquering and triumphant king, you think of him riding into the city on a white horse. But there is no white horse for Jesus. He rides into the city seated upon a donkey.

a. A prophecy fulfilled.

The first thing that I want you to see is that this was a fulfillment of an Old Testament prophecy.

> *Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion!*
> *Shout in triumph, O daughter of Jerusalem!*
> *Behold, your king is coming to you;*
> *He is just and endowed with salvation,*
> *Humble and mounted on a donkey,*
> *Even on a colt, the foal of a donkey. (Zechariah 9:9).*

Christianity is not a new religion. It didn't begin with a Galilean rabbi. It goes back through a long line of Old Testament prophets. If you are a Christian, then you are a part of something that has been around since the beginning of time. It has stood the test of time. And you can depend upon it.

b. An unbroken colt.

Did you notice what kind of a donkey this was? Verse 30 says that it was a colt *"on which no one yet has ever sat."*

When I was a lot younger, I spent a summer on my grandfather's farm up in the Ozark Mountains. My Uncle Silas had a colt that no one had ever ridden. I decided to try to ride him. It was a short ride. Very short. A colt that has never been broken to the saddle will not take kindly to being ridden. But there is none of that here. This colt seems to have borne his burden with no fuss. As he carries the Prince of Peace, he himself is at peace.

c. The Significance of the donkey.

When a king was coming to conquer, he would often ride upon a white horse. But when he came in peace, he would ride in upon a donkey. Jesus is coming to Jerusalem in peace. It is a sign of His humility. There is coming a day when the King shall return. And He will not be riding on a donkey. Revelation 19:11 pictures Him riding upon a white horse. He does not come in peace. He is waging war. Zechariah 14 describes Him standing upon the Mount of Olives and the Mountain splitting in two. Here is the lesson. Don't wait for the war to begin. Make your peace with the King today.

THE PERCEPTION OF THE PEOPLE

> *And as He was now approaching, near the descent of the Mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to praise God joyfully with a loud voice for all the miracles which they had seen, 38 saying, "Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord; peace in heaven and glory in the highest!" (Luke 19:37-38).*

Up to this point, Jesus has not allowed anyone to publicly call Him King or Messiah. When He healed the sick, He would often exhort them to remain silent. When Peter made his great confession, he was told not to spread the news. But that all changes as Jesus makes His triumphal entry. The time for remaining silent is past. Even the stones prepare to sing His praises. The King has arrived. The song that the people sing is from the Psalms:

Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the LORD;

> *We have blessed you from the house of the LORD. (Psalm 118:26).*

What is wonderfully significant is that the context of this passage set forth the events that were destined to take place later that week. Just a few verses earlier, the Psalmist described how this One would be rejected.

> *This is the gate of the LORD; The righteous will enter through it.*
> *I shall give thanks to Thee, for Thou hast answered me;*
> *And Thou hast become my salvation.*
> *The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief corner stone.*
> *This is the LORD's doing;*
> *It is marvelous in our eyes.*
> *This is the day which the LORD has made;*
> *Let us rejoice and be glad in it.*
> *O LORD, do save, we beseech Thee;*
> *O LORD, we beseech Thee, do send prosperity!*
> *Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the LORD;*
> *We have blessed you from the house of the LORD. (Psalm 118:20-26).*

Jesus was Himself the stone that the builders would reject. In doing so, He would become the salvation of men. This was not by chance, for it was the Lord's doing. This tells me something about the Triumphal Entry. Few of those who saw that event realized its full significance. There were several perceptions which took place as the events of that day were observed.

The first perception was that of the people. On the surface, the people seem to have gathered to greet their king. It is an inauguration day. They pave the road with their robes. They wave palm branches in the air. They praise God with loud voices.

A week later, these same people will be yelling, "Crucify Him!" How could they change so quickly? I think that it was because they had false expectations.

They were looking for a military conqueror - one who would overthrow Rome. And they think that Jesus can supply this desire. They are

like fair-weather football fans, waving their banners and cheering. But when their "team" loses, they aren't fans anymore. They are only fair-weather fans.

THE PERCEPTION OF THE PHARISEES

> *And some of the Pharisees in the multitude said to Him, "Teacher, rebuke Your disciples."*
>
> *And He answered and said, "I tell you, if these become silent, the stones will cry out!" (Luke 19:39-40).*

The Pharisees saw the actions of the people as blasphemous. They saw themselves as defenders of the faith. They sought Jesus to put a stop to what they saw as a blasphemous action on the part of the disciples of Jesus. What would be your reaction if I told you that Reverend Sung Yung Moon, the holy son of God, was to be crowned as the king of righteousness in the Orange Bowl Stadium next Thursday?

You would be upset with such a claim. And that was exactly the response of the Pharisees. They realized that for a man to say the things that Jesus said and to allow things to be said of Him that were said of Him would be to take glory that only belonged to God. Their response is perfectly appropriate -- unless Jesus really is the Son of God.

THE PERCEPTION OF JESUS

> *And when He approached, He saw the city and wept over it, 42 saying, "If you had known in this day, even you, the things which make for peace! But now they have been hidden from your eyes. 43 For the days shall come upon you when your enemies will throw up a bank before you, and surround you, and hem you in on every side, 44 and will level you to the ground and your children within you, and they will not leave in you one stone upon another, because you did not recognize the time of your visitation." (Luke 19:41-44).*

There is a contrast here between the perception of the people in the previous verses and the perception of Jesus described here.

Luke 19:37-38	Luke 19:41-44
The praise and joy of the people	The weeping of Jesus

When Jesus looked at the city of Jerusalem, He was able to see past the waving palm branches and the singing and the Hosannas. He was able to see past the mighty walls and the gleaming structure of the Temple. He looked at the city and He wept. Why did He weep? I believe that there are several reasons:

1. He Wept because of a Lack of Knowledge: *"If you had known..." (19:42).*

   Remember the context in which this is spoken. It is spoken on the heels of His triumphal entry into Jerusalem. It is spoken in the context of people singing and praising Him and waving palm branches and quoting Messianic Scripture. In spite of all these things, they didn't get it. They didn't understand. Even the disciples and those who followed Him did not understand who He really was and what He was doing.

   It was not that they had not been told. Abraham had told them. Moses had told them. All of the prophets had told them. Jesus had told them very plainly. But they continued to be ignorant.

   - Some were ignorant because of their preconceived notions. They had their prophetic scheme all figured out and they had their prophecy charts and they were blinded.
   - Others were willingly ignorant. These were the ones who willingly rejected the Son. And because of this, any further understanding was now hidden from their eyes. This brings us to the next point.

2. He Wept because of a Lack of Action: *"If you had known in this day, even you, the things which make for peace..." (19:42).*

   It is not enough to know that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. Such a knowledge demands a response on our part. What are you doing with the knowledge that you have? How are you using it? Remember the parable of the Talents - if you do not use it, then it will be taken from you even that which you have.

3. He Wept because of His Compassion: *"For the days shall come upon you when your enemies will throw up a bank before you, and surround you, and hem you in on every side, 44 and will level you to the ground and your children within you, and they will not leave in you one stone upon another..." (19:43-44).*

This prophecy came true in the year A.D. 70 when the Roman general Titus led two legions against Jerusalem. Instead of initially attacking the city, Titus had his legions build up a great earthen wall all the way around the city. For a period of eight long months, no one could go in and no one could come out. Anyone caught trying to escape was crucified atop this earthen wall. The people of Jerusalem starved. There is one story told by Josephus of a mother whose daughter died and so she resorted to cannibalism, boiling the body of her daughter, only to have a starving mob break into her home and steal the carcass for themselves.

He tells us that in those terrible months before the fall of the city, the entire mound around the city was constantly crowned with crosses of all the people who attempted to escape and who were subsequently crucified by the Romans. When the Romans finally did break into the city, they burned the Temple to the ground and then set out to tear down all that remained of the old Temple structure. They did such a good job that archaeologists today are still arguing about exactly where the Temple was originally located.

4. He Wept because He was the Answer: *"...because you did not recognize the time of your visitation." (19:44).*

Jesus wept because He was the answer and they were not even asking the question. He was the One who had been promised. He was the point of every sacrifice and the fulfillment of every ceremony.

As we see Jesus weeping over the city of Jerusalem, we also ought to be moved to tears. He looked out and He saw, not just the city, but the world. He would die for their sins so that they might be free and so that they might have life and joy and peace. He wept because He saw it and He wanted them to see it, too.

It is not coincidental that it had been from this very spot that David had stood and looked over the city and wept. Do you remember the story? It is found in 2 Samuel 15:30.

> *And David went up the ascent of the Mount of Olives, and wept as he went, and his head was covered and he walked barefoot. Then all the people who were with him each covered his head and went up weeping as they went. (2 Samuel 15:30).*

David was forced to flee from the city of Jerusalem because of the rebellion instigated by his son, Absalom. As he departed, he reached the Mount of Olives and he must have looked back and wept. Now the Son of David has come to Jerusalem. He is being accorded the welcome due a king. But amidst the welcome and the rejoicing and the palm branches and the singing, He finds Himself weeping. He weeps because He is aware of another rebellion. It is the rebellion of sin that goes back to a Garden and a smooth-talking serpent. This is why Jesus has come to Jerusalem. It is to deal with the results of this rebellion. It will mean His death on the cross.

THE PURIFICATION OF THE TEMPLE

> *And He entered the temple and began to cast out those who were selling, 46 saying to them, "It is written, 'And My house shall be a house of prayer,' but you have made it a robbers' den.'" (Luke 19:45-46).*

Jesus now moves from His weeping lament to stern action. He goes into the Temple and begins casting people out. To grasp the reality of such an action, we must remember just how big the Temple was. It was an incredibly large edifice with courts and outer courts and giant columns all around.

The Temple stood atop a mountain. It was here on Mount Moriah that Abraham had once come to offer his son Isaac. On that same spot, the regular sacrifices of animals were made. Herod the Great had greatly expanded the outer courts of the Temple and had it overlaid with a covering of white limestone so that it glistened in the sun like a jewel fallen from heaven. Surrounding the Court of the Gentiles were a series of "porches" or cloisters through which ran double rows of Corinthian pillars, each cut from marble and measuring 37 feet in height and covered by a flat roof. The entire court was paved with marble. The southern of these porches was known as "Solomon's Porch" (Acts 3:11). This court derived its name from the fact that Gentiles were permitted into this area provided they conducted themselves in a reverent manner.

It was here that the buying and selling took place. They were buying and selling animals for sacrifice within the temple, but instead of a place of worship and prayer, this had turned into big business. And it wasn't just business. The animals that were sold were marked up at a great profit. It is for this reason that Jesus accuses them of having taken the temple and *made it a robbers' den.*

Sweet, gentle Jesus became angry. It is easy to see why. Faithful pilgrims had journeyed many days and many miles to come into the presence of God, to witness the holy, to worship His majesty. But before being taken into the presence of God, they were taken to the cleaners. The place that was to be pure had become profane. The place that was to be holy was now filled with hucksters.

To be sure, this was not done in the Holy Place or even within the Court of the Women. It was done in the Court of the Gentiles. That was considered far enough away so as not to interfere with the worship of the temple. The authorities were not worried as to how that might affect the worship of the Gentiles. But Jesus cared. He cared about the house of God and He cared even about that place on the outer edges that was given over to the Gentiles.

THE POWERLESSNESS OF THE PRIESTHOOD

> *And He was teaching daily in the temple; but the chief priests and the scribes and the leading men among the people were trying to destroy Him, 48 and they could not find anything that they might do, for all the people were hanging upon His words. (Luke 19:47-48).*

The temple was to be a place of prayer. It was to be a place where God met man and when men met God. Jesus brought this quality back to the temple through His actions and through His teaching ministry. These actions brought Him into conflict with the leaders of the Temple hierarchy. How can you tell the huckster from the holy? How can you tell the con-artists from the true Christians? Max Lucado lists a couple of ways and I have added a couple more:

1. They emphasize their profit more than the Prophet.

   A study was done on Televangelists some time ago as to how much of their time was spent asking for money. There were some

who mentioned donations very little. Others spent as much as 92% of their air time trying to get cash from people. Their aim is to cultivate a clientele of loyal checkbooks.

One reason that the leaders of the Temple were so angry with Jesus is because He had cut into their profits. They pulled in a lot of money from their religious scams and now He had ruined it. Do you want to know where is the heart of a ministry? Follow the money trail.

2. They build more fences than they build faith.

Lucado points out that medicine men tell you to stay out of the pharmacy (1992:64). They don't want you trying other treatments. Neither do hucksters. Beware of those who want you to be separate from other Christians. They have a franchised approach and they want to protect it. Their bread and butter is their uniqueness. Only they can give you what you need.

3. They have no real power.

When confronted with real spiritual authority, these religious hucksters caved in. They were a cowardly lot and they would have to resort to the trickery of a paid traitor in order to capture Jesus. In the meantime, He was ministering in their midst with complete immunity and there was not a thing that they could do about it. Why? Because they feared the multitude. This brings us to our fourth point.

4. They are ruled by peer pressure.

The real man of God follows what is right no matter what anyone else thinks. The huckster always has to check whether popular opinion is on his side. You determine that you are going to follow Christ, even if you are the only one who is doing so. Once you do so, you will find that you are not alone.

THE AUTHORITY OF THE KING
LUKE 20:1-47

His name was Irwin Rommel. He was to be known as the Desert Fox. But before leading the Axis army in North Africa, Rommel was a commander in the German army as they invaded France in 1940. It was during that invasion that Rommel tells of having taken a ride in his command car to reconnoiter the front. He was driving through the Belgium hills when he rounded a turn and came face to face with a truck filled with enemy soldiers. Without missing a beat, Rommel was out of his command car and calling loudly to the soldiers, "You are all now prisoners of the German army. Just drive your truck in that direction and you will be processed accordingly." The soldiers in the truck nodded their agreement and moved to comply. The truck behind them followed suit. As did the truck behind that one. In amazement, Rommel watched while 20 truckloads of soldiers meekly surrendered, all because one man had spoken with authority.

One of the distinctive things about Jesus was that He spoke with a calm but unshakable authority. This set him apart from the rabbinical teachers of that day who were always having to quote the opinion of some earlier rabbi or expert. Jesus spoke from God. He was able to say, "Thus saith the Lord." And He even went further to say, "Thus saith Me."

He did not only speak with authority; He also acted with authority. He acted with authority when He commanded demons to leave those whom they had possessed. He acted with authority when He told a storm to be silent. He acted with authority when He told a lame man to walk, when He rebuked disease and it departed, and when He commanded a dead girl to get up. And He acted with authority when He came in and cleansed the Temple, driving out those who had come to make a profit instead of to listen to the Prophet.

Imagine what would be the reaction if an out-of-town carpenter showed up this Sunday in your church and began overturning pews and

tossing around the offering plates. What would be your reaction? It would probably be the same as was seen by the Temple leaders: "What gives you the right to do these things? Just who do you think you are?"

A QUESTION OF AUTHORITY

> *And it came about on one of the days while He was teaching the people in the temple and preaching the gospel, that the chief priests and the scribes with the elders confronted Him, 2 and they spoke, saying to Him, "Tell us by what authority You are doing these things, or who is the one who gave You this authority?"*
>
> *And He answered and said to them, "I shall also ask you a question, and you tell Me: 4 Was the baptism of John from heaven or from men?"*
>
> *And they reasoned among themselves, saying, "If we say, 'From heaven,' He will say, 'Why did you not believe him?' 6 But if we say, 'From men,' all the people will stone us to death, for they are convinced that John was a prophet."*
>
> *And they answered that they did not know where it came from.*
>
> *And Jesus said to them, "Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things." (Luke 20:1-8).*

The issue here in this initial question and the issue that shall run throughout this entire chapter deals with the question of authority. It is brought by those who held authority in the Temple. The delegation who comes to Jesus is made up of the most important men in the nation of Israel. Three groups are mentioned:

The chief priests	There were 24 courses of priests who took turns serving in the Temple. At Passover, all of the priests were in attendance. Everyone who was anyone in the priesthood was here. And so, it was the upper echelon from among the priests who were a part of this delegation.
The scribes	These were the scholars and the experts in the Scriptures. It was their duty to correctly hand copy the Scriptures.
The elders	These were the representatives of the major tribes and families of Israel.

Together, representatives of these three groups comprised the Sanhedrin, the Supreme Court of Israel. There were 70 members of that body. Their president was the high priest himself.

1. The Question Asked: *They spoke, saying to Him, "Tell us by what authority You are doing these things, or who is the one who gave You this authority?" (20:2).*

Notice that they do not ask Jesus why He cleansed the Temple. They knew why He had done what He had done. They knew that they had turned the Temple into a den of robbers. They knew that they were guilty of fleecing the flock instead of feeding the flock. And so, the question is not, "Why?" but rather, "By what authority?"

Jesus has not been ordained by any reputable denomination. He has no seminary degrees hanging on His wall. He goes by no title such as "reverend" or "rabbi." So what gives Him the right to overturn moneychangers' tables or to drive out animals being bought and sold? What gives Him the right to stop the "business as usual" within the Temple?

<table>
<tr><td rowspan="2">If Jesus answers</td><td>He was acting on His own authority</td><td rowspan="2">His enemies could say</td><td>He is a megalomaniac</td></tr>
<tr><td>He was acting on the authority of God</td><td>He is blaspheming God</td></tr>
</table>

They view this as a trick question. They feel that they have boxed Jesus into a corner and no matter what He answers will be something they can use against Him.

2. Jesus Replies: *And He answered and said to them, "I shall also ask you a question, and you tell Me: 4 Was the baptism of John from heaven or from men?" (20:3-4).*

Jesus turns the question over to them. He does this by asking about the baptism of John. Notice that it is specifically the baptism of John about which He asks, not the ministry of John or even about the character of the man John. The question regards the source and the authority of the baptism of John. It came from one of two locations:

(1) From heaven.
(2) From men.

The baptism of John was something new and different in the religious life of Israel. They were used to ceremonial washings. At several of the main entrances of the Temple there were large pools dedicated to ceremonial washings. The priests were constantly having to wash themselves before serving in the Temple.

But John's baptism was different. It was in rivers and streams. And it was part of a call to repentance. And it was accompanied by the promise of One who was to come to establish a Kingdom.

3. The Reasoning of the Religious Leaders: *And they reasoned among themselves, saying, "If we say, 'From heaven,' He will say, 'Why did you not believe him?' 6 But if we say, 'From men,' all the people will stone us to death, for they are convinced that John was a prophet" (20:5-6).*

I enjoy playing chess. There sometimes comes a point in a chess game where, no matter what you do, you are going to lose a piece. That is what happened here. They pondered their possible range of answers and came to the conclusion that, no matter what they said, it would be wrong.

If we say...	
"From heaven"	"From men"
Jesus: "Why did you not believe him?"	They will lose popularity with the people

Notice that they are more interested in fighting Jesus and in holding onto their popularity than they are in learning the truth. The one thing that they do not do is to ask, "I wonder if John and Jesus are right in what they are saying?" Why? Why don't they see their need for the truth? It is because they have a vested interest in continuing in their unbelief. And so, they refuse to answer the question.

"A person's epistemology is determined by his theology." - Hendricksen

4. The Response of Jesus: *And Jesus*

said to them, "Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things" (20:8).

There is a lesson here. It is that when you refuse to believe the teachings of Jesus, then no further teachings are given. The criteria for receiving further spiritual truth is receiving and believing that which you have been given.

A PARABLE OF AUTHORITY REJECTED

Jesus now proceeds to relate a parable. This parable must be seen in the context of this confrontation with the leaders of the Temple. It is still an issue of authority.

1. The Story.

> *And He began to tell the people this parable: "A man planted a vineyard and rented it out to vine-growers, and went on a journey for a long time. 10 And at the harvest time he sent a slave to the vine-growers, in order that they might give him some of the produce of the vineyard; but the vine-growers beat him and sent him away empty-handed. 11 And he proceeded to send another slave; and they beat him also and treated him shamefully, and sent him away empty-handed. 12 And he proceeded to send a third; and this one also they wounded and cast out.*
>
> *"And the owner of the vineyard said, 'What shall I do? I will send my beloved son; perhaps they will respect him.'*
>
> *"But when the vine-growers saw him, they reasoned with one another, saying, 'This is the heir; let us kill him that the inheritance may be ours.'*
>
> *"And they threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. What, therefore, will the owner of the vineyard do to them? 16 He will come and destroy these vine-growers and will give the vineyard to others." And when they heard it, they said, "May it never be!" (Luke 20:9-16).*

The man in the story was a landowner. As a landowner, he

owned a vineyard. In the course of time, he leased the land to a group of vine-growers with the agreement that, at the time of the harvest, he would be given a share of the produce.

When the harvest came, the unfaithful vine-growers treated the landowner with disdain, even going so far as to beat and kill those of his servants which were sent to represent the master.

When the master sent his own son, the vine-growers murdered him, hoping to steal the son's inheritance for themselves.

Josephus describes the statue of a golden vine which adorned the temple gate.

"...but that gate which was at this end of the first part of the house was, as we have already observed, all covered with gold, as was its whole wall about it; it also had golden vines above it, from which clusters of grapes hung as tall as a man's height." (Wars 5:5:4).

What you must understand is that Jesus is borrowing from an Old Testament parable. The parable is from the pages of Isaiah.

> *Let me sing now for my well-beloved*
> *A song of my beloved concerning His vineyard.*
> *My well-beloved had a vineyard on a fertile hill.*
> *And He dug it all around, removed its stones,*
> *And planted it with the choicest vine.*
> *And He built a tower in the middle of it,*
> *And hewed out a wine vat in it;*
> *Then He expected it to produce good grapes,*
> *But it produced only worthless ones. (Isaiah 5:1-2).*

Who was this vineyard of the Lord who had been the object of such care and such devotion from the hand of the Lord? Verse 7 indicates the identity of the vineyard.

> *For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel,*
> *And the men of Judah His delightful plant.*
> *Thus He looked for justice, but behold, bloodshed;*
> *For righteousness, but behold, a cry of distress. (Isaiah 5:7).*

The analogy of the parable is rather obvious. Jesus is telling this parable in the Temple in Jerusalem. He is speaking to those who view themselves as the servants of the Lord.

Character in Story	What it Represented
Vineyard	God's kingdom
Owner of the Vineyard	God
Vine-growers to whom the Vineyard was leased	Leaders of the nation
Servants of the Owner	Prophets
Son of the Owner	Jesus

It is not the vineyard that is being condemned, but the vine-growers who hold control over the vineyard. Remember the initial issue which gave rise to this parable? It was when the Jews asked Jesus what was His authority. This parable answers that question. His authority comes from the Father. He has authority because He is the Son - He is the heir to the vineyard. They are the sharecroppers who were charged with the job of raising fruit, a portion of which was to be returned to the Master. But they have been unfaithful in their duties. They have taken up the mantle of a false authority. And in their pseudo-authority, they are rebelling against God Himself. The following lessons come to us from the story.

a. The Generosity of God: The Landowner provided not only the vineyard, but also a wall and a wine vat and a tower. He was not a slum landlord, but rather graciously provided for those into whose hands the vineyard was entrusted.

b. The Trust of God: The owner went away and left his prized vineyard in the hands of the keepers. He gave them the freedom to either follow or to rebel against him.

c. The Patience of God: The owner sends a number of servants, even after they are rejected and mistreated and even killed. We tend to read this story out of long years of association and as a result, we do not feel the emotional impact. But to anyone reading the story for the first time, it seems incredible that the master could be so longsuffering in the matter of the cruel treatment of His servants. When was the last time that you were startled by the love and the patience and the forgiveness of God?

d. The Eventual Justice of God: Although the patience of God is longsuffering, there will come a time when the landowner will no longer hold his wrath in check. Did you ever stop to wonder what happens if, at the end of it all, the rebellious farmers repent of their sinful actions and receive the landowner? He forgives them. And he welcomes them into his family to take the place of the Son who they murdered. And he gives them the vineyard as their inheritance.

This parable reveals some basic truths about Jesus.

- It reveals that Jesus is the Son of God. He had described Himself to the populace as the "Son of Man." Luke has pictured Him as the teacher from the Lord. He is both of those things. But He is also the beloved Son of God.
- It reveals that Jesus will be rejected by the Jews and killed by them. Jesus knows that there is a cross awaiting Him.
- It reveals the ultimate triumph of Jesus. There is coming a day when the Lord shall return to take His vineyard and to render judgment upon those unfaithful stewards. Forty years from the date that Jesus stands talking in the temple, the Roman general Titus will surround Jerusalem, capture the city, burn that same temple to the ground, and carry the surviving inhabitants away into captivity.

> The powers-that-be will soon be the powers-that-have-been.

2. The Scriptures: *But He looked at them and said, "What then is this that is written, 'The stone which the builders rejected, this became the chief corner stone'? 18 Everyone who falls on that stone will be broken to pieces; but on whomever it falls, it will scatter him like dust" (20:17-18).*

The Scripture to which Jesus refers is Psalm 118:22-23. This Psalm speaks in its context of the nation of Israel. As the nations of the world sought to build their empires, they regarded the nation of Israel as a rock that was merely in the way - a rock that was to be set aside from the important affairs of men. But this tiny nation was to play a key role in God's economy.

Do you see what is happening? Jesus takes this passage which refers to the nation of Israel and He applies it to Himself.

There is a lesson here. It is that Jesus is the personification of the nation of Israel. He is everything that the nation of Israel was supposed to be.

Israel	Jesus
Descendants of Abraham	Descendant of Abraham
Nation of priests	The High Priest of God
A witness to the nations	Word of God & light of the world
Keeper of the law of God	Righteousness of God

What does that mean to us? It means that we have been called to be everything that Jesus is.

- Spiritual descendants of Abraham.
- A nation of priests coming boldly before the throne of grace
- Salt and light as we take the gospel to a world in darkness
- Living holy and righteous lives

Jesus gives the Psalm a new meaning. He points out that, in the same way Israel has been rejected in the past, so now the leaders of the nation are themselves going to pass a similar judgment upon the Messiah of Israel. They look at this little Galilean rabbi and they think that He is merely in the way. A stone to be rejected and cast aside. What they cannot realize is that this stone is to become the foundation stone for God's covenant people.

3. The Response: *And the scribes and the chief priests tried to lay hands on Him that very hour, and they feared the people; for they understood that He spoke this parable against them (20:19).*

I don't know if they understood all of the implications of the parable. But they understood enough to know that it was directed against themselves. They saw themselves as the unfaithful vine-growers. They saw themselves in the mirror Jesus had made and they hated the image they saw. When Jesus does that to you, you can to do one of two things. You can go to Him in repentance and seek to be changed, or you can try to break the mirror. They chose the latter. They chose murder.

CIVIL AUTHORITY VERSUS SPIRITUAL AUTHORITY

It was not too long before the murderous attitude of the temple authorities came upon a plan to do away with Jesus. They had already determined to do away with Him. They lacked only method and opportunity. They seek to find such opportunity by asking a politically incorrect question that will get Him in trouble with the Roman authorities.

1. A Politically Incorrect Question.

> *And they watched Him, and sent spies who pretended to be righteous, in order that they might catch Him in some statement, so as to deliver Him up to the rule and the authority of the governor.*
>
> *And they questioned Him, saying, "Teacher, we know that You speak and teach correctly, and You are not partial to any, but teach the way of God in truth. 22 Is it lawful for us to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?" (Luke 20:20-22).*

The Romans had ruled over Jerusalem in one form or another since 63 B.C. Since that time, there had been a gradual increase in taxes, all going to fund the Roman Empire. To be fair, it must be admitted that the Romans also provided certain services such as their system of roads. However, it is always true that government takes away more than it gives and Rome was certainly no exception to this rule.

Earlier in this century a rebellion had taken place under the banner of "no tribute to the Romans." It was claimed by these rebels that taxation was tantamount to slavery. There were three taxes which were collected:

- Ground Tax: Made up of 10% of all the grain and 20% of all the wine and fruit produced.

- Income Tax: 1% of a man's income.

- Poll Tax: A flat tax of one denarius (a day's wage) was paid by all men from 14 to 65 years of age and on all women between the ages of 12 to 65.

The enemies of Jesus have come up with a trick question. They feel that He will be wrong, no matter how He answers.

If Jesus answers	*Pay the Tax*	Then...	Jesus will lose popularity with the people by advocating an unpopular tax
	Don't Pay the Tax		Jesus can be accused of inciting a rebellion against Rome

Notice how they approach Jesus. It is with flattery. They are lying through their teeth., hoping to disarm Jesus.

2. An Authoritative Answer.

> *But He detected their trickery and said to them, 24 "Show Me a denarius. Whose likeness and inscription does it have?" And they said, "Caesar's."*
>
> *And He said to them, "Then render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." 26 And they were unable to catch Him in a saying in the presence of the people; and marveling at His answer, they became silent. (Luke 20:23-25).*

Jesus calls for a denarius. The fact that He had to call for one seems to indicate that He did not have a single denarius to His name. A denarius was a silver coin. It was one day's wages for a Roman soldier. On one side of the coin would have been an image of the Roman emperor, Tiberius Caesar. On the other side would have been an image of the goddess of peace. Around the image was an inscription which read, "Tiberius Caesar Augustus, son of the Divine Augustus, Chief Priest."

It was the practice of all new emperors to issue new coins with their own likeness stamped on the face. There is a sense in which the coin was considered to be the personal property of the king. It bore testimony to the rule of the king whose likeness it carried. The first thing that a rebel or a conqueror would do would be to issue new coins with a new face.

Things with Caesar's image	⇨	(Coins)	⇨	Give them to Caesar
Things with God's image		(Man)		Give them to God

There is a principle here. It is that the state is ordained by God. The state brings valuable services to the people of God. And as we share in the benefits of the state, so also we are to share in the responsibilities of the state. But what about paying taxes to a government that has set itself up against God? Is it right to pay your good, hard-earned money to a government that wastes it, or puts it to a purpose that you adamantly oppose?

Jesus says that it is. He calls us to give to Caesar that which belongs to Caesar. But notice that there is a limit as to what belongs to Caesar. Our ultimate allegiance is to belong to God. Caesar may own our money. But God owns us.

This has a direct impact upon the underlying issue in this chapter. That issue is one of authority. Legal and political authority is real, but it is only of limited scope and duration. Final and lasting authority is in the hands of God.

Jewish Leaders	Jesus
Had a limited and finite authority over the nation of Israel.	Has been given authority over an eternal kingdom.
Required to pay taxes to Rome in coins bearing the image of the Emperor.	The recipient of that which is in the image of God.
An earthly authority.	A heavenly authority.
This authority shall end.	This authority shall never end.

Both of these types of authority are ordained by God. Jesus was not advocating an abolition of the Jewish authorities in Jerusalem. Neither was He advocating a rebellion against Rome. Rather, He was establishing His claims to a higher authority, one that would be eternal both in scope and in nature.

AUTHORITY AND THE SCRIPTURES

The next question coming to Jesus also follows this theme of authority. In this case, it is a question of the authority of rationalism. The rationalists of that day were known as the Sadducees.

The Sadducees were made up of the aristocracy. They were the advocates of Hellenization. They held the Law of Moses in high regard, but did not hold that the rest of the Scriptures were inspired. They did not believe in angels or miracles. They were not looking for any future Messiah and they rejected any notion of a future bodily resurrection as well as of any life after death. They tended to represent the upper class, the royalty and the priesthood. They were the philosophically sophisticated.

Have you ever noticed that when people achieve a certain social strata, they often stop believing in certain things? Politicians are like that and so were the Sadducees. They did not believe in the supernatural. They did not believe in miracles. And Jesus had the effrontery to have performed miracles. Therefore they decided on a plan that would put Him in His place.

1. The Question of the Sadducees.

> *Now there came to Him some of the Sadducees (who say that there is no resurrection), 28 and they questioned Him, saying, "Teacher, Moses wrote for us that if a man's brother dies, having a wife, and he is childless, his brother should take the wife and raise up offspring to his brother. 29 Now there were seven brothers; and the first took a wife, and died childless; 30 and the second 31 and the third took her; and in the same way all seven died, leaving no children. 32 Finally the woman died also. 33 In the resurrection therefore, which one's wife will she be? For all seven had her as wife." (Luke 20:27-32).*

The question is meant as a trick. It is not a sincere question. It is one of those "can God make a rock so big that He cannot move it" questions. It is a question designed to disprove the doctrine of the resurrection. The question revolves around the laws of the levirate marriage as set forth in the book of Deuteronomy. Remember, the Sadducees only believed in the books of Moses.

The question presupposes a situation in which there are seven brothers. The oldest is married, but before his marriage can produce

any children, he dies. According to Jewish Law, it is now the responsibility of the second brother to have a child by that wife and to raise the child as the heir of the first brother (Deuteronomy 25:5-10). And so, he marries her, but dies before there are any children. And so it goes with the third and the fourth and the fifth and the sixth and the seventh. By this time, I think that I would be a bit suspicious of the woman. But she eventually dies, too.

Now is the question. Whose wife will she be in the resurrection? Do you see what the Sadducees are doing? They are not asking this question because they are actually worried about this situation. They are asking it because they think that the question shows a flaw in the whole teaching about the resurrection. They expect Jesus to stutter and stammer and get red in the face so that they can laugh at Him. But he does nothing of the sort.

2. The Answer of Jesus.

> *And Jesus said to them, "The sons of this age marry and are given in marriage, 35 but those who are considered worthy to attain to that age and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage; 36 for neither can they die anymore, for they are like angels, and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection." (Luke 20:34-36).*

The resurrection does not constitute a continuation of life as it is on earth. The old physical laws will no longer apply. And the old physical and social relationships will pale to insignificance in the presence of our relationship with the Lord.

3. Evidence for the Resurrection - an appeal to the Authority of Scripture.

> *"But that the dead are raised, even Moses showed, in the passage about the burning bush, where he calls the Lord the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. 38 Now He is not the God of the dead, but of the living; for all live to Him." (Luke 20:37-38).*

The Sadducees rejected the resurrection because they did not

think that it was taught in the Torah - the first five books of Moses. But Jesus points out that this is not the case. He does this by quoting the words of the Lord to Moses when He spoke to Him out of the burning bush (Exodus 3:6).

In that passage, God identified Himself as the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. If He is now the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, then it stands to reason that they must still be alive. And if they are alive, then there is life after death.

THE POSITION OF AUTHORITY

And some of the scribes answered and said, "Teacher, You have spoken well." 40 For they did not have courage to question Him any longer about anything.

And He said to them, "How is it that they say the Christ is David's son? 42 For David himself says in the book of Psalms, 'The Lord said to my LORD, "Sit at My right hand, 43 until I make Thine enemies a footstool for Thy feet."' 44 David therefore calls Him 'Lord,' and how is He his son?" (Luke 20:39-44).

Both the Pharisees and the Sadducees are out of questions. They have taken their best shots against Jesus and they have nothing left with which to attack Him. A few of them even go so far as to grudgingly admit that He has spoken well. At this time, Jesus asks a question of them. It is a question about authority and the promised Messiah.

1. A Question about Messiah: *And He said to them, "How is it that they say the Christ is David's son?" (Luke 20:41).*

   The word "Christ" is merely a transliteration of the Greek Χριστος, meaning "anointed one." It is an exact equivalent of the Hebrew term "Messiah." The Jews of that day had a very specific Messianic expectation. They believed that God would raise up a man who would have a special anointing of God's Spirit and who would come and deliver Israel from her enemies and lead her in victory and in righteousness. They also believed that this Messiah would be a descendant of David.

2. A Question from the Psalms: *"For David himself says in the book*

of Psalms, 'The Lord said to my Lord, "Sit at My right hand, 43 until I make Thine enemies a footstool for Thy feet"'" (20:42-43).

The question that Jesus asks is taken from the Psalms. He quotes Psalm 110:1. This is one of the most quoted Psalm in the entire New Testament. It presents three characters:

David	He is the one who writes Psalm 110
The Lord	The Hebrew of Psalm 110 uses the term Yahweh to describe the Lord
My (David's) Lord	This unidentified one is told to sit at the right hand of Yahweh. The only other clue to his identity is that he is David's lord (*adoni*)

The question revolves around the true identity of the one whom David describes as "my lord." He is shown to be a different person from Yahweh, for it is Yahweh who says to Him, "Sit here."

3. A Question of Authority: *David therefore calls Him 'Lord,' and how is He his son?" (20:44).*

Here is the point of the question. A son is not by nature greater than his father. Fathers do not bow down before their sons. Fathers do not look to their sons for leadership. If this is the case, then how can the Messiah be both...

- David's Son
- David's lord

The Scriptures make it quite clear that the Messiah is both David's son as well as David's lord. How can this be? It can only be the case if the Messiah's existence predated his birth. It can only be the case if the Messiah had a pre-incarnate existence.

The questioning of Jesus has a direct impact on our understanding of His true authority. The Jews thought that Messiah would be a wonderful person who would follow in the footsteps of his father, David. But Jesus moves to show that their concept of the Messiah was much too small. The Messiah would exercise greater authority than that which belonged to David, for He would be David's lord and master.

WARNINGS AGAINST THE MISUSE OF AUTHORITY

> *And while all the people were listening, He said to the disciples, 46 "Beware of the scribes, who like to walk around in long robes, and love respectful greetings in the market places, and chief seats in the synagogues, and places of honor at banquets, 47 who devour widows' houses, and for appearance's sake offer long prayers; these will receive greater condemnation." (Luke 20:45-47).*

Jesus has demonstrated a true authority. That true exercise of authority is seen in contrast to the scribes who exercised a false misuse of authority. Their use of authority was for the purpose of self-gratification. They sought to bring glory to themselves. This is in contrast to Jesus who only sought to bring glory to God.

Do you like it when people think highly of you? When someone demonstrates an exalted respect of you? Of course you do! The danger is that such exaltation becomes addictive and that you begin to conduct yourself so as to receive the accolades of others. True faithfulness is what you do when no one else is looking. You remember that because, in those times when you think that no one else is looking, those are the times that you are playing for the audience of heaven.

FUTURE THINGS
LUKE 21:1-38

This chapter contains predictive prophecy. It tells us about things that God is going to do in the future. We are going to see prophecies of the destruction of the temple, of wars and rumors of wars, or tribulations and famines and false messiahs. Finally, we are going to see a promise of the second coming of the Son.

Some of the prophecies have already come to pass. Some of them are being fulfilled today. And some are yet to be fulfilled. This entire panorama begins with something that seems at first glance to be out of place. It begins with a woman's gift.

THE TRUE AND THE TEMPORARY

> *And He looked up and saw the rich putting their gifts into the treasury. (Luke 21:1).*

The Temple was organized into a series of courts. As you initially entered the Temple area, you found yourself in the Court of the Gentiles. This was a vast area the size of several football fields. This was the place where the buying and selling and the money changing took place that Jesus had disrupted on the previous day. This court derived its name from the fact that Gentiles were permitted into this area provided they conducted themselves in a reverent manner.

Surrounding the Court of the Gentiles were a series of "porches" or cloisters through which ran double rows of Corinthian pillars, each cut from marble and measuring 37 feet in height and covered by a flat roof. The entire court was paved with marble. The southern of these porches was known as "Solomon's Porch" (Acts 3:11).

A low wall ran completely around the Temple structure and separated the temple from the Court of the Gentiles. It had periodic gates and an stone

inscription located at each gate. Archaeologists have discovered two of these inscriptions and they read as follows:

> *No outsider shall enter the protective enclosure around the sanctuary. And whoever is caught will only have himself to blame for the ensuing death.*

Beyond the Dividing Wall was a flight of 14 steps that led up to a terrace on which stood the inner wall of the Temple. This inner wall had a number of gates, but the main gate was located on the eastern side. This was the "Beautiful Gate" (Acts 3:2). There were 12 steps leading up to this gate. The doors of the gate were made of Corinthian brass and mounted on massive hinges. Entering through this gate brought one into the Court of the Women.

The Court of the Women was not exclusive to women. It was called this because this was as far within the Temple as women were permitted to enter. The court was surrounded by colonnades. Along the walls there were thirteen jars which served as receptacles for various offerings. Worshipers would come in and drop their offering into one of the jars.

Offerings that were mandated	1	The Half-shekel tribute	Offerings left over from sacrifices	8	Sin offering
	2			9	Trespass offering
	3	Turtledove offering	Voluntary Offerings	10	Offerings of birds
	4	Pigeon offering		11	Nazarite offerings
	5	Wood		12	Cleansed leper
	6	Incense		13	General voluntary offering
	7	Golden vessels			

As our passage opens, Jesus is in this area of the Court of the Women known as the Treasury. He is near to these jars where worshipers would come to make their offerings. He was watching the offerings and, in particular, he was watching the rich bring their offerings. Why is this significant? It is significant by what Luke wrote in the previous verses. They are the closing verses of Luke 20.

> *And while all the people were listening, He said to the disciples, 46 "Beware of the scribes, who like to walk around in long robes, and love respectful greetings in the market places, and chief seats in the synagogues, and places of honor at banquets, 47 who devour widows' houses, and for appearance's sake offer long prayers; these will receive greater condemnation." (Luke 20:45-47).*

There were those who made a great show of their goodness and their spiritual authority. They sought honor and prestige. The scribes were in that category, but they were not the only ones. There was also a temptation for the rich to engage in this sort of activity. In contrast, there came a woman to present her offering.

1. The True.

> *And He saw a certain poor widow putting in two small copper coins. 3 And He said, "Truly I say to you, this poor widow put in more than all of them; 4 for they all out of their surplus put into the offering; but she out of her poverty put in all that she had to live on." (Luke 21:2-4).*

It is bad in any era to be a widow. I can think of fewer things more tragic than the death of a mate. But to be a widow in that day was even worse. And to be a poor widow was a situation in which there was little hope. Widows had little financial recourse and a poor widow was often reduced to begging.

Here was a poor widow who had only two copper coins to her name. But she determined to give them to the Lord. The result was that it was accounted of the Lord as though she had given a vast sum.

2. The Temporary

> *And while some were talking about the temple, that it was adorned with beautiful stones and votive gifts, He said, 6 "As for these things which you are looking at, the days will come in which there will not be left one stone upon another which will not be torn down." (Luke 21:5-6).*

The words of Jesus regarding the Temple ring out as a

contrast to what has just happened. A poor widow woman comes and brings her tiny gift that has eternal consequences. Over against this is the magnificent splendor of the Temple that will be so dismantled that scholars will engage in speculation as to exactly where it was located.

The Widow Woman	The Temple
So poor that she had only two copper coins	Luke points of that it was *adorned with beautiful stones and votive gifts*
Her gift was of great merit	It will be completely destroyed
Jesus was impressed with the beauty of her gift	The disciples were impressed with the beauty of the architecture

We tend to be impressed with splendor and majesty and beauty. But all earthly things filled with splendor and majesty and beauty are destined for destruction. Only that which is spiritually approved shall last forever.

The words of Jesus were literally and dramatically fulfilled within that very generation. The Jews revolted in A.D. 66 and were initially successful in completely routing the Roman legion that was sent to quell the uprising. It was not long after this that the Roman general Vespasian landed in Palestine with two legions while his son, Titus, marched up from Egypt with a third legion. The next three years were spent in bitter warfare all throughout Israel. When Vespasian was recalled to Rome to become the new emperor, he left Titus in charge of all of the Roman armies.

In January of A.D. 70, Titus marched on Jerusalem and surrounded the city. The Romans erected a siege wall around the entire city so that no one could escape. Anyone who was caught was crucified atop the wall. It was said that on any given day the wall was ringed with crosses of those being executed. The Romans finally broke into the city in August and took the Temple Mount. After entering the Temple and the Holy of Holies, Titus had the Temple burnt to the ground and the entire outlying structure demolished. There was literally not one stone left standing upon another. There is no trace left today of the Temple. It has been so obliterated that archaeologists and scholars debate over exactly where it was located.

A QUEST FOR CLARITY

> *And they questioned Him, saying, "Teacher, when therefore will these things be? And what will be the sign when these things are about to take place?" (Luke 21:7).*

The words of Jesus must have come as a complete shock. Do you remember the shock you felt on September 11, 2001 when you saw the twin towers of the World Trade Center fall to the ground? It was with no less shock that the disciples heard the words of Jesus. They ask two questions.

1. Question #1: *"Teacher, when therefore will these things be?"*

   This first question is going to be answered in verses 8-11 when Jesus says that *the end does not follow immediately* (21:9). He will then go on to describe some of the events that will lead up to the fulfillment of His words as well as some of the things that will follow after.

2. Question #2: *"What will be the sign when these things are about to take place?"*

   They ask for the single sign, but Jesus is going to give them a number of signs. Have you ever been given directions on how to get somewhere and the person gave you such detailed directions as to tell you things that you would see on the way? Why did they do that? It was to let you know that you were still on the right path. Jesus does the same thing here. He will give a number of signs so that He followers will know that they have not missed anything and that all the things that are happening along the way are supposed to be happening.

THE NON-IMMEDIACY OF THE END

> *And He said, "See to it that you be not misled; for many will come in My name, saying, 'I am He,' and, 'The time is at hand'; do not go after them.* 9 *And when you hear of wars and disturbances, do not be terrified; for these things must take place first, but the end does not follow immediately."*

> *Then He continued by saying to them, "Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, 11 and there will be great earthquakes, and in various places plagues and famines; and there will be terrors and great signs from heaven. (Luke 21:8-11).*

The point here is that there are going to be a lot of things that are going to happen that might make it look as though the end is about to come, but in the words of verse 9, *"The end does not follow immediately."* You have only to walk into any Christian bookstore in America and you will find hoards of books pointing out the signs of the soon coming of the end. But Jesus says, "When you see wars and disturbances and earthquakes and plagues and famines and terrors and even what look to be heavenly signs, don't you be shaken because all of those things are going to come and go before the coming of the end."

When I was a youngster in Bible college, I saw the best-seller by Hal Lindsey, *The Late Great Planet Earth* in which he pointed out all of the wars and all of the earthquakes and plagues and famines and other perceived signs and he said that Christ must be coming back real soon. More recently, we have seen terror and terrorists and skyscrapers falling to the ground and the threat of plagues and other horrors. In the face of all of these "signs" we need to take the words of Jesus to heart that *"these things must take place first, but the end does not follow immediately."*

Here is the point. Every one of those things described by Jesus was fulfilled in the first century. And every one of those things has been fulfilled within our last century. And they are being fulfilled today just as promised. What is to be our reaction to these things? Jesus mentions two: *"See to it that you be not misled."* It is possible to look at earth-shattering events and to be misled by them, thinking that this is it, that the end has come. Are these events significant? Certainly. But they are only signposts along the way telling us that we are on the right track. As we see these come and go, Jesus exhorts us, *"Do not be terrified."* The reason you do not have to fear is because God is in control.

THE PROMISE OF PERSECUTION

> *"But before all these things, they will lay their hands on you and will persecute you, delivering you to the synagogues and prisons, bringing you before kings and governors for My name's sake. 13 It will lead to an*

opportunity for your testimony. 14 So make up your minds not to prepare beforehand to defend yourselves; 15 for I will give you utterance and wisdom which none of your opponents will be able to resist or refute.

"But you will be delivered up even by parents and brothers and relatives and friends, and they will put some of you to death, 17 and you will be hated by all on account of My name. 18 Yet not a hair of your head will perish. 19 By your endurance you will gain your lives. (Luke 21:12-18).

We saw in the preceding verses that God is in control in the face of national and natural calamities. Now we see also that God is in control even in the face of persecution of His people. Notice that this persecution is described as taking place *before all these things* (21:12). Before the coming of false messiahs or wars and rumors of wars or plagues or famines, there would first come persecution of the people of God. Luke himself testifies to the realization of this prophecy when we read through the book of Acts. The story of the early church is a story of persecution.

The key word in the book of Acts is the word "witness." It is seen in Acts 1:8 when Jesus says to His disciples, *"You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My WITNESSES both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth."* When you think of a witness, your mind takes you to a courtroom. It is not mere happenstance that a great deal of the book of Acts deals with judicial proceedings. This book is nothing less than an official record of the witnesses for the defense in the case of the world versus Jesus.

The same word that is translated *witnesses* in Acts 1:8 is found here in Luke. Jesus says that *it will lead to an opportunity for your TESTIMONY.*

THE FALL OF JERUSALEM

"But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then recognize that her desolation is at hand. 21 Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, and let those who are in the midst of the city depart, and let not those who are in the country enter the city; 22 because these are days of vengeance, in order that all things which are written may be fulfilled.

"Woe to those who are with child and to those who nurse babes in those days; for there will be great distress upon the land, and wrath to this people, 24 and they will fall

> *by the edge of the sword, and will be led captive into all the nations; and Jerusalem will be trampled under foot by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled." (Luke 21:20-24).*

The warnings of Jesus now move from the general to the specific. This specific warning deals with the city of Jerusalem. There would come a time when Jerusalem would be surrounded by armies. That would serve as the signal that the destruction of the city was at hand. This would take place *in order that all things which are written may be fulfilled* (21:22).

When Titus came to Jerusalem at the beginning of A.D. 70, the Jews from the surrounding countryside took refuge within the city. It was packed with refugees and there was not enough food to feed them all. Starvation ensued during the siege because the people had ignored the warnings of Jesus to flee the city.

This brings us to a question. Are we to view all of the prophecies of the Bible as having been fulfilled in the events of A.D. 70 and the destruction of Jerusalem? There are those who believe this is the case. Their doctrinal system is known as *Preterism*. Full preterism goes to the extreme of denying any future return of Christ, believing that this somehow was fulfilled in A.D. 70. Let me go on record by stating that I am not a Preterist. I do not feel that all of the prophecies of the Bible or even all of the prophecies of this particular chapter were completely fulfilled and finished in the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70.

How do I know that this is the case? One reason I know is because of the words of verse 24. That verse gives me a prophecy that extends beyond the events of A.D. 70. It tells of how Jerusalem will fall and its inhabitants shall be led away into captivity and then it goes on to tell us that *Jerusalem will be trampled under foot by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled*.

What is this "times of the Gentiles?" It is seen in contrast to the earlier age when the focus of heaven was upon the Jews. It is that time when the gospel is not limited to Jerusalem and Israel, but when it is going out to all the world. It is the days in which we are living today.

Notice that Jerusalem will be trampled under foot by the Gentiles *until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled*. Jerusalem is still under the foot of the Gentiles today. But there is coming a day when that will no longer be the case. There is coming a day when the King is going to return and when every knee shall bow and every tongue shall confess that a Jewish carpenter is Lord.

THE COMING OF THE SON

> *"And there will be signs in sun and moon and stars, and upon the earth dismay among nations, in perplexity at the roaring of the sea and the waves, 26 men fainting from fear and the expectation of the things which are coming upon the world; for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. 27 And then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.*
>
> *"But when these things begin to take place, straighten up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near." (Luke 21:25-28).*

The Preterist looks at these verses and postulates a reference to something that God did in A.D. 70. Can this refer only to the 70 A.D. event? Is this vision of the Son of Man coming in a cloud only symbolic of His act of judgment against Jerusalem? I do not believe so. At the outset, we should note that when Paul describes the "coming of the Lord" in 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17, he uses several of the same terms as are found here and in the parallel passages of Matthew 24 and Mark 13.

Matthew 24	Mark 13	Luke 21	1 Thessalonians 4
They shall see the Son of man coming (24:30; 13:26; 21:27)			*The Lord Himself will descend from heaven (4:16)*
...with a great trumpet (24:31)	--		*With the trumpet of God (4:16)*
On the clouds of the sky (24:30)	*In the clouds (13:26)*	*In a cloud (21:27)*	*We... shall be caught up together with them in the clouds (4:17)*
He will send forth his angels... and they will gather together His elect (24:31)	*He will send forth His angels, and will gather together His elect (13:27)*	--	*We who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and thus we shall always be with the Lord (4:17)*

Do you see it? Paul uses the very language which Jesus used as he sets forth the truth of the Second Coming. This is an indication that Paul is there speaking of the same event of which Jesus is speaking here in Luke 21. To be sure, there is a sense in which the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 prefigures the final judgment that is to come at the end of the age. In this sense, the destruction of Jerusalem can be regarded as a type and a shadow that pictures the end of the world.

A PARABLE AND A PRINCIPLE

> *And He told them a parable: "Behold the fig tree and all the trees; 30 as soon as they put forth leaves, you see it and know for yourselves that summer is now near. 31 Even so you, too, when you see these things happening, recognize that the kingdom of God is near. 32 Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all things take place.*
>
> *"Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away. (Luke 21:29-33).*

It is often held that the fig tree is a symbol for Israel. From this it is often maintained that the parable of the fig tree is pointing to a future regathering of Israel. The problem with such a view is that, while such a symbol could have been used in ancient times, the Scriptures are noteably lacking in making such a connection. Furthermore, Jesus does not limit Himself to the fig tree in this parable. He points to *the fig tree and ALL the trees.* The point is not to necessarily single out the fig tree or one particular sign. It is all the signs that are in view.

Here is the principle. When you see the signs, you know that the fulfillment is close by. By the same token, Jesus says that when you see the signs of which He has been speaking, you know that something significant is about to take place regarding the kingdom.

The words of Jesus in verse 32 have been the subject of some controversy: *This generation will not pass away until all things take place.* Of what is this speaking? Several interpretations have been suggested.

1. This is pointing to the fulfillments that would take place within the next 40 years and which would culminate in the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. The problem is that it is difficult to reconcile *all things* of verse 32 with *the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory* in verse 27.

2. This generation is a reference to the people of Israel. Jesus can be seen to use the term in this manner in Matthew 23:34-36.

> *"Therefore, behold, I am sending you prophets and wise men and scribes; some of them you will kill and crucify, and some of them you will scourge in your synagogues, and persecute from city to city, 35 that upon you may fall the guilt of all the righteous blood shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar. 36 Truly I say to you, all these things shall come upon this generation." (Matthew 23:34-36).*

Notice that the people of "this generation" seem to include those who put Zechariah to death in the days of the Old Testament.

3. It refers to the generation that is living in the days when Christ returns. Instead of holding to a view where the culmination of history takes an extended period of time (like a thousand+seven years), this would be telling us that it will all be completed within a relatively short period of time.

Which of these is the correct view? I do not know. They each have strengths and weaknesses. I am personally inclined to hold to the first view with the understanding that the A.D. 70 event was merely an initial fulfillment of the prophecy which would be ultimately concluded in a future day.

A CALL FOR ALERTNESS

> *"Be on guard, that your hearts may not be weighted down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of life, and that day come on you suddenly like a trap; 35 for it will come upon all those who dwell on the face of all the earth. 36 But keep on the alert at all times, praying in order that you may have strength to escape all these things that are about to take place, and to stand before the Son of Man." (Luke 21:34-36).*

Why did Jesus give all of this information about the fall of Jerusalem and about the end of the world? It wasn't so that we could argue eschatology or draw up our timelines and charts to beat each other over the head with them. Rather it was so that we could be ready.

I know all about readiness. I've made a career out of readiness. In the fire department, we have a book of preplans. These are written plans containing information on how we have planned to fight a fire in a particular area. Prophecy is like that. It tells you things about the future to prepare you.

> *"But these things I have spoken to you, that when their hour comes, you may remember that I told you of them..." (John 16:4).*

> *"These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world." (John 16:33).*

The point is that, if you are ready for the "tribulation" that Christ says we have in this world, then it will not take you by surprise.

CONCLUSION

> *Now during the day He was teaching in the temple, but at evening He would go out and spend the night on the mount that is called Olivet. 38 And all the people would get up early in the morning to come to Him in the temple to listen to Him. (Luke 21:37-38).*

During the week that Jesus is in Jerusalem, the point is made that he was not actually residing within the city, but instead that he was spending each night on the Mount of Olives. Why is this significant? Perhaps it is because He is the king who never actually came to reside within His city. He was even crucified outside the city. He came to His own, but His own did not receive Him.

THE LAST SUPPER
LUKE 22:1-38

The Festivals of Passover and Unleavened Bread took place one right after the other. The Passover took place on the 14th of the first month - the month known as Nisan. It was immediately followed by an entire week of feasting known as the Feast of Unleavened Bread. On the day after the Sabbath during this week, a sheaf of grain was brought to the Temple, taken by the priest, and waved before the presence of the Lord as a grain offering.

Passover	Unleavened Bread
14th of Nisan (single day)	15th-22nd of Nisan (full week)
Began at sundown on previous day and observed for one day.	Observed for entire week with Waving Ceremony on the day after the Sabbath (Sunday).
Commemorated the Exodus from Egypt.	Symbolized the promise of a harvest which was blessed by the Lord.
Looked to Redemption	Looked to Resurrection
Looked back to the Exodus	Looked forward to future promises

This was a happy time. It was a time of remembrance of past blessing and hope for future promises. This was to be a time of dedication and praise and prayers. But in the hearts of some, there was only murder. Within the ranks of the chief priests and the scribes, there was a plot to have Jesus arrested. After all, He had been messing up their religion. He had cleaned out the temple and He had overturned tables and He had driven out the people selling animals. And it was their temple and their tables and their animals with which He had been interfering. And so, they have decided to get rid of Him.

There is only one problem. Jesus has become very popular. And it would not be politically correct to arrest Him right now. And so, if they are to arrest Him, it must be done secretly and away from the crowds. The conspiracy took shape when help was offered from an unexpected source.

THE PASSOVER PLOT

> *Now the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which is called the Passover, was approaching.* 2 *And the chief priests and the scribes were seeking how they might put Him to death; for they were afraid of the people.*
>
> *And Satan entered into Judas who was called Iscariot, belonging to the number of the twelve.* 4 *And he went away and discussed with the chief priests and officers how he might betray Him to them.* 5 *And they were glad, and agreed to give him money.* 6 *And he consented, and began seeking a good opportunity to betray Him to them apart from the multitude. (Luke 22:1-6).*

The atmosphere in Jerusalem has been tense and exciting. Two days ago, Jesus confronted all of the religious leaders in the Temple. He rebuked them and pronounced the woe of God upon them. As He was leaving the Temple, He prophesied that not one stone would be left standing upon another.

The religious leaders are incensed. They plot to capture Jesus and put Him to death. However, they are afraid to do so in public because they fear that the crowd will side with Jesus. They are looking for a way to trap him in a house at night or in a dark alley. And then, as if in answer to the wishes, Judas of Kerioth comes to them and offers to betray Jesus to them. The price is not mentioned in Luke's account. It is left to the other Gospel account to tell us that it will be 30 pieces of silver. They need only the opportunity to catch Jesus alone.

PREPARATIONS FOR THE MEAL

> *Then came the first day of Unleavened Bread on which the Passover lamb had to be sacrificed.*
>
> *And He sent Peter and John, saying, "Go and prepare the Passover for us, that we may eat it."*

> *And they said to Him, "Where do You want us to prepare it?"*
>
> *And He said to them, "Behold, when you have entered the city, a man will meet you carrying a pitcher of water; follow him into the house that he enters. 11 And you shall say to the owner of the house, 'The Teacher says to you, "Where is the guest room in which I may eat the Passover with My disciples?"' 12 And he will show you a large, furnished, upper room; prepare it there."*
>
> *And they departed and found everything just as He had told them; and they prepared the Passover. (Luke 22:7-13).*

Did you ever stop to wonder why Jesus used such a round about way of selecting the upper room? Why didn't he give the two disciples the address? Why send them on this search for a man carrying a waterpot? I believe that it was because of Judas. Judas had already determined to betray Jesus. He is looking for an opportune moment at which he can catch Jesus in a place that is away from the crowds. The upper room will be such a place.

Jesus knows this. He knows that Judas is the betrayer. He has already predicted that He will be crucified. But it will only be permitted to happen at the proper time. Jesus will not allow His last supper to be interrupted. And so, He sends two trusted disciples into Jerusalem, giving them instructions that Judas will not be able to decipher.

A PROMISE FOR THE FUTURE

> *And when the hour had come He reclined at the table, and the apostles with Him. 15 And He said to them, "I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer; 16 for I say to you, I shall never again eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God."*
>
> *And when He had taken a cup and given thanks, He said, "Take this and share it among yourselves; 18 for I say to you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine from now on until the kingdom of God comes." (Luke 22:14-17).*

This was not the first time that Jesus had kept the Passover with His disciples. But it would be the last time. They would not partake it with Him again until the coming of the kingdom. When we partake of the elements of

the Lord's Supper, we do not only look to the past. We also look to the future. We believe that Jesus is with us in Spirit. But there is coming a day when we shall sit at His banquet table and we shall eat this supper in His physical presence.

Her name was Fanny J. Crosby. When she was a child, she was taken to a doctor who put some salve on her eyes which blinded her for life. She lived for 95 years. She began state schools for the blind. She knew 5 presidents personally. She played the harp and the organ. She memorized Genesis, Psalms, several of Paul's epistles. She was a woman of faith who wrote a number of hymns to the Lord which are sung by us today. One of my favorites is entitled "To God be the Glory." The third stanza says:

Great things He has taught us, great things He has done,
And great our rejoicing through Jesus the Son;
But purer and higher and greater will be
Our wonder, our transport, when Jesus we see.

Fanny Crosby knew that the very next thing that her blind eyes shall see will be the face of her Lord and Savior as He beckons her to His banquet table.

A PRECEPT TO BE PASSED DOWN

And when He had taken some bread and given thanks, He broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is My body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me." 20 And in the same way He took the cup after they had eaten, saying, "This cup which is poured out for you is the new covenant in My blood. (Luke 22:19-20).

The Lord's Supper looks both forward and backward. It has a connection with both the past as well as with the future.

1. A Connection with the Past: *And when He had taken some bread (22:19).*

The institution of the Lord's Supper took place while they were eating the Passover. They did not clear the table and start from scratch. Instead, Jesus used the materials at hand.

Christianity is based upon Judaism. Jesus was the fulfillment

of every ordinance and every ritual of the Law. There is a lesson here. It is that Christianity is not something new. It is a part of something very old that goes back to the founding of the nation of Israel. It goes even further to the person of Abraham.

You see, this is not the first time that bread and wine were offered by a King in Jerusalem. There was a supper that took place over a thousand years earlier. It was before...

- The building of the Temple.
- The Exodus from Egypt.
- Israel had even become a nation.

It was in the days of Abraham. It is found in Genesis 14. You remember the story. Abraham's nephew, Lot, had been carried off by an invading hoard from the east. Abraham gathered up a force of men under arms and set out in pursuit. He caught the invaders and defeated them in a daring night attack. Lot was rescued.

On their way back home, they were met by a mysterious king. His name was Melchizedek. The name means "King of righteousness." He was king of a mountain fortress called Salem. It was short for "Jerusalem."

> *And Melchizedek king of Salem brought out BREAD and WINE; now he was a priest of God Most High. (Genesis 14:18).*

We don't know much about Melchizedek. He seems to come from nowhere and he bestows a blessing upon Abraham and when he is done we never hear from him again. But forever after, there is a promise of a once and future king. He is seen in David who...

- Comes to Jerusalem and makes it his capital city.
- Even though he is not of the tribe of Levi, he dons the white robes of the priest and offers a sacrifice and blesses the people, describing himself as a priest "after the order of Melchizedek" (Psalm 110:4).

He is seen in the person of Solomon who likewise wore the white priestly robes at the dedication of the Temple and who made a sacrifice and blessed the people. But the final fulfillment of the Melchizedek motif was Jesus. We see Him here. The King has entered Jerusalem amidst the waving of palm trees and the singing of hosannas as even the rocks held their collective breath to greet Him. And now we see Him, offering bread and wine and a blessing to

those who will partake.

2. The Correspondence of Unity: *And when He had taken some bread and given thanks, He broke it, and gave it to them... 20 And in the same way He took the cup after they had eaten.... (22:19-20).*

Jesus took one of the Passover cakes from the table. He did not take several of the cakes and pass them around. Instead, He took one and broke it. There was one loaf which was taken and broken for the disciples. He took one cup and passed it around and they all drank from the same cup.

There was a point that Jesus was trying to make in this. It was the point of the unity of the body. When we partake of the Lord's Supper, there is a sense in which we are being spiritually united with Him. But that is not all. We are also being united with one another. We are made parts of a single body. That doesn't mean that we all...

Look alike.
Talk alike.
Dress alike.

But it does mean that we experience an organic unity - that when one part of the body hurts we all say, "Ouch." We are united by a tie that binds. It is not merely "until death do us part." It is for all eternity.

3. The Covenant Established: *And in the same way He took the cup after they had eaten, saying, "This cup which is poured out for you is the new covenant in My blood. (22:20).*

When Jesus spoke of the Covenant, He was invoking an Old Testament concept. In those days, a covenant was a legally binding oath which was entered by two parties. You would take an animal and kill

"Behold, days are coming," declares the Lord, "when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, 32 not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them," declares the Lord. (Jeremiah 31:31-32). Dispensationalism recognizes that this passage promises the new covenant to the "the house of Israel" and to "the house of Judah" and therefore usually concludes that the New Covenant is only for a future generation. But Jesus called the church to partake in the sign of the New Covenant -- the sign of the Lord's Supper.

it and cut its body into two pieces. The pieces would be placed upon the ground. Then the parties who were invoking the covenant would pass between the pieces as they recited the terms of the covenant.

The idea behind this was one of blessing and cursing. If you would keep the terms of the covenant, then you would be blessed. If you broke the covenant terms, then you would be cursed. The idea was that, just as this animal had been killed and torn into pieces, so you were also swearing destruction upon yourself should you break the terms of the covenant.

Here is the point. Jesus is establishing a covenant. He has just broken bread and they have eaten. He is giving wine and they shall drink. Where is the animal who shall be killed? Where is the sacrifice? He is the sacrifice.

But that is not all. He is also the Keeper of the covenant. He took the curse of the covenant upon Himself. The Law said: "Cursed is anyone who hangs upon a tree." He became a curse for us.

4. A Continuing Ceremony.

You have been invited to a Supper. I am not the one who invites you. It is not your pastor or even the elders of the church who invite you. It is Jesus. Max Lucado illustrates this by asking that you imagine a knock at your door and, when you open it, there are two men in business suits. They show you some identification. It declares them to be government employees. They are with the White House. The first thought that goes through your mind is that this is some practical joke. But they look so authentic. And you look past them to see a giant limousine with the Presidential Seal. You decide to go along with the gag, just in case.

They drive you to the airport. Air Force One is waiting for you. Before you know it you are at 25,000 feet cruising north. You land at Andrews and another Limo takes you to the White House. A butler shows you to the dining room. You try to act natural, but you can't help staring at all of the presidential portraits.

The dining room. Elegant. Mahogany table. Crystal and china. You hear that familiar voice and you know who it is without looking. You've heard it on the television. You turn and look and there they are. The president of the United States and his wife. They look both older & younger than you had imagined. Styled hair. Friendly smiles. Aprons. APRONS?

Yes. They begin to serve you dinner. Sounds a little far out, doesn't it? But that is exactly what happens when you come to Him

in faith. You have been invited to dinner, not by a president and first lady, but by the King of the Universe. And that is not all. He not only invites you, but he is also serving the meal.

A PROPHECY OF BETRAYAL

> *"But behold, the hand of the one betraying Me is with Me on the table.* 22 *For indeed, the Son of Man is going as it has been determined; but woe to that man by whom He is betrayed!"*
>
> *And they began to discuss among themselves which one of them it might be who was going to do this thing. (Luke 22:21-23).*

It is bad enough to be betrayed. But Jesus was betrayed by one who was with Him as His table. One who ate of the bread and drank of the wine. One who had been a co-worker in ministry. The tragic thing about Judas is that he had so many opportunities to hear the gospel and to believe. He was with Jesus. He saw the miracles. He heard the teachings. But he never entrusted himself to Jesus. When I look at Judas, I am forced to look also at my own heart. I've had opportunities to see the Scriptures and to entrust myself to Him.

There is a tension presented here between the foreordination of God and the responsibility of man. The fact that the cross was foreordained in no way alleviated Judas from the responsibility of his actions in the betrayal.

Foreordination of God	Responsibility of Man
The Son of Man is going as it has been determined	*Woe to that man by whom He is betrayed!*

The words of Jesus brought about a response from the disciples. They began discussing who it might be who would be the betrayer. I can imagine them all looking at Peter and nodding. Or perhaps Matthew, the retired tax-collector. Or Simon the former freedom-fighter. As they began to ponder and even to discuss the implications of this development, it was not long before an argument broke out among them.

THE PARODY OF POSITION

> *And there arose also a dispute among them as to which one of them was regarded to be greatest.*
>
> *And He said to them, "The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who have authority over them are called 'Benefactors.' 26 But not so with you, but let him who is the greatest among you become as the youngest, and the leader as the servant. 27 For who is greater, the one who reclines at the table, or the one who serves? Is it not the one who reclines at the table? But I am among you as the one who serves. 28 And you are those who have stood by Me in My trials; 29 and just as My Father has granted Me a kingdom, I grant you 30 that you may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom, and you will sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel. (Luke 22:24-30).*

The term translated "dispute" in verse 24 is the Greek work φιλονικολια (*philonikolia*). It is taken from the two words φιλεω (*phileo*), to love and νικος (*nikos*), victory. It reminds us that disputes often arise from our love to win.

It was only a small step for the disciples to go from talking about who might be the promised betrayer -- who would be the worst among them -- to speak about who would be the greatest among them. This is not the first time such a dispute had arisen among the disciples. Luke 9:46 tells us that they had already entered once before into a similar argument. Jesus had settled it at that time by taking a little child and using him as a picture of true kingdom greatness. He gives the same lesson here.

Kings of the Gentiles	The Kingdom of God
Lord it over their subjects	Called to serve others
Those who have authority are given the title of Benefactor	The greatest becomes as the youngest and the leader becomes as the servant
The one who reclines at the table is greater than the one who serves	Jesus is the example of the King who serves

Leadership in the Kingdom of God is not arranged according to the way the world defines leadership. The leader in God's kingdom is called to serve.

1. Servant leaders humble themselves and wait for God to exalt them. The world says, "Toot your own horn or it may not get tooted." The Bible says, "Humble yourself in the sight of the Lord and HE will exalt you" (James 4:10).

> Believers today often fall into the same temptation as they play the "greatness game."
> - My church is bigger than your church.
> - My doctrine is better than your doctrine.
> - My life is more righteous than your life.

2. Servant leaders follow Jesus rather than seek a position. There is nothing necessarily wrong with holding a position within a church or a Christian work, but that should not be your motivating force.

3. Servant leaders can risk serving others because they trust that God is in control of their lives. When you come to the point of realizing the sovereignty of God, that takes a tremendous weight off your shoulders because you no longer have to be in charge.

4. Servant leaders take up Jesus' towel of servanthood to meet the needs of others. Luke doesn't mention this, but John does. It took place before the meal. Jesus took it upon Himself to wash the feet of the disciples. Why did He do it? A lot of reasons could be suggested. It was a picture of how He would soon take away the dirt of sin by dying on the cross. It was a sign of their identification with Him. It was to teach them a lesson in humility. All of those are valid. But the real reason He did it is because their feet were dirty. Jesus moved to meet needs and we ought to move to meet needs, too.

5. Servant leaders share their responsibility and authority with others to meet a greater need. As a result, they multiply their leadership by empowering others to lead.

When Jesus says, *I am among you as the one who serves*, the verb that he uses is from the same word that is derived for our term "deacon." Jesus came to fulfill the ministry of a deacon. The promise that Jesus gave to His apostles who followed Him in this role of servant-leadership is that of a kingdom. He tells them that they would be granted a kingdom and that they would *sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel (22:30).*

At creation when God made man in His image, it was with the idea that he would rule over the earth as God's representative -- that man would rule the earth as God rules over all the universe. This same promise is

repeated in Romans 8:17 where we are told that we are the children of God and *heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ.*

THE PERIL OF PRESUMPTION

> *"Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has demanded permission to sift you like wheat; 32 but I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail; and you, when once you have turned again, strengthen your brothers."*
>
> *And he said to Him, "Lord, with You I am ready to go both to prison and to death!"*
>
> *And He said, "I say to you, Peter, the cock will not crow today until you have denied three times that you know Me." (Luke 22:31-34).*

I have no way of knowing for certain, but I have a feeling that Peter was very much involved in the dispute that we saw back in verse 24. After all, he had been one of the first to come and to follow Jesus. He was one of the inner circle that witnessed the transfiguration. If a vote were to be taken to determine who would be the greatest, he would win hands down. But Peter is in great danger. Pride goes before a fall and he is in danger of such a fall. He is given a warning, a promise and a commission.

1. Peter's Warning: *"Satan has demanded permission to sift you like wheat"* (22:31).

   Satan was out to attack Jesus. He had tried to tempt Jesus at the very beginning of His ministry. But since that did not work, Satan was now trying to get at Jesus through His disciples. You need to know that you are a part of a conflict that is bigger than you. There is a cosmic conflict at work. Satan wants to get at God. But since God is ungettable, he tries to do it through you. There is a battle going on, but it isn't for boundary lines or territories. It is for the hearts of men. It is for your heart.

2. Peter's Encouragement: *I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail"* (22:32).

   This is a wonderful statement. We saw Jesus praying on the slopes of the Mount of Olives and we saw Him sweating great drops

of blood. A part of that prayer was that the cup of suffering and sin might pass from him. But there was another part of that prayer. It was for Peter. And it was for you. How do I know that? Because John 17 records a portion of that prayer.

> *"I ask on their behalf; I do not ask on behalf of the world, but of those whom Thou hast given Me; for they are Thine" (John 17:9).*
>
> *"I do not ask in behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word; 21 that they may all be one; even as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be in Us; that the world may believe that Thou didst send Me" (John 17:20-21).*

Do you see it? Jesus prayed for Peter and for the rest of the disciples that night. But He also prayed for those who would come. He prayed for you.

3. Peter's Promise: *"and you, when once you have turned again..."* (22:32).

Peter is going to fall. He is going to sin big. But in the midst of that sobering prophecy, there is a promise of hope. It is that Peter will not stay fallen. There will be a turning back to God. And there will be forgiveness.

Without beginning to sound either morbid or weird, let me add that, if you remain for a lot more years on planet earth, then chances are that you are also going to fall and you are going to sin big. I don't say that to gloat or to excuse such behavior. I say it because there is also a promise of hope for you, too. We worship the God who forgives and you make certain that, when you do fall, you go back to Him.

4. Peter's Commission: *"...when once you have turned again, strengthen your brothers"* (22:32).

Do you recall what had been the subject of discussion among the disciples? They were arguing over who was the greatest. Jesus pointed out that the key to greatness in the Kingdom of God is through serving one another. Now Jesus tells Peter to do just that.

He is to serve the other apostles. He is to strengthen them.

SANDALS AND SWORDS

> *And He said to them, "When I sent you out without purse and bag and sandals, you did not lack anything, did you?" And they said, "No, nothing."*
>
> *And He said to them, "But now, let him who has a purse take it along, likewise also a bag, and let him who has no sword sell his robe and buy one.* 37 *For I tell you, that this which is written must be fulfilled in Me, 'And He was numbered with transgressors'; for that which refers to Me has its fulfillment."*
>
> *And they said, "Lord, look, here are two swords." And He said to them, "It is enough." (Luke 22:35-38).*

Luke has already described two different occasions in which Jesus sent people out to proclaim the gospel. He sent out the Twelve in Luke 9. And then He sent out the Seventy in the following chapter. He prefaced these commissions with some very specific instructions. They were to make no preparations for these trips. Instead they were to trust in the Lord to provide for them.

But this has changed. Now they will be called to make certain preparations. What made the difference? How are we to understand this passage? The key is seen in verse 37. This verse is given by way of explanation. Jesus is quoting from Isaiah 53:12.

> *Therefore, I will allot Him a portion with the great,*
> *And He will divide the booty with the strong;*
> *Because He poured out Himself to death,*
> *And was numbered with the transgressors;*
> *Yet He Himself bore the sin of many,*
> *And interceded for the transgressors. (Isaiah 53:12).*

Don't miss the context of what has been going on! The disciples have been arguing about who is the greatest in the Kingdom. They are thinking in terms of being head honchos in the kingdom. In the past when they went out through the land of Israel, they were supported by all of the people of the land. This was a measure of the popularity with which they had been received. But that is going to change. The Messiah-King is going to a cross

instead of a crown. The Judge of the universe will Himself be judged for the sins of men. The King will serve as a sacrifice.

This will also bring about a change for the disciples. No longer will they be popular among the people. Rather they shall be hated by all men for the name of Christ. No longer will they be supported at large through the land of Israel. There is a sense in which they will be on their own.

That does not mean that we are to take the words of Jesus with rigid literalism. He is not calling his disciples to take up arms for the kingdom. When one of the disciples starts swinging a sword, Jesus will stop him. Our sword is to be that which is of the Spirit -- the word of God.

THE LAST TEMPTATION OF JESUS
LUKE 22:39-46

Beneath the silver starlight and the soft glow of the full moon lies the sleeping city of Jerusalem. The hour is late and the narrow streets and alleys lie quietly in the deep shadows, broken only by the muffled sound of the passing of a small company of men. There are 12 of them. They are Jesus and eleven of His disciples. Judas has gone away. Even now, he is before the high priest, arranging the betrayal of his Master. Orders are being given and guards are being assembled. Members of the Sanhedrin, the supreme court of Israel, are being roused and gathered. Before this night is over, all of these diverse groups will come together.

Jesus and His disciples make their way past the silent Temple compound, through the gates of the city, descending down into the Kidron Valley on the east side of the city. They cross over the dark bubbling waters of the Kidron Brook which has swelled from the spring rains. They find themselves on the lower slopes of the Mount of Olives. And now, Jesus speaks.

THE PLACE OF TESTING

> *And He came out and proceeded as was His custom to the Mount of Olives; and the disciples also followed Him. (Luke 22:39).*

Luke tells us that this place was one customarily frequented by Jesus. Judas knows this and is going to be bringing the enemies of Jesus here to betray Him. The location of the upper room had been a closely guarded secret. But this location on the slopes of the Mount of Olives was well-known to him. Jesus has made it clear that He will be found here on this night.

Matthew and Mark both tell us that the name of the place was Gethsemane (Matthew 26:36; Mark 14:32). The name means "oil press." There are still several old olive trees along the slopes of the Mountain that gets its name from these trees. John tells us that it was a garden (John 18:1). That likely would have made it a walled enclosure.

The process used to extract olive oil was a laborious one. Whole olives were put into a circular stone basin in which a millstone sat. A donkey or other animal was then harnessed to the millstone and walked in a circle, rolling the stone over the olives and cracking them. The cracked olives were scooped up into bags, which were then stacked beneath a large stone column — a *gethsemane*. The enormous weight forced the precious oil to drip from the fruit into a groove and on into a pit at the base of the gethsemane, from which it was collected.

PRAYER COMMANDED

And when He arrived at the place, He said to them, "Pray that you may not enter into temptation." (Luke 22:40).

Jesus is aware that Judas knows exactly where to come and find Him. He knows that this is a time of temptation and He knows that the time of His betrayal is at hand. But before the betrayal, there will be a battle. Not a battle of swords or spears. A spiritual battle. Among these quiet trees, the forces of darkness are going to be pitted against the Son of Man. The fate of mankind hangs in the balance. Not since the fall of the human race in the Garden of Eden has such a crucial battle taken place.

Eden	Gethsemane
Adam and Eve had been placed into a Garden	The Second Adam comes to a garden
The first Adam was tempted	The Second Adam is tempted
The first Adam sinned as a result of his temptation and plunged the world into sin and death	The Second Adam will depart from the garden in victory and shall go forth to free the world from the curse of sin and death

Jesus is going to be tempted. But He is not the only one who will be tempted. His disciples will be tempted, too. And they are warned to pray ahead of time in preparation for that temptation.

A PETITION OF REMOVAL

> *And He withdrew from them about a stone's throw, and He knelt down and began to pray, 42 saying, "Father, if Thou art willing, remove this cup from Me; yet not My will, but Thine be done." (Luke 22:41-42).*

Jesus prays that the Father might "*remove this cup"* from Him. He knew that His death was at hand. And it scared Him to death. To what does this "cup" refer? The mention of the cup takes us back to His own use of the cup at the Last Supper, just a few hours earlier. The cup in that ritual pointed to His shed blood. It was a sign of the sacrifice. As such, it has some Old Testament implications.

> *For not from the east, nor from the west,*
> *Nor from the desert comes exaltation;*
> *But God is the Judge;*
> *He puts down one, and exalts another.*
> *For a CUP is in the hand of the LORD, and the wine foams;*
> *It is well mixed, and He pours out of this;*
> *Surely all the wicked of the earth must drain and drink down its dregs.*
> *But as for me, I will declare it forever;*
> *I will sing praises to the God of Jacob.*
> *And all the horns of the wicked He will cut off,*
> *But the horns of the righteous will be lifted up. (Psalm 75:6-10).*

Notice the reference to a cup in the hand of the Lord. As it is poured out, the wicked are called to drink the contents of the cup. This implies that the cup has reference to the punishment of God against the wicked.

> *Rouse yourself! Rouse yourself!*
> *Arise, O Jerusalem,*
> *You who have drunk from the Lord's hand the CUP of His anger;*
> *The chalice of reeling you have drained to the dregs. (Isaiah 51:17).*

> *For thus the Lord, the God of Israel, says to me, "Take this cup of the wine of wrath from My hand, and cause all the nations, to whom I send you, to drink it. 16 And they*

> *shall drink and stagger and go mad because of the sword that I will send among them."*
>
> *Then I took the cup from the Lord's hand, and made all the nations drink, to whom the Lord sent me: 18 Jerusalem and the cities of Judah, and its kings and its princes, to make them a ruin, a horror, a hissing, and a curse, as it is this day (Jeremiah 25:15-18).*

In each of these passages we are given the image of a cup of the wine of wrath from the Lord which is to be drunk by those who have been rebellious toward God. In light of these passages, the reference to Jesus drinking from the cup of the Lord is striking.

The cup includes all that he shall undergo on the cross. The beatings. The crucifixion. The mockery and shame. The identification with the sins of men. The wrath of a holy God judging the sins of the world. This was the cup of hell.

Are you horrified by the thought of being separated from God? There is no worse thing that can happen to you.

Jesus had known from the beginning why He had come to the world. It was for this purpose. It was to pay for the sins of the world. It was so that the righteous judgment of God might be poured out upon Him. He is going to be judged for the sins of the world. The sins of the world are going to be credited to Him. God will judge Him as though He is a guilty sinner.

> *He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. (2 Corinthians 5:21).*

But now, as Jesus prays in the garden, He comes face to face with the full impact of that cup. He who is without sin is going to be made sin. He who is holy and righteous is going to be identified with all of the defilement and transgression of a world in rebellion against God. He is going to be judged as a guilty sinner. All of the anger and the condemnation and the wrath of a righteous God will come against Him. For the first time in history, the Son of God is going to experience death. Not just physical death, though He will experience that. He is also going to be subjected to spiritual death. He will be separated from the Father. This had never happened before. And the sudden impact of this hits Him like a physical blow. And so, He turns to the Lord in prayer. He asks that this cup might be taken from Him. He asks that the hour might pass by Him. But He supersedes this request with the Father's will.

There is a tenderness in this request. It is addressed from a Son to His

Father. God is very big and He is very powerful. He is the sovereign Creator of everything. And yet, in all of His infinite power and glory, He cares for me. And for you. That means anything big enough to trouble me is big enough to trouble the Father. There is no problem too big. And there is no problem too small.

"Yet not My will, but Thine be done" (22:42). Even in His request, Jesus remains in submission to the will of the Father. In coming to the earth, He had emptied Himself, being made into the image of a man and taking on human flesh. Born as a man, He continued throughout His life to possess the very character of God. But He relinquished His divine prerogatives.

> *Who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, 7 but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. (Philippians 2:6-7).*

When Jesus performed miracles, it was not done by His own power, but by the power of the Holy Spirit working through Him. When He taught, it was not His own teaching, but truths that had been given to him from the Father. Even His knowledge of the future was limited to that which was revealed to Him by God.

His entire life was characterized by submission and trust in God. This is an example for us. This is how we are to live. In this day when independence is exalted and praised, we are to live a life of dependence upon the Lord. And so, Jesus prays to the Father. It is a prayer of faith. It is a prayer of total dependence and submission to God. And in the silence, the Father answers the prayer of His Son.

THE PROVISION FROM HEAVEN

> *Now an angel from heaven appeared to Him, strengthening Him. (Luke 22:43).*

Verses 43 and 44 do not appear in several of the oldest Greek manuscripts. Since they do appear in quite a few others, I am going to treat them as a part of the original text.

Notice that the passage does not say that the angel came to Jesus. It says that he appeared to Him. This wording might very well be significant. Angels are involved in our prayers. They are *ministering spirits, sent out to render service for the sake of*

those who will inherit salvation (Hebrews 1:14). They aren't always visible, but they are present nevertheless.

Why did this angel appear? He appeared as an encouragement to Jesus. In the midst of His terrible loneliness, the Father sent this heavenly messenger to comfort Him. But that is not all. This angel also appears as an encouragement to you. He appeared so that you can know that the power of heaven is available to you, even when everything appears to go wrong.

THE PASSION OF JESUS

> *And being in agony He was praying very fervently; and His sweat became like drops of blood, falling down upon the ground. (Luke 22:44).*

Luke is the only Gospel account to add this detail. It points to the pathos and the passion of Jesus. The greatness of His agony in the garden and the fervency of His prayers are reflected in this phenomenon of extreme sweat.

Do you recall the first mention of sweat in the Bible? It is in Genesis when the curse is pronounced upon mankind. Adam is told, *"By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground"* (Genesis 3:19). Sweat was a sign of the curse of sin. And now as the Second Adam prepares to remove that curse, there manifests upon His body a great sweat.

Luke says that *His sweat became like drops of blood*. That is not to say that Jesus started bleeding. A number of commentaries have pointed to a medical explanation that in cases of extreme duress the capillaries under the skin can burst and begin to seep blood from the pores. But Luke does not say that Jesus was sweating blood. He uses a simile. He says that Jesus was sweating so much that it was as if He had been bleeding sweat. The sweat was pouring off Him.

1. The agony of Jesus was a measure of man's sinfulness and the dire of its negative consequences. We have sinned and we haven't merely sinned lightly. One of our problems is that we don't really see and believe in the depravity of our sinful condition.

2. The agony of Jesus was a measure of the suffering that He would endure upon the cross on our behalf. The cross involved great physical pain and torment, but I do not believe it was limited to the physical. There was, in addition to the physical torture of crucifixion,

a great spiritual burden that was borne on our behalf.

3. The agony of Jesus was a measure of the torments that those without Christ shall face in the future. Jesus had a lot to say about hell and none of it was pleasant. We have a commission and it is to warn people of the very real dangers of hell.

4. The agony of Jesus was a measure of His love for us. He could have stopped it with a single word. He could have walked away. But it was His love for us that brought about such agony.

5. The agony of Jesus is a call to faithful endurance on our part.

> *Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance, and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with ENDURANCE the race that is set before us, 2 fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him ENDURED the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. 3 For consider Him who has ENDURED such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you may not grow weary and lose heart. (Hebrews 12:1-3).*

Do you see the word that is repeated throughout this passage? It is the word "endure." Jesus is to be our pattern. He endured the cross and the agony and the shame for the sake of what would come as a result and we are called to do the same.

Pain hurts. And it is hard to stand up against hostility. But it is easier when we remember that they were hostile to Jesus first. When you go to Him, you go to someone who has been there and done that. You go to someone who understands.

A CALL TO PRAYER

> *And when He rose from prayer, He came to the disciples and found them sleeping from sorrow, 46 and said to them, "Why are you sleeping? Rise and pray that you may not enter into temptation." (Luke 22:45-46).*

The hour was late. Midnight had come and gone. Jesus rises from His place of prayer and comes to the place where He has left His disciples. They are asleep. But it is more than merely the sleep of weariness. Luke tells us that they were *sleeping from sorrow*. They had heard some sober news from Jesus and it had bothered them a lot. Jesus warns them of the coming temptation. It will be a temptation with a way of escape. And the only way of escape will be through previous prayer.

There is a lesson here for us. We are often taken by surprise in the midst of a testing. The outcome will be dependent upon our relationship with the Lord. This is the alertness which is required of us. It is an alertness of faith and of prayer. Many years later, Peter would write of the need for believers to remain alert.

> *Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls about like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. (1 Peter 5:8).*

The disciples learned a crucial lesson in Gethsemane. It was a lesson of alertness of faith. This is the only way in which we can resist the attack of Satan. Notice what Peter says in the next verse.

> *But resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world. (1 Peter 5:9).*

How can we resist the attack of the devil? He is big and strong and we are little and weak. It is only by being firm in faith. It is only by continuing to depend upon the Lord. We may be little and we may be weak, but we worship a God who is very big and who is very strong.

BETRAYED, DENIED AND REJECTED
LUKE 22:47-71

"Wake up!!!" Flickering torchlights casting wildly moving shadows. The clank of armor and sword and shield. The low growl of muttering voices. Heavy shuffling footsteps. Stirred out of a slumbering sleep, the disciples open blurry eyes to find a mob suddenly swarming into the Garden of Gethsemane.

It had been a long night for the disciples. First had come the preparations for the Passover. The hustle and bustle of the crowded Temple. Then the meal in the Upper Room. And for the last few hours, a midnight prayer meeting in the quiet of a deserted garden. And suddenly, they are no longer alone.

THE ARREST

The Jewish authorities had long been desirous of putting a stop to Jesus but had to date been prevented by the fact that He was popular with the masses. It was for this reason that they had sought to have Him arrested privately and out of the sight of the crowds.

1. Judas the Betrayer.

> *While He was still speaking, behold, a multitude came, and the one called Judas, one of the twelve, was preceding them; and he approached Jesus to kiss Him. 48 But Jesus said to him, "Judas, are you betraying the Son of Man with a kiss?" (Luke 22:47-48).*

Up to this time, the name of Judas was a royal name. There was a tribe of Judah and it was the kingly tribe. But no one ever names a child "Judas" any longer.

Inferiors kissed the back of their superior's hand. If they were more than a mere servant, they could kiss the palm. Slaves would often kiss their master's feet. The hem of the garment could also be kissed. But the kiss on the cheek was a sign of love between equals.

Why a kiss? Why couldn't Judas have simply pointed or called out Jesus' name? Instead, he put his lips to the cheek of Jesus and kissed Him. Max Lucado points out that a snake kills with his mouth.

Betrayal. In my dictionary, the word stands immediately before "betroth." It is a weapon used only by one who was previously trusted. Only a friend can betray. Only one who was a part of your team can mutiny. The word connotes a violation of trust. It indicates an inside job.

Faithful are the wounds of a friend, But deceitful are the kisses of an enemy. (Proverbs 27:6).

Here is the point. Jesus knew what Judas was doing. And He allowed him the kiss. He would not turn away His face from those who spit and slapped. And He did not now turn away from the kiss of the serpent.

Why not? Could it be that, in the midst of this betrayal, Jesus continued to show love and grace toward Judas? That is good, because it means He can show love to me.

2. Disciples and Swinging Swords.

> *And when those who were around Him saw what was going to happen, they said, "Lord, shall we strike with the sword?" 50 And a certain one of them struck the slave of the high priest and cut off his right ear. 51 But Jesus answered and said, "Stop! No more of this." And He touched his ear and healed him. (Luke 22:49-51).*

As the crowd took hold of Jesus, one of the disciples moved into action. He drew his short-sword and charged into the crowd. I don't know who it was that he intended to hit, but the attack resulted in cutting off the ear of the slave of the high priest. Luke is silent as to the name of the attacker. Indeed, none of the Synoptic accounts mention his name. It is from John's Gospel that we learn it was Peter.

Do you see what is happening? The other writers were protecting Peter. They wrote their accounts at a time when Peter was still living and when he could have been charged with assault and battery. The statute of limitations had not yet expired. And so, they keep his name out of the record. But John presumably writes after the death of Peter. He can no longer be accused or arrested. And so, he tells us his name.

There is a principle here. Am I my brother's keeper? I certainly am. Everyone who is in the family of God is responsible for everyone else who is in the family of God. When one member of the body hurts, the rest of the body needs to say, "Ouch!"

Luke the physician is careful to tell us that Jesus healed his injured ear. Can you imagine the embarrassment of the high priest in having to pass judgment upon Jesus while this servant is sitting there with his ear still in place? I imagine that this slave was sold or transferred soon after this event.

You see, you can argue about theology and doctrine, but how do you argue with an ear? You can make fun of the five points of Calvinism and you can engage in Christian-bashing, but what do you say about an ear that has been healed? It is important that we all have one - that we have something in our life that can only be explained in the terms of the supernatural.

The story is told of a man who had been a drunk all of his life. He trusted in Jesus as his Savior and his life was changed and his home was restored. The man was confronted by a skeptic one day who asked him, "Do you mean to say that you believe the Bible is true and that it is the word of God?" The man replied, "Yes, I do."

"You can't be serious!" the skeptic retorted. "You mean that you believe that Jesus really turned water into wine?"

"I don't know much about that," replied the man, "but in my house, He turned wine into furniture and love and food."

It is hard to argue when the ear is stuck back on. You can't turn away from it. You can't pretend that it isn't there. When a husband sees the love of Jesus begin to be manifested in his wife, it is a compelling argument for the power of Jesus. When a co-worker begins to live an upright and holy life, it speaks volumes for the reality of God. Are there signs in your life that the Lord had done a work? Go to the Lord and ask Him for an ear. And then you take it and show it to everyone you know.

There were a lot of people that Peter could have gone after with his sword. He could have gone after the soldiers or the guard or one of the VIP's. But Peter wasn't stupid. He was a fisherman, not

a warrior. And so, he goes after this slave - perhaps the smallest one in the crowd. He will let Jesus and the other disciples handle the rest. But Peter couldn't even do that right. He wasn't aiming for this slave's ear. He was aiming for his head. He missed.

There is something delightful in the picture of Peter rushing into the crowd with his sword swinging. The crowd comes up to take Jesus. Peter is still rubbing the sleep from his eyes, but he has one of the swords and Jesus is in danger and so, he rushes in. I can hear Jesus saying, "Oh Peter, not again!"

Do your kids draw pictures and you place them on the refrigerator? When Sky was growing up, she never had an artistic bone in her body. When she drew a picture, I always had to ask, "What is it?" But Paula would always take it and say, "Isn't it wonderful!" and tape it to the refrigerator. Paula is a tremendous artist and she knew better, so I don't know why she would say that. No, that's not right. I know why she did it. And I like to think that God has a giant refrigerator in heaven. And one of the pictures that He has on it is Peter and his sword.

Peter was loyal to Jesus. His heart was in the right place, even if his aim was off and he thought that he could achieve a right result with a wrong method. There are a lot of church ministries that need to learn this lesson. There are a lot of Christian leaders who think that they can achieve the work of Christ through manipulation. They need to learn the lesson that Peter learned that night. You don't use a wrong method, even to achieve a right result.

3. The Challenge of Jesus.

> *And Jesus said to the chief priests and officers of the temple and elders who had come against Him, "Have you come out with swords and clubs as against a robber? 53 While I was with you daily in the temple, you did not lay hands on Me; but this hour and the power of darkness are yours." (Luke 22:52-53).*

Jesus calmly faces his enemies. He questions their motives and their fearfulness. If He had truly been a wrong-doer, they had ample opportunity to arrest Him when He was preaching in the temple. But they did not. They tried instead to blanket their actions under the cover of darkness.

A single soldier would have been enough, for Jesus was to offer no resistance. On the other hand, if Jesus had meant to resist

this arrest, all of the armies of the world would not have been enough. Indeed, the armies of Rome were powerless to stop the spread of the church. It wasn't that they didn't try. But all of the legions and all of the emperors of Rome and even the very gates of hell itself could not withstand the growth of the church of God.

Why did such a large crowd come to arrest Jesus? Perhaps they remembered that Jesus had single-handedly cleared out the temple. He was not some wimp in a Renaissance painting. He was a bold preacher who spoke with authority and His enemies were afraid of Him.

Another reason that so many men were utilized was because they suspected that He was capable of performing real miracles. It had been reported that He could give sight to the blind and hearing to the deaf. He had raised a cripple and had cast out demons with a word. They recognized real power and they were awed by it.

THE DENIAL

And having arrested Him, they led Him away, and brought Him to the house of the high priest; but Peter was following at a distance. (Luke 22:54).

There were actually several trials which Jesus was forced to endure. In comparing all four gospel accounts, it has been suggested that there are as many as six distinct trials. They are distinctly divided into two separate groups.

The Religious Trials	The Civic Trials
Annas presiding (John 18:12-13)	First Trial before Pilate (Luke 23:1-2)
Caiaphas presiding (Matthew 26:57-66)	Herod Antipas presiding (Luke 23:6-11)
The entire Sanhedrin (Luke 22:66-71)	Second Trial before Pilate (Luke 23:11-25)

Luke's account merges the first two of the religious trials into a single group. There is a reason for this. Although Annas and Caiaphas were two separate people, they were not working at cross purposes. Indeed, they were

related. Caiaphas was the son-in-law of Annas. Jewish tradition mandated that the office of high priest was to be held for life. But the Romans did not like the kind of power this might leave in the hands of a single individual, so they insisted that the office be turned over to a new candidate on a regular basis. Annas was the legal high priest. But the Romans had insisted he step down. He had done so, but he had done it in a way that left him as the power behind the position. He had arranged for one and then another of his sons to hold the position of high priest after him. When he ran out of sons, he turned to his son-in-law. That is where Caiaphas came in. He was the son-in-law of Annas.

Archaeologists tells us that the House of the High Priest was likely located in the Upper City, the newer and wealthier section of the city located to the west of the Temple Mount.

1. The First Denial.

> *And after they had kindled a fire in the middle of the courtyard and had sat down together, Peter was sitting among them.*
>
> *And a certain servant-girl, seeing him as he sat in the firelight, and looking intently at him, said, "This man was with Him too." 57 But he denied it, saying, "Woman, I do not know Him." (Luke 22:55-57).*

Out of the night, a voice of recognition. "I remember you! You were with Jesus." Startled by the suddenness of the question and all too aware of how the trial is proceeding, Peter denies his involvement with Jesus.

What happened? Peter had gone willingly into the courtyard of Jesus' enemies. He was in the lions den. The rest of the disciples are not mentioned. They were apparently away hiding. But Peter was on the front lines. He was ready to fight and to die for Jesus. He was ready to take on an entire band of temple guards. But he wasn't ready to handle this servant-girl.

Isn't that so often the way it is with us? We are ready to withstand the charge of the elephant, but instead we are brought down by the attack of the mosquito. It isn't the big things that defeat us - it is usually the little things.

Why? Because we are ready to trust God for the big things. But we get to thinking that we can handle the little things ourselves. And that is where we fail.

2. The Second Denial.

> *And a little later, another saw him and said, "You are one of them too!" But Peter said, "Man, I am not!" (Luke 22:58).*

Another person comes by and makes the same observation as the first had done. While the first person had been a lowly servant girl, this one is a man. Peter may have steeled himself to be ready to answer back to the servant girl, but now the test has changed and again Peter denies.

3. The Third Denial.

> *And after about an hour had passed, another man began to insist, saying, "Certainly this man also was with Him, for he is a Galilean too." 60 But Peter said, "Man, I do not know what you are talking about." And immediately, while he was still speaking, a cock crowed.*
>
> *And the Lord turned and looked at Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how He had told him, "Before a cock crows today, you will deny Me three times." 62 And he went out and wept bitterly. (Luke 22:59-62).*

Now the seed of recognition has been placed so that another of the bystanders soon speaks up. Peter's Galilean accent is giving him away. Again Peter denies. He says, "I don't even know what you are talking about!"

No sooner has he said this then he hears the echoing notes of the cock crowing. As the echos of that signal pass through the flickering shadows, Jesus turns and looks across the courtyard to see Peter. And Peter sees Jesus looking at him. The words of Jesus come back to him and he realizes that he has unwittingly fulfilled them.

Peter went out and wept. And in those tears, there is hope. It is the hope of repentance. How do I know that Peter repented? It is his life after the resurrection. It will be seen when he stands before that same high priest and declares his faith in the risen Christ.

There was not much difference between the denial of Peter and the betrayal of Judas. But there was this one difference - the

tears of Peter. They were tears of repentance. And that made all the difference in the world. There is hope here for you. Have you sinned? Do your sins weigh down upon you? Do you ever wonder if you have passed the point of forgiveness? I have some good news. It is that God is a forgiving God. He forgave Peter. And He can forgive you, too.

Did you ever stop to think where Luke got the story of Peter's denial? Ultimately he got it from Peter! Peter used this shameful story to tell men of the forgiveness of Christ and the message of hope that is found in him.

THE MOCKERY

And the men who were holding Jesus in custody were mocking Him, and beating Him, 64 and they blindfolded Him and were asking Him, saying, "Prophesy, who is the one who hit You?" 65 And they were saying many other things against Him, blaspheming. (Romans 22:63-65).

These were not Roman soldiers who were mocking and beating Jesus. These were Jews. They took their orders from Caiaphas, the high priest. In calling for Jesus to prophesy, they are inadvertently blaspheming the Lord. There is more than a touch of irony here as those who are spiritually blinded place a blindfold on the One who is the light of the world.

THE TRIAL BEFORE THE COUNCIL

And when it was day, the Council of elders of the people assembled, both chief priests and scribes, and they led Him away to their council chamber, saying, 67 "If You are the Christ, tell us." But He said to them, "If I tell you, you will not believe; 68 and if I ask a question, you will not answer. 69 But from now on the Son of Man will be seated at the right hand of the power of God."

And they all said, "Are You the Son of God, then?" And He said to them, "Yes, I am." 71 And they said, "What further need do we have of testimony? For we have heard it ourselves from His own mouth." (Luke 22:66-71).

Jewish Law forbade the Sanhedrin to meet at night. Therefore any and all examination of Jesus that had taken place during the night was necessarily of an informal nature. At daybreak the Elders were summoned together for an official examination.

Verse 66 says that *they led Him away to their council chamber* -- literally, to their **Sanhedrin**. The word translated "council chamber" is Συνέδριον - Sanhedrin. The word means "sitting together." There were many sanhedrins - local courts of law which judged matters both religious as well as civil. But there was only one Great Sanhedrin.

The Great Sanhedrin was composed of 70 elder/judges, going back to the days in the wilderness when Moses had chosen 70 judges to judge the nation of Israel. They were the supreme court of Israel. To this day, the supreme court of Israel is still known as the Sanhedrin.

24 members were chief priests.
24 members were elders.
23 members were scribes.
The high priest served as the president of the court.
He was the 71st member (he was one of the 24 chief priests).
They would sit in a semi-circle around the prisoner.
Across the room would sit the students of the Rabbis.
They were permitted to speak on behalf of the accused, but not against him.

They brought Jesus to their place of assembly. This was a building known as the House of Unhewn Stone. There were several irregularities about this trial that were recorded by Luke:

1. There were to be no trials held during any of the great feasts. This trial was held on the eve of the Passover.

2. The Sanhedrin was prohibited by law from reaching a verdict on the same day that the trial was held if that verdict were to result in death. This was to give the court a chance to change its mind in favor of mercy. Here the verdict is passed immediately at the end of this farcical trial.

3. When evidence was taken, the witnesses were to be examined separately and for their evidence to be considered valid it must agree in every detail. The presence of false witnesses would nullify the case. In this case, there is no mention of individual examination and even with obvious collusion, the witnesses never did agree as to all

of the details. Furthermore, the penalty for being a false witness was the punishment which would have been meted out to the accused (Deuteronomy 19:16-19).

Luke does not mention the presence of any witnesses. The reason he does not do so is that their testimony would have been summarily dismissed because the testimony of the various witnesses conflicted.

4. The accused was not required to testify against himself, but as we shall see, the Court insisted that Jesus answer and then passed sentence solely upon the basis of His testimony.

Each member of the Sanhedrin was to give his verdict separately, beginning with the youngest and going to the eldest so that there would be no "peer pressure."

Two questions are put to Jesus. The first question is seen in verse 67: Are you the Christ? Specifically, they ask, "If you are the Christ, then tell us." The question is given in the first class condition which is the condition of reality. "Assuming that you are the Christ, then tell us." The word "Christ" is merely the Hellenized form of the Hebrew term "Messiah." It describes the anointed one of God who was promised from Old Testament times.

The very fact that the Sanhedrin asks this questions is amazing. Jesus had never announced Himself to be the Messiah. He did not go around calling Himself the Son of God. When demons called Him by such a title He ordered them to be silent. When His disciples came to the conclusion that He was the Christ, the Son of God, He told them to keep this message to themselves and to tell no man. The fact that the high priest asks whether Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, indicates that he came up with this idea on his own! He looked at Jesus and he looked at what the Scriptures said concerning the promised Messiah and he recognized them to be the same and he asked whether this was the case.

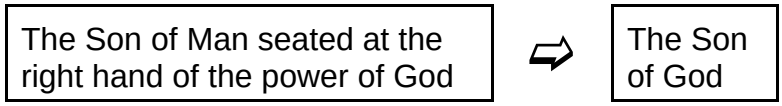
Jesus refuses to answer the question directly. Why? *"If I tell you, you will not believe" (22:67).* Jesus stops giving truth to those who do not want truth. At the same time, He announces that *the Son of Man will be seated at the right hand of the power of God."* The meaning of Jesus' words would not have been lost on the high priest or to anyone else who was present that night. Jesus was referring to a passage from Daniel.

13 *"I kept looking in the night visions,*
And behold, with the clouds of heaven

One like a Son of Man was coming,
And He came up to the Ancient of Days
And was presented before Him.
14 *And to Him was given dominion,*
Glory and a kingdom,
That all the peoples, nations, and men of every language
Might serve Him.
His dominion is an everlasting dominion
Which will not pass away;
And His kingdom is one
Which will not be destroyed." (Daniel 7:13-14).

Do you see what Jesus is saying? The Sanhedrin is trying to judge Jesus. But there will come a day when Jesus will judge both the Sanhedrin and the entire nation and all the world. This court is going through these trial proceedings because they do not have the power themselves to put Jesus to death. They will take their findings to Pilate, the Roman governor. But Jesus will be given dominion over all the kingdoms of the world, including Rome.

This brings the court to the second question: *"Are You the Son of God, then?"* There was evidently in the mind of the Jewish court a connection between the Son of Man who was seated at the right hand of God versus being the Son of God.



And He said to them, "Yes, I am." The Greek text literally reads, *"You are saying that I am."* Commentaries tell us that this is merely a figure of speech that is employed by Jesus as He replies in the affirmative. But I think it is more than that. Jesus is pointing out that the Supreme Court of Israel is the one who has publicly proclaimed Him to be the Messiah and the Son of God.

This is the charge against Him and this is the charge for which He will be crucified. He is charged with being the Messiah, the Son of Man and the Son of God.

THE CIVIL TRIALS OF JESUS
LUKE 23:1-25

It had been a long night. The night had seen the Last Supper. And the agony of Gethsemane. The betrayal and arrest of Jesus. And then He had been taken to the house of the high priest where he had been put on trial and interrogated and finally beaten and mocked. What followed the next morning were a series of trials before the civil magistrates of the region. There were three of these trials that took place in short order:

The First Trial	The Second Trial	The Third Trial
Judge: Pontius Pilate	Judge: Herod Antipas	Judge: Pontius Pilate
Luke 23:1-7	Luke 23:8-12	Luke 23:13-25

PONTIUS PILATE

Then the whole body of them arose and brought Him before Pilate.(Luke 23:1).

Pontius Pilate had been the governor or Judea since 26 A.D. He was an Equestrian, one of the middle class of Romans who had been appointed by the Roman Emperor Tiberius to his present position. His immediate superior was the Roman governor of Syria. Pilate had already made several serious mistakes in his dealings with the Jews.

1. Pilate had ordered the soldiers under his command to bring in the standards bearing the likeness of Tiberius. The Jews considered these emblems to be idols and they petitioned him to remove them. He remained obstinate, stating that to remove them would be an

insult to Caesar. When the Jews continued to complain, Pilate called out the legion, threatening the Jews with death. The Jews responded by throwing themselves to the ground and baring their throats, daring Pilate to kill them. Pilate finally relented and had the standards moved back to Caesarea.

2. When Pilate ran short of money to fund a project to repair the aqueduct which brought water to Jerusalem, he raided the Temple treasury. This stirred up a mob of Jews and, fearing a riot, Pilate sent soldiers into the crowd. At a signal from Pilate, they attacked, killing a large number and wounding many more.

3. Philo of Alexandria tells us that Pilate was afraid that the Jews might go to Rome and complain of his cruelties and corruption. Pilate would ultimately be recalled to Rome to be judged and banished to Gaul where he is reputed to have committed suicide.

On this day, Pilate would have been in the Antonia fortress, named for the old friend and benefactor of Herod the Great, Marcus Antonius. The fort and its high walls and four towers overlooked the northern side of the Temple.

THE CHARGES

> *And they began to accuse Him, saying, "We found this man misleading our nation and forbidding to pay taxes to Caesar, and saying that He Himself is Christ, a King." (Luke 23:2).*

In verses 66-71 of the previous chapter we saw what were the real charges against Jesus. They had nothing to do with Caesar or taxes. They had to do with the identification of Jesus as the Messiah of Israel and as a the Son of God.

They had asked Jesus point blank,*"Are You the Son of God, then?" And He said to them, "Yes, I am." 71 And they said, "What further need do we have of testimony? For we have heard it ourselves from His own mouth" (22:70-71).* It was purely on the basis of this testimony that they had determined to have Jesus put to death. There was only one problem. They did not have the authority to put anyone to death. Only the Roman governor could do that. And so they proceed to take Jesus before the governor.

The fact that they were able to obtain such a quick audience before Pilate suggests that they had already made prior arrangements for this trial. It could be that Pilate had agreed to hear this case on short notice and they assumed that he would quickly ratify their earlier decision to put Jesus to death.

But the charge of blasphemy and of claiming to be the Son of God will not in themselves be sufficient to obtain the death penalty from Pilate. If they want action on the part of the Roman government, they must come up with charges that are considered capital crimes by the Romans. They come up with three such charges.

1. *We found this man misleading our nation (23:2).*

   They seem to have been implying that Jesus was inciting a revolt and stirring up sedition. The truth was that Jesus had preached only peace and had been accorded the highest respect by various Roman centurions.

2. *Forbidding to pay taxes to Caesar (23:2).*

   This charge had been a long time in the making. Earlier in the book of Luke the Jews had set a trap for Jesus, asking Him whether it was proper to pay taxes to Caesar. They had thought that no matter how Jesus answered the question, he would be in trouble. It was a trick question.

   Jesus answered the question by calling them to *render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's* (Luke 10:25). He never said that people should not pay taxes to Caesar. To the contrary, He said that Caesar's coins should be given to Caesar.

3. *Saying that He Himself is Christ, a King (23:2).*

   Jesus had not come on the scene declaring Himself to be the Messiah. They had come to this conclusion by watching Him and by hearing the things that were said about Him. They had asked Him, "Are you the Christ?" and He had refused to answer them. He said, "If I tell you, you won't believe me." Only at the end had He confessed that He was indeed the Christ, the Son of God.

THE FIRST ACQUITTAL

> *And Pilate asked Him, saying, "Are You the King of the Jews?" And He answered him and said, "It is as you say." 4 And Pilate said to the chief priests and the multitudes, "I find no guilt in this man." (Luke 23:3-4).*

This is a dramatic moment. Jesus stands before Pilate. God meets Rome. The question of Pilate speaks volumes. Jesus had been charged with three offenses, but Pilate skips the first two entirely. Instead he moves directly to the third. He asks, "Are you the king of the Jews?" The issue of Jesus being the proper king of the Jews had not even come up on the previous night. They had asked Jesus about being the Messiah and they had asked Him about being the Son of God. This was enough to convince the Sanhedrin that Jesus was deserving of death. This was enough to convict Him of blasphemy.

But blasphemy was not a capital crime under Roman law. And so, they needed another charge. They needed a charge that would stick under the Roman law. And so, they came up with this one. They put forth the claim that Jesus is aspiring to be a king.

The Romans are in charge of Judea. Pilate is the governor of the territory. There has not been a king since Herod the Great. Anyone attempting to make himself king will find that the Roman government will take a dim view.

Here stands a man accused of trying to make Himself into a king. He has been beaten. His countenance is bloody and bruised. There is spittle dripping from his face and beard. Pilate examines the prisoner, questioning Him as to the charge. Is He indeed a king? His answer is indirect, but it is an affirmative. *"It is as you say."*

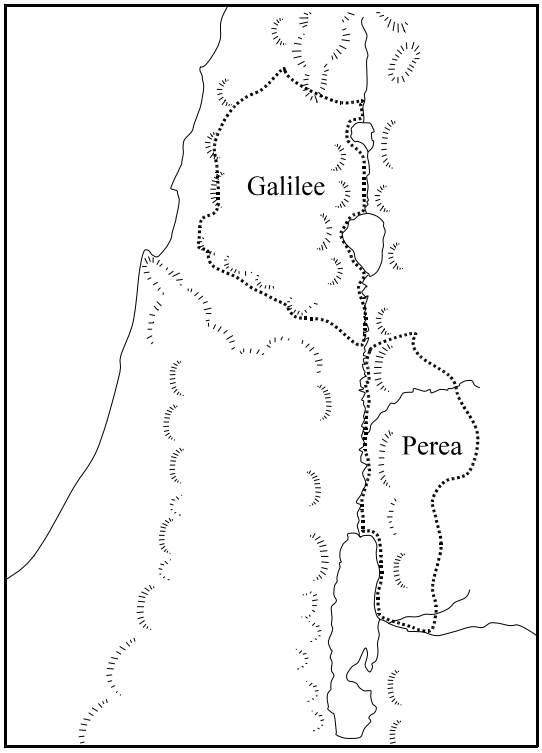
It is as though Jesus said, "I am a king, but not in the way you think." He did not come to sit on a throne or to be clothed in purple. His armies were not armed with sword or spears. He did not seek to overthrow governments. Pilate must have understood, for he concludes that Jesus is not guilty. Notice the way the acquittal is phrased: *"I find no guilt in this man" (23:4).* It isn't that Jesus was merely innocent of rebellion. There was no guilt in Him of any sort.

A JURISDICTIONAL REFERENCE

> *But they kept on insisting, saying, "He stirs up the*

> *people, teaching all over Judea, starting from Galilee, even as far as this place."* 6 *But when Pilate heard it, he asked whether the man was a Galilean.* 7 *And when he learned that He belonged to Herod's jurisdiction, he sent Him to Herod, who himself also was in Jerusalem at that time. (Luke 23:5-7).*

The Jews are not content with Pilate's judgment and so they expand upon the previous charges. They accuse Jesus of stirring up unrest and fomenting rebellion *all over Judea, starting from Galilee*. Most of the teaching ministry of Jesus had been centered in Galilee. Pilate sees this as a legal loophole. He is the procurator of Judea. He is not over Galilee. That is the job of Herod Antipas, the son of Herod the Great.



Since Jesus is from Galilee, Pilate reasons that he can pass the buck to Herod Antipas, the Tetrarch of Galilee. And to simplify matters, Antipas happens to be in Jerusalem for the Passover. Herod Antipas was one of the surviving sons of Herod the Great. Antipas had been given Galilee on the west and Perea on the east bank of the Jordan River. His title was that of a Tetrarch (literally, "ruler of a fourth part"). He built his palace at Sepphoris, only 4 miles to the northeast of Nazareth. He also built the city of Tiberius on the southwestern shore of the Sea of Galilee.

Herod Antipas was not actually a king. He ruled at the whim of Rome. Indeed, on one occasion he would travel to Rome and requested that Emperor Caligula make him a king, but he would be refused. Although he was technically not a king, it was common for his subjects to refer to him as their king. After all, if it walked like a duck and it quacked like a duck, then it was only natural that they should call it a duck, even if Rome chose to call it a Tetrarch.

JESUS BEFORE HEROD

> *Now Herod was very glad when he saw Jesus; for he had wanted to see Him for a long time, because he had been hearing about Him and was hoping to see some sign performed by Him.* 9 *And he questioned Him at some length; but He answered him nothing.* 10 *And the chief priests and the scribes were standing there, accusing Him vehemently.*
>
> *And Herod with his soldiers, after treating Him with contempt and mocking Him, dressed Him in a gorgeous robe and sent Him back to Pilate.*
>
> *Now Herod and Pilate became friends with one another that very day; for before they had been at enmity with each other. (Luke 23:8-12).*

Luke is the only one of the Gospel writers to mention the trial before Herod. The other Gospel accounts skip over him entirely. Why does Luke include this narrative? It is to show that all men had a part in the rejection and in the crucifixion of Christ. This is portrayed in a prayer recorded in Acts 4.

> *When they heard this, they raised their voices together in prayer to God. "Sovereign Lord.," they said, "you made the heaven and the earth and the sea, and everything in them.* 25 *You spoke by the Holy Spirit through the mouth of your servant, our father David: 'Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain?* 26 *The kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers gather together against the Lord and against his Anointed One.'*
>
> *"Indeed Herod and Pontius Pilate met together with the Gentiles and the people of Israel in this city to conspire against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed.* 28 *They did what your power and will had decided beforehand should happen." (Acts 4:24-28).*

The rejection and crucifixion of Christ was not the exclusive act of the Romans. And it was not the exclusive action of the Jews. Both Jew and Gentile stand equally condemned in this rejection. Both are equally in need of a Savior.

Notice that the actions of Pilate and Antipas were in direct fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies. Their actions were in accordance with what God's *power and will had decided beforehand should happen*. Their

decision did not catch God by surprise. It was something that He had prophesied many hundreds of years earlier. This does not absolve them of their responsibility. They are responsible for their condemnation of an innocent man to death. They each acted in a way that was in accordance with their own motivations.

Whereas Pilate seems to have been a previously disinterested party with regard to Jesus, Herod had wanted to see Jesus for a long time. One of the women who followed Jesus and who contributed to His ministry was Johanna, the wife of Chuza who served as Herod's personal steward (Luke 8:2-3). Furthermore, Herod had personal contact with John the Baptist and may have learned of Jesus through his preaching.

Luke tells us of the motives of Herod. He was *hoping to see some sign performed by Him* (23:8). He wanted a show. This seems to be reflective of his character. He had been swayed by a dance show put on by the daughter of Herodias and now he wanted Jesus to perform for him. He was doomed to disappointment.

Herod	Jesus	The Chief Priests and Scribes
Questioning Jesus and hoping for a sign	Silent	Accusing Jesus vehemently

When the pleasure of a show was not forthcoming, Herod unleashed his soldiers upon Jesus so that they mocked Him and dressed him in a *gorgeous robe* -- literally, a "bright robe." One result of this incident is that *Herod and Pilate became friends*. There is a lesson here. It is that the world will hardly ever agree on anything except when it comes to being antagonistic against Jesus.

THE SECOND ACQUITTAL

> *And Pilate summoned the chief priests and the rulers and the people, 14 and said to them, "You brought this man to me as one who incites the people to rebellion, and behold, having examined Him before you, I have found no guilt in this man regarding the charges which you make against Him. 15 No, nor has Herod, for he sent Him back to us; and behold, nothing deserving death has been done by Him. 16 I will therefore punish Him and release Him." (Luke 23:13-16).*

Pilate had come to the clear conclusion that Jesus was innocent. He says, "I examined this man and I also had Herod Antipas examine this man and neither one of us could find anything wrong with Him." This brings us to a question. If Pilate was convinced of the innocence of Jesus, then why didn't he release Him? It was because of the crowd. Pilate was a coward. He did not have the courage of his convictions. He rejected principle for position. He turned his back on Christ to protect His own interests.

Pilate is like many today. They turn their back on Christ and Christianity because they want what the world has to offer. Many are afraid to be identified with Christianity. They are afraid of what their friends may think, what their boss may think. They are afraid that somehow it may cost them something. Because they are cowards, they choose not to stand and be counted. Their cowardice keeps them from Jesus.

I charge you with having the courage of your convictions. Say what you believe. And then act upon what you believe. You are called to bold living and a bold witness for Jesus Christ. You are called never to be ashamed of Him or His people. God has not given you a spirit of fear. You are called to be bold.

JESUS AND BARABBAS

> *Now he was obliged to release to them at the feast one*
> *prisoner.* 18 *But they cried out all together, saying, "Away*
> *with this man, and release for us Barabbas!"* 19 *He was one*
> *who had been thrown into prison for a certain insurrection*
> *made in the city, and for murder. (Luke 23:17-19).*

The name "Barabbas" is Aramaic. *Bar* is the word for "son." *Abba* is the word for "father." It is the diminutive form of *ab*, "father." We could translate is as "daddy." His name means, "Son of daddy." There is a sense in which this man could stand for every man. He is every father's son.

Barabbas was a zealot. He would have termed himself a patriot. He had involved himself in an insurrection against Rome and he had committed acts of murder in that rebellion. He was a terrorist. But that is not all. John's account adds that Barabbas was a robber (John 18:40). There had come a time when Barabbas abandoned his high ideals and he had gone from freedom fighter to terrorist to a petty criminal. He had now been captured, tried and condemned. The sentence was death. He is imprisoned and awaiting execution.

He comes into the story because of Pilate's offer to free a political

prisoner in view of the Passover and a longstanding custom of leniency at this time of the year. Pilate proposes a trade. Shall he release the innocent Jesus or the guilty Barabbas?

Barabbas	Jesus
His name means "son of the father"	He was the Son of God
A man of violence	A man of peace
Freedom fighter	Made men free from sins.
He had murdered.	He had raised the dead.

Pilate was no fool. He may have been greedy and cruel and vacillating. But he was not stupid. He could plainly see that Jesus was innocent. And he could see that the Jewish religious leaders had some ulterior motive for wanting Jesus to be put to death.

THE THIRD ACQUITTAL

> *And Pilate, wanting to release Jesus, addressed them again,* 21 *but they kept on calling out, saying, "Crucify, crucify Him!"* 22 *And he said to them the third time, "Why, what evil has this man done? I have found in Him no guilt demanding death; I will therefore punish Him and release Him." (Luke 23:20-22).*

Jesus is once again before Pilate. Pilate had already tried to pass the buck, but now it is in his lap again. He has already satisfied himself as to the innocence of Jesus. He is now looking for a way to accomplish that while at the same time appeasing the crowd. To this end, he suggests punishing Jesus and then releasing Him.

The obvious question arises: Why would Pilate contemplate punishing Jesus when he has already determined His innocence? It is because of peer pressure. In verse 22 we read that Pilate asked the same question of the Jews *a third time*. We have seen Peter deny Jesus three times in the previous chapter. Now we see the Jews call a third time for the death of Jesus.

THE PRESSURE OF PUBLIC OPINION

> *But they were insistent, with loud voices asking that He be crucified. And their voices began to prevail.* 24 *And Pilate pronounced sentence that their demand should be granted.* 25 *And he released the man they were asking for who had been thrown into prison for insurrection and murder, but he delivered Jesus to their will. (Luke 23:23-25).*

Jesus was crucified on the cross that had been destined for Barabbas. He died in place of Barabbas. And in that regard, Barabbas is really not so very different from us. We were also guilty. We had been imprisoned by sin and were under the sentence of death. We were awaiting the day of our execution. But Jesus died in our place. Not because we deserved it. And not because He deserved it. It was only because of His love for us.

THE CROSS
LUKE 23:26-47

The scene is Jerusalem. It is the day of the preparation of the Passover. On this evening, the Passover meal will be eaten in thousands of homes throughout Jerusalem and Judea. Within the temple, the high priest is preparing to officiate in the slaughter of thousands of lambs. The stones of the temple will run red with the blood of countless lambs. Meanwhile, merely a couple of hundred yards away, another Lamb is being prepared for the slaughter. This is the ultimate sacrificial Lamb. This is the Lamb of God.

THE PATH TO THE CROSS

> *And when they led Him away, they laid hold of one Simon of Cyrene, coming in from the country, and placed on him the cross to carry behind Jesus. (Luke 23:26).*

The path to the cross was undertaken by two men that day. Jesus was being taken to the cross to be crucified, but there was another man for whom the cross appeared to be an unpleasant detour. His name was Simon. He was from the Roman province of Cyrene. Cyrene was located in modern Libya on the plateau between Benghazi and Tobruk. Lying 17 miles inland from the Mediterranean, Cyrene was a Greek city, having also a large Jewish population.

Simon's name is a Jewish name. He was coming in from the country, apparently to observe the Passover. He had traveled a long way if he was only now arriving from Cyrene. He was here for a joyous celebration. Instead he encountered a Roman guard who forced him to undertake an unpleasant chore.

Simon was a Jew living in Cyrene. But on this day, he had come to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover. And on his way, he was conscripted into

service to carry the cross of this condemned Galilean.

This was the domain of Rome. And any man might be pressed into the service of a Roman soldier at any time. It did not matter that Simon was on his way to celebrate the holy feast of Passover. His inconvenience was inconsequential to Rome.

I imagine that Simon would have been angry at the Romans that forced him to carry the cross. And he might have even been angry at this stumbling Galilean whose crimes now interfered with his Passover celebration. But that anger was replaced by something else. And even when his journey to Golgotha was completed, Simon may have tarried.

How do I know this? Because when Mark records this incident, he adds that Simon was the father of Rufus and Alexander. Why would he add this? There is no reason - unless Rufus and Alexander were known to those for whom Mark was writing his Gospel account.

You see, Simon's life was changed that day. What began as an inconvenient detour became his salvation. What started as an irritating chore forced upon him by a rude soldier became his entrance into eternal life.

- When we read of the gospel first being taken to Greeks in the city of Antioch, we read that the leaders of that church were *Simeon who was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene* (Acts 13:1).
- When Paul writes his epistle to the Romans, he instructs the church there to *"greet Rufus, a choice man in the Lord"* (Romans 16:13).

This tells me something about Simon. He was a bystander, but he became a participant, not only with his hands, but with his heart. He came for the cross, but he stayed for the crown. He was forced to bear the cross, only to find that it was to be the bearer of his own sins. He had come for his own purposes. He was stopped by some Roman soldiers and the next thing he knew, he was carrying a cross for which he had never asked.

We are like that. We were once doing our own thing. And then we were confronted with the person of Jesus. Before we knew it, we had become participants in His cross. Your life has never been the same. There is a lesson here. It is that you need to be aware of the unexpected nature of such encounters.

There was an old mountain man who was as mean as could be. He was hated by everyone. He died and in those days they did not embalm the body. They took him and they put him into a wooden casket and his family gathered together to act as pallbearers. They had lifted the casket to their shoulders and were coming out of the house to carry the casket to the cemetery when they bumped the casket into the gatepost.

The shock of the gatepost was enough to revive the old man and he

sat up in the casket and began cursing at everyone present. He lived for another year and when he finally died, the entire scene was repeated once again. Once again, the pallbearers came and as they were carrying the casket down the steps and past the gate, the old man's poor, bereaved widow called out, "Watch for the gateposts!"

Are there any gateposts in your life? They are those unexpected occurrences which come upon you and change your entire life. They aren't always pleasant. But if you look carefully, you will usually find that they are in the shape of a cross.

THE PLIGHT OF THE CROSS

> *And there were following Him a great multitude of the people, and of women who were mourning and lamenting Him.*
>
> *But Jesus turning to them said, "Daughters of Jerusalem, stop weeping for Me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. 29 For behold, the days are coming when they will say, 'Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bore, and the breasts that never nursed.' 30 Then they will begin to say to the mountains, 'Fall on us,' and to the hills, 'Cover us.' 31 For if they do these things in the green tree, what will happen in the dry?"*
>
> *And two others also, who were criminals, were being led away to be put to death with Him. (Luke 23:27-32).*

Four soldiers would have been detailed to carry out the crucifixion of each of the prisoners. Over the entire squad was a centurion. At the front of the procession would be an official with a wooden board on which the crimes of the convicted had been written. This official would read out the crimes so that all who heard would be warned of the results of committing such actions. There were a number of others who were also following. Luke describes them as *a great multitude of the people* and he adds that there were women who were mourning and lamenting the sentence of death. Jesus pauses and gives a prophecy to them. It is not a call to stop weeping. Rather it is a call to change the object of their weeping. They have been weeping for Jesus. They

The only other place the Bible uses the phrase "Daughters of Jerusalem" is in the Song of Solomon (it appears seven times there referring to the chorus of onlookers). It should be remembered that this book was typically read at the time of Passover.

ought to be weeping for themselves.

The prophecy is given in the form of a Beatitude. You remember the Beatitudes. They were filled with blessings.

> *Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.*
> *Blessed are you who hunger now, for you shall be satisfied.*
> *Blessed are you who weep now, for you shall laugh.*
> *Blessed are you when men hate you... (Luke 6:20-22).*

Here is another blessing. It is another source of happiness. *Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bore, and the breasts that never nursed*. Most people living in 21st century America will miss the impact of these words. That is because we live in a day and an age where motherhood is looked upon with disdain. But that was not the case in that day. When Jesus says, '*Blessed are the barren,*' it is like saying to an old maid, "Blessed is the one who was never asked out on a date."

What is the meaning of this Beatitude? It is a warning. The warning is that there is coming a day very soon when those who were weeping over the demise of Jesus would be weeping over the demise of their children.

For if they do these things in the green tree, what will happen in the dry? (23:31). A number of years ago our family went on a three week camping trip up into the mountains of North Carolina. We haven't done it since and the reason we haven't done it since is because I'm not much of a camper. My idea of camping is a Holiday Inn with a heated pool. One of the things that I tried to do during our camping trip was to start a campfire. Unfortunately, I made the mistake of trying to use a log from a "green tree." Paula snapped a photograph of me with the log in one hand and a blowtorch in the other. The result? No fire.

The image of a green tree versus a dry tree comes from the pages of the Old Testament.

Now the word of the LORD came to me saying, 46 "Son of man, set your face toward Teman, and speak out against the south, and prophesy against the forest land of the Negev, 47 and say to the forest of the Negev, 'Hear the word of the LORD: thus says the Lord God, "Behold, I am about to kindle a fire in you, and it shall consume every green tree in you, as well as every dry tree; the blazing flame will not be quenched, and the whole surface from south to north will be burned by it. 48 And all flesh will see that I, the LORD, have kindled it; it shall not be quenched."'" (Ezekiel 20:45-48).

The green tree is a picture of the righteous. The dry tree symbolizes the wicked. The point of the parable is that God starts a fire that consumes even the green tree.

Here is the point of the parable. Jesus had been condemned to a terrible death and He was completely innocent. He was a "green tree." If a fire of condemnation was going to fall on one who was completely righteous, how much worse would it be for the nation of Israel who was anything but innocent? How much worse would it be for those who were "dry?"

Green Tree	Dry Tree
Difficult to ignite and burn	Easy to ignite and burn
Represents righteousness	Represents sinfulness
If this one came under the condemnation of judgment...	How much more shall this one come under the condemnation of judgment?

THE PLACE OF THE CROSS

> *And when they came to the place called The Skull, there they crucified Him and the criminals, one on the right and the other on the left. (Luke 23:33).*

The place where Jesus was crucified was known as "Skull" (the Greek reads, Κρανίον , *Kranion*, as there is no definite article). The Latin word for this is *calvaria*, from which we get "Calvary" and that is the reading preserved in the Latin Vulgate. The same name in Aramaic would be "Golgotha" (Matthew 27:33).

Where was Golgotha located? We don't know for a certainty. Hebrews 13:11 says that Jesus suffered *"outside the gate."* John 19:20 says that it was *"near the city."* The traditional location is marked today by the Church of the Holy Sepulcher. It lies within the gates of today's city, but was outside the wall of the city in that day. Some have thought that the place must have looked like a skull, but there is no Biblical evidence that this was the case.

THE PARDON OF THE CROSS

> *But Jesus was saying, "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing." (Luke 23:34a).*

The dialogue around the cross was cruel and cutting. The onlookers said, "Come down from the cross if you are the Son of God." The religious leaders scoffed, "He saved others, but he can't save himself." Even the soldiers got into the action: "If you are the king, save yourself."

These words were meant to hurt and to sting. They remind us of the words of James when he calls the tongue a restless evil and full of deadly poison. Jesus did not retaliate. He did not bite back. He entrusted Himself to God. He said, "Father, forgive them." The first recorded words of Jesus in the gospel of Luke also concerned His Father: "I must be about My Father's business." Now He is doing the Father's business. He is in the forgiveness business.

How could He do such a thing? How could He accept the verbal onslaught and then meet it with love and forgiveness? I don't know. But I do know that my own grudges and hard feelings suddenly feel very childish.

1. This was Completeness of Forgiveness: *Forgive them (23:34).*

   It includes everyone who was present and who was involved in the crucifixion. There were a lot of people involved.

   - Judas
   - Pilate
   - The temple guards
   - Herod
   - Caiaphas
   - The soldiers who drove the nails in Jesus' hands and feet.

   It includes everything. "Forgiveness is not an occasional act, it is a permanent attitude" (Martin Luther King, Jr, 1929-1968).

   > *Then Peter came and said to Him, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Up to seven times?" 22 Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven." (Matthew 18:21-22).*

2. This was a Compassionate Forgiveness: *They do not know what they are doing (23:34).*

   Just as Eve was deceived in the Garden, so there were a lot of people that day who were deceived.

   - The Jewish priests and elders and scribes had deceived

themselves into thinking that they were the protectors of the Law as they conspired to put to death the Messiah of Israel.

- Pilate acted out of his own insecurities as he was pressured into putting to death an innocent man.
- The Roman soldiers committed their petty acts of cruelty with an insensitivity that bespeaks their ignorance.
- The Jewish crowds lashed out at Jesus simply because of a mob mentality. They had suffered from a hundred years of oppression and mirrored the saying that "Hurting people, hurt people."

They didn't know what they were doing. Jesus considered that bloodthirsty mob, not as murderers, but as victims. He looked into their faces and saw confusion. He said, "They do not know what they are doing." They didn't. They were a stir-crazy mob, mad about something they could not see. And they took it out on God. But they did not know what they were doing.

> *For that which I am doing, I do not understand; for I am not practicing what I would like to do, but I am doing the very thing I hate (Romans 7:15).*

They didn't know what they were doing. We don't either. If we ever came face to face with the awful reality of sin, it would scare us to death.

THE PARODY OF THE CROSS

> *And they cast lots, dividing up His garments among themselves. (Luke 23:34b).*

Luke abstains from giving us any of the gory details of what took place in the crucifixion -- the piercing of tender flesh with rough hewn nails, the screaming agony of tearing skin and cartilage. Instead there is a simplicity to his statement.

As the Galilean rabbi hangs spreadeagle upon the rough, wooden crossbeams, the soldiers assigned to the task divided up His belongings among themselves. There were no valuables - nothing but the clothes He had worn. He was stripped naked and His clothes were divided among the

soldiers.

It seems scandalous that the Roman soldiers should be shooting craps at the base of the cross where our Lord was crucified. The truth is that they had no idea of the significance of what was going on in their midst. It is like the sailor who was present at Pearl Harbor. As he saw the Japanese planes begin their bombing attack, he exclaimed, "I didn't even know that they were mad." People are like that today. They go through their whole lives and they don't even think about life and death and the life hereafter. It isn't that they do not believe. It is that they don't even think about it.

PROVOCATION AT THE CROSS

> *And the people stood by, looking on. And even the rulers were sneering at Him, saying, "He saved others; let Him save Himself if this is the Christ of God, His Chosen One." 36 And the soldiers also mocked Him, coming up to Him, offering Him sour wine, 37 and saying, "If You are the King of the Jews, save Yourself!" (Luke 23:35-37).*

Notice all of the different groups which joined in the mockery of Jesus.

- The rulers.
- The soldiers.
- Those who were crucified with Him.

It is as though the entire world rose up against Him to insult Him and to mock Him. Indeed, there is something almost supernatural about the venomous hatred that people felt for Jesus upon this day. It is as though Satan filled the heart of anyone and everyone to heap up scorn upon scorn on the Son of God.

THE PRONOUNCEMENT OF THE CROSS

> *Now there was also an inscription above Him, "This is the King of the Jews." (Luke 23:38).*

It was customary to write the name of the criminal and the nature of his crimes for which he was being punished upon a white tablet. This inscription would then be taken and nailed to his cross. The inscription of

Jesus was unique. It had never before been used. It declared that the One who hung upon this cross was a king.

Who was responsible for this inscription? Luke does not tell us. John's gospel states that it was written by Pilate, the Roman procurator who had sentenced Jesus to death (John 19:19-22).

Pilate did not believe the claims of Jesus. He was not particularly interested in whether He was innocent or not. He was more interested in his own political position. He was more interested in keeping the peace with the Jews. He was more interested in not making waves. And yet, he wrote this inscription.

Why? I think that it was meant as a mockery against the Jews. For a long time, Pilate had been antagonistic toward the Jews. They had already sent petitions to Rome complaining of his rule and asking for his removal. They hated him and he hated them. So when political pressure forced him to have Jesus crucified, he sought his petty revenge in the posting of this inscription. By this he indicated that he was crucifying the king of the Jews. It was an open taunt. It was meant as an insult.

But God used it to glorify His Son. Golgotha was located near one of the gates to the city. Thousands of Jews were coming to the city to celebrate the Passover. Every Jew that passed along that road saw the inscription and read the words. They testified to the kingship of Jesus.

That is not the only inscription which was nailed to the cross of Jesus that day. There was another inscription, unseen by human eyes.

> *And when you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him,* 14 *having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us and which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. (Colossians 2:13-14).*

This other inscription was our certificate of debt. It consisted of all our crimes. It pronounced our guilt. It declared that we were worthy of death. It condemned us. This inscription was also nailed to His cross. It consisted of the crimes for which Jesus was punished. He took that punishment in our place. He suffered the penalty of death instead of us.

PRESUMPTION AT THE CROSS

> *And one of the criminals who were hanged there was*

> *hurling abuse at Him, saying, "Are You not the Christ? Save Yourself and us!"*
>
> *But the other answered, and rebuking him said, "Do you not even fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? 41 And we indeed justly, for we are receiving what we deserve for our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong." (Luke 23:39-41).*

The mockery and taunting was not limited to that of the soldiers or the crowd. Even those who should have been the most empathic with the sufferings of Jesus jeered and mocked. Luke tells us that one of the criminals was hurling abuse at Jesus. Matthew's account tells us that both of *the robbers also who had been crucified with Him were casting the same insult at Him* (Matthew 27:44).

This is not a case of a good thief versus a bad thief. They were both wicked men. They were thieves and robbers. They had been captured and had been convicted of strong-armed robbery and perhaps worse. They were professional criminals who had been sentenced to death for their crimes. If anyone was ever worthless it was these two men. If ever men deserved to be crucified, it was these two thieves. But as wicked as they were, they were not too wicked to be saved. Neither were they too late to save. An assurance of salvation was given that day.

Neither of these thieves knew Jesus. They looked at Him and saw a beaten, slashed, Jewish rabbi, hanging from nails to a cross. His face was

If you look at Luke 23:43, you will see that the word "today" could modify either "I say" or "you will be." In both the English as well as in the Greek, either translation is possible.

- I say to you today!
- Today you shall be with me!

How are we to understand the words of Jesus? It is notable that there is not a single place in the Gospels where the phrase is used to say that "Today I tell you..." Such a thing would be somewhat redundant. On the other hand, Luke often uses the phrase that "this day a certain thing is happening..."

- "There is born *this day* in the city of David a Savior" (2:11).
- "*This day* the Scripture is fulfilled..." (4:21).
- "*This day* salvation is come..." (19:9).
- "The cock shall not crow *this day*..." (22:34).

Thus, the weight of Luke's use of the term (which is identical in the Greek to these other instances) indicates that Jesus was speaking of an action which was going to take place within that day.

On the other hand, when Luke wants to express the idea that something is being said that day, he takes care to insert a particle such as in Acts 20:26 where he says, *I testify to you this day, **that** I am innocent of the blood of all men*.

masked with blood and his bones showing through the torn flesh.

And yet, there was something compelling about this man. One of the thieves found his heart strangely moved. Somehow, he realized that he had never been in better company. And so, he makes his request.

THE PROMISE OF THE CROSS

> *And he was saying, "Jesus, remember me when You come in Your kingdom!"* 43 *And He said to him, "Truly I say to you, today you shall be with Me in Paradise." (Luke 23:42-43).*

If it is amazing that this thief makes this request of Jesus, it is even more amazing that it is granted. After all, this thief had nothing to commend himself. He had not changed his life. He had not been a good person. He was getting exactly what he deserved. Yet his prayer is granted. Why? Perhaps it is because he represents us so well. We were like that thief. We were under sentence of death and we deserved death. There was nothing to commend us but a prayer, but that was enough.

Someone has noted that there is a thief in heaven today who knows more about the grace of God than a thousand theologians. We may find that, when we get to heaven, he will be teaching a class entitled "Grace 101." In the meantime, we can learn from him how we ought to pray.

This thief received an assurance of salvation. To no one else did Jesus ever say, "Today you shall be with me in Paradise." To outward human eyes, it appeared that Jesus Himself needed a savior. He was being crucified. He was in agony. But it is in this context that He promises to save. This is the quintessential picture of the suffering Savior.

We learn from the other thief that the deathbed is not always a place of repentance.

And the thief? He was never baptized. He never belonged to a church. He never received the Lord's Supper. He never did any good works for Christ. He never tithed. Instead, he was saved by grace through faith. It was a saving faith and a sincere faith. It was a faith that would have produced works, but which had no time to produce works. There is a principle here. It is that the youngest faith is enough to save. It is possible to be saved in the hour of your death. But that does not mean you should put off your salvation until the time of death. Remember that there were two thieves there that day. The other did not believe. He also died and he did not come to repentance at the time of his death. It is not that he was a worse thief than the first; they were both guilty and deserving of death.

One repented, the other remained hardened.
One prayed, the other continued to mock.
One went to Paradise, the other went to hell.

Notice that two men may be in the same place and in the same time and may hear the same gospel proclaimed and one will believe while the other does not. Why? I don't know. But the Lord does. He is the one who grants repentance.

This man repented and believed when all of the religious experts of the day were clamoring in their unbelief. When even the disciples of Jesus had abandoned Him. It was at such an hour that this thief believed in Christ.

The disciples had seen great miracles - deaf to hear, lame to leap, dead to rise. The thief had seen none of these things, yet he believed. Notice his faith. He recognizes his own sin and sense of unworthiness. He spoke out in testimony to his companion. His faith directed his mouth to speak and bear witness.

Jesus promised him that "you shall be with me in Paradise." Paul speaks in Philippians 1:23 of departing and being with Christ. Where do believers go when they die? They go to be "with Christ." Where is that? I don't know. Jesus refers to it as Paradise. He is there and that is enough for me to know.

I have set the LORD continually before me;
Because He is at my right hand, I will not be shaken.
Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoices;
My flesh also will dwell securely.
For Thou wilt not abandon my soul to Sheol;
Neither wilt Thou allow Thy Holy One to undergo decay.
Thou wilt make known to me the path of life;
In Thy presence is fulness of joy;
In Thy right hand there are pleasures forever. (Psalm 16:8-11).

Notice what is said in verse 11: "In His presence is joy". This is the call of the Scriptures – that we might be in the presence of the One whose very presence brings joy.

THE PARTITION OF THE CROSS

And it was now about the sixth hour, and darkness fell

> *over the whole land until the ninth hour, 45 the sun being obscured; and the veil of the temple was torn in two. (Luke 23:44-45).*

Verse 45 describes *the sun being obscured*. A literal rendering of the Greek would describe "the sun failing." The Greek word used here is an aorist participle of *ekleipo*; it is the same word from which we get our modern term "eclipse." It is used in Luke 22:32 where Jesus prays for Peter that his faith does not *fail*. But this darkness was not an eclipse. An eclipse of the sun takes place at the time of the new moon. It takes place when the moon passes between the earth and the sun. But Passover always takes place at the time of the full moon. It takes place when the moon is on the opposite side of the earth from the sun.

Prior to reading of this darkness, we have read of a number of things taking place at the cross. There are the soldiers who are gambling and the Jews who are mocking and the thieves who are speaking. But that all seems to pause in the midst of this terrible darkness.

The sixth hour is a reference to six hours after sunrise. We would call this high noon. The ninth hour refers to that time about nine hours after sunrise -- about three in the afternoon. Jesus had been on the cross all day. He had gone to the cross at the time of the morning sacrifice and He was still on the cross at the time when the evening sacrifice was scheduled to take place.

But today was no ordinary day. It was Passover. Today there was not just one lamb to be sacrificed in the Temple. Today the Temple grounds would run red with the blood of thousands upon thousands of lambs. Each would be put to death to commemorate the Passover. Meanwhile the Passover lamb was dying upon a cross outside the city. As the One who is the Light of the world took our sins upon Himself, the world was plunged into darkness.

The veil of the temple was torn in two (23:45). In the temple was a veil. It was made of blue and purple and scarlet linen. Josephus tells us that it was a great double veil, each measuring 60 feet high and 30 feet wide and as thick as a man's hand. There was an opening at one end which allowed you to walk between the veils and come out the other end in the Holy of Holies. This was the innermost sanctum. It was the place where no Jew was permitted to go. Not even the priests were permitted to come here. Only the high priest and only once a year was entrance into this place permitted. On Yom Kippur the high priest would enter beyond the veil and offer an atoning sacrifice for the sins of the nation.

It used to be that the Ark of the Covenant sat here. But the Ark of the Covenant had been taken by Nebuchadnezzar 600 years earlier and had never

returned. Now there was only the place where the Ark once stood. Just a barren rock covered with generations of dried blood.

The Holy of Holies signified the presence of God. The veil was there to keep men out. They could not come into the presence of God. Their sins separated them from the holiness of God. Their sins demanded a sacrifice. A sacrifice had been offered for the nation each year for the past six hundred years. Six hundred years of lambs being slain. Six hundred years of being shut off from the presence of God. Six hundred years of God being hidden behind a veil.

At the very moment that Christ died, something spectacular took place in the Temple. It was the ninth hour. It was the time of the evening sacrifices. The Passover lambs had been slain. And a final sacrifice was made. Blood was sprinkled once again on the altar. And the high priest himself went into the temple to offer incense upon the Altar of Incense.

Suddenly there is a commotion. It comes from inside the Temple. The great veil which separates the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies is torn from top to bottom, signifying that the way has been made for men to enter into the presence of God. No more sacrifices. No more blood. No more veils.

THE PROPITIATION OF THE CROSS

> *And Jesus, crying out with a loud voice, said, "Father, into Thy hands I commit My spirit." And having said this, He breathed His last. (Luke 23:46).*

The Greek text says literally that Jesus was "crying with a great cry." These are the last recorded words of Jesus. Luke has given us three of His sayings upon the cross.

Luke's Record of the Words of Jesus on the Cross		
Verse 34	**Verses 43**	**Verse 46**
A Word of Compassion	A Word of Comfort	A Word of Confidence
"Father, forgive them..."	"Today you shall be with me in paradise"	"Father, into Thy hands I commit my Spirit"

The suffering was at an end. The darkness was done. The veil was

torn. The passion of the cross had come to a climactic finale. The last words of Jesus are words of restoration. They tell us that the judgment of the cross is completed. One preacher describes it this way:

> Were it a war - this would be the aftermath. Were it a symphony - this would be the second between the final note and the first applause. Were it a journey - this would be the sight of home. Were it a storm - this would be the sun, piercing the clouds. But it wasn't. It was a Messiah. And this was a sigh of joy (Max Lucado).

Father! The two are again one. The chasm has been bridged. Fellowship has been restored. The battle is over. Satan and his demons have been defeated. The work of atonement has been completed. Death has been damned.

1. This is a Word of Reconciliation.

   The One who had been judged by God as though He were a guilty sinner is no longer reckoned as such. He again can describe God as "Father." There is a reconciliation that has taken place. The righteous wrath of a Holy God has been met and answered in kind. The penalty for sin has been carried. The punishment has been meted. No longer is the Son forsaken. The relationship has been restored.

2. This is a Word from the Scriptures.

   The words of Jesus are borrowed from the Old Testament. They are echoed from the Psalms.

   Into Thy hand I commit my spirit;
   Thou hast ransomed me, O LORD, God of truth.
   (Psalm 31:5).

   Jesus only gives the first part of this Psalm because the second part does not apply to Him. He was not ransomed upon the cross. He was the ransomer. We are the ones who were ransomed. We are able to prayer this entire prayer.

3. This is a Word of Rest.

Do you see what Jesus does? He commits Himself to the hands of the Father. That is a place of rest and security. It is a definition of faith. When we trust ourselves to Him, we commit ourselves into His hands. When we do so, we find that we are in a place of wonderful security.

> *My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; 28 and I give eternal life to them, and they shall never perish; and no one shall snatch them out of My hand. 29 My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. (John 10:27-29).*

Jesus did that. He entrusted Himself to the hands of the Father. When He calls us to trust in Him, He is calling us to do something that He has first done Himself.

4. This is a Word of Relinquishment: *And having said this, He breathed His last (23:46).*

This is significant. It is significant because crucifixion was normally a very long death. It regularly took several days to die upon a cross. But Jesus died now. His death was deliberate. No one took His life from Him. He freely gave it up.

> *"For this reason the Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again. 18 No one has taken it away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This commandment I received from My Father." (John 10:17-18).*

Christ deliberately gave His life for us. His death was no accident. It was ordained from the foundations of the world. Luke does not merely tells us that Jesus died. He tells us that Jesus *breathed His last*, literally, that He "breathed out" or even that He "ex-spirited" (ἐξέπνευσεν). This was a deliberate action. Just as the veil was torn in two, so also Jesus literally tears His own spirit from His body. This is an act of His will. Even now as He breathed His last, no man could take His life from Him and He gave it up willingly.

5. This is a Word of Resurrection.

If it is true that Christ has the power to lay down His life at will, that means He also has the power to take it up again. The same power that was manifested to give up His life on command would also be manifested in the resurrection.

THE PERSUASION OF THE CROSS

Now when the centurion saw what had happened, he began praising God, saying, "Certainly this man was innocent." (Luke 23:47).

There are four centurions mentioned in the Bible.
- One asked Jesus to heal his son.
- Cornelius was the first Gentile convert.
- Julius escorted Paul to Rome
- This centurion who witnessed the crucifixion.

Not a bad thing is ever said about any of them.

There was one who saw these things on that day and who came to an astounding conclusion. He was not one of the priests or scribes. He was not a rabbi. He was not even Jewish. He was the Roman centurion who had been in charge of the crucifixion detail. He would have been present at the trial under Pilate. He had ordered the cross to be carried, the nails to be driven, the clothing to be divided. Through it all, he has watched this simple Galilean carpenter. And now he comes to an astounding conclusion: *"Truly this man was innocent!"* What made him say this? Was it the sun turning black? Was it the tearing of the veil? Was it the love and forgiveness reflected in the bruised and bloody face? I don't know. But I do know that, for a brief moment and perhaps for a lot longer, this pagan centurion had a glimpse of reality.

CHRONOLOGY OF THE ARREST AND TRIALS

TIME	EVENT	SCRIPTURE
Evening	Last Supper with Disciples • Judas leaves to meet the Jewish Authorities • Jesus and disciples go to Gethsemane	
Night	Jesus Betrayed	John 18:1-12
	Jesus led to Annas	John 18:13
	Jesus tried before Caiaphas & Chief Priests and Scribes and Council • Peter's Denials	John 18:19, Mark 14:53, Matt 26:57
3am	Cock crows	Luke 22:60
	Jesus mocked by Caiaphas's men	Luke 22:63
Very Early	Trial before the Sanhedrin - take counsel to put him to death	Matt 27:1; Luke 22:66
Morning	Jesus led to Pilate • Jesus led into hall of judgment (it was early and they themselves went not into the judgment hall, lest they should be defiled; but that they might eat the Passover) • Pilate questions Jesus in hall of judgment • Pilate says, "I find no fault in this man"	Matt 27:2 John 18:28-33 Luke 23:4
	Jesus sent to Herod • Jesus sent back to Pilate by Herod arrayed in a gorgeous robe	Luke 23:11
	• Jesus scourged in hall of judgment	John 18:38 John 19:1
9 A.M.	• Pilate condemns Jesus: 6th Hour (John) • Crucified after traversing the Via Dolorosa to Golgotha: 3rd Hour (Synoptics)	John 19:16 Mark 15:25
Noon	Darkness over the land for three hours	Mark 15:33
3 P.M.	Jesus dies Veil in the Temple is torn	Luke 23:44-46
Before Sundown	Joseph of Arimethea is given permission to bury the body of Jesus He has the body placed in his nearby tomb	John 19:38

THE REPORT OF THE WOMEN
LUKE 23:48 - 24:9

As the panorama of the cross came to a close, the players in the drama were scattered about Jerusalem. Peter was away weeping in repentance. John was taking Mary, the mother of Jesus, to a place of residence where they could mourn together. Judas was out committing suicide. The other disciples were in hiding. But there were several others who remained in the vicinity of the cross. They are described by Luke as Jesus' *acquaintances and the women who accompanied Him from Galilee (23:49).*

Why did they remain? I do not believe that it was out of a sense of hope for the coming resurrection. In all of the excitement they had forgotten the prophetic promise of Jesus to rise from the dead. They had seen Jesus arrested and tried, spat on and beaten and condemned. They had watched as His was marched through the city streets out to the place of execution and then nailed to rough wooden crossbeams.

Why did they remain? It was because of love. They must have been filled with grief as they saw the terrible sufferings and were powerless to do anything about it. There is a lesson here. Do you ever have a difficult time trusting in the Lord? Faith is vitally important in the Christian life. The Scriptures tell us that without faith it is impossible to please Him (Hebrews 11:6). But if you are having a hard time with faith, then pray for it and, while you are waiting for faith to come, keep on loving Him. That is what these women did. If they didn't know how to believe, then at least they loved. And that was enough to get them to the point of faith.

THEY FOLLOWED

And all the multitudes who came together for this spectacle, when they observed what had happened, began to

return, beating their breasts. 49 And all His acquaintances and the women who accompanied Him from Galilee, were standing at a distance, seeing these things.

And behold, a man named Joseph, who was a member of the Council, a good and righteous man 51 (he had not consented to their plan and action), a man from Arimathea, a city of the Jews, who was waiting for the kingdom of God; 52 this man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. 53 And he took it down and wrapped it in a linen cloth, and laid Him in a tomb cut into the rock, where no one had ever lain.

And it was the preparation day, and the Sabbath was about to begin.

Now the women who had come with Him out of Galilee followed after, and saw the tomb and how His body was laid. (Luke 23:48-55).

These women had been following Jesus for some time. They were present at Golgotha because they had followed Him. They weren't from the area. They were from Galilee. They had followed Jesus to Jerusalem at the time of the Passover. And as our passage opens, they are still following. When the disciples broke and ran, they continued to follow. It was because of this that they discovered where the corpse of Jesus was being buried.

The man who stepped forward at this time was a man named Joseph. We read in verse 51 that he was from Arimathea, a town in the former territory of Ephraim. Known also by the name Ramathaim, it was the traditional birthplace of the Old Testament prophet Samuel. Luke tells us that Joseph was a member of the Sanhedrin. But while the rest of the Sanhedrin had been hostile to Jesus, Joseph *had not consented to their plan and action*. Does this mean that he had spoken out or that he had cast a dissenting vote in the trial of Jesus? Not necessarily. John 19:38 tells us that he had been *a disciple of Jesus, but a secret one, for fear of the Jews*.

It is only now that Joseph determines to come out of the closet. It is only now that he takes a risk on behalf of Jesus. His risk involves going before the Roman governor and requesting permission to obtain the body of Jesus and give it a decent burial.

1. The Request: *this man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus (23:52).*

This was a request that would have normally been denied. Criminals who were crucified normally forfeited the rights to a burial under Roman Law. Joel Greene points out that "the corpse of the

crucified was typically left on the tree to rot or as food for scavenging birds" (1997:810). But Pilate grants his request. Perhaps this was the result of a twinge of guilt at having condemned an innocent man to death. For whatever reason, Pilate grants permission for Joseph to bury the body in his own tomb.

2. The Wrappings: *And he took it down and wrapped it in a linen cloth (23:53).*

It was the custom in those days to wrap a body in spices and wrappings. John's Gospel Account tells us that Joseph had the assistance of Nicodemus who brought with him a considerable amount of spice for the burial.

> *And Nicodemus came also, who had first come to Him by night; bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds weight. 40 And so they took the body of Jesus, and bound it in linen wrappings with the spices, as is the burial custom of the Jews. (John 19:39-40).*

Nicodemus was the leader of the Pharisees who had come to Jesus by night. I do not know for certain, but it is possible that his night visitation has been due to the fact that Nicodemus had been embarrassed to come by day. He was embarrassed no longer.

3. The Tomb: *And he... laid Him in a tomb cut into the rock, where no one had ever lain (23:53).*

There were two types of tombs that were common in that day. A single grave could be cut into the ground and a slab placed over the hole, much in the same way we bury people today. This would be the grave of a poor man.

Rich people would be interned in a sepulcher, a series of rooms and enclaves cut out of solid rock at considerable expense. It was the latter type of tomb that was used for Jesus. This was a rich man's tomb. Joseph had obtained it for the day of his own death. Instead he gave it to Jesus as a final act of love and respect. In doing so, Joseph was fulfilling an Old Testament prophecy.

> *His grave was assigned with wicked men,*
> *Yet He was with a rich man in His death,*

Because He had done no violence,
Nor was there any deceit in His mouth. (Isaiah 53:9).

Both of these prophecies were fulfilled in the death of Jesus. He was crucified between two wicked men; two thieves. And He was buried in the tomb of a rich man.

Did you ever stop to think that Joseph finally got his tomb back? He set it aside for Jesus, but the tomb was emptied and remained available for Joseph. Archaeologists like to discuss which of the tombs might be the real tomb. One has been suggested at the site of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher. The other has been suggested near Gordon's Calvary. Which one is right? I don't know. I suspect that neither might be the Garden Tomb, for that tomb just might have a body in it. It might today hold the remains of Joseph of Arimathea.

The actions of Joseph and Nicodemus did not go unobserved. The women who had been at the cross followed and watched the body wrapped and placed into the tomb. They determined that they would do some last act of kindness for Jesus. But not now. The hour was late and the setting of the sun would mark the advent of the Sabbath. As the body rested in the tomb, so they also would rest and remember.

THEY PREPARED

And they returned and prepared spices and perfumes. And on the Sabbath they rested according to the commandment. (Luke 23:56).

It must have been a sad and dreary Sabbath as the women made their plans for the coming week. They could do nothing to change the events of the crucifixion. They could do nothing to bring Jesus back. But they could continue to honor Him. That is what they decided to do. There was not a lot of faith involved. That may have been shattered in the events of the past few hours. But there was obedience to the Sabbath and there was a lot of love.

On a side note, I used to have the attitude that when this body dies, it is just an empty shell that can be casually disposed of. But I'm a bit older and perhaps a bit wiser. I've taken note of the reverence and respect with which these women and others treated the bodies of those who have died. There was great expense incurred in the preparation of these spices and

perfumes. But it was an appropriate expense.

THEY CAME

> *But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they came to the tomb, bringing the spices which they had prepared. (Luke 24:1).*

Notice that there is only a pronoun used to describe the action of this sentence. This is done because they are introduced in the previous chapter. These are *the women who had come with Him out of Galilee (23:33).* The first day of the week is a reference to Sunday. They had not come on the previous day because that had been Saturday. They had kept the Sabbath. But now the Sabbath is past and these women come at early dawn.

Matthew 28:1	Mark 16:1-2	John 20:1
Now after the Sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to look at the grave	*And when the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, bought spices, that they might come and anoint Him. 2 And very early on the first day of the week, they came to the tomb when the sun had risen.*	*Now on the first day of the week Mary Magdalene came early to the tomb, while it was still dark, and saw the stone already taken away from the tomb.*

Luke does not mention the names of the other women until verse 10. He will mention the two Marys and Joanna; but he will also say that there were other women accompanying them who continue to be unmentioned by name.

1. When They Came: *But on the first day of the week, at early dawn* (24:1).

   It was the first day of the week. This was a Jewish method of reckoning time. The Romans did not typically observe the same week cycle. They had days and they had months, but there was nothing celestial to make them observe a week.

   This was the first day of the week. The Sabbath day was now over. The period of rest was at an end. The women were now free

to come to the tomb and to do the work of adding spices to the corpse of Jesus. It was early dawn. While they technically could have come after sundown on the previous evening, that would have been impractical. Tombs are dark enough at the best of times.

2. Where They Did It: *They came to the tomb (24:1).*

Tombs in the ancient world often utilized existing caves. A poor man's tomb might simply be a hole in the ground. But a rich man would have a large tomb in which there would be multiple niches carved out into which his entire family might eventually be laid.

This was a new tomb. There were no bodies in any of the niches. This is important to know as it shows that there could be no mistaking the body of Jesus for another corpse. Jesus was born from a virgin's womb and He was lain in a virgin tomb.

The women had been to the tomb on the previous Friday evening and had seen where the body was lain. Now it was the light of the morning and they returned to the same tomb.

3. Why They Did It: *They came to the tomb, bringing the spices which they had prepared (24:1).*

The women were on a mission. They brought spices that they had prepared to minister to the corpse. What was the purpose of the spices? They were to make the corpse smell better. That is rather obvious. This was a last service of love and devotion. They came to honor the dead. But the dead was no longer here. Instead there was an open tomb.

The fact that they came to the tomb with spices for the body tells us something about the resurrection. It was unexpected. Their expectation was that the body was still there in the tomb.

THEY ENTERED

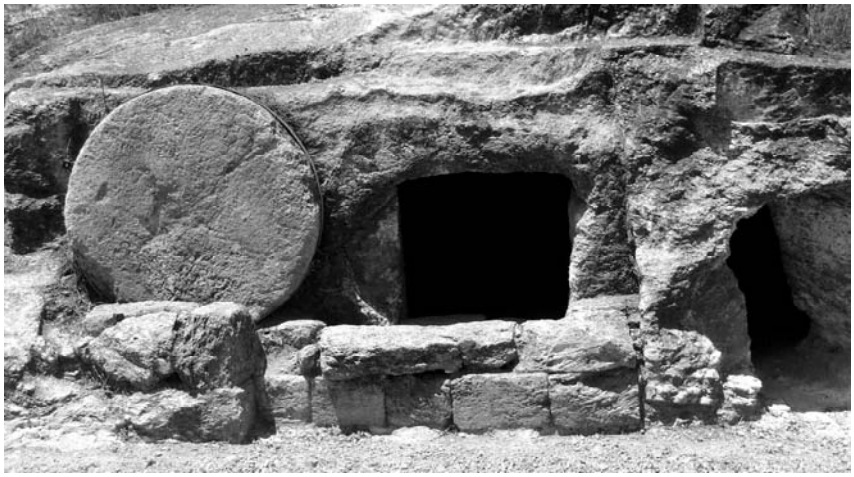
And they found the stone rolled away from the tomb,
3 but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. (Luke 24:2-3).

When the women got to the tomb, they found that the stone had been

rolled away. That would have seemed a mixed blessing. On the one hand, it meant that they would not have to try to roll the stone away themselves. On the other hand, it meant that something strange and mysterious had taken place. Stones do not normally roll away by themselves and tombs that have opened by themselves would tend to shake the nerves of any.

1. The Stone was rolled away.

Think about what the stone signified. We know from the other gospel accounts of a seal being placed upon the stone and Roman guards being stationed to guard the tomb, but Luke makes no mention of that. It is not significant to his account. Instead he draws our attention to the stone.



This example of a first century Jewish tomb is in the region of Mount Carmel.

The Stone was an Old Testament symbol. Stones in the Old Testament were often used as memorials. When Jacob had his vision of a ladder reaching to heaven, he set up a stone as a memorial. When Joshua and the Israelites came into the promised land, they placed twelve standing stones as a memorial of how God had led them through the Jordan River. The promise of the coming Messiah was a promise of a stone that was rejected by the builders, yet which became the chief cornerstone (Psalm 118:22). The stone at the tomb of Jesus reflected both of these aspects of his life and ministry. It was a sign that He had been rejected; it was a sign of His crucifixion and His death. But it is to us a sign that God has made Him the chief cornerstone, for it is the sign of His resurrection and it is also the sign of our own future resurrection.

Why was the stone moved? It was not moved to let Jesus out.

It was moved to let the women and others in so that they could see for themselves that the tomb was empty.

2. The Body was Gone.

There have been several false theories suggested as to what happened to the body of Jesus. They are all theories that try to explain away the resurrection.

- The Wrong Tomb Theory: This theory states that in the early light of the morning, the women ran to the wrong tomb and found one that was empty and jumped to the mistaken conclusion that Jesus had risen. There are some fatal problems with this theory. It says that...
  - The women went to the wrong tomb.
  - Peter and John ran to the wrong tomb.
  - Joseph of Arimathea also went to the wrong tomb which was his own tomb.
  - The Roman soldiers were guarding the wrong tomb.
  - The angels who appeared to the women were at the wrong tomb.
- The Swoon Theory: This theory says that Jesus did not die upon the cross but that He only fainted and that He later awoke in the coolness of the tomb, extricated Himself and was thought to have risen from the dead. The problem with such a theory is that the Roman soldiers who were charged with putting Him to death were professionals. They specialized in taking live people and in making them dead. They checked the men upon the cross and they observed that they were dead. Not content with this observation, they then took direct action to make certain that they were dead. When it came to Jesus, they took a spear and shoved it up into His chest cavity, just to make certain that He really was dead.
- The Messianic Expectation Theory: This theory says the disciples were expecting a resurrection and that they merely imagined it. The problem was that every indication is that they were not expecting a resurrection. When we come to Thomas, as recorded in John's account, we find one who, when he was told about the risen Jesus, refused to believe it without physical evidence. It was only when the risen Jesus stood before him that he came to believe.

The women get to the tomb and it is empty. Their reaction is one of bravery. I like these women. They come to a grave where there has been a rending earthquake with enough force to roll away a mighty stone. If I had been there, I might have taken John's approach. Stand on the outside of the tomb and look in. Don't get into a situation where the roof might come down on your head. Call for the Technical Rescue Team to shore up the ceiling of the tomb before taking any further action. But not these women. They go right on in.

THEY WERE PERPLEXED

And it happened that while they were perplexed about this...(Luke 24:4).

These women had a mystery on their hands. They had come to the tomb to anoint a corpse and now the corpse was gone. Who could have moved it?

1. Not Joseph of Arimathea. He had already given up his own tomb to bury the body of Jesus. He had gone to great lengths to do this, even obtaining permission from the Roman governor. There was nothing finer that he could have given.

Did you ever stop to think that Joseph of Arimathea eventually got back his tomb? There is no reason to suppose that he eventually did not use it for himself and for his descendants.

2. Not the disciples. They were off hiding, afraid that they might be next. The Romans had plenty more crosses and there could be one with their name on it.

3. Not the Jewish authorities. They wanted Jesus dead and buried and would certainly have done nothing to make it appear as though Jesus had risen from the dead.

4. Not the Roman soldiers. They lost interest in Jesus as soon as He died. Their job was to take living people and make them dead; they had no interest in corpses.

These women had a mystery on their hands. The last thing that they were expecting was a resurrection. Resurrection was something that would

take place some time in the future. It was something that in their minds would take place at the end of History when God stepped in and said, "That's enough!"

THEY WERE TERRIFIED

> *And it happened that while they were perplexed about this, behold, two men suddenly stood near them in dazzling apparel; 5 and as the women were terrified and bowed their faces to the ground, the men said to them, "Why do you seek the living One among the dead? 6 He is not here, but He has risen. Remember how He spoke to you while He was still in Galilee, 7 saying that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again."(Luke 24:4-7).*

Perplexity quickly turned to terror when their eyes were accosted with the dazzling appearance of two unearthly beings. They hadn't been afraid to go into an empty tomb, but they were afraid now.

Luke speaks here of them as "two men." In verse 23 He makes reference to the "angels." It is thus evident that he was aware of their true identity. Here in verse 4 they are described as ἄνδρες δυο, two males as opposed to two females. We are not told what the men looked like, but only that their apparel was dazzling. The fact that there were two of them is significant. Under Jewish law, a testimony had to be verified with two witnesses.

The reaction of the women to this angelic sight is the same way in which people always react when they see angels.

- They were very afraid.
- They bowed down.

Every time the Scriptures ever describe a person seeing an angel in all of his angelic glory, this same reaction is evident. The Greek and Hebrew words for "angel" both carry the meaning, "messenger." Angels are used by the Lord to carry His messages. These angels had a message. It is delivered in both a question and a statement.

1. A Rhetorical Question: *"Why do you seek the living One among the dead? (24:5).*

The tomb was a place for the dead. They had no further

business being in the tomb because the One for whom they sought was now alive. He will not be found in a place reserved for dead people.

2. A Statement of Fact: *He is not here, but He has risen (24:6).*

It is now that the women are given the news that Jesus has risen from the dead. This is the first proclamation of the resurrection. It is proclaimed by two witnesses to a group of startled women. You will remember that the first proclamation of the birth of Jesus had also been from an angel. It had been made, not to a group of women, but to a group of shepherds.

3. A Prophecy Remembered: *Remember how He spoke to you while He was still in Galilee, 7 saying that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again (24:6-7).*

It was only now that these woman realized that Jesus had promised His resurrection. It was only now that they remembered His words and how on several different occasions He had told them that He would die and would rise again. I can imagine this produced the sound of one hand clapping -- against the forehead. Of course! Jesus had spoken on several occasions of His own resurrection. They just had not imagined that it would take place in this manner.

THEY REPORTED

And they remembered His words, 9 and returned from the tomb and reported all these things to the eleven and to all the rest. (Luke 24:8-9).

The resurrection is God's historical affirmation that sin was settled on the cross. -- T.J. Campo

The rest of this story seems almost anticlimactic. There is nothing for the women to do but to go back and to tell the news of what they had heard and seen to the apostles. There is a sense in which their actions are to be the actions of the church. We are called to remember and we are called to go forth and to report to the rest of the world what has taken place.

When you come to the empty tomb and when you come to the

realization that Christ has risen, you can't help but to share it with others. It is a message that cannot be contained. It demands to be spread abroad.

The women returned and they reported what they had seen and heard to the eleven. But that is not all. They also reported these things *to all the rest*. Who does this comprise? Who is "all the rest?" I don't know. I have a feeling that it was anyone and everyone with whom the women came into contact. These women were not trained evangelists. They had not taken a course in Evangelism Explosion or Homiletics. But that did not stop them from telling others what they had seen and heard.

RESURRECTION!
LUKE 24:11-53

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the Gibraltar of our faith. It is the foundation upon which Christianity stands or falls. If there is no resurrection, then there is no Christianity. This is the unassailable rock that all of the critics of history have failed to pull down. It is the resurrection that moves Christianity out of the dry walls of philosophy and into the realm of actual history.

THE EMPTY TOMB

> *But these words appeared to them as nonsense, and they would not believe them.* 12 *But Peter got up and ran to the tomb; stooping and looking in, he saw the linen wrappings only; and he went away to his home, marveling at what had happened. (Luke 24:11-12).*

If you have ever had your doubts about the story of the resurrection, you are not alone. The disciples, upon hearing the report of the women who had just come from the tomb, did not believe. Their report was rejected out of hand. This tells me something of the thinking of the discples. They were not expecting a resurrection. They knew that when someone dies and is buried, then they are not likely to get up and go for a walk.

Yet there was something in the story that, despite their unbelief, compelled a response. Peter in particular went to the tomb. He didn't just go there; Luke says that he ran there. We are told the John's account that Peter was not alone; that another disciple accompanied him in something of a footrace. But for the time being, our focus is only upon Peter. He did not merely take a stroll. He ran. He entered. He looked. But there was nothing there. Only the linen wrappings marked the spot. It gave him something about which to marvel, but it provided no belief.

THE EMMAUS ROAD

Now our scene shifts to a point out in the country. The small village of Emmaus lies some seven miles to the west of Jerusalem. It was a nondescript place that is not mentioned in the Bible outside of this narrative. It is on this road that two disciples are going to have an amazing encounter.

1. On the Road to Emmaus: *And behold, two of them were going that very day to a village named Emmaus, which was about seven miles from Jerusalem. (Luke 24:13).*

   The two disciples are not immediately named. When we get to verse 18 we will find that one of them is named Cleopas. We never will be told the name of the other. Some have even suggested that the other could have been the wife of Cleopas. We read in John's account that there was at the cross a Mary who was "the wife of Clopas" (John 19:25). There is no reason to assume that these are two different people with a similar sounding name. However, this is merely conjecture and the truth is that we are not given enough information to make a positive identification. Perhaps the reason both names are not given is that you, the reader, might better be able to identify with one of these disciples.

   As the reader, you have been following the course of the ministry of Jesus. You have seen His miracles, you have heard his teaching, you have heard about His arrest, His crucifixion, His death, and His burial. You have been presented the facts of these events with very little commentary attached. Now you will be faced with a question. What does all of this mean to you? What is the significance of the life of Jesus? Is He merely a good teacher who came and who lived and who died? Or is He so much more?

2. An Unknown Traveler: *And they were talking with each other about all these things which had taken place. 15 While they were talking and discussing, Jesus Himself approached and began traveling with them. 16 But their eyes were prevented from recognizing Him (24:14-16).*

   Up to this time, Luke has not actually described the resurrection. At no time has he said that Jesus rose from the dead. Instead, he has reported the discovery of the empty tomb and he has reported the words of the angels. But now He says that *Jesus Himself*

approached.

As we read this account, we find ourselves overtaken with wonderment. What do you mean they did not recognize Jesus? How could they not recognize Him? That is the question you are supposed to ask. After all, He was standing there in full view.

The point is not, why could they not see, but why can't you see? He is the risen Savior. He is the one who died for sins. He is the One whom the prophets foretold. He is the master teacher who showed us the way to the Father. Why can't you see? The answer today is the same as was the answer in that day. It is because there has been a blindness.

3. A Knowledgeable Exchange: *And He said to them, "What are these words that you are exchanging with one another as you are walking?" And they stood still, looking sad.* 18 *One of them, named Cleopas, answered and said to Him, "Are You the only one visiting Jerusalem and unaware of the things which have happened here in these days?" (Luke 24:17-18).*

Jesus asks these two disciples about their conversation. He does so that He might enter into the discussion. He plays the part of the ignorant and they play the part of the knowledgeable and they proceed to instruct him on all the events of the past few days. The irony of the passage is obvious because it is they who need to be instructed and it is He who will soon be opening their eyes.

3. The Jesus Story: His Death: *And He said to them, "What things?" And they said to Him, "The things about Jesus the Nazarene, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word in the sight of God and all the people,* 20 *and how the chief priests and our rulers delivered Him to the sentence of death, and crucified Him.* 21 *But we were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel. Indeed, besides all this, it is the third day since these things happened" (Luke 24:19-21).*

Listen to the pathos in the remark of these two disciples when they say, "We were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel." This is the voice of lost hope. They had been hoping for one thing, but instead they had their hopes dashed. Steve Brown points out that everything for which they had given their lives had been shattered on a cross with a man screaming that God had forsaken Him.

If you have lived on planet earth for any amount of time, then

you know what it is like to have shattered hopes. You look for that which is glorious and instead you are saddled with the mundane. You look for the triumph and instead you find yourself in tragedy. I worked for nearly 30 years as a fire fighter, so I know all about tragedy. Thoreau said that most men lead lives of quiet desperation. Another way of saying that is most people live lives without hope.

4. The Report from the Empty Tomb: *"But also some women among us amazed us. When they were at the tomb early in the morning, 23 and did not find His body, they came, saying that they had also seen a vision of angels who said that He was alive. 24 Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just exactly as the women also had said; but Him they did not see" (Luke 24:22-24).*

These two disciples discuss the mystery of the empty tomb, but they did not know what to make of it. There had been reports of the empty tomb that had been substantiated by other witnesses; there had been reports of visions of angels, but these two disciples were not prepared to jump to any conclusions about what this all might mean. They are considering the reports and they are withholding any judgment at this time.

5. Pointing to the Prophets: *And He said to them, "O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! 26 Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?" 27 Then beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures (Luke 24:25-27).*

These two disciples have been telling Jesus about Jesus, though they do not yet know it is Jesus to whom they are speaking. He rebukes them without revealing His identity to them. He says in effect, "Everything you have been telling me about this Jesus of Nazareth is that which has already been foretold in the Old Testament by the prophets." They have been relating the events that have taken them by surprise and Jesus tells them, "Those things should not have taken you by surprise since they are all foretold in the Scriptures."

Jesus then proceeds to take them on a whirlwind Bible study of the Old Testament *beginning with Moses and with all the prophets*. He is not telling them that He is the risen Jesus, but is simply connecting their reports about Jesus with the Old Testament predictions about the Messiah. While we do not know exactly which

passages Jesus used from the Old Testament, we are told that it came from Moses and the prophets and we can easily imagine some of the texts that were cited by Him.

Report of the Disciples on the Ministry of Jesus	**Corresponding Old Testament Prophecy**
...Jesus the Nazarene, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word in the sight of God and all the people (Luke 24:19).	The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your countrymen, you shall listen to him. (Deuteronomy 18:15).
...and how the chief priests and our rulers delivered Him to the sentence of death (Luke 24:20).	He was oppressed and He was afflicted, Yet He did not open His mouth; Like a lamb that is led to slaughter, And like a sheep that is silent before its shearers, So He did not open His mouth. 8 By oppression and judgment He was taken away; And as for His generation, who considered That He was cut off out of the land of the living, For the transgression of my people to whom the stroke was due? (Isaiah 53:7-8).
...and crucified Him (Luke 24:20).	A band of evildoers has encompassed me; They pierced my hands and my feet (Psalm 22:16).
But we were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel (Luke 24:21).	And a Redeemer will come to Zion (Isaiah 59:20).
Indeed, besides all this, it is the third day since these things happened (Luke 24:21).	He will revive us after two days; He will raise us up on the third day That we may live before Him (Hosea 6:2).

Did Jesus cite these particular passages? I feel confident that

they are just a few among the many to which He would have pointed. The Old Testament Scriptures prophesy of Jesus and they also give a host of types, shadows, and hints of His coming. It is not merely one or two proof texts that can be used to give evidence of His authority. The entire Old Testament from one end to the other bears witness that He is the Messiah of Israel.

6. A Special Supper: *And they approached the village where they were going, and He acted as though He were going farther. 29 But they urged Him, saying, "Stay with us, for it is getting toward evening, and the day is now nearly over." So He went in to stay with them. 30 When He had reclined at the table with them, He took the bread and blessed it, and breaking it, He began giving it to them (Luke 24:28-30).*

As the conversation continued, the two disciples finally arrived at Emmaus. This was their destination and perhaps their home. Their new acquaintance looked as though He was going to continue on His way, but they invited Him to stay for dinner. He consented and they came together at the table for the evening meal.

As the meal commenced, Jesus took the bread and blessed it, breaking it and giving it to these two disciples. There must have been a sense of deja vu as they were handed the broken bread. They had recently been through a similar experience. It all suddenly came flooding back to them; the upper room, the last supper, the bread and the wine.

7. Opened Eyes and Burning Hearts: *Then their eyes were opened and they recognized Him; and He vanished from their sight 32 They said to one another, "Were not our hearts burning within us while He was speaking to us on the road, while He was explaining the Scriptures to us?" (Luke 24:31).*

As we read this account, it should not surprise us if we hear an echo from the Old Testament. Back in the Garden of Eden, when Adam and Eve first ate of the forbidden fruit, we read that their eyes were opened (Genesis 3:7). Now it happens again, but this time, it is not a matter of seeing their nakedness, but rather seeing and recognizing the risen Jesus.

Adam and Eve	The Two Disciples
The eyes of them both were opened (Genesis 3:7).	Their eyes were opened (Luke 24:31).
They saw they were naked.	They recognized Jesus.
They had eaten what was forbidden for them to eat.	They ate what Jesus commanded them to eat.
Their new sight was a sign of their sinful condition.	Their new sight was a sign of Christ's redemptive activity.
Seeing was a sign of their separation from God.	Seeing was a sign of their being reunited with God.

No sooner had their eyes been opened then Jesus suddenly vanishes from their sight. He is before them, they recognize Him, and then He is gone. They are left only with their memories. As they pause and reflect, they realize that there was something about the encounter that had been compelling to them, even as it was taking place.

THE REPORT TO THE DISCIPLES

> *And they got up that very hour and returned to Jerusalem, and found gathered together the eleven and those who were with them, 34 saying, "The Lord has really risen and has appeared to Simon." 35 They began to relate their experiences on the road and how He was recognized by them in the breaking of the bread. (Luke 24:33-35).*

These two disciples do not wait. They do not spend the night in Emmaus. Instead they leave at once and head back to Jerusalem. It is a journey of several hours, but the eleven disciples are still gathered, presumably in the upper room. They are talking about how the Lord had appeared to Simon.

To which appearance does this refer? We cannot be certain. Paul speaks of how Jesus appeared to Cephas (1 Corinthians 15:5), another name for Simon Peter, and that it was after this that He appeared to the Twelve.

We are forced to conclude that we do not have all of the eye witness testimony. Instead we have a representative sampling of that testimony. Many other eye witnesses to the resurrection of Jesus could have been brought forward. Paul says that there was at least one instance where Jesus appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time (1 Corinthians 15:6).

Why are these the only ones who are mentioned? Perhaps it is because Luke is presenting us with something of a parallel between the witnesses to the resurrection of Jesus and the announcement of His initial birth.

Do you remember to whom it was that the announcements of the birth of Jesus were initially made? A mute priest and two women. Now we see three people being the initial recipients of the announcement of the resurrection of Jesus. There are two witnesses and there is Simon; but we do not hear of Simon's experience. He is mute as to the specifics of his testimony.

Announcement of the Birth of Jesus	**Sightings of the Resurrection of Jesus**
Zacharias, the priest who became mute.	Peter, the Apostle who is mute with respect to his experience.
Elizabeth and Mary.	Two witnesses on the road to Emmaus.

THE APPEARANCE IN JERUSALEM

Our scene moves from the Emmaus Road back to Jerusalem, following the two disciples as they arrive back at the city from which they had initially departed. They get back and begin to relate their account of seeing Jesus and then He is among them.

1. The Evidence of their Eyes: *While they were telling these things, He Himself stood in their midst and said to them, "Peace be to you." 37 But they were startled and frightened and thought that they were seeing a spirit. 38 And He said to them, "Why are you troubled, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? 39 See My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself; touch Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have." 40 And when He had said this, He showed them His hands and His feet. (24:36-40).*

Even with all that has taken place that day, the sudden appearance of Jesus is both unexpected and startling. It is startling to Cleopas and his companion because they last saw Jesus back in Emmaus and they cannot conceive how He has arrived so suddenly. It is startling to the other disciples because, up to this point, they have had their doubts as to whether the resurrection has really taken place. Even now, they continue to have their doubts. Perhaps there is another explanation. Perhaps it is merely an apparition, a spirit.

Jesus responds by showing to them His hands and His feet. Why were these so significant? It is because they still bore the marks of crucifixion. They were identifying marks, showing that there was a direct correlation between the Jesus who now stood before them with the Jesus whom they had known and followed. Jesus demonstrates that the resurrection is not merely a spiritual resurrection, for *a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.*

2. The Evidence of Eating: *While they still could not believe it because of their joy and amazement, He said to them, "Have you anything here to eat?" 42 They gave Him a piece of a broiled fish; 43 and He took it and ate it before them (Luke 24:41-43).*

The one thing that comes through clearly in this passage is that the disciples were not expecting a resurrected Christ. The women had gone to the tomb with the expectation of embalming a body. They had expected to find a corpse still in the tomb. The rest of the events of that day were just as unexpected.

There is an important point that needs to be made. Christianity is not the invention of people who had an expectancy that Jesus would rise. They had to be convinced of the resurrection. Even the testimony of others was not enough. They needed evidence. One piece of evidence was not enough. They needed multiple pieces of evidence.

- They saw Him.
- They touched Him.
- They watched Him eat the fish.

There is a song that Christians sing that asks, "You ask me how I know He lives, He lives within my heart." The disciples would have disagreed. If you had asked them how they know Jesus lives, they would have replied that they know because they watched Him eat the

fish.

3. The Evidence of Scripture: *Now He said to them, "These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled."* 45 *Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures,* 46 *and He said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ would suffer and rise again from the dead the third day,* 47 *and that repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem. (Luke 24:44-47).*

Jesus had made constant appeals to the Old Testament Scriptures during His life and ministry. Yet it is only now that the disciples begin to have their minds truly understand the fulness of what the Scriptures said of Jesus. It was not merely the fulfilled prophecies. It was all the Scriptures that bore witness of Him.

- The Law of Moses: This is a reference to the Torah, the first five books of Moses.
- The Prophets: These books comprised both our historical books as well as the major and minor prophets.
- The Psalms: This would have included, not only the Psalms, but all of the books of poetry within the Scriptures.

RAMIFICATIONS OF RESURRECTION

These closing verses not only conclude Luke's gospel narrative, they also set the stage for the opening of his second volume; the book of Acts. They tell us the ramifications and implications of the resurrection, as does that companion volume.

1. The Witnesses: *"You are witnesses of these things"* (Luke 24:48).

This quality of being a witness of the ministry of Jesus, His life, His death, and His resurrection, will be a major emphasis in Luke's composition of the book of Acts. A large percentage of that narrative will take place in the settings of various legal trials in which the apostles will give their testimony, their witness. This means that the substance of what will be testified by the apostles in the Book of

Acts is that which is contained and described here in the Gospel of Luke.

2. The Waiting: *"And behold, I am sending forth the promise of My Father upon you; but you are to stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high." (Luke 24:49).*

The promise given to the disciples comes with a command. They are to wait in Jerusalem until they have been *clothed with power from on high*. When we come to Luke's second volume, we will find that this power comes through the Holy Spirit. Thus the close of the Gospel of Luke anticipates and sets the stage for the Book of Acts.

3. The Worship: *And He led them out as far as Bethany, and He lifted up His hands and blessed them. 51 While He was blessing them, He parted from them and was carried up into heaven. 52 And they, after worshiping Him, returned to Jerusalem with great joy, 53 and were continually in the temple praising God. (Luke 24:50-53).*

We are given no time element as to how much time had passed between the events of the previous passage to now. We know from other passages that a full 40 days passed, but Luke makes no mention of it here. Instead he moves to the accession of Jesus into heaven.

Notice how the book ends. It is seen in the very last verse. They are in the temple. Do you remember how the book began? It was in the temple. We have come full circle. We began with Zacharias in the temple and now, at the end of the book, we see the disciples in the temple. But there is a difference. Zacharias was struck dumb in the temple so that he could no longer talk; the disciples are seen continually praising God and their message is unhindered.

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