

Gary Ray

THE STORY OF

JESUS

According to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John

i AM A WATCHMAN .com

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THE STORY OF **JESUS**

According to Matthew, Mark, Luke and John

The Gospels arranged in Chronological order
with pastoral commentary



THE STORY OF JESUS

I Am A Watchman
Publications

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The *I Am A Watchman* ministry desires to equip and encourage believers, reach the lost, and see individuals prepared for the return of the King.

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It is with profound gratitude that I recognize the following for making it possible for me to write this book and share in the Kingdom's work.

I recognize that it is by the grace of God I am here today. My prayer is that this work, and the resources developed by the ***I Am A Watchman*** ministry, will bring honor and glory to His matchless name. The Word is true when it states that our heavenly Father is patient, loving, and kind.

Secondly, I would like to recognize my wife. Her love, support, and partnership in ministry has changed my life. I am very proud of her. She has a creative mind, a generous heart, and tirelessly serves. I am blessed.

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BOOKS AND BOOKLETS BY THIS AUTHOR

1. The Story of Jesus Book. In this 320 page book the material in the Gospels is arranged in chronological order—pastoral commentary is provided in the right column of each page.

2. The Story of Jesus Bible Study Student and Leader Guides. These two 80+ page booklets support a ten-week Bible Study on the life of Jesus. Students who complete this study will know what Jesus said, did, and expects of His followers today.

3. The Bible Prophecy Book. This 172 page book profiles the who, what, where, when, and why of Bible prophecy.

4. The Discipleship Handbook. This 230 page book provides a general overview of 50 important doctrines of the Christian Church.

5. What Will The Post-Rapture World Look Like? This 55 page booklet is designed to lead individuals to put their faith in Christ, and provide comfort and counsel to those not taken in the Rapture.

6. Reasons to Believe. This 70-page booklet provides answers to many common questions about the Bible and Christianity. It is a witnessing resource for believers, and an aid to draw seekers to faith in Jesus Christ.

7. Why and How to Teach on Prophecy and Eschatology. This 70 page booklet provides encouragement and practical helps for pastors and teachers as they consider God's leading to preach on the important subjects of prophecy and eschatology,

Information on these and many other resources can be found on the Rapture Kit USB resource.

ABOUT THE STORY OF JESUS BOOK

The goal in writing the STORY OF JESUS is to provide a resource that makes reading Scripture more enjoyable and understandable. The Story Of Jesus resource is not designed to replace the Bible, it is designed to be an aid in reading and understanding the Bible.

In the STORY OF JESUS book, the material in the Gospels is merged and arranged in approximate chronological order to form an easy to follow account of the life, ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Pastoral notes and cross-references (see the right column of each page) provide background information on uncommon terms and highlight sections of Scripture of particular importance.

Scripture passages are quoted from The Holy Bible, New International Version, Copyright 1973, 1978, 1984, by International Bible Society, published by Zondervan Publishing House.

This five part study resource profiles the life and ministry of Jesus Christ. In general, SECTION ONE profiles the birth of Jesus through the end of His first year of ministry. SECTION TWO profiles His second year of ministry. SECTION THREE profiles his third year of ministry. SECTION FOUR profiles the last months of His ministry, and SECTION FIVE profiles the week leading up to the crucifixion through His ascension into heaven.

Material for this book is drawn from the Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John).



THE STORY OF JESUS...



THE GREATEST STORY EVER TOLD!

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AN OVERVIEW OF THE GOSPELS

The Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John) profile the birth, ministry, crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus. In general, the Gospels profile a period of about 30 years (*the book of Acts profiles the 30 years following the resurrection*).

THE GOSPEL WRITERS:

- ➔ **Matthew:** Though placed first in the New Testament, the book of Matthew was likely the second Gospel written. His writing is unique in that it was written in Hebrew, to Hebrews, whereas the other Gospel writers wrote in Greek and have a more Gentile audience in mind. Matthew's name was not always Matthew. Prior to being a follower of Jesus, he was known as Levi. He was a Jew who worked for the Roman government as a tax collector. As a tax collector, he was despised by the Hebrews and considered an outcast by religious leadership. Yet Jesus saw in him great potential and extended a call to be His disciple. Levi accepted the call and promptly threw a party, at his own expense, so that many of his friends and associates could eat and hear Jesus (a great example for us).
- ➔ **Mark:** It may surprise you to learn that Mark was not one of the 12 Jesus chose to be His disciples. However, Mark was a follower of Jesus, he was related to Barnabas (a leader in the early Church), and he had close ties to Peter. Many Bible scholars believe that Mark was Peter's scribe and that the Gospel of Mark is actually Peter's account, though written by Mark. Mark was the first Gospel to be written. It is clear that Matthew and Luke draw heavily on Mark's writing and use it as a template for their Gospels.
- ➔ **Luke:** Like Mark, Luke was not one of the 12 disciples of Jesus. Luke was a physician. The Gospel record, and his account of the development of the church in the 30 years that follow the cross (the book of Acts), are detailed and scholarly. Luke writes as a historian, and presents his material in chronological order (he is the only Gospel writer to do so—the other Gospel writers tend to group their material by geographical location or subject matter).

- ➔ **John:** John was the last Gospel to be written, and was written by the only disciple who did not suffer a martyr's death. John lived a long life, and wrote not only the Gospel of John, but also 1 John, 2 John, 3 John, and the book of Revelation. The focus of John's Gospel is to present Jesus as being much more than a man—his focus is to present Jesus as the Son of God (part of God and one with God). John's Gospel is an apology (a theological term for making a legal case) for the divinity of Christ. He does this by recording seven miracles (seven is a number associated with God in the Hebrew culture), seven "I Am" statements made by Jesus ("I Am" is a phrase linked to God in the Hebrew culture), and seven deity statements made by Jesus (such as "I and the Father are one" and, "If you have seen me you have seen the Father"). John writes with an extremely limited vocabulary (600 words or so). But though his vocabulary puts his writing on a 3rd - 4th-grade reading level, there are a number of incredibly complex and beautiful spiritual truths woven into his writing.
- ➔ Each of the four Gospels present the story of Jesus. Some stories are repeated and each Gospel writer shows great freedom in providing varying degrees of detail in their written record. This resource merges the material in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, and sets the information in chronological order to form an easily readable account of the life, ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.
- ➔ The last book in the Old Testament is Malachi. Though the Old Testament is not presented in chronological order, Malachi was the last book to be written—It dates to about 450 B.C. Catholic Bibles include 14 books (collectively referred to as the Apocrypha) which profile several important historical events that took place in the 450 year period between the last Old Testament book of Malachi and the first New Testament book, Matthew.
- ➔ The coming of the Messiah was foretold in prophecy. Jesus fulfilled about 120 prophecies—no Messianic prophecy was left unfulfilled. The probability of all Messianic prophecies being fulfilled in one person, by random chance or by intentional effort, is statistically zero. The sheer number of prophecies fulfilled not only verifies the integrity of Scripture, but also verifies that Jesus is who the Bible says He is. For statistical comparison, the probability of just 7 of the biblical prophecies concerning the city of Tyre coming true is said to be one in 75,000,000. A few of the prophecies that Jesus fulfilled are noted on the following pages::

A PARTIAL LIST OF MESSIANIC PROPHECIES

	THE MESSIANIC PROPHECY	OLD TESTAMENT REFERENCE	NEW TESTAMENT FULFILLMENT
1.	The Messiah would be born of a virgin	Genesis 3:15, Isa. 7:14	Matt. 1:20-23; Gal. 4:4; Luke 1:26-31
2.	The Messiah would come from the line of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and David	Gen. 12:3, 17:19, 21:12, 22:18, 49:10, Num. 24:17; 2 Sam. 7:12-13 Genesis 22:18	Matt. 1:1-2; Luke 1:32-33, 3:33-34; Rom. 1:3, 9:5; Heb. 7:14
3.	The Messiah would flee to Egypt	Hosea 11:1	Matt. 2:14-15
4.	A massacre of children would accompany the Messiah's birth	Jeremiah 31:15	Matthew 2:16-18
5.	A messenger would prepare the way for Messiah	Isaiah 40:3-5	Luke 3:3-6
6.	The Messiah would be despised and rejected by his own people	Psalms 69:8 Isaiah 53:3	John 1:11 John 7:5
7.	The Messiah would be declared the Son of God	Psalms 2:7	Matthew 3:16-17
8.	The Messiah would be a Nazarene	Isaiah 11:1	Matthew 2:23
9.	The Messiah would minister in the region of Galilee	Isaiah 9:1-2	Matthew 4:13-16
10.	The Messiah would speak in parables	Psalms 78:2-4 Isaiah 6:9-10	Matthew 13:10-15, 34-35
11.	Messiah would be sent to heal the brokenhearted	Isaiah 61:1-2	Luke 4:18-19
12.	The Messiah would be praised by children	Psalms 8:2	Matthew 21:16
13.	The Messiah betrayed for 30 pieces of silver	Psalms 41:9 Zechariah 11:12-13	Luke 22:47-48 Matthew 26:14-16

	THE MESSIANIC PROPHECY	OLD TESTAMENT REFERENCE	NEW TESTAMENT FULFILLMENT
14.	The Messiah would be falsely accused	Psalms 35:11	Mark 14:57-58
15.	The Messiah would be silent before his accusers	Isaiah 53:7	Mark 15:4-5
16.	The Messiah would be struck	Isaiah 50:6	Matthew 26:67
17.	The Messiah would be crucified with criminals	Isaiah 53:12	Matthew 27:38 Mark 15:27-28
18.	The Messiah would be given vinegar to drink	Psalms 69:21	Matthew 27:34 John 19:28-30
19.	The Messiah's hands and feet would be pierced	Psalms 22:16 Zechariah 12:10	John 20:25-27
20.	Soldiers would gamble for Messiah's garments	Psalms 22:18	Luke 23:34 Matthew 27:35-36
21.	The Messiah's bones would not be broken	Exodus 12:46 Psalms 34:20	John 19:33-36
22.	Soldiers would pierce the Messiah's side	Zechariah 12:10	John 19:34
23.	The Messiah would be buried with the rich	Isaiah 53:9	Matthew 27:57-60
24.	The Messiah would resurrect from the dead	Psalms 16:10 Psalms 49:15	Matt. 28:2-7 Acts 2:22-32
25.	The Messiah would ascend to heaven	Psalms 24:7-10	Mark 16:19 Luke 24:51
26.	The Messiah would be a sacrifice for sin.	Isaiah 53:5-12	Romans 5:6-8

SOURCES FOR ADDITIONAL STUDY

100 Prophecies Fulfilled by Jesus: Messianic Prophecies Made Before the Birth of Christ
 by Rose Publishing; *Book of Bible Lists* by H.L. Willmington;
NKJV Study Bible; Life Application Study Bible.

THE NATURE OF THE MESSIAH / INTRODUCTION TO THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

SCRIPTURE TEXT

John 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

John 1:2 He was with God in the beginning.

John 1:3 Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.

John 1:4 In him was life, and that life was the light of men.

John 1:5 The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it.

COMMENTARY

One of the major focuses of John's Gospel is to present Jesus as being much more than a good man or prophet. Jesus is one with God and part of God. This is one of the great mysteries of the faith and the foundation of the Trinity doctrine. Here John emphasizes the deity of Christ by equating Jesus with God—noting that He was "with God" and "was God."

Here again, John emphasizes the deity of Christ by equating Jesus with the God/Creator of the Old Testament (see Gen. 1 and Col. 1:16). Also see Gen. 1:26 for an early reference to the triune nature of God.

INTRODUCTION TO THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

Matthew 1 may seem like dry reading for it is a listing of dozens of names with no information as to who these people were, where they lived or what they did in life. But 2000 years ago, Israel was primarily an oral culture and individuals did know who these people were. Each name, like George Washington or Abraham Lincoln in contemporary American culture, was well-known to the Hebrew people—and each name had a story.

It is also important to note that the Jews would see a beauty in the structure of Matthew's writing. Seven, to the Hebrew people, is a number that represents God and perfection. Matthew's genealogy is presented in perfect sets of seven generations, with each set of generations bringing the reader to the next significant point in Hebrew history. For example, there are two sets of seven generations between Abraham and David—two sets of seven generations between David and the Exile—and two sets of seven generations between the Exile and the birth of Jesus. From a structural point of view, Hebrew readers would see perfection and beauty in how God worked through the ages, preserving His plan to send the Messiah.

THE STORY OF

JESUS

THE BIRTH THROUGH THE FIRST YEAR OF MINISTRY

THE GENEALOGY OF THE MESSIAH

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Matt. 1:1 A record of the genealogy of Jesus Christ the son of David, the son of Abraham:

Matt. 1:2 Abraham was the father of Isaac, Isaac the father of Jacob, Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers,

Matt. 1:3 Judah the father of Perez and Zerah, whose mother was Tamar, Perez the father of Hezron, Hezron the father of Ram,

Matt. 1:4 Ram the father of Amminadab, Amminadab the father of Nahshon, Nahshon the father of Salmon,

COMMENTARY

Abraham lived about 2000 years before Jesus. He was the first person to be called a Hebrew. Originally, this was a negative term meaning, 'wanderer.' Abraham and his wife Sarah were promised land (the land that Israel would eventually inherit) and a child. This was a great surprise as they were elderly and Sarah was barren. Still, by faith they believed and to them was born Isaac. Abraham's story reminds us that it is never too late to be used of God.

With lies and deception, Jacob dishonored his father and took advantage of his brother (stealing the blessing usually given by the father to the oldest son). Yet God forgave him, and helped him reconcile with his brother. His story reminds us that God is quick to forgive and able to heal relationships.

Nahshon was the first leader of the tribe of Judah. As leader he was the first to bring an offering to the tabernacle (Num 7:12). He was also the point person for leading the armies of Israel into battle, and first to lead Israel out of the wilderness of Sinai (Num 10:14). He became known as 'Prince of Judah'. From his story we are reminded that with a great calling comes great responsibility and reward.

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Matt. 1:5 Salmon the father of Boaz, whose mother was Rahab, Boaz the father of Obed, whose mother was Ruth, Obed the father of Jesse,

Matt. 1:6 and Jesse the father of King David. David was the father of Solomon, whose mother had been Uriah's wife,

COMMENTARY

Salmon was born during the period of wandering in the days of Moses. For years he had no permanent home, but later became known as a prince of Bethlehem. From his story we are reminded that with God we can move from pauper to prince.

The Old Testament book of Ruth notes how Ruth had a difficult early life. She suffered the loss of her husband, but was blessed as she embraced the faith of her mother-in-law, Naomi. In time she married a good and wealthy man (Boaz), and became the grandmother of King David.

David lived about 1000 years before Jesus. He defeated Goliath when just a youth, was a shrewd military leader, provided for the building of the first great temple in Jerusalem, and is considered the first great king of Israel.

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Matt. 1:7 Solomon the father of Rehoboam, Rehoboam the father of Abijah, Abijah the father of Asa,

Matt. 1:8 Asa the father of Jehoshaphat, Jehoshaphat the father of Jehoram, Jehoram the father of Uzziah,

Matt. 1:9 Uzziah the father of Jotham, Jotham the father of Ahaz, Ahaz the father of Hezekiah,

Matt. 1:10 Hezekiah the father of Manasseh, Manasseh the father of Amon, Amon the father of Josiah,

Matt. 1:11 and Josiah the father of Jeconiah and his brothers at the time of the exile to Babylon.

Matt. 1:12 After the exile to Babylon: Jeconiah was the father of Shealtiel, Shealtiel the father of Zerubbabel,

COMMENTARY

The kingdom of Israel became divided during the reign of Rehoboam. The 10 tribes of the north were known as Israel. The 2 southern tribes, Judah and Benjamin, were known as the southern kingdom or Judah. The split was avoidable, and prompted by Rehoboam's pride and rejection of sound advice from his advisors (See 1 Kings 12).

Hezekiah called his people to pray when they were confronted by a huge enemy army. In the night God sent one angel and the enemy army of 185,000 was destroyed. From his story we are reminded that there is power in prayer, and that, with God, all things are possible.

Josiah became king when he was just a boy. Though his father was evil, he instituted many spiritual reforms and led Israel to receive God's blessing.

Jeconiah was evil. The prophet Jeremiah prophesied that none of his descendants would prosper on the throne. This should have disqualified Joseph from having a parenting role in the life of the Messiah. However, God, via the immaculate conception, made the impossible possible. Joseph was blessed to be able to serve as the father of Jesus. From his story we learn that God can always make a way.

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Matt. 1:13 Zerubbabel the father of Abiud, Abiud the father of Eliakim, Eliakim the father of Azor, Matt. 1:14 Azor the father of Zadok, Zadok the father of Akim, Akim the father of Eliud,

Matt. 1:15 Eliud the father of Eleazar, Eleazar the father of Matthan, Matthan the father of Jacob,

Matt. 1:16 and Jacob the father of Joseph, the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ.

Matt. 1:17 Thus there were fourteen generations in all from Abraham to David, fourteen from David to the exile to Babylon, and fourteen from the exile to the Christ.

COMMENTARY

Zerubbabel was neither priest nor prophet, but was used by God to bring exiled Jews back to Jerusalem and rebuild the Temple. From his story we are reminded that God can use the ordinary to accomplish the extraordinary.

The number seven is a number that represents God and perfection in Hebrew culture. Matthew's genealogy is presented in perfect sets of seven generations, with each set (of two sevens) the reader is brought to the next significant point in Hebrew history. Hebrew readers would see, from the structure of Matthew 1, that God had been at work through the ages to prepare the way for the coming Messiah.

THE PARENTS OF JOHN THE BAPTIST

Luke 1:5a In the time of Herod king of Judea there was a priest named Zechariah, who belonged to the priestly division of Abijah; his wife Elizabeth was also a descendant of Aaron

There are three King Herods mentioned in the New Testament. This is Herod The Great, an evil man, but notable for coordinating the Temple rebuilding project (the main part was completed in 19 B.C.). The Roman historian Josephus notes that this king Herod died in 4 B.C.

ANNOUNCING THE BIRTH OF JOHN THE BAPTIST

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Luke 1:5b who belonged to the priestly division of Abijah; his wife Elizabeth was also a descendant of Aaron

Luke 1:6 Both of them were upright in the sight of God, observing all the Lord's commandments and regulations blamelessly.

Luke 1:7 But they had no children, because Elizabeth was barren; and they were both well along in years.

Luke 1:8 Once when Zechariah's division was on duty and he was serving as priest before God,

Luke 1:9 he was chosen by lot, according to the custom of the priesthood, to go into the temple of the Lord and burn incense.

Luke 1:10 And when the time for the burning of incense came, all the assembled worshipers were praying outside.

COMMENTARY

A leading priest in the days of King David, who served in the eighth rotation of service in the Temple.

The brother of Moses, and patriarch of a priestly lineage dating back more than 1400 years. Zechariah had a truly distinguished bloodline.

Zechariah alone entered the Temple. This was considered a great honor.

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Luke 1:11 Then an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing at the right side of the altar of incense.

Luke 1:12 When Zechariah saw him, he was startled and was gripped with fear.

Luke 1:13 But the angel said to him: “Do not be afraid, Zechariah; your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you are to give him the name John.

Luke 1:14 He will be a joy and delight to you, and many will rejoice because of his birth,

Luke 1:15 for he will be great in the sight of the Lord. He is never to take wine or other fermented drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit even from birth.

Luke 1:16 Many of the people of Israel will he bring back to the Lord their God.

Luke 1:17a And he will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to their children and the disobedient to the

Luke 1:17b the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous—to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.”

COMMENTARY

The angel's name was Gabriel (see Luke 1:19)

The Roman historian Josephus records that it was not uncommon for Jews to receive spiritual visions when presenting the offering of incense (tradition held that Temple leaders Hyreanus and Simeon had also received visions in recent years).

He will be known as John the Baptist...so named because of his practice of baptizing in the Jordan.

A reference to John's special calling and the vow he would make to the Lord (a 'Nazarite Vow'). In this he followed in the footsteps of past great Hebrew leaders such as Samuel and Samson (see Numbers 6:1-21).

John's ministry was the fulfillment of the Malachi 4:5-6 prophecy, given about 450 years earlier (also see Matthew 17:10-13).

This is the fulfillment of the Isaiah 40:3 prophecy.

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Luke 1:18 Zechariah asked the angel, “How can I be sure of this? I am an old man and my wife is well along in years.”

Luke 1:19 The angel answered, “I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, and I have been sent to speak to you and to tell you this good news.

Luke 1:20 And now you will be silent and not able to speak until the day this happens, because you did not believe my words, which will come true at their proper time.”

Luke 1:21 Meanwhile, the people were waiting for Zechariah and wondering why he stayed so long in the temple.

Luke 1:22 When he came out, he could not speak to them. They realized he had seen a vision in the temple, for he kept making signs to them but remained unable to speak.

COMMENTARY

As an honored priest, Zechariah should have been mindful of how, in days past, God made it possible for a number of barren women to give birth (Sarah in Genesis 17, Rebecca in Genesis 25, Rachel in Genesis 30, Hannah in 1 Samuel 1, etc.).

Here Zechariah is in trouble, not because he had questions, but because he had a lack of faith. Note however, that although this judgment is severe, it is temporary. God had a plan to speak prophetically through Zechariah in the near future.

ANNOUNCING THE BIRTH OF CHRIST

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Luke 1:26 In the sixth month, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee,

Luke 1:27 to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary.

Luke 1:28 The angel went to her and said, "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you."

Luke 1:29 Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be.

Luke 1:30 But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favor with God.

Luke 1:31 You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus.

Luke 1:32 He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David,

Luke 1:33 and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end."

COMMENTARY

Nazareth was a very small village—too small to be noted by first century B.C. Roman and Jewish surveyors commissioned to make listings of cities throughout Judah. Nazareth was so remote and small, it was not discovered by archaeologists until 1961.

Gabriel (an Archangel).

In Hebrew this name means, 'God is our salvation.'

This is the fulfillment of the Isaiah 9:6-7 prophecy.

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Luke 1:34 “How will this be,” Mary asked the angel, “since I am a virgin?”

Luke 1:35 The angel answered, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God.

Luke 1:36 Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be barren is in her sixth month.

Luke 1:37 For nothing is impossible with God.”

Luke 1:38 “I am the Lord’s servant,” Mary answered. “May it be to me as you have said.” Then the angel left her.

COMMENTARY

At this time Mary was engaged to Joseph. This engagement was a binding contract. In all ways except intimacy, Joseph and Mary were considered married. If the engagement were broken it would be considered a divorce. From a cultural point of view, sexual infidelity at this time was among the gravest of sins.

John the Baptist.

Mary was mindful that accepting the Lord’s leading would mean that she would likely not be able to follow through with her wedding plans, her pregnancy would bring shame on her family, and she would be shunned by her people. Here, a young Mary demonstrates that it takes courage and sacrifice to be faithful to God’s leading.

THE BIRTH OF JOHN THE BAPTIST

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Luke 1:57 When it was time for Elizabeth to have her baby, she gave birth to a son.

Luke 1:58 Her neighbors and relatives heard that the Lord had shown her great mercy, and they shared her joy.

Luke 1:59 On the eighth day they came to circumcise the child, and they were going to name him after his father Zechariah,

Luke 1:60 but his mother spoke up and said, “No! He is to be called John.”

Luke 1:61 They said to her, “There is no one among your relatives who has that name.”

Luke 1:62 Then they made signs to his father, to find out what he would like to name the child.

Luke 1:63 He asked for a writing tablet, and to everyone’s astonishment he wrote, “His name is John.”

Luke 1:64 Immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue was loosed, and he began to speak, praising God.

Luke 1:65 The neighbors were all filled with awe, and throughout the hill country of Judea people were talking about all these things.

COMMENTARY

John the Baptist

It was customary for newborn sons to be presented in the temple on the eighth day after birth.

This, in obedience to the angel’s direction in Luke 1:13.

Zechariah, who was struck mute by an angel in Luke 1:19-20.

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Luke 1:66 Everyone who heard this wondered about it, asking, “What then is this child going to be?” For the Lord’s hand was with him.

Luke 1:67 His father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied:

Luke 1:68 “Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel, because he has come and has redeemed his people.

Luke 1:69 He has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David

Luke 1:76 And you, my child, will be called a prophet of the Most High; for you will go on before the Lord to prepare the way for him,

Luke 1:77 to give his people the knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of their sins,

Luke 1:78 because of the tender mercy of our God, by which the rising sun will come to us from heaven

Luke 1:79 to shine on those living in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the path of peace.”

Luke 1:80 And the child grew and became strong in spirit; and he lived in the desert until he appeared publicly to Israel.

COMMENTARY

This, in obedience to the angel's direction in Luke 1:13.

This is the fulfillment of the Isaiah 40:3 prophecy.

See John 1:4-5, 9.

THE BIRTH OF CHRIST

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Matt. 1:18 This is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit.

Matt. 1:19 Because Joseph her husband was a righteous man and did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly.

Matt. 1:20 But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, “Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit.

Matt. 1:21 She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.”

Matt. 1:22 All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet:

Matt. 1:23 “The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel”—which means, “God with us.”

Matt. 1:24 When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife.

COMMENTARY

This was an act of mercy as it would have been possible to pursue this as a capital offense.

Often, our idea of mercy is very different from what God has in mind. Joseph had in mind to quietly release Mary from the engagement contract. God desired that Joseph take Mary as his wife.

Joseph knew the writings of the prophets, but here he needed to be reminded that what was taking place was the fulfillment of the Isaiah 9:1-7 prophecy.

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Luke 2:1 In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world.

Luke 2:2 (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.)

Luke 2:3 And everyone went to his own town to register.

Luke 2:4 So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David.

Luke 2:5 He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child.

Luke 2:6 While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born,

Luke 2:7 and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

Luke 2:8 And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night.

COMMENTARY

Because there were a number of censuses ordered by the Roman government, the exact date of this census is difficult to determine. Most scholars believe this happened between 6 and 3 BC.

The journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem was about 100 miles, and required traveling over several mountain passes.

Wrapping him in cloths, placing him in a manger, and their simple sacrifice of two turtledoves (Luke 2:24) speaks to their very humble estate.

The mention of shepherds visiting the Christ child 1) notes that Jesus came for all—not just the privileged and 2) the timing of the birth was very likely not winter but late summer or fall.

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Luke 2:9 An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified.

Luke 2:10 But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people.

Luke 2:11 Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord.

Luke 2:12 This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.”

Luke 2:13 Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying,

Luke 2:14 “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests.”

Luke 2:15 When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let’s go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about.”

Luke 2:16 So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger.

COMMENTARY

For all the people: Here it is affirmed that the Messiah came for all, not just the Hebrew nation (which was likely the popular view).

Some translations read: ‘The city of David’. That is, Bethlehem. Bethlehem means, House or place of blessing.

Here the mission of Jesus is identified—to save humanity from sin—not to save the Hebrews from the Roman Empire.

THE INFANCY OF CHRIST

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Luke 2:21 On the eighth day, when it was time to circumcise him, he was named Jesus, the name the angel had given him before he had been conceived.

Luke 2:22 When the time of their purification according to the Law of Moses had been completed, Joseph and Mary took him to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord

Luke 2:23 (as it is written in the Law of the Lord, “Every firstborn male is to be consecrated to the Lord”),

Luke 2:24 and to offer a sacrifice in keeping with what is said in the Law of the Lord: “a pair of doves or two young pigeons.”

Luke 2:25 Now there was a man in Jerusalem called Simeon, who was righteous and devout. He was waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him.

Luke 2:26 It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord’s Christ.

Luke 2:27 Moved by the Spirit, he went into the temple courts. When the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what the custom of the Law required,

Luke 2:28 Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying:

COMMENTARY

Jesus is technically the “Lawgiver” (James 4:12) and showed himself to be over the Law (Matt. 5:21-48). However, both He and his parents (Cf. Luke 2:21) were careful to observe God-honoring Laws and customs.

The humble offering of the poor.

Some scholars suggest that Simeon was likely the son of the great Hebrew scholar, Hillel, and the father of Gamaliel (Acts 5:34-39), who was a priest, scholar and early mentor of the Apostle Paul.

It is possible that Simeon, being led to the temple by the Spirit (see verse 27), was reminded of the Malachi 3:1 prophecy: “‘See, I will send my messenger, who will prepare the way before me. Then suddenly the Lord you are seeking will come to His Temple; the messenger of the covenant, whom you desire, will come,’ says the LORD Almighty” (a passage finding it’s full fulfillment on the day of the Triumphal Entry).

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Luke 2:29 “Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you now dismiss your servant in peace.

Luke 2:30 For my eyes have seen your salvation,

Luke 2:31 which you have prepared in the sight of all people,

Luke 2:32 a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel.”

Luke 2:33 The child’s father and mother marveled at what was said about him.

Luke 2:34 Then Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, his mother: “This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against,

Luke 2:35 so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too.”

Luke 2:36 There was also a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was very old; she had lived with her husband seven years after her marriage,

Luke 2:37 and then was a widow until she was eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshiped night and day, fasting and praying.

Luke 2:38 Coming up to them at that very moment, she gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem.

COMMENTARY

Not a particularly encouraging prophetic word--but not all prophecies are. The wise will be willing to hear all that God has to say.

Luke, more than other Gospel writers, notes the important role women played in the ministry of Jesus, and in the development of the early New Testament Church.

THE VISIT OF THE MAGI

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Matt. 2:1 After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem

Matt. 2:2 and asked, “Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him.”

Matt. 2:3 When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him.

Matt. 2:4 When he had called together all the people’s chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Christ was to be born.

Matt. 2:5 “In Bethlehem in Judea,” they replied, “for this is what the prophet has written:

Matt. 2:6 “But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you will come a ruler who will be the shepherd of my people Israel.”

Matt. 2:7 Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared.

Matt. 2:8 He sent them to Bethlehem and said, “Go and make a careful search for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him.”

COMMENTARY

The number of Magi is unknown, though three is implied by the number of gifts presented to Jesus. Magi were wise men and advisers to political leaders—particularly in Persia. About 600 years before the birth of Christ a Hebrew prophet named Daniel lived in Persia and served with distinction in the king’s court. He spoke prophetically about the coming of a great King. Now, six centuries later, God used Daniel’s prophecies and the Magi’s tradition of studying the stars (astronomers note that Haley’s comet, and a rare triple alignment of Jupiter, Saturn and Venus were current events) to draw representatives from the east to Bethlehem to honor Jesus as King.

This prophecy comes from Micah 5:2, written about 725 BC.

In addition to being advisors, Magi were often used to confirm new kings. In this sense they were king-makers, which was especially troubling to King Herod. This ultimately led to Herod’s order to have infant males in the region of Bethlehem put to death.

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Matt. 2:9 After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen in the east went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was.

Matt. 2:10 When they saw the star, they were overjoyed.

Matt. 2:11 On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold and of incense and of myrrh.

Matt. 2:12 And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route.

COMMENTARY

Though God may have used some naturally occurring events (such as the alignment of planets and a comet), the unusual description of the star notes there were also supernatural elements in play.

The reference here to a 'house,' and the fact that Herod ordered infant males up to two years old killed (Matt. 2:16), indicates that it is likely the Magi did not visit Jesus at the stable, or on the night of His birth.

The gifts of the Magi have symbolic significance—they speak to the Messiah's nature and ministry. Gold symbolizes His royal nature. Frankincense was used in the Temple and represents His priestly role. Myrrh was often used as a burial ointment, and though it is an odd present for an infant, it links Jesus with His mission to die so that we might live.

THE FLIGHT INTO EGYPT

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Matt. 2:13 When they had gone, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream. “Get up,” he said, “take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you, for Herod is going to search for the child to kill him.”

Matt. 2:14 So he got up, took the child and his mother during the night and left for Egypt,

Matt. 2:15 where he stayed until the death of Herod. And so was fulfilled what the Lord had said through the prophet: “Out of Egypt I called my son.”

Matt. 2:16 When Herod realized that he had been outwitted by the Magi, he was furious, and he gave orders to kill all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity who were two years old and under, in accordance with the time he had learned from the Magi.

Matt. 2:17 Then what was said through the prophet Jeremiah was fulfilled:

Matt. 2:18 “A voice is heard in Ramah, weeping and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children and refusing to be comforted, because they are no more.”

Matt. 2:19 After Herod died, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt

COMMENTARY

This happened to fulfill the prophecy of Jeremiah, written about 600 years before the birth of Christ (Jeremiah 31:15).

Historians note that this happened in 4 B.C.

Joseph, Mary, and Jesus moved to Nazareth after the death of Herod (to fulfill the Hosea 11:1 prophecy).

See Jeremiah 31:15.

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Matt. 2:20 and said, “Get up, take the child and his mother and go to the land of Israel, for those who were trying to take the child’s life are dead.”

Matt. 2:21 So he got up, took the child and his mother and went to the land of Israel.

Matt. 2:22 But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning in Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. Having been warned in a dream, he withdrew to the district of Galilee,

Matt. 2:23 and he went and lived in a town called Nazareth. So was fulfilled what was said through the prophets: “He will be called a Nazarene.”

COMMENTARY

Archelaus was technically known by the title Ethnarch (national leader) of Judea, Samaria and Idumea. He was a terrible leader, and was disposed (banished to Gaul) by Emperor Augustus in 6 A.D.

This verse has been problematic for scholars as the prophets did NOT write (though they could have taught) that Jesus would be a Nazarene. The verse can be understood to mean that the prophets indicated that the Messiah would be called out of Egypt and grow up humbly in Galilee, and/or it may be a reference to how the Messiah would be despised (as the region of Nazareth was), and/or it could be a play on the the term ‘Branch,’ which is associated with both the Messiah and the word, Nazareth (in Hebrew, the word for “branch” is netzer, “NZR” which letters are included in NaZaReth).

JESUS AT 12 YEARS OLD

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Luke 2:40 And the child grew and became strong; he was filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was upon him.

Luke 2:41 Every year his parents went to Jerusalem for the Feast of the Passover.

Luke 2:42 When he was twelve years old, they went up to the Feast, according to the custom.

Luke 2:43 After the Feast was over, while his parents were returning home, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but they were unaware of it.

Luke 2:44 Thinking he was in their company, they traveled on for a day. Then they began looking for him among their relatives and friends.

Luke 2:45 When they did not find him, they went back to Jerusalem to look for him.

Luke 2:46 After three days they found him in the temple courts, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions.

Luke 2:47 Everyone who heard him was amazed at his understanding and his answers.

COMMENTARY

Jesus, grew up as a normal boy, having set aside His divine nature to live as a human (Phil.2).

There were seven Feasts or Festivals each year—times when most families in Israel would gather in Jerusalem for fellowship and worship. Families often traveled to and from Jerusalem caravan style— being temporarily unaware of Jesus' whereabouts would not be unusual.

With there likely being thousands traveling the road to Jerusalem, and tens of thousands of visitors in Jerusalem, it took time to find Jesus (3 days—see verse 46).

His boldness among the teachers, and His response to His parents in verse 49 is not to be understood as impudence. This event, especially as profiled in verses 47 and 49, serves to remind the reader that Jesus had a divine nature and was remarkably anointed by the Spirit.

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Luke 2:48 When his parents saw him, they were astonished. His mother said to him, “Son, why have you treated us like this? Your father and I have been anxiously searching for you.”

Luke 2:49 “Why were you searching for me?” he asked. “Didn’t you know I had to be in my Father’s house?”

Luke 2:50 But they did not understand what he was saying to them.

Luke 2:51 Then he went down to Nazareth with them and was obedient to them. But his mother treasured all these things in her heart.

Luke 2:52 And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.

COMMENTARY

Though perhaps there could have been better communication here between Jesus and His parents, there was no willful disobedience. V.51 specifically states that Jesus was obedient to His parents.

Luke may have included this story to note how the Messiah, even as a boy, had an unusual hunger for (and profound grasp of) spiritual things.

THE MINISTRY OF JOHN THE BAPTIST

SCRIPTURE TEXT

John 1:6 There came a man who was sent from God; his name was John.

John 1:7 He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all men might believe.

John 1:8 He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light.

John 1:9 The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world.

Matt. 3:1 In those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the Desert of Judea

Matt. 3:2 and saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near."

Matt. 3:3 This is he who was spoken of through the prophet Isaiah: "A voice of one calling in the desert, "Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him."

Matt. 3:4 John's clothes were made of camel's hair, and he had a leather belt around his waist. His food was locusts and wild honey.

Matt. 3:5 People went out to him from Jerusalem and all Judea and the whole region of the Jordan.

Matt. 3:6 Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River.

COMMENTARY

John the Baptist.

John 1:7-8 represents the fulfillment of the Malachi 4:5-6 prophecy.

John's mission was brief. He was killed by King Herod when he was about 30 years old. His ministry was likely less than one year, yet Jesus referred to John as "the greatest man who ever lived" (Matthew 11:11).

This is the fulfillment of the Isaiah 40:3-5 prophecy.

His clothing, diet and ministry location were very humble, and in keeping with the Nazarite Vow he had taken (see notes on Luke 1:15 and Numbers 6:1-21).

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Luke 3:15 The people were waiting expectantly and were all wondering in their hearts if John might possibly be the Christ.

Luke 3:16 John answered them all, “I baptize you with water. But one more powerful than I will come, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.

Luke 3:17 His winnowing fork is in his hand to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his barn, but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.”

Luke 3:18 And with many other words John exhorted the people and preached the good news to them.

Matt. 3:13 Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John.

Matt. 3:14 But John tried to deter him, saying, “I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?”

Matt. 3:15 Jesus replied, “Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness.” Then John consented.

Matt. 3:16 As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting on him.

COMMENTARY

Christ: God's promised one.

This was fulfilled on the Day Of Pentecost when the Spirit was given to the New Testament Church (see Acts 2).

Here John echoes the sentiment of the prophets in that Israel must repent and draw close to God or be excluded from blessing.

John constantly pointed people toward Christ, not desiring the spotlight for himself.

Baptism does not ensure salvation or forgive original sin. The baptism of John was a testimony of one's desire to forsake sin and share in the promises God gave to the Hebrew people. The meaning of baptism changed somewhat after the resurrection and birth of the New Testament Church. Yet, even at this early point in history, we see that Jesus placed great importance on baptism. In John 13:15, Jesus states, "I came that you might have an example." Following Jesus' example in baptism is a witness of one's faith and commitment to strive to live a life of holiness.

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Matt. 3:17 And a voice from heaven said, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.”

[THE APOSTLE JOHN’S ACCOUNT]

John 1:29 The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, “Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!”

John 1:30 This is the one I meant when I said, ‘A man who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me.’

John 1:31 I myself did not know him, but the reason I came baptizing with water was that he might be revealed to Israel.”

John 1:32 Then John gave this testimony: “I saw the Spirit come down from heaven as a dove and remain on him.

John 1:33 I would not have known him, except that the one who sent me to baptize with water told me, ‘The man on whom you see the Spirit come down and remain is he who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.’

John 1:34 I have seen and I testify that this is the Son of God.”

COMMENTARY

The voice of God. Jewish law placed great importance on having one’s testimony validated by witnesses. God’s voice here confirmed (validated) Jesus’ claim—that He was indeed the Messiah and Christ.

The reference to THE LAMB is significant in Hebrew culture. In the days of Moses it was an unblemished lamb that made possible an escape from Egypt and the plague of death (see Exodus 12). The sacrifice of an unblemished lamb (at Passover) was linked to the forgiveness of sins. Jesus would, at Calvary, be the last sacrifice—the unblemished Lamb sacrificed so that our sins could be forgiven.

John’s insight into the nature and ministry of Jesus was given to him by the Spirit.

THE TEMPTATION OF JESUS

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Luke 4:1 Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the desert,

Luke 4:2 where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing during those days, and at the end of them he was hungry.

Luke 4:3 The devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread."

Luke 4:4 Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man does not live on bread alone.'"

Luke 4:5 The devil led him up to a high place and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world.

Luke 4:6 And he said to him, "I will give you all their authority and splendor, for it has been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I want to.

Luke 4:7 So if you worship me, it will all be yours."

Luke 4:8 Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Worship the Lord your God and serve him only.'"

Luke 4:9 The devil led him to Jerusalem and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. "If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down from here.

COMMENTARY

The testing of our faith is often difficult, but can bring about good results (see James 1:2-4). Jesus was subject to being tempted in all things (see Hebrews 4:15). Jesus overcame this fierce time of testing by quoting Scripture. Here Jesus demonstrates that there is power in the Word, and that He had absolute confidence in the integrity of Scripture (the Scripture He quoted was more than 1400 years old at the time He quoted it).

*Satan tempted Jesus in the three main areas in which humanity is prone to fall: 1) **The flesh** (tell this stone to become bread) 2) **Pride** (you can have all the kingdoms of the world) and 3) **Doubt or fail to understand the Word** (throw yourself off the temple for God has said He will protect You). There is wisdom in knowing how the enemy operates. The areas in which Satan tempted Jesus 2000 years ago are the same areas he works to tempt God's people today.*

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Luke 4:10 For it is written: “He will command his angels concerning you to guard you carefully;

Luke 4:11 they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.”

Luke 4:12 Jesus answered, “It says: ‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test.’”

Luke 4:13 When the devil had finished all this tempting, he left him until an opportune time.

COMMENTARY

As the promises of God are often fulfilled in ways we do not expect, it is not wise for us to try to force God to move only in ways that make sense to (or benefit) us. Jesus throwing Himself off the temple would have been an incorrect application (and interpretation) of Scripture.

Until an opportune time: *Note that Satan did not cease from attacking Jesus just because Jesus had a victory here. Satan merely waited for another opportunity to strike. This same principle applies to God’s people today (see 1 Peter 5:8).*

THE CALLING OF THE DISCIPLES

SCRIPTURE TEXT

John 1:10 He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. —

John 1:11 He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him.

John 1:12 Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—

John 1:35 The next day John was there again with two of his disciples.

John 1:36 When he saw Jesus passing by, he said, “Look, the Lamb of God!” —

John 1:37 When the two disciples heard him say this, they followed Jesus. —

John 1:38 Turning around, Jesus saw them following and asked, “What do you want?” They said, “Rabbi” (which means Teacher), “where are you staying?”

John 1:39 “Come,” he replied, “and you will see.” So they went and saw where he was staying, and spent that day with him. It was about the tenth hour.

John 1:40 Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, was one of the two who heard what John had said and who had followed Jesus.

COMMENTARY

How difficult it must have been for Jesus to come to earth in the form of a man as from the beginning of time He had known only the glory and wonder of heaven. Add to this the sting of having the world He shared in creating (Col. 1:16) reject Him so meanly (Isa. 53). It truly is amazing grace which makes verse 12 possible. Thank God today for coming to redeem humanity, and for inviting you to be in relationship with Him (see Rev. 3:20).

See notes on John 1:29.

Their following was at first to satisfy their curiosity. But their quick embrace of Jesus’ invitation to find out more (verse 38) shows that their hearts were ready to receive the truth. The truth, and God’s leading, may surprise us. The key is to be like these two disciples, John and Andrew, who had hearts that were open and ready to respond to God’s leading (see John 1:12).

SCRIPTURE TEXT

John 1:41 The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, “We have found the Messiah” (that is, the Christ).

John 1:42 And he brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, “You are Simon son of John. You will be called Cephas” (which, when translated, is Peter).

John 1:43 The next day Jesus decided to leave for Galilee. Finding Philip, he said to him, “Follow me.”

John 1:44 Philip, like Andrew and Peter, was from the town of Bethsaida.

John 1:45 Philip found Nathanael and told him, “We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.”

John 1:46 “Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?” Nathanael asked. “Come and see,” said Philip.

John 1:47 When Jesus saw Nathanael approaching, he said of him, “Here is a true Israelite, in whom there is nothing false.”

COMMENTARY

Some years ago the Billy Graham Association started a witnessing program called “Operation Andrew.” Based on this section of Scripture, the idea is to follow Andrew’s example, and share our faith the best we can, to whom we can. Andrew’s witness was exceedingly simple—He found Christ, then found his brother and brought him to Jesus. This is a model all can follow.

Philip’s witness, like Andrew’s, was simple, but effective. He simply told Nathanael, “Come and see.” Being a great witness is not so much about having perfect words, it is more about having the right heart—a heart to be faithful to share with others what God has done for you.

SCRIPTURE TEXT

John 1:48 “How do you know me?” Nathanael asked. Jesus answered, “I saw you while you were still under the fig tree before Philip called you.”

John 1:49 Then Nathanael declared, “Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the King of Israel.”

John 1:50 Jesus said, “You believe because I told you I saw you under the fig tree. You shall see greater things than that.”

John 1:51 He then added, “I tell you the truth, you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man.”

COMMENTARY

Nathanael was impressed that Jesus knew his name and that he would be coming to see him. Nathanael would soon find out that Jesus knew much more. Indeed, Jesus knows everything about us (and loves us with an overwhelming love).

A possible reference to the Transfiguration of Jesus that three of the disciples would witness (Matthew 17:1-8). This verse could also be a reference to the return of Christ profiled in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18.

THE FIRST MIRACLE

SCRIPTURE TEXT

John 2:1 On the third day a wedding took place at Cana in Galilee. Jesus' mother was there,

John 2:2 and Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding.

John 2:3 When the wine was gone, Jesus' mother said to him, "They have no more wine."

John 2:4 "Dear woman, why do you involve me?" Jesus replied. "My time has not yet come."

John 2:5 His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you."

John 2:6 Nearby stood six stone water jars, the kind used by the Jews for ceremonial washing, each holding from twenty to thirty gallons.

John 2:7 Jesus said to the servants, "Fill the jars with water"; so they filled them to the brim.

John 2:8 Then he told them, "Now draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet." They did so,

John 2:9 and the master of the banquet tasted the water that had been turned into wine. He did not realize where it had come from, though the servants who had drawn the water knew. Then he called the bridegroom aside

COMMENTARY

Though not noted in Scripture, Jesus' father Joseph had probably died by this time.

Some misread this story which profiles the first miracle of Jesus. More than being about wine or alcohol, this story is about Jesus having the power and desire to provide for those He loves.

Mary shows grace and wisdom here. "Do whatever He tells you." How aptly she defines what it means to be a disciple of Christ.

The master of the house testified to the rare quality of the wine Jesus made available. This invalidates the argument that Jesus surely would have abstained from alcohol and therefore must have produced some kind of wine substitute. Wine was a cultural staple 2000 years ago—it was linked to celebration and blessing and had broad medicinal application (note that Paul advised Timothy to "take a little wine for his stomach and frequent illnesses" [1 Tim 5:23]). In moderation, and in the proper context, wine is shown to be acceptable. However, drunkenness is not (Eph 5:18).

SCRIPTURE TEXT

John 2:10 and said, “Everyone brings out the choice wine first and then the cheaper wine after the guests have had too much to drink; but you have saved the best till now.”

John 2:11 This, the first of his miraculous signs, Jesus performed at Cana in Galilee. He thus revealed his glory, and his disciples put their faith in him.

John 2:12 After this he went down to Capernaum with his mother and brothers and his disciples. There they stayed for a few days.

COMMENTARY

The exact location is unknown, but was likely located on the northwest side of the sea of Galilee. Capernaum is not mentioned in the Old Testament.

JESUS CLEANSSES THE TEMPLE

SCRIPTURE TEXT

John 2:13 When it was almost time for the Jewish Passover, Jesus went up to Jerusalem

John 2:14 In the temple courts he found men selling cattle, sheep and doves, and others sitting at tables exchanging money.

John 2:15 So he made a whip out of cords, and drove all from the temple area, both sheep and cattle; he scattered the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables.

John 2:16 To those who sold doves he said, "Get these out of here! How dare you turn my Father's house into a market!"

John 2:17 His disciples remembered that it is written: "Zeal for your house will consume me."

John 2:18 Then the Jews demanded of him, "What miraculous sign can you show us to prove your authority to do all this?"

John 2:19 Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days."

John 2:20 The Jews replied, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and you are going to raise it in three days?"

John 2:21 But the temple he had spoken of was his body.

COMMENTARY

This is a difficult passage as it may seem to conflict with Matthew 21:12. This apparent contradiction is easily resolved when one realizes that Jesus did not cleanse the Temple once, but twice. First here in John 2, to show His authority over the religious system of his day, and later in Matthew 21, to fulfill the prophecy of Malachi 3:1-3.

Nathanael was impressed that Jesus knew his name and that he would be coming to see him. Nathanael would soon find out that Jesus knew much more. Indeed, Jesus knows everything about us (and loves us with an overwhelming love).

A reference to Psalm 69:9.

Religious leaders had previously seen Jesus usher-in many miracles. The religious leaders were not interested in seeing a sign, they were interested in finding a way to discredit Jesus.

A reference to what would happen between the crucifixion and the resurrection.

A reference to the Temple project of Herod the Great.

THE MEETING WITH NICODEMUS

SCRIPTURE TEXT

John 3:1 Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a member of the Jewish ruling council.

John 3:2 He came to Jesus at night and said, “Rabbi, we know you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the miraculous signs you are doing if God were not with him.”

John 3:3 In reply Jesus declared, “I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again.”

John 3:4 “How can a man be born when he is old?” Nicodemus asked. “Surely he cannot enter a second time into his mother’s womb to be born!”

John 3:5 Jesus answered, “I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit.

John 3:6 Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit.

John 3:7 You should not be surprised at my saying, ‘You must be born again.’

John 3:8 The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit.”

John 3:9 “How can this be?” Nicodemus asked.

COMMENTARY

Pharisees were the religious and civic leaders of the day. Though responsible to Roman leadership, the Pharisees had almost limitless power. They interpreted the Law, served as judges in civil matters and commanded the respect of the people. In this system of limited accountability and great power, the Pharisees viewed Jesus as a threat. Nicodemus was one of the few Pharisees willing to hear what Jesus had to say. His meeting with Jesus was at great risk to his position as a Pharisee.

Jesus is speaking of a spiritual birth. The ordinance of baptism symbolizes this rebirth into a new life (1 Cor. 5:17).

SCRIPTURE TEXT

John 3:10 “You are Israel’s teacher,” said Jesus, “and do you not understand these things?”

John 3:11 I tell you the truth, we speak of what we know, and we testify to what we have seen, but still you people do not accept our testimony.

John 3:12 I have spoken to you of earthly things and you do not believe; how then will you believe if I speak of heavenly things?

John 3:13 No one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven—the Son of Man.

John 3:14 Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up,

John 3:15 that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life.

John 3:16 “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

John 3:17 For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.

John 3:18 Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God’s one and only Son.

COMMENTARY

The Pharisees prided themselves on being the holders of wisdom. Being well funded by the offerings of the people, they spent much of their time in study and debate. Jesus gently rebukes Nicodemus here—asking how he (and his order) were slow to grasp basic spiritual truths despite their great learning.

A subtle reference to His deity.

A reference to a happening in the days of Moses (Numbers 21—A bronze snake was raised up and all that drew near to it found healing). There is a double meaning here—that all who draw near to Christ will find spiritual healing, and that in order to affect the healing and redemption of humanity Jesus Himself will be lifted up (on a cross).

Verse 16 is a beautiful summary of the heart of God and mission of the Messiah.

Many ask, “Why would a loving God condemn any?” Here the truth is revealed: God offers help, salvation, and freedom to choose. If one chooses to reject God, they bring condemnation on themselves (see Rom 8:1).

SCRIPTURE TEXT

John 3:19 This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil.

John 3:20 Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed.

John 3:21 But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what he has done has been done through God.”

COMMENTARY

God knows the “spirit is willing but the flesh is weak.” He does not expect believers to be perfect—He knows that all fall into sin (Rom. 3:23). However, believers in Christ receive a covering of forgiveness, the abiding presence of the Spirit, and will not be mastered by sin (Gal. 2:20).

Believers are to both come into the light (of truth) and be a light (particularly to those who do not know Jesus as their personal Lord and Savior).

MINISTRY IN JUDEA

SCRIPTURE TEXT

John 3:22 After this, Jesus and his disciples went out into the Judean countryside, where he spent some time with them, and baptized.

John 3:23 Now John also was baptizing at Aenon near Salim, because there was plenty of water, and people were constantly coming to be baptized.

John 3:24 (This was before John was put in prison.)

John 3:25 An argument developed between some of John's disciples and a certain Jew over the matter of ceremonial washing.

John 3:26 They came to John and said to him, "Rabbi, that man who was with you on the other side of the Jordan—the one you testified about— well, he is baptizing, and everyone is going to him."

John 3:27 To this John replied, "A man can receive only what is given him from heaven.

John 3:28 You yourselves can testify that I said, 'I am not the Christ but am sent ahead of him.'

COMMENTARY

A relatively large area south of Jerusalem.

An area on the east side of the Jordan River—an area surrounded by Amon and Moab—areas many religious leaders in Jerusalem considered "defiled."

Over the centuries religious leaders established many traditions which the Pharisees in Jesus' day taught were equal in binding force as the Law of Moses. Jesus disagreed and did not require His disciples to observe a number of these traditions (such as ceremonial washing or fasting). In this He was emphasizing the distinction between man's law and God's Law. John's disciples were understandably surprised by Jesus' unprecedented move to show Himself to have authority over the Law—superseding even the authority of the Pharisees.

SCRIPTURE TEXT

John 3:29 The bride belongs to the bridegroom. The friend who attends the bridegroom waits and listens for him, and is full of joy when he hears the bridegroom's voice. That joy is mine, and it is now complete.

John 3:30 He must become greater; I must become less.

John 3:31 "The one who comes from above is above all; the one who is from the earth belongs to the earth, and speaks as one from the earth. The one who comes from heaven is above all.

John 3:32 He testifies to what he has seen and heard, but no one accepts his testimony.

John 3:33 The man who has accepted it has certified that God is truthful.

John 3:34 For the one whom God has sent speaks the words of God, for God gives the Spirit without limit.

John 3:35 The Father loves the Son and has placed everything in his hands.

John 3:36 Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on him."

COMMENTARY

A great summary of what it means to be a disciple.

A reference to the true (dual) nature of Christ (who was fully human and fully divine).

From the original Greek text, the literal meaning is: Has set his seal upon it, or confirmed it in his heart.

A reference to the mystery of the triune nature of God (the Trinity). The Trinity doctrine states that God has revealed himself in three persons (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit), with each part of the Trinity being separate, yet equal in essence.

MINISTRY IN SAMARIA—THE WOMAN AT THE WELL

SCRIPTURE TEXT

John 4:5 So he came to a town in Samaria called Sychar, near the plot of ground Jacob had given to his son Joseph.

John 4:6 Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired as he was from the journey, sat down by the well. It was about the sixth hour.

John 4:7 When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, "Will you give me a drink?"

John 4:8 (His disciples had gone into the town to buy food.)

John 4:9 The Samaritan woman said to him, "You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?" (For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.)

John 4:10 Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water."

John 4:11 "Sir," the woman said, "you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where can you get this living water?"

John 4:12 Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did also his sons and his flocks and herds?"

COMMENTARY

The region of Samaria was located about 25 miles north of Jerusalem. It was considered a defiled land as many Hebrews in that region in the past had married 'foreign wives,' cooperated with occupying armies and honored pagan deities. Many Jews would not travel through Samaria or have any dealings with Samaritans.

The fact that this woman was drawing water at the sixth hour (Noon—see verse 6) indicates that she was likely an outcast among her own people (most drew water in the cool of the morning or evening). The woman was very surprised that Jesus, a Jewish leader/teacher would speak to her (verse 9).

The phrase, 'gift of God' could be a reference to Himself, but also could refer to the opportunity God had given the woman to have an encounter with the Messiah. Samaritans accepted the writings of Moses and were looking for the coming of the Messiah.

The pride of the Samaritans was their well—built in ages past by Jacob, grandson of Abraham.

SCRIPTURE TEXT

John 4:13 Jesus answered, “Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again,

John 4:14 but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.”

John 4:15 The woman said to him, “Sir, give me this water so that I won’t get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water.”

John 4:16 He told her, “Go, call your husband and come back.”

John 4:17 “I have no husband,” she replied. Jesus said to her, “You are right when you say you have no husband.

John 4:18 The fact is, you have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband. What you have just said is quite true.”

John 4:19 “Sir,” the woman said, “I can see that you are a prophet.

John 4:20 Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem.”

John 4:21 Jesus declared, “Believe me, woman, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem.

COMMENTARY

Jesus demonstrated the ability to use the simplest illustrations with powerful effect. During His ministry Jesus used the common elements of Salt, Light, Oil, Bread, and Water to illustrate great spiritual truths.

The woman initially thought that Jesus would help her with her physical needs—Jesus had much more in mind.

This is a test. Jesus knew her marital situation, but here the woman is tested to see if she was truly ready to draw close to God—which requires an acknowledgment of sin.

Jesus’ intent was not to shame her, but to affirm who He was, and to draw her into a closer walk with God.

This was one of the key points of contention between Jews and Samaritans—Jews believed the rightful place for the Temple was Jerusalem whereas Samaritans believed the true temple site was Mt. Gerizim. Jesus noted that real faith is not about where one worships, but about knowing the truth (see V. 23 and John 14:6).

SCRIPTURE TEXT

John 4:22 You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews.

John 4:23 Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks.

John 4:24 God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth.”

John 4:25 The woman said, “I know that Messiah” (called Christ) “is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us.”

John 4:26 Then Jesus declared, “I who speak to you am he.”

John 4:27 Just then his disciples returned and were surprised to find him talking with a woman. But no one asked, “What do you want?” or “Why are you talking with her?”

John 4:28 Then, leaving her water jar, the woman went back to the town and said to the people,

John 4:29 “Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Christ?”

John 4:30 They came out of the town and made their way toward him.

John 4:31 Meanwhile his disciples urged him, “Rabbi, eat something.”

COMMENTARY

That is, God's covenant was established with the Jewish people, and the means of salvation for the world would come through a Jew, the Son of David, Jesus the Christ.

The situation was unusual for three reasons: 1) it was not customary for a man to speak with an unaccompanied woman 2) It was unusual for a Jew to speak to a Samaritan and 3) it was likely unusual for anyone to enter into dialogue with this particular woman, as she was probably considered an outcast among her own people.

Her direct and powerful witness (“Come and see...”) was beautiful, and prompted many in her village to come to salvation. In this story we are reminded that God can use anyone, and desires to use everyone.

SCRIPTURE TEXT

John 4:32 But he said to them, “I have food to eat that you know nothing about.”

John 4:33 Then his disciples said to each other, “Could someone have brought him food?”

John 4:34 “My food,” said Jesus, “is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work.”

John 4:35 Do you not say, ‘Four months more and then the harvest’? I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest.

John 4:36 Even now the reaper draws his wages, even now he harvests the crop for eternal life, so that the sower and the reaper may be glad together.

John 4:37 Thus the saying ‘One sows and another reaps’ is true.

John 4:38 I sent you to reap what you have not worked for. Others have done the hard work, and you have reaped the benefits of their labor.”

John 4:39 Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman’s testimony, “He told me everything I ever did.”

John 4:40 So when the Samaritans came to him, they urged him to stay with them, and he stayed two days.

John 4:41 And because of his words many more became believers.

COMMENTARY

Jesus’ focus was spiritual. The disciples, and many today, struggle to see past the physical plane.

Here Jesus notes that the work of the Spirit precedes our ministry efforts. The disciples were surprised that there could be a rich harvest in such an unlikely place, but they had not taken into account that God had gone before them in this work (as He always does, praise the Lord).

SCRIPTURE TEXT

John 4:42 They said to the woman, “We no longer believe just because of what you said; now we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this man really is the Savior of the world.”

John 4:43 After the two days he left for Galilee.

Mark 1:14 After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God.

Matt. 4:23 Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the people.

Matt. 4:24 News about him spread all over Syria, and people brought to him all who were ill with various diseases, those suffering severe pain, the demon-possessed, those having seizures, and the paralyzed, and he healed them.

Matt. 4:25 Large crowds from Galilee, the Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea and the region across the Jordan followed him.

COMMENTARY

A great harvest resulted from one woman's testimony and witness.

The Samaritans acknowledged Jesus as 'Savior of the world.' Not even the Jews would do as much.

According to Matthew 14:1-12, John was imprisoned because he offended king Herod (John told Herod that God considered his marriage to his brother's wife a sin). When John was in prison, Herod's wife, Herodias, along with her daughter Salome, manipulated Herod into authorizing the beheading of John.

THE STORY OF

JESUS

THE SECOND YEAR OF MINISTRY

OPPOSITION IN NAZARETH

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Luke 4:16 He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. And he stood up to read.

Luke 4:17 The scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written:

Luke 4:18 “The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed,

Luke 4:19 to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”

Luke 4:20 Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him,

Luke 4:21 and he began by saying to them, “Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.”

Luke 4:22 All spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his lips. “Isn’t this Joseph’s son?” they asked.

COMMENTARY

It was common for many synagogues to have an open pulpit policy. Jesus would speak at a number of small synagogues throughout His 3 ½ year ministry.

The prophet Isaiah lived about 700 years before the birth of Christ. His many prophecies about the coming Christ led him to be called the Messianic prophet.

That is, many listeners spoke well of Jesus, but most of the religious leaders did not appreciate His message. Jesus’ assertion that He was the fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophecy was viewed as blasphemy. Their overt disapproval prompted Jesus’ sharp response.

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Luke 4:23 Jesus said to them, “Surely you will quote this proverb to me: ‘Physician, heal yourself! Do here in your hometown what we have heard that you did in Capernaum.’”

Luke 4:24 “I tell you the truth,” he continued, “no prophet is accepted in his hometown.”

Luke 4:25 I assure you that there were many widows in Israel in Elijah’s time, when the sky was shut for three and a half years and there was a severe famine throughout the land.

Luke 4:26 Yet Elijah was not sent to any of them, but to a widow in Zarephath in the region of Sidon.

Luke 4:27 And there were many in Israel with leprosy in the time of Elisha the prophet, yet not one of them was cleansed—only Naaman the Syrian.”

Luke 4:28 All the people in the synagogue were furious when they heard this.

Luke 4:29 They got up, drove him out of the town, and took him to the brow of the hill on which the town was built, in order to throw him down the cliff.

Luke 4:30 But he walked right through the crowd and went on his way.

Luke 4:31 Then he went down to Capernaum, a town in Galilee, and on the Sabbath began to teach the people.

COMMENTARY

Not that it was necessary, but here Jesus cites precedence for God working in unexpected places, through unlikely people, in unbelievable ways.

The story of Naaman is found in 2 Kings 5.

OPPOSITION IN CAPERNAUM

This is likely Jesus’ second trip to Capernaum.

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Luke 4:32 They were amazed at his teaching, because his message had authority.

Luke 4:33 In the synagogue there was a man possessed by a demon, an evil spirit. He cried out at the top of his voice,

Luke 4:34 “Ha! What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God!”

Luke 4:35 “Be quiet!” Jesus said sternly. “Come out of him!” Then the demon threw the man down before them all and came out without injuring him. Luke 4:36 All the people were amazed and said to each other, “What is this teaching? With authority and power he gives orders to evil spirits and they come out!”

Mark 3:8 When they heard all he was doing, many people came to him from Judea, Jerusalem, Idumea, and the regions across the Jordan and around Tyre and Sidon.

Mark 3:9 Because of the crowd he told his disciples to have a small boat ready for him, to keep the people from crowding him.

Mark 3:10 For he had healed many, so that those with diseases were pushing forward to touch him.

Mark 3:11 Whenever the evil spirits saw him, they fell down before him and cried out, “You are the Son of God.”

Mark 3:12 But he gave them strict orders not to tell who he was.

COMMENTARY

Because He was not sanctioned by the religious leadership, and dared to speak against the teachings of the Pharisees and Sadducees (the two ruling religious bodies).

There was an increase in demonic activity during the ministry of Jesus—obviously an all-out effort to stop or disrupt the ministry of the Messiah.

Idumea: A region south of Judea

Across the Jordan: Areas east of where Jesus was teaching.

Tyre and Sidon: Areas far west of where Jesus was.

JESUS HEALS PETER'S MOTHER-IN-LAW

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Luke 4:38 Jesus left the synagogue and went to the home of Simon. Now Simon's mother-in-law was suffering from a high fever, and they asked Jesus to help her.

Luke 4:39 So he bent over her and rebuked the fever, and it left her. She got up at once and began to wait on them.

Luke 4:40 When the sun was setting, the people brought to Jesus all who had various kinds of sickness, and laying his hands on each one, he healed them.

Luke 4:41 Moreover, demons came out of many people, shouting, "You are the Son of God!" But he rebuked them and would not allow them to speak, because they knew he was the Christ

Luke 4:42 At daybreak Jesus went out to a solitary place. The people were looking for him and when they came to where he was, they tried to keep him from leaving them.

Luke 4:43 But he said, "I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns also, because that is why I was sent."

Luke 4:44 And he kept on preaching in the synagogues of Judea.

COMMENTARY

One of many women Luke cites as supporters of Jesus' ministry.

Rebuked: An interesting word which indicates that the root of her problem may have been more spiritual than physical. Though it is not the norm, demons can impact the physical realm, and do have the ability to torment and afflict (see Matt. 12:22, Mark 9:18). The believer's best defense is prayer (also see Eph. 6:12-18).

The general point of this section of Scripture is to show that Jesus had authority over the demonic realm, and to note that all who came to Jesus found help.

Here we see the emphasis Jesus placed on prayer. In the Gospels we see that it was common for Jesus to retreat to quiet places to pray. Prayer is essential to a dynamic spiritual walk.

The miracles of healing were wonderful, but Jesus' primary ministry was to preach the message of salvation (see Romans 10:17, 9-10).

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Matt. 5:1 Now when he saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him,

Matt. 5:2 and he began to teach them, saying:

Matt. 5:3 “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Matt. 5:4 Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

Matt. 5:5 Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

Matt. 5:6 Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

Matt. 5:7 Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.

Matt. 5:8 Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

Matt. 5:9 Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God.

Matt. 5:10 Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Matt. 5:11 “Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me.

COMMENTARY

Matthew 5-7 is a presentation of the longest sermon of Jesus in the Bible. These chapters profile key teaching points—rather than being the transcript of Jesus’ sermon. The first teaching is commonly referred to as, “The Beatitudes,” a Latin term meaning blessing. The thought is that believers are blessed of God for He offers hope, help, peace, salvation, and eternal reward.

Poor in Spirit = afflicted or oppressed.

A paraphrase translation of 2 Cor. 3:11 notes: “The troubles all around us will soon be gone but the joys to come will last forever.”

Meek = strength under control. This verse draws its foundation from Psalm 37:11.

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Matt. 5:12 Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Matt. 5:13 “You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men.

Matt. 5:14 “You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden.

Matt. 5:15 Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house.

Matt. 5:16 In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.

Matt. 5:17 “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.

Matt. 5:18 I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished.

Matt. 5:19 Anyone who breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

COMMENTARY

Later, the disciples were able to find joy in sharing in the suffering of Christ (Acts 5:40-42), for they were mindful that a great reward in heaven awaited them.

Believers are called the Salt and Light of the world. Believers are called to be, “sanctified,” which means to be set apart.

The Apostle Paul writes, “I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ” (Rom.1:16a). Question: Are you bold in your faith or are you more of an undercover Christian?

Jesus would fulfill more than 120 specific Messianic prophecies. No prophecy regarding His first coming was unfulfilled, only partially fulfilled or found to be in error. The same can be said of the more than 900 Bible prophecies that have been fulfilled to date. This should facilitate confidence that the more than 100 prophecies yet to be fulfilled, will unfold exactly as foretold.

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Matt. 5:20 For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven.

Matt. 5:21 “You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, ‘Do not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.’

Matt. 5:22 But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to his brother, ‘Raca,’ is answerable to the Sanhedrin. But anyone who says, ‘You fool!’ will be in danger of the fire of hell.

Matt. 5:23 “Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you,

Matt. 5:24 leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift.

Matt. 5:25 “Settle matters quickly with your adversary who is taking you to court. Do it while you are still with him on the way, or he may hand you over to the judge, and the judge may hand you over to the officer, and you may be thrown into prison

Matt. 5:26 I tell you the truth, you will not get out until you have paid the last penny.

COMMENTARY

A true but shocking statement. The Pharisees were thought to be close to God for their many highly visible “works of righteousness.” Here Jesus is not speaking of one’s education, training, position or deeds, but one’s heart (see Matthew 5:8).

In this section of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus presents Himself as having authority over the Law. Multiple times Jesus will say, “You have heard...but now I tell you...” In presenting Himself as having authority over the Law, Jesus is noting His divine nature.

It does not matter if you offended someone, or if someone sinned against you...believers are required to make the first move to set things right. God’s desire is that believers remain in good relationship with Him, and with other believers.

This is not a specific promise but a commentary on how there is wisdom in keeping small matters from escalating into big problems.

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Matt. 5:27 “You have heard that it was said, ‘Do not commit adultery.’

Matt. 5:28 But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

Matt. 5:29 If your right eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell.

Matt. 5:30 And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell.

Matt. 5:31 “It has been said, ‘Anyone who divorces his wife must give her a certificate of divorce.’

Matt. 5:32 But I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, causes her to become an adulteress, and anyone who marries the divorced woman commits adultery.

Matt. 5:33 “Again, you have heard that it was said to the people long ago, ‘Do not break your oath, but keep the oaths you have made to the Lord.’

Matt. 5:34 But I tell you, Do not swear at all: either by heaven, for it is God’s throne;

Matt. 5:35 or by the earth, for it is his footstool; or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the Great King.

COMMENTARY

All have sinned and are in need of the forgiveness and grace of God, which Jesus came to freely offer (Eph. 2:8-10). Note that this teaching stood in contrast to the mindset of the Pharisees, who believed themselves to be righteous on the basis of their position, bloodline and deeds.

A symbolic statement meaning that no sacrifice is too great to make if the reward is saving one’s eternal soul (see Mark 10:29-30).

Here, as in verses 27-30, Jesus is referencing cultural norms, and challenging people to set the bar higher. 2000 years ago it was common for husbands to divorce their wives for trivial matters (and by signifying their intent by simply putting their wives’ shoes outside the door). Here Jesus challenges believers to live to a higher standard (see also Matt. 19:4-9).

Here believers are warned not to take lightly, oaths made in the name of the Lord. Note: It was common for Jews to seal agreements in the name of the Lord (this was likely not always done with great reverence or respect for God).

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Matt. 5:36 And do not swear by your head, for you cannot make even one hair white or black.

Matt. 5:37 Simply let your ‘Yes’ be ‘Yes,’ and your ‘No,’ ‘No’; anything beyond this comes from the evil one.

Matt. 5:38 “You have heard that it was said, ‘Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.’

Matt. 5:39 But I tell you, Do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also.

Matt. 5:40 And if someone wants to sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well.

Matt. 5:41 If someone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles.

Matt. 5:42 Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you.

Matt. 5:43 “You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’

Matt. 5:44 But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,

Matt. 5:45 that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.

Matt. 5:46 If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that?

COMMENTARY

Another rather curious cultural practice was to finalize an agreement by “swearing by one’s head.” That is, by one’s own power, clout, or resources. The call here is to let one’s character and good name be strong enough to guarantee the promise (see verse 37). The theme of this narrative is to be the best witness possible.

The challenge in this passage of Scripture is to strive to exceed the minimum level of service and sacrifice required by the Old Testament Law.

The tunic was the only item of personal property protected by the Law. If money was owed, one could take any item of personal property to satisfy the debt—except one’s tunic. Jesus’ suggestion to give without reservation would have been surprising to the crowd.

Jesus continues His theme of challenging people to do the maximum, rather than the minimum in spiritual endeavors. It is wise to give consideration to what level we strive for (maximum or minimum) in the areas of service, prayer, worship and giving.

Our witness is most effective when our actions exceed the standards and expectations of the world.

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Matt. 5:47 And if you greet only your brothers, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that?

Matt. 5:48 Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

Matt. 6:1 “Be careful not to do your ‘acts of righteousness’ before men, to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven.

Matt. 6:2 “So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honored by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full.

Matt. 6:3 But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing,

Matt. 6:4 so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

Matt. 6:5 “And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full.

Matt. 6:6 But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

Gary Ray

COMMENTARY

Jesus was the only human who lived a perfect life (1 John 3:5), but believers who seek forgiveness from Him will be presented “holy and blameless before the throne” (Col. 1:22).

Strive to live for an audience of One. Live to please God, knowing that He sees and will reward acts of righteousness.

Scripture notes that God sees (Psalm 14:2) and rewards the humble (1 Peter 5:6).

Prayer is not about eloquence. It is about sharing from your heart and expressing praises and needs. The prayer of faith, however simple, is powerful (James 5:16).

The Story of Jesus

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Matt. 6:7 And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words.

Matt. 6:8 Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.

Matt. 6:9 “This, then, is how you should pray: “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,

Matt. 6:10 your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Matt. 6:11 Give us today our daily bread.

Matt. 6:12 Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.

Matt. 6:13 And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.’

Matt. 6:14 For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.

Matt. 6:15 But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.

Matt. 6:16 “When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show men they are fasting. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full.

COMMENTARY

Prayer should be like a nice conversation with your best friend (not like presenting a memorized speech). To pray is to cultivate one's relationship with God.

Note that Jesus states that this is HOW one should pray...not WHAT one should pray. The prayer noted here, often referred to as “The Lord's Prayer,” is designed to help believers know what to include in their prayer life (see below):

Acknowledge who you are praying to—the Father in heaven, whose name is ‘hallowed’ (holy). Pray that just as God's will is carried out in heaven, that it will be carried out through you.

Pray humbly, for your needs rather than ‘your greeds.’ Pray that your sins would be forgiven, and for the strength to forgive others. Pray for wisdom to stay away from areas of temptation, and that God would give you strength in times of temptation. The “Lord's Prayer” ends with verse 13, though some translations include a closing statement: “For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever. Amen.”

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Matt. 6:17 But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, —

Matt. 6:18 so that it will not be obvious to men that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

Matt. 6:19 “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal.

Matt. 6:20 But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal.

Matt. 6:21 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Matt. 6:22 “The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are good, your whole body will be full of light.

Matt. 6:23 But if your eyes are bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness!

Matt. 6:24 “No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money.

Matt. 6:25 “Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes?

COMMENTARY

That is, do not seek to appear pious and draw attention to the fact that you are fasting.

In 1 Cor. 3:13-14, the Apostle Paul notes that the only things of eternal value are the things we do for the honor and glory of God.

The thought here is that we are to fix our eyes (our focus) on spiritual things. Verse 24 notes that in the end, we must choose who will have our attention and affection: God or the things of this world. If we choose well, then we will have access to a peace (see verse 25) which the Apostle Paul notes, “Surpasses all understanding” (Phil. 4:7).

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Matt. 6:26 Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they?

Matt. 6:27 Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life?

Matt. 6:28 “And why do you worry about clothes? See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labor or spin.

Matt. 6:29 Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these.

Matt. 6:30 If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?

Matt. 6:31 So do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’

Matt. 6:32 For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them.

Matt. 6:33 But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

Matt. 6:34 Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

COMMENTARY

Here Jesus notes the scope of God’s care in referencing the simple birds of the air and lilies of the field—each looked after by the providential hand of God. If they are the recipients of such care, how much more then are we? (1 Peter 5:7)

It is faith, not circumstances, which positions believers to not be overcome by worry.

See also verse 32. Again, Jesus is challenging believers to be sanctified, to be different than those in the world who have no faith.

A key to inner peace: Rather than focusing on trying to accomplish hundreds of things and pleasing the masses—try focusing only on pleasing God. When we live for Him, and seek to accomplish His will in our lives, other things will fall into place.

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Matt. 7:1 “Do not judge, or you too will be judged.

Matt. 7:2 For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.

Matt. 7:3 “Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother’s eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye?

Matt. 7:4 How can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when all the time there is a plank in your own eye?

Matt. 7:5 You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye.

Matt. 7:6 “Do not give dogs what is sacred; do not throw your pearls to pigs. If you do, they may trample them under their feet, and then turn and tear you to pieces.

Matt. 7:7 “Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you.

Matt. 7:8 For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened.

Matt. 7:9 “Which of you, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone?

Matt. 7:10 Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake?

COMMENTARY

New topic: Judging. The Jews were noted for thinking themselves superior to their Samaritan and Gentile neighbors. Here Jesus speaks against that mindset and lays a foundation for the coming New Testament Church, which would extend God’s grace in a new way to all people.

Believers are to reach out to and help those caught in sin (see Gal. 6:1; Matt. 18:15; James 5:20), but always with grace, love, and a humble heart.

Dogs were considered unclean animals by the Hebrews. The Jews believed Samaritans had compromised their faith and hence were commonly referred to as dogs. Here Jesus is NOT suggesting that believers avoid contact with those who do not share their faith in God. Verse 6 presents a warning and general principle—do not allow those without faith to be a part of your inner circle—the closest advisors and confidants in your life.

Here Jesus returns to the topic of prayer. But this time the focus is not how to pray, but rather, the proper mindset for prayer. We must pray believing (James 1:6-7)—believing that God is able to, and desires to bless His children.

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Matt. 7:11 If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!

Matt. 7:12 So in everything, do ^{to others} what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.

Matt. 7:13 “Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it.

Matt. 7:14 But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.

Matt. 7:15 “Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves.

Matt. 7:16 By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles?

Matt. 7:17 Likewise every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit.

Matt. 7:18 A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit.

Matt. 7:19 Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

Matt. 7:20 Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them.

COMMENTARY

See also James 2:8 and Romans 13:9.

God’s standard, and the cost of discipleship is high. We must pursue the things of God “with all our heart, all our mind and all our soul” (see Matt. 22:37).

The true disciples of Christ will be known by their words, and by their actions (see verses 22-23).

The true disciples of Christ will also be known by the fruit they produce.

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Matt. 7:21 “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.

Matt. 7:22 Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?’

Matt. 7:23 Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’

Matt. 7:24 “Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock.

Matt. 7:25 The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock.

Matt. 7:26 But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand.

Matt. 7:27 The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash.”

Matt. 7:28 When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were amazed at his teaching,

Matt. 7:29 because he taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law.

COMMENTARY

The Rock is a reference to Jesus Christ, the sure foundation (Isa. 33:6), cornerstone (Eph. 2:20), and head of the Church (Matt. 16:18).

The authority of Jesus came from above—not from men, as was the case for the Pharisees, Sadducees and Teachers of Law.

THE COMPASSION OF JESUS

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Mark 1:40 A man with leprosy came to him and begged him on his knees, “If you are willing, you can make me clean.”

Mark 1:41 Filled with compassion, Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. “I am willing,” he said. “Be clean!”

Mark 1:42 Immediately the leprosy left him and he was cured.

Mark 1:43 Jesus sent him away at once with a strong warning:

Mark 1:44 “See that you don’t tell this to anyone. But go, show yourself to the priest and offer the sacrifices that Moses commanded for your cleansing, as a testimony to them.”

Mark 1:45 Instead he went out and began to talk freely, spreading the news. As a result, Jesus could no longer enter a town openly but stayed outside in lonely places. Yet the people still came to him from everywhere.

COMMENTARY

One stricken with leprosy was considered physically and spiritually unclean. Typically, religious leaders of the day would not have contact with lepers. Here Jesus not only talks with the man, He also touches the man, and heals him completely. The phrase, “I am willing” beautifully illustrates the heart of God.

God’s work is powerful, immediate and complete.

The order to “show yourself to the priest” was to comply with the Law, and to show that Jesus lived in submission to the Law.

LISTING THE DISCIPLES / AFFIRMING JOHN THE BAPTIST

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Luke 6:12 One of those days Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray, and spent the night praying to God.

Luke 6:13 When morning came, he called his disciples to him and chose twelve of them, whom he also designated apostles:

Luke 6:14 Simon (whom he named Peter), his brother Andrew, James, John, Philip, Bartholomew,

Luke 6:15 Matthew, Thomas, James son of Alphaeus, Simon who was called the Zealot,

Luke 6:16 Judas son of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor.

Matt. 11:2 When John heard in prison what Christ was doing, he sent his disciples

Matt. 11:3 to ask him, “Are you the one who was to come, or should we expect someone else?”

Matt. 11:4 Jesus replied, “Go back and report to John what you hear and see:

Matt. 11:5 The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor.

Matt. 11:6 Blessed is the man who does not fall away on account of me.”

COMMENTARY

The twelve disciples were chosen by Jesus over a period of months in the first year of His ministry. Most did not know each other before their connection to Jesus, and most would not have chosen to be friends were it not for Jesus (among the 12 were a tax collector and a zealot—radical and unlikeable fellows). But just as in God’s Church today, these men with different back-grounds and interests, were called to be united in Christ.

The names of the disciples are also listed in Matthew 10:2-4, Mark 3:16-19 and Acts 1:13.

Perhaps John sent to Jesus some who were skeptical of who Jesus was. Less likely is the possibility that John was burdened by his situation, and desired an additional confirmation of who Jesus was.

This is the fulfillment of the Messianic prophecies made by Isaiah (Isaiah 35:6, 61:1).

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Matt. 11:7 As John's disciples were leaving, Jesus began to speak to the crowd about John: "What did you go out into the desert to see? A reed swayed by the wind?"

Matt. 11:8 If not, what did you go out to see? A man dressed in fine clothes? No, those who wear fine clothes are in kings' palaces.

Matt. 11:9 Then what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet.

Matt. 11:10 This is the one about whom it is written: "'I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way before you.'

Matt. 11:11 I tell you the truth: Among those born of women there has not risen anyone greater than John the Baptist; yet he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.

Matt. 11:12 From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven has been forcefully advancing, and forceful men lay hold of it.

Matt. 11:13 For all the Prophets and the Law prophesied until John.

Matt. 11:14 And if you are willing to accept it, he is the Elijah who was to come.

Matt. 11:15 He who has ears, let him hear.

COMMENTARY

In verses 6-10 Jesus affirms the ministry of John the Baptist, whom he contrasts to reeds common to the banks of the Jordan River (reeds known to be weak and easily moved with each turn of the wind). Here Jesus notes that John was not weak, nor was he questioning his convictions.

Here, in the clearest terms possible, Jesus affirms the ministry of John the Baptist.

Elijah, a great Old Testament prophet, was said to return to announce the Messiah (see Malachi 4:4-5). Here Jesus states that Malachi's prophecy was fulfilled in John the Baptist—that is, that John came in the same calling, the same power, and with the same anointing as Elijah (see also Luke 1:17).

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Matt. 11:16 “To what can I compare this generation? They are like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling out to others:

Matt. 11:17 “‘We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we sang a dirge, and you did not mourn.’

Matt. 11:18 For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, ‘He has a demon.’

Matt. 11:19 The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, ‘Here is a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and “sinners.”’ But wisdom is proved right by her actions.”

COMMENTARY

In verses 16-17 Jesus reproves the people for being fickle—like temperamental children unable to be pleased (here illustrated by individuals not willing to dance or mourn). The people were not happy with John, who lived the strict, austere life of a Nazarite prophet—and the people were not happy with Jesus who employed a different (less rigid) approach in His ministry. It is this discontent with God’s will, way, and messengers that invites Jesus’ rebuke.

A LESSON IN GRATITUDE

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Luke 7:36 Now one of the Pharisees invited Jesus to have dinner with him, so he went to the Pharisee's house and reclined at the table.

Luke 7:37 When a woman who had lived a sinful life in that town learned that Jesus was eating at the Pharisee's house, she brought an alabaster jar of perfume,

Luke 7:38 and as she stood behind him at his feet weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears. Then she wiped them with her hair, kissed them and poured perfume on them.

Luke 7:39 When the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet, he would know who is touching him and what kind of woman she is—that she is a sinner."

Luke 7:40 Jesus answered him, "Simon, I have something to tell you." "Tell me, teacher," he said.

Luke 7:41 "Two men owed money to a certain moneylender. One owed him five hundred denarii, and the other fifty.

Luke 7:42 Neither of them had the money to pay him back, so he canceled the debts of both. Now which of them will love him more?"

COMMENTARY

Ostensibly Jesus was invited to dinner as a measure of respect, but the invitation was likely designed to discover some weakness in Jesus that the Pharisees could later exploit. Verse 44 makes clear that this Pharisee (named Simon) did not treat Jesus with respect.

Verses 37-38 note the woman's sincere sorrow for her sin and genuine appreciation for the forgiveness that God offered (a good example for believers today).

Strange that for this Pharisee, the test for being an anointed prophet was the ability to shun sinners. For Jesus, the proof that He was the Christ was the ability to love and help sinners.

A denarii was approximately the equivalent of one day's wages.

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Luke 7:43 Simon replied, “I suppose the one who had the bigger debt canceled.” “You have judged correctly,” Jesus said.

Luke 7:44 Then he turned toward the woman and said to Simon, “Do you see this woman? I came into your house. You did not give me any water for my feet, but she wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair.

Luke 7:45 You did not give me a kiss, but this woman, from the time I entered, has not stopped kissing my feet.

Luke 7:46 You did not put oil on my head, but she has poured perfume on my feet.

Luke 7:47 Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven—for she loved much. But he who has been forgiven little loves little.”

Luke 7:48 Then Jesus said to her, “Your sins are forgiven.”

Luke 7:49 The other guests began to say among themselves, “Who is this who even forgives sins?”

Luke 7:50 Jesus said to the woman, “Your faith has saved you; go in peace.”

COMMENTARY

Repentance is best evidenced by a grateful heart and an effort to turn and “sin no more.”

A startling statement: The Jews acknowledged that only God could forgive sins (see Mark 2:7). Jesus’ statement was designed to encourage the woman, and confirm His divine nature.

CONCERNING THE SOURCE OF JESUS' POWER

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Matt. 12:22 Then they brought him a demon-possessed man who was blind and mute, and Jesus healed him, so that he could both talk and see.

Matt. 12:23 All the people were astonished and said, "Could this be the Son of David?"

Matt. 12:24 But when the Pharisees heard this, they said, "It is only by Beelzebub, the prince of demons, that this fellow drives out demons."

Matt. 12:25 Jesus knew their thoughts and said to them, "Every kingdom divided against itself will be ruined, and every city or household divided against itself will not stand.

Matt. 12:26 If Satan drives out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then can his kingdom stand?

Matt. 12:27 And if I drive out demons by Beelzebub, by whom do your people drive them out? So then, they will be your judges.

Matt. 12:28 But if I drive out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.

Matt. 12:29 "Or again, how can anyone enter a strong man's house and carry off his possessions unless he first ties up the strong man? Then he can rob his house.

COMMENTARY

A reference to the masses seeing in Jesus the fulfillment of Messianic prophecies (such as Isaiah 35:5).

A Canaanite deity, also known as 'The Lord of the flies.'

Some of the Jewish leaders claimed to have authority to cast out demons, a claim Jesus used to His advantage as He pointed out that according to their logic, they too then must be in league with the Devil.

That is, if Jesus' work was true, then the Pharisees would stand condemned for their rejection of the Christ whom God had sent.

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Matt. 12:30 “He who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me scatters.

Matt. 12:31 And so I tell you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven.

Matt. 12:32 Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but anyone who speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come.

Matt. 12:38 Then some of the Pharisees and teachers of the law said to him, “Teacher, we want to see a miraculous sign from you.”

Matt. 12:39 He answered, “A wicked and adulterous generation asks for a miraculous sign! But none will be given it except the sign of the prophet Jonah.

Matt. 12:40 For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

Matt. 12:41 The men of Nineveh will stand up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it; for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and now one greater than Jonah is here.

COMMENTARY

Jesus continues making a case as to why their assertion that He was in league with the Devil was absurd. According to common logic, He could not be in league with the Devil, and be stronger than the Devil (able to bind the strong man) at the same time.

Most believe that blasphemy against the Holy Spirit means to die having rejected Jesus as Messiah and Savior.

They had already seen signs (the chapter begins with this group affirming His signs). The attempt was to sway Jesus' focus and to put the emphasis on His miracles, over His message. Jesus' focus was not signs, but to preach the Gospel.

A reference to the upcoming crucifixion and resurrection.

It was common for witnesses to stand in court to render judgments. The Ninevites in Jonah's day had a pagan background but repented and drew close to God. Here the Jews had every advantage but were rejecting God's Son, and so stood condemned.

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Matt. 12:42 The Queen of the South will rise at the judgment with this generation and condemn it; for she came from the ends of the earth to listen to Solomon's wisdom, and now one greater than Solomon is here.

Matt. 12:43 "When an evil spirit comes out of a man, it goes through arid places seeking rest and does not find it.

Matt. 12:44 Then it says, 'I will return to the house I left.' When it arrives, it finds the house unoccupied, swept clean and put in order.

Matt. 12:45 Then it goes and takes with it seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they go in and live there. And the final condition of that man is worse than the first. That is how it will be with this wicked generation."

COMMENTARY

This Queen from the far-off land of Sheba came to Solomon about 975 years before the birth of Christ, because she heard of His faith and wisdom. Further, she was receptive and respectful of Solomon's God. She will stand in judgment over Jews who heard the truth directly from Jesus, but rejected it.

In verses 43-45 we find a mini-parable—likely alluding to the nation of Israel who had times of renewal (verse 44), but was prone to quickly falling back into apostasy. This parable also has a prophetic element.

JESUS TEACHES IN PARABLES

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Matt. 13:1 That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat by the lake.

Matt. 13:2 Such large crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat in it, while all the people stood on the shore.

Matt. 13:3 Then he told them many things in parables, saying: “A farmer went out to sow his seed.

Matt. 13:4 As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up.

Matt. 13:5 Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow.

Matt. 13:6 But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root.

Matt. 13:7 Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants.

Matt. 13:8 Still other seed fell on good soil, where it produced a crop— a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown.

Matt. 13:9 He who has ears, let him hear.”

Matt. 13:10 The disciples came to him and asked, “Why do you speak to the people in parables?”

COMMENTARY

Jesus preached from a boat several times during His 3 ½ year ministry—this allowed Him to stay close to the people without being overwhelmed by enthusiastic crowds.

There are many parables in the Old and New Testaments. A parable is a form of story-telling. Parables are generally a fictitious narrative designed to present an important point or truth.

It's not the size of the tree, but the dynamic of the root that makes a tree strong. Strong disciples build their faith on a sure foundation and establish deep roots in spiritual truth.

The enemy “prowls about seeking those whom he may devour” (1 Peter 5:8).

This parable notes the expectation of God: The good disciple will produce a good crop and bear good fruit (see Matt. 7:19).

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Matt. 13:11 He replied, “The knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven has been given to you, but not to them.

Matt. 13:12 Whoever has will be given more, and he will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him.

Matt. 13:13 This is why I speak to them in parables: “Though seeing, they do not see; though hearing, they do not hear or understand.

Matt. 13:14 In them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah: “You will be ever hearing but never understanding; you will be ever seeing but never perceiving.

Matt. 13:15 For this people’s heart has become calloused; they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts and turn, and I would heal them.’

Matt. 13:16 But blessed are your eyes because they see, and your ears because they hear.

Matt. 13:17 For I tell you the truth, many prophets and righteous men longed to see what you see but did not see it, and to hear what you hear but did not hear it.

Matt. 13:18 “Listen then to what the parable of the sower means:

COMMENTARY

Knowledge of the secrets is perhaps better rendered: “The mysteries of the faith.” That is, the revelation of God’s plan to usher in the New Covenant through Christ was yet to be revealed to the whole of Israel.

The strong wording is designed to warn and prompt individuals to be spiritually prepared for the judgment that is to come.

See Isaiah 6:9-10.

Jesus presented information in a way that tested the heart. If one’s heart was open (like the woman at the well in John 4), the person would either understand the spiritual significance or be drawn to seek out more information. Whereas, if a heart was closed or filled with evil, as was the case for most of the Pharisees, they would not understand the deeper meaning behind Jesus’ words, and therefore be less able to attempt to thwart God’s plan.

See Isaiah 6:9-10.

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Matt. 13:19 When anyone hears the message about the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is the seed sown along the path.

Matt. 13:20 The one who received the seed that fell on rocky places is the man who hears the word and at once receives it with joy.

Matt. 13:21 But since he has no root, he lasts only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, he quickly falls away.

Matt. 13:22 The one who received the seed that fell among the thorns is the man who hears the word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke it, making it unfruitful.

Matt. 13:23 But the one who received the seed that fell on good soil is the man who hears the word and understands it. He produces a crop, yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown."

Matt. 13:24 Jesus told them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field.

Matt. 13:25 But while everyone was sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away.

Matt. 13:26 When the wheat sprouted and formed heads, then the weeds also appeared.

COMMENTARY

God's gift to the world in this age is the Church. It is important that every believer be plugged-into a good, Bible-teaching church so that they will be well-positioned to grow in discipleship, Christian fellowship and worship (see Hebrews 10:25).

James 1:2-4 notes that there is a spiritual blessing in being able to stand firm in times of challenge and oppression.

The Sermon on the Mount (Matthew chapters 6-7) deals with the issue of worry.

The King James translation renders the word, "Weeds" as "Tares." which literally means, "False grain." Interestingly, a tare will have the appearance of good wheat, but will not produce anything of value. The fate of the tares is noted in verse 30.

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Matt. 13:27 “The owner’s servants came to him and said, ‘Sir, didn’t you sow good seed in your field? Where then did the weeds come from?’

Matt. 13:28 “An enemy did this,’ he replied. “The servants asked him, ‘Do you want us to go and pull them up?’

Matt. 13:29 “No,’ he answered, ‘because while you are pulling the weeds, you may root up the wheat with them.

Matt. 13:30 Let both grow together until the harvest. At that time I will tell the harvesters: First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned; then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn.’”

Matt. 13:31 He told them another parable: “The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field.

Matt. 13:32 Though it is the smallest of all your seeds, yet when it grows, it is the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and perch in its branches.”

Matt. 13:33 He told them still another parable: “The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed into a large amount of flour until it worked all through the dough.” 2

Matt. 13:34 Jesus spoke all these things to the crowd in parables; he did not say anything to them without using a parable.

COMMENTARY

A sober reference to accountability and the coming judgment.

It has been noted that the mustard seed (verse 31) is not the “smallest of...seeds,” and therefore Jesus is in error here. Let the reader remember that Jesus is not speaking as a botanist or presenting a scientific lecture— He is sharing a parable and is using common reference points (i.e., a mustard seed, which was the smallest seed known to most Hebrew farmers), to emphasize a spiritual truth.

A general, rather than all-inclusive statement meaning, Jesus told many parables and could find ways to teach spiritual truths by referencing common objects and practices.

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Matt. 13:35 So was fulfilled what was spoken through the prophet: “I will open my mouth in parables, I will utter things hidden since the creation of the world.”

Matt. 13:36 Then he left the crowd and went into the house. His disciples came to him and said, “Explain to us the parable of the weeds in the field.”

Matt. 13:37 He answered, “The one who sowed the good seed is the Son of Man.

Matt. 13:38 The field is the world, and the good seed stands for the sons of the kingdom. The weeds are the sons of the evil one,

Matt. 13:39 and the enemy who sows them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the harvesters are angels.

Matt. 13:40 “As the weeds are pulled up and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of the age.

Matt. 13:41 The Son of Man will send out his angels, and they will weed out of his kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil.

Matt. 13:42 They will throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Matt. 13:43 Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear.

COMMENTARY

A reference to Psalm 78:2-3.

“Son of Man”: A term with Old Testament origins meaning “God’s anointed.” In the Old Testament, the term is often associated with the coming Messiah (see Daniel 7:13-14).

A spiritual metaphor (see also John 8:44).

The final judgment is profiled in Revelation 20:11-15.

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Matt. 13:44 “The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field.

Matt. 13:45 “Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls.

Matt. 13:46 When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it.

Matt. 13:47 “Once again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was let down into the lake and caught all kinds of fish.

Matt. 13:48 When it was full, the fishermen pulled it up on the shore. Then they sat down and collected the good fish in baskets, but threw the bad away.

Matt. 13:49 This is how it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come and separate the wicked from the righteous

Matt. 13:50 and throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Matt. 13:51 “Have you understood all these things?” Jesus asked. “Yes,” they replied.

COMMENTARY

The following parables have a common theme: The Kingdom of God is of incredible value. To be a part of the Kingdom's work (by being a disciple and follower of Christ), is an honor more precious than anything this world can offer.

Jesus told several parables which indicate that evil will not be removed from the world until the final judgment. The apparent delay in a time of accountability is a measure of God's grace (2 Peter 3:9) and should not be construed as a license to continue in sin.

WOMEN SUPPORT THE MINISTRY OF JESUS

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Matt. 13:52 He said to them, “Therefore every teacher of the law who has been instructed about the kingdom of heaven is like the owner of a house who brings out of his storeroom new treasures as well as old.”

Luke 8:1 After this, Jesus traveled about from one town and village to another, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God. The Twelve were with him,

Luke 8:2 and also some women who had been cured of evil spirits and diseases: Mary (called Magdalene) from whom seven demons had come out;

Luke 8:3 Joanna the wife of Cuza, the manager of Herod’s household; Susanna; and many others. These women were helping to support them out of their own means.

COMMENTARY

The teachings of Jesus were designed to bring new life, grace, meaning and fulfillment to the Old Testament Law. However, the religious leaders, fearing change and a possible threat to their power, rejected the teachings of Jesus outright.

Magdalene was likely not her last name, but a reference to the village she was from (Magdala, a town known for vice and wickedness).

Joanna: *It required great courage to serve in Herod’s court and be known as a follower of Jesus.*

Susanna: *Mentioned only here. Nothing more is known of her.*

JESUS CALMS A STORM

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Mark 4:35 That day when evening came, he said to his disciples, “Let us go over to the other side.”

Mark 4:36 Leaving the crowd behind, they took him along, just as he was, in the boat. There were also other boats with him.

Mark 4:37 A furious squall came up, and the waves broke over the boat, so that it was nearly swamped.

Mark 4:38 Jesus was in the stern, sleeping on a cushion. The disciples woke him and said to him, “Teacher, don’t you care if we drown?”

Mark 4:39 He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, “Quiet! Be still!” Then the wind died down and it was completely calm.

Mark 4:40 He said to his disciples, “Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?”

Mark 4:41 They were terrified and asked each other, “Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!”

COMMENTARY

The other side of the Sea of Galilee. This would be a journey of at least 10 miles.

Some of the disciples were seasoned fisherman. For them to be alarmed (see verse 38) notes the fierce nature of the storm.

In many different ways, Jesus introduced His disciples to trials for the purpose of strengthening and developing their faith—He does the same for His followers today.

JESUS HEALS A DEMON-POSSESSED MAN

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Mark 5:1 They went across the lake to the region of the Gerasenes.

Mark 5:2 When Jesus got out of the boat, a man with an evil spirit came from the tombs to meet him.

Mark 5:3 This man lived in the tombs, and no one could bind him anymore, not even with a chain.

Mark 5:4 For he had often been chained hand and foot, but he tore the chains apart and broke the irons on his feet. No one was strong enough to subdue him.

Mark 5:5 Night and day among the tombs and in the hills he would cry out and cut himself with stones.

Mark 5:6 When he saw Jesus from a distance, he ran and fell on his knees in front of him.

Mark 5:7 He shouted at the top of his voice, “What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? Swear to God that you won’t torture me!”

Mark 5:8 For Jesus had said to him, “Come out of this man, you evil spirit!”

Mark 5:9 Then Jesus asked him, “What is your name?” “My name is Legion,” he replied, “for we are many.”

Mark 5:10 And he begged Jesus again and again not to send them out of the area.

COMMENTARY

Interesting that Jesus would make the difficult journey—10 miles across the Sea of Galilee, at night, in the midst of a storm, to minister to one man. It is said that if there was but one sinner on earth, Jesus would still have come and died on the cross.

Spiritual possession can cause illness or involve supernatural strength.

The demons, more than the Pharisees, recognized Jesus as the Messiah.

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Mark 5:11 A large herd of pigs was feeding on the nearby hillside.

Mark 5:12 The demons begged Jesus, “Send us among the pigs; allow us to go into them.”

Mark 5:13 He gave them permission, and the evil spirits came out and went into the pigs. The herd, about two thousand in number, rushed down the steep bank into the lake and were drowned.

Mark 5:14 Those tending the pigs ran off and reported this in the town and countryside, and the people went out to see what had happened.

Mark 5:15 When they came to Jesus, they saw the man who had been possessed by the legion of demons, sitting there, dressed and in his right mind; and they were afraid.

Mark 5:16 Those who had seen it told the people what had happened to the demon-possessed man—and told about the pigs as well.

Mark 5:17 Then the people began to plead with Jesus to leave their region.

Mark 5:18 As Jesus was getting into the boat, the man who had been demon-possessed begged to go with him.

Mark 5:19 Jesus did not let him, but said, “Go home to your family and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you.”

COMMENTARY

These pigs were owned by Jews who made a profit by selling them to non-Jewish people. This practice, according to Old Testament Law, was very inappropriate. The loss of the herd was, from a cultural point of view, a well-deserved fate for Hebrews who lived in such disregard of Law.

A natural reaction given the very clear feeling of the crowd.

Rather than rejoicing at the healing of the demon-possessed man, the crowd is both afraid and angry. In short order they implore Jesus and the disciples to leave the area (see verse 17).

What could have been considered a punishment, Jesus considered an opportunity. The man was given the opportunity to be the first missionary for Christ to the surrounding region of 10 cities (the Decapolis). One year later Christ would return to find many believers (see Mark 6).

JESUS HEALS A PARALYTIC

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Luke 5:18 Some men came carrying a paralytic on a mat and tried to take him into the house to lay him before Jesus.

Luke 5:19 When they could not find a way to do this because of the crowd, they went up on the roof and lowered him on his mat through the tiles into the middle of the crowd, right in front of Jesus.

Luke 5:20 When Jesus saw their faith, he said, "Friend, your sins are forgiven."

Luke 5:21 The Pharisees and the teachers of the law began thinking to themselves, "Who is this fellow who speaks blasphemy? Who can forgive sins but God alone?"

Luke 5:22 Jesus knew what they were thinking and asked, "Why are you thinking these things in your hearts?"

Luke 5:23 Which is easier: to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up and walk'?

Luke 5:24 But that you may know that

COMMENTARY

Verses 18-26 note that creative and steadfast persistence is commended and rewarded by Jesus.

The words in the original text to describe the home and roof indicate that this was a substantial home, likely owned by a person of prominence. To break through the roof of a person with the means to bring charges against you required great courage (and great faith).

Jesus addressed the man's priority need first (his need for forgiveness).

It is true that only God can forgive sins. Jesus' actions here are designed to reveal His divine nature.

SCRIPTURE TEXT

the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins..." He said to the paralyzed man, "I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home."

Luke 5:25 Immediately he stood up in front of them, took what he had been lying on and went home praising God.

Luke 5:26 Everyone was amazed and gave praise to God. They were filled with awe and said, "We have seen remarkable things today."

COMMENTARY

It took courage and faith to follow Jesus' directive and stand, but his commendable actions led to a great blessing. Courage, faith, and obedience are commended today.

When we lead in giving praise to God we're on the path of becoming a powerful witness for God. Do not be reserved in telling others what God has done for you. Note the effect of this man's witness in verse 26.

THE CALL OF LEVI

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Matt. 9:9 As Jesus went on from there, he saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax collector's booth. "Follow me," he told him, and Matthew got up and followed him.

Matt. 9:10 While Jesus was having dinner at Matthew's house, many tax collectors and "sinners" came and ate with him and his disciples.

Matt. 9:11 When the Pharisees saw this, they asked his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and 'sinners'?"

Matt. 9:12 On hearing this, Jesus said, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick.

Matt. 9:13 But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.' For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners."

COMMENTARY

Matthew was also known as Levi (many in the first century A.D. had several names—Peter, for example, was also known as Cephas and Simon). Levi is the writer of the Gospel of Matthew.

It was a common thought that one could become 'unclean' by associating with one who was considered 'unclean.' It was therefore unusual for a religious teacher (such as a Rabbi) to eat or spend time with tax collectors.

This verse notes the heart and compassion of God.

JESUS AS LORD OF THE SABBATH

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Matt. 12:1 At that time Jesus went through the grainfields on the Sabbath. His disciples were hungry and began to pick some heads of grain and eat them.

Matt. 12:2 When the Pharisees saw this, they said to him, “Look! Your disciples are doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath.”

Matt. 12:3 He answered, “Haven’t you read what David did when he and his companions were hungry?”

Matt. 12:4 He entered the house of God, and he and his companions ate the consecrated bread—which was not lawful for them to do, but only for the priests.

Matt. 12:5 Or haven’t you read in the Law that on the Sabbath the priests in the temple desecrate the day and yet are innocent?

Matt. 12:6 I tell you that one greater than the temple is here.

Matt. 12:7 If you had known what these words mean, ‘I desire mercy, not sacrifice,’ you would not have condemned the innocent.

Matt. 12:8 For the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath.”

Matt. 12:9 Going on from that place, he went into their synagogue,

COMMENTARY

The Pharisees taught that it was against Sabbath Law to walk more than $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile, work (defined as anything requiring the use of two hands), or prepare food on the Sabbath.

1 Samuel 21:1-6 notes how David (about 1000 years earlier) and his men engaged in a similar activity, yet they were not condemned by the Pharisees. Further pointing out their hypocrisy, Jesus referenced (verse 5) their practice of exempting priests from their rigid interpretation of the Law by allowing certain temple practices and work to be done on the Sabbath (work that could have been done the day before).

The Pharisees, having the advantage of great learning opportunities, are here rebuked by Jesus, for misinterpreting Scripture and maligning the disciples (the innocent) for enjoying life’s simple pleasures.

JESUS HEALS A MAN WITH A SHRIVELED HAND ON THE SABBATH

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Matt. 12:10 and a man with a shriveled hand was there. Looking for a reason to accuse Jesus, they asked him, “Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?”

Matt. 12:11 He said to them, “If any of you has a sheep and it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will you not take hold of it and lift it out?”

Matt. 12:12 How much more valuable is a man than a sheep! Therefore it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath.”

Matt. 12:13 Then he said to the man, “Stretch out your hand.” So he stretched it out and it was completely restored, just as sound as the other.

Matt. 12:14 But the Pharisees went out and plotted how they might kill Jesus.

COMMENTARY

These back-to-back stories are presented to show Jesus' authority over the Law and the Sabbath.

As in verses 3-4, Jesus points out their hypocrisy. The Pharisees condemned Jesus for helping a man on the Sabbath, but would allow individuals to help an animal on the Sabbath.

Healing would technically be considered work, which, according to how the Pharisees interpreted the Law, was strictly forbidden.

JESUS HEALS THE DAUGHTER OF A SYNAGOGUE OFFICIAL

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Mark 5:22 Then one of the synagogue rulers, named Jairus, came there. Seeing Jesus, he fell at his feet

Mark 5:23 and pleaded earnestly with him, “My little daughter is dying. Please come and put your hands on her so that she will be healed and live.”

Mark 5:24 So Jesus went with him. A large crowd followed and pressed around him.

Mark 5:25 And a woman was there who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years.

Mark 5:26 She had suffered a great deal under the care of many doctors and had spent all she had, yet instead of getting better she grew worse.

Mark 5:27 When she heard about Jesus, she came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak,

Mark 5:28 because she thought, “If I just touch his clothes, I will be healed.”

Mark 5:29 Immediately her bleeding stopped and she felt in her body that she was freed from her suffering.

Mark 5:30 At once Jesus realized that power had gone out from him. He turned around in the crowd and asked, “Who touched my clothes?”

COMMENTARY

Jairus, a synagogue ruler, had many peers that sharply opposed Jesus. Now, with his daughter ill (V.23) Jairus rightly chooses to humble himself and seek Jesus' help.

Notice how quickly Jesus responds to Jairus' plea for help. With no lecture, rebuke or preconditions, Jesus immediately moves to bless.

From a cultural point of view, a woman with this medical issue was considered physically and spiritually unclean. It was considered inappropriate for her to approach Jesus, and it must have been difficult for Jairus to see this apparently cursed woman interrupt what Jesus had promised to do for his very ill daughter.

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Mark 5:31 You see the people crowding against you,” his disciples answered, “and yet you can ask, “Who touched me?”

Mark 5:32 But Jesus kept looking around to see who had done it.

Mark 5:33 Then the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came and fell at his feet and, trembling with fear, told him the whole truth.

Mark 5:34 He said to her, “Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering.”

Mark 5:35 While Jesus was still speaking, some men came from the house of Jairus, the synagogue ruler. “Your daughter is dead,” they said. “Why bother the teacher anymore?”

Mark 5:36 Ignoring what they said, Jesus told the synagogue ruler, “Don’t be afraid; just believe.”

Mark 5:37 He did not let anyone follow him except Peter, James and John the brother of James.

Mark 5:38 When they came to the home of the synagogue ruler, Jesus saw a commotion, with people crying and wailing loudly.

COMMENTARY

Here Jesus is not angry, but does not wish to miss an opportunity to teach, and encourage.

One of many times Jesus directly links one’s faith with the blessings they receive.

Like in the story of Lazarus, the miracle of healing was delayed, not because God is mean or sometimes unable to help, but so that Jairus would learn something about faith, the power of God, and receive a greater than expected blessing.

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Mark 5:39 He went in and said to them, “Why all this commotion and wailing? The child is not dead but asleep.”

Mark 5:40 But they laughed at him. After he put them all out, he took the child’s father and mother and the disciples who were with him, and went in where the child was.

Mark 5:41 He took her by the hand and said to her, “Talitha koum!” (which means, “Little girl, I say to you, get up!”).

Mark 5:42 Immediately the girl stood up and walked around (she was twelve years old). At this they were completely astonished.

Mark 5:43 He gave strict orders not to let anyone know about this, and told them to give her something to eat.

COMMENTARY

“The child is not dead but asleep” indicates Jesus’ intention for the child not to remain in death. The term, ‘asleep’ was a common metaphor for death (see John 11).

Talitha Koum: A phrase in Aramaic, the first language of most of the locals at that time. The use of the little girl’s first language shows tenderness on the part of Jesus.

JESUS HEALS THE BLIND AND THE DEMON POSSESSED

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Matt. 9:27 As Jesus went on from there, two blind men followed him, calling out, “Have mercy on us, Son of David!”

Matt. 9:28 When he had gone indoors, the blind men came to him, and he asked them, “Do you believe that I am able to do this?” “Yes, Lord,” they replied.

Matt. 9:29 Then he touched their eyes and said, “According to your faith will it be done to you”;

Matt. 9:30 and their sight was restored. Jesus warned them sternly, “See that no one knows about this.”

Matt. 9:31 But they went out and spread the news about him all over that region.

Matt. 9:32 While they were going out, a man who was demon-possessed and could not talk was brought to Jesus.

Matt. 9:33 And when the demon was driven out, the man who had been mute spoke. The crowd was amazed and said, “Nothing like this has ever been seen in Israel.”

Matt. 9:34 But the Pharisees said, “It is by the prince of demons that he drives out demons.”

COMMENTARY

Jesus wants individuals to come to him out of a desire to learn, draw close to God, and hear the Gospel message. 2000 years ago, individuals who came to Jesus just to see or receive a miracle were often closed to the truth and disruptive to his ministry, thus his counsel here to not announce this miracle.

According to custom, the blind were considered cursed (see John 9). The multiple healings of the blind note both Jesus’ power and compassion.

The surge in demonic activity is tied to the commencement of Jesus’ ministry. There will likely be a surge in demonic activity in the “last days.”

JESUS HEALS A LAME MAN AT THE POOL OF BETHESDA

SCRIPTURE TEXT

John 5:1 Some time later, Jesus went up to Jerusalem for a feast of the Jews.

John 5:2 Now there is in Jerusalem near the Sheep Gate a pool, which in Aramaic is called Bethesda and which is surrounded by five covered colonnades.

John 5:3 Here a great number of disabled people used to lie—the blind, the lame, the paralyzed [—and they waited for the moving of the waters.]

John 5:4 [From time to time an angel of the Lord would come down and stir up the waters. The first one into the pool after each such disturbance would be cured of whatever disease he had.]

John 5:5 One who was there had been an invalid for thirty-eight years.

John 5:6 When Jesus saw him lying there and learned that he had been in this condition for a long time, he asked him, “Do you want to get well?”

John 5:7 “Sir,” the invalid replied, “I have no one to help me into the pool when the water is stirred. While I am trying to get in, someone else goes down ahead of me.”

John 5:8 Then Jesus said to him, “Get up! Pick up your mat and walk.”

John 5:9 At once the man was cured; he picked up his mat and walked. The day on which this took place was a Sabbath,

COMMENTARY

Though not explicitly noted here, the ‘feast’ was likely the Passover, celebrated in spring.

The gate by which sheep (brought to the city for sale or sacrifice) entered.

Archeologists note the discovery of a pool 360’ long, 130’ wide and 75’ deep.

Some Bible translations omit this verse or designate it with a footnote as not being common to the oldest families of manuscripts. Jesus does not comment on the beliefs of those who sat by the pool, waiting for it to be stirred by an angel. The Lord’s focus is to heal one who had faith, but whose situation was pitiful as it must have seemed to him that the grace of God was always just out of reach.

Notice how quick and without condition Jesus offered this man the grace of God.

SCRIPTURE TEXT

John 5:10 and so the Jews said to the man who had been healed, “It is the Sabbath; the law forbids you to carry your mat.”

John 5:11 But he replied, “The man who made me well said to me, “Pick up your mat and walk.”

John 5:12 So they asked him, “Who is this fellow who told you to pick it up and walk?”

John 5:13 The man who was healed had no idea who it was, for Jesus had slipped away into the crowd that was there.

John 5:14 Later Jesus found him at the temple and said to him, “See, you are well again. Stop sinning or something worse may happen to you.”

John 5:15 The man went away and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had made him well.

John 5:16 So, because Jesus was doing these things on the Sabbath, the Jews persecuted him.

John 5:17 Jesus said to them, “My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I, too, am working.”

John 5:18 For this reason the Jews tried all the harder to kill him; not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God.

COMMENTARY

The man had wrongly believed that his healing was dependant on man's help, not God's power and mercy.

Several times Jesus rebuked the Pharisees for understanding the letter, but not the spirit of the Law (see Matt. 15 and 23). Here the pharisees not only wrongly apply the Law to condemn the healed man, but fail to understand and rejoice in what God through the Messiah was doing.

Jesus knew the past and heart of the man He had healed. Though not noted in this account, there was evidently some unresolved spiritual issues Jesus felt compelled to challenge the man to address.

An encouraging promise—God is working even now, in wondrous ways, on your behalf (see Eph. 3:20).

A deity statement.

SCRIPTURE TEXT

John 5:19 Jesus gave them this answer: “I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does.

John 5:20 For the Father loves the Son and shows him all he does. Yes, to your amazement he will show him even greater things than these.

John 5:21 For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son gives life to whom he is pleased to give it.

John 5:22 Moreover, the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son,

John 5:23 that all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father, who sent him.

John 5:24 “I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life.

John 5:25 I tell you the truth, a time is coming and has now come when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear will live.

John 5:26 For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son to have life in himself.

COMMENTARY

This is a reference to the humanity of Jesus Christ. One of the mysteries of the faith is that Jesus had a dual nature—He was fully human and fully divine (Col. 2:9).

That is: God will do an even greater work (than healing the blind and lame) through the Son in the future.

The Father gives life—the Son gives life. In verses 21-29, Jesus is linking Himself to God by noting that He shares in the work of the Father. Note: Jesus is also referred to as Creator, First and Last, One with God, the Mighty God, Lord and God, and King. These verses (and titles) support the Trinity doctrine.

Belief is a requisite to salvation, but there is more. James notes that “even the demons believe...” (James (2:19-20) and that “faith without works is dead” (James 2:17). Followers of Christ must first believe, then live out their faith—showing themselves not to be perfect, but faithful.

SCRIPTURE TEXT

John 5:27 And he has given him authority to judge because he is the Son of Man.

John 5:28 “Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice

John 5:29 and come out—those who have done good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned.

John 5:30 By myself I can do nothing; I judge only as I hear, and my judgment is just, for I seek not to please myself but him who sent me.

John 5:31 “If I testify about myself, my testimony is not valid.

John 5:32 There is another who testifies in my favor, and I know that his testimony about me is valid.

John 5:33 “You have sent to John and he has testified to the truth.

John 5:34 Not that I accept human testimony; but I mention it that you may be saved.

John 5:35 John was a lamp that burned and gave light, and you chose for a time to enjoy his light.

John 5:36 I have testimony weightier than that of John. For the very work that the Father has given me to finish, and which I am doing, testifies that the Father has sent me.

COMMENTARY

See Philippians 2:8-10.

A reference to the final resurrection and judgment. Revelation 20-21.

The Jews placed great importance on the validation of witnesses. Jesus’ testimony is valid for it had been endorsed by God Himself.

Jesus further seeks to validate His testimony by referencing John the Baptist, who also testified that Jesus was the Messiah.

You may be saved: The thought is that if they had difficulty believing in an unseen God, perhaps their heart would be stirred by the voice of one they knew, John, one recognized as a prophet from God.

SCRIPTURE TEXT

John 5:37 And the Father who sent me has himself testified concerning me. You have never heard his voice nor seen his form,

John 5:38 nor does his word dwell in you, for you do not believe the one he sent.

John 5:39 You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me,

John 5:40 yet you refuse to come to me to have life.

John 5:41 I do not accept praise from men,

John 5:42 but I know you. I know that you do not have the love of God in your hearts.

John 5:43 I have come in my Father's name, and you do not accept me; but if someone else comes in his own name, you will accept him.

John 5:44 How can you believe if you accept praise from one another, yet make no effort to obtain the praise that comes from the only God?

John 5:45 "But do not think I will accuse you before the Father. Your accuser is Moses, on whom your hopes are set.

COMMENTARY

Many are curious and show interest in spiritual things for a time. Jesus, however, does not commend the curious, but rather, the committed.

Study, prayer, giving, fasting and observing fine traditions have their place, but nothing can take the place of entering into a personal relationship with Jesus.

The Apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthian Church (1 Cor. 13) that even if one does great things and speaks with the tongues of angels, it is all for naught if there is not love. To love is to emulate God. To forgive and extend grace is to embrace the teachings of Jesus (John 13:15).

Moses spoke prophetically of the coming Messiah. The Pharisees professed to accept the teaching of Moses, but they could not accept that Jesus was the fulfillment of Moses' prophetic writings. Therefore, he (Moses), whom they respected, would in the end reject their piety.

JESUS IS LORD OF THE HARVEST

SCRIPTURE TEXT

John 5:46 If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote about me.

John 5:47 But since you do not believe what he wrote, how are you going to believe what I say?"

Matt. 9:35 Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness.

Matt. 9:36 When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.

Matt. 9:37 Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few.

Matt. 9:38 Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field."

Mark 6:7 Calling the Twelve to him, he sent them out two by two and gave them authority over evil spirits.

COMMENTARY

*A beautiful five-step evangelistic plan is presented in verses 35-38: 1) **Go**. Jesus went to "all the towns and villages" 2) **Share**. Jesus preached the "good news of the kingdom 3) **Help**. Jesus healed "diseases and sickness" 4) **Care**. Jesus "had compassion on them" and 5) **enlist others** to share in the good work.*

Let this be your prayer. Believers have a tremendous calling, and a tremendous opportunity to reap a ready harvest.

JESUS SENDS OUT THE TWELVE

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Mark 6:8 These were his instructions: “Take nothing for the journey except a staff—no bread, no bag, no money in your belts.

Mark 6:9 Wear sandals but not an extra tunic.

Mark 6:10 Whenever you enter a house, stay there until you leave that town.

Mark 6:11 And if any place will not welcome you or listen to you, shake the dust off your feet when you leave, as a testimony against them.”

Mark 6:12 They went out and preached that people should repent.

Mark 6:13 They drove out many demons and anointed many sick people with oil and healed them.

MATTHEW'S ACCOUNT

Matt. 10:14 If anyone will not welcome you or listen to your words, shake the dust off your feet when you leave that home or town.

Matt. 10:15 I tell you the truth, it will be more bearable for Sodom and Gomorrah on the day of judgment than for that town.

COMMENTARY

Here the instruction is to take no provisions (the reason is that this is a lesson in trust). Later (see Luke 22:35-36), the disciples are sent on the same kind of mission but are told to take extra provisions. From this believers are to see that ‘success’ is not so much dependant on the methodology as it is on faith and obedience. When one walks with God one moves toward blessing.

A cultural practice dating back hundreds of years. It was an emblematic action which served as a testimony and warning—giving notice that a particular area was lacking spiritually.

The cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, which did not have the benefit of Synagogues, prophets or the Scripture, were punished by God in Genesis 19 for their great wickedness. Yet a more severe judgment awaits those who have been exposed to the Word and truth, but reject it.

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Matt. 10:16 I am sending you out like sheep among wolves. Therefore be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves.

Matt. 10:17 “Be on your guard against men; they will hand you over to the local councils and flog you in their synagogues.

Matt. 10:18 On my account you will be brought before governors and kings as witnesses to them and to the Gentiles

Matt. 10:19 But when they arrest you, do not worry about what to say or how to say it. At that time you will be given what to say,

Matt. 10:20 for it will not be you speaking, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.

Matt. 10:21 “Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child; children will rebel against their parents and have them put to death.

Matt. 10:22 All men will hate you because of me, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved.

Matt. 10:23 When you are persecuted in one place, flee to another. I tell you the truth, you will not finish going through the cities of Israel before the Son of Man comes.

Matt. 10:24 “A student is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master.

COMMENTARY

This prophecy was fulfilled in Acts 5:40.

This prophecy was fulfilled in Acts 22-24.

Not, ‘if’ they arrest you, but ‘when’ they arrest you. It takes great courage to be the witness God wants you to be.

‘At that time...’ An important theme in this passage is Learning To Trust In God. Here Jesus points out that even in trials (or perhaps, especially in the midst of trials), we are to trust in and rely on God (rather than our words, wisdom, resources, or strategy).

A great season of persecution believers was coming. It would begin in Acts 3, grow sharply in Acts 8, and would sweep across the Roman Empire within a hundred years. Scripture also notes that another great wave of persecution will come in the last days.

The word WITNESS is linked to the word MARTYR. Believers are called to live for Christ, and be willing to die for Christ. How easy it is to feel entitled to a measure of comfort, wealth or privilege that Jesus himself never experienced.

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Matt. 10:25 It is enough for the student to be like his teacher, and the servant like his master. If the head of the house has been called Beelzebub, how much more the members of his household!

Matt. 10:26 “So do not be afraid of them. There is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed, or hidden that will not be made known.

Matt. 10:27 What I tell you in the dark, speak in the daylight; what is whispered in your ear, proclaim from the roofs.

Matt. 10:28 Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell.

Matt. 10:29 Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from the will of your Father.

Matt. 10:30 And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered.

Matt. 10:31 So don’t be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.

Matt. 10:32 “Whoever acknowledges me before men, I will also acknowledge him before my Father in heaven.

Matt. 10:33 But whoever disowns me before men, I will disown him before my Father in heaven.

COMMENTARY

Certainly Jesus wants all to be aware that there is a hell and there will be a judgment. However, the focus of this passage is perspective. The thought is: Do not fear the troubles of today, for God has an eternal plan for you—Do not fear the things of the world, for God has prepared a spiritual reward. Having a spiritual perspective (see Romans 8:31) helps one endure the trials of life (James 1:2-3).

A recap of a teaching from the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 6).

Verses 32-33: Very important verses which should be taken to heart.

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Matt. 10:34 “Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword.

Matt. 10:35 For I have come to turn ‘a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law—

Matt. 10:36 a man’s enemies will be the members of his own household.’

Matt. 10:37 Anyone who loves his father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves his son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me;

Matt. 10:38 and anyone who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me.

Matt. 10:39 Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.

Matt. 10:40 “He who receives you receives me, and he who receives me receives the one who sent me.

Matt. 10:41 Anyone who receives a prophet because he is a prophet will receive a prophet’s reward, and anyone who receives a righteous man because he is a righteous man will receive a righteous man’s reward.

Matt. 10:42 And if anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones because he is my disciple, I tell you the truth, he will certainly not lose his reward.”

COMMENTARY

Many believed the Messiah would bring about the overthrow of the Roman occupiers and thereby usher in a political peace. Jesus came to offer something better. Here He is saying: “I have not come to bring about a political peace, but a spiritual peace” (see Romans 5:1). The ‘sword’ mentioned here is perhaps a reference to the Gospel truth, the Word of God (see Eph. 6:17). The turmoil mentioned in verses 35-36 was not the objective of the Messiah’s coming, but the unfortunate result of the spiritual battle that impacts all who believe (Eph. 6:11-12).

True disciples of Christ exemplify a serious faith, a commitment to persevere, and a heart willing to sacrifice.

A figurative statement meaning: No sacrifice for the cause of Christ should be considered too great.

The final verses of this chapter are designed to remind the believer that God’s grace ensures rewards (in this age and in the age to come).

THE DEATH OF JOHN THE BAPTIST

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Matt. 14:1 At that time Herod the tetrarch heard the reports about Jesus,

Matt. 14:2 and he said to his attendants, “This is John the Baptist; he has risen from the dead! That is why miraculous powers are at work in him.”

Matt. 14:3 Now Herod had arrested John and bound him and put him in prison because of Herodias, his brother Philip’s wife,

Matt. 14:4 for John had been saying to him: “It is not lawful for you to have her.”

Matt. 14:5 Herod wanted to kill John, but he was afraid of the people, because they considered him a prophet.

Matt. 14:6 On Herod’s birthday the daughter of Herodias danced for them and pleased Herod so much

Matt. 14:7 that he promised with an oath to give her whatever she asked.

Matt. 14:8 Prompted by her mother, she said, “Give me here on a platter the head of John the Baptist.”

COMMENTARY

This Herod is the son of Herod the Great, the king who ordered the killing of infant boys when Jesus was born.

Please refer to Matthew 11:2-19 for additional information on Jesus’ assessment of the ministry of John the Baptist.

The dance was likely part of Salome’s mother’s plan to gain Herod’s goodwill, the promise of a favor, and to silence God’s prophet.

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Matt. 14:9 The king was distressed, but because of his oaths and his dinner guests, he ordered that her request be granted

Matt. 14:10 and had John beheaded in the prison.

Matt. 14:11 His head was brought in on a platter and given to the girl, who carried it to her mother.

Matt. 14:12 John's disciples came and took his body and buried it. Then they went and told Jesus.

COMMENTARY

The king knew that ordering the death of John was wrong, but sought to minimize his culpability by noting that he was bound by a promise to his wife. Later, Pilate ordered the death of another innocent man, Jesus. He believed his order to have Jesus crucified was required by his office, and sought to absolve his guilt by ceremonially washing his hands. In the end, however, both Herod and Pilate stand guilty before God for no one can blame others for the bad choices they make.

JESUS FEEDS THE 5000

SCRIPTURE TEXT

John 6:1 Some time after this, Jesus crossed to the far shore of the Sea of Galilee (that is, the Sea of Tiberias),

John 6:2 and a great crowd of people followed him because they saw the miraculous signs he had performed on the sick.

John 6:3 Then Jesus went up on a mountainside and sat down with his disciples.

John 6:4 The Jewish Passover Feast was near.

John 6:5 When Jesus looked up and saw a great crowd coming toward him, he said to Philip, “Where shall we buy bread for these people to eat?”

John 6:6 He asked this only to test him, for he already had in mind what he was going to do.

John 6:7 Philip answered him, “Eight months’ wages would not buy enough bread for each one to have a bite!”

John 6:8 Another of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, spoke up,

John 6:9 “Here is a boy with five small barley loaves and two small fish, but how far will they go among so many?”

COMMENTARY

Sea of Tiberias: The Roman name for the Sea of Galilee, so named in honor of Emperor Tiberias.

Jesus directs this logistical question to Philip, perhaps because he is a planner by nature, and prone to follow the course that seemed most logical. This approach can run contrary to the ‘walk by faith and not by sight’ call that Christians have (2 Cor. 5:7). In John 1:43, Philip, before becoming a disciple of Jesus, first reviewed what Moses and the prophets had to say about the Messiah. It is perhaps the administrator in Philip that Jesus sought to test here.

In the faith, we are not responsible for securing the blessing. Our sacrifice, be it time, effort or money, serves only to ‘prime the pump’—God is the well. The victory is His. In this story, many are blessed because of the sacrifice of one small boy.

SCRIPTURE TEXT

John 6:10 Jesus said, “Have the people sit down.” There was plenty of grass in that place, and the men sat down, about five thousand of them.

John 6:11 Jesus then took the loaves, gave thanks, and distributed to those who were seated as much as they wanted. He did the same with the fish.

John 6:12 When they had all had enough to eat, he said to his disciples, “Gather the pieces that are left over. Let nothing be wasted.”

John 6:13 So they gathered them and filled twelve baskets with the pieces of the five barley loaves left over by those who had eaten.

John 6:14 After the people saw the miraculous sign that Jesus did, they began to say, “Surely this is the Prophet who is to come into the world.”

John 6:15 Jesus, knowing that they intended to come and make him king by force, withdrew again to a mountain by himself.

John 6:16 When evening came, his disciples went down to the lake,

John 6:17 where they got into a boat and set off across the lake for Capernaum. By now it was dark, and Jesus had not yet joined them.

John 6:18 A strong wind was blowing and the waters grew rough.

COMMENTARY

Twelve: A number significant to the Hebrew people. It was linked to the sovereign administration of God's plan and the perfect unfolding of His will.

It was not unusual for Jesus to send His disciples on ahead of Him. This time it was to test their faith.

SCRIPTURE TEXT

John 6:19 When they had rowed three or three and a half miles, they saw Jesus approaching the boat, walking on the water; and they were terrified.

John 6:20 But he said to them, "It is I; don't be afraid."

Matt. 14:28 "Lord, if it's you," Peter replied, "tell me to come to you on the water."

Matt. 14:29 "Come," he said. Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus.

Matt. 14:30 But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, "Lord, save me!"

Matt. 14:31 Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. "You of little faith," he said, "why did you doubt?"

John 6:21 Then they were willing to take him into the boat, and immediately the boat reached the shore where they were heading.

Mark 6:53 When they had crossed over, they landed at Gennesaret and anchored there.

Mark 6:54 As soon as they got out of the boat, people recognized Jesus.

Mark 6:55 They ran throughout that whole region and carried the sick on mats to wherever they heard he was.

COMMENTARY

The word in the original Greek text is 'Phobeo,' from which is rendered the word, 'Phobia,' which is an irrational or illogical fear. The inference here is that there was no reason to fear for they had already received multiple assurances and promises from the Lord.

The more we keep our eyes on Jesus, the more peace we will have and the more we will be able to accomplish.

Though certainly Jesus was able to transport the boat to the shore, the precise reading of the original text does not require that interpretation.

This is the same area where Jesus healed the demon-possessed man who lived in the graveyard. One year had passed.

One man, in one year, had told the 10 cities in his region about Christ. A year ago these people were ready to kill Jesus. Now they run to meet him.

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Mark 6:56 And wherever he went—into villages, towns or countryside—they placed the sick in the marketplaces. They begged him to let them touch even the edge of his cloak, and all who touched him were healed.

COMMENTARY

The Gospels note that Jesus could do no miracles in areas where there was no faith. The great miracles mentioned here are notable in that 1) they took place in a Greek-influenced region (considered a lesser or defiled area by the religious leaders in Jerusalem) 2) the revival of faith was prompted by one, 'untrained' man who at one time was demon possessed and 3) they stand in stark contrast to the very few miracles that could be done in Jesus' home town (Matt. 13:58). In this story we see that faith is more important than training, and that with faith all things are possible. (Mark 9:23)

JESUS PREACHES COMMITMENT TO A LARGE CROWD

SCRIPTURE TEXT

John 6:22 The next day the crowd that had stayed on the opposite shore of the lake realized that only one boat had been there, and that Jesus had not entered it with his disciples, but that they had gone away alone.

John 6:23 Then some boats from Tiberias landed near the place where the people had eaten the bread after the Lord had given thanks.

John 6:24 Once the crowd realized that neither Jesus nor his disciples were there, they got into the boats and went to Capernaum in search of Jesus.

John 6:25 When they found him on the other side of the lake, they asked him, “Rabbi, when did you get here?”

John 6:26 Jesus answered, “I tell you the truth, you are looking for me, not because you saw miraculous signs but because you ate the loaves and had your fill.

John 6:27 Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. On him God the Father has placed his seal of approval.”

John 6:28 Then they asked him, “What must we do, to do the works God requires?”

COMMENTARY

Many of the 5000 who were miraculously fed the day before had returned to see if there would be another miracle.

Rabbi = Teacher.

What must we do?: To ask the question is wise, but true wisdom lies in responding to the leading of the Lord (James 1:22).

SCRIPTURE TEXT

John 6:29 Jesus answered, “The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent.”

John 6:30 So they asked him, “What miraculous sign then will you give that we may see it and believe you? What will you do?”

John 6:31 Our forefathers ate the manna in the desert; as it is written: ‘He gave them bread from heaven to eat.’”

John 6:32 Jesus said to them, “I tell you the truth, it is not Moses who has given you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven.

John 6:33 For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.”

John 6:34 “Sir,” they said, “from now on give us this bread.”

John 6:35 Then Jesus declared, “I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty.

John 6:36 But as I told you, you have seen me and still you do not believe.

John 6:37 All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away.

John 6:38 For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me.

COMMENTARY

Jesus had by this time already shown himself to be the worker of many miracles. Here the request for a sign was an attempt to delay any personal responsibility and put the ball in God’s court—“Show us a few more signs,” they said, “and maybe we’ll believe.” But Jesus had already preached, produced miracles, fulfilled prophecies, and put the ball in their court. The same is true for the world today. We have more than what is needed to make an informed decision about who Jesus is and how we should respond to that truth.

Jesus is the true bread—that which sustains and satisfies (see verse 35).

They asked for a blessing, without understanding that the blessings they sought from God are the result of faith.

This verse confirms that the Father’s plan will prevail. Those whom the Father intends to hear the message will be brought to Jesus, and those who have faith in Jesus will be saved and kept by Him (John 10:28).

Jesus became the perfect sacrifice, because He was obedient to the Father’s will and without sin (Phil.2:8).

SCRIPTURE TEXT

John 6:39 And this is the will of him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all that he has given me, but raise them up at the last day.

John 6:40 For my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day."

John 6:41 At this the Jews began to grumble about him because he said, "I am the bread that came down from heaven."

John 6:42 They said, "Is this not Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How can he now say, "I came down from heaven'?"

John 6:43 "Stop grumbling among yourselves," Jesus answered.

John 6:44 "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him, and I will raise him up at the last day.

John 6:45 It is written in the Prophets: 'They will all be taught by God.' Everyone who listens to the Father and learns from him comes to me.

John 6:46 No one has seen the Father except the one who is from God; only he has seen the Father.

John 6:47 I tell you the truth, he who believes has everlasting life.

John 6:48 I am the bread of life.

John 6:49 Your forefathers ate the manna in the desert, yet they died.

COMMENTARY

"I will raise him up." This is a reference to the dual nature of Christ. Jesus the man would lay His life down. Jesus as God would raise it up again.

They had heard that Jesus was from Nazareth, and that He was the son of Joseph and Mary. It is reasonable to assume that they had also heard the story of the immaculate conception, but this they forgot or rejected. How true it is that when one looks for the negative they will surely find it.

The Holy Spirit prepares the heart and draws people to the Lord (and to His Church). See 1 Corinthians 12:18.

A reference to the divine nature of Jesus Christ.

A reference to a special provision of God in the days of Moses (Exodus 16). In many ways, what God did for and through Moses, foreshadowed what God was now doing through the Messiah.

SCRIPTURE TEXT

John 6:50 But here is the bread that comes down from heaven, which a man may eat and not die.

John 6:51 I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.”

John 6:52 Then the Jews began to argue sharply among themselves, “How can this man give us his flesh to eat?”

John 6:53 Jesus said to them, “I tell you the truth, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you.

John 6:54 Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.

John 6:55 For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink.

John 6:56 Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in him.

John 6:57 Just as the living Father sent me and I live because of the Father, so the one who feeds on me will live because of me.

John 6:58 This is the bread that came down from heaven. Your forefathers ate manna and died, but he who feeds on this bread will live forever.”

John 6:59 He said this while teaching in the synagogue in Capernaum.

COMMENTARY

Jesus’ teaching has spiritual application, and is unrecognizable to those who do not see with the eyes of faith (see Matt 13:16 and 2 Cor. 5:7).

A spiritual phrase meaning receiving Jesus into one’s life. Note: The disciples will in time see that this discourse has links to the Passover celebration, which has ties to the New Testament Ordinance of Communion, which commemorates the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross.

SCRIPTURE TEXT

John 6:60 On hearing it, many of his disciples said, “This is a hard teaching. Who can accept it?”

John 6:61 Aware that his disciples were grumbling about this, Jesus said to them, “Does this offend you?”

John 6:62 What if you see the Son of Man ascend to where he was before!

John 6:63 The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life.

John 6:64 Yet there are some of you who do not believe.” For Jesus had known from the beginning which of them did not believe and who would betray him.

John 6:65 He went on to say, “This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless the Father has enabled him.”

John 6:66 From this time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him.

John 6:67 “You do not want to leave too, do you?” Jesus asked the Twelve.

John 6:68 Simon Peter answered him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.

John 6:69 We believe and know that you are the Holy One of God.”

John 6:70 Then Jesus replied, “Have I not chosen you, the Twelve? Yet one of you is a devil!”

John 6:71 (He meant Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, who, though one of the Twelve, was later to betray him.)

COMMENTARY

Embracing spiritual challenges is difficult—particularly for those who are inclined to think that one’s spiritual walk should be marked by joy and comfort.

The flesh counts for nothing: That is, in comparison to the things of the Spirit. The things of the flesh are temporal, the things of the Spirit have eternal value.

They turned away from Jesus sensing that the cost of discipleship was too high. Note that Jesus said, “Anyone who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me” (Matthew 10:38).

Comforting words for Jesus to hear—Inspired words given as a gift from the Spirit.

THE STORY OF

JESUS

THE THIRD YEAR OF MINISTRY

JESUS CONFRONTED FOR NOT FOLLOWING THE TRADITIONS OF THE PHARISEES

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Mark 7:1 The Pharisees and some of the teachers of the law who had come from Jerusalem gathered around Jesus and

Mark 7:2 saw some of his disciples eating food with hands that were “unclean,” that is, unwashed.

Mark 7:3 (The Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they give their hands a ceremonial washing, holding to the tradition of the elders.

Mark 7:4 When they come from the marketplace they do not eat unless they wash. And they observe many other traditions, such as the washing of cups, pitchers and kettles.)

Mark 7:5 So the Pharisees and teachers of the law asked Jesus, “Why don’t your disciples live according to the tradition of the elders instead of eating their food with ‘unclean’ hands?”

Mark 7:6 He replied, “Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you hypocrites; as it is written: “These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me.

Mark 7:7 They worship me in vain; their teachings are but rules taught by men.’

Mark 7:8 You have let go of the commands of God and are holding on to the traditions of men.”

COMMENTARY

The Pharisees established strict regulations regarding how and when one should wash. Failure to follow these traditions would, in their view, make a person spiritually unclean. Jesus rebuked the Pharisees in this discourse, for their focus was on the superficial rather than the more important spiritual.

The tone of their question was not respectful and belies their true intent—to discredit Jesus.

This is a reference to a prophecy found in Isaiah 29:13.

It is possible to do the right things the wrong way and thereby displease God. Amos notes that in his day many worshiped God (Amos 9:1), but that their worship added to their sin (Amos 4:4). Ask God to speak to your heart and let you know not just what to do, but how to be able to do the right thing, at the right time, the right way, and with the right heart.

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Mark 7:9 And he said to them: “You have a fine way of setting aside the commands of God in order to observe your own traditions!

Mark 7:10 For Moses said, ‘Honor your father and your mother,’ and, ‘Anyone who curses his father or mother must be put to death.’

Mark 7:11 But you say that if a man says to his father or mother: ‘Whatever help you might otherwise have received from me is Corban’ (that is, a gift devoted to God),

Mark 7:12 then you no longer let him do anything for his father or mother.

Mark 7:13 Thus you nullify the word of God by your tradition that you have handed down. And you do many things like that.”

Mark 7:14 Again Jesus called the crowd to him and said, “Listen to me, everyone, and understand this.

Mark 7:15 Nothing outside a man can make him ‘unclean’ by going into him. Rather, it is what comes out of a man that makes him “unclean.”

COMMENTARY

Here Jesus points out their hypocrisy—they accuse Jesus of not respecting the Law, yet blatantly manipulate it themselves to justify their own wrongdoing (see verse 11).

The Pharisees wrongfully established traditions to maintain their position and power, and to justify breaking the commandment to honor their parents (Exodus 20:12).

See Matthew 15:11.

JESUS PRIVATELY INSTRUCTS HIS DISCIPLES

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Mark 7:16 [If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear.]

Mark 7:17 After he had left the crowd and entered the house, his disciples asked him about this parable.

Mark 7:18 “Are you so dull?” he asked. “Don’t you see that nothing that enters a man from the outside can make him ‘unclean’?”

Mark 7:19 For it doesn’t go into his heart but into his stomach, and then out of his body.” (In saying this, Jesus declared all foods “clean.”)

Mark 7:20 He went on: “What comes out of a man is what makes him ‘unclean.’

Mark 7:21 For from within, out of men’s hearts, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery,

Mark 7:22 greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly.

Mark 7:23 All these evils come from inside and make a man “unclean.”

COMMENTARY

Some suggest that this was the house of Simon and Andrew, in Capernaum.

The King James text renders this, “without understanding.” The original text reads “asunetos,” which means: foolish and without wisdom.

Here Jesus is laying a foundation for the coming New Covenant, which focuses on grace and salvation, rather than the Law and dietary restrictions (see Acts 10).

JESUS HEALS THE DAUGHTER OF A GREEK WOMAN

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Mark 7:24 Jesus left that place and went to the vicinity of Tyre. He entered a house and did not want anyone to know it; yet he could not keep his presence secret.

Mark 7:25 In fact, as soon as she heard about him, a woman whose little daughter was possessed by an evil spirit came and fell at his feet.

Mark 7:26 The woman was a Greek, born in Syrian Phoenicia. She begged Jesus to drive the demon out of her daughter.

Mark 7:27 “First let the children eat all they want,” he told her, “for it is not right to take the children’s bread and toss it to their dogs.”

Mark 7:28 “Yes, Lord,” she replied, “but even the dogs under the table eat the children’s crumbs.”

Mark 7:29 Then he told her, “For such a reply, you may go; the demon has left your daughter.”

Mark 7:30 She went home and found her child lying on the bed, and the demon gone.

COMMENTARY

Tyre and Sidon are often mentioned together—they were two of the leading port cities of Phoenicia. These were Gentile (non-Jewish) areas where Jesus’ enemies would not likely look for Him.

Children: A reference to the Hebrew people.

The reference to ‘dogs’ is difficult for today’s readers to understand. It is important to note that this was a cultural reference, not a derogatory remark. The woman took no offense, but simply remained perseverant in seeking a blessing, which Jesus extends (see verse 30).

JESUS HEALS THE DEAF AND MUTE

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Mark 7:31 Then Jesus left the vicinity of Tyre and went through Sidon, down to the Sea of Galilee and into the region of the Decapolis.

Mark 7:32 There some people brought to him a man who was deaf and could hardly talk, and they begged him to place his hand on the man.

Mark 7:33 After he took him aside, away from the crowd, Jesus put his fingers into the man's ears. Then he spit and touched the man's tongue.

Mark 7:34 He looked up to heaven and with a deep sigh said to him, "Ephphatha!" (which means, "Be opened!").

Mark 7:35 At this, the man's ears were opened, his tongue was loosened and he began to speak plainly.

Mark 7:36 Jesus commanded them not to tell anyone. But the more he did so, the more they kept talking about it.

Mark 7:37 People were overwhelmed with amazement. "He has done everything well," they said. "He even makes the deaf hear and the mute speak."

COMMENTARY

A distance of at least 30 miles (and perhaps up to 50 depending on the route).

Jesus spat and touched the man's tongue: This notes Jesus' ability to communicate the grace of God in ways that anyone can understand.

The language of the New Testament is Greek, but the phrase here is Aramaic (likely the man's first language), which shows Jesus' personal way of ministering to individuals.

The order "not to tell anyone" stems from Jesus' desire for individuals to come to Him out of an interest in the spiritual, not merely to have a physical need met.

JESUS FEEDS THE 4000

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Matt. 15:32 Jesus called his disciples to him and said, “I have compassion for these people; they have already been with me three days and have nothing to eat. I do not want to send them away hungry, or they may collapse on the way.”

Matt. 15:33 His disciples answered, “Where could we get enough bread in this remote place to feed such a crowd?”

Matt. 15:34 “How many loaves do you have?” Jesus asked. “Seven,” they replied, “and a few small fish.”

Matt. 15:35 He told the crowd to sit down on the ground.

Matt. 15:36 Then he took the seven loaves and the fish, and when he had given thanks, he broke them and gave them to the disciples, and they in turn to the people.

Matt. 15:37 They all ate and were satisfied. Afterward the disciples picked up seven basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over.

Matt. 15:38 The number of those who ate was four thousand, besides women and children.

Matt. 15:39 After Jesus had sent the crowd away, he got into the boat and went to the vicinity of Magadan.

COMMENTARY

The miracles of Jesus feeding the 5000 and the 4000 do not include women or children, and are designed to show: 1) Jesus' power 2) Jesus' compassion and 3) Jesus' desire to bless His people. Note also that in Hebrew culture, there was a link between the words bread and blessing (Bethlehem, for example, means House of Bread or House of Blessing).

To the Hebrew people, Seven and Twelve were special numbers with divine connotations. It is significant to note that in the miracle of the feeding of 5000, 12 basketfuls of food were collected and in the feeding of the 4000, 7 baskets of food remained.

It is likely that Mary Magdalene was from this area.

THE PHARISEES DEMAND A SIGN

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Matt. 16:1 The Pharisees and Sadducees came to Jesus and tested him by asking him to show them a sign from heaven.

Matt. 16:2 He replied, “When evening comes, you say, ‘It will be fair weather, for the sky is red,’

Matt. 16:3 and in the morning, ‘Today it will be stormy, for the sky is red and overcast.’ You know how to interpret the appearance of the sky, but you cannot interpret the signs of the times.

Matt. 16:4 A wicked and adulterous generation looks for a miraculous sign, but none will be given it except the sign of Jonah.” Jesus then left them and went away.

Matt. 16:5 When they went across the lake, the disciples forgot to take bread.

Matt. 16:6 “Be careful,” Jesus said to them. “Be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees.”

Matt. 16:7 They discussed this among themselves and said, “It is because we didn’t bring any bread.”

Matt. 16:8 Aware of their discussion, Jesus asked, “You of little faith, why are you talking among yourselves about having no bread?”

COMMENTARY

The Pharisees were witnesses to many of Jesus’ miracles, but were often very quick to find fault (such as, He healed by the power of Satan or He should not have healed on the Sabbath day). Jesus knew their intent and rebuked them.

Jonah: A reference to the resurrection (represented in the story of Jonah. Jonah was thought dead and taken away to the depths for three days, and then miraculously raised).

Perhaps it was because they were unnerved by Jesus’ recent confrontation with the Pharisees (who had the power to punish and imprison) that they forgot the bread. Jesus saw this as an opportunity to teach the disciples about fear and God’s care.

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Mark 8:18 Do you have eyes but fail to see, and ears but fail to hear? And don't you remember?

Mark 8:19 When I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many basketfuls of pieces did you pick up?" "Twelve," they replied.

Mark 8:20 "And when I broke the seven loaves for the four thousand, how many basketfuls of pieces did you pick up?" They answered, "Seven."

Mark 8:21 He said to them, "Do you still not understand?"

Matt. 16:12 Then they understood that he was not telling them to guard against the yeast used in bread, but against the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

COMMENTARY

Jesus recognized that the disciples were more concerned about their future and safety, than the fact that they had no bread. He addresses their fears by reminding them that God was at work in their midst (hence, the reference [Verse 20] to the seven remaining basketfuls of bread). Here Jesus reminds the disciples that they should not focus on fear, but on the promises of God.

JESUS HEALS A BLIND MAN IN BETHSAIDA

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Mark 8:22 They came to Bethsaida, and some people brought a blind man and begged Jesus to touch him.

Mark 8:23 He took the blind man by the hand and led him outside the village. When he had spit on the man's eyes and put his hands on him, Jesus asked, "Do you see anything?"

Mark 8:24 He looked up and said, "I see people; they look like trees walking around."

Mark 8:25 Once more Jesus put his hands on the man's eyes. Then his eyes were opened, his sight was restored, and he saw everything clearly.

Mark 8:26 Jesus sent him home, saying, "Don't go into the village."

COMMENTARY

Bethsaida was the hometown of Phillip, Andrew, and Peter.

Perhaps this miracle unfolds in stages to remind individuals that God's will, way, and timing are sovereign (perfect and above our ability to fully understand). Just because God's grace seems to be revealed a step at a time, it doesn't mean it is lacking in any way.

The man was not from Bethsaida. Jesus therefore tells the man to return to his home, and not to stir the masses in Bethsaida where He was ministering.

PETER PROCLAIMS JESUS AS THE CHRIST

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Matt. 16:13 When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, “Who do people say the Son of Man is?”

Matt. 16:14 They replied, “Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets.”

Matt. 16:15 “But what about you?” he asked. “Who do you say I am?”

Matt. 16:16 Simon Peter answered, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”

Matt. 16:17 Jesus replied, “Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven.

Matt. 16:18 And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.

Matt. 16:19 I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.”

Matt. 16:20 Then he warned his disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Christ.

COMMENTARY

In this passage the Lord presents the disciples with the most important question in life: Who Is Jesus? Our response to that question will dictate the level of peace we will experience in this life, and determine our eternal destiny in the age to come.

John the Baptist had recently been beheaded. Elijah was said to return to announce the Messiah (Malachi 4:4-5). Jeremiah was one of the great prophets of old. The opinions of the masses were in a sense, honorable. However, the true nature of Jesus far surpassed their lofty assumptions.

*A play on words here: In the original text PETER and ROCK come from the same root word. Note that the rock the church will be built on is **not** Peter, but the truth that Peter just shared under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit—that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. It is on that truth that the Church is established.*

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Matt. 16:21 From that time on Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life.

Matt. 16:22 Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. “Never, Lord!” he said. “This shall never happen to you!”

Matt. 16:23 Jesus turned and said to Peter, “Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men.”

Matt. 16:24 Then Jesus said to his disciples, “If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.

Matt. 16:25 For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it.

Matt. 16:26 What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul?

Matt. 16:27 For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father’s glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what he has done.

Matt. 16:28 I tell you the truth, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom.”

COMMENTARY

The cross was not in any sense a miscalculation or error on Jesus’ part. The cross was the perfect completion of God’s perfect redemptive plan.

God’s plan can be surprising. Peter was so shocked at the revelation of God’s plan to let the Messiah be killed that he, without thinking, rebuked Jesus. We must remember that when we oppose God’s will, we side with Satan (see verse 23).

Sacrifice is a common theme in Jesus’ teachings. Still, these verses of challenge and sacrifice are partnered with verses promising blessing and reward to the faithful (see Luke 6:35; Matt. 16:27; Mark 10:21).

This is a reference to the Transfiguration (see Luke 9 in the next section).

THE TRANSFIGURATION

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Luke 9:28 About eight days after Jesus said this, he took Peter, John and James with him and went up onto a mountain to pray.

Luke 9:29 As he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became as bright as a flash of lightning.

Luke 9:30 Two men, Moses and Elijah,

Luke 9:31 appeared in glorious splendor, talking with Jesus. They spoke about his departure, which he was about to bring to fulfillment at Jerusalem.

Luke 9:32 Peter and his companions were very sleepy, but when they became fully awake, they saw his glory and the two men standing with him.

Luke 9:33 As the men were leaving Jesus, Peter said to him, “Master, it is good for us to be here. Let us put up three shelters—one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah.” (He did not know what he was saying.)

Luke 9:34 While he was speaking, a cloud appeared and enveloped them, and they were afraid as they entered the cloud.

Luke 9:35 A voice came from the cloud, saying, “This is my Son, whom I have chosen; listen to him.”

Luke 9:36 When the voice had spoken, they found that Jesus was alone. The disciples kept this to themselves, and told no one at that time what they had seen.

COMMENTARY

Matthew and Mark note that it was six days (not eight as noted here). This apparent discrepancy is reconciled by recognizing that here Luke is counting from the day of Peter's confession (see above in Matt. 16) to the day of the Transfiguration.

This special happening was to encourage Jesus, and to affirm His true nature (via the testimony of Moses and Elijah), to the disciples.

It is nice to be where Jesus is blessing and away from the cares of the world. This feeling led Peter to suggest the building of shelters so that they could stay on the mountaintop permanently. However, Jesus does not call disciples to stay away from the front-line work of the ministry. As soon as the event was over, Jesus led His disciples to the next task.

JESUS HEALS THE DEMON-POSSESSED MUTE

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Mark 9:14 When they came to the other disciples, they saw a large crowd around them and the teachers of the law arguing with them.

Mark 9:15 As soon as all the people saw Jesus, they were overwhelmed with wonder and ran to greet him.

Mark 9:16 “What are you arguing with them about?” he asked.

Mark 9:17 A man in the crowd answered, “Teacher, I brought you my son, who is possessed by a spirit that has robbed him of speech.”

Mark 9:18 Whenever it seizes him, it throws him to the ground. He foams at the mouth, gnashes his teeth and becomes rigid. I asked your disciples to drive out the spirit, but they could not.”

Mark 9:19 “O unbelieving generation,” Jesus replied, “how long shall I stay with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring the boy to me.”

Mark 9:20 So they brought him. When the spirit saw Jesus, it immediately threw the boy into a convulsion. He fell to the ground and rolled around, foaming at the mouth.

Mark 9:21 Jesus asked the boy’s father, “How long has he been like this?” “From childhood,” he answered.

COMMENTARY

Another example of the rare but possible ramifications of demon possession.

Perhaps a reference to their lack of faith and/or involvement in cultic activities, which opened a door to the spirit world and in a sense, invited, encouraged or somehow allowed the demonic presence to have a foothold in the boy’s life.

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Mark 9:22 “It has often thrown him into fire or water to kill him. But if you can do anything, take pity on us and help us.”

Mark 9:23 “‘If you can?’” said Jesus. “Everything is possible for him who believes.”

Mark 9:24 Immediately the boy’s father exclaimed, “I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!”

Mark 9:25 When Jesus saw that a crowd was running to the scene, he rebuked the evil spirit. “You deaf and mute spirit,” he said, “I command you, come out of him and never enter him again.”

Mark 9:26 The spirit shrieked, convulsed him violently and came out. The boy looked so much like a corpse that many said, “He’s dead.”

Mark 9:27 But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him to his feet, and he stood up.

Mark 9:28 After Jesus had gone indoors, his disciples asked him privately, “Why couldn’t we drive it out?”

Mark 9:29 He replied, “This kind can come out only by prayer.”

Mark 9:30 They left that place and passed through Galilee. Jesus did not want anyone to know where they were,

COMMENTARY

Satan’s objective is to destroy all that God loves. His name in Rev. 9:11 is APOLLYON, a Greek term meaning destroyer.

What a blessing! What a promise! See also, James 5:16.

Jesus did not want distractions to His ministry, nor did He desire a witness/validation from the demonic spirit world. His focus here is to show His authority over demons, not to, by any means, gain notoriety from His encounters with them.

It is important to note that, although it was never required and generally considered culturally improper, Jesus frequently extended a physical touch to the hurting He ministered to (see Mark 8:3).

Some manuscripts add, “And fasting.” Believers should respect the power of the enemy and enter into times of spiritual battle fully prepared (see Ephesians 6:10-18).

JESUS SPEAKS AGAIN OF HIS COMING SUFFERING

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Mark 9:31 because he was teaching his disciples. He said to them, “The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into the hands of men. They will kill him, and after three days he will rise.”

Mark 9:32 But they did not understand what he meant and were afraid to ask him about it.

COMMENTARY

It is important to note that Jesus was very much aware of what would happen in Jerusalem. In no way was his arrest and crucifixion a miscalculation or mistake.

THE MIRACLE OF THE COIN IN THE MOUTH OF THE FISH

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Matt. 17:24 After Jesus and his disciples arrived in Capernaum, the collectors of the two-drachma tax came to Peter and asked, “Doesn’t your teacher pay the temple tax?”

Matt. 17:25 “Yes, he does,” he replied. When Peter came into the house, Jesus was the first to speak. “What do you think, Simon?” he asked. “From whom do the kings of the earth collect duty and taxes—from their own sons or from others?”

Matt. 17:26 “From others,” Peter answered. “Then the sons are exempt,” Jesus said to him.

Matt. 17:27 “But so that we may not offend them, go to the lake and throw out your line. Take the first fish you catch; open its mouth and you will find a four-drachma coin. Take it and give it to them for my tax and yours.”

COMMENTARY

Two-drachma tax = the Temple Tax. According to Jewish Law, teachers (and doctors) were exempt. Still, Jesus pays the tax as an example, and to teach Peter an important lesson.

It was likely fear that prompted Peter to not seek Jesus’ counsel but rather give a rather impulsive reply, “Yes, he does.” Jesus takes the opportunity to speak to him about it, and then demonstrate God’s ability to provide.

*Some manuscripts note the word **STATER**, rather than “four-drachma.” **STATER** is the word used in most Greek texts—a **STATER** coin is worth four drachmas.*

TEACHING IN CAPERNAUM

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Mark 9:33 They came to Capernaum. When he was in the house, he asked them, “What were you arguing about on the road?”

Mark 9:34 But they kept quiet because on the way they had argued about who was the greatest.

Mark 9:35 Sitting down, Jesus called the Twelve and said, “If anyone wants to be first, he must be the very last, and the servant of all.”

Luke 9:47 Jesus, knowing their thoughts, took a little child and had him stand beside him.

Luke 9:48 Then he said to them, “Whoever welcomes this little child in my name welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me. For he who is least among you all—he is the greatest.”

Matt. 18:5 “And whoever welcomes a little child like this in my name welcomes me.

Matt. 18:6 But if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a large millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea.

COMMENTARY

Jesus was not with the disciples when they were arguing. When Jesus confronted them about this (verse 34) they were ashamed. Let the believer remember that Jesus is aware of every thought and deed (see Psalm 14:2).

The King James translation of Matthew 25:40) reads: “Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these, my brethren, ye have done it unto me.”

Hebrews 12:1-2 encourages individuals to extend hospitality to strangers, for those we extend kindness to may be angels in disguise.

A metaphor and reference to the Pharisees who were leading the people (children) of Israel away from God (via their misrepresentation of Scripture and their many burdensome traditions).

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Matt. 18:7 “Woe to the world because of the things that cause people to sin! Such things must come, but woe to the man through whom they come!

Matt. 18:8 If your hand or your foot causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life maimed or crippled than to have two hands or two feet and be thrown into eternal fire.

Matt. 18:9 And if your eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into the fire of hell.

COMMENTARY

Hyperbole noting the extreme importance of making the short-term sacrifices the Spirit leads believers to make (particularly in light of the eternal benefit and reward the faithful will receive).

JESUS TEACHES ABOUT FORGIVENESS AND CONFRONTATION

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Matt. 18:10 “See that you do not look down on one of these little ones. For I tell you that their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father in heaven.

Mark 9:38 “Teacher,” said John, “we saw a man driving out demons in your name and we told him to stop, because he was not one of us.”

Mark 9:39 “Do not stop him,” Jesus said. “No one who does a miracle in my name can in the next moment say anything bad about me,

Mark 9:40 for whoever is not against us is for us.

Mark 9:41 I tell you the truth, anyone who gives you a cup of water in my name because you belong to Christ will certainly not lose his reward.

Matt. 18:15 “If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over.

Matt. 18:16 But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that ‘every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.’

Matt. 18:17 If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector.

COMMENTARY

Their angels: An interesting and singular reference to what some refer to as ‘Guardian Angels.’ Though their exact role is undefined, it is clear that God has established in the spiritual realm a number of awesome beings to share in ministering to His creation.

Here, the process of dealing with sin, confrontation, and forgiveness, is detailed. Note that the goal is restoration, not assigning blame or establishing who is in the right. The goal is healing and reconciliation.

Tax Collector: A cultural reference—one who has turned his back on what he knows is right (tax collectors in Jesus’ day worked for the occupying Roman government and generally made their living by extorting money from Jews).

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Matt. 18:18 “I tell you the truth, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.

Matt. 18:19 “Again, I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven.

Matt. 18:20 For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them.”

Matt. 18:21 Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, “Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?”

Matt. 18:22 Jesus answered, “I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times.

Matt. 18:23 “Therefore, the kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants.

Matt. 18:24 As he began the settlement, a man who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him.

Matt. 18:25 Since he was not able to pay, the master ordered that he and his wife and his children and all that he had be sold to repay the debt.

Matt. 18:26 “The servant fell on his knees before him. ‘Be patient with me,’ he begged, ‘and I will pay back everything.’

COMMENTARY

Bind on earth: Here Jesus promises that the disciples will carry-on His message with Holy Spirit anointed power and authority (Acts 1:7-8). The Gospel message they share will have the binding force of Scripture, and the power to free (loose) those bound by the chains of sin.

That is, if we ask for (agree on) that which is in God’s will for us.

The Pharisees taught that one should forgive three times. Peter’s suggestion of seven, though off the mark, was probably considered very generous by his peers. In verse 22 Jesus counters Peter’s answer by suggesting seventy times seven, which in Hebrew culture was synonymous with a perfect, large number with divine connotations.

The forfeiture of personal property and even compelled family servitude was a common penalty.

We are the servant in this parable—in great need, in grave trouble, and utterly unable to pay the debt owed to our Master.

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Matt. 18:27 The servant's master took pity on him, canceled the debt and let him go.

Matt. 18:28 "But when that servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii. He grabbed him and began to choke him. 'Pay back what you owe me!' he demanded.

Matt. 18:29 "His fellow servant fell to his knees and begged him, 'Be patient with me, and I will pay you back.'

Matt. 18:30 "But he refused. Instead, he went off and had the man thrown into prison until he could pay the debt.

Matt. 18:31 When the other servants saw what had happened, they were greatly distressed and went and told their master everything that had happened.

Matt. 18:32 "Then the master called the servant in. 'You wicked servant,' he said, 'I canceled all that debt of yours because you begged me to.

Matt. 18:33 Shouldn't you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?'

Matt. 18:34 In anger his master turned him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed.

Matt. 18:35 "This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart."

COMMENTARY

God is the Master in this parable, who takes notice of our great need and extends great mercy to those who seek Him.

The parable is about mercy and compassion— how God extends it, and how believers are expected to extend it to others.

Our ability to forgive is a great witness, and an expression of how well we understand how the Father has dealt with us.

JESUS DELAYS GOING TO THE FEAST

SCRIPTURE TEXT

John 7:1 After this, Jesus went around in Galilee, purposely staying away from Judea because the Jews there were waiting to take his life.

John 7:2 But when the Jewish Feast of Tabernacles was near,

John 7:3 Jesus' brothers said to him, "You ought to leave here and go to Judea, so that your disciples may see the miracles you do.

John 7:4 No one who wants to become a public figure acts in secret. Since you are doing these things, show yourself to the world."

John 7:5 For even his own brothers did not believe in him.

John 7:6 Therefore Jesus told them, "The right time for me has not yet come; for you any time is right.

John 7:7 The world cannot hate you, but it hates me because I testify that what it does is evil.

John 7:8 You go to the Feast. I am not yet going up to this Feast, because for me the right time has not yet come."

John 7:9 Having said this, he stayed in Galilee.

COMMENTARY

Here Jesus does not show fear, but prudence. It is one thing to have faith—and another to put God to the test. Pray for discernment, wisdom, and a sensitivity to the Spirit's leading as you strive to live for Him.

The Feast of Tabernacles was a fall Feast commemorating the Hebrew's time of wandering in the days of Moses and God's abiding presence with them. It was celebrated by erecting temporary shelters and ceremonies involving great basins of water (making Jesus' statement in John 7:27 particularly startling).

The right time has not yet come: That is, for Jesus to be crucified.

JESUS AT THE FEAST OF TABERNACLES

SCRIPTURE TEXT

John 7:10 However, after his brothers had left for the Feast, he went also, not publicly, but in secret.

John 7:11 Now at the Feast the Jews were watching for him and asking, "Where is that man?"

John 7:12 Among the crowds there was widespread whispering about him. Some said, "He is a good man." Others replied, "No, he deceives the people."

John 7:13 But no one would say anything publicly about him for fear of the Jews.

John 7:14 Not until halfway through the Feast did Jesus go up to the temple courts and begin to teach.

John 7:15 The Jews were amazed and asked, "How did this man get such learning without having studied?"

John 7:16 Jesus answered, "My teaching is not my own. It comes from him who sent me.

John 7:17 If anyone chooses to do God's will, he will find out whether my teaching comes from God or whether I speak on my own.

John 7:18 He who speaks on his own does so to gain honor for himself, but he who works for the honor of the one who sent him is a man of truth; there is nothing false about him.

COMMENTARY

The intent was not to hide His ministry, but rather to not promote His plans to the Pharisees.

This required courage and boldness as the Temple Courts were a very public place (and it was evident that his enemies were searching for Him).

Jesus was not educated in the Rabbinic schools of the day. His teaching was powerful, not because He was schooled in the Law, but because via His divine nature He was the author of the Law.

SCRIPTURE TEXT

John 7:19 Has not Moses given you the law? Yet not one of you keeps the law. Why are you trying to kill me?"

John 7:20 "You are demon-possessed," the crowd answered. "Who is trying to kill you?"

John 7:21 Jesus said to them, "I did one miracle, and you are all astonished.

John 7:22 Yet, because Moses gave you circumcision (though actually it did not come from Moses, but from the patriarchs), you circumcise a child on the Sabbath.

John 7:23 Now if a child can be circumcised on the Sabbath so that the law of Moses may not be broken, why are you angry with me for healing the whole man on the Sabbath?

John 7:24 Stop judging by mere appearances, and make a right judgment."

John 7:25 At that point some of the people of Jerusalem began to ask, "Isn't this the man they are trying to kill?"

John 7:26 Here he is, speaking publicly, and they are not saying a word to him. Have the authorities really concluded that he is the Christ?

John 7:27 But we know where this man is from; when the Christ comes, no one will know where he is from."

COMMENTARY

The Pharisees were adept at concealing their wickedness, yet Jesus knew their hearts and was aware of their intention to kill Him.

Jesus rebuked the Pharisees for their hypocrisy: They admonished Jesus for healing a man (an act considered work) on the Sabbath, yet allowed for circumcision to be done on the Sabbath, which was also considered work.

Jesus' miracles and powerful teaching led many to think He was the Messiah. Still, most were slow to believe in Him as He was not supported by the religious elite, was from Nazareth, the son of a carpenter, a descendant of Jeconiah and in many ways did not fit well their preconceived ideas about what the Christ would be like. Note: God's will, way and timing are often very different than what we expect.

SCRIPTURE TEXT

John 7:28 Then Jesus, still teaching in the temple courts, cried out, “Yes, you know me, and you know where I am from. I am not here on my own, but he who sent me is true. You do not know him,

John 7:29 but I know him because I am from him and he sent me.”

John 7:30 At this they tried to seize him, but no one laid a hand on him, because his time had not yet come.

John 7:31 Still, many in the crowd put their faith in him. They said, “When the Christ comes, will he do more miraculous signs than this man?”

John 7:32 The Pharisees heard the crowd whispering such things about him. Then the chief priests and the Pharisees sent temple guards to arrest him.

John 7:33 Jesus said, “I am with you for only a short time, and then I go to the one who sent me.

John 7:34 You will look for me, but you will not find me; and where I am, you cannot come.”

John 7:35 The Jews said to one another, “Where does this man intend to go that we cannot find him? Will he go where our people live scattered among the Greeks, and teach the Greeks?”

John 7:36 What did he mean when he said, “You will look for me, but you will not find me,” and “Where I am, you cannot come?”

COMMENTARY

Several times in the Gospels a crowd seeks to move against Jesus but are unable to seize him. Jesus was protected by the sovereign will of God and working of the Spirit. His death on the cross was not a mistake, but the fulfillment of Scripture and the completion of God’s redemptive plan.

The temple guards were Jews with broad powers to arrest and detain.

The many statements like this note Jesus’ focus and knowledge of His mission.

You will look for me: That is, in the future there will be tribulation and you will look for a Messiah to come to earth to deliver you, but will find none.

SCRIPTURE TEXT

John 7:37 On the last and greatest day of the Feast, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, “If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink.

John 7:38 Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him.”

John 7:39 By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive. Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified.

John 7:40 On hearing his words, some of the people said, “Surely this man is the Prophet.”

John 7:41 Others said, “He is the Christ.” Still others asked, “How can the Christ come from Galilee?”

John 7:42 Does not the Scripture say that the Christ will come from David’s family and from Bethlehem, the town where David lived?”

COMMENTARY

On the last day of the eight day festival, water was put in a golden basin and with great ceremony, poured out lavishly over the altar area (representing God’s abundance, life, and the Spirit of God). Jesus used this ceremony as an object lesson to teach on His true nature, and encourage all to trust in Him. Note: the eighth day is actually the first day of the week—the day of the resurrection and the day that the Holy Spirit was poured out upon the New Testament Church at Pentecost (Acts 2).

There may have been some confusion about Jesus and this prophecy as He was known to be from Nazareth (not Bethlehem), and spent the first part of His life in Egypt.

TEMPLE GUARDS SENT TO ARREST JESUS

SCRIPTURE TEXT

John 7:43 Thus the people were divided because of Jesus.

John 7:44 Some wanted to seize him, but no one laid a hand on him.

John 7:45 Finally the temple guards went back to the chief priests and Pharisees, who asked them, “Why didn’t you bring him in?”

John 7:46 “No one ever spoke the way this man does,” the guards declared.

John 7:47 “You mean he has deceived you also?” the Pharisees retorted.

John 7:48 “Has any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed in him?”

John 7:49 No! But this mob that knows nothing of the law—there is a curse on them.”

John 7:50 Nicodemus, who had gone to Jesus earlier and who was one of their own number, asked,

John 7:51 “Does our law condemn anyone without first hearing him to find out what he is doing?”

John 7:52 They replied, “Are you from Galilee, too? Look into it, and you will find that a prophet does not come out of Galilee.”

COMMENTARY

The temple guards were in the crowd and had been listening to Jesus speak to the people. There was ample opportunity for them to attempt to seize Him.

A statement particularly offensive to the Pharisees, who considered themselves experts in the Law and eloquent speakers (Jesus Himself was not formally trained in Rabbinic schools).

Here the Pharisees, filled with rage, turned on their supporters. They cursed them (on the high holy day of the festival), and rudely referred to them as a mob (an illegal assembly which Roman guards were particularly concerned about and would punish quickly and harshly).

A prophet does not come out of Galilee: This was likely a saying, but was far from true. Elijah, Jonah, Nahum, and perhaps Malachi came from Galilee.

THE WOMAN CAUGHT IN THE ACT OF ADULTERY

SCRIPTURE TEXT

John 7:53 [Then each went to his own home.

John 8:1 But Jesus went to the Mount of Olives.

John 8:2 At dawn he appeared again in the temple courts, where all the people gathered around him, and he sat down to teach them.

John 8:3 The teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought in a woman caught in adultery. They made her stand before the group

John 8:4 and said to Jesus, “Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery.

John 8:5 In the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?”

John 8:6 They were using this question as a trap, in order to have a basis for accusing him. But Jesus bent down and started to write on the ground with his finger.

John 8:7 When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, “If any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her.”

John 8:8 Again he stooped down and wrote on the ground.

COMMENTARY

John 7:53-8:11 is not included in all of the oldest families of manuscripts.

It is likely that many who had come to share in the eight-day festival (Chapter 7) would be leaving for home on this day. Thus Jesus returns to town early in the morning to minister once more while there is opportunity.

Custom dictated that in the case of adultery, the man was to stand trial as well as the woman. If the woman was ‘caught in the act’ surely the man could have been detained as well. Only the woman is brought to Jesus to make it more difficult for Him, a known man of compassion, to pronounce a harsh judgment, which their legalistic tradition demanded.

What Jesus writes is not noted. Perhaps it was some of the secret sins the Pharisees were guilty of. Jesus’ move to forgive the woman shows great compassion and grace.

SCRIPTURE TEXT

John 8:9 At this, those who heard began to go away one at a time, the older ones first, until only Jesus was left, with the woman still standing there.

John 8:10 Jesus straightened up and asked her, “Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?”

John 8:11 “No one, sir,” she said. “Then neither do I condemn you,” Jesus declared. “Go now and leave your life of sin.”

COMMENTARY

There is a tradition that the woman's name was Susanna, and that she became a devout follower and leader in the New Testament Church in the western realm of the Roman Empire.

See Romans 8:1.

THE PHARISEES CHALLENGE JESUS

SCRIPTURE TEXT

John 8:12 When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”

John 8:13 The Pharisees challenged him, “Here you are, appearing as your own witness; your testimony is not valid.”

John 8:14 Jesus answered, “Even if I testify on my own behalf, my testimony is valid, for I know where I came from and where I am going. But you have no idea where I come from or where I am going.

John 8:15 You judge by human standards; I pass judgment on no one.

John 8:16 But if I do judge, my decisions are right, because I am not alone. I stand with the Father, who sent me.

John 8:17 In your own Law it is written that the testimony of two men is valid.

John 8:18 I am one who testifies for myself; my other witness is the Father, who sent me.”

John 8:19 Then they asked him, “Where is your father?” “You do not know me or my Father,” Jesus replied. “If you knew me, you would know my Father also.”

COMMENTARY

Here Jesus notes, “I am the light of the world.” In Matt. 5:14 Jesus tells His followers, “You are the light of the world.” Our mission as His followers is to share the hope and light of God however and whenever we can.

The Pharisees demanded at least two witnesses (three was best) to validate important claims. Jesus had previously discussed this point with the Pharisees noting that God (the voice at the baptism), the Holy Spirit (the dove at the baptism), His miracles, the fulfillment of prophecy, and the testimony of John the Baptist had validated His claim. Without comment the Pharisees reject Jesus’ powerful argument.

Verses 14-18 note Jesus’ dual (and divine) nature.

SCRIPTURE TEXT

John 8:20 He spoke these words while teaching in the temple area near the place where the offerings were put. Yet no one seized him, because his time had not yet come.

John 8:21 Once more Jesus said to them, “I am going away, and you will look for me, and you will die in your sin. Where I go, you cannot come.”

John 8:22 This made the Jews ask, “Will he kill himself? Is that why he says, “Where I go, you cannot come?”

John 8:23 But he continued, “You are from below; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world.

John 8:24 I told you that you would die in your sins; if you do not believe that I am the one I claim to be, you will indeed die in your sins.”

John 8:25 “Who are you?” they asked. “Just what I have been claiming all along,” Jesus replied.

John 8:26 “I have much to say in judgment of you. But he who sent me is reliable, and what I have heard from him I tell the world.”

John 8:27 They did not understand that he was telling them about his Father.

John 8:28 So Jesus said, “When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am the one I claim to be and that I do nothing on my own but speak just what the Father has taught me.

COMMENTARY

A reference to the coming trials on the Jewish people and religious system (the temple would be destroyed in about 40 years). Jesus notes that in times of trial they will seek a Messiah on earth, but will find none for the One sent from above was rejected and so they would stand condemned.

A reference to the cross. On that day, even the Centurion leading in the crucifixion confessed Jesus as the Son of God.

SCRIPTURE TEXT

John 8:29 The one who sent me is with me; he has not left me alone, for I always do what pleases him.”

John 8:30 Even as he spoke, many put their faith in him.

John 8:31 To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, “If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples.

John 8:32 Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”

John 8:33 They answered him, “We are Abraham’s descendants and have never been slaves of anyone. How can you say that we shall be set free?”

John 8:34 Jesus replied, “I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave to sin.

John 8:35 Now a slave has no permanent place in the family, but a son belongs to it forever.

John 8:36 So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.

John 8:37 I know you are Abraham’s descendants. Yet you are ready to kill me, because you have no room for my word.

John 8:38 I am telling you what I have seen in the Father’s presence, and you do what you have heard from your father.”

John 8:39 “Abraham is our father,” they answered. “If you were Abraham’s children,” said Jesus, “then you would do the things Abraham did.

COMMENTARY

A sober challenge: Real belief requires more than an initial response, it requires continued effort and commitment (see James 2:17).

A powerful truth and key to finding peace in life.

The Pharisees believed their salvation was secure because they were descendants of Abraham. Jesus expected more.

SCRIPTURE TEXT

John 8:40 As it is, you are determined to kill me, a man who has told you the truth that I heard from God. Abraham did not do such things.

John 8:41 You are doing the things your own father does.” “We are not illegitimate children,” they protested. “The only Father we have is God himself.”

John 8:42 Jesus said to them, “If God were your Father, you would love me, for I came from God and now am here. I have not come on my own; but he sent me.

John 8:43 Why is my language not clear to you? Because you are unable to hear what I say.

John 8:44 You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father’s desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies.

John 8:45 Yet because I tell the truth, you do not believe me!

John 8:46 Can any of you prove me guilty of sin? If I am telling the truth, why don’t you believe me?

John 8:47 He who belongs to God hears what God says. The reason you do not hear is that you do not belong to God.”

John 8:48 The Jews answered him, “Aren’t we right in saying that you are a Samaritan and demon-possessed?”

John 8:49 “I am not possessed by a demon,” said Jesus, “but I honor my Father and you dishonor me.

COMMENTARY

The Pharisees were seeking to kill Jesus. In pursuing this path they were imitating the work of Satan, who is called a murderer in verse 44. Jesus, knowing His ministry was coming to an end, seeks to shake the Pharisees from their blindness by using strong phrasing and imagery (i.e., your father is the devil).

Beware: Satan can blind and cloud the mind so that it is difficult to see and hear the truth.

It is important to note that even the enemies of Jesus could not prove Jesus guilty of any sin.

Jesus had already dealt with the accusation that He was demon-possessed or somehow in league with Satan (see Matt. 12:24). Their accusation that He was a Samaritan was just as ludicrous.

SCRIPTURE TEXT

John 8:50 I am not seeking glory for myself; but there is one who seeks it, and he is the judge.

John 8:51 I tell you the truth, if anyone keeps my word, he will never see death.”

John 8:52 At this the Jews exclaimed, “Now we know that you are demon-possessed! Abraham died and so did the prophets, yet you say that if anyone keeps your word, he will never taste death.

John 8:53 Are you greater than our father Abraham? He died, and so did the prophets. Who do you think you are?”

John 8:54 Jesus replied, “If I glorify myself, my glory means nothing. My Father, whom you claim as your God, is the one who glorifies me.

John 8:55 Though you do not know him, I know him. If I said I did not, I would be a liar like you, but I do know him and keep his word.

John 8:56 Your father Abraham rejoiced at the thought of seeing my day; he saw it and was glad.”

John 8:57 “You are not yet fifty years old,” the Jews said to him, “and you have seen Abraham!”

John 8:58 “I tell you the truth,” Jesus answered, “before Abraham was born, I am!”

John 8:59 At this, they picked up stones to stone him, but Jesus hid himself, slipping away from the temple grounds.

COMMENTARY

Sadly, the Pharisees, for all their learning, constantly had difficulty discerning the spiritual meaning in Jesus’ words.

The Pharisees knew the truth—they just refused to accept it.

By faith, Abraham looked forward to the coming of the Messiah (see Romans 4:3, 18 and Hebrews 11:13a).

I am: A very important deity statement. Here Jesus links Himself to the God who revealed Himself to Moses in Exodus 3:14 (as “I Am”).

Jesus’ claim to deity was clearly understood by the Pharisees—hence they immediately picked up stones to kill Him.

JESUS HEALS A MAN BORN BLIND

SCRIPTURE TEXT

John 9:1 As he went along, he saw a man blind from birth.

John 9:2 His disciples asked him, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?”

John 9:3 “Neither this man nor his parents sinned,” said Jesus, “but this happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life.

John 9:4 As long as it is day, we must do the work of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work.

John 9:5 While I am in the world, I am the light of the world.”

John 9:6 Having said this, he spit on the ground, made some mud with the saliva, and put it on the man’s eyes.

John 9:7 “Go,” he told him, “wash in the Pool of Siloam” (this word means Sent). So the man went and washed, and came home seeing.

John 9:8 His neighbors and those who had formerly seen him begging asked, “Isn’t this the same man who used to sit and beg?”

John 9:9 Some claimed that he was. Others said, “No, he only looks like him.” But he himself insisted, “I am the man.”

COMMENTARY

He saw: Interesting how Jesus notices and takes interest in those whom often seem invisible (the poor, needy, outcasts, etc.).

Here Jesus dispels the myth that all infirmities are the result of sin or a divine curse.

Night is coming: A reference to death.

Here, as in the story of the healing of a blind man in Mark 8:22-25, the miracle unfolds as a process. This man must walk through the city to the Pool of Siloam and wash there before the blessing is received. This is not because Jesus is unable to bring about an immediate remedy to the man’s blindness, but because Jesus desired to illustrate that sometimes God’s blessings unfold as a process, and are always contingent on our having faith and being obedient to do what the Lord is calling us to do.

SCRIPTURE TEXT

John 9:10 “How then were your eyes opened?” they demanded.

John 9:11 He replied, “The man they call Jesus made some mud and put it on my eyes. He told me to go to Siloam and wash. So I went and washed, and then I could see.”

John 9:12 “Where is this man?” they asked him. “I don’t know,” he said.

John 9:13 They brought to the Pharisees the man who had been blind.

John 9:14 Now the day on which Jesus had made the mud and opened the man’s eyes was a Sabbath.

John 9:15 Therefore the Pharisees also asked him how he had received his sight. “He put mud on my eyes,” the man replied, “and I washed, and now I see.”

John 9:16 Some of the Pharisees said, “This man is not from God, for he does not keep the Sabbath.” But others asked, “How can a sinner do such miraculous signs?” So they were divided.

John 9:17 Finally they turned again to the blind man, “What have you to say about him? It was your eyes he opened.” The man replied, “He is a prophet.”

John 9:18 The Jews still did not believe that he had been blind and had received his sight until they sent for the man’s parents.

John 9:19 “Is this your son?” they asked. “Is this the one you say was born blind? How is it that now he can see?”

COMMENTARY

As before, the Pharisees rebuke Jesus because He did not follow their strict interpretation of Sabbath Law.

A simple but powerful witness. The man shared what Jesus had done for Him. (A simple model all can follow).

The man was at least 30 years old—old enough to make a statement in court. Hoping to intimidate the man and discredit Jesus, the Pharisees questioned him, but to their surprise, he speaks well of the Lord.

Wanting to find some weakness in the man’s testimony, the Pharisees send for his parents. This ploy however, works against the Pharisees as well.

SCRIPTURE TEXT

John 9:20 “We know he is our son,” the parents answered, “and we know he was born blind.

John 9:21 But how he can see now, or who opened his eyes, we don’t know. Ask him. He is of age; he will speak for himself.”

John 9:22 His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jews, for already the Jews had decided that anyone who acknowledged that Jesus was the Christ would be put out of the synagogue.

John 9:23 That was why his parents said, “He is of age; ask him.”

John 9:24 A second time they summoned the man who had been blind. “Give glory to God,” they said. “We know this man is a sinner.”

John 9:25 He replied, “Whether he is a sinner or not, I don’t know. One thing I do know. I was blind but now I see!”

John 9:26 Then they asked him, “What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?”

John 9:27 He answered, “I have told you already and you did not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you want to become his disciples, too?”

John 9:28 Then they hurled insults at him and said, “You are this fellow’s disciple! We are disciples of Moses!

John 9:29 We know that God spoke to Moses, but as for this fellow, we don’t even know where he comes from.”

COMMENTARY

He is of age: At least 30 years old—old enough for his words to be given significant weight as testimony in court.

Note how persistent the Pharisees are—in this they are modeling the devil who constantly “roams about like a roaring lion” seeking to attack that which God loves (1 Peter 5:8).

The enemy’s tactics have not changed much over the years; He seeks to divide, discourage, and destroy.

Jesus recently (John 8) had an extended discussion with the Pharisees about who He was, His training, home, and authority.

SCRIPTURE TEXT

John 9:30 The man answered, “Now that is remarkable! You don’t know where he comes from, yet he opened my eyes.

John 9:31 We know that God does not listen to sinners. He listens to the godly man who does his will.

John 9:32 Nobody has ever heard of opening the eyes of a man born blind.

John 9:33 If this man were not from God, he could do nothing.”

John 9:34 To this they replied, “You were steeped in sin at birth; how dare you lecture us!” And they threw him out.

John 9:35 Jesus heard that they had thrown him out, and when he found him, he said, “Do you believe in the Son of Man?”

John 9:36 “Who is he, sir?” the man asked. “Tell me so that I may believe in him.”

John 9:37 Jesus said, “You have now seen him; in fact, he is the one speaking with you.”

John 9:38 Then the man said, “Lord, I believe,” and he worshiped him.

John 9:39 Jesus said, “For judgment I have come into this world, so that the blind will see and those who see will become blind.”

John 9:40 Some Pharisees who were with him heard him say this and asked, “What? Are we blind too?”

John 9:41 Jesus said, “If you were blind, you would not be guilty of sin; but now that you claim you can see, your guilt remains.

COMMENTARY

A foolish statement in that they knew Jesus was not a sinner, and that He had manifested many miracles.

The idea that this man was profoundly cursed from birth because of sin (i.e., born blind) stems from a wrongful interpretation of Numbers 14:18. Here Jesus extends God’s mercy and addresses the interpretation error by healing the man.

Note Jesus’ care and concern. At some risk to Himself, He seeks out the blind man to encourage Him, and to impart another blessing.

When the man realized what God had done for Him, he was quick to worship Jesus. What a good example.

A sober statement: Much is required from those who have been exposed to much spiritual truth.

THE STORY OF

JESUS

THE LAST MONTHS OF MINISTRY

JESUS AS THE GOOD SHEPHERD

SCRIPTURE TEXT

John 10:1 “I tell you the truth, the man who does not enter the sheep pen by the gate, but climbs in by some other way, is a thief and a robber.

John 10:2 The man who enters by the gate is the shepherd of his sheep.

John 10:3 The watchman opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.

John 10:4 When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice.

John 10:5 But they will never follow a stranger; in fact, they will run away from him because they do not recognize a stranger’s voice.”

John 10:6 Jesus used this figure of speech, but they did not understand what he was telling them.

John 10:7 Therefore Jesus said again, “I tell you the truth, I am the gate for the sheep.

John 10:8 All who ever came before me were thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them.

John 10:9 I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. He will come in and go out, and find pasture.

COMMENTARY

In the days of Jesus, temporary sheep pens were often set up on the outskirts of towns for those who brought their flocks to the city for sale or trade. These sheep pens typically did not have a gate—the shepherd slept in the entrance area and personally became the gate. In using this analogy, Jesus presents Himself as the access point, sentry, and guardian of His people.

See also John 14:6 and Psalm 23.

SCRIPTURE TEXT

John 10:10 The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.

John 10:11 “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.

John 10:12 The hired hand is not the shepherd who owns the sheep. So when he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away. Then the wolf attacks the flock and scatters it.

John 10:13 The man runs away because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep.

John 10:14 “I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me -

John 10:15 just as the Father knows me and I know the Father - and I lay down my life for the sheep.

John 10:16 I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd.

John 10:17 The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life— only to take it up again.

John 10:18 No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father.”

COMMENTARY

Jesus uses the analogy of a good and faithful shepherd (see God as the Good Shepherd in Psalm 23) to help people understand His mission, and to prepare them for His (sacrificial) death on the cross.

The Good Shepherd owns the sheep (verse 12), knows the sheep (verse 14), and lays down His life for the sheep (verse 15).

Other sheep: Some suppose this to be a reference to aliens—Mormon leaders teach that this references a pocket of believers living in North America at the time. Most theologians believe it is a reference to the Gentile world—to those who would be presented with the Gospel message after the cross and resurrection.

SCRIPTURE TEXT

John 10:19 At these words the Jews were again divided.

John 10:20 Many of them said, “He is demon-possessed and raving mad. Why listen to him?”

John 10:21 But others said, “These are not the sayings of a man possessed by a demon. Can a demon open the eyes of the blind?”

COMMENTARY

Some believe that understanding every doctrine and teaching of Jesus is a requisite to coming to faith. Here in John 10, because some could not fathom Jesus' nature and power, they refused to believe His message and declared Him mad. Do not make the mistake of thinking you must understand all in order to believe all. Some spiritual answers will be revealed in time, some come with spiritual maturity, and others, being as Job said, “too wonderful for me,” can not be understood and must be embraced by faith.

JESUS BEGINS THE LONG JOURNEY TO JERUSALEM

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Luke 9:51 As the time approached for him to be taken up to heaven, Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem. •

Luke 9:52 And he sent messengers on ahead, who went into a Samaritan village to get things ready for him;

Luke 9:53 but the people there did not welcome him, because he was heading for Jerusalem. •

Luke 9:54 When the disciples James and John saw this, they asked, “Lord, do you want us to call fire down from heaven to destroy them?”

Luke 9:55 But Jesus turned and rebuked them,

Luke 9:56 and they went to another village.

COMMENTARY

Jesus is moving toward Jerusalem where He will be crucified. But before arriving there He will travel through a number of small towns and minister to many. His final months will be His most intense time of ministry.

There was an uneasy peace between Jews and Samaritans. They did not like each other, but did find ways to work together. Jews traveling from Jerusalem were welcomed in Samaria as many came to buy and sell and this was mutually beneficial. However, Jews were not welcome to travel through Samaria toward Jerusalem, as Jesus is doing here.

JESUS SPEAKS OF COMMITMENT

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Luke 9:57 As they were walking along the road, a man said to him, "I will follow you wherever you go."

Luke 9:58 Jesus replied, "Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head."

Luke 9:59 He said to another man, "Follow me." But the man replied, "Lord, first let me go and bury my father."

Luke 9:60 Jesus said to him, "Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and proclaim the kingdom of God."

Luke 9:61 Still another said, "I will follow you, Lord; but first let me go back and say good-by to my family."

Luke 9:62 Jesus replied, "No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God."

COMMENTARY

It is easy to say, "I will follow." Walking the walk is another matter. This man evidently chooses not follow when he hears (V.58) that there is a cost to discipleship.

Jesus' response (verse 60) seems rather harsh. However, it is likely that the man's father was not yet dead, and that he was using this as an excuse to defer or minimize his service to the Lord. The point in this passage (verses 57-62) is not to identify which excuses have merit, but to see that God calls His followers to sacrifice and serve the moment they come to faith in Him.

JESUS SPEAKS OF ACCOUNTABILITY

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Matt. 11:20 Then Jesus began to denounce the cities in which most of his miracles had been performed, because they did not repent. •

Matt. 11:21 “Woe to you, Korazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! If the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes.

Matt. 11:22 But I tell you, it will be more bearable for Tyre and Sidon on the day of judgment than for you.

Matt. 11:23 And you, Capernaum, will you be lifted up to the skies? No, you will go down to the depths. If the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Sodom, it would have remained to this day.

Matt. 11:24 But I tell you that it will be more bearable for Sodom on the day of judgment than for you.”

COMMENTARY

In this passage Jesus speaks of the high level of accountability for those who have been exposed to spiritual truth. Cities such as Bethsaida were recent ministry stops for Jesus. At the time of judgment, citizens will not be able to plead ignorance of the truth. The saying is true: to whom much has been given, much is required.

Jesus shared a number of teachings and manifested many miracles in Capernaum, yet most rejected Him. Sodom was a city destroyed by God in Genesis 19 for its wickedness. Here Jesus notes that Capernaum's sin was worse, for at least Sodom acted out of some ignorance, not having heard Moses, the prophets or the teaching of the Messiah.

THE GREAT INVITATION

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Matt. 11:25 At that time Jesus said, “I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children.”

Matt. 11:26 Yes, Father, for this was your good pleasure.

Matt. 11:27 “All things have been committed to me by my Father. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.

Matt. 11:28 “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.

Matt. 11:29 Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

Matt. 11:30 For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”

COMMENTARY

A term of affection, not condescension (see John 1:12)

A yoke was a kind of harness which joined two animals together to pull a wagon or plow. Typically, a stronger animal would be paired with a younger, weaker animal. Here Jesus offers His strength, and extends an invitation to partner with anyone who draws near to Him in faith.

JESUS HEALS TEN LEPERS

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Luke 17:11 Now on his way to Jerusalem, Jesus traveled along the border between Samaria and Galilee.

Luke 17:12 As he was going into a village, ten men who had leprosy met him. They stood at a distance

Luke 17:13 and called out in a loud voice, “Jesus, Master, have pity on us!”

Luke 17:14 When he saw them, he said, “Go, show yourselves to the priests.” And as they went, they were cleansed.

Luke 17:15 One of them, when he saw he was healed, came back, praising God in a loud voice.

Luke 17:16 He threw himself at Jesus’ feet and thanked him—and he was a Samaritan.

Luke 17:17 Jesus asked, “Were not all ten cleansed? Where are the other nine?”

Luke 17:18 Was no one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?”

Luke 17:19 Then he said to him, “Rise and go; your faith has made you well.”

COMMENTARY

Leprosy was (and is) a dreaded disease. 2000 years ago, lepers were required to keep a shouting distance away from non-lepers.

Go show yourselves to the priests: Jewish Law required those who claimed to be healed, to be certified by a priest before they could once again move freely among the general population.

As they went: Note that the miracle was linked to their obedience to Jesus’ instructions.

A sad commentary on human nature. How sad that few recognize and appreciate the work of God. Here ten were blessed with healing, but only one thanked Jesus. How important it is that believers today lead in helping the world see the blessings God extends every day (see Lam.3:23).

THE 70 ARE SENT OUT

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Luke 10:1 After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them two by two ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go.

Luke 10:2 He told them, “The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.

Luke 10:3 Go! I am sending you out like lambs among wolves.

Luke 10:4 Do not take a purse or bag or sandals; and do not greet anyone on the road.

Luke 10:5 “When you enter a house, first say, ‘Peace to this house.’

Luke 10:6 If a man of peace is there, your peace will rest on him; if not, it will return to you.

Luke 10:7 Stay in that house, eating and drinking whatever they give you, for the worker deserves his wages. Do not move around from house to house.

Luke 10:8 “When you enter a town and are welcomed, eat what is set before you.

Luke 10:9 Heal the sick who are there and tell them, ‘The kingdom of God is near you.’

Luke 10:10 But when you enter a town and are not welcomed, go into its streets and say,

COMMENTARY

Here Jesus is teaching the 12 the importance of enlisting and empowering others to share in the work of the ministry.

The church today has been given a great responsibility and a great opportunity.

The instructions here parallel the orders given to the disciples in Matthew 10.

The point is to invest time and resources wisely. If someone is receptive to the Gospel, stay and share. If not, know your work is not in vain—persevere in planting seeds and keep moving forward.

Show hospitality and respect.

*The seventy were reminded that their mission was twofold: meet the spiritual **and** physical needs of people. Believers today have the same mission and calling.*

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Luke 10:11 “Even the dust of your town that sticks to our feet we wipe off against you. Yet be sure of this: The kingdom of God is near.”

Luke 10:16 “He who listens to you listens to me; he who rejects you rejects me; but he who rejects me rejects him who sent me.”

Luke 10:17 The seventy-two returned with joy and said, “Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name.”

Luke 10:18 He replied, “I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven.

Luke 10:19 I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you.

Luke 10:20 However, do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.”

COMMENTARY

An ancient gesture of rebuke for rejecting the blessing God had extended.

Some translations read seventy also, rather than seventy-two (there is some variation among the oldest families of manuscripts). Note that the number seventy was often considered a round number for the Hebrew people, and can, without error to the text, be understood as about seventy.

They had no great training or resources, but they did have a calling and enjoyed great success. Believers have the same calling and authority and through Christ, can share in that same kind of victory over Satan.

THE GREATEST COMMANDMENT

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Luke 10:25 On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. “Teacher,” he asked, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?”

Luke 10:26 “What is written in the Law?” he replied. “How do you read it?”

Luke 10:27 He answered: “‘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, ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’”

Luke 10:28 “You have answered correctly,” Jesus replied. “Do this and you will live.”

Luke 10:29 But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?”

Luke 10:30 In reply Jesus said: “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he fell into the hands of robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead.

Luke 10:31 A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side.

Luke 10:32 So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side.

COMMENTARY

The expert in Law here may have expected to be commended by Jesus for his knowledge and strict attention to the Law of Moses.

Religious leaders often bound strips of parchment (inscribed with verses) to their arms, belt or forehead. These were called phylacteries. The Scripture cited in verse 27 was a common phylactery and was to be recited daily.

Perhaps there was some body language or hint in Jesus’ gentle response in verse 28 that prompted the man to ask a follow-up question. His expectation was that Jesus would affirm his view that Jews were to love their countrymen (only). The parable Jesus shares in the following verses notes that God expects more.

In this story the Levite and priest extend no care to the hurting Samaritan. Religious leaders, trained in the Law, should have been mindful of Deut. 22:1-2, which states that if one comes across even a cow or sheep in trouble, they are obliged to help. How is it anyone would think themselves justified in extending less care to a person in need?

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Luke 10:33 But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him.

Luke 10:34 He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, took him to an inn and took care of him.

Luke 10:35 The next day he took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper. ‘Look after him,’ he said, ‘and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.’

Luke 10:36 “Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?”

Luke 10:37 The expert in the law replied, “The one who had mercy on him.” Jesus told him, “Go and do likewise.”

COMMENTARY

There was a centuries-old feud between Samaritans and Jews, with each group claiming to control the rightful site for the Temple (Jerusalem for the Jews—Mt. Gerizim for the Samaritans).

Showing mercy is a powerful witness. Believers are called to extend to others the love, grace, and mercy they have received from God.

MARY AND MARTHA WAIT ON JESUS

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Luke 10:38 As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him. •

Luke 10:39 She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet listening to what he said.

Luke 10:40 But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to him and asked, "Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!"

Luke 10:41 "Martha, Martha," the Lord answered, "you are worried and upset about many things,

Luke 10:42 but only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her."

COMMENTARY

Mary and Martha lived in Bethany, located a few miles from Jerusalem. They were the sisters of Lazarus.

An easy-to-relate-to and rather amusing situation. How easy it is for us to become so focused on preparations and details that we miss seeing, hearing, or doing what the Lord has for us.

Martha learns and grows from this encounter with Jesus. Later, when her brother Lazarus dies (see John 11), it is Mary, not Martha, who leads with wisdom, runs to meet Jesus, and is commended for her faith and spiritual insight.

JESUS TEACHES ABOUT THE NEED TO BE READY

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Luke 13:1 Now there were some present at that time who told Jesus about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mixed with their sacrifices.

Luke 13:2 Jesus answered, “Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans because they suffered this way?

Luke 13:3 I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you too will all perish.

Luke 13:4 Or those eighteen who died when the tower in Siloam fell on them—do you think they were more guilty than all the others living in Jerusalem?

Luke 13:5 I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you too will all perish.”

Luke 13:6 Then he told this parable: “A man had a fig tree, planted in his vineyard, and he went to look for fruit on it, but did not find any.

Luke 13:7 So he said to the man who took care of the vineyard, ‘For three years now I’ve been coming to look for fruit on this fig tree and haven’t found any. Cut it down! Why should it use up the soil?’

Luke 13:8 “‘Sir,’ the man replied, ‘leave it alone for one more year, and I’ll dig around it and fertilize it.

Luke 13:9 If it bears fruit next year, fine! If not, then cut it down.”

COMMENTARY

This incident is not referenced in Roman records, but similar atrocities are. For example, Archelaus’ soldiers are said to have slain 3000 Jews as they worshipped in Jerusalem. Jesus’ main point in verses 1-9 does not require that we know the specifics of what happened. His intent was simply to affirm the sovereignty of God, and to remind individuals to be spiritually prepared, for at any moment, one’s life may be required.

The main points here are:
 1) *God has planted (created) us and looks to see if we bear fruit*
 2) *Fig trees are in full leaf prior to producing any fruit. It is possible for the fig tree to look healthy and vibrant, but be barren. Looking good is not good enough (see verse 7). God has high expectations of His people (see John 15:1-2).*

One more year: A reference to God’s patience, mercy, grace and impending judgment.

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Luke 13:10 On a Sabbath Jesus was teaching in one of the synagogues,

Luke 13:11 and a woman was there who had been crippled by a spirit for eighteen years. She was bent over and could not straighten up at all.

Luke 13:12 When Jesus saw her, he called her forward and said to her, “Woman, you are set free from your infirmity.”

Luke 13:13 Then he put his hands on her, and immediately she straightened up and praised God.

COMMENTARY

A rare but real possible outcome of spiritual possession.

Note how wonderfully, quickly, and completely Jesus moves to meet the need of this woman.

JESUS AT THE FEAST OF DEDICATION

SCRIPTURE TEXT

John 10:22 Then came the Feast of Dedication at Jerusalem. It was winter,

John 10:23 and Jesus was in the temple area walking in Solomon's Colonnade.

John 10:24 The Jews gathered around him, saying, "How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly."

John 10:25 Jesus answered, "I did tell you, but you do not believe. The miracles I do in my Father's name speak for me,

John 10:26 but you do not believe because you are not my sheep.

John 10:27 My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me.

John 10:28 I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand.

John 10:29 My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand.

John 10:30 I and the Father are one."

John 10:31 Again the Jews picked up stones to stone him,

John 10:32 but Jesus said to them, "I have shown you many great miracles from the Father. For which of these do you stone me?"

COMMENTARY

The Feast of Dedication takes place in December. It is also known as the Festival of Lights and Hanukkah.

Jesus had previously revealed His identity (in many ways and many times). It is not that He hadn't told them, they simply were not listening.

A requisite for discipleship: Christians must listen to (and follow) Christ.

See Romans 8:33-39.

A deity statement (see also Colossians 1:15, 2:8-9). This means more than one in purpose, it indicates one in essence. This is a clear deity reference, evidenced by the reaction of the Jews in verses 31-33 (they attempt to kill Jesus for claiming to be God).

SCRIPTURE TEXT

John 10:33 “We are not stoning you for any of these,” replied the Jews, “but for blasphemy, because you, a mere man, claim to be God.”

John 10:34 Jesus answered them, “Is it not written in your Law, ‘I have said you are gods’? •

John 10:35 If he called them ‘gods,’ to whom the word of God came—and the Scripture cannot be broken—

John 10:36 what about the one whom the Father set apart as his very own and sent into the world? Why then do you accuse me of blasphemy because I said, ‘I am God’s Son’?

John 10:37 Do not believe me unless I do what my Father does.

John 10:38 But if I do it, even though you do not believe me, believe the miracles, that you may know and understand that the Father is in me, and I in the Father.” •

John 10:39 Again they tried to seize him, but he escaped their grasp.

COMMENTARY

This is a reference to Psalm 82:6 where the Judges of Israel were referred to as gods because they, in a fashion, served as a kind of proxy for God—they were the dispensers of justice, looked after the needs of the people and represented the Law.

A number of prophets foretold that the ministry of the Messiah would be accompanied by miracles. To reject Jesus, in light of His miracles and the testimony of John the Baptist and the voice of God at His baptism was especially troubling.

JESUS TEACHES ABOUT SALVATION

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Luke 13:22 Then Jesus went through the towns and villages, teaching as he made his way to Jerusalem.

Luke 13:23 Someone asked him, “Lord, are only a few people going to be saved?” He said to them,

Luke 13:24 “Make every effort to enter through the narrow door, because many, I tell you, will try to enter and will not be able to.

Luke 13:25 Once the owner of the house gets up and closes the door, you will stand outside knocking and pleading, ‘Sir, open the door for us.’ “But he will answer, ‘I don’t know you or where you come from.’

Luke 13:26 “Then you will say, ‘We ate and drank with you, and you taught in our streets.’

Luke 13:27 “But he will reply, ‘I don’t know you or where you come from. Away from me, all you evildoers!’

Luke 13:28 “There will be weeping there, and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, but you yourselves thrown out.

Luke 13:29 People will come from east and west and north and south, and will take their places at the feast in the kingdom of God.

COMMENTARY

It is sometimes tempting (and a convenient diversion) to focus on the spirituality of others, rather than on our spiritual walk. Here Jesus enjoins individuals to “make every effort” to ensure they are right with God. Remember, it is not enough to believe in Jesus— Scripture notes that even the demons believe (James 2:19). We must actively live out our faith in Jesus Christ (James 2:17).

Most Jews thought they were saved because they were ‘children of Abraham.’ Here, with powerful words, Jesus reminds the hearer that more is required.

Here Jesus speaks of the focus of His mission—to make salvation possible for all people (See Luke 2:10).

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Luke 13:30 Indeed there are those who are last who will be first, and first who will be last.”

Luke 13:31 At that time some Pharisees came to Jesus and said to him, “Leave this place and go somewhere else. Herod wants to kill you.”

Luke 13:32 He replied, “Go tell that fox, ‘I will drive out demons and heal people today and tomorrow, and on the third day I will reach my goal.’”

Luke 13:33 In any case, I must keep going today and tomorrow and the next day—for surely no prophet can die outside Jerusalem!

Luke 13:34 “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing!

Luke 13:35 Look, your house is left to you desolate. I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, ‘Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.’”

COMMENTARY

Those who are humble and faithful will be exalted (see Matthew 5:3,5 and 1 Peter 5:6).

The Pharisees were not concerned for Jesus’ safety—they simply saw Jesus as a threat to their ministry and wanted Him to leave.

A reference to the cross and resurrection (see also verses 33-34).

Hebrews 11 presents a list of many who died for their faith.

The Jews had rejected Jesus’ offer of salvation, mercy, and protection. Jesus would soon go to the cross, and in a few decades, the Temple would be destroyed. The Hebrew people would be oppressed and scattered for centuries until God’s final plan for Israel (as profiled in the book of Revelation) unfolds.

JESUS HEALS A MAN OF DROPSY ON THE SABBATH

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Luke 14:1 One Sabbath, when Jesus went to eat in the house of a prominent Pharisee, he was being carefully watched.

Luke 14:2 There in front of him was a man suffering from dropsy. •

Luke 14:3 Jesus asked the Pharisees and experts in the law, “Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath or not?” •

Luke 14:4 But they remained silent. So taking hold of the man, he healed him and sent him away.

Luke 14:5 Then he asked them, “If one of you has a son or an ox that falls into a well on the Sabbath day, will you not immediately pull him out?”

Luke 14:6 And they had nothing to say.

COMMENTARY

Dropsy is a serious medical condition which causes there to be a collection of fluid in specific parts of the body (often causing the painful swelling of the limbs).

Jesus had already dealt with this question multiple times. This miracle showed Jesus to have authority over the Sabbath, and over the interpretation of the Law. It also notes that no rule or construct of man can hinder God's ability to bless His people.

JESUS SPEAKS OF THE IMPORTANCE OF HUMILITY

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Luke 14:7 When he noticed how the guests picked the places of honor at the table, he told them this parable:

Luke 14:8 “When someone invites you to a wedding feast, do not take the place of honor, for a person more distinguished than you may have been invited.

Luke 14:9 If so, the host who invited both of you will come and say to you, ‘Give this man your seat.’ Then, humiliated, you will have to take the least important place.

Luke 14:10 But when you are invited, take the lowest place, so that when your host comes, he will say to you, ‘Friend, move up to a better place.’ Then you will be honored in the presence of all your fellow guests.

Luke 14:11 For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.”

Luke 14:12 Then Jesus said to his host, “When you give a luncheon or dinner, do not invite your friends, your brothers or relatives, or your rich neighbors; if you do, they may invite you back and so you will be repaid.

Luke 14:13 But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind,

Luke 14:14 and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.”

COMMENTARY

The Pharisees are reproved here not because they held positions of honor, but because in many ways they sought to exalt themselves. Someone wisely noted that, “Our job is to humble ourselves, and God’s job is to exalt us. If we insist on doing God’s job then He will do ours” (see Peter 5:6 and Luke 14:11).

Jesus did not just ‘talk the talk,’ He ‘walked the walk.’ He was born in a stable, lived a life of service and sacrifice, held no political office, and had no great wealth, etc. John 13:15 notes that Jesus came to be our example. Jesus lived humbly, and does not ask His followers to do anything that He Himself was not willing to do.

Verses 12-15: Here Jesus uses a common reference point (a special lunch or dinner event) to present a spiritual truth. The thought is: Are we willing to do what God wants us to do even if we do not receive any reward or recognition?

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Luke 14:15 When one of those at the table with him heard this, he said to Jesus, “Blessed is the man who will eat at the feast in the kingdom of God.”

Luke 14:16 Jesus replied: “A certain man was preparing a great banquet and invited many guests.

Luke 14:17 At the time of the banquet he sent his servant to tell those who had been invited, ‘Come, for everything is now ready.’

Luke 14:18 “But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said, ‘I have just bought a field, and I must go and see it. Please excuse me.’

Luke 14:19 “Another said, ‘I have just bought five yoke of oxen, and I’m on my way to try them out. Please excuse me.’

Luke 14:20 “Still another said, ‘I just got married, so I can’t come.’

Luke 14:21 “The servant came back and reported this to his master. Then the owner of the house became angry and ordered his servant, ‘Go out quickly into the streets and alleys of the town and bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame.’

Luke 14:22 “‘Sir,’ the servant said, ‘what you ordered has been done, but there is still room.’

Luke 14:23 “Then the master told his servant, ‘Go out to the roads and country lanes and make them come in, so that my house will be full.

COMMENTARY

Verses 16-24 provide insight into how God had dealt with Jerusalem. He had graciously invited Israel to a ‘great banquet’ at which they would be greatly blessed. The guests in this story (the Jews) however, showed little interest and did not accept God’s invitation to share in the blessing. Therefore, they would soon be cut off, and the mantle of blessing would be passed-on to the Gentile world.

Some excuses may seem reasonable to us, however, none are justified in the eyes of God. All must choose to become His follower, or by default, choose to reject Him.

A reference to how the Gospel message and the New Covenant would soon be given to the Gentile world.

JESUS SPEAKS OF THE COST OF DISCIPLESHIP

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Luke 14:24 I tell you, not one of those men who were invited will get a taste of my banquet.”

Luke 14:25 Large crowds were traveling with Jesus, and turning to them he said:

Luke 14:26 “If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters—yes, even his own life—he cannot be my disciple.

Luke 14:27 And anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple.

Luke 14:28 “Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Will he not first sit down and estimate the cost to see if he has enough money to complete it?

Luke 14:29 For if he lays the foundation and is not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule him,

Luke 14:30 saying, ‘This fellow began to build and was not able to finish.’

Luke 14:31 “Or suppose a king is about to go to war against another king. Will he not first sit down and consider whether he is able with ten thousand men to oppose the one coming against him with twenty thousand?

Luke 14:32 If he is not able, he will send a delegation while the other is still a long way off and will ask for terms of peace.

Luke 14:33 In the same way, any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple.

COMMENTARY

Here Jesus uses powerful and provocative language to capture the attention of His audience. He is not encouraging individuals to hate, but rather to become more aware of the preeminent place God must have in their lives.

To follow the Lord into glory requires that we follow in His example of sacrifice.

The focus of this section of Scripture is to encourage individuals to be mindful of the solemn nature and cost of discipleship. The ‘lukewarm’ (Rev. 3:16) disciple has no honor in the kingdom of God (see also Luke 14:33 and Jesus’ discussion on commitment in John 6).

JESUS SPEAKS OF OUR WITNESS

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Luke 14:34 “Salt is good, but if it loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again?”

Luke 14:35 It is fit neither for the soil nor for the manure pile; it is thrown out. “He who has ears to hear, let him hear.”

COMMENTARY

Believers are referred to as ‘Light, Salt,’ and ‘Sanctified’ (set apart). Believers are loved of God, anointed by His Spirit and called to make a difference in this world for His glory.

THE PARABLE OF THE LOST SHEEP

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Luke 15:1 Now the tax collectors and “sinners” were all gathering around to hear him.

Luke 15:2 But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law muttered, “This man welcomes sinners and eats with them.”

Luke 15:3 Then Jesus told them this parable:

Luke 15:4 “Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Does he not leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it?

Luke 15:5 And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders

Luke 15:6 and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, ‘Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.’

Luke 15:7 I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent.

COMMENTARY

The Pharisees considered it beneath their high office to associate with ‘sinners.’ How blessed we are that Jesus did not follow their example.

Some suggest that the Lord is an angry God who prefers those who stray to stay away and wallow in their misery. This story notes how God greatly desires to forgive and to see broken relationships healed. Note the shepherd’s joy in verse 5, and how he lovingly carries the stray back home on his shoulders.

A wise pastor once said, “God’s forgiveness and grace is always just one prayer away.”

THE PARABLE OF THE LOST COIN

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Luke 15:8 “Or suppose a woman has ten silver coins and loses one. Does she not light a lamp, sweep the house and search carefully until she finds it?

Luke 15:9 And when she finds it, she calls her friends and neighbors together and says, ‘Rejoice with me; I have found my lost coin.’

Luke 15:10 In the same way, I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.”

COMMENTARY

Continuing the same thought, Jesus presents two more stories—the first of a woman who loses a valued coin innocently, the second of a prodigal son who strays willfully. In each story we see that God desires reunion and restoration.

THE PRODIGAL SON

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Luke 15:11 Jesus continued: “There was a man who had two sons.

Luke 15:12 The younger one said to his father, ‘Father, give me my share of the estate.’ So he divided his property between them.

Luke 15:13 “Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living.

Luke 15:14 After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need.

Luke 15:15 So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs.

Luke 15:16 He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything.

Luke 15:17 “When he came to his senses, he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired men have food to spare, and here I am starving to death!

Luke 15:18 I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you.

Luke 15:19 I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired men.’

COMMENTARY

It was disrespectful for the younger son to seek his inheritance in this way. It was expected that he would honor his father by helping him with the estate. To forsake his responsibility and father’s values (see verse 13) was considered a serious transgression.

The young man was very slow to recognize his wrong. Only after he was out of money (verse 14), and lived for a time in despicable conditions (verses 15-16), did he begin to repent. This story notes the truth that it is never too late to seek forgiveness. It also speaks of God’s grace, mercy, and love.

In Jewish culture, tending pigs was considered unclean work, and was forbidden according to custom.

Moving to make it right with our Father is the beginning of wisdom.

The son’s humble spirit is an important part of his being able to be restored in his relationship with his father.

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Luke 15:20 So he got up and went to his father. “But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him.

Luke 15:21 “The son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’

Luke 15:22 “But the father said to his servants, ‘Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet.

Luke 15:23 Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let’s have a feast and celebrate.

Luke 15:24 For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’ So they began to celebrate.

Luke 15:25 “Meanwhile, the older son was in the field. When he came near the house, he heard music and dancing.

Luke 15:26 So he called one of the servants and asked him what was going on.

Luke 15:27 “Your brother has come,’ he replied, ‘and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.’

Luke 15:28 “The older brother became angry and refused to go in. So his father went out and pleaded with him.

COMMENTARY

The father’s special care and attention is extraordinary and unexpected.

The son was correct in noting that his sin was against his father and the heavenly Father.

Note how quickly and wonderfully the father moves to forgive the son, and joyfully celebrate his return.

God’s desire is that we rejoice in what He is doing, even if it is unusual or unexpected. Sadly, the story does not reveal whether or not the older brother ever shared in the celebration.

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Luke 15:29 But he answered his father, 'Look! All these years I've been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends.

Luke 15:30 But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him!'

Luke 15:31 'My son,' the father said, 'you are always with me, and everything I have is yours.

Luke 15:32 But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.'

COMMENTARY

There is a peace and satisfaction in being faithful, and joy in seeing repentance and restoration. The father tries to explain this to his son in verses 31-21, but the father's words are not heard. Bitterness can take root when we focus on what we think we deserve rather than what the Father desires.

THE PARABLE OF THE SHREWD MANAGER

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Luke 16:1 Jesus told his disciples: “There was a rich man whose manager was accused of wasting his possessions.

Luke 16:2 So he called him in and asked him, ‘What is this I hear about you? Give an account of your management, because you cannot be manager any longer.’

Luke 16:3 “The manager said to himself, ‘What shall I do now? My master is taking away my job. I’m not strong enough to dig, and I’m ashamed to beg—

Luke 16:4 I know what I’ll do so that, when I lose my job here, people will welcome me into their houses.’

Luke 16:5 “So he called in each one of his master’s debtors. He asked the first, ‘How much do you owe my master?’

Luke 16:6 “‘Eight hundred gallons of olive oil,’ he replied. “The manager told him, ‘Take your bill, sit down quickly, and make it four hundred.’

Luke 16:7 “Then he asked the second, ‘And how much do you owe?’ “‘A thousand bushels of wheat,’ he replied. “He told him, ‘Take your bill and make it eight hundred.’

Luke 16:8 “The master commended the dishonest manager because he had acted shrewdly. For the people of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own kind than are the people of the light.

COMMENTARY

This is a difficult parable to interpret correctly. Some suppose it to be about business, or ethics. It is not. Jesus presented this story to encourage resourcefulness in the Kingdom’s work.

The manager is proud and dishonest (see verses 3-8). It is unusual that he is the principle in one of Jesus’ parables. Perhaps it is to show that if the world can show itself to be shrewd and effective in its work, how much more then should believers be able to accomplish with the help and guidance of the Holy Spirit.

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Luke 16:9 I tell you, use worldly wealth to gain friends for yourselves, so that when it is gone, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings.

Luke 16:10 “Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much, and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much.

Luke 16:11 So if you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches?

Luke 16:12 And if you have not been trustworthy with someone else’s property, who will give you property of your own?

Luke 16:13 “No servant can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money.”

Luke 16:14 The Pharisees, who loved money, heard all this and were sneering at Jesus.

Luke 16:15 He said to them, “You are the ones who justify yourselves in the eyes of men, but God knows your hearts. What is highly valued among men is detestable in God’s sight.”

COMMENTARY

Lest the hearer misunderstand the point of the last parable, Jesus ends the story with a mention of the importance of integrity in our dealings. Pray that the Lord will help you to be faithful in little, so that you can be trusted with more.

God desires to be first in our focus and affection. (see Matthew 22:37).

The root Greek word used here is mukterizo, which means to mock, deride or sneer. The Good News Bible renders this, “made fun of...”, but that does not communicate the strong negative tone of this passage.

THE PARABLE OF THE RICH MAN AND LAZARUS

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Luke 16:19 “There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and lived in luxury every day.

Luke 16:20 At his gate was laid a beggar named Lazarus, covered with sores

Luke 16:21 and longing to eat what fell from the rich man’s table. Even the dogs came and licked his sores.

Luke 16:22 “The time came when the beggar died and the angels carried him to Abraham’s side. The rich man also died and was buried.

Luke 16:23 In hell, where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side.

Luke 16:24 So he called to him, ‘Father Abraham, have pity on me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, because I am in agony in this fire.’

Luke 16:25 “But Abraham replied, ‘Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, while Lazarus received bad things, but now he is comforted here and you are in agony.

Luke 16:26 And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, so that those who want to go from here to you cannot, nor can anyone cross over from there to us.’

COMMENTARY

It is important to remember that the story of Lazarus is a parable, and therefore drawing specific conclusions about heaven or hell should be done with great caution. Abraham’s role in this story, for example, is presented to reinforce the promise of eternal reward and the need to adhere to God’s message without reservation or delay. This parable does not in any way support the idea of purgatory or soul sleep.

From the whole of Scripture it is clear that Abraham has no role or authority to minister to those in hell—nor is it likely that those in heaven will, from their new vantage point, see those who are in hell.

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Luke 16:27 “He answered, ‘Then I beg you, father, send Lazarus to my father’s house,

Luke 16:28 for I have five brothers. Let him warn them, so that they will not also come to this place of torment.’

Luke 16:29 “Abraham replied, ‘They have Moses and the Prophets; let them listen to them.’

Luke 16:30 “‘No, father Abraham,’ he said, ‘but if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent.’

Luke 16:31 “He said to him, ‘If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.’”

COMMENTARY

The story is about the urgent need for all to respond to God’s message—hence a request to send the deceased Lazarus to the rich man’s father’s house. The text does not support the notion that God sends the departed on these kinds of missions.

Humanity is prone to ask for one more miracle or sign in order to believe. God’s expectation, however, is that we respond to the many signs, messages and wonders that have already been presented.

JESUS TEACHES ABOUT THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Matt. 20:1 For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire men to work in his vineyard.

Matt. 20:2 He agreed to pay them a denarius for the day and sent them into his vineyard.

Matt. 20:3 “About the third hour he went out and saw others standing in the marketplace doing nothing.

Matt. 20:4 He told them, ‘You also go and work in my vineyard, and I will pay you whatever is right.’

Matt. 20:5 So they went. “He went out again about the sixth hour and the ninth hour and did the same thing.

Matt. 20:6 About the eleventh hour he went out and found still others standing around. He asked them, ‘Why have you been standing here all day long doing nothing?’

Matt. 20:7 “‘Because no one has hired us,’ they answered. “He said to them, ‘You also go and work in my vineyard.’

Matt. 20:8 “When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his foreman, ‘Call the workers and pay them their wages, beginning with the last ones hired and going on to the first.’

COMMENTARY

Denarius: The standard salary for one day's work.

The story in verses 1-16 is presented to illustrate the sovereignty of God. That is, that God's will, way and timing are perfect and beyond our ability to understand (see Job 38-41). The Jews understood that a powerful landowner need not explain his actions to his servants. It is wrong therefore to judge God to be unfair when He works in ways we do not expect or understand.

The late group represents the Gentiles. The invitation to share in the work speaks of God's grace. However, it is important to note that God's expectation is that those who share in the reward will first share in the work!

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Matt. 20:9 “The workers who were hired about the eleventh hour came and each received a denarius.

Matt. 20:10 So when those came who were hired first, they expected to receive more. But each one of them also received a denarius.

Matt. 20:11 When they received it, they began to grumble against the landowner.

Matt. 20:12 “These men who were hired last worked only one hour,’ they said, ‘and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the work and the heat of the day.’

Matt. 20:13 “But he answered one of them, ‘Friend, I am not being unfair to you. Didn’t you agree to work for a denarius?’

Matt. 20:14 Take your pay and go. I want to give the man who was hired last the same as I gave you.

Matt. 20:15 Don’t I have the right to do what I want with my own money? Or are you envious because I am generous?’

Matt. 20:16 “So the last will be first, and the first will be last.”

COMMENTARY

Jesus’ ministry and sacrifice on the cross ensures that the Gentile world would receive equal access to salvation and the hope of heaven.

JESUS TEACHES ABOUT BEING PERSERVERANT IN PRAYER**SCRIPTURE TEXT**

Luke 18:1 Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up.

Luke 18:2 He said: “In a certain town there was a judge who neither feared God nor cared about men.

Luke 18:3 And there was a widow in that town who kept coming to him with the plea, ‘Grant me justice against my adversary.’

Luke 18:4 “For some time he refused. But finally he said to himself, ‘Even though I don’t fear God or care about men,

Luke 18:5 yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will see that she gets justice, so that she won’t eventually wear me out with her coming!’”

Luke 18:6 And the Lord said, “Listen to what the unjust judge says.

Luke 18:7 And will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off?

Luke 18:8 I tell you, he will see that they get justice, and quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?”

Luke 18:9 To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everybody else, Jesus told this parable:

COMMENTARY

Always pray and do not give up:
This is a great one-line summary of Jesus’ instructions regarding prayer.

This parable is not about the plight of widows, or the judge’s lack of faith—the story is designed to illustrate the importance and effectiveness of perseverance in prayer.

See also Matthew 7:8-11.

Here we see that a powerful faith is linked to a powerful, perseverant prayer life.

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Luke 18:10 “Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector.

Luke 18:11 The Pharisee stood up and prayed about himself: ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other men - robbers, evildoers, adulterers - or even like this tax collector.

Luke 18:12 I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.’

Luke 18:13 “But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, ‘God, have mercy on me, a sinner.’

Luke 18:14 “I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.”

Luke 18:15 People were also bringing babies to Jesus to have him touch them. When the disciples saw this, they rebuked them.

Luke 18:16 But Jesus called the children to him and said, “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.

Luke 18:17 I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.”

Luke 18:18 A certain ruler asked him, “Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?”

COMMENTARY

Just as in the recent parable of the judge and the widow, here Jesus uses two common reference points that are seemingly complete opposites. The judge and widow were at opposite ends of the spectrum in terms of power—the Pharisee and tax collector in this story were thought to be at opposite ends of the spectrum in terms of righteousness.

Justified: *The original Greek text reads: dikaioo, which means to be set free, or to be made innocent or righteous. This points to the power and mission of Jesus.*

Not only do children possess an innocence, they are also quick to believe, trust, and are demonstrative in their affections. These are the qualities Jesus is affirming here.

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Luke 18:19 “Why do you call me good?” Jesus answered. “No one is good—except God alone.

Luke 18:20 You know the commandments: ‘Do not commit adultery, do not murder, do not steal, do not give false testimony, honor your father and mother.’”

Luke 18:21 “All these I have kept since I was a boy,” he said.

Luke 18:22 When Jesus heard this, he said to him, “You still lack one thing. Sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.”

Luke 18:23 When he heard this, he became very sad, because he was a man of great wealth.

Luke 18:24 Jesus looked at him and said, “How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God!

Luke 18:25 Indeed, 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 18:26 Those who heard this asked, “Who then can be saved?”

Luke 18:27 Jesus replied, “What is impossible with men is possible with God.”

Luke 18:28 Peter said to him, “We have left all we had to follow you!”

COMMENTARY

“Why do you call me good?” Jesus’ response probably seemed odd to the ruler who had come to speak with him. Jesus’ response was unusual, but His words were carefully chosen to forewarn the ruler that though His answer would be difficult to receive, His answer was God’s answer, and should be embraced.

It is important to note that Jesus’ directive to “sell everything you have and give it to the poor” was only given to this man. Most believe that the directive was given to this man because his wealth was his idol. Jesus does not call everyone to sell all they have, but He does call everyone to make God first in their lives.

*Jesus is not saying it is impossible for the rich to enter heaven, just that it is difficult. The reference to the **camel and eye of a needle** is a reference to a well-known narrow pathway in town that was difficult to pass through with a large animal (such as a camel) laden down with supplies.*

Jesus ends this teaching with a word of hope: “What is impossible with men is possible with God.”

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Luke 18:29 “I tell you the truth,” Jesus said to them, “no one who has left home or wife or brothers or parents or children for the sake of the kingdom of God

Luke 18:30 will fail to receive many times as much in this age and, in the age to come, eternal life.”

Luke 18:31 Jesus took the Twelve aside and told them, “We are going up to Jerusalem, and everything that is written by the prophets about the Son of Man will be fulfilled.

Luke 18:32 He will be handed over to the Gentiles. They will mock him, insult him, spit on him, flog him and kill him.

Luke 18:33 On the third day he will rise again.”

Luke 18:34 The disciples did not understand any of this. Its meaning was hidden from them, and they did not know what he was talking about.

COMMENTARY

Where He will be crucified.

This is the fulfillment of many Old Testament prophecies (see Isaiah 53).

JESUS TEACHES ABOUT DIVORCE

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Matt. 19:3 Some Pharisees came to him to test him. They asked, “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any and every reason?”

Matt. 19:4 “Haven’t you read,” he replied, “that at the beginning the Creator ‘made them male and female,’

Matt. 19:5 and said, ‘For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh’?

Matt. 19:6 So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate.”

Matt. 19:7 “Why then,” they asked, “did Moses command that a man give his wife a certificate of divorce and send her away?”

Matt. 19:8 Jesus replied, “Moses permitted you to divorce your wives because your hearts were hard. But it was not this way from the beginning.

Matt. 19:9 I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, and marries another woman commits adultery.”

Matt. 19:10 The disciples said to him, “If this is the situation between a husband and wife, it is better not to marry.”

COMMENTARY

Tradition allowed for divorce to take place, even for trivial matters. Placing the woman’s shoes outside the door was all that was required for the husband to indicate the marriage was over.

There are some biblical allowances for divorce, but note how Jesus challenges the hearer to focus on what God’s expectation is, not on what exceptions humanity deems acceptable.

A divorced woman had a very bleak economic outlook (particularly if there was no immediate family to provide support). In part, Moses provided a certificate of divorce to aid women who were victims of divorce, so that they would be able to continue as fully-integrated members of society.

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Matt. 19:11 Jesus replied, “Not everyone can accept this word, but only those to whom it has been given.

Matt. 19:12 For some are eunuchs because they were born that way; others were made that way by men; and others have renounced marriage because of the kingdom of heaven. The one who can accept this should accept it.”

COMMENTARY

For additional information on this thought, see 1 Corinthians 7.

The bar is set high. Marriage is a solemn union that should be guarded and cherished.

THE RAISING OF LAZARUS

SCRIPTURE TEXT

John 11:1 Now a man named Lazarus was sick. He was from Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha.

John 11:2 This Mary, whose brother Lazarus now lay sick, was the same one who poured perfume on the Lord and wiped his feet with her hair.

John 11:3 So the sisters sent word to Jesus, “Lord, the one you love is sick.”

John 11:4 When he heard this, Jesus said, “This sickness will not end in death. No, it is for God’s glory so that God’s Son may be glorified through it.”

John 11:5 Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus.

John 11:6 Yet when he heard that Lazarus was sick, he stayed where he was two more days.

John 11:7 Then he said to his disciples, “Let us go back to Judea.”

John 11:8 “But Rabbi,” they said, “a short while ago the Jews tried to stone you, and yet you are going back there?”

John 11:9 Jesus answered, “Are there not twelve hours of daylight? A man who walks by day will not stumble, for he sees by this world’s light.

John 11:10 It is when he walks by night that he stumbles, for he has no light.”

COMMENTARY

Bethany was 2 miles from Jerusalem.

This is a reference to a story in the next chapter (John 12). It may seem odd for John to reference it here, but when he wrote the Gospel the story of Mary’s offering of perfume was well-known. John mentions it here briefly as a way to introduce Mary.

Mary and Martha are encouraged by Jesus’ words. However, they do not yet realize that the spiritual meaning in Jesus’ message would far exceed anything they could imagine.

It is seldom easy to understand, and fully appreciate Jesus’ timing. Here He waits several days before going to the home of Lazarus.

“Walks by day” is a reference to walking in the light—in accordance with the Word and will of God (Psalm 119:105; 2 Cor. 5:7).

SCRIPTURE TEXT

John 11:11 After he had said this, he went on to tell them, “Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep; but I am going there to wake him up.”

John 11:12 His disciples replied, “Lord, if he sleeps, he will get better.”

John 11:13 Jesus had been speaking of his death, but his disciples thought he meant natural sleep.

John 11:14 So then he told them plainly, “Lazarus is dead,

John 11:15 and for your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him.”

John 11:16 Then Thomas (called Didymus) said to the rest of the disciples, “Let us also go, that we may die with him.”

John 11:17 On his arrival, Jesus found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days.

John 11:18 Bethany was less than two miles from Jerusalem,

John 11:19 and many Jews had come to Martha and Mary to comfort them in the loss of their brother.

John 11:20 When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went out to meet him, but Mary stayed at home.

COMMENTARY

A cultural reference to death (see 1 Cor. 11:30). Still, the thought of Jesus tarrying (John 10:40) in a city about 30 miles from Bethany) while his friend Lazarus died was so unexpected that they misunderstood His meaning.

The Father’s plan was to glorify the Son through the raising of Lazarus from the dead. This plan would have been even more difficult for the crowd to understand had Jesus been in Bethany at Lazarus’ bedside while he was sick.

Lazarus had been dead for four days—seemingly too late for anyone, even Jesus, to do anything. Yet, the great truth in this story is that with God it is never too late (Matt. 19:26).

Would you be quick to greet Jesus, or would you be angry that He was willing and able to save others but not your brother? Martha’s spirit here is to be commended.

SCRIPTURE TEXT

John 11:21 “Lord,” Martha said to Jesus, “if you had been here, my brother would not have died.”

John 11:22 But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask.”

John 11:23 Jesus said to her, “Your brother will rise again.”

John 11:24 Martha answered, “I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day.”

John 11:25 Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies;

John 11:26 and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?”

John 11:27 “Yes, Lord,” she told him, “I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who was to come into the world.”

John 11:28 And after she had said this, she went back and called her sister Mary aside. “The Teacher is here,” she said, “and is asking for you.”

John 11:29 When Mary heard this, she got up quickly and went to him.

John 11:30 Now Jesus had not yet entered the village, but was still at the place where Martha had met him.

John 11:31 When the Jews who had been with Mary in the house, comforting her, noticed how quickly she got up and went out, they followed her, supposing she was going to the tomb to mourn there.

COMMENTARY

Martha's words are not mean-spirited. Even in grief she shares a statement of faith.

This is not plan 'B'; this is part of the same plan shared with Mary and Martha in verse 4.

Verse 25 is a great summary of the purpose of Jesus' ministry— to make eternal life possible for all who believe in Him.

A great statement of faith, especially considering that the Pharisees and religious leaders rejected this truth

Martha's faith and encouragement persuaded Mary to go out to see Jesus. Drawing close to Jesus is always the best thing to do when we are hurting.

SCRIPTURE TEXT

John 11:32 When Mary reached the place where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet and said, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.”

John 11:33 When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come along with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled.

John 11:34 “Where have you laid him?” he asked. “Come and see, Lord,” they replied.

John 11:35 Jesus wept.

John 11:36 Then the Jews said, “See how he loved him!”

John 11:37 But some of them said, “Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?”

John 11:38 Jesus, once more deeply moved, came to the tomb. It was a cave with a stone laid across the entrance.

John 11:39 “Take away the stone,” he said. “But, Lord,” said Martha, the sister of the dead man, “by this time there is a bad odor, for he has been there four days.”

John 11:40 Then Jesus said, “Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?”

John 11:41 So they took away the stone. Then Jesus looked up and said, “Father, I thank you that you have heard me.

COMMENTARY

Throughout the Gospels, Jesus shows extraordinary care and compassion—even to those who were so slow to receive Him.

John 11:35 is the shortest verse in the Bible.

We are prone to criticize what we do not understand.

There are often seemingly legitimate reasons as to why we should not do what the Lord is asking us to do. It's too late, the cost is too high, it's too hard, we are not ready, etc. Believers are to remember that God's way, plan, and timing are best.

A reference to verse 4.

SCRIPTURE TEXT

John 11:42 I knew that you always hear me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe that you sent me.”

John 11:43 When he had said this, Jesus called in a loud voice, “Lazarus, come out!”

John 11:44 The dead man came out, his hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen, and a cloth around his face. Jesus said to them, “Take off the grave clothes and let him go.”

John 11:45 Therefore many of the Jews who had come to visit Mary, and had seen what Jesus did, put their faith in him.

John 11:46 But some of them went to the Pharisees and told them what Jesus had done.

John 11:47 Then the chief priests and the Pharisees called a meeting of the Sanhedrin. “What are we accomplishing?” they asked. “Here is this man performing many miraculous signs.

John 11:48 If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and then the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation.”

John 11:49a Then one of them, named Caiaphas...

John 11:49b ...who was high priest that year, spoke up, “You know nothing at all!

COMMENTARY

Lazarus had been wrapped in burial cloths according to the custom of his day.

Some are always going to be unhappy with what God does and how He does it (see verse 53).

The Sanhedrin was the ruling body for the Jews. It was a council comprised of 70 men.

Caiaphas served as high priest with Annas (who was his father-in-law). Previously, Annas was removed from his position as high priest by Roman Officials. The Jews were obliged to obey the Roman order, but did not accept their ruling. And so, though Annas was no longer high priest in official title, he was in practice—serving with his son-in-law Caiaphas.

SCRIPTURE TEXT

John 11:50 You do not realize that it is better for you that one man die for the people than that the whole nation perish.”

John 11:51 He did not say this on his own, but as high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the Jewish nation,

John 11:52 and not only for that nation but also for the scattered children of God, to bring them together and make them one.

John 11:53 So from that day on they plotted to take his life.

John 11:54 Therefore Jesus no longer moved about publicly among the Jews. Instead he withdrew to a region near the desert, to a village called Ephraim, where he stayed with his disciples.

John 11:55 When it was almost time for the Jewish Passover, many went up from the country to Jerusalem for their ceremonial cleansing before the Passover.

John 11:56 They kept looking for Jesus, and as they stood in the temple area they asked one another, “What do you think? Isn’t he coming to the Feast at all?”

John 11:57 But the chief priests and Pharisees had given orders that if anyone found out where Jesus was, he should report it so that they might arrest him.

COMMENTARY

Though the man was evil, God honored the office of high priest by giving him this word of prophecy.

Ephraim is a region within Israel. The village of Ephraim was probably located a few miles west of Jericho.

Ceremonial cleansing: *This was done up to two weeks prior to the Passover (see Lev. 22:1-6 and 2 Chron. 30:17-18 for additional information).*

At this time of the year religious leaders were to help the people prepare for the Passover Festival. One of the seasonal traditions involved looking for leaven (a symbol for sin) in homes and businesses. It is interesting that instead of looking for leaven, the Pharisees spend their time looking for Jesus.

THE REQUEST FOR PREFERENTIAL TREATMENT

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Mark 10:35 Then James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to him. “Teacher,” they said, “we want you to do for us whatever we ask.”

Mark 10:36 “What do you want me to do for you?” he asked.

Mark 10:37 They replied, “Let one of us sit at your right and the other at your left in your glory.”

Mark 10:38 “You don’t know what you are asking,” Jesus said. “Can you drink the cup I drink or be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with?”

Mark 10:39 “We can,” they answered. Jesus said to them, “You will drink the cup I drink and be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with,

Mark 10:40 but to sit at my right or left is not for me to grant. These places belong to those for whom they have been prepared.”

Mark 10:41 When the ten heard about this, they became indignant with James and John.

Mark 10:42 Jesus called them together and said, “You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them.

COMMENTARY

Matthew 20:20 indicates that James and John brought their mother when discussing this matter with Jesus.

Jesus’ gentle reproof here indicates that before one receives great glory, there must be great sacrifice.

Yes, they will suffer for their faith, but not to the degree that Jesus would. Soon Jesus would take upon Himself the weight of all sin, of all people, for all time.

The ten other disciples of Christ.

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Mark 10:43 Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant,

Mark 10:44 and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all.

Mark 10:45 For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

COMMENTARY

Jesus is our example—in life and in death.

JESUS HEALS THE BLIND AT JERICO

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Mark 10:46 Then they came to Jericho. As Jesus and his disciples, together with a large crowd, were leaving the city, a blind man, Bartimaeus (that is, the Son of Timaeus), was sitting by the roadside begging.

Mark 10:47 When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!”

Mark 10:48 Many rebuked him and told him to be quiet, but he shouted all the more, “Son of David, have mercy on me!”

Mark 10:49 Jesus stopped and said, “Call him.” So they called to the blind man, “Cheer up! On your feet! He’s calling you.”

Mark 10:50 Throwing his cloak aside, he jumped to his feet and came to Jesus.

Mark 10:51 “What do you want me to do for you?” Jesus asked him. The blind man said, “Rabbi, I want to see.”

Mark 10:52 “Go,” said Jesus, “your faith has healed you.” Immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus along the road.

COMMENTARY

Then they came to Jericho. As Jesus and his disciples, together with a large crowd, were leaving the city, a blind man, Bartimaeus (that is, the Son of Timaeus), was sitting by the roadside begging.

The blind man provides an example for those who have needs today. He was blessed because he: 1) cried-out to Jesus (verse 47) 2) prayed with persistence (verse 48) 3) drew near to Jesus (verse 50) 4) shared with Jesus what his need and desire was (verse 51), and 5) he began to follow Jesus (verse 52).

JESUS MINISTERS TO ZACCHAEUS AT JERICHO

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Luke 19:1 Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through.

Luke 19:2 A man was there by the name of Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and was wealthy.

Luke 19:3 He wanted to see who Jesus was, but being a short man he could not, because of the crowd.

Luke 19:4 So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree to see him, since Jesus was coming that way.

Luke 19:5 When Jesus reached the spot, he looked up and said to him, “Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today.”

Luke 19:6 So he came down at once and welcomed him gladly.

Luke 19:7 All the people saw this and began to mutter, “He has gone to be the guest of a “sinner.””

Luke 19:8 But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, “Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount.”

Luke 19:9 Jesus said to him, “Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham.

Luke 19:10 For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost.”

COMMENTARY

Tax collectors were vilified in Jesus' day. Zacchaeus was not only a tax collector, but a chief tax collector, who likely made his living by training and overseeing others who extorted money from the Jewish people. But though he was despised, Jesus took notice of him and extended both compassion and mercy.

Jesus noticed the one who was invisible to the masses.

Notice how ready Zacchaeus was to change and make things right. All he needed was an invitation and an opportunity. Question: Has God put someone in your path that needs an invitation and challenge to make some spiritual decision or changes in their life?

THE PARABLE OF THE TALENTS

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Luke 19:11 While they were listening to this, he went on to tell them a parable, because he was near Jerusalem and the people thought that the kingdom of God was going to appear at once.

Luke 19:12 He said: “A man of noble birth went to a distant country to have himself appointed king and then to return.

Luke 19:13 So he called ten of his servants and gave them ten minas. ‘Put this money to work,’ he said, ‘until I come back.’

Luke 19:14 “But his subjects hated him and sent a delegation after him to say, ‘We don’t want this man to be our king.’

Luke 19:15 “He was made king, however, and returned home. Then he sent for the servants to whom he had given the money, in order to find out what they had gained with it.

Luke 19:16 “The first one came and said, ‘Sir, your mina has earned ten more.’

Luke 19:17 “‘Well done, my good servant!’ his master replied. ‘Because you have been trustworthy in a very small matter, take charge of ten cities.’

Luke 19:18 “The second came and said, ‘Sir, your mina has earned five more.’

Luke 19:19 “His master answered, ‘You take charge of five cities.’

COMMENTARY

The Passover celebration would draw up to a million Jews to Jerusalem, which would make the occupying Roman army vastly outnumbered. Many believed the Messiah would come to rid Israel of Roman oppression, and supposed that if Jesus was the Messiah, He would initiate a move against the Romans at this time.

The parable that Jesus presents (beginning in verse 12) is designed to help individuals understand that His mission was spiritual, not political, and that spiritually, Israel was about to be cut off (see Matt. 3:10) for their lack of faith.

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Luke 19:20 “Then another servant came and said, ‘Sir, here is your mina; I have kept it laid away in a piece of cloth.

Luke 19:21 I was afraid of you, because you are a hard man. You take out what you did not put in and reap what you did not sow.’

Luke 19:22 “His master replied, ‘I will judge you by your own words, you wicked servant! You knew, did you, that I am a hard man, taking out what I did not put in, and reaping what I did not sow?’

Luke 19:23 Why then didn’t you put my money on deposit, so that when I came back, I could have collected it with interest?’

Luke 19:24 “Then he said to those standing by, ‘Take his mina away from him and give it to the one who has ten minas.’

Luke 19:25 “‘Sir,’ they said, ‘he already has ten!’

Luke 19:26 “He replied, ‘I tell you that to everyone who has, more will be given, but as for the one who has nothing, even what he has will be taken away.

Luke 19:27 But those enemies of mine who did not want me to be king over them—bring them here and kill them in front of me.’”

COMMENTARY

It is wise to give consideration to how we respond to the gifts and opportunities we have been given.

A reference to Israel’s lot. Soon their unique calling would be lost and their role replaced by the New Testament Church.

JESUS IS HONORED BY MARY AT A DINNER

SCRIPTURE TEXT

John 12:1 Six days before the Passover, Jesus arrived at Bethany, where Lazarus lived, whom Jesus had raised from the dead.

John 12:2 Here a dinner was given in Jesus' honor. Martha served, while Lazarus was among those reclining at the table with him.

John 12:3 Then Mary took about a pint of pure nard, an expensive perfume; she poured it on Jesus' feet and wiped his feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume.

John 12:4 But one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, who was later to betray him, objected,

John 12:5 "Why wasn't this perfume sold and the money given to the poor? It was worth a year's wages."

John 12:6 He did not say this because he cared about the poor but because he was a thief; as keeper of the money bag, he used to help himself to what was put into it.

John 12:7 "Leave her alone," Jesus replied. "It was intended that she should save this perfume for the day of my burial.

COMMENTARY

Nard is a perfume that was used as a burial ointment. Led by the Spirit, Mary was, with this nard, not only honoring Jesus, but preparing Him for the great sacrifice that would soon come.

There were two disciples named Judas, hence this disciple is always referred to as Judas Iscariot.

Judas was not truly concerned about the plight of the poor. Verse 6 notes that Judas served as the treasurer for the disciples and pilfered funds. Perhaps he was angry that he would not have access to what verse 5 notes as "a year's wages."

SCRIPTURE TEXT

John 12:8 You will always have the poor among you, but you will not always have me.”

John 12:9 Meanwhile a large crowd of Jews found out that Jesus was there and came, not only because of him but also to see Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead.

John 12:10 So the chief priests made plans to kill Lazarus as well,

John 12:11 for on account of him many of the Jews were going over to Jesus and putting their faith in him.

COMMENTARY

A reference to the miracle profiled in John 11.

Here the Pharisees, like Satan, seek to kill all whom Jesus loves (see John 11:4) and gives life to. As we today are the object of God's affection, we must be mindful that we are also the target of Satan's fury.

THE STORY OF

JESUS

THE LAST WEEKS OF MINISTRY

THE TRIUMPHAL ENTRY

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Luke 19:28 After Jesus had said this, he went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem.

Luke 19:29 As he approached Bethphage and Bethany at the hill called the Mount of Olives, he sent two of his disciples, saying to them,

Luke 19:30 “Go to the village ahead of you, and as you enter it, you will find a colt tied there, which no one has ever ridden. Untie it and bring it here.

Luke 19:31 If anyone asks you, ‘Why are you untying it?’ tell him, ‘The Lord needs it.’”

Luke 19:32 Those who were sent ahead went and found it just as he had told them.

Luke 19:33 As they were untying the colt, its owners asked them, “Why are you untying the colt?”

Luke 19:34 They replied, “The Lord needs it.”

Luke 19:35 They brought it to Jesus, threw their cloaks on the colt and put Jesus on it.

Matt. 21:4 This took place to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet:

Matt. 21:5 “Say to the Daughter of Zion, ‘See, your king comes to you, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.’”

COMMENTARY

Bethany: Located a few miles from Jerusalem. Home of Mary, Martha and Lazarus.

At this time of the year, Jews from throughout Israel would travel to Jerusalem for the Passover—they would out-number Roman soldiers many times over. With this being the case, Romans sought to maintain control by imposing a kind of martial law. Lawbreakers were dealt with swiftly and harshly. In this tense climate of high-alert, following Jesus’ directive to take a valuable animal required courage as this could easily constitute what the Romans would view as a capital crime. The phrase Jesus gives the disciples to share should they find themselves in trouble, “The Lord needs it” (V.19), is designed to instill faith in the disciples, rather than to provide a strong defense for their actions.

A reference to the prophecy recorded in Zechariah 9:9.

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Matt. 21:8 A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, while others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road.

Matt. 21:9 The crowds that went ahead of him and those that followed shouted, “Hosanna to the Son of David!” “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!” “Hosanna in the highest!”

Luke 19:39 Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to Jesus, “Teacher, rebuke your disciples!”

Luke 19:40 “I tell you,” he replied, “if they keep quiet, the stones will cry out.”

Matt. 21:12 Jesus entered the temple area and drove out all who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves.

Matt. 21:13 “It is written,” he said to them, “‘My house will be called a house of prayer,’ but you are making it a ‘den of robbers.’”

Matt. 21:14 The blind and the lame came to him at the temple, and he healed them.

Matt. 21:15 But when the chief priests and the teachers of the law saw the wonderful things he did and the children shouting in the temple area, “Hosanna to the Son of David,” they were indignant.

Matt. 21:16 “Do you hear what these children are saying?” they asked him. “Yes,” replied Jesus, “have you never read, “‘From the lips of children and infants you have ordained praise?’”

COMMENTARY

A cloak was a valued article of clothing—in fact it was the only personal belonging protected by law (one could sue and take your home or livestock, but not your cloak). The response of the crowd was a remarkable way to honor Jesus.

The Passover season brought tension between Roman and Jewish leadership. Mass demonstrations were not welcome and could invite a strong, negative response from Roman soldiers. Though the Pharisees’ request for Jesus to quiet the crowd may seem to express genuine concern for the Jewish people, the truth is their response was motivated by petty jealousy.

This is the fulfillment of a prophecy noted in Psalm 8.

JESUS CURSES THE FIG TREE

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Mark 11:12 The next day as they were leaving Bethany, Jesus was hungry.

Mark 11:13 Seeing in the distance a fig tree in leaf, he went to find out if it had any fruit. When he reached it, he found nothing but leaves, because it was not the season for figs.

Mark 11:14 Then he said to the tree, “May no one ever eat fruit from you again.” And his disciples heard him say it.

Mark 11:15 On reaching Jerusalem, Jesus entered the temple area and began driving out those who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves,

Mark 11:16 and would not allow anyone to carry merchandise through the temple courts.

Mark 11:17 And as he taught them, he said, “Is it not written: “My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations”? But you have made it ‘a den of robbers.’”

Mark 11:18 The chief priests and the teachers of the law heard this and began looking for a way to kill him, for they feared him, because the whole crowd was amazed at his teaching.

COMMENTARY

The fruit of the fig tree precedes its leaves being in full bloom. Jesus, seeing the fig tree in leaf, naturally expected the tree to be bearing fruit, but found it lacking. This typified Israel, who with a newly rebuilt Temple and many religious leaders looked ready to produce good fruit, yet was not. Jesus’ curse of the fig tree (Mark 11:14) served as a somber warning.

Some take this verse as a condemnation of any kind of buying or selling on church property (car washes, bake sales, etc.). However, the issue here is not buying and selling, the issue was that religious leaders were selling sacrificial animals (at unfair prices) to those who had come to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover. Religious leaders were in essence, selling forgiveness.

GREEK JEWS SEEK AN AUDIENCE WITH JESUS

SCRIPTURE TEXT

John 12:20 Now there were some Greeks among those who went up to worship at the Feast.

John 12:21 They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, with a request. “Sir,” they said, “we would like to see Jesus.”

John 12:22 Philip went to tell Andrew; Andrew and Philip in turn told Jesus.

John 12:23 Jesus replied, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.

John 12:24 I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds.

John 12:25 The man who loves his life will lose it, while the man who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.

John 12:26 Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honor the one who serves me.

John 12:27 “Now my heart is troubled, and what shall I say? ‘Father, save me from this hour’? No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour.

John 12:28 Father, glorify your name!” Then a voice came from heaven, “I have glorified it, and will glorify it again.”

COMMENTARY

These Jews from Greek areas (sometimes referred to as ‘Jews at the Gate’) went first to Phillip, who was the only disciple with a Greek name (and perhaps had some contact with Greek communities).

A reference to the crucifixion, and a reminder that His death would not be without meaning.

Believers who wish to share in His blessing must be willing to share in His suffering.

Jesus’ prayer is that the Father would be glorified by His actions—a request that God affirms in the latter part of verse 28.

SCRIPTURE TEXT

John 12:29 The crowd that was there and heard it said it had thundered; others said an angel had spoken to him.

John 12:30 Jesus said, “This voice was for your benefit, not mine.

John 12:31 Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out.

John 12:32 But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself.”

John 12:33 He said this to show the kind of death he was going to die.

John 12:34 The crowd spoke up, “We have heard from the Law that the Christ will remain forever, so how can you say, “The Son of Man must be lifted up”? Who is this ‘Son of Man’?”

John 12:35 Then Jesus told them, “You are going to have the light just a little while longer. Walk while you have the light, before darkness overtakes you. The man who walks in the dark does not know where he is going.

John 12:36 Put your trust in the light while you have it, so that you may become sons of light.” When he had finished speaking, Jesus left and hid himself from them.

COMMENTARY

The validation of one's claim was exceedingly important in Hebrew culture. Jesus' claim to be the Messiah was validated by the prophets, His miracles and the voice of God.

The power that Satan, the 'prince of this world' had over humanity was about to be broken by Jesus' atoning work on the cross.

The spiritual Kingdom of God and the reign of Christ will last forever, but things of this world will not (see 1 Cor.3:11-15).

Even at this late hour, and in the face of harsh treatment and multiple rejections, Jesus extends an invitation to receive the grace and blessing of God.

JESUS SPEAKS IN PARABLES

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Matt. 21:33a “Listen to another parable: There was a landowner who planted a vineyard. He put a wall around it, dug a winepress in it and built a watchtower. Then he rented

Matt. 21:33b the vineyard to some farmers and went away on a journey.

Matt. 21:34 When the harvest time approached, he sent his servants to the tenants to collect his fruit.

Matt. 21:35 “The tenants seized his servants; they beat one, killed another, and stoned a third.

Matt. 21:36 Then he sent other servants to them, more than the first time, and the tenants treated them the same way.

Matt. 21:37 Last of all, he sent his son to them. ‘They will respect my son,’ he said.

Matt. 21:38 “But when the tenants saw the son, they said to each other, ‘This is the heir. Come, let’s kill him and take his inheritance.’

Matt. 21:39 So they took him and threw him out of the vineyard and killed him.

Matt. 21:40 “Therefore, when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?”

COMMENTARY

Jesus’ discourse here parallels the parable noted in Isaiah 5:1-7.

Some understand this passage to mean that God created humans, but now is unconcerned for their welfare. This is sometimes referred to as the deist position—it is easily refuted by Scripture. The sending and sacrifice of Jesus points to how much God cares for, and is vested in, humanity.

Servants: Plural to note God’s continued efforts to reach out to his creation.

In ancient culture it was considered unthinkable for hirelings/tenants to rise-up against a powerful master in this way—making humanity’s crime against the Son of God even more egregious.

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Matt. 21:41 “He will bring those wretches to a wretched end,” they replied, “and he will rent the vineyard to other tenants, who will give him his share of the crop at harvest time.”

Matt. 21:42 Jesus said to them, “Have you never read in the Scriptures: “The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone; the Lord has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes”?

Matt. 21:43 “Therefore I tell you that the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit.

Matt. 21:44 He who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces, but he on whom it falls will be crushed.”

COMMENTARY

***They replied:** Not Jesus, but His audience thought this a just reward for their actions.*

This is a reference to Psalm 118:12.

Here Jesus is referencing Scriptures that were familiar to his audience: Isaiah 8:15, Zechariah 12:2 and Daniel 2:34-35.

PHARISEES AND HERODIANS ATTEMPT TO TRAP JESUS

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Matt. 22:15 Then the Pharisees went out and laid plans to trap him in his words.

Matt. 22:16 They sent their disciples to him along with the Herodians. “Teacher,” they said, “we know you are a man of integrity and that you teach the way of God in accordance with the truth. You aren’t swayed by men, because you pay no attention to who they are.

Matt. 22:17 Tell us then, what is your opinion? Is it right to pay taxes to Caesar or not?”

Matt. 22:18 But Jesus, knowing their evil intent, said, “You hypocrites, why are you trying to trap me?”

Matt. 22:19 Show me the coin used for paying the tax.” They brought him a denarius,

Matt. 22:20 and he asked them, “Whose portrait is this? And whose inscription?”

Matt. 22:21 “Caesar’s,” they replied. Then he said to them, “Give to Caesar what is Caesar’s, and to God what is God’s.”

Matt. 22:22 When they heard this, they were amazed. So they left him and went away.

COMMENTARY

Herodians: Not much is known of this sect. In general, the Pharisees, Sadducees and Herodians did not get along and vied for power and prestige. However, these groups were united in seeing Jesus as a threat and in their efforts to discredit or destroy him.

The Pharisees had previously tried, without success, to discredit Jesus by showing Him to be guilty of violating Jewish law. The goal here is to lure Jesus into the trap of speaking against Roman law (which was a punishable crime).

What a wise response to a very difficult and potentially dangerous question.

THE SADDUCEES ATTEMPT TO TRAP JESUS

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Luke 20:27 Some of the Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to Jesus with a question.

Luke 20:28 “Teacher,” they said, “Moses wrote for us that if a man’s brother dies and leaves a wife but no children, the man must marry the widow and have children for his brother.

Luke 20:29 Now there were seven brothers. The first one married a woman and died childless.

Luke 20:30 The second

Luke 20:31 and then the third married her, and in the same way the seven died, leaving no children.

Luke 20:32 Finally, the woman died too.

Luke 20:33 Now then, at the resurrection whose wife will she be, since the seven were married to her?”

Luke 20:34 Jesus replied, “The people of this age marry and are given in marriage.

Luke 20:35 But those who are considered worthy of taking part in that age and in the resurrection from the dead will neither marry nor be given in marriage,

COMMENTARY

The Sadducees were powerful and respected religious leaders. They served on the Sanhedrin (the Council of 70) with the Pharisees but held different doctrinal views. But despite their theological differences, they were together in attempting to discredit Jesus.

This is an odd question coming from the Sadducees as they did not believe in the resurrection of the dead. Despite their evil intent, Jesus’ reproof is gentle. He notes in verses 34-40 that 1) there is a resurrection 2) only the ‘worthy’ will share in the heavenly resurrection 3) God’s plan regarding the resurrection far exceeded their understanding and 4) Moses, whom the Sadducees did accept as a prophet of God, spoke of the resurrection of the dead.

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Luke 20:36 and they can no longer die; for they are like the angels. They are God's children, since they are children of the resurrection.

Luke 20:37 But in the account of the bush, even Moses showed that the dead rise, for he calls the Lord 'the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.'

Luke 20:38 He is not the God of the dead, but of the living, for to him all are alive."

Luke 20:39 Some of the teachers of law responded, "Well said, teacher!"

Luke 20:40 And no one dared to ask him any more questions.

COMMENTARY

The Sadducees did not believe in the existence of angels.

A rare compliment from those who were his chief opponents.

THE PHARISEES ATTEMPT TO TRAP JESUS

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Matt. 22:34 Hearing that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, the Pharisees got together.

Matt. 22:35 One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question:

Matt. 22:36 “Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?”

Matt. 22:37 Jesus replied: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.”

Matt. 22:38 This is the first and greatest commandment.

Matt. 22:39 And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’

Matt. 22:40 All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”

COMMENTARY

It is important to note how persistent Satan is; he brought attack after attack against Jesus, and was not deterred by setbacks or defeat. Believers today must see that this is the standard operating procedure of our adversary (1 Peter 5:8). Satan is aggressive and persistent in his attacks against all whom God loves.

Pastor Rick Warren notes that “A great commitment to the Great Commission (Matt. 28:18-20) and the Great Commandment [expressed here in verse 39] will grow a great church.”

JESUS REBUKES THE PHARISEES

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Matt. 23:13 “Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You shut the kingdom of heaven in men’s faces. You yourselves do not enter, nor will you let those enter who are trying to.

Matt. 23:14 [Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You devour widows’ houses and for a show make lengthy prayers. Therefore you will be punished more severely.]

Matt. 23:15 “Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You travel over land and sea to win a single convert, and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of hell as you are.

Matt. 23:16 “Woe to you, blind guides! You say, ‘If anyone swears by the temple, it means nothing; but if anyone swears by the gold of the temple, he is bound by his oath.’

Matt. 23:17 You blind fools! Which is greater: the gold, or the temple that makes the gold sacred?

Matt. 23:18 You also say, ‘If anyone swears by the altar, it means nothing; but if anyone swears by the gift on it, he is bound by his oath.’

Matt. 23:19 You blind men! Which is greater: the gift, or the altar that \ makes the gift sacred?

Gary Ray

COMMENTARY

With less than a week to the cross, Jesus sternly rebuked the Pharisees for He saw that their hearts were hard and their intent was to kill Him.

In this chapter Jesus exhorts the Pharisees with seven “Woes” or warnings (eight counting verse 14, which is not incorporated into all of the earliest families of manuscripts). The rebuke is exceedingly strong because their hearts were exceedingly hard. Perhaps this stern approach was a kind of last-ditch effort to break the Pharisees away from their blindness and hardness of heart.

In verses 17-19 Jesus references several common elements in Synagogue and Temple practice to help the Pharisees realize that they were 180 degrees off in their spiritual walk. They had become accustomed to emphasizing the physical and temporal, and in so doing forgot to consider the more important spiritual and eternal (see verses 23-24).

The Story of Jesus

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Matt. 23:20 Therefore, he who swears by the altar swears by it and by everything on it.

Matt. 23:21 And he who swears by the temple swears by it and by the one who dwells in it.

Matt. 23:22 And he who swears by heaven swears by God's throne and by the one who sits on it.

Matt. 23:23 "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices—mint, dill and cummin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law—justice, mercy and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former.

Matt. 23:24 You blind guides! You strain out a gnat but swallow a camel.

Matt. 23:25 "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence.

Matt. 23:26 Blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and dish, and then the outside also will be clean.

Matt. 23:27 "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of dead men's bones and everything unclean.

COMMENTARY

Verses 20-22 may seem rather cryptic to us, but the Pharisees easily understood Jesus' meaning—that they were not at liberty to pick and choose or manipulate the Law to suit their own interests.

Cummin: *An herb of little value. The Pharisees were meticulous in their handling of the small and incidental matters (how to wash, how to tithe on the herbs of their garden, etc.). Here Jesus rebukes them for neglecting the more important spiritual matters.*

God knows and judges the heart. The Pharisees attended the finest schools, were observant in the Law, could quote the Scriptures and pray with eloquence. Here Jesus notes that these things, though important, do not matter if the heart is not right.

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Matt. 23:28 In the same way, on the outside you appear to people as righteous but on the inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness.

Matt. 23:29 “Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You build tombs for the prophets and decorate the graves of the righteous.

Matt. 23:30 And you say, ‘If we had lived in the days of our forefathers, we would not have taken part with them in shedding the blood of the prophets.’

Matt. 23:31 So you testify against yourselves that you are the descendants of those who murdered the prophets.

Matt. 23:32 Fill up, then, the measure of the sin of your forefathers!

Matt. 23:33 “You snakes! You brood of vipers! How will you escape being condemned to hell?

Matt. 23:34 Therefore I am sending you prophets and wise men and teachers. Some of them you will kill and crucify; others you will flog in your synagogues and pursue from town to town.

Matt. 23:35 And so upon you will come all the righteous blood that has been shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah son of Berekiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar.

Matt. 23:36 I tell you the truth, all this will come upon this generation.

COMMENTARY

Build tombs for the prophets and decorate the graves of the righteous: Good works are all for naught if the heart is not right.

See Hebrews 11:36-39.

In the next 50 years, the Jews would work with the Romans to see Stephen stoned, Peter, James and Paul imprisoned, James pierced by a sword, Peter crucified (upside down), Paul beheaded and much more. But despite great attacks on Christians through the ages, the church has endured (just as Jesus promised).

There are several schools of thought regarding the identity of this person. He could be someone known by tradition but not mentioned in the Scripture, or he could be the individual mentioned in 2 Chronicles 24, referenced there as the son of Jehoiada (which may be a secondary family name, just as Peter was also known as Simon or Cephas).

THE WIDOW'S OFFERING

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Mark 12:41 Jesus sat down opposite the place where the offerings were put and watched the crowd putting their money into the temple treasury. Many rich people threw in large amounts.

Mark 12:42 But a poor widow came and put in two very small copper coins, worth only a fraction of a penny.

Mark 12:43 Calling his disciples to him, Jesus said, "I tell you the truth, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others.

Mark 12:44 They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything—all she had to live on."

COMMENTARY

2000 years ago, the giving of one's offering was open and public. This was a reminder of God's expectation that all should contribute in supporting the spiritual work. However, it had become an opportunity for the wealthy to feel undue pride as their offering was presented in a high-profile fashion. Against this historical backdrop is a poor widow, who meekly offers two small copper coins in the offering. It is beautiful how her offering is noticed and she is commended by Jesus.

JESUS FORETELLS THE DESTRUCTION OF THE TEMPLE

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Luke 21:5 Some of his disciples were remarking about how the temple was adorned with beautiful stones and with gifts God. But Jesus said,

Luke 21:6 “As for what you see, the time will come when not one stone will be left on another; every one of them will be thrown down.”

COMMENTARY

The Temple was built by Herod The Great (taking decades to complete). It was a grand structure and the pride of the people.

The Romans destroyed the Temple (just as this prophecy notes) in 70 A.D. It has not been rebuilt since that time, but will be before the end of the Tribulation period. Note: The Temple site is now occupied by what is considered one of the most holy structures in Islam—the Dome Of The Rock Mosque.

JESUS SPEAKS OF END TIME EVENTS

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Luke 21:7 “Teacher,” they asked, “when will these things happen? And what will be the sign that they are about to take place?”

Matt. 24:4 Jesus answered: “Watch out that no one deceives you.

Matt. 24:5 For many will come in my name, claiming, ‘I am the Christ,’ and will deceive many.

Matt. 24:6 You will hear of wars and rumors of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come.

Matt. 24:7 Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places.

Matt. 24:8 All these are the beginning of birth pains.

Matt. 24:9 “Then you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of me.

Matt. 24:10 At that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other,

Matt. 24:11 and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people.

COMMENTARY

Here begins the most important teaching on the end times in the Gospels.

The study of end-time events is called Eschatology. In this section of Scripture, Jesus broadly outlines events associated with the destruction of the Temple, and the Tribulation events referenced in the book of Revelation.

Verses 6-14 profile what is called, “the birth pains,” events which precede the “Great Tribulation” profiled in the book of Revelation.

The events profiled here begin to be fulfilled in the early chapters of the book of Acts, and will carry-on through history—peaking when the Antichrist signs a covenant with Israel and thereby initiates the Tribulation period (see Daniel 9:27).

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Matt. 24:12 Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold,

Matt. 24:13 but he who stands firm to the end will be saved.

Matt. 24:14 And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.

Matt. 24:15 “So when you see standing in the holy place ‘the abomination that causes desolation,’ spoken of through the prophet Daniel—let the reader understand—

Matt. 24:16 then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.

Matt. 24:17 Let no one on the roof of his house go down to take anything out of the house.

Matt. 24:18 Let no one in the field go back to get his cloak.

Matt. 24:19 How dreadful it will be in those days for pregnant women and nursing mothers!

Matt. 24:20 Pray that your flight will not take place in winter or on the Sabbath.

Matt. 24:21 For then there will be great distress, unequaled from the beginning of the world until now— and never to be equaled again.

COMMENTARY

See also Revelation 3:21.

A reference to Daniel 9:26-27 and the Antichrist, who will stand in the Temple (which was destroyed in 70 A.D., but will be rebuilt before the final return of Christ to earth).

Some say that the world is in the Tribulation period now. Some say the Tribulation took place during the period of church persecution under the Roman Empire. The Jehovah Witness Church teaches that the Tribulation began almost 100 years ago (and coincides with WWI and the great flu pandemic). Here Jesus notes that the Tribulation will be marked by unprecedented (and yet future) events. When the Tribulation comes, all will be able to see it for what it is.

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Matt. 24:22 If those days had not been cut short, no one would survive, but for the sake of the elect those days will be shortened.

Matt. 24:23 At that time if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or, 'There he is!' do not believe it.

Matt. 24:24 For false Christs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and miracles to deceive even the elect—if that were possible.

Matt. 24:25 See, I have told you ahead of time.

Matt. 24:26 "So if anyone tells you, 'There he is, out in the desert,' do not go out; or, 'Here he is, in the inner rooms,' do not believe it.

Matt. 24:27 For as lightning that comes from the east is visible even in the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man.

Matt. 24:28 Wherever there is a carcass, there the vultures will gather.

Matt. 24:29 "Immediately after the distress of those days 'the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken.'

Matt. 24:30 "At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory.

COMMENTARY

*The book of 1 John notes that there will be many antichrists and false teachers. The demon-possessed world leader profiled in the book of Revelation is referred to as **the** Antichrist.*

The return of Christ will not be 'secret' (as the Jehovah Witness teach) or subtle. His coming will be sudden and magnificent.

A brilliant event that all will witness.

A general statement of fact, but possibly a quote from a familiar proverb of the day.

***Immediately** can be interpreted as next or later in the timeline of events (this is how Mark often uses this word).*

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Matt. 24:31 And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other.

Matt. 24:32 “Now learn this lesson from the fig tree: As soon as its twigs get tender and its leaves come out, you know that summer is near.

Matt. 24:33 Even so, when you see all these things, you know that it is near, right at the door.

Matt. 24:34 I tell you the truth, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened.

Matt. 24:35 Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.

Matt. 24:36 “No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.

Matt. 24:37 As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man.

Matt. 24:38 For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark;

Matt. 24:39 and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man.

Matt. 24:40 Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other left.

COMMENTARY

Verses 32-33 returns the reader to Luke 21:7 and the question that launched this discussion (“What are the signs that will accompany the end of time”). Further, it reminds the believer that God does not want His people to be unaware of His plans, or to be caught off-guard by the events that will unfold.

Here Jesus equates His words with the Word of God (see Rev. 22:13).

During Jesus’ earthly ministry, He “emptied Himself” (Phil 2:5-10) of the fullness of His divine glory (power and knowledge). It is the human nature of Jesus that is referenced here—His human nature was not privy to the fullness of the infinitely complex plan of God.

This section of Scripture is full of imagery—designed to reinforce the importance of being ready for the imminent return of Jesus Christ (see verse 44).

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Matt. 24:41 Two women will be grinding with a hand mill; one will be taken and the other left.

Matt. 24:42 “Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come.

Matt. 24:43 But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what time of night the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and would not have let his house be broken into.

Matt. 24:44 So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.

Matt. 24:45 “Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom the master has put in charge of the servants in his household to give them their food at the proper time?

Matt. 24:46 It will be good for that servant whose master finds him doing so when he returns.

Matt. 24:47 I tell you the truth, he will put him in charge of all his possessions.

Matt. 24:48 But suppose that servant is wicked and says to himself, ‘My master is staying away a long time,’

Matt. 24:49 and he then begins to beat his fellow servants and to eat and drink with drunkards.

Matt. 24:50 The master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he is not aware of.

COMMENTARY

Who is faithful and wise..? *The one who, when Jesus returns, is found doing the right thing, in the right way, with the right heart (see verse 46).*

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Matt. 24:51 He will cut him to pieces and assign him a place with the hypocrites, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Matt. 25:31 “When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory.

Matt. 25:32 All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats.

Matt. 25:33 He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left

Matt. 25:34 “Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world.

Matt. 25:35 For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in,

Matt. 25:36 I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.’

Matt. 25:37 “Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink?

Matt. 25:38 When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you?

COMMENTARY

See also 1 Corinthians 15:51-52, 1 Thessalonians 4:16 and Revelation 8 and 10.

Separate the people: A reference to a separation of good from evil, not Israel from other nations (as some may have supposed).

It is good to know that the Lord does not expect the impossible from His people. He does not expect all to give a million dollars—but He does expect all to give and do what they can. And note how even the small acts of service—sharing a cup of water, food or clothing, do not go unnoticed by the Master.

This is the key verse in this passage of Scripture. Have a heart to serve others for in doing so you are serving Christ (see Gal. 6:2, 9 and Heb. 13:2).

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Matt. 25:39 When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?’

Matt, 25:40 “The King will reply, ‘I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.’

Matt 25:41 “Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.

Matt. 25:42 For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink,

Matt. 25:43 I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.’

Mat 25:44 “They also will answer, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?’

Matt. 25:45 “He will reply, ‘I tell you the truth, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.’

Matt. 25:46 “Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life.”

COMMENTARY

What does God expect of you? Do what you can do. Say what you should say. Serve as you can serve, and go where you should go. And remember, God will equip you to do what He calls you to do.

The Gospels record that Jesus spoke more of hell than of heaven. Jesus emphasized the reality of a coming judgment, and the importance of an active faith (see James 1:22; 2:17-18).

JESUS SEEKS TO COMFORT HIS DISCIPLES

SCRIPTURE TEXT

John 12:27 “Now my heart is troubled, and what shall I say? ‘Father, save me from this hour’? No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour.

John 12:28 Father, glorify your name!” Then a voice came from heaven, “I have glorified it, and will glorify it again.”

John 12:29 The crowd that was there and heard it said it had thundered; others said an angel had spoken to him.

John 12:30 Jesus said, “This voice was for your benefit, not mine.

John 12:31 Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out.

John 12:32 But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself.”

John 12:33 He said this to show the kind of death he was going to die.

John 12:34 The crowd spoke up, “We have heard from the Law that the Christ will remain forever, so how can you say, ‘The Son of Man must be lifted up’? Who is this ‘Son of Man’?”

John 12:35 Then Jesus told them, “You are going to have the light just a little while longer. Walk while you have the light, before darkness overtakes you. The man who walks in the dark does not know where he is going.

COMMENTARY

In this passage Jesus reviews His mission and once again prophesies of the sufferings that are to come.

In Hebrew culture, the testimony of witnesses was very important in validating one’s claims. Jesus’ extraordinary claim to be the Messiah was validated by the prophet John the Baptist, by His miracles, by God at His baptism, at the Transfiguration, and here in verses 28-30.

Jesus allowed Himself to be lifted up (on the cross), so that we could be raised up to reign with Him in glory.

JESUS PLEADS WITH PEOPLE TO BELIEVE

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Luke 21:37 Each day Jesus was teaching at the temple, and each evening he went out to spend the night on the hill called the Mount of Olives,

Luke 21:38 and all the people came early in the morning to hear him at the temple.

John 12:37 Even after Jesus had done all these miraculous signs in their presence, they still would not believe in him.

John 12:38 This was to fulfill the word of Isaiah the prophet: “Lord, who has believed our message and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?”

John 12:39 For this reason they could not believe, because, as Isaiah says elsewhere:

John 12:40 “He has blinded their eyes and deadened their hearts, so they can neither see with their eyes, nor understand with their hearts, nor turn—and I would heal them.”

John 12:41 Isaiah said this because he saw Jesus’ glory and spoke about him.

John 12:42 Yet at the same time many even among the leaders believed in him. But because of the Pharisees they would not confess their faith for fear they would be put out of the synagogue;

John 12:43 for they loved praise from men more than praise from God.

COMMENTARY

Even with the knowledge of His upcoming crucifixion, Jesus spent His last days focused on loving and ministering to the masses. Each day between the Triumphal Entry and His arrest (Thursday evening), he woke early, traveled to the public squares in Jerusalem, and taught until evening.

The rejection of Jesus as Messiah was the fulfillment of the prophecy in Isaiah 53 (particularly Isaiah 53:1).

Perhaps this is a reference to the glory of the triune God being revealed to the prophet (see Isaiah 6).

Timid faith is not commendable (2 Tim. 1:7). Believers are to be bold in their witness (Rom 1:16) and not ashamed of their faith in Jesus (see Matthew 10:33).

SCRIPTURE TEXT

John 12:44 Then Jesus cried out, “When a man believes in me, he does not believe in me only, but in the one who sent me.

John 12:45 When he looks at me, he sees the one who sent me.

John 12:46 I have come into the world as a light, so that no one who believes in me should stay in darkness.

John 12:47 “As for the person who hears my words but does not keep them, I do not judge him. For I did not come to judge the world, but to save it.

John 12:48 There is a judge for the one who rejects me and does not accept my words; that very word which I spoke will condemn him at the last day.

John 12:49 For I did not speak of my own accord, but the Father who sent me commanded me what to say and how to say it.

John 12:50 I know that his command leads to eternal life. So whatever I say is just what the Father has told me to say.”

COMMENTARY

This verse speaks of the deity of Christ and the triune nature of God (i.e., the Trinity).

Jesus came to be a light (John 1:1-12), and now has given that responsibility and calling to believers (Matt. 5:14,16).

2000 years ago, Jesus’ mission was to be the sacrifice that would offer salvation to the world. In the future He will serve as the ultimate judge, and will “judge the living and the

Verses 49-50 can be confusing if one does not take into account the dual nature of Christ. Jesus was fully divine as well as fully human. It is His human nature that is being referenced here. During His earthly ministry His human form did not have the fullness of the Father’s knowledge.

JESUS AT THE FEAST OF UNLEAVENED BREAD

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Luke 22:1 Now the Feast of Unleavened Bread, called the Passover, was approaching,

Luke 22:2 and the chief priests and the teachers of the law were looking for some way to get rid of Jesus, for they were afraid of the people.

Luke 22:3 Then Satan entered Judas, called Iscariot, one of the Twelve.

Luke 22:4 And Judas went to the chief priests and the officers of the temple guard and discussed with them how he might betray Jesus.

Luke 22:5 They were delighted and agreed to give him money.

Luke 22:6 He consented, and watched for an opportunity to hand Jesus over to them when no crowd was present.

Luke 22:7 Then came the day of Unleavened Bread on which the Passover lamb had to be sacrificed.

Luke 22:8 Jesus sent Peter and John, saying, "Go and make preparations for us to eat the Passover."

Luke 22:9 "Where do you want us to prepare for it?" they asked.

COMMENTARY

The Passover celebration commemorates how God saved the Hebrews from bondage in Egypt—particularly how God saved from death those who had the blood of a sacrificed, unblemished lamb placed on the doorpost of their home. This miraculous moving of God foreshadowed what Jesus, the Lamb of God (Col. 1:20) would do for humanity.

30 pieces of silver was the standard price for a slave, and is the fulfillment of the Zechariah 11:13 prophecy.

Tradition held that families preparing for Passover would take a young, unblemished lamb into their home and care for it like a cherished pet for the week leading up to the Passover. This made the sacrifice of the lamb more difficult, particularly for children, and pointed, in a small way, to God's pain in offering His Son as the sacrificial Lamb.

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Luke 22:10 He replied, “As you enter the city, a man carrying a jar of water will meet you. Follow him to the house that he enters,

Luke 22:11 and say to the owner of the house, ‘The Teacher asks: Where is the guest room, where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?’

Luke 22:12 He will show you a large upper room, all furnished. Make preparations there.”

Luke 22:13 They left and found things just as Jesus had told them. So they prepared the Passover.

COMMENTARY

It was unusual for men to carry water. This would make the man easy to identify.

Several hundred thousand Jews had flooded into Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover. Finding accommodations like must have amazed the disciples.

THE LAST SUPPER ACCORDING TO LUKE

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Matt. 26:20 When evening came, Jesus was reclining at the table with the Twelve.

Luke 22:15 And he said to them, “I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer.

Luke 22:16 For I tell you, I will not eat it again until it finds fulfillment in the kingdom of God.”

Luke 22:17 After taking the cup, he gave thanks and said, “Take this and divide it among you.

Luke 22:18 For I tell you I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes.”

Luke 22:19 And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, “This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me.”

Luke 22:20 In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you.

COMMENTARY

“Reclining at the table” was, in Roman culture, the sign of a freedom. Servants stood—citizens reclined and enjoyed special rights and privileges. Because of Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross, we are now free in Christ (John 8:32) and citizens of heaven (Phil. 3:20).

Jesus became the fulfillment of the Passover celebration. That is, what the Jews celebrated God doing in the days of Moses (rescuing from bondage, saving from death, leading people toward the promised land), Jesus was about to do for the world.

The words ‘bread’ and ‘blessing’ are linked in Hebrew culture. Here Jesus is speaking of how His body, represented by the unleavened (pure/sinless) bread, was about to be broken (sacrificed) so that many could be blessed.

THE LAST SUPPER ACCORDING TO JOHN

SCRIPTURE TEXT

John 13:1 It was just before the Passover Feast. Jesus knew that the time had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he now showed them the full extent of his love.

John 13:2 The evening meal was being served, and the devil had already prompted Judas Iscariot, son of Simon, to betray Jesus.

John 13:3 Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God;

John 13:4 so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist.

John 13:5 After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him.

John 13:6 He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?"

John 13:7 Jesus replied, "You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand."

John 13:8 "No," said Peter, "you shall never wash my feet." Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no part with me."

John 13:9 "Then, Lord," Simon Peter replied, "not just my feet but my hands and my head as well!"

COMMENTARY

This section of Scripture recounts the Passover meal, but from a perspective different from that in Luke 22. The design of this passage is to show Jesus to be the humble servant, as well as Mighty King.

What an example of what it is to be a servant (see John 13:15).

The Pharisees were very focused on outward appearance and ceremonial cleansing. Jesus' purpose here is not to emphasize cleanliness, it is to emphasize humility. This is something the disciples did not immediately recognize (see verses 8-10).

JESUS WASHES THE FEET OF THE DISCIPLES

SCRIPTURE TEXT

John 13:10 Jesus answered, “A person who has had a bath needs only to wash his feet; his whole body is clean. And you are clean, though not every one of you.”

John 13:11 For he knew who was going to betray him, and that was why he said not every one was clean.

John 13:12 When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. “Do you understand what I have done for you?” he asked them.

John 13:13 “You call me ‘Teacher’ and ‘Lord,’ and rightly so, for that is what I am.

John 13:14 Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another’s feet.

John 13:15 I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you.

John 13:16 I tell you the truth, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him.

John 13:17 Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them

John 13:18 “I am not referring to all of you; I know those I have chosen. But this is to fulfill the scripture: ‘He who shares my bread has lifted up his heel against me.’

COMMENTARY

Here Jesus is speaking of spiritual cleansing—which the disciples had received by virtue of their relationship with Him. However, there was one (Judas) who had not fully accepted Jesus as Messiah. Judas therefore had not, and would not, receive forgiveness or have the hope of salvation. In this we see that it is not enough to know about Jesus and/or to share in holy endeavors. It is said, “Jesus must be Lord of all in your life if He is to be Lord at all in your life.”

No servant is greater than his master: *Understanding this truth is the key to understanding this section of Scripture. Believers must be humble and willing to serve, in order to be the witness God desires.*

This is a reference to Judas Iscariot, and the fulfillment of the prophecy noted in John 6:70.

SCRIPTURE TEXT

John 13:19 “I am telling you now before it happens, so that when it does happen you will believe that I am He.

John 13:20 I tell you the truth, whoever accepts anyone I send accepts me; and whoever accepts me accepts the one who sent me.”

John 13:21 After he had said this, Jesus was troubled in spirit and testified, “I tell you the truth, one of you is going to betray me.”

John 13:22 His disciples stared at one another, at a loss to know which of them he meant.

John 13:23 One of them, the disciple whom Jesus loved, was reclining next to him.

John 13:24 Simon Peter motioned to this disciple and said, “Ask him which one he means.”

John 13:25 Leaning back against Jesus, he asked him, “Lord, who is it?”

John 13:26 Jesus answered, “It is the one to whom I will give this piece of bread when I have dipped it in the dish.” Then, dipping the piece of bread, he gave it to Judas Iscariot, son of Simon.

John 13:27 As soon as Judas took the bread, Satan entered into him. “What you are about to do, do quickly,” Jesus told him,

John 13:28 but no one at the meal understood why Jesus said this to him.

COMMENTARY

Jesus was troubled, not because the betrayal would lead to His crucifixion, but because Judas had chosen to follow Satan.

A reference to John.

It was an expression of honor for the host to invite one who dined at the table to share his bread. In this Jesus was giving Judas every opportunity to change His mind.

SCRIPTURE TEXT

John 13:29 Since Judas had charge of the money, some thought Jesus was telling him to buy what was needed for the Feast, or to give something to the poor.

John 13:30 As soon as Judas had taken the bread, he went out. And it was night.

John 13:31 When he was gone, Jesus said, “Now is the Son of Man glorified and God is glorified in him.

John 13:32 If God is glorified in him, God will glorify the Son in himself, and will glorify him at once.

John 13:33 “My children, I will be with you only a little longer. You will look for me, and just as I told the Jews, so I tell you now: Where I am going, you cannot come.

John 13:34 “A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.

John 13:35 By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”

John 13:36 Simon Peter asked him, “Lord, where are you going?” Jesus replied, “Where I am going, you cannot follow now, but you will follow later.”

John 13:37 Peter asked, “Lord, why can’t I follow you now? I will lay down my life for you.”

John 13:38 Then Jesus answered, “Will you really lay down your life for me? I tell you the truth, before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times!

COMMENTARY

Hebrews 12:2 provides insight into how Jesus endured the suffering and humiliation of the cross—He fixed His eyes on the joy and reward that comes from glorifying the Father.

The commandment to love was not new, but the scope of this directive was. The new commandment, to love as Christ loves us, presents a new standard for how to love.

A conditional statement. You are my disciples IF...

Love and compassion are a most powerful witness (see John 17:23).

Peter would soon find out that it is easier to promise than to deliver. Believers are to guard their words as they impact their witness (see Matt. 5:36-37).

JESUS SPEAKS OF HIS GOING AND THE COMING OF THE SPIRIT

SCRIPTURE TEXT

John 14:1 “Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me.

John 14:2 In my Father’s house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you.

John 14:3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.

John 14:4 You know the way to the place where I am going.”

John 14:5 Thomas said to him, “Lord, we don’t know where you are going, so how can we know the way?”

John 14:6 Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

John 14:7 If you really knew me, you would know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him.”

John 14:8 Philip said, “Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us.”

John 14:9 Jesus answered: “Don’t you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’?

COMMENTARY

Father’s house: Heaven. Here Jesus encourages His disciples by reminding them that 1) His coming suffering (and going away) is part of the Father’s plan 2) His going away will facilitate a great blessing for humanity and 3) A wonderful future awaits the faithful.

In today’s culture it is common to teach that truth is relative, and that there are many paths or teachings leading to heaven. Here Jesus presents an important spiritual truth: There is one way, one truth and one faith that leads to salvation.

A reference to the deity of Christ and Trinity doctrine. Jesus was, in the fullest sense, Emmanuel, which means, “God with us.”

SCRIPTURE TEXT

John 14:10 Don't you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you are not just my own. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work.

John 14:11 Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least believe on the evidence of the miracles themselves.

John 14:12 I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father.

John 14:13 And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father.

John 14:14 You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it.

John 14:15 "If you love me, you will obey what I command.

John 14:16 And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever—

John 14:17 the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you.

John 14:18 I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.

John 14:19 Before long, the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live.

COMMENTARY

Old Testament prophets taught that miracles would validate the ministry of the Messiah. Even the Pharisees did not deny that many miracles accompanied Jesus' ministry (see Matthew 9:34).

Believers today do not access a different or greater power than Jesus, but the geographical and numerical scope of the modern church ministry is different, and arguably greater than that of Jesus' earthly ministry.

A simple summary of the New Covenant (see 1 John 3:24, 1 John 5:2-3; 1 Peter 1:14).

Jesus' sacrifice on the cross would facilitate the coming of the Holy Spirit. This gift, the very presence of God, now lives in the heart of believers (1 John 5:7-10).

SCRIPTURE TEXT

John 14:20 On that day you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you.

John 14:21 Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him.”

John 14:22 Then Judas (not Judas Iscariot) said, “But, Lord, why do you intend to show yourself to us and not to the world?”

John 14:23 Jesus replied, “If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.

John 14:24 He who does not love me will not obey my teaching. These words you hear are not my own; they belong to the Father who sent me.

John 14:25 “All this I have spoken while still with you.

John 14:26 But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.

John 14:27 Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.

COMMENTARY

This Judas was also known as Lebbus and Thaddeus. It is likely he was the brother of James and the author of the New Testament book of Jude.

Counselor: *The Holy Spirit.*

What Christ gives, be it peace or life or love, always exceeds what the world can give.

SCRIPTURE TEXT

John 14:28 “You heard me say, ‘I am going away and I am coming back to you.’ If you loved me, you would be glad that I am going to the Father, for the Father is greater than I.

John 14:29 I have told you now before it happens, so that when it does happen you will believe.

John 14:30 I will not speak with you much longer, for the prince of this world is coming. He has no hold on me,

John 14:31 but the world must learn that I love the Father and that I do exactly what my Father has com-manded me. “Come now; let us leave.

COMMENTARY

This is a reference to the human facet of the dual nature of Christ. Jesus did possess the fullness of deity (Col.2:9), but would endure the sufferings of the cross as a human.

Prince of this world: A reference to Satan (see Eph. 2:2 and 2 Cor. 4:4).

OUR CALLING AND GOD'S EXPECTATION

SCRIPTURE TEXT

John 15:1 “I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener.

John 15:2 He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful.

John 15:3 You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you.

John 15:4 Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.

John 15:5 “I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.

John 15:6 If anyone does not remain in me, he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned.

John 15:7 If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you.

John 15:8 This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.

John 15:9 “As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love.

COMMENTARY

Here Jesus follows-up His statement in John 14:6 (that there is one truth and one way) by noting that there is only one true vine. This is an important warning as branches grafted to false vines will not bear fruit (verses 4-5), and that which does not bear good fruit will be thrown into the fire (verse 6).

Believers are to remain faithful, and strive to have the mind of Christ (Rom. 12:1-2). When believers remain strong in Christ, and pray in accordance with the will of God, prayers become powerful and can, as James writes, “accomplish much” (James 5:16b).

Our motivation for remaining in Christ (and extending love to others) is not fear of punishment, or the promise of great reward, but a response to the overwhelming love that God has extended to us (Rom. 5:8).

SCRIPTURE TEXT

John 15:10 If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love.

John 15:11 I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.

John 15:12 My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you.

John 15:13 Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.

John 15:14 You are my friends if you do what I command.

John 15:15 I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you.

John 15:16 You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit—fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name.

John 15:17 This is my command: Love each other.

John 15:18 "If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first.

John 15:19 If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you.

COMMENTARY

Love is to be a distinctive quality in the life of every believer. Love is the first attribute of the Holy Spirit mentioned in Gal. 5:22.

This verse foreshadows Jesus' upcoming death, and provides a simple explanation for it—Love.

See also Ephesians 1:4 which notes that we were chosen by God even before the world was created.

This statement was given the same night that Jesus said, "I came that you might have an example" (John 13:15). It is a blessing and act of grace that Jesus did not just tell us what to do, He showed us how to live.

SCRIPTURE TEXT

John 15:20 Remember the words I spoke to you: ‘No servant is greater than his master.’ If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also. If they obeyed my teaching, they will obey yours also.

John 15:21 They will treat you this way because of my name, for they do not know the One who sent me.

John 15:22 If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not be guilty of sin. Now, however, they have no excuse for their sin.

John 15:23 He who hates me hates my Father as well.

John 15:24 If I had not done among them what no one else did, they would not be guilty of sin. But now they have seen these miracles, and yet they have hated both me and my Father.

John 15:25 But this is to fulfill what is written in their Law: ‘They hated me without reason.’

John 15:26 “When the Counselor comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father, he will testify about me.

John 15:27 And you also must testify, for you have been with me from the beginning.

COMMENTARY

A reference to the deity of Christ, which is a major focus in the writings of John.

Those who have been blessed to receive the truth have a greater level of accountability to the Lord.

A reference to Psalm 69:4.

A reference to the Holy Spirit.

THE COMING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

SCRIPTURE TEXT

John 16:1 “All this I have told you so that you will not go astray.

John 16:2 They will put you out of the synagogue; in fact, a time is coming when anyone who kills you will think he is offering a service to God.

John 16:3 They will do such things because they have not known the Father or me.

John 16:4 I have told you this, so that when the time comes you will remember that I warned you. I did not tell you this at first because I was with you.

John 16:5 “Now I am going to him who sent me, yet none of you asks me, ‘Where are you going?’

John 16:6 Because I have said these things, you are filled with grief.

John 16:7 But I tell you the truth: It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you.

John 16:8 When he comes, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment:

John 16:9 in regard to sin, because men do not believe in me;

John 16:10 in regard to righteousness, because I am going to the Father, where you can see me no longer;

COMMENTARY

A reference to the opposition the Apostles would face as profiled in the book of Acts.

Jesus’ words, the writings of the prophets, and even the information in the book of Revelation is given out of love—to warn and prepare individuals for all that is to come.

Going to him: To God. A reference to the crucifixion and ascension to heaven.

Counselor: The Holy Spirit.

Convict: The role of the Holy Spirit is to convict, not condemn. To convict is to make one aware of wrong with the aim of moving one closer to the center of God’s will.

SCRIPTURE TEXT

John 16:11 and in regard to judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned.

John 16:12 “I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear.

John 16:13 But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come.

John 16:14 He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you.

John 16:15 All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will take from what is mine and make it known to you.

John 16:16 “In a little while you will see me no more, and then after a little while you will see me.”

John 16:17 Some of his disciples said to one another, “What does he mean by saying, “In a little while you will see me no more, and then after a little while you will see me,” and “Because I am going to the Father?”

John 16:18 They kept asking, “What does he mean by “a little while”? We don’t understand what he is saying.”

COMMENTARY

Prince of this world: One of the many titles of Satan. Other titles include: Accuser, Destroyer, Beelzebub, the Devil, Lucifer, Dragon, Serpent, Prince of the air, Tempter and Father of lies.

In essence: God will bring glory to Himself through the glory of the Son. This is a reference to the wonder of the Trinity.

A reference to the cross and resurrection.

Jesus had gone to great lengths to prepare His disciples for what was to come. Though He had spoken plainly of the upcoming crucifixion, the disciples were not ready or able to hear His words.

SCRIPTURE TEXT

John 16:19 Jesus saw that they wanted to ask him about this, so he said to them, “Are you asking one another what I meant when I said, ‘In a little while you will see me no more, and then after a little while you will see me’?”

John 16:20 I tell you the truth, you will weep and mourn while the world rejoices. You will grieve, but your grief will turn to joy.

John 16:21 A woman giving birth to a child has pain because her time has come; but when her baby is born she forgets the anguish because of her joy that a child is born into the world.

John 16:22 So with you: Now is your time of grief, but I will see you again and you will rejoice, and no one will take away your joy.

John 16:23 In that day you will no longer ask me anything. I tell you the truth, my Father will give you whatever you ask in my name.

John 16:24 Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete.

John 16:25 “Though I have been speaking figuratively, a time is coming when I will no longer use this kind of language but will tell you plainly about my Father.

John 16:26 In that day you will ask in my name. I am not saying that I will ask the Father on your behalf.

COMMENTARY

What patience Jesus shows here. In spite of much teaching on this topic, Jesus takes time to again address their questions.

A reference to the resurrection and coming of the Holy Spirit.

The key to answered prayer is to pray in the Father’s will. Romans 12:2 speaks of having the mind of Christ. When we have the mind of Christ and pray in accordance of God’s will for our life, then our prayer life becomes powerful and blessed.

This is a deity statement, linking Jesus with the focus of prayer [God the Father] in Matthew 6:5-13.

SCRIPTURE TEXT

John 16:27 No, the Father himself loves you because you have loved me and have believed that I came from God.

John 16:28 I came from the Father and entered the world; now I am leaving the world and going back to the Father.”

John 16:29 Then Jesus’ disciples said, “Now you are speaking clearly and without figures of speech.

John 16:30 Now we can see that you know all things and that you do not even need to have anyone ask you questions. This makes us believe that you came from God.”

John 16:31 “You believe at last!” Jesus answered.

John 16:32 “But a time is coming, and has come, when you will be scattered, each to his own home. You will leave me all alone. Yet I am not alone, for my Father is with me.

John 16:33 “I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”

COMMENTARY

The disciples had moments of insight. Still, on Good Friday, the disciples thought that all was lost. It is good we have a patient and gracious Lord.

The disciples were scattered when Jesus was arrested (the night before He was crucified). This is the fulfillment of the Zechariah 13:7 prophecy.

See also 1 John 4:4.

THE HIGH PRIESTLY PRAYER

SCRIPTURE TEXT

John 17:1 After Jesus said this, he looked toward heaven and prayed: “Father, the time has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you.

John 17:2 For you granted him authority over all people that he might give eternal life to all those you have given him.

John 17:3 Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.

John 17:4 I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do.

John 17:5 And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began.

John 17:6 “I have revealed you to those whom you gave me out of the world. They were yours; you gave them to me and they have obeyed your word.

John 17:7 Now they know that everything you have given me comes from you.

John 17:8 For I gave them the words you gave me and they accepted them. They knew with certainty that I came from you, and they believed that you sent me.

John 17:9 I pray for them. I am not praying for the world, but for those you have given me, for they are yours.

COMMENTARY

This passage of Scripture is sometimes called the High Priestly Prayer. Here Jesus prays for His disciples, and for believers through the ages.

Let this be our prayer: That we will complete the work the Lord has given us to do.

The Apostle James writes that “every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights...” (James 1:17a)

SCRIPTURE TEXT

John 17:10 All I have is yours, and all you have is mine. And glory has come to me through them.

John 17:11 I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name—the name you gave me— so that they may be one as we are one.

John 17:12 While I was with them, I protected them and kept them safe by that name you gave me. None has been lost except the one doomed to destruction so that Scripture would be fulfilled.

John 17:13 “I am coming to you now, but I say these things while I am still in the world, so that they may have the full measure of my joy within them.

John 17:14 I have given them your word and the world has hated them, for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world.

John 17:15 My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one.

John 17:16 They are not of the world, even as I am not of it.

John 17:17 Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth.

John 17:18 As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world.

John 17:19 For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified.

COMMENTARY

Here Jesus prays that there would be unity among believers. Unity is different than uniformity. We are called to be one in Christ—but we are not all called to be the same. Diversity in the church honors God.

The believer's prayer should match the prayer of Jesus. Too often believers pray to be exempt from the cares of the world. That's not what Jesus prayed for (see John 16:33). Believers should not pray to be exempt from trials, but to be able to remain strong in the midst of them.

***Sanctify** means to be set apart. Believers are to have a different perspective, different priorities and different values from that of the world. To be different from the world is to be sanctified in Christ.*

SCRIPTURE TEXT

John 17:20 “My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message,

John 17:21 that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me.

John 17:22 I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one:

John 17:23 I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.

John 17:24 “Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world.

John 17:25 Righteous Father, though the world does not know you, I know you, and they know that you have sent me.

John 17:26 I have made you known to them, and will continue to make you known in order that the love you have for me may be in them and that I myself may be in them.”

COMMENTARY

Jesus prays not only for His disciples 2000 years ago, but for all disciples that will follow them.

The unity of believers is directly linked to their witness. The greater the level of unity in the church, the greater the potential of their witness for Christ.

Believers are to share the love and truth of Christ (in this believers model the actions of Jesus Christ).

IN THE GARDEN OF GETHSEMANE

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Matt. 26:36 Then Jesus went with his disciples to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to them, “Sit here while I go over there and pray.”

Matt. 26:37 He took Peter and the two sons of Zebedee along with him, and he began to be sorrowful and troubled.

Matt. 26:38 Then he said to them, “My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me.”

Matt. 26:39 Going a little farther, he fell with his face to the ground and prayed, “My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will.”

Matt. 26:40 Then he returned to his disciples and found them sleeping. “Could you men not keep watch with me for one hour?” he asked Peter.

Matt. 26:41 “Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the body is weak.”

Matt. 26:42 He went away a second time and prayed, “My Father, if it is not possible for this cup to be taken away unless I drink it, may your will be done.”

Matt. 26:43 When he came back, he again found them sleeping, because their eyes were heavy.

COMMENTARY

Gethsemane means place of olives, so named because of an olive grove there. It is important to note that Jesus thought it imperative to enter into a time of earnest prayer before encountering His great trial.

Jesus endured all aspects of the crucifixion as a man, not as God or some kind of Superman. Hebrews 4:14-15 notes that we have a high priest that can sympathize (and empathize) with our weaknesses.

These are the keys to a powerful prayer life—to make your every request known to God (Phil 4:6), to be able to accept that God’s plan and timing are best, and to humbly pray, “Thy will be done.”

The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak (KJV). An eloquent but sad commentary on the human condition. Our only hope is to seek God for help, strength and guidance.

Because their eyes were heavy: What a weak excuse. Believers should ask themselves if their excuses for not doing what the Lord has asked are equally without merit.

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Matt. 26:44 So he left them and went away once more and prayed the third time, saying the same thing.

Matt. 26:45 Then he returned to the disciples and said to them, “Are you still sleeping and resting? Look, the hour is near, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners.

Matt. 26:46 Rise, let us go! Here comes my betrayer!”

From John 18, scholars determine that at least 500 Roman soldiers were following Judas Iscariot (along with a number of religious officials). Judas' task was to identify and betray Jesus.

THE ARREST OF JESUS

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Matt. 26:47 While he was still speaking, Judas, one of the Twelve, arrived. With him was a large crowd armed with swords and clubs, sent from the chief priests and the elders of the people.

John 18:4 Jesus, knowing all that was going to happen to him, went out and asked them, “Who is it you want?”

John 18:5 “Jesus of Nazareth,” they replied. “I am he,” Jesus said. (And Judas the traitor was standing there with them.)

John 18:6 When Jesus said, “I am he,” they drew back and fell to the ground.

John 18:7 Again he asked them, “Who is it you want?” And they said, “Jesus of Nazareth.”

John 18:8 “I told you that I am he,” Jesus answered. “If you are looking for me, then let these men go.”

Matt. 26:48 Now the betrayer had arranged a signal with them: “The one I kiss is the man; arrest him.”

Matt. 26:49 Going at once to Jesus, Judas said, “Greetings, Rabbi!” and kissed him.

Matt. 26:50 Jesus replied, “Friend, do what you came for.” Then the men stepped forward, seized Jesus and arrested him.

COMMENTARY

Strange that hundreds of armed soldiers were sent to arrest just one man—particularly at a time when hundreds of thousands of Jews had gathered in Jerusalem for the Passover (thus increasing the need to spread out Roman resources).

With a simple phrase several hundred Roman soldiers fell to the ground (a miracle affirming God’s favor with His Son, and perhaps some wordplay on the phrase “I AM,” which points to Jesus’ divine nature). It is amazing arrogance and pride that led the soldiers and religious leaders to press on with their evil plan.

Jesus constantly showed concern for others. He showed concern for Bartimeus by healing him just before He entered Jerusalem, concern for His disciples when He was arrested, and to the ‘thief on the cross’ who at the last minute asked for forgiveness.

Rabbi: A title of respect and honor—a great irony in that Judas gave Jesus neither.

SCRIPTURE TEXT

John 18:10 Then Simon Peter, who had a sword, drew it and struck the high priest's servant, cutting off his right ear. (The servant's name was Malchus.)

Matt. 26:52 "Put your sword back in its place," Jesus said..., "for all who draw the sword will die by the sword."

Matt. 26:53 Do you think I cannot call on my Father, and he will at once put at my disposal more than twelve legions of angels?

Matt. 26:54 But how then would the Scriptures be fulfilled that say it must happen in this way?"

Matt. 26:55 At that time Jesus said to the crowd, "Am I leading a rebellion, that you have come out with swords and clubs to capture me? Every day I sat in the temple courts teaching, and you did not arrest me.

Matt. 26:56 But this has all taken place that the writings of the prophets might be fulfilled." Then all the disciples deserted him and fled.

COMMENTARY

A clumsy, albeit well-intentioned act by Peter. It is important to note that the best actions are always those that are led by the Spirit.

Readers are given a glimpse of the power of a single angel in 2 Chronicles 32 (where one angel overwhelms an army of 180,000 in one night). A Roman Legion was comprised of at least 4000 soldiers. Imagine the power of 50,000 angels.

A reference to prophecies presented in Psalm 41:9 and Zechariah 13:7.

THE TRIAL OF JESUS

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Matt. 26:57 Those who had arrested Jesus took him to Caiaphas, the high priest, where the teachers of the law and the elders had assembled.

Matt. 26:58 But Peter followed him at a distance, right up to the courtyard of the high priest. He entered and sat down with the guards to see the outcome.

Matt. 26:59 The chief priests and the whole Sanhedrin were looking for false evidence against Jesus so that they could put him to death.

Matt. 26:60 But they did not find any, though many false witnesses came forward. Finally two came forward

Matt. 26:61 and declared, "This fellow said, 'I am able to destroy the temple of God and rebuild it in three days.'"

Matt. 26:62 Then the high priest stood up and said to Jesus, "Are you not going to answer? What is this testimony that these men are bringing against you?"

Matt. 26:63 But Jesus remained silent. The high priest said to him, "I charge you under oath by the living God: Tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God."

COMMENTARY

According to Jewish custom, it was illegal to convene a hearing in the evening.

Note that just a few hours before this (Mark 14:29-31), Peter promised he would always stand by Jesus' side.

Sanhedrin: A body of 70 religious leaders. They had almost unlimited authority in civil and religious matters. They could impose fines and harsh punishments, but needed Roman approval to put an individual to death.

Judges were to carefully investigate charges (see Deut. 18-19). This trial was a mockery of justice.

A fulfillment of the Isaiah 53:7 prophecy.

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Matt. 26:64 “Yes, it is as you say,” Jesus replied. “But I say to all of you: In the future you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven.”

Matt. 26:65 Then the high priest tore his clothes and said, “He has spoken blasphemy! Why do we need any more witnesses? Look, now you have heard the blasphemy.”

Matt. 26:66 What do you think?” “He is worthy of death,” they answered.

Matt. 26:67 Then they spit in his face and struck him with their fists. Others slapped him

Matt. 26:68 and said, “Prophecy to us, Christ. Who hit you?”

COMMENTARY

A gesture of shock. The act has Old Testament roots and indicates righteous indignation.

This kind of abuse was illegal, and shows the trial to be a sham.

PETER DENIES JESUS

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Matt. 26:69 Now Peter was sitting out in the courtyard, and a servant girl came to him. “You also were with Jesus of Galilee,” she said.

Matt. 26:70 But he denied it before them all. “I don’t know what you’re talking about,” he said.

Matt. 26:71 Then he went out to the gateway, where another girl saw him and said to the people there, “This fellow was with Jesus of Nazareth.”

Matt. 26:72 He denied it again, with an oath: “I don’t know the man!”

Matt. 26:73 After a little while, those standing there went up to Peter and said, “Surely you are one of them, for your accent gives you away.”

Matt. 26:74 Then he began to call down curses on himself and he swore to them, “I don’t know the man!” Immediately a rooster crowed.

Luke 22:61 The Lord turned and looked straight at Peter. Then Peter remembered the word the Lord had spoken to him: “Before the rooster crows today, you will disown me three times.”

Luke 22:62 And he went outside and wept bitterly.

COMMENTARY

From a cultural point of view, a servant girl had no power. But though she was not an intimidating individual, she caused Peter to cower and deny his association with Jesus.

Interesting that the second person that prompts Peter to deny Christ is not a burly soldier, but another girl. In this second denial Peter includes an oath (an important cultural practice that was viewed as binding as a written legal contract).

Here Peter curses to prove that he is not a disciple of Christ, for all knew that the disciples of Jesus did not speak in such a way.

At the precise moment that Jesus was being led out of the home of Caiaphas the High Priest, the rooster crowed, and across the courtyard, in the glow of the firelight Jesus catches Peter’s eye.

JESUS BEFORE PILATE

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Luke 22:66 At daybreak the council of the elders of the people, both the chief priests and teachers of the law, met together, and Jesus was led before them.

Luke 22:67 “If you are the Christ,” they said, “tell us.” Jesus answered, “If I tell you, you will not believe me,

Luke 22:68 and if I asked you, you would not answer.

Luke 22:69 But from now on, the Son of Man will be seated at the right hand of the mighty God.”

Luke 22:70 They all asked, “Are you then the Son of God?” He replied, “You are right in saying I am.”

Luke 22:71 Then they said, “Why do we need any more testimony? We have heard it from his own lips.”

Matt. 27:2 They bound him, led him away and handed him over to Pilate, the governor.

Matt. 27:3 When Judas, who had betrayed him, saw that Jesus was condemned, he was seized with remorse and returned the thirty silver coins to the chief priests and the elders.

COMMENTARY

Tradition required that judges pray and fast for an extended period (days) prior to overseeing a trial that could result in a death sentence. .

Jesus is brought to Pilate, a Roman Official, because Roman consent was required in matters of capital punishment.

Thirty silver coins: *This is the fulfillment of prophecy. Thirty pieces of silver is said to have been the standard price for a slave (yet Jesus was a Sovereign).*

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Matt. 27:4 “I have sinned,” he said, “for I have betrayed innocent blood.” “What is that to us?” they replied. “That’s your responsibility.”

Matt. 27:5 So Judas threw the money into the temple and left. Then he went away and hanged himself.

Matt. 27:6 The chief priests picked up the coins and said, “It is against the law to put this into the treasury, since it is blood money.”

Matt. 27:7 So they decided to use the money to buy the potter’s field as a burial place for foreigners.

Matt. 27:8 That is why it has been called the Field of Blood to this day.

Matt. 27:9 Then what was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet was fulfilled: “They took the thirty silver coins, the price set on him by the people of Israel,

Matt. 27:10 and they used them to buy the potter’s field, as the Lord commanded me.”

COMMENTARY

Acts 1:18 presents a description of what happened to the body after it fell to the ground (perhaps a branch or the rope broke).

The prophecy evidently comes from Zechariah, not Jeremiah. The apparent error can be resolved by 1) assuming that Jeremiah wrote the last four chapters of the book of Zechariah (something that has long been debated) or 2) acknowledging that Hebrew writings were divided into sections, and the section (book) of the latter prophets began with Jeremiah. In this sense, Zechariah’s writings would have been included in the book of Jeremiah.

JESUS BEFORE HEROD

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Matt. 27:11 Meanwhile Jesus stood before the governor, and the governor asked him, “Are you the king of the Jews?” “Yes, it is as you say,” Jesus replied.

Matt. 27:12 When he was accused by the chief priests and the elders, he gave no answer.

Matt. 27:13 Then Pilate asked him, “Don’t you hear the testimony they are bringing against you?”

Matt. 27:14 But Jesus made no reply, not even to a single charge—to the great amazement of the governor.

Luke 23:7 When he learned that Jesus was under Herod’s jurisdiction, he sent him to Herod, who was also in Jerusalem at that time.

Luke 23:8 When Herod saw Jesus, he was greatly pleased, because for a long time he had been wanting to see him. From what he had heard about him, he hoped to see him perform some miracle.

Luke 23:9 He plied him with many questions, but Jesus gave him no answer.

COMMENTARY

The Roman government did not allow Jews to appoint themselves a king. Jesus’ answer here, along with the accusation that masses were following Him and that He was a disturber of the peace, was likely enough to convict Him in a Roman court. Yet, even Herod and Pilate (both Roman officials), did not find Jesus guilty (see Luke 23:24-25).

Jesus remained silent because He knew nothing He could say would change the heart of those who were filled with Satan and intent on killing Him.

This is the Herod who had John the Baptist put to death. Herod had a Jewish background, but was not open to the possibility that Jesus was the Messiah. His interest in seeing Jesus was not based on faith, but rather on some hope that he would be entertained by seeing Jesus perform magician-like signs and wonders.

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Luke 23:10 The chief priests and the teachers of the law were standing there, vehemently accusing him.

Luke 23:11 Then Herod and his soldiers ridiculed and mocked him. Dressing him in an elegant robe, they sent him back to Pilate.

Luke 23:12 That day Herod and Pilate became friends—before this they had been enemies. —————

Luke 23:13 Pilate called together the chief priests, the rulers and the people,

COMMENTARY

Enemies because both were men of great pride and continuously vied to gain the favor of Rome.

PILATE ORDERS JESUS BEATEN

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Luke 23:14 and said to them, “You brought me this man as one who was inciting the people to rebellion. I have examined him in your presence and have found no basis for your charges against him.

Luke 23:15 Neither has Herod, for he sent him back to us; as you can see, he has done nothing to deserve death.

Luke 23:16 Therefore, I will punish him and then release him.”

COMMENTARY

Pilate's move to punish Jesus had nothing to do with Jesus being guilty of a crime—Pilate was trying to placate Jewish leaders who were vehemently pressing for His death. Pilate here shows unusual concern for one who was, from his point of view, a rather inconsequential Jew. His move to save Jesus stands in stark contrast to the actions of the Jewish officials. But in the end Pilate surrenders to peer pressure, compromises and delivers Jesus over to be crucified.

PILATE SEEKS THE RELEASE OF JESUS

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Matt. 27:15 Now it was the governor's custom at the Feast to release a prisoner chosen by the crowd.

Matt. 27:16 At that time they had a notorious prisoner, called Barabbas.

Matt. 27:17 So when the crowd had gathered, Pilate asked them, "Which one do you want me to release to you: Barabbas, or Jesus who is called Christ?"

Matt. 27:18 For he knew it was out of envy that they had handed Jesus over to him.

Matt. 27:19 While Pilate was sitting on the judge's seat, his wife sent him this message: "Don't have anything to do with that innocent man, for I have suffered a great deal today in a dream because of him."

Matt. 27:20 But the chief priests and the elders persuaded the crowd to ask for Barabbas and to have Jesus executed.

Matt. 27:21 "Which of the two do you want me to release to you?" asked the governor. "Barabbas," they answered.

Matt. 27:22 "What shall I do, then, with Jesus who is called Christ?" Pilate asked. They all answered, "Crucify him!"

Matt. 27:23 "Why? What crime has he committed?" asked Pilate. But they shouted all the louder, "Crucify him!"

COMMENTARY

Feast: The Feast of Passover is a Jewish Festival which celebrates freedom, redemption, and the forgiveness of sin. The Roman governors, seeking to please their Jewish constituency, often released a Hebrew prisoner during the week of Passover.

Though there is much speculation about who Barabbas was and what he did after the crucifixion, there is no information on this in the Bible.

The prophet of Isaiah wrote: "All we like sheep have gone astray..." (Isa. 53:6). All fall into sin, and all are responsible for the choices they make. Saying that we were just following orders, or that we were caught up in peer pressure is not an excuse for bad choices. Here in Matthew 27, Pilate was influenced by the crowd, the crowd was influenced by the religious leaders, and the religious leaders were influenced by Satan. Believers can be tempted and pressured, but in the end, each individual is responsible for the choices they make.

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Mat 27:24 When Pilate saw that he was getting nowhere, but that instead an uproar was starting, he took water and washed his hands in front of the crowd. “I am innocent of this man’s blood,” he said. “It is your responsibility!”

Mat 27:25 All the people answered, “Let his blood be on us and on our children!”

Mat 27:26 Then he released Barabbas to them. But he had Jesus flogged, and handed him over to be crucified.

COMMENTARY

Receiving forgiveness does not come from washing your hands, or from anything we do by our own power or authority. Forgiveness comes from (and only from) recognizing who Jesus is, accepting Him into your heart, and asking Him to forgive your sins (1 John 1:9; 2 Cor. 5:17).

This was about 9:00 A.M

PILATE TURNS JESUS OVER TO BE CRUCIFIED

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Matt. 27:27 Then the governor's soldiers took Jesus into the Praetorium and gathered the whole company of soldiers around him.

Matt. 27:28 They stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him,

Matt. 27:29 and then twisted together a crown of thorns and set it on his head. They put a staff in his right hand and knelt in front of him and mocked him. "Hail, king of the Jews!" they said.

Matt. 27:30 They spit on him, and took the staff and struck him on the head again and again.

Matt. 27:31 After they had mocked him, they took off the robe and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him away to crucify him.

COMMENTARY

Praetorium: *The governor's palace and court.*

Scarlet robe: *This color represented royalty. The intent of this, and the placement of the crown of thorns (verse 29) was to mock and humiliate.*

Jesus had already been flogged—Pilate's order was that Jesus should be executed, not further humiliated. In a spirit of rage, however, soldiers and bystanders took matters into their own hands and continued to curse, hit, and throw dirt and rocks at Jesus as He made his way to be crucified.

SIMON CARRIES THE CROSS / JESUS IS CRUCIFIED

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Matt. 27:32 As they were going out, they met a man from Cyrene, named Simon, and they forced him to carry the cross.

Luke 23:27 A large number of people followed him, including women who mourned and wailed for him.

Luke 23:28 Jesus turned and said to them, "Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me; weep for yourselves and for your children.

Luke 23:29 For the time will come when you will say, 'Blessed are the barren women, the wombs that never bore and the breasts that never nursed!'

Luke 23:30 Then "they will say to the mountains, "Fall on us!" and to the hills, "Cover us!"

Luke 23:31 For if men do these things when the tree is green, what will happen when it is dry?"

Matt. 27:33 They came to a place called Golgotha (which means The Place of the Skull).

Matt. 27:34 There they offered Jesus wine to drink, mixed with gall; but after tasting it, he refused to drink it.

Matt. 27:35 When they had crucified him, they divided up his clothes by casting lots.

COMMENTARY

Nothing more is known of this man, but what an honor to be known as the one who carried the cross of Christ.

Weep, for Israel's mantle of blessing (being uniquely chosen, appointed and used of God) was about to be removed and given to the Gentiles.

Golgotha is a Greek term which means, "Place of the Skull." The hill was so named because it had the resemblance of a skull. The same word in Latin is rendered, "Calvary".

This is the fulfillment of the Psalm 22:18 prophecy.

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Matt. 27:36 And sitting down, they kept watch over him there.

John 19:18 Here they crucified him, and with him two others—one on each side and Jesus in the middle.

John 19:19 Pilate had a notice prepared and fastened to the cross. It read: JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS.

John 19:20 Many of the Jews read this sign, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city, and the sign was written in Aramaic, Latin and Greek.

John 19:21 The chief priests of the Jews protested to Pilate, “Do not write ‘The King of the Jews,’ but that this man claimed to be king of the Jews.”

John 19:22 Pilate answered, “What I have written, I have written.”

COMMENTARY

Roman crucifixions were designed to be a spectacle—to intimidate and instill fear. It was uncommon to crucify just a few. Crucifying three, with Jesus in the middle, represents how humanity can either choose to receive or reject Him.

Here Pilate acknowledges Jesus’ true identity—something the Jewish religious leadership never did.

Pilate proclaims Jesus to be the “King of the Jews.” Jewish leadership proclaimed, “We have no king but Caesar” (see John 19:15).

THE CROWDS MOCK JESUS

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Matt. 27:39 Those who passed by hurled insults at him, shaking their heads

Matt. 27:40 and saying, “You who are going to destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself! Come down from the cross, if you are the Son of God!”

Matt. 27:41 In the same way the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the elders mocked him.

Matt. 27:42 “He saved others,” they said, “but he can’t save himself! He’s the King of Israel! Let him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in him.

Matt. 27:43 He trusts in God. Let God rescue him now if he wants him, for he said, ‘I am the Son of God.’”

Luke 23:39 One of the criminals who hung there hurled insults at him: “Aren’t you the Christ? Save yourself and us!”

Luke 23:40 But the other criminal rebuked him. “Don’t you fear God,” he said, “since you are under the same sentence?”

Luke 23:41 We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong.”

COMMENTARY

Shaking their heads: A cultural reference intended to express disapproval, shame and dishonor.

This behavior was petty, wrong and not befitting the leadership role God had given them.

As mentioned previously, the two crucified with Jesus may represent the two choices humanity can make—to accept or reject Christ. Christ is in the middle, offering the hope of salvation to all who believe and follow Him.

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Luke 23:42 Then he said, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.”

Luke 23:43 Jesus answered him, “I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise.”

John 19:25 Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother, his mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene.

John 19:26 When Jesus saw his mother there, and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, “Dear woman, here is your son,”

John 19:27 and to the disciple, “Here is your mother.” From that time on, this disciple took her into his home.

COMMENTARY

An important truth is presented here: It is never too late to find mercy and salvation in Christ.

Clopas: Also known as Alpheus (some suggest that he was the brother of Joseph, the husband of Mary, the mother of Jesus).

Disciple whom he loved: This is a reference to the apostle John.

THE DEATH OF JESUS

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Matt. 27:45 From the sixth hour until the ninth hour darkness came over all the land.

Matt. 27:46 About the ninth hour Jesus cried out in a loud voice, “Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?”—which means, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”

Matt. 27:47 When some of those standing there heard this, they said, “He’s calling Elijah.”

Matt. 27:48 Immediately one of them ran and got a sponge. He filled it with wine vinegar, put it on a stick, and offered it to Jesus to drink.

Matt. 27:49 The rest said, “Now leave him alone. Let’s see if Elijah comes to save him.”

Matt. 27:50 And when Jesus had cried out again in a loud voice, he gave up his spirit.

Matt. 27:51 At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth shook and the rocks split.

Matt. 27:52 The tombs broke open and the bodies of many holy people who had died were raised to life.

COMMENTARY

Sixth to the ninth hour: This is a reference to the Jewish system of keeping time. It indicates Noon—3:00pm.

Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani: This is a quote from, and reference to, the fulfillment of the Psalm 22 prophecy.

A mean action, not designed to bring comfort, but rather to revive and prolong agony (in the hope that they might see one last sign).

A reference to death—though some have tried to twist the meaning here to indicate that Jesus did not die on the cross, but only passed out (and was later revived by supporters of His ministry).

This curtain was 40’ wide and 18” thick. In general, it separated the common man from the holy work of God. Jesus, the perfect sacrifice, ushered in the New Covenant and did away with the Priestly system. He is now our Mediator (1 Tim. 2:5) and through him we have access to God.

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Matt. 27:53 They came out of the tombs, and after Jesus' resurrection they went into the holy city and appeared to many people.

Matt. 27:54 When the centurion and those with him who were guarding Jesus saw the earthquake and all that had happened, they were terrified, and exclaimed, "Surely he was the Son of God!"

Matt. 27:55 Many women were there, watching from a distance. They had followed Jesus from Galilee to care for his needs.

Matt. 27:56 Among them were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Joses, and the mother of Zebedee's sons.

COMMENTARY

Quite a statement from a Roman soldier (especially in light of the fact that religious leaders would not recognize Jesus as the Christ).

Joses: *Also known as Joseph.*

THE BURIAL OF JESUS

SCRIPTURE TEXT

John 19:31 Now it was the day of Preparation, and the next day was to be a special Sabbath. Because the Jews did not want the bodies left on the crosses during the Sabbath, they asked Pilate to have the legs broken and the bodies taken down.

John 19:32 The soldiers therefore came and broke the legs of the first man who had been crucified with Jesus, and then those of the other.

John 19:33 But when they came to Jesus and found that he was already dead, they did not break his legs.

John 19:34 Instead, one of the soldiers pierced Jesus' side with a spear, bringing a sudden flow of blood and water.

John 19:35 The man who saw it has given testimony, and his testimony is true. He knows that he tells the truth, and he testifies so that you also may believe.

John 19:36 These things happened so that the scripture would be fulfilled: "Not one of his bones will be broken,"

John 19:37 and, as another scripture says, "They will look on the one they have pierced."

COMMENTARY

Crucifixion was designed to be a slow, painful form of execution. It was common for individuals to suffer for days before succumbing to death. Jewish leaders, being mindful of Deut. 21:22 (which notes that one hung on a tree must not be left there overnight), and not wanting to interrupt upcoming Sabbath activities, asked Pilate to have the legs of the three being crucified broken in order to hasten their deaths.

This is the fulfillment of the Psalm 34:20 prophecy.

This is the fulfillment of the Zechariah 12:10 prophecy.

JOSEPH OF ARIMATHEA AND THE TOMB

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Matt. 27:57 As evening approached, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who had himself become a disciple of Jesus.

Mat 27:58 Going to Pilate, he asked for Jesus' body, and Pilate ordered that it be given to him.

Mat 27:59 Joseph took the body, wrapped it in a clean linen cloth,

Mat 27:60 and placed it in his own new tomb that he had cut out of the rock. He rolled a big stone in front of the entrance to the tomb and went away.

Mat 27:61 Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were sitting there opposite the tomb.

COMMENTARY

Joseph was a member of the Sanhedrin, the elite ruling council of the Jews. This fulfills the Isaiah 53:9 prophecy.

Typically those crucified were classified as criminals and were not granted the honor of special tombs or burials.

New tomb: *This is the fulfillment of the Isaiah 53:9 prophecy.*

The other Mary: *The wife of Cleopas, mother of James and Joseph (and perhaps the sister-in-law of Joseph, the husband of Mary, the mother of Jesus).*

PILATE ORDERS THE TOMB SECURED

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Matt. 27:62 The next day, the one after Preparation Day, the chief priests and the Pharisees went to Pilate.

Matt. 27:63 “Sir,” they said, “we remember that while he was still alive that deceiver said, ‘After three days I will rise again.’

Matt. 27:64 So give the order for the tomb to be made secure until the third day. Otherwise, his disciples may come and steal the body and tell the people that he has been raised from the dead. This last deception will be worse than the first.”

Matt. 27:65 “Take a guard,” Pilate answered. “Go, make the tomb as secure as you know how.”

Matt. 27:66 So they went and made the tomb secure by putting a seal on the stone and posting the guard.

COMMENTARY

The Pharisees, who many times condemned Jesus for violating Sabbath Law and tradition, are now in violation themselves as their actions here constitute ‘work’ (and their hearts were far from honoring the Sabbath).

They went: *The Pharisees attended the guards and secured the tomb—in violation of their law and tradition.*

THE RESURRECTION

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Mark 16:1 When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices so that they might go to anoint Jesus' body.

Mark 16:2 Very early on the first day of the week, just after sunrise, they were on their way to the tomb

Mark 16:3 and they asked each other, "Who will roll the stone away from the entrance of the tomb?"

Mark 16:4 But when they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had been rolled away.

Luke 24:3 but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus.

Luke 24:4 While they were wondering about this, suddenly two men in clothes that gleamed like lightning stood beside them.

Luke 24:5 In their fright the women bowed down with their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, "Why do you look for the living among the dead?"

Luke 24:6 He is not here; he has risen! Remember how he told you, while he was still with you in Galilee:

Luke 24:7 "The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, be crucified and on the third day be raised again."

Luke 24:8 Then they remembered his words.

COMMENTARY

When the Sabbath was over: Sunday morning.

Salome: The wife of Zebedee and mother of James and John.

The first day of the week became the new day of worship (rather than Saturday) to commemorate 1) the day that Jesus rose from the grave 2) the day the Holy Spirit was given to the church (Pentecost— see Acts 2) and 3) the commencement of the New Covenant of Grace.

Two men. These are angels in the form of men (see Hebrews 13:2).

Remember how he told you... How easy it is to forget the promises of God when tough times come. The challenge is to have the Word ingrained in our heart (Psalm 119:11) so words of counsel and encouragement remain in the forefront of our mind when tough times come.

AT THE TOMB

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Luke 24:9 When they came back from the tomb, they told all these things to the Eleven and to all the others.

Luke 24:10 It was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the others with them who told this to the apostles.

Luke 24:11 But they did not believe the women, because their words seemed to them like nonsense.

John 20:3 So Peter and the other disciple started for the tomb.

John 20:4 Both were running, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first.

John 20:5 He bent over and looked in at the strips of linen lying there but did not go in.

John 20:6 Then Simon Peter, who was behind him, arrived and went into the tomb. He saw the strips of linen lying there,

John 20:7 as well as the burial cloth that had been around Jesus' head. The cloth was folded up by itself, separate from the linen.

John 20:8 Finally the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went inside. He saw and believed.

John 20:9 (They still did not understand from Scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead.)

COMMENTARY

Eleven: The Disciples (minus Judas), and a group of other followers (perhaps some of the 70 from Luke 10 and/or the 120 mentioned in Acts 1:15).

The other disciple: John

It was important for at least two men to go to the tomb as by the testimony of two a statement was confirmed in a court of law.

MARY'S ENCOUNTER WITH THE RISEN LORD

SCRIPTURE TEXT

John 20:10 Then the disciples went back to their homes,

John 20:11 but Mary stood outside the tomb crying. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb

John 20:12 and saw two angels in white, seated where Jesus' body had been, one at the head and the other at the foot.

John 20:13 They asked her, "Woman, why are you crying?" "They have taken my Lord away," she said, "and I don't know where they have put him."

John 20:14 At this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realize that it was Jesus.

John 20:15 "Woman," he said, "why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?" Thinking he was the gardener, she said, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him."

John 20:16 Jesus said to her, "Mary." She turned toward him and cried out in Aramaic, "Rabboni!" (which means Teacher).

John 20:17 Jesus said, "Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet returned to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, 'I am returning to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'"

COMMENTARY

This is Mary Magdalene, who became a follower of Jesus after being freed of seven demons (Mark 16:9).

In 2 Kings 6:15-17 the servant of Elisha is afraid for he is surrounded by an enemy. Suddenly his eyes are opened and he sees a great army of God standing ready to give aid. Psalm 46:1 notes that God is an "ever-present help in times of trouble." The truth, just because we cannot see Him, does not mean that He is not there, is illustrated in verse 14.

I have not yet returned: Perhaps this is best understood as Jesus indicating that He was not going to leave immediately. He would stay for some time and Mary need not cling to Him now. For additional information on what Jesus did between the cross and resurrection, see 1 Peter 3:19 and Eph. 4:7-10.

RELIGIOUS LEADERS TRY TO CONCEAL THE TRUTH**SCRIPTURE TEXT**

Matt. 28:11 While the women were on their way, some of the guards went into the city and reported to the chief priests everything that had happened.

Matt. 28:12 When the chief priests had met with the elders and devised a plan, they gave the soldiers a large sum of money,

Matt. 28:13 telling them, “You are to say, ‘His disciples came during the night and stole him away while we were asleep.’

Matt. 28:14 If this report gets to the governor, we will satisfy him and keep you out of trouble.”

Matt. 28:15 So the soldiers took the money and did as they were instructed. And this story has been widely circulated among the Jews to this very day.

COMMENTARY

Chief priests: Caiaphas and Annas. These men were to lead the Hebrew people in righteousness, worship and truth. How far they had strayed from their calling (see verses 12-13).

This story is easily refuted in that the resurrected Jesus appeared to more than 500 people (see Matt. 28:16-20 and 1 Cor. 15:7).

AN ENCOUNTER ON THE EMMAUS ROAD

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Luke 24:13 Now that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem.

Luke 24:14 They were talking with each other about everything that had happened.

Luke 24:15 As they talked and discussed these things with each other, Jesus himself came up and walked along with them;

Luke 24:16 but they were kept from recognizing him.

Luke 24:17 He asked them, "What are you discussing together as you walk along?" They stood still, their faces downcast.

Luke 24:18 One of them, named Cleopas, asked him, "Are you only a visitor to Jerusalem and do not know the things that have happened there in these days?"

Luke 24:19 "What things?" he asked. "About Jesus of Nazareth," they replied. "He was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people.

Luke 24:20 The chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him;

Luke 24:21 but we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel. And what is more, it is the third day since all this took place.

COMMENTARY

Two of them: One was Cleopas (see verse 18) and perhaps the other was Peter or Luke.

They were kept from recognizing Jesus (verse 16). Even after hearing the report that Jesus had risen there was doubt. This stole their joy (V.17) and kept them from seeing the truth.

These disciples were amazed that this 'visitor' did not know what had happened three days prior in Jerusalem. What is amazing is the immediate impact the crucifixion had on Jerusalem. The crucifixion of just three men, in the midst of the Passover celebration which involved over a million Jews, should have been a minor event. Yet here it is noted that all in Jerusalem knew of it.

Hope is fleeting when faith is failing.

JESUS MEETS WITH THE DISCIPLES

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Luke 24:22 In addition, some of our women amazed us. They went to the tomb early this morning

Luke 24:23 but didn't find his body. They came and told us that they had seen a vision of angels, who said he was alive.

Luke 24:24 Then some of our companions went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but him they did not see."

Luke 24:25 He said to them, "How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken!

Luke 24:26 Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?"

Luke 24:27 And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.

Luke 24:28 As they approached the village to which they were going, Jesus acted as if he were going further.

Luke 24:29 But they urged him strongly, "Stay with us, for it is nearly evening; the day is almost over." So he went in to stay with them.

Luke 24:30 When he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them.

COMMENTARY

Among them, Mary (the mother of Jesus), Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Salome, and Mary (mother of James),

Have to: *Jesus' suffering was the fulfillment of scores of Old Testament prophecies, and the fulfillment of what Jesus Himself promised.*

Here truth is gleaned by examining the Scriptures—the same is true today.

These disciples were not present at the "Last Supper" but likely had heard from the Eleven of how Jesus had broke bread on the night before the crucifixion.

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Luke 24:31 Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him, and he disappeared from their sight.

Luke 24:32 They asked each other, “Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?”

Luke 24:33 They got up and returned at once to Jerusalem. There they found the Eleven and those with them, assembled together

Luke 24:35 Then the two told what had happened on the way, and how Jesus was recognized by them when he broke the bread.

Luke 24:36 While they were still talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, “Peace be with you.”

John 20:20 After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord.

Luke 24:44 He said to them, “This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms.”

Luke 24:45 Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures.

Luke 24:46 He told them, “This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day,

COMMENTARY

Their eyes of faith were slow to see the truth because they lacked the faith to immediately believe the testimony of the women (who shared that Jesus had risen from the grave). Further, they were slow to remember that Jesus promised He would return from the dead.

It is late evening. How wonderful it must have been to have this encounter with Jesus right before settling in for what would likely have been another restless night.

More than 120 prophecies were fulfilled by Jesus Christ—no Messianic prophecy was left unfulfilled. The probability of all Messianic prophecies being fulfilled in one person, by random chance or by intentional effort, is statistically zero. The sheer number of prophecies fulfilled not only verifies the integrity of Scripture, but also verifies that Jesus is who He said He was. For statistical comparison, the probability of just 7 of the biblical prophecies concerning the city of Tyre coming true is said to be one in 75,000,000.

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Luke 24:47 and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.

Luke 24:48 You are witnesses of these things.

Luke 24:49 I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.”

John 20:21 Again Jesus said, “Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.”

John 20:22 And with that he breathed on them and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit.

COMMENTARY

This is the blessing and anointing of the Holy Spirit. The indwelling presence (and gift) of the Holy Spirit will be given about 50 days later, on the day of Pentecost (see Acts 2).

JESUS SPEAKS TO THOMAS

SCRIPTURE TEXT

John 20:24 Now Thomas (called Didymus), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came.

John 20:25 So the other disciples told him, “We have seen the Lord!” But he said to them, “Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe it.”

John 20:26 A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you!”

John 20:27 Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe.”

John 20:28 Thomas said to him, “My Lord and my God!”

John 20:29 Then Jesus told him, “Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”

COMMENTARY

It is difficult to believe in things not seen, but that's the beginning of faith (see Hebrews 11:1). God is patient, and will help us in our areas of weakness, yet all should remain mindful that “without faith it is impossible to please him please Him” (Heb.11:6).

Thomas, who doubted the reports of the resurrection, sees Jesus and believes, acknowledging Him as his Lord and God in verse 28. Jesus notes, however, that it is better to be able to believe without seeing (See verse 29 and Heb. 11:1).

JESUS AT THE SEA OF TIBERIAS

SCRIPTURE TEXT

John 21:1 Afterward Jesus appeared again to his disciples, by the Sea of Tiberias. It happened this way:

John 21:2 Simon Peter, Thomas (called Didymus), Nathanael from Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two other disciples were together.

John 21:3 “I’m going out to fish,” Simon Peter told them, and they said, “We’ll go with you.” So they went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing.

John 21:4 Early in the morning, Jesus stood on the shore, but the disciples did not realize that it was Jesus.

John 21:5 He called out to them, “Friends, haven’t you any fish?” “No,” they answered.

John 21:6 He said, “Throw your net on the right side of the boat and you will find some.” When they did, they were unable to haul the net in because of the large number of fish.

John 21:7 Then the disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, “It is the Lord!” As soon as Simon Peter heard him say, “It is the Lord,” he wrapped his outer garment around him (for he had taken it off) and jumped into the water.

COMMENTARY

Note the similarities to the story of the call of the first disciples in Luke 5.

Perhaps some time had passed since Jesus was with them.

There are striking similarities between this miracle and the miracle in Luke 5. Perhaps this is to bring recognition to His identity and to remind them that they serve a God who abundantly provides.

This is a reference to John.

SCRIPTURE TEXT

John 21:8 The other disciples followed in the boat, towing the net full of fish, for they were not far from shore, about a hundred yards.

John 21:9 When they landed, they saw a fire of burning coals there with fish on it, and some bread.

John 21:10 Jesus said to them, “Bring some of the fish you have just caught.”

John 21:11 Simon Peter climbed aboard and dragged the net ashore. It was full of large fish, 153, but even with so many the net was not torn.

John 21:12 Jesus said to them, “Come and have breakfast.” None of the disciples dared ask him, “Who are you?” They knew it was the Lord.

John 21:13 Jesus came, took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish.

John 21:14 This was now the third time Jesus appeared to his disciples after he was raised from the dead.

John 21:15a When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon son of John, do you truly...

COMMENTARY

It is just after sunrise. Surely the disciples are tired and hungry after working all night.

The net was not torn: *Interesting and wonderful how God sees to even the smallest of details.*

Here begins the story of the restoration of Peter (though some wrongly suppose it to be an account of the rebuke of Peter).

JESUS RESTORES PETER

SCRIPTURE TEXT

John 21:15b ... love me more than these?" "Yes, Lord," he said, "you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Feed my lambs."

John 21:16 Again Jesus said, "Simon son of John, do you truly love me?" He answered, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Take care of my sheep."

John 21:17 The third time he said to him, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, "Do you love me?" He said, "Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Feed my sheep."

John 21:18 I tell you the truth, when you were younger you dressed yourself and went where you wanted; but when you are old you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go."

John 21:19 Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God. Then he said to him, "Follow me!"

John 21:20 Peter turned and saw that the disciple whom Jesus loved was following them. (This was the one who had leaned back against Jesus at the supper and had said, "Lord, who is going to betray you?")

John 21:21 When Peter saw him, he asked, "Lord, what about him?"

John 21:22 Jesus answered, "If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you? You must follow me."

COMMENTARY

The number three is significant in Hebrew culture. For this reason, and because Peter denied Christ three times, Jesus will ask Peter three questions. This questioning is public and probably a very uncomfortable time for Peter. Yet the questions, and Jesus' responses, are gentle and specifically designed to encourage Peter. As Peter's denial was public knowledge, so now is Jesus' restoration of Him. Jesus gives him the challenge: "Feed my sheep." Within two months Peter will be preaching to the multitudes and thousands will be saved. In Christ, there is always hope. With God, the goal is always restoration.

John was the only disciple who did not die a martyr's death. Jesus' directive here, however, is to stay focused on the work of the present, and not be overly concerned about what will (or what we worry might) happen in the future.

THE GREAT COMMISSION

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Matt. 28:16 Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go.

Matt. 28:18 Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

Matt. 28:19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,

Matt. 28:20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

COMMENTARY

Though not specifically identified, many scholars believe this site to be Mt. Tabor, though the Mount where the Beatitudes were given is closer to Jesus' last known location.

Verses 18-20 comprise what is known as THE GREAT COMMISSION. This is the general calling of every believer, though every believer also receives a gifting by the Holy Spirit to accomplish a specific work for the glory of God.

THE ASCENSION OF JESUS

SCRIPTURE TEXT

Luke 24:50 When he had led them out to the vicinity of Bethany, he lifted up his hands and blessed them.

Luke 24:51 While he was blessing them, he left them and was taken up into heaven.

Luke 24:52 Then they worshiped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy.

Mark 16:20 Then the disciples went out and preached everywhere, and the Lord worked with them and confirmed his word by the signs that accompanied it.]

COMMENTARY

Near Mount Olivet.

See also Acts 1:9-11 for an account of the ascension. There we read a rather humorous account of how the disciples were slow to leave and begin the work the Lord had given them to do.

Many of these “signs” are profiled in the book of Acts.

JOHN'S FINAL WORDS

SCRIPTURE TEXT

John 20:30 Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book.

John 20:31 But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

John 21:24 This is the disciple who testifies to these things and who wrote them down. We know that his testimony is true.

John 21:25 Jesus did many other things as well. If every one of them were written down, I suppose that even the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written.

COMMENTARY

John openly notes that his Gospel record is not a comprehensive listing of every miracle or everything Jesus said. Yet, the account is sufficient and the Words are inspired. We have all we need in order to believe, and find the encouragement and guidance we need in life.

Perhaps this will be the focus of many of our discussions when we are in heaven. I suppose we will never grow tired of hearing and telling of all the wonderful things our great Lord and Savior has done for us.

EPILOGUE

The story of Jesus does not begin with the Gospels—it begins in Genesis, and is announced in the first prophecy in the Bible (Genesis 3:15). There God reveals His perfect plan to redeem humanity by sending a Savior. Jesus Christ is the expression and fulfillment of God's plan to overcome evil and offer salvation to humanity.

The Gospels note how Jesus demonstrated the love of God (John 3:16; Romans 5:8), and how He commissions (Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 1:8) all who believe to carry-on His work. The book of Acts and New Testament Epistles and Pastoral Letters profile how to live-out the 'Great Commission' challenge believers have received.

Studies show that believers in the early New Testament Church actively lived-out their faith. By the end of the second century A.D., more than 1,000,000 individuals had come to faith in Christ, and more than 80,000 died as martyrs. By the end of the fourth century A.D., more than 35,000,000 had come to faith, and approximately 1,950,000 died for it.

Jesus said that the cost of discipleship is high (Matthew 16:24-26). The calling is not for the curious, but for the truly committed. Yes, there are blessings in this life, and unimaginable rewards await the faithful in the age to come. However, believers must expect trials and tribulations and be prepared to overcome. Disciples of Christ are to be strong and brave. Disciples are to be the salt and light in a darkened world. Disciples are to have hope and share hope. Disciples are to be learners, and willing to share what they learn with others. Believing in Christ is good, but there is more. The challenge is to be a true disciple of Jesus Christ.

Additional information on the subject of salvation follows this simple [four-step outline](#). See [Section 05 - Discipleship Study Materials](#) for the video [The Gift of Salvation](#). This video will further support the information below.

HOW TO BECOME A CHRISTIAN

The next chapter profiles what the highly committed disciple should keep in mind and pursue. You can read many articles along these topics in the Section 08 - Additional Articles folder on the Rapture Kit USB

1. Join a good, evangelical, Bible-teaching church: When looking for a church, do not be unduly influenced by congregation size, building design, or professional music, drama and preaching presentations. Look for heart. Look to see if the people love each other. Discern whether or not the staff are good teachers and shepherds. Ask for information about church goals, study opportunities, beliefs, and missions involvement. Determine if staff teach and preach in a way that communicates the need to be prepared for the imminent return of the Lord. Ask to meet with a Pastor, Elder, or Deacon to discuss the church vision, how the church can be a blessing to you, and how you can be a blessing to the church.

2. Join a small group: The Biblical Disciple-making ministry notes that the benefits of sharing in a small group include:

- You will begin to feel like part of God's family: It is easy to get lost in a crowd—to go to church and worship but stay invisible and anonymous. Meeting with a small group of fellow believers provides an opportunity to build relationships. It also provides the opportunity to share, learn, pray with and for others, and walk with others on your spiritual journey. When you are connected to fellow believers, you are part of a family and never stand alone.
- You will grow faster spiritually in a group than alone: The Word notes that we have been “predestined to become conformed to the image of Christ” (Rom. 8:29). Spiritual growth involves life change. Life change is optimized in the context of a small group. 2 Timothy 2:22 teaches that we are to “run after” godly character and “run away” from the passions of youth. This verse instructs us not to do this alone but “with those who call upon the Lord from a pure heart.” God wants us to stop “trying” and start “training.”

PRAYING TO BECOME A CHRISTIAN

You can begin a new life in the faith by praying a simple prayer of surrender and commitment to God. A sample prayer is noted below:

“Dear Jesus, thank you for making me and loving me, even when I’ve ignored You and gone my own way. I realize I need You in my life. I’m sorry for my sins. I ask You to forgive me. Thank you for dying for me on the cross so that my sins can be forgiven.

Please help me to understand Your love and Your Word. Help me to learn more about who You are and Your will for my life. As much as I know how, I want to follow You from now on.

Please come into my life and make me a new person inside. I accept Your gift of salvation, and pledge to live for you, and tell others about you.

Thank you, Jesus!”

WHAT EVERY BELIEVER SHOULD DO

Many ask: “What do I do now that I have committed to be a follower and disciple of Christ? What are the best next steps?” Noted below are five suggestions. The next chapter profiles what the highly committed disciple should keep in mind and pursue. You can read many articles along these topics in the Section 08 - Additional Articles folder on the Rapture Kit USB

➔ **Join a good, evangelical, bible-teaching church:** When looking for a church, do not be unduly influenced by congregation size, building design, presentation materials or personalities. Look for heart. Look to see if the people love each other. Discern whether or not the staff are good teachers and shepherds. Ask for information about church goals, study opportunities, beliefs, and missions involvement. Determine if staff teach and preach in a way that communicates the need to be prepared for the imminent return of the Lord. Ask to meet with a Pastor, Elder, or Deacon to discuss the church vision, how the church can be a blessing to you, and how you can be a blessing to the church.

➔ **Join a small group:**

The Biblical Disciple-making Ministry notes that some of the benefits of sharing in a small group include:

- You will begin to feel like part of God’s family: It is easy to get lost in a crowd—to go to church and worship but stay invisible and anonymous. Meeting with a small group of fellow believers provides an opportunity to build relationships. It also provides the opportunity to share, learn, pray with and for others, and walk with others on your spiritual journey. When you are connected to fellow believers, you are part of a family and never stand alone.
- You will grow faster spiritually in a group than alone: The Word notes that we have been “predestined to become conformed to the image of Christ” (Rom. 8:29). Spiritual growth involves life change. Life change is optimized in the context of a small group. 2 Timothy 2:22 teaches that we are to “run after” godly character and “run away”

WHAT EVERY BELIEVER SHOULD DO

from the passions of youth. This verse instructs us not to do this alone but “with those who call upon the Lord from a pure heart.” God wants us to stop “trying” and start “training.” It’s always easier to exercise, physically or spiritually, in a group rather than alone (1 Tim. 4:7b).

- You will not have to go through struggles alone: It’s not only possible but probable that you could walk into and out of large group (worship) events with hurts, and questions but never connect with someone who will show an interest in you or identify with your difficulty. Many their struggles are unique, but in a small group setting, it becomes clear that most struggles are universal. It’s encouraging to find that members of your group have not only struggled with common problems but have also found helpful solutions in God’s Word (1 Cor. 10:13).
- Pray, Pray, Pray: Many are hesitant to pray in front of others, especially in a large group setting. In a small group of 6-12, you will learn to participate in prayer by having a conversation together with God. As you see prayer modeled by others you know, you will become more comfortable joining in prayer. It is good to pray for one another—it is even better to pray with one another.
- You will understand the Bible better: Have you ever listened to a message at a worship service and wanted to stop the speaker and ask, “But what about...?” or, “I don’t understand!” If so, then a small group is for you. The message presented in a worship service is one-way communication. You listen while the speaker speaks. It’s fine for imparting knowledge, but not as effective for personal application. In a small group setting, you can ask questions, participate in a discussion of the text, and hear others share their insights. The truths found in the Bible are practical, timeless, and designed to be applied to our everyday lives—participation in a small group helps believers know how that is possible.

➔ **Develop your personal prayer life:** Many have busy schedules and hesitate to schedule something new—particularly a new time commitment every day. However, this is not only important, but essential. Jesus prayed constantly and encouraged his disciples to pray. Paul noted that believers are to “pray without ceasing” (1 Thess. 5:17). A great evangelist once said, “I have so much to do today, it is impossible for me not to pray.” That’s a proper mindset. A few suggestions to help develop a meaningful daily prayer time are noted on the next page:

WHAT EVERY BELIEVER SHOULD DO

- Schedule it: For many, if it's not on the schedule it doesn't get done. It may take some time to get into a routine, but the benefit of setting aside this time will soon become clear.
- Seek out a prayer partner: This needs to be a confidant who will pray for you and with you—someone who will encourage you and challenge you. Pray with and for this person about specific needs. Keep a list of your prayer needs. Follow-up with your prayer partner to let them know you are praying for their needs. Follow-up with your prayer partner to let them know how God is working in your life. Be positive, encouraging, and perseverant. Ask church leadership to pair you with a prayer partner if one is not apparent.
- Keep a prayer journal: Note when you begin praying for the specific needs and how God moves to answer specific requests.

➔ **Plan to give:** Christian stewardship is the mark of Christian maturity. When believers give, believers receive. “God loves a cheerful giver” (2 Cor. 9:7). A few suggestions are noted below:

- Make a plan to provide regular financial support for the Kingdom's work.
- Ask for a copy of your church budget and familiarize yourself with church finances.
- Give cheerfully, regularly, and generously. Give your time, talent, resources, and finances.
- Rejoice in being able to support mission and outreach efforts through the local church. Seek God's leading regarding providing above-and-beyond support (funds, time, encouragement) to address particular needs and ministry projects.
- Remember, God expects His people to be good and faithful stewards of the resources He entrusts to them (Luke 14:13-14; Matthew 25:14-30). Ask God to help you do what He desires you to do.

➔ **Read and study the Word:** Titus 2:15 notes that disciples are to study and “rightly handle” (understand and share) Scripture. Acts 17:11 notes that the Bereans (a small group of believers living in Berea) were commended for their diligence in studying the Word. Acts 2:42 records that the early church committed themselves to learn from the Apostles. It honors God when His

WHAT EVERY BELIEVER SHOULD DO

people strive to learn what the Word says, how to share it, and how to live it out. A few suggestions are noted below:

- Take notes during sermon and teaching times. Write down important points and questions.
- Write down your questions as you read—share these with a staff member or Small Group/Bible Study teacher.
- Consider purchasing a STUDY BIBLE—A Bible that has study/commentary notes on each page of the text. This will aid in understanding difficult passages.
- Listen to good Bible Study teachers online, on TV, and/or radio. Your church leadership may be able to share helpful recommendations.
- Establish a Bible reading routine. Read for a certain number of minutes at a regular time each day. Note: There are a number of free, Read-the-Bible-through-in-a-year guides online.
- Schedule it: For many, if it's not on the schedule it doesn't get done. It may take some time to get into a routine, but the benefit of setting aside this time will soon become clear.
- Seek out a prayer partner: This needs to be a confidant who will pray for you and with you—someone who will encourage you and challenge you. Pray with and for this person about specific needs. Keep a list of your prayer needs. Follow-up with your prayer partner to let them know you are praying for their needs. Follow-up with your prayer partner to let them know how God is working in your life. Be positive, be encouraging, and be perseverant. Ask church leadership to pair you with a prayer partner if one is not apparent.
- Keep a prayer journal: Record prayer needs and note when you began praying for the specific needs. Review your prayer journal often and rejoice in seeing how God moved to answer specific requests.

ABOUT THE I AM A WATCHMAN MINISTRY

The I Am A Watchman ministry has been established to help individuals know the love of Jesus, enter into relationship with Jesus, live for Jesus, tell others about Jesus, and to prepare for the imminent return of Jesus. In informal language, the Watchman ministry strives to help individuals finish well (which is to live a life of meaning and purpose, and at the coming judgment hear the Lord say, "Well done my good and faithful servant").

In more theological terms, the I Am A Watchman ministry's focus is to help prepare the bride of Christ to meet the coming Bridegroom. This language comes from Matt. 25:1-46, Rev. 19:7-9, Rev. 21:2, John 14:1-3, and Rev. 21:9-11. The phrase is a word picture that imagines believers in Christ as the bride, who stand in readiness and purity, waiting for the Groom, who has promised to return, reward, and take his bride away.

The wise will strive to live well so they can finish well. The astute will strive to be aware of what God has done and what prophecy notes He will do in the days to come. In support of these goals, the I Am A Watchman ministry is happy to make available at no cost a wealth of discipleship, prophecy, and spiritual growth resources for those who desire to learn, and those who are called to lead.

THE STORY OF JESUS...



THE GREATEST STORY EVER TOLD!



About this author: Gary Ray is a student of the Word. He has served in pastoral ministry with his wife Tina for 30 years. He currently serves as President of the *I Am A Watchman* ministry.

Gary is a lifelong learner. He has received and shares the grace of God, and enjoys speaking and writing about what God has done and what He is going to do.

God is on the move! More prophecies have been fulfilled in the last 70 years than in the 700 years leading up to 1948 (the year Israel was restored as a sovereign and independent nation). An understanding of Bible prophecy provides insight into what is happening, and what will happen in the future.

There are more than 1000 prophecies in Scripture; more than 90% have been fulfilled and verified to be true. As NO Bible prophecy has been proven to be in error, one can trust that the remaining 10% of the prophecies in the Bible will be fulfilled exactly as foretold. This writing will help seekers of truth discern and be ready for what is to come, and be ready to greet the One who promised to return. Maranatha.

